

## Evangelists or Missionaries?

By David Lerseth

Meet Some Missionaries, May 2023

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### The New Missionary

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The first Lutheran missionaries arrived in Madagascar in 1866 from the Norwegian Mission Society. In 1888, the first missionaries from the United States of America from Lutheran Churches of Norwegian descent arrived to join in the mission work. The sending of missionaries from Lutheran churches in America to Madagascar ended around 2010, but during those years, 366 missionaries answered the call to serve. Interestingly, their service amounted to 5,445 total years of missionary service! The average length of a missionary's service was 14.88 years, with the longest service at 46 years.



*Former missionaries to Madagascar*

**EVANGELISTS**  
MISSIONARIES

Today, missionaries are not being sent to Madagascar. WHY? Because there is a new kind of missionary serving in Madagascar: EVANGELISTS! Madagascar is not opposed to having companion churches send missionaries to serve, but the Malagasy Lutheran Church has an abundance of people educated, trained and ready to serve as the new missionaries, called evangelists.

There is a deep appreciation for the Christians from Norway and the United States who came to Madagascar to share the Gospel and help establish the Malagasy Lutheran Church. But today, as the first indigenous church body within Lutheran circles (begun in 1950), they are a leading church in evangelism — connecting evangelism and humanitarian actions as one and the growth of church members and new congregations.

The new missionaries, the evangelists, for today's evangelism outreach is a good thing. Why?

- 1) Because sending an American missionary family today would cost over \$100,000.00 a year!
- 2) An American missionary would have to learn to speak the language and culture, pay for their children's education, pay for airline tickets to return home at least once every two years, pension/health care, etc. All of this would be very costly.

The new missionaries, the evangelists, are the most effective for the future of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. They currently receive an annual salary of \$650, \$100 for continuing education events and \$100 for health care, salaries in line with the local economy. And the work they accomplish in evangelism is amazing.



*The first three evangelists sponsored by FOMM in 2010*



*Some of the evangelists from the Betioky Synod*

### Statistics for the work of the current 56 evangelists in 2022:

- 1) Villages visited: **2,426** (Each evangelist travels to villages within their region)
- 2) Families visited in these villages: **8,124** (Evangelists visit homes to teach and share the Gospel)
- 3) Baptisms: Children: **3,213**  
    Adults: 1,573  
    **TOTAL: 4,786**
- 4) Confirmations: **1,273**
- 5) Absolutions: **1,151** (Individuals who sought out an evangelist to seek God's forgiveness)
- 6) New congregations formed as a result of the evangelist's work: **23**

As one of the FOMM board members stated during a discussion of this program, "What would happen if one's own congregation in the USA followed the same evangelism emphasis as these Malagasy evangelists?"

The answer is simple: our American congregations, if they took evangelism seriously and as the most important work of the local congregation, would grow instead of decline!

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### A Story of the Evangelist's Work

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*Evangelist REHOAZE Christin*



*Evangelist BRUNO Auguste*

Every year the Regional Synod of Betroka holds an evangelism emphasis event. The event this year was held at the village of Vohitelo. Two evangelists in this area, BRUNO Auguste and REHOAZE Cristin, had been visiting many villages proclaiming the Gospel and Jesus' great love and redemption for the people. As a result, many people came for the event: pastors, evangelists, catechists, and over 500 Christians to witness and proclaim the Gospel message.



*People walking to attend an evangelism event*



As a result of attending worship services, viewing films and participating in Bible studies, many people were baptized and a new Christian community was formed. Since then, a new church has been built and the evangelists continue to help strengthen and grow the numbers of new Christians in Vohitelo.



*Worship service*



*Many adults and children were baptized*

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## The Future of Mission Work in Madagascar

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The Malagasy Lutheran Church is steadily growing each year due to the commitment to be a church in mission, not only within Madagascar, but also by sending missionaries to other countries.

You may help to support this work by supporting an evangelist with an annual gift of \$800, paid monthly, quarterly or annually. It is a great way to help your congregation or you as an individual/family to become engaged in global mission. You will be assigned an evangelist and will receive a biography and photos of the evangelist, plus four reports every year about the work of the evangelist you support.



***For more information about evangelists, go to our website at:***

**[www.madagascarmission.org](http://www.madagascarmission.org)**

**and click on Get Involved**

***Or***

***Call us at: 847-445-8177***

***Write us at:***

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