

September 2008

Dear Friends,

The purpose of this letter is to update you on some of the information you'll want to know in making a decision to travel with us to India in February 09. This will be a special occasion as we will have the opportunity to celebrate 40 years of ministry (150 churches and preaching points, and a membership of over 15,000!) with Dr. Prasanth and Rev. Nirmala Kumar and all those at the Brethren Mission in Rajahmundry, India.

Dates: The dates for the trip are tentatively set for February 8-20. I say tentative because we are still deciding what all can and will be done while en route to and in India at the mission. We will need at least ten days total to make everything work, and maybe a couple of days more.

Cost: Our best guesstimate is \$3500 inclusive, from the point of departure. (Our point of departure will likely be Chicago.) The plans are for us all to gather at the point of departure to begin our journey. We will be glad to assist you with arranging your travel to our departure point. Inclusive means that once we leave the country all food, hotels, and ground transportation will be provided. You will just need to be responsible for whatever personal spending you may want to do. Generally, souvenirs and gifts to take home from India are very reasonable. Usually \$100 to \$200 per person is sufficient, or credit cards work well!. You will also need a passport with at least six months validity before its expiration, and you will need to obtain a visa. The visa cost is estimated at \$100 extra, which includes express mail of documents. We will assist you in every aspect of the visa process.

Purpose: 1.) To experience God at work through the India mission for the purpose of our own spiritual transformation, and so that we can share that spirit of transformation with our own congregations. 2.) To learn about the Brethren Mission in India so that we will be encouraged to pray for and support the mission, and urge others to do the same. 3.) To participate in the ministry of the Brethren Mission wherever possible. 4.) To learn as much as possible about the Indian culture for the purpose of greater understanding of the mission there, and as a way of showing respect and love for those who serve on our behalf.

Itinerary: We will have plenty to do as we experience the vast ministry of the Brethren Mission including sharing with the children at the orphanage, conducting a mobile medical clinic in one of the outlying villages, participating in the ordination of forty new pastors to commemorate the forty years of the Brethren Mission, dedicating a new church building in one of the villages, a special day of praying for the sick and the needy, times of worship where some group members will have the opportunity to preach or lead in some way, and of course the celebration of God's work through the Brethren Mission over the past forty years!

Sightseeing: We will do some sightseeing at our first stop in Delhi, and in Agra at the Taj Mahal which is a train ride from Delhi, in Visakhapatnam, and in Rajahmundry at the mission. There are several reasons why we have included this aspect of the trip in our itinerary: 1.) It shows respect and love for those who serve in India on our behalf. 2.) It will give us time to rest after a long journey, before we begin our ministry time in Rajahmundry. 3.) It will give us time to purchase gifts to take home to those who have supported our efforts, and provide a visual reminder of our partnership with those who sent us. Additionally we will do a few hours of sightseeing in Amsterdam likely on the way back to the states, for a couple of reasons: 1.) It will provide a break in the long flight schedule, which is a concern that several of you have expressed. 2.) It costs very little to do such an excursion and is well worth the effort while the opportunity exists. A partial day lay over in Amsterdam (not overnight) might include a tour of the famous canals and a visit to the Anne Frank house.

Preparation: There are many ways that Nancy & I will be assisting you in your preparation for this trip. These will include:

- Advice and assistance with passport, and especially visa preparation
- Information on inoculations, and other required medications for travel
- Counsel on fund raising ideas to assist you financially and to build natural networks for prayer support and for sharing the Gospel
- How to prepare, counsel on attire and other things to bring with you
- What you can bring with you to bless the India mission
- How to get your whole church involved in the effort if possible

In addition to the above mentioned items, it is important for you to be physically and spiritually ready for this excursion. We will create opportunities for you to begin your spiritual journey well in advance of boarding the plane. Likewise we will make a conscious effort to connect as a group before departure. This trip will not be strenuous, but physically challenging nonetheless. There will be moderate walking and time on your feet. While indoors we will be in air conditioning, but we will not spend all of our time indoors! Expect temperatures in excess of 80 F, but not usually higher than what we experience in the Midwest in July. The Indian environment is quite different from anything you've experienced, as it smells and looks completely unique. The food will be different though we will ensure that the menu is compatible with our needs. There are people everywhere, though not terribly crowded. All of these factors combined however can lead to what I call "sensory overload," and makes the whole experience a bit more of a challenge. Traveling with friends and at all times under the watchful care of our missionaries makes all the difference.

In conclusion, let me say that you are considering the trip of a lifetime! It is difficult to describe the spiritual impact of this sort of journey, for yourself and potentially for your church as well. For this reason we are encouraging as many of our pastors as possible to be a part of this experience. Consider asking your pastor (and spouse) to participate! Think and pray through this information and let me know if you have questions or concerns. I can be reached at 1-877-289-1708 during the day, or feel free to call me on my cell at 419-606-0318. If all of

this information is sufficient and you are certain that you would like to participate, then do let me know as soon as possible. Already we have at least a dozen that intend to travel. This opportunity will be offered denomination-wide, and we expect the size of the group to potentially double or maybe more. Though we want to identify the group as soon as possible, openings to travel will be available until the plane is full.

How to get started?

- Be sure that I know you intend to participate.
- Obtain your passport now, or check your existing passport to be sure it does not expire before 8/09. Passport applications can usually be made at a local Post Office.
- Go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinationIndia.aspx#vaccines> for information on required inoculations and travel medications. Generally we suggest inoculation for Hepatitis A&B (Twinrix), Typhoid, Tetanus up to date, and an adult booster of Polio vaccine if you've not had one. In addition you will need an anti-Malarial prescription such as Malarone or Doxycycline. Vaccines and medicines can usually be obtained from the Travel Nurse at your County Health Dept. for a reasonable fee, and they will usually be able to advise you on this part of your preparation. Check with your insurance provider, as some of you will have coverage for these meds and vaccines and therefore may obtain them from your family physician.
- Go online and begin to learn about India and its culture. Begin your inoculations no later than Dec. 1, 2008.
- Ask God to help you in your decision process and to prepare you inside and out for this amazing journey. Pray that this investment will impact the lives of those around you!

We are very close to getting everything finalized. At that point we will request that you purchase your airline ticket to get you locked into the process. Included in the ticket cost will be travel insurance that would help you recover your ticket cost should you not be able to follow-through due to health, and would have other coverage as well. The projected ticket cost will be about \$1775 and will be due in full to get started. If this is a problem, then inform me of your situation and we'll see what we can work out together. We'd like to get you going if at all possible.

I'm sure you will have questions, so let me hear from you! I would love to have you join us. Just remember that your interest may be the call of God, and that we are all here to help one another and make this journey together. God bless you as you seek to follow Him!



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