

MINUTE FOR MISSION

BUILDING PEACE IN MADAGASCAR

Blessed are the peacemakers! The Peace & Global Witness Offering unites our church with Presbyterians everywhere reaching out to people across the globe who long for peace and reconciliation. Shaping a foundation for peace starts with honest conversations and shared experiences. When we share, we carry each other's burdens, advocate for one another, and share each other's hopes. Some US Presbyterians and our church partners in Madagascar shared just such an experience this past year through a travel study seminar.

Madagascar is an island nation 250 miles off Africa's east coast. Due in part to years of unsustainable development practices and government instability, the Malagasy people suffer from poverty and malnutrition.

Despite this, the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar's efforts to alleviate hunger and promote democracy offered much hope to celebrate. "The church there is so alive—it is active and caring, and they encouraged us to be more faithful," says Lucy Janjigian (say JAN-JIG-IAN), of Los Altos, California.

At Ivato (say EE-VA-TO) Seminary, student Ravo Vonialisoa. (say RA-VO VON-E-AH-LEE-SO-A) shared that her goal in ministry is to "bring new ideas and new life to the churches I serve and a new life to the nation." Her resolve was strengthened by her Presbyterian visitors.

"I realize now that the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar is not alone. I will share this with the churches I serve so they know that there are many churches around the world praying for us," she says. "I feel a greater connection to the worldwide church."

Seminar participants were captivated by the agricultural, educational, and healthcare ministries that our partner church and our mission co-workers do together. They clearly saw the Malagasy church's struggle for human rights and democracy. Now these witnesses are calling on us to deepen our commitment to active peacemaking, through

advocacy efforts to end extractive development practices and promote democracy and respect for human rights.

Half of the offering is used by the national church to witness for peace in Madagascar and other troubled places around the world. Twenty five percent is retained by our congregation for local ministries of peacemaking, and another 25 percent is used by mid councils for these ministries on the regional level.

I end this minute for mission by reminding you of where we started — *Blessed are the peacemakers*. Please give generously.

Let Us Pray ~

*God of all people, we give thanks for
vibrant, growing churches like the
Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar.*

*Bless them as they work for a more just
and peaceful country.*

*May we see that the struggles of brothers
and sisters around the world are also
our struggles.*

*Yet move us beyond mere sentimentality
toward action in your name.*

Amen.