

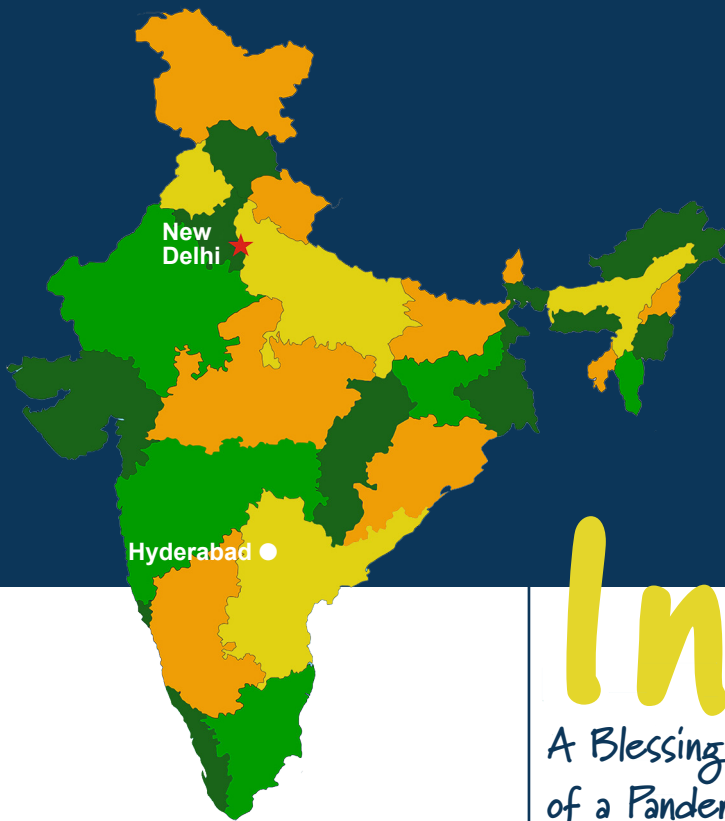


July
2020

Mission News & Helping Hands

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach

Sharing the Gospel in South America and Asia



India

A Blessing in the Midst of a Pandemic

by Pastor Simeon Mamidi, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,
Moosapet, Hyderabad, India

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

We had an exciting start for the year 2020 as we began the year with new plans and taking up the challenges that confronted us. COVID-19 was shaking up the entire world. The world, now sharing a common problem, began the search for one solution. During this pandemic, we have seen people suffer in many ways and we've been praying more than ever. Thankfully, the severity of the pandemic seems to be decreasing. The lockdown restrictions are being eased, the number of positive cases is decreasing, and we hope that one day this is all done. But, do we really want *all* of this to be over?

The Lutheran Mission of Salvation-Hyderabad (LMSH) has a different story to share during the pandemic. The pandemic was upsetting news for LMSH. **The churches were locked down only for people to get depressed realizing that they were getting "distanced" from God at a time when they needed Him the most.** However, the Holy Spirit reminded the president of LMSH, Rev. Solomon Mamidi, with the words of St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" Romans 8:28.

The solution that the world came up with to fight the pandemic was to maintain "social distance" and be quarantined. But, does this also mean we increase our distance from God? Absolutely not, and therefore, **since we could not go to church due to the lockdown, President Mamidi decided that the church services should go to everyone's home.** This marked a new beginning—offering online services.

From the Editor—

Rev. Thomas Heyn
Board for World Outreach
Administrator

Are we back to normal yet? I'm sure many of us wish we were, but we're not. A pandemic that we thought would be subsiding by summer is still prominent in the news, although there appears to be some easing. Recently, protests and social unrest are occurring, not only in the United States where many of our readers live, but in many places around the world. The fields where we work are not unaffected.

In this issue, we have a heart-warming story from India. We also have updates from other fields where the coronavirus has caused more hardship and sadness. Our Lord remains in control. As the main article reminds us: God works for the good of his people—even and especially in the darkest of times.

As always, we appreciate your prayers for the work in our world fields and your financial support that makes this work possible.

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This started during the season of Lent, one of the busiest seasons for our church since a service is conducted every day for 40 days. We were already halfway through the Lenten season when the churches were asked to shut down. People were asked to work from home.

Many people in rural areas and a few people in the cities had no source of income. Once again, we remembered Paul's words: God works for good.

The ELS and the Board for World Outreach offered support for LMSH providing funds to help relieve the pressure on our members due to the pandemic. This help not only gave strength to their physical bodies, but also strengthened their faith that God is in control, not the virus.

When a curfew was declared, people were forced to stay home. Everyone concluded that this was a good opportunity to spend more quality time with families and the church concluded that this was an even better opportunity to spend quality time with God. Therefore, three days after the Lenten services were halted, the services began online via Zoom and then eventually on YouTube as well. In fact, God used this opportunity in such a way that, even after Easter, people requested to continue. We even began to engage them in studying the Bible every day with their family. Although the Lenten season came to an end, both the lockdown and the sharing of the Gospel continued in every home.

But, the story of LMSH is even more interesting. It was not just the adult Bible study that was added,

but we began a Bible School that kept the kids engaged also and kept them thinking about Jesus through the lessons that were taught and the activities that were conducted. Every summer, the church conducts Vacation Bible School during the summer break, but this year, it was called the "Lockdown Bible School-LBS 2020" with the theme "Jesus, the Master Storyteller" where kids were taught the parables of Jesus. (See photos.)

How did God work things out for the good? It was not only one church that participated in this service. It was not only churches from one region that were active during the online worship services. It was all the churches of LMSH in all the regions that logged into one meeting, sharing one room, to once again proclaim that we all share one faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus.

L M S H
PRESENTS
L B S
lockdown Bible School

JESUS
The Master StoryTeller Of
Faith, Hope & Love
28-30 MAY, 2020 | 11:00AM | ZOOM

Activities
→ Devotion
→ Songs
→ Stories
→ Quiz
→ Crafts
Zoom Meeting Id & Password: 852 5912 4414, 269150
(Same meeting id for all the three days)

(above)
Poster for "Lockdown Bible School"

(right)
Zoom meeting for students

All the members, pastors, seminary students, gospel workers and the Bible women tuned in for these online services which were conducted by Rev. Solomon Mamidi and his assistant, Rev. Simeon Mamidi.

This brings us back to the question: Do we really want all of this to be over and done? The pandemic: YES! The way the Gospel is being proclaimed: NO! The restrictions are starting to lift, but the proclamation of the Gospel shall continue online hereafter, evangelizing and reaching out to more people than ever before.

Therefore, "...we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Prayer Request
Blessed by the love of God,
the grace of Jesus,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
we have been able to conduct our online services successfully. But it could be more efficient if we could produce better quality. Therefore, we request your support and prayers to be able to reach out to the Indian people more efficiently.



News from Other Mission Fields

Our South American fields have been especially hit by the coronavirus.

Peru A number of people have died from the coronavirus. In Tarapoto, the city from which we work in the Amazon region, at least one elderly member has died and members of her extended family have been infected. Pastor Ronal Rivas informed us that no one could attend the funeral because of quarantine. The congregation in Chimbote, about four hours north of Lima, also experienced the death of at least one of its members. Pastor Segundo Gutiérrez reported that he had to walk to the home of the family to comfort them because car traffic was severely restricted in the city and throughout the country. The virus has had severe economic consequences for the members of the Peruvian congregations.

Chile The capital city of Santiago has been hit hard by the coronavirus. They are under a very strict quarantine. Two of our Chilean workers, Vicar Victor Henriquez and Pastor Mario Gálvez, contracted the virus. Both have recovered. Unfortunately, the father-in-law of Pastor Gálvez contracted the disease and died from it. He was especially helpful to his son-in-law in carrying out the ministry of his congregation. And, as above, there has been a severe economic impact on the members of the congregations.

South Korea The coronavirus has had less impact on this church. However, there are still travel restrictions and quarantine requirements. The BWO had plans for a seminary student to vicar at Seoul Lutheran Church. Due to coronavirus restrictions and other factors the student cannot begin his vicar year in Seoul and other arrangements are being made for him.

Latvia The last report we have received informs us that social distancing is still in effect which prevents the congregations from corporate worship. However, there have been no reports of coronavirus infection among the members of the church.

Czech Republic Martin Luther School in Pilsen is back in session. We have received no reports of coronavirus infection and life seems to be returning to normal for which we are very thankful.

Ukraine The counseling centers and medical clinics await the opportunity to be open and offering services once again. No reports of coronavirus. Administrators Nick and Kerry Laper are returning this month after several months of being back in the United States.

In Other News

Kenya Seminary classes have been on hold during the pandemic. Not only did Kenya have to deal with a severe coronavirus outbreak; they also were victims of a locust plague.

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.
- Pray for these Christian brothers and sisters who often do not have the kind of medical care and government help that is available to most of us in the United States. May the Lord continue to care for them and strengthen their faith.
- Please—prayerfully consider a gift or regular donation to the work in the various fields. Every field, and some more than others, have 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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