

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Spring 2006

Volume 13, Number 1

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



ANANTAPUR FOLLOW-UP

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



"And greater works than these shall you do . . ."

In mission work there is ground-breaking, sowing, watering and harvesting. Most work among Muslims never sees much harvesting. Workers have to be satisfied with the other functions. Anantapur breaks with that tradition. It is an astonishing story of harvest-time.

I met with the chief harvester, Mr. Ismail, in December 2005. Earlier I had reported there were two to three hundred new believers in Anantapur. It was a mistake that Ismail corrected. He said that two hundred families have chosen to follow the Messiah, up to one thousand individuals. It is hard to visualize such an unfolding drama. I have really never heard anything quite like it in Muslim work in South Asia. In October there were nine adult baptisms, and on Christmas Day there were fourteen more—ten women and four men. On that day the baptisms were conducted by Ismail, by immersion, in a stream. Afterwards they went back to a temporary worship shed that had been created by bamboo and draped saris, and there they celebrated a double birth—Christ born in Bethlehem, and Christ born in their hearts. Rev. Victor wrote, "It was a real Christmas!"

To reiterate, Anantapur is a district in the south-central Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It is the Andhra district closest to Malabar, but still a good distance away. Anantapur is about 140 sq. km. in size, and is Telugu-speaking. Most of the people are Hindus, but Muslims number about eleven per cent. Christians, less than one per cent, are very rare. Why should the Gospel get going in this area? There is a divine mystery here, but also a visible reason. The visible reason is Mr. Ismail, whose full story I will tell at a later time. He came to faith through reading the *Qur'an*, which has a vibrant testimony to the greatness of Jesus, but doesn't know of Him as Saviour. Ismail wanted to know more about that, found out, and chose to follow Him. He witnessed to his wife, who mightily opposed his decision. She also then yielded to Christ. Together they decided to share their faith with others. In the process they suffered severe hardships, but survived. They believed the Lord's promises: "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age," and, "Greater works than these shall you do, because I go to the Father."

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Rev. Ismail baptizes Anantapur converts on Christmas Day 2005.

MMS FACES EXCITING TIMES

- Emerald Schoepp, MMNewsletter Editor

At the mid-January Board meeting held in Regina, Saskatchewan, Dr. Miller presented a variety of information. He began by alerting us to the fact that **India is exploding economically!** One example he cited is that of a person hurrying along with a shopping bag in the left hand and a mobile phone in the right.

Another is the cars. There used to be only two kinds of cars in India, now the market is flooded. One newspaper article headlined, "India new money culture, a lust for cars." There is a new consumer class; five years ago it was 150 million, now it is 250 million in size. Fifteen years ago India began a transition from a state-run to a relatively freer market economy. Growth rate is eight per cent. A Mitsubishi Lancer costs US\$20,000, or 40 times India's per capita income of \$500. Yet cars are being sold. There are now 8 million cars in India, with one million added annually. The roads, few four-laned, are clogged! Everyone wants "up-gradation." This, of course, affects the value system, symbolized by the trains that threw everyone together. Now, as one person put it, it is "everyone for himself."

Or maybe this explosion can be symbolized by Bill Gates. He and Microsoft have just announced they will invest 1.7 billion dollars in India "as one of the world's fastest growing economies."

We must adapt! Mission work in India will cost much more in the days ahead than it has in the past.

Dr. Miller's December 2005 trip included a **change of personnel**, namely the official retirement of Rev. Victor as India Agent, and the transfer of his duties to Rev. Joy, retired president of Concordia Seminary in Nagercoil. It should be noted the official title now given to Rev. Joy will be "Program Director," rather than "India Agent."

The MMS will continue to call upon the services of Rev. Victor in the role of advisor to Rev. Joy, as well as pastoral advisor in Kannur. Rev. Victor also hopes to establish a much-needed literature centre for the Malabar Mission Circle. Hymns, catechisms, and evangelistic literature are

urgently needed for these growing mission stations. This might be a good project for a women's society, or perhaps a district or region to undertake.



The new Good Shepherd Lutheran Church at Chengalai

Some final costs were approved to construct a compound wall around the property and provide a well cover for **the new church—Good Shepherd Lutheran Church—at Chengali**. This church was built with a special gift from a couple who participated in the 2004 India Tour. (Pictures from this tour are available on the Malabar Mission Society website at http://www.gracelutheranchurch.ca/MMS_Photo_Album.html)

The Kannur **Open Door Ministry**, also fully supported with special ear-marked donations, is clearly making an impact on the wider community. The Open Door sponsored a major event, a Christian song program, at the Kannur Stadium. This attracted 2,000 people and was very well received. Two successful Lyceum Series discussions were also offered.

The **Open Door—Vanitha** is seeking continued funding. Is your congregation looking for a mission project? We can provide you with all the information on this well-established project, which is showing great success.

The **Kannur district** is urgently in need of an area for worship, for literature storage, and housing for the workers. We need your prayers and financial support. There are many opportunities and challenges. If you are looking for a meaningful way to invest some of your accumulated gifts from God, contact us.

Dr. Miller's article on **Anantapur** is a follow-up to the article in the Summer 2005 edition. The new believers there represent probably the largest Muslim group to turn to Christ in South Indian history. The area clearly represents a unique opportunity.

Rev. K. K. Alavi's program has successfully been transferred to the New Hope Mission Society headquartered at Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, Minnesota. New Hope will assume full administration of Alavi's work, and it was noted this transfer will formally recognize the autonomy of New Hope from the Malabar Mission Society. It is with great appreciation and thankfulness we acknowledge this transfer, and we wish New Hope Mission Society God's abundant blessings on

working together with Rev. K. K. Alavi.

Christian Welfare Centre, where Dr. Roland and Mary Helen Miller began their ministry in India, is thriving. The congregation became self-supporting a few years back and, referring to the hospital in this compound, the work is going on at an astonishing pace. This hospital has become *the* place for Muslim women to have their deliveries and about 90% of the attendees are Muslim, some coming from many miles away. The attraction is Dr. Sophie Brillan, who has achieved a kind of magical reputation. The MMS extended an invitation to Dr. Sophie to visit Canada and the U.S.A. for a month, and to tour for the Malabar Mission Society as both Rev. Victor and Dr. Vijayan have done in the past. The invitation was accepted but, unfortunately, now has to be placed on hold due to a shortage of workers because of retirement and another doctor transferring to a new location. It is with regret that we have to wait longer for this visit from Dr. Sophie.

Karunalya Hospital is not enjoying the same blessings. The hospital is at a standstill and in huge debt, partly due to the gridlock of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church. Dr. Vijayan has left his position as medical director at Karunalya Hospital, and has taken up service with the Church of South India in Malabar. We have lost a good leader, but we are grateful to God for

the good things Dr. Vijayan did over the years, both in the medical and in the evangelistic programs. We ask for God's continued blessings on all his labours.

Otten Memorial (English) School is in the midst of a building program. If your desire is to help children in their education, there are many opportunities here. Books for their library, funds toward their building program, or equipment for their laboratories are all needed. Are these projects which your Sunday School might support?

You can now see what I mean by "exciting times" for the MMS.

Anantapur (cont. from pg. 1)

And now it is harvest time. Not only in Anantapur, but also in the neighboring districts of Bellara and Cuddapah. Twenty-two evangelists—all Muslim converts—are now working with Ismail, covering a vast territory and population. They earn their livelihood by daily labour, and then witness as best they can. They have no other resources, but have managed to put up a couple of small churches with straw roofs.

Now come two other miracles. When Rev. Victor, Rev. Joy and I met with Rev. Ismail, we drew up a budget of \$13,645, which would provide the Anantapur workers with a little stipendiary help, some VBS materials, two tracts, five horns to proclaim the gospel, and funds to bring the new believers together in a spiritual convention. The Malabar Mission Society Board received that challenge and responded to it positively in two ways. The Board said it is time to move beyond Malabar when confronted with such a harvest opportunity. And the Board approved the budgetary request from Anantapur. "Let's do it," it said. "God will provide."

Now the second miracle. Earlier a Lutheran congregation in Regina, Saskatchewan had provided fifteen cycles for these workers. Now another congregation has come forward. The pastor of a Lutheran congregation in Florida read the report about this remarkable development, telephoned, and said, "My congregation wants to help. We can give \$6,000 a year for the next three years. Will that be useful?" I gulped. A full half of what is required! Will someone partner with them in enabling the harvesters?

"And greater works than these shall you do . . ."



Pictured is our new Program Director, Rev. Joy Tennyson, retired president of Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil, India. Watch for more information in our next Newsletter.

Unfortunately we were unable to include all of these projects in the budget that was adopted for 2006. We will continue to offer support to the various stations for a further three years, and will review our decision again in 2009. Continuation of this support will depend in part on church growth, and on donations received from people wanting to see the Lord's work multiply in India. We need your support, both your prayers and your financial support, in order to continue the work there.

In Appreciation

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

In memory of:

- **Gladys Engelbrecht**
(Missionary in India)
Rev. & Mrs. Herbert M. Zorn
- **Imogene Fletcher**
Phyllis Nerbas
- **Harold Giere**
Allan & Brenda Hjelte
- **Danielle Hoggan**
Allan & Brenda Hjelte
- **Rev. Dr. Roy Holm**
Lowell & Phyllis Guebert
- **Bernice Meyer**
Allan & Brenda Hjelte
- **Rev. Walter Schoepp**
Brian Ray
Emerald Schoepp

In honour of the faithful service of Rev. and Mrs. K. M. Victor
Patricia Farnham

In honour of the safe arrival of their new and precious grandson, Nicholas Joseph Bona
Howard & Gloria Ulmer



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

TOUR INDIA'S MALABAR COAST

Experience the wonder of India! The beauty of Kerala! And the excitement of the work being done by the Malabar Mission Society on the fabled Malabar Coast!

The Millers and the Dickinsons are planning a trip to Kerala from (approximately) November 7 – 28, 2006. If you would be interested in touring our mission areas—with sightseeing along the way—we would be happy to have you join us.

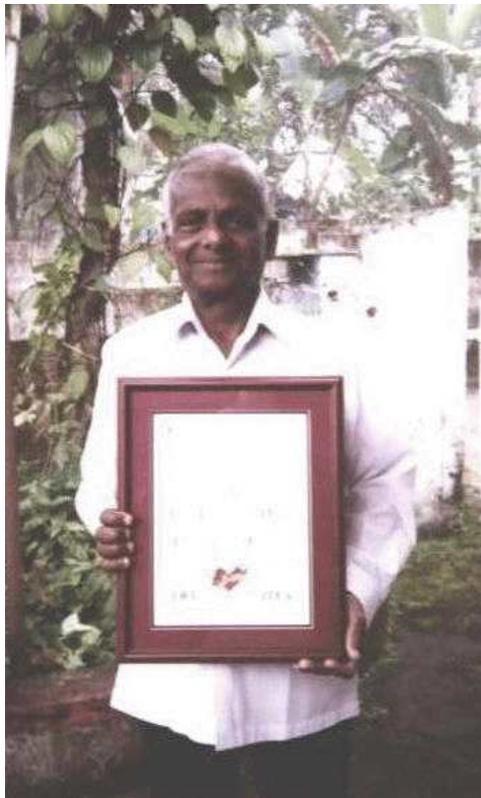
For information please contact Mary Helen Miller

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THANK YOU FROM THE VICTORS

Rev. Victor expressed his sincere thanks to the Malabar Mission Society for "the beautiful piece of handwork to me and my wife." He said they want to hang it in their home "so that every one can read it," and that they "are proud to have this in our home." He asks the Lord's continued blessings on the work of the Malabar Mission Society and the Malabar Mission Circle in India. We say: "Many thanks to you, Rev. Victor, for the labour of love you have performed on our behalf - and for our Lord!"



Rev. Victor graciously receives the token of appreciation presented by the MMS

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT Kerala and Beyond

At the January, 2006 meeting the Board decided to go forward in faith and support the new work at Anantapur in the area adjacent to the State of Kerala. We trust that our gracious God will touch the mission hearts of God's people and provide the financial resources needed to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this area. See Dr. Miller's article beginning on page one of this newsletter.

In the city of Kannur we currently support the Open Door, a Reading Room for male college students, and the Open Door-Vanitha, a Reading Room for female college students. The Board approved the purchase of some property near the Open Door - Vanitha. This multi purpose home and property would provide for a worship centre and fellowship meetings, space for a Bible Correspondence Course centre, space for a literature holding centre and bookstore, space for seminars and private instruction, residence for two female workers, provide a "public face" to the Kannur ministry, and if necessary provide space for a library and student's centre. Although the price of \$125,000 may seem reasonable for India's economy, it seemed too great an obligation without a substantial down payment. We may lose this opportunity, but hopefully we can begin a capital fund and be prepared for the next opportunity. Through the dedicated and faithful support of individuals and congregations, this goal of a worship and multi-purpose centre will be achieved.

In this Lenten season we are reminded of the sacrifice by Jesus as he died on the cross for the sins of all, including the people of India. Through his resurrection he proclaimed the victory over death and the promise of eternal life in heaven. We have an opportunity to respond to God's generous gift of love. Our response enables the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed in India and throughout the world. Thank you to all who have responded through their faithful prayers and financial support.

May the power of God's love in Jesus Christ provide hope and assurance of salvation.

Rev. Howard Ulmer

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the
Malabar Mission Society

will be held
1:00 p.m., April 29, 2006

at
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
627 Taylor Street East,
SASKATOON, Saskatchewan

All regular and honorary MMS
members are invited to attend



Sindhu and Manjusha staff the busy Open Door-Vanitha Reading Room for Women at Kannur