

# Malabar Mission Newsletter

Summer 2020

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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



## Inside this issue...

In Appreciation .....	Page 2
Update on BCC continued .....	Page 2
MMS News/Updates .....	Page 2
Kunyamma .....	Page 3
President's Message.....	Page 3
President's Message continued ....	Page 4
Journey's of Faith .....	Page 4

## Malabar Mission Newsletter

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## COVID-19 SITUATION IN INDIA WITH EMPHASIS ON KERALA AND ANANTAPUR

At a time when Italy and Spain were seeing many cases of Covid-19, this pandemic was off to a slow start in India. The first case was reported at the end of January. On April 26, 2020 Mr. Sherjin Franklin, BCC Director, reported that there were 26,900 positive cases in India with 825 deaths. As of July 28, 2020 India has had 1,483,156 cases with 33,425 deaths. Due to its large population of over 1 billion people, the prevalence of poverty and hot temperatures, it is very difficult for India to use the same methods of disease control as are used in more developed countries. The India government declared a lockdown in the country at the end of March. People were to remain in their homes and public transportation was stopped. Unable to go to work, many people did not have enough money to buy food at a time when food prices were increasing. With no public transportation, walking was the only means of travel for some.

**Covid-19 in Kerala:** In April the government of Kerala gave free rice and food grains to all people. For the migrant workers, the government provided free food grains, milk, eggs, television sets to their dwelling places, and facilities for indoor games. As restrictions were relaxed, Covid-19 cases increased. As for the MMS supported workers and their congregations in Malabar District, Mr. Solomon reported on June 26, 2020 that "by God's grace and protection" there were no cases of Covid-19. The people were sanitizing, practicing social distancing, staying in their homes and only going out for necessities.

On July 19, Rev. Titus reported that the situation in Kerala is "very bad" as Covid-19 is spreading every day, buses and trains are not running and most of the shops are closed. Schools and colleges are closed. The reading rooms are open but very few readers attend. Churches are opening but attendance is very low. There is no help even as the workers are suffering. God alone is trustworthy and they are praying for fast recovery from Covid-19.

On July 25, Rev. Titus wrote that there were 458 hot spots. Travel between districts in Kerala is not allowed at this time. He is not able to hold any leadership conferences. During this monsoon season the rains are very heavy, adding extra stress to people's lives already burdened by the pandemic. Please pray for protection from the virus and from severe weather and flooding for the people of Kerala, and especially for the MMS supported missions in Malabar. Also pray that the Lord would have mercy on India and rebuke the virus.

**Covid-19 in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh:** In regards to the Anantapur mission that the MMS helps to support, pastors and congregation members have been keeping safe and there have not been any cases of Covid-19 among them, thanks to the grace of God. However, they greatly missed the opportunities to gather for worship once government restrictions were in place, especially on Easter Sunday. Church Workers are visiting families to encourage them in their faith.

## UPDATE ON MMS BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE PROGRAM

Lorna Pederson

During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bible Correspondence Courses proved to be a successful means of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those who had not heard it. When a very generous gift was given to the MMS in 2012, Dr. Roland Miller suggested that these funds be used to initiate a new Bible Correspondence Course that would be available, not only by the traditional postal system, but also online to simplify communication and distribution for the many people in Malabar who are computer literate. A website was developed that offered six courses in Malayalam and two courses in English.

## *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
- † Jim and Ruth Mitchell**  
from Owen and Gail Mitchell
- † Oscar Sommerfeld**  
from Martha Sommerfeld
- † Ron and Irene Raedeke**  
from Jeanette Stead
- † Curtis Haugen**  
from Dan and Bev Haugen

*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](mailto: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.*

The new BCC was inaugurated on May 30, 2016, with Rev. Titus, filling in as part time Director of the BCC in addition to his job as MMS India Agent. In early 2019, Mr. Sherjin Franklin assumed this part time position while continuing to work for a newspaper firm. The original plan included a volunteer BCC Committee to review monthly reports, help set goals while developing strategies for reaching these goals, promote advertising, encourage prayer, and provide encouragement for BCC staff. A functioning committee with Mr. Christudas, son of the late Rev. Dr. K. M. Victor, as chairperson was established in early 2019 and has been diligent in carrying out its mandate.

The original goal of the BCC was to average 220 registrations each month. However, by the end of April 2020, only 222 people had registered for the BCC since its beginning in 2016. Even more discouraging, of those registered very few actually did a course. Then in May 2020, Mr. Christudas sponsored an advertisement for the BCC on Facebook. The response was overwhelming with 194 new registrations. The response to Facebook advertisement in June was 80 new registrations. Of these new registrations, 205 have signed up for courses. The MMS is very grateful for this initiative taken by the BCC Committee.

Future plans for the BCC include promotion of BCC in the three MMS sponsored reading rooms located in Kannur and Malappuram. The postal system as well as the online BCC will be promoted. MMS pastors and Workers are to be involved in follow up of BCC students who live in their respective area but have no involvement with a Christian church. It is hoped that students living in remote areas or outside of the Malabar district will be connected to a local pastor. At present with Covid-19 restrictions, these plans are on hold. In the meantime, it is hoped that registered BCC students will use extra time during Covid-19 isolation to study Scripture. Please pray for success of this program. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, may many students come to faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **MMS NEWS/UPDATES**

**Rev. Howard Ulmer**

The Malabar Mission Society continues to provide support to the workers and various projects in India. Although the daily activities are very limited due to Covid-19, the needs of the workers has increased. There is a very significant increase in the Bible Correspondence Course. See related article.

Due to Covid-19 the Annual Meeting and 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration was postponed. Since travel restrictions continue, the Board is unable to meet and the Anniversary is on hold.

On September 2, 2015 a special gift of \$15,000.00 for the Kannur work was received from Elaine Broughton, Whitby, ON. The gift was used for Vanitha Women's Reading Room and mission outreach at Kannur. Sincere thanks.

On November 28, 2017 lawyers for the Estate of Herman Koetsier of Calgary notified the MMS that a portion of the Estate was designated for the MMS. Near the end of December 2019 the MMS received \$32,065.02 from the Estate. Sincere thanks to Herman Koetsier for his faith in Jesus and his support of the Malabar Mission Society.

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Saskatoon, SK disbanded in 2019. The congregation donated \$4,000.00 to Malabar Mission Society. Sincere thanks for the gift. The work of the congregation and support for missions continues through this gift.

The history of the Malabar Mission Society, Two Decades of Service, 1986-2010, by Dr. Roland E. Miller is available. A NEW history Malabar Mission Projects Progress: The Malabar Mission Society 2011-2016 by Rev. Carlton Riemer is now available. Sincere thanks to our retired Project Officers for their faithful service and reflections on the work and mission of the MMS. A donation of \$15.00 for each booklet to cover printing costs is appreciated.

Your faithful prayers are sincerely appreciated. Your regular financial gifts provide for support of the mission work in Malabar and Anantapur. May our gracious God continue to bless this work.

## AYESHA AND KUNYAMMA: THEY SAW THE LORD

Dr. Roland E. 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 Mary's 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 Muhammed. Ayesha was equally strong in her personality. (The story of Ayesha was published in the previous Newsletter.)

### Kunyamma

The second woman, named Kunyamma, was a Hindu. Her story illustrates how God chooses some people with the intention that they will prepare others for His coming. That, of course, is what He did with John the Baptist. Through Zechariah (Luke 1:76) the message came: "And you, child....you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways." That is what Kunyamma did. The first person to be baptized in our Malappuram work, she prepared the way for others.

Kunyamma lived five kilometres from Malappuram and coincidentally, like Ayesha, she had a terrible asthma problem. Her condition was worsened by her extreme poverty. Her family consisted of a widowed mother who laboured in rice fields from morning to evening in order to feed her seven children. Kunyamma was the oldest, but her poor health did not allow for education, and she could not help her family.

As Kunyamma's disease advanced a senior Muslim neighbour named Ahmad Kutty approached her. I had been teaching him about the life and service of Jesus. He advised Kunyamma to come and meet me, which she did. From our small clinic we could only help her with symptomatic treatment. One day she met me in our yard. As we talked she was suddenly seized with a fearful coughing spasm, and she fell to the ground, sobbing. I picked her up and said to her, "There is nothing I can do, but I know someone who can help you." In a few words I told her of Jesus the Physician and His healing power. She replied, unforgettably, "atinnu nyann orukkum" the Malayalam for "I am ready for that." She was indeed. She learned more of Him, came to faith and was baptized in our small chapel.

Then Kunyamma went to work, telling her mother and siblings what had happened, giving them the basic reason why she had chosen to follow Him. They too wanted to follow Him from their Galilee and eventually all six were baptized. Thereupon the family opened up their little home to their neighbours for a Sunday afternoon school time for songs and stories about Jesus. Out of this activity was born the Chelur congregation. The Lord made it possible for us to arrange her marriage with Mr. Chacko, a leprosy medical worker; he himself was a healed leprosy patient. Together they raised a fine family before she passed away from other causes. Oh, I almost forgot to report that, for some reason, within one year of Kunyamma's baptism her asthma disappeared.

Ayesha and Kunyamma remind the Malabar Mission Society to be diligent in their service to Muslim and Hindu women in Malabar. We remember them and their many counterparts in other parts of India in the words of this hymn (LH, 195):

"For all your saints, O Lord, Who strive in you to live,  
Who followed you, obeyed, adored Our grateful hymn receive."

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I will sing to the Lord! – Rev. Howard Ulmer, President

### PSALM 13 (ESV)

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

<sup>2</sup> How long must I take counsel in my soul

and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

<sup>3</sup> Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;

light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,

<sup>4</sup> lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"

lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

<sup>5</sup> But I have trusted in your steadfast love;

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

<sup>6</sup> I will sing to the LORD,

because he has dealt bountifully with me.



Kunyamma is second from right

The heart of the Psalmist is filled with deep emotion, including loneliness and abandonment. He feels overwhelmed with his situation and the events that affect him seem beyond his control. When will the Lord rescue him? How long shall he wait?

The year 2020 began with great hopes and goals for many people in our world. However, since March the pandemic Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the lives of many people in our world. This has had a severe impact on employment, travel, worship services and family closeness. Many people are overwhelmed and discouraged. They ask, "How long, O Lord?"

The Psalmist reminds us, "But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation." The Psalmist is aware of his history that included waiting 430 years before the people were delivered from slavery in Egypt. He is aware of the 40 years of travel on the way to the promised land and hope. He also looked forward to the coming Messiah and hope. Although the burdens and struggles of life seemed too great, he trusted in God's steadfast love.

Covid-19 has caused sickness and death, economic loss and uncertainty, family struggles and hardship. Health officials and governments encourage physical distancing and limiting the size of gatherings, including for worship. As we wait for vaccines the pandemic continues. We look to science and medical research for answers. "How long, O Lord?" Our God has not abandoned us. He is in control of the world, even when various events and natural disasters happen. Sometimes we want to blame God, instead of trusting in Him. Through His Son, Jesus, who died for us and rose again we have our hope. Through Him we have forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. "My heart shall rejoice in your salvation." May we continue to trust in God's grace and mercy as we reflect on His steadfast love for His people. "I will sing to the Lord!"

#### **JOURNEYS OF FAITH**

##### **Pastor R. J. Richard** by Lorna Pederson

Pastor Richard was the son of an evangelist who served in Wayanad, Kerala for 28 years. He founded Immanuel Lutheran congregation in Kurumbala (Mundakutty). Pastor Richard resembled his father and followed in his footsteps serving for 25 years. He did his evangelism in the same way as his father. His wife came from Vadattupara and together they raised two daughters. The family enjoyed singing. Pastor Richard composed some devotional songs. He had a good command of English and beautiful penmanship.

Pastor Richard did much grassroots work. Although he was not flashy, he could be persuasive. In 1992 his first post was at the Friendship Centre, Malappuram. He served the congregations at Malavayal, Sulthan Bathery; Thiruvali, Wandoor; Vadattupara; Immanuel, Mundakutty; and Choormala. He thanked God that he was able to serve in these places and receiving support from the Malabar Mission Society. In 2017 he wrote, "By the grace of God I could lead many people to Christ and give baptism to many." He died September 2018.

##### **Mr. C. R. George** by Dr. Roland E. Miller

With the passing of Mr. George in February, 2020 we have lost one of the most outstanding evangelists in the history of the Malabar work; but heaven gained a star of faith and a loyal worker. From his early years as a college student evangelist in the Malappuram Reading Room to his later period when he and his wife served in Karunala Hospital and where he also assisted the Otten English School, and on to his retirement Mr. George was a quiet faithful servant, a staunch and tireless witness for Christ, and a friend to all.

In his youth Mr. George helped bring Rev. K. K. Alavi and other Muslim converts through their dangers and suffering safely, giving them comfort and encouragement. When K. K. Alavi miraculously escaped his persecutors and fled to Mysore City, he wrote these words to Mr. George, "Do not become angry because I have not sent a letter to you.... I will come there in March and tell you everything. Inform Saib of this. I am writing to you out of my respect for you.... You have suffered many difficulties over my affair. Tell me if it is possible for you to send me to a distant place.... I greet you humbly, Mr. George.... I am always praying to the Lord." A full listing of Mr. C. R. George's services would fill many pages.

##### **Mrs. Nancy Oliver** by Dr. Roland E. Miller

We have also heard of the passing of Mrs. Nancy Oliver in South Kerala where she and her pastor-husband, Rev. S. S. Oliver, were stationed in a Trivandrum Synod congregation. Already as a Seminary student Mr. Oliver was the pioneer who started a new outreach program in North Malabar, a project of the MMS. The dedicated effort was blessed and later he and his wife, Nancy, were able to establish a new congregation at Naduvil, with the aid of the Holy Spirit overcoming many severe difficulties. Their home at the rear of the small church building was about as simple as you will ever see! Later they continued their service at Wandoor for a period; thus spending the major portion of their careers in Malabar.

Nancy participated fully in this new pioneer work. She was a gracious Christian with a great smile who gave loving care to their two children, and a warm welcome to visitors. Sadly, at a relatively young age, she succumbed to cancer, but now "mourning and crying and pain will be no more."

**Thank you, Lord, for such devoted workers!**