

# Seeds on the Wind

Spring 2005

SPECIAL TSUNAMI EDITION



Bethania is here in the heart of the tsunami-ravaged east coast of India.

**Dear respected and beloved board members and partners, donors and well-wishers in Christ,** on behalf of Bethania Kids in India, from depth of my heart, I offer my thanks and God's abundant blessings to you-all for your support to the BETHANIA KIDS TSUNAMI RELIEF FUND, for the affected people. I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The tsunami disaster has affected many villages in Tamil Nadu and more than 13,000 people have lost their precious life. Most of the affected people are from the fishermen community. Many of the dead are children. So many surviving children are orphaned. This is a fishing community. The nets are gone—they have no livelihood!

As the calamity is beyond belief and the area is in a pathetic condition, mere words of comfort will not bring hope to the affected people who have lost their loved ones, belongings, properties, possessions, jobs and savings. Many have lost their homes and money, and are in need of essential commodities such as mats, bed-sheets, pillows, soaps, toothpastes, toothbrushes, milk powder, saris, dhotis, lungies, shirts, briefs, vests, notebooks, pencils, etc. These Bethania is providing.

Bethania is one of the key organizations in the Chennai area. There are hundreds and hundreds of children to be taken care. God will provide! Yet, we have to adopt them with permission from the concern authorities with proper legal proceedings. Right now we are supporting them by providing the basic needs. There are three categories of affected children: parentless, semi-orphans and the wounded.

By the grace of God, yesterday I had an opportunity to share with the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Ms. Jayalalitha, about the effective and meaningful activities of Bethania Kids in India. She had appreciated very much and this will be a blessing to our organization.

Along with other leaders also, we are providing the temporary shelter and education for affected children. Yet, we cannot support only the material blessing. We must feed them the love of Christ. We need to prepare and formalize a long-term plan of care. I am discussing this with the other Bethania leaders, and from Chennai to Cudalur to Nagappattinam we will do our best for the underprivileged in the society.

Yours with love and prayers,

Rev. John Sathiyakumar, President  
Bethania Kids, India



Bethania Kids



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# The Young Ones

BY DR. JOEL ALMEIDA *Medical Relief Volunteer*

The power of the tsunami was almost palpable. Sturdy steel frames had been twisted into fantastic shapes, like flimsy electrical wire. Brick walls had been smashed; huge concrete pillars had been flung around. Halves and quarters of fishing boats were scattered around, their bright colours peeping through the grey smoke. Bushes wore colourful garments, clothes that had got entangled in them. Goats wandered calmly through the destruction. Some people were scrabbling about in the wreckage, apparently looking for bounty.

“There was a wave as high as a tree,” one woman blurted out. “There were people on the crest of the wave. They were being thrown down onto hard things. The sea is our mother. If our mother turns on us, where can we go?” she sobbed. I was dumbstruck.

“The wave was so high”, said a fifty-year-old woman. “Had it come at night, when we were sleeping, nobody would have survived. I clung to a pole until the water went out. My husband died. Nearly all the young children died. Look at this girl,” she said, thrusting forward a silent six-year-old. “I found her crouching near a tree when I went back that evening. She was lucky. The young ones slipped out of our arms. They could not hold on to anything.”



For Christ's love  
compels us

—2 Corinthians 5:14





## Finding Children

BY DAVID GRANNER *President, Bethania Kids USA*

“It is the children who are affected the most,” says Rev. John, “According to news reports it is children who account for nearly sixty percent of those who died. And for the survivors the trauma is harrowing. This is the reason we are anxious to identify those most in need as soon as possible.”

Suresh is a young man, perhaps thirty or so. He is a community leader in this village on the outskirts of Chennai. He is also the missionary-in-residence who has been scouting for lost children on behalf of Bethania Kids for the past several years. The fisher-folk along this seacoast village trust him, and he often watches out for their children when both mother and father have gone out to sea. It is Suresh who has brought most of the children to the Bethania Kids Center located nearby.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, the selection process for children is crucial. Identification of affected people remains a serious problem because family cards used for identification have been washed away. Dishonest people tend to exploit this situation and the result is much confusion. Rev. John reports, “We are making every effort to set up priorities to be sure we are bringing the most needy children into our Bethania Orphanages, here in Chennai and elsewhere.”



from tents

# to shelters



## Rebuilding in Nagappattinam

BY JOHN HAEUSLER *Director of Social Experience - Kodiakanal International School*

During January the government of Tamil Nadu, along with international agencies and local agencies like Bethania Kids organized the difficult process of clearing the rubble, providing for medical needs and identifying children. Six weeks after the tsunami hit, focus shifted from relief to rehabilitation. February found volunteers engaged in the construction of temporary housing.

According to Rev. John, “A high percentage of the loss of life in India took place around the Nagappattinam area. This is not only the hardest hit area, it is also a place where relief efforts and rehabilitation have been extremely difficult because the loss is so great.

Students at Kodiakanal International School were pleased to leverage a strong longstanding relationship with Bethania Kids. One group joined Bethania Kids caregivers to care for orphans in the Chennai area. An earlier group led by John Haeusler volunteered to assist with construction of temporary housing in Nagappattinam.

We all knew we had something to do. A small team of us gathered food, water, clothing, medical supplies, and other emergency

supplies—whatever we could think of—and we drove to Nagappattinam. There we joined in with other groups already at work organizing temporary relief measures like World Vision. The Central Government of Tamil Nadu had agreed to supply fifty per cent of the materials, World Vision the remainder. Our students, unskilled carpenters, would be able to provide the simple man and woman-power needed to complete the job.

Twenty-one students and nine faculty members traveled to Nagappattinam. “We may not know anything about carpentry,” they all agreed, “but we will work very hard.” And work they did! In two days time our team managed to put together thirty-two shelters, enough space to accommodate thirty-two families. They worked from dawn to dusk and some students were heard to say, **“Don’t stop us. We can work a little longer. We can still see!”**

We had sharing sessions in the evening and this brought out deep feelings of accomplishment. Even the local contractors stood in awe that our kids worked so tirelessly. In spite of the heat and their lack of experience, everyone was amazingly resilient. We will never forget this experience.



## This issue of Seeds on the Wind

### In Honor of

Josephine Allfeies  
Dave and Sandy Bachus  
Elaine and Thor Boaz  
Jeanee Burger  
Eric Fernandz  
Pat Forman  
Carol Gallo  
Bill and Beth Hagstad  
Bob Hagstad  
Doris and Harry Hagstad  
Phyllis and Mike Hagstad  
Helen Hasslebach  
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The Kirwin Family  
Gary Knoernschild  
Lauren Krise  
Mildred Meier  
Martha Meinzen  
Marie Snyder  
Matt and Erica Reid  
Betty Reilley  
Allan and Heidi Rowe  
Micah Steiner  
Mary and Jud Wallace  
Dorothy Zorn

### In Memory of

Barney Braaten  
Domingo Flora  
Bob Hennig  
Rev. Gary Knoernschild  
Bernice Lowe  
Martha Meinzen  
Ismail Alimed Munli  
Selma Pollert  
Velora Pollert  
Dr. Clarence Rittman  
Hal. J. Roth  
Kenneth Roth  
Marie Snyder  
Erika Steiner  
Herb Wente

Bethania  Kids

# Tsunami Orphans in Temporary Housing

BY RESHAM ELIZABETH GEORGE  
*Bethania volunteer, Kodai, India*

As I visited a group of orphans at a temporary government shelter, I noticed that they were strangers to each other, thrust into a situation without the security offered by home and parents. These facilities were set up to meet their basic needs.

In general, I found the orphans to be very insecure. They often squabbled with others over small things. They were wary of strangers and were in desperate need of love and parenting.

Mani, a young boy of about 12 or 13, took it upon himself to become the surrogate father to the younger boys around him. Mani says, "All of them were children I met sometimes on the beach. So now that they don't have any one to see to their needs on a personal level, I just make sure that they're all right, and that they have enough to eat and that they sleep properly."

It was a humid day, the trademark weather of the coastal areas around Chennai. While the other orphans grabbed the glasses of water, Mani and some of the older boys waited until their protégés had drunk their fill before they allowed themselves to be served. "It's hard to be patient and always look out for them. Sometimes I get very angry when the younger boys are naughty. It's hard to think about them when I'm hungry and I want to drink." Mani lost his father in the destructive waves that swept into his fishing village early on December 26th. His mother was not able to take care of her children and was forced to give them to the care of the government officials. "I miss my mother a lot. The government can see to our food and clothes, but it's not a substitute for the love of a mother."

Pavithra was one of the younger orphans we met. While the other orphans maintained a vestige of gaiety, her eyes would often fill with tears without any apparent cause. Another young orphan clarified her grief to us. "Her mother died of grief because her father died in the tsunami. That's why she's like this."



but orphans need

# O Reason Not the Need!

BY BOB GRANNER *One of Bethania's founders*

*O reason not the need! Our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous.  
Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
Man's life is as cheap as beasts.  
(Shakespeare's King Lear Act III, Sc. IV)*

King Lear discovered through tragedy that everyone needs a life above the baseline of poverty and destitution. Bethania's vision is nurturing and equipping the children of India to change their world through Jesus' love. Never has there been a time in which that vision is more needed. Our calling is a long-term commitment to children to give them *much more* than just food and a roof!

First priorities, of course, will be given to full orphans who have lost both mother and father and who have no other relatives to care for them. Then places will be reserved for semi-orphans, those who have lost a father or a mother and whose families have no means to support them. Additionally, the disabled and mentally disadvantaged must also be cared for. "You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed." -*Psalms 10:17*

Bethania has raised funds to set up two new orphanages at the present time. One of these will be located in the Kodaikanal area

and one in Chennai, as an extension of the Bethania Home already established there. The magnitude of the need in Tamil Nadu has also encouraged partnerships between agencies with complimentary skills. In April Bethania leaders from the U.S. and India will be meeting in Chennai with leaders of Lutheran World Relief and Habitat For Humanity to develop a long-term plan for the care of tsunami orphans throughout the area.

The plan for children not actually taken into one of our Bethania Kids Homes would be twofold: First, we will offer care through Bethania Kids Christian foster care homes. Christian foster parents would be selected based on reputation of the family and capability to take in two children per home. Siblings would stay together in one foster home. Pastors and trained social workers will work in partnership with other volunteers to ensure a high quality of care.

Second, local Bethania Kids Centers would provide Christian daycare from age 2 to 5, for those families who need this service, as well as after-school care for school age kids through age 18. After-school activities might include counseling, tutoring, vocational training, art, music, moral instruction, and computer skills, as applicable and determined by local leaders.

All people, Shakespeare says, deserve at least a little something *extra*, beyond the basic needs for survival. Otherwise life is cheap and human beings have lost their dignity. In touching the suffering children of India, we gain insight, like King Lear, and begin to feel compassion for human kind!

# A Child's Eyes

BY TARA MENON

*A dark-eyed child sits drawing  
Under a wind-blown tree.  
He draws a house and garden flowers  
And the waves of a bright blue sea.  
His father was drowned in the ocean,  
His mother drowned in tears;  
His house was carried away by the sea  
Now dark with nameless fears.  
The sun streams down through the treetops  
And smiles on him in the shade;  
He was born, he has lived by the ocean,  
But now it makes him afraid.  
Small waves lap the sun-bleached seashore  
And carry away the sand.  
The boy draws golden flowers  
With a dark and slender hand.  
In the garden and beach of his picture  
Small children run and play;  
The waves wash away their footprints,  
But the prints on his mind will stay.  
The blue horizon is vast and blank;  
No one goes out to fish.  
The child's mind, too, is quiet, empty  
Of even a childlike wish.  
Here is a seed caught up from the sand  
Where the sea-winds always blow.  
Will it be blown to fertile soil,  
To a garden where it can grow?  
Out on the lonely horizon  
Skims a boat as faint as a thread.  
For the silent child with liquid eyes  
There are decades and decades ahead.*



homes

# Bethel Allows His Light to Shine

It is an amazing thing to watch as people respond to the call and come to the aid of their brothers and sisters in crisis. Recently we have seen an outpouring of God's love from the community at Bethel Lutheran Church in Winchester, VA. Presented with the opportunity to raise funds needed to establish a new orphanage in Chennai, specifically for children victimized by the tsunami, members and friends of Bethel Lutheran rose to the challenge in a rich outpouring of love and generosity.

This past fall, after a visit to India, Bethel Lutheran Church Pastor Rhodes Woolly made the following statement regarding Bethania Kids: "I was so thankful to experience such well-managed, caring, Christ-centered facilities that have made dramatic influences on the lives of the children living there and in the communities surrounding them." Pastor Woolly's first-hand experience in India with the Bethania Kids ministries led him to encourage his congregation to partner with Bethania Kids. The tsunami disaster gave the church a focal point on which to begin this partnership.

Posting a letter on the Bethel website, Pastor Woolly encouraged members to contribute to its India Orphanage Fund and to forward his letter to friends and family who would be interested in supporting this effort. The fundraising effort began on January 8th with a goal of raising \$30,000. In only one week's time, Bethel's efforts surpassed the \$30,000 mark and funds continued to arrive from far and wide! In addition, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans announced that it would match contributions to the fund, dollar for dollar, up to \$40,000. What a blessing!

The community at Bethel has been amazed by the outpouring of support and Pastor Woolly continues to post updates on the fund's progress on the Bethel website ([bethelwinchester.com](http://bethelwinchester.com)). Recently he wrote, "I am convinced that we are a people who are eager to help, especially when given the opportunity."

Funds have come in to Bethel from 17 different states and a wide variety of people. One of the donors was a 10-year-old boy who brought in a \$250 gift after having sold "I Care" buttons to neighbors and Costco Shoppers. Another 15-year-old contributed all of the tips he received while playing piano for a local art gallery's open house. Still other donations came in from funds raised by students at a local high school and middle school. One couple living in West Virginia, wrote "We have been wanting to find a direct way to help the children devastated by the tidal waves. Thank you for providing us the opportunity to contribute in some small way through your relationship with the orphanage in Chennai. May God's blessing be upon you for all you do here and around the world."

We are so thankful for partners like the folks at Bethel Lutheran Church who help Bethania Kids to provide light in a time of darkness and hope for a better future for hundreds of Indian orphans. We have seen through the efforts of Bethel that the tsunami, which devastated so much of southern Asia, is no match for the love and power of Jesus Christ. His light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it!



*Bethel members Bailey and Cameron Morisak put final touches on puzzle-poster to raise support for Bethania Kids.*

"I am convinced  
that we are  
a people who  
are eager to  
help, especially  
when given the  
opportunity."

—Pastor Rhodes Woolly  
Bethel Lutheran Church  
Winchester, Virginia

**Bethania** Kids

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.

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

## **Bethania Administrative Offices**

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