

# Howell's – eMail News

Wednesday – May 14, 2008

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from the United States this time! We are writing from Memphis, Tennessee, and for all of you we have not seen, it is nice to be on this side of the pond with you!

## travel trials

Our travels didn't get off to a good start, or at least not a timely start! Every single flight we took to get from Pemba, Mozambique to Dallas, Texas left between one and four hours late, which resulted in a forced 2-night stay in New York City (at the expense of South African Airways, thankfully). This would have been more frustrating except that we had built in two days at the beginning of our schedule just for recovering from jet lag so we wouldn't get sick, so basically we just got over our jet lag in New York instead of Dallas. We considered for about half a second leaving the hotel to do some sight-seeing; the problem was that we only packed warm-weather clothes and it was about 33 degrees in New York – we even saw some old, gray snow still sitting on the tarmac at the airport! Needless to say we were a little road-weary (or is it air-weary?) when we FINALLY got to Dallas.

We took a week of our personal vacation for the year that first week, which was nice and restful. My parents watched the girls and sent us off to a hotel for a few nights for some kid-free relaxation, and then a couple days later we took the girls to San Antonio to go to the zoo, the River Walk, and most of all, Sea World, which they enjoyed. A couple days after that we started making our way to Tennessee, stopping for a few days with Alan's family in Memphis before heading on to Nashville, where we spent a month with the Donelson church, our sponsoring church family.

## furlough fun

Missionaries live unusual lives, and furlough is no exception! Basically, when we are in Nashville, our job is to spend as much time with Donelson folks as we can, reconnecting relationships with those who have sent us, and sharing about the work in Mozambique so that members at Donelson feel connected to the work they support. So for the four weeks we were in Nashville, we averaged lunch with Donelson people about 5 days out of the week, and dinner about 6 days out of the week, with sharing in Sunday school classes and Sunday night home churches and missions committee meetings on top of that, with visits to the dentist and the eye doctor and the financial planner squeezed in as well! We were very blessed by our time in Nashville; we feel very much like we are at home with family when we are with Donelson, and it is a joy to pick up right where we left off in our relationships there, even though it had been 2 and a half years since we were with them.

It was a pretty busy schedule to keep for a whole month, though, and by the end of the four weeks we were pretty tired! On 5 May we left Nashville for Memphis to be with Alan's family; we have enjoyed the change of pace and have been catching our breath and catching up on emails and finances, etc. This past weekend we took a quick trip to Searcy, Arkansas for Alan's brother Aaron's graduation from Harding University, and this coming weekend Aaron Howell will marry Erin Gray here in Memphis (yes, that's right, it's Aaron and Erin!). We are excited for Aaron and Erin, and we are glad we could arrange our furlough to be here for the wedding – Abby and Ellie are especially excited since they are flower girls in the wedding and get to wear pretty dresses! While we are in Memphis we are also hoping to take the girls to the zoo and catch a baseball game, and on Memorial Day we will head down to Florence, Alabama to spend more time with Alan's family there.

On 2 June the girls and I will head on to Dallas, and Alan will stay behind for 2 weeks to take his last class at Harding Grad School here in Memphis. After this all that remains are his 2 practicums, and then he will be finished with his M. Div., which will be very exciting! While Alan is still in Memphis my mom and I will take the girls to Virginia Beach to see my Granny, which we are really looking forward to. After his class Alan will join us in Dallas for our time with my family, which will include a trip to Colorado to see my brother and sister-in-law.

Monday we will be officially halfway done with furlough, and saying that makes it feel like it is going by fast! Since we are away for such long stretches at a time, it is a blessing to us to reconnect on furlough with so many people we love. At the same time, furlough can be a weird experience (not a bad kind of weird) – furlough is part of our job as missionaries but so different from our regular activities in Mozambique. Alan and I end up processing our emotional reactions together: reverse culture shock coming back to the States, wondering how we will adjust back to life in Mozambique in a few months (Will it be easy? Will it be hard?), and the strange joy of being together with people here we love while at the same time really missing our life and friends in Mozambique (more than on our first furlough).

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While not always easy to articulate, we generally regard that last one as a very good thing that is a gift of God's grace: that even though life there isn't always easy, Mozambique is becoming more a part of us, and we miss it when we are not there (just like we miss you when we are not here).

The girls have generally done well, and though we try to anticipate their needs and their possible reactions to all the travel and transitions, they still surprise us sometimes. Ellie, still being so young at 2 years old, has been pretty flexible, though still with normal 2-year old behavior! (whining when tired, etc. =) ) Abby, though, surprised us by asking to go home to Mozambique several times the first few weeks – even while watching whales leap through the air at Sea World! We realize, though, that we shouldn't be surprised; even though Abby enjoys her grandparents and aunts and uncles and Bible class and French fries and ice cream and playgrounds so much, Mozambique is still home for her – more so even than for us if you count the portion of her life that she has lived there. We want to do a good job helping our girls adjust through the years to all the transitions we put them through; we know we are in God's hands and that He knows even better than we do what our girls need and how to care for them.

## meanwhile in mozambique...

Our teammates the Smiths, Rolands, and Westerholms are still plugging away in Mozambique, and they have done a great job sending us emails to keep us updated on what is going on in our area: our Mozambican friends and the young churches and Bible studies and seminars. We treasure every email they write; it lessens the disconnect we feel when we are so far away, especially since none of our Mozambican friends can do email! We were very sad to hear of two friends of ours who have died since we left for furlough: a woman named Nantholo from the church in Chipembe and a man named Cassimiro from the church in Nekhwaya. We have been to many funerals in Mozambique, but these two believers were by far closer to us than any others we have known, so we are sad to lose them and that we were not there to participate with the communities in the funerals. Our teammates also told us that four guards were killed at night in another neighborhood in Montepuez in April; violent crime is pretty unusual there and this is only a recent development – please pray for God's protection, for his kingdom to come in Montepuez, and for wisdom for our team to make wise choices.

## new pictures on the website

Due to our slow internet connection in Mozambique, we had not posted pictures on our team website since last August, so we are long overdue. We sent a whole batch of pictures to our website administrator, and they are up and ready for viewing; they cover September through March, and we hope you enjoy them! Speaking of internet and email, we sent our last newsletter in early March, and we had more bounce back to us than ever before (almost all were hotmail or Comcast addresses); the error message said that the reason "may be related to spam-like content." Since we send out our newsletter to such a long list of people from a location in Africa, our messages may be being flagged as spam; please be sure to add us to your email address book. So for those of you who did not receive our newsletter in early March, please feel free to read it on our website! We may look into choosing a different format for our newsletters (maybe a blog?); we will keep you updated on that.

## since you asked...

Many of you that we have already spent time with have asked "What else can we do to help?" So we wanted to share in our newsletter the different ministry opportunities/ projects that we are looking at in the next few years:

- **Development project.** Over the past year or so Alan has had a vision for starting a not-for-profit business in Montepuez. We have had some experience with raising our own chickens and there is a market in our area for fresh eggs and buying quality chickens for consumption. With about \$1300 we could purchase a plot of land in our town, build some chicken pens as well as purchase the chicks and starter feed. We have a good relationship with the handicapped association and I would like to employ a few of them as guards and train a manager to run the day-to-day operations of the business. This business should be able to support 3-5 employees and the profits could be used to do a number of good things in our area. From buying corn to give to the leprosy association, supporting orphans, to starting a similar venture in a different area in the future. Our team sees this as a good way to show that we want to be a blessing to our community.
- **Hearing the word of God: MP3 players and speakers.** The lack of literacy is a big problem for the churches in our area – both in Portuguese and Makua. A missionary friend of ours who serves among a different people group has had a lot of success using recordings of the biblical texts and having people listen in small groups. He has let people borrow MP3 players and speakers and when the rechargeable batteries run out – they bring it back and can add additional recordings. This way of sharing the word of God has been really effective so far

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– so, we'd like to try that among the Makua-Metto as well. When we return to Mozambique, we would like to take back 10-15 MP3 players and portable speakers (We would probably purchase these in Dallas – and the cost estimates we have so far are about \$70-100 per unit).

- **Mozambican churches sending their own missionaries** – One of the most exciting things happening among the churches in Mozambique is that at a national level the Churches of Christ are catching a vision for sending their own missionaries into unreached areas of Mozambique. Alan was present at a meeting a few months ago where they laid out their time table and came up with a plan for supporting these missionaries. So, far they have raised over \$1000 USD. They want to prepare these missionaries well for this cross-cultural work and want to spend about 9 months of training before sending them out. With about \$4-6,000 we could help them purchase some land and contribute towards the building of a storage room (to hold the food that the Mozambican churches will be sending to support these missionaries while training), a meeting area for the students, and set-up costs for the missionary training. We are excited about the possibility of helping in this way because this help would allow all the contributions that the Mozambican churches are making to go towards directly supporting the sending of their missionaries.
- **Giving in the time of hunger.** Though some years are worse than others, December through March are difficult months for many people in Mozambique when there is often not enough food (the harvest starts in late March). This coincides with the rainy season, which means more mosquitoes and more people suffering with malaria. We help out many people who come to us for money to buy food or medicine or mosquito nets, but during those four months we often run out of money. Extra funds for hunger relief during December through March would bless many people.
- **Schooling our kids.** This year in the fall our teammate Martha will begin teaching our two oldest kids, Luke and Abby, (with me as backup and assistant!), but we hope to have teachers come over from the States beginning in fall 2009. This will be the beginning of the adventure of schooling the children on our team, and we are looking for individuals and/or churches to partner with us financially in this effort, both one-time and long-term, since there are no funds for this in our personal salary or our work fund. In the beginning this would involve some initial one-time funds (curriculum purchase, bookshelves, desks), but would expand to more regular needs (renting a school house as we teach more kids, supplies, more curriculum). In addition, don't forget – we are looking for teachers! Many who do this will fundraise to come over and teach missionary kids for a one-year commitment, and we have made a few initial contacts, but please tell anyone you think might be interested; we would be happy to start lining up teachers for the next several years!

If you are interested in helping with any of the needs above, please email us and let us know; the different projects have different time frames, etc.

## **please pray**

As we wrap up here, we ask that you pray for

- For the Kingdom of God to come among the Makua-Metto
- Furlough travels: safety and peace through transitions
- For unity and health on our team

May God bless you as you serve Him,

Love,

Rachel, Alan, Abby, and Ellie Howell