



FRIENDS of MADAGASCAR MISSION

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Fall 2023

Dear Friends of Madagascar Mission,

We all have regular routines of life that we have developed over time. Routines are not bad, but they may cause us to look at life with a “ho hum, nonchalant attitude.”

While in Madagascar this summer I had the opportunity, as we were traveling from Bezaha to Manasoa, to gain a different perspective regarding routines. It was a trip of 25 km (15.5 miles) that took more than three hours and required a 4-wheel drive vehicle to travel this distance. As we slowly drove over roads that had fallen into disrepair, I was able to watch the routines of the people going about their daily life.



The women were tending to the home, the children were doing chores to help the family, and the men were tending to the rice paddies and herding the cattle. During this time, I saw something different than a routine, I saw a “**rhythm of life**”. They had smiles on their faces, they waved joyfully as we passed them, and they worked to provide for their life together. A good example of the rhythm of life is this picture of three girls walking and carrying clothing on their heads. They were heading to the river to wash their clothes. As we drove in our powerful 4 wheeled vehicles, they passed us three times as we were stuck in the sand or water.



Our vehicle stuck on the road to Manasoa.

This has caused me to reflect upon what we do at Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM). Our work is not a routine or a “ho hum nor a nonchalant attitude”. We are doing this mission work because we believe we are called by God to support the Christian mission in Madagascar with prayer and financial support. One hundred percent of the financial gifts goes to the mission work and the staff does not receive a salary or reimbursement for their expenses. We are daily working to expand the mission programs, and provide financial support. There is a joyful “**rhythm in our work**” at FOMM, and for this we are so very thankful to God.

This issue of the Friends of Madagascar Fall Newsletter seeks to share the FOMM’s “**rhythm of life**”. You, as a Friend of Madagascar Mission, are a part of this “**rhythm of life**” and we are pleased to share with you the work of FOMM. Thank you!

PEACE IN CHRIST!

The Rev. David P. Lerseth

P.O. Box 46381, Eden Prairie, MN 55344 Phone# 847-445-8177 Email: FriendsOfMadagascarMission@gmail.com

THE RHYTHM OF FOMM'S 2023 GLOBAL MISSION EDUCATION TRIP TO MADAGASCAR

From May 31 through June 16, four members of FOMM traveled to Madagascar: Pastor David Lerseth (President/Executive Director), Jeff Tetzlaff (Vice-President of FOMM), Pastor Eric Swenssen (Staff, Director of Digital Media Management) and Ruby Sistad (A member of a supporting congregation from Fosston, MN). This was not a tourist trip or a trip to build something in Madagascar. They tell us, "You don't need to come and build something, paint a building, etc; just come and visit with us and get to know us and our mission goals." We traveled to several cities and villages and held five summits listening, sharing and planning meetings with the mission program personnel. The following is a report about summit meetings.

SUMMIT #1: PRISON MINISTRY: Meeting with the Prison Ministry Madagascar Bureau (PMM) that manages this ministry.

The Prison Ministry is one of the original three programs that FOMM has supported since our beginning in 2010. We began with one prison and as of 2023 we are supporting a ministry in 30 prisons. Our plan and prayer is to increase ministry in five additional prisons each year. This goal is dependent upon receiving the financial support needed for this growth.

Discussion at the summit: The average cost for supporting a prison ministry is \$3,000.00 per year. We discussed whether or not FOMM could continue to increase the budget each year to continue the expansion of this ministry. We also discussed how the prison ministry board could also provide support.

Outcomes from the summit: 1) The Prison Ministry Madagascar (PMM) board presented four proposals for how they could raise funds to help support this mission ministry. They will continue to develop these plans for implementation. 2) The PMM is growing and expanding so there needs to be the development of a new organizational process. We are thinking about dividing the PMM into two separate programs. The first is the ministry for the prisoners. The second area is the humanitarian program that will help the prisoners physical needs. This includes: nutrition, infrastructure of the prison facilities, literacy/education, rehabilitation and legal advocacy. Each of these two emphases will be managed by two different boards.

We look forward to reporting to you the result of this planning and ask for your prayers that this ministry might become a powerful, life changing program for the prisoners and their families.

2023 Prison Ministry Budget: \$86,000.00

We visited a children's prison worship service. Pictured with our team is the prison ministry leaders and congregational members who provide support for this mission.



FRIENDS OF MADAGASCAR MISSION EDUCATION TRIP IN 2024

It is not too early to begin planning for our 2024 trip to Madagascar. If you are interested, please notify FOMM and we will send you an application form that describes the trip, ask for your interests in such a trip, time of the year you would consider, FOMM's expectations for a trip and the estimated costs. There is no obligation to go on the trip at this point, but this application gives you an opportunity to be informed about such a trip. We already have received 4 requests for information for the trip. FriendsOfMadagascarMission@gmail.com

SUMMIT #2: CHILDREN IN PERIL: A meeting with programs and individuals that work with children who live in difficult situations and who need physical, spiritual love and care.

Discussion at the summit: There were four programs that were present for the discussion. Each has a different type of program but all working with children in peril.

1) Nofy i Androy was represented by Mahareta Paubert Kaurin and four girls who are in this program that provides educational support for girls to receive an education. **2)** Hope Lutheran School for street children was represented by Dr. Peri. **3)** Thrive Madagascar, an Australian Christian based program, that ministers to street children and provides educational programs was represented by Paulin and Chantal.

4) A Development Center was represented by Tsimbina "Tsitsy" Aandrianaivo that provides care for under-age single mothers.



Those who attended the summit on Children in Peril

Outcomes from the summit: **1)** It was a powerful conversation about the needs for children in Madagascar and how we can support one another and be a resource for each other. **2)** FOMM also supports the School for the Visually Impaired. They were not present at this summit but we visited the school when we traveled to Antsirabe.

As a result of this summit, FOMM is considering support for the tuition cost for needy students at Dr. John Dyrnes Lutheran School in Bezaha. The estimated cost for the annual support is: \$1,500.00 (\$35.00 per child for 12 months of support). Also, we have received a gift of \$1,500.00 to begin a Nofy i Androy Program at this school.

2023 Children in Peril Budget: **\$12,000.00 Nofy i Androy Program**
\$15,000.00 Visual Impaired School
\$15,700.00 Antalaha Children's Prison Program

SUMMIT #3: HEALTH CLINICS: A meeting with the executive director and program coordinator of SALFA (The Madagascar Lutheran Church Health Program).

Discussion at the summit: SALFA has 10 hospitals and 25 plus clinics and many dispensaries across Madagascar. FOMM does not normally become involved in medical/health programs/projects, but there is a lack of medical facilities in the areas of Madagascar where FOMM supports ministry. As a result, SALFA has asked FOMM if we would be interested in providing the buildings for 3 different locations in the arid, poor south-west of Madagascar.

Outcomes from the summit: The ministry of the Gospel can never be separated from caring for the physical needs of people. Thus, FOMM is open to the possibility of accepting SALFA's invitation to provide the cost of building 2 new clinics and remodeling an existing clinic. The FOMM Board of Directors has not taken action on this proposal from SALFA but there is a good possibility that they will seriously consider raising the funds. We have received architectural drawings for the buildings and are impressed with the plans.

Projected cost for building the clinics: **Betroka Clinic --- \$14,446.00**
(Furnishings, not included) **Manasoa Clinic --- \$14,446.00**
Isoanala Clinic --- \$ 9,198.00 (A remodeling project)

SUMMIT #4: EVANGELISM SUMMIT: FOMM's central purpose for existence is to support those who share the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the people of Madagascar. And so, on June 10-12th we gathered a total of 85 persons (evangelists, synod leaders, financial directors and program leaders) for a summit in Toliara on the theme of Evangelism.

Discussion at the summit: Pastor David Lerseth, executive director of FOMM began the summit by sharing a message based on the Biblical book of Jonah. This book is often called the "Missionary Book" of the Bible. Why? Because Jonah ran in the opposite direction, away from going to the non-believing city of Nineveh. It was overwhelming to think about the problems one would experience from proclaiming the Word of God to unbelieving people! So, it is with us. The evangelists responded to this message with their own experiences of fear and not wanting to travel to the neighboring village where there were no Christians. It was a lively beginning to the summit. Also, during this event, we met with the synod leaders for discussion on the evangelism programs we support and all financial directors went through a training event on how to maintain correct auditing procedures.



FOMM members being welcomed by Malagasy evangelists at the Evangelism Summit

Outcomes from the summit: It is always great to meet face to face with our Malagasy partners to discuss the work of evangelism that FOMM supports in Madagascar. We were able to clarify expectations, prepare proper reports and pray together. At the conclusion of our event a Covenant Agreement was signed by all programs. This agreement states the expectations of each program and also what FOMM promises to provide for each program.

2023 Evangelism Budget: Evangelists (56) --- \$44,800.00

Bible Schools (3) --- \$39,500.00

Prison Ministry --- (Financial costs listed under Prison Ministry Summit), \$86,000



Developing relationships with the Malagasy Lutheran Church is important. Pictured with Pastor David Lerseth is Pastor President Jean Norbert ANDRIAMIHAJA of the Betroka Synod.

SUMMIT #5: WATER (DRIP IRRIGATION AND WELL DRILLING) FOMM's mission support is mainly in the arid central-southwest part of Madagascar. This region suffers from a lack of rain and therefore is one of the most likely places for famine. Recently there was a four year period of drought. FOMM seeks to provide humanitarian assistance in providing water and teaching farming techniques.

Discussion at the summit: This is a major problem and it will take FOMM's cooperation with other organizations to help bring solutions to help. We have found a great partner in our goal for developing water with the Madagascar Water Project. Also, FOMM's Steve Lellelid has been trained in electronic imaging equipment to identify locations where there is a high possibility for finding abundant water at deep levels (a modern water witching process). With these two resource persons we are making plans for water development in the Betroka area.

Outcomes from the summit: Madagascar Water Project is importing well drilling equipment. FOMM will negotiate with this organization to dig the wells for FOMM. Also, they will work to restore existing wells that have ceased to produce water. As a result, they have been able to reclaim these shallow wells and FOMM will also support them to continue this work.

Funding for this project is available to dig 3 deep wells and restore dozens of existing wells

What Legacy Will We Leave?

All of us will leave a legacy. The question is: what kind of legacy? What will your legacy say about your priorities, your passions, your faith?

A legacy is something passed from one generation to another when our life journey is over. Our first thought is about the finances and the property in a person's estate given to family or loved ones. But, even those without significant financial assets also leave a legacy.

A more significant legacy is the lasting impact of one's life based on actions, events, accomplishments, and relationships. It flows from integrity of character, reputation, and faith. Our legacy should clearly reflect our core values, as well as what we hold precious, what we love and cherish.

As people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who support God's desire to share His love with the whole world, we see reality through a different lens than most. We know that we owe the LORD a debt of gratitude that we can never repay. So, when we think about our legacy, we want our lasting impact of life to bear witness to our faith, to our love for Christ, and to our desire to build Christ's kingdom of love.

When believers plan our distribution of financial assets, part of the desire intrinsic in our "last will and testament" is to not only bless our loved ones, but also to express our faith. We want the legacy to bear witness to the One to whom we belong. We want our legacy to show our gratitude to Him. We want our legacy to generously empower the continued spread of the gospel.

At the end of his life, King David was raising money for the building of God's temple under Solomon. He said, "Blessed are You, O LORD God. Yours is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory . . . Riches and honor come from You . . . Therefore, we thank and praise You . . . Who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given to You." (1 Chronicles 29:10-14).

As we create our legacy, we have the opportunity to give back to the One who has blessed us so richly with His grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps your legacy will remember your local congregation. Perhaps you will also consider impactful Christian missions like Friends of Madagascar Mission. What legacy will you leave?

Pastor Lee Laaveg, FOMM's Development Director

SUPPORT FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION NEEDED!

Madagascar is a poor country. Resources for most church programs suffer from a lack of finances. This is where Friends of Madagascar Mission fits into their mission and ministry.

There are several areas of financial support needed:

- 1) **Tuition and living expenses** for students preparing to become parish pastors and receive a Bachelor of Theology degree. **Scholarships needed:** A four year degree with a cost of \$235.00 a year for tuition, living costs & rent. **Total for 7 students \$1645.00**
- 2) **Tuition and living expenses** for Pastors who desire to go to graduate school at SALT Seminary to receive a Master of Theology degree. **Scholarships needed:** A three year study program with a cost of \$490.00 a year for tuition, living costs and rent) **Total for 9 students \$4,410.00**
- 3) **Post graduate study for a doctor's degree in theology.** In order to receive this level of scholarship, a Malagasy student used to have to leave the country and go to Europe or the USA for study. Today with online educational opportunities available a student may stay at home to complete this degree. Studying online in the developing world has many advantages, including not losing one's culture. The whole family changes when a pastor leaves to study abroad.

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Scholarships needed: There are currently numerous students from Madagascar studying at the Institute of Lutheran Theology, Brookings, South Dakota and several others who are seeking support to begin their studies. If you are interested in providing this support, please contact FOMM and we will check on the current tuition, books and electronic costs.

ONE MORE NEED

We need books for the students in Madagascar who are studying online with seminaries in the USA. I'm working on a plan to send recent textbooks in English for students to use. There are six Malagasy students currently studying in the USA and 2 additional students planning to enroll in the future. This plan is asking for financial gifts so we may purchase new books to send to Madagascar. Please let Pastor Lerseth know if you would like to be a sponsor. FriendsOfMadagascarMission@gmail.com

Thank you for your consideration to participate in supporting theological education in Madagascar!
Rev. Eric Swensson, FOMM's Director of Media Management

A REFLECTION BY A PARTICIPANT ON THE 2023 MADAGASCAR GLOBL MISSION EDUCATIONAL TRIP



"A person can learn about the ocean by reading books and watching movies, but until you feel the sand between your toes and smell the smells coming off the sea, until you run into the water and get knocked over by the waves, feel the tug of the current and the taste of salt on your lips you really don't have an appreciation for the ocean. Having recently spent two weeks in Madagascar, I gained a tiny sense of appreciation for that country and its people.

I came away reflecting on how much we in America take for granted. Only 17% of the people in Madagascar have electrical power, and those who do have power experience rolling blackouts daily. We take electricity for granted. The road system in Madagascar is terrible by anyone's standards. A trip of 25 km (15.5 miles) took more than three hours and required a 4-wheel drive vehicle. We take our highway system for granted. Going to the bank from a remote village is a 4 day trip (there and back). We take access to services for granted. Their meals are simple by our standards and frequently the same, or similar, day after day. Rice is the main part of all three meals of the day in Madagascar. It is frequently served with zebu, chicken or vegetables. We take the abundance of food and the availability of food for granted. Water is scarce in many parts of the country and nonexistent in other parts. We take water for granted. One of the many times our vehicle was stuck in the sand, three women - carrying their laundry in baskets on their heads - passed us, twice. They were walking several kilometers to wash their families' clothes. We take the conveniences in our lives for granted. And the list goes on.

In my opinion, I/we tend to complain a lot, about what we don't have or I/we express dissatisfaction about what I/we do have that does not meet our expectations. I didn't experience anything like that in Madagascar. I did, however, watch a young girl playing happily with a deflated balloon attached to the end of the stick."



Young girl's toy, a deflated balloon attached to a stick

Jeff Tetzlaff, FOMM Vice-President

IN MEMORY OF	GIVEN BY	IN HONOR OF	GIVEN BY
Morris Vaagenes	Arlene Lellelid	Michelle Stillman	Rebecca Utu
	Christopher and Kim Carlson	Katie Boyle	
	Bonnie Vaagenes	Lori Harrington	
	John and Diana Hetzler	Sierra Freier	
	Annette Baker	Julia Pershken	
	Carl and Ruth Vaagenes	Pat Bentsen	Carolyn Akland
	Annonymous	David Lerseth's birthday	Norm Carlson
	Evelyn Jacobson		
	Peter and Judy Dyrud		
	David and Diane Lerseth		\$ 379.95
Katharine Quanbeck	Susan Lloyd		
Louise Varberg Midthun	Suzanne Zapolsky		
	John and Kathy Baxter		
	Evelyn Jacobson		
	Susan Lloyd		
Marjorie (Dahle) Zugschwert	Otto and Lewann Sotnak		
Ron Jensen	Arlene Lellelid		
Ian Griffith	Todd Paxton		
	David and Diane Lerseth		
Tafy Lellelid's Father in Madagascar	Arlene Lellelid		TOTAL:
Gloria Luick	David and Diane Lerseth		\$4,107.40
Freeman Walters	John and Diana Hetzler		
Roy Harrisville	Arlene Lellelid		
Agnes Akland	Susan Lloyd	\$3,727.45	

**Friends of Madagascar Mission Resolution to establish,
“Renewal International Endowment for Bible Schools in Madagascar.”**

This resolution was approved by the Friends of Madagascar Mission Board of Directors meeting June 22, 2023. (A portion of the resolution is printed below.)

With gratitude and in loving memory of Morris Vaagenes:

Whereas well-known pastor, Rev. Morris Vaagenes, recently passed away after a lifetime of service to Jesus Christ on the mission field in Madagascar, and as a pastor serving churches in Minnesota, especially as senior pastor of North Heights Lutheran Church of Roseville, MN;

Whereas Rev. Vaagenes served as a faithful long time member of Friends of Madagascar Mission board of directors;

Whereas Rev. Vaagenes strongly believed Bible schools in Madagascar are essential to educate, train, and equip pastors and evangelists for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ and for service to the church.

Therefore, be it resolved that Friends of Madagascar Mission Board of Directors establish a special endowment fund called "Renewal International Endowment for Bible Schools of Madagascar," in loving memory of Rev. Morris Vaagenes, grateful for his wonderful passion for Christ Jesus and for the Word of God.

You may support this endowment fund by sending gifts to:

(Total gifts to date: \$3,000.00)

Friends of Madagascar Mission

P.O. Box 46381

Eden Prairie, MN 55344





FRIENDS of MADAGASCAR MISSION

P. O. Box 46381
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

WHO ARE WE?

We are a Christian mission organization, incorporated as a nonprofit with approval by the IRS, with a nine-member board of directors consisting of Lutheran pastors and laypersons. All financial gifts are tax deductible, and donors will receive regular reports on the progress of the project you support. Welcome to our mission!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rev. David P. Lerseth, President
Catherine Marks, Secretary
Kirsten Schlicht, Treasurer
Charles Eidem
Rev. Lee Laaveg
Loren Morschen
Craig T. Norenberg
Jeff Tetzlaff

Fall 2023

This issue of FOMM's Newsletter includes stories about programs that are seeking support. These 3 photos represent some of the program stories written about in this newsletter. Please pray that the needs of Friends of Madagascar Mission may be funded, so the Gospel of Jesus Christ may continue to reach the people who have not yet heard this GOOD NEWS!



Evangelist from the Betroka Synod arrive at the Evangelism Summit in their bus

Pastor Lerseth and Pastor Eric Swenssen with a pastor wishing to study online with a USA Lutheran Seminary.



Communion service that we visited at a children's prison