



May 2023

Dear Praying Friends,

It seems like it has been longer than 2 months since the last time that happened! Sorry in advance for how long this letter is... unless I just gave the abbreviated highlights, there is no way around it. (Some things are what you might have read on FB.)

The **Valentines mini-conference** and banquet that we wrote about in the last letter went very well. A Malagasy pastor who helped Richard start the church was able to come. He preached for about 2.5 hours on Friday and about 1.5 hours on Saturday. Then there was a nice couples' banquet organized by our missionary friend, Dani. There were 9 couples who participated in the mini conference on marriage! It was also a special time for the church to reunite with their old friend.

Thank you for praying for our **survey trip**! Our eyes have seen, and our hearts have been affected by the great needs of the areas where we went. We went to the island of Nosy Be and were able to visit Dزاماندзар, Mandirokely, Andoany, and Ambatosavavy on Nosy Be (as well as drive through some smaller areas). We were also able to visit Ambanja, Sambava, and Mandritsara. There are needs everywhere, and we are only able to try to meet the need in one area... There are several cities that have stayed on our minds since we got back from our trip – Dزاماندзар and Andoany (Hell-ville). These cities are quite big and very big respectively with another quite big town in between them. From what we could tell on our survey trip, neither of these places have a Baptist church. Andoany has a population of between 40-50,000 people! About 20-30 minutes from the center of town, there is a very small group of believers who are meeting. This group does not have a pastor because he left. We are still praying about where exactly God wants us and the timing on what we should do!

I have started an intense schedule of **Malagasy classes**. I have been doing two classes per day on Monday and Tuesday and one class on Friday. These class days have been rather exhausting! By the end of the day, I am so tired and feel drained of all energy!

Many have heard through Facebook how Richard's **wallet bag** with our passports, residents' cards, drivers licenses, debit card, and a lot of cash was **stollen** in March. We tried to recover it but have not been able to do so. It was discouraging and time-consuming to file the report and deal with it. We applied for replacement passports and have been able to get them back. I think that the reason why the things were stolen was so that we would go the Embassy and talk to the American there. I had pulled a stack of tracts out of the door of the car (these are tracts in Malagasy). There just "happened" to be one English tract in the stack! We were able to give it to the American and briefly share the gospel with him.





March 16<sup>th</sup> was our **ONE-year anniversary of arriving in Madagascar**. Some might describe it as a hard year with morning sickness, adjustment sicknesses, a painful abscess, a car accident, adjustments and loneliness, struggles to learn a new language, and the “normal” stuff of living in this country like regular power and water outages... but we choose to describe it a very blessed and wonderful year! We are so happy and blessed to be here where God has called us! This year, we had a baby, were able to be involved in spreading the gospel in Madagascar, were able to go on a wonderful family vacation, were able to see people get saved, were able to do survey trips, were able to get a good start on knowing the Malagasy language, were able to have a visit by our family, and were able to enjoy life together.



**I just had a birthday** and turned 33 years old. I feel like this year (and last year) are special years because this is probably the age when Jesus had most of His public ministry on earth. This is also the age when Jesus died on the cross for my sins and for yours! I am always in awe when I think about what Jesus did for me! The all-powerful God who created the universe chose to come to earth and die for me, so that I would not have to receive the just punishment for my ugly sin if I put my trust in Him! I do not deserve such love that God gives... yet, He loves me and you so much (and He knows everything about me!) We had a great time celebrating Jesus’s resurrection from the dead! He died a terrible, painful death; but He did not stay dead! He rose again, conquering death!



Richard continues to work on recovering his Malagasy, and he has had several opportunities to preach at the church here. Four weeks ago, **I began teaching** the 6–10-year-old Sunday School class at church. Children are very valuable to God, and we need to be diligent to teach His Word! Teaching at church has been good practice for my Malagasy! There are two Malagasy ladies who teach with me. My goal is to teach them how to teach, so that they can take over teaching the class. It is difficult teaching because I type out everything that I plan to say and then translate it. I am really looking forward to the day when I can teach from an outline instead of having to type out every word! There are so many things that I would love to say, but it is slow and hard to get the words to come.



**Matthew finished up his class with Ambassador**. We are still plugging away at our school. Rebekah teaches school while I study Malagasy and Richard does a variety of things that need to be done.



The time has come to renew our yearly visas and residents’ cards. We are in the process of trying to get a **10 year visa** and residents card... this would be so wonderful because we would not have to come to Tana multiple times every year to submit paperwork and get photos taken... but it would cost about \$12,000 for our family of ten. It is a great deal as far as saving money, but this is a big chunk of cash to pay upfront! The fees for one-year visas and residence cards every year for 10 years would be about \$22,000 (and this does not include the added cost of transportation of flying in and getting around, time, and headache that is involved in doing visas every year)! Please pray for us in this process that we would be able to actually get the visas!



Week before last, we took 4 days and went to **Maintirano to sort and pack** and get rid of the stuff that Richard left when they went to America in 2015. Richard, Matthew, Nate, and I (with Grace) went to tackle the job that had been hanging over our heads for the past 8 years! Stuff sitting in the African heat and humidity does not do well, but we were pleasantly surprised to find that lots of the things were still good!! (and there were lots of things that were covered in mold, eaten by termites, chewed by mice, or dry rotted.) This job was a BIG DIRTY HOT one!! There was dirt, mold, mouse poop, mouse nests, spiders, termites, and other messes! We worked from morning till dark each day and were so hot, dirty, stinky, and sore! It was such a relief to have everything sorted and repacked!! We plan to have the stuff shipped to us when we know where God wants us to serve long-term. For now, the stuff is in a storage room at the hanger.

We just had "**birthday week.**" Abby, Matthew, and Nate just had birthdays turning 11, 17, and 13 respectively. It is pretty wild to think that I have a son who is already 17 years old!! What is happening to time!! It is racing by as fast as it can! We try to enjoy all the moments, but still time races by!

Sometimes when my babies and kids are running around the house making messes and putting their little hands into everything, I think... maybe it would be nice if their hands were not into things and were calm. Then, the other day, I was in the nursery holding a little toddler who did not have hands at all. It was sad; the baby just sat there and watched the others play. It reminded me to be thankful for my babies' busy little hands. Sometimes we tend to look at the negative instead of the positive. We need perspective! Instead of complaining, we should look for the blessing for which we can be thankful! I am reminded to be thankful – even if some things make me tired and/or cause more work.

Richard and I celebrated our **5<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary**. I feel like I am living the dream life! I have God as my Father, I have fulfilling work to do, I have a wonderful husband, lots of wonderful kids (big and small), I get to serve God, and I get to serve God in Africa. I could go on and on... When you are where God wants you, doing what He wants you to do, you are in the absolute best place that you can be!

In June, I (Ruth) may have the opportunity to take Matthew and go on a **missions' trip** to help some missionary friends. I will go to help deliver their baby; then they would not have to leave their field for an extended period. Matthew will possibly have the opportunity to teach and help out in the church work. We will both get the opportunity to see another work in another part of the world. Please pray for the many aspects of this trip to go well!

We are praying for you, and we thank you for praying for us! This life has many struggles that we each must face, but we praise God for His presence and His greatness and love toward us! He is with us each step of the way... no matter where that way leads us.

In the Service of the King,

Richard and Ruth Jertberg, Matthew, Sarah, Nathaniel, Abigail, Kezia, Hadassah, Moriah, and Grace

### Prayer Requests:

- Visa applications to go smoothly
- Ruth and Matthew to be able to take the missions' trip
- Continued Malagasy learning
- Words to impart God's truth when preaching and teaching
- Timing on what God would have us to do
- That there would be fruit from the tracts that were given

### Praises:

- The Valentines time went well
- We had a good survey trip
- We received our replacement passports
- Tracts were given and the gospel was shared
- We have had opportunities to teach and preach
- We were able to sort and pack the stuff in Maintirano