

WALDRON NEWSLETTER

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BUILDING CHURCHES

As you have heard me say before there are six billion souls just outside the back door and our Lord and Savior, Jesus, said “go” and “preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15-16). Yet, that is not the end. For our King also said, “teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). This means that evangelists must set up and build local churches. For it is by the means of local churches that the kingdom of God is maintained in a community or nation. This is why we stress in the schools of preaching that those who teach and baptize must be sure that new Christians have someone with them to preach and break bread each Lord’s day.

Our first school of preaching was set up in Tamil Nadu in 1989. At that time it was reported that there were 71 congregations in the central portion of the state. Today we do not know how many congregations are meeting in the region, but it is somewhere in the neighborhood of 425. These churches have been established not by me, but by faithful native brothers. In many places it has been difficult, but through perseverance and hard work men and women have been converted from the dumb idols of wood and stone and local churches of Christ have been planted. Below is a report on the success and difficulties in three regions where brethren are working.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN PUDHUKOTTAI

This is the city where the Bible institute for the blind meets. It has a population estimated at about 60,000. It lies about 70 miles east of Dindigul. Brother K. Shunmugam is the director of the school. There are thirty-two blind in the school. This group consists of men, women and some children. But training the blind is not all that Shunmugam does. Here are some of the things he told in a recent report. There are three congregations in the area. One of these is at the school property. The average attendance is 44 and 30 of these are members. It meets at 7:30 in the morning on the Lord’s day and one of the instructors in the school, C. Marimuthu, who is blind is the preacher. Another congregation meets at 9:35 a.m. in a house in a place called Tiruvappur. There are 12 members and Shunmugam does the preaching. A new congregation has begun in a different location, Machuvadi, with two members and a total attendance of 15. It also meets in a home. Shunmugam and two other brothers conduct studies house to house throughout the week to win souls and to strengthen the members. Elizabeth, Shunmugam’s wife, helps him a lot in his visitation work. Sadly he reported that those who were baptized in the eVangelism work in February have gone back to the world. He wrote they did this “in spite of our follow up efforts.”

CARMEL NAGAR CHURCH OF CHRIST

This congregation meets on the grounds of the Dindigul Bible Institute, which is the three year school of preaching. It is thus a rural congregation because the school meets eight miles from the city. The students are not there on the weekends, so the church has had to struggle. The present preacher is a brother A. Arockiadass, who is one of the instructors in the DBI. There are 34 members. Several of these are widows and two or three are handicapped. Between June 1999 and July 2000 there were 12 who obeyed the gospel, but brother Arockiadass reports that four of these have fallen back. The contribution averages about Rupees 775\ (\$18) a month. Out of this they give three graduates of the preaching school a hundred rupees each to help support them. These brothers are members of the local church and they go out on Sunday afternoons and preach in other places. Besides that they work with the students during the week preaching from house to house and from village to village.

DINDIGUL SOUTH CHURCH OF CHRIST

This is the congregation where brother J. Sagayaraj preaches. The attendance is about twenty and they meet in a room that is on top of a house. They have had five to obey the gospel since March. Sagayaraj also preaches for another congregation about twelve miles from Dindigul. It is called the mountainside church of Christ and it meets in the home of one of the brothers who is a farmer. Three other brothers in the Dindigul South congregation are very active in preaching the gospel in nearby villages.

PETER PILLAI

Few men are more valuable in the kingdom than this brother. He is the man who banks all our funds which we send to the various Bible schools in Tamil Nadu each month, disperses it and gives us a regular report as to who receives what. Brother Pillai obeyed the gospel on January 1, 1970, while we were living in Pakistan. For many years he was a clerk in a British Bank in Karachi. After retirement he with his wife, son and daughter immigrated to South India. His son is now married with two children. They all live in a small house in the mountains about 150 miles north west of Dindigul. He along with his family formed the church in Kotagiri after they moved to the region in 1981. The church, which met in a renovated cow shed until 1999, has grown slowly over the years. Recently a couple from the states helped them buy a piece of land. Having saved their money for some years they were able to put up a small meeting house. It is shown in the picture. It well illustrates the simple kinds of buildings our brothers and sisters have as church houses in third world countries. This little hut of fibrous corrugated tar sheets makes a stark contrast to some of the cathedrals being built by churches in this country. Of the 425 churches I spoke of above only about 15 percent have there own meeting places. Most meet in homes or in the open. Many times brethren will ask us to help them build buildings, but I tell them we are too involved in the training of preachers to build church buildings. We do put up buildings or help with them where the SOPs meet, but if we help one congregation build a building there would be 400 others who would want the same. It is far better for them to find their own meeting place, while we give ourselves to the work of training gospel preachers.

Speaking of buildings, we are continuing to upgrade those that are used for schools of preaching. Please help as you can. We want you to know that we always thank God for your care and we thank you for your joint participation in this work of faith and labor of love.

In Christian love,

Jim E. Waldron

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