

Newsletter November 2026

Dear friends,

Our last newsletter was written in September, just before we were due to travel back to Madagascar.

By now, we have well and truly settled back into life here in Madagascar. It took a little while to find the right balance again between work, family life and the everyday demands of living here. Madagascar is often described as *tany moramora* – the land where everything moves at a leisurely pace.

As I write this, I, Jurgen, am sitting beneath a palm-thatched roof, with a coconut drink in my hand, looking out over the Indian Ocean. I'll come back to that in a moment.

Our two eldest children

Our eldest daughter spent the summer holidays with us in Oudewater. It was lovely to have everyone together again! As you can imagine, saying goodbye once more was quite difficult.

Our second child did not return to Madagascar with us either. Just before we left, he went to stay with friends in Kansas, USA. He spent a month there helping out on their farm. He has now returned to the Netherlands and is staying with his sister for a few weeks. The plan is for him to come to Madagascar for another period on 24 November, before he too starts studying in the Netherlands.

Taking on new roles

It is strange watching the children leave home. Many missionaries return to their home country once their eldest child goes off to university. However, we have always said that we want to keep doing what the Lord has called us to do. Thankfully, our children feel the same way.

What we are seeing, though, is a gradual change in the missionary community. The old hands are leaving one by one, and relatively young families are taking their place. This makes it harder for our children to find others of a similar age within the missionary community.

We are now seeing our second daughter and second son taking on the role of children's workers. They used to be members of the children's and teenagers' group themselves, but now they are leading it!

We are noticing changes in our own roles too. In the past, we would often seek advice from more experienced missionaries. Now, however, we find that others are coming to us for advice. Younger families regularly approach us with questions or simply because they need a little encouragement.

It feels rather strange to suddenly find ourselves among the 'senior missionaries'! Ha ha!

Unit Leader

One of my roles is that of Unit Leader. Within AIM, we have appointed leaders for each region. Here in Madagascar, that is Manoa Ratovana. Manoa and his wife have worked incredibly hard over the past few years and are in real need of a period of leave. They are hoping to take four months off to rest.

I had a feeling something was coming... And sure enough, Manoa gave me a call. He is Malagasy, so naturally we first spent some time chatting about this and that – because that's how things are done here! But eventually he got to the point and asked whether I would be willing to take over his responsibilities for the next few months.

I have done this once before, for a few weeks. That happened to be during a period when a cyclone hit Madagascar, so, as well as being interim Unit Leader, I suddenly found myself acting as crisis manager too. Well, it certainly keeps me busy!

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Antsirabe, Ranomafana, Maroamboka, Vangaindrano and back again

It wasn't long before we started making plans to visit our village, Maroamboka, again. We hadn't heard anything from our translator, Menja, for quite some time, so we were naturally curious to find out whether he had completed any more chapters of Genesis.

Normally, I travel there on my own with one or two of the children. This time, things were a little different.

Our friends Wouter and Sanne van Holst live in Vangaindrano with their three children. Their home is about an eight-hour drive south of our village. They have been through quite a lot recently and asked whether we might be willing to spend a couple of weeks with them.

As much as we love them, the thought of spending three days in the car wasn't particularly appealing! But we also understood how much they would appreciate having some visitors who know what life is like here. So, after a bit of planning and rearranging, we came up with a plan.

On the way there, we decided to stop in Antsirabe, where our American friends Russel and Kathy Thomas live. We hadn't seen them for a long time, and they were immediately enthusiastic about our visit. We stayed with them for a couple of nights. This also gave me the opportunity to see their work.

They train Malagasy Christians to become missionaries through an eight-week course. They welcome young Christians from all over the country, preferably from rural areas. These are young people who have no problem living in remote places. That is a real advantage, because it is precisely in the interior of Madagascar that access to the Gospel is often very limited or even non-existent.

It was wonderful to see what they are doing! As you can imagine, I can see some great opportunities here for potential students from our own area, or even from further afield. Why go to all the trouble of setting something up yourself when your brothers and sisters have already established something so worthwhile?

After visiting the Thomas family, we continued to Ranomafana to buy supplies for our stay in the village. Halfway through that eight-hour journey, we discovered that the car no longer wanted to climb the hills at anything like a decent speed. It was as though it wasn't getting enough fuel.

We decided to remove one of the fuel filters from the system to see whether that would make a difference. After all, the filter might have been blocked. Unfortunately, it didn't help.

Once we reached Ranomafana, I called the mechanic at our garage in Tana. He recommended a good mechanic in Ranomafana. He suspected the problem was with the fuel pump. And, sure enough, they took it out, cleaned it and put it back in again. That made a huge difference to the car's performance.

I still suspect that the piston rings may need replacing as well, but we will have a closer look at that once we are back in Tana.

Onwards to Maroamboka!

Once we had cleaned the house, we could finally relax for a bit. The children went off for some lovely hikes, while I went to visit Menja. Thankfully, he had completed another few chapters of Genesis. He said there weren't very many because I hadn't been there for such a long time. And that is, in fact, how things tend to work here. People involved in longer-term projects often need someone to give them a little push from time to time. Life here is full of challenges, and less urgent matters can easily slip into the background.

While we were in Maroamboka, I also replaced all the water pipes around the house. I already had the materials, so I spent the whole day getting stuck into the work. Mud between my toes, blisters on my hands and the sunshine on the back of my neck. Just like the old days! The only difference is that I'm not quite as used to it as I once was. The following day, I spent the entire day lying on my mat with a headache and feeling thoroughly unwell. In other words, I had sunstroke. Ugh!

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After a few days, we continued on to Vangaindrano, where we spent a couple of weeks with the van Holst family. Those were really good weeks in which we were able to share a lot with one another. It was lovely to see them at work on their own project. I had visited them before, but spending a longer period there gave me a much better understanding of what they are doing.

Coconut milk and the Indian Ocean

And now we come back to the coconut drink in my hand and the view of the Indian Ocean.

We had planned to visit Menja once more on our way back to Tana. Our idea was to follow the same route we had taken on the way down, but in reverse.

A few days before we were due to leave Vangaindrano, our daughter came down with malaria. We started her on medication straight away and were unsure for a while whether we should travel at all. The medication seemed to be working and she was already feeling a little better, so we decided to set off. Initially, everything went well, until she also started suffering from travel sickness. Travel sickness combined with the weakness caused by malaria is not a good combination!

To make matters worse, one of the shock absorbers broke in half along the way. That meant we could no longer drive very fast. We had the broken shock absorber removed in a village and took a chance that we would be able to find a replacement in Manakara, the main town near Maroamboka.

In the past, parts like these had to be ordered specially, and you would have to wait a day or two. Thankfully, things have changed. At the first spare parts shop, I was directed to a specialist. We ended up in a shop absolutely packed with car parts! Hooray for progress!

Two hours later, the shock absorbers had been replaced and we were ready to continue our journey.

It was already late afternoon, so, particularly considering the condition of our patient, we decided it would be better to stay in Manakara for the night. We know our way around here, and people speak our dialect. After looking around for a while, we came across a little bungalow park in a rather secluded spot. There were two bungalows available, so we were able to move straight in. Tourists would normally eat at the restaurant next door, but we had brought our own vegetables and rice. The lady running the place kindly gave us a little charcoal stove so that we could prepare our own meals.

People are quite amazed by the whole thing. White people who speak just like them and even cook their food in the same way!

Meanwhile, our daughter is still confined to bed. We had hoped that the malaria medication would work well, but unfortunately that hasn't been the case. We have now given her a second course of a different medication. This second medication needs to be taken twice a day over a period of three days. Although we are reasonably comfortable here, it is obviously not a pleasant situation for her. She is tired, has headaches and muscle aches, and sleeps a lot. She did manage to eat a little this morning, which is encouraging, but we are hoping and praying that she will feel better tomorrow. *[EDIT] It is a new morning and the medicine seem to do their work, praise God!*

At times like these, you really wish you were back in your own home. We will have to see how things develop over the next few days. Another trip to Maroamboka is no longer on the cards for now, but that is all right. We will see on Saturday whether we can continue our journey.

Thank you for your support and prayers!

So, this newsletter has been written from an unfamiliar place and in rather unusual circumstances. But even from here, we want to thank you all sincerely for your support and prayers.

I think it is clear that it is by no means unnecessary to keep us, and missionary work in general, in your prayers. He sees everything, and He is with us. We also know that He is the Great Healer.

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A little explanation

You may have noticed that we no longer mention the children's names. This is at their own request. They are getting older and want to be careful about making their names publicly available. They are particularly cautious about this because of social media. Of course, we want to respect their wishes.

Finally

Looking back at everything we are able to do here, one thing becomes very clear: God is faithful. In everything!

We can make our plans, but it is the Lord who directs the work.

And we are grateful that we are able to do this together with you – through your prayers, involvement, support and encouragement.

Let us continue to put our trust in Him. For God is good – all the time. And all the time – God is good.

Thank you so much!

Katja, Jurgen and the children Hofmann

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Jurgen & Katja

Serving God on Madagascar



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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 we serve a great and mighty God;
2) the local Christians in and around Maroamboka are organizing things independently;
3) we have had opportunities to encourage other missionaries;
4) our son had a wonderful time in Kansas.

Pray that/for:

5) our financial situation will recover;
6) the translation work and its distribution will continue to make progress;
7) we will be kept safe from illness and harm;
8) we and our children will enjoy good health;
9) our car will continue to run reliably during our travels.

Were do we serve?

Location Openstreet Maps:
Maroamboka, Madagaskar-21.59506/47.87529

Location Google Maps:
Maroamboka, Madagaskar-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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