

Prayer Points

March 2009

By Charles Woodrow

Dear Friends:



Last month I requested prayer for the **Missions Conference at Brackenhurst Baptist Church** in Alberton, South Africa (suburb of Johannesburg) where I was to bring four messages. As happened last year at Kabwata Baptist Church in Zambia, I went concerned only that God would use my participation to strengthen and bless the congregation, not realizing that I would be the one so much encouraged through the church's hearty vision for missions and love for Christ.

Our family had never visited this church, but its reputation as a mission-minded congregation was known to us. In recent years BBC had sent out three missionary families from their own number, assuming in their behalf all the responsibilities of a mission board and providing 50% of their financial support. Last year the 130 families in their membership pledged and contributed \$50,000 for missions, and this year their pledges increased by 50% to \$75,000, enough for them to send out yet another missionary family. And there are already in the congregation elder-qualified men trained up and experienced in ministry willing to go to the field as the Lord leads.



As at Kabwata Baptist Church last year, I was impressed with the large turnout each night, Wednesday through Saturday, that was only slightly smaller than their usual Sunday morning congregation. Though many commendable statements could be made about BBC, it is enough to mention only this commitment of time and finances. When that is in evidence, love for Christ and everything else of importance almost invariably follows.

God's blessing seemed to attend every facet of the conference, including my messages – a sincere "thank you" to all who were praying. For me, the crowning event of the conference was to discover on Monday morning the church's strong interest in placing their next missionary family in Nampula to help with the work here, a burden I hope has come from the Lord! The next day, quite independently, one of their elders in training approached the pastors about making an investigative trip to Nampula, seeking the Lord's leading for his own family on the mission field. So now **Pastor Doug Van Meter** and **Barry Jamie** are scheduled to attend the FIEL conference in June and see first hand the opportunities for ministry in our corner of the world.

1) Praise God for making the Brackenhurst Missions conference a blessing beyond expectation, at least for the speaker if not for the congregation!

2) Pray for the Lord's guidance for both BBC and the Jamie family as they consider becoming directly involved in the Nampula ministry.

Salomé Van Niekerk

March brought the end of Salomé Van Niekerk's time with us as administrative assistant. We will sorely miss the service she rendered overseeing the only Christian bookstore we know of in northern Mozambique and the literature distribution program to 90 Mozambican church leaders scattered throughout the country. Because of Salomé's quick mastery of Portuguese, it is hard to imagine someone else coming in and matching her usefulness here. Nevertheless, we desperately need someone to pick up where she has taken us in her two years of service and trust the Lord will not allow the important ministries she oversaw to now suffer neglect.



3) Thank God for His provision of Salomé Van Niekerk during the past two years, and . . .

4) Pray that He will provide a replacement for the administrative, secretarial, and bookkeeping duties she so ably performed for both Grace Missions and Editora Fiel.

5) Pray for the Lord's guidance as Salomé considers what to do in the next phase of her life.

Girls' Club Ministry

We are all disappointed and bewildered at the sudden drop in attendance in the evangelistic girls' club ministry started by Sarah Beth and Grace Anne along with two of the young women in our local church. Recently they were having up to 20 girls at the Saturday afternoon meetings, then that dropped to only a handful and then none at all. The bulk of the girls are reportedly engaged in a short term catechism class for joining



the Catholic Church. It is expected that when the Catholic program ends they will return to the Saturday meetings; however, whether or not that prediction is correct remains to be seen. In any event, it is disappointing to see that our daughters' efforts over the past year have seemingly been ineffective in altering the course of these girls' lives as they continue on their path of spiritual darkness.

6) Please pray for God's truth to be convincingly expressed through this ministry, that our daughters may be able to manifest to these girls a

close walk with God their friends have not yet experienced, and that the participants might come to see the vast difference between mere religion and relationship with Christ.



Grace Evangelical Hospital

On the hospital front, in March we received six containers loaded with building supplies ordered by **Mike Stolk** in South Africa. We are awaiting two more containers with the roof materials, and then Mike and Hilda will return to oversee construction of the main hospital building. We are grateful for these tireless servants who almost single-handedly are pushing this project ahead. However, they have worn themselves down through years of service to the Lord and the specter of Hilda's having to remain in Pretoria has reared itself again lately.

7) Pray that God would smooth away health and family concerns that could prevent Mike and Hilda from finishing the next phase of construction.

8) Pray that God may raise up another builder, if necessary, who can carry on the work Mike has begun in the event he is unable to give it his undivided attention in the future.

In March we were visited by the administrator of a Christian foundation that has helped build surgical specialty hospitals in many third world countries, including several here in Africa. The family foundation he oversees was established to distribute donations from the fourth largest producer of chickens in the U.S. The administrator of this fund (and member of the donor family) recently became a partner with a Christian chicken producer here in Nampula whose ministry is discipling Mozambicans in the faith while equipping them to be successful businessmen and chicken farmers. The administrator's involvement in this ministry eventually brought him and his family to Nampula for a visit. Knowing the donor's interest in surgical hospitals for underdeveloped countries, our friend brought him around to see us during his stay, a gesture for which we are profoundly grateful. As a committed Christian and sponsor of other mission hospitals who desires to invest even more of his wealth in Nampula, he was naturally interested in our project. The money he has already provided our friend in the chicken business would be more than enough to finish building and equipping our hospital, so it appears the resources are there, if only the burden were as well!

9) Thank God with us for this encouraging contact, and . . .

10) Pray that He may give this family a burden for Grace Evangelical Hospital that would enable us to finally begin serving again the medical and spiritual needs we were privileged to meet during our first eight years in Mozambique.

Family News – End of an Era

On the family front, we are mourning the recent departure of dear friends Ken and Lisa Turnbull whose five children, together with our five, became known as the Woodbull family. People who have followed their adventures on www.10-happy-kidos.blogspot.com will appreciate the close friendship and good times they shared over the past three years, all the more precious in a remote place



like Nampula where for the first years of our ministry our children were about the only white children in this city of 400,000 people. The Turnbolls are returning to the States for furlough, and then will move to Zambia to help the Reformed Baptist churches there establish a Christian University.

11) Thank God with us for the provision of the perfect friends for our children, and for His remarkable deliverance of Ian Turnbull who three months ago was at the threshold of death with complications from cerebral malaria.

South Africa Trip

I had originally intended to stay on in South Africa after the Brackenhurst Missions Conference to accomplish my annual purchases for the mission and our family. However, desiring to expose my older children to the ministry at BBC I decided to fly home directly after the conference and bring the whole family to stay in SA while I took care of our annual business there. We have had a hard time getting to Johannesburg, however, because of multiple breakdowns. Right now we are stranded in Maputo, about 400 miles from our destination, while the car is undergoing repairs for a blown head gasket. How thankful we are that every one of our three setbacks occurred near a major town where we could get comfortable accommodations and find spares, not in the middle of one of Mozambique's vast expanses of wilderness hundreds of miles from a parts store. However, it has made the usually arduous trip even more taxing.

12) Thank God for His watch care over us, making these little trials much easier to bear than they might have been, turning them into mere reminders that He is with us as our Helper and Champion.

13) Pray that I would be efficient in the brief time (now even briefer) that I scheduled for getting all my work accomplished in South Africa this year.

10th Annual Fiel Conference

The pressure to hurry back to Nampula is that this year's 10th annual FIEL conference is looming just two months away. When we return I will have only four weeks to prepare for this gathering of 200-250 church leaders from all parts of the country. The theme this year is **the Christian home** and our **speakers are Wayne Mack**, associated with Masters' College and Seminary, now working in South Africa, and **Jaime Marcelino**, a Presbyterian pastor from Brazil. Salome's absence will soon be felt even more keenly as planning gets underway for this important event.

14) Please pray for the 10th annual Fiel Conference, that God will send church leaders who will benefit from our program, that we will have good participation in the week-long training seminars to follow, and that all my responsibilities will be fulfilled graciously and well so that the conference might be for the pastors a time of both spiritual and physical refreshment.

By His grace:
Charles and Julie Woodrow