

## Punjab Mission

Trinity United Reformed Church of Walnut Creek, California gave me, Rev. Joghinda Gangar, permission to conduct my third missionary journey to Punjab, India in March, 2006. A number of United Reformed Churches in Canada and USA provided prayer and financial support, as they have done for the previous two missionary journeys in 2004 and 2005. It was an honor and a delight to be able to return and encourage the brethren as well as to build them up and help them with issues that confront them.

## Pastoral Needs

The church of about 55 people has been served by a minister who was Pentecostal. On my previous trip, I made my reservations known to the church as well as to my aunt, since the church meets in her house and she pays the salary of the minister. We were well aware that the situation was not ideal, but in light of the need for a preacher throughout the year, especially when we are not there, he was kept on. Sad to say, the minister passed away last year. He was only in his early fifties. This left the church in need of pulpit supply. I was in contact with my aunt encouraging her to take her time and to find a minister that would be conservative and more of a pastor. I was pleased to meet the new minister on this trip. He is a conservative evangelical. He expounds the Word of God. He not only preaches the gospel to evangelize, but also to build up the believers. He is mindful of the need for leadership and is active in training up young men. I am thankful to the Lord that He has provided such a minister. He does have a smaller church in a village a few kilometers away. If we find a pastor, he is more than willing to step aside, but in the meantime he has committed himself to taking care of the church.

## Worship Matters

The manner of worship in the church has gone through a radical change with the change in ministers. Before it was mostly singing with an emphasis on healing. It was not the case when I was there, but in our absence the worship was more Pentecostal in nature. Now the worship was more orderly and reverent. I had the opportunity to talk with the brethren and hear their concerns. I met with my aunt and the new minister to address various concerns. The new minister does not use instruments in his church and hence did not use them in our church. We asked him why this was the case. He pointed out that this was his custom and that he did not want anything distracting him in his worship of God. I pointed out that music was used throughout the OT. He did not have a response.

Another issue was “line singing.” This entails someone singing a line of a hymn followed by the congregation repeating the line. The minister was not comfortable with this practice. I pointed out to him that about 75% of the brethren could not read. If they were expected to sing from hymnbooks, then they would sit with mouths closed. Line singing was not a choice of preference, but a choice of necessity. He then recognized the need for “lining.”

The final issue that was addressed was the frequency of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. For a moment, I thought I was still in the USA! I asked what his

reasoning was. I did not feel that it this was an issue that I wanted force one way or the other. If the minister and the church were happy to celebrate it each week, then so be it.

I tried to address the issues raised as agreeably for both sides as I could. The Sunday service was at 11:00 a.m. The minister was regularly arriving at 11:15 a.m. since he had to conduct a service at his own village. I proposed that the church begin its service at 10:30 a.m. and that it be led by a man who essentially serves as an elder. In this way the congregation could sing with musical accompaniment (a drum). This was acceptable to all. It was agreed that the hymns could be sung by lining. I was happy that these issues could be amicably resolved. I guess growing pains are universal.

I met with the elder and instructed him in regard to liturgy. I introduced him to the various elements of worship. I helped him prepare six orders of worship that he could use. The three Sundays that I was there he did very well. The brethren were happy with the order of worship and appreciated it very much.

### Teaching Matters

I was glad to be able to take copies of the Heidelberg Catechism in Punjabi. The Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto through Rev. Tony Zekveld had asked a minister in Punjab to translate the Heidelberg Catechism into Punjabi. I was able to take a number of copies for the church. I had began teaching the Catechism last year, but this time I was able to give them copies of it. They were thrilled to be able to read it themselves. They promised that they would make every effort to study it before I came back so that they could ask me any questions that they might have. I am grateful for the work of Rev. Tony Zekveld, especially in making available copies of the Heidelberg Catechism in Punjabi.

### Evangelical Matters

In the previous mission trips I conducted tent meetings and preached the gospel. Fruit is not always seen immediately. On this trip I did not conduct such a mass meeting. We did seen seven people, however, make a profession of faith. They will be disciplined by the minister and prepared for baptism in the near future. Although these people had heard the gospel previously, and some had even attended the church, they were not members and had not been baptized. They all expressed a desire to profess faith and be baptized. Some of the people were relatives of my aunt. My uncle was one of them that professed faith. I had spoken to him on my last visit and discussed with him his religion. He did not show any sign of changing his mind. I was glad to see that he had forsaken his religion and embraced Christ. May the Lord preserve each one of these believers. I am glad that the church is there and has a good minister to nurture them. Even while I was there, the minister made a special trip to visit some of these converts in their own village.

I met with one young man that kept me talking until 3:00 a.m. one night. He painfully recounted events in his life that filled him with bewilderment and sadness. He was confused over the injustices that he had suffered. He confessed that inwardly he was very sad. I was able to share with him the gospel and assure him that Christ was able to bring peace and joy into his life. I shared with him that the blessings of salvation are so precious that any amount of trials and persecution cannot rob us of their joy. I told him

that this was not some theory of mine, but I had seen it with my own eyes in my ministry. I have seen believers lose children, husbands, wives, and suffer terrible illness and yet still have the joy of salvation. I pointed out to him that the Lord Jesus calls all those that are weary and heavy-laden so that He may grant them rest and an easy and light yoke. I pray that the Lord will bring him to repentance and faith.

Though I did not conduct any tent style meetings, I did preach in the church and hold evangelistic meetings in two homes of church members. About 40 people attended each meeting. The meetings were conducted in two separate villages. I pray that in time a church can be planted in each of these villages.

### Leadership Matters

On my last trip I met with four young men and led Bible studies and taught the Heidelberg Catechism. I felt they had leadership qualities in them. I was glad to see that these young men were regularly attending Bible studies on Saturday nights with the minister. When the previous minister had a church in his own house and village, it was openly Pentecostal. When he died, his son took over. Some tried to have the members of our church go to their church. These young men were pressured to go to the Pentecostal church. These youth chose to remain in our church, even though it was small in number. They valued the preaching of the gospel and Bible study. I am glad they see through the hype of Pentecostalism and desire to grow in knowledge and love for the Lord. They were so glad to see me again, and I was glad to see them going on in the Lord. I pray that the Lord will use them in the future as leaders of His church.

I was encouraged by the man that serves as an elder. I met with him and his family most evenings. We engaged in Bible study as well as discussed questions that they had. I was pleased to see evidence of growth in knowledge and wisdom. I was glad to see that his family was also going on with the Lord. He is about sixty years old and is respected by the congregation. I am thankful that the Lord has raised him up for the church. May the Lord grant him wisdom to lead and shepherd the flock.

### Ecumenical Matters

I was able to meet with about three ministers in the area. I am thankful that God is gathering His people in many villages. I met with the minister that translated the Heidelberg Catechism into Punjabi. I had met with him on the previous trips. He shared with me that he had faced some persecution. He had been physically attacked. A woman with some men had come to his house and assaulted him because he was converting people. He suffered some bruises, but was rescued by others that came to his aid. This shows that there are some dangers of persecution with which to contend. The new minister shared with me that he goes into villages to evangelize, but he makes sure that he goes with believers from the village because if he went as a total stranger, he might be attacked. I met with another minister who shared with me that resistance was evident and that persecution was just below the surface.

I discussed with one minister (who is a Reformed Baptist) how I might be able to help him. He shared with me that he had conducted a sort of conference for leaders and about 120 people turned up. He asked if I would be willing to come and help by

speaking. I assured him that I would be most happy to assist. I shared with him that part of my vision was to help with theological education and training. I intend to keep in contact with him and see how the Lord leads. There is a great need for training and teaching. It seems that the Pentecostal and Charismatic people tend to beat the Reformed people to the mission field! Unfortunately, they create a lot of problems for new believers. I have had to deal with a lot of issues in our church. I know that such problems exist on a much wider scale. If we could find a way to educate and train leaders including those that are Pentecostal and Charismatic, the churches would be greatly helped. I pray that something may come of this plan to hold a yearly conference.

### Gratitude Matters

A great big thank you to Trinity URC for granting me time to go to India. I thank those churches that have contributed financially towards this mission. I am thankful to the Lord that He has granted me the opportunity to return to my birthplace and share the gospel. I am thankful that the Lord enabled me to keep up my mother tongue so that I can preach in Punjabi. It would be impossible if I could not speak the language. I am thankful that the Lord has moved my aunt to have a great burden for the villages of Punjab. She has devoted a lot of time and money to build a house and a church and to support a minister. She does get support from her home church in England, and she has shown great service to the cause of the gospel. She is sixty-five years old! May the Lord grant her health and strength to continue.

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