

# Howell's e-Mail News

Friday, July 9, 2004

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Nampula (once again!). We are so thankful for all the emails and prayers from so many of you during this strange time here for us, and we wanted to give you an update. For those of you who need a recap of the background details, I have pasted our June 17th email at the end of this message.

We all left Montepuez as a team, and most went to Nampula, while we went to Pemba to fly to South Africa for our previously scheduled trip. Our teammates Jeremy and Martha took us to the airport in Pemba, picked up some visitors of their own at the airport, and then drove our truck down to Nampula. Our time in Johannesburg was restful and productive - we enjoyed some peaceful family time, and Abby got her one-year vaccinations, and we re-applied for her social security number at the embassy (the Lisbon embassy lost her paperwork last year). We picked up my (Rachel) parents at the airport there and enjoyed reacquainting them with their granddaughter and showing them around Joburg. They even watched Abby so Alan and I could have a real (without a baby) date! We had to spend a couple extra days in Joburg since we had to change our return tickets to Nampula instead of Pemba.

We rejoined the team in Nampula on June 30th, and we had a week here with my parents before they left yesterday. Their visit was a blessing in many ways. Of course, since we love and miss them so much, it was wonderful to spend time being together, especially for them to be able to spend so much time with Abby, whom they hadn't seen since she was two months old. In addition, they enjoyed experiencing (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) Mozambique for the first time. It took them a few days to get over the disorientation of us driving on the left side of the road, and my mom described a visit to the central market in town as "WalMart in your face!" We took them to visit several of our Mozambican friends here in Nampula in their homes where they tried "African food" for the first time - matapa and xima, the local daily dish. It was also a blessing for them to get an understanding of what life is like here, including a better understanding of our team's current situation. They were able to visit some with our teammates and with other missionaries here, and they have offered to share their insights and perceptions of our team's current situation with anyone interested. It was very hard to take them to the airport and put them on a plane yesterday afternoon and watch them fly away. But we look forward to more visits in the future - by the time they left they were telling people here that they would be back in two years!

Regarding our current situation, we are all still in Nampula, and we have spent much time debriefing together and asking for advice and insight from other missionaries. We continue to learn more about Montepuez town and district. So where does that leave us as a team until then? Currently, we are finding houses to rent here in Nampula until the end of the year.

We will be using this time together in Nampula to accomplish several things. First, we will, beginning here in Nampula and later in Pemba, begin more intentionally and deliberately forming relationships with appropriate government officials and religious leaders, in the form of multiple visits over a long time period. This will hopefully be a blessing when we attempt to re-enter Montepuez in that we will not be quite so unknown.

We will also be using this time to rework the vision and structure of our team. Some of the specifics of the vision that we brought with us, as well as the structure and functions of our team do not fit well with the ministry context of the Cabo Delgado province. One of several examples is that we have always chosen in the past as a team to function as an entire group, making decisions by consensus, not having a designated team leader or president, etc. While having some drawbacks, this way of functioning has worked well for us in the past, and we have grown a lot as a community because of it. However, we are understanding more and more that people here see life in terms of authority structures and don't know any different, and so for us to not have a designated team leader or spokesperson is just plain weird and only adds to the suspicion that we must be up to no good. So, in a sense, we are starting over. We have a passion to see God's Kingdom grow here and a desire to be a part of that work, and so we are currently praying and will soon begin vision (re-) casting together to discern how what we know and have recently learned about the context of northern Mozambique can mesh with who we are as a team (our history, our size, our different gifts and strengths). Sam Shewmaker, one of our team

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mentors, will be visiting us for a week at the end of July, and we are looking forward to filling him in on more details of our situation and including him in our current conversations.

As we close, specific prayer requests:

- Please join us in praying for "holy creativity" as we seek to discern how to best fit our team into this context of northern Mozambique.
- Please pray for encouragement. We have lived in transition (not putting down roots) for so long, but at least with momentum and direction for Africa, for Mozambique, for Montepuez.
- Please continue to pray that our houses in Montepuez will not be vandalized.

We love and miss you all!

Grace and peace,  
Alan and Rachel and Abby