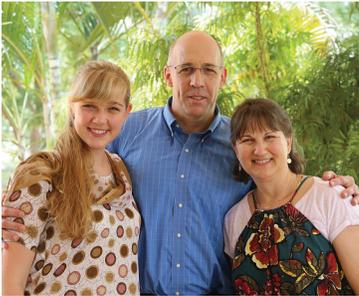




VOICE *of* SHALOM



ENCOURAGING WOMEN: PERSEVERING IN LOVE AND HOPE

By Kendra Good Rittenhouse

This upcoming summer brings another opportunity for me and my husband, Jim, to fellowship, interact, and learn with our Christian sisters and brothers in India. During the latter weeks in June, we will be traveling with Conrad and Sharon Swartzentruber and Paulus and Sumatha Thalathoti. Sarah, Paulus' and Sumatha's daughter, will also be with us.

We will spend several days at a retreat center in Hyderabad where numerous pastors and their wives will gather for worship, instruction, and spiritual and emotional support. The participants will come from the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, some of them traveling a couple of days by bus.

My tasks for the conference will be focusing on the women, along with Sumatha, Sharon, and Sarah. The scriptural text for the women's conference will be Galatians 6:9. "Do get weary of doing what is good," is the message of encouragement that we want to give to our Indian sisters. We will also focus on several women in scripture in hopes to help them see that God uses everyone for his purposes, even women within patriarchal and caste system societies. Discussion and practice of prayer and singing will also be part of our conference time.

In years past, there was focus on the women's self worth. An aspect that most Americans take for granted but that many Indian women have little sense of in their society. The women have been receptive to the refreshing good news that they are treasured in the eyes of God. We prayerfully hope that in instilling this message of God's love for them that they will be able to be used as vessels of God's love for others in their families, churches, and villages.

We are also planning to teach the women some practical sewing and knitting skills. Sumatha will show the the basic rudiments of blouse making with instructions to take home. Sharon and I will teach how to knit hats which they like to wear when the usual intense heat cools to moderate temperatures. Hopefully, these skills will be useful to them personally and will also give them extra income potential.

Not to be minimized will be our personal interactions with our Indian sisters and brothers. Though most communication will be through an interpreter or non-verbal, I have no doubt it will be sacred. There is no gift greater than connection to another human being when cultural pretense is wiped away and there is nothing left but God's image that is seen in the eyes of another. Our mutual connection to our Creator is indeed sacred. May God speak to and through all of us this summer, Indian and American alike, building God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Thank you for your Generosity to all our donors and supporters all these years. Your prayers and financial support is helping us to go and make disciples of Jesus Christ and plant churches in the name of Christ in the interior rural communities.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dr. Paulus Thalathoti



I thank God for the opportunity to share the love of Jesus and the good news of His crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection during this Lenten season.

We praise God as individuals are turning from darkness to the Light and as many experience God's mighty hand in their broken bodies, as they are healed of diseases, physical ailments, and even the influence of demonic powers. The glory and joy of the Lord is filling many lives in India! Led by the Holy Spirit, they are coming forward to be baptized and to begin their journey of faith. I am very humbled to share that in February I had the opportunity to minister in 13 of these baptisms.

We praise God for the dedication of two new church buildings on February 11th and 12th. The leader of one of these churches, Pastor Paul, was once not a follower of Christ, but through the power of the Gospel he accepted Jesus as his Savior. Now his wife, mother, and seven other families came from the darkness into Light of Jesus our redeemer! The other congregation is located high in the hills, so I walked the rocky $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the church. I was very humbled to join the 8-11 families of this congregation as they joyfully worshipped God in their new one-room church.



As we move forward, we ask for your continued prayers for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ across the oceans. The Holy Spirit is moving in India as people come to Jesus. Filled with a joy they had not tasted previously, the hearty praises of these believers are still ringing in my ears after five weeks. Please uphold these brothers, sisters, and small congregations in your prayers and glorify the name of the Lord. Amen.



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PRAYER ITEMS:

- Pray for upcoming Pastors and women's conference in June.
- Continue to remember to pray for the pastors and their wives as they serve Jesus in their challenging and volatile mission fields.
- You can help! Some churches need doors, windows, roofs, and sidewalls. Please pray and consider giving.
- Pray for \$2,000 to implement a "Community Development Center" in two of the Commonwealths in India. This gives the opportunity to women to come and learn sewing classes (Project Lydia) and for down-trodden and poor kids to receive support for a quality educational help through these centers.
- Pray and join in our upcoming annual banquet in October.



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