

Mozambique 2010

I arrived at Heathrow Airport at 5pm on 26th August on the first part of my journey to Mozambique for my flight to Johannesburg only to find to my horror that the flight had been cancelled. My on going flights from J'berg via Maputo to Lichinga were all carefully timed so that I would move smoothly from one flight to another so a cancelled flight was nothing short of catastrophic. Fortunately, our oldest Son came swiftly to the rescue and I was transferred to another airline flight!

That I am delighted to say was the only problem that I experienced for the whole of my three week trip to Mozambique and thanks to a supporting letter from Bishop Mark and nifty paperwork from the tour operator, I have received a complete rebate for my cancelled flight.

So what of my trip this year?

My first weekend was spent in Lichinga where the Diocese of Niassa has its base. Bishop Mark and his wife Helen and also Rebecca Vandermeulen have their homes there. Then it was straight into working with Rebecca and Mario and the Equipa da Vida teams (Team of Life) at Mashamba, a Diocesan training centre.



Tuesday we were up early and on the road to Mecanhelas, eight hours in total with two stops one in Mandimba and one in Cuamba. We arrived at dusk to be greeted by some of the Mothers Union women whom I had taught last year. They had been waiting quite a long time but sang a very warm welcome. It was lovely to see them again. In the morning I was able to see the Church with its roof on – what a great

sight especially knowing that people at St Augustine's, Whitton, have been a part of providing the roof. The Church is far from complete requiring the floor to be filled and concrete laid but it is intact and will stand against the rains. Padre Camwenda would very much like to render the walls, not essential but would make the Church look very good.



During the next five days I was an observer and participant in a project to provide Mosquito Nets to an area within the District of Mecanhelas that has a high incidence of malaria and deaths from malaria.

Rebecca and Frank, Samuel, Miguel and Albertina (members of the Equipa da Vida) together with Padre Camwenda (Parish Priest) and Padre Winess (a Community Priest – Self supporting minister, like me) met with Alvish, Director of the Association – Working together for Community Development (AJDC) and two of his colleagues Ohinda and Matilda. The AJDC is a voluntary organization not a Government one and does not receive funding, so all three workers are volunteers.



We started each day with Prayers and a bible study followed by singing, of course. Then we started the business of the day, developing the project to provide the nets. The need for nets is great so the whole thing of distribution has to be very carefully thought through – who to distribute to, how many to each family, how to ensure they go to the people identified, how to ensure the nets are used correctly and maintained properly etc., etc. Every stage of the project has to be determined so that each person involved in the sequence of events knows exactly what they are responsible for and to whom.



By the end of the week we had determined the area to be targeted, what information would be needed, the people who would go to see the Chief of each village involved, what questions would be asked of the Chief and how the answers would be transferred back to Rebecca for the next stage of the project. The time frame from starting the project to actually distributing the nets would be three months. So hopefully if everything goes according to all the careful planning the nets should be distributed in January or February of next year.



A simple problem occurred when determining how people would access the villages to be targeted because the one motorbike was not in a good state of repair! So there was considerable discussion about the funding for bicycles to be provided for the field workers. For example, is the money that has been donated to provide the mosquito nets intended to cover the cost of setting up the project, providing transport etc., or is the money purely to pay for the number of mosquito nets required? These kinds of details are important because there needs to be transparency in the spending of donors' money.

People who work for the Diocese, like Rebecca and the Equipa da Vida teams have to be able to account, with a receipt, for every metacais (the local currency) that they spend of the money that has been donated from overseas.



We returned to Lichinga stopping on the way in Mandimba where we met up with Revd Derek Winterburn and two people from his congregation who were on a visit to their link parish – a long way to go to have lunch with my Area Dean!!

En route to Lichinga we stopped off to purchase some bicycles with money that had been donated by a private donor. These bicycles are to be given to members of the Mothers Union so that they can move around and visit the women in the villages in their area more easily.



The next phase of my trip was spent in Lichinga with Rosa who also works for the Diocese as a Field worker for the Mothers Union. Like last year, the women came from the surrounding area in great numbers.



I think we stopped counting after seventy had arrived. We had a great time together praying, singing, studying the Bible and teaching.



The women were delighted with all the embroidery silks and threads that the women at St Augustine's gave and set about making and embroidering the table cloths for their MU meetings and the memory bags. We can learn so much from these women who embrace life with such enthusiasm and praise of God and yet if we judge them by our standards they would appear to have so little.



In my last week I was very privileged to present Bishop Mark with greetings from ALMA for the Diocese of Niassa Synod and spend the week as an observer at the Synod.



Bishop Mark presided at the Synod with all the Priests in the Diocese of Niassa attending plus invited representatives from the laity in the Diocese. In his opening sermon Bishop Mark took 2 Corinthians 12. 9 – “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness”.....so that the power of Christ may dwell in me” as his text and the theme for the Synod – GRACE – Generosity of Christ, Reconciliation, Acceptance, Compassion and Encouragement. So much happened during that week but the most significant event was the decision taken by Synod to work towards Multiplication, to divide the Diocese of Niassa into three Diocese. This was a momentous decision because it reflects the fact that the numbers of churches and membership of the church has grown significantly in the last ten years. As Bishop Mark said “it took more than 100 years to create one Diocese, 31 years to create three Diocese”. The Synod ended with a great celebration Eucharist which started at 8am after a three kilometre walk around Lichinga and ended at 2pm and was held in the local Basket Ball stadium with nearly 2,000 people present – a great celebration indeed.





I had not been to the Lake shore on any of my previous visits so it was with great delight that on my last day in Mozambique, I accompanied Rebecca and Mario and the Equipa da Vida team who had worked so hard during the Synod, on a days' outing to the lake side.



We had a great deal of fun and just before we came home the team presented me with a special cap – so I am proud to say I too am a member of the Equipa da Vida – Team of Life.



Three weeks went by all too quickly and I was on way my home again and arrived without any mishap.

It is difficult to know what to say in conclusion but perhaps the best that I can say is please go and experience Mozambique for yourself.

