

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Summer 2004

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Our Mission

The Malabar Mission Society is a group of Christians interested in assisting the Malabar Mission Circle in India as it shares the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ along the Malabar Coast by supporting, with prayers for God's blessings,

- the spread of the Gospel, and
- the Circle's witness



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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN INDIA?

Most of us know what has just happened in India even though our media reports were somewhat meagre. The world's largest functioning democracy delivered a stunning verdict. The National Congress Party, the party of Gandhi and Nehru, the party of India's Independence Movement, recovered its power under Sonia Gandhi's leadership and won the national election. There were three reasons. The 300 million neglected poor and lower classes raised their voices through their votes: "We want food and water and electricity—we can't eat high tech." The second reason was that the electorate in India likes change; and the third was a vote for the return to the secular principle. MMS Newsletter readers need to understand the importance of the last point. The ruling BJP Party was a reactionary movement that wanted to turn India into a *Hindutva*, that is, a Hindu-only land. Along with all other non-Hindus, Christians were in trouble. All sorts of roadblocks were being put down against evangelism, four states had passed anti-conversion bills, there was destruction of church property, and even the loss of life. The Congress Party stands for the equality of all religions and no discrimination against minorities, as India's wonderful constitution declares!

What has just happened in India has the highest significance for the work of the Malabar Mission Society. More important, you can practically hear the sigh of relief and hope from our brothers and sisters in India! ✝

MALABAR OUTREACH: The Work in Wynad

- Rev. Dr. R. Miller, MMS Project Officer



If you would divide a square into four quadrants, Wynad would be the northeast quadrant of Malabar. It is a plateau on the foothills of the mountains, 1,100 metres high and about 60 kilometres from Calicut and the coast. It is a tea, coffee and rubber plantation area, active and busy. Its people are mostly Hindu, but a large number of Christians have migrated from South Kerala. It is an area of great physical beauty.

Our work in Wynad had an interesting beginning after World War II. Wynad had many jungles, some of which were being cleared. Government programs had more or less succeeded in wiping out malaria. Land grants were being offered to settlers who would develop the area, particularly to ex-servicemen. One of these was a Lutheran church member from South Kerala who started a small plantation. He invited a pastor to serve the people working in the plantation. It was also noted that, with the coming of various changes the Wynad hill tribes were being readied for the Gospel. The hill tribes are the aboriginal residents of India who were forced up into the hills by successive waves of immigrants in ancient times. They are a remarkable people called *adivasis*, which means "original inhabitants," with their own distinct languages and sub-cultures, and they are to be found in the millions in all the hilly regions of India.

Continued. See Wynad on page 4.

NEWS FLASH

An appeal for funds to start Open Door B in Kannur for work among college-going women has just been answered! We give thanks to a generous donor for sufficient funds for a two-year pilot project. The work will commence immediately. The full story will appear in the next issue. **Praise the Lord!**

INDIA: UNDER THE CROSS OR THE CRESCENT?

A man with a heart for missions in India, Dr. Herb Hofer was guest speaker for a special mission evening following the April 30th MMS annual general meeting held in Saskatoon. Dr. Hofer, Director of Missions for Southeast Asia for Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, recently returned from a six-week visit to the southern parts of India.

In his opening devotion, Dr. Hofer emphasized how, in the Great Commission, we are directed to include ALL the world. "India has many different nations within India. This makes the challenges even greater with all the different types of ethnic groups," he stated. "We see footsteps of the Holy Spirit in the sands of India. It's hard to keep up with the Holy Spirit of God!"



Dr. Herb Hofer recently returned from a six-week visit to southern India.

India, with a population of over one billion, is also the largest populated country in the world that is open to mission. He cited a situation where a family was willing to give one-third of their three-room house for use as a classroom for pre-school children. In another area there has been some success in preventing the village from carrying out child sacrifice, one a year, because of the Christian influence.

"We must be creative with our ministry. Talking about Jesus is the most productive method." Dr. Hofer himself was a missionary in India for fifteen years in Tamil Nadu. "It is thrilling to see that people have taken up the cause of India—it is crucial that Societies, such as the Malabar Mission Society, have filled in. Mission boards are now emphasizing partnership with mission societies. This gives donors a sense of ownership and only good can come from that!" ✝

GOD'S LOVE – OUR RESPONSE

- Rev. Howard Ulmer

Recently a father observed his son's actions and said, "What on earth are you doing?" As God observes us, he may ask, "What are you doing on earth?" Although the question contains the same words, their emphasis is quite different. Our gracious God sent his Son, Jesus, from heaven to earth to die for the sins of all people. Through Christ's action we are forgiven and restored in our relationship to God. Jesus gave us the task of sharing the Gospel with all nations, all people groups.

"What are you doing on earth?" This question reminds us of the responsibility and opportunity of sharing the Gospel through words and deeds to all people, both where we live and throughout the world, including India. There are many wonderful stories of how the Holy Spirit has touched people in India through the workers of the Malabar Mission Circle. As these people receive the gift of faith, they share the gift of God's love with family and friends. What a privilege to share in this ministry through our prayer support and our financial support. God has blessed us richly. May we respond with a gracious and loving heart.

Will you consider supporting one of the various projects and ministries of the Malabar Mission Society? Will you encourage your congregation, mission group or Sunday School to consider supporting one of the ministries? Will you pray for this ministry and the workers of the Malabar Mission Circle in India? ✝

Rev. Howard Ulmer is Hospital Chaplain for the Lutheran Care Society in Saskatoon. He is also vice-president of the Malabar Mission Society.

YOU CAN HELP: CHOOSE YOUR PROJECT

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. . ." (Matt. 28:19a) Too big a job? Unmanageable? The 'Big Job' is made up of pieces. Can you help? Could you choose a project—for yourself, or for your church? Here is a selection; which one is for you?

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

– 45,000 Rupees (Cdn\$1,365 or US\$1,025)

- An Evangelist is assigned for four months: sells Gospel of Matthew, enrolls students with Lesson 1 of Correspondence Course; follows up, teaches about Jesus.
- For a smaller piece of this project, about \$100 would print the needed lessons.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL CAMPS

– Rs 25,500 (Cdn\$775 or US\$590)

- The Malabar Circle conducts 36 Vacation Bible Schools: costs include teacher training, printing lessons, organizing and enrolling children.
- For a smaller piece of the action, approximately \$25 will sponsor one VBS camp.

TIRUVALI (and other villages) EVANGELISM

– Rs 24,000 (Cdn\$800 or US\$600)

- The Wandoor congregation plans to work in three neighbouring villages: Tiruvali, Peragamanna, and Kazhinjiriyl. Costs include the expenses of the full-time Evangelist, printing and supplies.
- \$67 will about cover one month's expenses.

LITERATURE PROJECT: 100 BIBLE STORIES

– Rs 75,000 (Cdn\$2,500 or US\$1,875)

- Can you remember this Sunday School classic from years ago? Originally it appeared in 'King James' English. Now translated into Malayalam, it is very useful to Gospel Workers in India as they bring the message of Jesus to the children.
- Smaller budget? \$25 buys 200 copies of this book.

MAKING A GIFT OF RRSP's and RRIF's

- Brian Wonnick

John and his wife, Mary, were meeting with Brian, the Gift Planner from their church. Brian was suggesting that they consider gifting some of their RRIF's to support their Lord's work.

"Why," John asked, "would we gift something that was set aside to provide income in my retirement? Sure, we realize that we get a tax break when we invest in an RRSP, plus, it's great to see these investments grow without tax consequences."

"But John," Mary commented, "we have to pay tax on all the income when we take it out of the RRIF."

"You're right," said John. "Brian, what happens to the RRIF's when either of us dies?" asked John. "Any remaining RRIF's go to the surviving spouse without any tax consequences, and income may continue to the surviving spouse," answered Brian.

"There is another wrinkle," said Brian. "On the death of the last spouse, any remaining funds in the RRIF are added to other income. If that amount is large, the deceased's income could go into the next highest tax bracket, which currently runs 39% to 49%, depending on where you live. This may result in up to half of the value of the funds being paid out in taxes before anyone else receives anything from the estate."

"You mean to tell me," asked Mary, "that our children will not get the full

value of the remaining RRIF funds? Isn't there some way to deal with this?"

Brian replied, "There are 'wealth replacement' strategies using insurance, for example. Insurance funds replace money paid in taxes with other funds. However, you will need to use other funds while you are living to pay the insurance premiums."

Brian continued, "Returning to our original thoughts about gifting RRIF's or RRSP's, you may name your estate as the beneficiary of your RRSP or RRIF, and then make a gift to the church in your will. Or, a second way, you may name your church, or church ministry as the beneficiary of your RRSP or RRIF, a provision provided in the 2000 federal budget. In either case, the charitable tax receipt from the gift of the RRSP or RRIF will cancel out the tax owing. The second way reduces the size of your estate which reduces probate fees and other related expenses."

"Well, what do we do next?" asked John.

"Talk to your financial planner, as well as any other professional, such as your lawyer or accountant. Also, make sure to include your family in these discussions," suggested Brian.

"And," Brian concluded, "Be sure to turn to God in prayer, that He may guide and direct your decision as you look to put

a gift in place that will touch others' lives with the Gospel of Christ."

Please see your Financial Planner for assistance on how you might gift to the MMS, and receive a tax benefit either while living or through your estate. Or, take advantage of gift planning services from one of the following individuals:

- Clarence Elle
Foundation Manager
LCC, A-BC District
7100 Ada Blvd.
Edmonton, AB T5B 4E4
Phone: 1-888-747-0063
- Brian Wonnick
Development Officer
LCC, Central District
1927 Grant Dr.
Regina, SK S4S 4V6
Phone: 1-800-ONE-LORD
(1-800-663-5673)
- In the United States, gift planning services are offered by
The LCMS Foundation
1333 South Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295
Phone: 1-888-930-4438
Or visit their website at www.lfnd.org

Brian Wonnick is the Development Officer for Lutheran Church-Canada, Central District, and lives in Regina, Saskatchewan. He is also a board member of the Malabar Mission Society.

WE SAY GOOD-BYE TO AN OLD FRIEND AND LONG-TIME MMS MEMBER

On May 19, 2004, Rev. Dr. Oscar Sommerfeld entered into the joy of his Lord. Throughout 33 years of ministry, Rev. Dr. Sommerfeld served both Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCC) and Lutheran Church-Canada (LCC) parishes in Alberta and Saskatchewan. He served the church-at-large in numerous positions, including President of ELCC's South Alberta Conference; the American Lutheran Church's Board of Publications for Canada District; and ELCC's Division of Communications. He was a member of the Calgary Lutheran Association, the (Inter-Lutheran) Church Music Institute, and the Lutheran Student Foundation of Alberta, and served as supervisor of chaplain-interns at the University of Calgary.

Rev. Dr. Sommerfeld edited ELCC's quarterly devotional booklet *Eternity for Today* and their official monthly magazine *The Shepherd*. He was an accredited journalist to the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Budapest in 1984, and was a visiting guest of the Lutheran Church of Saxony in the German Democratic Republic.

Rev. Dr. Sommerfeld served as the ELCC member of the Joint Commission on Inter-Lutheran Relationships, and later as a member of the LCC Commission on Theology and Church Relations. He wrote a number of resource materials, articles and studies.

He also served with the Royal Canadian Army Chaplain Corps, and held leadership positions with two Pro-Life organizations, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Vision TV, Canadian Church Press, and the Malabar Mission Society.

In recognition of his many years of faithful service to the church, his community and his country, and for his commitment to a firm biblical and confessional stance, Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton honoured Rev. Sommerfeld in 2003 with an Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree.

Rev. Dr. Oscar Sommerfeld leaves to mourn his passing and celebrate his life his wife Martha, five daughters, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. ✝

WYNAD *(continued from page 1)*

Hill tribe people are intelligently interested in the message of the Gospel. So there were two reasons for starting new work in Wynad: 1) to work among new settlers from the south, and 2) to work among hill tribes. Our Mission decided to do both, and the decision was blessed.

A sterling group of Indian pastors who worked selflessly in primitive conditions led the way, accompanied by three missionary families in turn—namely, the Lutzes, the Heinleins, and the Schimers. Missionary presence ended in 1975 when Paul was killed in a road accident. Over the decades the workers were able to establish congregations and preaching stations, composed of new believers in Christ, and Wynad became the centre of the Lutheran population in Malabar. This was not easy work. Not only were physical conditions difficult, but a lot of opposition from anti-Christian agitators had to be faced and overcome. I can recall when the drums would beat loudly in order to overcome the sound of the message that was being delivered in some village, but this did not stop the church from growing.

Along the main highway of Wynad there are three towns that became work centres. The first of these is **Kalpetta**, the Wynad District headquarters. It is the home of the first Wynad congregation and has a good-sized church building. Twelve kilometres eastward is another smaller town called **Meenangadi**. Kalpetta and Meenangadi comprise a pastorate that is being served by Rev. P. Madhusoodanan, himself a Hindu convert. Meenangadi also has a church building, but it is not in as good condition as it should be, since the congregation members there are quite passive. In Meenangadi Rev. and Mrs. Martin Lutz built a sturdy mission bungalow on a beautiful two-acre tract; on it is a wonderful coffee planting that Mr. George, the caretaker, has faithfully taken care of since the last missionary left. Rev. Madhusoodanan lives in a home near the compound.

Another twelve kilometres eastward lies **Sultan Battery**, a large town. There we find St. Peter's Lutheran Church and parsonage, under the pastoral care of Rev. A. T. Baby, himself a Wynad product. A short way further east is **Moolankavu**, another good-sized congregation that, together with Sultan Battery, comprises a single parish. A hostel for Christian youth is located on the Battery church property. It was established to help the children from the interior villages to obtain education. The support for the forty young people comes from Kindernothilfe, a German organization. Sultan Battery is also the home of Rev. and Mrs. Victor, who live in a suburb. He is supposed to be retired, but for the past fifteen years he has voluntarily and with great dedication taken care of the MMS work, as it's India Agent.

Inland from Meenangadi is our largest Wynad congregation, **Kurumbala**, which includes about 22 families. It is now connected by a road, but previously it was difficult to reach except on foot. Mr. D. Joseph, father of one of our current workers, Mr. Richard, is the worker mainly responsible for the breakthrough among the hill tribes in this area, living with the people under conditions that most of us would reject. Kurumbala now has a fine church building and a parsonage. Mr. J. Devaraj, a dedicated evangelist, is in charge.

Inland from Kalpetta is a tea plantation area, where a preaching station called **Puthumala** is located. A handful of members drawn from plantation workers worship in temporary sheds.

Starting from these centres the pastors and people in Wynad do outreach work in many other places, helped by the regular grants for evangelism received from the MMS. They have just completed a lot of Vacation Bible School work with the help of those grants. It is easy to tell how important the MMS assistance has been to the continuing advance of the Gospel in Wynad! ✚

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER'S TRAINING SEMINAR

A two-day seminar proved very helpful to 35 persons, from 5 different congregations of the Malabar Mission Circle (MMC). It was held at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Sultan Battery where Rev. Baby is the Pastor.

On Saturday Rev. T. Joy, retired principal of the seminary in Nagercoil, was one of the presenters. He introduced the text books and spoke about teaching style. Rev. Shaji then demonstrated how one might conduct a class. The third speaker, Mr. Kunjukunju spoke of ways to communicate with the children during a class session.

After worship on the second day of the seminar there was opportunity for those participating to observe a class being taught by Sunday School Teacher Mr. Shaju, who put all the talk into action.

Later in the afternoon a music group was formed, with members selected from all the churches represented and led by Mr. K. S. Tennyson. The Music Team performed for all present and then discussed plans for the future.

The Seminar was considered a big success, and it was decided that pastors should undertake to start a Sunday School in each of the Wynad District churches.

This two-day Seminar was supported by "The Lutheran Trust" of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Malabar Mission Society. The MMC expressed their sincere gratitude for such opportunities. ✚



35 people received Sunday School teacher training in two-day seminar held at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Sultan Battery.

*Memorials and gifts
honouring special occasions are welcomed by the
Malabar Mission Society, and are used to
support the Lutheran Church in India to share
the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those who do not
yet know His love.*

*Special-occasion gifts and memorials will be
acknowledged in future issues of the Newsletter.*

