

## IT'S TIME TO REVITALIZE!

By David Lerseth

Celebrating Mission, August 2023

I find it discouraging that one of the things that has been lost in contemporary church life is the celebration of global mission. Very seldom does a congregation even mention the existence of global mission, much less have a time to celebrate and educate the membership about global mission.



*Missionaries visiting congregations to tell the story of global mission*

That has not always been the case. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries were the times in the history of the Christian Church when Western Christianity was sending missionaries by the thousands to Africa, Asia and South America to bring the Gospel message to the people who had never heard of the love and salvation through Jesus Christ.



Congregations always had at least one special Sunday to tell the story of global mission, along with probably a guest missionary speaker or some other representative from the church, to share the stories of what was happening in global mission. The congregations also had women's, children's and men's organizations that included the title of mission in their organization, such as Women's Mission Federation and Junior Mission Crusaders. Global mission was taught in the Sunday School, Bible School and confirmation curriculum. Congregations had special offerings and other methods of supporting a missionary or special cause.

In the early 1970s the American Lutheran Church had a national appeal to raise millions of dollars for American Mission and Global Mission. We visited every household in the parish I served, and we surpassed the goal that had been set by the national church for our parish by raising 5 times more than expected. Global Mission was at the heart of the church's purpose!



*The Great Commission to go to the whole world with the Gospel*

Today, it is difficult to find many churches who hold a global mission festival or even speak/teach about global mission. So, "IT'S TIME" to revitalize global mission in the life of the Christian Churches! The rest of this article is about how **you** may help with the revitalization.

## *Revisioning Global Missions*



---

### **How to Revitalize Your Congregation's Involvement in Global Mission**

---

If you have a Christian passion for global mission:

- Become educated about the Biblical teachings about God's mission to the nations.
- Learn about Biblically-based global mission organizations that are involved in the Great Commission "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Matthew 28:19).
- Share the call to God's global mission with family, friends, in Bible study groups, with church members, pastors and church councils, and seek involvement through prayer and action.
- Give financially, personally and/or through your congregation.
- Attend conferences on global mission. For example, *Celebrate Global Mission Magazine* (CGM) will be sponsoring a Mission Conference in St. Charles, Missouri, at the Best Western The Charles Hotel from 5:30 to 8:45 p.m. on Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. The theme of this event is: "It's Time: Understanding God's Heart for the Nations".

---

## Global Mission Educational Trips

---

Often, when one hears of a global mission trip, we think of going somewhere in the world and participating in doing something, such as building a house, painting a building, etc. It seems like this satisfies our Western World thinking that we need to do something for those people who are poor. We who are rich want to come and improve their lives by doing something. It is noble and ego satisfying, but I am not so sure it is the best definition of how to learn about the purpose of global mission.



In the Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM) organization, we have begun a different focus on our global mission trips. We call our trips “A Global Mission EDUCATIONAL Trip”.

I asked the people in Madagascar, “What would you want us Americans to do when we come Madagascar?” (Implying we would do something for them.)

They replied, “You do not have to come and do anything. Come and get to know us, encourage us, worship and pray with us, etc.”



*Malagasy people greeting Friends of Madagascar Mission Education Trip representatives*



*Developing relationships with the Malagasy Lutheran Church is important: Pastor David Lerseth with Pastor President Jean Norbert ANDRIAMIHAJA of the Betroka Synod*

And so, we organize trips to visit the programs and projects that we support with prayer and financial gifts. We hold summits on various programs such as: Evangelism, Children in Peril, health programs/hospitals/clinics, prison ministry, Bible schools/seminaries, water/food programs, schools for the blind and deaf. We learn what they are doing, what they dream about doing, pray and worship together and go home to share the story and seek financial support so supporters may be *Participants in a meeting on "Children in Peril* involved in doing the mission work of Madagascar.



*Friends of Madagascar visitors with Malagasy leaders at a prison ministry worship service*



*Madagascar Mission (FOMM)*

*Mission Education Trip participants having a meal having a meal with Malagasy friends*

---

### **Educational Trip Reflection**

---





Recently we traveled to Madagascar for a two-and-one-half week Global Mission EDUCATIONAL Trip. The following is the reflection from one of the participants about his experience of visiting programs and people in Madagascar.

“A person can learn about the ocean by reading books and watching movies, but until you feel the sand between your toes and smell the smells coming off the sea, until you run into the water and get knocked over by the waves, feel the tug of the current and taste the salt on your lips, you really don't have an appreciation for the ocean. Having recently spent two weeks in Madagascar, I gained a tiny sense of appreciation for that country and its people.

I came away reflecting on how much we in America take for granted. Only 17% of the people in Madagascar have electrical power, and those who do have power experience rolling blackouts daily. We take electricity for granted. The road system in Madagascar is terrible by anyone's standards. A trip of 25 km (15.5 miles) took more than three hours and required a 4-wheel drive vehicle. We take our highway system for granted. Going to the bank from a remote village is a 4-day trip (there and back). We take access to services for granted. Their meals are simple by our standards and frequently the same, or similar, day after day. Rice is the main part of all three meals of the day in Madagascar. It is frequently served with zebu, chicken or vegetables. We take the abundance of food and the availability of food for granted. Water is scarce in many parts of the country and nonexistent in other parts. We take water for granted. One of the many times our vehicle was stuck in the sand, three women - carrying their laundry in baskets on their heads - passed us, twice. They were walking several kilometers to wash their families' clothes. We take the conveniences in our lives for granted. And the list goes on.

In my opinion, I/we tend to complain a lot about what we don't have, or I/we express dissatisfaction about what I/we do have that does not meet our expectations. I didn't experience anything like that in Madagascar. I did, however, watch a young girl playing happily with a deflated balloon attached to the end of a stick.”



*Young girl's toy, a deflated balloon attached to a stick*

---

## **Celebrate Global Mission!**

---

In whatever way possible, I encourage you to Celebrate Global Mission. Be a motivator, a catalyst, an encourager for **raising up** the Biblical call to be people and a Christian Church in Global Mission.

Friends of Madagascar Mission is planning another “Global Mission EDUCATIONAL Trip” in 2024. If you are interested in receiving information on this trip, please send an email to Friends of Madagascar Mission (FriendsOfMadagascarMission@gmail.com). We will send you an application form and the tentative dates for the trip.

**For more information, visit [madagascarmission.org](https://madagascarmission.org)**