

Minister's Message – December 2008

Orissa Response

In August a terrible wave of persecution broke out against the Christians in the Indian state of Orissa. They were attacked in their churches and in their homes. Many were killed while thousands fled into the forest. Homes and churches were burnt. Many have been praying for these brothers and sisters in Christ and seeking to help them materially. The response of a church in India is shared below:

Last Sunday (2nd Nov), we attended morning service at a church in a poor suburb of Bangalore. We went there for worship because one of Elias friends was supposed to give the sermon that day. The church is located in an impoverished area and the size is hardly 800 sq feet. But there were more than 200 people crowded into that building (sitting on the floor) and some were sitting on the staircases also. Most of the people in the church were daily wage labourers (street sweepers) and people who sell fruits and vegetables on pushcarts. The Church was similar to any other slum Church I had visited earlier.

The one thing which really caught my eye was the huge banner with the map of India which asked the members to pray for the missionaries the church is supporting (with the location of the missionary). The banner had the list of the mission agencies the missionaries belonged. Later I came to know that the Church is supporting 50 full time missionaries across India and even to Nepal and Sri Lanka. This information was an eye opener for me. If such a small church with mostly first generation Christians and people with no fixed monthly income can support 50 missionaries then how much the whole Bangalore can send considering the huge IT Christian population and the biggest churches in India?

The pastor who is still a first generation convert allowed Elias to speak about his Orissa trip. Elias shared the experience we had during our time in Kandhamal and asked the believers to pray earnestly for the people of Kandhamal. He just mentioned that the climate in Kandhamal is very cold, but he didn't share any of our needs other than Prayer. The Pastor, who spoke next, told the congregation that he has been asking Lord for an opportunity to help the people of Kandhamal and asked the members not to pay any money for this years Carol service. Instead he asked all the families to provide money for one Blanket each by the third week of November. He told them that there are 400 families in the church and they can buy 400 best quality blankets from a wholesale shop in Bangalore and send it along with our contacts in Kandhamal. He also asked the Church families to buy an additional pair of dresses if they are going to buy a new dress for their own children for Christmas.

I was very much moved by the Pastors statement as in the previous day meeting Elias and friends were debating on whether to send an additional 350 blankets to Orissa. Such an example of sacrificial giving is rarely seen in today's churches (including my home church). Even when Elias was refusing to take this offer from the Pastor, I felt that the Spirit of God spoke to the Pastor to motivate ourselves in the big task ahead (Reaching the yet Unreached folks of India – population 1.1billion), while the support for Orissa victims is a small step in that direction.

Why I am sending this mail? As I was sharing this with Sunny yesterday, he asked me to send this incident to the whole group to encourage each other. Instead of expanding their own Church building, the congregation is building our Lord's churches across India. We need to pray for more congregations (even existing churches need to change their priorities) like these to come up all over India so that the big task is easily attained in spite of all the difficult times ahead.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon, DD.