

# Malabar Mission Newsletter

Fall 2006

Volume 13, Number 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



## ZIEGENBALG'S 300<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

### The Pioneer Lutheran Missionary in India

- Rev. Dr. R. Miller, MMS Project Officer



On July 9, 1706, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) landed at Tranquebar in India. He was the first Lutheran and Protestant missionary. Lutherans everywhere should celebrate this anniversary. He died at the age of 36, and only worked 13 years in India, but was an inspirational and trail-blazing figure.

Ziegenbalg was born in Pulsnitz in southern Saxony, Germany.

Two important things influenced him as a youth—his mother's love of the Bible and the pietist movement. Pietism was interested in four things: a personal conversion and relationship with God, holiness in life, and an emphasis on fellowship and witness. One of the greatest pietist leaders was Augustus Francke who had established a major orphanage and school at Halle. He later became Ziegenbalg's spiritual guide and supporter. Ziegenbalg was a sensitive and introspective young man, as well as physically weak. He experienced much inner conflict and frequent illness. He sought hard for the meaning of life and the direction God wanted him to go. A foreign mission, however, was not in his thoughts.

Most European Protestants in this period were interested in other affairs. The biggest thing was making money. Asia seemed the best place to do it. A Portuguese, Vasco da Gama, had begun the age of colonialism in India when he landed at Calicut in Malabar in 1498. Several other European countries then established "East India Companies." The race was on. Portuguese, Dutch, English, French and Danish companies each set up port colonies to do business. They allowed chaplains for the European staff, but no missionaries. European churches, which were not in a lively period, did not object. There was one man, however, who differed with the trend. He was King Frederick IV, ruler of Denmark-Norway. He and his family resolved to send missionaries to a tiny Danish enclave on the Coromandel Coast of southeast India, a place called Tranquebar. It is Tamil country, 200 km south of Madras, now called Chennai, and on the opposite coast from Calicut. But where would King Frederick find his missionaries?

When the King asked Danish church authorities for missionary candidates, they announced there were none available! However, the King's chaplain, a German pastor, sought help from friends in Berlin. They mentioned Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, and so we return to his spiritual journey.

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## Malabar Mission Newsletter

is published three times per year by  
The Malabar Mission Society  
P.O. Box 32045  
Regina, SK, Canada S4N 7L2  
Email: malabarmission@sasktel.net

Visit the MMS website at  
[www.gracelutheranchurch.ca/MMS\\_Home.html](http://www.gracelutheranchurch.ca/MMS_Home.html)

Editor: Emerald Schoepp  
Layout & Design: Arlene Hiller  
Advisor: Rev. Dr. Roland Miller

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## GOD'S EVER-SURPRISING BLESSINGS AT KANNUR

The Malabar Mission Society has an opportunity to purchase a multi-purpose building at Kannur. We need your support.

See details on page 3.

Ziegenbalg's father was a wealthy corn merchant, so he could seek education. He did so through theological self-study in his village, and through short stays at Halle, Goerlitz and Berlin. A teacher at the Berlin school, Joachim Lange, greatly influenced him; he lost some of his self-doubts and came to the conclusion that the Lord could use him in some way. Never did he anticipate what happened next. When his Berlin mentors recommended him and Heinrich Plütschau for mission service, King Frederick invited them to Copenhagen for a personal interview. There Ziegenbalg was asked to preach a sermon to the royal family.

Continued. See Ziegenbalg on page 2

## *In Appreciation*

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

### *In memory of:*

- **Betty Dickinson**  
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### *In honour of Rev. L. L. Guibert upon receipt of the Distinguished Service Award from the Concordia University College of Alberta*

Mark & Monique Dickinson



*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  
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## **Ziegenbalg** (continued from page 1)

He did so on Acts 26:17-18: "I will rescue you from this people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you. I send you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, so that by trust in me, they may obtain forgiveness of sins, and a place with those whom God has made his own." The King challenged them to go out with the Gospel, and his sister Hedwiga Sophia did likewise. Ziegenbalg and Plütschau accepted the challenge.

Their journey by ship to India took seven months; Ziegenbalg called it "an academy of death," but their troubles had barely started. Things went well at the beginning. In their first year there were 37 baptisms, 50 catechumens, and a small worship place was constructed. Ziegenbalg studied Tamil, gaining a speaking knowledge in eight months, a major feat! He was not only interested in the language, but also in the thought world that it conveyed.

Plütschau worked harder at Portuguese, which had become the communication link language in the colonies. The first believers gathered were from slaves of European families and outcasts. Their missionary activities aroused the ire of Governor Hassius who made their life miserable, forbidding European Christians to attend their services, often cutting off their funds, arousing Hindu opposition, and even imprisoning Ziegenbalg for four months in a tiny, hot cell. It was a heavy cross to bear. Only the fact that Ziegenbalg and Plütschau had the King's personal commission saved them.

The non-Christians could not understand the persecution, and some came forward to the defence of the missionaries. They were amazed at Ziegenbalg's knowledge of their culture and deeply appreciated it. They said: "A white man has appeared who did not trade and cheat, and did not lead a loose life, but daily proved his piety."<sup>1</sup> The door was opened, and Ziegenbalg had no trouble engaging Hindus in religious discussion. He did not forget to remind Brahmins to be kinder to outcasts.

Tranquebar had become too small, and Ziegenbalg began exploratory mission journeys in different places. He was as

fearless as he was knowledgeable, as visionary as hardworking. "A rare power went out from this man who had no fear of death."<sup>2</sup> Indians by the hundreds came to hear him, and at Madras even carried him in procession.

Ziegenbalg wrote seven letters home reporting on the Lord's blessings. These objective reports were printed in German and distributed under the title, "Remarkable Reports from East India." It is not exaggeration to say they took many German Christians by storm. Halle-connected people began to send monetary gifts. The letters soon got to London through Pastor Boehme, Chaplain to the Danish consort of Queen Anne, who had them translated and distributed. It was a highly significant development because for the first time it brought English Christians into a direct missionary involvement with Tamil people. While the British East India Company had the same general bias against missions as the Danes, individual English Christians would not be denied and got involved. The archbishop of Canterbury himself sent a gift. The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge raised money to print the New Testament in Portuguese, and later they sent a printing press to Tranquebar. In 1709 three new missionaries were sent out, including the strong J. E. Gruendler (d. 1720); he effectively replaced Plütschau who returned to Europe in 1711. In 1713 three printer/missionaries followed. Now Ziegenbalg could publish the essential evangelistic and discipling literature that he was producing. It was a co-operative wonder... Copenhagen-Halle-London... Christians working together to enable this ground-breaking missionary effort.

The Scandinavian "Northern Wars" now got in the way. They drastically reduced the funds sent to Tranquebar. Ziegenbalg therefore decided to make a trip home, his first and last one, from 1714-16. He took a Tamilian colleague with him so he could keep talking in Tamil! When he arrived in Denmark, he sought out the King in his war camp. The King promised to take care of the problems caused by the Danish civil authorities, and soon appointed a new Governor. Then Ziegenbalg went on to Halle and his first meeting with the great Francke. (Continued on p. 4.)

## MMS HAS OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE PROPERTY AT KANNUR

- Rev. Dr. R. Miller, MMS Project Officer

Who would have thought we would have such a fine building available for our work at Kannur? God's grace is truly ever-surprising!

Before stating its functions, let me tell you a little about the property and house. It is strategically located, less than a ten-minute walk from our current Open Door–Vanitha Reading Room, and fronting on a quiet road. The property is 90½ feet in width (frontage) and 78 ft. in depth. The house itself is

a well-constructed two-storey building with large rooms and about 2,800 sq.ft. of space. It's interior arrangement is very adaptable for a multi-faceted mission outreach program.

The following are the functions envisioned:

**Worship:** An upstairs room provides wonderful space for a small group to worship. We will put the altar in the bay window!

**Instruction:** The same room will give space for meetings and seminars, a terrace for fellowship, and a balcony for private instruction.



**Literature and Correspondence Course Ministries:** There is a second large upstairs room suitable for these important outreach ministries.

**Staff Quarters:** Much of the downstairs space will house our two Vanitha workers. We will no longer have to pay rent for them after November.

**Reception, ESL, and Access:** The living room of the house together with an adjoining room will enable short-term

ESL work and receiving visitors.

**The Open Door–Vanitha:** After one year we will move our highly successful outreach to college women to this location. To do so, one of the other functions will have to give way. Alternatively we could add one room to the front of the house.

This move will greatly reduce our costs. The yard around the house is spacious. Coconut trees can be planted for income. Even a nursery school could be accommodated in future. In short, we have been highly blessed with a great facility. Thanks be to God!

**But . . . we need \$50,000 by November 22, 2006! Please help with your gift.**

### THERE'S STILL TIME TO JOIN THE GREAT INDIA ADVENTURE

**November 9 - 27, 2006**

We will start our tour at the tip of India where three oceans meet. We'll work our way northwards through Kerala to Malabar where we'll experience firsthand the work being done by The Malabar Mission Society. Then up into the jungle for a ride on an elephant and a visit to the ancient Hindu kingdom of Mysore. We'll end our tour with a visit to one of the seven wonders of the world—the fabled TAJ MAHAL!

All this for Cdn.\$3,000, plus \$50 deposit (ex Toronto; add \$200 for points west)

For further details contact Mary Helen or Roland Miller at 613-692-7672 or e-mail [remhmiller@rogers.com](mailto:remhmiller@rogers.com)

## GOD PROVIDES ANOTHER OPEN DOOR

- Rev. Howard Ulmer, President

God has provided another opportunity for the mission work in India to expand. In Kannur we have an Open Door (for men), and Open Door–Vanitha (for women), and now an Open Door for worship, evangelism and outreach. The Malabar Mission Circle and Rev. K. M. Victor located the building. Malabar Mission Society considered purchasing the property and building previously; recently we made an offer to purchase. On April 29, 2006 the MMS Annual Meeting established a capital fund. Recent gifts of \$15,000 will assist with the purchase. A loan through the Central District Church Extension Fund will also provide assistance.

We urgently need additional financial support to reduce the loan for the purchase of the property. We will also need support for some renovations and expansion of the mission and ministry at Kannur. Please pray for the workers in Kannur and the Malabar Mission Circle as they share the Good News of God's love in Jesus with the people of India.

The Lutheran missionary Ziegenbalg began the work in India 300 years ago. Thank you to Rev. Dr. Roland Miller for providing an excellent article about the history and growth of missions in India. The Malabar Mission Society continues to support the work of missions and outreach through workers of the Malabar Mission Circle. May our gracious and loving God continue to bless this ministry and mission.

## Ziegenbalg (continued from page 1)

The Halle Lutherans spearheaded a fundraising drive to construct the great Jerusalem Church at Tranquebar that is still used for Lutheran services. He stayed long enough to get married to Maria Dorothea Salzmänn. She packed her bags, and they were off to London. There Ziegenbalg was introduced to King George I, who afterwards sent him hand-written letters of encouragement.

When they arrived back in India, Ziegenbalg and his companion brought \$10,000 for various projects, and then went to work. He was inconceivably busy. Always physically weak, he now literally wore out. As he was dying he said: "It is so bright before my eyes; it is as though the sun is shining in my face." He was very musical, and his last request was that someone go to their piano and play "Jesus Christ, My Sure Defence." He died September 30, 1719.

Two of Ziegenbalg's mission policies have drawn some criticism. Mr. Wendt, the director of the Copenhagen Mission Society, found fault with him for building too many costly institutions and church buildings. Wendt thought that Ziegenbalg and Plütschau should go on itinerant preaching missions through South India in the Pauline model, and leave it to Indian Christians to build their structures. Ziegenbalg simply replied that then there would be no churches and schools because the new believers were impoverished. Later he was also criticized for being too welcoming to Roman Catholic Christians who wanted to join him. These Christians had gone without any ministry for a generation, were without Bibles and catechisms, and were going backwards. It was not an easy decision.

Overall there is astonishment at Ziegenbalg's insight. Stephen Neill has analyzed Ziegenbalg's contributions in five categories:<sup>3</sup>

- (1) He had a strong belief that church and school go together. Christian children must be educated so they can read the Word of God. From his personal experience he had great faith in the value of boarding schools.
- (2) The Word of God must be translated so it can be read. He himself translated the New Testament into Tamil in eight years, and got as far as Ruth in the Old Testament.
- (3) Evangelistic work must be based on an accurate knowledge of the mind of the people and their religious culture. He studied

and wrote about the beliefs and customs of Hindus, and his work opened doors.

- (4) The aim of evangelism must be personal conversion. True religion is more than outward membership.
- (5) An Indian church and an Indian ministry must come into being quickly. To that end he developed a group of catechists. One of them, Aaron, became the first Tamil Lutheran pastor in 1773.

To Neill's list we might add his infectious zeal and his ability to work with different kinds of people.

Ziegenbalg's living legacy is the development of the Lutheran Church in India, for which he played a seeding role, and which now has more than one million members. It may be noted that after 1840 the German Leipzig Mission gathered up and extended the work of the Danish-Halle Mission in Madras State, and out of its efforts was born the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church. Fifty years later missionaries of this Society joined the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and founded its India work in the 1890s, and this is the India Evangelical Lutheran Church. Thus there is a direct line from Ziegenbalg to the Malabar Mission Society, and it may resoundingly celebrate this seminal figure in mission history. We may also join in Ziegenbalg's prayer:<sup>4</sup>

**"We looked upon all the work and acts which we had done until now as a preparation for the future entrance to the non-Christians, which glorious entrance we do not expect to see with our own eyes, but which we now behold from a distance with the eyes of faith and rejoice thereof, and are at the same time more ready to prepare the way for the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of glory, to the non-Christians."**

<sup>1</sup>Erich Breyreuther, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1955), p. 26

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pg. 55

<sup>3</sup>Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 229.

<sup>4</sup>Breyreuther, p. 42.

## LWMLC CONVENTION DESIGNATES OFFERING TO OPEN DOOR—VANITHA

The Open Door—Vanitha was listed as one of the designated offerings at the 2006 LWML—Canada convention held in Regina in July. \$3,183 was realized. In this photo Irene Raedeke, Rev. Howard Ulmer, Elfriede Fisher and Emerald Schoepp gather at the Malabar Mission Society booth on display at the convention.

