

Westerholm's e-Mail News

Friday, December 31, 2004

Friends and Family,

Happy holidays to all! We want to invite everyone to check out a Christmas greeting from Amy and me on our team's website at www.makuateam.org. We enjoyed and celebrated our second Christmas here in Mozambique, and were able to get much more in the holiday spirit this year than the last. Unlike last year, we set up our Christmas tree and had nicely wrapped presents underneath. Amy even hosted a sugar cookie decorating party for some of the missionary women in town. On Christmas Eve, our teammates, the Howells, came over and we had a tasty dinner including some of our favorite American dishes. The Howells spent the night and we opened presents and had breakfast together in the morning. On Christmas Eve we had finally been able to arrange a phone line and internet access in our house, so we could call family over the internet. This had taken several months of dealing with bureaucracy which even included the phone company wanting the signature of someone who is dead! To say the least we are very grateful to finally have a phone line and internet access in our home.

Many times in Mozambique the months of December through February are times where there is little food since most of the crops are not ready to eat until March. Our organization unexpectedly received a donation to be used for food to help in this time of hunger. The food was divided up between the four provinces where our organization is working in order to be distributed. The food for both Cabo Delgado and Niassa was purchased here in Nampula, so somehow it had to be transported to each area. Like many things this is not as simple as it sounds. After several days of multiple trips to the train station, the warehouse, and bargaining with truck drivers we managed to send part of the food to Niassa. Because of our current situation, we were not sure if we were allowed to distribute the food in Montepuez, so we first had to drive to Pemba (10 hours round trip) to find out if it would be possible. Then we had to go to Montepuez (10 hours round trip) to make further arrangements. In the end it was determined that the Church of Christ in Montepuez could distribute the food for us and that would be legally allowed. We are hoping that God will use this project to open doors for us to return and to show the community that our intentions are for good and not evil.

Language learning this month has been really positive in that we have tried a few new things that seem to be working well. First, we received some pamphlets that the Bible translators have produced which include traditional Metto stories, lessons about AIDS, and various Bible stories. We have been reading through these pamphlets and learning word for word the meaning of each pamphlet. So far we have completed a story about a rabbit that convinces both an elephant and a hippopotamus to have a tug of war with him, but secretly ties them to each other! We have also just read through the pamphlet on AIDS. Each of these pamphlets also has been recorded on CD, so we have been able to download these to our computer. After class is over we listen to the recordings multiple times, first reading along with the text and then just listening and trying to comprehend. This has been really helpful because I have noticed an improvement in my listening abilities already. It is especially useful because the Nampula Makua is different from Makua Metto, so it gives us an opportunity to hear Metto spoken. Another fun activity we are practicing is sitting on our porch and describing to our language teacher various things that people are doing on the busy street. Thus we will say things like, "Nlopwanole onkosile isaku wa muru," (That man is carrying a sack on his head) or "Nthiyana nettiha ikaru," (A woman is driving a car). It is encouraging to see all the things we can say.

We continue to worship with the Intxotxa Church of Christ and I have lots of opportunities to teach and preach there. In the past few months I have been working my way through the first section of Genesis in my teaching. One of the reasons that I have chosen to teach on Genesis is that the Metto translation of Genesis will be completed in the coming year. I wanted to "practice" teaching on Genesis and try to develop a set of lessons that I can eventually teach in Metto. Last Sunday I was asked to speak for the Lord's Supper so I taught on Hebrews 12:24, which compares the blood of Jesus with the blood of Abel (since I had preached on Genesis 4 the previous week.) While I was speaking I had a lot of flies that were buzzing around my head (since the church is right behind the fish stand of a market) when suddenly one fly decided to dive straight down my throat! I stopped and hacked an awful sounding cough and managed to eject the fly from my mouth, spit it into my hand and put it out of its misery underneath my shoe.

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Fortunately I had some time to regain my thoughts while the translator was translating my Portuguese.

This month Mozambique held its third elections. Everything passed peacefully without any problems. We are hoping doors will soon open for us to return to Montepuez, now that elections have passed and things are returning to normal. This past year has been marked with unexpected blessings and challenges. Although we often wonder what the reasons are that God has not yet opened the door to Montepuez, we remain confident of his leading us there. We trust that while we have been here in Nampula God has been developing and sharpening us and using us to be a blessing to the body of Christ.

Please Pray:

1. God will use the food project to open doors for our ministry in Montepuez
2. We will be able to meet with the governor of Cabo Delgado
3. God will give us wisdom as we interact with the government
4. The Roland's and the Smith's, our teammates, will have safe deliveries of their new babies
5. God will encourage us to keep pressing on in the midst of surprising and confusing circumstances

Praise God For:

1. Peace in Mozambique during the elections
2. Our home phone and internet access
3. Being able to renew our work visas
4. Being able to distribute the food in Montepuez
5. Wonderful time of celebration during this Christmas season