

Merry Christmas Eve from Tamatave, Madagascar

Dear friends and family,

A BIG thank you to you all for your continued support of our family serving on the *Africa Mercy*- prayerfully and financially - we experience your partnership as a blessing we wouldn't want to do without!

At the end of November, Daniel needed to fly back to the Netherlands to do some mandatory training courses for a few weeks to renew his maritime courses. We were all glad to see him again onboard, with some Sinterklaas presents and just in time for Abel's 9th birthday on 19 December!

So what does Christmas onboard look like?

Today, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day, are 'ship holidays' - a break from work for almost everyone- definitely not the catering staff though! This week the galley and bakers have been working hard to prepare a magnificent Christmas meal for this evening! Afterwards there will be a Christmas eve church service, and tomorrow a special Christmas morning brunch followed by church service. The kids have been involved in a full December programme! They all took part in the Elementary school's *Christmas Nativity*, and Esther and Anna's dance group performed in the *Christmas Variety Show*. Here you can see Esther the angel, Abel the shepherd, Jozua the sheep, and Esther's dance group. Anna was in the background as a narrator/storyteller.





Malagasy Swimming diploma?!

Esther has had swimming lessons almost every Saturday morning this year from Mr Fidelies, a Malagasy man at the pool very close to the ship. This week we got a message that he had arranged an examiner to come and assess her, and 8am yesterday was the moment!



Esther says:

“I wasn’t feeling tired swimming but I also didn’t really want to do it. But I wanted to get my certificate so I tried my best. When I had done 16 laps, my teacher told me “4 more to go”. I felt happy because that wouldn’t take too long”.

We were so amazed watching Esther and how beautifully she swam the different strokes - and how long she kept swimming! She got a certificate of the highest category- swimming 1000m! We are so proud of her perseverance!

End of Madagascar Field Service, February-December 2025:

1430 patients served

1588 surgeries

166 participants in Education and Training (on- and off-ship)

20,488 hours of Education and Training (on- and off-ship)

Surgeries stopped 3 weeks ago the last patient left the ship a week later. Remaining crew have been cleaning the hospital top to bottom and packing everything away in preparation for the sail. God willing, in less than a week we will start sailing to Durban, South Africa and say goodbye to Madagascar until May 2026! This ship needs an extended amount of time in Durban for dry dock and shipyard, essential maintenance to keep this vessel running well.

Focus on the deck department Day Crew

In the deck department, while very removed from the sterility of the operation room and the wards of patients on deck 3, Daniel, as Chief Officer is also supervising and managing 14 Malagasy men who work as “Day Crew” in the deck department. Without them, it would be impossible to keep the ship running, there is so much manual labour needed. These men are Malagasy nationals and live in the surrounding area, some of them travelling up to 2 hours each day to get to the ship, some cycling and walking at the end of a full day’s work in the heat. They get paid by Mercy Ships and work daily alongside our crew members serving in the deck department to keep the decks clean and safe, assisting in crane operations to get tonnes of food and supplies onboard, load water onboard and treat it to render it drinkable, do lots of cleaning, rust removal and painting the ship, helping packing up all the outpatient tents on the docks and getting the ship ready to sail...there are too many jobs to list. These 14 “day crew” are not Mercy Ships crew, don’t live onboard, and will not be sailing with us into our Annual Maintenance Period in Durban. Mercy Ships will reemploy them when we return but it is very difficult to find work in this city for these months. Many of them have families to support. Join us in praying for them that God will protect them during the 4 months we are gone as they look forward to joining us again in May.

Personal plans.....

As for us, and all families, we need to leave the ship soon after arrival in South Africa. This is due to the 90-day visa rule. While the children still have school holidays, we will fly to the Netherlands mid-January for around 4 weeks. We are very much looking forward to seeing family and friends again, and hopefully some nice winter weather after a year and a half!

And finally....

We hope and pray that you can stand still this time a year by remembering the birth of Jesus Christ. God sent His Son as the Savior of the world. He came to pay for our sins and demonstrated how we should live within the Kingdom of God with help of the Holy Spirit. When we would all live as Jesus’ example the world would be a much better place to live. People would be happy and live in peace with one another. He is the Peace-Maker. We wish you all and Blessed Christmas and a Wonderful 2026!

Daniel, Carolyn, Anna, Abel, Esther and Jozua

