



Chad, Amy, Maggie & Jane Westerholm  
C.P. 140, Pemba  
Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

# Westerholm Family News

## Ministry in Mozambique

A few weeks ago our family visited a new church in the remote village of Nakoja. After driving down a paved road for 25 minutes, we turned off and drove for nearly an hour on a bumpy dirt road. Although it hadn't rained in almost a week, the road still had large puddles from the previous rains. With my trusty shovel, I had come prepared to get stuck in mud. Several miles outside of Nakoja we came upon a large tree that had fallen across the road. The vegetation was overgrown on both sides of the tree, with no way to drive around it. If only I had brought my machete! Having driven an hour already and being close to Nakoja, we didn't want to turn back. After examining the trunk I found I was able to move it some, and in a moment that resembled a passage out of the Old Testament I was actually able to pick it up and roll it out of the way to the side of the road. I'm pretty sure an angel was probably sent to help me out on that one!

During the months of November and December I worked in Nakoja and Mahera three times a week teaching through stories of the Old Testament and the life of Jesus. At times a handful of people would participate; other days more than a dozen would come. Usually between twenty and fifty children would come and participate in the singing. One rainy day in December I visited Mahera and found only two people came due to heavy rains. As I talked with them about baptism, I asked if other people who normally came to the Bible study wanted to be baptized. One of the older men there told me confidently, "I don't know what the others want to do, but I want to be baptized. I'm ready." Hearing the passion in his voice I knew that God's Spirit had been at work in him and that he really understood the message. Seeing a handful of people in each of these villages come to faith and begin to worship together has been a great encouragement.

The story of Nakoja and Mahera is a snapshot of what has been happening in many villages in recent years. Late last year we did a survey, interviewing over 700 of the 900 members of the Churches of Christ in Cabo Delgado. Some of the information was exciting: 23 new churches have been planted in the past three years, there were about 400 baptisms in the past three years,

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Maggie and Chad celebrate after moving the tree out of the road.

## Praise God For:

- ◆ The success of our first leadership training seminar this year.
- ◆ The new churches in Nakoja and Mahera
- ◆ The valuable information we received from the church survey
- ◆ The growth of the churches in the past three years
- ◆ Our teammate's new baby, Katie Howell



One of the first converts in Nakoja is baptized.

Donations to this ministry can be written to Cordova Community Church with the memo "Mozambique" and sent to:

Cordova Community Church  
2964 Ole Bartlett Ct.  
Suite #5  
Bartlett, TN 38134

46% of the converts come from completely non-Christian backgrounds, and a wide variety of clans are represented in the churches. Other information presented us with challenges: 62% of believers are illiterate, 34% have never been to school, most are on their second or third marriage, 25% of Christians do not have a believing spouse, and only 60% of members claimed to "always" go to church. Numbers are funny in that they both say a lot and say very little. However, when I think about someone who has come to Christ in the past two or three years as part of a new church plant, is on their second marriage, can't read, and only comes to church some of the time, several faces come to mind. When I think of those faces and the obstacles that exist to the development of their faith, I find myself searching for better ways to serve them.

One area that we constantly come back to is leadership. Within the 40 churches, 91 people were identified as leaders. These leaders are the ones who are doing the vast majority of teaching in the churches and are much more influential in their villages than we missionaries. Because this is the case, it is essential that our work focus on equipping the leaders in these congregations. This past month we began a weekend leadership training course where we worked with 17 of these leaders to help them learn to work together as the body of Christ. While we spent a good amount of time studying Scripture, we also did a lot of team building activities to learn more about working together and recognizing the importance of each person in the body of Christ. It was exciting to see these leaders building relationships with one another. As I spoke with one of these men on Sunday, he shared with me his plans to go and visit two new churches this week. I was encouraged to see these plans arise naturally from reflecting on the importance of the body of Christ.

I am hopeful that 2010 will bring growth and maturity in the churches we work with. The needs of the churches and the myriad of villages with no Christian witness are overwhelming in light of our abilities. It is my prayer that God's Spirit will multiply all the efforts that we undertake in his name.



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## Margarita e Isabel



Jane & Maggie

Hi everyone! We have had some really exciting times since we wrote to you last! Just this morning Jane took her first steps all by herself! She is getting so big and we just had her 1<sup>st</sup> birthday party. We all sang Happy Birthday to her and she clapped her hands with joy. She really enjoyed the birthday cake that Mommy made for her and she liked the way the icing felt when she rubbed it all over her face and hair! We finished kickball season and started gymnastics class with the Smith boys. We have been learning how to do headstands, summersaults, cartwheels and walk on a balance beam, it is very fun! I like walking on the balance beam the best. I also enjoy having school with Mommy when Jane has her morning nap. I can write my name now all by myself and I am learning all sorts of fun things about numbers and letters and shapes. We went to Nampula a couple of weeks ago and Mommy said I was almost as excited as she was to be in a "real grocery store" again! I got to ride in the cart as Mommy and I "oohed and aaahed" over all that Nampula has to offer these days. We have also been going out to visit in the villages. I even got to go with Daddy a few times by myself and that was really fun. Last Sunday we went to one of my favorite villages called Mesa (that means table). There is a big hill right beside where the church meets, I call it a mountain and I get to run up and down it with all the kids there who come to play. I also get to dig in the dirt and get really messy! Jane has been having a great time in the village too, she likes to try to eat as many handfuls of dirt as she can before Mommy and Daddy are able to stop her! She also likes to eat mangos and several helpings of shima (that's cornmeal mush). Hope that you are all doing well and that you have a blessed New Year!



Maggie and Jane are on the gol

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Jane and Amy hold her first birthday cake.

### Please Pray For:

- ◆ The 91 church leaders in Cabo Delgado
- ◆ The multitude of villages that still have no Christian witness
- ◆ The new believers in Nakoja and Mahera
- ◆ Our family to stay healthy
- ◆ Chad as helps with scripture revisions for portions of the Metto Bible translation

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