

Westerholm's e-Mail News

Thursday, January 15, 2004

Family and Friends,

It is amazing that our first month in Mozambique has already come and gone! It feels as if we are constantly learning and becoming more adjusted to life here. So much has happened in the past month, and yet so much has not happened! Life here is much slower and things take much more time than we are accustomed to in the western world. A good example is the process of opening our bank account. This included waiting several days for the bank to photocopy enough applications for our entire team, receiving the right forms, getting specific instructions about how to complete them, individually completing five pages of forms (front and back), submitting the forms, presenting our passports, and finally waiting a week and a half for the bank to process our applications. In the end, what would have taken an hour in the USA required about two weeks in Mozambique. On the other hand, when we applied for our work visa, one of the missionaries here in Nampula knew someone who worked in the government office and introduced us to them. The rest of the process ran very smoothly and we already have our work visas! Praise God!

Another item that has taken a lot of time has been the process of buying a vehicle. After pricing all the options and negotiating the price, we have started the process of purchasing a Toyota Hilux pickup truck. Unfortunately, last January the Mozambique government introduced a car tax that raised the price of this vehicle by over \$12,000! The Lord has always provided us with the exact amount of money that we have needed, and this is no exception. We have exactly enough money to purchase the vehicle. Now we are only waiting on the wire transfer to go through, which like other things in Africa, could take awhile.

One of the most memorable parts of the past month was a three day trip we took with Nick Dexter, who works for World Vision. Nick is a Christian and has been working with a food security project in some rural areas near the coast. Our trip was a tremendous blessing because we were able to visit a lot of "off the beaten path" places which we would have had a difficult time finding on our own. The majority of the time we distributed a breed of cassava plants that were more resistant to a mold that is destroying many farmers' crops. We spent two days in the districts of Mossuril and Matibane riding on very bumpy dirt roads. Both districts had very few, if any churches. Most people seemed to be nominally Muslim, but Nick's impression is that they are open to the Gospel. It was exciting to see an area with many opportunities, as it reaffirmed that our presence here is needed and that there is much work to be done in Mozambique.

In addition to getting settled, we have been using much of this first month to begin building relationships with leaders in the churches here. Two weeks ago we met with pastors from six churches here in Nampula and shared our vision, asking for their wisdom and counsel. It was a really positive meeting and they were all encouraging. This weekend we are having a conference with leaders in the Churches of Christ here in Northern Mozambique. This will be an important meeting because much of African missions is about building relationships. In the coming weeks we will continue to focus on establishing contacts with missionaries, church leaders, and NGO (Non-Government Organization) workers in order to learn more about the needs of this region.

Everyday I have a new experience or learn something that impacts me in a profound way. It would be impossible to share all these experiences, so I will give you condensed list: celebrating Christmas in 100 degree weather, being asked to pay for roofs on five church buildings, preaching for the first time in Portuguese, watching a road in town become gradually smaller and less safe after each rain, having a successful short conversation in Makua, looking for expiration dates on every item in the grocery store, hearing children in church sing an upbeat song with the lyrics "Ananias died because he lied to the Lord," going to the health center to be tested for malaria (I was malaria free), daily being called *patra-o* (patron/boss) when people ask for money, seeing the sunrise at 3:30 AM over the Indian Ocean, waiting two or more hours for food to be prepared at the local restaurants, sitting through a three hour church service on a small clay bench, discussing diarrhea as a regular topic of conversation, sharing the front seat of a twelve passenger taxi van as we waited twenty minutes for one more person to ride the taxi (18 people were not enough to warrant us leaving, we needed 19 in the van!), learning that to call someone a "Makua" is an insult, and finding a snake under my sandals outside the house (I don't

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know if it was poisonous, but the snake is now dead). All these experiences are just a taste of daily life here. It is a smorgasbord of the funny, strange, exotic, heartbreaking, and joyful flavor of Mozambique. May God bless you this month as you begin the New Year!

In Jesus,
Chad and Amy Westerholm

Please pray this month:

- • For the meeting with regional church leaders this weekend.
- • That all our wire transfers will be received.
- • That we will stay in good health.
- • That our team will be unified.
- • That our marriage will stay strong.