

CONNECT

AIM's journal for prayer, reflection and growth



*Journey with us as we consider God's sovereignty and power.
Discover how God's glory is the ultimate end and purpose of mission.*



AFRICA
INLAND MISSION



LOOKING UP

In 1910, as the leading architects of Christian mission around the world gathered in Edinburgh to craft a global plan for world mission in the twentieth century, they were informed that, though the prospects for mission in most of the world were excellent, there was no hope for Africa. Islam was too strong. It was growing too fast. By the end of the century, Africa would be a completely Muslim continent.¹ Confronted with the seemingly hopeless case of Africa, it seems that some of these leaders failed to ‘look up’.

‘Look up at the sky and count the stars...so shall your offspring be’ (Genesis 15:5). Time and again in the long years that followed this promise from God, Abraham would have been reminded every time he looked up at the night sky that he would be the father of many nations, even as he and Sarah aged and remained childless. And when there seemed no hope, even when ‘his body was as good as dead...he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised’ (Romans 4:19-21). In other words, he kept looking up. The eyes of his heart were probably looking up too when God came to him and said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love...Sacrifice him...’ (Genesis 22:2), because he obeyed immediately, reasoning that ‘God could even raise the dead’ (Hebrews 12:19) if needed, to fulfil his promises. And when the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven to stay his hand he ‘looked up’ and saw the ram, the foundation of his hope.

‘After this I looked...’ (Revelation 4:1). In Revelation, John saw everything from heaven’s perspective. He saw behind the scenes of the apparently meaningless drama which unfolds on the earth we know. He saw the climax of a carefully directed play - a great, adoring multitude from every tribe, nation, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Revelation 7:9), the foundation of their hope. In our earthbound weakness, we struggle to see beyond this world’s stage, where it seems that we have not only lost the plot but there is in fact no script, no storyline. How we need to look up and see as God wants us to see! ‘I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest’ (John 4:35). ➡

06

Hervé and Nathalia’s journey into mission.

10

How can you pray for the Antakarana?

12

An update from Rosina Ferdinand, our Unit Leader for Madagascar.

16

Get to know the Bara people who live in Betroka, Madagascar.

18

Meet the Basso family, serving among the Bara people.

20

Pray for Madagascar.

22

How can you get involved?

24

Caroline Bell talks about how her view of God has changed.

26

An update from Adam Willard, Unit Leader for Uganda.

28

An interview with Ugandan missionaries Sam and Derrick.

32

Pray for Uganda.

34

Find out how you can respond by praying, giving or going.

🗨️ *We’d love to hear what you think of Connect. Let us know: communications.eu@aimint.org*

©AIM Europe | January 2021 | Lindsey Davies, Joe Morgan and Lucy Cranston

Africa Inland Mission International, a company limited by guarantee (04598557), a registered charity in England and Wales (1096364) and a charity registered in Scotland (SC037594)
Registered Office: Halifax Place Nottingham NG1 1QN.



☛ Those mission leaders in Edinburgh in 1910 failed to see that it is exactly where and when things seem most hopeless that God loves to act. Thankfully, others did look up and pressed on with the task of bringing the gospel to Africa's peoples. The result is that not only is Africa now *not* completely Muslim but, south of the Sahara, Africa is majority Christian and the African Christian diaspora is re-shaping Christianity around the globe. Where mission leaders saw no hope in Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century, the gospel is now Africa's overflowing hope. As one upward-looking African mission leader wrote prophetically at the beginning of this millennium:

"Africa is a continent eminently endowed. Her sportsmen and women are a spectacle all over the world. Her rich raw materials fuel industries worldwide and her skilled labour force keeps several industries and bureaucracies around the world running. Even her troubles provide jobs and businesses for several governments and non-governmental organisations. And yet in

no area is Africa as endowed as in her growing spiritual resources... Africa may not give the world computers, astronauts or great inventors. Yet it may well be that God has designed Africa to give the world what the world needs most: missionaries - bearers of the message of life and hope. That could as well be Africa's greatest contribution to this generation. Watch out, the Africans are coming!"

*From Africa to the World*² is the story of Africans coming, of Africans looking up and going forth to proclaim the gospel in boldness and faith. In the late 1960s, amidst the ashes of a Nigeria racked by a vicious civil war, revival broke out among students. Propelled by the Holy Spirit, and with the eyes of faith gazing upwards to the one enthroned in heaven (Psalm 123), they began preaching in the Muslim north of the country. And so was born Calvary Ministries (CAPRO), the largest interdenominational mission agency to emerge from Africa, with over 700 missionaries from more than two dozen nations, serving in over 35 countries.



It is the story of some of Africa’s best and brightest offering their lives to see the gospel established among the unreached of our world. And it is not an isolated story.

On a personal level, my contact with Great Commission following Africans has enlarged my faith, warmed my heart and fanned my zeal. They have helped me to ‘look up’. They have helped AIM to look up. They stir us all to keep looking up towards the finish line of churches established among all of Africa’s remaining unreached peoples. With the hope that each of us who have contributed will one day be able to say, ‘I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do’ (John 17:4).

DUDLEY PATE
European Director

1. *The Kingdom of God in Africa – A History of African Christianity*, Mark Shaw and Wanjiru M. Gitau, Langham Publishing 2020, p 12
2. *From Africa to the World – the CAPRO Story*, Festus Ndukwe, CAPRO Media 2019

Why not use this journal as a tool to help you to look up from the day to day? As we read stories from Africa, we will also be considering what God’s glory looks like and the impact that has on our lives.



Getting started: When you hear the word ‘glory’, what do you instantly think about? Consider some of the ways British culture uses the word ‘glory’ (for instance, in sports, the arts, and social media spheres).



Read Revelation 1:12-17. John saw someone ‘like a son of man’. This phrase links back to Daniel 7:13 and to the New Testament where Jesus called himself the ‘son of man’. It’s clear from the phrase that Jesus had the general appearance of a man. Why then did John not recognise him? What do you think John thought and felt at that moment? Even though John was one of Jesus’ best friends, he still reacted as he did. Why do you think this was?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Bringing it home: Why not spend some time asking God to speak to you through this journal? Pray that once again you would be overwhelmed by God’s amazing glory as you read of all that he is doing. Pray that God would open your eyes so you may see how you can bring him glory through the work he has given you to do.

MEET THE RAMANGALAHY FAMILY

Hervé is Malagasy and lived in Madagascar until he was 24, when he joined Nathalia, who is Swiss, in Geneva. They got married and have three children, Rija (11), Andry (9) and Mialy (5). They are just starting ministry in Nosy Be, an island off Madagascar. We asked them how God led them to the mission field.

HOW DID YOU BECOME CHRISTIANS?

Nathalia: My father pastored a Protestant church. I grew up in a Christian environment and I followed my parents to church all my childhood. I gave my heart to Christ during a camp when I was nine. I then confirmed this choice at 18, being baptised. I've always been involved in church, serving with Sunday school or music.

Hervé: I grew up in Madagascar and I went to a Catholic school, but I attended a reformed church. Later on, I also discovered a Scripture Union youth group that helped me to get to know the Bible and then to follow Jesus. I've always been worried by the situation in my country and I have dreamt about finding a way to help. ➔





❶ WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE THAT THE WAY TO HELP WAS THROUGH MISSION?

When I (Nathalia) was a child, I was affected by missionaries sharing their stories at summer camps. Then, after I graduated from high school, I served for a year in Burkina Faso with Wycliffe. That year had a really powerful effect on me. After that, I met Hervé in Madagascar during a three week trip with the youth group from my church.

When we started our relationship we thought about mission, but first we wanted to gain professional experience. God's plans for us in mission remained hidden for a long while.

Then, in April 2018, after hearing three sermons in a row which made us think about going out of our comfort zone and making disciples from all nations, we considered again whether God was calling us to mission. We talked to Gilles and Myriam Bonvallat (AIM France) and asked close friends to pray for us. Slowly, the thought of mission grew stronger. We clearly felt God calling us to share our lives and serve him overseas, to share what we have received from him. He was calling us to come out of our comfort zone, to look to him and think again about the ideas he had given Hervé about returning to Madagascar to help his people.

WHERE WILL YOU BE SERVING?

Together with AIM we discussed where it would be best for us to get involved. After looking at a few options and praying through

God's plan for us, we chose a project in the north of Madagascar. We are now serving among the Sakalava and Antakarana peoples. With the AIM team, we decided to come and live in Ambatozavavy, a small village on the east coast of Nosy Be (a tourist island near the main island). Another American family from AIM and the Unit Leader of AIM Madagascar also live there. They have started a church and a music group who compose songs in Sakalava for the church. They are also working with local women, sewing and making products to sell, so they can earn money. At the moment we're not sure which element of ministry we'll be involved in. First of all, we have to learn the language and culture, and get used to life in the village. Then, we'll see if we stay in Ambatozavavy or if we move to Ambilobe (in the Antakarana area). We are wondering whether to offer a children's ministry, but we are open to see what God's plans are for us.

HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED YOUR PLANS?

Throughout this process we have really felt God's hand on us, guiding and helping us. Covid-19 meant that there was a lot of uncertainty around whether we could take our planned flights at the end of August 2020. We decided to keep pressing ahead, and finished our jobs even though we didn't know when Madagascar's border would open. At the end of August we had to leave our apartment in Geneva without any definite plans. We moved to France for a while, staying in a chalet that someone lent

us. During this time, we had to start home schooling our children and Hervé tried to get a repatriation flight (the only way to enter Madagascar at this time). The Malagasy embassy firstly said no, then yes but only for Hervé. But, against all hope, they finally called us to say we could have the next flight for the whole family. We just had a few days to sort all the administration and pack again. On September 19th, we were able to take the repatriation flight to the capital of Madagascar. We stayed there for a month, with Hervé's family. It was great to be with them! We also managed to complete the necessary paperwork and received our visas.

On October 21st, we took a bush-taxi which we rented to ourselves, so we could take all our luggage and items that we'd bought in the capital to Nosy Be. The ride was long, 26 hours on a not very smooth road, but we arrived without a problem, thanks be to God.

Since we've been in the village we have had a homestay for one week with a Sakalavan family. Now we are in our little house, getting settled and used to the heat, the insects, the people, and the language.

In all this process, we were amazed to see how this word from Josuha 1:9, which has followed us through all our preparation, has been true: 'Strengthen yourself and take courage. Do not be afraid or frightened, for the LORD your God is with you in all that you do.' We have really felt that God is in control. There were so many uncertainties, but God always led us in the way that he had chosen, and even now, we can rely on these experiences to keep faith that he will guide us in our choices and life here.



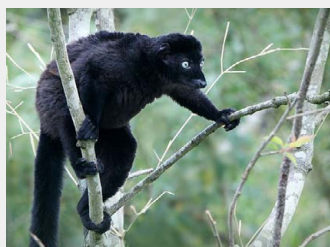
DIVERSITY

First settled by Indonesians, Nosy Be is home to a diverse range of peoples. Marodoka, the first village of Nosy Be, still holds the remains of an Arab mosque and a 19th century Indian cemetery.



MUSIC FESTIVAL

Nosy Be hosts a music festival called Donia, that sees fifty thousand people descend on the island to see acts from Mauritius, Réunion, Rodrigues, and the Comores perform their best reggae, rock, and Creole tunes.



BLACK LEMUR

Located in the south eastern part of the island, Lokobe Reserve is home to the endangered black lemur, which along with all other lemurs, is endemic to Madagascar.



PRAY FOR THE ANTAKARANA

WHO ARE THEY?

The Antakarana, who are originally of mixed Austronesian, African and Arab ancestry, settled in the far north of Madagascar in the 12th century. Their name means ‘People of the White Coral Rocks’ as they live in a geographically isolated, rocky place. Some work as coastal fishermen, and those in inland villages harvest rice, raise cattle and grow crops on a small scale. Others have moved for work in towns and factories.

WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

During the Merina invasion, when the Antakarana were in danger of being wiped out, they hid in caves for over a year. Life was difficult and many died. Their King prayed that if his people survived, they would embrace Islam. They found refuge on the island of Nosy Mitsio and converted to Islam in the 1840s. Now folk Islam is mixed with animistic beliefs, with ‘taboos’ adhered to in daily life. They see themselves as Antakarana before they consider themselves Muslim and are proud of their history and culture.

“Give thanks that the Jesus Film is available in the Antakarana dialect... Pray that in watching the whole gospel unfold they would see the hope that Jesus offers...”

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO REACH THEM WITH THE GOSPEL?

The history of the Antakarana means that they have not accessed the Scriptures available in the Merina dialect. At the moment, an organisation called SIL are in the process of translating the Gospel of Luke. Pray the Antakarana would have ears to hear the good news in their own language. A TIMO team went to serve among them on the island of Nosy Mitsio from 2014-2016. Now previous TIMO team members continue to minister there alongside Malagasy missionaries.

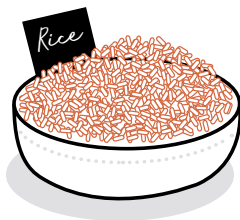
WHAT CAN WE PRAY FOR?

Malagasy missionaries, Petera and Francine, have been involved in reaching Antakarana children with Bibles studies. Muslim leaders have responded by encouraging parents to teach the young boys Muslim prayers. Pray for the spiritual battle that is being waged for the hearts of the young ones. Pray that their parents would turn to the Lord Jesus too and be able to rebuff the influence of Islamic leaders with grace and truth.

Increasingly the Antakarana people are spreading across northern Madagascar as they seek work. Pray that as they mix with others from different people groups, their historic mistrust of other peoples would be broken down and that, as a consequence, they'd be open to hearing the gospel from other Malagasy people, as well as to reading Scripture in other Malagasy dialects.

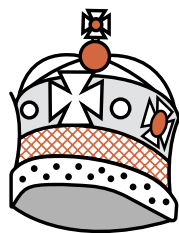
Give thanks that the Jesus Film is available in the Antakarana dialect. Pray for opportunities to show the film and that the Antakarana would not watch it just for the entertainment but would allow the truth of the story to affect their hearts. Pray that in watching the whole gospel unfold they would see the hope that Jesus offers and recognise what they are missing in their lives.

Incorporated into the Islamic beliefs of the Antakarana is their adherence to ancestor worship. This is expressed in sacrifices that are offered to the ancestors. These are often carried out with a significant ceremony where possession by spirits is welcomed. Pray for protection for Christian workers and for ways they can share the story of Jesus' ultimate sacrifice and victory over sin and death.



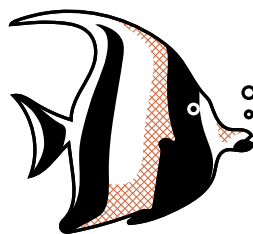
'TO EAT'

Rice is a huge staple food in Madagascar. In Malagasy the verb 'to eat' is the same as 'eat rice'.



KINGSHIP

Although subject to all national laws and government, the Antakarana are also united in their recognition of the authority of their King who is the living descendant of a line of Antankarana royalty going back nearly four centuries.



FISHING

Traditionally the Antakarana are fishermen, but increasingly tourists arrive on Madagascar's north shore for fishing trips. The amount of marine life also means that snorkelling and scuba diving holidays are popular.

You can download our prayer PDFs from: eu.aimint.org/resources.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MADAGASCAR?

In early March 2020 the government here instigated a lockdown to cope with Covid-19. Stores and schools closed, as well as our borders. Other than a local lockdown in the capital in July, measures have been slowly eased. We are seeing cases decreasing and we are recovering from the threat to our health. Now we wait to see the economic effects.

Tourism, one of the main resources in our country, has suffered a lot. It is hard to think it will return to previous heights again over the next year. Many people have lost their jobs. The price of trade products such as vanilla, ylang ylang and lychee dropped down so badly this year and the consequences of that will keep impacting us for at least another year.

Poverty is so severe and with it come increasing social problems. Prostitution is increasing. Insecurity is growing, especially in the cities: pickpocketing, robbery and petty theft are options taken by the increasingly desperate. Moreover, there is severe famine and drought in the south. People are dying because there is a lack of basic medications,

they're dying from hunger, and they're dying from thirst.

This is all putting pressure on our government. The political situation is delicate. There is social unrest. How will the country be able to rise up from all of this? I do not know.

But I do know that people are searching for a spiritual power that they can cling to, that they're searching for God. There is a sense of spiritual hunger sweeping across my country. People feel so desperate that they are searching for something bigger. I give thanks that some churches and local believers are taking this opportunity to show the love of God. We praise God for food distribution, the little we can do, to practically love people in the midst of this suffering.



ROSINA FERDINAND is AIM's Unit Leader for Madagascar. A member of the Sakalava people, Rosina is seeking to reach more Malagasy with the gospel.

LIFE-GIVING LYCHEE

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world, and its undeveloped logistics and infrastructure mean it is unable to make the most of its agriculture sector. Alongside vanilla, cloves and pepper, lychees are one of the country's few valuable exports, and the sector provides a vital income to around 30,000 families, a figure that rises during harvest time.

Scattered across the east coast of the country, small family farms make up 95% of the country's lychee production. The harvesting season began in November, so the easing of Covid-19 restrictions came in time to allow harvest, although earlier restrictions meant that tending crops was more difficult. The crops are also vulnerable to frequent cyclones which can damage the delicate branches of the plants and are at risk from climate change. Madagascar's rising temperatures and increased droughts don't suit the lychee.

Scattered across the east coast of the country, small family farms make up 95% of the country's lychee production...

In the UK, lychees are often seen as a dessert option in a Chinese restaurant, or as a luxury or festive treat, topping fruit bowls over Christmas. Container ships full of lychees leave Madagascar in early December, heading for European shores. Over 80% of the lychees consumed in the UK are Madagascan, so our treat helps support a rural and desperately poor farming community.



TSINGY DE BEMARAHA

This nature reserve is a maze of canyons, caves, tunnels and spires formed from limestone. The unique geology means that species there have evolved to embrace life among the rock skyscrapers.



DIVERSE POPULATION

There are 18 people groups in Madagascar. Some general commonalities overlap between groups, but clothing, hairstyle, song, dance, food, and language vary greatly.



SHARING HIS GLORY

The Greeks, Romans and other nations that surrounded Israel had many gods; one for each town, district and different area of life (e.g. rain, harvest, sea). By comparison, Israel was unique in believing in a supreme God who both created everything and maintained all things.

When God revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as the great 'I AM', he emphatically rejected other nations' notions of God and dramatically reworked Moses' understanding. The use of the words *yhwh* and *adonai* help us to understand that God is timeless, unending, all powerful and utterly sovereign.

God's splendour and majesty are so amazing and so much greater than his created world. This amazing glory is uncontainable; his glory demands that all peoples bow the knee to the Lord. God always planned for the whole world to know him, right from Adam onwards. It was 'too small a thing' just to save Israel (Isaiah 49:6). Israel was meant to be a light to the whole world, not to turn inwards.

Since 1979 AIM has been helping churches send Christians to Madagascar to be a part of helping Malagasy people come to know God in all his fulness. Would you pray for more people to be a part of this work, both Malagasy Christians and those from overseas, so that there is no one in Madagascar who hasn't heard of our glorious God?



Getting started: The final result for the world is that everyone, one day, will bow the knee before him, giving God the glory that is rightfully his. Take some time to read these passages and look at these questions to explore more of God's character.



Read 1 Chronicles 16:25-27 and 1 Timothy 6:15-16. How do these two passages describe God?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Read Psalm 47:7-8 and Psalm 46:10. What do you think the link is between God's glory and the nations, and how should God's glory be demonstrated?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Read Philippians 2:10-11 and Revelation 7:9-10. What is the final outcome for the world? What happens when the whole world acknowledges Jesus as Lord?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

PRAY FOR THE UNREACHED



THE ANTANDROY

They live in the arid south of Madagascar and believe that the blessings and curses of life come from their ancestors. By appeasing their ancestors, they can reap benefits. They acknowledge that there is a God, but they see him as distant and inactive in their lives.

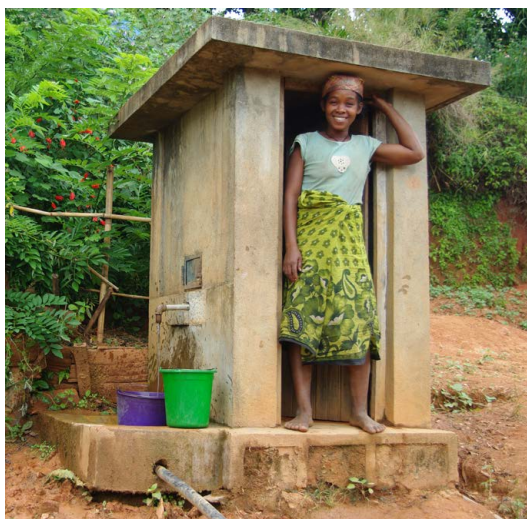


THE TSIMIHETY

They live in the mountainous northern central area of Madagascar. Their name means 'those who do not cut their hair' which was a sign of refusal to recognise the monarch. They are considered extremely egalitarian, refusing to recognise authority. Most Tsimihety are animists with only a vague belief in a supreme being who presides over the spirit world.

THE TANALA

They are skilled woodsmen, food gatherers, and hunters, trading in beeswax, honey, and other forest products. They observe patrilineal descent and often live in large compounds consisting of a father and his sons or of a group of brothers. They hold deeply to their traditional religious practice, which is based on animism and ancestor worship. They believe that there are spirits all around us in nature and that people must try to please the spirits.





GET TO KNOW THE BARA

Betroka is a small village in southern Madagascar, surrounded by beautiful mountains. This place has been the land and home of the Bara people for centuries.

The Bara belief system is animistic; the worship of their ancestors is a priority for them. To honour the ancestors, they must follow rules which control everything: eating, behaviour and sacrifices. In Bara society it

is the *Ombiasa* (witchdoctor), who dictates the rules and the direction of the community. The *Ombiasa* are deeply respected and feared; they are the mediator between the people and the ancestors, as well as having the power and wisdom to prepare medicine. The *Ombiasa* also communicate with the demons that oppress the Bara. The Bara live in fear of these demonic spirits.

In the centre of every Bara village is the *razomanga*, a stone or a piece of wood that is used for sacrifices. This is a holy place, where the Bara worship and pacify the spirits. There is also a tree, the *votokiny*, where offerings are given to the spirits. Food, alcohol, and clothes are put in this tree to receive a blessing, to cause harm, or to honour ancestors. The Bara believe that the spirits of the dead dwell within trees and rocks.



HONOUR AND FEAR

Bara economy is based on agriculture, with cows playing a central role. Cattle represent respect, honour and wealth. The importance placed on cows means that the Bara face the problem of cattle thieves (*Malasos*). Villagers are fearful of cattle thieves because they have killed those trying to stop them. However, cattle stealing is part of the Bara worldview and culture; it's a lifestyle that not only brings fear, but a certain amount of honour and praise within your own community. You are viewed as becoming a man when you successfully steal your first cow. The *Malasos* use witchcraft to help them in their endeavours and as a form of protection.

Life for the Bara is hard; poverty, sickness and death are part of their lives. Women play an important role, not only caring for the

house and children, but planting rice and managing crops. However, men will value their cows more highly than their wives.

Despite being known for their faithfulness to their culture and resistance to the gospel, some Bara admit to a sense of hopelessness. Faced with cattle raiding, diseases that witchcraft can't cure, and their fear of the spirits, many are searching for another kind of life.

PRAY FOR THE BARA

You can download prayer sheets to use in a prayer meeting or Bible study for the Bara, and other people groups, from: eu.aimint.org/resources.

CALLED TO GO, AND STAY

Janaine Basso, her husband Fernando and their two sons, Benicio (5) and Timóteo (2), live in Betroka, southern Madagascar, among the Bara people. Janaine explains how God called her.

I was 14 years old when I knew that God was calling me into overseas mission.

My home church in Brazil hold annual mission conferences, started by Pastor Roberto Welzel (who served in Mozambique with AIM). In 2000, I was at the conference and the preacher shared about the need to reach certain unreached peoples in Africa. I told myself that I would pray that God would send someone to share the gospel with them. In that moment, a voice in my heart said: “You will go!”

I kept that word in my heart, and after a while I shared my desire to serve overseas with my pastor. He was wise, and told me to wait. I did a course in teaching – examining how to teach in different contexts. By the time I finished my course, mission had dropped lower on my agenda. I applied to work as a government teacher. On the day I received the news that I had a teaching job, I received a call from my pastor. He said, “It is today Janaine! Choose mission. Go to Bible school and prepare!” This was a huge decision, but I remembered God’s first call.

At Bible college I met Fernando. We had the same ideas about how God was calling us, so we got married and began exploring how we could serve in Africa.

FULFILLING GOD’S CALLING

We met with AIM South America who suggested we serve in Madagascar. We trusted this was the direction that the Lord was giving us so we went, and God has

blessed us here. By the grace of his Spirit, the gospel is spreading among Bara people.

As well as life as a mother, wife, and home school teacher, I am also engaged in ministry among the Bara women and children. We have 380 (mainly Bara) children joining us every Wednesday and Saturday to learn about Jesus in our Bible story programme. We have also started a ministry teaching local women to sew, and at the same time we share the good news of Jesus with a short devotional.

Covid-19 has affected our village. Most of our programmes have closed because we couldn’t maintain social distancing. We didn’t know whether to stay or to leave and not be a burden on this country and people. We saw the hopelessness and helplessness of the people, as there have been many deaths from malaria, and hunger caused by drought (Betroka has had a year without rain). God took the decision out of our hands, putting us in lockdown with the Bara, calling us once again to share his love and kindness.

GOD HAD MORE PLANNED

We started asking God how we should share his love, and were reminded of James 2:17, ‘Faith without deeds is dead’. We couldn’t do much, our resources were limited. But we could sit with people, join their struggles, cry with them and share God’s concerns for their lives. But God had more planned.

With the help of partner churches and AIM’s regional offices here and in Canada, we were able to hand out almost ten tonnes of rice. Every week during the lockdown we filled our car and went out to different places where there was no food and shared a little bit of rice and the Word of God. Children, widows, old people and orphans were blessed. In one village, the pastor testified, “The rice you shared opened the door for us to preach the gospel to the people here. Now they are interested in coming to the church.” One very old Christian lady told us, “We praise the Lord you are with us in these difficult times. He used you to look after us.”

So, for now, this is what God has given us to do. Live with the Bara and share his love.





GIVE THANKS AND PRAY

A UNITED TEAM

Give thanks that we have a united team of local and foreign missionaries serving in Madagascar. Give thanks for training opportunities allowing more local missionaries to get involved in the wider ministry. Pray for local churches as they send and equip their people for outreach.

MORE WORKERS

Pray for more local and foreign Christian workers, church planters and children's workers to serve God's kingdom in Madagascar. Many current missionaries plan to return to their home countries in the next two years. Join us in praying for many more to come and sustain the ministry.



COVID-19 TRAVEL

Entering Madagascar remains difficult due to Covid-19. This means that some missionaries keen to start, or return to service, are unable to enter the country. Pray particularly for the Hofmann family from the Netherlands who are trying to return to ministry among the Tanala.

WITNESSING ABOUT JESUS

Thaddee and Haja are serving among a Muslim people group in south Madagascar. Pray the Lord will draw people to himself through this family's witness. Pray for the health of Thaddee, Haja and their four children, far from missionary support and healthcare.

PREPARING TO GO

Pray for Simon and Miriam Desborough, currently at All Nations Christian College as they prepare to serve in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Pray that as well as readying themselves for ministry they would receive the necessary prayer and financial support.



CAN YOU HELP?

We are looking for enthusiastic AIM supporters to join our brand new volunteer programme as AIM Advocates. Could you be proactive in your own church and network to share and promote our work, helping to build relationships with churches in your area?

We are praying that God would raise up more workers to go to Africa, as well as more prayer and financial supporters to enable us to sustain our ministry. You could be a part of the answer to these prayers by becoming an AIM Advocate and sharing your understanding of how God is at work through AIM.

You will be inspired and equipped through regular communications from us. They will be designed to help you enthuse the people around you for mission. We will provide regular ideas, tips and resources including;



- Bible studies for use in housegroups or for individual study
- Service outlines for mission Sundays, prayer meetings (and more)
- Youth group plans and studies
- Our latest videos, sharing vision and needs
- Details about available opportunities to serve in Africa
- Current news and information

We'll also invite you to participate in occasional training and social events to help equip you for your volunteering activities.

Our hope is that AIM Advocates will play a key role in new workers and supporters being raised up, as churches and individuals hear of all that God is doing and the needs of those with little to no opportunity to hear of Jesus.

Volunteers must be: at least 18 years of age, enthusiastic and prayerful supporters of AIM, in membership of a local church, in agreement with AIM's Statement of Faith, and willing to work in accordance with a volunteer code of conduct.

If you would like to find out more or apply, please go to eu.aimint.org/volunteers.



IN OUR IMAGE?

The Apostle John had an amazing vision of the risen Christ in all his glory. But not many of us have seen a vision of God as John did. Instead, we can be tempted to project our understanding of the world onto how we view God. Caroline Bell talks about how moving to Moroto, Uganda, has shaped how she sees God and his character.

I grew up in a Christian family and, from my earliest days, my understanding of God was shaped by the Bible. I believed God is both a God of love who is approachable and intimately involved in our lives, and a God who is holy, who we should fear and revere.

However, it would be naive to think that my British culture has not influenced how I understand God. As a generalisation, I think we emphasise God's love, forgiveness and acceptance and I see my own struggle to hold the truths of God's love and closeness, and his holiness and 'otherness' together. These truths are not mutually exclusive, but it is easy to focus on one to the exclusion of the others. We value knowledge, understanding and discovery, which encourages me to search the Bible and grow in my understanding of God. However, we often overlook or minimise the spiritual realities of life. As a consequence, I find myself underestimating God's power and provision, resulting in self-reliance.

In contrast, a traditional Karimojong worldview believes that God made people, but the reason why is unknown. This is reflected in their word for God, *Akuj*, which means 'beyond our understanding or explanation'. After creating people, God's involvement in life between birth and a natural death at a good age is limited. Older people may use the greeting *enwaka* which means 'may we hide from God so that he doesn't take our life'. The Karimojong more inherently see the spiritual dimension of every part of life. This is expressed in their traditional rites and practices, including sacrificing at shrines in order to avoid offending God or the spirits. Among believers, I often see a greater dependency on God and recognition of their need for his involvement in their lives.

Living in another culture is a wonderful opportunity to have a new and different perspective brought to bear on my cultural understandings and beliefs. It exposes assumptions I don't even realise I make. At times this is unsettling and uncomfortable, but it is a gift that reveals a deeper richness and depth to truths about God which I have believed for many years. It is a privilege to join with my Karimojong brothers and sisters to celebrate our amazing God and grow in our understanding of who he is together.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN UGANDA?

Like most of the world, schools in Uganda have been impacted by Covid-19. Ugandan schools have not been fully open since March 2020 (although international schools are now happening online and will probably soon be reopening on campus in some form). Those taking exams this school year returned in October, but many children who really need school are still not allowed to attend. This has caused a rise in abuse, child labour, pregnancies and marriage among school age girls. Child sacrifice has increased as well. Going to school helps protect children from many of these things. Pray that schools will fully reopen, that parents will be able to pay school fees despite the increased economic hardships, and also that teachers will return. Many teachers have had to find other work during the closures. Returning to teaching in this climate might not be too appealing.

Vast numbers of refugees in Uganda have also been significantly affected by Covid-19. According to the UNHCR, Uganda is the 3rd largest refugee hosting country in the world, with more than 1.2 million refugees as

of February 2019. In October, the Guardian reported that of these numbers, more than 500,000 were experiencing severe food shortages as a result of cuts to food aid and restrictions needed to curb the spread of Covid-19. More aid cuts are expected, with unrest inevitable as desperate people compete for food.

We're thankful though that churches have been allowed to reopen, although with many restrictions. Many churches tried to accommodate the restrictions in different ways, moving online or meeting in smaller groups. They have also used the opportunity as a reminder that the Church is not the building but the people. It's no secret that Africa is communal, so being able to come together in groups is really helpful.



Adam Willard serves in Uganda with his wife, Cori, and their children. He is AIM's Unit Leader for Uganda.



HOW DO WE DEFINE MISSION?

It might surprise you but you won't find the word 'missionary' in the Bible.

The idea that God sets apart people to 'go' from one part of the world to another to share the good news and plant churches is based upon Jesus' 'Great Commission' in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. Throughout our publications, when we say 'mission' we understand the word to mean 'going, cross-culturally, from one part of the world to another to share the gospel and plant churches.' While the Lord has given the local church a unique, Bible-mandated role to enable Christians to love and share the gospel in their local communities, he has also separately and distinctly given the local church the task of spreading the good news about Jesus throughout the whole world.

In Genesis 17 God comes to Abram and makes a covenant with him. He promises to bless Abram and give him a son - at 99 years of age! As a daily reminder, the Lord changes Abram's name. 'Abram' means 'high or exalted father'. By simply changing one letter in the Hebrew, he would now be called 'Abraham', which means 'father of many' (Genesis 17:5).

God's call to Abram marks a significant intervention by God into human history. By calling Abram, God initiated his redemption plan for humankind. While God focuses upon Abram and his children, it's important for us to recognise that even at this early stage God was planning to use Abram and his descendants to bless the whole world.



Getting started: People show love for one another in many different ways. Have a think about what some of these ways might look like for you. Now, think about some of the ways that God demonstrates his love to us. Why not spend a few moments writing down some of the specific ways you have seen God demonstrate his love for you lately, both big and small, and thank him for them?



Read Genesis 12:2-3. This is the first time God spoke to Abram. What do you notice? How was God's concern for the whole world revealed in God's call to Abram?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

The story of God's involvement with humankind moves on and focuses upon the people of Israel (Abraham's descendants). Through Moses, the Lord delivers them from slavery in Egypt and brings them into the promised land. **Read Exodus 19:4-6 and Isaiah 49:6.** What do you think God was seeking to do through Israel? Did he simply want a holy people that he could relate to or was he seeking something more?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

An aerial photograph of a dry, hilly landscape. A winding river or stream flows through the center of the image. The terrain is covered in sparse, dry vegetation and small trees. In the lower right, there are some small, circular structures, possibly huts or tents. The overall scene is arid and rugged.

WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

Sam and Derrick are Ugandans, both involved in mission work. Sam serves as the team leader for Global Link Afrika (GLA), creating awareness - especially in Uganda and East Africa - of mission issues, creating platforms for training, equipping those who have an interest in mission, and working in partnership with the church to send Ugandans and East Africans to serve in places of need. Derrick is also part of the GLA family. He has been through a Kairos (mission mobilisation) course, has done some mission work, and is currently preparing to serve long term in North Africa.

As the church in Africa has seen tremendous growth and a burgeoning interest in mission, Seb Allwright, an AIM missionary, interviewed them about what role there is for western missionaries to play on the mission field in Africa. Here is a transcript of their conversation: ➔



❶ GIVEN THAT THE CHURCH HERE [IN UGANDA] IS STRONG AND GROWING, MUCH FASTER THAN OUR CHURCH IN THE UK, WHAT ROLE DO YOU BELIEVE WESTERN MISSIONARIES HAVE TO PLAY?

Derrick: The first thing I would think is that role of, let me call it ‘inspiration’. That part where Seb comes in and meets me, and is like, by the way I am a person like you. I met another missionary who was an engineer like me, and, in fact, he had studied for a Masters. So I felt like, “Oh, we are the same, I can actually think about doing this thing”. There’s that part where we can be inspired, missionaries can come to us and tell us, “By the way, this thing is not ours, you can also come and join us”.

And we still need people, I think, to go to [difficult] places, because there are places where as a church we still feel that’s too much for us, we are not yet there. Most churches cannot yet adopt a missionary to stay long term in some fields, so for now we need you to play a part until we are up to the challenge.

Sam: And even when we feel we are up to the challenge, I actually think that there’s beauty in all of us working together, everyone bringing their strength to the table. Everyone bringing their experience, the things that God, by his providence, has allowed to flourish and shine in your context. Obviously not everything will work everywhere, and I think that that speaks into the posture from which you come.

But I think two things. Number one is that there are fires that are burning already in Africa. There are indigenous missions organisations that are beginning to emerge. There’s a fresh awakening to mission within Africa, there is growing interest within Africa for involvement. And I think that one of the things you could do is to come and inspire and encourage those fires with your experience. Not necessarily - how do I put it? - not necessarily wanting it done the way it is done elsewhere, you understand, but inspiring, encouraging, motivating.

I think the other thing that is key is when you come, it would be good to come to encourage local initiatives as opposed to replace them. You know how you can work in such a way as to create a system of dependence; you understand, you know it all, you have it all. So you’re not looking out to see what is working, you’re not engaging in order to understand what the issues are here, what the strengths are that you can encourage. I think for people who have a lot more experience in this work, the bigger role is that of an encourager, and a friend, and a partner.

❷ SO, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ATTITUDES THAT WE NEED TO COME WITH?

Sam: I have had interactions with friends from the West. Some, they come like there is nothing going on here. You know... ‘We came to show you the light!’. And I think that that’s not very helpful, and soon you’ll discover that actually you can’t do this thing alone. I’d like to suggest that it’s important to come and listen, to pay attention to the things that are going on. It’s important to come, not with an assumption that there’s nothing happening. Movements may be slightly different, they may be not too big, but actually things are going on. And so it’s good to come and listen and learn, and then we can grow together. So that’s number one.

Number two, I have also met people who come with a very superior attitude and they think everything rotates around money. Someone told us that they could give us all the money we need, but we refused the money because we felt there’s something particular that God has asked us to do, and if we switch to your way of thinking and doing things, simply because you have money, well we’ll lose out on what God is trying to do. So, a learner’s posture and an equal friend and partner posture, I think is key.



Listen to more of this interview on our podcast:
eu.aimint.org/podcast.

"There's a fresh awakening to missions within Africa, there is growing interest within Africa for involvement."

Derrick: I think it's the same as when you're traveling to any place, you need to have a sort of openness. You are probably told a lot of things and you've learnt much before you go, but some things will be different. It's always different from what you've heard, both on the good and the bad side. And also, maybe I would encourage you to be open and speak if there are some things you don't understand. Why are all my neighbours bringing me food on my first week, and lots of food? Do they think I eat a lot? So speak out, don't feel like if you press too much, you might offend people. No, see and speak out, so that we understand each other.

Sam: There are areas where you're strong, there are areas where we're strong. But there are also areas where I see we would need to grow, and I think you can bring your area of strength to the table. But also, work with us to help us to develop and grow in those areas where we are lacking, and do that in such a way that is sensitive to our contextual issues. Do that with sensitivity. The way to appreciate the sensitivity is by actually listening and seeking to learn before you open your mouth too quickly. It's not always easy, but you need to identify people who are honest and sincere, people who will tell you, 'My brother, culturally that's really not appropriate'.



Sam is a team leader at Global Link Afrika, a Ugandan mission agency mobilising the African church for effective involvement in global mission.



Derrick is a missionary with Global Link Afrika. He knows that God is calling him to serve in North Africa and he is currently preparing to move and serve long term there.



THE CHURCH OF UGANDA

AIM first partnered with the Church of Uganda in 1918. Since then, the church has expanded, and by 2014 there were 11,100,000 members.



UNREACHED PEOPLES

There are still five unreached people groups in Uganda, which equates to about 1,143,000 people.



GIVE THANKS AND PRAY

GLOBAL LINK AFRIKA

Give thanks for Global Link Afrika, for Sam and his colleagues promoting the cause of mission and serving the church as the church sends missionaries into cross-cultural ministry. Pray they would increase awareness and excite more Ugandans about the roles they can play in sharing the gospel.

WORKING ALONGSIDE

Pray for Western missionaries seeking to work alongside the church in Uganda, that they would serve with humility and learn from those they are working with. Pray that they would seek to minister from servant hearts, be willing to ask questions, and be ready and quick to listen.



COVID-19 AND TRAVEL

Leave and home assignment plans for many missionaries in Uganda have been interrupted or changed due to Covid-19. As we look ahead to another difficult year, pray that missionaries would get the breaks they need, and be able to reconnect well with family, friends and supporters.

SERVING WITH RESTRICTIONS

Pray that missionaries would know how best to continue ministry when faced with the restrictions necessary to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Pray particularly for those working in remote rural locations, that they would know how best to support struggling communities.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The Presidential elections in Uganda are planned for February 2021. Pray that the run up and aftermath don't become too contentious. The President revised the constitution to adjust the age limit so that he would be able to run again, so there is some extra tension.





HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

PRAY

As we look at the Bible's overarching narrative, we see that God's concern for all peoples is central to the redemption story. As we consider what the Lord has done for us, and his love and concern for all peoples, it is right that we reaffirm the centrality of evangelism (sharing the good news) and mission (sharing the good news cross-culturally) in all we do. Why not take some time to pray about your response? For more inspiration you can sign up for our Daily Prayers by visiting: eu.aimint.org/pray.



GIVE

One of the ways in which you can respond is to make a financial gift. In **Exodus 35-36** we read of the Israelites giving from generous and willing hearts. Their giving was such that the workers reported to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for the work the Lord commanded to be done." We long for mission work to be funded in the same way. To give, visit eu.aimint.org/give.



GO

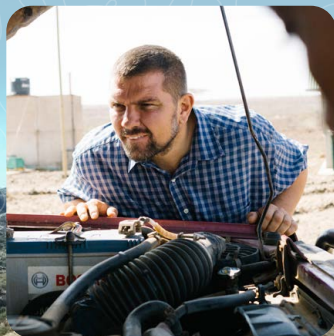
Why not explore how and where you could serve using our 'find your fit' quiz. You can also chat online to us, arrange an online meeting, or (restrictions permitting), meet a Mission Advisor in person. Start your mission journey at eu.aimint.org.



INTO AFRICA

AN ONLINE EVENT TO EXPLORE YOUR PLACE IN MISSION




There will be three sessions:
1, 8 and 15 March • 7:30-9pm



➡ [EU.AIMINT.ORG/INTOAFRICA](https://eu.aimint.org/intoafrica)

Africa Inland Mission serves and partners with churches to fulfil the Great Commission and advance the gospel among Africans who have the least opportunity to hear about Jesus.

*AIM International
Halifax Place
Nottingham NG1 1QN
United Kingdom
0115 9838 120
admin.eu@aimint.org*

 [@aimeurope](https://twitter.com/aimeurope)
 fb.com/aimeurope
 africainlandmission.europe
January 2021

eu.aimint.org

Partnering with churches • Reaching Africa's unreached