

FIEL Conference:

Last month we hosted the 2007 FIEL Conference, always our single most important event of the year. This was the largest conference so far, with 178 church leaders and wives attending from nine of Mozambique's ten provinces. The majority of these people came from outside Nampula, so it is truly a conference of national scope. Karl Peterson organizes the program while I handle the local logistics. I felt this year's messages were the most pertinent we have yet had in addressing the challenges that Mozambican churches must deal with, particularly in the area of nominalism. Jim Elliff from the States addressed those matters practically, directly, and concisely, while Paulo Brasil from Brazil gave stirring messages on the Reformed doctrines that undergird sound church polity. We were grateful for the labors of both men and hope they will be able to return for future conferences. We were particularly pleased with the contribution from Paulo Brasil, as our pool of Portuguese speaking preachers is small, though we desire to have at least one of our two speakers each year preach in the local language.

To those of you who remembered this conference in prayer, a hearty THANK YOU. God did bless us for the eighth consecutive time. My responsibilities went well, and my workload was much less than usual thanks to the skills of Salome, the administrative assistant sent by Constantia Park Baptist Church in Pretoria. With her help we were able to computerize a great deal of our labors so that half the work for next year's conference is already "in the can".

Radio programs in Portuguese:

This past week I was contacted by a Christian brother wanting assistance in preparing Christian broadcasts on a radio station owned by a local church. Christian radio programming is apparently unknown in this formerly Marxist country, so the church, which has had the license for the station for some years now, only plays music, much of it secular like all the other stations. When this Christian brother had the "novel" idea of using air time for Bible lessons and evangelistic messages he contacted me as a possible resource for preparing those broadcasts. He is a patron of our bookroom and thought the owner of a Christian bookstore might be open to other "novel" ideas for disseminating the gospel. I would like much to get involved, but the time commitment seems prohibitive. I am mentioning it here for two reasons. First, is there a prospective missionary reading this report? These are the opportunities that go begging in Mozambique. Come and help us! Second, does anyone have contacts through which I can arrange good Portuguese language broadcasts for this brother? If so, please tell us! And to everyone, ***please pray that God would guide and bless the initiative of this brother in organizing Christian radio programming for Nampula and bless my efforts to help him find good resources.***

Other updates are not so encouraging.

Canadian contribution:

Two months ago I reported on a perceived breakthrough in obtaining a gift of \$20,000 collected by Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto that they had been unable to send us due to government regulations controlling contributions to non-Canadian ministries. That breakthrough did not materialize, and so we are still without those funds. Later I thought I had found another way to accomplish the transfer, but discovered we would have to sacrifice \$6,500 in the process. ***So we still need prayer that God would help us past this obstacle in receiving the \$20,000 that has been collected.***

Purchase of bookroom:

In the same update I was delighted to finally have the full \$35,000 the owner of our downtown bookshop wanted for selling his location. You may remember that he had given an ultimatum that we must either buy the site or he would terminate our contract and sell to someone else because he needed cash. When I paid a year's rent in advance he agreed to give us time to raise the amount he was asking for. Then, as soon as we had the money, even before contacting him, he called me up with an urgent need for funds to send his wife to South Africa for treatment of uterine cancer. Since I had been praying that he would still be interested in selling, it seemed things were working out toward that end. However, the value of downtown property has escalated, and when we went to the bargaining table last month he amazed me by raising his price to \$56,000! I don't know yet if he is just dreaming or if property indeed has risen that much – a year ago I suspect he would have sold for \$30,000! However, he is desperate to get much more than we can offer, so it appears we will be unable to purchase the site we have been using, and will probably have to move in any event. While he looks for a buyer, he has raised the rent to nearly double what we were paying last year, which is also outside our range. I am dismayed at the prospect of losing this excellent location on the main street of downtown Nampula and having to start over from scratch, especially when Salome was set to lift the bookstore to new heights overseeing the long-needed investments we could only justify once we actually owned the facility. ***Please pray that God would yet turn these dismaying realities regarding the bookroom into a blessing for the furtherance of this work.***

Lucas:

For the past few months we have been mentioning Lucas in these prayer points. He is the long time church member whose Muslim wife diligently avoided all contact with Christianity until recently. Through circumstances that do not warrant a lengthy re-telling, God had dealt a strong hand to Lucas toward the conversion of his wife. These events resulted in her attending two consecutive worship services, when before she had never attended even one, and encouraging her husband in regular family worship at home. This in turn was followed by clear, impressive manifestations of God's favor upon her life and family. We were hoping and even expecting further progress toward her salvation as it seemed obvious that God Himself was dealing with her. However, at the peak of God's favor Lucas became dilatory in his own church participation, choosing to use eight of the last twelve Sundays to tend to relatively mundane matters of far less importance than his wife's salvation. It now appears a promising opportunity has been squandered in order to spend Sunday mornings making "home improvements" of a material nature! Such are the vexations of the ministry! But I suppose when sheep become as concerned for their own souls as their shepherds are, they too will be pressed into service as shepherds. ***Despite these disappointments, please pray that God would yet strengthen this family in Christ.***

Family news:

My father was diagnosed over a year ago with late stage malignant melanoma. When we were with him on furlough last September and October he was fading fast and we did not expect him to live much longer. When we returned to Mozambique in October neither he nor I expected to see one another again. However, he rallied and made it for almost another year, causing me to think I would return to the States when his last days came. The week before the FIEL conference his condition deteriorated suddenly and he had to be admitted to the hospital. He died the day before the conference ended. The timing precluded my making it home either for his final days or the funeral. I thank God for the good life my father lived and that he died full of years (84). Death did not take him by surprise, nor linger long such that he had to spend more than a few days debilitated and away from home. Nevertheless, it is a loss and ***I would appreciate your prayers for us, especially for my mother as she adjusts to being alone after 59 years of marriage.*** By the time you read this I will be

flying home for two weeks hoping to be of some help to her during this adjustment.

Until next month:
Charles Woodrow