

August Prayer Points



Dear friends:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
And our deepest thanks to those who lifted their voices in prayer for the 9th annual FIEL (faithful) conference which just ended days ago here in Nampula. I believe God answered in a resounding fashion all six requests mentioned in the last prayer bulletin!



First, after eight months of struggling with a dilatory manufacturer and an equally laggard exporter, the large marquee tent did arrive in the nick of time. **Mike Stolk** barely got it erected and fitted with lights before the conference was underway. As the photo above reveals, it was a striking landmark as it loomed against the night sky, and without the tent we could never have accommodated the 240 attendees at this year's meetings.

Second, in response to fervent prayer, the final shipment of books ordered and mailed long ago finally began trickling in one week before the conference. After months in transit, the last box arrived in Salome's relieved hands the day before the conference began! Such last minute providences make it impossible to prepare in a pleasant, relaxed way for so complex an event, but they also serve to reveal in a clear, objective fashion that God is very much a part of the FIEL ministry in Mozambique. From the first conference onward, He has given us many proofs that this is not a work conceived and undertaken by men alone.

Next, the wireless transmitters for sending the television images to the overflow room also arrived in time, which was our third unlikely result. The courier did not expect them to reach us until after the conference began, but in answer to prayer they found our remote corner of Africa several days ahead of time. In the end, they didn't work, but at the last minute we found 100 meters of coaxial cable in a store right here in Nampula (phenomenal!) which did the job as well though perhaps a bit less elegantly. As mute and as moot as they were, the timely arrival of the transmitters did preclude us from registering an unanswered prayer request!



The other three answers to last month's prayer

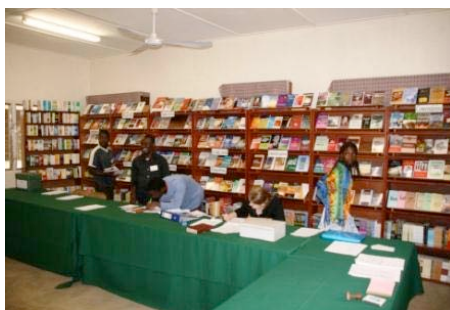


requests are subjective in their evaluation. They were related to: 1) God's divine enabling for our speakers **Ronald Kalafungwa** from Lusaka, Zambia, and **Gilson Santos** from Brazil who brought 12 expositions from the book of Ephesians; 2) His hand of blessing upon the many participants who came from all parts of Mozambique's 10 provinces; and 3) His under-taking for the conference organizers and hosts who could easily have found themselves harassed and harried on every side by unforeseen disasters. It is no overstatement to say those present would affirm these requests were granted just as certainly as the former ones. Gilson Santos brought excellent messages from Ephesians 1-3, doctrinally one of the richest mines in Scripture. Though these were the messages I most eagerly anticipated, Ronald's Kalafungwa's preaching on Christian living from Ephesians 4-6 was stunning. My own heart's testimony and the audible responses from the audience confirmed that his messages repeatedly struck home.



During the afternoon sessions, the wives held their own meetings with **Christine Hallet**, former missionary to Mozambique and Zimbabwe, who addressed topics related to the pastor's home. African women are drawn to Christine's wise, experienced and compassionate demeanor, and we are thankful to have her back as a regular fixture at these conferences.

The book ministry ran well at the conference under the careful supervision of **Salome Van Niekerk** and her four assistants. Over \$7,500 worth of literature (publisher's cost), or 780 books, Bibles, and booklets were sold. We gave away an additional 460 booklets and each pastor received a free handbook of systematic theology that follows in the sound tradition of the Reformation Fathers. Editora Fiel provides excellent Reformed Evangelical literature at 60-80% discounts, then Grace



Missions pays two-thirds of the remaining cost so that Mozambican pastors can read the Puritans, Jonathan Edwards, Bishop Ryle, Spurgeon, Pink, Lloyd-Jones, MacArthur, Piper, and Sproul at 7-15% of the regular price. How thankful we are for generous supporters who make it possible to put such literature into the hands of African pastors!

The reputation of the conference is growing. **Karl Peterson**, who organizes the teaching program for the conferences, reported a 35% increase in attendance



compared to last year. From all ten of Mozambique's provinces, 240 church leaders registered for the conference, and of those only 20 failed to make the sometimes arduous journey to Nampula. Their appreciation for the

Karl Peterson, Charles Woodrow, and ten pastors who have never missed a conference

conference is reflected in the high return rate. Of the 85 Mozambican leaders present at our first conference nine years ago, ten of them (12%) have returned every year since without fail. Many others have missed only once or twice after getting their first experience with the conference.

The high point for me, however, is the weeklong seminar that follows afterwards. Last year I was disappointed to have to cancel my course in systematic theology when only a few participants signed up for it. This year however, 30% of the conference attendees registered for the seminar, 36 for the course in expository



preaching taught by Gilson Santos and 30 for my seminar in systematic theology! Baptista Herculano, a pastor and one of my former students, said from the podium that it was better to miss the conference than to miss the seminar. To prove his point, he said that the seminar was where he first came to the startling realization that his dependence on good works to save him in the Day of Judgment actually made Christ of no effect to him, cutting him off from grace and from salvation!

I agree with his sentiments about the seminar. The conference is excellent, but one can participate passively, enjoy the fellowship, relish the fine preaching, and still miss the main point. The seminar, with five hours of lecture every day, fifteen hours of class discussion, fifteen homework assignments, and fourteen tests, makes it



Mealtime at the conference

impossible to skate through undetected while missing the point. The men are compelled to grapple with the issues in the written assignments and to defend their responses before the group in the discussions, and thus many finally come to terms with the material under study. In the course of six days, I graded (with Kent's invaluable assistance) 513 papers, or answers to 9,766 questions(!), the great majority of them requiring written responses. It is worth the effort, especially in this year's case, as each student commented on how rewarding the material was. The time pressure is considerable as we study from 7:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with only three short breaks, yet every one of the men said on his post-course evaluation that he would not have one class cut from the curriculum to ease the strain. When I offered

to cancel the final test, they insisted that it be administered. One of the pastors said, "In this course, even the tests are sweet because of what we are studying." Because the doctrines of grace are at the core of much of the material, I have never enjoyed so positive a response from the entire class. This was yet another in an uninterrupted succession of stunning answers to prayer over the past few weeks. Thank you, prayer warriors!

Only a small portion of the conference cost is covered by the registration fee paid by participants. Editora Fiel, Karl Peterson, and I cover the rest of the expenses. This year Grace Missions' portion of the cost came to \$24,200. Years ago I would never have thought we could support so expensive an undertaking, but God has made His presence known repeatedly in the conferences, and His financial provision is just one of those manifestations. While God is the primary cause, we know He provides through you, our generous supporters. Thank you for your faithfulness!

The final remarkable answer to prayer has to do with the hospital construction which Mike Stolk will officially launch in just two days. When the Grace Evangelical Hospital board met States-side in June to decide about beginning construction, we had \$78,000 on hand for building the structure, which we anticipate will cost an additional \$600,000 or more to complete if building costs stop sky rocketing. God has been gracious and has never let our coffers run dry despite the heavy financial drain of our various ministries. The board decided to begin building in faith and see what would happen this time. With in a few weeks of the meeting, we had over \$200,000 in the building fund! I know about \$50,000 came from re-allocating already existing funds, but I still have not learned how we came by the remaining increase. Our architect says with \$250,000 we could probably get the external structure up and covered. Though we are a bit short of that mark still, it has been a great encouragement to Mike and myself to know that we can get much more done than we thought before, and that God not only can, but likely will, provide what is not already in hand.



Mike and Hilda Stolk

It seems certain the prayers of many have gone up to God in our behalf these past weeks. Now, as many have lifted up their voices in supplication, may praise and thanksgiving redound to Him from whom all blessings flow!

By His grace:
Charles and Julie Woodrow

P.S. In previous newsletters I have referred to www.10-happy-kidos.blogspot.com, which describes the daily activities of the ten Woodrow/Turnbull missionary kids, otherwise known as the Wood-Bulls. For better pictures of the conference and more entertaining comments from our volunteers' point of view, you may want to check it out.



Some of the Wood-Bulls serving tea at tea time