

March Prayer Points 2

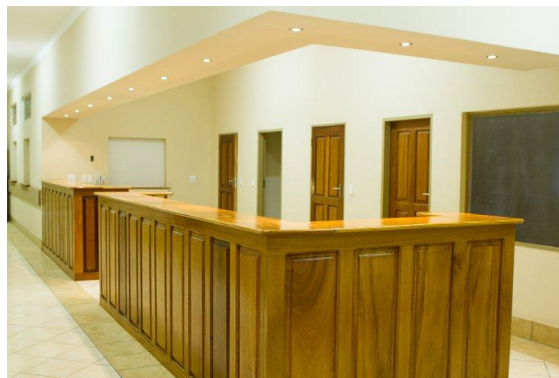
Those who do not have time to read the stories may still get the main points in less than three minutes by scanning the red print and looking at the photos.

Dear Friends:

The previous report referred to the words of Psalm 127:2 telling how God gives to His children even in their sleep (NASB). This report continues to illustrate that theme in describing the present state of our three-fold ministry in Mozambique.

Medical Evangelistic Ministry

In the medical work, we have a beautiful building as displayed in the last newsletter. The architect is drawing plans for an industrial grade kitchen and laundry that we still must build, and we must finish outfitting the hospital. This autumn we will begin recruiting the following missionary personnel:



- **two surgeons,**
- **an anesthesiologist,**
- **a primary care physician,**
- **a maintenance expert who can care for the building and equipment,**
- **and an administrator.**

What has been accomplished so far is due to the generosity of donors and regular supporters and the building skills of Mike Stolk, while I toil at a desk doing administrative work. Their contributions are another example of God giving even in my “sleep” (though it does not feel like sleep whenever Mike is here).



Church Planting Ministry

In the church work, we have gained four new members over the past year, but as usual, people are transferred away as quickly as others join, and we remain in a steady-state of only 20 members, with 10 to 15 other adults present on any given Sunday. **We have twelve male members, and almost to a man they are unusually strong Christians in the African context,** for which I give great thanks after experiencing so many disappointments during the first ten years of the church planting work.

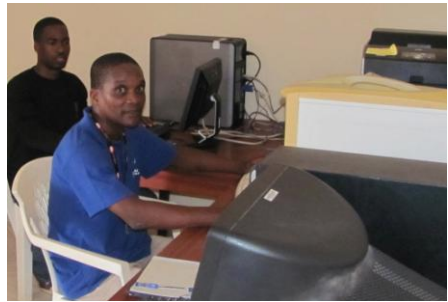


- **Seven of the twelve regularly preach and lead worship.**
- **Seven have memorized the church's entire scripture catechism of faith and practice comprised of 365 selections of Scripture filling**



up 48 pages (begun as a means of providing financial help to people who needed it).

- **Six participate in a Christian literature program where members read a different book each month and then meet to discuss it.** In the first year they have read classics like Luther's *Bondage of the Will* and Owen's *The Mortification of Sin* (abridged in Portuguese), contemporary books like Mark Dever's *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, and other standard works by Sproul, Packer, Carson, MacArthur, and Piper.
- **Three have been studying for one to three years in the International College of Reformed Theology,** a Portuguese language Internet college based in the U.S., Holland, and Brazil that we facilitate through the free electronic media room of our bookstore.
- **Three formed an evangelistic organization for hospital and open-air evangelism.**
- **Two are prolific composers of church music that is African in harmony and style, but also poetic, experiential, and Biblically and theologically sound.** There is a need for such music in the Mozambican church and we are thankful that after 20 years of prayer, God has given us men who can help meet that need! The choir started by these musicians recently recorded its first CD, which we hope other groups will copy.
- **One has founded and registered an organization for strengthening the church in Mozambique, written and published a noteworthy book on the doctrines of grace, recently launched a credible theological journal, organizes and teaches city-wide seminars, and hopes to one day establish a school of theology.**
- When our people are together, I am obliged to deal with questions about covenant theology, new covenant theology, and dispensationalism; or five views of sanctification; or five views on law and gospel. I am reading more now than I have in many years just to deal with the issues raised by some of the members of this African congregation. I am at times "assisted" by church members bringing me articles they have found on the Internet that don't agree with a position I have expressed. It is enough to make one think about closing down the free electronic media room in our bookstore! So far I have chosen instead to prepare carefully and respond graciously!



The women in the church do not intend to be left behind by the men. Besides social and service ministries, they have organized their own reading circle, and several have taken the systematic theology course I usually offer to church leaders. **The women in our congregation now hold two of the six highest scores among the 121 leaders who have taken the course so far!**



The church definitely has room for improvement. We are burdened for evangelism, but fruit is rare and fruit that stays even more rare. Sometimes I wonder if we are like Martians on the African landscape – could we be too different? To bridge the chasm between us and the surrounding culture, we need an extra-abundant outflowing of Christ’s love. As one might guess, some members are discouraged when doctrinal agreement is not complete, and maintaining a joyful spirit in the church where these few individuals are concerned, is challenging. Pastoral ministry, apart from teaching, is wanting. There are non-members in the church who desperately need individual attention, yet home visitation by the leaders is almost non-existent. Like myself, our African leaders are cumbered with many concerns outside the church, but a better missionary example would help them.

I preach every other Sunday, but apart from that, everything that has been described above is the result of the members’ own efforts to grow in grace and truth, with Grace Missions simply providing resources. Progress that comes by the hand of indigenous believers is gratifying to a missionary, but when I see the needs that are still unmet, I know that I should do more. However, my desk has a very short chain!

As I anticipated this report, I was chagrined to think how little teaching I had been doing this term compared to previous years. But in contemplating the activities of our church members during this time, I see again that God has been working, producing fruit even in my “sleep”.

Christian Literature and Conference Ministry

In recent months, Grace Missions hosted the 14th annual Fiel conference and my usual post conference seminar. I also taught three series of messages at different city-wide seminars, one on Christian marriage, one on Christian leadership, and one on the book of Romans (chapters 3-8). Sadly, I have turned down many other teaching invitations, including preaching regularly on the radio, because the heavy administrative burden of our various projects consumes so much of my time.



However, **Timóteo Bila, one of our members, has been diligently at work, and I am doing all I can to help his efforts from behind the scenes. Bila started and maintains several reading circles, not only for members in our church but also for leaders from other churches. He planned the two-day seminar mentioned above on the book of Romans and the Five Solas of the Reformation. He also**



launched the theological journal that included good articles by John Piper, himself, and a local pastor. I help by obtaining from Brazil the books given away to participants in the reading clubs, and our supporters pay for them. Grace Missions also covered most of the cost of Bila's two-day seminar attended by 80 local church leaders whom I invited. Since I have a team of experienced workers and all the information needed to sponsor events like Bila's seminar, I handled most of the logistical arrangements and publicity for that event (alas, more administration!) so Bila could be free to concentrate on his messages and publish his journal. A valuable friend of mine in England, responsible for printing 3000 copies of Bila's first book, is handling the graphic design for his journal. Bila and I are hoping that we can get a printing machine from South Africa that will enable him to produce the journal attractively at an affordable cost.

Once again, in this area my work has been largely administrative, not teaching or meeting dire physical and spiritual needs the way I would like. But though I have been sidetracked from hands-on ministry, God is granting progress which He is accomplishing through Mozambicans whose ministry we are only facilitating. **I cannot take credit for Bila's work (nor can he!), but I rejoice in the fact that God is giving fruit in our corner of Nampula, even in my "sleep".**

This is the state of the ministry where we have been assigned. Over the next few days you will receive reports with stories about people and events already mentioned in this letter that I hope will encourage you and will show that God really is present in the details. I have also included family information later on for friends who like to know what is happening in the home.

In ending this report, I would especially ask for prayer that God would lead us to the people we need for this work to grow – especially someone interested in "administration for the glory of God" who can take over the mundane work that now consumes nearly all of my time, so I can return to medical work and preaching and teaching!

Also pray for:

- **Two surgeons,**
- **One anesthesiologist,**
- **One primary care physician, and**
- **One hospital maintenance expert.**

By His grace,
Charles and Julie Woodrow