

## Prayer Points

September 2007

By Charles Woodrow

### ***Trip home:***

I spent two of the last four weeks traveling to the States to spend time with my mother and help with some of the matters needing attention after my father's death from malignant melanoma in late July. Mom has been strong through this difficult time, and ***I appreciate the words of encouragement many have sent and the prayers that have been efficacious in our behalf.***

### ***A thorn in the flesh:***

Upon my return to Nampula I learned from our church leaders that a damaging letter against me was circulating through high government offices and that during my absence a meeting had been called by the governor to investigate the allegations. I had been summoned together with our church leaders, but as I was away the meeting took place without me. For 24 hours I labored under the distressing misconception that the harmful letter had issued from the governor himself as a result of believing slanderous deceptions directed against me for seven years by a former church member who had been expelled from our congregation. Upon meeting with the local authorities I was much relieved to find out the letter was written by the former church member himself and that rather than accept the accusations the governor had ordered the investigation. However, the damaging letter had been sent to the governor, the president of the city council, the administrators of the district in which we live, and several other government officials. Unfortunately, while all these people received the denigrating letter, few of them will ever hear the vindicating conclusions of the investigation.

This was the latest move in what appears to be an unending campaign by my adversary to do as much harm as he can to our work. In 2000 as he was just coming under church discipline he sought to escape the process by having me expelled from the country and our Mozambican leader removed from the church. At that time he wrote letters to the Ministry of Justice and the Governor alleging I had stolen ten thousand dollars from the church (whose total annual giving at that time amounted to only \$120); that I had burned a container-load of clothing contributed to needy Mozambicans; and that a vehicle, a building, and Christian literature worth thousands of dollars had been sent to the church by Grace Missions but appropriated by me or sold for cash. That resulted in the first investigation which required a representative coming from Grace Missions to testify both to the church and to the government that these were complete fabrications. Nothing but the missionary had ever been sent to the church by Grace Missions. When over the course of several months the man refused to repent of his intrigues, he was expelled from the church.

Three years later he went to the local chief of police with all the same allegations and convinced him to arrest me and detain me in jail overnight. Thankfully we still had the official documents resulting from the prior investigation and upon presenting them the next day I was released and the chief of police charged my adversary with abuse of confidence (conning the police), holding him in jail for over a week.

Soon after, while I was away on furlough, stories were circulated throughout Nampula that I was no longer seen about town because I had been convicted of sex crimes and was in the penitentiary.

Two years later I was tipped off by friends in the Department of Religious Affairs that the State Prosecuting Attorney's office had solicited information about me from their department. I decided to take the initiative and bring forward my dossier of official records documenting my adversary's prior libelous activities before things progressed

further. The Public Prosecutor received me with clear distaste and confirmed that he was investigating charges brought against me by my nemesis, but refused to discuss the allegations saying only that I should wait until I was subpoenaed, which thankfully never happened.

Then last month I was advised through pastors attending the FIEL conference that stories were now circulating that I was harvesting human organs. This fantastic yarn surfaces at regular intervals here, with different personalities assigned the role of villain, because it is entrenched in local folklore that witch doctors pay a high price for body parts supplied by unscrupulous persons who obtain them by digging up fresh graves or from sacrificing careless children. People suppose these body parts must fetch fabulous sums from the witch doctors in wealthy western societies, so such stories travel fast when a foreigner is involved. Incredibly, these rumors are taken seriously even in high offices, and so they are relayed to international news services which report them in articles I personally have read in the States emanating from right here in Nampula! Within days of discovering I was the latest supposed trafficker in body parts, I was informed by the health department that my medical license was being suspended and that I must meet personally with the Provincial Health Director which I have endeavored to do for a month now without success.

Long experience has taught us from whence such stories come, and even before the latest letter written to our new governor surfaced, I wondered if my thorn in the flesh was back in action. Though high government officials have so far always investigated before acting, having a character assassin like this on the loose is clearly unhelpful. Salacious stories circulate widely; the subsequent vindication is known only by the few who do the investigation.

***Please pray for a good outcome from the meetings I have had with the latest government authorities and for the meeting still to take place with the health department.***

***Pray that God would muzzle my adversary and not let him taint further the good ministries we are connected with such as the FIEL bookroom, the annual FIEL conference for church leaders, our own congregation, and the training seminars that we seek to organize, not to mention the name of Christ Himself which is being vilified in high places by its association with me.***

***Funds for hospital construction:***

My purpose for being in Mozambique is to help in the best ways possible, which means the spiritual ministry has first priority. However, for those who only appreciate social services, the fact that our hospital project has not progressed for several years now and I have not been involved in health care during this time places me in a position of weakness and suspicion during our interviews. I am not received as in former days when the medical ministry was known and appreciated throughout northern Mozambique. It is not easy to fully satisfy wary, new officials already sated with evil calumny that I am here only to help, nor is it possible to dispel all doubts about all charges in the 30 minutes usually allotted for that, thus I have detected lingering suspicion even when the meetings adjourn. On a happier note, I was gratified and amazed that of the eight officials in the room at the meeting in the district secretary's office, one had been operated on by me and the child of another had also. They gave earnest, unsolicited recommendations in my behalf which heartened me and caused me to think God was at work to correct the damage. ***Please pray that God would provide the funds we need to resume the ministry that was so effective for evangelism during eight years and which He has used time and again to deliver Grace Missions from the snares of our real adversary, the devil.***

There is still need to report on the bookstore ministry, the \$20,000 contribution being held up in Canada, our purchase of a 2003 Land Rover to replace our '89 model,

Salome's efforts to obtain support in South Africa to return and work as long term administrative assistant with Grace Missions, the opportunity to begin a daily Bible broadcast here in Nampula, and the visit next month of missionary prospects Jeffrey and Amanda Ziegelmann. All this will have to await the next prayer point bulletin which should be sent out in a couple of weeks.

For now, please pray that God would:

***Free me definitively from the cankering thorn that has gnawed for seven years now.***

***Grant progress in resuming the medical-evangelistic ministry.***

***Lead us to an affordable long term site for our downtown Christian bookstore.***

***Reveal a way for us to receive the Canadian contribution that will satisfy the Canadian government's requirements for charitable giving.***

***Prosper our plans to convert our new Land Rover from a twin cab pickup into a bus accommodating 8 passengers plus cargo.***

***Bless the Ziegelmann's 1-12 October trip to Nampula and grant His direction regarding future missionary service.***

***Undertake for our colleague Salome Van Niekerk as she seeks funding in South Africa to return to Nampula to give long term administrative assistance.***

***Grant His guidance regarding opportunities for regular Bible teaching on a local radio station.***

By His grace:

Charles and Julie Woodrow