

Presbytery of Yellowstone gives \$5000

Churches are challenged to help rebuild Vanuatu boarding school after cyclone



Onesua Presbyterian College classroom building

Onesua Presbyterian College, a boarding high school for students of the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, sustained \$150,000 in damages from Cyclone Pam in March 2015. The school, one of 6 secondary schools in the entire nation of Vanuatu, serves about 400 students. In a country where fewer than 10% of all students are able to graduate from high school, this school plays a significant role in the nation's development.

Bruce and Lora Whearty, originally of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Billings, served as Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission co-workers at Onesua College for several years. Teaching English and training teachers to teach, their ministry also helped Yellowstone Presbyterians to connect with the people of Vanuatu. Some memories from the Wheartys' ministry:

- collecting cancelled stamps for mission
- each of our congregations received a colorful worship stole, handmade by local women
- the profuse thanks from students when the presbytery gave \$1000 to repair their classroom roof.

It was a time of learning, sharing, and growing in understanding of Christ's mission in God's beautiful world.

In September 2004, the principal of Onesua Presbyterian College, Jonathan Tarip, traveled to the United States on behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. His first week in the U.S. was spent in Montana, where he shared his joyful spirit with our congregations.

Today, **Jonathan Tarip is the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu Liaison Officer**, responsible for disaster relief funds and the rebuilding efforts following Cyclone Pam. →



Onesua Presbyterian College staff house

Cyclone Pam damaged 90% of buildings in Vanuatu, affecting nearly all of its population of 220,000 people. It decimated crops, where most people live by subsistence agriculture. It toppled the communications and transportation infrastructure of a developing nation. Fewer than 20 people died in the storm, and media attention quickly turned to other stories in other places. Yet the suffering of this small island nation calls out to the hearts of Montana Presbyterians, because we remember Vanuatu.

Our presbytery's Leadership Cabinet voted to send \$5000 from the Social Justice Fund for repairs to Onesua College, and to challenge churches to contribute to this need as well.

Already, First Presbyterian Church of Bozeman has contributed \$2000. Your church may choose to

- receive a special offering
- designate dollars from your mission budget
- hold a fund raising event
- or find some other creative way to make a gift.



Onesua Presbyterian College boys' dormitory

All gifts can be made to the Presbytery of Yellowstone, PO Box 1254, Bozeman, MT 59771, earmarked for Vanuatu Relief. To facilitate transfer of funds, please make your gift by September 15, 2015.