



Dear Church Family,

As important and significant July 4<sup>th</sup> is to this great country we live in, it is a significant date in our church history. It marks the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ACFI.

'...I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.' Genesis 32:12

God has been moving in mighty ways and I am completely amazed and awed by His love, grace and blessing upon our ACFI family. Our God is a prayer answering God. Several of our members came forward to give praise reports to testify how they have been healed from their ailments. We had a terrific family retreat this year! Bro. Suresh Babu shared from God's word on our theme for this year Jars of clay. Sis Beulah had special sessions with our women and empowered them with real world examples. Many expressed that 3 days spent with their family and in God's Word was a true blessing. It was an excellent team effort and our maiden experience in going out of Austin to a camp site as a church family. Children were grouped age appropriately and they had exciting activities during the course of the retreat. Our worship team led by Deepu enabled us to have an uplifting time of praise and worship. Many participated in the talent time facilitated by Mano and displayed their God given talents. It was a joy to see our children display many talents by singing, saying Bible verses, playing instruments and acting a play. Our children performed Indian dances and you could tell lot of time went into practice. We had ACFI Olympics in the afternoon and all participated in various games. This was an exciting time led by Harry, that brought members of all ages and we played cricket, basketball, volleyball and other games. We ended our 2nd day with a campfire led by Onesi. Our media team Vinoth and Vinod have recorded the entire retreat and they gave us a copy of the retreat. I am very happy to say that we have gotten few invitations from other Indian churches and Shalini took her students to perform the Indian dance at the Houston Telugu Conference. The fruits of His blessings in various ministries were so obvious in all realms. Our PremMilan ministry led by Onesi continues to bring many non Christian students and it is a great way to reach UT students. We had very good participation on Ladies and Men' Sunday. Both Suja and Harry are leading the respective ministries and have exciting topics that applies to our everyday lives. Ladies and Men's Bible study meets on 3rd Fridays every month. Children's ministry is led by Angel and it has been very exciting to see our children taking tests and getting awards after an exciting and engaged quarter. During summer our youth have signed up for helping with the children's ministry to give all the children's ministry leaders a well deserved break! Music ministry continues to grow under the leadership of Deepu and we are excited to see many of our youth taken on stage. John has been leading the prayer ministry; I encourage you to attend the all night prayer and home fellowship meetings. This is a time where you can speak freely and question "Why?" about almost anything on topics that have been unclear to you. All conversations are based on keeping Bible as the focal point.



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Patrick, Ebeny and kids have decided to move back to India. God was with them throughout the process of moving back to India. Ramki, Vicky and kids are planning to move to India this summer. As some old-timers are moving back to India, God has been bringing several new families to ACFI. I welcome all new members and we are excited to have you join part of our family. When we are in His presence, we share in His happiness (Matt. 25:23), and when we participate in His joy as a collective family of believers, the connection with God and with each other is powerful.

I am happy to announce that Careth Jefferson is the new addition to the board. We have some new ministries that we are embarking on and we need your prayers and participation. Naga is leading a team of excited volunteers to conduct our first Vacation Bible School for kids of all ages. We are planning to start a benevolence ministry. Please keep these in your prayers and if you interested in being a part of these ministries please do let me know. We would love to have you help us in expanding His kingdom. We have accepted the invitation to host the next Telugu Conference 2009 in Austin. I am looking forward to see what He has in store for us the remainder of the year. All we need to do is submit to Him.

In Him- Josh David

ACFI ministries

include:

- Prayer
- Outreach
- Children
- Worship
- Ladies
- Men
- Web
- Students
- Music
- South Austin Bible Study

## Outreach Ministry

### RHS Update - Bro. Remo Paul



Since its discovery in 17<sup>th</sup> century electricity has come to become critical part of our lives. It is almost impossible for us to imagine a life in the absence of electricity. Having said that there are still many places in India that suffer from the lack of electricity supply, one such place is Rhabaguda. Rhabaguda is a Koya village 70 Kms south of Malkangiri. Work in Rhabaguda started in November 1999.

The closest electricity pole is 15 Kms away. Due to the terrain and the distance from the main road electricity was something that the village has not experienced. In fact the first time they saw a candle was in the December of 1999 and it was a great feeling for the entire village. We had also taken a generator and set up lights for the Christmas program. The village just loved the idea of being able to celebrate after sunset. We now have Niranjana and his wife and son Prince along with Dilip who live and work in this village. In the 9 years that they have stayed and worked in this village they have accomplished the following

1. Learn the Koya language and speak it fluently
2. Sunday worship in Rhabaguda (people are yet to openly confess their faith. This is because the village headman is yet to agree to it)
3. Oriya Literacy classes in 5 villages
4. Children's ministry in 5 villages
5. Loans to establish petty business
6. Setting up of a village committee for management of water pump for agricultural use
7. Grain bank program with the government (project is now over)
8. Digging of pond
9. Health, dental care and sanitation
10. Translate Oriya songs into Koya (spoken)

All this has been accomplished in the absence of electricity.

The commitment of the current team and the teams that have stayed in this village is definitely laudable. I am happy to report that through the generous donation of friends through India Partners we have been able to get electricity in the house of Niranjana and Dilip through the use of solar energy. A street lamp is also being installed for the use of the villagers. If this installation works fine we hope that someday we will be able to have electricity for the entire village through the use of solar energy.

It has been a couple of months since I returned back to Malkangiri after my two years secondment to India Missions Association. It is great to be back in Malkangiri. RHS is at a very interesting crossroad. We are re-looking at our vision and strategies as we gear up to face the future. The most recent change that we have introduced is the revision of staff allowances. We had to do this for the following reasons, 1. The last time we revised the allowances was 7 years ago

2. With the rising costs most of us were running a constant credit with the local grocer from where each of us brought our provisions.

This means that our monthly needs towards staff payments has jumped to Rs. 1.4 lakhs. We have made this change believing that the Lord who has provided in the past will continue to do so in the future as well. Please do continue to stand with us in prayer and finances.

To meet the financial overheads towards the meeting of staff allowances we plan to build a corpus fund. If you are led of the Lord to contribute towards this you could send your donations with a note specifying that your donation is to be set aside for this corpus. You could send your check/ dd/mo in favour of "Malkangiri Development Project" and post it to the address at the end of this letter. If you require more information or our bank details to make a direct deposit please email me at [remo-paul@gmail.com](mailto:remo-paul@gmail.com).

For more strategic and comprehensive coverage of the Malkangiri area the area has been divided into four regions with the following persons in charge of each region

North East Region - Mrs. Satya Jyoti Dongri

North West Region - Mr. Romesh Chandra Khosla

South Region - Mr. Laban Soren

Central Region - Mr. Remo (till we find someone to take this position)

Each of the persons in charge are surveying their respective areas and evaluating the work done so far. New strategies will be evolved and the old and effective ones will be strengthened in the days to come. Please pray for divine wisdom as we continue on in this journey.

In our preliminary survey we find that there are many pastors/workers from the mainline and independent churches working in many villages/areas. Most of them are not aware of the existence and the work of other brother/ sister in a nearby village. In the long run we hope to have a gathering of all the workers in Malkangiri region and evolve partnerships for effective missions.

We have registered a web address for RHS and now need the finances to design and host the website. We look to God for provision. The estimated total costs are Rs. 25,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand Only).

Dr. Susan (my wife) is slowly setting up the hospital. She is in urgent need of a qualified lab-technician and will appreciate your prayers in finding the Lord ordained person. On Thursdays and Sundays she goes in the medical van to Kalimela and Mundiguda respectively for weekly village clinics. Please pray for wisdom for her as she plans on the future of the St. Luke Temple Hospital. She also conducts a women's Bible Study group every Tuesday at the hospital premises in Malkangiri. At the moment the women staffs of RHS along with a few other women are a part of this Bible Study group.

**The commitment of the current team and the teams that have stayed in this village is definitely laudable.**



Dr. Iris (mom) is travelling in south India keeping busy with promotional work. She has been able to make some new friends of RHS and also connect with some existing friends of RHS. She also got to spend some time with David and Mary, which she enjoyed immensely. Please find a report from her being sent to you as a separate email. Please feel free to write to her at [dririsipaul@gmail.com](mailto:dririsipaul@gmail.com).



RHS is set to see interesting days ahead. We are aware that as we shake the region with the Gospel we will definitely come under the attack of Satan. So whenever you remember us please pray a prayer of protection as we venture out.

On the family front the highlight has been that Adarsh has started to walk and we are very excited about it. On the 10th July 2008 he completes his 1st year. We are planning a small get-together here in Malkangiri and you are definitely most welcome. We are sure that the celebrations may not mean much for him, but it sure means a lot to us as we thank God for His wonderful blessings.

Thank you very much for the continued prayers and support.

Closing with prayers

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***Our Ethos: Reach the Unreached, Reach Completely***

## *Prayer Ministry - Bro. John Ramesh*

What a joy to testify once more the wonder working power of God demonstrated time and again by His miraculous works. Prayer truly has power like no other and it is an avenue seldom used fervently unless pushed to a corner.

*Matthew 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

*Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

*Mark 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.*

Acts 16:25, 26 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. <sup>26</sup>And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosened. On April 21<sup>st</sup> a special prayer was held in Mehran's home for his dad Mr Rasoul Poursmaeli traveling to Iran after many years in the US amid lot of uncertainties to meet his sick mother. Praise God the Lord safely brought him back to the US and gave him a very successful and uneventful trip

Acts 28:8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. April 22<sup>nd</sup> Special prayer was held at Dominic and Manisha's home for their son Daniel who was going thru a life threatening situation with his trachea being constricted. He went thru surgery and praise God for the successful surgery and his healing. April 23<sup>rd</sup> I came down with severe stomach pain and was diagnosed with a kidney stone ACFI prayed and the Lord healed me just in time for the retreat on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

### All Night Prayer

Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that He (Jesus) went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. The first All night prayer for this quarter was held in Patrick and Ebeny's home on April 4<sup>th</sup> This was also the last ACFI prayer meeting held at their home before they fulfilled God's plan of transitioning back to India. We sincerely prayed for their smooth transition and praise God they are settled in India now. May 08 All night prayer was held in our Home, We had a wonderful time of testifying, Praising and worshipping God and submitting our petitions and to Him. June All night prayer was at Urmila aunty's home We specifically prayed for Deepika and Mehran as they were preparing to get united in Holy matrimony on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

### Home Fellowship

*Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

*Acts 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*

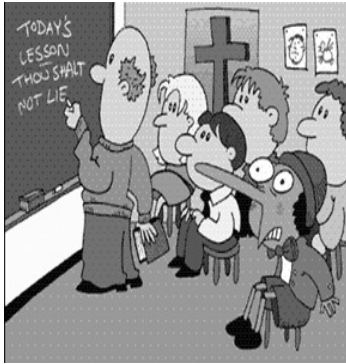
April 2008 Sunitha and Vasu opened their home for the ACFI home fellowship. We discussed the passage from Eph 4:1-7 and learnt we all prisoners of our Lord Jesus Christ and belong to the same body and need to build the body of Christ at any cost. May 2008 It was at Angel and Vinod's home, the passage discussed was Eph 5:1-11. We studied and discussed that we need to emulate Christ as he became an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. June 2008 Kiran and Arun welcomed us all into their home Eph 6:10-19 was discussed and we learnt the our fight is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers of darkness. And we need to put on the full armor of God

Prayer is not only asking and petitioning God, it is communicating with God He is our Father and we are His children, let develop a habit of talking to Him and hearing from Him often and always. Let us make it a life style by which we live. It will take us a long way.

Luke 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

God bless you all

## Children's Ministry - Sis. Angeline Emmanuel



Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD. Ps150:6

ACFI Children's ministry exists to reach out to children with the message of Christ's unconditional love, guiding them to grow into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and nurturing in them a heart to serve.

2007-2008 Sunday School year has brought great change in leadership to Children's Ministry. We praise God, we thank God and we ask God to continue to guide us. The vision of Children's Ministry is to win kids to Christ and grow them spiritually. We reach out to children with the message of Christ's unconditional love, guiding them to grow into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, nurturing in them a heart to serve.

This past school year we have been blessed to have 7 teachers to share their time and talents to Serve, Pray, Love and Teach our precious children ages 2 – 5th grade in Sunday School. What a

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blessing these teachers have been to the children who come to ACFI each week to learn and grow in their faith journey. We THANK YOU. Our school year teachers take a break in the summer.

In ACFI Family Retreat 2008, Sunday school kids participated in several programs and also displayed their talents. The children practiced long and hard for, and I thought was a terrific, fun performance, enjoyed by all! Thanks to Onesi, Shalini & Shirisha & Vicky for the phenomenal leadership on skit & dance programs.

We had a very successful Graduation ceremony before the congregation on June 8th, and the feedback and comments received from the children, teachers, parents and the congregation in whole was very positive. The focus of the day was to highlight the hard work and accomplishments of the children and their teachers as they completed their curriculum.

In July '08 first time ACFI is planning to conduct Vacation Bible School [VBS] in a backyard. The major purpose is outreach and evangelism. By taking VBS away from the church to neighborhood

homes, a congregation is able to reach a greater number of un-churched homes and children.

Heartfelt thanks to Sunday School Teachers Onesi, Shalini, Vicky, Shirisha, Sanjana and Sudha for the successful Sunday School year 07-08. After the summer off, Sunday School continued to be busy again, preparing for the new Sunday School year.

We are very grateful to our Sunday school teachers Ebeny and Vicky for their service. It is with much love and sadness that we say goodbye to their leadership. And now we look ahead to next year and many opportunities we will have to make a difference in the lives of children.

I look forward to the upcoming year and the challenges that lie ahead, and again I want to thank you all for the prayers and support.

## Youth Ministry - Bro. Onesi Gananiab

I praise God that we had two wonderful Prem Milan dinner gatherings at the UT Baptist Student Center in April and May. God is definitely moving among the UT Indian Hindu Students and it's a privilege to serve Him in this area. Since God enabled us to begin this ministry in March, it has blossomed well. We've had new relationships form between students and we've also been able to connect with Hindu Students in a meaningful way!

I'm extremely thankful for all the women of ACFI who have graciously prepared wonderful Indian meals for these dinner gatherings. An interesting progression to see was with final year grad student Padmadevan Chettiar. He's been at every meeting and brought his friend Aditya Saurabh. Aditya ended up bringing his friend Vishvas Vasuki. So definitely word of mouth about these meetings is starting to spread. We've had a good mix of Christian Students (some non-Indian) as well as Hindu students participate in these meetings. Josh Adams, who is a student at UT and a passionate follower of Christ has had great follow-up lunch conversations with the Hindu students that have attended Prem Milan meetings.

Our goal is to connect with these students by simply giving them a taste of what the family of ACFI is all about. We have definitely been united in love (as is the meaning of Prem Milan) and we've been effective in sharing the love of Christ by just interacting with these students. We've had wonderful Ice Breaker games as well as great sharing times that have followed each dinner.

We will not be meeting in June, July, or August due to the summer break for UT Students. Our next meeting will be September 6th for the new school year. However on August 23rd, there will be a "Welcome to Texas" BBQ for new students and we will be participating in that to connect with the freshman students that will be starting at UT this fall.

We also plan for our own version of a Diwali Celebration to attract more Hindu Students for Christ. We are also eagerly looking forward to the 2nd Aradhna concert to happen in UT this November. Thanks so much for all your prayers and encouragement! God has some exciting times ahead this fall. Please continue to pray that this ministry will grow deeper and touch more lives this coming school year for Jesus!

Blessings,  
Onesi



## *Ladies Ministry - Sis. Sujatha David*

*This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:8*

'Be Fruitful' – that was the message title for the Ladies Sunday which was held on May '08. The Ladies Sunday was one of the highlights of the Ladies Ministry in the past quarter.

The topic of 'Serving' was chosen as the theme of the Ladies Sunday. This year we took the approach of having the presentations over the entire month rather than having all of them on one Sunday. Throughout the month of May, we had short presentations by the ladies on the topic of serving. This allowed for greater participation by the ladies.

Some ladies spoke about individuals who exemplified serving the Lord in their life. Others spoke of serving one another within the various relationships and roles like mother-child, friendship. We had special songs by the ladies for the offertory song. We had an art presentation on the ACFI theme for the year, treasure in jars of clay. It was exciting to see the level of participation by the ladies and the enthusiasm with which they prepared & presented. It was a great encouragement to see a number of ladies come forward for the first time to present.

During the Ladies Sunday, the ladies presented regional songs in five languages & led the praise and worship too. We had prelude music by the young women in the church; and how exciting to hear the Scripture Reading read by Esther.

The message was on God's first blessing found in *Gen 1:28a* God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful..." This is also a command; the message looked into how we can fulfill this command and claim the blessing by serving Him.

The **ACFI retreat** was a wonderful time of renewal and refreshing; it was great to get away from the business of our routine to spend time in God's Word and in fellowship with ACFI family.

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 Corinthians 4:7*

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the retreat, the ladies met as a group to spend time in fellowship with one another & with sister Beulah, wife of the speaker Suresh Babu. It was a great time of sharing; we heard from Beulah practical steps on being an encouragement to our husbands, being a prayer warrior for our children and a good friend in Christ for each other in the body of Christ.

We heard encouraging messages on the theme verse; I hope each of us recognizes the 'treasure' that each of us has and trust in the all-surpassing power of God and allow Him to use us to show that power.

We completed our study of the book 'Believing God' by Beth Moore, in the month of May. We discussed the last section 'Believing God to get you to your Gilgal.' This book study challenged us to analyze if we merely 'Believe *in* God' or if we 'Believe God'?

We had a great time of sharing where every one shared their personal testimony or shared an experience when they embarked on something completely believing God & how He delivered them. What great strength we draw from one another as we learn God leads us in our lives when step to do things believing Him and submitting ourselves to His will.

New games conducted by different ladies keep the '**Getting into the Word**' session interesting; we reading the book of 1 Corinthians

We have surprise items like sharing of recipes & the dish like 'bean casserole' & carrot cake.

SUMMER FUN!! During the months of June, July & August, the ladies ministry has a mandate of FUN!

In the month of June, we did a craft making hand-made, self-designed, very individualistic treasure boxes. Though not pre-planned, we had a treasure hunt organized by the elder women. Oh, what great treasures we found - verses of wisdom, promise & teaching from the Bible.

We have other fun things planned for the rest of summer; so plan to come & join the rest of the ladies; in the month of September we will start another topic or book for our Bible Study discussion time.

The '**Sister in Christ**' program has completed its first year! We will be picking our new sister in the month of July. This program is based on Ecclesiastes 4:9. If you are currently not participating, I would highly encourage you to consider this. During the fellowship in June, we had a sharing session on this program & heard what a blessing this has been to many.

In the month of April, we had a baby shower of Martha. John & Martha are blessed with a beautiful daughter, Anya who was born on **April**.

The elder women of the church sang a special song on Mother's day. We are blessed to have so many of our mothers participate with us in ACFI. Thank you for the various roles you ladies are taking on as you serve God in your special way. I appreciate your commitment and fellowship.

What a great treasure God has given each of us! How uniquely He calls each of us to use that treasure for His glory!



# ACFI Annual Family Retreat - Shalini Rajkumar



"...But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD..." Joshua 24:15

**2008 Theme Song:**

*Open me up and fill my cup  
Break me down and mold me up  
The Kingdom needs a worker like me  
To serve Jesus till eternity  
'cause We are Jars of Clay (4)*

*Dust it is from where we come  
Blown away by wind  
Watered down to the ground  
A puddle, No Soul yet found*

**Bridge:**  
*God, Father, Pick me up  
In thy image, shape me up  
'cause We are Jars of Clay (4)*

*Let you Fire engulf me  
Strengthen me with Thy Peace  
Teach me to speak The Truth  
(for) Death has no sting on me*

**Bridge:**  
*God, Father, Pick me up  
In thy image, shape me up  
'cause We are Jars of Clay (4)*

- Deepu Mittra

I take this opportunity to thank the Lord for the Mercy and Grace that he's been showing to the ACFI families. The Lord has blessed all our families in a very special way and with a deep sense of gratitude, the families came together to worship Him, Praise Him and meditate on His words at our annual family retreat held at Sandy Creek Bible camp, Brenham TX from 4/25/2008 to 4/27/2008 with Bro. Suresh Babu and his wife, Sis. Beulah Babu from CA, founder of the Power of Gospel ministries as our guests and speaker. This was the first time the families gathered at an off-site location and spent time together.

The retreat was centered around the theme of the year "Jars of clay" based on 2 Corinthians 4:7,

"...But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us..."

We started on Friday evening with the welcome address and theme introduction by our chairman Josh David. The theme song for the year was composed by our very own Singer, Song writer and musician Deepu Mittra. The ACFI choir led the praise and worship sessions and the congregation lifted their voices to the Lord.

Our guest speaker was Bro. Suresh Babu from CA, founder of the Power of Gospel ministries. Bro. Suresh Babu, like most of us came on an H1B visa to the USA, works in IT field, been a founder member of an Indian Church in the Bay Area and also leads his personal ministry. Most of us our could relate to Bro. Suresh Babu's experiences and this was an added Blessing.

Bro. Suresh spoke on "Jars of clay" from 2 Corinthians 4: 1-10. He emphasized on how God has created each one of us with a purpose and how He has fearfully and wonderfully made us, the earthen vessels into something beautiful and has added value to us to Glorify His kingdom

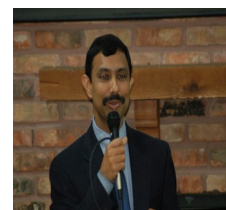
We have to allow the treasure to grow and let Him mould us. We need to remove the pebbles that are in us that prevents Him from molding us to what He wants us to be. We need to enter spiritual battle field that is ahead of us and bring victory to the Lord. We also need to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord and be ready for Him.

Sis. Norma grouped the children together and had special activities like messages, stories, games and crafts centered around the theme.



The members were divided into small groups and there were discussion after every message. There were also opportunities for people to share their testimonies and prayer requests. The ACFI ladies had a session with Sis. Beulah. She shared her experiences with raising God-fearing children and gave spiritual answers to the questions raised by the ACFI ladies.

On the lighter side, we had a session to bring out the talents in our ACFI family, both young and old. Bro.Mano Paul organized the event. The children displayed their talents in singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. The ACFI sunday school boys performed a skit. It was amazing to see how the Lord has Blessed our children with loads of talents. Let His name alone be glorified!!!!



The ACFI men had a cricket match were all men participated so enthusiastically. This was followed by ACFI's 1'st Olympics organized by Bro. Harry with games for every age group. There was a camp fire on Saturday night where the families gathered around the fire and sang songs and glorified the Lord's name.

On the whole, the retreat was a great success. The families not only enjoyed the family time and stay outside, but also the spiritual food that they got from Bro. Suresh Babu. We are all looking forward to the next family retreat!!!

*The ACFI retreat was an amazing opportunity for me to connect with members of the ACFI family whom I normally would not get a chance to share with. The fellowship truly changed and broadened my perspective of a family. I enjoyed the relaxing and engaging activities that we could participate in during the retreat the most. --- Sanjana Ponnusamy*

*The retreat for 2008 was a different experience altogether. It was refreshing, exciting and rejuvenating. Extra ordinary location provided for not only the refreshing of the spiritual aspect but also the mental & physical aspect as well. Would do it again! --- Deepu Mittra*

*We would like to thank the ACFI family for making the retreat a very blessed one, it was a time we will always cherish for all things, from the message to the venue and the games and all the fun we had as a family, we (Danita, Deepa and myself) we couldn't have asked for more in this foreign land. We are blessed and grateful to be part of this family. - ---Fenil Rajkumar*

## My Journey - Esther Boyalapalli

I thank the Lord for this journey and for the things that I have gone through throughout all of this. I thank God for His great mercy and grace in my life; I literally would not be alive today and would not be able to share the testimony of His faithfulness. I am also so thankful for my family and for every person who has earnestly prayed for me. Without them, there is no way that I would have made it this far, and their constant prayers and encouragement are what have sustained me.

When I first began this journey, I had NO idea that it would entail this much. No doubt it has been the hardest thing I have ever gone through, but I didn't know that it would involve this much. I remember the day I was diagnosed with brain cancer – I was just shocked that it could happen to me, and I was in disbelief that the tumor was actually there. But little did I know that that was just the beginning of this great journey.

After we found out, the very first thing my parents did was pray with all of us, and then the calls began. In a matter of 2 days, it truly was amazing how God united the ACFI family together with prayer and fasting. It was remarkable how everyone took the time and drove the long distance to visit and pray for me before my surgery.

The day I had gone into my surgery, it was so comforting to know that people were supporting me and lifting me up in prayer the entire time. When my surgery was finally finished 7 or so hours later, I directly went into ICU to recover. However, I really don't remember anything directly afterwards including the ICU and the hospital room – just parts of the rehabilitation room. Once I was finally released from hospital care after more than a month, I came back home permanently. Afterwards, I had gone in for radiation everyday for 7 straight weeks, and chemotherapy once a week. Radiation was a time when I was severely depressed – I was depressed with the fact that I had cancer at such a young age, and it didn't help that everyone in the radiation room was so much older than me. I was also depressed because I felt like there was no hope for me. It just didn't seem fair to me that a girl my age, with so much ahead of me, was suffering with a brain tumor.

But as always, God is so gracious. He saw me through those difficult times, and brought me out of it. Once again, however, I had only accomplished one of the many hurdles in my journey. My chemotherapy had intensified to 4 treatments a week, every 3 weeks, for 8 months, and though the days there were *very* long and tiring, I survived and am completely done with all of the treatments. When visiting with the doctor, he said that I am now cancer-free and everything looks clear!

Now, I am involved in physical therapy twice a week. Because chemotherapy targets all cells, whether good or bad, it has caused damage to all the nerves in my legs, which in turn has made simple tasks like walking or sitting on the floor very difficult. Even through all of this, my physical therapist has said that I am making great strides not only to improve my walking, but in regaining all the muscle lost in my arms and legs. He even said that I would be ready by November to run marathons!

All in all, this has been a big journey. Though there have been some pretty rough, terrible times through this, I wouldn't be the person I am today without it. Sure chemotherapy has stripped me of all my hair, my strength, and my ability to walk, but I have learned what it means to completely humble myself. When you don't have anything left on the outside, you quickly learn that all those things don't matter – that it's the heart that truly matters... what you once believed to be important just isn't anymore. I've especially learned what is worth fighting for, and the things that just don't matter at the end of the day. Finally, I have learned that though trials may come my way, the only person I can really count on is God. Different obstacles and difficulties occur in life that no one person can assume, except for God alone.

With all that said, I would like to encourage each of you that nothing is too big for our God. He knows us through and through, but He is waiting for us to really trust in Him to see us in any difficulty we are facing, whatever it may be. God is our creator, and because He knows everything about us, and He knows what is best for us. I would like to share my favorite verse from Jeremiah 29:11 which says, **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

I would like to thank each of you for genuinely caring for our family, for the kindness you have displayed, and for displaying God's love throughout all of this. Words cannot truly express the thankfulness I feel for each of you in our lives. I am very grateful and humbled by your love, and I thank God for you.

## Fond Memories - Balasingh Samuel

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear. Psalm 46:1

My brother Gnanasingh, 54 years is the eldest of 6. He left behind his Wife and a Son. He is a wonderful husband and a loving father, who always bound by his cheerfulness. He lived his life in full by helping others and loving children around him.

*He is in a better place right now*

*than he's ever been before;*

*All pain is gone; he's now at hands of his creator our holy God;*

*Nothing troubles him anymore.*

*It's we who feel the burden of*

*our sadness and our grief;*

*We know we'll see his cherished face again*

*at the end of each life's road;*





## *My Christian Ancestors - A bird's eye view of Church History by Vinoth Rajkumar*

This series is written in the interest of the history of our religious ancestors, and to understand what went on after Christ, the spread of Christianity and the formation of churches. We do hope this will open some opportunities of study and spark some interest in you all. In the last edition we saw the early church beginnings. In this edition we will look at the persecutions against the church and its members.

### **The Persecutions**

In the New Testament, particularly Acts, the Epistles and the Gospels we recognize that the persecution that came to the early Christians came first from the Jews. Especially in Acts, the persecutors are the Jews and sometimes pagans, and Rome is often the protector of the Christian church. Paul appeals to Caesar in order to have a fair trial. But as we move to Revelation, from the decade of the 60s AD in Acts to the decade of the 90s AD in Revelation, things have changed dramatically. Rome is no longer the protector of the church but rather the persecutor.

The Roman persecution lasted from the 60s of the first century to the 320s. So there were about two and-a-half centuries of persecution. The Roman persecution began in the time of Nero in the 60s AD. The Roman historian Tacitus left us that vivid description of the awful persecution of the Christians under Nero: "Covered with skins of beasts Christians were torn by dogs and perished. Or they were nailed to crosses or burned by flames to serve as nightly illuminations in Nero's gardens." This is from Tacitus who was not necessarily sympathetic to the Christians; he was simply describing what happened. From that first persecution in the 60s, which claimed almost certainly the lives of Peter and Paul.

In the two-and-a-half century period, there are two points that need to be noted. One is this: these persecutions were sporadic. We are not talking about two-and-a-half centuries of intense, consistent, persistent persecution. Actually there were two periods of long peace in the third century interrupted by persecution in the mid-third century. For much of this period Christians were not being persecuted. We should not think of this as a consistent period of extreme persecution. Persecution could break out at almost any time and in almost any place, but many Christians lived their lives in relative peace during these first centuries of the Christian church. The other point to emphasize is this: until the mid-third century this was not systematic, empire-wide persecution. Until the middle of the third century persecution tended to be localized. It might happen in North Africa, it could happen in Lyon, it could break out in Asia Minor, and it did from time to time strike Christian people in all those places. But until the first empire-wide, systematic persecution under Decius in 250 AD, there was no concerted effort to wipe out the Christian church that stretched across the empire. There are many wonderful accounts of Christians who suffered, who were persecuted, and who were faithful. There were also many Christians who were not faithful. Not every Christian was able to stand like Polycarp and say, "Yes, I serve the Lord and I will serve Him in my death as I have served Him in my life." There were many who failed. But there were many who were faithful.

There is the amazing story of Perpetua, a 22-year-old young woman, mother of an infant child. She wrote her diary while in prison in Carthage, North Africa. The diary of Perpetua is probably the first writing we have from a Christian woman. That is a wonderful account of courage and faith in the midst of awful tension and eventual death. There is also the famous story of Polycarp, the old bishop who died in Smyrna, Asia. One of the stories from this part of church history is the account of the martyrdom of the 40 martyrs of Sebaste, Asia. These martyrs were from the Roman province of Cappadocia. The martyrdom of these 40 soldiers happened in the year 320 AD, which is after persecution had ceased in the western part of the empire because it is after the date of the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, but persecution continued in the East for some years.

### **Why were the Christians persecuted?**

Many reasons were given.

There were many charges brought against the Christians at that time, some of which could be easily refuted. Those charges included cannibalism. Christians did speak in their worship about eating Jesus' body and drinking Jesus' blood. So you can see how rumors might spread that cannibalism was being practiced in these secret meetings often held before dawn in out-of-the-way places. When Pliny was a governor in Bithynia, Asia he did not quite know how to handle the Christians in his province. He wrote to Emperor Trajan to get some suggestions, and he tried to describe the Christians as he saw them. He said, "They eat only ordinary and harmless kinds of food." Thus we see that this Roman governor was careful enough to do research and discover that the charge of cannibalism was grossly unfair and untrue.

Christians were also charged with disruption of business. Perhaps in some way they could be charged with that. In Acts chapter 19 Paul's preaching certainly disrupts the business of those engaged in the worship of Artemis or Diana. Also, as people became Christians they did not buy the sacrificial items or other items that were used in false worship. Another charge brought against them was "gross immorality, including incest." This also came from unfounded rumors. Christians call one another "brother" and "sister." They had the habit of greeting one another with a "holy kiss." And the love Christians had for one another was transposed in the Roman mind to sexual extravagance and even incest. Those charges were fairly easily answered.

Christians were also charged with being anti-family. Christians like the young woman Perpetua were willing to say, "We must forsake father and mother and husbands and wives and take up our cross and follow Christ."

Christians were also charged with poverty. The Christian apologists like Minucius Felix said, "That many of us are poor is not our disgrace but our glory."

Then there was a strange charge: atheism. Christians were considered atheists because they did not worship all the gods. They did worship one God, but He is invisible and so did not count.

Another charge against the Christians was novelty. This was a new religion. This is a strange charge since all sorts of new religions were pouring into the Roman Empire from the East, not only Christianity but the mystery religions as well.

And then the charge was also often made that the Christians were not patriotic. Christians, it is true, did not participate in some of the city festivals because immorality was practiced in connection with those festivals, and emperor worship was part of the city duty in those festivals. Therefore Christians would absent themselves from the festivals, from the celebrations. And consequently they were charged with lack of patriotism. Their behavior was considered anti-social, staying in their homes and not associating with other people. When people are different and separate themselves somewhat, others will charge them with hatred of the human race.

The Jews were a nation, but the Christians were everywhere. They came from all nations, and they were not exempt. The Christians' response to this was, "We cannot worship the emperor. We worship God alone. To worship the emperor would mean that we were no longer Christians. But we respect the emperor as chosen by our Lord. Caesar is more ours than yours because he is appointed by our God." That was a good answer but it did not satisfy the Romans. It probably infuriated them for the Christians to say, "We do not worship the emperor but he belongs more to us than to you because our God put him on his throne."

Especially later on in this period, but it was possible at any point during this time, people who were Christians suffered simply because they were Christians. They suffered because they bore the name of Christ. And they were prepared for this. In 1 Peter 4:16 it says, "However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name." We read also from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The church was ready for this. Persecution did purify the church. When we come to the time of the end of persecution under Constantine, the church has a new problem: nominalism. This happened because it became popular to be a Christian. But before Constantine it was not popular to be a Christian, and Christians faced very serious threats and even death. And persecution also extended the church. Again Tertullian says it in a very famous quote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." But people have said, that more people have been martyred for Christ in the last 50 years than in the first 250 years of the church's history. That is partly because there are more Christians today. We are all over the world now, and in many places our brothers and sisters in Christ are being persecuted and martyred.

We in the United States and other places of relative safety for Christians should not think that persecution is something that is finished with, something that is not and will not happen again. We know that it is happening now in different places in this world including India. There are about 23 million Christians in India, but they make up only 2.3% of the population. The missionary, Graham Staines, 58, and his two boys, Philip, 10, and Timothy, 6, were attacked on Jan. 22 as they slept in their jeep in a remote village in the state of Orissa. According to witnesses, the vehicle was then set ablaze with the three victims trapped inside as 50 to 100 people chanted slogans. Mr. Staines, the local director of the Evangelical Missionary Society, ran a hospital for leprosy patients. His death came during a string of attacks against Christians and their churches in India. Gladys Staines, wife of Mr. Staines remained in India, declaring forgiveness for the killers and continuing her ministry at the leper colony. This forgiveness strengthens the faith of Christians and keeps the Church expanding in HIS glory.

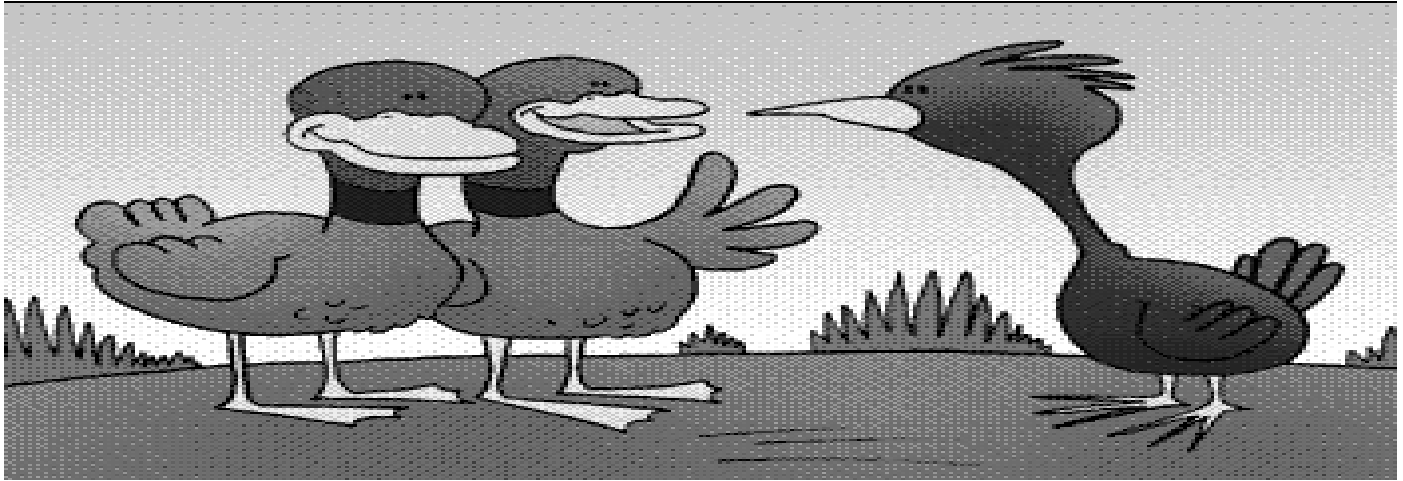


### **Conclusion:**

This episode concludes a look into the persecutions on the church and its followers. All kinds of things could produce a persecution and we should be prepared to face it with HIS help .

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us"(Hebrews 12:1).

In the next episode we will look at some of the early church fathers who grew the church.



## One Min Message - Bro. Mano Paul

### Look at the birds of the air ...

One afternoon when taking a break from work, as I stepped into my backyard, I couldn't help being inundated by the brilliance of the sounds that filled the air. The din of everyday life noises (automobiles on streets, computers buzzing, television commentary etc) were drowned by the sonnets and melody of the birds chirping and singing. I must admit, I did not quite understand what they were singing, suffice it to say, that it was harmony in my ears as my mind started to transcend into the beauty of God's creation. As I strode further into the backyard, I noticed a couple of sparrows on a tree and every step closer to them, got them more and more flustered, dawning in me the realization that there was their nest (home) in the tree they were perched. I could not tell if the nest had their eggs or young. Their singing had rapidly changed and I speculate that their loud vocalizations either meant that they were calling for help perceiving me to be a threat and they were sending me a warning signal that I dare not venture into their territory. I continued walking toward their nest and now, I had one of the sparrow do what I felt was a kamikaze dive toward my head, followed by its partner. They clearly did not want me there and were willing to defend their nest with their very lives, should there be a need to. I first ducked to avoid the sparrows and then was filled with awe and respect for the bravery of these little birds that barely would have filled the size of my fist.



Another day as I was driving on the highway, I noticed a bird of prey, probably a red tailed hawk (a Texas Bird of prey) soaring in circles in the air, almost as if it was seeking to zone in on a target. As I observed the bird, I was overcome with an emotional response, as I recounted of God's promise to provide for that bird's daily bread, and my eyes welled up, streaming my cheeks with a deluge of tears.

Jesus said, Look at the Birds of the Air ... (NASB: Matthew 6:26). Ever wonder why he would have said this? As I delved deeper into my experiences, I found to my surprise certain truths come to surface. There is so much depth in the statement "Look at the Birds of the Air ..." that one can miss on perfunctorily review.

First one is obvious from the verse. Jesus said this to reflect that God the Father is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. Just as the birds are provided for, so will we be.

Secondly, when no danger was around, the birds were singing continuously, drowning the voices of the world. Our continuous praising of God will be harmony in someone else's ears drowning the cares of the world for them or our own. When danger was around, they either called for help or were willing to ward off their danger, by vocalizing threats. This is exactly what God wants us to do, call to Him for help and be willing to voice our stand resisting (quoting the scriptures). The Bible says, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

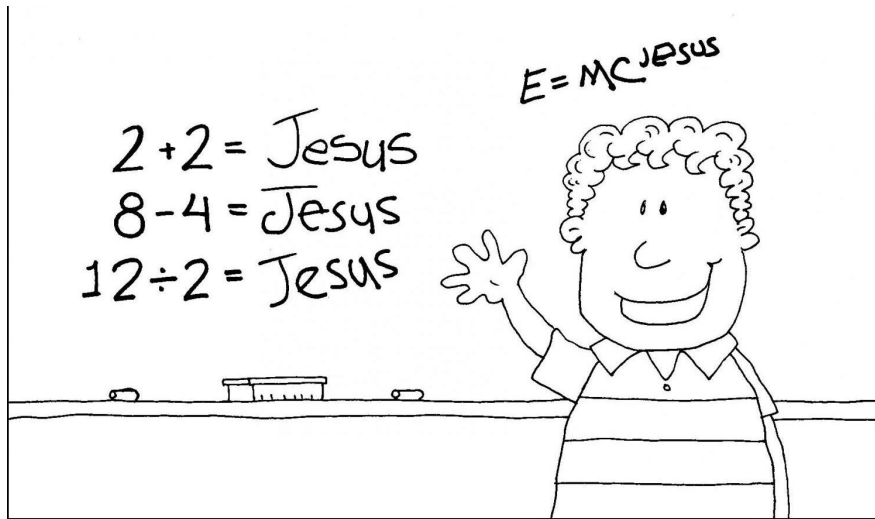
Thirdly, not only did the sparrows vocalize, but they also acted and were willing to take me, an individual more than 100 times their size, on for a fight. The hidden truth is that the size of our problems does not matter. Just as David, a little shepherd boy took on the trained-for-battle giant Goliath, so should we be willing to take on our problem/giants in our lives. The sparrows surely had the same Holy Spirit in them that was in David and that which is in us, when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Fourthly and finally, the *flying* hawk brought to attention another distinctive principle that expands on the provisionary attribute of God the Father. While it is true that God will take care of the birds of the air, you don't see birds perched on trees, expecting God to drop their food in their mouths. While this is not impossible for God, this is not the way God provides. The birds fly in search of food a.k.a. they work toward finding the provisions God has in store for them. Likewise, we cannot sit and idle and expect God to provide. We need to work toward seeking the provisions God has in store for us. For the first time, the adage, "God will help those who help themselves" made sense to me. Another noteworthy addition is that God takes care of the birds just as he does us, *daily*, not tomorrow, not next month, not next year or the next decade.

So next time, we look at the birds of the air, are we willing to realize that God is our provider; we need to continuously keep praising God as that could drown some of the noises in someone else's life or our own; we should call to God for help and resist; we should stand and fight irrespective of how insurmountable our problem may seem; we should work toward seeking God's provisions daily, one day at a time. *Look at the birds of the air ...*



## Kid's Korner - Sis. Shalini Rajkumar



**IN BIBLE CLASS WE LEARNED THAT JESUS IS THE ANSWER**

**Know your Bible??!!!**

**Challenge yourselves...Email the answers....Win a Prize!!!!**

**Ready...set...GO!!!!!!!**

1. What son of Adam and Eve did Eve consider as a replacement for Abel
2. Which son of Cain had a city named after him
3. Who was the father of Abraham?
4. What nationality was Timothy's father?
5. Who was Joshua's father?
6. Who was the mother who persuaded her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist?
7. Proverbs says, '...do not despise your mother when she is...' "
8. What father made a foolish vow to God, which cost him his daughter?
9. Eber had a son named Peleg (his name means 'division'). Why was he given that name?
10. What father was 'unable to speak' until his son was born, because he doubted God's message that he was to have a son?
11. According to Proverbs, 'A \_\_\_\_\_ spurns his father's discipline'.
12. According to Paul, what is 'the first commandment with a promise'?
13. On what two occasions does God say he is 'well-pleased' with his son, Jesus?
14. Who does Jesus call the 'father of lies'?
15. Who was the father of David?
16. Who stole her father's household gods?
17. Which father came to Jesus to seek help for his little daughter who lay at the point of death?
18. Who was the father of Saul?
19. Who was to be named Zacharias, after the name of his father, until his mother intervened?
20. Whose name means 'father of a great multitude'?

**The first person who emails the correct answers to [shalinirajkumar@gmail.com](mailto:shalinirajkumar@gmail.com) will receive a \$25 gift card to Borders.**

**Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."**

## News and Events



- The ACFI annual family retreat was held on APR 25, 26 & 27 at Sandy Creek Bible Camp, Brenham TX. The event was hosted by ACFI and the speaker was Bro. Suresh Babu ([www.poverofgospel.org](http://www.poverofgospel.org)). The theme for the event was 'JARS OF CLAY'.
- We welcome Anya Rachel Cherukuri into the ACFI Family.
- The upcoming Backyard Bible club for kids are to be held on Aug 02.
- The children's Sunday will be held in September
- We thank the families who have opened up their homes for the upcoming Home fellowship and the schedule is as follows
  - July -- Julie and Careth Jefferson
  - August – Prema and Vijay Potireddy
  - September -- Mary and Suresh Konatham
- The schedule for the All Night prayer is as follows
  - July – Suja and Josh David
  - August – Melody and Arundeeep Mitra
  - September – Angel & Vinod Emmanuel

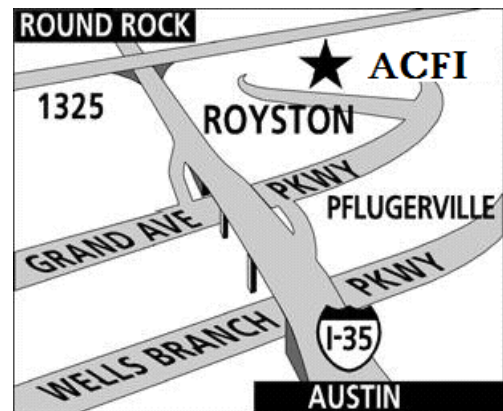
### Austin Christian Fellowship of India (ACFI)

#### Location

Grace Christian Center  
1500 Royston Lane,  
Round Rock, TX 78664

#### Mailing Address

Austin Christian Fellowship of India  
PO Box 5672  
Round Rock, TX-78683



### Program Schedule

Worship service - Sundays , 5:00 PM  
ACFI Night Prayer - 1<sup>st</sup> Friday , 9:00 PM  
Home Fellowship - 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday , 7:00 PM  
Ladies Bible Study - 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday , 7:00 PM  
Men's fellowship - 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday , 7:00 PM

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If you would like to contribute to the newsletter or have questions about the newsletter please send an email to [rwnoth@gmail.com](mailto:rwnoth@gmail.com)

