

Glen Tracy Visits Madagascar

When Glen Tracy set off on a ministry trip to the Diocese of Toliara in Madagascar last month, he had hopes of glimpsing a rare red bird in the Baobab forest. And to his amazement, he got his wish.

Glen describes riding through the arid landscape, past 3,000 year-old trees on an ox-drawn cart, accompanied by a capable guide who knew the botanic names and medicinal uses of each plant. Sitting beside him was Eric Robison, his companion for the trip and a parishioner and Master Gardener from St. David's in Glenview. While Glen was sure he would likely not see the bird, at one point he looked up and could hardly believe his eyes when, sure enough, there it was.

Later, as they sat at dinner with Bishop Todd and Rev. Patsy McGregor, their hosts at the Diocese of Toliara, everyone was invited to share their "Christlike moments" from the day. Glen told the group how thrilling it was to see this rare bird, and how it felt like a "Christlike moment" for him and perhaps the highlight of his two-week trip.

"Christlike moments" are not foreign to Glen. I had the privilege of interviewing him this past week and he freely shared how he came to know Christ in a deep and powerful way in 1995 during the breakup of his first marriage. Addicted to drugs and alcohol, and reaching rock bottom in every way he could imagine, a friend shared the love of Christ with Glen and mentored him.

He remembers the moment his life was changed forever as he encountered the love and mercy of Christ while he sat at his desk, filled with a light he has never known before. As a result of this encounter, Glen's

life was forever changed and he has been sober ever since.

Glen was invited by Patsy McGregor to come to Toliara three years ago and even before that time he was encouraged by the folks at St. David's and the McGregors to visit the ministry that St. James the Less and St. David's have long supported in Madagascar. But as he said, the timing never felt right.

Last year Todd asked him again and Glen admits that he didn't know if he could afford the time away from his business. But after a chance meeting with Eric Robison, the master gardener, following one of the Babbs' presentations at St. David's, everything fell into place.

Glen expresses a look of wonder as he describes all the ways the trip came together: generous donations came unbidden, Eric offered companionship and expertise, and Glen was able to find a window to leave his business for two weeks.

Just as God's provision surprised and blessed him in 1995, Glen was amazed to experience God's hand again, this time leading him to Madagascar.

While in Madagscar, Glen and Eric led a team of workers, along with their translator, Zafi, who worked from 7am to 6pm everyday while they were there.

The laborers teamed up and accomplished an incredible amount, especially given the fact they only had three wheelbarrows, a couple rakes and had to do everything by hand. They built a garden, leveling the ground and worked with a local nursery to plant local, sustainable vegetation.

Glen shares how he and the McGregors were proud to offer \$5 a day to the workers, who are extremely poor and would usually receive \$5 a month for their labor.

These workers, who usually had a hard time working together because of various tensions, came together as a team and some even worked without pay for several days to finish the garden after Glen and Eric left.

Glen was personally impacted in many ways. Perhaps most startling for him was the extreme poverty the people in Madagascar experience. The majority of people have no doors on their simple homes, have no electricity, and no shoes. He describes how his perspective on what we truly need in life is forever altered.

Glen speaks highly of the incredible work Todd and Patsy are doing and all that they have accomplished and how they daily experience the power of prayer. He hopes everyone will take the opportunity to go and see what they are doing. He will also be sharing his experience at the **Men's Discussion group Monday, March 23 at 7:30pm** and hopes to go back to Madagascar sometime in the next few years.

As I reflected on my time hearing Glen's stories, I am struck by the incredible, surprising mercy of God present in Glen's life (and for that matter, in all our lives). In the gifts of red bird sightings, in overwhelming love and deliverance from addiction, in providing ways to serve outside our comfort zones, God opens doors to freedom and new life when we are willing to surrender and say, "Yes."

- Kate Rickard,
Communications
Coordinator



Baptism



The red bird!



SNAPSHOTS OF THE TRIP January 2015



Prayer Garden



Bishop Todd at work



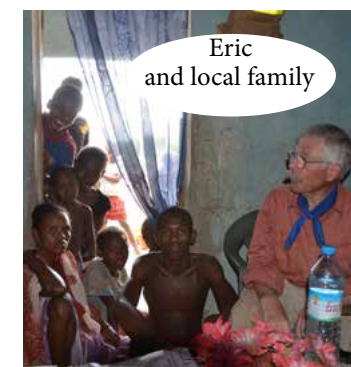
Local family



Glen & Todd



Men at work



Eric and local family



The crew!

Levi's Table: Serving the Grove in Northbrook



Our Levi's Table ministry started in the spring of 2000. The Vestry wanted to establish a new ministry that truly reached out and helped people in real need. We provide a whole range of activities and services, including a monthly birthday party, worship services, taking them on trips such as to The Botanic Gardens as well as individual involvement, sharing their joys while providing moral support on their sad days.

The Grove of Northbrook is located at 263 Skokie Blvd. (just north of Garden Fresh Market). Any interested volunteers should contact Sue Babbs, Bill Fox, or Ron Valentine.

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Opportunities to Serve

- Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2:30pm Ash Wednesday Service
- Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2:30pm Monthly Birthday Party

- Sunday, March 1, 9:30am We will be bringing any residents who wish to attend our 10:00am service
- Wednesday, March 11, 2:30pm Eucharist Service
- Wednesday, March 18, 2:30pm Monthly Birthday Party
- Wednesday, March 25, 2:30pm Afternoon Prayer Service

- Friday, April 3, 2:30pm Good Friday Service
- Sunday, April 5 9:30am We will be bringing any residents who wish to attend our 10:00am service
- Wednesday, April 8, 2:30pm Easter Eucharist Service
- Wednesday, April 15, 2:30pm Monthly Birthday Party
- Wednesday, April 22, 2:30pm Afternoon Prayer Service

- Sunday, May 3, 9:30am We will be bringing any residents who wish to attend our 10:00am service
- Wednesday, May 13, 2:30pm Eucharist Service
- Wednesday, May 20, 2:30pm Monthly Birthday Party
- Wednesday, May 27, 2:30pm Afternoon Pentecost Prayer Service

Cyclones Chedza & Fundi Hit Madagascar

On January 16th, as Glen Tracy and Eric Robison arrived in Antananarivo a cyclone hit Madagascar. Then, on February 7th a second one passed through the town of Toliara itself. Todd and Patsy are fine, and the newly landscaped land is under water but otherwise looks unharmed. Glen reckons that as the soil is so sandy the water will drain away quickly. We are still waiting to discover the full extent of the damage caused by Cyclone Fundi.

Bishop Todd McGregor writes: Cyclone Chedza hit our Diocese in the Morondava area (on the western side of Madagascar), about 300 miles north of Toliara where Patsy and I live. The heavy rains, flooding and wind caused considerable damage throughout the whole island.

At least 68 people were killed, around 135,000 people were affected by floods, 46,000 were displaced and 2,322 homes were destroyed.

There is damage to schools, colleges and churches.

The Diocese of Toliara is operating cyclone relief and needs support for the following emergency assistance:

1. FOOD: distributions over two months for 3,000 people - \$12,000.
2. TEMPORARY SHELTERS: for 300 families - \$12,000
3. PURCHASE AND DISTRIBUTION OF SEEDS: for the upcoming planting season - \$5,000
4. REPAIR OF 8 DAMAGED CHURCHES AND PROPERTIES - \$54,500

Thankfully, the current relief funds committed by our partners total approximately \$30,000. This is great news and we praise the Lord for raising up generous donors. A further \$53,500 is needed to help alleviate this devastation.

If you wish to make a donation,

checks can be made out to St James the Less, please put "Madagascar cyclone relief" in the comment line, or you can donate Online at <https://secure-q.net/Donations/SAMS/3388>

More information can be found on the outreach bulletin board & at www.peoplereaching.org/

Kneeler for the Cathedral at the Cathedral!

A kneeler has been designed for the Bishop's Chair at the currently being-built Cathedral for the Diocese of Toliara. Bishop Todd's chair will be moved from St Lioka's, Ankilifaly, to St Patrick's Cathedral. If anyone would like to stitch the kneeler (or donate towards its cost), please contact Sue Babbs. It is hoped that it will be completed in time for the dedication of the Cathedral on St Patrick's Day 2016.



Donate Today!