

The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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Ken & Joan Jensen
Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

As 2016 disembarked at the port of history, 2017 weighed anchor and set sail onto the vast ocean of the future. It is always best if the cargo of one year does not need to be transferred to the subsequent year, allowing for a lighter load to begin a fresh journey. With 2016 ended, it seems that my new barque is filled to the gunnel with last year's unfinished tasks. Looking to the horizon, there are numerous islands of welcome opportunity, but also visible are several rocky shoals to be navigated. Thankfully my office crew of Joan, Kami, and Jeff are adept sailors. They know the shortcomings of their captain and compensate for his deficits. And, of course, our Lord and Commander oversees us all, and directs our path even on stormy seas. May He grant you "fair winds and following seas" in this New Year, and comfort and protect you in the inevitable squalls ahead.

As is obvious from a quick glance through these few pages, there is not an article on the 3+ week trip that Joan and I took to **China and Cambodia**. I knew ahead of time that I wanted Jeff Davis's visit to India to take up the columns not covered by "Along the Way" in the December and January newsletters. For the February Newsletter either **Joan or I** will submit a report of our adventures from November 21 to December 14, visiting our five EMU missionary families in Cambodia and one in Beijing. In capsule form (many of which I took on this trip!), Joan had one of the best mission trips of her life, and I had
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"I HAVE DECIDED TO FOLLOW JESUS"

by Jeff Davis, assistant to the director, EMU Home Office in Taylors, SC

In the last newsletter, I told about my recent trip to India, November 5-20. I, along with five other Americans, had been invited by EMU missionary, Billy J., to participate in the first annual Good News 360 Conference, held at the Ashirwad Global Learning Centre, a beautiful 3-acre campus located on the outskirts of Hyderabad, India's fourth largest city. This three-day conference was a great success, with God blessing those attending the conference. There were 570 people in attendance who heard messages on the themes of Preaching, Praying, Equipping, and Servant Leadership.

One of the joys of the conference was listening to the nationals sing with such passion and emotion. I asked if they knew any English songs. One song that they knew well was, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," which they sang for us.

The story behind this uniquely Indian hymn is not so much a tale of conversion as it is a tale of total commitment. It took place in Northeastern India, in the region of Assam. In the 1850's, a great revival took place in Wales. As a result, missionaries were sent out all over the world, with many focusing on Northern India. They were joined by missionaries from the United States, England, and Australia. A missionary movement began which was primarily led by Indian nationals themselves. The area of Northern India was a particularly rough area that was entrenched in Hinduism and the caste system, and was the home of tribes of violent headhunters. In the late 1800's, a missionary who had labored for many years and faced difficult persecution, finally witnessed his first converts come to know Christ. The townspeople were angry at the professed faith and baptism of the father, mother, and two children. The leaders of the village determined to make an example out of the father. He was arrested and shoved into the public square where an angry mob had gathered. He was ordered to renounce his faith in Christ or his wife and children would be killed. What could he say? The only thing that came to his mind was the words to a song that he had composed when he was first saved. He sang, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no

turning back, no turning back." The man watched as his children were shot with arrows. He was given another chance. This time the arrows were pointed at his wife. He continued to sing, "Though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back." His wife also was executed with arrows. The arrows were then turned upon the man. He was given one more chance to turn from Christ. Instead, he sang, "The cross before me, the world behind me, no turning back, no turning back." Along with his family, he was martyred for his faith. The story does not end there because the events of that day planted a gospel seed in the heart of the village chief. Over time, that seed grew. Eventually, he, too, was born again, and the gospel began to flourish, not only in that town but all throughout the region of Assam. If you look in your hymnal, you will notice that the tune to the song, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," is called Assam. It is a song about following Jesus, even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Before I left for India, I tried to understand as much as I could about the history, the religion, and the culture of this dark country. India, with 1.32 billion people, is second in world population, behind China which has 1.38 billion. India is projected to have the largest

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This was Jeff's common transportation around Hyderabad, as it was for all the other American visitors to the conference. (l-r) Mike Lapierre, Jeff Davis, and brothers Paul & Daniel Funchess

ALONG THE WAY...

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one of my worst! Much, though not all, of my time was spent in bed trying to get over a cold or some other deadly disease. Even our son, **Joshua**, who had just had dengue fever, fared better than me. Joan interacted much more with our missionaries than I did, so she would be best suited to journal the journey for you. As far as visiting with all of our missionaries and interviewing them to some extent, it was a successful sojourn.

One day after we arrived home, **Josh and Amy Jensen** landed in New York City with their four lovely children for a short furlough that ended January 6. The day after landing in NYC, they travelled to Indiana where Amy was in the wedding of one of her best friends. They then drove to our house to spend five pre-Christmas days with us. A morning and evening drop-in for them allowed them to visit with many of their friends in the Greenville area. And there were a lot of Sutter, Jensen, Mickler, and Martin family visits, too. The Jensens flew back to York, PA, on Christmas Eve to spend Christmas with Amy's family. Then on the last day of 2016, the main reason the Jensens took this furlough took place: the wedding of **Emily Sutter** (Amy's younger sister) and **Daniel Miller**. It was fun to have the four Jensen grandkids here so soon after we were with them in Cambodia. They knew us instantly, so we could start having fun right away!

Another Cambodia missionary who showed up in Greenville for a short visit was **Brooke Illsley**, who helps the **Farmers** with their eight children in Stung Treng, Cambodia. We knew Brooke was coming, but it was kept from her parents. There is a great Facebook video of when Brooke walked into the room where her mom and dad were. Brooke returned to Stung Treng at the beginning of January. She is an invaluable part of the Farmer family.

The Steels ended their two-month furlough in the Greenville, SC, area on December 8. Besides the class that John Mark took at BJU, the Steels took two trips to Florida to be with Deborah's father and step-mother. Before we left for China/Cambodia, the Steels spent several hours at our house. Back in Uruguay, they are extremely busy with Camp Emmanuel, where **John Mark** is the speaker in January. He and **Deborah** are also preparing for the classes they will teach at FEBU beginning March 6.

Matias, Kristine, and their three children arrived in Myrtle Beach, SC, on December 20 for a one-and-a-half-month furlough and to spend some time with Kristine's parents. But the main catalyst for the timing of this visit was the wedding of Kristine's sister, **Rachel**. The wedding was held on December 29 in Myrtle Beach, where **Stan and Miriam McCune** (their

parents) reside. **Matias** was able to line up twelve services with supporting churches to be visited in one month and a day! We will not see them until they are in the Greenville area in early February. They return to Uruguay on February 7. Then **Matias** will have a mountain of work to do to get ready for the opening of another school year for FEBU. Pray that many of the current students will continue their studies and that a good group of Freshmen will sign up to begin taking classes at the Bible college. If you would like to contribute towards purchasing more books for the college library, please let us know.

Kristine Espinel and **Becky Hancock** will each be adding a new member to the EMU family in 2017.

Every four years **the Tom Chapman family** has a reunion at the Anchorage conference grounds in eastern North Carolina. This was one of those fourth years. So, the Chapmans from all over the Western Hemisphere converged on the Anchorage for Christmas. **Tom and Connie** are taking a four-month furlough to visit supporters and family. We are scheduled to see them in March after we get back from Uruguay. **Tim, Cheryl, and their three children** came for breakfast on December 22. It was



This is the growing congregation of the church Tim Chapman has started in downtown Lima, Peru

a blessing to hear how the new church in central Lima, Peru, is growing. They will be moving out of their first "church building" to an even larger meeting place at a very good rental price. There is a wonderful, dedicated team of Christians helping to plant this church. The family returns to Lima on January 16.

One other EMU travel group in January is the **Crowley family**. **JD and Kim** will be the guest speakers for a conference for missionaries with another organization. The conference begins in the last week of January and is being held on the island of Cyprus. Their time in Cyprus ranges from January 30 to February 4.

The Davises have had services in several churches

since Jeff's return from India in November. And he is currently getting his messages ready for speaking at EMU's Camp Emmanuel in Uruguay in February and March. He has five messages for the **Family Camp** beginning February 20, and then he teaches nine times at the **Workers' Conference** starting February 27. This year Jeff and I will be accompanied by our wives and the youngest Davis daughter, **Hannah**. We have already purchased the tickets. I believe it is very important that our people in Uruguay get to know Joanna before Jeff becomes the director of EMU. On January 1, Jeff started his second year of training to be the next director of EMU. Pray that 2017 will be a good year for this training. So far, Jeff has been doing an excellent job of learning and helping.

The summer camps at **Camp Emmanuel** have already started. There was a rental camp group the first week of January. Camp Emmanuel's summer staff training begins on January 11. Then the next three weeks are EMU camps: **Children** starting the 16th; **Jovenes** starting the 23rd; and the **Adolescents** beginning on the 30th. Pray for good health for the campers and workers; for good weather; for spiritually minded counselors; and for attentive campers.

One of our goals this year is to raise at least **\$6,000 of monthly (regular) support** for the monthly expenses of **Camp Emmanuel**. Although the camp is not a church, it is a spiritual service to all of our churches. If you would like to be a part of meeting this important need, please let us know.

The Coles and Bixbys are still looking for a more suitable place to hold services in Sarcelles, France. Each month there are visitors to the services. The core group of helpers remains committed to this church plant. Michael and Tim are also

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The church plant by the Bixbys, Coles, & Colas in Sarcelles, France, is both growing and diverse in ethnic makeup.

“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” *(continued from page 1)*

population in the world within the next fifteen years. Though the caste system was made illegal over sixty years ago, discrimination based on social standing is still very common. Over 800 million people currently live in poverty. Seventy-five percent of the population currently live on less than \$2.50 per day. Approximately one-fourth of all Indians cannot read or write. According to Operation World, India is by far the most unreached country in the world. One-third of the world's unreached people groups are from one country, India. Four hundred million people in India have never heard the name Jesus. Constitutionally, there are 22 official languages in India, but there are over 1,600 other languages with no Scriptures. India is a very religious country. It is the birthplace of four of the world's major religions: Hinduism (the world's oldest religion not associated with the Bible), Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Eighty percent of the country identifies as Hindu.

Following the conference, three of the other Americans traveled back to the States, while three of us along with Billy J. spent the evening enjoying dinner and visiting the Muslim district of Hyderabad. In India, Islam is the religion of 14% of the population, but in Hyderabad 48% are Muslim. Around dusk, we stood in the bustling town square and heard the Muslim call to prayer echoing through the twilight from three different mosques. The next morning, before the other Americans made their way back to the States, we visited the Qutb Shahi Tombs, dating back to the 1500's, and the Golkonda Fort, originally built in the 1100's on a granite hill that stands 480 feet high. After an adventurous and crowded ride on an auto-rickshaw, we enjoyed a delicious Lebanese meal, and then I said good-bye to the other Americans as they headed back to the States. I remained in India for another week.



Jeff, Paul, Daniel, & Mike at one of the Qutb Shahi Tombs

That evening I visited the main campus of the Good News Bible Colleges and Seminaries (GNBCS). Billy J. works with his father Dr. G. Jaya Sekhar, who began the Bible college with 60 students in 1999. In the past seventeen years, they have established 46 Bible colleges throughout all of India. Billy's ministry is called "One Fair Chance." His goal is to see all 1.3 billion Indians have at least one chance

at hearing the gospel. His focus is on training nationals to reach nationals, with a motto of "Each one, teach one, reach ten." It was a joy to fellowship with the students and share the word of God.

On Sunday, I preached at the Hayathnagar Baptist Church. After removing our shoes and entering the auditorium, I was welcomed with the loud and passionate singing of the congregation as they began their worship. It was a joy to partake of the Lord's Supper with these brothers and sisters. Following the service, we enjoyed lunch with three of the pastors.



(l-r) Pastor Rudhra Paul, Jeff, and Billy's father Jaya Sekhar

On Monday, Billy, his dad, their driver, and I began our journey south to visit and minister in several of the Bible colleges. While traveling the 205 miles to the city of Ongole, we saw the effects of the government's most recent attempts at curtailing counterfeiting and tax evasion. On November 5, the announcement was made that all 500 (\$7.60) and 1,000 Rupee currency notes had no cash value. This decision has greatly affected the poor and the middle class. Every time we passed a bank, we saw lines of people down the block trying to get their money. As a result, land value has decreased by 50%. This unannounced move has impacted every financial sector and has adversely affected private educational institutions such as the Bible colleges.

During the all-day drive to Ongole, Billy and I talked about the ministry, while I saw a beautiful side of India. We traveled through rolling hills dotted with cattle and water buffalo. We crossed some large rivers. During our journey, we passed hundreds of Hindu temples. In India, Billy said there are two Hindu temples per street. We traveled through small mountains and rocky terrain, which along with the bright flowering trees reminded me of my recent trip to Phoenix.

Somewhere along the way, I had picked up some kind of germ that gave me a cough that I would not shake until I returned to the States. We arrived in Ongole and met Brother Anil Kumar, the pastor and coordinator of GNBCS in Ongole. We stayed at his house and were shown wonderful hospitality. When I entered the church, I was greeted by a large poster in the back of the room that read, "Heartily Welcome to Pastor Jeff Davis, USA." We had over one hundred people packed into a room that looked like it would hold thirty. Every one of my interpreters did an amazing job, and the Lord used the preaching of His Word to challenge and encourage these believers. After each evening service throughout the week, I enjoyed a meal with the Pastor and his family

before heading back to the hotel.

The next day, I learned a lot about Baptist history in Southern India. Billy has a tremendous heritage on both sides of his family. His great-grandfather was one of the founders of the Baptist church in Ongole. We visited the Jewett Memorial Prayer Hill and Jewett Memorial Baptist Church where approximately 6,000 people worship each Sunday. Missionary efforts in that area date back to 1840 with the ministries of American Baptist missionaries. The first believer was baptized in 1841, and a church began in 1844. It was a difficult mission field which yielded very little fruit. In 1862, Lyman Jewett was told that the American Baptist Missionary Union was going to close the Lone Star Mission in Ongole. Jewett replied, "You can give up the Telugu mission, but I will never abandon the Telugus. I will go back to India and die there." Against the advice of his mission board, Jewett returned, along with John Clough. In 1878, a movement of the Spirit of God, like that at Pentecost, resulted in John Clough baptizing 2,222 in one day. John and his assistants baptized nearly 9,000 members of the Madiga (Dalit) community in and around Ongole in a six-week period.

That evening I had the privilege of recording a 30-minute message on John 3, "You Must Be Born Again," for a local TV station called Satya Vakam, which broadcasts to 300,000 people. I again preached for the GNBCS group with a larger group attending. At the end of my message, a 12-year-old boy wanted to share a testimony of how God is calling him into the ministry. Following our meal, I spent some time encouraging the young man.

The next morning, we set out on a five-hour drive to Tirupati. (By then my back and stomach muscles were aching from all of the coughing, but God was giving grace.) Each time I preached, the Lord led me to a different text that ended up being what the leaders needed to support their efforts in their schools. We stopped near the coast of the Bay of Bengal and visited the Ramapadnam Baptist Theological Seminary. The school was established in the 19th Century with a motto, "Preach Christ Crucified." Sadly, the school closed in 2011. We drove about a mile to the coast and looked out over the water. As I looked at the nearby lighthouse, I could not help but think how this country needs the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We drove through another third-world area and saw little villages dotted with Hindu temples, cows wandering the streets, women carrying water jars on their heads, and ditches that served as sewers.

We drove another hour or so towards our destination but stopped for lunch at a rest stop. We met up with a couple of men, one of whom was Asha Meenan, a GNBCS coordinator that I recognized from the conference the week before. After lunch, we made our way to Tirupati, a city of approximately 460,000 people. It is known as the "Spiritual Capital"

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of the State of Andhra Pradesh, because of the many Hindu temples, particularly the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple. After checking into our hotel, we left for the New Cornerstone Prayer House and met with pastor and GNBCS coordinator Rudhra Paul. Like the nights before, the room was packed, and the music was loud. It was a joy to preach on 2 Timothy 1 and encourage these believers to not be ashamed of Christ and to share in suffering for Him. After the meal that night with the pastor and his family, we stood outside the meeting house. It was dark as we stood on the hill, but we could see the outline of a nearby mountain. I mentioned that it looked like there could be tigers up there. The pastor told us that tigers have been known to come down to the village out of the mountain. They also have had pythons that have eaten the dogs in the area.

The next day we visited the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, constructed in 300 AD. It is known as the richest temple in the world. It is also the most-visited holy site in the world with a daily 50,000-100,000 pilgrims who visit. During special occasions and festivals, as many as 500,000 will attend in a day. It is also called the Temple of Seven Hills.

That evening we drove about an hour away to Puttar. The GNBCS coordinator, John Milton, wanted me to preach the message that I had begun the conference with the week before on the subject of servant leadership. Again, the house was packed, and we enjoyed a sweet time of fellowship in a very hot room. Afterward, I enjoyed a meal with the pastor and his family. A large group hung around and asked questions about the message earlier. That evening, I was strongly feeling the effects of my cold and two weeks of preaching.

On Friday morning, we met one of

the pastors in the area for breakfast with his family. He then wanted to show us his church and school. He was going to leave while we went to the New Corner Stone Prayer Temple but felt led of the Lord to stay. I preached that morning to our smallest group, but God led me to Acts 17 and Paul’s ministry at Mars Hill. Athens was a city covered in idols, and God used the parallels of that text to challenge the heart of the two preachers present and the people who had gathered on that Friday morning. Before we left, there were tears all around. I was ready to get home and see my family, but I didn’t want to leave. God had shown me a group of people who truly were willing to follow Jesus, whatever the cost.

Billy and I took a flight back to Hyderabad that cost us only \$59 each. We saw it as good stewardship, taking a one-hour flight versus a ten-hour drive. We were able to tie up loose ends before I left the next day to fly back to the States. Please believe me that there was no way I could describe for you in these two articles everything that God taught me during my two weeks in India. If nothing else, remember with me that God’s light is shining in the darkest corners of our world. Believers have determined with that unknown author from the region of Assam, “I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.”

(For the original, unedited article by Jeff, please go to <http://pastorjeffdavis.com/blog/>.) ✚



*The New Cornerstone Prayer House congregation.
Jeff is the white guy in the center.*

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getting plenty of preaching/teaching time. One very important prayer request is that the Coles will soon find a new place to live that meets their needs. The current house they are renting is very humid and is causing many respiratory problems in the family. The way most of the houses in France are built, it is almost impossible to get rid of indoor humidity once it starts to set in.

As we enter this New Year, we should all have the same primary resolution that we had last year and the year before, etc.: to glorify our Lord and make Him known in our homes, neighborhoods, and around the world. It is a blessing to partner with you to help fulfill the latter of those. ✚



*Jack & Barbara Buttram in May 2016.
Jack became an EMU Board member in 1982 but has not been an active member for the past 3 years due to health problems.
Jack passed away on January 1, 2017.
He was a dear friend of our family & EMU.*

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