

Asian Ministry Trip:

Yvonne and I have just returned from an awesome trip where we have spoken at about forty five meetings, mainly for leaders, in Dubai, India and Thailand. Following are some of the highlights.

In Dubai we were not only impressed by a super city, but by the number of Christians who gather there. In the United Arab Emirates the churches have been granted large plots of land where a number of church buildings have been erected, in one of these places where we preached one hundred and twenty different congregations meet over a week. Because of the economic downturn churches are flourishing even more. Dubai is made up of about 80% expatriates so most attenders are from different country origins. We enjoyed meeting and ministering to some very fine leaders. The leader of the Bible Society there, Babu Ganta, was a great blessing and introduced us to a number of churches; one of these was the Arabic Evangelical Church in Abu Dhabi where there were a number of Egyptian farmers. Ravi David who travels widely throughout Asia introduced us to Babu and another fine minister Rev. Ernest Victor who opened his doors to us.

From Dubai we flew to a very different city Mumbai (Bombay) having a population of about 20,000,000 people; what a contrast! The total chaos of traffic, thousands of auto rickshaws, unbelievable crowds of people walking the streets, dilapidated buildings and modern buildings and slums all in the same areas, amongst these are thousands of cows all milked by hand, poor and rich all mixed together; it was truly an enormous, fascinating metropolis. However, amongst all this was a mighty work of God. In the New Life Fellowship of churches where we ministered in Mumbai there are 91,000 committed attenders spread over 600 congregations; and probably this is increasing, at about 1000 new believers a month. All this started from small beginnings, in about 1968 two New Zealand missionaries, Trevor & Isobel Patterson, started a small church in Mumbai, (then called Bombay) the church was taken over by Pastor S. Joseph who was a great visionary for God, through his ministry and those fine leaders he developed, it has grown to an awesome movement all over India and beyond. They have lost count of the number of New Life Fellowships in India because many churches have produced churches who have produced more churches - meaning, that to say 5/6000 churches would be a good guesstimate. For instance we ministered in a wonderful New Life Fellowship in Dubai which started out of Bangalore.

Pastor Shelton & Melissa Davidson and Dr Jacob & Eva Serrao major leaders in NLF Mumbai were wonderful hosts to us and gave us the privilege of ministering to their fine leaders and people. One of their leaders, Samuel who now oversees twenty six churches, preschools etc., was a smuggler, alcoholic and gambler in the 1990's. When his wife got saved and had a house group in their home people had to step over him lying drunk on the floor. What a trophy of grace; his fine family are now standing tall in God. We feel a real attachment to all those brothers and sisters.

We were the speakers at a New life Fellowship convention in Miraj, about 400 kms south of Mumbai; this was a memorable time with some great pastors who labour at huge sacrifice. Their area leader Pastor Christopher Roberts was a fine brother who we so admire. By-the-way he badly needs a good vehicle rather than to travel around those many churches in those terrible old buses. He said other leaders who go long distances to visit pastors and churches badly need motorbikes. They could do with about twelve at a NZ cost of \$2000 each. Anyone reading this please pray about giving to this vital ministry. You could send me a cheque written to Christian Mission Trust, P.O. Box 20035, Palmerston North, New Zealand. It is a worthy work ministering to thousands, many who are underprivileged.

From Mumbai we flew to Bangalore, a city of 6,000,000 people. It is a very fine city that has become a centre for well over one hundred missionary organisations, and has many, many churches. We spoke at a number of places all arranged by Ravi David who has a large school there. Our ministry included two outstanding Bible Colleges:

1. SAIACS which has about 300 students doing degree courses including PhD's in theology - the buildings and grounds were very impressive. This great ministry was started and led by Graham Houghton who was brought up on a farm near Palmerston North, New Zealand. A major contribution energised by another of God's great visionaries.
2. Southern Asian College (AOG) with 280 students - an excellent faculty with fine buildings and grounds. We were impressed by the calibre and hospitable spirit of the leaders there.

We also visited the Indian head office and ministered to the staff of the Bible Society. The society is very strong throughout the country; it began in India about 130 years ago. Also we visited Ambassadors for Christ who have a new building on the site of a Bible College that my son Anthony led in 1981.

The first night in Bangalore Ravi held a meeting of major leaders to meet and hear us; we had a meal and warm fellowship with these good men of God. On the Sunday we preached at the churches of All Peoples; again what a great people with fine leaders. Pastor Ashish & Amy Raichur were of the Lord's finest who received us with warmth.

From Bangalore we flew to Bangkok for a range of meetings arranged by our good friend Rev Ching Wah Lee. He is the overseer of all Anglican churches in Thailand. One of the meetings (seminars) in Bangkok was the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, a gathering of city pastors and leaders from various denominations. On the Sunday we preached at Christ Church, a large magnificent Anglican Church.

There is some great work being done in Thailand. Lorraine Dierck and Val ( NZ missionaries) have done a major work with 110,000 children on Bible correspondence courses and follow-up camps,

also teaching the Kairos Missionary preparation Course in many places; plus orphanages etc.

Two lovely young Thai sisters, Maem and Jume drove us to the Bangkok airport. I met Maem by coincidence on my web-site and arranged to meet her in her city Bangkok; what a wonderful testimony she has having come from a sad life of drugs, attempted suicides etc., into an amazing encounter with Jesus. Now she lives for Him to serve others who have such needs.

To complete the trip we spent three days relaxation in Phuket an excellent place with many beach resorts. We enjoyed the break, and riding elephants etc.

Now we are home catching up and remembering all the new friends in the ministry we now have throughout Asia. Many names we haven't mentioned here; we feel that even after meeting them for a day or two we had known them for years - that's how it is in God's loving family.

This is part of our happenings over the past six weeks.

A thousand blessings,

John & Yvonne Walton

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