

Howell's e-Mail News

Tuesday, January 6, 2004

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Nampula, Mozambique! We have been in the country for nearly three weeks, and already Lisbon seems like a long time ago! God has blessed our team's transition here in many ways, though we are quickly learning how things work differently here than in the States or in Portugal. We wanted to send an update on our transition to Africa, share what we have been up to and what is coming up soon, as well as give you a taste of what it is like here.

We left Lisbon on Friday, December 12th and started our journey from Lisbon to Nampula via London, Johannesburg and Maputo (the capital of Mozambique). We were blessed with success and safety in travel (Abby slept better on the flights than we did), though it took the luggage (of our whole team) a few extra days to join us here in northern Mozambique. In spite of the delays we are excited to share that every single piece of our team's luggage arrived intact, including the bags we shipped as cargo, and we were not once charged for overweight or extra bags!

Everyone has been handling the move well so far; this has been a very peaceful transition between continents. Even though we have been busy getting settled and started on various things, life moves more slowly here and we are able to stay well rested, which is a blessing. We are currently staying in the house of missionaries who are on furlough in the States, and we are sharing the house with the Holtons. Their son Asher really enjoys seeing Abby all the time, and he loves to give her hugs and kisses and she enjoys his attention. The rest of the team is staying in SIL (Wycliffe) guesthouses just down the road – less than a five minute walk away. A number of cashew and mango trees shade the property, which is just outside of town, so in addition to all those “camping sounds”, we constantly hear ripe mangoes falling and crashing into the roof as well as the neighbor's rooster crowing throughout the day. The local insect population has also required some adjustment on our part,

since the bugs don't seem to understand that we prefer that they stay outside of the house. But for that reason we really don't mind the five or six geckos that climb our kitchen or bedroom walls everyday since they eat bugs...

We have thoroughly enjoyed the blessing of being able to communicate in Portuguese this time around in Mozambique! It certainly makes the transition to a foreign place and culture easier when we already speak the national language. Many of the church leaders that we visited with two years ago have received us warmly again and commented on how they enjoy being able to speak directly to us now. It is nice to have Portugal in the rearview mirror and moving on to life here in Mozambique; learning Portuguese was an important objective and by God's grace we can now speak relatively well. Thank you for all your encouragement and support through that time of learning, and we will appreciate your prayers for language after we locate further north as a team and begin using our Portuguese to learn a Makua dialect (which we know will be a much longer and more difficult process!)

And yes, it is hot in northern Mozambique! Since we are in the southern hemisphere we arrived in the middle of their “summer” as well as the beginning of the rainy season. Most every afternoon has brought rain, but we have been pleasantly surprised that neither the heat nor the humidity have been unbearable. As we walk down the road we can feel that we are at a latitude closer to the sun, though the temperature in the shade is not bad. The house we are staying at is actually the hottest place to be due to poor ventilation, but we are very comfortable at night – we even used the sheet after we bought an oscillating fan! During the day, though, the thermometer in the kitchen reads about 80 degrees by eight in the morning, and just under 100 in the afternoons. The heat did make it difficult to really believe that we had Christmas and New Year's, though we tried our hardest to get into a holiday spirit as we celebrated with our teammates and others in the missionary community in

Nampula. Another interesting difference here is that northern Mozambique stretches so far east that it should technically be in the next time zone, but it isn't... so the sun comes in and our room is bright with daylight before five in the morning, and it is dark by six pm or so! (By the way, we are eight hours ahead of Central time in the US).

Much of our time has been spent getting settled into our temporary housing here in Nampula, visiting multiple government offices, arranging and turning in government paperwork to

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get started on our residency/work permits (called DIRE's), investigating vehicle options, trying to open bank accounts, planning our different survey trips to the northern provinces (to discern the best location for our team to live), making contacts for those survey trips... Some things have happened quite quickly, while others are taking more time - life definitely moves slower in Africa! We are also sharing as a team the Land Rover that belongs to the missionary whose house we are living in, so we have had to be creative as we share one vehicle among a community of twelve and try to accomplish all these tasks!

We have also been meeting with local Mozambican church leaders, missionaries and others to share our vision and to learn their perspective on what is happening in northern Mozambique. These encounters have been very helpful for finalizing plans for our survey trips, which will begin soon. Overall we have had a warm welcome from everyone: the folks with Good News For Africa (the organization who has served as our invitation into the country), the rest of the missionary community in Nampula, and the churches in Nampula. We have been helped by so many people since we've been here. God has provided men and women of peace at every step of the way.

The next few months will find us basing out of Nampula as we continue to complete the processes of residency/work permits, purchase vehicles, and survey six different locations in northern Mozambique. During and after these surveys we will meet back in Nampula to compile information and compare experiences in order to discern the best location to move to as a team. Please pray that we will have a "Joshua and Caleb" experience. Following this, we will begin the process of buying land, after which we will begin construction on homes and begin wading into the experience of learning the local dialect.

Abby continues to grow and change, and we are enjoying watching her change and learn before our eyes. She smiles and laughs a lot, and has started jabbering out loud lately. New Year's Day was hot enough that we went to a hotel outside of town that has a swimming pool, and Abby went swimming for the first time! She seemed to like being in the pool, even though I think we got a little sunscreen in her eyes. She seems to have adjusted to Africa pretty well so far, though she doesn't like taking her malaria medicine every week (we mix it in some juice, but it is still very bitter). We realized that we never thought much about malaria on our previous trips to Africa, but having a baby here has caused us to think and pray much more about such things...

As we wrap up, we would ask that you pray for:

- Abby (and Asher and Luke) that they would continue to grow and be healthy
- Our six survey trips: safety, health, success in travel, a "Joshua and Caleb" spirit
- That we continue to grow in our ability to communicate in Portuguese
- Wisdom and discernment in "big" decisions (vehicle purchase, where to live)

Grace and Peace,
Alan, Rachel, and Abby