



Newsletter May 2021

Dear Family and Friends,

Time flies... For our idea we've just recently sent a newsletter, but now it appears to be almost three months ago. Well, no problem! There is enough to write about.

Ordinary Life

Normal life seems to be returning. Winter has started, which means that we are heading for cooler days. We don't mind because with temperatures above 38 degrees it is difficult to do anything.

It also calms down a bit when it comes to visits from sick people. It looks like the Malaria season is about to end due to less rain. We'll come back to this topic later in this letter.

Less Malaria but Abbey, however, still contracted it. She complained about a headache and she was warm to the touch. She felt like she had to vomit but nothing came. Time for a test. We discovered it pretty quick, so the medicines did their job within a day.

The children are busy with school. We try to keep a schedule of six weeks and then have a week of holiday. During the last holiday we visited people in Manakara (a larger coastal town). The Koen family (from South Africa) work for a humanitarian organisation. We just got to know them recently, and they invited us to stay with them for a weekend. It was a welcome change. We had a wonderful swim in their pool. Had dinner together and shared a lot of experiences.

School

Speaking of school. The children are doing their very best and that is reflected in the great results. They enjoy learning. In addition to the usual languages (Dutch and English), they also like to pick up other languages. For example, we regularly hear French and German sounding through the house. Dani wanted to learn a language that the other children don't know yet... He has now started learning Latin, and he is good at it too! Sometimes it is just like the confusion at the tower of Babel: Dutch, English, German, French, Latin, Malagasy, Antanala-Malagasy and sometimes... very occasionally Jurgen is also allowed to throw in a few words from his mother tongue West Frisian. Soon, according to Issa, this may be expanded to include Russian.

Well, the teacher tries to keep up. While Jurgen limits himself to science and biblical studies, Katja is in charge of the entire education program of the children. It takes up a lot of time, but it is bearing visible fruit.

Practical issues

How about the water situation. We are no longer dependent on the dirty water from the rice fields, but now and then the pumps seem to have pressure again. When that happens, we quickly open the tap to the water tank and with a little luck it will fill with 500 litres of water. Meanwhile, a well of 21 (!?) meters deep has also been dug behind the house. At that depth the diggers came across stone and the well began to fill with beautiful clear water. Don't cheer too soon now! We have had heavy rains and underground streams have collapsed part of the wall. A solution would be to have the wall bricked up completely from the bottom. We're still thinking about it.

Vanya and Jurgen travelled to the capital and there they bought a new washing machine. That takes a lot of work off Katja's hands, we are very happy with it.

The internet also seems to have recovered somewhat. It is still not fast but at least we can do some research on the internet. This greatly benefits schooling. This also means that we do not have to wait until we are back in a big city before sending this newsletter.

Gospel of Luke and Acts

The first copy of the Gospel of Luke has been printed! Jurgen has given it to our friends, Doris and Alphossin, who are already busy reading it. Doris and Alphossin pastor a small church which they started in a village where Jurgen already



preached the Gospel. It was not easy for them to actually read the Antanala dialect. They are trained in the official language, and it is difficult to switch. Yet they definitely see the added value. Alphossin said she didn't even need to explain to people what she just read. The people just got it. We hope to get more booklets. This printing has to be done in the capital. We hope to travel there in July.

In the meantime, the digitisation of the book of Acts has also started. Menja has translated and checked 20 chapters. These chapters are all handwritten, so Jurgen has enough work to do. In principle, the last 8 chapters are also finished, but Menja was not satisfied yet.

Doris and Alphossin

We would like to bring Doris and Alphossin to your attention. They also come from outside the area and have given up a lot to live here. They are going through a rough time. At the beginning of March they had to bury their three-day-old son, Melkitedèk. The umbilical cord was not clipped after delivery, so he lost a lot of blood and eventually died.

Then, barely two weeks later, it started to storm. The strong gusts, have completely destroyed their newly built church. Thick beams broke like toothpicks. They now have meetings in the open air and when it rains everyone is packed in the small houses.

Last Sunday Doris came running to our village. His brother, who had lived with them for a long time and was suffering from diabetes, was dying. The brother had the wish to die in his mother's house. Jurgen got into the car and together with Alphossin, Doris and his brother they went on their way to their mother, 88 kilometres away. Sadly, the brother died while they were still on the road. Life isn't always easy, and it requires quite a bit of resilience here. Please pray that Doris and Alphossin will keep their spirits up. That they will continue to look up to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

A Good Testimony

In the previous letter we talked about babies whose mothers had died. Mothers do not feed another's child, even if it means that the child dies. It is a taboo, it is not allowed by the ancestors. It made us a little despondent. But! Then a family came to us with a baby whose mother had also died. The father's elder sister came along. This lady is not the young any more but, after hearing us explaining to her about breastfeeding, she wanted to feed her brother's baby. We gave her powdered milk and explained to her that she could just start feeding the baby, which she right away did. After a day or so the hormones started to wake up and, yes! Milk production started. How wonderful the Lord has made it. These people told us that they worship God in the Catholic Church. They trust in Jesus and therefore have nothing to do with all kinds of taboos. Nothing! Jesus is Lord, and so they need not be afraid of the ancestors.

In the previous letter we also told about a baby who was severely malnourished. Her name is Mamisoa which means 'good sweet'. Well, Mamisoa was 'sweet' indeed. They fed her with condensed milk (we use that sweet stuff as topping for pastries). Katja started to help out immediately. Now both Mamisoa and her mother are doing well. Mamisoa is a cheerful child who loves to smile and talk.

As said, we would write a little more about the people with Malaria. The short moments of helping them gives us a wonderful opportunity for a good conversation. Some of the medicines we bought ourselves and some were donated to us. It's not uncommon or strange here to let people pay for medicine and/or treatments. A Malaria treatment is about 3200 Ariary (for a child), which is almost a day's wages. We tell people that they don't have to pay for it. Instead, we say it is 'fiatiavana' (act of love). Fiatiavana is an important cultural word here. Fiatiavana brings forth 'fiadanana' (peace). Many Antanala do not have peace in their hearts, so we tell them how to get real peace. We tell them about the Lord Jesus and about His commission: 'Love the Lord your God with all that is in you and your neighbour as yourself.' At one point, two men came to visit us. They didn't need anything but just came to chat. They just wanted to say that they had talked about us... Yes, they said, father and mother of Vanya always talk about the Bible. The men said that they've thought about it a lot, but now they saw that it was real! The father and mother of Vanya did what they preached. Well, you understand that this was a great encouragement to us. Sometimes you think, 'do the people even listen?' Apparently yes!



Lastly

We want to ask you to pray for us. Maybe make it a daily commitment to the Lord. Not only for us, but also for the Antanala. Many of the Antanala are trapped in a world of fear! Pray that they will come to recognise Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

In turn, we pray for you, our brothers and sisters in Christ. May you also be a witness to the surrounding people. May you also grow in the love of the Lord.

We have many more things to say, but we leave it at this. We assume that this letter has given you a good idea of our experiences.

We wish you God's rich blessing!

Katja & Jurgen
Vanya, Issa, Abbey, Dani en Simeon Hofmann

Jurgen & Katja

Serving God on Madagascar



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Contact

Jurgen & Katja Hofmann
Vanya, Issa, Abbey, Dani & Siemen
Postal address:
BP714, Antananarivo 101
Madagascar
contact@jurgenkatja.nl
Contact person The Netherlands:
David Pavlotzky
Tel.: +31 (0)6 542 036 83

Go to our website to find more ways to contact us:
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[Please go to our website](#) for more details about how you can support us.

Things to pray for:

We are thankful because:

- 1) we serve a great God;
- 2) normal life seems to be returning;
- 3) we feel supported and encouraged by you and many others.

Pray that/for:

- 4) the fear of the people;
- 5) Doris and Alphossin will keep their spirits up;
- 6) we will trust the Lord in everything;
- 7) the local Christians may grow in faith;
- 8) the Gospel of Luke will reach many hearts!

Where do we live?

Location Openstreet Maps:
Maroamboka, Madagascar-
[21.59506/47.87529](#)

Location Google Maps:
Maroamboka, Madagascar-
[21.595055,47.875621](#)

Disclaimer

Thank you so much for your interest in our ministry to the Antanala people on Madagascar. We greatly appreciate the love and support of the wonderful people that God has put around us. This ministry is much larger than our family, and we cannot do it alone.

You have either signed up to receive this newsletter or you have been an important part of our lives and we thought you would like to know about our journey. If at any point you no longer want to receive this newsletter, please unsubscribe:

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