

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Summer 2009

MALABAR—20 YEARS AND BEYOND

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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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UPDATE FROM THE FIELD (Part 2): THE RIEMERS FINISH FOUR MONTHS IN INDIA

- Rev. Carlton Riemer, MMS Project Officer

Things warmed up in India since we wrote in the last newsletter about our experiences in India. It became the summer season in the tropics, characterized by a tropical Sun that is literally described in the local language as "beating." The weather turns hot as the monsoons form in the ocean. Schools in India have their summer break in April and May.

But the sharing of the Gospel does not take a break for the Christians in India. The congregations and outreach centres in the Malabar Mission Circle use summer as a time for Vacation Bible Schools. Arlene and I attended a VBS training session for the congregations in the Trivandrum District Synod on March 28, 2009. We were impressed with the materials that were developed by the TDS educators. They are Bible-based, Gospel-centered, and filled with practical activities that reinforce the stories and apply them to life.

The workers in Kannur at the Vanitha Friendship Centre (Women's Reading Room) postponed their VBS sessions till May this year, so that they could accommodate the English as a Spoken Language program that MMS sponsored there. The ESL program is covered elsewhere in this newsletter by Lorna Pederson, our MMS Secretary, who served as one of the teachers.

While we were in Kannur, we very much enjoyed traveling to Naduvil and Chengalal with Smitha Babu and Soosan George and worshiping in those churches on April 26, 2009. Mr Shinoj did a wonderful job of leading the worship and interpreting into Malayalam the sermon that I preached in English. Mr. Shine, the evangelist at the Open Door Men's Reading Room in Kannur, was with us for the first day of ESL. He was diagnosed with hepatitis and went to his parents' home to recuperate for two months. Please pray for his complete recovery.

The event I most want to celebrate in this article is the re-opening of the Friendship Reading Room in Malappuram on the Day of our Lord's Resurrection, April 12, 2009.

The three storey building was constructed with donations from congregations and organizations in Canada and the USA. It was built under the guidance of the Rev. Dr. Roland Miller, when he lived and worked as a missionary in Malappuram. It served well as an outreach to the students (many of them Muslims) and all who walked by on the well-traveled roadway. A short distance down the road is a mosque, *madrassa*, and college. It is also very near to a shopping area.



Mr. John and Mr. Jijo watch MMS Project Officer Rev. Carlton Riemer cut the ribbon at the re-opening of Malappuram Friendship Reading Room, April 12, 2009.

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UPDATE FROM THE FIELD (continued from page 1)

The ground floor has the library/reading room; the second and third floors have an assembly room and seven lodging rooms. These rooms are capable of generating income to support the ministry that takes place on the first level. But for about ten years, the reading room has not been functioning because of internal administrative problems in the India Evangelical Lutheran Church. Now the IELC is recovering administrative control of the facility. Hence, we are now proceeding with our plan for ministry there.



The Friendship Reading Room in Malappuram

The Rev. Dr. K. M. Victor took responsibility for getting the facility cleaned and “spruced up” with new paint. The color matches that of the mosque down the street. Mr. John, a retired worker at the Christian Welfare Centre in Malappuram, a trained evangelist, and a brother to Rev. T. Joy, did much to help Rev. Victor with this project. Our prayers for a worker/attendant to staff the reading room on a daily basis were answered in the person of Mr. Jijo, a young but very conscientious new worker. Mr. John and the Rev. I. Titus, pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Malappuram, are supervising his work and giving him further training.

Those who attended the inauguration function were impressed with the bright and inviting appearance of the tables, benches, bookshelves, and walls, as well as the new, colorful magazines, newspapers, and Christian tracts with which the reading room is furnished. One item that would make a nice addition to attract even more visitors is a television set. A designated gift for that item would be appreciated. Otherwise it will have to wait for the 2010 budget.

After the Bible reading, a hymn in Malayalam, a prayer, and the ribbon cutting, the reading room was officially open, and tea was served. An elderly Muslim gentleman who was passing by stopped in and enjoyed tea with us—a favorable indicator that the reading room is strategically located to attract people, especially Muslims, from the community. Two weeks after the reopening, Mr. Jijo reported that around twenty people are coming to the reading room every day. We praise and thank God for all those who have worked so hard to make it possible for this centre to be reopened. May God richly bless this outreach ministry to His glory and for the growth of the Church, of which Jesus is the Head.

Also on Easter Day, Arlene, Lorna Pederson, and I went to Wandoor to present the Karunalaya Hospital staff with salary arrears to cover two months of past salaries.

On April 28, 2009, the Gospel Workers of the MMC met in Kozhikode (Calicut). Our special guests were the Rev. Y. Christopher, the vice president of the IELC and convener of the Board for Missions of the IELC, and the Rev. D. S. Simpson, the president of the Trivandrum District Synod. Their presence signals a new interest of the IELC in the Gospel work being done in the Malabar Mission Circle. May God guide us, as the relationship between the IELC and the MMS develops and grows. In the meeting the Gospel workers expressed their appreciation for the encouragement the Malabar Mission Society gives them and for our support of their work with our prayers and finances. ♥



The ground floor houses the library/reading room with colourful magazines, newspapers and Christian tracts. A TV set would be a nice addition that would attract more visitors.

ENGLISH AS A SPOKEN LANGUAGE (ESL) PROGRAM IN KANNUR

- Lorna Pederson

When, in October 2008, Dr. Miller raised the possibility that I might be part of an ESL team that would go to Kannur, Kerala in April 2009, I was immediately interested. I did have some doubts in the ensuing months, but on April 7th I was en route to India. This was the second ESL course to be offered at the newly purchased and renovated Vanitha Friendship Centre where the MMS supports various

learning and outreach projects for college women. The purpose of the course was to help women become more fluent in English and thus more qualified for employment, especially in call centres that have been set up in India by North American companies.

Our ESL team was most fortunate to have a very qualified ESL teacher, Gail Vander Heide from Oregon, and two of her friends/helpers, Jackie Paulson and Janine Clayton, along with Arlene Riemer, wife of MMS Project Officer Rev. Carlton Riemer who was in India at the time as a volunteer professor at the Lutheran Seminary in Nagercoil and who also accompanied us on our ESL journey. Although we were prepared for up to 30 students, approximately half of the 28 women who registered did not come and only 10 women completed evaluations. There were many reasons for the low attendance, including holidays, family concerns, exams, a computer class and the fact that the student residences were closed at that time.

Nonetheless, the students who did come made the class worth our time. They were beautiful women from both Hindu and Christian backgrounds. They showed great respect for all of our team and dressed in their colourful Indian fashions, not in blue jeans as would be the style in Canada or the U.S.A. The women could choose English names for the class and that is how I remember them now. There was Judy, a housewife in her 30's, who had never worked outside the home but did extremely well in the class



Smitha Babu, Lorna Pederson, Jackie Paulson, Gail Vander Heide, Rev. Carlton Riemer, Arlene Riemer, Soosan George, Janine Clayton and Rev. Dr. K.M. Victor at the April 2009 ESL course held at the Vanitha Friendship Centre in Kannur

and would be very employable. There were Kathryn and Elizabeth, Christian women who worked in a hospital. Jane, a married teacher, and Pamela, who worked in an insurance office, were friends and came to class in Pamela's car. Rebecca, Jennie, Anna and Julia were in the 18-21 age group and in college. Abbey, a serious student of 15 or 16 years of age, came during the first week but then never came back, perhaps because of family

concerns. Our youngest student, who came for a few days in the second week of class, was only nine years old but already knew some English from school.

We were fortunate to have Rev. Christopher from the IELC present at the closing exercises. He asked the class if they knew why these people (teachers) would spend money and take the time to come to India to help with English training. Then he proceeded to say that it was because of our faith in Jesus that we had come. The short program was an opportunity for sharing our faith through word, prayer and music. The students received their certificates and also took part in the program. For me, saying farewell to these lovely women was very emotional as we hugged, signed autograph books and shared e-mail addresses. I promised to keep them in my prayers.

For me, as part of the MMS board, visiting congregations in Malappuram, Chengalvai and Naduvil, as well as spending time with Smitha and Soosan, the fine Christian women who work at the Vanitha Friendship Centre, were highlights of my three-week stay in India. I was very impressed with Regidas who was in Kannur during his seminary break. I also met Shine from The Open Door project and Shinoj from Naduvil/Chengalvai congregations. I have returned home with a much greater awareness of the prayer and support needs of these MMS projects and I am very grateful for the opportunity to have been part of the ESL team in Kannur. ♥

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: FROM PLANTING SEEDS TO REAPING THE HARVEST

- Rev. Howard Ulmer

Growing up on a Saskatchewan farm near Neudorf provided an opportunity to learn about the cycles and seasons of nature. As a young child I had the opportunity to help with planting the garden, including having my own row of “mixed” vegetables and flowers. I looked forward to seeing the “new” plants come out of the ground, grow and be ready for picking/harvest. Throughout the summer and fall, the various vegetables matured and were ready to harvest. How wonderful the fresh lettuce, radishes, peas, beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots and potatoes tasted! Of course the garden required a lot of work, including watering and weeding, but God provided the bountiful harvest.

The parables of Jesus are filled with many agricultural terms. Several parables refer to seed as the Word of God. The seed is placed in the soil. It grows and produces fruit. In the same way the seed/Word of God is planted in our hearts as we hear the good news of the Gospel. God’s Word shows us our sin and proclaims forgiveness through Jesus, our Saviour. Through the Word and Sacraments of Baptism and Lord’s Supper, the Holy Spirit produces faith in the believer. The seed/Word of God enables growth and service and maturity. God provides the bountiful harvest!

Malabar Mission Society is about planting seeds, “God’s Word,” in the hearts of the people of India. During the past twenty years many seeds of God’s Word have been sown. The message that Jesus died for our sins and rose again has touched the lives of many people. Through the Holy Spirit the Good News of God’s love in Jesus has produced faith, hope and peace. Indeed, God provides a bountiful harvest!

The faithful prayer support and financial gifts have enabled the Malabar Mission Society to provide assistance to the Pastors and Gospel Workers of India as they share the seed/God’s Word with the many people in their communities. God’s Word has touched the hearts of many Hindus and Muslims. As you consider how God has blessed you with his love, grace and mercy, may you also respond to the many mission opportunities of sharing the Gospel of Jesus in India. May you continue to pray and provide financial support for this important mission outreach. As the seed/God’s Word is proclaimed in India, God will provide a bountiful harvest! ♡



Rev. Dr. K.M. Victor holds the honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree *honoris causa* received from Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton in May 2008. The Certificate and hood were presented to Rev. Dr. Victor at the November 2008 Gospel Worker’s Conference in Calicut, India.

In Appreciation

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

In memory of:

- **Emily Dreger**
Arthur & Patricia Mann
- **Donald Schmidt**
Foothills LWML, Calgary AB
- **Rev. Oscar Sommerfeld**
Martha Sommerfeld

In celebration of Malabar Mission Society’s 20 years of mission service

Mark & Monique Dickinson



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*

MMS MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM



You can now help the Malabar Mission Society through convenient monthly donations. Our monthly giving program is an easy, safe and secure way to support the ongoing mission outreach of the MMS. Your monthly donation will be withdrawn from your bank on the 20th of each month; you may change or cancel your pledge at any time by contacting us.

If you are interested in participating in this new program, please write the Malabar Mission Society, P.O. Box 32045, Regina, SK S4N 7L2 (or email malabarmission@sasktel.net) requesting a pre-authorized offering program application form. Please include a void cheque for bank processing with your completed application.

Your financial contributions greatly assist the Malabar Mission Society in continuing, and expanding, our programs of help and assistance in Malabar. Your tax-deductible donation, however large or small, makes a big difference. We are sincerely grateful, and continuously thankful, for your ongoing gifts – and prayers – in supporting our efforts to bring the Gospel message to the people of India.

THANK YOU so much!