



# FRIENDS of MADAGASCAR MISSION

ALL YOU NEED TO  
KNOW TO PARTICIPATE  
IN FOMD'S  
"THANKS A MILLION!"

Vol 14:2

webpage: [www.MadagascarDevelopment.org](http://www.MadagascarDevelopment.org)

SPRING 2025

Dear Friends of Madagascar Mission,



FOMD's "Thanks a Million!" fundraising program is a new and exciting way to make a big difference in the world through small, regular donations and social sharing. FOMD's first project under the Thanks a Million! banner is to raise \$1 Million to repair and dig 300 wells in drought-stricken southern Madagascar. We're inviting you to join us.

The Thanks a Million! motto is "Small giving, big influence," and the idea is simple. When many people each give a little and invite others to do the same, amazing things can happen. Sign-up today and start creating a social media post to let people know in your network about Thanks a Million!

**Participation is easy. All you need to do is:**

- 1. Donate a minimum of \$3 per month for 3 months - a total of only \$9 (but you can give more!)**
- 2. Invite 3 other people to also give \$3 per month for 3 months.**
- 3. Follow up with your 3 invitees to make sure they donate and each invite 3 more people.**

Thanks a Million! only works if everyone reaches out in their community to enroll others who share the vision. As each person gives and invites others, the number of donors grows quickly. 100% of donations go directly to the project.

Share your involvement with Thanks a Million! in your social media network through photos, videos, podcasts, and stories—using platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. You can also buy items like a t-shirt, cup or water bottle with Thanks a Million! logo from our Printify shop (Link is located on our web page) to let people know you're joining with us to make a difference. Or you can buy one to give to someone as a gift. With each of us doing a little and using our influence to share the vision, together we make a BIG impact.

"Thanks a Million!" is a simple way for you to create real change. With just \$3 per month as a minimum gift and inviting 3 friends to join, you can be part of something big. Let's make a difference so we can hear the people of Madagascar say "Thanks a Million!" for giving us fresh water and new life.

To find out more and to join the campaign, visit the FOMD website ([www.MadagascarDevelopment.org](http://www.MadagascarDevelopment.org)), watch a short video about Thanks a Million!, and sign up. You'll find everything you need—including instructions to invite others. If you do not prefer to send your financial support via the Internet, simply send to: FOMD, PO Box 46381, Eden Prairie, MN 55344.

Thanks a Million!

Dr. David Isaacson,  
Friends of Madagascar Development  
Director for Research and Grant Writing

## FACTS

- 1) 12,331,950 Malagasy persons do not have access to safe water
- 2) 89% have not access to basic sanitation services
- 3) 4 out 5 people drink contaminated water
- 4) Children walk many kilometers a day to find contaminated water for their home use
- 5) "Thanks a Million!" is a program to provide safe, clean water (100% of your gift goes to this program)



The new logo for promoting FOMM's Development work and new web site: [www.MadagascarDevelopment.org](http://www.MadagascarDevelopment.org)

## **STATEMENT: THE CASE FOR THE “THANKS A MILLION!” FUNDRAISING**

In 2024, Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM) made significant strides in addressing the severe water crisis in southern Madagascar, a region devastated by prolonged droughts resulting in widespread suffering and death.

Over four years of preparation and research by FOMM showed there were over 1000 disused wells in the region that could be repaired at low cost. Ongoing collaboration with hydrologists and continued fundraising enabled FOMD's well-drilling partner, the Madagascar Water Project (MWP) to repair some wells. But many arid regions were also identified where there was a desperate need for water and no wells had been drilled yet.

MWP's founder and director, Fred Rittelmeyer, knew that the hand-drilling of wells would not work in the southern regions with their deep granite substrate. In 2024, Fred's team used a newly acquired, advanced drilling rig to drill through tens of metres of solid granite. This technology brought about a breakthrough by accessing deep underground water sources, with the well in Betroka producing 3,000 litres per hour of fresh, uncontaminated water. A new well in Mananovy, 70km south of Betroka, also produces high volumes of water.

Encouraged by these successes, FOMM developed a plan to repair and restore many disused wells, recognizing that many only require simple, low-cost fixes. In parallel, FOMD also committed to drilling new wells where past efforts failed due to hard granite that destroys basic drilling equipment.

In May 2025, both new wells remain fully functional, inspiring FOMD's bold new vision: the “Thanks a Million!” campaign to raise \$1 million to repair 150 existing wells and drill 150 new ones—bringing life-saving water to 300 communities.

FOMD gives glory to God for these achievements and commits 100% of donated funds to the project. Will you join the “Thanks a Million!” campaign and help transform lives across southern Madagascar? Visit our website ([www.MadagascarDevelopment.org](http://www.MadagascarDevelopment.org)) to find out more and donate today.



Photo of Pastor ANDRIAMIHAJA at a water station.

“I want to express my thanks to FOMD for the well that produces 3,000 liters of water per hour. People will now be able to plant gardens. Having pure water from the ground will have a huge impact on people's health. They

drank from the river before, which was not healthy. We thank the donors of this project. God bless you.”

## **EXAMPLES OF WHAT HAS BEEN DONE:** **WATER PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2024**

### **THE CITY OF BETROKA: WELLS, WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND BATHROOMS/SHOWERS**

(A report written by MIHAJASOANANDRASA NA Theo Jeanne Rosa, a graduate student, majoring in English)

Friends of Madagascar Development has completed two big water development projects in southwest Madagascar, one in the city of Betroka and one in Mananovy. They have dug wells in Betroka and built a water distribution system for five different Lutheran institutions: a grade school, high school, synod office, Toby (a spiritual renewal center) and the new clinic being built by FOMM. This article will include short stories and photos of people from Betroka. They will express their thanks and how they feel about the water wells and water distribution system.

## 1. The Water Project at the Lutheran Grade School

Mrs. Lalao TSILEFA, the school's director, said: "The students and teachers at our school are thankful to God for the new water wells and distribution system for our school. This means that 1,030 students and 27 teachers benefit from clean drinking water, for our new bathrooms and for cleaning at our school. An additional benefit for the school is that we no longer have to pay to have water delivered to the school and that water was not always very sanitary."

One of the wells on the school campus



An photo of solar panels on the school roof to power the water pump.



The school campus



Water tower for the water distribution system

## 2. The Water Project at the Lutheran High School

The director of the high school, Mrs. Daida SOATSKY Rose said : "We have 100 students and 12 teachers who benefit from this new water system given to us by FOMD. We now drink and wash everyday with clean water. We hope for continuation of our precious collaboration and we express our sincere thanks."



School sign for the high school



The high school water station



The school director with students



The synod water station

## 3. The Water Project at the Lutheran Synod Office

The synod office is not only the headquarters for the Betroka Synod, but the synod president, Pastor ANDRIAMIHAJA Jean Norbert and his family also live there. The new water well distributes water to this building and a former water storage reservoir built by missionaries. Not only does this provide water for personal use, but in this arid region it also is used to provide water for the gardens to grow vegetables and fruits for his family and guests who come to the synod office.



The restored water reservoir built by the missionaries



Synod Office gardens



Synod Office gardens

#### 4. The Betroka Toby (Retreat/Training Camp)

Pastor TOMOERA Alexandre, the director for this Toby expresses their thanks to FOMD for the two water towers, bathrooms, showers and 3 water stations that serve their community. There are around 400 people who live at this Toby. The new water system is especially important in providing good hygiene for the residents. They care for the poor and also the mentally ill. They all benefit from good hygiene because of the water.



Water station at the Toby



Bathrooms and showers

Water tower



The Toby Pastor and some residents

#### 5. The New Betroka SALFA Medical Clinic

SALFA is the acronym for the “Lutheran Health Care System in Madagascar”. This new clinic is being built in collaboration with FOMD. The plan is to have it completed and dedicated during the visit from Pastor David Lerseth and other FOMD members from the USA and FOMD/Madagascar staff in July. Pastor ANDRI-AMIHAJA Jean Norbert said: “All of this is fully entrusted into the hands of God, who is the master of the work, so that it may be accomplished in every way.”



## THE CITY OF MANANOVY: WELLS, WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND BATHROOMS/SHOWERS

(A report written by Pastor Daniel TOLOTRA , a teacher at Mananovy Bible School)

In the city of Mananovy, FOMD has also had a well dug that provides water to two institutions: The Toby and the Mananovy Bible School. Each institution has water stations and bathroom and shower facilities built to provide a great improvement for the life of those living there. The following are some statements from individuals who have written what these improvement mean to them.

#### Manovy Bible School Students:



1. **Amede:** I am one of the students at the Bible School. Before FOMD had the well dug and the water system installed, we had to get water from the river, which is about 3 kilometers from our school. Today, we have a modern water fountain right here in our place which is unbelievable. We can clean things and plant vegetables...etc. in our school. Thank you for your donation.

2. **Lanto:** Water is one of basic needs in life. It was difficult for us to find an adequate supply of water previously. Now, we have water here where we live that is used for cleaning and drinking. Thank you for your love and for your help.



May 19, 20

## Residents at the Toby



1. **Sana:** How great is my happiness to have healthy and clean water for my home. We, the people of the Toby, do not need to fetch water from a far distance anymore. We can grow things nearby our houses, and the sick people can be cleaned right here at the Toby. Thanks a lot.

2. **Caliste:** As one of the people of the Toby, I am so happy for the existence of the water station and the toilets. We are satisfied in many ways which have positive impacts on our health. So thank you for giving us good things. May our heavenly Father reward you abundantly.



## WHO HAS PROVIDED THE RESOURCES FOR THESE WELLS AND WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS?

1) **Total cost of these projects to date: \$79,155.69**

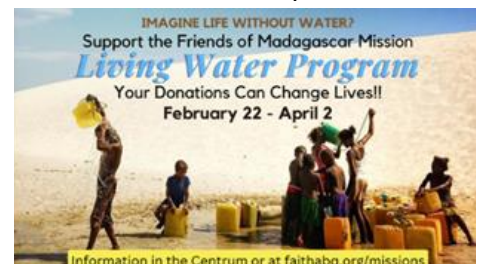
2) **Individual Donors:** Numerous individuals have provided generous gifts for this project. One individual, who has been a major donor wishes to remain anonymous. So, we are thankful for all of these individual donors: **\$26,930.54**

3) **Congregation Donors:** Two congregations have provided major gifts and they have agreed to share the story of their work to provide these gifts for the digging of wells and the distribution systems:

### A. Faith Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico: \$32,225.15



Friends of Madagascar Mission has been a mission partner of Faith Lutheran Church in Albuquerque, NM for many years and as a congregation, we have supported several of their programs. Our congregation knows this organization well and is so impressed by their passion and dedication and especially the fact that 100% of all donations goes directly to the chosen project. In 2023, we chose the Living Water Program, raising money to drill and repair wells in southwestern Madagascar, as our Lenten Project. Rev. David Lerseth provided so many resources for us including information, a wonderful video, plenty of photos, and even materials for our Sunday School Children and that's part of what made our collection so successful. When our congregation saw a video showing the result of 4+ years with no water from fields totally dried up, unable to grow anything, to children drinking water from tiny muddy puddles and all the suffering from lack of food, it greatly touched their hearts. But also, asking the question, "What would you do if suddenly you had no water for anything?" really made people think about what it would be like. People reflected on the Living water that sustains life and also the Living water we receive through faith in Jesus Christ and donations began coming in - big and small and the result was incredible.



Announcement of the Living Water Program

The *Thanks A Million!* Program has the potential to benefit so many more people and villages in the southern part of Madagascar suffering from lack of water. It sounds relatively simple in theory, but the impact could be incredible! The smallest or largest of churches could easily get involved. Just say yes.

Ginni Webb, Mission & Service Team, Faith Lutheran Church

## **B. Vernes Lutheran Church, MacIntosh, Minnesota: \$20,000**



Vernes Lutheran Church in rural MacIntosh, MN is a small country church with a BIG heart for global mission. The congregation will be excited to join the new initiative soon to be launched by Friends of Madagascar Mission to raise monies in support of the needed water projects called “Thanks a Million!” Throughout this congregation’s history, this body of believers has shown a very strong passion to support missions “beyond our doors” through prayer and financial gifts. A daughter of this congregation, Verna Syverson, felt the Holy Spirit calling her to the mission field, and spent her lifetime serving Christ and the gospel in Cameroon, Africa.

So, when Vernes congregation became aware of the great need for fresh, clear water in Madagascar, especially in the Southeast, and the terrible truth that many people become sick from contaminated water, or literally die from lack of water, they quickly committed to support FOMD’s initiative to dig new wells and restore broken down wells which are no longer functioning. As we know, clean, healthy water can improve the health and vitality of a whole village, a whole region.

Together as a congregation at their annual meeting, they committed to raise \$20,000 which they intended to give over the next three years. This was over and above their regular financial obligations in ministry, and over and above their annual support of global, regional, and local missions. But, the generous giving of the people to the well project came in faster than anticipated. The congregation raised the entire \$20,000 in just one year!

With great excitement and joy, Vernes celebrates the successful wells which have been completed to date. They cheer for the videos and photos of the well drillers striking the huge underground aquifers, and seeing the water gushing up from the ground into the air.

In the “prayers of the church” during Sunday worship, Vernes regularly prays for all the programs of FOMD, for the water projects, and for the good partnership with Mr. Fred Rittelmeyer and his well drilling company. What a thrill to know that our gifts are literally changing lives!

The American church is losing its mission focus. We are moving toward a “take care of our own” attitude. While that is important, we cannot forsake those in need. Everyone should have reliable, clean drinking water. Our compass of passion is off course. By participating and helping achieve a wonderful gift of a well for such needy people, we can rekindle the passion of mission giving in American churches, getting our compass back on course and uniting our mission vision with God’s heart for all people of every nation. Will your congregation join in this global vision for Christ?

Vernes anticipates joining in the fun of the “Thanks a Million!” campaign and dreams of the Spirit stirring the hearts of many Christians everywhere joining the effort to help God’s people and build the kingdom of God. We can be the hands and feet of Jesus, providing “living water” to those who thirst.

Together for Christ and His kingdom,  
Ruby Sistad, Chair of Mission Committee for Vernes Lutheran  
Pastor Lee Laaveg, FOMM Board of Directors

## **OTHER WAYS OF RAISING FUNDS FOR MADAGASCAR WATER WELLS**

Aside from individual or congregational giving to this program, funds may be raised by:

- + Having a “Water Walk”, people pledging so much per person!
- + Having a garage/rummage sale!
- + Having a dinner/picnic and share the story of water!
- + Other ideas and ways?

**"Please cut these 4 invitations and give them to someone else."**



Thanks a Million! is a new and exciting fundraising program that has the big goal of raising \$1 Million to repair and dig 300 wells in drought-stricken southern Madagascar.

**Join Us!**

[madagascardevelopment.org](http://madagascardevelopment.org)

Participation is easy!

1. Donate a minimum of \$3 per month for 3 months.
2. Invite 3 people to also give \$3 per month for 3 months.
3. Follow up with your 3 invitees to encourage donations and ask them to extend invitations to 3 more people.

Thanks a Million! • PO Box 46381 • Eden Prairie, MN 55344



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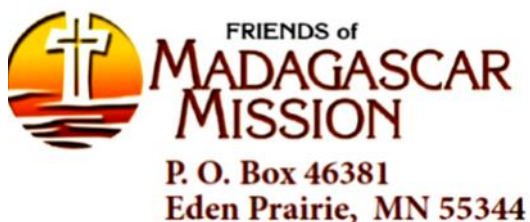
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### WHO ARE WE?

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  
Jeff Tetzlaff, Vice President  
Catherine Marks, Secretary  
Kirsten Schlicht, Treasurer  
Andrea Crew  
Rev. Lee Laaveg  
Loren Morschen  
Craig T. Norenberg

**SPRING  
2025**



Our **"Thanks a Million!"** logo tells the story of our vision to make a big impact in Madagascar. Where there is drought and desperation in communities, we have started and want to continue to bring life-giving water.

+ The big water droplet shows that water is at the forefront of all community needs. An abundant supply of fresh, uncontaminated water brings health and happiness, expressed as green growth.

+ The "Thanks a Million!" slogan is catchy and fun, yet expresses our appreciation to those who join with us to achieve our vision.

+ It also expresses the gratitude of communities we help. Their joy in receiving life-giving water becomes our joy to share.

+ Finally, our logo says to you: "Thanks a Million!" for joining us and using your influence to bring hope for a better future to communities in southern Madagascar.