

Report from Comunhão dos Crentes em Cristo, Nampula, Mozambique

Comunhão dos Crentes em Cristo (CCC or Fellowship of Believers in Christ) is different from other churches in the Sola Five Association in that it is a Portuguese-speaking church in Mozambique. We would be delighted if other churches here would follow our example in joining Sola Five so that a whole group of Mozambican congregations could be allied to each other through the five Solas of the Reformation, perhaps in time forming a Portuguese-speaking sister association called Sola Cinco.

Toward that end, in conjunction with Karl Peterson from Barber-ton, South Africa and Editora Fiel (Faithful Publishers) from



Brazil, CCC has helped host the annual nation-wide Fiel Conference for church leaders over the past nine years. These conferences are held here in Nampula, the second largest city in the country with a population of over 400,000 and the cultural and economic hub of northern Mozambique. Recent conferences have been attended by over 200 church leaders and wives coming from every province in the nation. Our speakers come from Reformed churches throughout Brazil, England, the



Speaker Conrad Mbewe of Kabwata Baptist Church



Ronald Kalifungwa of Lusaka and Josafá Vasconcelos of Brazil

United States, South Africa, and Zambia. The purpose of these conferences is to acquaint Mozambican leaders from all denominations with the rich legacy left us by the Reformation Fathers.

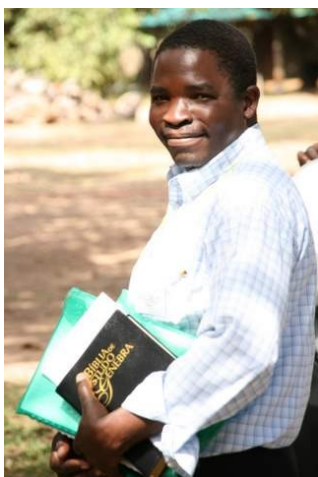
Together with Grace Missions, the church also helps sponsor and staff a Reformed Evangelical Christian bookstore in downtown Nampula, the only Christian bookstore we know of in northern Mozambique. Salomé Van Niekerk, an associate member of CCC from Constantia Park Baptist Church in Pretoria, oversees Editora Fiel's nation-wide literature distribution program whereby selected pastors



Front view of the Fiel Bookstore



Salomé Van Niekerk



One of the pastors on the Fiel reading program

receive one free book a month for 36 months. To date, 90 church leaders are either on this program or have completed it already.

We are grateful to God that these efforts to bring Biblical faith to Mozambican churches have enjoyed His manifest blessing over the years!

The church itself was officially founded in 2001 and started with four strong Mozambican believers, two of whom had been walking faithfully with Christ for nearly ten years already. Those two men, Arnaldo Aquiles Junior and Costódio Gustavo, are today the national leaders and teachers of the congregation. In eight years the church has grown to a typical Sunday morning attendance of 30 adults and ten to twenty

children. Of the adults, 20 are members (13 Mozambicans and seven expatriates) and the rest are Mozambican visitors who attend regularly but hesitate to surrender themselves to Christ.

Though growth has been slow, we are thankful that six of our 20 members have joined just in the past year, four of them through a profession of faith.



Because of the many ties to local culture that must be severed in the process of becoming a Christian, it is no small decision when a Mozambican asks to join CCC. The leaders of our congregation are diligent in exhorting the brethren to Biblical, godly living and in setting a good example in their own lives. People know that commitment to Christ and His word is taken seriously; that among other things members are expected to speak the truth, to keep themselves pure before marriage, to marry believers only, to remain faithful to their spouses until death, to never resort to witch doctors, and to shun completely ancestor worship despite the pressures that may be brought to bear by family members. We are a grace church. These rules are in no place written down and codified, nor do we preach rules to the people, but they do illustrate just a few of the ways love for Christ and obedience to Him is diametrically opposed to local custom in our setting. As these expectations are unthinkable in the eyes of many Mozambicans, one does not glibly join himself to our congregation. Two of the men who joined in 2008, Bonifácio Manuel and Orlando Mário, had attended worship regularly for over five years, had each read the Bible from cover to cover, and had even memorized over 300 Bible passages in the church's Bible catechism program. So, when they did finally ask to meet with the leaders about membership, we were not surprised to hear gratifying, convincing testimonies of how God had recently opened their eyes to finally comprehend the truth and had wed their hearts to Christ such that they were ready to follow Him despite adverse consequences. We rejoice when Mozambicans are so swept away with Christ that they can't wait to join His body, and we have seen those conversions too, but we are



Orlando, our newest member, signing the church covenant

even more sure when men come forward who have carefully and soberly considered the cost of discipleship and have already proven Christ's power at work in their hearts.



Orlando and Bonifácio reviewing verses in the catechism program

Commitment to God's word is also reflected in that 18 of our 20 members have read the entire Bible and are known to read it on a daily basis, and 12 have already memorized the entire scripture catechism of over 300 short Bible passages. These comments serve only to point out some of the ways this 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, something that has been a weakness in the past.

We still call ourselves a church in formation as we wait for God to provide two elders from our number. Our two national leaders are elder-qualified except that Gustavo has remained single well into his fourth decade of life precisely because he would rather forego the pleasures of matrimony than marry a woman who is a professing Christian only. Arnaldo's wife, whom Arnaldo married when he was a practicing Muslim, has remained staunchly



Arnaldo and his children

Muslim and anti-Christian, largely from fear of reprisal from relatives who tried to take her away from Arnaldo when he converted to Christ. Despite having a spiritually divided home, Arnaldo has reared his offspring in the Lord and his three oldest children, ages 17 to 23, have already become pillars in the church. Nevertheless, we are waiting for God to fulfill His own requirements for eldership in these two men so that we can consider ourselves a truly autonomous church under Christ with God-appointed leadership.



Gustavo

For this reason, we ask you to join us in praying:

1. That God would convert the heart of Arnaldo's Muslim wife, Muacite.
2. That He would provide a godly wife and offspring for Gustavo.
3. That He would bless CCC's evangelistic outreaches with even more fruit in 2009.
4. That He would magnify Himself and strengthen the Mozambique church through the Fiel Conferences, Pastors' Seminars, literature distribution program, and bookstore.
5. That in time the Lord would raise up a sister "Sola Cinco" association of churches in Mozambique.