

Church Planting in MADAGASCAR



March 2024

Dear Praying Friends,

I hope that you all had a wonderful Resurrection Sunday! The resurrection is the event that makes all of life worth living! We praise God for the wonderful things He has done!

We are excited to announce that **we are expecting another baby** near the end of August or beginning of September. Along with the blessing of being pregnant again comes the not-so-fun symptoms of morning sickness (probably my least favorite part)... From the end of December till the middle of March, I have been nauseated, very tired, and weak. I have been working on an art project to show how precious children are (and specifically our children are to us)! Sometimes people have the idea that if you have a lot of children, then you might just not know a few things about how children are conceived and therefore are "just having more" and don't necessarily care or want them. (That is NOT the case for us! We love and want each one of our children!) We thank God for entrusting each child to us!

During the time that I was sick, **Matthew and Sarah** (and the other kids) really **stepped up** and took over the cooking and much of the caring for the babies. They did it with great attitudes and did a great job too! (They know how to cook some pretty yummy food!)

School continues along. Some days, school is long. It takes a lot of energy and time to keep up with each kid and what they need in school along with correcting their work. In about 2 weeks, we will hit our 100th day of school.

This month marks **2 years since we have been here in Madagascar.** Many things have happened this year. We studied the Malagasy language (though are not as progressed as we would hope); Matthew and I (Ruth) went on an exciting missions' trip; we made a quick trip for my brother's wedding; we did a furlough replacement ministry; we are expecting another baby and did the morning sickness part; we saw people get saved; and we did "normal" life – cooking, school, learning, and growing.

The **Browns**, the missionaries for whom we were watching their church, **returned** to Madagascar the very end of February. We are still participating in the ministry there while we are here. It was exciting to see **5 people** get **baptized** on Easter Sunday especially because two of the people who got baptized had been new visitors from the time that we were doing furlough replacement and two others were doing a discipleship course with me (Ruth). It is so exciting to see lives saved and people grow! There is nothing I would rather do than to serve God!

We are so thankful for the **opportunity that we had to work** in the church during the Brown's furlough. We were able to help the people, but **they also blessed and helped us** in many ways. It was good for me (Richard) to get back in the rhythm of preparing Bible studies, Sunday school lessons, and sermons on a regular basis. **Preparing lessons and sermons** in a language in which you are not fluent is difficult. This opportunity helped me get a little more comfortable in Malagasy. Another blessing from our time there was being able to teach and be a part of the **English classes.** We were able to see several people start coming to church and several people get saved as a direct result of the English class ministry. We heard



Growth Art for the kids





Prayer Requests:

- Safety and health during this pregnancy
- The kids and I as we do school and learn
- God’s leading and a place to live in Nosy Be
- Finances needed to purchase things and moving costs
- Strength and encouragement
- Souls to be saved

Praises:

- A new baby on the way
- Good attitudes and help from our kids
- Blessings and growth during furlough replacement
- Nice visit from Richard’s brother and his wife
- People have been saved and 5 people were baptized

If you would like us to email you a higher quality recent family picture, let us know.

testimony from quite a number of people who are now faithful in church who started coming as a result of the English class. During our time in the church, we were able to **make some friends** and build relationships. Matthew and Sarah especially enjoyed doing things with the other young people at the church. It has helped us all to have Malagasy friends that we enjoy spending time with.

About 2 weeks after the Browns returned, **Richard’s brother and his brother’s wife came to visit**. Their visit coincided well with Matthew and Sarah’s break from their college classes that they are taking, and we took our break from school at the same time. The trip to Madagascar is long, but we are glad that they could come, visit us, and see some of Madagascar!

Moving to Nosy Be is proving to be slightly complicated. It is hard to **find a house** with more than 1 or 2 bedrooms (and our family needs a few more bedrooms than 2). Most houses that we have seen for rent are targeting smaller families. We would like to move up there soon (in the next month or two), but some of the timing depends on what accommodations we can find.

Also, when we first came to Madagascar 2 years ago, we were very blessed to be able to live in another missionary’s house and use their appliances and furniture. We came over with the luggage that we could take with us on the airline. We have since purchased some shelves and a few dressers, but we do not have the major appliances (like a refrigerator, stove, washer, and dryer) and furniture (like mattresses, table, chairs, etc.). Now with a move in the near future, **we need to purchase the big appliances and furniture** as well as pay for our things to be **shipped** across the country (it is a 3 day trip from where we are now up to Nosy Be). We also need to ship the things that were left from years ago (books, some keepsakes, tools, random household things) from Maintirano (in the west) to us here and then up to Nosy Be. Please be in prayer for these logistical and financial needs.

There are several **hard aspects of moving** (some of which I just mentioned above). Whenever you move into a house, you usually have water problems, electricity problems, and mosquito screen problems to fix as well as LOTS of cleaning to do. We already worked on this house and got the kinks and problems worked out; now we need to do it all over again. The thought of all the **work** that needs to be done is a little overwhelming and discouraging at times. It is hard to pack up a house and unpack and settle in again. It is hard to **leave people** and move to a place where you must start over in learning how to live and making friends.

Please pray for each one of us as we process emotions and that we would have strength and encouragement for the job ahead!

Please **pray for souls** to be saved and that we would have the words to say in sharing the gospel with people that we meet. There are people everywhere who need to realize that they are sinners on their way to Hell and to hear the clear and true message of Jesus. There are many churches that preach about Jesus, but the message is not accurate and clear; hence, people are blinded to the truth!

In the Service of the King,

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

