

Cultural Exchange and Relational Travel to India

January-February 2012

**Sojourners:
Norma, Carmen,
Dave & Nikki,, Carol,
Scott, Steph, Jake,
Beth & Mark**



**LUTHERAN PARTNERS
IN GLOBAL MINISTRY**
Connecting and Encouraging through Faith

DAY ONE: SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2012

TRAVELERS ARE NOT ALL ON THE SAME SCHEDULE BUT WE'LL
BEGIN OUR REFLECTIONS ON THIS DAY ...

DEPARTURE DAY ... AIR TRAVEL

Psalm 46:10

Be still and know that I am God

Corinne E: In 2008, our family traveled to India with LPGM. It was an amazing, life-changing experience but it was with a fair amount of anxiety, mindful of the “what ifs” of the unknown, that I approached the trip. Many “what ifs” filled my mind. I attempted to quiet my mind by finishing the packing.

Recently I picked up a book *Prayer: Does it Make Any Difference?* by Philip Yancey. A passage began “Be still and know that I am God” and went on to explain that the Latin for “be still” is “vacate” from which “vacation” is derived.

We are invited, actually commanded, to be still, to remember that God is God, and to take a vacation from trying to be God. That was the reminder I needed and I rested that night and often thereafter in those words.

As you travel, may your heart be still, knowing that our loving God is Lord over the days ahead.

Lord, God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

from Evening Vespers in the LBW page 153

DAY TWO: MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2012

AIR TRAVEL ALL DAY (uff da!)

Acts 8:26-40 (Philip and the Ethiopian) ... ³⁸And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Dave and Nan: This is the story of Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch. As this important official of the queen of Ethiopia was traveling home, the Spirit told Philip to go up to the man in his chariot and engage him. The man was reading from the book of Isaiah, but he admitted that he didn't understand what he was reading. He asked Philip to explain the passage, Philip explained the Isaiah passage and how it was fulfilled in Jesus. Then the eunuch asked to be baptized, and he went home rejoicing.

The Spirit used an unexpected encounter to minister to a traveler. In the coming days you as travelers in an unfamiliar land will find yourself ministered to in unexpected ways. You will encounter cultural differences. You will see examples of poverty that you could not have imagined. But you will be surprised at the ways that the Spirit will engage you and that you will be ministered to. And the end result will be that you will eventually go on your way home rejoicing at the new insights you have acquired and the ways that you have been blessed as a traveler.

And we are pretty sure that the Ethiopian eunuch did not keep the good news to himself when he got home. He undoubtedly told others of the wonderful things he had heard. And so you, too, will no doubt come home filled with excitement, unable to contain yourself. And you will be used by the Spirit to pass on the good news of all that you have seen and heard. (And the good news is that you don't have to be a eunuch to pass on the Good News! ☺)

DAY THREE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2012

... ARRIVE MAA (CHENNAI INDIA!) AT VARIOUS TIMES

WELCOME TO INDIA!

CHENNAI SIGHTSEEING, SHOPPING AND RESTING!

OVERNIGHT AT LOTUS GRT HOTEL

Hebrews 13:2 ...

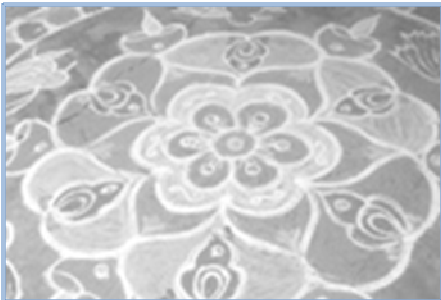
Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. For by so doing some have entertained angels without knowing it.

IvaNell & Luther: Through our travels to India and Bangladesh one thing stood out: **HOSPITALITY**.

The people were remarkably welcoming to us. Even though they were living with grinding poverty, they always found ways to share whatever they had with us. It was a humbling experience in every way.

May God grant you a **WELCOMING SPIRIT** as you travel to different places.

“Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.”



This is a KOLAM, a very traditional symbol of welcome in South India, Wait until you see one, in brilliant color, with your own eyes!

DAY FOUR: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2012

PARK TOWN FIELD TRIP

OVERNIGHT AT LOTUS GRT HOTEL

ELW 719

***Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan
Above the noise of selfish strife
We hear your voice, O Son of Man***

Allison: The Mount of Beatitudes, where some think Jesus delivered his Sermon on the Mount, is a place of awe-inspiring beauty. The site of a gracious chapel, the hill gently gives way to the sea. The hills of Jordan climb steeply in the east. After a rare autumn shower, the sun emerges from behind clouds and paints the landscape in vivid blues, greens and golds.

Jesus, the "master from the mountainside," was no doubt tempted to remain in this idyllic place, away from the abode of the "restless throngs." But he did not. His place was among humanity's "wretchedness and need," calming fears, thwarting greed, wiping tears.

So too it is our mission as his followers to teach the world of his love, doing acts of word and deed, to bring God's city among us.

Prayer: God of creation, may we find refreshment in the beauty you have created, in order that we may continue to participate in your Son's work. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY FIVE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2012

PARK TOWN

OVERNIGHT AT LOTUS GRT HOTEL

Jeremiah 33:3 ...

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

Corrine D: Every experience is what you make of it.

While traveling abroad, I've realized how many amazing things there are in the world. Although there are always hard things to see and not every day goes perfectly, there will always be something new and incredible to enjoy. If you focus on what goes wrong and you are not willing to see the wonders that God has guided you to experience, you will miss out on some amazing experiences. Even the hard parts of travel lead to something good that makes the bad completely worth it. You may get sick (we pray not), there could be bad weather or transportation glitches, you might just not enjoy the food, but at every obstacle you reach, remember God brought you there for a reason and if you are willing to, you will see amazing things through Him.

Dear Lord, although we doubt you at times, we know you are guiding us to great things. Help us to keep our eyes open through hard times and be willing to see your incredible work in our travels. Thank you for the opportunity to experience your work around the world and may this experience teach us to trust you always and see the beauty everywhere. Amen.

DAY SIX: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2012

TRAVEL TO TIRUKOILUR

REST AND RELAX

OVERNIGHT AT SILOAM BOARDING HOME GUEST HOUSE

Psalm 8:3-5 ... O Lord, I often think of the heavens your hands have made, and of the moon and stars you put in place. Then I ask, 'Why do you care about us humans? Why are you concerned for us?' You made us a little lower than you yourself, and you have crowned us with glory and honor.

Kris T-M: Close your eyes, and listen for a moment. So many sounds and sights and smells in India. When you woke up this morning, what was the first thing you heard? Maybe a car on the road or the girls singing? Have you heard the sound of sweeping yet? One of my favorite video clips from the time I was in India is of two girls at Siloam sweeping a platform together. It makes me think about a parable Jesus once told about a woman who had ten silver coins. Suppose she lost one, he said. She would light a lamp and sweep carefully until she found it. Then she would call in her neighbors and say, "Celebrate with me!" Just a few verses before, Jesus told a parable about the lost sheep. Suppose the shepherd has 100 sheep and loses one of them. He would leave the other 99 to make sure that one made it home safely. (Luke 15)

When you walk through the grounds of Siloam today, you'll see hundreds of girls, and it might be difficult to tell them apart. They share the same hair style and uniform as so many others. Yet Jesus knows each and every one of them by name. As you meet the children, take photos of them and interact with them, remember that each one has gifts and talents just like you. Say a prayer of thanks for them, and extend a smile to each one. Then give thanks to God for this incredible experience in India!

Lord God, we give you thanks for the girls at Siloam and the opportunity to see your glory reflected in them. Open our eyes today to all that you would have us see and do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY SEVEN: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2012

DANISH MISSION HOSPITAL

LIBRARY AND HOME VISITS

OVERNIGHT AT SILOAM BOARDING HOME GUEST HOUSE

I John 4:11 ...

Dear friends, since God so loved us we also ought to love one another.

Brenda: When Hank and I were in India in 2005 we truly felt this kind of love through many people connected to LPGM. Hank had a health problem that required us to head home before the trip finished. Gordy went into full gear making arrangements; Betty helped us pack our things. Then we boarded one of the vans for a trip to a hospital in Pondicherry.

As we left our LPGM friends and the girls at Siloam they were praying for us. Others were caring for us by accompanying us to the hospital in Chennai: a retired doctor from Minnesota, the head mistress of Siloam, a doctor and the head nurse from the Tirukoilur hospital, and Gordy. The hospital administrator and his wife met us at the hospital. We were quite a group going into the hospital that night. They were our guardian angels.

Hank was admitted to the ICU--hardly what you think an ICU should be. It was one large room with men coughing loudly, obviously very ill. He was stuck with needles--we hoped they were sterile. Yet he had no fear. He felt "the peace of God, which transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) with the love of these good people surrounding us.

The love these others showed us was definitely God's love. It was and is, such a blessing to travel with people who will love you and pray for you no matter what.

Dear Lord, We pray for safe travel and good health during this trip. Help us to rest in the knowledge that you are there loving us through our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen

DAY EIGHT: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2012

WORSHIP AT PANRUTI CHURCH

VISIT MELPATTAMBAKKAM; HOME VISITS

OVERNIGHT AT SILOAM BOARDING HOME GUEST HOUSE

Matthew 2:12 ...

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Hank: When we travel abroad we see signs that are unfamiliar or signs in a language foreign to us. This is not the case when God uses signs to announce His presence or to point us in the direction He would have us go.

God used numerous signs in the story of that first Christmas as told in the Bible. Mary is told her elderly cousin Elizabeth was expecting a child even though she was said to be barren. The shepherds are told they can find the baby in the city of David. “This is Christ the Lord. He will be wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.”

God continues to use signs to announce the nearness of His kingdom. We see them in Africa when we worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ under a large acacia tree that serves as their sanctuary [*or in India in the New Jerusalem Church today*]. Or when we are invited to sit with them and enjoy a meal of barbequed goat meat and fresh local produce. And again we see God in the grateful eyes of the children and adults reaching through open windows to get the precious scraps of goat meat offered them from the leftovers.

We may see God’s presence when we wash our hands over an hand-held bowl using one small cup of water and soap followed by another small cup of water for rinsing. God’s gift of precious water that then is reused to water the garden vegetables from the bowl under our hands.

Be alert to the signs God sends as you travel and encounter those He has called and gathered. Especially look in the eyes of the small child or the widow that may lack some of life's necessities that we take for granted. Smile with your greeting. And thank God for organizations like LPGM that help us reach out to those in need. Each night revisit those sights and God's signs as you thank God for the gift of travel.



Gracious God, we thank and praise you for signs of Your presence in our lives. Grant us your protection as we travel, and bring us to a clearer understanding of the role you have for us in building your kingdom here on earth. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen

DAY NINE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2012

QUO VADIS EXPERIENCE

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

OVERNIGHT AT LR CLASSIC INN

John 13:34-35 ...

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Joyce: In this scripture reading, we are instructed to love God with our hearts and minds and our neighbors as our self. You are meeting new neighbors and traveling on roads outside of your comfort zone. It might be scary at times, but by now you recognize the kind welcome of India.

I have seen a video titled "Becoming A Good Samaritan." It relays that acknowledging people and feeling compassion is a beginning step toward loving one another. On this journey, you are taking action by simply seeing these children of God and their needs. In my trip to India, I was deeply touched by the actions of a fellow traveler. She had the capacity to be present for the children. She truly listened, saw, and was compassionate. She was God's hands at work. *Where do you see God's hands at work today at Quo Vadis?*

We mostly likely can agree that the needs are huge both at home and abroad. One can feel overwhelmed. Remember the saying "I am only one, but I am one." You can do small things with love. You can tell the story.

Dear Lord, help me to be present to my new neighbors. May I be your ambassador. Help me spread your word in this far away world through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

DAY TEN: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2012
VISIT SARON SCHOOL AND BOARDING HOME
HOME VISITS

OVERNIGHT AT LR CLASSIC INN

Romans 12:10... Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Charles: We are all God's children. Therefore, we are all brothers and sisters. By now this is no doubt especially evident to you, even though you are very different from the native people that you will meet in terms of material wealth, physical appearance, language, customs, education, diet, and access to health care. We have the same basic humanity, and the same need for security, peace, love, and hope for the future. Look into the eyes of your new friends and listen to their hearts, and it will seem that you have known them all your life. The stories are different, but the themes are often the same. And often enough, they will bring back memories of your own childhood.

Do not despair for the poor because they are poor in assets. I believe that you will find them rich in their faith. The message that you bring of salvation through Christ brings hope to their lives and joy to their witness. You will be the Good Samaritans, bringing opportunities for education of their children, clean water, improved health care, and self-improvement, all of which will ease the daily burdens of life. At the same time, you may see that their lives are not all toil and sorrow. In fact, they live in something of a natural utopia of mild temperatures, sufficient rainfall, mangos and bananas and other fruits, and abundant natural springs. They are also free of many of the afflictions that we suffer in our own western culture.

Be with us this day, Lord, as we continue to cross the threshold into a world apart. Let us be enlightened, Father, as we walk in the sandals of our new friends for a brief moment in time. Help us to understand their trials and sorrows, to share our mutual

faith and joy in knowing Christ, and to be instruments in the realization of their hopes for the future. Protect them and the land they live in from exploitation, violence, and the ravages of malaria, HIV infection, and waterborne diseases. Bless this journey, Lord, that we may also return to our homes to find generous hearts willing to support our efforts to improve the lives of these, our brothers and sisters. Amen

DAY ELEVEN: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012
LEBANON HOME FOR WOMEN
TRAVEL TO CUDDALORE

OVERNIGHT AT YOGI RAM INN

Mathew 37-40 ...

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Brian: Think of a time when someone helped you. Maybe someone brought over something for supper, or provided a ride somewhere or gave you a word of encouragement when you needed it. Do you remember how you felt after this act of kindness? By going on this trip you are helping to repay the kindness by passing along Christ's love to others in need. You may never know how much you have helped someone but that's not the point. What may seem like a small gesture to you may be life changing to another.

God in Heaven, you are always with us as we visit the people and places of this exciting nation. Fill us with the Holy Spirit to show us how you are at work in the many cultures in the world. Thank you for the opportunity to visit the people of the world. We give thanks for your son, Jesus Christ, and we pray in His name. Amen

DAY TWELVE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2012
ALC COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LPGM India Office
VISIT CYCLONE THANE DAMAGED LOCATIONS
OVERNIGHT AT YOGI RAM INN

Mark 6:31 ... *Come away with me to a lonely place.*

Michael: Liminal Space. It's the place where we get away. It's the Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus in the desert. The disciples on the mountain. Paul in the wilderness. For many liminal space is summer camp, sabbatical, vacation, retreat, continuing education, cultural immersion. It is a place apart, away from the routines and daily grind.

Liminal space gives us a great gift: perspective. It gives us a place to step away from our lives, and see them from outside. It is a place to dream. We can rethink ourselves, reinvent, recreate. All the great prophets "got out of Dodge." Some suggest there is no spiritual growth without liminal space.

Getting out of our cultural box changes us. We view our culture through the eyes of another. We see the strengths and the weaknesses of our own place in the universe. We are challenged and inspired. Although the forces of inertia are strong to pull us back into the familiar routines when we return, we cannot possibly return unchanged. The journey alters the course of our lives.

As you go into the place apart, find quiet. Listen for the life-changing voice of God.

Good and gracious God, you called Abraham and Sarah to leave the comforts of home and trust you in a place they did not know. As we journey from home and family, walk with us.

**Give us eyes to see your Christ in the eyes of those we meet
along the road.**

Give us ears to hear the rustling of your Spirit.

**Give us hearts to feel the challenge of being
a stranger in a new land.**

Give us courage to surrender to the experience.

***May our hearts might be drawn to love what you love, through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***



DAY THIRTEEN: Friday, FEBRUARY 10, 2012

RETURN TO CHENNAI

OVERNIGHT AIR TRAVEL

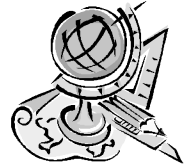
Mark 4:30-32 ... *Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."*

Mark: In his book *The Shadow of the Sun*, Ryszard Kapuscinski longed for the days when traveling to the tropics took months. He noted that the slow travel gave travelers from the North time to acclimate to the change in temperature, humidity and smell. I wish we had more time between Tamil Nadu and the United States. Time to put the experiences in order, organize our thoughts and share them with each other.

Sadly, we do not have that luxury. Soon you will be returning to family, friends, school, work and daily life. If you haven't already packed your bags, you are probably in the process of doing so and along with your belongings you are also packing up this experience. I encourage you to take the time when you get home to unpack the people, places and events of India. Don't let this become another trip that you only remember through pictures.

God brought you here as a part of your life journey to shape you and your faith. In doing so, God planted a seed in you. No one can imagine the plant that will grow from it but we all want to see what it becomes. Your experience in India is as unique as each one of us on the trip. Sharing your stories will be an important part of unpacking your India experience and it will help the seed God planted in you to sprout and grow.

Dear God, you have brought us safely this far and now we look for your guidance as we journey home. Give us the strength and courage we need to finish this trip and prepare for our homecoming. You know what you have planted in us and what has been happening at home.



*Help us nurture the seed within us so it will grow into a healthy thriving plant which provides nourishment for faith and life.
Amen.*

DAY FOURTEEN: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2012

TRAVELERS ARE NOT ALL ON THE SAME SCHEDULE

IT'S A LONG DAY WHEN YOU CROSS TIME ZONES IN THIS DIRECTION BUT YOUR ADRENALINE WILL CARRY YOU FORWARD!

Sandra: I believe you are chosen by God to be in this place, on this trip, at this time. In Isaiah 43:1 it says, *“I have called you by name. You are mine.”* That’s why you find yourself in India today. Perhaps in light of the all the things you have seen throughout this trip, you are called to discern justice. Justice is active intervention on behalf of the helpless, especially the poor. In Psalm 96 the writer sings a song of great hope to and for all nations. Reflect on it and make it personal.

Sing a new song to the LORD!

Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!

Sing to the LORD; praise his name.

Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.

Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.

Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!

Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy!

Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise

before the LORD, for he is coming!

He is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with justice,

and the nations with his truth.

Those of us who have traveled to India have sent you with travel mercies and prayers for your safety. We have held you in our hearts and in our prayers and ask God’s blessing on each of you. Come home now, you have things to do!

Holy God, we ask for the blessings of safety and health for me and my traveling companions. Keep our hearts and minds open that we may each hear your thoughts clearly. Help us to find opportunities to be the difference that makes a difference. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

WHEN YOU ARE SAFELY BACK IN YOUR OWN HOME ...

Psalm 126:5-6 ... Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

Chris: By the time we get to this devotion, you will be home. You will have experienced much. You will have a far greater appreciation of the Lutheran Church in South India. You will have made wonderful new friends at the schools you have visited.

You will have experienced the incredibly warm, chaotic, and beautiful Tamil culture. There will have been new sights, new smells (some wonderful, some not so much), new visions, new sounds, new feelings. You will have noted incredible, grinding poverty, and experienced the contrast between the very rich and the very poor.

You will be different people than when you left Minnesota. You will be closer to each other. You will have a new perspective on your own life and in relation to the lives of the people you have met. You will no doubt have an appreciation for the wonderful, ancient cultures that make India so incredible.

And you will be glad to be home! I like the image in Psalm 126: that we return home with shouts of joy, bearing sheaves of wheat (as some translations reveal) all that we have learned and experienced.

Thank you Lord, for the time we have had, for all that we have learned ... for all the laughter and the tears and for all our many new friends. Help us to remember always our brothers and sisters half a world away, and to rejoice that your praise is sung through every hour of the day. Now, we pray that you wrap your loving arms around us. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Dedicated to becoming true disciples of our Savior, we make intercession in a spirit of compassion and supplication. We pray for the Church, bearing witness to the gracious power of Christ. May we grow as a community set free from discrimination, all daughters and sons of God made one in the Lord.

For all who lead and serve the church: may they be open to the Spirit's wisdom working through them.

For every people and nation of the earth, no matter what their spiritual beliefs and religious convictions, embrace initiatives toward peace.

For those who deny themselves for the sake of others in religious life and vocation of service: May they find joy in the life-giving power of their sacrifice.

Not in power, O Lord of the prophets, but in weakness and compassion did your Son come among us. Make us faithful disciples of the wisdom whose



Teacher and Master is Christ and whose chair of learning is the cross. Day by day, grant us the grace to take up the cross and follow Jesus toward true life. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ,

your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. AMEN