



## Newsletter November-December 2021

### Dear Friends,

When we started writing this letter we were in the capital, Antananarivo. The trip to the capital is always quite a challenge. Lots of preparations in and around the house. But when that is all arranged we can actually go ...

### Looking Back

When we look back at the past few months we are amazed at how quickly time has gone by. Last time we returned from Tana with a box full of copies of the Gospel of Luke. In our last newsletter we wrote that a deacon from the Lutheran Church, laban'i Menty, bought a few booklets. Later he bought some more copies. These he took to a large meeting of the Lutheran Church. The meeting was organised about 4 hours drive south of us. Leaders and deacons had come from the far south of Madagascar. These people all speak different dialects. These dialects all have unintelligible differences from the official Malagasy.

laban'i Menty was given the opportunity to read from 'our' gospel of Luke. Those present were pleasantly surprised. One person immediately shouted: *"Hey, that's Antanala!"* So the language was recognised immediately. But that is not the only thing. The attendees also wanted to read for themselves. Big eyes! Despite the fact that they all speak different dialects, this gospel was still easier to read than the version in the official national language. Apparently the southern dialects are similar enough that people prefer to read the gospel written in a neighbouring dialect than in the official Malagasy. This was a big surprise for us. When Jurgen told Menja about it, he didn't seem surprised at all, *"Yes, the southern dialects all look alike"*, he said ... laban'i Menty said that next time they want to use the booklets during the meeting. The leaders may also want to take them home to use it in their local congregations.

### Borders

As of November the 8<sup>th</sup>, the airport of Madagascar opened up again for international flights. For now, it is mainly Air France that flies from Paris to Antananarivo, twice a week. We understand that it is still a hassle to get to Madagascar. Many airline companies do not know what the rules are. We are glad that we could return last January and that we are living in our village again since February. If we look at what we have been able to do in the past 10 months we can only be grateful.

It is humbling to see the ins and outs of our neighbours. People who mainly worry about what to eat the next day. A life where small accidents can quickly become life-threatening. We are grateful that we could be there for our fellow villagers when things go wrong. Malaria, worm infections, up to severely malnourished babies ... We have seen more in the past 10 months than in the previous 10 years.

We tested at least 100 people for malaria, most of which proved positive. This means that most of the people we tested really did have malaria. We were able to provide them with good and fast-acting medicine. Some infections were so severe that we wondered if the medicines would arrive in time. Fortunately, as far as we know, no one died of malaria after we were able to help them. That is truly something we can praise God for.

God is good, all the time. And all the time, God is good. It is an English song we once sang when we were on holiday in Ireland (many years ago). That song still echoes, now and then, in our heads. How wonderful it is to see a malnourished baby growing to become a chubby toddler. When you consider that the baby was very skin over bones when it was first brought to us on the veranda ... Really, the average childcare worker would get a heart attack just seeing it. We were allowed to help people with information about breastfeeding. We could help them with supplementary feeding. We could pray for them, and we could put our arms around them. God is good!

The border is open for tourism again. The border was opened for us 10 months earlier for a good reason, don't you think?



## Pets

Anyway, we went to the capital. Well, what do you do when you have a pregnant cat? Normally we leave the care to our neighbour. But to be honest, our friends in the village are very well meaning, but do not have the same attitude towards animal care as we do. Actually our fellow villagers think a cat should take care of itself. Our neighbour already said so herself. The last time our cat gave birth we were still in the Netherlands. Our neighbour also has her own work and therefore she couldn't watch over the cat and her kittens all the time. The cat went for a walk with the kittens. The neighbour brought them back to our house in the evening. But there was nobody there, and that is not cosy, so the next day all the kittens were gone again. In the end the kittens did not survive. The neighbour asked us if we would rather take the cat with us. So we are in the capital with mother cat and three kittens. Of course this is great fun for the kids ... we will not complain.

It's a nice distraction for the children (and for us). We could use some distraction. Last time when we came back from the capital we brought a puppy with us. We called her Suus. A very nice and active animal! She loved to play all day long. Later, Katja and Abbey found another puppy during a hike. Totally neglected and on the verge of death. Two little dogs! What a joy! We named the neglected dog Hope. After a lot of care and love, Hope also started to grow into an active puppy. But sometimes things do not go as you had hoped for. Our first dog, Suus, became ill. We did not understand what was wrong with her. After a lot of research we found out that she had caught the Parvovirus. We treated her but because we did not know exactly what to do we were too late. Unfortunately she did not make it. But now we knew with what we were dealing. We kept a close eye on our second dog. As soon as we saw the first symptoms we started the proper treatment. After five days she started eating and drinking again. She also started to play now and then. And then all of a sudden she went downhill very fast and died. We were very sad! It is a little bitter to know that there is a vaccination available for this virus ... Only, not in our neighbourhood.

## Joy

Despite the bad things, not everything is doom and gloom! The children had organised several sleepovers and as a family we regularly visited good friends. Our friends literally come from all corners of the world: South Africa, Switzerland, Canada, the Netherlands and so on. It is an enrichment to have dinner with them or just to be together. Exchanging insights and occasionally laughing at jokes that you only understand when you are in the same situation. Everyone has his or her own story and that makes the relationship so fascinating. You find out that we really belong together.

It was also time for our annual AIM *retreat*. This is a midweek retreat where we as AIM missionaries from Madagascar come together in a relaxed environment. This year we got to organise the meeting. That was quite a challenge because until the very end we didn't know who could attend or not. We had a good time together. We said goodbye to Georgina. Georgina is going back to Canada to enjoy her well deserved retirement. At the same time we've met a new family from Switzerland. This is the Ramangalahy family who, with their three children, are serving in the north of Madagascar.

## Baptism

And when your third child says that she wants to be baptised! Yes, then the joy is complete, isn't it? Abbey, had the desire to be baptised for a long time already. Before we went to Tana, she asked Kim Midgley (our friend and pastor of our church in the capital) whether she could get baptised. No problem, of course! Abbey loves the Lord, that is obvious. Outside the church, they set up a large swimming pool. And there, in front of the entire congregation, Abbey was baptised by Jurgen and Kim. We are so thankful that we were able to witness this!

God is good, all the time. And all the time, God is good.

## Looking Forward

Meanwhile, we are back in Maromaboka, and we try to look ahead. Looking ahead is difficult in Madagascar. In any case, we just pick up where we have left. Jurgen had already started visiting a new village, TsaraRano (Good Water). The Bible stories are well-received there. The king's wife had often asked when Jurgen would visit them too ... That time is now. Jurgen filmed his hike to this village, explaining some of the things that are going on there:  
<https://www.jurgenekatja.nl/goedwater>





Our stay in Tana has also brought us into contact with new people. For example, we made friends with a Romanian family. Marcel, the father of the family, is a real visionary. When he heard about our work, ideas came out of his mouth like a waterfall (really, he was unstoppable). Marcel knows a lot of people around our area. He started brainstorming about radio broadcasts, dubbing the Jesus film, training Malagasy missionaries, helping missionary pastors. But also strengthening the many small churches that have to deal with the advancing Islam. All kinds of possibilities, even working among the prisoners in the Manakara jail. We have a lot to think about.

For now, we will be busy with our work here in Maroamboka. But what does the Lord want us to do in the future? This is not the first time we have asked Him that question, and it will not be the last time either. It is one of the most important questions we can ask as Christians ... It is also a scary question. How much do we want to keep things in our own hands?

### **Finally**

The title of this letter already tells you that we are late sending it. The intention was to send the letter three weeks ago. So now it is also a December letter. The advantage is that we can already wish you a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year! We wish you God's blessing and wisdom.

We hope this way you are informed about our work here in Madagascar. We want to thank you very much for all your support, in whatever way!

God's blessings from the bottom of my heart,

Katja and Jurgen  
Vanya, Issa, Abbey, Dani and Siemen.

# 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](mailto: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:  
[www.jurgenkatja.nl/en/](http://www.jurgenkatja.nl/en/)

## Support us!

### Mandate form (UK donors)

Donors from other countries can contact the following offices:

**US:** [receipting.us@aimint.org](mailto:receipting.us@aimint.org)

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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) the Gospel of Luke is ready;
- 3) the booklets are received with happiness;
- 4) we feel supported and encouraged by you and many others.

### Pray that/for:

- 5) the local Christians learn that they too can preach the Gospel;
- 6) we will trust the Lord in everything;
- 7) we will hear and understand God's voice when it comes to our future plans;
- 8) the local Christians may grow in faith;
- 9) the Gospel of Luke will reach many hearts;
- 10) the initiatives of the other organisations.

## Where do we live?

Location Openstreet Maps:  
Maroamboka, Madagascar-  
[21.59506/47.87529](https://www.openstreetmap.org/?lat=-18.7529&lon=21.59506)

Location Google Maps:  
Maroamboka, Madagascar-  
[21.595055,47.875621](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Maroamboka,+Madagascar/@-18.7529,21.595055,15z)

## 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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