

## Prayer Points

November 2008

By Charles Woodrow

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your prayers! Not only did we complete the pouring of the slab for the hospital since last month's report, but all three of our prayer requests in that bulletin were graciously answered by God. First, after eight months of waiting, the week before Thanksgiving we finally received the renewal of the building permit for the hospital. As mentioned in our last letter, because of the rapidly approaching rainy season and the soon departure from Mozambique of Mike Stolk, our volunteer builder, we felt constrained to go ahead and pour the slab for the hospital even without the city's authorization. Once we began, we were concerned that the building inspector, who kept promising to carry out the necessary inspection of the work previously done but for weeks never materialized, would finally show up and catch our men hard at work without a permit. That would have elicited a substantial fine and possibly brought down upon our heads the wrath of the city fathers. We requested prayer about this last month, and are grateful for God's answer, which follows.



The building inspector, who apparently was harried with much paperwork, decided to approve without an inspection the construction previously done. That was a relief as it meant we no longer had to fear the consequences of his catching us building without a valid permit. Also due to the pressure of being so far behind in his work, he said he was shelving the matter of making us relinquish the front 30 meters of our property to make room for widening the highway.

We are glad to have a reprieve in dealing with that unhappy prospect and continue to pray that the problem will go away by itself. There is plenty of vacant land on the opposite side of the road for building the widest thoroughfare in the city, and it has been reserved for that very purpose from the beginning.

Having waived those two requirements, the building permit was soon renewed, and ***we are grateful for three important answers to prayer – 1) the building permit, 2) no fines, and 3) the retention so far of our entire 8 acre plot.***





Here in Mozambique, building is still done the old-fashioned labor-intensive way. The slab was poured manually, with the only motorized help being two small cement mixers, so it took fourteen men three weeks to complete the job. Six men continuously supplied the cement mixers with rock, sand, and cement, while four men shuttled non-stop back and forth between the mixers and the masons with wheel barrows heavily laden with concrete. In addition to the concrete crew, we had up to six handicapped fellows at a time working for weeks breaking by hand 50 cubic yards of

small rock into finer rock suitable for concrete. Two more men have been making cement block by hand for many months. At the rate of about 120 blocks per day they have produced 13,000 of the 28,000 blocks we will require.



Presently, Mike and Hilda Stolk are back in South Africa where Mike is arranging the purchase and shipment of all the other building supplies needed before we can put up the walls and roof. Mike's premature return to his homeland became necessary due to the failure of our South African exporters, apparently paralyzed by the magnitude of a job that far exceeded their abilities.

***Please pray for wisdom and energy for Mike as he buys, packs, and ships all the materials needed for finishing the building, a job that has daunted others who do this sort of work full time.*** Right now we are expecting to resume construction in March, hopefully with all the needed materials ready at hand on the premises.

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In church news, we are thankful for continued slow growth. Last Sunday we received one more man into membership after a good interview with the church leaders. This brother has attended our services regularly for several years, though it was evident at the first that he was not a believer. In the past year he has shown good signs of spiritual growth, culminating in his recent request to become a member. This is a significant step for a Mozambican, given that church members must part with many fundamental cultural traditions related to ancestor worship, marriage, chastity, and witch doctors, while



visitors are not held accountable for such obedience. Generally, it is only the true Christian who will dare to sweep aside all such traditional props and lean wholly on Jesus Christ.

We also have a new participant seeking baptism, another encouraging sign. He has been prevented thus far on several occasions by our church leaders who fear he does not adequately understand baptism and salvation. Sometimes the leaders seem over cautious. He failed the last interview, his third, in which the leaders asked this new convert a question that amounted to, "Which comes first, faith or regeneration?" They are concerned about weeding out those who subscribe to the common belief here that ritual baptism automatically confers salvation, and are on the lookout for anything else men may offer up as a meritorious religious work without recognizing the supernatural hand of God in their conversion. In the process, though, I fear we may discourage someone truly convicted of sin and his need of a Savior who is still too young in Christ to express it in just the right terms. Having lamented that fact, it must be said that we have baptized many people who subsequently parted company with Christ, so I know where their caution comes from.

***Please thank God with us for these signs of spiritual life, but continue praying that we might be more useful to Him.*** Our church remains small with only about 30 adult participants.

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In closing, I would like to mention our work devotions. For almost two years the workers have been going through the Bible one chapter a day, beginning with Genesis. For the



past several months we have been reading chronologically in Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah. During this period the men hired for the building crew have swelled our workforce to over 30 at times. There are a few Christians among the work-ers but most are Muslims, and a few sub-scribe only to traditional African beliefs/ customs. I wondered at the beginning if I would be able to have daily Bible reading without reper-cussions, par-ticularly from the Muslims, so I started with the Old Testament since Muslims have a high regard for

Moses. Over time it appears the men have grown content to have this "story break" and one Muslim has openly expressed his appreciation for what he is learning from the Old Testament. The Muslims here talk about Abraham, Moses, and even David, but never read the original source of their information, so it is a worthwhile experience in his opinion.



Several months ago the men were much affected by the life of David. Recently they have been sobered by God's stern chastening of the Israelites' for their infidelity to Him in the years leading up to the Babylonian exile. The many fulfilled prophecies of Jeremiah have impressed them, together with the people's persistent rejection of his message. These readings in particular have provided occasions to speak of the terrible consequences of ignoring God's word and living as if God does not matter, something I suppose the practicing Muslims would agree with.

Up until now we have spoken much about God and only occasionally about Christ, though there have been good opportunities to speak of the Savior in response to questions the Muslims themselves have asked, usually wanting to know why Christians

don't live by the Old Testament law in the same way they do. My prayer at this stage is that our Muslim workers will develop a high regard for the Bible. Then as we reach the end of the Old Testament, I plan to review all the prophecies of the coming Messiah, hoping they will see that something very important has been left out of their religious instruction and will want to continue on into the New Testament to hear what the Bible says about Jesus. We are probably a year away from that still, but ***please pray that God will make His word fruitful and powerful in the lives of these workers and that it will culminate in the salvation of at least some. Please pray specifically for the salvation of Juma Ali***, a skilled cabinet-maker working for Grace Missions, a man of rare integrity, and a devout Muslim.

By His grace:  
Charles and Julie Woodrow