

Howell's e-Mail News

July 22, 2005

Dear Friends and Family,

We are humbled and excited to share that after over a year of praying and waiting, we have finally recieved official approval from the provincial government of Cabo Delgado to live and work in Montepuez. Alan, Jeremy, and Aaron went to Pemba on Wednesday, and on Thursday were able to speak briefly to the new governor himself and meet again with his chief of staff who showed them the signed documents, and a little later, gave them our own official copy. So, over the next few weeks we will begin the process of saying our good-byes here in Nampula and making our way back up to Montepuez (these next few weeks are going to be very busy!). We are grateful for all the ways God has provided for us, despite circumstances so amazingly contrary to what we had planned or expected. We are humbled to have been reminded that our job is to trust Him and keep walking, even when we cannot see what is next.

And we are grateful to say that while sometimes confusing, this time has not been without benefit. We have built valuable friendships and invested in relationships and many hours of teaching with a small group of churches here in Nampula, relationships that we know will continue into the future. We have continued with language learning, despite the different dialects from the different provinces, and also learned a great deal about how not to learn an African language! Our strange circumstances during this time have also provided the opportunity to appropriately develop a number of good relationships with government officials through the many trips to Pemba (around 25 or so as a team), relationships that we know will be invaluable in our being able to continue working in Cabo Delgado for many years.

This last month or so has been busy as we have gotten back into language learning and our relationships with the Embaixada churches. Our time with Luis, our language teacher, has been intense and invaluable to get a good, hard look at Makua grammar structures in this area before we return to Cabo Delgado and more self-directed immersion learning. The timing was also good, spending this time on grammar structures after already having a good start with Makua-Metto on our own to make us familiar with the language. In addition, the conference with the Embaixada churches went very well, with Alan and Aaron each teaching different sections of the whole Biblical narrative, to give the big picture of the story of God working throughout history. Alan and I also taught from two different passages about bringing marriage relationships under the rule of God's Kingdom, focusing a lot on honor and respect, as fear and manipulation are so common in marriages here. We were very surprised at the frankness and honesty with which people shared ideas and experiences from their marriages. And then at the end Alan and Aaron also taught on church leadership and

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finances. It has been a blessing to see God working through our relationship with these churches as we have been with them for over a year now. Several of the Embaixada church leaders have said they are convinced that the reason God has kept us in Nampula for this long was to work with them!

My pregnancy is going smoothly, and we are looking forward to having this baby close to family during our furlough in the fall. Abby, who will be two years old next week, enjoys talking to the baby, especially when she comes and jumps on our bed in the mornings. And no, we don't know if it is a boy or a girl, though Abby continues to insist that it is a baby girl! Abby is great, and has done very well playing with Carlinda, our Mozambican friend who takes care of her during our language class. In addition to the adventures of life in Africa, our life includes the daily adventures of learning to parent a two-year old for the first time!

Please pray for these specific requests:

- for health for me and baby in pregnancy, and for a safe birth in the States
- the logistics of moving from Nampula to Montepuez
- for grace, wisdom, and courage as we "start over" in Montepuez
- for the Makua-Metto people and the Montepuez area to come to know and have life in God's Kingdom
- for discernment, patience, and long-term vision for our part in that work

We will have new pictures up on the website in a few days. We will let you know when they are up so you can see photos of the Embaixada church conference, our language class, and Abby playing with Carlinda (Including Alan's favorite picture showing the short stature of an average Makua person).

We love and miss you all!

Grace and Peace,
Rachel, Alan, and Abby