



Phil & Vala Long

Taking Life to the forgotten people of Madagascar

Mad 4 Life Ministries

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

www.Mad4Life.org



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Dear Pastors and Prayer Partners,

Tratin ny Taona (Happy New Year) from the "Big Red Island" of Madagascar! Like most of you, Christmas has always been the biggest holiday for our family. Even though we had a great Christmas, it is still very strange to have Christmas in the middle of the summer. Gabe was able to come home from university and Tabitha and our son-in-law, Matthew surprised us by coming for a 10-day visit on January 7th. For the Malagasy, it's not that Christmas is unimportant, but New Year's is their major holiday. As a matter of fact, many shops close for a whole week after New Year's Eve.

For me New Year's is a time to reflect on the previous year and set some goals for the next year. In 2019, we were able to continue our progress in language and culture study. Thanks to you, we were able to purchase our first mission field vehicle, a 2014 Toyota Land Cruiser. We were able to help run a teen camp here on the island where we saw nine teenagers begin their relationship with Jesus. We also had a return trip back to the States to meet with some of our supporters, get Gabe settled into university, meet with Deacon's diabetic medical team and, of course, give our daughter away to be married.

The **planning for 2020** began in March of 2019 when Vala and I began to pray with another missionary family about the possibility of launching the first church here on the island for both of our families. Our friends and colleagues, the Brown family, just returned from their first furlough and **we will begin to work together to plant a church here in the capital** of Madagascar. Another one of our goals for this year came to me in the form of a question through an email. One of our supporters back in the States sent an email asking if every tribe had the Bible in their own language. The answer to that is no, but what I learned after talking to several missionaries is that the schools here on the island teach reading and writing in what is called "official" or the ruling tribe's language known as Merina and also in French. That does not mean that everyone is educated, but those who are, read official/Marina and some French, so many people do have access to the Word of God here. However, what I found out is that pastoral resources are lacking. The resources they do have are usually in French, and only the highly educated would be able to read and comprehend. So **Vala and I want to begin work on getting good resources translated and into the hands of Malagasy pastors for 2020. One of our first projects that we will be working on is the discipleship material we use.** The Lord has brought two educated college-aged young ladies into our lives. They love Jesus, they speak great English and have been helping Vala with her Malagasy language study, and they have agreed to help us begin work on this project. Vala is taking them through discipleship in English and when they are through, we will all go back through the program again with the purpose of translating it into Malagasy. Our final goal for 2020 sounds obvious, but it is **to stay in Madagascar**. We wrote in our last update that we were thrown a curveball in October concerning Visas; we are still navigating the process. We don't totally understand everything that is going on, but **we are praying that with all these changes to Visas, it will open the door for longer stay Visas** so we can concentrate more on ministry and less on government paperwork. We truly appreciate your prayers with us in these areas as we kick off the New Year. We thank you for everything you do and remember, we are also praying for you.

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