

Westerholm's e-Mail News

Wednesday, October 27, 2004

Friends and Family,

October has been filled with a variety of events. We are continuing language study and with each class we discover new concepts we need to learn. We have been working on the parts of the body for the past two weeks, starting with the face and then the upper body. First our language teacher David pointed to various places, such as his nose and says what it is (iphula). Then we progressed to where he would say the face or body part and we would have to point to where it was, and then Amy and I would quiz each other, both saying the part and pointing to it. Interestingly, Metto does not have a word for "cheek" but instead has a word for your lower cheek (between the jaw and the cheekbone). There is also a word for the top of the head and the back of the head. We also learned that there is only one word (osoma) to express "to study", "to be in class", "to read", and who knows what else. In the Makua way of thinking, they are all basically the same action.

Sometimes trying to understand new concepts in class can become quite confusing. For example, we spent about twenty minutes trying to learn what our teacher meant when he made a distinction between "learning to read" and "learning how to read". He kept telling us that the difference was that the one sentence used "how" (mananna) and the other one didn't! We finally realized that using "how" referred to learning something specific at that particular moment rather than learning something in a more general way. We also visited one of our language teacher's friends and did some language practice with her, telling her our names and about our families. We were able to ask how many children she had and where she was from etc. Our language abilities are definitely limited, but it is exciting to see we are making progress. We were also excited to get a copy of the Gospel of Mark in Makua Metto which I have been reading and trying to pick out words I know.

Last week we took a three day trip out to the bush to visit some churches in the Zambezia province. This is an area southwest of Nampula (near Malawi) that has quite a few Churches of Christ. We have been advised by church leaders in Nampula that it would be good for us to visit these churches in order to let the leaders know our vision and our plans for Cabo Delgado province. Otherwise, years down the road the churches in the South may not recognize the churches in the North as being part of the same church movement. We had plans to visit two districts, but the first one called us the day before we left and asked us to come in November. We decided that it would be best to go ahead and visit the second district, Alto Moloque, since they were expecting us. When we arrived we found out they had not received the letter we sent...so they were not expecting us after all!

The churches we visited were all Lomwe, which is a dialect of Makua that is pretty different from Metto, so we could only understand a few words and had to rely on our Portuguese to communicate. Using a translator when preaching is always interesting, because many times the translator likes to elaborate on what you say. Sometimes this is necessary because some concepts are difficult and an illustration added by the translator can help bring a point home. However, one time, as I was trying to explain that it was important for churches to support their preachers, the translator turned to me and asked me what the name of the big river in my land was. I replied "Mississippi" and then he continued speaking and had the whole church repeat the word "Mississippi". Having no idea what that had to do with what I was saying, I skipped ahead to my next point.

The Lomwe churches are quite different from the Metto churches. First, whereas the Churches of Christ among the Metto are all less than five years old, the churches in Alto Moloque were started in 1970. There are over 100 Churches of Christ in the Alto Moloque district (compared to about 15 Churches of Christ in the whole province of Cabo Delgado). The churches were well organized and all of the requests that they presented to us were for spiritual needs and not material items. They asked us if a missionary could be sent to live and work with their churches, for someone to teach the women, for materials for children's ministry, for our advice on ways to develop the children's ministry, and the preachers asked us to teach about giving. One lady stood up and spoke in Lomwe to us and seemed very angry and upset as she spoke. We were scared to know what she was saying, but then the translator told us that she was overjoyed

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we were there and that we reminded her of her own children! Overall the trip helped give us a vision of what the churches in Cabo Delgado can become.

Work with the Intxotxa church here in Nampula has gone pretty well. I just finished preaching a sermon series on the creation story in Genesis that seemed to go pretty well. The most encouraging thing was that the preacher, Eduardo, told me that he wants the church to start preaching a sermon series on the book of Genesis and have a different chapter assigned for each week. This was really encouraging because many times people preach on random verses and don't really get a full picture of what the Bible is actually teaching. A good example of this happened during the offering talk last Sunday when the man talking tried to reference the apocryphal book of Ben Sirach. Pastor Eduardo was translating, and looking unsuccessfully for the book in his Bible. I then had to explain that Ben Sirach was only found in Catholic Bibles, and hence the confusion. In the same service I seemed to have caused some ripples in the church when I said that the Last Supper took place on a Friday. Apparently, they were under the impression that it occurred on a Sunday, so it was a major paradigm shift. Each of us has things to learn from the other, so it is an intriguing process as we each grow together. Even though we have been here almost a whole year, it is amazing how many things we continue to learn and still need to learn.

God Bless!

Please Pray For:

1. Our upcoming visits to Gile (Oct 22-24) and Gurue (Nov 5-8).
2. Peace in the upcoming elections (Dec 1-2).
3. Wisdom as we deal with problems with some of our workers.
4. Our lives to be filled with love and patience as we minister.
5. Our language learning as we seek to find creative ways to learn.

Praise God For:

1. The maturity of the churches in the Alto Moloque district.
2. The desire for the Intxotxa church to grow in Biblical knowledge.
3. The good relationships we have with our teammates.
4. Our good health, especially on trips to the bush.
5. The growing awareness we have of the spiritual needs of the Makua.