

Westerholm's e-Mail News

Friday, January 28, 2005

Friends and Family,

Happy New Year! We are excited to begin this New Year and are excited about the possibilities of what we will see God do this year. About midway through December, our language teacher, David, told us that he was not shaving or getting a haircut until New Year's Eve and then he would shave his head and face. He told us that many people do that in order to "start the New Year with new hair". When I mentioned that maybe I should do the same, he told me that I should have started growing my beard in November, so maybe next year! Of course I would also need to know what the significance (if any) of this practice is before I myself do it. To celebrate the New Year, our team shared with each other various ways they had seen God act in 2004. It was very encouraging to remember ways that God had worked and humbling to realize how quick I am to forget those things!

Besides these two trips to Pemba, I also had the opportunity to travel to Gurue, Zambezia last week. Manuel DeOliveira, a missionary in Maputo, flew to Nampula in order to visit with some church leaders in Gurue. We were also accompanied by Germindo, the pastor of the Igreja de Cristo in Montepuez who is originally from Gurue. It takes over six hours to get from Nampula to Gurue and most of the way is on dirt road. Despite being the rainy season, the roads were in pretty good condition, although at one point I had to cross a bridge where a truck had hit the guard rail and there was only about an inch to spare as I passed! Gurue is where the Igrejas de Cristo were first established in Mozambique and the district alone has over 400 Igrejas de Cristo! We had a meeting with some of the influential leaders and discussed church unity, since there have been some divisions among them. The meeting went well, but many of the church leaders hadn't heard about our visit and had left town. One of the church leaders asked that missionaries (he emphasized more than one!) be sent to Gurue to work with the churches as they have almost no Bible training. Overall, the visit was a good one and it was good to get to know the church leaders in this area.

Usually at this time of year the dirt roads become progressively worse as the rainy season continues. Two weeks ago we tried to go to the Intxotxa church where we have been attending, and our way was blocked by a large tractor that had gotten stuck in the mud. We asked if anyone knew another way that we could get to the church and several guys said they knew a way. However, the detour they knew was also impassable because the road became something resembling a canyon. We tried another way, but soon found that the guys who were "helping" us really had no idea where they were. In addition to not being very knowledgeable of the bumpy neighborhood roads, one soon became car sick and we were able to get the door open just in the nick of time! After about an hour we gave up trying to find another way into the neighborhood and went home. Last Sunday, the tractor was gone, but we had to walk the last part of the way to church because the road had eroded so much.

This year our team has also been blessed with two new babies. Aaron and Mika Roland have a son named Josiah. They had Josiah in South Africa and are hoping to return to Mozambique in the next few weeks. Jeremy and Martha Smith also just had their second son, Andrew. They are in the USA right now and hope to return to Mozambique in March. We are excited for them to return and to meet our two new little teammates!

Please Pray For:

1. Our return to Montepuez.
2. Continued progress in learning Makua-Metto.
3. God to send people to work with the churches in Gurue.
4. Our health.
5. Wisdom as we continue to develop a partnership with church leaders in Montepuez.

Praise God For:

1. Allowing us to meet with the governor of Cabo Delgado.
2. Having a good meeting with the Minister of Justice.
3. The births of Josiah and Andrew.
4. Safety in all our travels to Pemba, Montepuez, and Gurue.

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5. Providing an inexpensive way for us to talk with family through the internet.