

Westerholm's e-Mail News

Monday, March 1, 2004

The past month has been very eventful for Amy and I and our team. First, after a short stay in Nampula following our survey of the coast, I was able to spend ten days in the province of Niassa surveying the Makua, while Amy stayed in Nampula getting caught up on business. If you like the new newsletter format, thank Amy! It is one of the many projects that she completed while I was away. My trip, with Jeremy, was a very beneficial trip. In Niassa we visited 104 villages and towns, 90 of which did not have a protestant or evangelical church. Of the pastors and church leaders we interviewed we found that about half of these churches were either newly planted or struggling. Niassa is the least densely populated province in Mozambique, so there is quite a bit of wildlife. We were excited to see lots of monkeys and warthogs, but were unable to see any elephants. Although we enjoyed seeing the wildlife, the majority of people at this time of the year live in their fields to protect their crops from being eaten by the animals. If a herd of elephants comes into a village's fields, the people may starve to death if too much of their harvest is eaten. Most of our trip was spent among two dialects of the Makua: the Shirima and the Meeto, both having a great need for mission work. We were accompanied on our trip by a preacher, Rosario, who is an influential church leader in Niassa. It was good to travel with him, hear his thoughts and develop a vision with him for reaching this area.

After we returned, our entire team shared about the different areas they had surveyed. One group had traveled several hours south found an area where there were many churches, while another group traveled several hours north and found a large area where there were no churches at all. Having completed all our survey work for the Makua we were able to see on a large scale the different needs of each province. After a time of prayer and fasting we met to discuss where in Northern Mozambique we would choose to locate. It was exciting to see how God gave everyone the same conviction: **the Makua Meeto north of Montepuez in Cabo Delgado**. We are praising God for the unity and peace He provided as our team made this decision.

Next month we will be traveling between Nampula and Montepuez preparing for our move to the Montepuez area. We will be focusing on developing relationships with leaders in the government and villages in Montepuez, locating temporary housing in the Montepuez area, locating and purchasing land for constructing our homes and continuing to build our relationships with the two missionary families living near Montepuez who are working on the translation of the Makua Meeto Bible.

We want to thank you all for your prayers and support! We have been blessed this month to reflect on God's incredible faithfulness as we celebrated the completion of our first year on the mission field. This celebration coupled with the additional blessing of after years of planning and preparation deciding as a team where we are going to move and work has been so exciting! Thanks for your prayers, love and support! God bless you!

Who are the Makua Meeto? The literal translation of "Meeto" is "legs". The Makua Meeto are known for walking long distances on small footpaths across the countryside. The Makua Meeto speak a dialect of Makua that is different from the Makua spoken here in Nampula. The dialect is so different that a Bible translation is in progress for the Makua Meeto language; currently Genesis, Jonah, and Mark have been translated. The majority of the Meeto follow folk Islam, or a mixture of African Traditional Religion and Islam. For example, often the leader of the mosque is also the village witchdoctor, and the Quran is used in magic ceremonies to cast spells. There are over 1 million Makua Meeto. Most Makua Meeto live in the two northern most provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, but the Meeto can also be found in Tanzania and northern Nampula.

Prayer points:

- The Kingdom of God to come among the Makua Meeto people
- We will be able to find temporary housing for our families
- Government red tape will be minimal as we move north of Montepuez
- Our container will arrive safely and move through customs quickly
- That God will raise up more workers for Northern Mozambique