



Where the Sun Never Sets

Celebrating 75 Years of BCM Global Outreach



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BCM International is a global
Bible-Centered Ministry dedicated
to making disciples of all age groups
for the Lord Jesus Christ through
evangelism, teaching, and training so
that churches are established and
The Church strengthened.

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From the Editor

*"From the rising of the sun to the place where
it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised."
(Psalms 113:3)*

The year of 2011 is drawing to a close and with it BCM International's 75th Anniversary Jubilee celebration. Over the past year we've rejoiced together in the Philippines, the UK, Peru, Europe, Canada, India, southern Africa, and more, culminating with our global Jubilee Celebration hosted in Lancaster, PA, October 28-30, 2011.



We've honored not only BCM's rich past heritage since its beginnings in 1936 as the Bible Club Movement but its continued and growing global impact. From a handful of volunteers and Bible Clubs in inner city Philadelphia, BCM ministry has spread to encompass over 50 countries on five continents. At any given hour around the clock in some latitude and longitude across the planet, children are hearing God's Word, churches are being planted, people's physical, mental, and spiritual needs are being met through the ministry of BCM missionaries, pastors, and volunteers.

In this issue, BCM's largest field, India, honors its own ministry pioneers while celebrating the planting of 16,000 churches and half-a-million children hearing God's Word weekly. In Cuba, a camp and its founder doesn't know how to quit. This present generation of BCM ministry leaders give tribute to pioneers of the past who impacted their lives. We rejoice in what God is doing through BCM in Zambia, South Africa, Poland, Ireland, Peru.

Today it can be said truly that the sun never sets on BCM ministry. And as BCM International steps forward in faith into its next seventy-five years of ministry, our vision remains the same as that which motivated Bessie Traber and her associates in the founding of those first Bible clubs: that from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, in every time zone and on every continent, the name of our heavenly Father, the Lord God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, may be lifted high in everlasting praise.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." -Acts 16:31

Dear Friends, I am wondering if you have heard of the new movement being started among young people to give them the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know the Lord Jesus as your own personal Saviour? Do you know that you are saved? Then to you He has commanded that you go and be His witness—that you "Go and preach the Gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem."

This winter we are starting Bible Clubs among young people of Philadelphia. Would you be willing to start and teach such a Club? You could gather just a few of your friends together and get them to study the Bible with you one night each week. Perhaps the Lord would enable you to interest only two or three of your friends at first, but you have His promise that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

He will surprise you with the wonderful things that He will do for you as your obey and trust Him. Won't you come?

Bessie M. Traber, September 24, 1936

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Over the past year we have been celebrating BCM International's Diamond Jubilee: 75 years of ministry since its founding as the Bible Club Movement in 1936. Since that time a single missionary and a handful of volunteers teaching Bible Clubs in one city, Philadelphia, has expanded to 779 missionaries from over 40 nationalities along with 5000 volunteers serving in more than 50 countries on five continents. While 1.3 million children hear God's Word in BCM camps and Bible Clubs, ministry has expanded as well to evangelism, church planting, leadership training, disaster relief, and much more.

But even as we honor 75 years of global ministry, we do not wish to live in the past. Our role is to live in the present, reaching the generation of the present with the gospel of Jesus Christ that offers them an eternal future.

Former BCM director Bernice Jordan was once asked what was the secret of the then Bible Club Movement's success. She responded that it wasn't gifted workers, natural endowment, promotion of its programs, or even prayer. As a pioneer missionary, Hudson Taylor once summed it up: the secret lay in God's Word. There is a living God. He has spoken in His Word. He means what He says. And He will do all that He has promised.

Then Miss Jordan quoted a verse from Isaiah: "*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*" (Isaiah 43:19 NIV)

As we look now to the future, we see a world that is still in need, larger in population than ever before. And we are convinced that God is not finished with BCM. He is going to do a new thing with a new generation of BCM leadership.

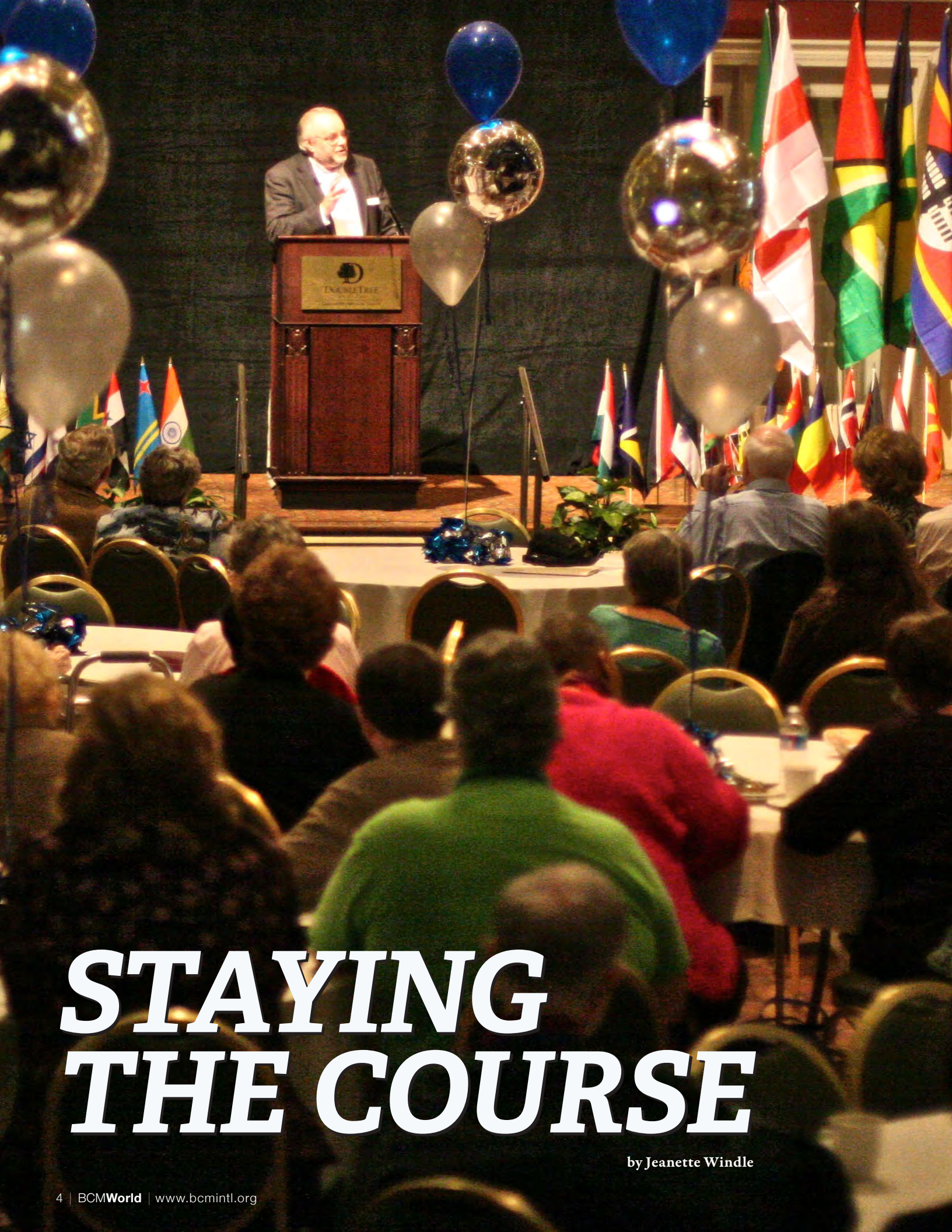
As we take the next step to follow what God has in mind for BCM International, we commit ourselves as a mission to the following:

- We will refine and refocus our vision as individuals and as a mission. That vision will continue to be focused on reaching people for Jesus Christ and discipleship.
- We will review and realign our ministry efforts with our vision. Things that worked in the past may not work in the future. But whatever new methods the future may hold, the one non-negotiable is the undiluted message of the gospel.
- We will rely on the divine as we await God's direction and blessing. As a mission, we will come together to pray and seek God's face.
- We will resolve to stay the course whatever the cost until the race is finished. We will be overcomers. We will stick with the task of reaching children and developing the church worldwide until God Himself says, "My child, the race for you is now over."

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martin Windle". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'M' and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Martin Windle



STAYING THE COURSE

by Jeanette Windle

“The theme chosen for BCM’s 75th Anniversary — ‘Honoring the Past and Celebrating the Future’ — sums up as well our ministry of evangelizing children,” shares Jonatan Odicio, Director of Mobilization and Evangelism for BCM Peru. “We honor the past as we share with Peruvian children, remembering how Jesus Christ came to earth and laid down His life on the cross for our salvation. We celebrate the future, not just in changed lives of children now growing up to serve God, but our ultimate future in heaven surrounded by countless thousands of Peruvians celebrating the final victory over sin because they met Christ through our children’s outreach.”

Jonatan and Shantal Odicio were one of many BCM ministry families who traveled to the DoubleTree Resort in Lancaster, PA, October 28-30, 2011, for a weekend celebration of BCM International’s 75 years of outreach since its founding as the Bible Club Movement in 1936. Joining field missionaries were pastors, board members, ministry volunteers, and support partners who make up the global BCM family. Many participants shared how they’d first come to Christ at a BCM camp or in a BCM Bible Club, illustrating how many lives BCM has impacted for Christ over the last three-quarters of a century.



am with you always to the end of the age.’ It is that precious promise of the personal persistent presence of Jesus that makes our ministries possible.”

John Noel, associate worship minister at Calvary Church, Lancaster, and former BCM missionary, along with his wife Kathy led worship music for the weekend. Joining them for special music were the Calvary Church ensemble His Own, BCM missionary Jan Smoyer, and board chairman’s wife, Renea Henderson. Calvary Church’s delightful King’s Kids choir challenged the group to “Carry the Light to a World That Is Blind.”

BCM International’s Diamond Jubilee celebration kicked off Friday noon with an area pastors luncheon. Guest speaker for the luncheon and each main session was Dr. Marv Newell, Director of CrossGlobal Link (formerly International Foreign Missions Association), and author of *A Martyr’s Grace* and *Commissioned: What Jesus Wants You to Know as You Go*.

Over the weekend, Dr. Newell laid out a clear challenge to a renewed vision of international missions based on the mandates of Jesus Christ as laid out in the Great Commission passages. With the challenge, he offered the BCM mission family a reminder of where our hope lies. “Jesus promised His followers in Matthew 28:20, ‘Lo I



A highlight of each session were field ministry reports representing the three pillars of BCM global ministry—evangelism, children’s ministry, and church planting. Former board member Don Kroeker and his wife, Eileen, sum it up, “These ministry presentations have not only given us a fresh look of what God is doing around the world through BCM but renewed hope for God’s continued work in BCM’s future. We have been so impressed at the deep commitment, competency, and variety of gifts we’ve seen in BCM’s field personnel.”

Evangelism

Open air evangelist Tony Schaapman shared a sidewalk art presentation

Top: BCM Peru missionary Jonatan Odicio;
Bottom: Dr. Marvin J. Newell, Executive
Director of CrossGlobal Link



Above: King's Kids children's choir (Calvary Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania); Right: King's Kids soloist Madalyn Mendenhall; Below left: BCM Brazil missionary Maria Gusmão; Below right: BCM Canada missionary Tony Schaapman

along with the challenge of Montreal's busy streets while BCM disaster relief coordinator Tommy Gambrell reported the continued desperation of Haiti's earthquake victims. From the Ukraine, Sam Hanchett told how ministry among that country's one million handicapped has also brought many of their families from hopelessness to faith.

Children's Ministry

BCM's International Children's Ministry director, Esther Zimmerman,

outlined the urgency of reaching the planet's 2.2 billion children. BCM Brazil missionary Maria Gusmão visualized the life of a 6-year-old 'aviãozinho' or 'little airplane' (a drug runner) in Recife, Brazil, while BCM USA missionary Lorraine Stirneman shared the equal hopelessness children face in inner-city Philadelphia. Big Sky Bible Camp director Jamy Landis showcased the life-changing impact of BCM's camp ministry from Montana to more than thirty countries on four continents where BCM camp ministries reach more than 25,000 children each

year. *In Step with the Master Teacher* instructor Steve King outlined the multiplication factor of training local trainers for children's ministry, most recently 1500 new children's ministry leaders in Nigeria (see "Because Children Really Do Matter," *BCM World*, Issue One, 2011).

Church Planting

Senior Executive Vice President of International Ministries Dr. Vararuchi Dalavai and BCM Philippines director Rev. Vernon DeJesus shared how





Clockwise from top left: BCM Philippines director Vernon DeJesus; Big Sky Bible Camp director Jamy Landis; International Children's Ministries director Esther Zimmerman; BCM USA missionary Lorraine Stirneman; BCM missionary Tommy Gambrell (left) and Pastor Simon Serleus of the Union of Evangelical Baptists in Haiti (UEBH)

thousands of new BCM churches have been planted across India, the Philippines, and other South Asia nations.

"In the Philippines, we also have traffic lights. But our drivers interpret them differently," explained Vernon DeJesus with a smile. "Green means 'go fast.' Yellow means 'go faster.' Red means 'go anyway.' This is our vision as BCM Philippines. If fields are green for harvest, we will go. If yellow with opposition, we will go even faster. If the light turns red, and we are ordered to stop, we will go anyway!"

Special tribute was paid to some special guests, including Mrs. Jane Hirt, wife of Oscar Hirt, BCM president from 1965-1995. Bob and Sandy Barber, who have served with BCM for 41 years in the UK and Eastern Europe, were honored for opening several new fields in the former Soviet Union, including Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. With 54 years of continuous ministry,

Dave and Lois Haas were honored as BCM's longest serving active-duty missionaries. Nor do they have plans to quit.

"We have cause to be thankful for the people God has given BCM to serve along the way these last seventy-five years," expressed Dave Haas. "Now we pray for a new vision. As we review the past, we dedicate ourselves to continue serving as long as God gives us strength."

BCM president Dr. Martin Windle wrapped up the weekend with a challenge and commitment for the future of BCM International.

"As we look now to the future, we are convinced God is not finished with BCM. He is going to do a new thing with a new generation of BCM leadership. Our commitment as a mission is to stay the course – whatever the cost – as we follow the next step of what God has in mind for BCM International."



Snapshots of a Legacy

*Tales of a legacy left behind
by the pioneers of BCM International*

“I’ll never forget an encounter with Miss Bernice Jordan during an annual conference

at Camp Sankanac in my teen years. Our cabin of teenage conference volunteers was nearest to the infirmary apartment where Miss Jordan, Miss Bessie Traber, and Miss Dorothy Scott (then Director of Camp Sankanac, later BCM Director Oscar Hirt’s administrative assistant) were sleeping. We girls had brought in hoagies and soda from a nearby restaurant called Rock’s for an after-hours treat. The hoagies were full of onions and hot peppers, great food, but strong odor. We girls were laughing and eating when we heard a knock. A trash can with the remains of our feast was sitting right in front of the door. Moving it aside, we opened the door to see Miss Jordan standing outside. *Oops!* Clearly we’d been noisier than we’d thought.



The group of conference volunteers

“The look on Miss Jordan’s face as she caught a strong whiff of onions and hot peppers from the trashcan was priceless. But she remained composed, simply requesting we keep our voices down. She left without another word. Appalled at having disturbed her, we immediately quieted down. The next day she didn’t mention the incident, but we had already decided to apologize. Miss Jordan accepted our apology graciously and lovingly and never brought it up again.

“Not long after Miss Jordan’s death in 1964, I was helping with the move to BCM’s new headquarters in Upper Darby, PA. As I sorted through Miss Jordan’s old desk, I found a small loose-leaf notebook. In it was Miss Jordan’s daily prayer list. Leafing through its pages, I discovered my name along with several others of the camp girls who’d worked at conference. How special to know that Miss Jordan had prayed for me (and other teens) on a certain day each week! Miss Bernice Jordan played a very special role in preparing me for where I am today.”

— Pam Rowntree
BCM Canada

“A minister in Philadelphia when the Bible Club Movement first started, my father learned of BCM founder Bessie Traber’s vision to

bring children to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That was how I came to attend one of the earliest neighborhood Bible Clubs taught by BCM missionary Dorothy Scott in perhaps 1937. A nucleus of three or four Christian girls, ages 9 and 10, we invited several friends to join us after school once a week at my house.



Dorothy Scott

“Miss Scott taught us with clear love for the Lord she served and for us. These were the early days of utilizing visual aids for teaching, and BCM was on the cutting edge with their use of flannelgraph and object lessons. A lovely lady, Miss Scott provided a role model for us girls: an apt teacher, kind, patient with our group of giggly girls.

“Our family’s contact with BCM didn’t stop there. In the early 1970s our oldest son served as counselor at BCM’s Camp Sankanac. God used that summer of spiritual stretching and growth as a stepping stone to ministry with Young Life during his college years. Today he serves as president of Berry College. Also in the 1970s when my husband served as pastor of Aldan Union Church near Philadelphia, we met BCM missionaries Dave and Lois Haas. Ever since we’ve maintained a friendship and prayer interest in their work for the Lord.



Camp Sankanac, Spring City, Pennsylvania

“For the past 75 years I have followed with great interest the development of BCM International from a fledgling effort for the Lord to its current worldwide outreach. During those years God has used His servants’ many and varied abilities to bring countless children and adults to an acceptance of Christ as Savior. In this 75th Anniversary celebration, may all honor and glory go to Him, whom we praise and thank for His faithfulness.”

— Betty Overford Briggs



BCM Founder, "Aunt Bessie" Traber

"My parents, Sterling and Helen Gustavson, came to faith in Christ in the late 1940s through the ministry of Camp Sankanac. Miss Bessie Traber and her associates were role models and mentors of my parents, who were touched by the love of Jesus they witnessed in the camp staff. All four of their children came to faith partly through the ministry of Camp Sankanac during the mid 1950s, including myself. Dad has now gone home to Glory, and Mother is in her 100th year.

"She still speaks fondly of the Bible Club Ministries and the leadership. I am grateful for BCM's faithfulness in telling the stories of Jesus, which has changed so many lives."

— Bill Gustavson

"I was interested to note a picture on page 6 of the last BCM World

issue, identified as 'A 1930s Bible Club in Philadelphia.' That club was Mrs. MacBeth's Bible Club in Collingdale, PA (a suburb of Philadelphia). My older brother, Dr. John W. Haas, Jr. (Jack) came to Christ at age nine at that club in the fall of 1939. Jack attended BCM's Camp Sankanac from 1941 till 1944, memorizing 300 Bible verses each summer to be able to attend. Later he served there as a counselor. When Jack grew up, he got his PhD in chemistry at the University of Delaware, then went on to teach at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, where he developed its Chemistry Department and taught until his retirement. For many years Jack served as the organist at First Presbyterian Church of Ipswich, Massachusetts. Jack's early years at Mrs. MacBeth's Bible Club and Camp Sankanac laid the foundation for a long life of fruitful Christian service."



Mrs. MacBeth's Bible Club in Philadelphia

— Dave Haas
BCM N.S.A.

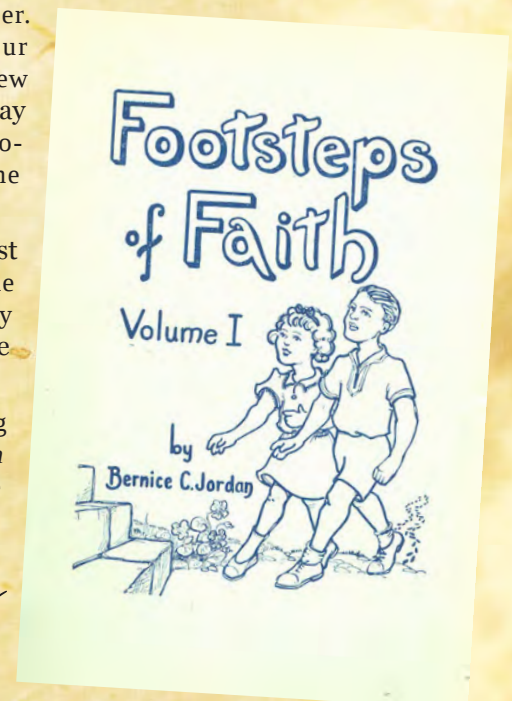
"In 1950 I traveled to Japan as a missionary under The Evangelical Alliance Mission.

The language school was in a mountain town that was a resort in the summer. We lived during the school year in those non-insulated summer houses. Our language teachers lived together in a nearby house. After I'd been there a few months, they asked if I'd be willing to teach a Bible lesson if they set up Saturday children's meetings in their house. I'd heard about BCM's new Genesis-to-Revelation Bible curriculum, *Footsteps of Faith*. My family ordered it for me and mailed it.

"The lessons fit perfectly for Japan, a country with thousands of gods. The first edition began with a white circle, showing that God is eternal and holy. The Genesis lessons taught how He made the world, and so on. I also especially liked the illustration stories that went with the lessons and used Japanese paper dolls to take the place of the American children figures.

"After I met my husband in my third term, I was involved in church-planting with him. In each church I always began with those same *Footsteps of Faith* Genesis lessons. I have been so pleased to watch all that the Lord has done through BCM. May the Lord continue to bless you much."

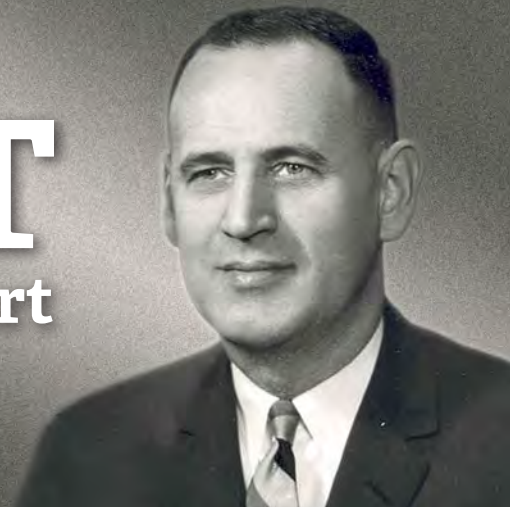
— Barbara Knoble, Retired missionary
E.A.M. Japan



OSCAR HIRT

A Mission Director with a Big Heart

by Evelyn Plett, BCM Spain



In 1980, I had been serving for just two years at BCM's *Centro Bíblico Betel* (Bethel Bible Center), in La Granja, Spain. The only other BCM missionaries working with me were the camp founder, Maria Bolet, and her Spanish co-worker, Ruth. Maria was already well into her seventies and in poor health. Ruth was elderly as well. For years BCM had been praying for more workers there, but I was the only one who'd responded.

So when Maria and Ruth informed me they'd be leaving the camp ministry, I was devastated. Already the Bethel ministry had dwindled to a few retreats and camps. I felt completely inadequate to take on the full responsibility. On a trip to the BCM headquarters, then in Philadelphia area, I poured out my fears and doubts to then BCM director Oscar Hirt. I will never forget his kind reassurance and wise counsel.

"Evelyn, I know you don't want to be in charge of Bethel Bible Center," he told me. "But I want you to understand that as BCM Director I am the one ultimately responsible for that ministry. However, I can't be there, and you can. Are you willing to work with me? When you go back to Spain, I will stand behind you all the way in your leadership of the Center."

Oscar Hirt prayed with me, then drove me to the airport. His confidence in God and in me bolstered my faith enough to return alone to Spain, trusting God to be with me and even to provide a co-worker in God's own time and way.



Centro Bíblico Betel, La Granja, Spain

Those first months back in Spain I spent in much prayer, waiting on the Lord and just looking after the Bethel grounds. Then the Lord answered our prayers and sent the first co-worker. New doors of ministry we'd never dreamed of began to open.



Evelyn Plett teaching at camp

Again Oscar Hirt was instrumental in stretching our faith. We wanted to get a photocopier to make it easier to prepare our camp materials. We shared that desire with Oscar Hirt. He challenged us to first get a good typewriter with different fonts that would allow us to produce more professional looking material. Then we could produce other BCM materials too to serve Spain's Christian camps and churches. That seemed a tall order, considering we didn't have funds for even a typewriter. How would we ever get funds for a copier too?

Yet, as we followed Oscar Hirt's advice and stepped out in faith, God provided for a more modern typewriter and a better copier than we'd ever dreamed. That was just the beginning. Over the next years, more co-workers and volunteers joined us. Doors opened to translate, print, and distribute many of BCM's Bible teaching materials around Spain. God not only provided funds for materials but also to upgrade our equipment when necessary. Never did we run into debt of any kind!

Bethel's Bible camps, teacher training, and retreat/conference ministries also continued to grow steadily. Four years after I replaced Maria Bolet, God called fellow BCM missionary Isabelle Leaitch to Bethel. I served as Bethel director for the next 26 years before passing the leadership baton on to Isabelle. Through all these years when difficult times came, Oscar Hirt could always be counted on to come alongside, to encourage by setting an example of trusting the Lord. While giving words of wise counsel, he never pushed or demanded, leaving plenty of room for the Holy Spirit to lead me as an individual. Oscar Hirt exemplified by his life and counsel what it means to walk by faith, believing that God is in control of every situation, that He can be fully trusted to guide and to provide.

Making a Difference For God

by Donna Culver

Missionary to India Amy Carmichael once said, “There are three necessary factors in any lasting work of God; vision, faith, and hard work.” In its first sixty years, God blessed BCM International with two such individuals as Amy Carmichael describes—its founder, Bessie M. Traber, and longest serving director, Oscar H. Hirt.



Miss Bessie Traber
BCM founder and director
1936–1962, 1964–1965

Bessie Traber, BCM Founder & Director 1936–1962, 1964–1965

Growing up in a Christian home in New York State, Bessie Traber responded early to Jesus’ love. She had a great sense of humor and loved people. She also loved learning, receiving an excellent academic education at Vassar College, the University of Pennsylvania, and Biblical Seminary. But she struggled with illness. During these times God began to speak to her through His Word, revealing that He had a plan for her life, and that she could trust Him to work it out. As she yielded heart and life to God’s control, she began to feel the call of the world’s unreached millions. Accepting a missionary call to the Philippines, Bessie began a ministry to children there.

But after one term of missionary service, Bessie Traber had again become quite ill and was unable to return to the Philippines. I was a missionary candidate in an early Bible Club Movement candidate class where Bessie described her struggle in prayer as she pleaded for healing so that she could go back. God’s presence was so real it seemed as though the Lord Jesus came and sat in a chair beside her bed.

“My child, you are not to return to the Philippines,” God told her clearly.

Bessie Traber cried out, “But Lord! You know I have no use for someone who goes to the field for one term and does not go back!”

He answered, “I know, My child, but you are not to go back.”

At the time it was a great disappointment for Bessie Traber. She had no way seeing what God saw: the opening of a much wider door that would mean untold blessing to many and an opportunity to witness God’s power revealed through His faithfulness to His Word. But once more she yielded to God’s control, choosing to trust and obey. Bessie Traber later wrote: “As I committed to the Lord what He would have me to do, since the doors of the Philippines were closed to me, He encouraged me to just wait before Him and trust Him absolutely to give me something to do whereby souls would be brought to know and love our Savior.”

When young people at a Labor Day Bible conference near Philadelphia asked Bessie Traber to start Bible Clubs in Philadelphia, she had no idea how wide a door had opened. By end of the first year, 145 Bible Clubs had been registered. By the Bible Club Movement’s tenth anniversary, 4,000 Bible Clubs were registered, summer camps increased from 2 to 12, and 28 Bible Club missionaries were actively serving the Lord. By the time Miss Traber retired, more than 100 missionaries and thousands of volunteers were teaching children in sixteen countries.

Oscar Hirt — BCM General Director 1965-1995

God’s hand was on Oscar Hirt from the beginning. Oscar grew up in a Christian home, his father, Oscar Hirt, Sr., a businessman in Philadelphia. When only six years old, Oscar became seriously ill with a blood problem no one could diagnose. Finally the doctors decided to admit him to the hospital for testing and surgery. But God miraculously healed him the day before he was to be admitted. Two years later, he was stricken with rheumatic fever and confined to bed for 18 months, yet afterward experienced neither heart damage nor defect.



Miss Traber in the 1960s

Then at age 18, Oscar joined friends one day to go horseback riding, something he'd never done before. When others began racing, his horse charged off through the woods, crowded against a tree, and threw him. Oscar was severely injured, the nerves in his leg crushed. But contrary to all expectations, after surgery and a year of inactivity lying flat on his back, Oscar's leg healed completely.

Oscar Hirt later said, "It seemed as though Satan tried to either remove me or change my life through these episodes. But I've learned that when God has a purpose for a life, He prepares and takes care of that life."

One Saturday evening in Ocean City, New Jersey, Oscar met a young woman named Jane Barron. When he asked her out the next night, she replied, "I'd like to go sometime, but tomorrow night I'll be in church."

Oscar Hirt began attending church with Jane. At an evangelistic service, a missionary with Africa Inland Mission, Paul Whitlock, led Oscar to the Lord. The next day, Whitlock and his wife, with two of their children, boarded a China Clipper airplane to return to Africa. They never made it, their plane crashing into the ocean. This made a strong impression on Oscar as he realized he might be the last person Rev. Whitlock had led to the Lord on this earth. Why would God take an experienced missionary? he wondered.

Oscar Hirt learned two things through this experience: Life is unpredictable, and he needed to know more of the Scriptures. After Oscar and Jane were married in 1944, they both enrolled in a Bible Institute that later became Philadelphia College of Bible (now Philadelphia Biblical University).

Oscar and Jane in time established their home in Collingswood, NJ, where Oscar went into business with his father. In their 50+ years of marriage God blessed the couple with three children: Nancy, Pat, and Herb, who all grew up to love and serve the Lord, and six grandchildren. God also opened doors to service on several mission boards, including that of the Bible Club Movement.

After Bessie Traber retired as BCM director in 1962, her long-time colleague Miss Bernice Jordan had stepped into leadership. When the Lord took Bernice Jordan home to heaven unexpectedly in October, 1964, Oscar Hirt along with the rest of the board began earnestly seeking God's choice for the next director of the mission. At a February meeting the board asked Mr. Hirt to pray about assuming that responsibility.

Oscar Hirt struggled greatly with the decision. Like Moses, he listed reasons he couldn't do it. "I'm not qualified or trained. I don't have the ability. There are many others who have much more to offer than I." But God's quiet, persistent voice inside responded, "I am looking for someone I can use. That's all. Are you willing for me to use you?"

Oscar's decision was made. On April 8, 1965, Oscar Hirt was officially appointed the General Director of Bible Club Movement. And God did use him mightily. During his years as director, BCM expanded around the world. By the time he retired in 1995, more than 625 missionaries were serving with BCM International in 44 countries.

Approaching retirement Oscar Hirt commented, "I am amazed at what God has done through an unworthy servant to accomplish His plans and His purpose for developing BCM into a worldwide ministry."

Those of us who knew and worked with him can testify to why his life and ministry had such a strong impact. Three outstanding qualities characterized Oscar Hirt. A vital faith in the living, miracle-working God. A servant attitude toward the mission family. And a trust in the One who alone is able to manifest His strength through our weakness. Oscar Hirt's example of faith inspired others also to step out in faith and obedience, to look beyond their present circumstances, to be willing to stretch and grow in service to God.



Mr. Oscar Hirt
General Director
1965–1995



Jane & Oscar Hirt



Helen Black

The Woman Who Refused to Leave

by Scott Gillespie, Director Promotion and Recruitment,
Action International Ministries, Canada

In August, 2002, I took a ministry trip to Cuba. A pastor from the Oriente (Eastern) Baptist Convention of Cuba escorted me to some of the summer camps the Convention operated. Among them was Mi Campamento (“My Camp” in Spanish), a beautiful Christian camping and retreat center of several lush, green acres situated in central Cuba. Mi Campamento had been established by the Bible Club Movement (now BCM International) in 1948 through the ministry of Miss Helen Black, who in 1947 left BCM ministry in Mexico to open the Cuba field. Even when the Communist revolution in 1959 drove most expatriates from Cuba, Helen Black remained on to continue giving leadership to Mi Campamento. Running continuously now for more than six decades, Mi

Campamento remains the only interdenominational camp still open in Cuba, operating in partnership between the Eastern Baptists and BCM International.

While at the camp, I had the wonderful privilege of visiting in person with Helen Black. I found a small, elderly woman, barely 5 feet tall and now in her eighties, in poor health, but sitting comfortably and quietly in a chair, always smiling and attentive to the others in the room. She had not been out of Cuba back to her home in the US for over 25 years, for concerns that the Cuban authorities might not allow her to return, and since she rarely had occasion any longer to speak English, she was more comfortable speaking in Spanish. But

when I asked if she'd be willing to speak with me in English, she graciously agreed to do so.

I asked briefly about her life and background, how long she had been in Cuba, etc. As she answered in her soft-spoken voice, I could see the honor and respect my Cuban companions had for this little woman, who carried so great a stature in their eyes and had become over the past decades one of their own. While Helen Black offered little tribute to her own life, my guides were happy to tell me stories of this incredible woman.

One story told how the camp had received its name. In her early years in Cuba, Helen was one of the few women who owned a car and drove herself around. This was the height of the Batista military regime, and government authorities were hardly people to be trifled with. One day returning from some errand, Helen found a police officer and his motorcycle blocking the camp entrance. Intrepidly, Helen demanded that the officer remove himself and his motorcycle so that she could get by.



"Why should I do that?" the officer retorted.

Helen answered simply, "Because you are blocking the way into 'my camp'."

And that, according to the story Cubans have told ever since, is how Mi Campamento got its name.

A second story told of how during the 1959 revolution, plans were made to expropriate Mi Campamento like most other expatriate-funded properties. By now Helen Black was well-known across Cuba. She'd taught in Bible Clubs, camps, and seminary both Christian ministry leaders and members of the new regime. To keep the property from being seized, Helen Black declined evacuation with other American citizens, planting herself on the camp property and refusing to leave. A military general visited Helen to investigate the situation.

"With all the other missionaries leaving Cuba, why have you remained behind?" he asked her.

Above: Mi Campamento; Right: Mi Campamento attendees praying



Helen Black with Cuban children in the late 1950s

"Because I love the Cuban people, and this is where God has called me to be," Helen answered.

The general was so impressed that he scribbled his personal phone number on a piece of paper and handed it to Helen. If she had any further problems with attempts to seize the camp, she was free to call him for assistance. The Mi Campamento property was never expropriated or shut down, continuing to function as a youth camp for all the decades that followed. Helen Black also taught Bible and Theology in the nearby Los Pinos seminary and Eastern Baptist Seminary in Santiago de Cuba. Today two generations of Christian leadership in Cuba testify to the impact Helen Black's ministry had on their life. Under cooperation between the Oriente Baptist Convention and BCM personnel living on site, the camp continues to expand, now accommodating up to 500 Cuban youth in summer camps.

Not long after my visit, on April 3, 2003 at the age of 84, Helen Black finally left Mi Campamento to be with her heavenly Father. I will never forget the privilege of meeting her that day in 2002. Helen will be missed, but her legacy continues on in the lives of the Cuban people she loved so much and the camp she started so many years ago.



Disappointment Becomes God's Appointment!

by Christina Lal with Jeanette Windle

It all began with an orphanage.

In the early twentieth century, India's orphaned and abandoned children had few recourses outside a scattering of children's homes run by local and expatriate Christians. Both parents of Christina Lal, BCM India's first appointed missionary, were raised in such an orphanage. If without a mother and father of their own, they received from house parents and teachers love, care, and God's Word. As is custom in India even today, when the orphanage children reached adulthood, marriages were arranged among them, each girl from the orphanage with one of the boys. Both of Christina's parents had accepted Christ during their years in the orphanage. While Christina's father provided for their family through manual labor, he permitted his wife freedom to become involved in ministry. As she taught God's Word and helped the poor, Christina's mother became known throughout her neighborhood as the "Bible lady."

Born in 1930, Christina Lal knew from a young age she wanted to serve God with her life. After finishing her high school education, she attended a Methodist Bible college. Upon graduating, she was hired as a Bible teacher within the Methodist church, working in an orphanage and school, youth and women's ministry, serving as assistant pastor of her church as well as teaching upon invitation in area churches. Then in 1965, she received an invitation to Nagpur, a large city at the exact geographical center of India, where there was a large mission hospital.

"The nurses take care of the patients," the missionaries told Christina. "But who takes care of the nurses? We want to do something for them."

Christina began teaching classes and organizing conferences for the nurses. Delegates came from all over India, even from the Andaman Islands off the coast of India. Christina found herself as housemate of a British single lady missionary. Since the British missionary spoke little of the local Indian language, Christina was forced to use her own scant school English. Because her British housemate didn't care for the spicy Indian food, Christina learned to eat hers and to adapt to Western dining customs. "I had no idea God had a plan in this for my future," Christina shares now.

Though Christina was busy and content over the next years, others in Nagpur saw a greater potential for Christina's life. Ministry colleagues told her, "You are a Bible college graduate, with far more education than most women in India. But you are serving as an ordinary, lower-level teacher. Do you want to remain in this position for the rest of your life?"

Even a non-Christian acquaintance told Christina she needed to consider applying for a scholarship to seminary. A librarian, the woman looked up addresses of North American seminaries that



gave such scholarships. Giving them to Christina, she urged, "Here are the addresses. Now go and apply."

Christina did so and was accepted at New York Theological Seminary. In 1969 she arrived in the United States. Thanks to her time with the British missionary, her English was better than most fellow students from India. Soon a local Methodist church invited her to teach Sunday school. To Christina's surprise, they paid her \$100 every two weeks for her ministry. An American missionary friend helped her set up a savings account.

"God is meeting your needs," she told Christina. "But you don't know if God will supply this way next year, so put what you don't need in the bank."

This was good advice. Before the end of Christina's first year, she was informed that due to financial difficulties, the seminary would be terminating her program. Her foreign student advisor helped her correspond with other seminaries. Accepting a scholarship from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, Christina graduated in 1971. She'd been communicating with the Bible college from which she'd graduated in India, planning to return there as a professor. The wife of another professor there had arrived at Asbury to finish her own seminary degree. The two women graduated together. When the professor arrived for his wife's graduation, he asked Christina, "What are you planning to do when you graduate?"

Surprised, Christina answered, "You don't know? I'm coming back to the Bible college to teach."

"You realize we can't offer you a salary," he answered.

Christina wrote immediately to the college administrator. To her shock, he wrote back, saying that they wouldn't be able to use her after all. At a loss what to do next, Christina returned to New York. During her time there in seminary, she'd met a pastor who ministered to the international students. Christina was walking to her bank when she heard a man's voice calling her name. It was the pastor. While many foreign exchange students stayed on in the US, Christina had always shared her determination to return to her own country after graduation. So the pastor immediately inquired, "When are you leaving for India?"

"I've had a terrible disappointment," Christina explained.

That this meeting was not chance but God's plan soon became apparent because the pastor immediately pulled from his pocket a brochure for Inter Cristo, a Christian ministry job search program. Filling out the application form, Christina quickly received thirteen job offers from international missions and Christian aid organizations. Among them was the Bible Club Movement. Several positions required that she move to other countries such as England. But Christina had no doubt God was calling her back to her own people who so desperately needed the gospel in India.



Christina Lal teaching children's Bible Club

Then she received a phone call from BCM's General Director, Oscar Hirt. "Can you come to our international office in Philadelphia?"

"Look, I'm a New York girl," Christina responded. "I can get to any address you give me here on public transport. But if I take a train to Philadelphia, how will I ever find your office from the train station?"

Oscar Hirt gave Christina a phone number. "Just come on the train. When you arrive, call this number, and you will be picked up."

Christina agreed, giving him the color of her sari for identification. She expected an assistant to be sent for her. Instead, the BCM director was waiting himself at the station when she arrived. Even more heartening, he did not suggest another mission field, but quickly asked her, "So what are your plans for returning to India?"

Christina's reply was just one word. "Disappointment!"

But Oscar Hirt's own response was immediate. "Disappointment is God's appointment!"

It was just the encouragement Christina needed. Over the next two years, she worked with BCM missionaries across the United States and attended candidate school. Commissioned in 1972, Christina returned to Nagpur in 1973 as BCM's first missionary to India. For almost four decades now she has taught systematic Bible study to children and women all over the Nagpur region. She began BCM India's first women's conferences. The most recent in Nepal had an attendance of 300 women. Now 81 years old, Christina remains active in ministry.

Honored for her service at BCM's 75th Anniversary celebration in North India on Monday, August 22, 2011, Christina shared, "I am so thankful for how God has supplied my needs all these years with BCM and for good health even today at the age of 81. What Oscar Hirt told me that day is very true. Disappointment truly is God's appointment."

ANGELS IN THE NIGHT

by Jeanette Windle



“Brother Markose, you know they want to kill us.”

“I know.” Markose glanced around the small, plain room. The guard by the door was watching them, his expression discouraging. Markose shivered, though it wasn’t cold in the room.

V. U. Markose was born into a Christian family in his homeland of India and had come to Christ as a young adult in 1962. When he’d graduated from Bible college, he’d been excited to be chosen as a missionary to a new area of Rajasthan, Northern India, where there were no churches. He and a companion had been handing out Gospels and Bible literature when a mob of men surrounded them, shouting and waving sticks.

The two young men tried to explain they just wanted to share their faith, but the mob hadn’t listened. They’d accused Markose and his companion of spying out the village to plan a robbery. If they really were Christians, that was even worse. Ripping up their literature, they’d beaten the two young men before dragging them to this building that served the village as a jail.

That was ten in the morning. Now it was dark outside. All day long men had been coming to question them, demanding they confess their robbery plans. They’d been given no food or water. Markose was thirsty and hungry and very, very tired. Was his friend as frightened as he?

Glancing at the stony-faced guard, Markose said quietly, “They’re coming soon to kill us. If God saves us, we’ll live.

But otherwise this is our last time together and our last day on the earth.”

“Then let’s pray until they come.”

The two young men bowed their heads. We’re not the first who have been imprisoned for our faith, Markose was reminded. Peter and Paul in the Bible had both been thrown in jail for preaching Jesus Christ. Stephen had been stoned to death. If he could only show their courage.

“Lord, if it is your will,” he prayed, “then take our spirits. But if you want us to continue our ministry, then allow us to go free.”

Their prayers were interrupted by a noise at the door. The two young men stiffened. Their time was up.

But it wasn’t the village men coming through the door, talking in a quiet voice to the guard. It was an old woman. Walking over to the two young men, she caught Markose by the hand and motioned for him to come with her. They must have sent her to lead us to the executioners. Though he’d prayed for courage, Markose was shivering too badly to move.

The old woman tugged harder on Markose’s hand. The guard watched without speaking. Reluctantly, Markose got to his feet and followed her. But the old woman wasn’t leading him to another part of the building, nor were there any other guards in sight. As though in a dream, Markose followed her out the front door and stepped out into the dusty, packed earth that was the street.



The old woman dropped his hand. “Go, run,” she ordered him.

No, it wasn’t a dream. Markose could feel the night breeze on his face. The night was dark, and the street was empty. Like Peter and Paul in the Bible, he was free. But his companion was not. Markose shook his head as the woman urged him towards the dark night. “My friend is still inside. They’re going to kill him. We have to get him too.”

The old woman stared at him, then took Markose’s hand again and pulled him back up the steps. Knocking on the door again, she pushed into the room past the guard. Catching Markose’ companion by the hand, she led him out too. The guard just watched them leave.

Outside the old woman led them down the dark street to a house. If anyone was watching from windows and doors, they didn’t try to stop them. Leading them inside, she poured them each a glass of water. Drinking gratefully, they asked in bewilderment, “Who are you? How did you come to get us?”

“I came because God called me,” the old woman said simply. “I tried to sit in my room tonight, but God didn’t allow it. He kept pushing me, telling me to go and save My children. So I came and I saved you, and now my work is finished. Go now. You need to flee from here, far away before they find you.”

She was urging them back out the door. Before they could protest, the two young men found themselves alone in the night. Who was the old woman? Why had the guard let her lead them away? They had never even learned her name. Was she a real person? Or an angel?

What mattered was that they were free. Under cover of the night, the two young men walked for hours until they came across a road crew who gave them a ride in their truck to another town. They were safe at last. Beyond their hopes, God had delivered them.

But V. U. Markose hadn’t forgotten that back in that black night was still a village that did not know God loved them or had sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for their sins. A BCM missionary since 1986, Rev. Markose has since that day preached God’s Word all over Rajasthan. He has endured beatings, jail, and threats of death. It is said of him that he bears a scar for each church he has planted.

But today there are many BCM pastors and churches under his leadership in this region. And Markose continues to give glory to God for the angel sent that night to rescue him and his companion for a lifetime of ministry preaching God’s Word in the villages and towns of India’s northern regions.



Right: Pastor V.U. Markose

Still I Will Follow

by Mrs. Seeli Devadason with Jeanette Windle & Dr. Bob Evans

“When I read Mrs. Devadason’s monthly ministry reports, I always think I must have misplaced a decimal point,” jokes BCM’s Senior Executive Vice President of International Ministries, Dr. Vararuchi Dalavai. “But as it always turns out, I haven’t.”

That is because BCM Tamil Nadu Area Director Mrs. Seeli Davadason and her team of 47 BCM staff reach a staggering 1.15 *lakh*, or 115,000 by Western numbering, children each week in Bible Clubs, camps, and school release time classes across twelve ministry zones.

Born into a Christian home in pre-independence 1930s India, Seeli is one of eight sisters and two brothers. Because her parents worked in tea estate management at some distance from their home, she and her sisters lived much of the year in a Christian boarding school. There at age eight, Seeli accepted Christ as her Savior. Attending a Christian youth convention at age 15, she surrendered her heart to God’s call to full-time ministry. After finishing high school, Seeli studied nursing in the city of Madras, now called Chennai, India’s fifth largest city with a current population of over five million. She was working in the nursing school when she met a young man named Lawrence Devadasan.

Also born into a Christian home, Lawrence had lost his father at an early age. An outstanding student who’d won many athletic and academic awards, Lawrence was forced to abandon a college education to support his mother and siblings. He found work at Burma Shell, an international oil company. Seeli and Lawrence were married April 29, 1963. For the next years Lawrence continued working at

Burma Shell while Seeli continued nursing. Two daughters were born to the couple. Lawrence’s position with Burma Shell was a lucrative one by local wage standards, providing financial security. Both were active as lay leaders in their church and Christian outreach.

But like Seeli, Lawrence had long felt God’s call to full-time ministry. In 1976, after seventeen years with Burma Oil, Lawrence resigned from the company to become BCM’s first full-time missionary in the Tamil Nadu area. A year later, Seeli joined her husband in full-time ministry along with four other children’s ministry workers. The BCM Tamil Nadu team focused on what today is popularly termed the “4-14 Window,” that time frame between age four and early adolescence when more than 80% of all Christians place their faith in Jesus Christ. Permission to teach religious education classes in area schools made it possible to reach thousands, and eventually tens of thousands, of children each week with systematic teaching of God’s Word, using BCM’s Genesis-to-Revelation *Footsteps of Faith* curriculum. A gifted theologian and writer, Lawrence Devadason became well-known among India’s Christian community as the author of devotional books.

As more BCM missionaries joined the Tamil Nadu team, the children’s outreach expanded into other regions: Arakonam under Mr. & Mrs. Kanagaraj in 1980, Chengalpet under Mr. & Mrs. David Maniraj in 1982, Vellore under Mr. & Mrs. Yesurajan in 1984, Sivakasi under Mr. & Mrs. Isaac Jebamani in 1994. Along with children’s outreach, ministry expanded to youth and adult outreach, teacher training, and outreach to those with special needs. A greatly neglected need all over





India, this outreach today reaches mentally and physically challenged children and adults in eight different regions of Tamil Nadu. Some are deaf and dumb, others affected by polio, HIV-Aids, and leprosy.

In 1996, BCM missionaries Mr. & Mrs. Wilson opened ministry in Krishnagiri, an area infamous for its continued practice of infanticide for unwanted baby girls. Today nearly 3400 children are reached in weekly Bible Clubs in this region. In 2000, Mr. & Mrs. Udayakumar started ministry in the Santhoshapuram region. By this time over 10,000 Bible teachers had been trained to work with children and adults through the Devadasans' ministry. Thirty-three full-time BCM missionaries along with volunteers were working across seven districts of Tamil Nadu. Lawrence and Seeli's two daughters were now adults, both married to pastors and with children of their own.

Then tragedy struck both the family and the BCM Tamil Nadu ministry when founder and director Lawrence Devadasan became gravely ill. On March 23, 2001, Lawrence went to be with the Lord he'd served as a BCM missionary for 25 years. What would happen now to the BCM Tamil Nadu ministry?

One person came immediately to mind as a leader of proven ability and faithfulness. The BCM ministry leadership approached Mrs. Seeli Devadasan. Would she be willing to carry forward the ministry she and her husband had begun a quarter century earlier?

Seeli had no doubt this was what God had called her to from the moment she'd surrendered her life to His service at age fifteen. Since 2001, Seeli has provided leadership to BCM Tamil Nadu. In that time, outreach has expanded to five new regions: Abattur under Mr. and Mrs. Paul Thomas in 2002, Cuddalore under Mr. & Mrs. Meshack in 2004, Napalayam in 2005 under Mr. and Mrs. Ruban, Palani under Mrs.

Opposite page & above: Tamil Nadu volunteer teaching Bible Clubs;
Right: Mrs. Veronica Dalavai (left) presenting a shawl to
Mrs. Seeli Devadasan (right)

Notes from India

"My life is a testimony to God's goodness. In 1984, the year Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated, my son was stripped of life. I only knew there was a foreign follower of Jesus Christ who believed in a God who could resurrect from the dead. I asked him to come and pray in the name of his God. He prayed, and my son breathed again. That was a turning point in my life. I accepted Christ and took baptism. I began sharing my faith among my people. Then in 1990 I met with a serious accident. But this time it only made my faith stronger. God healed me. In 1994 I met Rev. Joseph and joined BCM. I am working among a people group considered cursed by Hinduism. Many who arrived here with me have come to Christ from that group. We are so thankful God arranged for us to be able to be here today."

— BCM Church planter, North India

"I come from a Hindu family. When I found the Lord Jesus Christ, they chased me out. I spent many years roaming here and there. Then I began serving God in my own village. Ten families received Christ. Later I came into BCM ministry and was trained. There were 18 who took the training. Today 10 of us are still working with BCM ministry."

— BCM North India pastor

"I am from a Muslim family; my father was a Muslim priest. Seventeen years ago in 1994, God showed his mercy on me, and I heard His voice. In 1997 I knew that as God had helped me, so I wanted to begin giving His help to others. God brought me to Rev. Joseph, who was working with BCM. Since I started working with BCM, my family has faced many problems, but God has met all our needs. The Lord has never left us, never forsaken us. Today in my family, we are several brothers working for the Lord. Other relatives have come to Christ. Please keep praying for my family that salvation will come to all of them."

— BCM missionary, North India

Margret Paulraj and Mrs. Priscilla in 2009, Madurai in 2011 under Mr. & Mrs. Livingston. A virtually 100% Hindu area, Palani is best known for one of Hinduism's most famous temples, site of pilgrimage for more than a million devotees each year. Today Mrs. Margret and Mrs. Priscilla reach 450 children a week there in 11 different Bible Clubs.

Today 47 full-time BCM Tamil Nadu ministry leaders not only reach 115,000 children each week in 699 school Bible Clubs but teach as well over 600 youth and adult meetings each month with average attendance of around 30,000. Many of the male staff also serve as preachers in area churches.

Seeli makes the purpose of their ministry very clear. "Our aim is to teach only the Bible."

What percent of the children are from Christian backgrounds? Seeli quickly responds, "Ninety percent are non-Christian and of those a majority are from Hindu homes."

And just how is this extensive ministry funded? Mrs. Seeli Devadasan explains, "This is a faith ministry supported by believers, schools, Indian churches, and God's provision."

Petu and her family are among those who support BCM Tamil Nadu through both prayers and contributions. Not long ago on the eve of Petu's wedding, BCM staff traveled to her home to pray a blessing over Petu and her future husband. While they were there, Petu's mother told her daughter's story.

"Petu was studying in secondary school. One day when she came home, she ran to me to share how happy she was because she'd accepted Jesus into her life. I asked her how? She replied, 'BCM Aunty ("aunty" and "uncle" are honorary terms of respect) invited us to pray if we wanted to accept Jesus. So I invited Jesus to come into my heart and cleanse me with His blood.' From that day I have seen my daughter growing in Jesus."

It is a story that can be replicated today across Tami Nadu. What does Mrs. Seeli see as the ministry's most pressing need? One of the big expenses is transportation, whether bus fares, taxis or gasoline for those with access to a motor scooter. A number of these motor bikes, or "two-wheelers" as they are dubbed locally, were donated a few years ago by friends of BCM in the US and Canada. But most of the BCM Tamil Nadu staff ride the very crowded city buses, carrying their Bible and visual aids with them.

With price of transport and gas soaring, Mrs. Seeli asks for urgent prayer in covering travel costs. She also asks for prayer in supplying salaries for ten added workers as BCM Tamil Nadu continues to expand into new regions. **If interested in contributing to these needs, checks or direct donations can be made through BCM, earmarked to "BCM International, Tamil Nadu Branch."**

* Names withheld for security reasons

FIELD BRIEFS

FRANCE



On September 11, 2011, BCM church plant in Desvres, northern France, celebrated its first baptism with an attendance of almost sixty people and three believers baptized. BCM missionaries Chuck and Cathy Powers had served in Toulouse, southern France, for 22 years, establishing the thriving Center Seven ministry there, when God used a funeral to call them to northern France. One Toulouse

church member had been a homeless alcoholic when he came to Christ. Originally from Desvres area, he'd introduced his family to the Powers. After being diagnosed with cancer, he'd returned home to spend his remaining years with family. Chuck Powers was invited to preach at his funeral. Northern France has been historically very closed to gospel preaching. But after hearing Chuck preach, several at the funeral begged him to bring his message of God's love to their area.

In 2010, the Powers moved to Desvres. Shortly after, they met a woman who'd been praying for 25 years for God to provide a pastor for their town. In April, 2011, church services began in the Powers' home. Among visitors was Monique (see photo), who soon accepted Christ as Savior. Since then a second couple and their daughter have accepted Christ. A Wednesday Bible club is reaching neighborhood children who've never before heard the story of Jesus or God's redeeming love.

IRELAND



This first year since BCM Ireland acquired Castledaly Manor as a full-time, year-round Christian camp and retreat facility has proved a challenge. Along with expected renovations, heavy winter rains caused unanticipated flooding and damages. But work teams from the UK and North America along with local volunteers worked hard to get Castledaly Manor ready for its official

opening September 3, 2011. A beautiful day saw 500 visitors touring the facilities and sharing a celebratory meal. BCM missionaries Mervyn and Joyce Young did the honors of cutting the ribbon.

GERMANY



Despite cold, rain, even snow for some from higher elevations, more than 100 women plus children traveled to *Bibelgemeinde Nordrhön* (Bible Church of the North Rhine), a BCM church plant in Huenfield, central Germany, on October 8, 2011, for a regional Women's Fall Breakfast. While children attended their own special activities, keynote speaker Beate Herwig spoke on God the Creator as a heavenly Father. Many visitors shared that they'd never seen

God in this way. Through a follow-up Bible study, several visiting women have already accepted Christ as Savior.

"Many Germans have a misunderstanding of who God is as a heavenly Father," share BCM Germany missionaries Dale and Paula Sigafos. "Beate made clear we need to come to know God as our Father. Only then are we part of His family through the salvation He provides."

SOUTH AFRICA

Collin and Loveline Wung, BCM Africa's newest missionaries from Cameroon, are among many BCM couples with one spouse working a full-time secular job to provide for both to serve in ministry. Collin's position as teacher in an East Cape school has opened doors for him to teach God's Word daily in school assemblies to hundreds of South African children.



PERU

BCM Europe, BCM Peru, and BCM South Africa were among fields celebrating this year's Diamond Jubilee with a commemorative banquet. At Peru's 75th celebration, missionaries were asked: What has BCM meant to you in your life and service? Among their responses:

"When I look back at almost 14 years with BCM, the word PROVISION stands out most in my mind. God has been faithful to provide for every need of the mission here in Peru and also for our own needs as we have stepped out in obedience to Him as a family."

"BCM Peru for me means an OPPORTUNITY to serve God, to put my gifts and talents at His disposition for His glory."

"In the short time I am with BCM, I have found truly a FAMILY here."

"I heard about missions all my life, but it is here at BCM Peru that I am learning to DREAM for God and for Missions."

"For me, the aspect of working as a TEAM here at BCM has greatly enhanced my life and ministry and has given me the path to follow serving my Lord."

BCM Peru founders Carlos and Marion Odicio add, "Thank God for Miss Bessie Traber, and for all God's faithful servants who dared to pick up the torch and carry it over to Peru. May God continue to be glorified in and through us!"



INDONESIA

A Train the Trainer (TTT) event held in Sentani, Papua, July 26-28, 2011, added four new master trainers to Indonesia's *In Step with the Master Teacher* team. TTT prepares regional ministry leaders to train teachers within local churches for Sunday school and children's outreach. The Sentani course was taught by BCM missionary Sylvia Wright, who has been ministering in Papua (formerly Irian Jaya) for almost thirty years. What is exciting about this event, shares Sylvia, is that each of the four new trainers comes from a different tribe, lives in a different area of Papua, and attends a different denominational church. Which means that four new tribal regions now have access to BCM's *In Step with the Master Teacher* training program. In all, fifteen TTT graduates scattered across Papua are now training other children's ministry leaders. Translation of the ISMT training manual into Indonesian is also nearing completion.





Handing the Baton

by Jeanette Windle

BCM India Celebrates A New Generation



“BCM laid the foundation for what my life is today.”

“I remember well my 9th year of school back in 1976, living at a boarding hostel. Every Saturday a BCM missionary, Dr. Dalavai-Uncle, came to hold a Bible class. One lesson etched in my memory was on God’s agape love, an unconditional love not based on our performing well but that gives everything when we have nothing to give. Learning not just of the fear of God but of His love deeply impacted my life. Today I still teach that message of Dr. Dalavai’s as I counsel young people.”

The man sharing was Dr. B. Kalakumar, currently a university professor in Andhra Pradesh, India; the occasion, an impromptu interview during BCM International’s 75th Anniversary celebration in Hyderabad, India.

There was much to celebrate. This year BCM India itself commemorates three and a half decades of ministry since its official incorporation under leadership of Dr. Vararuchi Dalavai, now BCM’s Senior Executive Vice President of International Ministry. The outreach of more than 200 missionaries along with countless pastors and volunteers has grown to be BCM’s largest ministry field with more than 16,000 churches planted in 17 of India’s 27 state districts, over 400,000 baptized believers, and a half-million children in Bible Clubs, school release time classes, and camps.

Much too wide spread, in fact, to squeeze into a single celebration, so festivities throughout the Indian subcontinent filled the week of August 22-27, 2011. Traveling from the USA as keynote speakers were BCM president Dr. Martin Windle with his wife Jeanette and international board chairman Rev. Johnny Henderson with his wife Renea. With a variety

Top: BCM Church in India; Bottom: BCM President Dr. Windle preaching at an India church; Opposite page: Dr. Vararuchi Dalavai baptizing one of 156 new believers in Orissa





of India's numerous people groups taking part, messages and reports were translated to and from multiple languages, including English, Hindi, Oriya, Telegu, and Tamil. But one frequent acclamation was understood by all: "Alleluia! Praise the Lord!"

NORTH INDIA

BCM India's 75th Anniversary celebration kicked off Monday, August 22nd, in Karnal, Haryana, a two hour drive from the capital city of Delhi. More than two hundred pastors and ministry leaders traveled up to 30 hours by bus, car, and train to participate. Several key pastors shared testimonies (see *Notes from India*, page 22). Special honor was given to BCM India's first missionary, Miss Christina Lal (*Disappointment Becomes God's Appointment*, page 16), pioneer church planter V. U. Markose (*Angels in the Night*, page 18), and BCM North India director, Rev. K. E. Joseph.

In all, 115 BCM pastors along with missionaries and children's workers serve across North India's ten state districts, mostly with unreached people groups in hostile and extremely impoverished areas. Every month they minister to an average of twenty thousand people in 900 villagers. Thousands have accepted Christ as Savior. But their goal, Rev. Joseph explains, is not just to bring people to Jesus Christ.

"Scripture tells us to make disciples, not just converts. Our desire is for every BCM church to be a ministry center to disciple new believers, identify potential leaders, and train them to plant new, self-supporting churches. I cannot start a church myself in every village. But each person I train and send into a village can start a church. After 19 years with BCM, it is exciting to see many young men I have discipled serving God, some with BCM, some with other ministry organizations, all over North India."

ORISSA

Pouring down monsoon rains didn't discourage several hundred Orissa pastors and church lay leaders from journeying through the night to a Christian ministry compound in G. Udayagiri, Kandhamal district, for an all-day celebration on Wednesday, August 24th. A lush, green landscape of thick jungle and rice paddies, Orissa was the



Top: Dedication of new BCM India pastors at 75th Anniversary;
Right: BCM President Dr. Windle prays over Rev. D.K. Nayak

Oppositepagetop: New church and borewell dedication in Balliguda;
Oppositepagebottom: Singing at the 75th Anniversary Celebration in Hyderabad, India

flashpoint for anti-Christian violence exactly three years earlier in August, 2008, resulting in hundreds of destroyed churches and 300,000+ Christians left homeless. All 42 BCM Orissa pastors, who'd spent months then in refugee camps, now back serving in their communities, made it to the celebration. The rains lifted long enough for an outdoor baptism of 156 new believers. In the following anniversary celebration, both pastors and BCM's Orissa director, Rev. D. K. Nayak, were honored for their service in the midst of danger and hostility.

"Despite severe persecution and brutal attacks to the Christians a few years back, God is faithful and using us mightily," shares Rev. Nayak. "Many nonbelievers are coming forward to accept Christ as their personal Savior. We have baptized over 4300 new believers and established 73 churches across five districts of Orissa during the last 17 years. The Gospel to every person and a church among every people group is our vision for BCM Orissa."

BALLIGUDA

Part of that goal was met as festivities shifted to nearby Balliguda on Thursday, August 25th, for the dedication of BCM Orissa's newest church building, along with a bore well that will supply free water to that entire community. The pastor's home that had served as the church meeting place was among those destroyed by the 2008 violence. With monsoon rains still pouring down, the bore well inauguration and ribbon cutting was carried out under umbrellas. Though it was a mid-week work day, the new sanctuary was packed out for the dedication service.

PALASA

Leaving the Balliguda believers enjoying a celebratory meal, the BCM team drove seven hours through an intensifying storm to Palasa in neighboring Andhra Pradesh state district, where area pastors had waited patiently much of the day for their arrival. These were the churches and pastors who had welcomed and housed BCM refugees from neighboring Orissa three years earlier. Though cut short by the storm, it was a wonderful time of honoring their ministry and sharing a new vision for the future before the team had to drive on through the night for their next stop on the Bay of Bengal.



HYDERABAD

The week's final celebration took place Saturday, August 27th, at BCM's Ebenezer Prayer and Retreat Conference Center in Hyderabad, where BCM India has its headquarters. Among several hundred pastors and ministry leaders participating were many of BCM India's national board, including Dr. Kalakumar, whose youth was so greatly impacted by BCM ministry, and the administrator of Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. BCM South Asia director Rev. Susiri Liyanage flew in from Sri Lanka to chair the event.

Special honors were made to long term church planters and missionaries, including Rev. Matthews (see back cover), pioneer volunteers Mr. V.S. Aristrarchus and Mr. B.A. Williams, and BCM missionary Mrs. Seeli Devadasan (*Still I Will Follow*, page 20), whose team reaches over 100,000 children a week. A group of her young ministry volunteers provided special music and dance for the event. A dedication commissioned new BCM pastors and missionaries. Dr. Dalavai closed the 75th Anniversary week with a vision challenge of his own.

"This is not about who started the race. but how it is finished. We—Vararuchi Dalavai, Christina Lal, Rev. Matthews—we are the past of BCM in India. You are the generation that will carry BCM India forward into the next seventy-five years of ministry. Lord willing, you are the ones who will cross the finish line in reaching India for Jesus Christ. So run the race and finish well."

Alleluia! Praise the Lord!





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Notes from India

"I was born into a Hindu priest family. As a young adult, I met with a serious accident. Because of the accident, I blamed Jesus and his followers. I hated Jesus, His words, His actions, His pastors, and the preaching of the gospel. As a Hindu, I did everything I could do to disturb such activities.

"In 1968 I was working as a railway employee when once again I met with an accident. While lying greatly injured in the hospital, I heard Jesus call to me by my name. It was not in my mind. I heard His voice call me clearly. That experience made me repent of my sins and accept Jesus as my Savior and my God.

"But once I accepted Jesus Christ, many of my family started hating me. I faced much opposition from neighbors and family members. With my wife, I walked to many villages, telling people about Jesus, how He has changed me, how He is the real God. Because of this, my family and I went through much suffering, often going without food. Those who opposed Jesus many times beat me, tried to kill me,

pushed me into the water canal to drown me. But the more that suffering increased, the more people turning to God also increased, and hundreds of souls have been won for Christ. I have seen God do many miracles, drive out evil spirits from many people.

"How did I begin working with BCM? I prayed for God to send someone to help me in my ministry. God heard my prayers and sent Dr. Dalavai into my life. Since then he has been involved in much ministry in my area, walking to villages with me, taking lorry trucks, to preach the gospel. In 1984 I became a BCM missionary. Since I joined BCM, God has blessed me immensely, allowing me to preach to many thousands and begin many worship centers. Today 24 pastors are serving the Lord under me.

"When Jesus called me, I was an accuser and abuser of Jesus Christ. He saved me and made me a minister of the Gospel. Today all my four children believe in Jesus. Though I have never been to college, all of my children have studied in Bible college and are each now involved in the preaching of the gospel."

— Rev. Lake Matthew, BCM Church Planting Coordinator, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh State

