

**Rebuilding of the William Gray
Memorial Church, Tanna Island, Vanuatu**
(By Jaco Reyneke)



On a picture perfect Saturday afternoon on the 1st of October 2016 on Tanna Island (Vanuatu) I had the privilege to lead the Waisisi Presbyterian congregation in worship. We gathered in the ruins of the William Gray Memorial Church, covered with blue tarpaulins. The surroundings did not seem to impact on the deep-felt worship, expression of their faith and the hospitality shown.

Under the leadership of Rev Kenneth Calvert (currently Interim Moderator of Oteramika/Kennington Presbyterian Church, Myross Bush) the church was built in 1974 by volunteers from the New Hebrides Missionary Association from New Zealand. Ken Calvert was a missionary in Vanuatu between 1967 and 1979, and served another three years in the Vanuatu government after independence.

In the wake of Cyclone Pam (March 2015) only three of the church's walls and a few beams remained intact. The congregation faithfully continued to serve the Lord and was grateful that Pastor Graham accepted the call to lead the church after a long vacancy. For the first time in history they will be hosting the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu's General Assembly in 2018. They are therefore praying and working to restore or replace the church so they might have a suitable structure to host the Assembly in. This financially poor community has managed to save enough to buy 10 lengths of roof iron so far. This is remarkable considering most members of the community lead a subsistence life and are still working hard to restore their food gardens after the devastating storm.

After the service, I was given a greeting from the congregation to the PCANZ GA16. The Moderator, Right Reverend Richard Dawson, referred it to Rev. Phil King of the Global Mission office, who conferred with Neville Jones from Blenheim who has been living in Vanuatu for the last 2 years helping the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) with the Cyclone Pam repairs. Neville works directly under Global Mission PCANZ and alongside PCV helping communities and churches in Vanuatu.

The PCV was asked to include Waisisi on their Special Projects list and rebuilding the William Gray Memorial Church was approved. Consequently NZ\$9,000 from the Moderator's disaster fund was allocated to the project. The Kaimai Presbytery approved the project, granted Rev. Dr. Jaco Reyneke permission to raise funds, and agreed to administer the funds. Neville, in consultation with the community, costed the rebuilding of the church at NZ\$36,500.

Please pray and consider whether God is calling you to get involved with this special project. Any donations can be transferred to BNZ 02-0410-0114051-000 KAIMAI PRESBYTERY. Please use reference: Donation Vanuatu.

For further information and to arrange a meeting/presentation of the project, contact Jaco on 0273259003 or email: nzreynekes@xtra.co.nz



The congregation inside what remains of the church

The ministry of the William Gray Memorial Church in Waisi continues to witness to the gospel, despite a seriously damaged church



View from the back of the church - the back wall and roof were destroyed

