



Arrival of the "Madagasgals" in Antananarivo after 32 hours of travel.

FIHAVANANA

Living,
Loving,
and Learning
in Madagascar

September 2017

Tonga Soa! Welcome!

Salama (hello) from Madagascar! Just over a week ago, I boarded a plane with nine other young women and embarked on what promises to be the journey of a lifetime. Our YAGM (Young Adults in Global Mission) adventure began during orientation in Chicago, where 93 young adults gathered to prepare for a year of service in 11 countries around the world. Almost every volunteer has now arrived "in country," where orientation continues.

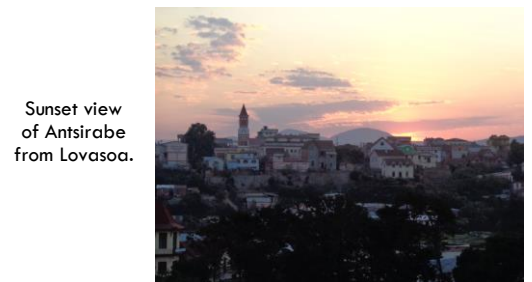
Upon arrival in Antananarivo (Tana for short), the capital of Madagascar, our country coordinator, Pastor Kirsten, joined us, and we spent two nights in a guesthouse at the headquarters of the Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy (FLM), which is the Lutheran church of Madagascar. We have now moved on to Antsirabe, one of the largest cities in the country. Our home for the next three weeks is Lovasoa, a cultural center under the joint leadership of the Norwegian Mission Society and the FLM. In-country orientation is off to a great start, filled with Malagasy (the native and also official language of Madagascar) lessons, culture classes, team bonding, and delicious food (which is primarily rice-based). Thus far in Malagasy lessons, we've learned how to greet people, present ourselves, count, and tell time; or, in our instructor's words, we are basically fluent! (He was definitely joking.)

In approximately three weeks, the ten of us will disperse to our placement sites all over the country. (Read more about mine below!) In the meantime, I can't wait to learn more about Madagascan culture and become better acquainted with my new home.

Peace, love, and happy trails,
Rachel



View of Antananarivo, the capital city, from the FLM headquarters and guesthouse.



Sunset view of Antsirabe from Lovasoa.

Want to Get Involved? Here's How!

Subscribe:

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

Donate:

I am still working towards my fundraising goal of \$5,000. For more information or to make a contribution, visit my personal fundraising page at support.elca.org/goto/RachelMann.

Pray:

Please consider keeping me and the 92 other YAGMs in your prayers this year. Thank you for your love and support!

Church in Madagascar

Church is a big deal in Madagascar. In a relaxed culture of “mora mora” (literally, “slowly slowly”), church is one of the few things that begins on time. Actually, if you show up on time for church, you’re late—which is what happened to us this past Sunday. We attended our first Malagasy worship in a beautiful Lutheran cathedral. Armed with Malagasy hymnals and English translations of the service, we crowded into close-set wooden pews and attempted to follow along to the best of our ability.

On Sundays, not much happens besides church. Shops are closed and streets are empty. Why? Because church is important. And, church services typically last three hours, minimum. That’s right! There are no hour-long services here, and the time frame extends if there’s communion, a baptism, or any other special event.



Our first Malagasy church service.

Even though the readings, songs, prayers, and sermon were all in Malagasy, I was surprised that the worship order follows the order most Lutheran churches use in the United States. It’s not exactly the same; there’s no passing of the peace, and the service is very traditional. But, in a context where everything else is unfamiliar, there’s something comforting about the familiarity of the good old Lutheran liturgy.

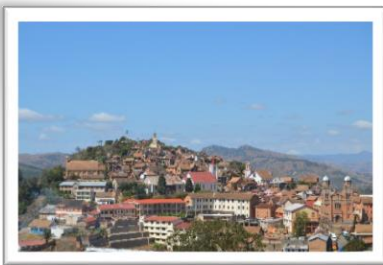
MALAGASY WORDS OF THE MONTH

FIHAVANANA (fee-hah-vahn-ahna):
Relationship

SALAMA (saw-law-maw):
Hello; health

MANANASY (m-on-a-naw-see):
Pineapple (Say this instead of “cheese” when taking pictures!)

AZAFADY (oz-a-fa-dee):
Please; sorry; excuse me



Upper Town of Fianar.
Photo by HoneyGale, Wikipedia.

Fianarantsoa, Here I Come!

This year, a fellow YAGM and I will be living in Fianarantsoa. Fianar is located in south-central Madagascar in the highlands region. Literally named “good education,” it’s fitting that the city of 200,000 people is home to a university and to SALT, the highest-level Lutheran seminary in the country. And, it’s even more fitting that I will be teaching!

I have the opportunity to teach English at three locations: SALT (the seminary), Amboaloboka (a young women’s vocational school), and Fafafi (a farming program of the FLM). Additionally, I will spend time working with the Community English Clubs teaching English but also participating in some social and cultural activities. While I do have a host family in Fianar, I’ll live in a small apartment on the campus of SALT. I’m very excited to explore my new home, begin building relationships with my community, and start teaching again.

One of many cathedrals in Fianar, which has the most churches per square meter in the country.
Photo by Discover Madagascar.

