

# Malabar Mission Newsletter

Fall 2022

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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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## CONTENDING WITH LEPROSY IN MALABAR

Dr. Roland Miller

In late September, in Ottawa, we had a visit from two old friends, sisters named Barbara and Renate Riedel from Germany. Their parents were Dr. Gottfried and Helle Riedel. Dr. Riedel became a world-wide known expert in leprosy. For years he and his wife conducted a selfless healing ministry, on behalf of the Mission to Lepers, in a place called Chevayur near Calicut, in Malabar. While Dr. Riedel's establishment and even some of his oldest patients are still there, it is now run by the Government of Kerala State, and its vaunted out-clinics are closed down. That development, however, did not take place before its program had made a deep impact on the Malappuram community. Barbara's and Renate's welcome visit reminded me of how that happened.

As I reflect on that once more, I think of two critical factors in our Malabar work. The first is the very close relation of evangelism and the healing ministry in our program. The second factor is the dedication of people like the Riedels and others who very specifically laboured on behalf of those who were afflicted with leprosy, now often called "Hansen's disease."

Mary Helen and I met with the leprosy problem in 1954, in an early and personal way. We had come to the town of Manjeri in South Malabar for language study. Then a sad thing happened. Mrs. J. L., a missionary wife in Wynad, Malabar, contracted leprosy. She was lovingly and successfully treated by Dr. Riedel. We were requested to and readily agreed to take care of their two little boys for four months, until by God's grace J. recovered. Thus, we had a family in India earlier than expected!

A year later when Mary Helen and I arrived in Malappuram, 12 kms. away, we could easily see that leprosy was a wide-spread problem. We resolved to try to help these neglected people, but what could we do? Then Dr. Riedel came to our assistance. He decided to conduct a clinic for the Malappuram area, even though it was 60 km. away from his hospital. In addition to that happy development, the general work among lepers had been blessed by the discovery of new medications such as DDS, which significantly changed the approach to this affliction. If caught early, it can be cured! Its later progress also can be halted, even though the bodily marks of the disease cannot be easily erased. Now there was a healing possibility and some hope for the patient beyond the prospect of a lifetime spent in a sanatorium.

At Malappuram "the ball was now in our court." I consulted with some town leaders who said, "There is no leprosy here," but they were in a state of denial. We went ahead and rented a building from a sympathetic Muslim citizen to serve as a clinic, and eventually more than 500 patients came for help! There Dr. Riedel faithfully conducted his clinic for many years. Occasionally someone would come and see me privately so that no one would know about their problem and they would not become one of the socially ostracized. One such youth, A. K., came to my office in panic and said, "I think I have leprosy." I asked him to raise his shirt. On his back was the early but undeniable mark of the disease. The doctor, as requested, treated him privately, and he was cured and became a leading citizen in the Gulf region. We received an unexpected and additional benefit from the program when Mr. Chacko, who himself was a recovered leprosy patient, married the first new Christian in Malappuram, a woman named Kunyamma. They lived a

### *In Appreciation*

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

#### *In Memory of:*

- ✠ **Walter Schoepp**  
from Emerald Schoepp
- ✠ **Eric Kemle**  
from Marjorie Kemle
- ✠ **Mary Beckham**  
from Faith Lutheran Church, Homer, Alaska
- ✠ **Curtis Haugen**  
from Dan and Bev Haugen
- ✠ **Henry and Mary Esther Otten**  
from Bill and Marie (Otten) Meyer
- ✠ **Oscar Sommerfeld**  
from Martha Sommerfeld
- ✠ **Betty Dickinson**  
from Mark Dickinson
- ✠ **Ernie Hiller**  
from Arlene Hiller
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from Phil Guebert
- ✠ **Ron and Irene Raedeke**  
from Jeanette Stead
- ✠ **David Ramsey**  
from Howard Ulmer  
from Lorna Pederson  
from Gerry Wagner  
from Ted Giese  
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from Mike Raedeke  
from Jeanette Stead  
from Les and Carol Rein  
from Lorne Wirth  
from Gerald Grabowsky  
from Ruth Erickson  
from Jon and Charisse Jensen  
from Barb Schentag

#### *In Honour of:*

- ✠ **Lowell Guebert**  
from Ken Peterson  
from Phil Guebert

happy life together!

I will mention another of the good endings that came from the work that Dr. Riedel initiated. One day the medical officer at our Maternity and Child Welfare Centre came rushing over to our home and pleaded, "Please come quickly." I went with her. On the veranda floor of the health centre lay what can only be described as a kind of human wreckage – a recumbent, very sick leprosy patient, lying in filthy rags. The physician begged me to do something in the interest of other functions that could not be carried on without some sort of solution.

The crisis had to be dealt with. Our compound gardener's name was Alavi, a Muslim, and he too was present. We looked at each other and made a mutual decision. With each of us lifting one end of the man, we carried him to my car and loaded him on the back seat. Then I drove to the Chevayur leprosy hospital, with Alavi firmly and fearlessly holding the man. There a German nurse-deaconess named Sister Elizabeth Spiess took charge of him, in the absence of the Riedels. She cleaned him up, saw to his care, and gave special attention to his legs. I was relieved to see that he was safe, and thought the story was over. Not so.

Several months later I heard someone on my veranda. I went out and saw a good-looking man who appeared vaguely familiar. He said, "I am Gopala Krishnan. You took me to Chevayur. I am ok now and am going home. I came here to thank you." As I pondered this Hindu patient's words, I could not help but recall the New Testament story of Jesus and the ten lepers, one of whom returned to give Him thanks (Luke 17:11-19). And I also gratefully praised God for those who restored a human wreckage to new life.

The Malabar Mission Society has so much to do, including many important projects for which it greatly needs the financial assistance of its dedicated donors. In these desperate days please continue to help as you are able. But, looking ahead, when we once again feel the challenge to "lift up our eyes." We may also sense that there is still room for a ministry among and to lepers in Malabar. Despite the new treatments, the number of the afflicted gives an enduring challenge to mission-conscious Christians. India continues to have well over

100,000 new cases of leprosy annually, constituting 56% of the world's new case count, and not including old patients. The work is not yet over. Read Luke 5:12-15. The Lord Jesus still stretches out His hand, touches the lepers, and says, "I do choose. Be made clean."

*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.*

## REV. GREG HEIDORN, PROJECT OFFICER

Rev. Gregory Heidorn is a third generation pastor and his daughter Johanna is a fourth generation servant in the Church (missionary in Dominican Republic).

Rev. Heidorn graduated from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, SK in 1981. He was Vicar at Mount Olive, Regina, SK under Rev. Brian Dill and has served congregations in Frobisher/Oxbow, SK (1982-1988); Winnipeg, MB (1988-1990); Rochester, Minnesota (1990-2019); and now in Homer, Alaska (2019-present).

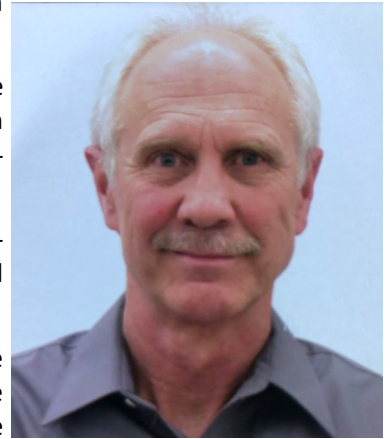
He married Wylene in 1982 and they have four grown children: Danaca (Bekkestua, Norway-outside of Oslo), Peter (Minneapolis, Minnesota), Johanna (Dominican Republic), and Gretchen (Seattle, Washington)

Besides travelling to India in 2019 with Lorna Pederson, Rev. Heidorn has taught at the Lutheran Seminary in Odessa, Ukraine (LCC supported) twice, led several English Language VBS's in Vyborg, Russia, and has served also as Pastoral Advisor to various districts of the International Lutheran Laymen's League (LHM). He is fascinated with foreign missions and strives to encourage all congregations to support the most necessary work of the Malabar Mission Society.

In his free time he enjoys reading, hiking, swimming, and riding bike.

**President Howard Ulmer** welcomes Rev. Greg Heidorn as the new Project Officer for the Malabar Mission Society. Rev. Heidorn will be visiting Malabar in mid January 2023. He will be accompanied by Mr. Joel Otten, another Board member. They will be visiting the various congregations and mission stations. They will also visit with the newly elected officers of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC).

**President Howard Ulmer** expresses sincere thanks to Miss Lorna Pederson for her faithful service as the Past Project Officer since 2016. Annually she visited Malabar until Covid-19 restricted the visits. She also maintained regular contact with Rev. Titus and Mr. Solomon. She regularly provided encouragement and support to the pastors and church workers in India. Lorna continues to serve as Secretary for the Malabar Mission Society.



## 2022 NEWS UPDATE FROM MALABAR AND ANANTAPUR

### Lorna Pederson, Past Project Officer

#### MMC Activities

Rev. Titus planned a Workers' Meeting for January 19, 2022. As in the past, the meeting took place in Kozhikode at the Good News Centre. Four pastors were absent. The meeting began and ended with prayer (Rev. John Das, Rev. I. Titus). The Pastors and Workers were very disappointed to learn that they had lost 3 months of support in 2021, especially when they are asking for more income, not less. Requests were not made for those 3 months. The Workers decided to meet again in March 2022 to further discuss this matter.

Only one pastor was absent at the Workers' Meeting held on March 23, 2022. Worship services were taking place with gradual improvement in attendance. Confirmation services were planned for Easter Sunday. Pastors were encouraged to conduct VBS. On April 9, 2022, Rev. Titus wrote that not all places would offer VBS. Mr. Solomon reported that the children of Sharathkunnu and Pergamanna, congregations served by him, were eagerly waiting to attend VBS.

On April 20, 2022 Rev. Titus related that little progress, if any, had been made in their attempts to secure a safe way to receive financial support. Monthly bills for rent, electricity, water, telephone, cable TV, etc. need to be paid regularly so they were stopping cable TV, telephone and the newspaper. March 2022 was the last month that support was sent to Malabar.

On May 29, 2022 Mundakutty congregation dedicated its new church building which was completely built by its own members. In 2016, the original church was taken down and the foundation of the new building was laid on the same site, but facing a different direction on the top of the hill. Muslim neighbours next door helped generously by providing 18 bags of cement. Rev. Titus wrote that the congregation members suffered much to complete the building.

Since July 2022, all churches connected to the MMS are open and regular worship services are being held except for 2 points: Naduvil and Chenagli churches are almost closed as the pastor has not been there for several months. Rev. Joseph moved to Trivandrum from Kozhikode, but still collects room rent from the Good News compound. The nursery school is closed, but some worship services still take place using recordings. Rev. George has left Mundakutty church and there is a change in pastors in Wandoor.

Heavy monsoon rains in the summer of 2022 caused much damage, especially in Wayanad and Kannur. Many viruses were circulating and many workers were afflicted. Due to fear of viruses, no one was visiting the Reading Rooms. No funds were available to pay Workers and teaching staff.

### **Bible Correspondence Course**

The April BCC report was the only one received in 2022. An advertisement on Facebook in the spring of 2020 had a very positive outcome on BCC registrations with 151 people registering for the BCC and 113 people taking courses. The most popular courses were Gospel according to St. Matthew, Book of Prophet Isaiah, and Promises of God. A lesser number of students registered for the the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John. BCC Director, Sherjin Franklin, wrote that these 6 courses are the Basic Course. There is no need to add more courses at this time, but advanced courses could be made available for students who have completed the Basic Course. Please pray that the BCC will transform lives in Kerala and beyond.

The MMS is grateful for the BCC staff as well as BCC Committee members. BCC Instructor, Dr. Siromony, has been very helpful, not only in correcting the students' answer sheets but also in responding to the evaluations that he receives from students. In addition, Dr. Siromony receives calls and WhatsApp messages asking for clarification of doubts from the students. Earlier when the BCC team was preparing questions in English for some courses, Dr. Siromony did the Malayalam translation and also corrected errors found in the Malayalam course materials. BCC web administrator, Tony Jose, resigned from his position but no suitable person has been found to replace him. To qualify for the position, expertise in IT as well as a commitment to ministry are required.

### **Anantapur Mission**

Not even a pandemic has stopped the proclamation of the Word in Anantapur during the first 10 months of 2022. During this time there were 26 baptisms, 2 new church dedications and one re-dedication following the rebuilding of an old, damaged church. On October 24, fifty pastors attended a one day pastors' conference. Each pastor has 3 churches and is working to establish new congregations in places where there are no churches. Rev. Shaik Ismail and Pastor Shaik Benson request prayer for these dedicated pastors and their families. Our prayers and encouragement are needed to sustain them in their ministry.



Pastors' Conference October 24, 2022



Church Dedication August 9, 2022



Anantapur Baptisms

**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.