

April-June Prayer Points

South Africa trip:

For most of April and May we were in South Africa for a family holiday, though three weeks were spent in Johannesburg on projects there requiring my personal attention. Working from Nampula I had been unsuccessful in getting the large tent manufactured that Community Bible Church in Nashville, Tennessee donated for use in the annual FIEL pastors' conferences. With continual prodding from close range the tent was finally undertaken and completed by the South African firm who had promised to do it, though now we are having unusual difficulties getting it transported to Nampula in time for this year's conference (more on that below). We also ordered another container-load of building supplies for construction of the hospital, another project that was progressing slowly when carried out from Nampula.

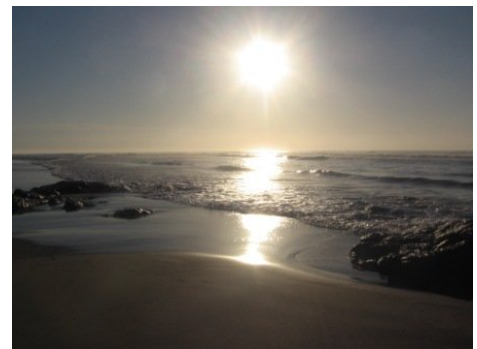
We thank God that a major prayer request for someone to oversee construction of the hospital was answered during our stay in South Africa! Mike and Hilda Stolk of Antipas Reformed Baptist church in Pretoria have recently retired and are offering to spend their days with us until the construction work is completed or until we run out of funds, whichever ever comes first. Mike has directed several other building projects on the mission field and his personal contacts in the building business have already proven helpful. Hilda is an added bonus as she has experience running the kitchen for conferences of more than one thousand participants! She and Mike will come in early July to help set up and run this year's FIEL conference and then kick off construction of the hospital as soon as that is over.

1) Please thank God with us for this much-needed answer to prayer in providing Mike and Hilda Stolk to help with the FIEL conference and oversee construction of the hospital!

2) Pray that the building permits, still held up in the municipal office, and other legal documents will all be processed in time for us to start construction on schedule.

Holidays:

For our holidays the family enjoyed 17 days of free fun at the Indian Ocean, staying south of Durban in the vacation flat of friends John and Elaine Joubert from Johannesburg. Because school was in session we had the whole resort, beach, and swimming pool to ourselves! Trying to follow Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones' example, I spent half of each day reading and the other half having fun with the family. Vacation is about the only time I have for reading, and with over two weeks of leisure time I was able to feast on ten excellent books dealing with various aspects of Christian life and ministry.



The beach where we stayed in South Africa

Our second week we were joined by the Turnbull family, missionary friends here in Nampula, who were invited by the Jouberts to stay in a second flat at the same resort. Their five kids match ours in age, and so the ten brothers and sisters had a truly grand time. Their experiences were captured in many photos which can be seen at their blogsite, www.10-happy-kidos.blogspot.com, if you would like to see how much fun ten kids can have on a South African vacation!



The kids find an exhausted sea lion on one of their beach walks

After the beach the two families headed off for seven days at the famous Kruger game park. We visit the park about every four years, and this experience was our best one ever! The first few hours there we inadvertently got ourselves surrounded by a herd of about 100 elephants as they moved through the dense vegetation toward a river a few hundred yards away. For about 15 minutes, whichever way we



tried to go we risked getting into the path of an elephant. Until we could maneuver the car back to the edge of the herd we felt exceedingly vulnerable, given that you must always be able to quickly withdraw from any elephant who thinks you are challenging his right of way and decides to charge you. Surrounded as we were, it would have been hard to please one elephant without riling another! Thankfully, none of them took offense at our presence.



Other highlights were watching a family of elephants playing in a pond, enjoying another herd wallowing at a mud hole, and observing two lionesses hunting (unsuccessfully) at a water hole. We had many good experiences, but our friends from South Africa are probably getting bored at this point so I will stop, even though most of our American friends would enjoy imagining these unusual experiences that come as a fringe benefit of missionary life.

While in Johannesburg Kent was able to take the SAT exam offered there. The results encouraged us that home schooling on the mission field has not hurt our kids too terribly. Kent scored 770 on the critical reading section and did not do badly on the other sections either. To say we were relieved by the results would be an understatement!

3) Please thank God with us for a most rewarding and refreshing holiday time in South Africa.

Church:

We are grateful for two baptisms coming up next Sunday - our Andrew (now sixteen years old) and the oldest daughter of Arnaldo, one of our African church leaders. This brings our church membership to 18, with six new members just in the last year.

Given the slowness of church growth in the past we could almost persuade ourselves that we were bursting at the seams with new members, but the truth is we still need more church participants to come to Christ and wish that we had many more visitors. We are not a typical Mozambican church – we expect obedience to Christ to be reflected in church members by chastity before marriage, permanent marriages to believers only, faithfulness in personal devotions, and other behavior which is strikingly non-traditional by local standards. While this presents a formidable obstacle to joining the church in the minds of some, we believe it is no hindrance to those who are saved and long that we could be more fruitful in the church ministry.



4) Please thank God with us for consistent spiritual growth in the past year, 5) but continue to pray that we would have a winsome testimony resulting in many more genuine conversions among the people we were sent to help.

FIEL (“faithful”) Conference:

Preparations are now underway for the ninth annual FIEL pastors’ conference to be held 22-25 July. This is a high point of every year as church workers converge on Nampula from all parts of the country. Our speakers will be Ronald Kalafungwa from Lusaka, Zambia and Gilson Santos from Brazil.



Last year we outgrew the main meeting room at the SIL facilities where the conference is held, so we had a large tent manufactured in South Africa. The tent is ready, after much struggle, but the shipper has missed three opportunities to send it to Nampula and we are rapidly running out of time. On one of the three attempts, the vehicle was allegedly hijacked (commandeered by armed robbers while the driver was in it) the day before it was to take our tent to Mozambique. Thankfully the tent had not yet been loaded or we would have lost it after so much effort. Beyond problems with the tent, with only a few weeks left, many boxes of books ordered months ago to replenish the book store stock before the conference takes place have yet to appear. These and other setbacks consistently cast before us in preparing for this year’s conference cause me to wonder if there is a special effort being made by our adversary to hamstring a ministry that has been so successful in years past.

6) Please pray for the speakers at our conference, 7) for Karl Peterson as he prepares the program, 8) for Salome and me as we make the local preparations, 9) that God might bind the power of our adversary, and 10) that the tent and books would arrive without further delay.

Until next month:
Charles and Julie Woodrow