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Seeds on the Wind

NEWS FROM BETHANIA • SPRING 2009

Why Is Our Ministry So Important?

What a privilege to lead children into a life in which Christ's love flows through them to others! This is the most rewarding and joyful life a person can have. I am Dr. James Gnanakan, the Chief Executive officer of Bethania Kids, India. It is both a joy and blessing to come to you through this brief letter. I like this job; no, I love this ministry among children!

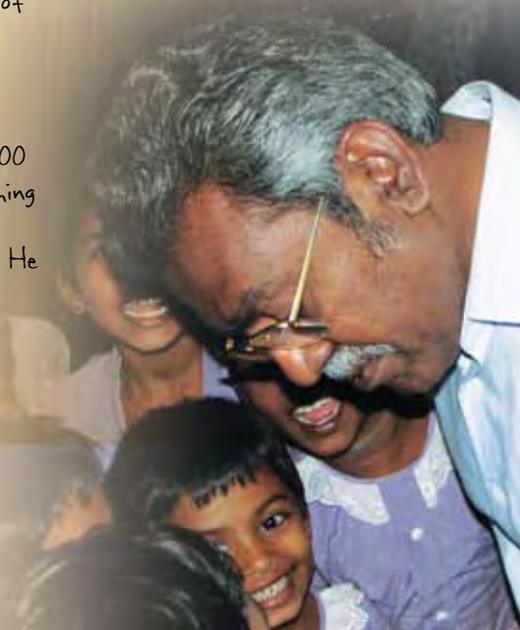
I started my career in the Church as a child-care worker in the year 1972. Why is our ministry so important? Let me share a brief story. Many years ago, I was visiting a group of children who were sitting looking blankly at me. I took a ball and rolled it into a child's lap; waited a while with no response. I took the ball and threw the same to another child with no response. I repeated this exercise encouraging them to throw back but not with encouraging results. After that, I went to a neighboring centre some twenty kilometers away. I repeated this exercise there too; but with an entirely different outcome. The children, bubbling with joy, started playing with me unending. Why those children are dull and why these are active? Somewhere something is lacking in the previous centre. I had to go back to the first one and make a detailed study, where it revealed clearly the several issues that are uncongenial for a child's active growth happening in that project. I share this because children are the mirrors of the realities surrounding us. Bethania Kids is a very intentional ministry in which we are constantly striving to nurture and equip children on a daily basis.

Why is our ministry so important? India today is a youthful nation: 19 per cent of the children in the world live within its boundaries... India arguably has the highest number of children facing exploitation and neglect in the world today. But the investment on child protection within India was a shocking 0.034% of the budget last year.

I see the hand of God mightily working in Bethania Kids, as day by day we take an ever better dimension in our mission for poor and underprivileged children. We now have a highly professional Board of Trustees guiding our daily life and work. We want to establish an ever-greater scope for future stability and sustainable quality care. I believe that it is a direct commission from our LORD Jesus Christ to take care of the little ones. It is our joy as well as reward from the LORD.

Children continually teach us volumes. For twelve years I was living amidst hearing-impaired children in a remote village. Early each morning these children got on their knees and thanked the creator, offering prayers to HIM. Nearly 100 children personally communing with the LORD in their own tongues, seemed nothing but a lot of babbling sounds. I didn't know the meaning, but our LORD knows every child's prayer of sounds distinctively, together a symphony, and I am sure He answers them well too.

Your brother in Christ,
Dr. P. James Gnanakan
Chief Executive Officer, Bethania Kids India



A Thousand Generations

ThiruSelvam laughed as his sewing machine clicked away. He could make out the form of Murniandy, between the slats in the wall. The old man was always saying funny things between visits from customers to his barber shop next door. “ThiruSelvam, here comes Saddien!” he said, “Doesn’t he look silly carrying that big ball on his head?” A somewhat younger man of forty years, Saddien was another good friend. He was a dhobi (launderer), who offered his services in the shop on the other side of ThiruSelvam. Saddien happily carried a ball of clothing on his head, coming back from the river where he washed his wares, beating each article against the rocks and carefully spreading the laundry out on rocky surfaces to dry in the sun. A young mother interrupted ThiruSelvam’s smile with a request to repair her son’s pants. He had lots of good work making and repairing pants, blouses, shirts, and small children’s clothing. As ThiruSelvam reached for more gimp and continued his work on buttons, he could hear the bustle of carts, cars, cows, water buffalo, goats and people up and down Fern Hill Road. He could occasionally smell coffee, tobacco, and beetle nut—sometimes sambar with coriander and cumin for dosai, idly, or poori. As the sun streamed into his shop, ThiruSelvam’s mind wandered back to his childhood.

The 15 year old boy was awkward. Having been crippled by a bad fall as a young child, he had become permanently disabled. It was difficult for him to walk and He had been hungry a lot. A caring group, called Bethania, had opened a home down on the plains. There had been only a half dozen youngsters at first and, as a teenage boy, ThiruSelvam loved to be helpful at the home—just to be able to contribute and make a difference for the younger children.



As a cart k-clacked on by his shop, ThiruSelvam smiled as he thought how funny he must have been, getting in the way as he tried to help, but never complaining about his deformed body. It was then that he first learned to know God as a personal and loving being. As he grew into a young man, Bethania staff had seen to it that he received a sewing machine and his little shop on Fern Hill Road in the mountain village... As the shadows of the afternoon lengthened, across the road gathered a group of men in uniforms from the local panchayat.

ThiruSelvam closed up his shop and walked home to his wife, Julie, who was also disabled, but was as energetic as he. She greeted him warmly, putting into his arms their young daughters, Susai and Salate. With a low wage, the family had just enough to eat every day, and were happy.

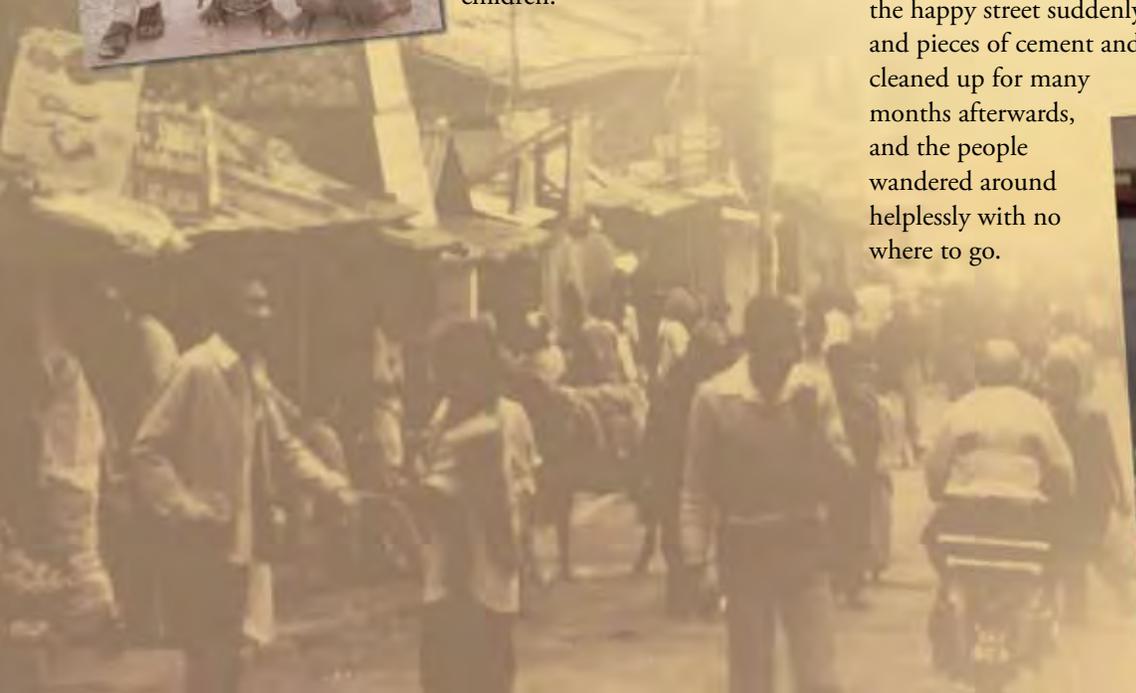
After a good night’s rest, the early morning mist rose slowly through the Eucalyptus trees as ThiruSelvam worked his way down the mountain path to his tailoring shop. His back and legs were practically worthless, but his hands were still strong. As he approached the little row of shacks on Fern Hill Road, he heard shouts and noticed that a crowd had gathered. “This is not ‘patta’ land!” said a man from the highway department. “You don’t own this land. Don’t you know that? This road is going to be made wider.”

“We have been here for years!” shouted an angry young man. Murniandy stood in his shop door—all of the happiness replaced with a look of fear at what this might mean.

“This is paramboke land and it belongs to the government,” shouted the official. “We can do what we want!” Everyone started to shout, “What will we do? We have no where else to go.”

***“Get out now and take what you can.
Your shops will all be gone by tomorrow!”***

The next day, all of them were totally razed by a bulldozer, and the happy street suddenly became a slum, with broken boards and pieces of cement and trash everywhere. The mess wasn’t cleaned up for many months afterwards, and the people wandered around helplessly with no where to go.



ThiruSelvam struggled to earn enough money to feed his young girls. He could see his wife and children's faces getting thinner and the happiness slowly dying out of his home. He prayed regularly, but God didn't seem to answer. Where was God? Between what little Julie could earn and the unusual disappearance of his tailoring work, ThiruSelvam grew depressed. In January of 2009, outside his little hut, he just sat down and cried. "God, would you please show me the way to provide for my family?" As he released his fears and commended himself to God, ThiruSelvam remembered the words his pastor had recently read, "He will take pity on the weak and save the needy from death." (Psalm 72:13)

Shortly thereafter, Bethania received a brief letter:

"Our congregation is well aware of the Bethania people, and we are so grateful for your help throughout all the past years. You have been foster parents for ThiruSelvam. Now, because of this young man's difficulties, we ask you to consider helping him to buy a cow. We as a church will also stand with him and support him. With thanks and love," -Pastor Francis Selven

In the third week of February 2009, Jay Elias, a Bethania worker, led a young milk cow up the path to ThiruSelvam's hut. The heifer, at a cost of about 12,000 rupees (\$400), was a gift from Bethania Kids. Julie clapped her hands with excitement. This cow would provide about sixteen liters of milk each day—about 200 rupees.

Today, ThiruSelvam, Julie, Susai and Salate sit around their little one room hut and happily portion out the rice and dhal. But this day is special, because each person also receives an egg. ThiruSelvam feels so proud that his family has vegetables and fruit almost every day, chicken or fish once per week and eggs twice per week. Since they keep only a liter of milk for their children, they can sell enough to buy medicine, clothing and household supplies. At the close of each day, ThiruSelvam kisses his girls goodnight and puts the sign of the cross on their foreheads. What will become of this next generation? God promises to remain constant in the present day and far into the future "...showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love Him and keep His commandments." (Exodus 20:6)

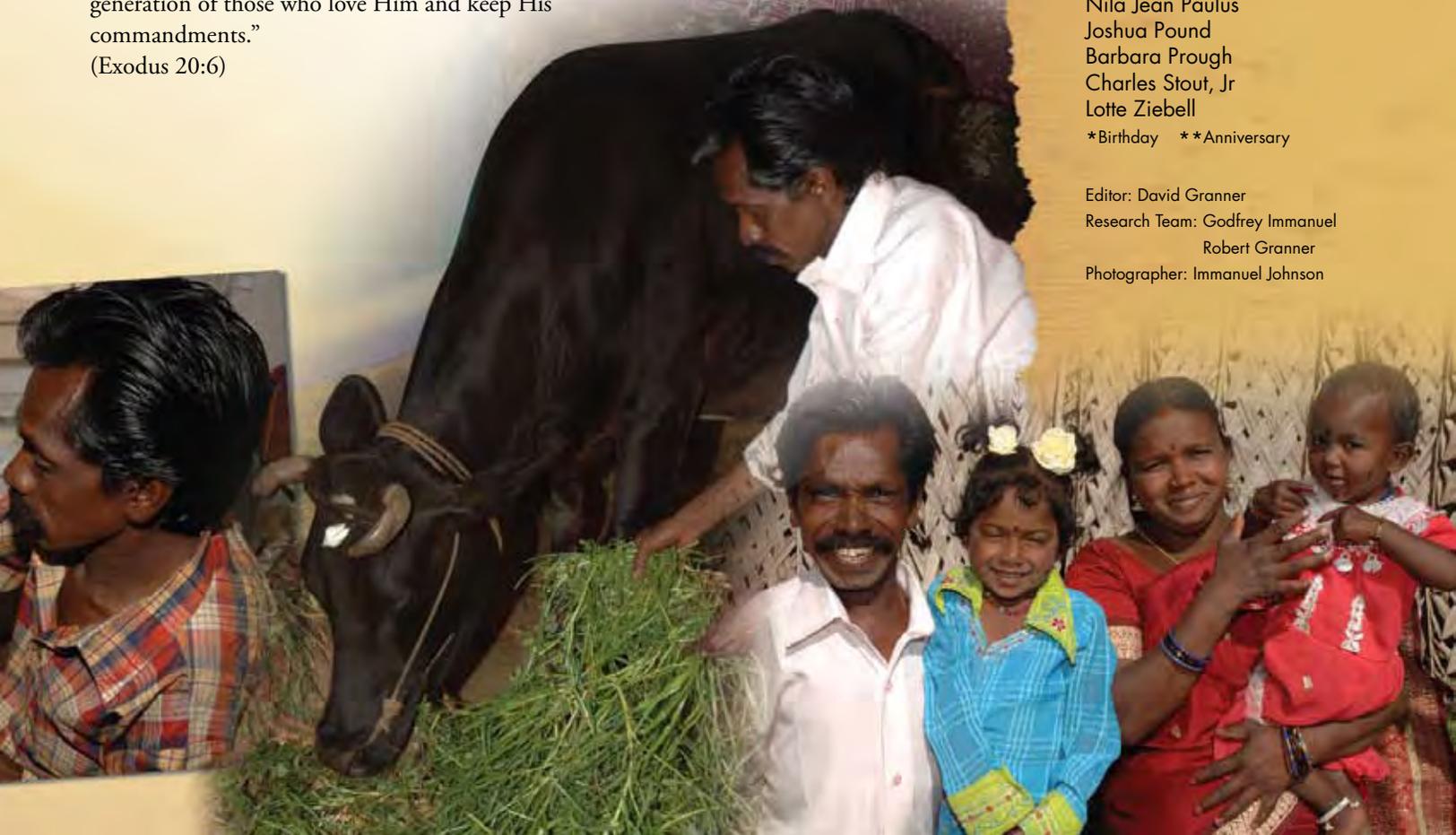
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Bethania is a Christian mission bringing wholeness and hope to poor, abandoned and disabled children in India, equipping them to share God's love.

100% of your contribution will be used directly for children's ministry in India.

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Sharing His Love Program Available For Sunday Schools

During the month of February 2009, thousands of school children all over the state of Michigan participated in a program called Sharing His Love produced by Bethania Kids. The program included games, skits and stories based on Jesus' teachings. Each child had a goal to raise \$20 to support one child for one month through Bethania Kids. Hundreds of kids were sponsored through the unique program in which students reached out to poor children 9,000 miles away. God's love is just that powerful!

Rebecca Mohler, Kindergarten teacher at St. Michael Lutheran School in Portage, Michigan writes, "The most rewarding parts of this experience were watching the children show compassion and love for others. They would do chores and give of their own to help children in India."

What impact did this program have on our kids? Here's a brief letter from Jace Binder, 4th grader at St Peter's Lutheran in Saginaw, Michigan:

Dear Bethania Kids,

I can't imagine what it is like there. I know God will always protect you in every way he can. I hope you are having a very fun, exciting and happy life in Bethania. Is it warm, cold or normal? This letter is meant with good things and is made with love and care. This letter is for everyone. I hope you're having fun. I wish I could come to Bethania and meet you-all. I am glad you are all safe. I know you are all safe in God's heart.

All of you will receive money. My school has provided money for all of you. You will receive at least 7 basket's full of money soon. When you get the baskets remember that St Peter Lutheran School provided all that money just for you 'cause we care a lot about you and your environment and everyone in our school is hoping you guys are safe forevermore and always will be. Remember God is always with you and you are in his heart.

I love you all!

Remember, God is always by your side!

Jace Binder

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**Thank you to all
for your faithful
support of
Bethania Kids!**

