

# *Lutherans in Medical Missions*

*February 2021*

## **Reflections of Healing and Hope** *LIMM's 25 year banquet celebration*

**Saturday, November 6, 2021 (new date)**

**Social Hour: 6:00pm**

**Dinner: 7:00pm (program to follow)**



**Koburg Hall  
Concordia Seminary  
801 Seminary Place  
St. Louis, Missouri**



## **A Note from Our Executive Director**

Welcome 2021! This is the year we have all been anticipating new beginnings, protection from COVID-19, and resumption of life as we knew it. Sadly, resolution will not be here as fast as we want it. We celebrate the vaccine and weep for the hundreds of thousands impacted by COVID. Several of our LIMM family have contracted the virus and recovered, and we rejoice that God has protected them. We continue to hold to God's promises found in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you...plans to give you hope and a future." Yes, we have hope in Jesus! We have been called to serve and not hide from the unknown. We have the promise that God is with us through all our endeavors, and even though our serving has had to be adjusted, we continue to serve Him in spite of COVID-19 restrictions.

Over this past year, I am excited to tell you that we have supported many specific ministry projects in the US and abroad. We have supplied desperately needed medical equipment to a nursing school, a hospital, and clinics in Madagascar. We raised matching funds to "keep the lights on" for the Lutheran Hospital in Madagascar and assisted in funding staff salaries, medications and supplies. Special funds were raised and dispersed to help the family of Bishop David Rakotoirina, who was killed by COVID. We have supported CHE education classes online and in person, and have several upcoming projects for 2021. Your generosity has been incredible, and we will continue to disperse funds to selected ministries in 2021.

Sadly, once again, we need to postpone our anniversary celebration from April to November. We have to protect ourselves and our faithful LIMM family and, until the government eases restrictions, we will continue to stay safe and socially distance. Thank you for your understanding, your love, and support of the ministry of Lutherans in Medical Missions. We are here to serve!

*Sharon*

## *Inside this Issue*

<b>LIMM banquet.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Note from ED.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Staff Spotlight.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Harold Melser Memorial.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Madagascar Report.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2020 Sponsors.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LIMM Newsletter.....</b>	<b>4</b>

**Lutherans in Medical  
Missions (LIMM)  
works with local and  
global partners to  
share Christ's healing  
in medically underserved  
communities**

## Lutherans in Medical Missions

For more information, email:  
[limm@limm.org](mailto:limm@limm.org)

Please visit our website:  
[www.limm.org](http://www.limm.org)

**Contact:**  
Sharon Thomas  
[sltomasch@yahoo.com](mailto:sltomasch@yahoo.com)  
815-985-5542

Please visit our Facebook page:  
**Lutherans in Medical Missions**

**Donations may be sent to:**  
Lutherans in Medical Missions  
P.O. Box 766  
Concordia, MO 64020

**Or go online at [www.limm.org](http://www.limm.org) to  
donate through Pay pal or  
credit card.**

Contributions made directly to  
LIMM are tax-deductible.

## Staff Member Spotlight – Gail Nierman

Gail Nierman has worked for LIMM since November 2002. Prior to that, she was a computer programmer for 16 years in Overland Park, Kansas. In 2001, Gail quit her job to stay home with her two children. The following year, she was asked to help with administrative duties at LIMM, and took the job because it was flexible and fit so well into her schedule.

During her 18 years, Gail has worked with 3 different Executive Directors (Bobbie Lautenschlager, Rita Nickel, and Sharon Thomas). Currently, she works part-time answering LIMM's correspondence, doing bookkeeping/accounts receivable, maintaining the website, acting as secretary to the Board of Directors, and assisting the Executive Director and Treasurer.



Gail comments about the wonderful mission-minded individuals she has met and the close relationships she has with Board members and donors. Gail says, "God has certainly blessed me through my ventures with LIMM." After the death of her husband, she now resides with her daughter in Lee's Summit, Missouri. In her free time, Gail enjoys walking, crocheting, reading, shopping, and being with family and friends.

## In Memory of Harold Melser

On February 15, 2020, a good friend and faithful board member of LIMM passed away. Harold Melser was a man who loved God, family, and serving. During his 77 years of life, he impacted many people. Harold married Carole Ruple on August 1, 1965, and they were married for 30 years until her passing in 1995. Together Harold and Carole had 2 wonderful children, John and Debbie. On June 13, 1997, he married Amy Huggins, and they were married for 22 years.



Harold's expertise was fundraising and development, and he used these gifts at LCMS, LIMM, Lutheran Hour Ministries, SIU, St. Louis Science Center, Family Shields Ministries, the YMCA, ALMA, and Christian Friends of New America. Just before his passing, Harold was bestowed the honor as Outstanding St. Louisan. He was also a devoted Nebraska Cornhuskers and St. Louis Cardinals fan.

We thank all those who honored Harold with a memorial gift to LIMM this past year. Harold, we miss your smile, sense of humor, and servant heart! Thank you for serving with us at LIMM!

## The Madagascar Report

Madagascar is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest island in the world, situated off the eastern coast of Africa, and home to 28 million people. Prior to the COVID outbreak, LCMS Short Term Mission teams (MMT) worked with the Lutheran Hospital in Antsirabe conducting medical clinics, teaching medical/surgical techniques and bringing health supplies. On average 3,000 people are treated during the 10-day trips. Inspired by God's mercy, Dr. Harison, chief surgeon at the hospital, and his wife Domoina, are committed to serving patients both physically and spiritually.



When asking Malagasy citizens to describe their country, they say things like, "the country attracts many tourists due to its beautiful land. The fauna and flora is one of the most unique on earth. Most Malagasy people are Christians, and the people are kind, gentle and hopeful. Madagascans are hard-working despite the poor living conditions. Being the most diverse country in the world, with a blended culture and ethnicity, they are somewhat isolated from everything else."

One MMT pastor notes that "Madagascar is beautifully poor. In the midst of great poverty, the colors of the land and people are vibrant and bright. The soil is red; the clothing a rainbow of colors. The people are joyous, peaceful, loving and at peace with each other and with God." MMT volunteers say, "Malagasy people are sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything. They are a happy, grateful and kind people. The people have amazing happiness glowing in their smiles. Madagascar is such a beautiful country, which makes the extreme poverty affecting the majority of the population, so incomprehensible. The extreme beauty lies not only on its scenic routes, winding roads and countryside, but also in the hearts and souls of the people encountered while working at the clinic. Travel in Madagascar is like no other. Flash downpours can turn the soil into thick clay mud that vehicles can barely pass through, and often get stuck."



Healthcare on this island is very limited, and lack of access to healthcare is prevalent throughout the country. Malnutrition, hernias, vision loss, massive goiters that obstruct airways, skin lesions including leprosy, scabies and parasitic wounds are prevalent. According to recent statistics from US Aid, 10 Malagasy women die from complications of childbirth every day. Less than 50% of live births are attended to by trained medical staff. Women are transported to health centers via oxcart while in labor, and many complications and miscarriages occur in route to the medical centers. Midwives in Madagascar are paid an average of \$230 USD per month, and emergency Cesarean sections cost approx. \$150 USD each. Ultrasounds are accessible to 30% of women in urban regions and 7% of homes in rural settings. Midst the COVID pandemic, statistics are skewed due to lack of reporting, but there have been over 18,000 COVID positive cases and 280 deaths. Life expectancy has increased over the years; it is now estimated to be 66 years.



It is exciting to know that over 40% of the country are practicing Christians, and the Malagasy Lutheran church has over 3 million baptized members. Norwegian missionaries first introduced the Malagasy to the Lutheran faith in 1866. The Malagasy Lutheran Church (AKA FLM), established in 1950, is one of the most important Christian churches in Madagascar. The people of Madagascar have great faith that God will provide what they need for each day. One MMT member recalls the massive number of people attending church services and the need to make a reservation to attend church. One must arrive early to get a seat, otherwise they

stand outside the windows, listening to the service which can last well over 2 hours.

Today, due to COVID-19, there are very few outreach clinics available, so LIMM has helped support the outreach of the Lutheran Hospital so they can continue to provide free and low-cost health care. Your donations have touched the lives of thousands of people in this country, and LIMM thanks you for your support!



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## LIMM Newsletter

LIMM's quarterly newsletter is one vital way for our ministry to keep in touch with our donors. Your continued support enables us to serve Christian missionaries and medical facilities around the world. In an effort to try to reduce postage and printing costs associated with our newsletter, and if you would be willing to receive the newsletter by email only, please email Gail at [limm@limm.org](mailto:limm@limm.org) with your email address. Thank you!

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