

Malabar Mission Newsletter

fall 2008

MALABAR—20 YEARS AND BEYOND

Vol. 15, 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



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MILDRED FRANCIS:

A TRUE WORKER FOR THE MISSION OF THE LORD

- Mary Helen Miller

A joyful part of human experience is to find a special person at a crucial point in your life who is destined to not only play an important role in your life at that time, but also to become and remain a dear friend. How lucky I was to have Mildred Francis as that special person.

When we first moved to our new home in Malappuram on the Malabar coast of South India some 55 years ago, we were approached by members of the Francis family, a prominent Christian family of the town, with the offer to sell their old family home and compound for the new mission we hoped to establish there. They were forced to sell for financial reasons, but because the property contained their family chapel they were loath to sell to non-Christians. Located as it was right in the middle of the town, it was ideal for the new mission station—a win-win situation for everyone. As the work of the mission grew the old Francis house metamorphosed, first into a nursery school cum maternity center and eventually into the present full scale hospital which it is today. The family chapel became St. John Lutheran Church, and a bungalow-home for the fast growing Miller family was constructed on one side of the property.

We were soon close associates and colleagues as Mildred took on the daily job of teaching me Malayalam, the local language; and her husband "Daddy" (that was indeed his baptized name) taught my husband this difficult language. Along with the Malayalam she explained and introduced to us many aspects of the every day life and customs of the community. A mother of six, herself, she was also my closest adviser and



Mildred Francis and Mary Helen Miller

(2004 Photo courtesy of Mary Helen Miller)

confidant during my first pregnancy. In sharing our lives so closely we also shared the same dreams for the future work of the mission, and in the course of time she became the first teacher in the Nursery School we established together the following year.

It was Mrs. Francis, or "Tutu Teacher" as she was affectionately called by the community, who gathered the hungry, ragged children playing in the streets and took me to visit their homes where we were able to persuade their parents to send them to the new school. A nursery school for preschool children was a new concept in the area and this was the first one to be established in our Malabar district. She generously shared her devotion, hard work and many talents with everyone. She was the heart of the nursery school and remained a very highly respected person throughout the community.

Continued. See *Mildred Francis* on page 4.

In Appreciation

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

In memory of:

- **Gladys Evelyn Smith**
Sue Morrison
- **Margaret Stalwick**
Ken Stalwick

In honour of

- **Rev. Dr. Roland & Mary Helen Miller**
E.W. (Hutch) & Janet Hutchins



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*

GOSPEL WORKERS OF THE MALABAR MISSION CIRCLE MEET AND RETREAT



Rev. T. Joy led the Workers

Under the leadership of the Malabar Mission Society Program Director Rev. T. Joy, the Gospel Workers of the Malabar Mission Circle met at Kozhikode, Kerala, India, on May 27, 2008, with 100 % attendance and participation. A special guest at the meeting was the Rev. Y. Christopher, the Board for Mission Convenor of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church. Rev. Christopher led a Bible study on Mission. For many of the Gospel Workers this was their first opportunity to meet Rev. Christopher and learn about how the Board for Missions is structured and operates in the IELC.

Less than a month later, on June 24-25, 2008, all the Gospel Workers again met for a retreat, entitled "The MMC Workers' Fellowship." The three main presentations were on the subjects of

- "Leadership," led by Rev. T. Joy
- "Mission and Church Growth," by Rev. Y. Christopher, and
- "The Holy Spirit," by Rev. Dr. Monickaraj.

A special time in the evening was spent in intercession, when the participants prayed for all the Mission centers of the Malabar Mission Circle, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Board for Missions, the Malabar Mission Society, and for all the workers.

At this gathering the officers of the Malabar Mission Circle of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church had an official meeting as a circle under the leadership of the Rev. Y. Christopher. They charted out a one year plan of Evangelism and Outreach for the Malabar Mission Circle.

We look forward to hearing more about this plan as it unfolds and gets implemented in the year ahead. Such a plan encourages coordinated efforts by the MMC and IELC in planning evangelism in the Malabar area. We are also thankful for the interest and concern Rev. Y. Christopher has for the workers in the Malabar Mission Circle, as the Malabar Mission Society and the India Evangelical Lutheran Church develop a relationship. ❖

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS RECEIVE TRAINING

The Malabar Mission Circle recognizes the importance of Christian education for nurturing Christians in the faith and for reaching the lost with the Gospel. Jesus is our model and example. At the invitation of MMS Program Director Rev. T. Joy, ten Sunday School teachers from the Wandoor and Malappuram congregations met July 12, 2008 at St. John Lutheran Church, Malappuram for a training program. The Rev. D. Christudas, a professor at Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil, and director of the Lay Training Department of the Seminary, taught the classes. He covered these main subjects:

- Orientation to the India Evangelical Lutheran Church Sunday School Syllabus
- The Psychology of various age groups of students
- Practical helps on "How to Prepare a Class," and
- The Geography of Bible Lands

The congregation of St. John, Malappuram, took care of the food arrangements at the seminar. We thank them for their generosity and hospitality.

A similar seminar was scheduled to be held on August 30, 2008, for the Wynad area. ❖

PROJECT OFFICER PLANS TRIP TO INDIA

The Rev. Carlton Riemer is planning a trip to India leaving on October 28 and returning on November 26, 2008. The purpose of the trip is to visit with the Gospel Workers in the Malabar Mission Circle and review what God has been doing in and through their work and to plan for the future. He will confer with the Rev. T. Joy, the MMS Program Director, and the Rev. Dr. K. M. Victor, the Past MMS India Agent, so that together they can prepare a work program or budget for 2009 for the MMS.

This trip will include a visit to the Anantapur area, where the MMS has been supporting workers who have been very effective, by God's grace, in reaching Muslims with the Gospel. ❖

**We regret to announce
Rev. T. Joy's tour to
Canada and the United States
is CANCELLED**

NEW RELEASE OF OLD VIDEO

In recognition of the 20th anniversary of the Malabar Mission Society we are re-releasing, in DVD format, the video documentary *The Rhythm of Love: Mission to Malabar*. Originally produced in 1993 with the help and participation of Framework Productions Inc., and under the umbrella of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Manitoba and Saskatchewan District, this inspiring presentation provides a detailed overview and history on the purpose, the people, and the places central to the mission outreach of the MMS. Included in the documentary are early photos and video clips of Dr. and Mrs. Roland Miller, Rev. K.K. Alavi, and numerous pastors and Gospel workers familiar to readers of this newsletter. In addition, all footage used in the film was recorded in the Malabar region of Kerala, India.

Malabar Mission Society
Video Presentation



The Rhythm of Love

DVD-R

As we look back over the past twenty years, we are especially grateful for the contribution and support of many, many dedicated individuals, supporters and volunteers. It is in their honour that we re-introduce this special video presentation.

Request your complimentary copy of this video today! Write the Malabar Mission Society, contact a local MMS representative, or e-mail malabarmission@sasktel.net

NOTE: The re-released version of *The Rhythm of Love* is available in DVD-R format for either computer or stand-alone DVD player and runs approximately 26 minutes. When ordering, please specify your preferred DVD format: either for stand-alone DVD-R player or for *Windows* PC DVD. Sorry, no *MAC* version at this time. ❖

MALAYALAM CATECHISM PRINTED

The Lutheran Christians in the Malabar area use Martin Luther's *Small Catechism (With Explanation)* extensively in the Malayalam language for Sunday School classes, Bible classes, and as an evangelism resource. The Sunday School syllabus of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church has many references to it. Children start at an early age to memorize Bible verses that are quoted in the explanation portion of the Catechism. The teachers also tell the Bible stories that are referenced in connection with a doctrinal teaching mentioned in the Catechism. Hence, it is important that every member of the congregations in the Malabar Mission Circle who is able to read have his own copy of the Catechism.

To fill this need the Malabar Mission Society is supporting the printing of 3,000 copies of *The Small Catechism* in Malayalam. Already in 2007 the Rev. Dr. Roland Miller as Project Officer approached the Laurentian District of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League—Canada for a mission grant of \$1,800 for this project. We thank them for their generosity and encouragement in approving of this project and making this resource available to the members of congregations in the Malabar area.

At the time of this writing, the Catechism is in the process of being printed at Modern Offset Printers, located in Sulthan Bathery, Kerala, India. The Rev. Dr. K. M. Victor, past India Agent of the MMS, is overseeing the publication.

The Catechism is also used evangelistically in Malabar when copies are given or sold for a nominal cost to "seekers" and "inquirers" who are not Christians. In addition, Christians of other denominations request copies because the Catechism contains such a clear presentation of the basic teachings of Christianity in their language.

When you meet members of the LWMLC, please thank them for their support of mission projects such as *The Small Catechism* in Malayalam. ❖

MALABAR MISSION SOCIETY SUPPORTS VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS

In March and April 2008, fifteen congregations and outreach stations in Malabar conducted a total of 31 Vacation Bible Schools. The pastors and evangelists of the Malabar Mission Circle and a total of 63 teachers led this educational and outreach endeavor. The effort reached a total of 1,239 people, many of whom had never heard the Gospel before.

More non-Christians than Christians attended: 690 Hindus; 59 Muslims; and 440 Christians. The congregation in Wandoor, led by the Rev. S. S. Oliver, had six Vacation Bible Schools for a total of 311 students.



Four sites had three Vacation Bible Schools. In contrast, most congregations in North America have only one, and it is often a struggle to recruit teachers and staff for even one VBS.

Hence we in the MMS are delighted that so many Vacation Bible Schools were held and that so many people could hear and experience the Gospel of God's love in Jesus the Christ. We praise God for these workers in the church for their remarkable effort. As members of MMS we support these

Vacation Bible Schools not only with funds for the materials and resources but also with our prayers and encouragement. ❖

MILDRED FRANCIS (continued from pg. 1)

Mildred taught in this Christian Mission school for the next twenty-five years and was the beloved "Tutu Teacher" for three generations of children, imparting to them her strong Christian faith through her words and her love. She once confided to us that when she first started teaching she was afraid of the Muslims for there was a lot of prejudice and fear against them in Malabar at that time. But through their children, whom she loved, she came to love them also and to realize that we were all Children of God.

Part of our program was a visit to each child's home twice during the year. The families and especially the mothers of the children became involved in the school program and special classes were started for the older children and mothers on Fridays, the Muslim holiday. In addition to the Bible stories the classes also included sewing and literacy lessons. These women became the nucleus of a woman's group which eventually developed into "The Malappuram Women's Handicraft and Cottage Industry Society, Ltd.," an organization which provided many poor women of the community with work and a small income. Mildred and I found ourselves in a unique position. As Christians we were not associated with any of the divisive castes and were accepted by both the Muslim and the Hindu families of our town. The women were able to meet and come together in our homes which they couldn't do in each other's. It was an exciting time and another exciting project I shared with this dear friend.

Now, widowed and in her late eighties, Mildred is badly crippled by osteoporosis and can no longer visit in the homes of her friends and neighbors, so the hundreds of "her" children, who still call her "teacher," come to visit her in her small home ... as do we on every return visit to our Malappuram. ❖

Rev. K. M. Victor,
former India Agent
of the Malabar Mission Society,
received an honorary
Doctor of Divinity Degree
honoris causa
from Concordia Lutheran Seminary,
Edmonton, Alberta
at the May 2, 2008 Convocation.

The Certificate and hood will be presented
to Rev. Victor in November
at the Church Workers' Conference
in India.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT MALABAR: BEYOND TWO DECADES

- Rev. Howard Ulmer

God's mission and promise of salvation began in the Garden of Eden and was renewed many times with his people. The messengers and prophets proclaimed a message of hope and renewal. At the right time God sent Jesus, his Son, to redeem the world through his life, death and resurrection. In the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus commanded his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing...and teaching ..."

The followers of Jesus spread the Good News of God's love in Jesus throughout the world. They also brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to India. Missionaries from various countries shared the message in many communities. The India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC) established mission stations in Kerala State (along the "Malabar" coast) in Southwest India. As God's love in Jesus Christ is shared with the people, the Holy Spirit has touched the hearts and lives of many people who now believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

The **Malabar Mission Circle** includes the Gospel Workers who serve several mission stations in Kerala State. In response to the requests for financial and prayer support the **Malabar Mission Society** was established in 1988. The initial funds came from Shepherd King Lutheran Church, Calgary, Alberta. Mr. Eric Kemle and Rev. Val Hennig encouraged the congregation's support. The outreach and mission work has continued to grow through the faithful prayers and financial support of many congregations, Sunday Schools, Lutheran Women's Missionary League, Ladies Groups, as well as many individuals throughout Canada and the United States.

We give thanks and praise to God for the dedicated and faithful workers in India. We sincerely appreciate the many faithful supporters who assist with the mission task of sharing God's love in Jesus Christ. The opportunities to proclaim the Good News of God's love continues to grow. The Malabar Mission Society has responded to these opportunities. We will continue to provide support and encouragement beyond the two decades in order that God's kingdom may grow. **All praise and glory to God!** ❖

MMS REPRESENTED AT IELC ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The MMS Program Director, Rev. T. Joy, represented the Malabar Mission Society at the 50th Anniversary (Golden Jubilee) celebration of the founding of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church. He attended the festivities held at Calvary Lutheran Church, Nagercoil, India, in June 2008, together with dignitaries from all over the world, including the Rev. Dr. David Buegler, the Fifth Vice President of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. ❖