

# Howell's – eMail News

Monday, March 10, 2008

Dear Friends and Family,

Hello again from Mozambique! The last two months have been very full and busy, as we have received teammates back from absences and have begun preparing for furlough on top of our usual activities. The rains have continued, though we haven't been getting quite as soaked since March started, and the heat has begun to ease up as well.

## **mocuba conference**

Alan spent most of his free time in the first 2 weeks of January preparing a resource booklet for a national conference of church leaders down in Mocuba, farther south in Mozambique. The trip down itself was no simple thing; it took two full days of driving to get there, with 5 people in the cab and 9 people crammed in the bed of the truck. The two-day conference was focused on how Churches of Christ in Mozambique could send out their own missionaries to more unreached parts of the country (like where we are working). Overall there were just under 600 people at the conference, and we felt really good about our participation. New relationships were formed and dreams were shared for a Mozambican-run missionary training center within country. It was exciting to see existing churches taking initiative and shaping a vision for reaching their own country with the news of God's kingdom.

## **teammates return with new babies**

We have been excited to receive two team families back with new babies! As Alan was gone to Mocuba, our teammates Aaron, Mika, and Josiah Roland returned from South Africa with new baby Elijah, and then in mid-February Jeremy, Martha, Luke, and Andrew Smith returned from the States with new baby Joshua. It has been fun getting to meet and know these two new babies; Abby and Ellie especially are enjoying touching, holding and cooing at Baby Elijah and Baby Joshua.

## **rioting in Maputo**

Many of you already heard about the rioting way down in the capital city of Maputo in early February. Due to the rising cost of fuel, the price to ride a chapa ("shapa" - minibuses within the city) in Maputo had gone up, and riots broke out in protest of the price increase (the equivalent of ten cents). Transportation in the capital came to a standstill as protesting crowds put up barricades, burned tires in the streets, and threw rocks at cars. Aaron Roland's parents, who were wrapping up a trip to come visit their new grandson, were stranded in the Maputo airport overnight because the crew couldn't get to the airport to fly the plane. The crisis was mostly resolved the next day as the government promised to help with the cost of fuel, and the prices were lowered back to what they were. We are so far removed from the capital way down south that, aside from hearing about it on the radio, the rioting did not really affect us here in Montepuez at all, though we do wonder how a country as poor as Mozambique will be able to subsidize fuel costs.

## **heavy rains, bridges gone, getting stuck in the mud and sunburned**

The rains have been steady and plentiful this year, and the folks who planted the earliest are already beginning to harvest some fresh corn. However, since it has been a very wet year, many people's houses (mud brick covered with a roof of loose grass thatch) have fallen down, and the mosquitoes have also been worse than other years, which means that more people are suffering with malaria. Many roads and bridges have also been torn up or washed away beyond recognition, and we have had a lot of challenges getting to the villages we usually spend time in (remember that when we say roads we mean dirt, not asphalt!). Because of our recent travel difficulties, one weekend in February Alan made plans to spend the whole weekend with both the churches in Khambiri and Nekwaya, combining trips instead of making separate visits. The heavy rains during that weekend, however, caused one of the bridges he used to get there to be washed away so that he couldn't return home the way he went, which meant he was stranded out in the bush for an extra night with no way to contact us so we would know he was alright! Alan said there was more mud and water on that trip than he has ever seen in that area, and the truck got stuck in the mud many times. They were still trying to make their way home Monday morning via a detour when the truck got stuck in the mud one final time; Alan and those with him decided to leave our friend Mario with the truck out in the bush and come back in a few days, praying that the next two days would not bring rain! This decision meant that Alan ended up walking about six hours in the sun that day (beautiful clear weather!), both to a spot where his cell phone would work and where our teammate Chad could go pick him up. He ended up with a bad sunburn (we won't go anywhere without sunscreen in the car again!), but was glad to be home, and our friend Mario (who has a driver's license) ended up being able to get the truck out of the mud and back to Montepuez in one piece the next day.

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## Chiure district visits

Alan has continued to work with the small group of leaders in the Chiure district every other Saturday (those four churches are all along the paved highway to Nampula!). Alan has been teaching through some ministry training materials for about 15 or so church leaders. It has been exciting to see their vision for what being a church is all about expand as we learn and share together. For the past two visits, the girls and I have gone along, and Alan has dropped us off in Milamba (the first village with a church) to spend time in fellowship and teaching with the women there. It has been a good experience, and I have wondered why I didn't try it before!

## Wrapping up for furlough

Saying goodbye is very important in Makua culture, so we have tried to make sure we have made all the proper visits so that we don't offend anyone, lest we get scolded for not properly taking our leave, even though we will only be gone a few months! This is tricky, since we are involved in several different communities. As a summary, since our last furlough, our family has been directly involved in the planting of three churches (Chipembe 2006, Khambiri 2007, and Nkororo 2008) and the revival of one church that had died (Nekwaya 2006/07). We have also taught in one village, Nkunama, where a church has yet to emerge (the believers walk to Chipembe to worship together), and one church in existence before our arrival died last year (Nakuka). Our family generally works north while other team families work in villages in other directions, and our team coordinates efforts with the churches in town and in other areas of the province of Cabo Delgado.

Two Sundays ago was a really neat day with a lot of people we know all gathered in one place; the group in the village of Nkororo that has been studying with Alan had decided to become a church, and they had chosen that day for baptisms. However, due to a variety of circumstances, believers from Chipembe, Nkunama, Nekwaya, Khambiri, Chiure, and Alto Molocue were all there as well, blessing and encouraging the new little church. It was a really neat experience – a glimpse of the kind of loving community we think followers of Jesus can have here. Ten believers from Chipembe, Nkunama, and Omeringue had walked two hours to get to Nkororo the day before so they could spend the night there and teach them new songs. The believers from Chipembe organized and led everything that Sunday, and fifteen people from Nkororo were baptized, along with one young man who worships in Chipembe.

On a side note, we subsidize the cost of Bibles (we pay about \$4 and ask them to contribute \$2), but we also give a free Bible to anyone who memorizes all the books of the Bible (this is significant in that, due to the low level of education, many people don't think they can memorize anything written, so they are always extremely excited and empowered when they realize that they can do it). The young man from Chipembe baptized that day wowed us all as he stood up in front of everyone and recited perfectly all the books of the Bible including the summaries that we had written explaining the different sections (books of history, etc)!

We know we will miss our Mozambican friends while we are gone, and we look forward to picking back up where we left off with them when we return. At the same time, though, we are also VERY excited to see our families and friends in the States! Aside from the fellowship of reconnecting relationships, which is always at the top of the list, we are also looking forward to worshipping in English, leaving granddaughters with grandparents so we can have dates, high-speed internet, Chili's restaurant, and not opening the door to a small crowd of people every day!

## please pray

As we wrap up, we ask that you pray for the following things:

- For these young churches to continue to grow in love for God and for each other: **Chipembe, Nekwaya, Khambiri, and Nkororo**
- For unity within our team since we have been apart lately
- For our girls to sleep VERY WELL on our flights: **March 18/19!**

See you soon!

In Christ,  
Rachel, Alan, Abby, and Ellie Howell