

News & Notes



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The Rev. Matt Conrad, Pastor

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Pastor's Corner

So, Tell Me About India!

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Philippians 1:3-5

Well, I'm back – safe and sound. India was a wonderful experience. Some of you were able to stay after last week's voter's meeting to hear a bit about my trip with Mission India. I have to say, that was the most attended voter's meeting I've ever seen. And considering the topic up for vote (an amendment to the constitution of our Synod), I know everyone was present to hear about my trip. Thank you!

But for those of you who couldn't attend, I don't want you to be left in the dark. So I'd like to share a little bit about what I saw in India.

First of all, the work of Mission India is AMAZING. India is a very large country, 1.2 billion people. Right now, the largest nation in terms of population is China. But by 2020, India is expected to be the most population place on earth. About half of this population in India is under the age of 20. It's estimated that only about 6% of the population is Christian, and ¼ of the people in India have never even heard of the name Jesus. This is a tremendous mission field for the Gospel.

What's even more amazing is that while you have this incredibly large mission field, you also have many workers in the field. In fact, there are more willing to go spread the Gospel than there are resources to support them through Mission India (this is where I hope St Paul can help make an impact – more on this later!) Mission India focuses on 3 important ministries, and they do them very well: church planting, children's Bible clubs, and adult literacy.

The church planting through Mission India is not done through any particular denomination. Rather, Mission India works with a partnering organization to train church planters. So our sister

synod in India, the IELC (Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church) send church planters to be trained by Mission India, so that these new planters can go out and do work on behalf of the IELC in the local villages.

The church planting training takes place over 1 year – 1 month of training, and then 3 months of out in the field. Then back to training, and then three months in the field. Over this time, the church planter is expected to contact 800 families (3200 people), plant 2 worshipping groups, reach 100 kids through the children's ministries, perform 20 baptisms, and start 5 prayer groups. ALL IN ONE YEAR!

These church planters touched my heart. Their dedication to the work before them, their vision to do so much in their homes and communities – speaking with them made me want to be a better pastor back here in Skokie. I was humbled and inspired. What's touching is that all of these church planters know the full reality that they most likely will suffer persecution for the work that they do. Yet they are eager to be God's hands and feet in India to share the good news of life in Jesus Christ.

Another ministry of Mission India is the children's ministries: A 10-day VBS-like program and then an after school program. Last year 4.5 million children in India participated in the 10-day VBS. Mission India thought that was a little small; this year they are aiming to reach 5 million children! The after school program is kind of a continuation of what happens in VBS. For 2 hours a day, 5 days a week, the kids learn and memorize Scripture, are mentored in their school work, have opportunities to sing and dance and learn songs, and also play sports with equipment provided by Mission India. The program reaches the total child – physically, intellectually, spiritually, and culturally. They want the kids to grow up and be productive citizens in their country – all while sharing the Good News as well. What Mission India has found is that if they reach the child with Jesus, the family, through the child, soon follows. Often, after a VBS program during the summer, Mission India needs to send a church planter because now parents want to start worship. Again, amazing work!

Last is the adult literacy program. Many of the students in this program are women who have wanted to learn but have never

been given the opportunity. To many, women are seen as having no value – they are only going to be a burden to their families to marry off, and then they are a burden to the husband. Mission India provides this opportunity for women to receive a 5th grade education in reading, writing, and basic math. What's amazing is that as these women learn and grow, you can see a total transformation in the village. They are starting their own businesses. They are saving money for their families. They can now read and give their children the proper medicine. Right now 96,000 students are part of the program – there's another 200,000 on the waiting list!

My trip to India allowed me to see these ministries first-hand. I heard from Mission India and learned the foundation to why they do what they do. I met the leaders who spearhead these efforts and work to bring these opportunities to so many in India. But then we were sent out to different villages to see the impact that Mission India is having among the people. And it's wonderful. I have come back "sold" on the work of Mission India. Not only are they sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, they are transforming entire lives as well. The work is not easy – but there are so many ready and willing to take up the Lord's challenge and make a difference in the lives of the people in India. I want us as a congregation to take part in this work. And we're going to do this through a few different ways.

First of all, we're going to start praying for the work in India. We take our open expression of our faith for granted. But you can't do that in India. There are 62 different militant Hindu groups that persecute the Christians in India. India is preparing for a new prime minister – and the most likely candidate is a proponent of anti-conversion laws: laws that make it difficult to convert to Christianity. We should be praying for the future governance of this country, but also that our brothers and sisters in Christ are able to freely express and share their faith.

A second thing we are going to do is to find ways to help support the work of Mission India. Over these past few years, St Paul has been opening her eyes to the needs of the community. We have been challenged to look beyond ourselves. We have been tithing of our offerings faithfully to the work of our greater church body. We've been supporting local ministries. But now I'd like

us to also turn our eyes beyond just our country, and to the work of the Kingdom in other countries. At the beginning of this article you read about the work a mission planter does in 1 year. Did you know that to make all of that happen only costs \$2500. This includes a modest stipend so that the planter can stay focused and not have to hold an outside job.

Jesus charged his disciples to be witnesses in their own homes and also the ends of the earth. One way we can continue to share the Gospel to the ends of the earth is through the work of organizations like Mission India. We can pray for them, support them, and be excited as the Lord uses Mission India to grow His church in places we might not ever go. I have so many other things to share about my trip, but this I felt was the most important part. God is good – all the time!

In His Hands

Rev Matt Conrad

Pastor Conrad

CHURCH NEWS

Lent and Holy Week Schedule

Ash Wednesday - Communion:
March 5th, 7:00 pm

Midweek Lenten worship:
Wednesday March 12th - April 9th, 7 pm

Maundy Thursday worship - Communion: April 17th, 7 pm

Good Friday worship: April 18th, 7 pm

Easter Sunday - Communion: April 20th, 8 & 10:30 am



Easter Egg Hunt



We will be hosting the annual Community Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 19th. Mark your calendar and watch for more information on this popular event.

OFFICIAL ACTS

Subtraction: 2/19 Andrew & Shawn Stuenkel

ATTENDANCE

	<u>8:00 am</u>	<u>10:30 am</u>
February 2	25	75
February 9	25	60
February 16	29	64
February 23	20	80



THE FOLLOWING MEMORIALS WERE RECEIVED IN THE CHURCH OFFICE:

In memory of Roland Keppen

Bill & Carol Peterson

In memory of Ralph Kasten

Karen Kasten

In memory of Ida Weier

Maryann Stas

In memory of Ralph Weber

Helen Weber



ST. PAUL GIVING & DEBT

Fiscal Year – June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014
Month Ending – January 31, 20134

Member Contributions + Loose Offerings

Needed total per 2013/2014 budget	\$ 253,070
Needed giving each month	21,089
Giving received this month	12,823
Giving needed so far this year	168,713
Actual giving so far this year	146,377
Variance to need – surplus/(deficit)	(22,336)

<u>Remaining Debts & Pay Down Progress</u>		<u>Pay Down This Month **</u>
Mortgage (parsonage) @ 5.75%	\$ 73,729	\$ (101)
Line of bank credit (LOC) @ 5%	36,826	\$ ()
Bonds 50K @ 6%, 15K @ 6-1/2%	65,000	
Loan from Foundation Fund @ 0% *	25,000	
Loan from Schaefer Bequest @ 0% *	<u>25,000</u>	
Totals	\$ 225,555	\$ (101)

* Pay back promised when borrowed

** Members: To help pay down our debts, please use the Building Fund envelopes in your packet, or use plain envelopes. When using either envelope type, please mark it Debt Reduction.

March Birthdays

3/01 Kristin Li
3/04 Christina Botten
3/05 Debra Rossi
3/07 Jonathan Kurinsky
3/08 Ann Schmidt
3/09 Danelle Conrad
3/09 Jean Culling
3/09 Kaia Koerm
3/10 Betty Eck
3/10 Tanja Flugum
3/10 Lori Guiang
3/10 Marilyn Schroeder
3/11 Carol Peterson
3/12 Kennedi Keyes
3/12 Edna Krueger
3/13 Robinson Sweet
3/13 Donald Young
3/14 Walter Pautsch, Jr.
3/14 Aaron Taber
3/16 Scott Kreissler
3/18 T.J. Casem
3/18 Tara Hilliard
3/19 David Raabe
3/20 James Smith
3/21 Debra Tarasievich
3/24 Herman Grosse
3/25 Barbara Ahrens
3/25 Penny Luytgaarden
3/27 Oliver Gadlin
3/28 Marilyn Farber
3/28 Arthur Stender
3/28 Robert Stender
3/28 Corrine Taber
3/28 Ursula Weinberg
3/31 Christine Malcher



March Anniversaries

- 3/2 William & Paula Hebble
- 3/3 Gary Blaha & Kristine Kiesel
- 3/5 Dennis & Nancy Stephans
- 3/6 Adam & Betsy Plant
- 3/25 Jeff & Nancy Eck-Prinz

