

Walking Together as Companions in Christ

It is a wonder to experience the bonds we have discovered with our brothers and sisters in Madagascar.



Malagasy Christians glow with a passion for the Gospel of Jesus.....warm vibrant smiles expressing their love...rich harmonious voices raised in song...strong spirits able to rise above the economic poverty of their land. In

our journey together the relationship between the Rocky Mountain Synod and our Companion Synods has moved from a formality to one of deep human connectedness and a shared bond rooted in the love of Christ.



Continuing the journey . . .

As we look to the future we seek to grow in faith, mission and friendship with our companions in Madagascar. We ask you to join us.

- Pray for the people and their powerful witness to the Gospel in a country which is just 50% Christian.
- Pray for the pastors and other leaders who serve in the midst of extreme poverty and all its accompanying challenges.
- Pray for our ELCA missionaries who serve in health care, education and leadership development in partnership with the Malagasy Lutheran Church.
- Observe Companion Synod Sunday (traditionally in November) in your congregation.
- Give generously to the Seeds of Hope companion synod projects fund.
- Learn more about our companion synods through one of the many previous visitors eager to visit your congregation. Or gather resources available on the RMS and ELCA websites.
- Participate in future trips to our companion synods in Madagascar.
- Receive the gifts of passion and zeal for the Gospel that spills forth in effective evangelism demonstrated by these Malagasy Lutheran Christians!

For more information on how you or your congregation can deepen our connection with our companion synods, contact
Pastor Ron Roschke
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or
Rocky Mountain Synod - ELCA
303.777.6700

Walking Together

An introduction to our sisters and brothers in Madagascar—the Mahajanga, Antsiranana, Avaratra Atsinanana and Sophia Synods of the Malagasy Lutheran Church



A Brief History

The island of Madagascar is about as far away from the Rocky Mountain Synod as you can get geographically, culturally, and economically. Yet, since 1992, we have enjoyed a special relationship with members of the Boeny Mahajanga Regional Synod of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. In 1996, this relationship was expanded to include the Antsiranana Regional Synod. A third synod, Avaratra Atsinanana, was added to our relationship in 2007. And in 2011 we recognized a fourth synod, Sophia. These relationships have allowed people in both countries to expand their horizons and grow in their experience and understanding of the global nature of Christ's Church.

All four of our companion synods are located in the northern third of the island. The Lutheran presence in this part of Madagascar is the result of migration from the traditionally Lutheran southern parts of the island by people in search of work and fertile lands. They are powerful evangelists!

All four synods have experienced growth through their healing ministries and their zeal for the gospel. The Malagasy Lutheran Church's *Project Shalom* is a health, literacy and agricultural ministry integrated with evangelism among Muslims in our partner synods and elsewhere in the country.

Betela Regional Seminary serves all four of these synods and has been a primary focus of our financial support. Betela is included in the budget of the Rocky Mountain Synod and several fund raising projects have provided solar power and lighting, new student housing, an electric pump for the well, bikes for new pastors, and financial support for continuing education for their pastors, women theologians and catechists.

Accompaniment

Our relationship with our sisters and brothers in Madagascar is one of accompaniment, as stated in the ELCA's philosophy of mission. Accompaniment means "walking together in solidarity, characterized by mutuality and interdependence. In this walk we share gifts, experiences, and resources, but also advice and admonition that will assist both companions for expanding and deepening the capacity for ministry."

Fifamangiana (FEE-fah-mahn-GEE-ah-nah)



Fifamangiana is a Malagasy word that means "visiting together with one another". In 2008, a group of Malagasy church leaders came to the RMS for the express purpose of sharing our faith stories with one another and engaging one another in conversation regarding our ministry contexts. This model was taken to seven different geographical areas in the Rocky Mountain Synod. Relationships grew deeper through these conversations.

Seeds of Hope

Seeds of Hope is the project of the Rocky Mountain Synod which gives RMS congregations and individuals a way to support the exciting ministries of the Malagasy Lutheran Church and our partner synods. Over the past seven years, Seeds of Hope has focused our collective energies to help support leadership development of the church in Madagascar. Many of the projects have assisted the church's mission through Betela Seminary. We have been able to provide a solar power system to the seminary; students who used to try to study by candlelight are now able to more comfortably read at night. Our offerings have built new student housing for married couples and families. Annual continuing education for pastors and women theologians supported by Seeds of Hope builds the powerful ministry of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. Our projects are always developed in consultation with our companion synods, and we are working to expand our ministries even further.

Exchanges

The exchange of visitors has contributed significantly to the development of our companion synod relationship. Beginning in 1992, there have been ten major exchanges that have taken place. We are currently considering another trip in 2013. In recent years, the two camping programs of the RMS have had young people from Madagascar on their staffs. These exchanges have helped us build close personal relationships and a better understanding of the work of the Church in both cultural settings.

