

## U.S. Partners Grow Bethania's Capacity to Care

Over the years many U.S. churches have caught the vision of Bethania. Some congregations have formed a wonderful partnership with



Mount Olive Lutheran Church

us to reach children with Jesus' love. This is extremely helpful to Bethania because it gives us solid long-term support upon which we can continue to build our ministry and reach more children. One congregation which has been in partnership from the beginning is Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In 1987, when Bethania Ministries was founded, Mount Olive became a charter supporting congregation. This congregation has remained faithful in its support every year since then, in part because two of its members, Gene and Kristie Hennig, have always had a tremendous heart for God's work among children through Bethania. Moreover, Lisa Ruff, director of global missions, adds, "Mount Olive members enjoy supporting an organization on a continuing basis because it enables them to develop a relationship with that organization." Members tell her that they feel well connected to Bethania and the work that is going on in India. "People are always impressed that 100% of their donations go directly to help the children," Lisa reports. Some individuals are so impressed that they give significantly beyond the corporate donation budgeted by the congre-

gation. At the time of weddings, anniversaries, and funerals, for example, members often give memorials to Bethania through Mount Olive to honor friends and family in a unique way.

There are other ways the people of Mount Olive support the work going on in faraway India. Through the years, there have been curry suppers to thank contributors, the hosting of Indian visitors, Sunday School presentations and adult forums to keep people in touch with the ministry of Bethania. Prayers for the Bethania children and staff are regularly offered during worship. The mission committee has staged events called "Taste of India," featuring the food, music, and culture of India. Beautiful displays of Bethania photographs, Potter's Shed pottery, and crafts created by the children of our Cerebral Palsy Center appear several times a year in a prominent glass case at Mount Olive.

Partnerships with faithful congregations like Mount Olive are essential to Bethania's ongoing ministry. Perhaps your church might find joy in teaming up with Bethania to reach out in love to orphaned, abandoned and handicapped Indian children.



Nurturing and equipping the children of India to change their world through Jesus' love.

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

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## Dear Partners in our Bethania Ministries:



Bethania has always been about creating a partnership between caring Christians around the world to reach out with Christ's love to poor and disabled children in India. At the time

of our inception in 1987, we adopted as our "temporary" logo the simple line drawing of a thatched-roof hut—or "pod"—that we envisioned might become a home for some of our Bethania orphans. This logo, in time, became permanent, and by now it is well-known to many of you as the mark of Bethania.



In the intervening years, by God's grace, Bethania has grown and prospered. Although the idea of a thatched-roof pod never came to fruition, Bethania was able to build three orphanages with more sturdy roofs, establish six Bethania Kids Centers, start centers for children with cerebral palsy (and other disabilities) and reach out through a number of other projects to children in the Palni Hills. What began as a handful of children has now grown to more than 600. And, just as importantly, the number of people like you who have supported Bethania with your prayers and gifts has grown.

As we look to the future in our ever-changing world, Bethania will continue to explore new ways of reaching out both to our children in India and our many partners here in North America. One striking change you will note is our new logo! A more contemporary design,

intended to focus attention on our kid-centered mission, has now replaced the venerable old pod.

You'll notice that the name of this newsletter is *Seeds On the Wind*. Our vision is simple: we desire to nurture and equip children in India to change their world through Jesus' love. Fulfilling this vision requires loving children over many years, so that they are nurtured and equipped to contribute in a meaningful way to the society in which they live. Through Bethania's ministries, children come into a personal relationship with Jesus. We desire for these precious children to thrive like young plants—watered, tended and cared for. By age 18, the children grow up to become mature plants bearing seeds of their own that will spread all over India—"Seeds on the Wind" for the glory of God!

We sincerely hope you have had a chance to see Bethania's new video/DVD, which captures in splendid color and sound the important work of Bethania. We are excited about these "new" things—and we hope you will be too!

Finally, be assured, that the one thing that does not change is our Mission. Bethania has been from its beginning, and ever will be, a "Christian mission bringing wholeness and hope to poor, abandoned and disabled children in India, equipping them to share God's love." Amen.

*Gene*

Gene H. Hennig  
President



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### We are grateful for contributions

#### In Memory of

Baby Jonathan Choo  
Martin and Clara Leininger  
Emil and Concetta Moffa  
Andrew Nahm  
Luther Slifer  
Walter Urbatsch  
Margaret Wittmer

#### In Honor of

Mildred Lynch  
Mrs. David Matthews  
Mildred Meier  
Harold Pollert  
Velora Pollert  
Rev. Rob Ruff

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

—Mark 10:14

# A Narrative Journey to India

You are invited to travel along with Bethania Board members Todd Heidelberger and Phil Meitzen to visit the places, witness the work of those who serve, and meet the children who are touched through Bethania Kids missions. On their recent trip to India as part of a Bethania mission team, every one of their senses was Divinely touched by their experiences, and the memories will forever be etched in their minds and hearts.

## Jesus and Kids

by Todd Heidelberger

Having recently returned from my first visit to the various Bethania ministries located in the steaming plains and cool mountain towns of India, I am convicted. I am convicted of the fact that when all things are boiled down, when new impressions and personal experiences are taken away, and when I take myself out of my own trip (if this is even possible), what remains is the fact that Bethania is, at its core, all about Jesus and kids. This fact I have witnessed firsthand.

Let's consider the Bethania Orphanage in Chennai. Chennai is an immense and sprawling city—hot, dusty, and full of smells. People are everywhere. Noise and activity assault the senses. This is truly one of the most confusing and chaotic places I have ever visited. As I make my way through the city with my traveling companions, I look around and wonder where is Jesus? Piles of garbage clog the streets. Old and young, men and women, boys and girls beg for their next meal. **Where is He?**

We cross a busy highway and turn down a gravel lane, dodging pot holes, animals, and people. After a right-hand turn, we pass half-constructed homes, piles of dirt, and a shirtless old man breaking bricks with a hammer. Turning right again, I see a small boy running full tilt ahead of our car. He disappears to the left as our vehicle rolls to a halt. In front of us there is a large blue gate with a simple white cross and the words "Bethania Ministries." Beyond the gate I can see two rows of smiling children waiting patiently for our arrival. After we roll through the gate, I step from the car and am greeted with a sight that I will never forget: fifty or more children dressed

in their finest clothing, beaming at me while holding baskets of flower petals. They have white socks pulled up to their knees, but no shoes. Their black hair is combed neatly to one side, their bright white smiles shining in the sun. We walk between the rows of children and are showered with flower petals and laughter. I am captivated by these children, waiting only for an invitation to give them each a hug. Instantly, I am aware that He is here. **He is with these kids, in the hearts of these kids.**

This Bethania orphanage—along with other Bethania orphanages, daycare centers, after-school centers, and rehabilitative centers—radiates Christ, and the children here radiate His love. His loving hand tenderly cares for each child every day through this ministry, and it shows. Young boys pray with each other, girls help joyfully with meal preparation, children shout happily as they play catch in the yard, and later that day, all of us worship together at a service at the orphanage. Jesus is present in this place.

With leadership that comes straight from the hand of God, these ministries are run by Christian men and women with a commitment to Christ and children that is truly inspiring. One of the images from my trip that I will not soon forget was impressed upon my mind the first night we arrived. As I left the customs area of the airport in Chennai, I saw immediately the tall figure of Bishop

John Sathiyakumar, and his assistant, Reverend Emmanuel. They stood at the far end of the arrival area, their hands together as if in prayer and huge smiles on their faces. It was well past midnight. They were dressed in white robes and had crosses hung around their necks. They were the picture of servants of God. And these were just our two friends in Chennai; there would be many more Godly men and women to be met in the days to come, all full of the Spirit, all committed to Jesus, all committed to children.

In the months and years to come, I will be returning to India to visit my new friends. I hope to get to know them better and to follow their stories. I look forward to seeing the children and the leaders and to encountering the Spirit of God that is so clearly present in the Bethania Ministries. But I do not want to do this alone. I want to go with you—Bethania supporters—to introduce you to the work and wonder that is taking place in India. **I want you to see what I have seen: Jesus and Kids!**

Please consider taking a trip to India with me or another mission trip leader. If you are so led, please contact our office in Michigan, and we will let you know when the next trip is scheduled. Your life will be never be the same.

## Excerpts From My Journal

by Philip Meitzen

### Chennai

The day was filled with marvel as we interacted with the beautiful, dark-eyed, silky chocolate-skinned children that we call Bethania Kids. Upon entering the single room where they live, work, play and eat, we were invited to sit in front of them in plastic deck chairs—places of honor. The children performed their talents reciting, singing, dancing and sharing their memory of the scriptures. We were so fortunate to greet each child with a blessing and a hug.

During the afternoon we engaged in a makeshift game of volleyball, playing with a small wooden ball that the children had scavenged. The children then grabbed our hands and showed us their small garden plantings scattered around the dirty floor of the compound, mentioning the names of the plants with beaming pride. At one point, I peered over the back fence of the compound where I witnessed a little girl left all alone to fend for herself in the dirt. This scene illustrated the plight of the very poorest children on the face of the earth. Yet, because of Bethania, the children found within our walls are happy, fulfilled children who understand the love of Christ and its meaning in their lives.

After sunset the children joined in groups of 5 or 6, praying on their knees in the dirt yard. We joined the kids in their main room and sang spiritual songs and then played the bunny hop and the hokie pokie, much to their delight. Before we departed, we enjoyed a worship service with our Bethania Kids and staff at the Injam Bakkam orphanage.

These children are carrying in them the seed of God's love in Jesus, and it will be their destiny to go forth upon the winds of the Holy Spirit to seed the country of India with the love of Jesus.

### Madurai

Before driving to Kodaikanal, a medium town in the mountains that boarder the western side of the continent, we toured the great Meenakshi Hindu Temple. The streets of the city were crowded with the everyday plight of millions. Many vendors and beggars approached us to sell their wares or ask for money. At the temple, we were required to take off our shoes to walk in the temple grounds. Scores of Indians, mostly older men and women, lined halls strewn with all kinds of paraphernalia of the vendors. Here searching hearts worshipped a granite bull and bowed down to cold, stone-carved deities.

Leaving the temple we drove the road to the mountains. We ventured through village after village, and I began to see the India I remembered as a child. In this distinctly rural area, we found women caring bales of hay—the harvest of winter wheat. This provided footage we were to eventually use for the new Bethania video, entitled "Seeds on the Wind."

### Nagercoil

After a long ride from the Kodai hills to the southern part of India, we arrived at Nagercoil, a large city and home of the Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church Seminary. Grace Subbiah, the dedicated matron of the home, graced us with her delicious cooking and warm friendship.

The children here also treated us as their family. They performed dances, songs, and recitations for us. We had a worship service led by Pastor Daniel. We met two young women, recent graduates of Bethania's Home. One was studying to be a nurse and the other a lab technician. These ladies were living testimonies to the mission of Bethania. They were well adjusted and productive citizens on their way to a life of service. Their faith firmly planted, they are

indeed "seeds on the wind," equipped to share the Good News of Life with their community.

### Kodai

We visited the Bethania Cerebral Palsy Center. It was professionally operated with skilled staff working with the many needy children. These children were able to receive the care and support that would otherwise not be available to them. We witnessed many different vocational skills being learned, such as paper maché, bowl making, sewing, as well as academic learning for those with maladies such as blindness, deafness and speech impediments. We met several girls with polio who projected a warm confidence mixed with a grateful countenance.

We were encouraged to visit Mabels Crèche before we left town. The children were waiting for our arrival. We were asked to sit at tables staged on the rooftop area under a tin roof. There we were served a curry and rice lunch while the children performed dances for us.

After visiting the Crèche, we shuttled down the winding mountain roads toward a nearby village called Poombari. We found our way to the new after-school Center that Paramadass, one of Bethania's teaching evangelists, had helped to establish. This center was like a small cave in the side of the hill, embedded into a building.

Together with Paramadass, we then traveled to Mannavanur, a neighboring village in one of the many valleys of the Western Ghats, or hills. This village had a single road running through the town. Paramadass summoned the children of the village and "piped" them to a hilltop just past the town. There we were able to tell the stories of the Bible and share the love of Jesus with these children of Hindu parents. What an opportunity! What a privilege!

