

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Christmas 2019

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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 Newsletter

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AYESHA AND KUNYAMMA: THEY SAW THE LORD

Roland Miller

Matthew 27:55 is an astonishing Bible verse. It says that at the crucifixion of our Lord, "Many women were also there." This does not refer to the three Marys near the Cross. There were other women who "had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for Him." It is a long three-day walk from Galilee to Jerusalem. Still they made it, including the mother of two of the apostles, Mrs. Zebedee, who was not young. This verse illustrates the fact that there seems to have been a large movement of women to Jesus in New Testament times. The same has been true in India, including Malabar. Following are stories of two of them. The first one was named Ayesha. A Muslim, she was named after a "feisty" wife of the Prophet Muhammad. Ayesha was equally strong in her personality.

Ayesha

She was born and raised at Wandoor. Her family allowed her to graduate from high school. It was very unusual at this time for a Mapilla Muslim girl to finish high school, as most were made to leave school after fourth grade when they reached puberty. After graduation she trained as a seamstress and sewing teacher. She married Mr. Seyd Ali who worked for the local Communist Party. The Marxist party has been strong in Kerala for many decades, and currently leads the state government.

The young couple moved to Malappuram in the mid 1960s. There Ayesha also became a Communist Party member, as well as a socially liberated woman and a dynamic leader. I recall how she led political parades down the main street of our town, shouting through her megaphone: "Communist Party, Zindabad!" In later years she joined the All-Kerala Literacy campaign, teaching illiterate Muslim women how to write. Unforgettable was the expression of wonder on the faces of these aged women as they finally learned to write their names and realized they were somebody with an identity.



Helpful neighbours at Mundakutty

For the next thirty plus years Ayesha was employed as the sewing teacher by the local community's women's society, the Mahila Samajam. It was there my wife, Mary Helen, met her and they became close friends and co-workers. Through contacts with her and other Christian women, Ayesha met the Lord Jesus and gained a new perspective on life. However, she had a lot of problems—a philandering husband and a serious asthma condition. The Lord sustained her in her suffering, but she finally had to have a lung removed. We saw her last in 1999. She met me on the St. John's Church veranda for a private discussion. When I commiserated with her, she said: "Don't worry, sir. When I went into the operating room I saw the face of Jesus, and I knew that I would be all right." It reminds me of a hymn verse (LH 277):

*I looked to Jesus and I found in Him my Star and Sun;
And in that Light of Life I'll walk, Till traveling days are done*

Her travelling days are done in this world, but I am sure she is leading parades in heaven!

(The story of Kunyamma will be included in the next Newsletter.)

In Appreciation

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

In Memory of:

- † **Louise and Elmer Bradley**
from Owen and Gail Mitchell
- † **Ernie Hiller**
from Arlene Hiller
- † **Oscar Sommerfeld**
from Martha Sommerfeld
- † **Edward Wudrick**
from Florence Wudrick
- † **Judy Keller**
from Karl Keller
- † **Walter Schoepp**
from Emerald Schoepp
- † **Eric Kemle**
from Marjorie Kemle

In Honour of:

- † **Roland and Mary Helen Miller**
from Virginia and Osborne

Ellis

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.

Send your gifts to:

*The Malabar Mission Society,
P.O. Box 32045
Regina, SK S4N 7L2*

We encourage our donors to send their gifts directly to the mailbox (address above) in Regina. Supporters/Donors may arrange for a direct deposit to the Malabar Mission Society bank account. Please contact Howard Ulmer, 306 - 352 - 0991 or email: malabarmission@sasktel.net for arrangements. For Canadian donors, gifts may also be made through Canada Helps. However, Canada Helps receives a percentage for their services.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL IN 2019

Lorna Pederson

In 2019 a total of 18 VBS camps were held in Malabar with 610 children in attendance. Of these, 252 children were Christian, 318 children were Hindu and 40 children were Muslim. Rev. Baby conducted VBS in 6 locations with a total of 205 children in attendance. Pastor Bennet's camp in Meenangadi had the highest attendance with 108 children. It was alarming to learn that Rev. Joseph's VBS camp was shut down by BJP people after only 2 days in session. Mr. Solomon's Vacation Bible Schools at Sharathkunnu and Pergamanna were also threatened with closure, but the residents of the area supported Mr. Solomon and VBS remained in session.

MINISTRY in MALAPPURAM

St. John Lutheran Church: This congregation in Malappuram, where Rev. Rejidas is pastor, is composed of 12 permanent families who are involved in all activities of their church. At worship services four young women lead the singing while 4 youth take turns accompanying the hymns on an electric keyboard. For the past two years, St. John has hosted the Women's Seminar. In 2019 they provided the food at no charge to the 68 people who attended.

The youth group is very active. In 2018 the youth donated Rs. 10,000 to Shalom Matha Bhawan, a rehabilitation centre for mentally retarded children under the age of 15 years. In 2019 the youth collected waste materials from the roadside and exchanged them for Rs. 45,000. This money was donated to Mundakutty Church people for agricultural purposes. The youth are involved in Bible quiz competition sponsored by YMCA. This year they won the first prize trophy.

St. John Congregation is very generous. In 2018 the Church donated Rs. 30,000 (Rs. 8,000 from Youth) to Lutheran Samithi, Wayanad, for flood relief, and Rs. 30,000 to the Friendship Reading Room for renovation expenses. In 2019 Rs. 60,000 were donated to Mrs. Daisy of Mundakutty who was in need of a house.

The Friendship Reading Room is a busy place with a total of 12,372 people visiting the reading room during the first 10 months of 2019 (60 to 65 people per day). Mr. John Tennyson does fine work as librarian. He maintains a good relationship with those who use the library and many donated funds to renew the reading room in 2018. Of the 9 newspapers and 82 periodicals, 4 newspapers and 24 periodicals are sponsored by the readers. Mr. Shajahan sponsors drinking water for the readers.



Reading Room Fall 2019

Christian Welfare Centre: CWC hospital is running well with Mr. Yovel, retired IELC controller, as administrator. With his support the committee that oversees all decisions and purchases has been reinstated, thus giving better control over expenditures, and daily devotions are again taking place at CWC. Dr. Sophia Brillin continues to be the "CEO" of CWC. It is thanks to her hard work that the hospital has a very good reputation for medical treatment and is still in operation while many other mission hospitals have had to close. Under her guidance a new wing was added to the hospital a few years ago. There are plans now to tear down the original hospital, once permission is obtained, and open the fifth floor of the new addition. Standards for health care have increased, but CWC has so far been able to keep up. Presently the government is taking better care of the poor and offering free medical treatment. As a result CWC no longer sees the poorest people. The needs are different and CWC will adapt.

MINISTRY IN WAYANAD

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Meenangadi: A bore well for this congregation, at a cost of Rs. 80,000, has been in the MMS budget since 2015. It was finally completed in January 2019. Over the years the cost increased by Rs. 57,000. The congregation needed to pay a further Rs. 17,000. Pastor Bennet, who was living at House of Hope, is now living at the parsonage on the church compound. The congregation is most grateful to the MMS for providing the necessary funds for this source of water.

Bethel Lutheran Church, Moolenkavu, where Rev. Baby is pastor, is also requesting a bore well as there is no source of water at that site. Three people rent living space on the church property at a very low rate as they must provide their own water. There are plans to widen the highway on which the church is located. The church will be moved back in the process. The congregation has been wanting a bigger church for the past few years and feel that this is the opportune time to build. This congregation has the largest attendance of any that the MMS supports with an average attendance on Sundays of 90 people.

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mundakutty: The congregation tore down their church building in 2016 because of problems due to its original faulty construction. The corner stone of the new church was laid in November, 2016. Church members donated their time and labour to reduce costs. The building is basically finished on the outside and looks very impressive. However, the congregation is short Rs. 400,000 to complete the inside of the building so no work is being done at present.

The 2019 Family Convention took place in Sulthan Bathery on October 25 and 26 with over 100 people in attendance. The theme was "Fruitful Life." Guest speaker, Ummen John, gave three presentations. Intercessory prayer, Bible quiz and communion service, together with tea breaks and four meals prepared in an outdoor kitchen, completed the program. The choir and musicians of St. John Lutheran Church in Malappuram led the singing. The young men wore bright pink shirts while the women wore outfits of matching pink, trimmed with green. Thanks to Bible Studies led by Rev. Rejidas, St. John Lutheran Church won the Bible Quiz based on the book of Romans. The congregation was awarded the grand prize trophy for winning the Family Convention Bible Quiz three years in row. Twenty members of the congregation attended the Convention.



Meenangadi and Bore Well

Rev. Titus in foreground

2019 TRAVEL TO INDIA

In mid October, I made my regular visit to Malabar on behalf of the Malabar Mission Society. This time I had the opportunity to introduce Rev. Greg Heidorn, incoming Project Officer, to India. Our first stop upon arrival was Thrissur, capital of Thrissur District and third largest city of Kerala. It has a strong Christian presence as it is one of the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church in Kerala. Here we visited Mr. Christudas, son of Rev. Dr. K.M. Victor, who now chairs the MMS sponsored Bible Correspondence Course committee.

Mr. Solomon brought a car to our hotel to take us to Wandoor where we first attended House Prayer led by Paster Akhil, second year vicar at Christ Lutheran Church, Wandoor, and where Greg had the opportunity to enjoy the fine hospitality of MMS accountant, Mr. Solomon, and his wife, Sobhi. We also visited Otten English School, and the two congregations of Pergamanna and Shartkunnu that Mr. Solomon serves. From there we continued on to Manjeri to visit Rev. K. K. Alavi and wife, Yasmin, and then on to Malappuram to meet Rev. Rejidas of Chelur and Malappuram Lutheran churches. Greg was also introduced to Dr. Sophia Brillin, medical director of CWC, and Mr. John Tennyson, head of the Friendship Reading Room.

The next day Mr. Solomon arrived and we traveled to our next stop, Kozhikode (Calicut). Rev. Titus joined us there for a few hours of conversation and lunch, after which we visited Rev. Joseph and wife, Nancy, in their home. The following morning, we traveled to Sulthan Bathery, picking up Rev. Titus and Flory along the way, and stopping at Mundakutty, Kalpetta and Meenangadi to introduce Greg to the pastors and to their congregations. We had a free morning on October 23 to explore the neighbourhood near the hotel before visiting Rev. Baby's two churches: Bethel, Moolenkavu, and St. Peter, Sulthan Bathery. These visits were followed by tea in Rev. and Mrs. Baby's home. There, Greg was introduced to their handicapped daughter, Jeffi.

The MMS sponsored a retreat on "Family" for pastors and their wives on October 24 with Greg Heidorn as presenter. The retreat was very much appreciated by the 14 people who attended. Following the Family Convention held on October 25 and 26, we continued on to Kannur. Here we visited Vanitha Library, the Open Door Reading Room and Naduvil for an early morning Sunday Service. On the afternoon of October 28, Greg and I took the train to Cochin. Mr. Solomon and Sobhi cared enough to meet us for a 10 minute station stop, a one hour bus ride from their home, just to say good bye and offer us some treats. In Cochin we had a day to see some tourist attractions with the help of an auto rickshaw driver before preparing to leave on the 3:30 A.M. flight back to North America. We are most grateful to the Lord for His traveling mercies and good health on this memorable trip.

MINISTRY IN ANANTAPUR

The MMS continues to receive encouraging emails from Anantapur. Pictures taken at the Good Friday service in April 2019 show many people in attendance. On August 12 a converts' meeting was held to give opportunity for new Christians to share experiences and grow in their faith. They also discussed the obstacles to reaching Muslims for Christ. An essential need is a burial ground. We are asked to pray for this as well as the strengthening of faith for new converts. On September 20 the Workers' Meeting gave opportunity to pray for a recently baptized family who face difficulties brought on by their conversion from Islam. In late August Shaik Benson traveled 2200 kilometers to distant areas where he was invited to preach and share the Gospel.



Anantapur Good Friday 2019

For the past 12 years this mission has tried to buy land to build a church in a place called Sollapuram where there are 130 believers. However, it was difficult to find a landowner who would sell his land for the purpose of a church. Thanks to many prayers a landowner did come forward to sell his land for Rs. 50,000, the sum that the congregation had contributed. The people are very happy to finally have this land. They look forward to the day when they can build a church.

Dear Friends in Christ and of Malabar,

Grace and Peace to you at this special time of the year.

As we begin a new Church Year we do so with anticipation and resolve: Anticipation of when Christ will come again and resolve to make sure that everyone everywhere hears and believes the message of salvation through Him. This is why you are supporters of Malabar Mission Society.

I am writing this as a first time visitor to India this past October. Since it was my first time I have some observations that I pray will inspire you to continued and greater service to the Kingdom for the sake of the Society.

1. The need for our presence in India and the support that we provide is essential. We know that without Christ at the center a person is lost and condemned. There are many in India who fall into this category. We also know how essential a proper witness to Christ is to bring a person from darkness into light. What the Lutherans there are doing—with our help—is shining the light of God's love into the darkness of unbelief and despair.
2. The hospitality of the people there is amazing. Even if they have little, what they do have is shared with even a stranger like me.
3. I want to thank Lorna Pederson for being the 'tour guide' on this trip as I felt my way around the country. She, the Board, and you have made it all possible for me to serve you in this way. I want you to each know how much I appreciate it.

The people are joyful, the worship is uplifting, and the service rendered is filled with love and compassion.

You ARE making a huge difference in the lives of many. Keep up the Great Work.

In Christ,
Rev. Gregory N. Heidorn
Assistant Project Officer

**Malabar Mission Society
Annual General Meeting
April 24, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.
Mount Olive Lutheran Church
2015 4th Avenue North
Regina, SK
All regular and honorary members
are invited to attend.
30th Anniversary Supper at 6:00 p.m.**

Remember In Prayer...

Pray that the Lord would bless the work of the pastors/workers in the Malabar Mission Circle and in Anantapur so that more people become believers in Jesus through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Pray that the Lord will provide a committed pastor to shepherd the newly planted church in Kannur.

Pray that the Bible Correspondence Course will be a tool to lead non-Christians in India to Jesus and that many will register for the Bible Correspondence Course.

Pray for the Lord's protection for all Christians, Christian churches and workers in India, especially in Kerala and Anantapur, that no harm will come to them.

Pray for adequate funds to continue the support of the Malabar Mission Society in Malabar and beyond. Also pray that funds will be found to finish the Mundakutty building project and other requests for Maintenance and Repair.