

# Malabar Mission Newsletter

Spring 2023

Vol. 29 No. 1

## 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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## PROJECT OFFICER VISITS INDIA

### Rev. Greg Heidorn

Dear Friends in Christ and of India,

As we prepare for the 33rd Anniversary of the Malabar Mission Society on Saturday April 22 at Mount Olive in Regina, I wanted to give you a little preview of my presentation and a 'taste' of my recent visit to Kerala.

First of all, I want to thank you so very much for the trust you have placed in me to be the Project Officer of this Mission Society. I am more than honored to perform this work on your behalf.

Lorna Pederson and I visited India in October 2019. Thus, this trip was more than necessary. It was a great pleasure to also tour with Joel Otten. His last name and his parents' reputations opened many doors for us and provided excellent hospitality by the communities we visited.

Of the pastors at the Worker's Meeting only three were still serving in the congregations we visited in 2019. The three that I had met prior are: Rev. Joseph serving in Calicut (Kozhikode), Rev. Baby serving in Sultan Bathery and Moolankavu, and Rev. Suseelan serving in Vadattupara. We did not visit this town but will do so on the next visit in January 2024.

The new pastors are Rev. John Das serving in Malappuram, Rev. Shine Raj serving in Kalpetta and Meenangadi, Rev. Manu Prasad serving in Mundakutty (we did not meet this pastor as he was away at some training), Rev. Prasanth Raj serving in Wandoor and Thiruvalli. The congregations in Naduvil and Chengali are vacant and are also in great disrepair and will need a "go getter" pastor to really work the territory.

We also visited the three Reading Rooms. Only the Friendship Center in Malappuram operated by Mr. John Tennyson is active. The other two in Kannur need to be reviewed, but the Open Door Center will be relocated to a better location in the near future. Mr. Solomon and Mr. Jayarajan are finding a new place. Kannur also needs a new pastor who can really make an impact. We pray that the IELC will assign new men to these congregations.

Joel and I were privileged to meet the newly elected officers of the Trivandrum Synod of the IELC. Those gentlemen are: President—Rev. M. Mohanan; Secretary—A. Pramod Kumar; Vice President—Rev. J. Mohanraj; Synod Executive member—Rev. K. Sasthyedes. I hope that we can have a working relationship with them—especially in the placing of pastors in the congregations we support.

One thing that came through loud and clear is the respect the people of Malabar feel for everyone who contributes to the success of this ministry. Although we may seemingly not be doing much—as in bringing hundreds of thousands to faith in one fell swoop—we are doing what Christ has called us to do: be faithful to the Gospel message and let the Holy Spirit convert. And the Holy Spirit will in His own time and way.

I will have a much larger presentation for the banquet celebration so I hope to see you all there.



Worker's Meeting

### *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 Arne and Deanne Bessel*

✠ **Oscar Sommerfeld**

*from Martha Sommerfeld*

✠ **Ian Hope**

*from Bradley Jackle*

✠ **Dennis Haatvedt**

*from Edna Matthews*

✠ **David Ramsey**

*from Lila Pollard*

*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.*

### **Malabar Mission Society Annual General Meeting**

**April 22, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.**

**Mount Olive Lutheran Church**

**2015 4th Avenue North, Regina, SK**

All regular and honorary MMS members are invited to attend.

You are invited to the MMS 33rd Anniversary Supper at 6:00 pm at Mount Olive Lutheran Church. Tickets are \$20.00 each. Please purchase or reserve your ticket by calling Rev. Howard Ulmer 306-352-0991, or email [malabarmission@sasktel.net](mailto:malabarmission@sasktel.net) before April 16. The evening program includes: Rev. Greg Heidorn, Mr. Joel Otten and Rev. Howard Ulmer.

## **MY VISIT TO MALABAR**

### **Mr. Joel Otten**

When Rev. Roland Miller asked me if I would accompany Rev. Greg Heidorn on an upcoming visit to India, I had to say yes. It had been 12 years since my last visit to India with Roland in 2011 and that was the start of my involvement with the Malabar Mission Society (MMS). Malabar is like my second home, having grown up there as a missionary kid. The Millers were our closest missionary neighbors so there is a connection and bond with our family that goes way back. Not long after my dad died in 1985, my mom wrote a letter to Roland, asking if there was anything he could do to help the pastors and gospel workers who were in dire straits due to lack of financial support. That "cry for help", which Roland noted in the MMS history booklet, was the impetus for the formation of the Malabar Mission Society. With God's help and faithful support from volunteers and donors this society has brought light and hope to Malabar for 33 years.

Planning for our trip began with guidelines and advice from Roland, Lorna Pederson and Rev. Howard Ulmer in the Fall of 2022. The Coronavirus pandemic and travel restrictions were finally easing up in Kerala. Lorna proposed an itinerary to the MMS representatives there, Mr. C.D. Solomon and Rev. I. Titus. With minor alterations they stuck with that itinerary which took us from the southern city of Trivandrum to the northern city of Kannur and multiple places in between. Mr. Solomon and/or Rev. Titus were our tour guides for the entire 2-week visit. We are thankful to them for all their planning and for being so kind and attentive. Mr. Solomon's son, Sujin, was also very kind to drive us around in his car while we were in Trivandrum. Driving in the crazy traffic of Kerala cities is no small feat, we thank God for his protection.

Soon after our arrival in India, Pastor Greg and I met with newly elected officers of the Trivandrum Synod of the IELC (India Evangelical Lutheran Church) on Jan. 19. The purpose of our meeting was to try and work in cooperation with them and to determine what support IELC could give pastors and gospel workers in Malabar. Naturally they also wanted to know what support MMS could give IELC. The IELC has gone through rocky times but based on our meeting and conversations with other locals, we are hopeful there is a new spirit of commitment to faithfully doing God's work.



Trivandrum Synod Meeting

We were fortunate that a large wedding ceremony was taking place in the Lutheran church next to the synod office where we met. We attended the first part of the wedding from the back of the church, then after our meeting were invited to the reception. Thus began our diet of fantastic Indian food and weight gain for the next two weeks.

After the wedding reception we met with Mr. Sherjin Franklin, who has been coordinating the Bible correspondence courses, financed by MMS with a generous gift from Lillian and Arthur Saar. We then went to the home of Mr. D. Appukuttan where we had

a nice meal with his family. Mr. Appukuttan is the founder of the Henry Otten Memorial English School (also called Otten English School or OES), He turned 90 on January 1 and he is presently not in good health, confined to a wheelchair. As a young man back in the 50's he was a Christian reading room attendant who worked closely with my parents in Wandoor. In their early letters they commended Appukuttan for his strong faith and willingness to share the gospel. Over the last 30+ years that I've known him, I can say that he has maintained those attributes. His son, Sushil Peter, had traveled from Wandoor to be with us in Trivandrum. Sushil taught at OES for several years and in the last few years he has taken a leadership role there while still consulting with his father.



Appukuttan Family

After saying goodbye to Mr. Appukuttan and family, we (Pastor Greg, Mr. Sushil, Mr. Solomon and I) boarded an overnight train to the town of Wandoor, where Otten English School is located. This is also the town where my folks started their mission work, built a church and clinic that eventually grew into a hospital. Pastor Greg and I knew we would be visiting the school but were surprised by the program they had lined up for us. We first met with the Principal, Dr. Divya, school administrators and teachers who started the day with devotions. This is a practice that has been in place since the early days of the school even though many of the teachers are not Christian. After the devotions we walked outside and saw the entire student body assembled and standing in neat rows from youngest on one end to oldest on the other end. They directed us to a building in front of the students which had a ribbon strung between 2 columns. A sign next to the building entrance read "MARY ESTHER OTTEN CONFERENCE HALL". Under that title were the words "NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE". This is the school motto, seen written in many places throughout the campus and on school literature, a reminder of our Lord Jesus' words and actions. I was handed a pair of scissors and asked to cut the ribbon for



Otten English School Ribbon Cutting

the conference hall, named in honor of my mom. We then stood on the porch of the building and watched as one of the older girls made announcements and gave a speech, a trio of girls sang a song, then Pastor Greg and I were each asked to speak to the assembly. Following that there was a program inside the newly inaugurated hall with a speech by the principal and an impressive classical Indian dance performance. Finally, we were treated to a delicious rice and curry lunch with all the "fixins". Otten English School has a good reputation for academic excellence but is struggling to recover from the pandemic. It needs roof repairs, bathroom renovation and technology updates.

Mr. Solomon informed us that some local community leaders wanted to meet with Pastor Greg and me that afternoon. We accepted the invitation and were surprised once again by the reception. It was touching to hear them talk about my parents whom they still held in high regard after all these years. They also wanted to know if there was anything we could do to reopen Karunalaya Hospital. My parents had started it in the 1950's and it had served the community well until it had to close in 2008. After that the buildings steadily decayed, and the 20-acre compound became something of a jungle. Only the church and my father's grave next to it were maintained by the congregation. A local news team had been reporting on the school program as well as our walk around the hospital compound and a prayer by Pastor Greg at my dad's grave. These reports found their way into Kerala State newspapers and YouTube. A couple popular State legislators met with us and offered to help with rehabbing the hospital. Pastor Greg wrote a letter to Trivandrum Synod leaders suggesting the same. After we left India a group of IELC officials visited Wandoor and talked with Mr. Solomon, Mr. Sushil and members of the local church and community. They decided to initiate cleanup of the compound and renovation of the buildings with the intent to reopen the hospital, starting with a clinic. The Wandoor panchayat contributed excavating equipment with skilled operators and within two days they had made significant progress with the cleanup. We thank God for this and pray that he will bring the project to fruition.

In Wandoor we also visited the nursery school, and my childhood house which is now the parsonage. The roof framing of that house has been damaged by termites and is in danger of collapse. On the brighter side... we visited friends and enjoyed hospitality and delicious meals prepared by Mr. Solomon's wife, Sobhi.

After 2 days in Wandoor we headed to the Bisharah Center in Manjeri, driven by Mr. Sushil in his small car and accompanied by Mr. Solomon. Along the way we stopped at 3 small IELC churches. One is served by the Wandoor pastor and two by Mr. Solomon who is also a lay pastor. They are some distance from his home in Wandoor and he has been taking the bus to reach them every Sunday. He gathered the members and introduced us to them. They sang hymns and Pastor Greg gave messages and prayers.



Upon our arrival at the Bisharah Center, we received a warm welcome by Rev. K.K. Alavi, his wife, Yasmin, son, Dr. Abdul Messiah and all the staff and students of Shaliach's Institute there. Rev. Alavi is well known for his brave commitment to Christ in the face of persecution and danger. Bisharah has a robust gospel outreach program in Kerala and other states. This includes house churches started by graduates of the institute, literature distribution and responding to inquirers. They have also done a lot to serve the local community with food and water during the pandemic, seasons of drought and monsoon flooding. MMS would like IELC pastors to take classes on reaching Muslims with the Gospel at Shaliach's Institute. As I also serve on the New Hope Mission Society board which supports Bisharah, I regularly communicate with Dr. Messiah, who with his father, manages the ministry. Dr. Messiah's wide-ranging knowledge and fluency in English and Malayalam is much appreciated.

While at Bisharah, Pastor Greg had an opportunity to lead a Bible study class for the Shaliach students one evening. On another evening we met with a longtime friend and partner in ministry, Christudas Victor. His late father, Rev. K.M. Victor was the India agent for MMS, also a faithful IELC pastor and colleague of my dad and Roland Miller. Christudas is the CEO of a banking division of ESAF. He had some good insights on several matters including the BCC program.

We stayed three nights at Bisharah and on two days Dr. Messiah was kind to drive us to the nearby town of Malappuram in the mornings and bring us back in the evenings. On the first day in Malappuram, we attended a Sunday church service and toured the elementary school with Pastor John Das and Mr. Augustine. We also talked with Dr. Sophia, long-time dedicated medical director of CWC Hospital. She recently retired and will be sorely missed. On the second day we met the hospital staff and toured the hospital. We also met teachers and students at the adjacent elementary school. Finally, we met Mr. John Tennyson Gospel Worker of the Friendship Center reading room that is located in a different part of the town.

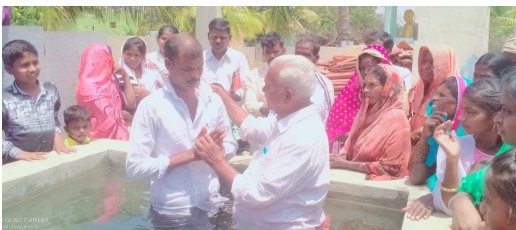
We had a very interesting and enlightening tour including visits to Calicut, Kalpetta, Meenangadi, Sulthan Bathery, Moolankavu, Mundakutty, Kannur, Naduvil and Chengalai. I took a lot of photos and placed them in Google photo albums for which I'm happy to share the links. Pastor Greg will also have a detailed presentation with photos at the MMS 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary gathering in Regina on April 22. Hope you can join us then!

Thank you for your interest and support.

## **ANANTAPUR NEWS**

### **Rev. Howard Ulmer**

The mission work of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ continues in Anantapur. On November 17, 2022 a church was dedicated. Another church with 180 believers was dedicated on January 24, 2023. There was a church anniversary on February 22 and on March 3. On March 21 there were 17 adult baptisms. There are also 20 new pastors that were former Islamic religion and have accepted Christ. 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.



Anantapur Baptism

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

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

Malabar Mission Projects Progress: 2011-2016, by Rev. Carlton Riemer

Donation of \$15.00 each includes printing and postage.