

Howell's e-Mail News

Thursday, December 30, 2004

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings and happy holidays from sunny, rainy, northern Mozambique! We have passed the one-year mark and our second Christmas since we arrived in Mozambique, and it is hard to believe that the time has gone by so fast!

We continue to live in Nampula and work towards returning to Montepuez town in the Cabo Delgado province, and at the moment, only us and our teammates the Westerholm's remain together in Nampula (since the Smith's and Roland's are out of the country having babies!). We want to give a quick update and elaborate on the matters we are asking you to pray for, and then share a little humor from our first year of living in Mozambique!

We continue to ask for your intercession for the following matters:

- Please pray that peace will continue in Mozambique as some elected officials are changing jobs (The election results were announced three weeks after the election, and the majority party remains in power. So far there have been no election-related problems that we have heard of.)
- Please pray that we may have our meeting with the governor of Cabo Delgado province soon. This was applied for and then granted months ago, but we were never notified. We feel anxious that if we do not get to meet with the current governor soon before his transfer to a new position down in Maputo, that a new governor will not know us or our situation and not be in a hurry to help us, adding months onto our return. It is our understanding that the governor's approval is all we lack to return to live and work in Montepuez.
- Please pray for wisdom to know best how to use our time here in Nampula. We continue to participate in a few ministries here in Nampula and perform several administrative roles for our team. However, language learning has been frustrating lately— we are having a hard time getting a language teacher to even show up. And “immersion” language learning is not possible when you are living in a place where that language is not spoken.
- Please pray for encouragement and perseverance for us. We know we are in God's hands, but lately we have grown more discouraged as we do not know what the future may hold or when we will know what it holds; please pray that we will trust God and have faith instead of spending too much time guessing what government officials might do and when they might do it. Also, while we know that what God desires of us daily is to seek first his Kingdom wherever we might be, we struggle with a need to feel “productive,” while not living in the place that we plan to live and work long-term.
- Please pray for the Kingdom of God to be proclaimed among and to take root in the hearts of the Makua-Metto people!

Thank you for your prayers, we know God hears and acts on them. Knowing that our friends and families are joining us in prayer means a lot to us.

And now we wanted to share some of the funnier points we have gathered after our first year of living in Mozambique. We have compiled a list, just in case you were wondering...

“You might be a (new) missionary (in Mozambique) if...”

- You know that it is the responsibility of the customer (not the merchant) to have correct change
- The largest bill of currency you have in your wallet (not to mention the largest available in the country) is worth about four US Dollars, and no one has change for that in the market
- You have a hard time distinguishing between the tan line from your sandals and the dirt on your feet
- You know from experience that roosters do NOT just crow at sunrise
- You put on deodorant and your spouse says, “Oh, you smell good!”
- Your clothes are all worn out and falling apart from hand washing

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- You've discovered that cloth diapering and driving on the left are not nearly as difficult as you thought they would be,
- But you still treat disposable diapers like they are precious resources!
- You need four-wheel drive just to get around town, let alone travel into the bush
- Your guard took in a stray goat while you were out of town
- The nicest shirt that your language teacher, David, owns is an Ace Hardware employee shirt with the name "JILL" monogrammed on it
- Municipal workers filled in the potholes on your street (that resembled the Grand Canyon) very carefully with dirt about three days before the rainy season began, after which the Grand Canyon promptly returned
- You get really excited to find mustard or peanut butter for sale in the store,
- And you get even more excited to get a call from your mom
- You're not surprised when the electricity goes out (again), you just hope your baby doesn't wake up since the fan is now off
- Your seventeen month-old daughter can count to five (most of the time) in three languages
- You're learning how to really cook from scratch, including making your own sour cream and mayonnaise
- You kill mosquitoes with a vengeance, thinking, "that one could bite my baby!"
- During the past year you have co-habited with geckos, multiple bug species, mice and bats (but thankfully no snakes!)
- You aren't the least bit surprised to wait two hours for your meal in a restaurant
- Coke is cheaper (and sometimes safer) than ordering water in a restaurant
- Vendors come to your back door selling fresh ripe pineapples and mangoes everyday
- You can tell that mango season has arrived by the size of the flies in town
- You learned the hard way NEVER to assume that your African houseguests know how to use a western toilet!

We hope you all have a peaceful holiday season, with hope for continuing to live for God's kingdom in 2005! May our hearts be transformed more to be like His.

Grace and peace,
Rachel, Alan, and Abby Howell