

Malabar Mission Newsletter

Winter 2012



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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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JEFI, A NEEDY GIRL AND A MISSION SYMBOL

Written by Rev. Dr. Roland E. Miller

Jefi is a poor 12 year old girl with disabilities produced by cerebral palsy. However, she is more than a symbol of need. She is a symbol of a whole mission field. Her story reveals how God has worked in Wynad.

Wynad is a high plateau in the mountainous region of northeast Malabar. Its climate makes it suitable for the production of tea, coffee and rubber. The setting up of plantations, however, faced two problems: severe malaria infestation and jungles inhabited by the resistant aboriginal tribes. A breakthrough came in 1947 when the Government decided to fight the malaria. Many former soldiers from the World War that had just ended were granted settlement lands.

More and more plantations were established. One was started by the brother of a Lutheran pastor in the Trivandrum District. He requested the church to send missionaries. The Synod did so, and the Wynad mission field was born.

What does this have to do with Jefi? Jefi's grandparents belong to the aboriginal tribal people of Wynad who lived in the forests and were totally primitive in their lifestyle. In that regard, they resembled all the hill tribes in India who still number millions. They are the most ancient stratum of the Indian population. About 2500 years before Christ a large movement of Indo-European people from Persia and beyond pushed into the northwest of India. They forced the Dravidian people living there to go southward. The Dravidian's in turn pressed the indigenous tribes into the hills where they have survived to the present day. Each tribe has its own characteristics, but they are commonly animistic in their religion, uncivilized in culture, very shy, and quite suspicious of the intentions of the outsiders who were invading their habitat.

Our pioneer Wynad missionaries saw them as people who needed love — God's love and human care. These courageous workers were led by Rev. Martin Lutz, from Britain, and their honour roll includes the names of Revs. Johannan, Abishayi, Tennyson (Rev. Joy's father), and Joseph (Mr. Richard's father). At first, the forest dwellers resisted their efforts; there was extremist Hindu resistance to the work, and they labored on in quite deplorable conditions. Gradually, the tribal people gave them their trust, and many accepted Christ as their Saviour. At the same time, the new believers increasingly adopted modern ways. Our largest congregation in Malabar — at Kurumbala — is composed of people from this background. They represent an evangelistic miracle.

One thing the tribal Christians needed most was education. A student hostel was set up in the town of Sultan Battery where the tribal children could stay while they attended public school. One of them was a boy named Baby. He went on to become a Lutheran pastor, the first and still the only member of this group to do so, and he is now the pastor at Sultan Battery where he and his wife are working faithfully. They understand what it means to be called out of darkness into His marvelous light. Jefi is their daughter.

Having been born with learning defects, she symbolizes need. Members of a Canadian Lutheran congregation are helping her receive the special education her condition requires. She is able to get it at a local Roman Catholic school in her town. More than that, however, Jefi symbolizes the wonder of how God works with us and his mission. One of the most incredible and largely unwritten mission stories from wider India is that the tribal people in different areas are turning to Christ. The Jefis' are multiplying dramatically. A Scripture verse sums it up: "Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me will also do the works I do, and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father" (Jn.14:12).



In Appreciation

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

In Honour of...

Eric Kemle's Birthday

Marjorie Kemle

Rev. Lowell Guebert's 60th Anniversary of Ordination

Irene Pergentile

In Memory of...

† *Rev. Richard Zimmerman*

Cheryl and Vern Windrim

Jerome and Patricia Robert

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Florence Wudrick and Family

† *Violet Printz*

Wilbert Printz

† *Rev. Angus Schneider*

Ken and Margaret Peterson

† *Arthur Saar*

Mark and 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:
The Malabar Mission Society
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Regina, SK S4N 7L2**

MMS APPOINTS NEW AGENT

Written by Rev. Carlton Reimer



In October 2011, the Rev. T. Joy informed the Project Officer that he wished to step down as the Program Director/Agent of MMS in India but he offered to continue in his duties until MMS found a replacement. The MMS Board considered various candidates based on suggestions from Revs. Joy and Victor and from the Project Officer and Program Advisor. At the April 2012, meeting of the Board, the Rev. I. Titus was selected. He accepted the position of MMS Agent on May 23, 2012 for one year starting September 1, 2012. He wrote: "After getting your message I put that in God's hand and prayed. Then I took a decision. That is, God's call is this. So I submit myself to God. So I accept this responsibility. I know it is a great task. So I want MMS prayers and full cooperation; then only we can do this for His glory."

At the Family Convention, in the presence of members of the Malabar congregations and of the Gospel Workers of the Malabar Mission Circle, the Rev. T. Joy was formally thanked for his service as Program Director. The MMS presented him with a plaque which read: "Presented to the Rev. T. Joy, Program Director of the Malabar Mission Society 2006-2012 with sincere appreciation for your years of service as Leader, Teacher, Churchman, and Friend." The MMS also presented him with a cash gift. Following that presentation, the Rev. I. Titus was placed into office as the Agent of MMS.

The Rev. I. Titus has been the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Malappuram, for around ten years. The congregation has about 50 members with two families who are converts from Islam. It is an active, self-supporting congregation. Rev. Titus is chaplain of the Christian Welfare Centre. He visits patients regularly and conducts devotions at 8 a.m. in the main lobby for the hospital staff. He is also principal of the Lutheran nursery school and elementary school (up to grade five). A majority of the children are Muslims. As the supervising pastor of the Friendship Centre Reading Room in Malappuram, he works closely with Mr. John Tennyson, the attendant. His respect among his peers is evidenced by his election as the president of the Malabar Gospel Mission Society in India, a partner society with MMS. He is also very active ecumenically in the Malappuram area. He has a Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Divinity, and Master of Ministry degrees, as well as a L. S. T. diploma. His wife is D. Flory, a retired teacher. Their two grown children live in the Thiruvananthapuram area. When he retires on May 31, 2013, he plans to reside in Kozhikode. He is already functioning well as MMS Agent, but he looks forward to focusing even more intently on his duties as MMS Agent in retirement. Please pray for Rev. Titus' ministry, as he requested.

THE CANADIAN/AMERICAN SPOKEN ENGLISH COURSE — AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM EFFORT!

Written by Rev. Carlton Reimer

The Canadian and American Spoken English Course (CASEC) was held at *Vanitha*, in Kannur, from August 27 to September 8, 2012. Rev. Dr. Roland and Mary Helen Miller recruited three Canadians from Ottawa to make up most of the team—Sharyn Heagle (the Academic Director), Analis Groh, and Jennifer Voelker. The fourth traveler, Ian Voelker, joined his wife, Jennifer, for this unique adventure. Arlene Riemer, from Stillwater, OK (and a member of the 2009 team) completed the team and served as Team Coordinator. Roland and Mary Helen prepared the Canadian teachers well for their first experience with India.



Ian & Jennifer Voelker, Analis Groh and Sharyn Heagle are welcomed on arrival at Kochi International Airport.

The Project Officer welcomed them upon their arrival in Kochi with garlands according to Indian custom. During that time Arlene was working with Pastor Rejidas in Kannur buying supplies for the teachers and making preparations. At the shops they purchased tote bags advertizing *Vanitha* for all the students, white boards and markers, hand mirrors so the students could learn mouth and lip placement for better pronunciation, folders for lessons, etc. The teachers attended worship in Malappuram on their way to Kannur and joined services in Naduvil and Chengali on the Sundays they were in Kannur. The team also met several of the workers in MMC. In Kochi, they took in some of the tourist attractions and local shopping. On the way to Malappuram they stopped at a “Captive Elephant Sanctuary” and viewed 63 of the magnificent creatures.

Ms. Bency and Ms. Anila, the *Vanitha* attendants, faithfully kept the facility and grounds clean and refreshed the teachers with tea at the beginning and end of each day. They also improved their English language skills by attending the classes; both ladies

related well with everyone in the program.

Pastor Rejidas handled applications and registration and interviewed prospective students, as well as undertook many errands to make the CASEC program a success. Thirty three students were enrolled, and all but one completed the requirements with perfect attendance. There was an equal distribution of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians in attendance. Many of them were recruited from the Sri Krishna Menon Memorial Women’s College, located across the road from *Vanitha*.



The teachers are treated to an Onam meal.
L to R: Analis Groh, Jennifer & Ian Voelker, Carlton & Arlene Riemer, Sharyn Heagle.

The CASEC was purposely scheduled to take place during the ten-day festival of *Onam*, Kerala’s biggest festival, a unique celebration in honor of a legendary King. The duration of the course was 11 days of classes with no classes on Sundays and one holiday for *Onam*. On the main day of *Onam*, Bency, Anila, and Pastor Rejidas served the teachers a traditional *Onam* feast, which we ate with our fingers from banana leaves as our plates. Bency and Anila also made a huge *rangoli* using flower petals, another *Onam* custom.



Ms. Bency and Ms. Anila made this rangoli at Vanitha to celebrate Onam.

Rev. Titus chaired the Opening Ceremonies with Mr. D. P. Jose, the Circulation Manager of Rastra Deepika, a Malayalam newspaper publisher located across from *Vanitha*, as the chief guest. Rev. Joy led the Closing Ceremonies and Graduation. Professor Premraj, from the Department of English at Sri Krishna Menon Memorial Women’s College, was the main speaker. Groups of students performed cultural presentations of songs, readings, and dances.

Together, the Canadian teachers wrote 22 modules or lesson plans, specifically for Malayalam-speaking students, to facilitate conversation and discussion - a monumental task! The lessons will make a good basis for future ESL classes. Some of the topics included phonetics, festivals & celebrations, the changing role of women, contractions, idioms, listening, global issues, food & meals, preparations for marriage, resume writing, preparing for an interview, currency, agree or disagree, etc. Ian and the Project Officer played the role of bosses of a company and conducted job interviews of all the participants. This was a new experience for almost all of the women, but they also evaluated it as “most useful/helpful.” The evaluations were overwhelmingly positive in that all the activities made them more confident in speaking English.



Jennifer Voelker is surrounded by her students and receives a gift from them.

More importantly, the event made it possible to form relationships and friendships that can develop into opportunities to share the Gospel. Those relationships are continuing between the students, teachers and *Vanitha* workers through email and Facebook as well as students returning to use the resources offered at *Vanitha*. May God’s continued blessings rest upon all the effort that was put into the CASEC project. To God be the glory!

THE GOSPEL WORKERS OF THE MMC SHARE JOYS AND CHALLENGES IN MINISTRY—

Written by Rev. Carlton Riemer

On September 18, 2012, the Gospel Workers of the Malabar Mission Circle met in Kozhikode to report on their activities and to encourage one another. The workers reported a total of ten baptisms of converts in 2012. They, faithfully, continue to make regular evangelistic home visits, which include prayers for family needs and healing, both Christian and non-Christian, as well as conducting regular worship services, offering Sunday School classes and Vacation Bible School camps, and being involved in their communities.

Mr. C. Rejidas reported that he was appointed by the IELC to Kannur as a Probationer (similar to a vicar) and church planter in July. In India, probationers are given the title of "Pastor." After two years, probationers are ordained and receive the title of "Reverend." Pastor Rejidas conducted the first official Lutheran worship service in Kannur in the *Vanitha* chapel on September 2, 2012, with 14 people attending.



The Gospel Workers of the Malabar Mission Circle.
Front L to R: Pastor Deveraj, Rev. Dr. K.M. Victor, Carlton Riemer, Rev. I. Titus, Rev. T. Joseph, Mr. C. D. Solomon. Back Row (L to R): Rev. A. T. Baby, Pastor D. Wilson, Pastor C. Rejidas, Pastor Richard, John Tennyson, Miss Anila, Rev. S. S. Oliver, Miss Bency, Mr. Deveraj.



Pastor C. Rejidas conducts the first official Lutheran Worship Service in Kannur on September 2, 2012

For the meeting, Pastor 'Reji' translated the "Evaluation Analysis and a Plan for 2011-2014" into Malayalam and arranged for its printing so that all the workers received their own copy in Malayalam and English. This achievement brought to completion the evaluation process that the MMS initiated in 2010-11 of projects under the support of the Malabar Mission Society. The MMS budget for 2013 was prepared with reference to this plan. The MMS Board members received their copies in April 2012.

The three reading rooms (in Malappuram and Open Door and *Vanitha* in Kannur) reported increases in attendance. In fact, the Friendship Centre is short on space to accommodate the people coming regularly. Some of them have asked Mr. John Tennyson to open the Friendship Centre also on holidays.

Reverend Titus is exploring ways to make more of the Friendship Centre building available for the ministry of the reading room. Miss Bency and Miss Anila, the Reading Room attendants at *Vanitha*, reported on the Canadian and American Spoken English Course (CASEC) held in Kannur. A fuller report on CASEC appears on page 3.

MALABAR GOSPEL MISSION SOCIETY SPONSORS FAMILY CONVENTION —

Written by Rev. Riemer

The Family Convention for members of the congregations in the Malabar Mission Circle was held on September 14 & 15, 2012, in Manjeri. Since Arlene came with me to India on this trip, we were able to enjoy this event as a family ourselves. Rev. and Mrs. K. K. Alavi offered their guest room for our accommodations. We appreciate their gracious hospitality.



Members of the Malabar Gospel Mission Society set up the registration area for the Family Convention.
L to R: Sobhi Solomon, Flory Titus, Pastor Rejidas, Carlton Riemer, Rev. Joy, John Tennyson and Rev. Titus.

The convener was Rev. I. Titus, the president of the Malabar Gospel Mission Society which officially sponsored the event. Funding was shared between the congregations and the Malabar Mission Society. Eighty people attended, although attendance was affected by a transportation strike that was called for the second day of the event (till 6 p.m.) in protest to the government raising gasoline prices. Some of the families could not return to their homes on Saturday night, so lodging and food provisions were made for them at *Bishara Manzil*.

The theme was prayer. The main guest speaker was the Rev. Mammen, the Pastoral Council Secretary of the Church of South India—North Kerala Diocese—serving in Malappuram. Another speaker was a well-educated young man who grew up in a devout Muslim family. He met with Rev. K. K. Alavi with the goal of convincing Rev. Alavi to return to Islam. Instead, he became a Christian. He was recently baptized and is now studying at a seminary to deepen his understanding of Christianity and to equip him for evangelism. He explained and demonstrated the ablutions and postures that Muslims perform when they do the ritual prayers (*salat*) five times a day. The chapel was decorated with sayings in Malayalam from various sources, biblical as well as philosophical, including one from Dr. Martin Luther: "Pray – Let God Worry." On the second day, small groups of youth, women, and laymen met separately to discuss prayer and how it is practiced in their lives. The Holy Communion was celebrated on September 15 at 6:30 a.m.



Pastor Rejidas leads small group discussion with young people at the Family Convention.

COMPUTERS FOR OTTEN ENGLISH SCHOOL

Written by Rev. Dr. Roland E. Miller

The Otten School is a fully-accredited English-medium school located at Wandoor, South Malabar. It is named after Missionary Henry Otten who died in service in 1985 and is buried at Wandoor. A group of sincere laymen, led by the visionary D. Appukkuttan, developed the school out of the ground. It was hard work because they had to raise money for buildings, as well as develop the educational program which required approval of a national agency, but somehow they succeeded.

The school has become a major educational ministry. It has 1262 students ranging from the first to the twelfth standards. The students are almost entirely either Hindus or Muslims in faith. This reflects the fact that the institution has a high standing in the surrounding community, which is over 95 per cent non-Christian. Thus, its fine staff are well positioned for Christian witness, as well as patient service, and they are sincere in both.

The school is in the vanguard of those institutions that are providing computer education in the backward interior of South Malabar. Each class gets two periods a week of instruction; however, the Otten School does not have the needed computers to maintain its program and has requested help. The Malabar Mission Society, in its November 3rd Board meeting, resolved to fund the purchase of 15 computers at a cost of \$6000 in order to assist this worthy ministry. If anyone wishes to help purchase one of the computers, the cost is \$400 each.

It may interest the reader to know that many years ago Mr. Appukkuttan started his career as an evangelist, and he retains his commitment to Christian witness, especially among Muslims. He writes of remembering...

"..the good old days that I could spend with you as a reading-room evangelist. Our Lord's guidance is wonderful indeed. The flannelgraph, the view master and the Christian literature attracted many a person to the reading room. I did enjoy the busy hours of sharing the gospel with them. A boy who lived next door used to knock at the door of the reading room every morning in order to join the Morning Prayer with me. He is none other than Abdul Aziz who became a famous sportsman and lives with his family near Malappuram town and visits Wandoor occasionally to spend time with me. The other day he collected an English New Testament and a few tracts for his daughter who is a graduate in English."

Although he is very senior now, Mr. Appukkuttan's salt has never lost its savour! The computers will be in good hands.



CHRISTIAN WELFARE CENTRE, MALAPPURAM, RECEIVES SUPPORT

Written by Rev. Carlton Riemer

Arlene Riemer, the wife of the MMS Project Officer, had special duties to perform at the Christian Welfare Centre, Malappuram, when we visited there on September 17, 2012. In the presence of the nurses, doctors and staff, Arlene presented to Dr. Sophia Brillon a cheque in the amount of US \$4,000, from the Oklahoma District Lutheran Women's Missionary League, for use towards the hospital addition to CWC. This was a first installment toward the mite-supported project of \$8,000 which was chosen by ballot at the April, 2012, LWML convention.

Arlene also presented 360 gauze bandages that were cut and folded to specifications as a Servant Event at the same convention which she carried in her luggage to save the cost of shipping. The CWC has also received \$96 (US) from the Montana District LWML for this addition; and the Mid-South District LWML has selected this project, in the amount of US \$5,000, for the 2012-14 biennium. At this reception, the Project Officer presented the MMS annual gift to CWC in the amount of CA \$1,130.



After the presentations, we toured the five stories high addition, an impressive building, solidly built of cement and reinforced with steel. We observed the reception and registration areas, conference room, consultation rooms, pharmacy, natal IECU, delivery room, and, most important of all, the patient rooms complete with bathrooms. The outside is painted and soon the inside will be painted, and then furnished and decorated with drapes and pictures to make a homey atmosphere for families to welcome a baby into their midst and for patients to be treated.

From the top of the addition, we saw a Muslim mosque to the North. The CWC is within ear range for hearing the "Call to Prayer" from the minaret, five times a day, according to Muslim custom. Seventy five percent of the patients at CWC are Muslims. Looking to the Northeast, we saw the new bell tower of St. John's Lutheran Church, looming above the trees to give witness to the community that this hospital is an expression of the same love that Jesus showed for the whole world when He died on a Cross, like the one perched on top of the tower, and rose from the dead to give us a sure and certain hope of eternal life.



Arlene Riemer presents Dr. Sophia Brillon, Medical Director of CWC, with gauze bandages and a cheque from Oklahoma supporters.

(continued next page)

CHRISTIAN WELFARE CENTRE, MALAPPURAM, RECEIVES SUPPORT (continued)...

On the horizon above the church tower we saw another kind of tower— satellite towers relaying messages from cell phones and internet servers. India has gone high tech. God is giving us this technology as a way to communicate the most important message in the world—the Gospel! How appropriate that those towers were placed on top of the surrounding hills, since Malappuram means “Hill (*mala*) Town (*puram*) in Malayalam, the local language.



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS ...

COMPUTER ... Spa weekend ... COSTA RICA ... Large flat screen TV ... VIDEO GAME ... New Dress ... PEACE ... Family time ... LOVE ... Christmas turkey ... JOY. There are many more possibilities for completing the sentence. At the heart and center of Christmas is God’s gift of love to the world. At the right time God sent this special and wonderful gift into a world filled with political unrest, jealousy, envy and greed. God sent his Son, Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem to bring **Peace, Love, Joy and Hope** to his people and the whole world.

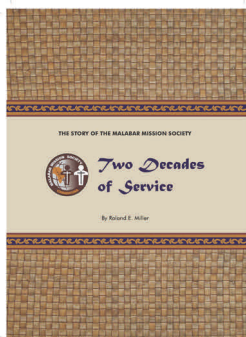
In the beginning God promised a Saviour. He renewed his promise to the people in many ways. In the Advent season we hear the prophets speak of the promised Messiah. Finally, it is the angels who announce the birth of the Christ Child in Bethlehem to the shepherds. God provides the star that leads the shepherds and wise men to worship the baby Jesus, God’s gift of love to the world. Through the preaching, teaching and healing ministry of Jesus, the disciples, religious and political leaders hear the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus brings salvation through his suffering, death and resurrection. The disciples wanted a new leader, like King David. The religious leaders felt threatened by Jesus, who challenged their authority. The political leaders wanted to eliminate this new King of Kings, who was gaining in popularity. However, Jesus came in humbleness. He lived that perfect life and fulfilled all the requirements of the law. He suffered and died on the cross for the sins of all people. On Easter Sunday morning He rose in victory over death and gives us our eternal hope, joy and peace.

In Holy Baptism we receive the gift of faith through the Holy Spirit. Although we do not deserve his precious gifts of love and forgiveness, God continues to touch our lives with his grace and mercy. Through his Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and Lord’s Supper we grow in faith and trust in him for all things. We respond to God’s blessings and share the Good News through our daily activities in word and deed. Thank you to all who continue to support the **Malabar Mission Society** through your prayers and generous financial support. May God’s love for you in Jesus continue as the motivation for your faithful support of **Malabar and beyond**. The pastors, catechists and Gospel Workers share the **Good News** with the people of India in their respective communities.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS **JESUS!**



MMS HISTORY BOOK AVAILABLE



The Story of the Malabar Mission Society: Two Decades of Service, by the Rev. Dr. Roland Miller, tells the story of Malabar from its development—including its struggles, challenges and opportunities to the present growth and expansion. God has blessed the work of the Pastors, Catechists and Gospel Workers as they share the Good News of God’s love in Jesus with Hindus and Muslims in Malabar, Anantapur and beyond. In the face of persecution and hardships, the Gospel continues to change the hearts and lives of the people in India. We give thanks and praise to God for the many blessings as His kingdom grows! We are also thankful for your continuing prayers and support of the Malabar Mission Society. You may order a copy of the book by email or by mail. A donation of \$10 will assist with the cost of printing the history book.

