

# Madagascar Matters



**“Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”**

**Psalm 46 v 10**

## still here

Here I am sitting at my desk, it's warm outside, the sky is blue and I haven't seen rain for several weeks. It sounds much like Madagascar at this time of year and not a lot like N. Ireland. And yet, this scene is how it is here in N. Ireland.

I am still here. On the 14 March, I was in the process of printing boarding passes, just 12 hours before due to board the airport bus from Belfast to Dublin, when I heard that it was probably unwise to fly to Madagascar. A couple of phone calls later and the decision was made, I would not be returning until the threat of Coronavirus eased and the normal schedule of flights to Madagascar resumed.

Nine weeks later, I am still here. This was not the plan, not my plan. This wasn't where I expected to be in the middle of May. However, I am thankful that I have a place to stay, thankful that I can join in with my church services online, thankful that I still have plenty of work to keep me occupied, thankful that the countryside lends itself to a

series of meandering walks where I can exercise, and thankful that I know that God is in control.

Yes, you are right, I haven't changed the verse (Ps 46 v 10) since my last letter in January. Right now, I need to be still in the presence of God, taking one day at a time and trusting Him with the plan of how this year will look.

- **Please pray that I would be patient as I wait to return to Madagascar.**
- **Pray that I would make good use of this extra, unexpected time here in N. Ireland.**

## Tsimihety team

The Tsimihety team met together during the dates previously reserved for the workshop (which didn't happen). Permission was given for the team to work in a room of the Good News Hospital. We are so encouraged by the support we get from both the Friends of Mandritsara Trust and the staff at the Good News Hospital.

The Tsimihety team still meet to work on a Saturday,

currently working on finishing 3 of a series of 7 booklets which outline the plan of God and the message of salvation. The team is also continuing to community test the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the gospel of Luke. It had been hoped that I could have joined the team for a few weeks in March and April but that wasn't to be. Please pray for them as they continue to work. They are still enthusiastic and though the work is hard and carries much responsibility, they remain motivated.

- **Pray that they would have great wisdom as they work.**
- **Pray that they would work well together, listen to one another, and produce a translation which would be clearly understood by the Tsimihety.**
- **Give thanks for the encouragement they receive from those at the Good News Hospital and related Mandritsara projects.**

## Madagascar

Madagascar actioned an early response to the Coronavirus

threat, with restrictions on flights and passengers entering the country. Despite this however, it has reported 193 cases of the virus and no deaths. (BBC world news 12 May 2020)

The Malagasy government imposed heavy restrictions on



travel throughout the country with no permitted crossing from one region to another. Much like many other countries, schools and churches were shut. Most however, have now reopened because within the past couple of weeks, scientists claim to have discovered a cure for covid-19. It has since been exported to several other African countries. Please pray for the country of Madagascar in the midst of this pandemic.

- **Pray for wisdom for the government.**
- **Pray that the virus would not begin to spread rampantly through the country as it has done elsewhere.**
- **Pray for safety for friends and colleagues in Tulear.**
- **Pray for the safety of the staff of the Good News Hospital in Mandritsara as they prepare for possible cases of the virus to reach that area.**

## And now?

At the moment, I am staying with my parents until... I have no idea.

I have set up a small office in a spare room where I can work.

I have things to continue to work on which include the Tsimihety stories I mentioned in my last letter. The grammar course which I had hoped to attend is now being held online. However, since I was not able to go to Mandritsara to get the extra material needed

for the course, I will not be able to attend it this year.

I am also revising some Hebrew when translating the Tsimihety stories proves too much for my brain!!

I am thankful for the sometimes frustrating(!) modern technology. I am able to keep in touch with friends near and far by WhatsApp and have team meetings via Skype or Zoom – things I never imagined I would be making much use of. But so are the times and without technology, communication with Madagascar would be so much more difficult.

- **Please pray for discipline to work on the Tsimihety stories and motivation to revise Hebrew.**
- **Give thanks for the ability to stay in touch with friends in Madagascar and members of the team who are outside of Madagascar due to world travel restrictions at present.**



## Please pray:

- **Please continue to pray for the funding required for our proposed move to Antananarivo.**

Even before travel restrictions and lockdowns, the workshop due to be held in March had to be cancelled due to lack of funds. The financial demands of workshops would be so much less if we were already based in Antananarivo.

Thank you so much for your continued interest and your prayers. We value them all,

*Debbie*

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