

# January 2010 Prayer Points

*Those who do not have time to read the stories may get the prayer requests and main points in only a few minutes by scanning the portions in bold italics.*



Dear Friends:

It has been nearly three months since our last update. As the picture above shows, we have made progress on the hospital, though the change is not as marked as in previous interval photos. This is in part because the men are now working inside plastering the walls and finishing the doors and windows and we have reduced the work force by over half. But mostly it is because Mike and Hilda Stolk completed their time with us last December and returned as planned to their responsibilities in Pretoria. Despite the slowed pace, in just a few weeks we expect the building will appear finished from the outside – except for one glaring deficiency.

We are immensely grateful for the blessing of having Mike and Hilda in our home for so many months. To us, the edifice at the front of our property will be a lasting monument to their industry and love for the Lord. Beyond the construction work we were enriched in countless other ways by their constant service – beautifying our home, making clothes for the girls, preparing meals,



*Above: The hospital after six months*

*Below: Mike and Hilda Stolk*



repairing everything that did not work properly. Only people who already know them will understand how much help they were to us.

**1) Please thank God with us for His provision of Mike and Hilda Stolk, without whose help this hospital would still be as it was in 2003 when we finished the foundation walls. Those who know Mike and Hilda will also want to pray for God's guidance as they begin investigating a possible evangelistic ministry among a mixed-race ethnic group in the Northern Cape well known for alcoholism, violence, and incorrigibility. Only Mike and Hilda would look forward to something like that as "retirement".**



*Nestor Maradono*

wages, but he insisted on doing the job for free. This, together with the perfect timing of his arrival, abundantly confirmed that he was indeed a "man sent from God!"

**2) Please thank God for continuing a remarkable string of answered prayer, providing free expert help in the form of Nestor Maradono from Argentina who finished our roof for us. Pray that I will have many opportunities to speak with him about Christ as our friendship continues.**

Three months ago we asked for prayer for an evangelistic meeting among the construction workers that was going to take place soon after sending out our last prayer bulletin. The meeting was scheduled to occur immediately following work, and I wondered how many men would attend. To my great satisfaction, almost all of our 70+ workers stayed behind and seemed to listen carefully as the gospel was presented. This apparent interest encourages me to hope that the daily Bible reading has awakened a concern for eternal matters among the men. At the end of December the workers heard a second gospel presentation at a Christmas program where they received their bonuses. In the six months they have been working for us they have listened to many Old Testament prophecies regarding Christ, heard all of the





four gospels read, listened to several evangelistic messages, and are now half way through the book of Acts as our regular workers continue their trek through the entire Bible. One previously unchurched worker, Paulo Agostinho, has been attending our congregation frequently and now speaks openly of how God has taken hold of his life. Paulo is the only worker who has come to our church consistently, though several others have visited sporadically. I nourish the hope that still others may have begun attending congregations in their neighborhoods that they find less intimidating than going to the boss's church.

**3) Please pray that the seed sown during our daily Bible reading will bear fruit in the lives of our workers. Pray that God would indeed take hold of Paulo Agostinho. Pray for me, that I would know how to be an exacting foreman demanding careful work and good productivity without undercutting my goal of drawing our laborers to Christ.**

In church and evangelistic work, we had our annual opportunity to preach the gospel to 90 neighboring families who are on the welfare roles. By Mozambican standards, a veritable feast for an entire family can be supplied here at a cost of only a few dollars, so we take advantage of that situation every Christmas to distribute food packages and gospel tracts at the Grace Missions property in coordination with local welfare officials. This year we added our 70 construction workers to the event and all assembled at the appointed time to hear a message on the reason for Christ's first advent, then received their food allotments. I considered it a special gift from God when Maradono, our Argentinean roofer, just happened by moments before the presentation began and listened all the way through the message. I had been seeking an opportunity to speak with him about Christ, but the language barrier (my Portuguese and his Spanish) had been a hindrance. He understands Portuguese well enough, but only speaks rapid-fire Spanish which I cannot decipher. In the end, he heard the whole message of salvation through Christ which I hope God will one day bless to his eternal good.



*Christmas in Nampula: an occasion to meet both spiritual and physical needs among impoverished neighbors*



Another annual high point was the church's all day prayer and praise meeting on New Year's Day. That is an activity even nominal Christians look forward to here where there is little else going on to attract their attention. A special treat toward the end of the day was watching a movie on the Reformation using the equipment Mike Stolk gave us for projecting DVD's onto the front wall of our evangelistic pavilion.



However, as I look back on the church's progress in 2009, I am disappointed to reflect that we have not made up for the ongoing losses we continue to experience as church members obtain government jobs that take them away from Nampula. Having a job is a great and relatively rare blessing in this impoverished country, and we think it is significant that God has rewarded virtually every one of our members with gainful employment. However, the constant loss of mature members as they

assume their posts in outlying regions is discouraging. This year membership has declined from 20 to 17 despite having gained several new members, and all the newcomers are weaker in the faith than the mature Christians we lost. Our average adult attendance on Sundays is around 25, which is also down from previous years. Our members are growing in the Lord, and I am thankful for some excellent brothers in Christ which, if they remain in Nampula, could form the nucleus of a strong, growing church, but I am forced to recognize that our church planting work remains quite stunted numerically. My Saturday Bible classes, which seemed to be thriving throughout the past two years with good participation from unbelievers as well as from members of other churches, also suffered a sudden decline in the final months of the year, shriveling from around 20 per week to only 8-10. So . . .

***4) Please pray for spiritual fruit to come from our evangelistic endeavors and especially for the church to grow strong both in numbers and spirit. Pray that the dwindling trend of the past year and a half would be reversed, and that God would send us a qualified man zealous for the Lord, in love with His people, and burdened for the lost who could devote his full time to church ministry.***

In the last newsletter we reported the demise of our faithful Bedford off-road military troop carrier which suffered at the hands of a careless substitute motorist. I am thankful to report that its replacement is even now traversing the waves of the Indian Ocean en route to Mozambique. Generous gifts from our home church and from Heritage Baptist Church in Owensboro, Kentucky made this rapid replacement possible. After its civilian makeover, sticker price of the truck with 50,000 miles of use was \$12,000.



*Our new troop carrier after shedding its NATO colors in the British paint shop*

***5) Please thank God with us for promptly replacing our off-road 4x4 truck, and pray that it completes its journey to Nampula without incident.***

We are grateful to now have working with us Hester Austin, a multi-talented bookkeeper and nurse practitioner, from Logos Church in Sasolburg, South Africa. After learning Portuguese she will take over the bookstore ministry and when the hospital is finished will be able to serve there as well. More information about her will come in the next newsletter. For now, I want to send out an **urgent call for a**



**builder** who could put up the 1250 square foot (115 square meter) brick and block cottage she wants to erect on the Grace Missions property. We expect the job will take 3 months. During this time I would be most pleased to have assistance with the hospital work, finishing out the two sanitation blocks and several private rooms which could then serve to house guests and volunteer work crews for the final phase of construction. For us, May through August would be the best time for hosting a visiting builder.



*Hester Austin at her daily Portuguese lesson*

**6) Please thank God with us for Hester Austin who is taking charge of the bookstore ministry, and ask Him for a volunteer builder who can erect her cottage and help us finish this phase of the hospital construction.**

In March Kent and I will make a brief, two week trip to the States. My way is being paid by a conference on surgery in underdeveloped countries being hosted at Vanderbilt University where I attended medical school. Three of the colleges Kent had applied to were within 150 miles of Vanderbilt, so when I received the paid invitation, it seemed a provision from God for Kent to come as well and apply in person for financial aid at these schools. Kent has received several generous scholarships, but needs more help to bring the charges within range of our budget.

**7) Please pray that Kent might have good interviews with three schools in the Tennessee-Kentucky area, and that God will open the way for him to attend one of these schools if that is His will.**

Returning to hospital construction, the glaring deficiency referred to in the first paragraph is a large hole in our prefabricated roof resulting from a shortfall in sheeting material supplied from the factory that manufactured it. We learned that the truss engineer discarded the architect's design and followed his own plan, apparently without informing the sheeting engineer who ordered and cut the roof sheeting as per the architect's plans. So to our horror, after spending \$60,000 having the roof prefabricated and shipped to Nampula, upon reassembly we discovered the trusses and sheeting were hopelessly mismatched. On the one hand this required that we cut up half the sheeting to make it fit the altered trusses, and on the other hand it left us 50 feet short of covering the whole building.



*The truss engineer's lopsided re-configuration of the architect's symmetrical roof design*



*An unexpected bonus – air conditioning for the women's ward!*



*Putting in the underground power cable  
for the public lighting system*

Mike and I have cast the problem back on the manufacturer whose engineers were responsible for the shortage in the first place. The company chiefs are now considering what they should do. It will be a costly error for them to correct because we are so far from their factory. They will have to hire a truck with a 40 foot trailer to travel 2000 miles just to deliver the 25 pieces of roof sheeting they should have sent with our original order.

***8) Please pray that the factory will act responsibly in correcting the mistake their engineers made that left us with a 1300 sq foot hole in our roof and send at their cost the sheeting that should have come in the original shipment. Transporting a 40 foot container from South Africa to Nampula will cost close to \$5000, a needless expense we have no desire to assume.***

Much more could be included in this report, but to keep from going even longer I will save those items for next month. I cannot close, however, without thanking the multitude of friends whose abundant financial and prayer support continually lifts us past obstacles that would have stymied us long ago had we been left to our own devices. We are deeply indebted and know how obliged we are to serve Mozambicans in the same faithful fashion our supporters have served us. Please pray that God will enable us to fulfill this obligation.

By His grace,  
Charles and Julie Woodrow



**For those who have enquired:**

Contributions for the hospital work should be sent to:

Grace Missions Mozambique  
P.O. Box 34531  
San Antonio TX 78265

All other contributions should be sent to:

Grace Missions  
c/o Faith Community Church  
723 South "D" Street  
Oxnard CA 93030

