

# Malabar Mission Newsletter

Spring 2011

Vol. 18, 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



## THE THREE "YEFF" COMPANY

- Rev. Dr. Roland Miller

As my car drove through Ramanattakkaru in South Malabar I saw a sign board above the small shop. It read "The Three Yeff Company." The three initials of the proprietor were F. F. F., and that explains the sign. Malayalis pronounce "f" as "yeff." For the sake of this article I will refer to the MMS as "the Three Yeff Company." The first "f" stands for "Friends in Action."

### Friends in Action

The MMS really is a group of friends in action. The donors and supporters are friends. The board members and officers are friends. And the Gospel Workers in Malabar are friends. I once again experienced that when I reached Malabar February 7, 2011, in a hectic journey that ended February 22. There at the Calicut Airport waiting to greet us were Revs. Victor and Joseph, Mr. Appukuttan of the Otten School and Mr. Frederick, retired administrator of Karunalaya Hospital. It was trouble for them to come for 10 minutes of greetings and the bestowal of garlands (*mālas*). Rev. Victor, for example, who is now 82, himself not totally well and his wife with a broken ankle, nevertheless came 100 km. on a bus. They came as friends because they wanted to.

Friends rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. A week later I sat with the Gospel Workers as they memorialized the passing of Mrs. T. Joy. We sat in a circle, sang and prayed, and then in the traditional manner each one recalled a memory of the departed one or her husband. I told the story of how we started the Calicut work 50 years ago. I had gathered 10 willing college students, and at night we plastered walls with our announcements; in the daytime we sold Gospel portions with the first lessons of a Bible Correspondence Course. One of the students was the 21 year old Joy Tennyson, then attracted by various ideologies, but when challenged to work for Christ he responded magnificently. That was my story about our MMS Program Director. Each of his friends responded to the sad event in their own way.

Of course the Malabar Mission Society is a **society**. The word comes from the Latin *socius*, a sharing. But it is the sharing of friends in action. That is a possible definition of mission. And I felt that friendship again in February.

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### Malabar Mission Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held

11:00 a.m., May 7, 2011

at

OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH

190 Massey Road, Regina, Saskatchewan

All regular and honorary MMS members are invited to attend.

## THE THREE "YEFF" COMPANY

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Now the second "Yeff."

### Flexibility in Method

"F" also stands for flexibility, and the India of today demands that quality in evangelistic methodology. It is no longer simply traditional, and no longer very impressed by old methods. India is now a mass of people on the move. With its famous absorptive capacity working at full strength, it is taking in almost every cultural influence under the sun. Change is occurring at every level. The roads and faces make it visible. Vehicles of every description abound — I counted 22 car models. There are no more goats on the roads — they could not survive, and in Kerala ox-carts are nowhere to be seen. Pedestrians are an endangered species. But no one seems to mind. At last the people have a chance to pull themselves out of the old swamp of poverty. The faces reflect the feeling of hope. But the new conditions have also made the people intense, enamoured with progress and technology, money conscious, more driven and less easy-going, less religiously focused. Social observers see this as the beginning of secularism. We must rejoice with those who rejoice, but also shed a tear for the loss of soul.

Into this new social milieu our Gospel Workers in Malabar must take the Gospel. They are a little bewildered as to how to do it. It is not the number of non-Christians that baffles them — 10½ million. They are used to that. It is the new lifestyle. Nothing prepared them for it. Recently the Gospel Workers went through an evaluation process that will hopefully lead to a new Work Plan for the period 2011 – 2014. I sat with them to discuss it. They are not very accustomed to management by objectives, and it was only



Some "Friends in Action." l-r: Rev. Dr. K.M. Victor (speaking); Mr. N.Shine Jose (Probationer in Vellarmala), Rev. P.G. Henry (retired in Kalpetta), and Evangelist R.J. Richard (Mundakutty).

with hesitation that they addressed the task of setting numerical goals. They ended up, however, with the commitment to try to bring 83 new people to faith in the time period that had been set. But the question in everyone's mind was **how**. They realize the need for a Spirit-led flexibility in method.

The Gospel Workers are not particularly adept in social analysis, but they are experts in evangelistic methodology. They had listed eleven possible methods: personal relationship; visiting, with Bible classes; tract distribution; worship; Sunday School work; prayer meetings; hospital visiting; nursery schools; youth meetings; women's association; using films and CDs. But they were wondering about the priority methods for the new India. They are asking, what new things do we have to do, without neglecting the values of the old patterns and without losing the primacy of the Word, to reach the evangelistic goals. I reminded them of how St. Paul had to adapt his method when he entered Europe. His common approach had been to go to the Jewish synagogue first and there announce the coming of the Messiah. But when he, with Silas and Timothy, arrived at Neapolis there was no synagogue! Someone, however, told them that there were women groups on the beach. They went there, found Lydia, and the Macedonian Mission Society was born!

It was a success that hid the personal suffering that lay ahead, so now we must go to the third "Yeff," the "F" of fortitude.

### Fortitude Under Duress

What the Malabar Gospel Workers are into is struggle, and hence they need fortitude. What they are trying to do is not easy. Their current struggles have three major dimensions: economic hardship, social harassment, and group morale.

1) **Economic Hardship:** That seems like a contradiction to what we have said about India's upward surge. The surge, however, has not really taken in the Gospel Workers, and they all list this as their chief problem. To an extent they are unquestionably an economically distressed group, fighting the 17% inflation in food costs, and bearing health and educational burdens. The situation worsens when the settled church to the south (I.E.L.C.) re-enters its periodic administrative gridlock. The faithful Malabar Workers are the first to have their salary support reduced or excised.

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That was the situation that produced the birth of the MMS, and it is now recurring again. Since August, 2010, several workers have not received any remuneration beyond what the local people can afford. Pastor B. receives Rs.1500 [Rupees] from one congregation he serves, Rs.1000 from another, and some assistance from the MMS. With that \$100 per month, about half of what his family needs, they must make do. Yet Pastor B. has also committed to a goal of bringing 18 new members into the Kingdom. We may call it grace under pressure. The fortitude is drawn from deep spiritual wells.

**2) Social Harassment:** Mission is not based on a theology of glory. We follow and proclaim the Man of the Cross. The Malabar Workers have never been without some social difficulty, and they are not without it today as they carry on their witnessing task. India is not Pakistan where a Christian cabinet minister is assassinated because he opposes an unjust blasphemy law. Nor is South India like other regional areas where there are frequent communal incidents. Malabar is Northern Kerala, a state that has been a blessed place of inter-religious harmony, where 20 per cent are Christians, and where the Gospel has had free course. Yet of late serious new tensions have arisen, for which all communities have responsibility, and leaders are working hard to keep the peace. I myself have spent a good deal of time with Muslim leaders to keep the lines of communication open. On this visit I was asked to help inaugurate a major Calicut festival that celebrates trade between Malabar, Arabia, and China. The Collector who invited me to participate, and the Cabinet Minister who was the main speaker were Muslims; the mayor of the city and the local M.L.A. were Hindus, and I was Christian. Together we lit the *nilawilakku*, the inauguration lamp. We must work at all levels to keep the peace of the city. But in the trenches are the Gospel Workers who “walk in danger all the way,” and who often stand alone amidst the furies.

**3) Morale Issues:** The Gospel Workers are essentially a small group of about twelve evangelists, augmented by medical workers and teachers. They are separated from each other by distance, and are advancing in age. It would be highly surprising if the pressures we have described did not produce some problems in morale. Rev. Victor, the fiery spirit who periodically aroused them to new energy can no longer manage that kind of Pauline leadership. The Workers need to develop fresh ways to draw on those spiritual resources that will sustain them and will strengthen their apostolic zeal. We talked about some of those ways. The materials for the Spirit’s fashioning are there. It is a talented and experienced group, with women—both unmarried workers and spouses—playing an important role. In the northern post of Kannur a remarkable 34 year old unmarried

female worker named Sosamma (Soosan) George is leading the way. She is maintaining her unexpected leadership role while the wheels grind slowly to find more staff. With five years of study at Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil and an earned Bachelor of Theology degree, but above all with a deep personal commitment she carries an immense work load. The worker morale is affected by conditions and needs tender loving care, but it is not gone. At the close of our Gospel Workers meeting on February 15th the workers sang their favorite hymn, “We Shall Overcome,” with as much conviction and abandon as ever. We must pray for our friends in action.



More "Friends in Action." l-r: Evangelist J. Devaraj, Miss Lizy, Miss Soosan George, unknown, Rev. T. Joseph. Lizy and Soosan are workers at *Vanitha* in Kannur.

## Conclusion

I have touched on only some of the events of the busy visitation. It included helping Rev. Randy Freund and Mrs. Dorothy Desens of Faith Lutheran Church get around as they reviewed their support of Rev. K.K. Alavi’s ministry, relating to the directors of a Muslim College in regard to a possible twinning program, negotiating a publication proposal with a Calicut publisher, and above all finding time for the old friends who came for a visit. The bottom line is that possibility and joy still reign in the Malabar work. The most remarkable example of that came from the Otten English School. Joel Otten, son of the former missionaries, Henry and Mary Esther Otten, had gone with me on the out-bound trip, returning to Wandoor after a seventeen-year absence. As our car drove up, a good portion of the thousand students—mostly non-Christians—leaned out of the school verandas and let loose with a wild cheer that rattled the heavens, a cheer for the prodigal son who had returned. The Three Yeff Company is in good shape. I encourage MMS members and donors to continue their generous and faithful participation, and to share in some of its joyful dividends.

“By our love, by our love, we shall overcome some day.” ❖



## In Appreciation

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

### In memory of:

- **Phyllis Guebert**  
Gloria & Linden Dressler  
Mark & Monique Dickinson
- **Eric Kemle**  
Marj Kemle



*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*



# COMING SOON

Rev. Dr. Roland Miller has authored an extensive history on the Malabar Mission Society. It is titled *The Story of the Malabar Mission Society: Two Decades of Service*. With over 100 pages and 8 chapters, this book documents the plans, promises, journey, and experiences of the MMS family, as well as their triumphs and accomplishments. It is a remarkable story of faith, hope, love and compassion. And it is only available from the Malabar Mission Society [... to be released in June 2011].

## In Memory of Mrs. M. D. Rajam Joy

- Rev. Carlton Riemer, MMS Project Officer

Mrs. M. D. Rajam Joy was born on March 6, 1950, in Ooty, Tamil Nadu, in the Nilgiri Hills. Her father, M. N. Devadas, converted from Hinduism and served as a soldier in World War II. Her mother, Sosawma, was a Syrian Christian. The family moved to Moolankavu, near Sulthan Bathery, where Rajam grew up and attended school through the Tenth Standard.

On May 26, 1969, at the age of nineteen, she married the Rev. T. Joy. Their marriage was blessed with three children. Asha is a teacher; Santhosh is a pastor in the Trivandrum District Synod of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church; and Sownya is a clinical research assistant. The Joys have two grandchildren.

Rajam was a homemaker and a partner with Rev. Joy in his ministry, including his service as the Program Director of the Malabar Mission Society. She taught Sunday School for many years. While Rev. Joy was principal of Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, Rajam was in charge of the Ladies' Hostel. At Bethel Lutheran Church, Chengavila, where the Joy's retired, she was active in women's work in the congregation.

She completed her life on earth on February 14, 2011, when she succumbed to Hodgkins Lymphoma. A burial service was held on February 15, 2011, in Chengavila. By the grace of God M. D. Rajam reached the age of 60 years, 11 months, and 8 days.

We now await the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the body, and the new heaven and the new earth, which our Savior has promised. Praise be to Christ for all He has done for Rajam, and for all humanity by His birth, His death, and His glorious resurrection from the dead! ❖



Rev. T. and Mrs. Rajam Joy at home in Chengavila

## [www.malabarmissionsociety.org](http://www.malabarmissionsociety.org)

The overhaul and redesign of the Malabar Mission Society website is now complete, with many new features included. For example, we've added tabs along the top panel to help explain WHAT WE DO, WHO WE ARE, WHY WE CARE, and HOW YOU CAN HELP. We hope this expanded site, with updated information, will better inform our existing supporters and attract new members.

As with most websites, some of the information is not yet completed. Over the coming months we intend to add new articles, new updates, regular messages from our President and Project Officer, and new multimedia features. We are still working on these items and plan to finish everything very soon. Please check back regularly!

If you would like to know more about the MMS but cannot find the information you are seeking, or if you simply need some clarification on the activities and goals of the Malabar Mission Society, please don't hesitate to contact us at [malabarmission@sasktel.net](mailto:malabarmission@sasktel.net).

If you find some bugs or broken links, please let us know. We appreciate your help and support. ❖

## AN INTERVIEW WITH "REJI" - Conclusion

- Mark Dickinson, Newsletter Editor

*Part 1 of this "Internet Interview" with Mr. C. Rejidas, a seminary student from Kerala, India and a long time friend of the Malabar Mission Society, appeared in the Winter 2010 issue of the MMS Newsletter. This concludes the interview. – ed.*

MMS: Reji, how would you like to serve in the ministry when you graduate? In other words, is there a particular area of work/mission that you would like to focus on?

**Reji:** **Serving the Society and helping the needy along with parish ministry [note: by the word "Society," Reji means the local community where God is placing him; the local community (or society) includes people with different culture, caste, and faith].** There are lot of people in our society longing for love, protection, and care. As a Christian we must care for them not only by words but also through deeds. Also, along with my pastoral parish assignments, I am planning to focus on serving the people through some development and training projects and other compassionate institutions.

MMS: What are some of the difficulties (or challenges) of pastoral work in India/Malabar today?

**Reji:** **i) These days dedicated youth are not coming for pastoral ministry. One of the main reasons is the pastor's less (low) salary. In all other field people are getting good salary, even labourers also are getting more than 400 rupees per day (~ \$8.50 CDN). But Pastors getting maximum 4,000 rupees per month. How can they hope to send their children to good school? How can they live in society at least as a congregation member? Pastors must be paid and cared. Especially in Malabar area, travelling and living with limited resources is very difficult, because all pastors are not natives. Pastors at Mission field must be especially cared [for] and their need should be addressed properly as the established congregations in the Synod area (in Malabar).**

**ii) There are a lot of problems pastors face. There is no security in their life and also their family's life. Because God's word, Pastors are facing mockery, rejection and burning Bibles. But as a disciple of God, we are happy to bear these kinds of things.**



Reji inside St. John Lutheran Church at Malappuram.

**iii) There are a lot of Dalit (out)caste people. If they want to convert from Hindu to Christian they will lose all their benefits from government. As a Hindu dalit, lots of benefits, but as a Christian dalit, there is no benefit. So because of this reason people are not interested to convert, at least not interested to hear the Word of God.**

**iv) Today all other religious people have conventions, children education, writings and books, etc. People don't want to come out of that.**

**But, if we look at all centuries, Pastors or Missionaries faced a lot of problems. However, at last victory belongs to God's word. So we are sure that God is with us to protect, to guide, to inspire, to save from all of the above kinds of problems. Also, there is no problem to suffering for the glory of God.**

MMS: Do you feel that Christianity is growing in India? Where is the Christian movement strongest, and weakest in India?

**Reji:** **Growth of Christianity can't be evaluated through numerical growth only. Christian impact in the Indian society is high and also increasing. Charismatic Christianity claims growth. In South India and North East India, Christian Movements seem stronger.**

MMS: When I first met you in 2004, you were working at the Open Door – Kannur. How did you find this job (or did it find you)? Also, what did you like most about your work at the Open Door?

**Reji:** **Kannur Open Door Library found me. While I was studying the one year Catechist course at Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil, Rev. Dr. K. M. Victor enquired with the Seminary Principal about getting an evangelist to Kannur. He suggested my name. After the consultation, I was appointed there.**

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MMS: What words or ideas come to mind when you hear the words “missionary” or “mission?” In India, there is much controversy (and often danger) associated with missionary or “conversion” activity. How does this affect you ... when you hear about missionaries or Christians harassed, beaten, or murdered?

**Reji: A Missionary is one who is sent out to do God’s will and Mission in an assigned area other than his or her native place. Suffering is a part of discipleship. Religious conversion and fundamentalism are the growing issues. But the Holy Spirit empowers us to do His mission weekly and in the spirit of love.**

MMS: What impression do you have of the Malabar Mission Society (and its people – Dr. Miller, Rev. Riemer, etc)? Has the MMS been of help to you? How could the MMS do more in Malabar, and India (in general)?

**Reji: Due to various reasons, mission in the Malabar area weakened in the past several decades. Involvement of the Malabar Mission Society is helpful for the work in the**

**Malabar area. The Malabar Mission Society is assisting, financially, the workers, providing vehicles to the Pastors, providing opportunities for fellowship like Study Seminars, Gospel Conventions, etc. The MMS is trying to revive the Gospel work in the Malabar area. The MMS is also helping my studies by providing a scholarship.**

If I can say anything personally, Dr. Miller and Rev. Riemer is the good model for us to do mission work. They did (do) a good job here. Dr. Miller is the person who found out and selected me to leadership training and theological studies. Rev. Riemer is encouraging me a lot through all kinds of words and deeds. Their open heart and vision for the Mission of God is very much the root of growth in India, especially in Malabar.

Finally, more dedicated and qualified pastors are needed here. The harvest is high, but workers are very few. Developing institutions and other compassionate services is also needed. Above all, the first priority must be given to the improvement of existing congregations.

MMS: THANK YOU, Reji! ❖

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: BOTTLED WATER OR LIVING WATER

- Rev. Howard Ulmer



**O**n several occasions Jesus enters Samaria and is involved in cross cultural ministry. In these contacts he frequently crosses through the various religious barriers as he encounters individuals with their perceptions of religious and cultural bias. In John 4 Jesus comes to the town of Sychar in Samaria.

While resting at Jacob’s well Jesus requests, **“Give me a drink”** from a Samaritan woman. This bold request crosses the usual gender, cultural and religious boundaries.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ, the Gospel workers in Malabar and Anantapur, regularly work in communities where they cross similar boundaries of gender, culture and religion. They boldly proclaim and give witness to Jesus, our Saviour, in their evangelistic outreach and Christian witness to the many Hindus and Muslims in their communities. They remain faithful to the task in the midst of ridicule, rejection and persecution. They continue to preach and teach God’s Word and respond to the needs of many people. Our gracious and loving God continues to bless the work as many hear the **Good News of Jesus, “the living water.”**

Are we weary and thirsty from our journey in life? What are you thirsty for? Where do we go for “refreshing” water? Probably like the woman at the well we have relied on “bottled water” that is packaged and readily available from various

stores. We purchase the various self-help books, Bible studies and programs, insurance policies, gym memberships and medications to help keep us hydrated. Many of these are necessary for our lives, but they can’t replace what Jesus is offering. Too often we trust bottled water products more than what **Jesus offers – “living water.”**

In this Lenten season we follow Jesus on his journey to the cross. On the cross Jesus was thirsty. On the cross he completed his Father’s mission. He died so that we might have forgiveness and he rose from the dead so that His living water would give us eternal life. Bottled water only sustains us for a short time. **The source of the living water is God.** The living water comes to us through Christ. The Holy Spirit enables us to worship God in spirit and truth.

**Living water is flowing water.** Drink it. Trust it. Believe it. It flows to us through the Gospel of truth in Jesus Christ. The living water washes us clean by daily remembering our baptism. The living water is also contained in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We serve this living water in towns and cities, at stores and churches – wherever we encounter thirsty people, just like Jesus. We share the living water in India and where we live and journey. As people hear the Word of God, they drink living water from the source and trust that is all they need. We give thanks for the faithful financial and prayer support of many people that enables us to assist the faithful workers in Malabar and Anantapur. ❖