

Howell's e-Mail News

Monday, March, 15, 2004

March 2004 E-Newsletter no. 2 or "Blessed by God and by You"

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings again from northern Mozambique! Our second survey trip was successful with uneventful travel (no new stories of being stuck in the mud for 24 hours, etc.!) Alan left with teammate Rusty Caldwell on Monday March 1 to survey the central, southern, and western portions of the Cabo Delgado province, and Abby and I along with Rusty's wife, Ann, joined them a week later. The trip was especially encouraging in that we saw one area that we thought had great potential as a future location for our team. But no promises yet! Tomorrow we begin as a team processing the information from this second round of surveys, and then after that we will begin the process of deciding where to live and work. And of course, we will send news once the decision is made!

We want to ask again for your prayers over this decision! Every place that our team has surveyed could use mission work – the needs are great everywhere, but ministry would take different forms in different places. And God has blessed our team of six families with a range of gifts and strengths and dreams for ministry, so our desire is to prayerfully discern together where our team will best fit to be a blessing in northern Mozambique.

We also want to ask for your prayers over the process of transitioning to the new place once we have chosen it. We know already that it will not be a quick process, and we are expecting to have a stack of paperwork to fill out and a number of hoops to jump through. But we are praying for God to grease the wheels of bureaucracy once again for us. There still remains much distrust and even paranoia at times in Mozambique, especially in the north, even though the war ended over 10 years ago. For this reason we will have to get permission from the government to live outside of the major cities, and the permission process could take some time. We are told that in some areas we will initially be seen with much suspicion – some officials might not think it normal for Americans to want to live out in the bush. We even heard from an white American missionary of a Mozambican who ran away from him because he thought he might be a vampire! (but only at night, of course). This suspicion of foreigners may necessitate that we rely heavily on development projects to bless the community from the very beginning, even during language learning, because otherwise we might appear at the beginning, suspiciously, that we aren't doing anything.

We also wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate and praise God with you, our friends and family, the completion of our first year overseas! It was one year ago today (March 15) that we said good-bye in Nashville and flew off to start language school in Portugal. In some ways it is hard to believe that so much is already behind us, and we humbly thank God for letting us participate in his Kingdom here in Africa. We also are humbly thankful to you, our friends and family. By God's grace we are who we are and we are where we are because we have been blessed and loved and influenced by you. And for that we are very grateful! In addition, we want to say thank you again for all the money generously given to work fund and start-up fund, for all the emails, the phone calls, the packages, and the prayers. So as we stand here a year beyond the "beginning" – our departure from the States – we acknowledge that the real beginning was before that, with all those who have shaped us into who we are today, and even before that, with a God who actively seeks to redeem his Creation to himself and asks us to join Him in that work. This is why we are in northern Mozambique!

We love you and miss you all!

Grace and Peace,
Rachel, Alan, and Abby Howell

PS – Yes, the team website is down at the moment, but will be up and running again in about a week or so. Until then, you can see our first round of Africa pictures at <http://photos.yahoo.com/africahowells>. (Including pictures of Abby and of some of our adventures from the previous newsletter – even the hand-cranked ferry!)