

# Derek and Jane Waller

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*The call in action*

## Welcome to Gardeners' World!

Dear friends,

### The Kingdom of heaven is like a couple who make a garden in a dry and salty land

It all began after Easter. We were having a more settled period in Toliara after much travelling and the weather was cooling down in our Southern Hemisphere winter. What better time to plant some young trees and even try some vegetables and flowers – so we explored the local nurseries, found a supply of “muck” and our garden began. Every evening sees us out with buckets, watering with the help of our young neighbours Katerina and Marina. As well as being fun and good exercise, there is something profoundly gospel about creating a garden in a dry place – “the wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus” (Isaiah 35:1). We love the idea of future generations enjoying the beauty and shade from “our trees” and who knows – others may copy us and plant their own good news!

Lord, we thank you for trees and flowers, for how they enrich our environment and point us to your enduring faithfulness and beauty. May our gardens flourish wherever we are! As we've planted our garden, we can see parallels with our attempts at the kingdom work of growing disciples within this impoverished part of God's world. We've been here 18 months, half our expected period. We have completed three-day Rooted in Jesus training conferences in all 10 parishes. Here are just a few reflections...

One of the first trees we planted in our new garden was an avocado. It looked so good at first, producing new leaves almost at once; however, in the space of a few days, all the leaves turned black and it quickly died. Was it the salt in the soil? Our first training conference took place in Andranovory parish, an hour north from Toliara. Many came and 11 Rooted in Jesus groups sprang up straight away but all but one have now stopped. Why? Many people in this parish are desperately poor and often hungry so when the rains began, some abandoned meeting in order to grow food. One village ran out of water and the people had to move to a small town. In place of our avocado, we have now planted a native tree called a “badamera.” So far it's flourishing, well able to cope with the salt and dryness. Can we find an approach to disciple making that fits the “soil” of Andranovory and the culture and conditions that its people experience?

Father, give us all your Spirit of imagination to plant your Kingdom

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**Name:** Derek and Jane Waller

**Location:** Toliara, Madagascar

**Our call:** To make disciples and encourage young Christians

**Our role:** Derek is the diocesan coordinator of disciple making. Jane is exploring possible roles in adult education while also working alongside Derek.



*Katerina and Marina helping to water our Badamera tree*

wisely wherever we are. "I planted, Apollos watered but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6). In this hot, windy place, we dare not neglect to water our young trees daily. Our hope is that eventually they will find the water that lies below the ground and flourish on their own but for now, they need our help. In our final training in Sakaraha parish, we were thrilled when 17 church members came. As everywhere, the singing was loud and uplifting and those attending were attentive to the teaching and enthusiastic to lead practice Rooted in Jesus lessons. We had lots of fun too.

However, our experience here and across the parishes is that one concentrated training period is not enough to establish discipleship groups. Many of those attending have no experience of leading small groups and although most can read, they are not used to books. Transferring the lessons in the book into lively group learning is a challenge, so we have advised the parish priest to start small. Those who are keen to lead should be members of a Rooted in Jesus group first. Let them learn first and then step out to lead when they are ready. We plan to add our support with more training in the coming year; in particular, we are organising a discipleship conference with Evj. Florent for church leaders (around 100) from September 3–5. Like our young trees, these leaders need time and nurturing if they are to grow.

Father, grant us all patience to persevere. In your kingdom work, may we go at your speed, not lagging behind or rushing ahead.

"You did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you to bear much fruit" (John 15:16). Wouldn't it be wonderful if our trees produced delicious fruit for people here to enjoy – especially the children – and to improve their health? With this in mind, we have planted a mango, an orange, three papayas, and four dates. They are all small but they are growing and there is the hope of fruit. Some of you may remember we began a Rooted in Jesus pilot group in May last year in Ankilifaly. That group, which began with 10 members, now has seven, but they are so faithful and have completed 43 lessons – only five to go! Six of the seven members are also leading their own Rooted in Jesus groups and all have grown in confidence in their faith. We plan to give them their final certificates at the cathedral during diocesan synod at the end of August. Father, may this small group be the first fruits of your harvest. Grant us all to see signs of your Kingdom among us.

Lastly, please join us in thanking God for some more personal news of growth. Our daughter Ruth is expecting our first grandchild in November!

Father, for the gift of new life and growth in the garden, the church and the womb, we praise your glorious name. Amen.

With our love in Christ,

Derek and Jane

*Photos from top to bottom: Relaxing during training; prayer is integral to training; a game brings training to life; the Mamaka group, a small group discussion.*



## GOING FURTHER WITH CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

Did you know that CMS has an online hub full of free mission resources to help you put your call into action? Videos, audio interviews, prayer materials, theological journals, mission partner stories and church resources... it has everything you need to go deeper in mission: [churchmissionsociety.org/resources](http://churchmissionsociety.org/resources)

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email [supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org](mailto:supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org) or call 01865 787400

You can give to Derek and Jane at: [churchmissionsociety.org/waller](http://churchmissionsociety.org/waller)

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