



# Global Mission welcomes Vanuatu Volunteers

**A new wave of volunteers for Global Mission has just headed into the humid monsoon season in Vanuatu.**

For some, like Gloria and Neville Jones of Blenheim, the sprawling archipelago is already like a second home. For others, the experience of serving the Church in a tropical Pacific nation will be a step into the unknown. Everyone agrees, however, that the decision to go was all about timing.

"It all fell into place with a feeling of peace and excitement," says Gloria. "We've been doing short-term mission since 2007 and this calling to serve long-term feels like the right thing to do."

Gloria is a dental assistant and is based in Port Vila at the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PVC) health clinic, undertaking dental education. For the local Ni-Van people, personal hygiene, including teeth, is one of the main health challenges - along with smoking, diet and boils.

Husband Neville is also in Port Vila, teaching at a local Bible School. The couple hopes to continue the relationships with Ni-Van seasonal workers and their families they have built up over six years as pastoral carers for these men. They've been busy improving their Bislama fluency, sorting out their house and assisting short-term mission teams with practical details. They also expect to be called on to travel out to other islands during their two-year stint.

Responding to local need is central to how Global Mission works, says Global Mission coordinator the Rev Phil King.

"Although each of the three couples emerged out of their own sense of calling," he says, "their placements came firmly from needs identified on the ground in Vanuatu."

Graeme and Maebrly Reid are living and working at a high school in Onesua, an



Gloria and Neville Jones of Blenheim with Seth, a Vanuatu seasonal worker they assisted by helping to raise money for an operation he needed.

hour from Port Vila. They both completed NZQA accredited TESOL courses in Christchurch before departing for six months. Alongside teacher aiding, the Reids expect to be pitching in with childcare, kitchen, library and grounds work, and possibly evangelical mission.

The couple met and married in their 60s, after a lifetime of service to their communities and raising children. While her children were teenagers, Maebrly responded to a long-held feeling of being called, and travelled with Servants in Asia's Discovery Team to a slum area in Calcutta. That journey planted a seed.

"You end up with so many questions about life, poverty and justice - more than you went with," she remarks. "I laid those questions on my heart and left them there for years, until now."

Graeme was a lay pastor for 25 years in Spreydon, where he developed community services, before transferring recently to St Margaret's in Bishopdale, Christchurch, where he is a church member. "I've always had an interest in crossing borders," he says. "Myanmar was mentioned but we're both knocking 70 and I have diabetes. We preferred somewhere closer."

Aucklanders Shirley and Don Anton have replaced Roger and Paula Levy and are living on campus at the Talua Ministry Training Centre in South Santo. They will serve on the staff for up to two years. The centre offers a Diploma of Theology, Diploma of Mission and Bachelor of Ministries programmes.

Shirley finished full-time teaching a few years ago and spent two weeks at the end of 2013 relief teaching at the centre in

the Foundation class. Then everything changed.

"The Spirit must have been working," says Shirley. "My husband quit his job and decided he wanted to join me in mission work."

At Talua, change is the flavour of 2015; even the principal is new. Ni-Vans run the centre and the ex-pats support indigenous lecturers, who since 1986 have been training church leaders in various denominations and evangelists for isolated island villages.

"We walk alongside the students and staff sharing skills," Shirley says. "That's really important."

Shirley had prepared a range of teaching materials adapted to the local context. How the couples themselves will be moulded by new experiences remains to be seen.

"I believe anyone stepping out of a New Zealand culture into a Pacific way of life will be changed by the experience," says Neville.

Gloria agrees. "I have a love for these people and feel I can be a blessing to them just being me. God is going to use me here."

The Church provides free accommodation and the volunteers pay all other expenses during their time with Global Mission. Pastoral care and oversight are also provided. To find out more about Global Mission, see [www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/global-mission](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/national-ministries/global-mission)

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