



# LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES MADAGASCAR

Madagascar is a large island in the Indian Ocean, just off the east coast of Africa. Archaeologists believe it was originally populated by people who migrated from Indonesia and Asia some 1,500 to 2,000 years ago—making it one of the last major landmasses on earth to be settled by humans. The country is also home to a large number of plant and animal species that appear nowhere else on earth.

Despite the rich diversity to be found in the land, the culture, and the plant and animal life of Madagascar, most of the country's 24 million people are poor, on average living on less than one US dollar per day. Lack of industry, unstable national politics, and educational challenges (40 percent of Madagascar's people are illiterate) are major factors in the nation's ongoing economic challenges. Agriculture is the primary source of income for most families in Madagascar.

Madagascar's people are called Malagasy. The majority of Malagasy people—about 55 percent—are Christian. The Malagasy Lutheran Church currently has about 4 million members and is one of the fastest-growing Lutheran church bodies in the world. Roughly 40 percent of Madagascar's people practice traditional animist religions, and about 5 percent of Malagasy people practice Islam.



## *Ministry Response*

There is tremendous opportunity to share God's love and reach out with the Gospel in Madagascar. Lutheran Hour Ministries (**LHM-Madagascar**) responds to the spiritual hunger across the island country through a variety of strategies:

**RADIO.** Since poverty and illiteracy limit the use of newspapers, television and internet in Madagascar, radio broadcasting is the country's most powerful communications medium. LHM-Madagascar broadcasts a weekly talk show discussing social and spiritual issues on thirteen stations across the country. By 2018 the center will broadcast in 15 cities, many of which are in areas where Islam is growing.

**PRISON MINISTRY.** LHM-Madagascar has built a relationship with the administration of the main prison in Madagascar's capital city to minister to the institution's inmates. In addition to conducting rally-style events and offering **Bible Correspondence Courses (BCCs)**, the center sponsors inmate sports events such as soccer tournaments and cultural events such as choral competitions, and it periodically provides inmates with rice and other necessities.

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**FILM SHOWINGS.** LHM–Madagascar staff and volunteers regularly schedule trips to rural areas and generate interest by showing motion pictures like the internationally-known “Jesus Film.” People who are not connected with a church in the community often come for the event, and this affords an opportunity for LHM and a local congregation to begin to build relationships, perhaps through Bible Correspondence Courses or connection with the local congregation’s pastor.

**EQUIPPING THE SAINTS.** LHM–Madagascar recruits volunteers and provides **Equipping the Saints (ETS)** workshops that train volunteers in effective witnessing. “We organize six ETS workshops each year, and each is attended by about thirty people,” says LHM–Madagascar Director Daniel Andriamanjaka, “who then share the Gospel with their neighbors and invite them to become part of their church community.”

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES.** LHM–Madagascar offers Bible Correspondence Courses (BCC) to introduce the Gospel to people who don’t know Jesus and reinforce biblical understanding for people who do. When someone responds to an LHM outreach activity such as a radio broadcast or a rural film showing, the center will typically invite the respondent to begin a Bible Correspondence Course as the next step in his or her spiritual journey. LHM–Madagascar’s BCC is available in Malagasy, French, and English. During the last year, more than 2,200 new students enrolled in the BCC program.

**YOUTH MINISTRY.** LHM’s Madagascar ministry center partners with several high schools to sponsor outreach programs that involve youth—including choral music, leader development, Bible education, and even participation in radio broadcasting.

## Impact

### **BAPTISMS ... WEDDINGS ... GROWTH: How LHM’s Equipping the Saints Changed a Village Church**

Pastor Joasy Andriatsihoarana (pronounced Ahn drie aht see hoe ah RAH nah) faced some challenges in the congregation he served in Madagascar’s Antanetilava region. Many people in the surrounding area still practiced traditional ancestor worship; there was more than enough opportunity to spread the Gospel—but there was little interest among the 160 members of his church in sharing Jesus with their neighbors. According to Pastor Joasy, they were content to let him do any outreach that was to be done.

Pastor Joasy had learned about LHM–Madagascar from some of his ministry colleagues. He contacted the center and asked to host an Equipping the Saints workshop at his church. Pastor Joasy reports that eight members were commissioned as volunteers and became very active—especially in reaching out to unchurched people.

“As a result,” he says, “25 children and adults came for baptism ... and ten unchurched cohabiting couples even determined to join together in Christian marriage!” In two years, Pastor Joasy’s congregation has grown by leaps and bounds, and more than 80 people have enrolled in LHM’s Bible Correspondence Courses.

“I no longer work alone!” he says. He is humble to add the words of the apostle Paul: “[So] neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor. 3:7).

