

Prayer Points

February 2009

By Charles Woodrow

Dear Friends:

In the next week I will be flying to Alberton, South Africa to participate in the Brackenhurst Baptist Church missions conference from 4-8 March. I am to speak four times and do covet your prayers that God would bless my messages to the hearts of this strongly mission-minded congregation.



1) Please pray from 4-8 March that God will attend these meetings with the power of His Holy Spirit and that a renewed passion for missions will be the result.

Mike Stolk has had good success obtaining all the building supplies needed for the next phase of hospital construction. In fact, while I am away we should receive the first six container-loads of material, with two more containers scheduled to arrive in early April. Then the Stolks will return to Nampula and we hope to see construction re-summed before May.



2) Please pray for Salome as she oversees the process of guiding these containers through the port, through customs, and then finally to Nampula where they must be unloaded and then returned to the shipping line.

Regarding news since our last prayer point bulletin, at Christmas our family carried out its annual food distribution ministry for 90 welfare families in our neighborhood. We do this each year as a gesture of good will so the neighbors will be reminded that we do intend one day to serve their needs and have not settled in their midst simply to enjoy the life of the idle rich! Of course we are never idle, but from the pace of our construction work over the past ten years, the neighbors might be excused for thinking we do nothing at all! Here, ten dollars of food staples purchases a veritable feast



compared to what these families are used to normally, being the poorest folk in one of the poorest nations on earth, and for us the activity is the big event of our Christmas season. It is another example of how easy it is to make a meaningful difference here on the mission field when compared to the challenge of helping people back home in the States whose needs are often not so basic.

I always use this occasion to preach a message about Christ's advent to the neighbors. It is the evangelistic high point of the year for our family, but for me it is a bittersweet reminder of how for the first eight years in Mozambique I preached to similar crowds every week of the year at the Sunday evangelistic services at Marrere hospital. May those opportunities soon return!



After Christmas, the church started off 2009 with its annual New Year's Day worship and fast. This is a tradition we picked up from other Mozambican churches and we have benefited from their example. People spend the entire day in prayer and worship and many churches include a fast of varying duration, beseeching the Lord's blessing upon their ministries in the coming year. We have found these

all-day services to be most rewarding and not fatiguing in the least, contrary to what I always expect. Worship just gets better and the prayers more fervent as the day wears on. We finish by breaking the fast with a fellow-ship meal in the evening, which we all *really* enjoy, in direct proportion to how long we each have been fasting!

At home in the States, I seriously doubt I could forego all the New Year's Day excitement with parades and football games and parties to devote myself instead to something as serious as an all-day worship service, so I am glad that here I don't have that choice before me! Once again, I am reminded of advantages that are part and parcel of living on the mission field, a world that is not so abundantly blessed with tantalizing options and alternatives!



As for other news on the church front, with the beginning of a new school year in the southern hemisphere (February to November), we have lost the participation of three long-time members, two who have been employed as teachers in remote locations and one who is doing college work in another province. As we are a church of only 20 members, it is not easy to lose so many people at once. However, we are thankful that God seems to be bringing new people into the church more rapidly than in the past. As I prepared a report recently for an association of Reformed Evangelical churches in southern Africa that we belong to, I was gratified to discover that though we have only 20 members, six of them had joined just in the past year, four of them by a profession of faith. Also, that 19 of those 20 members have read the Bible from cover to cover and all are known to study the word daily! And 12 have memorized the entire scripture memory catechism of over 300 short passages which is offered as part of a financial aid program for people in and outside the church who have no income. These comments serve only to point out some of the ways our congregation is unlike many traditional churches here. Yet at the same time, we much need and desire a greater work of grace and love in the hearts of all our members and leaders, that we might have the winsomeness of Christ that woos the lost and helps them over the cultural obstacles that hinder true conversion. This has been a weakness among us in the past, one



which we can ill afford given that, compared to other churches, we are much less accepting of the compromises often made by Christians in deference to local culture and customs.

3) Praise God for a good year of spiritual growth in 2008, and pray that 2009 will surpass it as we seek to effectively reach the lost all around us for Christ.

The best news in this report is that Arnaldo's son, Aquiles, a second generation Christian and perhaps our brightest light in the church, was accepted to the medical school that recently opened here in Nampula. Grace Missions is paying his tuition (less than \$100 a semester so far!) in exchange for his services with our hospital when he finishes his training. He is a sterling Christian and we have fond dreams of his one day taking spiritual and administrative oversight of the hospital when the time comes to pass it to the Mozambicans. We do hope that this is one more critical piece that God Himself is putting into place as He orchestrates the future of Grace Missions' medical/evangelistic ministry here in Nampula.



4) Praise God for raising up one of the most spiritually qualified Mozambicans we know as a future colleague in the medical work we trust may soon be underway in Nampula.

As we conclude this report, please remember to pray especially for the meetings next week in South Africa where I will be preaching.

By His grace:
Charles and Julie Woodrow