

Excerpts from correspondence from Charles Woodrow

August 21, 2005

NOTE: The following contains excerpts from recent correspondence from Charles Woodrow.

The family is well, recovering from an exciting month with a house full of visitors the entire time. First, Constantia Park Baptist Church in Pretoria sent a couple to run the bookshop during the Fiel Bible conference. They were here for three weeks. Community Bible Church from Nashville sent one member of their team two weeks ahead of time to update all the administrative work for the book shop. Just before the conference we had all the speakers and leaders come (five people, including Martin Holdt, the pastor at Constantia Baptist Church in Pretoria), who stayed with us as well. As soon as the conference was over, the full Community Bible Church team arrived, 12 more people plus the two pilots who flew them from Johannesburg. That made 23 people living in the house. It was quite comfortable, and the CBC people said there were no inconveniences. We seated all 23 people at two very large dining room tables with room to spare, everyone slept in beds, and the four bathrooms seemed to be adequate. We still have seven beds to make, so our sleeping capacity could increase even further. The team got to all their appointments riding in the Bedford (the large transport truck) which we configured as a troop carrier, putting the frame and canvas over the bed. It was ideal for the job as they could see Nampula as if from a tour bus.

The CBC team arrived a full week late as their flights were cancelled due to a strike by South African Airlines that began two days before their expected departure from the States. So they were with us only four days. However, they had a good time, and the facilities were so suitable and the opportunities to minister and experience Africa so plentiful that they have determined to bring another team next year to take full advantage. It was the first time for us to host a large group since moving into the house, and it worked wonderfully. We are expecting to have many such experiences as word spreads about the good possibilities here.

For us, the great benefit was all the expertise these people brought with them, as well as the keen interest the visit has generated in their respective churches. The book shop ran well at the conference; and after the main CBC team left, two women stayed on to teach me to use Quicken and Excel for our finances and the bookshop respectively. They bought and installed the software, only a couple of the many "goodies" the team brought with them. So

we are now fully computerized in both areas. That is a great leap forward, especially with the finances. The team also brought all our JESUS film equipment with them with no customs charged, as well as the hymnals, and there was no shipping cost involved.

The kids were thrilled to have so many friends on hand and joined in all the activities going on during the visits. They were the interpreters for most of them. The visitors toured two orphanages, visited our worship services, led the Missionary Fellowship service on Sunday evening, visited the museum of African culture, traveled into the barrios to visit the homes of some of our church leaders, went to the local scenic sights, hiked in the bush, bought African curios at the flea market, toured Nampula and local environs from the troop carrier, and had their last dinner at a nice outdoor restaurant. They were scheduled to run the kitchen at the conference and do two work projects at the orphanages, but those had to be canceled when their flight was delayed and the trip shortened. The people who arrived before the conference helped with the nursery, kitchen, and book shop. The group from CBC had planned to do a short concert at various locations around town with the pastor preaching an evangelistic message and other team members giving testimonies, but that also had to be canceled from lack of time. We had the generator and sound system for all that, as well as the truck, but we'll have to try out that ministry the next time.

The Fiel conference continues to improve every year. We now have four local missionary families running it as well as the team from Editora Fiel in Brazil and a missionary from South Africa. We have already planned and scheduled the next conference, and it should be even better. Among other things, we plan to host a parallel conference for pastors' wives which will be entirely planned for their benefit.

This year we had 190 people signed up to attend, though not all of them made it. Seventy-four out-of-town leaders signed up to live at the conference site the entire time, with the others staying with friends in town or in their own homes. People from all over are now calling the conference the most significant ministry going on to the church at large in Mozambique. We have had that conviction from the beginning, and I think we are only beginning to see the potential it has. The New Tribes missionaries, who have entered Mozambique in the past year, have traveled the length and breadth of northern Mozambique doing surveys. They say everywhere they go the evangelical leaders are virtually unanimous in telling them salvation comes through keeping the law. However, one New Tribes missionary returned last week quite excited. In the middle of the bush in the province to the

south of us they came across a pastor serving a mudhut congregation who vigorously denied salvation by works, insisting rather that it was a miraculous work of grace accomplished by God in the hearts of His elect. He also had a respectable little library and a Geneva study Bible. When they asked him where he got his books, he said he got them from attending the Fiel Conferences. The missionaries were so encouraged to find that little oasis of truth in the midst of such spiritual darkness amongst professing evangelical leaders they looked me up on their return to Nampula to let me know.

The post-conference systematic theology seminar I led was perhaps the most satisfying event I have participated in during my entire time in Mozambique, though the conferences are thrilling because of the good attendance and excellent speakers. I limited enrollment in the seminar to 20 men and filled every space, turning others away. They studied 11 hours a day for five days and a half day on Saturday, 25 hours of classroom lecture, 15 hours of discussion, 15 hours of homework and five hours of test-taking (13 tests). I was up late every night grading about 100 homework or test papers each day. But it was a rich experience seeing the men come to grips with salvation by grace through faith and all the ramifications of the true gospel. There were some good thinkers and spiritual men in the group, and for those men it was clear the conferences and books had plowed up the field ahead of time. Others were just beginning to think Biblically. But in every case it was a rewarding experience, and the men enthusiastically called for a follow-on seminar. I have kept the contact information for each of them, and I believe if I offered another seminar next month they would sign up two or three times the number of men we had this time, though I limit the conference to 20 because of all the grading I have to do. I believe this ministry is even more crucial than the conferences because here the men are compelled to interact with scripture and learn to think and preach Biblically. We looked at many hundreds of Bible texts, all of which were part of their handouts. Several mentioned the benefit they expected to derive from having so many scripture portions to refer to in their sermon preparations.

Before the FIEL conference I attended the Skogheim conference. I much appreciated the messages of the other men whom I was grateful to get to know personally. Besides preaching the opening message, the organizers gave me an hour to present a missionary report on Sunday afternoon. I got to make good friends from churches all over South Africa and visited with some good missionary prospects. The leaders seemed to go out of their way to give the Nampula ministry plenty of exposure. I trust we will be able to capitalize on

that in future visitation times, though so far it has been easy already to get into South African churches, far easier than in the States. South Africa may be a better place for recruiting missionaries for Mozambique anyway.

As for the kids, they are staying active in the church youth ministry and in the missionary youth ministry. Kent and Sarah are progressing well with both piano and guitar. I bought Kent the software to put his music on the computer and he is getting proficient with that. He has a number of compositions. They really enjoyed having the music minister from CBC here, who is an excellent performer and solid Christian.

Julie was busy being hostess this past month. That is what makes her happiest, though she says in the future we need to hire a cook. We can easily do that as we have several working already during the conferences and seminars. Her pantry is well stocked with salad dressings, chocolate chips, snacks, flavorings, and all the other "loot" the visitors bring with them.

The guest house isn't fully furnished yet, but it is getting there and looking nicer and nicer all the time. The grounds are also in nice shape. We often wonder at all the Lord has given us to enjoy, but the past month has caused us to understand better why God has so richly provided all the resources that have come through Grace Missions. We are hoping to host many more mission groups and expect that will redound to our benefit.

On a side note, Faustino's murderer was convicted and sentenced to 22 years in jail, 24 years being the maximum penalty.

Charles Woodrow

Note from the editor:

Charles will be in the US for the annual Grace Missions Advisory Board meetings August 26-27. The entire family will return to the States in early fall to continue church visitation. If your church would like to schedule a visit with the Woodrows, please contact Charles (cjwoodrow@teledata.mz) or Grace Missions (gracemissions@juno.com) as soon as possible.

On a side note, if you wish to add or delete an email address to this mailing list, please contact Dunie Roberts at mroberts31@satx.rr.com.