

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Summer 2005

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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

Annual General Meeting	1 and 4
India News	2
Project Proposal to LWML-C	2
What Do We Do About Anantapur?	3
Dr. Miller's Latest Book, <i>Muslims and the Gospel: Bridging the Gap</i>	4

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Rev. Howard Ulmer

The Annual General Meeting and board meeting on April 22-23, 2005 in Saskatoon provided an opportunity to hear the reports of the Malabar Mission Circle. Along with the many exciting ways that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is shared among the people of India, there are also new and challenging opportunities. Thank you to the faithful prayer support and generous gifts of God's people that provide for the continuance of this mission and ministry. Opportunities for individuals, ladies'/men's groups, Sunday Schools, congregations, districts, synods and other organizations to support this important ministry are available. Indeed, "the fields are ripe and the harvest is waiting." May our hearts respond to God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.

We give thanks for the faithful and dedicated leadership provided by Rev. Lowell Guebert, our retired president. May he be blessed with continued good health. The Newsletter contains an introduction to the new president and vice-president, and a report of Malabar's presence at the Convention of Lutheran Church-Canada.

Dr. Roland Miller continues his faithful contact with Rev. K. M. Victor, our India Agent, and the Gospel workers in India. We give thanks for the dedicated workers who share the Good News of Jesus with the people in their communities. All praise and glory to God. ✿

The **Malabar Mission Newsletter** is now available by e-mail. If you would prefer to "save a tree" and receive the Newsletter in this format, e-mail your request to malabarmission@sasktel.net

MMS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, SASKATOON

- Emerald Schoepp

It was a time to say thank you for his many years of service to our retiring president, Rev. Lowell Guebert, and to welcome our new president, Rev. Howard Ulmer. (See the sidebar listing the names of our other board members.)



Rev. Lowell & Phyllis Guebert have faithfully served the MMS in many capacities.

Rev. Guebert wore many hats while serving the MMS, and was chairman for an impressive nine years. It is with sincere appreciation that we say a heartfelt thank you for his untiring efforts. Lowell will continue to serve as a board member.

Guests attending from the United States were Rev. David Christensen, Ian McDonald and John Gelschus from Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, Minnesota.

Other guests were Mark Dickinson from Manotick, Ontario and his father, Roy Dickinson from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Dr. Roland Miller is always successful in presenting the board with many challenges. All we need are generous hearts filled with a love for those who do not know Christ as Lord and Saviour. There is no shortage of opportunities.

(Continued. See **MMS Annual General Meeting**, pg. 4)

INDIA NEWS

- Rev. Dr. Roland Miller

- August 15th was India's 59th birthday as a free nation. Its 1.2 billion people celebrated happily amidst relatively good times. More and more people are recognizing the rise of India. It has been a quiet evolution, but nonetheless dramatic in effect and implication.
- It is the economic advance that has particularly caught people's attention. The growth rate is high, although inflation is also. There is now a middle class of 300 million people. China has gone in for manufacturing with cheap labour and a controlled society. India has turned to the service industries with educated labour and a free society.
- As old India becomes a new power, the following facts should cheer us:
 - India is a real democracy, with a parliamentary system and free elections that people take very seriously;
 - India has great leaders; its president (like our governor-general) is a noted nuclear scientist, while the prime minister is a world-renowned economist and former head of the World Bank.
- India has English as one of its two national languages, and the British tradition of law.
- India has freedom of religion, and freedom for the propagation of the Gospel by Indian nationals; it is a huge fact that what will soon be the largest country of the world is still kindly disposed toward religion!
- India has a Christian Church, although its members comprise only about 2½ per cent of the population; there are about 25 million Christians and one million Lutherans.
- India is friendly to the West.
- The Malabar Mission Society has been readied by the Spirit to be of evangelistic service to the new India, or rather to a remarkable amalgam of the old and new that represents Indian society today. May it also be empowered to join in relevant witness to "the new and living way" (Heb. 10:20), and to the thrilling sound, "Behold, I make all things new!" (Rev. 21:5). ☘

MEET OUR NEW PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT

President Howard Ulmer was born October 24, 1945 to Carl and Helen Ulmer of Neudorf, Saskatchewan. The family farmed six miles southeast of Neudorf. Baptized and confirmed at Trinity Lutheran Church in Neudorf, Howard attended Snowflake School, a one-room country school, for grades 1–8, and Neudorf School for grades 9–12, graduating in 1964. In preparation for the pastoral ministry, he was a student at Concordia, Edmonton from 1964–1967. He then spent two years (1967–1969) at Concordia Senior College in Fort Wayne, Indiana, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts with concentrations in Hebrew and Greek. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon in 1973.

Following his ordination in 1975, Howard served parishes in Wadena, Margo and Southey in Saskatchewan. At the same time, he often provided assistance as vacancy pastor for other congregations in the vicinity. Since May 1998 he has served with the Lutheran Care Society of Saskatoon as Hospital Chaplain at the three Saskatoon hospitals. The ministry provides him with many opportunities to share the Gospel with patients and family members.

Over the years, Howard has shared his skills and gifts with the larger Church constituency (Lutheran Church–Canada and Lutheran Church–Canada, Central District),

as well as various boards in the communities in which he has lived. On May 8, 2004 he received the Distinguished Service Award from Concordia University College of Alberta in Edmonton.

Howard and his wife, Gloria, reside in Saskatoon. They have one daughter, Joscelyn Bona (Marcel) of Iquluit, Nunavut.

Art Timm, vice-president, was raised on a farm in a Christian home. His first ten years of education took place in a one-room school known as "Beautiful Plains" in the Yellow Grass district in Saskatchewan. The last two years were at Luther College, Regina.

For 35 years Art toiled in the Iron and Steel Industry, ending up as General Sales Manager for the Prairie and Eastern Division. Upon closure of the Foundry, he was employed as a lay worker at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Saskatoon. During that time he attended the Laity School conducted by Lutheran Church–Canada, Central District.

Art counts it a privilege to serve the church as a member of the Board of Directors of Lutheran Church–Canada, Central District, as well as the Board of the Lutheran Laymen's League of the Central District.

Art is married to Geraldine (nee Stewart). They have 2 sons and 5 grandchildren. ☘

PROJECT PROPOSAL TO LWML–CANADA

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League at St. Matthew in Stony Plain, AB have submitted a project proposal for The Open Door–Vanitha, a library-reading room ministry for women in the city of Kannur. This highly successful evangelistic ministry of the Malabar Mission Society is being funded by the Zimmer Family Foundation in Florida for the two-year period 2004–2006. LWML–Canada are being asked to consider a \$23,025 grant, to be designated specifically to continue this ministry to spread the Gospel among the young female Hindu and Muslim students. The funds would cover the annual facility rental and the salaries of the two excellent female workers for another three-year period. It is anticipated at the end of this period the Open Door–Vanitha will be self-supporting.

Pray with us that the Mission Projects Selection Committee will look favourably upon this request, which would then come before the LWML–Canada convention in Regina, SK July 6–9, 2006. ☘

MALABAR AT LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA CONVENTION

Delegates representing the 325 congregations of Lutheran Church-Canada gathered June 9-13, 2005 in Edmonton, Alberta with the theme, "Proclaiming His Faithfulness." The Malabar Mission Society is a Listed Service Organization of Lutheran Church-Canada. A report for all the delegates was included with *Today's Business*. On Saturday evening there was a "Mission Festival" that included a variety of international foods, music and cultural performances and an opportunity for delegates and visitors to visit and experience the display booths of various organizations, including Malabar Mission Society. Rev. Howard Ulmer, President, had an opportunity to share the exciting mission and ministry of Malabar Mission Society. This was an important introduction for many of the visitors. Newsletters and brochures were handed out and visitors were invited to sign up for the Newsletter. Following the Convention the LCC affiliated mission organizations held their second consultation. ❀



WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT ANANTAPUR?

Rev. Dr. Roland Miller, Project Officer

"Anantapur" is a shorthand word for an astonishing evangelistic development. It refers to an area of three districts in Andhra State and one in Karnataka State where Muslims are turning to Christ in considerable numbers. The Holy Spirit has been powerfully working to produce a spontaneous harvest, without any organized church activity. It is estimated that about 300 village Muslims have accepted Christ as Lord and have received baptism. This group of new believers has appealed to the Malabar Mission Society for help. What shall we do?

The development came about as the result of the conversion of Mr. S. Ismail. He and his wife struggled to the Christian faith, overcoming much difficulty and persecution. Like a St. Paul, he determined to bring others to Christ. The outcome has been greatly blessed. In addition to the new believers already mentioned, other fields are ready for the reapers. The group has dedicated 22 individuals from among themselves to serve as part-time evangelists, at the same time as they earn their own living. They have appealed to the MMS for supplementary assistance to help their program forward.

These are dedicated people. Twenty-six of them came a long distance to Calicut last September to meet me and others. Since then, Rev. K.M. Victor, our India representative, has gone to Anantapur twice to meet with the group. Each time he has returned with great excitement and enthusiastic recommendations. He says that we must help. "Now is the time." He senses a great opportunity. Rev. T. Joy will succeed Rev. Victor in December. In May he accompanied Rev. Victor to Anantapur. Joy is no less enthusiastic. Last week he sent an urgent e-mail saying: "I strongly recommend the proposal made by Rev. K.M. Victor about the Andhra Mission . . . I would very much like to see the Muslim converts there and the evangelists among them under the leadership of Rev. Ismail be encouraged and helped concretely." He speaks of "great scope" and "plenty of harvest" such as we have not experienced.

There are two major issues that the MMS Board has to consider in this connection:

- 1. Financial:** Rev. Victor proposes a support program amounting to \$17,000 per year. While this is not large for such a great effort, we do not have the funds now. Where would we obtain them?
- 2. Policy:** Anantapur is not in Malabar. It is in another state and language area (Telugu), 450 kilometers from Sultan Battery, our nearest station in Malabar. Shall the MMS adopt the policy of moving beyond Malabar in its outreach, or remain with the 3 million inhabitants of Malabar?

The MMS Board is in a quandry. Anantapur clearly represents a unique opportunity . . . the new believers representing probably the largest Muslim group in South Indian history to turn to Christ. Unquestionably they need help from someone, and prayer support.

A Western Canadian Lutheran congregation, Christ Church in Regina, has already provided a gift to purchase 15 bicycles for evangelists. Is this a leading that others might follow?

The Malabar Mission Society itself in May arranged for the purchase of a motorcycle for the leader, Mr. Ismail. Should it do more?

Is there perhaps a congregation, or a group of congregations, that might make this ministry their own for a defined period? Or are there some individuals who sense a personal call to this challenge?

By January 2006 the MMS Board must decide how the Society should respond to the pleas of Mr. Ismail, Rev. Victor and Rev. Joy. If it does not wish to or cannot see its way clear to take this on, its obligation will be to seek out and turn over the task to other Christians. Rev. Ismail writes: "I thank God for you so much because you are so much having the burden for my ministry to win Muslim people for salvation . . . Please pray so that God will spread the Gospel for Muslim ministry even in neighbouring states." Ismail is a natural leader and a person of distinguished bearing.

So I must repeat the question: **What shall we do? We must have the opinion of MMS supporters to this question. Please write the Board!** ❀

(Write to the MMS at P.O. Box 32045, Regina, SK S4N 7L2, or e-mail malabarmission@sasktel.net)

MMS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (Con't. from pg. 1)

We want to acknowledge the various gifts that have been given over the past year:

- Ian McDonald of Hutchinson, MN provided the funds still needed for open-heart surgery for Rev. Joseph in Calicut.
- St. Armand's Lutheran Church of Sarasota, Florida, committed to fund the Open Door (men's) Reading Room at Kannur until 2006.
- The Open Door–Vanitha (women's) Reading Room has been funded by the Zimmer Family Foundation in Florida for the two year period 2004—2006.
- The September 2004 MMS tour group donated US\$619.00 to build a playground for the Good News Nursery School at Calicut, as well as an equal amount to purchase books for Open Door–Vanitha in Kannur.
- During the 2004 tour, Abbey Anderson of Hutchinson, MN, provided funding for needed equipment at the Christian Welfare Centre in Malappuram.
- Mr. Roderick and Mrs. Helen Lawson, also of Florida, have provided the necessary funding to develop leadership and further the ministry in Kannur.
- Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, MN have provided US\$18,000 to Rev. K. K. Alavi's New Hope Mission in Calicut, and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Elgin, IL has provided additional funds for this ministry.
- Through their charity foundation, Careworks, Inc., Mr. and Mrs. Mark Dickinson have provided funding for the construction of a church at Chengalai. ❀

HOT OFF THE PRESS

- Emerald Schoepp

Dr. Roland Miller has a new book—his ninth—which you will find very interesting if you wish to learn more about Muslims. The book, entitled *Muslims and the Gospel: Bridging the Gap*, is a reflection on Christian sharing. I have asked Dr. Miller to give us an outline of this latest book, and where it might be purchased. Enjoy!

MUSLIMS AND THE GOSPEL; BRIDGING THE GAP

The editor requested me to outline the contents of my new book, and I am happy to oblige.

The book has three parts. We have to know the nature of the gap between Muslims and the Gospel, what kind of bridge to throw across it, and what to do when we get to the other side.

The first part has five chapters. The opening one briefly explains the key principles for understanding Islam, and the next two describe the Muslim teaching on sin and salvation. The last two chapters outline the Muslim opinion about Jesus and about Christians. All in all, the gap looks wide.

What kind of bridge is needed? The second part of the book deals with that question. It suggests a bridge with three spans. The first is the span of friendship, and there I take up the Biblical theology of friendship. The second is the span of restitution. Islam is a post-Christian religion. In a sense, it is the unnecessary religion because the Gospel was not preached in Mecca or Medina when it was needed. The third is the span of learning. For centuries various formidable individuals have tried to deal with Islam, including Luther, and some have tried to communicate the Gospel to Muslims. What can we learn from them? The last figures I deal with are Henry and Mary Esther Otten, and their Malabar ministries.

After crossing the bridge, what do

we do? What kind of personal qualities should we aspire to? How do we relate the ministries of service, evangelism, peace-making and dialogue? How do we actually connect with a Muslim? What methods are appropriate and effective? How do we answer the hard questions that Muslims ask, whether they be about the Son of God, about the Trinity or about the crucifixion? When a Muslim draws near to Christ, how do we nurture his or her interest? And when the inquirer chooses to follow the Lord, how can the church support that faith journey with its special problems that make Muslim converts the bravest Christians in the world? Here I mention K. K. Alavi, well known to the Malabar Mission Society, his faithful supporter.

The subject is as big as it is important, and so also the book is big. You can get it from Lutheran University Press, P.O. Box 390759, Minneapolis, MN 55439; phone 1-888-696-1828, FAX 952-835-2613, e-mail to publisher@lutheranupress.org. Having it available will help MMS supporters to better understand their ministry.

- Rev. Dr. R. Miller

In Appreciation

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

In memory of:

- **Rev. Walter Schoepp**
George & Hilda Schoepp
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Woodruff
- **Katherine "Katie" (Mutschler) Senft**
Janet Burkart
Mr. & Mrs. Ian Hope
Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Jackle
Mr. & Mrs. Rudy Jackle
Mr. & Mrs. T. J. Piggin
- **Carl Wagner**
Irma R. Wagner



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
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During the months of June through August it rains unmercifully in India. For this reason you are not hearing a lot of reports from workers in the mission field. More in the next issue!