

## Report from Comunhão dos Crentes em Cristo, Nampula, Mozambique

***Comunhão dos Crentes em Cristo and Sola 5***  
Comunhão dos Crentes em Cristo (CCC or Fellowship of Believers in Christ) is different from other churches in the Sola 5 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 5 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.



*CCC Sunday morning congregation*

Toward that end, since our last report in January 2009, our church has sponsored the translation of the Sola 5 confession of faith and its core values statement and given these resources to scores of congregations throughout Mozambique. Distribution has been done through the downtown Christian bookstore operated by our church members and through the annual Fiel (Faithful) conference for church leaders hosted each July by our congregation in conjunction with Editora Fiel (Faithful Publishers) from Brazil and Karl Peterson, missionary pastor working out of Barberton, South Africa.



*Our bookshop in downtown Nampula  
population 400,000*



*The 2010 Fiel Conference for church leaders*

### ***CCC and the 2009/10 Fiel Conferences for Church Leaders***

The Fiel conferences were begun eleven years ago by some members of our congregation to acquaint Portuguese speaking pastors and church leaders with the rich legacy left them by our Reformation Fathers and to introduce them to the fine Evangelical and Reformed literature that has been translated into Portuguese and published by various Reformed publishing houses in Brazil. Church leaders come from all parts of Mozambique to attend these four day meetings. The 2009 conference was the largest one to date with 330 church workers present. In 2010 attendance dropped for the first time ever, with participation down to 230. This





***Excelent Christian literature is sold at the conferences for one third actual cost***

may have resulted from putting a deadline on registrations and increasing the published registration fee. The theme of this year's conference was the five solas of the Reformation, a subject of special interest to the brethren of Sola 5! We had prepared sufficiently to host 450 church leaders and wives, so were dismayed when these expectations were not realized, not merely because the decline in participation represented a step backward for the conference ministry, but especially because of the blessing the meetings could have been to those who missed out!

Only one of our four main speakers, Wayne Mack, would be familiar to the brethren of Sola 5, but besides the main speakers, at each of these two conferences Doug Van Meter, pastor of Brackenhurst Baptist Church and chairman of the Sola 5 steering committee, was present to lead elective sessions and address the church leaders about Sola 5. This past year Pastor Van Meter stayed on to lead a four day seminar for pastors from I Timothy. As will be noted repeatedly in this report, CCC has benefitted much from the strong participation of Sola 5 churches and members in the ministries entrusted to us in this country.



***Pastor Doug Van Meter addresses an elective session at the conference as missionary Charles Woodrow translates***

### ***Recent church developments***

For CCC, 2010 marks the ninth year of our existence. We still have only 20 members and until recently had a typical Sunday morning attendance of about 25 adults and 15 children. Church growth has been slow throughout our history, in part because of the many ties to local custom and culture that must be severed when a Mozambican joins a Bible-based congregation. Gains in membership have usually been offset by losses due to job transfers or members moving away to study. However, regardless of excuses or extenuating circumstances, lack of fruitfulness in evangelism must always be a cause for concern and self examination, and for some members of the church it has for several years been a cause of weekly prayer and fasting as well. Nevertheless, since our last report 18 months ago we had gone 16 months without gaining any new members.



***Church leaders Costódio Gustavo, Charles Woodrow, and Arnaldo Aquiles Júnior***

In that context, one can appreciate how encouraged church members have been to see the Lord changing our circumstances over the past seven months, drawing many people to the church and some to Himself. Sunday morning attendance has “mushroomed” to 40-45 adults and 25 children, and at times we have had 50 or more Mozambicans present. Seven people





***Sunday afternoon fellowship to welcome a new member***

quiet, unostentatious fellow, there are presently five people attending the church because of what they have seen happening in Jeremias' life.

Amongst the recent influx of visitors, we are particularly grateful for a number of teen age girls. Apart from the missionary's family, the church previously had only two young women and no adult women in the membership. However, in recent months five young ladies have begun attending. The four girls in our congregation promptly resurrected the evangelistic girls' club that had died out about a year ago, and now that appears to be thriving with enthusiastic participation by the visitors. Another welcome change is the presence of three married couples. Before, we had no couples where both husband and wife attended worship.



In that regard, our two church leaders continue to be hampered in marriage. Arnaldo Aquiles was saved from Islam 20 years ago, and his three oldest children have since grown to be pillars in the church work, but his wife Muacite remains a committed Muslim. Pray for her salvation! And Costódio Gustavo is now nearing his 40's and is still single. He is a desirable and successful man who wants to marry and could have done so scores of times by now, but has been hindered by the paucity of Christian women amongst his acquaintances. Pray that God would grant him a wife whose Christian testimony would illustrate the reward that comes from waiting on God and obeying His word!

### ***The Word of God and CCC***

Though the church is small and effective evangelism needs to improve, our members are dedicated to the Lord and to the Scriptures. Six of the 14 male members teach the Bible well enough to participate regularly in the preaching rotation, and of the remaining eight men, six take a strong hand in leading the worship services and teaching and admonishing during the open participation time each Sunday. All the members study the word regularly, and except for the newest ones, all have read the



***Two church members review scripture memory***

have initiated the membership process which entails some months of discipleship, and two of these were welcomed into membership in the past two months. One of the new members, Jeremias António, has a remarkable testimony of transformation which has impressed the church and captured the attention of friends and family. Though he is a

entire Bible, something unusual in this land even amongst pastors. Eleven of the twenty members participate in the missionary's scripture memory program which is part of a financial aid scheme begun 14 years ago to help people who need money without simply putting them on the dole. Seven of the members have learned all 365 scripture portions of one to three verses each.

### ***Jeremias Ant3nio, our newest member***

Jeremias, our most recent member, was converted by God through the scripture memory program. He started memorizing scripture to earn money to buy food for himself and the three sisters with whom he lives. Jeremias must have a phenomenal memory, because he learned the entire scripture catechism, 46 A4 pages of type-written verses, in just three months. He is still on his first pass reading through the Bible, but in the months following his salvation his spiritual comprehension soared. He began doing so well in the missionary's Saturday Bible class that he was invited to participate in the week long systematic theology seminar taught to pastors who stayed on after this year's FIEL Conference. It was an intensive six and a half day course, but Jeremias did exceptionally well, outscoring all but one of the pastors (class of 16) and earning a final grade of 98%.



***Jeremias after signing the church covenant***

In Jeremias' case, Bible study is not a matter of gaining head knowledge only. Several of the scripture passages in the catechism deal with the importance of giving to the Lord, and after learning these verses Jeremias asked that ten percent of his earnings from the memory program be automatically deducted and transferred to the church. These contributions have already been a noticeable blessing to the whole congregation.

Only God can produce transformations like that observed in Jeremias, and the church asks our Sola 5 brethren to pray that He will let us see much more of this kind of spiritual power at work in our midst.

### ***Hester Austin***

Since our last report the church has been enriched through the faithful prayers and participation of Hester Austin, a missionary colleague sent from Logos Church in Vereeniging, South Africa. Hester was directed to our congregation through friends and churches in the Sola 5 association. Though she is still learning the language, Hester has already begun using her skills as a nurse practitioner to help a Dutch missionary doctor based out of Nampula who works during the week in bush clinics. Hester has been a faithful means of transportation for many of the children and some of the adults who have begun visiting the church in recent months, and her love for good Christian



***Hester Austin studying Portuguese***



literature has caused her to help in overseeing the Fiel Reading Room, the Christian bookstore in downtown Nampula operated by members of CCC. Christian book stores in Mozambique can be counted on the fingers of one hand, so this ministry is much needed by a great many Christians, some of whom come long distances to purchase their books. For the past two years Hester has also run the bookroom at the Fiel conferences for church leaders.

### ***CCC and Grace Evangelical Hospital***

Though effective outreach to our community has been a weakness in recent years, our church leaders have great hopes for future fruitfulness thanks to the work carried on since our last report by Mike and Hilda Stolk. Mike and Hilda were sent from Antipas Baptist Church in Pretoria, another Sola 5 congregation, to get the building of Grace Evangelical Hospital underway. The progress they made month by month was phenomenal as the accompanying pictures reveal! By the time Mike and Hilda returned home in December 2009, the exterior of the buiding was almost completed and work was moving ahead on finishing out the inside.



***Mike and Hilda Stolk***



***Starting point***



***After three weeks***



***After two months***



***After three months – 1 November 2009***



Progress on hospital construction after years of delay was no doubt encouraging to Steve Roberts, member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Florida, yet another Sola 5 church to have a strong hand in CCC's ministry over the years. Ten years ago Steve's architectural firm prepared the plans for the hospital free of charge.

Besides Mike and Hilda, other Sola 5 brethren have participated in turning hospital plans into reality. Lorenzo Brocardo, roofing contractor from Brackenhurst Baptist Church in Alberton, spent two weeks in Nampula getting the roof trusses in place.

Because the church and the hospital share the same property, and because several of the church members will be instrumental in the evangelistic and medical work carried on at the hospital, the church hopes that the hospital will one day be a fruitful means of both serving the community and strengthening our own congregation.



***Finally, please pray:***

That God would bless the pulpit ministry of the church, that by it He would strengthen the believers and draw our visitors to Himself and to our congregation.

That the recent unusual increase in attendance would be long-lasting, not transitory.

For continued enthusiasm of the young women in the girls' evangelistic club.

For the salvation of Muacite, wife of leader Arnaldo Aquiles.

For a godly wife for leader Costódio Gustavo.

For great results from the Fiel conference outreach to pastors and church leaders and the literature ministry carried on through the bookstore and conferences.

For Hester Austin as she settles in to ministry in Nampula.



***Participants at this year's Fiel Conference***

For a hearty evangelistic zeal among church members, and for the funds necessary to finish the hospital project.

For missionary Charles Woodrow and his family as they leave for furlough next year to recruit missionary colleagues in the hospital and Fiel work.

**Submitted by Charles Woodrow**