

# Malabar Mission Newsletter

December 2020

Vol. 27 No. 2

## 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
Missions Updates cont'd.....	Page 2
Former Medical Missionary Dies....	Page 2
Mission Under The Cross .....	Page 3
MMS History Books for sale .....	Page 3
Christmas Message .....	Page 4
We Thank God.....	Page 4
Remember In Prayer .....	Page 4

## Malabar Mission Newsletter

is published by  
The Malabar Mission Society  
P.O. Box 32045  
Regina, SK, Canada S4N 7L2

Email: malabarmission@sasktel.net  
Website: www.malabarmissionsociety.org

Editor: Rev. Howard Ulmer  
Advisor: Rev. Dr. Roland Miller  
Layout & Design: Pam Burns

### Malabar Mission Society Executive

President:	Rev. Howard Ulmer
Vice-President:	Art Timm
Secretary:	Lorna Pederson
Treasurer:	Ryan Baker
Financial Sec.:	Gerald Wagner
Project Officer:	Lorna Pederson
Asst. Project Officer:	Rev. Greg Heidorn

### Board Members

Mark Dickinson	Harold Weiss
Mark Raedeke	Joel Otten
	Allan Hjelte

### Advisors to Board

Allan Hjelte	Glen Ozem
--------------	-----------

### Honourary Board Members

Mary Helen Miller	Dorothy Desens
Emerald Schoepp	Rev. L. L. Guebert

## AN UPDATE ON MISSIONS IN MALABAR AND ANANTAPUR

Ms Lorna Pederson

**MALABAR:** The MMS, along with entire world, has had to adapt to changes made necessary by the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, there were no in person MMS Board meetings nor was there travel to India in 2020. Covid-19 continues to take its toll in India with approximately 9.5 million cases so far. In terms of population the per capita rate is slightly higher than 0.06% in contrast to Canada's rate of 1.03%. The virus has been very active in Kerala with many hot spots and deaths according to Rev. Titus. At the end of August, Rev. Titus wrote that churches were closed and locked so no services were taking place. With few shops open and other facilities closed, it was difficult to obtain the essentials for daily living. It was impossible for Rev. Titus to carry out plans that were made at the beginning of 2020. Vacation Bible School had been cancelled in all places. Leadership Seminars and the Family Convention could not take place.

In August 2020, Kerala again experienced unusually heavy rains and wind adding to the difficulties caused by Covid. Broken windows and other damage to the building that houses Vanitha Library and Rev. and Mrs. Titus' living quarters occurred as a result. Very few people were coming to the library which has been run by Mrs. Flory Titus for the past two years.

At end of September Rev. Titus reported that churches could open but people under the age of 10 or over 60 years of age were not allowed to attend, so people with families did not come. This meant that pastors over the age of 60 could not conduct services in Kerala. This age ruling also applied to shopping and attendance at public functions. Only five people were allowed to gather in one place while burials were limited to 20 people and marriages were limited to 50 people. At the end of October, Rev. Titus wrote that shops and other facilities were allowed to open under strict guidelines and crowd control was happening in public places. During this pandemic only Rev. Rejidas and his wife Soumya became ill with Covid-19 after visiting a market that was affected by the virus in July. While self-isolating they developed fever and sore throat. They tested positive for the virus and spent 1 week in hospital. Fortunately, they both recovered. On November 28, Rev. Titus informed me that Flory had been diagnosed with Covid-19. Thanks to prayer and treatment, her health is improving. We continue to pray for complete recovery for Flory.

On October 12, Rev. Titus announced that the IELC was transferring four pastors to the Malabar area. Rev. Rejidas had requested transfer from St. John Lutheran Church, Malappuram to the Trivandrum area. He has been replaced by Mr. John Das, a pastor whose ordination has not yet taken place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Rev. Sony has replaced Vicar Pastor Akhil who has completed his two-year vicarage at Christ Lutheran Church, Wandoor. Rev. George replaces Pastor Raju at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mundakutty and Rev. Shine Raj replaces Pastor Bennet who was pastor at Christ Lutheran, Kalpetta and St. Paul Lutheran, Meenangadi. After serving their churches during retirement, both Pastor Raju and Pastor Bennet may again retire from active ministry. Rev. Shine Raj is known to the MMS as he helped out at the Kannur Open Door Reading Room and Naduvil in 2009 before going to seminary. The four new pastors were all to resume ministry in their new churches on October 31, 2020. We pray that the Lord will bless the efforts of these four new pastors recently transferred by the IELC.

### *In Appreciation*

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

#### *In Memory of:*

✠ **Dennis Haatvedt**

*from Edna Matthews*

✠ **Elizabeth (Betty) Dickinson**

*from Mark Dickinson*

✠ **Agnes Schneider**

*from Edith Schneider*

✠ **Walter Schoepp**

*from Emerald Schoepp*

#### *In Honour of:*

✠ **Lowell Guebert**

*from Ken Peterson*

*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.*

**ANANTAPUR:** The Covid virus is active in Anantapur, but there have been very few deaths. Thanks to God's grace, pastors, workers and congregation members are in good health. For the past two months all pastors are conducting worship services and contacting their members on a regular basis. During this pandemic, they have distributed food rations to nearly 2,000 families. Through the efforts of dedicated pastors and evangelists, the Holy Spirit has continued to gift saving



Anantapur Baptisms

faith as evidenced by six baptisms on October 2, 2020 and thirteen baptisms on October 7, 2020. On November 6, 2020 a new church was dedicated in the village of Sollapuram. The church was started 25 years ago and now finally has a building for worship. Your prayers are solicited for the newly baptized, for believers in Sollapuram and for those who live in surrounding villages that they will become believers in Jesus.



Church Dedication

### **FORMER MEDICAL MISSIONARY DIES**

Dr. John E. Rittmann, a former Malabar missionary, passed away at Watertown, South Dakota, on November 22, at the age of 83. He died as the result of Covid-19 illness.

Dr. Rittmann was the Medical Superintendent of Karunalaya Hospital, Wandoor, Malabar, from 1965 to 1971. There he provided strong and steady Christian leadership, in partnership with his wife, Lorraine. He also gave great help to the medical work particularly with T.B. patients both in Wandoor and at the Christian Welfare Centre in Malappuram.

Dr. Rittmann was born of long-serving missionary parents in Nagercoil, South India. He grew up in India and graduated from Kodaikanal High School in 1954. After his medical education in the U.S. he embarked on a career in public health and family medicine. After his Malabar service he kept that mission in his heart and gave it his support. He also assisted in the formation of the Lutheran Health Care, Bangladesh Hospital in Dumki. Quiet in demeanor and dedicated in ministry, John was a faithful servant of the Lord and a sterling co-worker. He will be sorely missed by many.

## MISSION UNDER THE CROSS

Rev. Dr. Roland Miller

The phrase “mission under the cross” is widely used because it expresses what is normal in the Christian experience. First of all, the Lord Jesus Himself affirmed that any and every Christian will have to take up a cross to follow Him. Secondly, we know that Satan works hard against anyone trying to overcome his influence. These two realities are responsible for the fact that all the original apostles except one suffered a martyr’s death. Ever since, mission work has been associated with suffering. That principle has held true in India and Malabar also.

India on the whole has been tolerant to the proclamation of the Gospel and we must be thankful for that. However, that fact does not mean that Christians have been able to conduct their witness and work without cross-bearing. Rather, it has been a constant presence. This fact was prominently underlined 21 years ago in the state of Orissa (now Odisha), northeast of Anantapur. There Graham Staines, an Australian missionary, had been working among leprosy patients since 1965. He met Grace, who was an Operation Mobilization youth worker, and they married and had three children. In 1999 Graham, taking with him their two boys, went on a field trip. They had to sleep overnight in their jeep-van. During the night a mob attacked the jeep and torched it. Graham, Philip (10) and Timothy (7) were burnt to death.

The mass of people in India, up to its president, gasped in dismay, and the 49 miscreants were apprehended and sentenced. After five years, in 2004, Grace decided to leave India with her daughter, Esther (13), who had been studying at the Hebron School in Ootacamund, near Malabar. She said, “I have forgiven the killers. Nothing I say or do will bring Graham back.” Later she added, “Forgiving helps the healing process.” Before she left, however, she inaugurated the hospital her husband had planned, naming it the Graham Staines Memorial Hospital. Many Indian citizens made financial contributions to its construction. Yet Grace could not stay in her homeland. Answering the call of the Spirit, she eventually returned to India to continue her ministry.

Mission under the cross. That truth was also evident in the work in Malabar, which I will demonstrate by two illustrations. The fact that there has been occasional violent opposition to Christian work even in Kerala is surprising because the population of the state is 19 percent Christian, in contrast with the national average of three percent. Yet there too Christian work has had to face harassment of different kinds, even including intermittent forcible physical deterrence. The Calicut branch of the Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa’s organization) experienced the latter in September 2004, at the time of one of my visits. Two sisters, Sirolina and Rose, were visiting a poverty-stricken outcaste (Dalit) colony in West Hill to distribute relief supplies when they were attacked and beaten. When their Mother Superior and other nuns came to try to help, they too were assaulted. The attackers were allegedly extremist Hindus. The State Chief Minister, Mr. Oomen Chandy, appealed for public assistance in the arrest of the criminals, while female members of the Student Federation of India launched protest marches against “the fascist oppression.” In an editorial headed “Communal Thuggery” (published September 29, 2004), the Hindu newspaper attributed the motivation to “hate politics” and named the organizations involved. Christians drew together and prayed for the injured nuns.

Bearing the cross has been an element in the Lutheran work in Malabar from the beginning. It took different forms, not excluding violence. It was not unusual for new believers to be beaten or cast out, and some simply “disappeared.” As an illustration of the harassment, I recall an occasion when loudspeaker attacks were launched against our work in Malappuram as the result of a Muslim baptism. They were accompanied by the demand that all Muslim children be immediately withdrawn from our nursery school. I was gone at the time. Like Grace Staines, my wife, Mary Helen, held firm. One morning a Muslim bicycle-shop owner named Ali walked down the main street of the town, holding the hands of his two little children. Bravely he went past the guards at the gate, walked up the driveway, and presented the children to Mary Helen and Mrs. Francis, saying: “You have always loved my children; here they are.” That night all the loudspeakers shut down, and the next morning all the children returned to the school. God had used an ordinary Muslim friend to defuse a serious situation. With the cross comes the Lord’s promise to be with his servants. The Risen Christ declared, “Lo! I am with you always!”

Harassment takes different forms and is currently on the increase. Please pray for those under persecution that they may have the strength to forgive. Please pray for the Gospel workers and the believers in Malabar that they may have the courage to stand. Please pray that the Spirit of God may keep the work going. Please pray that we may be able to continue an active supporting role.

### **Malabar Mission Society History Books**

Two Decades of Service, 1986-2010, by Dr. Roland Miller

Malabar Mission Projects Progress: 2011-1016, by Rev. Carlton Riemer

Donation of \$15.00 each includes printing and postage.

## CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Dear Friends in Christ, our New Born King,

Depending on your latitude (not attitude) it is getting darker and darker sooner and sooner and it is staying dark later and later. This is true not only because of the tilt of the earth in the northern hemisphere of the globe, but also because of the true and sad state of the world at present. The world and the cultures of the world are choosing darkness rather than Light.

Yet, it does not really matter what the world chooses, it matters more of WHO chooses. For us—as well as for everyone on earth—it is God who chooses. He chooses us. He chooses us NOT because we are so good or smart or clever or good looking. He chooses us because He wants us to be with Him eternally. And He doesn't choose just one particular group of people, or one particular nation, or language group. In Christ, God the Father chooses everyone, everywhere. Had God the Father not chosen us in Christ, no one could know the joy of salvation.

Spreading joy of salvation is our delight and it is, especially, our delight to do so specifically in India through the Malabar Mission Society. Yes, we do it in our own dark places in Canada and the United States, but God also has called us to bring the Light of Life to the people of India and specifically the Malabar region.

This is a holy calling and a holy enterprise. Never doubt that God is going to do even greater things in the future than He has ever done in the past. He will do these things because He always does.

So, this is the task of us who live in the Light—that Christmas (Christ) may come to everyone, everywhere and especially in India.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Rev. Gregory N. Heidorn  
Assistant Project Officer

### *WE THANK GOD ...*

**For** many years of blessing the faithful service by the Malabar Mission Society, its various leaders and workers.

**For** many years of blessing the Gospel Workers, Pastors and Evangelists of the Malabar Mission Circle and Anantapur in India as they continue to share the Good News of God's love in Jesus.

**For** Ms. Lorna Pederson, Project Officer, for her faithful service.

**For** Rev. Dr. Roland Miller, Program Advisor, for guiding and leading the Malabar Mission Society.

**For** the various congregations and individuals in Canada and the United States who provide financial support of this mission and ministry in India.

### *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** for continued healing and strength – Mrs. Flory Titus, Dr. Sophia Brillin, Rev. Rejidas and Soumya and all affected by Covid-19. Pray that Covid-19 will be controlled.

**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** that many children will attend the Vacation Bible Schools in April so that the seed of faith may be planted in their hearts and minds.

**Pray** that the Lord will provide strength and courage to all Pastors, Evangelists and Gospel Workers in Malabar and Anantapur.

**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 Dr. Sophia and Christian Welfare Centre in Malappuram, that there will be adequate business to pay the bills. Also pray for reliable management that Dr. Sophia can count on.

**Pray** for adequate funds to continue the support of the Malabar Mission Society in Malabar and Anantapur and beyond.