

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Spring 2005

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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



MALABAR OUTREACH

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



There are two final stations in our review of the Malabar outreach. Their function, certainly unintended, is to remind us that mission work is not easy. It is not easy anywhere.

But we have a craving for success stories, and somewhat romantically we may assume that the foreign mission field differs significantly. It really does not. The criteria for good mission work are the same everywhere—the faithful preaching of the gospel, loving

deeds, the intelligent use of resources, and prayer. Even then at times the ground may be too hard or the thorns too prickly. Then comes the question—what do we do next?

Srikrishnapuram

Srikrishnapuram illustrates what we have just said. It is a quiet, pleasant village, with friendly people, situated in Palghat District. Fifty years ago missionary Elmer Griess and colleagues thought that it would be a good place to start work. The area is devoutly Hindu. There were no Christians, and no church. In the course of time a good property was obtained. A combined chapel-reading room and a pastor's house were constructed. A series of fine pastors, including Revs. Henry, Madhusoodanan and Victor worked there, but only a handful of people could be gathered. There was no real break-through. When the Malabar Mission Society (MMS) began its support Mr. D. Solomon, a catechist, and his wife Kristy began working there. Their enthusiasm was high, and people began to show interest. With MMS financial help the buildings were refurbished, Rev. Victor and Mr. Solomon joining hands to manage the project. Then Mr. Solomon was paralysed by a stroke. The young evangelists who have worked there since then, including the incumbent Mr. Schirmer, have tried hard, but the Srikrishnapuram work has settled back to its old pattern.

The MMS Board has said it will continue to support this effort to the end of 2005, but if there is no tangible progress, it will have to use the resources elsewhere. This will give the members of the Malabar Mission Circle and the Board for Missions of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church time to consider its strategy for this outreach. Is the problem the area, or is it that our approach has been like the seed that fell by the wayside, that is, not well conceived? In the meantime, the people of Srikrishnapuram must be in our prayers. Perhaps we have not prayed enough.

Edamalayur

Edamalayur teaches another lesson. The lesson is that the people on the spot must be aroused to do the mission work or the church will not grow. Edamalayur is in the foothills of the mountains, about 100 kilometres inland from Cochin. Some Lutheran families from the Milamel area in southern Kerala migrated to Edamalayur to find employment in the rubber plantations. They formed a small, isolated and very poor congregation that was served by catechists. Missionary Henry Otten of Wandoor brought the congregation into the orbit of the Malabar Mission Circle, even though it was well outside its geographical area. The purpose was to give fellowship and inspiration to the group. It was hoped these families would become the seed of the church, in the course of time. Minimal physical facilities were provided in the form of a small church and a pastor's house. The MMS recently provided funding to repair and upgrade these buildings.

The congregation now numbers about seven families, and it has declined in size rather than grown. The families must carry on their witness work among plantation workers, a floating population and notoriously underpaid. It is not an easy task, and there is hardship involved.

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P.O. Box 32045
Regina, SK, Canada S4N 7L2
Email: malabarmission@sasktel.net

Visit the MMS website at
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Editor: Emerald Schoepp
Layout, Design & Mailing List: Arlene Hiller
Advisor: Rev. Dr. Roland Miller
Mailing: Volunteers from Lutheran Churches in Saskatoon

Malabar Mission Society

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AN APPRECIATION OF REV. K. M. VICTOR

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

Some words come to mind quickly and easily when one thinks of Rev. K. M. Victor. They are *faith*, *dedication*, and *energy*. Those are good, strong words, and they are very much in place. Rev. Victor is the India representative (agent) for the Malabar Mission Society. From August 1988 to the present, he has carried out his duties with a strong faith, with dedicated faithfulness, and with an almost incredible energy. He is now 74 years in age and will soon be passing the torch to Rev. T. Joy. We cannot help but applaud his striking efforts, especially during the past decade when his services were entirely voluntary.



Rev. K. K. Victor

Faith In Rev. Victor it is a powerful quality. He loves the Lord, and loves the privilege of sharing it. It becomes evident in his prayers. They are a talking with the Father in absolute confidence. The conversations are long. There is nothing that cannot be asked or expected. It becomes evident in his singing. Rev. Victor loves Christian songs. He jumps into them strongly and vibrantly, face lit up, hands clapping in time. He loves to teach the little children songs in the VBS classes that he still conducts. The faith also becomes evident in his response to new Gospel work challenges. He is not afraid of them. He rises to them. Start a new mission in Kannur? Sure. Let's go.

Dedication Dedication is another word for faithfulness. Kerala culture has the grace of spontaneity. People get excited, conduct a three-day festival, and then collapse. There is no collapsing in Rev. Victor. Being the MMS agent involves a lot of hard, gripping, regular work. The quarterly workers' meetings have to be conducted. The funds have to be distributed. The monthly accounts have to be gathered, consolidated, and sent to Canada. Above all, the letters have to flow. For sixteen years they have flowed. I keep the correspondence files of the MMS Project Officer. File after file is full of Rev. Victor's letters. Practically every one ends the same: We are fine, God is working, tell the MMS members thank you.

Energy That is about the same as hard-working. Rev. Victor is hard to keep up with. It is not easy to ride the Kerala buses. The seats are hard. They are crowded, with double the official capacity of passengers. The rain beats in the open sides. But Rev. Victor is the bus-rider *par excellence*. He is constantly on the move to one or another of our stations or projects. He will not delegate. He will not leave anything to chance. He has to do it himself. Especially the new projects started by the MMS have been his responsibility, and he has worked hard and selflessly to enable their success. Despite his energy, the load might have been too much if it had not been for his sense of humour. You need that when the bus breaks down.

Rev. Victor could probably have done only a small portion of what he did if it had not been for his wife, Mable, who provided full support, including hours of selfless office labour behind the scenes, and a steady hand in crisis. The qualities I mentioned could equally well be assigned to her. With their two children—Christopher, a chemist in Quilong, and Nancy, a lab tech in Dubai—the Victors are a fine Christian family. Rev. and Mrs. Victor love to take care of their two granddaughters, Betsy and Blessy, in their pleasant Sultan Battery home.

As a young man Rev. Victor came from the Trivandrum area to Malabar to serve as a temporary Gospel worker at Srikrishnapuram. He went on to graduate as a pastor from the Seminary at Nagercoil, and returned to Malabar. He was a pastor at several places, but spent long years at Sultan Battery where he had a fruitful ministry. He had literary gifts and became the Literature Secretary of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, for which he was sent for special training in Philadelphia. In that capacity he produced much literature for the church, both nurturing and evangelistic materials. He also held many offices in the Malabar Mission Circle. At heart he was an evangelistic pastor, and still is. Rev. Victor can be substituted for, but cannot be replaced. ✚

Edamalayur (continued from page 1)



Mr. R. Richard

Edamalayur. ✚

The current catechist is Mr. R. Richard, who was previously in Malabar. Mrs. Richard comes originally from Edamalayur. It is hoped they can lead the people forward into a Spirit-moved outreach movement. The MMS now provides a monthly station stipend to assist the congregation, but the question of appropriate strategy for this outreach work is not yet fully answered. We need to pray for the blessing and guidance of the Spirit at

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the

Malabar Mission Society

will be held

Saturday, April 23, 2005

at 10:00 a.m. at

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH,

627 Taylor Street East,

SASKATOON, Saskatchewan

All regular and honorary MMS members are invited to attend

SUCCESSFUL FAMILY LIFE CONVENTION

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

Every two years the Malabar Mission Circle gathers for a spiritual uplift assembly that tries to bring together in one place as many members of our Lutheran congregations as possible. The convention goes on for two days. Hymns and songs, speakers and Bible studies, fellowship and meals together make up the program. Usually the men do the cooking

This year the event took place December 11-12, 2004 at Wandoor, and was thoroughly successful. Three hundred attended, about 50 per cent of the total membership. An outdoor "pandal" made of bamboo poles and coconut mats provided the forum in front of the Otten Memorial School, where visitors from afar also slept.

These conventions that are supported fifty per cent by the MMS provide a great spiritual boost—linkage and inspiration—for everyone attending.

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together..." - Hebrews 10:24 ✚

"FAREWELL"

The usual heading for this article is "A Word from the President"—and for this issue that is the word: "Farewell." No, I'm not going anywhere, but after the Malabar Mission Society's Annual Meeting, there will be a new president. They may even award me the title "Past President."

I have been around for quite a while. It was my privilege to be at the founding meeting of the MMS, along with Dr Roland Miller, and I have been active in one way or another ever since.

It was also my privilege to get a first-hand view of the mission years ago. I was serving on the board for Canadian Lutheran World Relief, and we were asked to visit Bangladesh and India. I told the Director that if we were going to India, I had to take time for a side trip to see my good friend and classmate, Roland Miller. It was arranged, and that was thirty years ago, a great introduction to the mission in Malabar!

Over the years the thing that impressed me most was the way that the Gospel Workers in India were dedicated to sharing the good news with those outside of the Christian Church. In my own ministry, I could have longed for the kind of outreach through a Vacation Bible School that we see over there. Yes, we had a few kids from "outside," but in India they usually have more kids from "outside" than from their own churches. May God continue to bless them with a love for the lost—and may He also bless us with that same kind of fervour.

What does the future hold? There is only One that knows that, but we see some exciting things happening, with outreach to new villages and states, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit inspiring them. It is my hope and prayer that you will continue to support this mission so that it can continue to grow as God intends!

- Rev. L. L. Guebert

In Appreciation

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

In memory of:

- **Rev. Walter Schoepp**

John & Ruth Adam	Ernie & Arlene Hiller
John & Beth Armbruster	Lorraine Jackle
Bill Batke	Cliff & Susan Kulak
Robert & Eleonore Bauer	Florencia Lemmer
Mary Breikreutz	Leland & Edith Lochhaas
Walter J. Doern	Rev. L.W. & Jerry Myers
Murray & Dorothy Framingham	Paul & Marge Ockrassa
Henry Giese	Victor & Tammy Parfieniuk
Ken & Gloria Giese	John & Ann Schoepp
Clifford Guebert	Martha Ulmer
Lowell & Phyllis Guebert	Rev. D. & Mrs. Unterschultz
Paul & Erna Haehlke	Marty & Colleen Van Keulen
H. P. Hennig	Gerald Wagner
Roland & Bernice Hennig	

- **Ron Raedeke**

Irene Raedeke

- **Oscar Sommerfeld**

Martha Sommerfeld

- **Herbert & Linda Fruson**

Ed & Marge Fruson

- **Vic and Janet Umphrey**

Ed & Marge Fruson

In honour of their sixtieth wedding anniversary:

- **Max & Marie Zimmerman**

Lowell & 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
P. O. Box 32045
REGINA, SK S4N 7L2*

HARVEST FESTIVAL TIME IN MALAPPURAM

- Mary Helen Miller

Aside from Christmas and Easter, the biggest celebration for the churches in India is their annual Harvest Festival. It is a combination of Thanksgiving for fruits of their harvest, church fair, and old home day. There is no fixed date, so each congregation sets its own time on a Sunday afternoon, usually during September or October, trying not to conflict with neighbouring church festivals so everyone can take turns attending each others'.

In addition to the prayers, readings and sermon, music is a big part of the 2 - 3 hour service. There is a choir, a small orchestra with a harmonium, and what seems to be every member taking turns singing either a solo or duet. Many non-Christians from the community also attend, crowding the verandahs outside the open windows to hear the gospel message through the songs and the preaching.

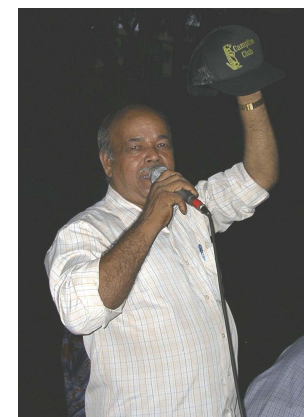
After the service the fruits (stalks of banana, coconuts, papayas, etc.), vegetables, homemade handicrafts, etc. that have been brought by the congregation members are auctioned off to the accompaniment of much hilarity and good-natured jostling. (In the picture "American" hats, brought by one of the Hutchinson,



Rev. Dr. Roland and Mary Helen Miller with Mrs. Mildred Francis and extended Francis family members—all descendants of Mrs. Alice Francis who built the original chapel.

MN 2004 tour members are being auctioned. They became must-have items and went like hot cakes.) After games for the young and the young at heart it ends, like all good parties, with tea and goodies. A big portion of the congregation's yearly budget is raised through this day's "thank offering" and auction.

We were delighted that the Malappuram Harvest festival was held during our visit there last October. Roland was asked to preach—he can still manage it in Malayalam. The highlight for me was the chance to worship again



Hats are auctioned

with old friends. I was especially thrilled to see the Francis family who had been such a special part of our lives during the years we

lived there.

Way back in 1954 (after our first year in India) the attractive hilltop town of Malappuram was chosen to be the location of the new mission station where we would start our work and make our home. When they heard that we were looking for a place, the offer was made by this local Christian family to sell their ancestral home and property to the Mission. Their compound was ideally situated right in the middle of the market. Although they were forced to sell for economic reasons, they had been reluctant to sell

to non-Christians because of the beautiful little chapel which had been built on it for their family prayers by their grandmother, a first-generation Christian. Our arrival and purchase of the property proved to be a godsend to both them and us; the chapel was gifted to the mission by the family; it was, and is, a wonderful centre for the work of our church.

Over the years the old Francis home underwent a metamorphosis and is now the nucleus of an active hospital. Our home was built on an other side of the compound and our family was raised there. The chapel grew into St. John's Lutheran Church and remained the centre and the focal point for us and for the congregation which gathered there.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Francis became our close friends, first as our language teachers and then as co-workers helping in the development of our mission work there. Mrs. Francis was the first teacher in the nursery school, where she taught for twenty years until her retirement. We watched each other's children grow up. Some of those children travelled many miles to be with us that Sunday on this festival day in the church which had been built by their great-great-grandmother.

A very special day and a special place for us all. ✚



Every member takes turns singing a solo or duet

More pictures of the Malappuram mission site can be seen on the Malabar Mission Society website at http://www.gracelutheranchurch.ca/MMS_Photos_Malappuram.html