



## CAUTION: ELEPHANT CROSSING

On the road from Trivandrum to Nagercoil we stopped at a small chapel ascribed to be the "oldest Christian church in the world" in Kerala. Tradition says St. Thomas the disciple founded this church ca. 62 A.D.

While looking at the chapel and its little campus we heard some noise on the road. Nothing unusual: just someone walking his elephant while scooters and other traffic passed by.

We encountered other four-legged traffic at other times: cattle, water buffalo, and the white cows sacred to Hinduism.



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## A Passage to India

**I**t was my privilege to travel recently (May 28-June 8) to India to visit two Lutheran churches, the India Ev. Lutheran Church (IELC) and the Bible Faith Lutheran Church (BFLC).

The IELC is a LCMS partner church descended from our first overseas mission. I was privileged to travel to a celebration of the restoration of Concordia Theological Seminary-Nagercoil, by LCMS Disaster Relief. The seminary was severely damaged in 2017 by Cyclone Ochki.

Our group of eight toured the restored campus and presented papers to a "Pastors Refresher Course." We also participated in the 2022 graduation ceremony for the seminary's 35 pastor



and deaconess graduates.

More than just a good-will visit, our time in Nagercoil was also used to discuss our relations with the seminary



Sunset off the tip of India

and the IELC. Faculty and curriculum development and visiting professors were among some of the matters considered.

From Nagercoil three of us continued our travels up to Guntur in Andhra Pradesh state. The journey underscored how diverse India is! From a balmy 88F in Nagercoil, we were greeted by hot and humid temperatures of 107+F in Guntur. Here the land was flat and more open.

The BFLC was also a contrast from the more established IELC. Bishop Shalem Gorremuchu welcomed us; we were joined by Dr. Paul Desari, MD and Rev. Dr. Michael Albrecht. Dr. Desari's father and mother were instrumental in the establishment of Lutheran mission work in Andhra Pradesh and Dr. Albrecht has visited the BFLC from the U.S. many times.



Pr. Albrecht (ctr) and Dr. Desari

Our host took us to visit small but vibrant congregations in the Krishna River delta who greeted us as if we were visiting celebrities with floral leis, smiles, prayers, and food.

The joy these people have in the Gospel is easily seen. They proudly showed us two of the churches they were building with their own efforts and expense. We also visited the current chapel one congregation was replacing by their work. Its appearance was like the manger of Bethlehem: outwardly humble and lowly, but with the power of the Word latent within.

## Impressions of India



The Lord's Supper, Nagercoil

### PLEASE PRAY FOR...

- The progress of the Gospel in India.
- Students in seminaries around the world who are preparing for the holy ministry.

### GIVE THANKS FOR:

- God's grace that took us to—and safely brought us back from—India.
- Our partners in missions who support outreach by their prayers and offerings.
- The grace to complete another festival half of the Church's Year, from Advent to Pentecost.
- 44 years of marriage for Charles and Connie (June 10).



In preparing to visit India for the first time, I read numerous travel accounts to try to learn about what I would see and what to expect. All of them noted how a first trip usually involves “sensory overload.” I have to emphatically agree. India is a trip!

Our visit was limited to two states, Tamil Nadu in the south and Andhra Pradesh to the north on the east coast of the



BLFC pastor and his family

subcontinent. Tamil Nadu was densely forested with tropical plant-life; Andhra Pradesh flat and more arid. 1.3 billion people live in India making it the second most populous country on earth (we heard India is likely to overtake China in population). People are everywhere! While on the road, we were surrounded by 3-wheel “taxis,” motorbikes, scooters, etc., some with four persons aboard. The streets were thick with vehicles and pedestrians.

Color is everywhere from the saris worn by the women to birds, flowers, and pastel buildings.

Christian tradition says St. Thomas the disciple went to India and died there in the first century.



Krishna River congregation

Christianity is present in modern India, but greatly overshadowed by Hinduism, Islam, and the like. Foreign missionaries are strongly restricted by law so our partnerships and cooperative efforts with churches like the IELC and BLFC are important connections for Gospel outreach to India. May God bless them for His sake!



Heading to a wedding

- Charles +

Dear supporter,

Thank you for your role in allowing me to represent LCMS missions and our Eurasia region on this “passage to India.” I wish I could convey better how much our visit meant to the Indian Christians we were privileged to meet. It was humbling and exhilarating all at once. God has called His Church from every language, people, and nation—this we believe—and this visit made that more real than ever. Blessings in Christ to you!

- Charles +

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