

Malabar Mission Newsletter

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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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SOCIETIES IMPACT SOCIETY: A REPORT ON THE OCTOBER TRIP TO INDIA

- Rev. Carlton Riemer, MMS Project Officer



The word "society" has two meanings: 1) "a body of persons united for some common purpose," and 2) "human beings in general taken in relation to one another."

The Malabar Mission Society has been united for more than twenty years for the common purpose to share the Gospel in India in the Malabar area and beyond by supporting evangelism projects.

The MMS wants to impact society (the second definition above) in

India—a predominantly Hindu and Muslim society with Christianity as a minority of around 4% nationally. Through the Gospel human beings are not only "in relation to one another," but also and more importantly, in a right relation to God. They are human beings whom God loves so dearly that He sent Jesus to live a perfect life for them, to sacrifice His life on the cross for them, and to rise from the dead so that by faith people may have a sure and certain hope to live with God forever in heaven.

On October 26, 2010, another society was formed in India to impact Indian society.

At the encouragement of the MMS in Canada, the Gospel workers of the Malabar Mission Circle (MMC)

formed a society which they named "The

Malabar Gospel Mission Society" (MGMS). The

members are lay men and women, IELC

congregational members who pay a modest

membership fee. The first objective of

MGMS is to "undertake evangelistic work in the

Malabar area." The IELC church workers in

the area are *ex officio* members and may be

officers. As soon as the

society is registered with the Indian government, the funds that MMS sends to India will be safely channeled into India through the MGMS according to current Indian

government regulations and procedures. All MMS funds will be administered by the MMS Program Director, the Rev. T. Joy.

The MMS Board of Directors approved the final version of the MGMS Constitution on December 3, 2010, and rejoiced at the formation of this partner society. Now our two

societies can work together as sisters and brothers in Christ in India more effectively to bring the Gospel to bear upon the society of India.



The Gospel Workers of MMC burst into spontaneous applause when the constitution of the MGMS was approved.

...continued. See Report on the October Trip on pg. 4

AN INTERVIEW WITH "REJI"

- Mark Dickinson, Newsletter Editor

This past summer I had the privilege to conduct an "Internet Interview" with Mr. C. Rejidas, a seminary student from Kerala, India and a long time friend of the Malabar Mission Society. Because of the length of the interview, this 'conversation' will appear in two parts. The conclusion will appear in the Spring 2011 edition of our newsletter. - ed.

MMS: Reji, please share with our readers a bit of background on yourself and your family.

Reji: I was born in Trivandrum District of Kerala on 16th November 1983. My father is N. Christudas and my mother is R. Cicilet. My father is working in a Restaurant and my mother is a housewife. My mother is deaconess and women fellowship president in the congregation Zo-Ar-Hill Lutheran Church; it is situated at Kakkamoola, Kalliyoor P.O, Trivandrum District, Kerala. She is also working as Vice President of Women Fellowship in Circle level. I have two elder brothers, Ajikumar and Sajikumar, and a younger sister, Simladas. All are married except me.

[Note: In Kerala, the practice used for names is a single initial and then the first name; people do not actually use a family (or last) name. For example, from their caste background, Reji's formal name is simply C. Rejidas, where "C" represents Christudas (his father's name). However, it is also acceptable to include "the home name" as a part of a person's identity – for Reji, his home is "Retnavilasom", where "Retna" means gold and "Vilasom" means address. So, another way of addressing Rejidas is Retna Vilasom C. Rejidas, or Retna Vilasom Christudas Rejidas].

MMS: What were you doing before you decided to attend Gurukul Lutheran Theological College [located at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, South India]?

Reji: I was an active member of our mother's congregation up to my Pre-Degree studies. I served in many levels within the congregation: Child League Secretary (1997), Child League President (1998), Youth League Secretary (1999), Sunday School Teacher (2000–2002), Youth League Circle Secretary (2000), Sunday School Secretary (2001), and Youth league Circle President (2002) [Note: 28 Churches belong to one circle.] In 2002, I completed my Pre-Degree Course from Kerala University and in June 2002, I joined in a One Year Bible Course at Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil for 2002-2003 academic year. After that I worked in Open Door Library, Kannur from 8th April, 2003 to 30th April, 2008; around 5 years. I got a lot of Ministry experiences from working there as an Evangelist, and also from my work with Naduvil and Chengalai Churches and from Vanitha Library. During this time I did my B.A in Sociology from Calicut University through Correspondence Course. During these times I was especially influenced by my mother's prayer life to choose God's Ministry.



"Reji"

In May 2008 I started my BD Theological journey in Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai, Tamilnadu. I am getting good opportunities to study more things there. At Gurukul, there is a focus on three basic Formations – to be developed in each and every student. 1. Spiritual Formation, 2. Academic Formation, 3. Ministerial Formation. In my second year I was class representative. This year I am the person who is in-charge of Book Store.

MMS: What attracted you to the ministry? Why were you interested in pursuing a career as a pastor?

Reji: I was most influenced by a local Pastor's life and activities [Rev. Y. Christopher, now I E L C Vice-President], and especially by the prayerful life of my mother. Also, another pastor, Rev. L. T. Pavithra Singh encouraged me to join in the Ministerial training. After the Sunday School and Confirmation, I dedicate myself to this ministry.

MMS: What part of ministry (or mission) work do you find most interesting, and why?

Reji: Serving the Society and helping the needy along with parish ministry [Note: By the word "Society," Reji means the local community where God is placing him; the local community (or society) includes people with different culture, caste, and faith]. There are lot of people in our society longing for love, protection, and care. As a Christian we must care for them not only by words but also through deeds.

MMS: If you had not decided to go into the ministry (or were not accepted), what other career field might you have pursued?

Reji: I never think about it.

MMS: When do you expect to complete your studies? Is there an "apprentice" or vicar stage in your studies? Do you graduate as a Pastor or as an Evangelist? What is the difference?

Reji: I expect to complete my studies in April 2012, after Seminary Graduation. As per the present rule, after graduation I need to serve in an assigned ministry under the direct supervision of a senior pastor as a probationer (for three years before ordination). I graduate as an Evangelist, but after ordination I will have designation as a Pastor.

MMS: We often hear the words Evangelist, Catechist and Pastor used, sometimes interchangeably in India. What are the differences between these positions/titles?

...continued on pg. 3

Reji: Catechist means Evangelist, the stage before BD Studies – that means after One Year Bible Course from Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil. When I graduate, I am not an Ordain(ed) Pastor. People will call me as Pastor, but there is a little bit difference between Ordain Pastor and Pastor. After my Graduation – after 3 years only – I can get Ordination. Ordain Pastor is known as Reverend.

MMS: After completion of your studies, where would you like to live and work in India/Malabar?

Reji: I am studying for the work of IELC at Malabar I like to continue there for my future ministry. [Note: IELC is India Evangelical Lutheran Church.]

This interview will be continued in the next (Spring 2011) issue of the Newsletter.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: CHRIST is in CHRISTMAS

- Rev. Howard Ulmer



In this season of Advent we frequently hear the greeting "Season's Greetings" or "Happy Holidays" coming from the media, as well as from clerks in shopping malls. The attempt at political correctness misses the point of the "Season" or the "Holiday." The reason for the "Season" is CHRIST and the basis of the "Holiday" is CHRIST. The "Greeting" for the season is "MERRY CHRISTMAS." I am "Happy" in this season because Jesus, the Christ came into the world as my Saviour on

Christmas!

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." (Matthew 11:2-6)

This lesson from the Advent season keeps us focused on Christ, the Saviour of the world. All around us we see people struggling for survival, for meaning in life, for advancement through education, work or business, for spiritual direction and purpose in life. Where do we turn for guidance and answers? As John sent his disciples to Jesus for answers, they returned with words of confidence and hope that Jesus IS the Promised One, the Messiah, the CHRIST. Jesus came to fulfill the promise that God would send a Saviour. This Saviour would come as a baby born in Bethlehem. He would bring the Good News of salvation to the world. He came to take our sins to the cross, where he died on Good Friday. On Easter morning he rose from the dead and proclaimed his victory over sin, death and the devil. This is our Christian faith.

In India the Pastors, Catechists and Gospel Workers boldly proclaim the Good News of God's love in Jesus. The Holy Spirit continues to grant faith in believing hearts. God is at work through his Word and Sacraments. Read about the exciting events in the article by Rev. Carlton Riemer, Project Officer, who recently returned from India. Read about the enthusiastic spirit of Seminary student Reji. The opportunities to share the Gospel are enormous and the challenges are great! Daily pray for the workers. May God continue to bless the workers and the proclaiming of God's love in Jesus, our Saviour. Your faithful prayer and financial support are sincerely appreciated. **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

In Appreciation

The Malabar Mission Society sincerely thanks the following who have so generously given special gifts in memory of:

- **Phyllis Guebert**
Dr. Miriam McCreary
Irene Raedeke
Roland & Mary Helen Miller
- **Jean McAskill**
Mark & Monique Dickinson
- **Oscar Sommerfeld**
Martha Sommerfeld
- **Four Lutheran Missionaries to India:**
Rev. Elmer Griesse, Mrs. Juanita Lutz,
Mrs. Audrey Steinhoff, Rev. Eric Reble
Roland & Mary Helen Miller



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
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COMING SOON

www.malabarmissionsociety.org

A newly developed website featuring

- news from the field
 - mission stories
 - profiles on people and places
 - announcements
 - interviews
 - monthly updates
 - videos
 - a photo gallery
 - a newsletter archive
- and much, much more.

Watch for the official release in
January 2011.

REPORT ON THE OCTOBER TRIP TO INDIA (continued from pg. 1)

From September 27–October 1, 2010, Mr. and Mrs. David (and Beth) Hoepfner, IELC education consultants, accompanied your Project Officer on a tour of the six stations of MMC that have nursery schools. They gave very favorable evaluations of



David & Beth Hoepfner present teaching pictures for Bible stories at St. John's Lutheran School, Malappuram.

our schools and presented educational resources. They were impressed to visit with Mrs. Mildred Francis, who, together with our own Mary Helen Miller, started the first nursery school in Kerala in 1957.

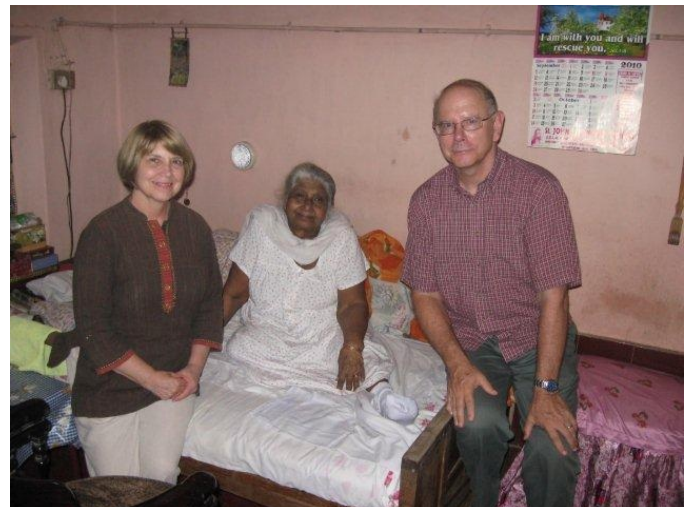
The Gospel Workers in MMC have been working on the evaluation of the MMS projects in India. It is still a "work in progress." The MMS Board received the preliminary results at their meeting on December 3, 2010 and gave the Project Officer helpful direction for moving the process forward and analyzing the data, so that the MMS Board can devise a five year plan for our projects.

In October 2010, the Project Officer also visited with Rev. and Mrs. K. K. Alavi in Manjeri and the Gospel for Muslim president

and secretary from Anantapur, the Rev. Shaikh Ismail and the Rev. S. Masthan Vali. We prayed for their courage and faithfulness as they told stories of persecution and threats of mortal danger for those who expressed interest in or converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, the believers in Anantapur held baptismal services in October and November 2010 in which nineteen converts were baptized into the Body of Christ and the Family of God.

Christmas is always a joyous time for Christians in India. They use the time to witness to their neighbours with caroling, decorating their churches (decorations that remain up until Easter), extending wishes for joy, peace, and hope with greeting cards they send to friends, and sharing gifts with the poor and needy. At their request, I extend their warmest Christmas greetings to all of you who are supporting the MMS, prayerfully and financially.

May God continue to bless our society and the newly formed Malabar Gospel Mission Society in India, as together we impact the society of India with the Gospel for the growth of the Church.



David & Beth Hoepfner visit Mrs. Mildred Francis.

MMS VIEWBOOK: YOUR ENTRY TO A WORLD OF SERVICE

The Malabar Mission Society is pleased to announce the completion and availability of the MMS Viewbook: Your Entry to a World of Service. In the words of President Howard Ulmer: "The Viewbook provides a glimpse of how God's grace and mercy has touched the hearts of people ... During the last twenty years the mission and ministry of Malabar has achieved remarkable growth. The Pastors, Catechists and Gospel Workers continue to share the Good News of God's love in Jesus Christ to the people in India. God has blessed their courageous and bold witness to Hindus and Muslims in their communities."

If you are interested in a copy of the Viewbook, or would like to receive additional copies of the booklet, please contact the Malabar Mission Society either through our email address: malabarmission@sasktel.net or our postal mailing address in Regina. [Please also note that a portable document format (PDF) version of the Viewbook is posted on the Malabar Mission Newsletter page of the MMS website.]