



December 2023

Dear Praying Friends,

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;..." 1 Tim. 1:15 This is a wonderful truth that we get to celebrate! I pray that each of you would have a wonderful Christmas that honors the Savior Who was born! Also, that you would have a great start to a new year!

The past three months have been busy. We officially **started our new school year** at the beginning of October and have been working on it steadily. Doing Algebra 1 and 2 and Geometry (imaginary numbers, extracting the square roots, infinity, and other such equations) with the kids has made me evaluate what is important and how we should use our time. Yes, math, reading, writing, grammar, science, etc., etc., have their place; but I don't plan to allow these things to take the top priority and consume all our time to the exclusion of other important things. 2 Peter 1:5-9 "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;..." Faith and virtue come before knowledge. Please pray for wisdom, understanding, and energy for all of us as we learn and grow! We found a **young lady** who comes every morning from 8-12 to play with and **take care of Moriah** and the other little kids. It has been a big help for our school. (To give you perspective on daily wage here, we pay her a little less than \$2.50 per day – and that is considered a pretty good amount.)

It was fun to have the **pastor and his wife of our sending church** come visit us for a few days near the beginning of October. It was nice to get to know them better (especially for me because I have not spent much time at our sending church). We had some good conversations and time together. We are really glad that they could make the long trip to come see life here and spend time with us!

We celebrated **Grace's first birthday** at the beginning of November. It has been fun to watch our baby grow. She is quite the world traveler at her young age. She has been on 27 flights and to 5 countries other than Madagascar and America. She now has 14 teeth and has started to take steps. We all are enjoying having her in our family!

It has been about two and a half months since we have been **working in the church** while Dan and Rachel Brown are on furlough. It has been a good time, with some exhausting days as we got/get adjusted to the schedule and driving back and forth (our house is about 45min drive from their church if there is no traffic). This time of preparing messages, preaching, and talking with people has helped Richard to become more fluent in the Malagasy language and in the rhythm of teaching and preaching. We are very thankful for this opportunity to serve here! Please pray for safety as we drive back and forth and as we minister here and as we continue to learn the Malagasy language.

Our weeks have been full with church and school, but the work is fulfilling. Richard has been going out with a man from the church to visit people on Fridays. On Saturday, Richard and some of the older kids go on visitation, then have English classes as an outreach in the afternoon, then have youth time right after that. Whoever stays home, cares for the babies and cooks food for Sunday. On Sunday, we head to church around 7:20am or so and don't get home till around 9pm. There is Sunday school then a service in the morning; then around 8-10 young people come to have lunch with us; there is a



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Bible study in the afternoon during which time, I have a discipleship class with two young ladies (pictured to the left). Then there is a midweek Bible study and prayer time every other week... so that is **our church schedule**. During the week, there is the preparation of 2-4 lessons/sermons that Richard does plus everything involved in homeschooling our kids, running a house, and trying to learn the Malagasy language making life quite busy. We try to take an afternoon during the week to relax together.



We have been having some special **meetings and outreaches**. The **English class** had their end-of-the-year party finishing their regular classes and are now having some English Bible classes, which I have enjoyed teaching. We have seen how English is an effective tool to reach people who otherwise would probably not hear the gospel, and we have been able to see the fruit of this outreach ministry. There was a **youth outreach** a few weeks ago with around 40 young people who came (pictured to the left). Many of them do not regularly come to church. We also had a **ladies' meeting** with 31 ladies. I was able to bring the lesson mostly in Malagasy (albeit a little brokenly) with some French mixed in. I pray that the ladies were able to understand. We all had a good time together. The **youth group** Christmas party was this past weekend. Thank you for praying for these different outreaches.



Here in Madagascar, the people love to get together and have a **service Christmas morning**; so we will have a service on Sunday, then on Christmas morning also (which is when the kids will do their Christmas program). **It is busy!** Please pray for the families of the kids to come to church and hear the gospel – most of the parents do not come to church regularly. Also, there is a stay-at-church-till-the-new-year service for New Year's Eve that will involve food. (Did I mention that it is busy?) We are planning to celebrate Christmas as a family on Wednesday because Sunday and Monday are going to be full.



Please pray that **people would be saved** and that they would grow. There have been quite a number of deaths of family members in the church (pictured to the left). Time to accept Jesus is short! It is so sad to see people grieving the loss of their family member and to wonder, "What hope do they have of seeing this person again? Did this person go to heaven or are they burning in hell after a hard life here on earth?" We have had some opportunities to share the gospel and get involved in some people's lives because of the deaths in their families. There are people in the church who have been witnessing to their family – these people need to be saved; there are visitors who have come who need to be saved; there are people who have recently gotten saved who need to grow. There are many previous beliefs from other churches that confuse the understanding of the Bible. Satan's primary goal is that all people would not get saved and would go to hell. He deceives people by using the truth then hiding lies in it or twisting words. It looks good and right, but the conclusion is terribly wrong because of the lies or little words that are added or removed. If a person does get saved, he has a secondary goal – to destroy the life of the Christian by sin. Please pray for the believers and others!

Please pray for us as we **prepare to move to Nosy Be**. Please pray for us to find the right place to live and in the right location. We are planning to visit the office of a sugar cane company (that is no longer functioning in Nosy Be) that owns much of the land there. We want to talk to them and are praying for God to open their hearts to us that they would be willing to help us.

All glory belongs to God Who supplies all our needs and gives us all the strength to do anything in this life! Thank you so much for praying for us and for the gospel in Madagascar!

#### Prayer Requests:

- The kids and I as we do school and learn
- Continued Malagasy learning
- Words to impart God's truth when preaching and teaching
- Salvation of family members of the people in church
- Growth and protection of Christians
- God's leading and a place to live in Nosy Be
- That the sugar cane company would be willing to help us.

#### Praises:

- Pastor and his wife came to visit
- Someone is helping watch the babies while we do school
- Special times and outreaches went well
- Safety as we drive back and forth to church (40-60min)

In the Service of the King,

Richard and Ruth Jertberg, Matthew, Sarah, Nate, Abby, Kezia, Hadassah, Moriah, Grace





Kezia is working on her school.

(Below) Part of a game at the youth event.



Life here is hard for all ages.



Matching with my handsome son.



(Below) Kids' class at church.



(To the Left) Sunday lunch with all the young people who join us. We have a good time together.



(To the Left) Just a little cutie. Moriah



(Below) All the ladies holding their craft that we made at the ladies' Christmas party/meeting.

(Below) When people die here in Madagascar, they will keep a light burning near the body until they put the body in the tomb. This young mother died at age 26 and left behind a 1-year-old daughter.

