

# Seeds on the Wind

NEWS FROM BETHANIA • FALL 2015

## In Celebration of Gene Hennig

On August 25, 2015, just six months after his dear mother Polly passed away, Gene Hennig died peacefully at home at the age of 67 after a 21-month journey with brain cancer. So in quick succession, our Bethania Kids family has suffered the loss of two beloved founding members, this one much too soon.

Gene spent much of his childhood in India (from 1957 to 1965) as the son of Lutheran missionary teachers in the mountain town of Kodaikanal. It was there that he developed two of his passions: mountain climbing and a deep compassion for India's needy children. After earning an engineering degree and a law degree in the early 1970s at Valparaiso University in Indiana, he taught for four years at Valparaiso Law School, where he had the good fortune to meet his future wife, Kristie. Marrying shortly thereafter, he and Kristie moved to Minneapolis, MN, where he began a fulfilling 37-year career as a lawyer. During that time, he also started a free legal clinic and served on 11 nonprofit boards.

In 1987, Gene became a guiding force in the founding of The Bethania Foundation. The initial impetus was to provide financial support to Dayavu Dhanapal in starting a small Indian orphanage, but that soon led to a more ambitious undertaking. In October 1987, members of the Hennig, Granner, and Dhanapal families founded The Bethania Foundation, with Gene preparing all of the documents and thereafter taking leadership roles on the board.

*(Continued inside...)*



*“What does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.”*

*—Micah 6:8*

(Continued from cover)

Through the ensuing years there were many challenges, starting with founding The Bethania Foundation of India, which required many trips to India by Gene as he recruited dedicated Indian leaders for this partnership. One of those leaders, Dr. J. Gnanakan, recently recalled with gratitude Gene's willingness to listen with respect to the views of some Indian leaders, even if he might disagree with some of the "Indian ways of doing things." He credits Gene for organizing Bethania so well that the foundation gained status with the Indian government.

Driven by his deep love for God and heart for hurting children, Gene devoted much of his free time and legal expertise to purchase land in India for care centers, maneuver through Indian red tape, and ensure that Bethania Kids centers maintained high standards. In many ways, he guided Bethania Kids to become a beacon of light to India's most destitute and broken children.

Meanwhile, Gene and his wife, Kristie, were blessed with their own three children (Kate, Luke and Emily) and their grandson, Simon. How fortunate we all are that Gene's family was generous enough to share him with the Bethania Kids family! At his memorial service, the packed pews and magnificent music were a fitting tribute to the man who had humbly devoted so much of his life to serving God by saving suffering children in India.

Not surprisingly, Gene's favorite Bible verse was Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." May we all turn our mourning into motivation, following Gene's inspiring example and living to God's glory.



## Dear Sisters and Brothers,

This year marked the passing of two beloved and respected founding members of Bethania Kids. Both Polly Hennig and her son Gene were on the scene on day one of this ministry. Both were committed to sharing God's love by contributing their own personal time, talents and treasures to transform the lives of formerly destitute children who found their way to Bethania Kids. **Polly and Gene will be sorely missed; however, we are comforted in our confidence that our loving God greeted both with the words "Well done, good and faithful servant."**

This year, newly elected Indian government leadership escalated efforts to review and enhance child care standards and regulations, including separating boys and girls residences. Consequently, Bethania Kids leadership reassessed our facilities and implemented a number of actions, including transferring girls from our Dayavu Home Kannivadi to our new, larger, rented Shalom Home for Girls in Kodaikanal. We closed Bethel Home for Boys in Kodaikanal, transferring the boys to our newly renovated Dayavu Home in Kannivadi. **We welcome your prayers as we search for new, permanent housing for Shalom Home for Girls.**

All of the children involved have developed new friends and relationships with other children in their new homes. All are very well cared for, studying hard in school and flourishing. Praise God!



**In 2015, 190 new children were enrolled into Bethania Kids' care and are now experiencing loving care from our committed staff.** They receive all that is necessary to remain physically healthy and safe while growing mentally, emotionally and in their faith. Bethania staff

in India suggest that without the intervention of Bethania Kids, of the almost 1,000 children under our care, most likely 49 children would have experienced abandonment, 156 some form of abuse, 184 malnutrition and 174 forced child labor instead of attending school.

We also have other success stories to share. **Thirteen children graduated from our Home Care to begin their new lives. Another 22 young individuals are attending college classes with an additional 69 enrolled in vocational training programs.** These young people received good shelter, compassionate care, education and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, preparing them to make unique contributions in their communities. Our prayer is that they now change their world through Jesus' love.

Our Mission Trips Committee organized multiple trips to India in 2015 and is currently planning for 2016. Each trip was very successful for donor travelers, Indian leadership and staff, and (especially) the children of Bethania Kids, who always enjoy meeting donors who come to visit with them.

All of us involved with Bethania Kids are like a family. We contribute in different ways to make this family thrive—as general donors, child sponsors, Board of Advisor members, Sponsor Advocates, Board of Directors and Trustee members, ministry leaders and location staff. **We have been abundantly blessed by our loving God as we do our best to carry out His will by caring for the orphaned, abused and needy children of India.**

We are deeply grateful for every contribution you make to the Bethania Kids family and pray for God's blessing on you and your family.

Michael Morelli  
President



## I Was Hungry

*“I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.” —Matt. 25:35-36*

How often we have all heard these words that Jesus spoke to his disciples. Yet, what added significance they carry when faces, especially the faces of children, are connected to those words. The statistics regarding the welfare of the 440 million Indian children (more than the entire population of the USA, Mexico and Canada combined) are staggering. In a 2007 Indian government study of 12,000 children, it was concluded that 67% are victims of physical abuse, over 50% face some type of sexual abuse, and 20% receive severe mistreatment. The U.N. estimates that 50 million Indian children aged 4 and above are sold for child labor to help provide money for their families, making as little as 20 cents per day. Of the 11 million Indian children abandoned by their parents, 90% are girls.

It is too easy to judge those who allow such conditions to exist and to

become overwhelmed or even numbed by the sheer numbers involved. At Bethania Kids, we have chosen to not be overcome because Jesus taught us instead to minister precisely to those very children.

We asked the staff at each of our ministries exactly how these issues of abandonment, abuse, malnutrition and child labor relate to the children currently in their care. Our staff suggested that many of the children would have been affected by more than one of these issues had they not come into our care. This is especially true

in the agrarian communities of Dholdholi and Cilpajodi Care Centers in Odisha state, where every one of our

children would have been threatened with malnutrition and subjected to child labor (e.g., tending cattle or doing agricultural work) rather than allowed to attend school. In fact, most of the children now in our residence homes came to us as a result of abandonment, abuse, malnutrition or forced child labor, which would have doomed them to a bleak future. Through Bethania Kids, children receive the foundations of self-respect, education, spiritual guidance and family counseling that serve to prevent these unconscionable situations. Since malnutrition affects 40% of Indian children, we seek to provide the proper nutrition that children need to grow and thrive. We regularly measure height and weight and provide health care for our children. As these children are emotionally and physically fragile when they come to us, providing them with a sense of family and the assurance of loving care is the focus and strength of our Homes and Care Centers.

As our hearts cry for the millions of children suffering these tragedies of childhood, we lift them up in prayer. At the same time, we offer prayers of thanksgiving for the thousands of children who have been saved through God's gift of Bethania Kids. We also give thanks to God for our sponsors and people like you, who continue to live those words Jesus taught us by feeding, clothing and caring for the children of Bethania Kids.

### Bethania Kids Creative Giving Catalog

Looking for a unique and caring gift for those special people in your life? The Bethania Kids Creative Giving Catalog is the perfect solution! It is full of creative ideas for gifts

in honor or memory of your favorite people and loved ones. As you contemplate a gift list this year, please consider donating from our Creative Giving Catalog today. It is available online at [bethaniakids.org/creative-giving-catalog](http://bethaniakids.org/creative-giving-catalog)



## Experience Ministry in Action: Travel to India with Us!

Do you have a heart for the children in India? Would you like an opportunity to impact their lives while bringing a new sense of fulfillment to your own life?

Join one of our trips to India and experience the joy of Christ's love through the children in our ministries. You will have the opportunity to interact with them through song, play, ESL (English as a Second Language) and prayer. Your experienced leader will be with you on an adventure you will never forget, working together to become a part of Christ's mission in serving "the least of these," His precious children (Matt. 25:40). The next available trip being planned is February 2016, where you will have the opportunity to work with a professional ESL instructor.

If you would like to join us or learn more about how to get involved, please feel free to contact Dia De Haan ([sonseeker1@gmail.com](mailto:sonseeker1@gmail.com)) or Amy Pitts ([amyjpitts@gmail.com](mailto:amyjpitts@gmail.com)) or visit our website: [bethaniakids.org/get-involved/travel-to-india](http://bethaniakids.org/get-involved/travel-to-india).



# Mohan Babu: Child of God

Smiling, playful Mohan Babu acts like a typical 13-year-old boy. At Dayavu Home in Kannivadi, he joins the other boys on the school bus every morning, does his homework in the afternoon, plays raucous games of tag with his friends, participates in daily devotions and eagerly looks forward to his next meal or snack.

Four years ago he was begging on the street for his food. The emotional trauma of losing his parents, grandmother and sister by the time he was 5 years old is difficult enough to imagine. Begging for your next meal on the street at just 9 years old leaves no room for hope of any kind. By God's grace his aunt found him and brought him to Bethania Kids. Today he is not included as a number under "abandoned children". He is not among the millions of malnourished Indian children. He is K. Mohan Babu, child of God, and he has a life to live with purposeful zeal!



**In Honor of:**

Ronald & Janet Allen  
 Steve & Irene Akers  
 David & Silvia Giorgini-Althoen  
 Ed & Beth Ammons  
 David & Sandy Anderson  
 Greg & Andrea Anderson  
 Bob and Angie Beyer (50 anniversary)  
 Marilyn Beyer  
 Bonnie Branim  
 Dan & Sue Brieschke  
 John & Jane Burch  
 Jan Campbell  
 Michael & BJ Connor  
 Greg Carducci  
 Karen Carducci  
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 Eric & Kim Martin  
 Michael & Diane McCain  
 Marc & Jan McMorris  
 Peter & Barbara Meier  
 Philip Meier (50th Birthday)  
 Rev Lawrence E. Meinzen  
 Meinzen family  
 Alan & Ruth Menge  
 Barbara Miller  
 Drew & Cindy Montag  
 Michael & Lea Morelli  
 Our Grandchildren (Joyce and Dan Morlang)  
 Mike & Iris Nadeau  
 David & Anne Nerez  
 Katie Nerez  
 Roger & Sheila Nielson  
 Jim Nohl (Birthday)  
 Margrit Nonnenmacher  
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 Karen O'Clair  
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 Chuck Zill

**In Memory of:**

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 Joseph S. Celento, Jr.  
 Margaret E and William D Coleman  
 Larry Dahle  
 Jerry Marie Doody  
 Daniel Duggan  
 Soghra Fatima  
 Harry Hagstad  
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 Eunice Naumann Nissen  
 Georgianna Ostermeyer  
 Jeevan Paul  
 Rev Ted Richter  
 Ralph Spitzack  
 Betty Swavely-Granner

**Donating to Bethania Kids through Thrivent Choice**

This past year, Thrivent Choice donations totaled \$35,611! We are truly grateful to all of you who selected Bethania Kids as your "Thrivent Choice" donation. Members can donate online through the Thrivent website or telephone by calling 800-847-4836. *Thank you for all you do to support Bethania Kids!*

Bethania Kids is a Christian mission bringing wholeness and hope to poor, abandoned and disabled children in India, equipping them to share God's love.

*We channel 100% of every penny donated into direct ministry for children.*

Bethania Kids is an IRS registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit and benevolent organization.

## Bethania Kids Administrative Offices

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## We are thankful for our staff!

We are truly blessed with a dedicated and professional staff who take care of all the administrative details that keep Bethania Kids running smoothly. They are also eager to answer any of your questions about donations (Emily) and hosting events or brochures (Carolyn). They look forward to hearing from you.

### Emily Spriggs, Database Administrator

Emily Spriggs comes to Bethania Kids with a great deal of experience in marketing, membership development, training and information design in telecommunications and information systems. She and her husband Rodney are proud parents of a daughter, Rebekah, and a son, R.J. Emily considers herself blessed to serve the children as Bethania Kids' Database Administrator. It is her great joy to be a part of "The Great Commission" of spreading the good news to God's children in India. Contact Emily at [emily@bethaniakids.org](mailto:emily@bethaniakids.org).



### Carolyn Frye, Administrative Assistant and Marketing Coordinator

Carolyn and her husband Greg have been involved with Bethania Kids for over 10 years, more recently as child sponsors and Advisory Board members. They have 5 daughters, a son and a grandson. In 2013, Carolyn joined the staff part time to assist with administrative tasks and also to draw on her graphics background to work with the Publications Team. She considers it a joyful privilege to work with the staff and the Publications Team to serve the Lord, thereby doing her part to help change the world of the children in our ministry. Contact Carolyn at [carolyn@bethaniakids.org](mailto:carolyn@bethaniakids.org).



### Lisa Smit, Accounting and Payroll Administrator

Lisa joined the Bethania staff this spring as the new accounting & payroll administrator. She lives with her husband, Dave, and 3 daughters in Ann Arbor, MI. Lisa and Dave were first introduced to Bethania by long-time board member Ravi Srinivasan in 2012. She is delighted to have the opportunity to become more involved with Bethania Kids as a staff member and as a member of the Publications Team. She especially likes attending meetings when Indian food is served! Contact Lisa at [lisa@bethaniakids.org](mailto:lisa@bethaniakids.org).

