

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Summer 2015

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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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MALABAR MISSION SOCIETY CELEBRATES ITS 25th ANNIVERSARY

Lorna Pederson

Malabar Mission Society (MMS), which was organized April 10, 1990, celebrated its 25th anniversary this April 10 at Mount Olive Lutheran Church (Regina, SK), in connection with the Society's Board meeting and annual general meeting. Some 45 people gathered for a delicious East Indian dinner catered by Flavours of India, a local restaurant.

Following the dinner, MMS president Rev. Howard Ulmer led a program that featured three guest speakers: Dr. Roland Miller, Rev. Carlton Riemer and Rev. Robert Bugbee.



Dr. Miller, MMS founder, gave some background information on the beginnings of mission societies. While they had operated in Europe for some time, they did not gain acceptance in North America until the late 20th century. Mission societies were previously seen as in competition for funds with church mission boards. In the case of Malabar Mission Society, the time was right for its creation. Now there are about a hundred mission societies in LCMS alone. There are several reasons for this change of perspective:

1. Conditions exist where mission societies can do useful service for the wider church.
2. Few people may have heard the Gospel in certain places. There is a sense of need.
3. Local participation is a possibility. We must work while it is day before the night comes.
4. There is potential for raising funds.
5. We have faith that the Lord is risen indeed. He is with His workers all over the world.

The sale of a Lutheran church in Calgary made the creation of MMS possible. Proceeds from the sale went to several ministries. It was too late for MMS to be included, but thanks to the efforts of Rev. Val Henning and others of his congregation, the sum of \$41,145.11 was made available for the Malabar mission. Rev. Ron Raedeke, the Society's first president, worked with lawyer Glen Ozem to draft the constitution and documents of incorporation. Some time later the Society received its charity status. MMS projects have expanded beyond the original Malabar region of Kerala to include Anantapur in the state of Andhra Pradesh, in answer to the plea: "Come over and help us." An offshoot of MMS, New Hope Mission Society, emerged in 2006. "If we have the conditions to go ahead, the Holy Spirit will lead us in the future and will bless us," Dr. Miller declared.

Rev. Carlton Riemer, MMS project officer, used the acronym **LAP** (as in a race) to describe his goals as he makes his annual trip to India on behalf of MMS.

In Appreciation

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

In Honor of:

Louise Bradley's 90th birthday
✠ *Gail Mitchell*

In Memory of:

Mrs. Constance Charron &
Mr. Ronald McAskill
✠ *Mark & Monique Dickinson*
Mr. Eric Kemle
✠ *Marjorie Kemle*
Mr. Edward Wudrick
✠ *Florence Wudrick*

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**



rainfall of 300 to 400 inches annually. Strict guidelines must be followed for each request.

A denotes ACTION. Act more boldly. In Kannur MMS is reaching out to young men (Open Door) and to young women (Vanitha) through reading room evangelism. The Society has sent three ESL teams to Kannur with plans to send a fourth to Wandur in October 2015. An online Bible correspondence course is about to begin under Indian management.

P means PROCLAIM. Proclaim more zealously. It takes zeal to proclaim the Gospel that Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead. We stand on the resurrection of Christ. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, our faith is in vain and it matters not what religion we follow. However, the fact is that Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).



Rev. Robert Bugbee, LCC president, asked the question: **“Why does the church reach out in mission to foreign lands when there is enough work to do in Canada?”** In the church, mission work should not be seen as a “frill” after all needs of local congregations have been met. In the mind of Jesus, we are to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. We are called to spread the good news of the Gospel to our immediate area, to our surrounding areas and to the uttermost parts of the world. LCC reaches out in mission to Central America (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras), Cambodia, Thailand and Ukraine. The commitment to Christ of new Christians in other lands encourages us to greater commitment to Jesus Christ ourselves. Some of the churches

may struggle but we struggle with them. **As the Father sent Jesus, He sends us to distribute the blessings that Christ won by His suffering, dying and rising again.**

FAITHFUL FORERUNNERS

Unseen foundations of the MMS ministry, 1910 to 1990

Rev. Dr. Roland E. Miller

On the 25th anniversary of the Malabar Mission Society, it is appropriate to remind ourselves of the guidance of God and of our faithful forerunners. The original idea, dating back to 1910, was that Lutherans should take responsibility for work among the Kurdish people, who are spread across Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. The inter-synodical Lutheran Orient Mission (LOM) was formed in Minneapolis/St. Paul that year to put the vision into effect. (It still continues its activity but now under the name Lutheran Mideast Development.) LOM had difficulties carrying out its mission because of the uncertain political conditions in the region. The society laboured in northern Iran but when evicted by the government in 1948 transferred its work to Erbil in northern Iraq. There too, in 1951, the government expelled the

lone missionary left. Lutheran Mideast Development now continues its service in Turkey, in the context of the new “Kurdish Spring.”

Dr. Henry Nau had become the leading voice in Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) calling for that church body to take up mission work among Muslims. In 1944, at Charlotte, North Carolina, a group formed the Society for the Promotion of Mohammedan Missions to help facilitate a response. At that time all eyes were still on the Kurds. In 1949 Dr. Nau journeyed through their territory and discovered the obvious—there was no open door. So he went on to India, where he had started out as a missionary in 1911, to examine the possibilities there. Dr. O. H. Schmidt, executive director of the LCMS Board for Missions, joined the investigation. After their joint tour they concluded that there were two good places to undertake evangelism. One was in Malabar, among the Mappila Muslims, and the other was in Vaniyambadi, Tamil Nadu State.

The choice of Malabar seemed timely because a few Indian Lutherans from south Kerala were migrating as agricultural pioneers to a mountainous area in northeast Kerala called Wayanad. Led by Rev. Martin Lutz and a small group of Indian pastors, work among Hindus was started in Wayanad in 1947. **The Holy Spirit seemed to be guiding the church, since work in a very needy area could be done among Hindus and Muslims at the same time, within the framework of a newly independent India.**

On that basis various decisions were taken. Rev. John Gall (St. Louis, 1947) and Rev. Henry Otten (St. Louis, 1948) received Malabar calls. They spent 1948-49 preparing at the Kennedy School of Missions (Hartford, CT) and left New York City for India on March 30, 1950. Henry and Mary Esther Otten did Malayalam language study in the city of Calicut, but then moved to the interior village of Wandur to begin their new work. For personal reasons Rev. Gall had to return to the US, but Roland and Mary Helen Miller arrived in India on September 11, 1953, to take his place. After their initial language study in Manjeri, they moved to Malappuram to open that new outreach.

The addition of Indian pastors, evangelists and medical workers meant that the building blocks were in place for the Malabar program, and it went vigorously ahead for the next 25 years. The evangelism was steady and new centres were established. **In the 1970s and 1980s, however, three setbacks occurred. Financial support for the Malabar work almost dried up.** There was a loss of leadership as missionaries and other leaders retired or passed away. Finally, there were several ecclesiastical difficulties in both North America and India; the national church in India was immobilized and did not know what to do to maintain the program in Malabar.

It was time for something new and it happened. The Lord of the Mission, Who declares “Behold, I make all things new,” inspired the creation of the Malabar Mission Society to take up the challenge. For 25 years MMS has provided the supplemental assistance need by the Indian staff to carry out the task of reaping the harvest. In a memorable 1990 moment, Rev. David Ramsay said, “Let’s just do it!” to a group meeting in Regina. By God’s grace, they did it. Donors and members of the Society have run the race faithfully, have worked hard and have seen some wonderful results. To everyone, thanks. Yet I think all will agree that it could only have been God the Spirit who could pull all these strands together and make it work. Therefore, let us at this time praise the One Who gave us his glorious commission and truly promised: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

While we are giving thanks, let us also include the members of the Lutheran Orient Mission, which has stuck to its defined task for over a century. Compared to that, we have a long way to go. Grant us travelling mercies, O Lord!

THE 2015 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS WERE ALL ABOUT LIFE

Rev. Carlton Riemer

Earlier this year, the nine congregations of the Malabar Mission Circle held a total of 20 VBS “camps,” most of them with the theme **Prosperity for Life**. Total attendance came to 735. Not all the workers reported the religious background of the children, but those who did identified 288 as Hindu, 236 as Christian, 43 as Muslim, and 21 as “tribal.”

Here is a story from the VBS session in Sharath Kunnu. The work there had been started by Mr. Thomas, a pharmacist, and his wife,



Mercy, a nurse. They served at Karunalaya Hospital, Wandur. Mercy’s work is now limited due to aging, but she made the effort to attend the closing VBS ceremony this year. (In the photo, she is sitting in the second row, fourth from left.) There she was overjoyed to see Mrs. Savitry, who had been Mercy’s student in VBS years ago and now is an active member of the congregation. The **joy overflowed for Mercy** when Mrs. Savitry pointed out her son, who attended VBS this year. Life and the New Life that leads to eternal life passes on from one generation to another by the grace of God through the power of God’s Word!

ANNOUNCING THE SAAR BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE CENTRE

Rev. Carlton Riemer



“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

At the latest MMS Board meeting, members designated a grant given by Mrs. Lillian Saar—in memory of her husband, Arthur—to fund the revitalized Bible Correspondence Course ministry in Malabar for five years. The project is designed to use both a traditional approach (papers sent through the mail) and an online one.

Mr. Tony Jose has agreed to be website administrator. MMS Agent Rev. I. Titus is recruiting workers for the other positions and also forming a committee in Malabar to oversee this effort and to ensure local ownership of the project. In the meantime, and in order to get hands-on experience with the two methods, Rev. Titus is administering the program. Mark Dickinson has prepared timeline and expenses spreadsheets to keep the project on task and within budget. The overall design for the project is in its final stages.

Please visit www.malabarbiblecourses.org to learn more about this important ministry. Sobhi, the wife of MMS Accountant C. D. Solomon, has transcribed courses on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John in Malayalam that will be posted on the website. The next courses to be transcribed into Malayalam are the Gospel of Luke and “The Promises of God,” which is intended for a Muslim audience.

Our stated goal is to have at least one percent of Malabar’s 13 million people complete at least one course in five years. That amounts to 130,000 people in total; 26,000 people annually; and 220 people monthly. With God’s help, we should soon be able to report to you on our first graduates. We plan to gather them together for an Inquirer’s Camp to follow up on their interest and encourage them in the faith.

INTRODUCING TEACHERS FOR ‘ENGLISH AS A SPOKEN LANGUAGE’ COURSE, WANDUR

Rev. Carlton Riemer

Meet the six instructors who will be teaching English as a Spoken Language to teachers in an MMS program set for 12-24 October, 2015, at the Otten English School, Wandur. The school has an enrolment of more than 1,000 students in kindergarten through Grade 12. Most of them are Muslims. The faculty numbers more than 50, and their English classes will take place four hours each weekday afternoon.

Team Coordinator **Lorna Pederson** is an experienced instructor who will handle travel arrangements and visa applications, and see to the comfort and health of the instructors in India. Secretary of the MMS Board of Directors, she is a retired pharmacist who lives in Regina.

Academic Director **Dianna Just** previously led an ESL team working with nurses at the Bethesda Lutheran Hospital in Ambur, as well a teachers’ courses in China and Malaysia. Active in the LWML, she is a middle school teacher in Vinita, Oklahoma, and will be taking time off from her regular duties to participate in this project.

Retired engineer **Daryl Mang** hails from Regina. Active in his local congregation and in outdoor ministry at Kinasao Lutheran Bible Camp on Christopher Lake near Prince Albert, he became a member of the MMS Board of Directors about a year ago. This will be his first trip to India.

Arlene Riemer is the wife of MMS Project Officer Carlton Riemer and lives in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where she leads a conversational English group for Middle Eastern women. She has been a member of an ESL team with Lorna Pederson on two previous MMS projects.

Rev. Dr. Gilbert Duchow and his wife, **Linda Duchow**, hail from Hilliard, Ohio. Referred to us by Dianna Just, they were on the team that conducted ESL in Ambur a few years ago. Retired from his congregation, Pastor Gil has just finished a stint as interim pastor for another congregation, so he is free to go on this mission trip. He graduated from Concordia Seminary St. Louis in 1968 (one year after your MMS Project Officer) and holds a Doctor of Ministry degree. On a personal note: While the Riemers were preparing for mission service among Muslims in 1967-69, they studied at Hartford Seminary Foundation in Connecticut (on the advice of Rev. Dr. Roland Miller, who received his Ph.D. there). As they awaited a visa to India, they were active in Bethel Lutheran Church of West Hartford, whose pastor was Gil Duchow's father. Who would have imagined, 50 years ago, that in 2015 we would all be going on a mission trip to India together?

Please pray for these ESL instructors and for the Otten English School and its teachers, so that God will richly bless this mission venture of sharing and living out the Gospel.

DR. MILLER'S NEW BOOK ON MALABAR MUSLIM GROUP

Dr. Roland E. Miller has just published a new book on the 9 million Mappila Muslims, half of whom live in Malabar. The volume is titled *Mappila Muslim Culture: How a Historic Muslim Community in India Has Blended Tradition and Modernity*; the publisher is SUNY (State University of New York) Press, 2015. Dr. Miller is regarded as the chief Western authority on the subject.

The book is highly relevant to the work of MMS. The population of Malabar is 56% Hindu, 35% Muslim and 9% Christian. Gospel workers reach out to both Hindus and Muslims. Mappila Muslims take their faith seriously, but they also have respect for Jesus as a great prophet, whom they call "Isa Masih," Jesus the Messiah.

This volume concentrates on the everyday life and social customs of the Mappila Muslims, which developed in unique forms as the result of the merging of cultures. The book describes Mappila habits and manners from the inside, including home life, dress and food, marriage practices, festivals, funerals, worship places and rituals, as well as educational tensions, leadership, and literary and other cultural achievements. Dr. Miller shows that Muslims can deliberately and successfully change—vital information for the work MMS does among them. For more information, visit www.sunypress.edu.

MMS PROJECTS THAT NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Rev. Carlton Riemer, Project Officer

Please take note of these important projects and consider supporting them, either as a total project or as partial funding toward a chosen goal. Many thanks for your support!

Project 1: Station Evangelism Support

Needed: \$5,000 for one year of support for eight workers; \$416 per month

In the Malabar Mission Circle (MMC) of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, there are nine congregations led and served by eight pastors or evangelists. They do evangelism work as well as train and equip their members to do what they more commonly call "Gospel work." Most of the work is done as "lifestyle evangelism," because Christians are in a minority in the predominantly Hindu culture of India. In addition, around one-fourth of the population in Kerala is Muslim. Christian pastors spend several evenings a week doing "house prayers": visiting families in the congregation and leading them in prayers about the felt needs of the family and community. The families have daily devotions that involve Scripture readings, prayers, and singing hymns (loudly and from memory) to indigenous Malayalam tunes. They sing and pray loud enough so that their neighbours can hear them and the Gospel! They also invite their non-Christian neighbors and friends to these house prayers and include their prayer concerns for healing, doing well in studies,

getting a job, and so on. Among Christians in India, every visit ends with a prayer before visitors leave. Funds donated to this project support all MMC Gospel Workers in their evangelism outreach.

Project 2: Vacation Bible Schools

Needed: \$920 per year

The nine congregations in the MMC conduct more than twenty Vacation Bible Schools during the hot dry season in April and May. Hardly any congregation does just one VBS—one congregation regularly does five! More Hindus and Muslims attend than Christians. The curriculum centers on Jesus, His parables, and the stories of His miracles—all related to His death and resurrection for us. The children love to do “action songs” and proudly sing them for parents and relatives when they get home. The funds provide the lessons, craft supplies, prizes, refreshments, and training for the lay teachers.

Project 3: Developing Servant-Leaders for the Church

Needed: \$900 per year

Jesus calls people to be His disciples, and he also calls us to make disciples of others. For this vital work, the Malabar Mission Circle provides biblically based leadership seminars for men, women and young people—sessions that equip laypeople to assume servant-leader roles in their congregations and undertake effective disciple-making efforts. The project includes a talent competition for Sunday School children, since leadership training can start at a young age! The funds help cover the expenses related to teaching resources, lodging, transportation, food and special speakers.

Project 4: Mission Start That Started Another Mission

Needed: \$6,000 per year

Bethel Lutheran Church, Naduvil, Kerala, started in 1999 with MMS support. Rev. S. S. Oliver, the new young pastor, served and led the congregation faithfully. In 2001 the congregation planted a new church: Good Shepherd Lutheran, 30 kilometers away in Chengalai. Bethel continues to reach out with a nursery school of around 20 students. With new pastoral leadership and care, there is interest in starting up a tailoring-school ministry again. Good Shepherd has a Christian cemetery on its property—a feature that meets an important need for Christians in India, since Hindus practice cremation and the government strictly regulates burials. The congregations also have a vision of planting rubber trees on their properties to help make them self-supporting. The rainy weather in Kerala is hard on buildings, so the leaking roofs on the churches and parsonage have been repaired recently. These funds provide annual salary, housing, utilities, upkeep and mission supplies.

Project 5: Open Door Reading Room Ministry for Women

Needed: \$8,000 per year

After ministering to college women in Kannur in rented facilities since 2004, the Malabar Mission Society borrowed money to purchase property with a building in 2006. It is called the Open Door Vanitha [the Malayalam word for women] Reading Room. There is space for worship, books and magazines, meetings, fellowship, staff quarters, and literature and Bible correspondence-course ministries. Two women evangelists stay in the facility to receive visitors, make friendships and share the Gospel. It is located across the road from a large government women’s college. This project provides funds for annual salaries, utilities, supplies and maintenance.

Project 6: Open Door Reading Room Ministry for Men

Needed: \$5,000 per year

The city of Kannur was selected by the Gospel workers in Malabar as a place for mission expansion with a youth-related approach through reading-room evangelism. The Open Door opened in 2002 in a second-story rental facility near a large college. Christian literature is available as well as daily newspapers, reference works, journals and a copy of every course textbook in the arts and science curriculum. To attract students and faculty, there have been lectures, lyceums and song programs. The attendant is an evangelist who develops friendships to present the way of salvation and the meaning of life in Christ. The funds for this project cover rental, annual salary, operating expenses and literary and mission materials.