

India Mission 2012



Christian World Missions

Worship the Lord in the beauty of His Holiness...Psalm 96:9

After 48 hours and three long flights, we arrived in Madurai, where we were greeted by heavy rains and flooded streets, but more importantly, by the smiling faces of the assistant director of Gospel Friends, Joel Kumar; the driver and boys' home director, Robert; and one of the "home boys", David. While driving from Madurai to the Living Hope Campus, we heard many great stories of God's faithfulness as well as David's personal story of freedom. His family had brought him to the Living Hope Orphanage as a young teen. After returning home to visit his family for a short period, his father sold him as a slave on their way back to the orphanage. David was able to escape and eventually found his way back to Living Hope. He now wants to attend Bible College. He has a great spirit and by God's grace, will grow into a strong man of God.



David and Susan



*Our ninety year-old friend
ready for morning devotion*

Four hours later, we arrived on the Living Hope campus. It was late in the evening, and we were tired from our journey, but our spirits were lifted by the amazing welcome to the campus. The faculty, staff, and boys and girls from the orphanage greeted us with fireworks, singing, smiles, hugs and beautiful leis.

We began our work right after the next morning's devotion with a retreat for the Bible College students. Lee Ann and Susan had a wonderful time with the young men and women who would be graduating from the Bible College in just a couple of days from then. For most, their next step was unclear. Many would return to their home villages, work in children's ministry, as pastors or wherever God leads. Others would remain on campus and continue their education. For some, it would take weeks of traveling to get home, where they would face possible imprisonment for preaching the Word. Their response was, "But we'll just preach in the prison." Spending time with these soon-to-be Bible College graduates made us keenly aware of our religious freedom in the U.S.



Breakout session during retreat

Following the Bible College retreat, we spent time with the pastors from a nearby district, their spouses, nursing and sewing students. During a breakout session, we had the wonderful privilege of teaching the pastors wives, the female Bible College students, sewing students, and nursing students and leading them in a foot washing ceremony. It was such an honor for us to share this special time with each precious soul.

As the week came to an end, there was a celebratory spirit in the air. First was the annual Sunday school celebration with dances, skits and proclamations from children, youth, faculty and staff. It was wonderful to see these children dancing and singing to the glory of the Lord and then hear their stories of rescue. As Ghuna pointed out, some of these children have been rescued from slavery or poverty, but all of us who are Christians, have been rescued from sin and death. Hallelujah!



Dancing at Sunday school celebration

The first graduating class of the Jaya Institute of Paramedical Sciences held their graduation ceremony Friday evening with Susan Seal giving the commencement address. Susan congratulated the class, challenged them to commit themselves to serve God through nursing, and encouraged them to have peace in God's plans. The very next day we celebrated the graduation of 27 students from the Living Hope Bible College, with Lee Ann

Williamson giving the commencement address. Lee Ann was also blessed to receive an honorary doctorate from the college, with Ghuna Kumar making the presentation.



Lee Ann blessing Bible College graduate

The next morning, we, along with representatives from 5 or 6 denominations in South India, were invited to take part in the ordination of about one third of the Bible College students, by giving a personal blessing to each one. Participation in these important ceremonies connected us to all of the students in a much deeper way, almost as if we were a part of their education process. We pray for them as they begin their careers and ministries, not as strangers in a foreign land, but as brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of God.

Over the next week, we visited some of the out-lying ministry sites, including medical clinics and churches, and participated in the largest Vacation Bible School in India. Almost 5000 children and young people gathered under a thatched-roof in the blazing sun, and then slept on the concrete floor of the Bible College, elementary school, and orphanage dormitories. For about 18 hours each day, they heard the plan of salvation presented through skits, music, puppets, and small group devotions. There were no crafts or games and only about 3 hours of free time each day, but they loved it and had a great time! Ninety percent of them came from staunch Hindu families, and all of them went home with their hearts filled with Scripture. At the prayer of invitation on Thursday afternoon, 95% of the children were on their knees, weeping before the Lord in gratitude for His great love. That's what VBS is all about. That's what CWM is all about!



Vacation Bible school

As we began our journey back home, we spent a day in Chennai, where we led a pastor's retreat with a time of teaching, and group and individual prayer. We were so blessed by their dedication to sharing the Gospel and to meeting the needs of the people in their area. As the pastors are struggling with having enough food for their own families, they are working to help the families around them. In addition to personal needs, their church facilities often need many basic things such as electricity or maybe even simple shelter from the elements.



Chennai Beach

We have heard so much about the slums of India, seen photos and even movies about it, but we really wanted God to touch our hearts with a passion for these people. So, on Sunday evening, we were driven through the slum area along the beach of Chennai. It was hit hard by the Tsunami in 2005. What we saw was hard to really comprehend. The beaches were littered with trash piles where children and goats were both digging for food. There were makeshift shacks that we learned were "homes" and people sleeping on whatever they could

find. The smell was a mixture of fish, ocean water and open sewage. It was the smell of poverty in a way we have never experienced. We turned the corner and found a small church tucked in the middle of Hindu shrines and shanty type homes. It was a modest little building of concrete, but what we saw touched us deeply. There on the back wall of the building past the few folding chairs and an old table was painted... "Worship the Lord in the beauty of His Holiness." After the worship service, we prayed individually for each person present that night – it was a small crowd. One teenage boy came to each of us, and then came back again and again. That's the way it is when God's people truly love one another – we just want to go back again and again. We pray you will consider joining us on our India mission next year. God can use you, and you will be changed by what you experience.



Lee Ann praying at church in Chennai

For more photos and video of the India mission, visit our website or our facebook page.