

March 2025 Mission News

Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Board for World Outreach
*Sharing the Gospel in
South America and Asia*



India

Carry It on to Completion

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From the Editor

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We recently returned from the annual field visit to India. It was the first time that Asia committee member Justin Marthaler visited the country. He shares his impressions and observations with us in this month's feature article. We pray that you share his excitement about the opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this large nation. We always appreciate your prayers and your support for the world mission work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

As a first-time visitor to India, I kept noticing unfinished buildings—concrete support columns spiked with rebar, waiting for the next level or phase of construction. These buildings reminded me of the unfinished work of sharing the Gospel, especially in India. Only a small fraction of the 1.4 billion citizens have faith in Jesus. Yet, like these unfinished buildings, a solid foundation exists.

The Lutheran Mission of Salvation India (LMSI) has over 25,000 members primarily spread across southern India's Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states. That surpasses the membership of the ELS! LMSI is a vibrant and growing church body. As we traveled to the village churches, we were always greeted with Indian hospitality which includes being showered with flower petals, adorned in flower garlands, being covered in a shawl and never being hungry or thirsty. The churches were small, but full of worshipers, even during the middle of the week when many could not attend because of work commitments. The singing was loud, the sanctuaries were colorful, and the women were dressed in colorful saree dresses. Most sat on the floor, but plastic chairs were available for those who needed a seat and late comers were always accommodated.

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welcoming of visitors ▼



India continued

Just as India is alive with growth and construction, both the Hyderabad and Rajahmundry districts of LMSI are alive with growth in Christ. During our visit, we toured St. Peter's church, where recent updates allowed them to accommodate over 700 youth for a Reformation Day retreat. But those renovations are not yet complete as the church office, pastor's living quarters and a parking area still need to be finished.

We visited several children's homes, including the one at St. Peter's, where congregations are providing food, shelter, and Biblical training. The children were eager to share the scripture they memorized and the songs they have learned. We

learned that inflation has hit India as well and it has made supporting the children's homes more difficult. For example, a measure of lentils went from ₹28 (\$.32) to ₹235 (\$2.68), increasing more than 8 times in a few years. While the children are served milk and dairy every day, protein such as chicken is only available once or twice a week due to cost. Small donations in this area can make a huge difference in a child's growth and development.

"I am convinced of this very thing: that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6).

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ailapuram, shepherded by Rev. K. Nirmal Babu was another stop on our tour. The children's home associated with the church recently had a new wall and roof added to keep out bands of aggressive monkeys that were breaking through the roof to steal food. New restrooms were also added. These renovations only cost a few thousand dollars, but have improved life for the children.

In the Rajahmundry district, we helped inaugurate a new church building for St. Paul Evangelical Church in Dharmavaram, in the Kakinda District. This new

example of unfinished construction in India ▼



structure replaces a temporary, thatched roof building that was being used for worship.

In Rajahmundry, we were warmly greeted by the students at Grace and Truth Light Cornerstone (GTLC) English Middle school and toured the classrooms from Pre-K to 10th grade. The students receive an excellent education, pass 100% of required exams, and most importantly, learn God's word. To keep this school running well, about \$40,000 in repairs are underway.

At Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Rajahmundry, I was able to meet the latest cohort of seminary students and study hermeneutics (Bible interpretation) alongside these faithful men. They generally attend classes one week a month for five years on their path toward ordination.

While there are a lot of exciting things happening in India, the work is unfinished. So many people have not yet heard the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. As St. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6, **"I am convinced of this very thing: that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."** The Lord continues to bless the good work in India and I invite you to provide your support and prayers to help carry it to completion. ■



orphan boys with their suitcases of possessions ▲



new seminary students and professors ▲



orphans reciting catechism ▲



women at worship ▲



women at church ▲



orphans from the home at St. Peter's ▲

News

From Other Mission Fields

Peru The Peruvian church is facing challenges with increasing violence and crime in the country. The pastors continue their work with the Shawi pastors in the jungle churches. Pastor Gutiérrez regularly visits the congregation in Cajamarca. The third story addition to Martín Lutero School continues to face challenges from governmental red tape in moving forward with the project.

Chile Pastor Mario Gálvez reports that he has several training classes in Santiago. The congregation continues to grow there. A new vicar is helping him with the work.

Korea Pastor David Choi, together with his wife, Ashley, and Friends Network workers Doug and Lauren are active in reaching out to their Korean neighbors. Seoul Lutheran Church is evaluating how to best respond to challenges and opportunities for the work of their congregation.

Australia Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brisbane, Australia, continues to call a pastor to serve their congregation.

Latvia Seminary teaching continues with two men enrolled in seminary studies.

Czech Republic The BWO is investigating options for the future of St. Paul's congregation in Pilsen which has no full-time pastor serving them. Pastor Martin Vrsecky manages and teaches religion at Martin Luther School.

Ukraine Administrator Dmytro Maksymenko is developing and promoting new ways of Gospel outreach through the pregnancy counseling centers and mobile clinics. Although the war with Russia is a challenge for the work of Gift of Life, the Lord continues to bless this work for his glory and the blessing of many.

How

Can You Help?

Pray for each of the mission fields, for the national pastors of these churches as well as for the members of their congregations who live where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not always welcome. May God work all these challenges for the good of his people as he has promised.

Please—prayerfully consider a gift or regular donation for 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 or simply scan the QR code below which will take you to the donation page.



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