

# BULLETIN BRIEFS

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## TSUNAMI

This is a Japanese word for a powerful earthquake generated tidal wave. On Sunday December 26, 2004, at 7:58 a. m. local time (Sumatra, Indonesia) a rupture occurred in the floor of the Indian ocean 18.6 miles below the surface 100 miles west of Sumatra. Traveling at 1.25 miles per second the rupture traveled about 250 miles, paused for 100 seconds, then cracked another 500 miles. Its length was 750 miles and its width 60 miles (Internet: Google/Tsunami). The water above the full 750 miles was lifted to an enormous height – some estimates run as high as eighty feet in Sumatra and it affected about 15 countries, some as far away as Mexico.

The death toll estimates run 175,000 or more. It is highly unlikely that the true figure will ever be known. In Indonesia itself the count runs well over 100,000. In Sri Lanka, the island country south west of India, the count of the dead runs up to 35,000. India reports that more than ten thousand died.

By 9:30 a. m. that fateful morning the enormous wave had crossed the Indian ocean and the Bay of Bengal and slammed into the east coast of India. That country's most Southern state, Tamil Nadu was the hardest hit. Just here I would like to repeat a portion of the report that I made at the time the Tsunami hit.

Greetings in the name of Jesus our Savior. You have seen the catastrophic devastation that the Tsunami of December 26, 2004, left in its wake across Asia. According to press reports there may have been 150,000 or more deaths in eleven countries. While the heart is rendered on the earthly plain because of the great suffering, it is even more horrible to perceive how many of those went into eternity unprepared. We know as David did (II Samuel 12:23) that the babies and little children who died by the thousands are safe with our Lord, but judgment awaits "those who do not know God and those who (did not) obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 1:6-9).

Tamil Nadu, where we have fourteen Bible Training Schools, was the hardest hit state in India, with a government estimate of more than 7,500 dead and many still missing. This is the fifteenth day since the disaster and television has shown horrible

### 6. One million tracts at 1.78 cents each - \$17,860.

(These will be five titles that we have on hand for unbelievers. We are to publish others one for denominational people.

7. One hundred and fifty-six Bicycles at \$59 each - \$9204. As I have indicated before, we do not put the preaching school graduates on support after they complete the course, but give them a bicycle. This is usually after graduation, but this year due to the even greater urgency in soul sinning in the wake of the Tsunami we want to give them their bikes by the time of graduation in April. You cannot imagine the joy a "cycle," as they call it, gives to them. It is like buying a car for someone in the US who never had a car and could not afford one. The 156 bikes will go to 86 graduates from the married men's school at Dindigul (April 30), the 29 graduates from the school of preaching for single men at Coimbatore (April 23) and 41 previous graduates.

8. A small truck - \$11,500. For the more than fifteen years that we have been training preachers in India I have been very reluctant to buy a car or other vehicle. The exceptions to this reluctance was when we bought an old used van back in 1995, which is still running and a fifteen passenger van we bought for the girls school in 2001. However, with the great expansion of the work in the last three years and with the impact of the tidal wave a tremendous need has been put on us to transport materials and brothers, so that we sorely need a truck. It will be small one.

8. More regular monthly support for students in the Bible schools. We now spend about \$65 a month to train a preacher. Much of this increased cost has come about because of the lower exchange rate we are receiving for the dollar.

It is our prayer that this Biblical like plague of the Tsunami will cause the Tamil people to open their hearts to the gospel and turn from the dumb idols of wood and stone. You will note that the plan outlined above is not just a hand out of disaster relief, but a studied effort to win souls and hearts for our dear Master's sake. Never before has there been such an opportunity in this state of more than 65 million souls. Please help as you can by sending your gifts to: Crossville Church of Christ, P. O. Box 1010, Crossville, TN 38557. Put on the "for line" on the check: *Tsunami relief and soul saving*. If you have questions phone Clyde Randolph, elder, at 931-935-5933. (Please pass this appeal to others).

In Christian love,

Jim E. Waldron

scenes of death and devastation with truck loads of bodies being carried to places for mass burial or cremation. Bodies are still being pulled from the rubble and bulldozers and back hoes are being used to bury other bodies where they fell.

Don Iverson of Banner Elk, N.C., self supporting elder and gospel preacher, and I work as a team in the Tamil Nadu work. On Tuesday (28<sup>th</sup>) after the Tsunami hit he phoned me in Dindigul from Banner Elk and the two of us discussed what we could do in the face of such devastation. He indicated that he was getting calls from various brethren and churches asking what they could do. Calls were also coming into Crossville. I phoned brother Clyde Randolph, one of our elders at Main Street and he spoke with our other two elders, brothers Eddie Brown and Bill Foland. They as well as the Banner Elk elders agreed that we should make an all out effort do what we could. In order to have funds for the initial work we borrowed \$20,000 at Crossville and the Banner Elk church added another \$20,000, thus when Don boarded a plane at Knoxville on Thursday (30<sup>th</sup>) he was carrying \$40,000 to be used to cover our initial response.

He arrived on the 1<sup>st</sup> at Coimbatore. I had ridden the train over night the one hundred miles to meet him. We spent twenty-four hours planning then I returned to Dindigul to work in the bicycle campaign (664 were baptized in the eleven days). Don went south to the Kanniya Kumari (KK), the southern most tip of India where much damage was done by the Tsunami. It is a small city where one of our schools of preaching is located. There are several dozen churches of Christ in the area. Many lives and homes were lost in the tidal wave, but as far as we know not one Christian perished. Don stayed three days and set up a program using fifteen of our preaching brethren to help widows. To do this he rented the local YMCA pavilion at KK.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Don, four Tamil brothers and I made a trip to the city of Nagappattinam, which lies about 275 miles north of KK and 160 miles east of Dindigul. It was the hardest hit area in the country. The massive wall of water struck on that fateful Sunday at an estimate height of thirty to thirty-five feet high and moving at about 500 miles an hour. Houses, made of thatch, wood and brick were hurled down and boats weighting thousands of tons were driven inland and piled on each other and on houses and shops.

Some of the area where the devastation was most intense the government had giant backhoes and bulldozers leveling the rubble. As we walked over one of those areas we came upon two ladies standing off to one side. As we came up one of them said, "That is a cemetery now." It was an area about the size of four football fields, which had contained a large ghetto of several hundred huts of the fishermen and their families. Both women were widows and each had a bag the size of a feed sack with all their worldly belongings in

them. One said she had lost her husband, two children and another relative. The other had lost seven family members. As it was very late I gave each some money and told them we would be back.

The State and National governments and large numbers of non-government organizations (called NGOs) are sending in large quantities of rice, other food stuff and water. Yet, human suffering and loss is so great and the devastation so wide spread, that Don and I realize that we must concentrate on finding individuals with an open heart, whom we can help and who will listen to the gospel. The fact that we already had a eleven-day campaign for Christ planned (January 3 -13) in which we are using several hundred Tamil gospel preachers gave us an opportunity to teach many people that they as well as we, must, as Jesus said, always be ready. These brothers are tent-making preachers who support themselves with day labor, when they can obtain it, for \$1.75 per day. In order to offset their loss of wages we are supporting them for the 11 days at the same rate.

These are devout men of God, trained in the word and know their own people well. We will be able to use some of them directly in the affected areas. They will be far better than we at being able find those whom we can help with basic physical needs and to whom we can teach the gospel. In seeking wisdom on how to take advantage of this rare opportunity I have prayed daily, discussed with Don regularly by phone (sometimes two or three times in a day) and stayed in contact with our elders at Crossville. The elders, Don and I are convinced that this is extremely rare opportunity for the church to make a powerful impression on this State (Tamil Nadu has a population of more than sixty-five million) and the whole country (1.1 billion). We are equally convinced the struggle must be a long term effort. Here is a list of needs:

**1. Support for daily Bible camps for widows and fatherless children (minimum number of widows – 250) at \$2.25 per head.** We will work this plan for a minimum of ninety days. This will mean a daily cost of \$560 per day or a total cost of \$50,600. This is laid out in this manner for we must see how the program works from the widows' interest and the way support comes in. This work is on going even as I write).

The government has thousands of people in refugee camps and the people are crowded beyond belief. The squalor is appalling. The people are fed in mass with rice and a gruel like stew to go over it. Although our brothers can visit the camps they are not allowed to teach there. Also the government has disallowed adoption of orphans.

Yet, in spite of these road blocks there is a real window for a demonstration of the love and compassion of our dear Savior for some of the most helpless. That window is open, not only because of the ordinary need of widows, but is intensified here because of the common discrimination by the populous against widows. When a Hindu woman marries she must provide a dowry (pay money to) and become

a part of her husband's family. Often when he dies she is no longer wanted. Thus these widows, many who are quite young, have little if any hope (they are never allowed to remarry) or family support.

Don and fifteen gospel preachers over the past seven days (January 3-9—this work has been expanded up the eastern coast ) have demonstrated the effectiveness of the approach of a day Bible camp at KK. This was done by leasing the local YMCA pavilion for the use of this benevolent program ((Just today January 25, Don has just informed me that the director of the YMCA has obeyed the gospel. This brings to 32 the number baptized since January 4th).

The Tamil brothers visit in the refugee camps and invite the widows to come for the day to get a well planned hot meal with appealing food and fruit. They sit in Bible studies and the gospel is preached to them. In the evening they return to the camps for the night. During the first week an average of about ninety widows daily took advantage of this and the numbers grew as the joy of it spread by word of mouth. We (are duplicating) this effort in three other centers in as many cities on Tamil Nadu's eastern coast: Nagappattinam, Cuddalore and Pondy Cherry. Cities hit hard by the Tsunami. Not to be overly ambitious we are (seeking) to provide this kind of help for 250 widows with or without children over ninety days. The success or growth of this effort will depend on the widows' response in those three locations and the help we receive for this project. At \$2.25 per day that will cost \$565 a day for the 250 or \$50,850 for the 90y days.

**2. Lay the ground work for long term effort in these same cities by locating two mature well trained gospel preachers in each of the three cities.** Preachers, who are not only effective evangelists, but who are Bible school trained men that can begin to conduct a preacher training school within three years. I interviewed six brothers for this purpose on the 10th January (They are now in place). We need support for the six like this: Total monthly support for each \$150. That means \$100 in wages for family support, \$30 for house rent and \$20 for retirement savings.

**3. Rent, buy or lease a building in the three places.** Although our brethren have established several hundred churches since the first SOP was begun in 1989, we do not build or buy a meeting house except in conjunction with a SOP. Where we have a Bible training school located we rent, buy or build. Monthly rent of a hall in any of the three cities named above will cost about Rs 3,500\-\$83.33). That is \$1,000 for a year's rent in each place.

**4. Buy 10, 000 Tamil Bibles from the Bible Society for distribution at \$1.86 each - \$18,605.** (These we have ordered today (January 25), but more will needed within the next few months.

**5. Print 10,000 song books.** Individuals here like to have their own song book, which they bring along with their Bibles to worship, and use for family devotions at home at ninety-eight cents each - \$9,800. (We have ordered these today).