

India

The Happy, Half Church

By Pastor Kalyan Gollapalli
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I am always fascinated by the churches of our Lutheran Mission of Salvation of India (LMSI).

As a child of God bought by the precious blood of Christ and as a shepherd under the Good Shepherd, I realize what it means and what a privilege and blessing it is to gather together around God's Means of Grace for the worship of the true God with the brothers and sisters of the same faith confronted and surrounded by a nation of Hindus.

I mention this because India, which is also called Hindustan, meaning "the land of Hindus," is the home for more than a billion Hindus and not less than six million Hindu temples (not counting the shrines and small street temples). Hinduism according to many of its adherents is tolerant of other faiths and religions, considering every other religion as an equal path to Moksha (liberation). But there have always been intolerant Hindu activists, who are growing day by day, who want to rid India of all other religions including Christianity. So, they plan to do it by degrading Christianity publicly, by persecution and

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Mission News & Helping Hands

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach

Sharing the Gospel in South America and Asia

From the Editor—

*Rev. Thomas Heyn, Board for World
Outreach Administrator*

We recently returned from a visit to our churches in Hyderabad and Rajahmundry, India. It is always a fascinating visit. To Westerners, India holds a certain exotic fascination—the bright colors, the music, the food, the Hindu temples and statues. Those temples and statues remind us of the millions who are perishing. Pastor Kalyan Gollapalli shares a story about one of the congregations we visited, the challenges they face in a Hindu nation, and the help we can provide to this happy congregation of Indian brothers and sisters in Christ.



Happy Children of St.
Paul's Lutheran Church



But there have always been intolerant Hindu activists, who are growing day by day, who want to rid India of all other religions including Christianity. So, they plan to do it by degrading Christianity publicly, by persecution and by simply demolishing churches wherever possible.

by simply demolishing churches wherever possible. At the same time, with the help of the government, they have been promoting Hinduism like never before, by producing 24/7 Hindu devotional television channels, by organizing huge public rallies and by building new temples and renovating the old ones wherever possible.

But how hopeless are their efforts and beliefs, for “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Romans 1:18). For them, the message of the cross is foolishness because their primary goal is liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth and getting united with Brahma, the supreme being. But to us who are being saved what comfort and assurance the message of the cross brings because it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). And this power of God enables us to bring the good news of forgiveness, life and salvation through Christ to those who want to persecute and treat us as enemies.

God our Savior wants all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). So, we would never overlook the Hindus but rather would bring the gospel to them despite their animosity. We believe that the Holy Spirit works faith in them according to His will. Accordingly, the congregations of LMSI are growing also with Hindu converts.

However, many congregations of LMSI do not have a proper place of worship to accommodate the growing membership. By “proper place,” I mean a spacious, well-roofed, well-lit, well-ventilated and well-accommodated church facility. Currently, many of these churches are small sheds (30 feet by 20 feet or even smaller) having four walls with either a thatched roof or an asbestos roof with very minimal ventilation and light. It can be very difficult for these congregations to hold their services, especially during the monsoon season. During monsoons they always have roof leakage and water stagnation problems. And throughout the year they face difficulties with stale air and congestion inside the sanctuary. Nonetheless, in such a small place at least 60 to 100 members will gather for worship. Can you imagine?

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St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in the village of Kathipudi of East Godavari district near Rajahmundry is one of many such congregations. In spite of a small house of worship, this is really a happy church with over 125 members. For the past several years they have had a problem on their hands, in fact it is a “good problem” to have for any congregation. The membership is large but the church building is too small to accommodate all the members. So, they have been praying and planning for church expansion. However, the lack of funds has kept them from going ahead with their plans.

But now, they have a new problem from the government. The government is planning to take half of their church building. Why? Because the government wants to widen the road adjoining the church building. And when it's done, the congregation will be left with only one half of the church. (Needless to say, if it were a Hindu temple the government would not encroach upon it.) There is nothing this church can do about it. So, this congregation is in great need for rebuilding the church right now. The congregation wants to tear down the small parsonage attached to the church and use it along with some additional vacant space for rebuilding the church if funding can be obtained. \$30,000 would allow them to complete this project.

Please keep this congregation in your prayers. If you would like to donate toward this project, please see information on the next page.



News from Other Mission Fields

South Korea—The pastors and members of this church body look forward to hosting the CELC conference at the end of May. Representatives from 32 member churches worldwide will gather “for encouragement, fellowship, study, cooperation in projects, and an internationally united voice.”

Peru—The congregation in Chimbote is in the process of purchasing property where they plan to build a multi-purpose worship center including health consulting rooms and a future Christian day school.

Chile—The congregations in Santiago are once again experiencing civil unrest with protests against the government which disrupt transportation and make it harder for members to attend worship.

Latvia—A field visit is taking place during March to this and other Eastern European fields. Pastor Ivo Sildeggs and his congregation continue their renovation of the building in which their congregation meets. They have already created an attractive sanctuary in the old building.

Czech Republic—Martin Luther School in Pilsen is underway with its winter/spring semester.

Ukraine—The counseling centers and medical clinics continue with their work as the Gift of Life ministry works toward a transition to Ukrainian administration when Nick and Kerry Laper retire in December.

In Other News

Kenya—The pastors in Kenya continue to be instructed via online classes. President John Moldstad, Rev. Thomas Heyn and Pastor Joseph Abrahamson will visit with the Kenyan men at the end of March.

Australia—The congregation in Brisbane has asked to work with the Board for World Outreach on outreach strategies and long-range planning for the future.

What can you do to help?

■ Pray for each of the mission fields in this newsletter. Pray for the national pastors of these churches as well as for the members of their congregations, that they might remain faithful in their homelands that often do not welcome the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And thank the Lord for their faithful service.

■ Please—prayerfully consider a gift or regular donation to the work in the various fields. Every field, and some more than others, has many needs where God’s people can provide much needed assistance.

■ You may designate a gift to a particular field or project on the memo line of a check. You may also go to els.org and click on “Donate” in the top banner on the right-hand side.

■ If you have questions, please contact us in the following ways:

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