



Independent Church in India

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

NEWSLETTER Christmas Edition DECEMBER 2006 - VOLUME 25

INDEPENDENT CHURCH IN INDIA PO BOX 238 FREDERICKSBURG, PA 17026

website: www.indchurch.org email: info@indchurch.org (717) 865-7885

FINDING LOST SOULS

In this Issue:

From Castaway To A Mighty Woman of Faith

A Prayer For God's Special People

Back in India

The Lord is Using Native Missionaries

The Children at "Homes of Compassion"

The Good Samaritan Christmas Fund

*Editor and Writer
Kathy A Smith*

From Castaway To A Mighty Woman of Faith

Ammakannu was desperate... She had just heard about a church called Bethel Prayer House ICII that was helping people with leprosy and she was willing to do anything she could to get there. Someone had told her that they had seen a leper in the town carrying around a bag that said "Leprosy Compassion Pack". Ammakannu needed one of those compassion packs very desperately.

Ammakannu had had leprosy for many long and degrading years. Her life seemed beyond ever repairing. In her past, she had once been considered a high caste person, but since she got this terrible disease of leprosy, everyone had rejected her, both her family in whom she loved and all of society. Now she was sadly considered an untouchable person, the lowest of all the caste system. No one was willing to help her. No one wanted to even be near her because she had many deformities of her body that others considered hideous, and the filthy old rags she wore were beyond acceptable. But this deplorable situation was not of Ammakannu's choosing. She had certainly not desired a life of poverty. Those who believed in Hinduism believed that she was being cursed by the Hindu gods because she had done evil things in a past life. Now she had been reincarnated as an untouchable, a leper. Because of this, Ammakannu had no hope that things would ever get better, but worst of all she dreaded what might happen to her when she died. She only survived by begging. It had been three whole days since Ammakannu had eaten. She was also very worried because her landlord was asking her to leave the shack she had been renting from him. She dreaded living out on the streets.



Many lepers are homeless and live in unspeakable conditions. This was one leper's house that ICII met at a remote village.



Ammakannu

Ammakannu didn't know how much longer she could stand life. She often thought about committing suicide. The chill of night, the hunger, the poverty, the painful open sores on her hands and feet was more than she could bear in her old age. When Ammakannu did eat, many times she felt sick and she could not keep the cheap, spoiled food in her weak stomach. On top of all that, she felt so awfully lonely, having been rejected over and over again. She desperately yearned for someone to care. But this morning Ammakannu did leave her house with something new. It was a small ounce of hope that she had not felt for a long time. She felt if only she could get to this Bethel Prayer House church she had just heard about, maybe someone there would finally have mercy on her.

It was Sunday morning, and in hopes of finding the church, Ammakannu had been walking a long time and was feeling very weak and dizzy. Her thin, feeble body could go no further and she collapsed to the ground. One of the people on the busy street walking by had mercy on her and stopped and bought her some hot tea in hopes that she would get up again. Ammakannu drank the tea and slightly began to recover. She struggled up and continued to walk again. Not only did Ammakannu

not know how to get to the church, but her old eyeglasses were so scratched that it was hard to see much through them. In spite of all these complications she continued on. Ammakannu dimly remembered that once in her past, a man had told her "Jesus loved her". Ammakannu didn't know anything about Jesus, but she thought to herself that if this Jesus really does love me then I will pray to Him, and ask Him to show me where this church is. Ammakannu began praying for guidance. Shortly after, Ammakannu finally spotted ICII's church sign.

She slowly began climbing up the long three-story stairway, using every ounce of strength that she had left. As Ammakannu entered the church, she sensed something was different here. It felt good here and she felt a love that she had never experienced before. These people, many of them lepers, were worshipping Jesus with their whole hearts. As Ammakannu began to sing along with the praise songs and hear the Word of God, even though she had not eaten for three days she felt like she had renewed strength.

After the service, Pastor Britto and US missionary Lowell Smith sat down with her and lovingly shared the Gospel to her. That day, Ammakannu made the best decision of her life. She accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior! That day, Ammakannu didn't go home hungry, but she received a hot meal and a leprosy compassion pack from the church. She also received the love and attention that she had been longing for. Ammakannu also asked Independent Church in India to pray for her to be able to stay at the house she was living because she did not want to live on the streets.



When Ammakannu entered the church she seen other lepers worshipping and praising God with joy!

Inside the leprosy pack were very important things that Ammakannu needed. There were sandals for her feet, a mat to sleep on, a blanket, soap and a towel, toothpaste and a brush, some eatables, and more. Ammakannu also found a Bible inside. Since Ammakannu had made the decision to follow Christ, she was eager to know what God's Word said, but she was illiterate. Ammakannu eventually persuaded her neighbor man, who was a Hindu, to read this Bible to her. He too was curious about this strange book, so he began reading the Bible to her. After reading God's word he too began getting very interested. He told Ammakannu, **"Since you can't read, why don't you just give me this Bible?"** So the next week, Ammakannu went to church again and asked for a Bible for her neighbor. Through reading the Word of God, this Hindu man also made a decision to accept Christ!

Ammakannu looked forward to going to church each week because she felt the overflowing love of Jesus in each service. The church also began to help provide some of her needs. Each week she received a good meal and medical attention if she needed it. They also took her to the eye doctor and bought her new glasses so she could see clearly again.

One day, one man that lived near her that knew she was a Christian came to her in a panic asking her to pray for his wife. His wife was giving birth, and she was having serious trouble delivering their baby. The doctor had just told him that it was a very high chance that both she and the baby would die because of many complications. Ammakannu told him that she would come to pray for his wife. The man took Ammakannu into the delivery room and she laid her fingerless hands upon the woman in pain and asked Jesus to heal her and that the baby would be saved. After this, Ammakannu stayed at the hospital and continued to pray fervently for the woman. An hour after this, the man came to her with a big smile on his face and thanked her for praying for his wife. He told her that a miracle has happened! His wife had just delivered a beautiful baby boy and she would not die! Ammakannu began getting more excited about Jesus and knew that He was already using her to be a witness for Him to others in need.



Ammakannu standing next to the mother who wanted to commit suicide.

God heard her prayers, and many months later she continued to live in her house, even though she still faced some opposition from her landlord from time to time. In her neighborhood there was a family, a husband, his wife, and their three daughters. One daughter was 20 years old, and the others were much younger. This whole family was planning to commit suicide together because of their poverty and debts. Just before they were going to drink poison, they were crying very loudly in their house. Some of the neighbors began knocking on their door to see what problem they had. The family would not open to the neighbors, so they gave up and left. Ammakannu then went boldly to the family's door and she also began knocking. They also would not let her in. But Anna was persistent and she kept knocking and cried outside their door, **"I know you don't want to see me because I am a leper, but since you are planning to die anyway, why not allow me to come in and tell you something first?"** After almost thirty minutes of persistent knocking, the family finally left Ammakannu inside. Once inside, she could see that all five of them had the bottle of poison and were prepared to drink it. She began to tell them her testimony and how she also had wanted to die because of her disease and rejection from others, but she found the God who loved her and saved her from all her despair. She began to tell them how much Jesus loved them, and she invited them to church. That night, through her encouragement, the family decided to wait. It was a Saturday night. The next morning, Ammakannu brought the wife and daughters to church. That morning they felt the love of Jesus, and after hearing the Gospel they accepted him as their Lord and Savior! Now this whole family is trusting in Jesus and he is rebuilding their lives giving them new meaning and purpose for their lives. They decided not to take their lives, but they now realize that Jesus has a purpose for them. This family has been coming to church each week and the older girl has a desire to learn how to be a nurse so she can help others.

Since then Ammakannu has been baptized and has received a new name, "Anna". Anna continues to come to church each week to worship the Lord, and boldly prays for others and shares her faith.



Missionary Mel Huyard standing with Anna after he gave her the quilt.

Just recently, Pastor Britto and US missionary Mel Huyard (member of ICII's board of directors) took Anna a beautiful Amish quilt that Mel had brought along with him from Pennsylvania. That day Anna was very happy to receive the quilt, but she had not eaten for two days and was not feeling well because she had a fever. Before Mel and Pastor Britto left her small shack they prayed for her, gave her some money so she could get something to eat, and then went on their way. After they left her shack, the fever immediately left her and she began to feel better and went and got some food to eat. She was so happy that the Lord had touched her with healing and she was so blessed by the beautiful quilt that she went around to her whole neighborhood telling them how Jesus had healed her! The next day Pastor Britto and Mel stopped by her house to check to see how she was feeling and soon after this, the neighbors began to gathered outside of her house for prayer because they too wanted to be prayed for. The following day at church Anna testified that many of the people that were prayed for the night before told her that they had been healed! Anna looks forward to coming to the leprosy colony when it is built so she can have all her physical and spiritual needs provided for and to have a family to live with and to love for the rest of her life...

A Prayer For God's Special People - US Missionary Mel Huyard was a friend of the late Dr. Paul Brand, the famous pioneer of leprosy rehabilitation. Mel has been in India since mid-October and is helping Pastor Britto to find a plot of land for lepers such as Anna and others who need ICII's help. Below are a few excerpts of what Mel wrote about the first Sunday service he attended at Pastor Britto's church. "Pastor Britto and I have toured several parcels and pray we soon we'll have the land to build a Community, a Home, a Village and Clinic for these poorest of the poor, these precious suffering leprosy friends in this Dindigul region.

On Sunday, October 22, I attended Pastor Britto's church. He asked me to come and share from God's word. Approximately 130 people filled the church, many being our leprosy friends. After thirty minutes of sharing, we prayed with our heads bowed asking Jesus to forgive, to come into our hearts, to heal our hurts, our sorrows, our pains. To bless us with love and compassion and healing. Then Pastor Britto closed the service. So we thought. God had other plans.

First one person came for prayer then, two, three and finally a group. They all came for prayer one by one, our leprosy friends, those without fingers and toes with open sores and pain. A lady with a tumor on her head the size of a lemon, the blind, the dumb, those bent with age and pain, they all came for prayer for healing. The deaf, the mute, those with chest pain, stomach pain with earnest look in their eyes of expectations, expressions of faith they came. We laid our hands on their foreheads and held their hands in ours and prayed, hands with no fingers, hands with pain and hands with expectation. We prayed to our Father in heaven through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit we prayed. We brought our friends in prayer to the mercy seat of Jesus. To the throne of grace in fountains of prayer we asked, for healing, for blessing, for grace, for mercy, for compassion, for love. There were those who wept, those who praised God, those who thanked God. There were those who smiled and were happy. Maybe because they were touched and loved with compassion and prayer. For more than one hour we prayed.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? I John 3:16-17

Dear Lord, Bless these precious souls, the sheep of your pasture. Those for whom you died on the cross, hear our prayer, have mercy O' Lord. Help us to show love and compassion. Help us to build homes of compassion for these precious homeless ones, who are labeled as untouchable castaways in society. Teach us to love and care Lord Jesus, we will glorify you and praise you forever. Amen". .. by Mel Huyard



Many lepers are crying out for love and someone to care about them...

Please do join us in prayer to soon get this parcel of land and to begin building homes of compassion for leprosy victims. Yes, the need is urgent, and broken lives of leprosy victims are crying out for love, and someone to care for them, and a home to call their own. Please prayerfully consider giving extra this Christmas holiday towards the leprosy land project and we know that you will be blessed to know that you are helping these desperate precious people who are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Back in India - As you are reading this newsletter, Lowell and Kathy Smith and their family are back in India working with Pastor Britto and the missionary teams to bring the Gospel into the remote villages and reach out to the poorest of the poor. We are planning to stay in India till the beginning of May. While we are in India, everything will continue as it did before. Please continue to send all gifts to the same address in Fredericksburg as before and your gifts will be wired over to ICII. During the time we are in India, the ministry needs your support more than ever to keep functioning and also to accomplish these projects that the Lord has placed on our hearts. Please join with us in prayer that the Lord will make this trip prosperous to build the kingdom of God.

The Lord is Using Native Missionaries -Throughout the summer ICII has been getting sponsors for native missionaries so those who have the heart to serve the Lord can work full time in the ministry. Below is a testimony of one of our full-time missionaries:

Priya Juliet's Testimony - "I grew up with a Hindu background. My father was a strong Hindu devoted to worshipping the idol gods. My family suffered through poverty and emptiness in our lives and some days I didn't eat because my parents didn't have a job. Every day my family and I felt hopeless, and we had no joy in our lives. So I began to search for peace in many of the Hindu temples and all kind of other religious places. But I didn't receive any peace or hope in my life. One day when I and some of my friends were ready to go to an idol temple, the Independent Church in India team came to my area and preached the Gospel and gave out Gospel tracts. When they first began to preach, I and my friends began to mock them. But as they continued sharing about Jesus and shared that He can give me peace in my heart which I had been searching for, it touched my heart. That day, I asked Jesus Christ to come into my heart as my Lord and Savior. So that day I canceled my trip to the Hindu temple. Jesus filled my heart with joy and after this the Lord also touched my parents to know the true and living God. After that, I felt the call of God for reaching the lost souls. I never cried for the people for their needs, but now the Lord gave me the burden about the people to pray for them and share the Gospel to them. When I saw the ICII Gospel team doing ministry and showing the compassion of Jesus to others, it touched my heart to do something for God in my life. Now I am going every day to preach the Gospel in the villages, teaching Bible studies, and reaching children in the villages. Throughout my whole life, I want to serve God and reach the souls in India."

If you want to be effective for God's kingdom, you can sponsor a native missionary like Priya. Together you can reach many lost souls with the Gospel. It only takes \$30 per month (just one dollar a day) to reach people that have never heard the name of Jesus! This is but a small sacrifice to fulfill our Lord's last command. *(If you would like to sponsor a missionary please see enclosed giving card).*



Priya Juliet (far right) ministering to hundreds of children.

The Children at "Homes of Compassion" - In this section we want to dedicate some space to what the children who live at the orphanage "Home of Compassion" have been saying. We want to again thank all of their faithful sponsors that have made it possible for these precious children to give such wonderful testimonies. ICII along with the child and orphanage sponsors are planning to give the children a fun first Christmas this year. Here is what some of the children have been saying:



David-Raj smiling ear to ear as he looks at pictures and reads a letter that his sponsor sent him.

"I used to live in a hut, but now I am living the life of someone living in a palace!" (Stephen Raj - Age 12)

"Where I use to live before I had to eat bad stale rice, but here I have good food to eat even meat. Here I feel the real compassion and love". (Savara Muthu-Age 15).

"Before I came here my mother would always beat me. But at this orphanage the people here are loving me. Here I have come to know the Lord Jesus!" (Saranya Christy- Age 7)

"In my old house we never had electric. I like having electricity". (Juliette - Age 6)

"I used to worship all kinds of gods. My mom would come home late and would many times punish me. I would say many bad words and do bad things. But now since I've been living at the orphanage I have come to know Jesus and now I am worshipping him only. I also never could study well in my house because of the situations but now I am doing much better through the tutors that are helping me at the orphanage". (David-Raj - Age 12)

Pastor Richard, who is overseeing the orphanage, shares; "The children are all very happy here at the orphanage. They are enjoying each other and are uniting together as a family. I see them helping one another and sharing things with one another. And as they are doing this they also are feeling lots of joy. They also enjoy memorizing Bible verses and then sharing them in church".



Saranya Christy gives a warm welcome as she poses for a picture to be sent to her sponsor.

The Good Samaritan Christmas Fund - As ICII preaches the Gospel each day in the remote villages they find many people who are suffering. Giving these poor people help is a great way to show the love of Jesus as we are sharing the Gospel to them. We want to provide blankets and rice for poor families. This Christmas season ICII wants to reach out in love to the homeless and the disabled. We want to help poor village children with needs as basic as toothbrushes and toothpaste and provide for them notebooks and pencils for school. The Good Samaritan Christmas Fund will help people who are in desperate need, such as disaster victims, orphans, the elderly, the disabled, food for the starving, hut building or repair, blankets, medical help, and much more. One hundred percent of all gifts given to this fund will be used to help those in great need. For these people, your gifts are their only hope of any relief. Give a gift this Christmas that will keep giving...

THE GOOD SAMARITAN CHRISTMAS FUND provides for:
Medical Attention
Food Outreach
Blankets and Clothing
Hut Building and Repairs
Disaster Relief
Homeless Families
The Disabled
Orphans/Poor Children
Leprosy Victims