

This month, I'd like to highlight our partner in India, Ghuna Kumar and Gospel Friends. Toward the end of April, they will be holding graduations for their sewing, nursing, and Bible schools, and immediately after that, they will conduct their annual Vacation Bible School for over 4000 young people.

Tradition holds that the presence of Christianity in India dates all the way back to the Apostles, when Thomas, one of the original Twelve, visited India on two separate missions. Today, we are told there are from 25 to 60 million Christians in this land of 1.25 billion souls – still only a tiny fraction of the country with the world's second largest population. (China is still first, with 1.39 billion.)

From the time India established independence in 1947 until 1996, only 39 incidents of persecution against Christians was *reported*. According to recent statistics (Christianity Today, Oct. 2016) things have changed radically since the Hindutvah government took power (pushing for a fully Hindu state). “Last year, EFI (Evangelical Fellowship of India) and other concerned groups launched a free 24-hour hotline for Christians to report persecution. The line initially collapsed from overload. By the end of 12 months, it had received more than 11,000 calls. ‘Not a day goes by without a pastor being beaten up, a church being attacked, or a Christian home being robbed,’ says Vijayesh Lal, EFI’s general secretary. By the end of June, his researchers had already confirmed 135 incidents—almost the same total as in previous full years.” On March 1, 2017, Compassion International announced that it is being forced to withdraw completely from India, abandoning nearly 600 centers serving 145,000 children.



But the Word of God is still being preached in India! Our partner, Ghuna Kumar, who founded Gospel Friends in the early 1990's, has baptized more than 75,000 precious souls and now oversees more than 1000 churches, 2 orphanage campuses, a Bible college, sewing school, nursing school, elementary and secondary schools, and many local medical clinics and other community development projects.

Each spring, on the Living Hope Campus in Mount Zion, Tamil Nadu, approximately 5000 children and young people gather for Vacation bible School, the largest in India, perhaps in the world. Countless women and children have been rescued from destitution and restored to dignity and renewed hope through the vast network of compassionate Christians who are a part of Gospel Friends. It is our privilege to serve as one of several channels for financial support of this great ministry.



Pray for Ghuna and Jaya Kumar, their son Joel and his wife Jenitha, and the hundreds of pastors, faculty, and staff who work tirelessly, with deep love and compassionate service, to see that India's precious people come to know the God who loved them enough to die.

Never forget that you share the great reward for all of these souls. God sees your generous, sacrificial gifts, and each one of these folks will greet you someday in glory to say, “Thank you for giving to the Lord. I am a life that was saved.”

Blessings and love,

Lee Ann Williamson