

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Spring 2007

Volume 14, 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



CONGREGATIONS AT WORK IN THE MALABAR MISSION

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



Usually in this column I give some background and information on the actual work in Malabar and beyond. That work could not proceed without financial support. Though the budget is small, we can do quite a bit of work because of the favourable currency exchange. But we could not do anything if the support was not there. It comes from dedicated individuals, groups and congregations.

It is interesting to see what a difference one congregation can make for the work, and also, in turn, how much the experience of helping means for its members. Let me, without giving names or places, refer to five wonderful Lutheran congregations who have or are assisting our outreach.

- **CONGREGATION ONE:** This congregation has developed an unusual way of supporting specific needs. Its Christmas Eve offering is dedicated for that purpose, and generous gifts are offered. Twice the congregation has shared a significant portion of that offering for the Malabar work.
- **CONGREGATION TWO:** This congregation became excited about two projects. The pastor played a leading role. First, it decided to underwrite the full cost of the Open Door project at Kannur. Then, when it heard about the Anantapur outreach, it stepped in to support half of the needed amount for three years.
- **CONGREGATION THREE:** The first congregation to get involved, it heard about our desire to reach out into a North Malabar area called Naduvil. For years now, with great faithfulness it has supported the annual operating costs of that outreach. In addition, it has provided capital costs to enable the continuation of a church and mission centre.
- **CONGREGATION FOUR:** The congregation became excited about the work of Rev. K.K. Alavi, one of the best-known Christian leaders from Muslim background. His extensive activities include travelling evangelists, Bible correspondence course work, and literature production. They are not inexpensive. Yet the congregation resolved to take on the support of the entire program, enlisting other interested and nearby congregations in a working partnership.
- **CONGREGATION FIVE:** A congregation decided to concentrate especially on helping Rev. Alavi to produce specific items of literature. It has underwritten the publication of such booklets as "One Hundred Bible Stories," and "Growing in Christ," a discipling manual.

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Malabar Mission Society ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1:00 p.m., April 21, 2007

at

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH,
603 - 115th Street East, SASKATOON, Saskatchewan

All regular and honorary MMS members are invited to attend

CHENGALAI: ANOTHER NEW BEGINNING IN GOD'S WORK

- Mark Dickinson, MMS Development Officer



(Photo: Mary Helen Miller)

Mark Dickinson gives the sermon at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chengalai as Rev. Joy translates to Malayalam.

There are moments in our life when we live an experience that leaves us breathless, when we are overwhelmed with emotion and gratitude, and we feel God's presence on our shoulder. We have all had these experiences. And we probably remember the occasion as though it was yesterday. Such was our November 19, 2006 visit to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Chengalai.

On the Saturday evening before our arrival in Chengalai I was asked by Rev. Dr. Roland Miller, our tour co-guide, to speak during the church service the next day. Only, he didn't want me to say a few words of welcome or appreciation on behalf of the tour group or the Malabar Mission Society, he wanted me to present a sermon, or homily. Rev. Joy would translate from English to Malayalam, but I had to come up with the message. Seriously? Yes!

I went into temporary shock; I might as well have been stricken by a bolt of lightning. How do you write a sermon when you have never prepared, nor given, a sermon before in your life? Where do you begin? What do you say? Time for some serious prayers!

We arrived at the church in Chengalai early on Sunday morning after travelling from Kannur by bus for about an hour and a half. The day was beautiful. The sun was shining. The sky was clear. The temperature was hot and rising. And most special of all—we were greeted by a crowd of worshippers who had assembled in the church courtyard to welcome us and remind us that we are all God's children. What a remarkable, precious moment!

We had travelled to Chengalai to celebrate and give praise to God; to remember His blessings and proclaim His love. We were united as a people of God, grateful and full of joy. A small group of Canadians and Americans standing arm-in-arm and hand-in-hand with the people—the congregations!—of Chengalai and Naduvil, sister parishes served by Rev. Oliver.

Two years prior to this visit there was no church in Chengalai; there was only barren land and a small, wooden, garage-type

structure that provided some shelter from the monsoon rains and hot sun. No church. No pews. No altar. No cross. Today, however, the community of Chengalai had a new church, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, a gift from the Malabar Mission Society, built by church members and the local community, and funded by Lutherans in Canada. A partnership. A brotherhood. A new beginning.

On that lovely, memorable Sunday morning I chose to speak about dreams, stepping stones and hope: the building blocks of our spiritual growth and transformation. Rev. Joy translated every sentence, every message, into Malayalam. And my wife, Monique, joined me at the front of the church to read the scripture lessons. I could sense the wonder and joy of God's love on that beautiful Sunday morning in Chengalai, in the country-side, under the sunshine.

I learned something new about mission work that day. I realized (because I had experienced and understood) that God is truly present before us at all times. We are His people, born with a mission to care and reach out to others, to extend love and compassion wherever we go, whether in Canada, the U.S., or India. All is God's beloved handiwork. And like the workers in a vineyard, our role is to till the soil so that the Gospel of Jesus can be revealed to all.

Oscar Romero, the former Archbishop of El Salvador, once wrote: "We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.... We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning."

Chengalai is yet another new beginning in God's work. A growing congregation. A new church. A grateful people of God, celebrating His love through the Gift of Jesus Christ. And yet, there are many more "Chengalais" waiting to be discovered, and born. Our mission work is still incomplete, but it is a beginning.



(Photo: E. Hiller)

Chengalai and Naduvil congregations at November 19, 2006 dedication of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Chengalai

DEDICATION OF THE VANITHA FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

- Lorna Pederson, MMS Secretary

I had the opportunity to visit India with the Malabar Mission Society tour in November 2006. A highlight of the tour was attendance at the dedication service of the newly-purchased property in Kannur. I had been in Kannur in 1999 during the first MMS tour. I remembered the city as a nice place to stay—from which we visited other MMS projects. As well, it was a good place to shop. This most recent visit was different.

Our bus arrived in Kannur on Saturday, November 18, just in time for lunch at the Mascot Hotel. During the afternoon we visited the two MMS reading room venues for college students—new since the 1999 tour. I met Rejidas, a fine young man in charge of the Open Door Reading Room for men. After touring the Open Door, we made our way to the Open Door—Vanitha, the MMS project for women college students, where I met the two lovely young women who are in charge there, Smitha and Manjusha. From that location we could look out on the large house purchased by the MMS, the papers having been signed just 24 hours earlier in the name of the India Evangelistic Lutheran Church Trust Association. In spite of pouring rain we made our way to that building. There was already a sign on the building, "Vanitha Friendship Centre," identifying its new purpose. One room, with a bay window, had been selected as a chapel. There was already an



(Photo ©Mike Miller)

At the new Vanitha Friendship Centre, Lorna Pederson brings greetings from Rev. H. Ulmer on behalf of the MMS board of directors

altar, draped with a white cloth embroidered by Rev. Oliver, the pastor at Naduvil and Chengalai. There was also a lectern, draped with a white cloth beautifully embroidered by Mrs. Mabel Victor.

Rev. Joy planned the dedication service, with help from Rev. Victor who "looked after the practical details." Rev. Victor arranged twelve candles on the altar, one for each tour member to light. Tour members read the lessons. I read the greeting from Rev. Howard Ulmer on behalf of the MMS board of directors. Rev. Joy preached a very fine sermon on "Giving by the Poor." Dr. Miller

led in the prayer of dedication. Hymns were sung in both English and Malayalam. The final hymn, "How Wonderful is the Love of God," was sung with great exuberance in Malayalam, a fitting closing for such a wonderful service.

After the service Rev. Victor, Smitha and Manjusha served everyone biscuits and soft drinks in traditional glass pop bottles. Dr. Miller, commenting about this occasion in his report to the MMS board in January 2007, wrote: "It was raining outside when we left, but nothing could dampen our spirits."

It is truly a blessing that the MMS was able to purchase this property. The decision to buy was a difficult one, but the Lord will use this building to His glory. ✚

"THE MILLER BLOCK"

Mary Helen Miller

There is a big, old (nobody really knows how old) building in the middle of a lovely 2.9 acre treed compound in the centre of the Malappuram market area. It has undergone many metamorphoses in its long life: from a District Court and hospital during the British Raj in the 19th century to the home of a distinguished Christian family in the first half of the 20th century. In 1927 Alice Francis, the matriarch of this family, built a small church just beside this home as their private family chapel.

When, in 1954, her descendants decided they could no longer afford to keep this property, they were reluctant to sell it to non-Christians because of this little chapel. We were newly arrived in India and looking for a place to start work among the Muslims in a new mission area. It was as if the hand of God led us to pick Malappuram where this property seemed to be waiting for us for the site of our station and home.

The chapel has been enlarged several times and is now home to the self-supporting St. Johns Lutheran Church. The old bungalow has undergone yet many more renovations as the first location of the first nursery school in Malabar and the nucleus of our medical work. It is now the maternity wing of the Christian Welfare Centre (which has grown into a 40 bed hospital).

The latest transformation came during our Malabar Mission Tour in November 2006, when our family was honoured by being asked to unveil a new plaque re-christening the most recent renovation of this grand old building as "The Miller Block." ✚



(Photo © Mike Miller)

Mary Helen and her son, Mike, unveil the plaque naming the renovated CWC wing in honour of Rev. Dr. Roland Miller.

OPEN MY EYES TO SEE ... MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

- Rev. Howard Ulmer, President

"Open my eyes, so that I may see the wonderful truths in your law." Psalm 119:18

God has revealed himself in his wonderful creation. We see his handwork displayed throughout nature. We see his gracious love for his people as he sends his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate his birth at Christmas, his revelation to the whole world in Epiphany, his journey to the cross in Lent, his death on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday. This wonderful gift of his grace and mercy provides forgiveness, life and salvation to all who believe in Jesus as their Saviour.

God provides the **gift** – his Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have forgiveness of all our sins. He has won the victory through his death and resurrection. He provides the assurance for all who believe in Jesus.

God provides the **givers** – his people, redeemed through Jesus who died and rose again. Through his people, he enables the mission and ministry of his grace and mercy to be proclaimed and shared through word and deed. The Holy Spirit provides the gift of faith to God's people in baptism and empowers them to serve Jesus.

God provides the **gifts** – the resources, the prayers, the time, the talents, and the treasures that he has granted to his people. We are stewards of these gifts. We are richly blessed.

What a wonderful opportunity for us to **"open our eyes to see ... Mission Opportunities"** as we respond to his grace and mercy in our lives daily. What a privilege to share the good news of God's love in Jesus to our brothers and sisters around the world, including India. The Malabar Mission Society is dedicated to providing assistance to the Gospel Workers of the Malabar Mission Circle in India. Through the faithful prayer support and generous gifts of God's people the message of God's love, grace and mercy is shared. The Holy Spirit **"opens the eyes to see"** Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He is touching the people in Canada, United States and India.

Mission Opportunities! This newsletter highlights how God's people have responded through individuals and congregations. The new beginning at Chengalai is filled with opportunities and God's blessings. God has opened a **new opportunity** as we begin work at the "Vanitha Friendship Centre" in Kannur. We give thanks to God for these opportunities, gifts and blessings.

I pray that God will **"open my eyes to see ... Mission Opportunities"** and touch my heart to respond to his love in Jesus. I pray that he will touch your heart also. ✚

A NEW HYMNAL

In a noteworthy achievement Rev. Victor has produced 2,000 copies of a new edition of *The Lutheran Hymnal* in Malayalam. For years the hymnal was not available.

The hymnal includes all hymns of the previous edition, plus one hundred new songs, selected psalms, and Luther's Catechism (without explanation.) The first of the 2,000 copies were released at the November 8, 2006 Gospel Workers Meeting. The books will be stored and issued from the new Kannur Centre. ✚



In Appreciation

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

In memory of:

- **Walter Doern**
Emerald Schoepp
- **Walter Schoepp**
Emerald Schoepp
- **Ernest Walter**
Daryl and Cherry Walter
- **Rev. Robert Wudy**
Emerald Schoepp

In honour of Rev. Dr. Roland Miller

Lake Erie Pastoral Conference,
Redford, MI



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 recaptured 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*

CONGREGATIONS AT WORK

(cont. from page 1)

These congregations have felt good about their participation in the work. It has not hindered their own regular program, but has, rather, enhanced it and provided it with further stimulus. The process has been creative and responsible. Both freedom of choice and program planning have been honoured. There are still many needs that have not yet been met. It may be that other congregations may be interested in helping out, alone or together. We certainly need the help. The harvest is ready.

