

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Spring 2010

Vol. 17, No 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



PROJECT OFFICER REPORTS ON TRIP TO ANANTAPUR

- Rev. Carlton Riemer, MMS Project Officer



The Gospel for Muslim ministry is a group of 25 evangelists who are converts from Islam and Hinduism and who are effectively sharing the Gospel with Muslims and Hindus in the Anantapur area in the state of Andhra Pradesh in south central India. Their leader is the Rev. Shaikh Ismail, who became a Christian at the age of 37. His testimonial is being prepared for publication by the MMS. He feels strongly that the Lord called him to faith and witnessing. By the grace of God, he has not lost his enthusiasm for the Gospel nor his

burden for finding lost souls. By the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God in 2009 he and his workers brought 283 people to faith in Jesus and baptism into the Body of Christ (124 Muslims and 159 Hindus). He has regular contact with 200 secret believers in more than 100 families.

The Malabar Mission Society has been supporting this ministry since 2005 with specific help from St. Armands Key Lutheran Church, Sarasota, FL; Foothills Lutheran Church, Calgary, AB; the Lake Erie Pastors' Conference; Zion Lutheran Church, Stillwater, OK; Christ Lutheran Church, Regina, SK; and Don & Merceda Schmidt. Those of us who were on the MMS tour to India in 2004 met Rev. Ismail when he and a large group of new believers came to Kozhikode to hear Rev. K. K. Alavi speak on witnessing to Muslims.

After repeated invitations to visit them, Rev. Joy, Rev. Dr. Victor, and I spent January 21, 2010, in Uravakonda, the headquarters of the Gospel for Muslim ministry.

On the way there we saw the largest flock of sheep that I have ever seen! They were on the road being led by their shepherds to green pastures and still waters (I live in Stillwater, OK!). I could not help but think of Jesus as our Good Shepherd and that we were on our way to visit a group of under-shepherds who are bringing many lost people into the fold of the church. I said a silent prayer for God's blessing upon our visit. And in good time we were there. We were welcomed warmly with garlands and tea.

I opened the meeting with a prayer (translated into Telugu by Shaikh Benson, Rev. Ismail's son). Then the group sang five songs in Telugu (from memory) with enthusiastic clapping. The words to one of the songs were, "If all leave me, You [Jesus] are still with me. You are more than my father and mother to me." Those words speak eloquently to their commitment to being disciples of Jesus, even though they endure persecution.

My devotion was based on Luke 4:16-30, two responses to Jesus: "all spoke well of him [Jesus] and were amazed ..." and "all the people ... were furious" and tried to kill Jesus. My point was that as disciples and witnesses, we experience both responses, and yet remain faithful and rejoice when people believe and when we suffer the consequences, because they reject the Gospel and persecute us.



Rev. Shaikh Ismail and Mrs. Ismail

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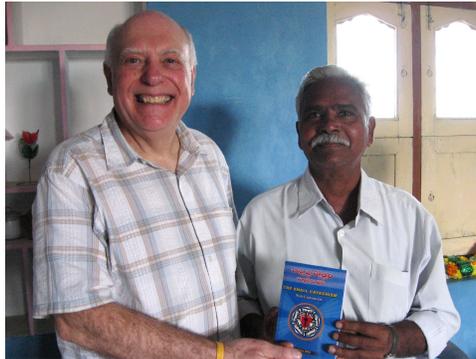
ANANTAPUR TRIP (continued from page 1)

With Rev. Joy and Rev. Dr. Victor I presented the Christmas/Epiphany gifts MMS gave each worker this year. We presented 500 copies of Luther's *Small Catechism With Explanation* in Telugu, financed by the MMS budget for Literature. As Lutheran Christians the MMS is sharing one of our strengths as a denomination (doctrine) to build up these recent converts in the Christian faith. We feel that we can't train them to be better evangelists; they are already doing well in that area of Christian living. But we feel that we can help them to nurture the converts.

Rev. Ismail responded with thanks for the gifts, the support from MMS, and our personal visit. He motivated his workers by referring to John 4:1-8 (Samaritan woman), John 3:1ff (Nicodemus), and Paul's instructions to Timothy to encourage them to be always in ministry, to work hard for the Lord day and night, and to not let tiredness be an excuse. He stressed making sacrifices for Christ and living as true servants of God. He mentioned his plans for a Muslim converts meeting in April 2010, to help the converts overcome their doubts, and he invited Rev. Joy to be present. This meeting is included in the 2010 MMS budget.

The station reports that we heard from the 24 workers included the results in baptisms mentioned above (283!) and goals and plans for even more conversions and baptisms in 2010 with God's help. When the members of the MMS Board received these reports at our February 26, meeting, we stood and sang the Doxology—some with tears in our eyes. It is powerful emotionally to realize what God is doing through these humble, ordinary people doing mission work. It is remarkable, to say the least, in the history of missions.

Casting a vision for the future, Rev. Ismail urged: "Grow and grow. Bring many to Christ." And he added that he is happy,



Carlton Riemer presents Rev. Ismail with a copy of *Martin Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* in Telugu. Rev. Dr. Victor explained to the group how to use the Catechism..

733,000 or Canadian Dollars 18,325 at a Rs 40 per 1 CAD exchange rate. But they have a "wish list" of Rs 1,510,000 /\$37,750.

The MMS depends solely upon voluntary donations to support



Some of the Gospel for Muslim workers in Uravakonda.



The Gospel for Muslims Ministry headquarters, *Begum Manzil*, in Uravakonda, a one-hour drive north of Anantapur.

because the Lord has given him a "burden for souls."

After this meeting with all the Gospel workers of the Gospel for Muslim ministry, Rev. Joy, Rev. Dr. Victor, and I met with the leaders to hear about their budget requests for 2010. They are "thinking big!" The MMS cannot accommodate all of their needs and wants. In mission theology, theory, and practice, it is also important to keep the evangelism work simple and house-church based, rather than enabling the group to become institution-based with an emphasis on buildings and administration. The budget the MMS approved for them comes to Rs

all of our programs and projects in "Malabar and Beyond," the theme of our 20th anniversary year. We welcome designated offerings for specific projects that are part of our approved budget, such as the Gospel for Muslim ministry, or for special projects, such as the items on the "wish list" of the Gospel for Muslim ministry. Please contact Rev. Howard Ulmer, President, or Rev. Carlton Riemer, Project Officer, for details and for recommendations on how your contributions could be directed as groups, organizations, or individuals.

We request all our readers and contributors to pray fervently for all the ministries of the Malabar Mission Society, including the Gospel for Muslim ministry. May God bless our efforts to be good stewards and managers of the blessings with which He entrusts us, so that we may be a blessing to others by using the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word and the Sacraments to bring lost people into the fold of our Good Shepherd. ❁

INTRODUCING SEMINARIAN S. S. SHERMAR

The Board for Mission of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church recommended Mr. S. S. Shermar, one of our evangelists in the Malabar Mission Circle to attend Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. In our recent MMS Board meeting we agreed to support him for at least one year as he pursues a Bachelor of Divinity degree.

Mr. Shermar was born on May 3, 1979, and raised in Tholoor, near Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. He has been a member of Shalom Lutheran Church, Tholoor all his life.

In 1998-99, Mr. Shermar attended the One Year Bible Course at Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil. He then served as a catechist under the Rev. D. William in the Kuttichal Pastorate in the Luthergiri Circle of the Trivandrum District Synod. During that time he pursued a Bachelor of Arts in History with a minor in General Economics and Political Science from the University of



A congregational member, Mr. Shermar and Rev. Dr. Victor stand beside the retaining wall built by MMS at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Mundakutty

Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.

After he received this degree in 2003, he came into the Malabar Mission Circle by serving in Srikrishnapuram till 2007 and then at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Mundakutty, till May, 2009.

His older brother is the Rev. S. S. Oliver, pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Wandoor, Kerala.

Regarding his future plans he writes: "My vision is to spread the Gospel of Christ in any new field in the ministry under the umbrella of M.M.C. for which I promise to work with M.M.C. wherever I am placed."

The MMS is thankful for the special grant that was given by the late Mr. and Mrs. Roderick (& Helen) Lawson for leadership development in Malabar to make Mr. Shermar's support possible.

Please pray for Mr. Shermar as he studies God's Word in great depth and trains for ministry in the Malabar Mission Circle of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church. ✠

DEBATE — DISCUSSION — DECISIONS

CONSIDER CHOOSING A PROJECT FOR YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, OR YOUR CONGREGATION.

Here are some examples:

The Friendship Centre, Malappuram Cdn \$2,000/year

This would be a 3-year commitment. This gospel outreach station is strategically located across from a large college and between a Muslim mosque and *madrasah* (school). Many Muslims and Hindus walk by daily, and many stop in to read the books and newspapers. At last report between 60 and 75 people visit daily. Rev. Joy's brother, Mr. T. John, temporarily serves as the centre's Gospel worker.

Vanitha (Women's) Centre, Kannur Cdn \$5,000/year

This highly successful women's reading room and friendship centre originally started in rented facilities. With the purchase of a permanent home in 2006, this facility now sees around 150 women visiting regularly. Presently Miss Soosen George, an IELC deaconess, and Miss Lizy greet, welcome and assist all who come, with the goal of sharing the Gospel with them.

Bible Correspondence Course, Kozhikode Cdn \$1,100/year

This course, administered by Rev. T. Joseph, continues to be an effective evangelism tool. In Kerala the literacy rate is high, and people of all ages are eager to learn. At last report more than 600 people were enrolled in the course. On average 200 people complete the whole course yearly.

Motorscooter for Gospel for Muslims worker Cdn \$1,300

Transportation is obviously important to bring the Gospel to remote villages in India. Some of the roads are not passable by buses or other conveyances, especially during the monsoon season; a motorscooter is more flexible and convenient. Workers in the Gospel for Muslims ministry in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh would welcome this transportation to help them spread the Gospel.

Too big a job? The "Big Job" is made up of smaller pieces. And every small piece is significant.

You can help. You could choose a project — for yourself, your family, or for your church.

Which one is for you?

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matt. 28:19a)

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: THE LENTEN-EASTER JOURNEY — ALSO FOR INDIA

- Rev. Howard Ulmer



During the season of Lent we join Jesus in his journey to Jerusalem where he was crucified on a cross to die for the sins of all people. His victorious resurrection on Easter Sunday provides hope of eternal life for all believers in Jesus Christ. Through this Gospel message the Holy Spirit touches the hearts of God's people and empowers them to believe and "proclaim the Good News of God's love in Jesus" throughout the world. The Malabar Mission Society is engaged in that task. We give thanks for the faithful financial and prayer support of many people that enables us to assist the faithful workers in Malabar and Anantapur.

At the recent Board and Annual Meeting we received reports of how God is at work through his powerful word. This Newsletter features Anantapur, where 283 Hindus and Muslims were baptized in 2009. All praise and glory to God!

In the coming months there will be a new Viewbook that describes the mission opportunities of the MMS.

Dr. Roland Miller has prepared *The Story of the Malabar Mission Society: Two Decades of Service*. This history of the MMS describes the opportunities, challenges and growth of the MMS.

On February 27 there was a Donor Appreciation Supper that provided an opportunity to "give thanks and praise God for his work in Malabar and beyond."

The Board also approved the 2010 Budget of \$86,095. Join us in supporting this exciting mission outreach of sharing God's love in Jesus with the people of India. ❁

Visit the Malabar Mission Society website at
http://www.gracelutheranchurch.ca/MMS_Home.html



Getting ready for the meeting with the Gospel for Muslim workers in Uravakonda.
L-R: Rev. Dr. K. M. Victor (leaning forward), Masthan Vali, Rev. T. Joy, Rev. Shaikh Ismail, Shaikh Benson, and Mohammed Rasool.

In Appreciation

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

In memory of:

- **Rev. Dan DeBlock**
Audrey DeBlock
- **Phyllis Guebert**
Lorna Pederson
Howard & Gloria Ulmer
Harold Weiss
- **Elsie Glubish, Ervin Schoepp, Stephen Shwed, Malcolm McBain, Walter Schoepp, Elsa Maier**
Emerald Schoepp
- **Ed Wudrick**
Florence Wudrick

In honour of her 100th birthday

- **Emma Fraser**
Emerald Schoepp

In celebration of Malabar Mission

Society's 20 years of mission service
Ernie & Arlene Hiller



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*

Phyllis Marion Guebert

We celebrate the life of **Mrs. Phyllis Marion Guebert**, who received the crown of righteousness and glory on January 28, 2010. Phyllis and Rev. Lowell Guebert were charter members of the Malabar Mission Society. Their involvement and faithful support is remarkable. Phyllis assisted with various activities, including serving as Secretary and host for various meetings. Phyllis loved the Lord and was a dedicated servant. We cherish her memory. The Service of Celebration was held on February 1, 2010 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Saskatoon.