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The LONGS To Madagascar



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Bonjour and Salama Ireo from the Big Red Island of Madagascar!

I know I say this every year, but I love the New Year. Every year at this time, I look back at the goals that I set for myself and for the ministry the year before to see if we were able to accomplish them. Then I set new goals for the next year.

The big goal we set for last year was to get a new church plant off the ground. It was awesome to watch God work! We started in June with about 45 people at our first Sunday service and at Christmas, we had a high attendance of 245 people. One of the great things about our service on Christmas day was that we had several new teenagers come and they have returned every week since to both church and to youth. Not only that, but the first Sunday of the New Year I had **seven teens approach me after church who wanted to accept Jesus as their Savior**. Then, the next week we had **3 more people come to be saved**.

So, there are several things that we are looking toward as we move into this new year. First of all, after having several people saved and others come to rededicate their lives to Jesus, we are going to begin heavily pushing discipleship. Last week, we put a new take-home Bible study course out and all of the booklets were taken. People are hungry for the Word. We also want to help people go through a one-on-one discipleship program with the hopes that when each individual is finished, they will then take other people through discipleship as well. Another thing we are looking forward to this year is to get our new youth group to camp for the first time. We know this will be huge in their spiritual lives.

Then, have several exciting outreaches planned. The **school supplies outreach** was very effective for us last year and **resulted in people coming to church and accepting Jesus as their Savior**, so we will do that one again for sure. All-in-all, we can't wait to see how God works in 2024!

Here are some things you can **be praying with us** about over the next several weeks. First of all, we are hoping to be able to do **our first baptisms** at some point in the next few months. That will require a location, whether we bring in some sort of tank or go to one of the lakes close to the church. It will also require some teaching as there is a lot of confusion on what baptism means in this culture. In many ways, because of family pressure from parents and even extended family, baptism can be a harder step for the Malagasy than salvation. So, be in prayer for us and the church as we work through this process. Also, please **be praying about our visas**. For the past few years, we have only been able to get short-term visas; the last one was only 9 months before we had to renew. The process to get new visas takes a lot of time that could be invested into the ministry instead of administrative things. Well, we think we have been able to get a much longer visa this time, and have been told we were approved, but we can't count on it until we have it in your hands...or passport. So please be praying with us about that.

Let me end by saying that as we look back on 2023 and see all that God has accomplished here on the Big Red Island, it is obvious that you have been praying for and with us. As we move into 2024, we want to say thank you for praying for us and please know, we are also praying for you.

Phil and Vala Long

BBFI
MISSIONS

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