

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Winter 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



THE CURRENT MOOD IN INDIA

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



The current emotional climate in Indian society is about as positive as it has been for a long time.

The first reason is the fact that the economy is getting ever stronger. Consumer goods are available everywhere, and people can afford them. There is still poverty, but especially in the south of India it is less glaring.

The second reason is that Indians like their new federal government. The people-oriented Congress party is back in the saddle again, and the reactionary Hindu BJP party is out. Manmohan Singh, the prime minister and a Sikh, is a world-renowned economist, while Sonia Gandhi, the Congress head, is committed to the secular principles of the Indian constitution.

The third reason is that the religious minorities, notably Muslims and Christians, feel somewhat more secure.

The final reason is the fact that India and Pakistan are making some progress towards peaceful relationships. Buses now run again between Delhi and Lahore!

The Malabar Gospel workers would probably add a fifth reason. That is the fact that the India Evangelical Lutheran Church is on the brink of resuming normal operations after some years of administrative gridlock. They believe that they may even get their salaries soon, after seven years of total drought!

While they share the positive mood, the Malabar Gospel workers also have some concerns:

Inflation, at eight per cent annually, eats away at their meagre resources.

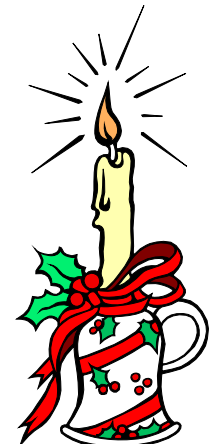
The right-wing Hindu and Muslim movements are not going away. While Mary Helen and I were there, four female Roman Catholic Missionaries of Charity, Mother Theresa's group, were physically manhandled and wounded by Hindu rightists in Calicut who objected to their work with the poor.

There is a growing societal pressure against any conversion activity.

A third concern is the aging of the workers and the need, hard to meet, for fresh blood.

Finally there are also some disagreements among the workers themselves, as will happen in any family.

Overall, it is a positive time in India and a good time to be working in Malabar. God is prospering the efforts of the workers and new believers are being added to the fold. The climate is good! Let us work while it is day. ✨



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2004 INDIA TOUR

- by Emerald Schoepp

Thirteen people participated in the tour to India that was advertised in our Spring 2004 newsletter. Reports are that it was a very successful adventure. Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN, with some financial assistance from collaborating congregations, and the MMS serving as the channel for it to happen, have supported Rev. K. K. Alavi's work among the Muslims in Calicut since February 2001. They arranged the tour primarily to allow folks from the Hutchinson congregation to visit Rev. Alavi and become personally knowledgeable about his New Hope Mission program. But the wider worth of the MMS was also on their agenda.

Hosting the tour were Dr. Miriam McCreary (who served in India for many years) and Mary Helen Miller. Dr. Miller was present on the tour and also spent additional time in India. In addition, there were six people from Faith, Hutchinson; the others came from Oklahoma, Illinois and Ontario. The group proved to be very compatible, and, as well as having an enjoyable time, achieved a broad awareness of the work in India.

The tour spent the major portion of their time within Malabar. Four days were involved with Rev. Alavi and his work; the rest were spent on the general MMS program. All of the Gospel workers were present in Calicut to welcome the tour group.

Upon their arrival in Calicut and their visit to the **Good News Centre** where Rev. T. Joseph is pastor, the group was informed of Rev. Joseph's need for heart-valve replacement surgery in April 2005. The associated cost of approximately 60,000 rupees would be two years of his salary. The first of several important "tour moments" came when Rev. D. Christensen, on behalf of Faith Lutheran, Hutchinson, offered 50,000 rupees. One can imagine the joy that filled this servant of the Lord as Rev. Joseph was given this news. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Other mission stations were visited, with progress and growth being stronger in some and needing assistance in others. When all the numbers are totalled, the Gospel workers report close to 500 communicant members in the Malabar Mission Circle.

Travelling north to two of our newest

mission stations, **Naduvil and Chengalai**, the group learned of the need for a church building in Chengalai. Property has been purchased, a well constructed, and the foundation for a worship centre laid when the funds ran out. No money for the church building! Then came another special "tour moment." One of the couples participating in the tour offered to give \$7,500, the estimated need to complete the development. To God be the glory! This will mean the completion of the church superstructure and bathroom, the extension of an existing small room into a Sunday School facility, and the construction of about half of the compound wall. This wall construction will enable permission for a much-needed cemetery at the site. As a measure of appreciation the couple has been asked by the congregation to name the new church. They have stated they will submit several names, and let the local group decide on the final name.

At **Kannur**, the men's facility, **The Open Door**, presents a solid and very attractive appearance. It is bright and appealing. There are 100-120 men—largely young men—in daily attendance. The worker there, Mr. Reji, is a born leader, strong in character and intelligence. His goal is to become a pastor. Reji has started worship services at the Open Door, and there are 15-20 attendees. Looking to the future we envision a congregation developing at Kannur, with the accompanying need to purchase property. This might be just the project your congregation, one of your Church groups, or you, individually, are looking for. Let us know of your interest.

Elsewhere in this edition you will read of **The Open Door—Vanitha**. The third special "tour moment" occurred with a gift from the heart of a tour participant when she offered to purchase two computers for this facility. We praise You, O God.

When the tour stopped at the **Christian Welfare Centre in Malappuram**, yet a fourth outpouring of love was demonstrated. It was pointed out that a radiant warmer was badly needed for premature babies. Dr. Miller had a portion of the funds for this item, and the remainder of the needed amount came via a gift from yet another tour participant. Thanks be to You, O God.

The Christian Welfare Centre has need for a huge water supply, and our prayers are that they will find an agency willing to fund this large project. Please join us in this appeal with your prayers.

The tour group also visited the **Otten English School at Wandoor**. The school is mentioned in another portion of this newsletter edition. With the school's numerous needs this would also be a worthy project for congregations, church groups or individuals.

With the exception of the days spent with Rev. Alavi, this summarizes the highlights of the tour. All of this was reported at the November MMS board meeting held in Regina – a meeting very upbeat in spirit. We enjoyed a *PowerPoint* presentation from Mark Dickinson, a tour participant from Christ Risen Lutheran Church in Kanata, ON. The presentation brought back many fond memories of an earlier tour which five of the board members had taken in 1999. The Lord is truly blessing the work among Muslims through the Malabar Mission Society.

There are still new, untouched areas where the MMS would like to expand. Reference has been made in earlier newsletter editions about starting new work in Kasaragode, the only Malabar district without MMS support. The year 2005 will be an investigating year! While new work is being started and expanded with some fine success, there are continual needs for building repairs (the monsoons are very hard on the buildings), requests for motorcycles, medical expenses for the Gospel workers and their family members, etc.

We close this report with a prayer: *O God our Father, You have made of one blood all the nations of the earth. O God the Son, You have redeemed all mankind from the power of darkness. O God the Holy Spirit, You continue to sustain and keep us in the faith. We thank You for the early disciples who were sent forth by Christ to proclaim His saving love. We thank You for all the pastors, Gospel workers, missionaries and lay people who are continuing to do Your work here on earth until the Gospel has been preached to every nation. Give each of us an extra measure of Your Holy Spirit so that we may be receptive to the work that is still to be done. In Your most Holy Name we pray. Amen* ✠

THE OPEN DOOR - VANITHA

- Emerald Schoepp



Looking toward the library at The Open Door-Vanitha.

Our regular readers will recall we wrote in our last issue that a pilot project was being considered in Kannur for a student library and reading room for women. This project has now been named "The Open Door-Vanitha." The word *vanitha* (*vanida*) means women. This is a parallel program to The Open Door, now 2-1/2 years old, with men being the attendees.

The Open Door-Vanitha is well nigh miraculous on three counts: first the emergence of the funds, represented by a two-year total grant for the pilot project of U.S.\$15,000 received from the Florida-based Zimmer Family Foundation; secondly, the rapid deployment of qualified female staff; and thirdly the renovations needed for the Centre by Rev. Victor and Reji (the Gospel worker for the Open Door). The two staff appointed are Bindu, a B.Th. graduate of Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil, and Sajeetha, who holds a B.A. in Economics from the Kerala University, Trivandrum.

The Open Door-Vanitha is located directly opposite the Government Women's College and right beside a Women's Parallel College. As a result

young women are pouring into the Vanitha Centre. A copy of every required textbook has been provided, as are reference books and general as well as Christian literature. The desire was to also provide Internet access to strengthen the study possibilities. During the recent tour to India - one of the tour visitors spontaneously offered to provide two computers.

As a Centre for service and witness, the Open Door-Vanitha has had a quick and splendid takeoff. Here is another opportunity to give support to a project that may touch your heart— any amount, large or small—for the Gospel is now reaching young non-Christian women. ✝



Sajeetha and Bindu staff the Open Door-Vanitha.

OTTEN MEMORIAL (ENGLISH) SCHOOL, WANDOOD

- Emerald Schoepp

The Otten Memorial School at Wandoor is a highly successful English-medium educational ministry among Muslims. The now sainted Ottens, Rev. Henry and Mary Esther, were long-time dedicated missionaries at Wandoor, and the school has been named in their honour. The school has not only emerged from self-effort, but has remained unashamedly Christian. This represents the spirit of the Ottens. The motto of this school is "NOT TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE."

The school boasts of 675 students and 31 teachers. Because it is in a Muslim-dominated area the majority of students are Muslims. English and all other subjects are being taught. Various club activities, including a Scripture (Bible) Club, are in full swing.

Christmas is the special occasion when the whole school is engaged and involved in various programs to help the children



understand the real meaning of Christmas.

The needs of the institution are great as the enrollment has grown, but the MMS has thus far never made a contribution. There is need for more classrooms, proper laboratories and library, office space for staff, and rooms for guidance and counselling. In spite of the shortcomings, the school has been able to produce excellent results in Grade X board examinations in the past years.

At the last board meeting the MMS consented to send \$1,000 to the Otten Memorial School for books for their library. Our request, along with that of the school administrators, is that you uphold this Christian institution in prayer, so that it will prosper further and glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is also another opportunity to give financial support to a very worthwhile endeavour. ✝

100 BIBLE STORIES

- Emerald Schoepp

Do you remember this classic from long ago? It has been a favourite for thousands of children, teachers and parents.

Originally it was printed in 'King James' English, then later based on the 'New International Version' of the Bible. It was even translated into Malayalam for use by Gospel workers in India as they bring the message to children and new comers to faith in Jesus Christ. But for a long time it was not available. Now, thanks to Rev. K. K. Alavi, a fresh 10,000 edition has been published in India. The book is a beautiful full-colour production, paid for by contributions from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Elgin, Illinois, U.S.A. We are extremely grateful to these Christians for their interest, prayers, and contribution.

Two thousand copies were immediately placed in the hands of the Malabar Gospel workers. The books are a wonderful tool, both for evangelism and nurture. The copies cost about a dollar each to print, but generally they will be sold for 30¢ each. The receipts will be kept for re-printing. 🌲

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Small beginnings – great blessings – we thank God!

- Rev. L. L. Guebert

There was a Lutheran presence in Malappuram before Roland and Mary Helen Miller arrived in 1953. And nothing much happened that year or the next if you are trying to quote statistics. A total cultural change for this young Canadian (he) and American (she). The 'evangelism Bible belt' doesn't get many notches while you struggle with a totally new language with a different set of letters, and a whole new culture to absorb. There were not great conversion numbers to post. They were too busy loving the people, and sowing seeds of trust, and sharing the love of Christ in many different ways. Beginnings.

The Malabar Mission Circle has been greatly blessed by our gracious Saviour, and they thank God for every one of the more than 500 confirmed Lutherans among them. You can appreciate that number more when you try to think of how many new members your own church has added from 'the outside!' (Not recycled Christians who have changed congregations.) We thank God for the Gospel witness and for these new brothers and sisters in Christ.

And we thank God for the prayers of everyone who lifts this ministry before the throne of Grace. We thank the staff at the Lutheran Church-Canada office who remembered the ministry of the Malabar Mission Society in their prayers when they gathered for worship on October 21.

We thank God for the blessings that He gave to and through His servant Walter Schoepp. We share the concern of his wife Emerald (Newsletter editor) and their children, and commend them to the God of all grace. Walter 'retired' about fifteen years ago, but never quit. If there was something that needed doing, call Walt! Could it be more fitting: he received his heavenly call on Sunday morning, November 21, 2004 while he was conducting a worship service at Peace River, Alberta. He had a great heart for people; and it stopped beating while he was sharing the Good News of Jesus.

We thank God for the way that He works in the hearts and lives of people. Taking advantage of the fact that our November Board Meeting was in Regina, Christ Lutheran invited Dr. Miller to preach in their service. He shared the story of some leaders who, when he was in India this fall, came by bus several hundred kilometers to meet Miller. Back home they walked wherever they went. As he told their story, he noted that they could be more effective in their outreach if they each had a bicycle. The Board at Christ Lutheran, in their meeting the following Tuesday evening, decided to underwrite the whole cost of fifteen bicycles. This newsletter also mentions the generosity of the people who went on the Mission Tour this fall.

We thank God for each and every one who has heard God's call to service, and responded. And we would be thankful for everyone who wants to use the Malabar Mission Society to bring a Christmas Gift to Jesus. 🐾

In Appreciation

The Malabar Mission Society sincerely thanks the following who have so generously given special gifts ...

In memory of:

- **Henk DeBoer**
Marj and Walter Plitt
- **Harold Giere**
Allan and Brenda Hjelte
- **Elsie Litton**
Walt and Marjorie Plitt
- **Oscar Sommerfeld**
Lowell and Phyllis Guebert
Ernie and Arlene Hiller
Gerald Wagner
- **Fred Wymer**
Martha Wymer

In honour of their fiftieth wedding anniversary:

- **Ed and Elsie Glubish**
Walter and Emerald Schoepp
- **Arthur and Frieda Kreuger**
Walter and Emerald Schoepp
- **Roland and Mary Helen Miller**
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- **Al and Lorraine Wauters**
Ernie and Arlene Hiller

In honour of their birthday:

- **Ed Hohlbein**
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- **Carl Schutz**
Walter and Emerald Schoepp

In honour of Rev. Howard Ulmer's fifth anniversary as Chaplain of the Lutheran Care Society, Saskatoon

Lowell and Phyllis Guebert



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. All donations are receipted for income tax purposes. Special-occasion gifts and memorials will be acknowledged in future issues of the Newsletter.

*Send your gifts to
The Malabar Mission Society*

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