

# Seeds on the Wind

NEWS FROM BETHANIA KIDS • FALL 2020

## Coping with COVID-19 in India

During the past six months, we have all been taught a valuable lesson. COVID-19 is impartial to race, social status, gender and geography. Even as we struggle to cope with this pandemic in the U.S. and Canada in the relative safety of our homes, we are compelled to look beyond our borders and focus our concern on the major challenges COVID-19 has imposed on our beloved Bethania Kids family in India.

On March 22, soon after COVID-19 arrived in India, the Indian government ordered a strict lockdown of all public transportation, schools, businesses and hostels. That forced the Bethania Foundation in India to close all of our residence homes, care centers, rehab centers and women's empowerment centers. The Bethania Kids administration and staff in India experienced great stress as they hurriedly implemented the government's lockdown orders.

Most adversely impacted were the children living in our four residential homes. Although initially happy to return to their loved ones, these children soon felt the sorrow of living indefinitely with impoverished or dysfunctional families until COVID-19 ends. In many cases, the families were already suffering financially, exacerbated by job losses during the pandemic, so the children did not always feel welcome in their own family's home in such difficult situations. Now deprived of compassionate care, education and social interaction, our Indian staff report that most of these children feel depressed.

Although the Indian government has supplied some food assistance to each family, it hasn't been sufficient to feed many of the children from our residential homes. Bethania Kids staff have wanted to provide those families with some nutritious food, but it is almost impossible with the restrictions on transportation. In all cases, the residence homes staff

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*On March 22 the government ordered a COVID-19 related lockdown forcing all of our residence homes, care centers, rehab centers and women's empowerment centers to close.*

Bethania Kids

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have diligently kept in contact with the children by regularly phoning to make certain they are staying safe and healthy. Fortunately, the children from our care centers live close to the Bethania Kids facilities, so those staff members can more easily deliver some nutritious food to their families.

The Indian government initially allowed some children at our residence homes to remain there to study for an important exam in June. However, the government cancelled that exam and automatically promoted all students up to 10th grade to the next level. Students in 11th and 12th grade were promoted after passing board exams. The children are eager to return to their studies by distance learning, and Bethania Kids will continue to prioritize their education.

Initially, the number of COVID-19 cases in India (population 1.35 billion) was quite low, but since then, both cases and deaths have increased. As of August 15, India had 2.53 million confirmed cases and 49,036 deaths. Three of our residential homes (Shalom, Grace and Dayavu) are located in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which had the second highest incidence of COVID-19 at 326,000 cases and 5,514 deaths. Angel Home is located in Andhra Pradesh, which had 273,000 cases and 2,475 deaths.

So far, there are no reported cases of COVID-19 in our Bethania Kids family in India. Surely this is due in part to the fervent prayers emanating from both India and North America. Eduman Isaac (Dayavu Home manager) has prayed: "We in the Bethania Kids Family pray for your healing hand upon those affected by COVID-19 and those who risk their lives to help them. Lord, guide our national leaders to make the right decisions. Thank you for your faithfulness."

May we all be moved to pray for the people of India and especially for the children from our residential homes who currently are living in difficult home environments with inadequate food. Above all, may our compassion lead us to donate generously to Bethania Kids to help finance our Indian staff salaries and alleviate wherever possible the suffering and deprivation that this pandemic has brought to our beloved children and their families.

*Photos from top: School supplies gathered for distribution; Student J. Anil received a laptop to continue engineering studies online; empty beds at Davayu Home for Boys*



# “Sthothiram!”

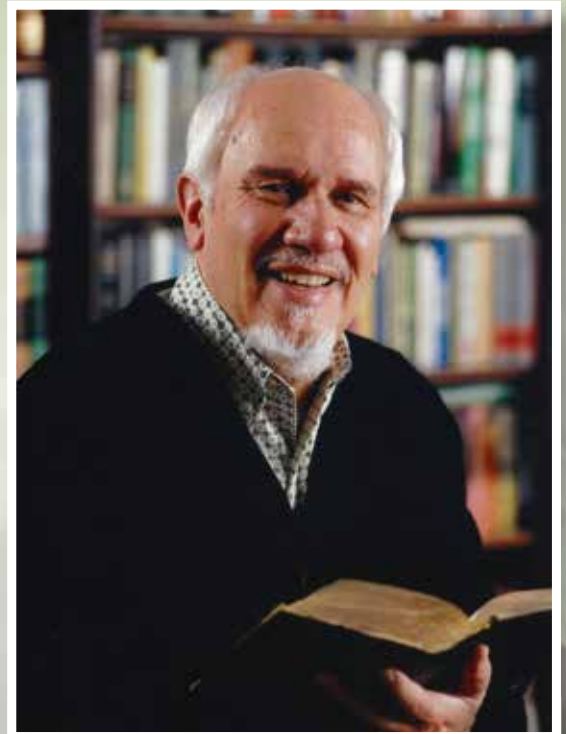
BY DAVID GRANNER, A BETHANIA KIDS CO-FOUNDER

Before Bethania Kids began in 1987, several key congregations led the way for this new ministry to disadvantaged children. One such congregation was Cross and Resurrection Lutheran Church in Washtenaw County, Michigan, where Rev. Theodore Jungkuntz was pastor and I was a member. I invited Dayavu Dhanapal (the woman who founded the first Bethania Kids home) to introduce the members of my church to the fledgling ministry. Since that day and for the next 30 years, Pastor Jungkuntz supported the ministry of Bethania Kids through encouragement, leadership and his own generous financial support. Sadly, on June 8, 2020, our beloved friend and pastor was called home to Jesus.

The first words that Pastor Jungkuntz heard from Dayavu Dhanapal were these: “Sthothiram! Please put your hands together and repeat after me, Sthothiram,” and the congregation immediately obeyed that small yet confident voice. I remember the feeling of awe and anticipation in the air while time stood still for the next five seconds of silence. Dayavu went on to say, “Sthothiram means ***God be praised.***” Then she simply told of her remarkable love for Jesus and of His magnificent love for poor children, who stand in the sun, pressing their own hair down with their hands, trying to make themselves as presentable as possible so that they might be ‘good enough’ to be allowed in our first Bethania Kids home in Kannivadi. From that moment onward, Pastor Jungkuntz connected the on-the-ground mission of Bethania Kids to the lives of North American Christians through his leadership, solid theology, and his own generous example.

When the Bethania Kids Advisory Board was founded, Pastor Jungkuntz was one of the first members of this board, generously promoting the ministry with his strong financial support, praying earnestly for years and, most importantly, being a role model of love in action. He was always one of the first adopters of any innovative Bethania Kids initiative. As he grew older, he grew in love every single day, so that those who were privileged to spend time with him felt a veil increasingly parted--light shining through a doorway.

Today we honor the memory of Pastor Theodore Jungkuntz, thank him for his leadership and generosity, and praise God for his beautiful...meaningful...Spirit-filled life. So, together, we say, “Sthothiram!”



*For 30 years, Rev. Theodore Jungkuntz supported the ministry of Bethania Kids through encouragement, leadership and his own generous financial support.*

# Why We Volunteer for Bethania Kids

BY SOPHIA SAWOSKI, STUDENT VOLUNTEER

As the Student Volunteer at Bethania Kids this summer, I engaged in a number of activities. First, I learned that Bethania, the Greek word for Bethany, derives from the Bible and translates to “house of welcome.” What this organization does then became clear to me. With a promise to give 100% of donations for the care of children in their residential homes, care centers, and rehab centers, Bethania Kids “works to bring wholeness and hope to orphaned, abandoned, and disabled children in India” and provides homeless children with homes of welcome.

I interviewed members of the Board of Directors, who donate years of their time to support Bethania Kids. I listened to their stories and now understand why they became involved. Hearing their stories was an eye-opening experience. One member shared, “Jesus’ compassion for invisible, poor, and sick people reached out to the world. Bethania Kids is really important because it’s making Jesus’ love happen. It’s about compassion and hope – when people don’t have hope, they die. Bethania Kids gives them hope.”

In doing my research and writing for the newsletters, it became clear to me that the children to whom Bethania Kids provides assistance are most deserving of the high level of care they are given. Recently, I learned about the proactiveness and diligence the children show in their lives, which is reflected through their dedication to their academics. Here is how three Board members have described the children: “The kids are resilient. The kids take initiative and leadership.” “All of our children have had significant trauma in their lives, but every one of them knows God’s love.” “The children are so humble and grateful...it’s refreshing and fills my cup with hope for humanity.”

The impact of the blessings of support and care for the children is huge. I’m grateful to have worked with Bethania Kids and to have made a small difference in someone’s life.



# Update on the Academic Lives of Bethania Kids Students

We thank our child sponsors for continuing to support the children in Bethania Kids homes and care centers, particularly during this pandemic. We are very proud of all our students at Bethania Kids for continuing to study hard at their family homes and advance on to the next grade level. Selva Saroja, director of the Grace Home for Girls, and Ruby Kumar, director of Shalom Home, have shared with us some glowing reports of the diligence and academic progress of all their students. **We particularly commend the students in the 11th and 12th grade who passed their government Board exams: Vasika Y., Sathya M., Anuja S.K., Jenifer Y., Krishnaveni K., Prabavathi S., Lillipriya P., and Sneha R.**

By the beginning of September, all students are scheduled to be taught at a distance via online classes or programming on television. Bethania Kids ensured that laptops were purchased for a few engineering students who needed them. Our staff partners in India continue to check in on the children, making visits to them at home where possible and with regular phone calls. The subjects our students study include, but are not limited to, English, Tamil, computer science, electrical engineering, physics, math, chemistry, biochemistry, and social science. May all of our students continue to strive towards a secure educational foundation.

**Your gifts to Bethania Kids make a substantial difference in the children's lives, in meeting their physical and emotional needs, as well as their educational needs.** Thank you for your faithful support!

## In Honor of

Mr. Abecunas  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Carol Hart  
Claire Wehrman Meinzen  
Wendy Oesterling  
Sarah Paulus in honor of her birthday  
Lisa Smit  
Blake Swientoniowski  
Keira Swientoniowski  
Johnny Vegesna  
Larry Zimmerman  
Larry & Susan Zimmerman in honor of their 50th wedding anniversary

## In Memory of

Mark Bonhag  
Kathryn Bowers  
Marian Etzler Stup  
Gene Hennig  
Rev. Theodore Jungkuntz  
Ronald Kercheval  
Mary Oesterling



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.

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## Call to Action

Did you know that if you are 70½, you can take advantage of the tax savings associated with making charitable contributions, known as Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs), directly from your IRA? Simply put, a QCD is a direct transfer of an otherwise taxable distribution (gift) from your IRA to an eligible non-profit such as Bethania Kids. A QCD can satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution up to \$100,000/year and is excluded from your adjusted gross income. This allows you to donate to a charitable organization tax free. This is truly a win-win option for both you and Bethania Kids! For more details, please contact your financial advisor or your IRA custodian as your QCD may also provide additional tax benefits depending on your filing status.

*Please be assured that even during this pandemic, when our homes and care centers are temporarily closed, expenses continue, so your support is as essential as ever.*

We continue to pay our Indian staff, who devote much time to staying in contact with the children by phone, providing guidance to the families for safe practices and keeping our facilities clean and safe. At Dayavu Home, Isaac and his staff have planted fruit trees and a vegetable garden to share with the boys when they return. We also have ongoing special projects like completing the construction and furnishing of the new Shalom Home and, on the U.S. side of the ministry, upgrading the Bethania Kids website. You may donate by visiting our website ([www.bethaniakids.org](http://www.bethaniakids.org)) and choosing where to share your treasure. We are deeply grateful.

