



English students
at SALT on our
last day of class.

FIHAVANANA

Living,
Loving,
and Learning
in Madagascar

July 2018

24 Things for 24 Hours

As crazy as it sounds, I only have 24 hours left in Madagascar. Here are some things I've been doing, thinking, and feeling as time winds down:

1. I said goodbye to my community and Fianarantsoa last week. Some days it feels like I left just yesterday, and other days it already feels like I've been gone a long time.
2. How do you say goodbye to someone you might never see again?
3. Malagasy people are masters of hospitality.
4. I have received so much more this year than I ever could have given.
5. This is the best first year of teaching I could have asked for.
6. I am going to miss eating *vary* and *laoka*.
7. My host family is incredible.
8. I had mixed feelings about leaving Fianar because I was so sad to go but so excited to see my YAGM family again.
9. The terraced rice fields that cover the highland region of Madagascar are beautiful.
10. The Madagasgals and I spent a week on the shores of a beautiful lake along the Canal des Pangalanes for our end-of-service retreat.
11. Kayaking, hammocking, swimming, discussing, crying, and laughing are good for the soul.
12. It's strange to think about going home because I am home.
13. I have so many stories to tell, but I'm not always sure where to begin.
14. What questions will people ask when I get back to Minnesota?
15. When you want time to slow down, it has a bad habit of speeding up.
16. "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken."
(C. S. Lewis)
17. Am I different person than I was when I left the U.S.?
18. I'm ready to be back in the States, but I'm not ready to leave.
19. Coconut chicken is delicious.
20. Tonight was my last time washing laundry by hand.
21. "We're a rich country, but our people are poor."
22. New beginnings are exciting.
23. What will my re-entry be like? Will my American life feel as foreign as it does now?
24. I am going to miss Madagascar so very, very much because this place has stolen my heart.

On Judgment

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you.

(Luke 6: 36-38)

This scripture was part of the readings at my church a couple weeks ago, and it hit me hard. It seems so long ago that I stepped off of a plane and set foot in Madagascar for the first time, full of expectations and preconceived notions of what my year would be like. Some of my ideas seem hilarious now, others cringe-worthy. Very few were spot-on and many more were blatantly wrong. I've spent the past year deconstructing those beliefs and building a better, more thorough understanding of this wonderful, complicated, heart-breaking, beautiful country that I have come to call home.

Now I'm leaving this home to go back to a different one. And I find myself full of all sorts of expectations all over again. I'm already judging our lives of convenience in the U.S.—and my own lifestyle pre-YAGM. I'm already irritated and exasperated thinking about encounters with people who don't know that Madagascar is a real place and not just an animated movie.

This bible verse was a good reminder to keep an open mind and heart when I arrived, but I think it's an equally important reminder for when I return. I pray that God grants me mercy. Washes away my judgments. Helps me to forgive rather than to condemn. Renews my giving spirit. And continues to walk alongside me every step of this new journey.



One of my English classes at SALT.



Saying goodbye to my amazing host parents at the taxi brousse station.

MALAGASY WORDS OF THE MONTH

VELOMA (vey-loo-muh)
Goodbye

MANDRA-PIHAONA (m-on-ja-pee-own-uh)
See you later

MIRARY SOA (me-rawr-ee soo-uh)
Best wishes

SOAVA DIA (soo-ah-vuh dee-uh)
Safe travels

Want to Get Involved? Here's How!

Subscribe:

Follow my blog for regular updates, reflections, and pictures at rachelmannyagm.weebly.com.

Follow:

Like the pages "YAGM Madagascar" and "Young Adults in Global Mission - ELCA" on Facebook for updates about the YAGM programs in Madagascar and around the world!

Donate:

I have surpassed my fundraising goal of \$5,000! If you wish to make a contribution to the YAGM program, visit the ELCA's website at www.elca.org, click "give," and select YAGM as the area for your gift to support.

Pray:

Please consider keeping me and the other YAGMs in your prayers as we say goodbye to our communities and transition back to life in the United States. Thank you for your love and support!

Misaotra Betsaka!

A big thank you to all of the donors (see below) who helped me surpass my fundraising goal. We raised \$7,149 together! Misaotra indrindra, tompoko!

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Our Savior's Lutheran Church (Beldenville, WI)
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And a shout out to all of you for supporting me through love and prayer this year. I couldn't have done it without you!



Zebus grazing in the countryside outside of Fianar.