

P. R. I. A. MINISTRIES

(Pure Religion in Action)

Newsletter

September 2009

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In This Issue:

Progress of P.R.I.A. Ministries

- page 1

Churches Currently Needing Extra Help

- page 4

Progress of P.R.I.A. Ministries

By Kellie Tompkins



The last part of July this year, Joel and I left our mission work in Cairo, Egypt, to visit our son Andrew who is volunteering to help train lay pastors in the Tanuku, Andra Pradesh area. I kept a journal of our visit and would like to share what I saw and experienced in my first visit to India.

July 25, 2009—We planned a short trip to a nearby village to visit an Adventist church. This Adventist church was special—all its members are widows or widowers. Rekah is in charge of the widows' ministry in the area and she was going with us.

As we bounced along in the little auto-rickshaw I looked out at India, a place I've only read about and seen in pictures—the very very tall palm trees, the rice paddies with stooped-over people, the little houses with palm leaf thatch on their roofs, the women beating clothes along the river's edge. Rural India is quiet and peaceful. Birds sang and squawked in the background.

We arrived at the little church and Rekah went around in the village to collect the widows for us to meet and visit with. I felt bad that we had nothing to give. But I wanted to talk with them and encourage them. One by one they came into the church.

These widows and widowers are the poorest of the poor. They have no family to take care of them and they are at the mercy of others to provide their needs. Fortunately PRIA has set up a ministry giving them a small amount of money each month and some food. This is their existence. They were born into



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* * * * *

Contact Info:

PRIA Ministries
P O Box 19613
Seattle WA 98109
Tel. # 206-352-9365
baburaoched@msn.com
www.priaministries.com

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poverty and they will surely die in it. To look at some of them one could even believe they have given up on surviving and how they manage to stay alive is a mystery. But to look at others of them, you see the dignity they have in their faces, their smiles, and you realize their humanness and their suffering they bear because in this world they don't have any other choice. It's good to spend time among the widows of India. They have a thing or two to teach the rest of us. This life is full of pain and sorrow. But it is not for this life we work for. It is for the life eternal Jesus promised that would be free of the pain and suffering. The widows faithfully come to church every Sabbath and worship Jesus with a hope to someday stand far away from the lowly circumstances of their birth. And when that day comes it is no wonder we will all be singing "Worthy is the Lamb."

From the little church we walked through the village to a house where an Adventist woman had just died. We were going to give encouragement to the husband who is a Hindu. There he was sitting on the front porch of his thatched house. All was quiet around him. We shook his hand. Rekah talked gently to him and he began to weep pulling his hand up over his face to wipe away his tears. Before we left Rekah slipped some money into his hand.

Next we visited a woman in the last months of death. Hindu Indians believe something evil will happen to them if someone dies in their house. So when the elderly begin to show signs of dying, they are put into a tiny shack outside the house and that is where they spend their final days. Buzzing everywhere around her were flies. I've never seen a human being in such conditions before. When I bent down to shake her hand, Rekah quickly said, "Don't touch her." Disease was around her. I smiled at her as she struggled to hold herself up to see me through the dimness of the shack.

July 27, 2009. The lay workers gathered at the school today for some meetings. Joel and I joined Andrew in greeting them. We stood in front of them in our bare feet, as is the habit in this country when indoors, to offer words of encouragement. How does a person encourage a lay worker in India? Keep up the good work? You are doing the work of God? Jesus will reward you for your faithfulness? I found it difficult to say pat words to these humble workers who come from poor villages, who live each day in a survival mode, trying to eke out a life in the rice paddies or at local factories. Their jobs are mundane if not menial. Yet they sat before us, women and men, young and not-so-young. They expected us as the foreigners to impart some kind of knowledge to them, the lay worker.

My life is one of ease and comfort. I don't have to endure persecution from my family for my beliefs. I don't work a day job and then on the side encourage others to be strong in their faith. The job of the lay pastors is to strengthen their congregations in the absence of the pastor who is not always available to give Bible studies or to encourage each member to be faithful. So I did my best to encourage them and they looked and listened to the translator with respect and joy on their faces. I felt inadequate.



The only real encouragement I could give them was to assure them that I was praying daily for their efforts. And I urged them to endure the hardships they face because Jesus did not promise an easy life for us on this earth, but he did promise to always be with us and to reward us in the life to come. There is no doubt in my mind they will be among those Jesus counts as first in His kingdom.

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Chadalawada English Medium School



July 27, 2009. On the last day of our visit, we spent some time at the school which PRIA helps to fund. As we walked through the school entrance, I looked at the chalk board used as the school notice board. It was the official declaration that school was in session here. And I remembered less than five years ago that the school was only a dream. Students were meeting in a small shack.

Now over 280 students come together to study each day. The school is running smoothly, the teachers instructing, the children learning. What gives me the most pleasure is the school's desire to help educate children from poor homes. Although the school still has a lot of work to do to

finish the building project, the lower floors are in full operation and children are coming each day in their uniforms, marking in their books and reciting their subjects. I am thrilled to watch how professional the teachers and the staff are. From beginning in a shack to operating a proper school is quite a task. But the best part is the opportunity provided for families with low incomes. They need a place for their children to have a good education.

As I chatted with the principal on our last day I discovered the school has a strong reputation. The school's standards are high which means these children of low caste are receiving an advantage they could never hope for in any other school—a chance for a quality education. Many individuals have contributed money to help build this school. They should know that the money has multiplied through the blessings the children receive. This is priceless.



While I stood in the midst of the playground many children jostled to greet me. I watched them running and playing with a feeling of complete happiness to see them immersed in the learning process. But there were some who caught my attention more than others—the shy boy who just stared at me, his uniform clean and neat but his big toes poking out of his shoes. The family no doubt was putting off the expense of new shoes for lack of money. This small detail was an indication of the poverty these children face at home. But the boy was happy to be in school.



It is my daily prayer that PRIA will be able to continue helping so many in India in such a direct way. And I am thankful for everyone who has played a part in this project. May God continue to bless the work in Tanuku, Andhra Pradesh.

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Churches Currently Needing Extra Help

By Sarojini Chedalawada

For 4 years baptized members in the following villages have been praying for either a church or a chapel to worship the Lord in. To construct a small church or chapel would cost \$5,000, both for land and church.

1. Mortha

Padma, a young lady, went around visiting her neighbors and witnessing to them about the love of Jesus. Soon she had more than 17 members join the church by baptism. They meet regularly on her little verandah. A plot of land has been purchased for this purpose. They need funds to construct a small church. Most of these believers are too poor and old and therefore cannot afford to build a church of their own.



2. Chinthapalli

Mr. Dharma Rao and his wife are new converts from Hinduism and are on fire for God. This village has 35 believers who meet regularly for mid-week prayer meeting and for Sabbath services on a rented verandah from a neighbor. If they had a proper place of worship, many more would join them. Meeting on a verandah is not conducive for worship during the monsoon season. Please pray for these believers.



3. Meenavalluru

Mr. Chandar Rao, who is also a new convert from Hinduism, has been faithfully gathering 15-20 believers in his home for mid-week prayer meeting and Sabbath services. Because they meet in a home, many unbelieving husbands object to their wives going to a home where other men are present. If they have a small church of their own, many more souls would be gathered for the kingdom.



4. S. Illindraparru

Pastor Peter Ahn of California conducted ten-day evangelistic meetings and created an interest in the Adventist message to this group of mostly young people. Mr. Kumar Raja is not yet a baptized member, but he is ministering to this group by conducting mid-week prayer meeting and Sabbath services regularly. They meet in the street, blocking the road during church services.

5. Ravipadu

Mr. Surya Prakasa Rao and his wife care for two congregations in this village. Nearly 35 people meet every Sabbath for church services on a verandah that they are renting from one of the members. As mentioned before, having Sabbath services on a verandah is not conducive for worship during the monsoon season.



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