

2018 International Heart and Voice Conference Report

From Linnea Good, co-leader:

"But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it." (Deut 30:14)

The gift of Holy Word was brought a step closer to our mouth and heart this month, when a team of 9 members of the Network of Biblical Storytellers International travelled to three cities in South India to teach students, staff and family of the Christian Medical College Hospital of Vellore (Tamil Nadu), students at a bible college in Bengaluru (Karnataka), and staff and students of Believers Church College Hospital in Thirruvalla (Kerela).

Team Leader Ron Coughlin, began with why: "When you practise a portion of scripture every day, it becomes a part of you; you learn it not just with your head but with your heart."

Participants spent three and a half days worshipping, hearing plenary addresses and working actively in small groups and were able, at the end of the conference, to tell four full stories from the gospel of Mark from memory.

Many were amazed that they had this ability within them, and all had the opportunity to reflect on the possible places - personally, professionally and pastorally - where telling Holy Word would be immediately useful. They were presented with certificates of accomplishment at the closing ceremony, and a team was commissioned to build on the work begun.

At the close of the third conference, Ron wept on the stage, so moved was he by the energy and courage these young evangelists had for telling the Word. Dr George Chandy, our host and director of the Hospital, said, "With the persecution that is going on in some states these young students come from, it may be that biblical storytelling is the only means they will have available to them in sharing the Word in future." Indeed, perhaps it is the only one that really matters.

"... and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mk 2:12)

Juliana Rowe, associate board member for international work:

This mission turned out to be different from prior missions although it started off as any other. When I learned that Linnea Good was going on a choral music trip to India, I asked her to look into the possibility of including biblical storytelling to her choral program, and Linnea began groundwork with her contacts in India to make it possible. At 2016 Festival Gathering a team began to form; nine biblical storytellers joined

the team. I invited past mission team member, Ron Coughlin, to become the team leader and he set the wheels in motion.

Three towns: Vellore, Bengaluru and Thiruvalla, opened their doors to us. The mission theme chosen by Linnea, 'Heart and Voice,' tied speaking from the heart and singing praises with the voice together quite well.

Then two weeks before departure, when we started addressing publicity and advertising, we began to get subtle caveats from one of the liaisons in India, corroborated by a contact in the Bengaluru. Our visit was not to be advertised. We were to be simply visitors and tourists. That stirred anxiety in some of us. What was going on? All plans were in place, vaccinations taken and tickets already bought. At that point there was no turning back. We were advised to script our language to get through on arrival and while we were in transit. It was "All systems go."

We met in Chennai and traveled as a team in a van to Vellore where the kindest and most efficient chaplain, our organizer, welcomed us. The next morning at Vellore just under a hundred young and energetic men and women, students and lecturers from various medical and theological disciplines gathered quite early, all eager to meet us.

With our team's own musical quartet, comprising Linnea Good on keyboard, her husband David Jonsson on drums, Dr. Larry Brown's guitar and Elaine Davies' flute, they were ready to lift their voices in many familiar tunes they had already learned from Linnea and David's previous visits. What a rousing opening worship that was - a first. We have never had our own traveling four-piece band on such trips!

Ron Coughlin as team leader opened the conference. Linnea led the opening worship. In keeping with our Heart and Voice theme, stories from the heart that underscored the need to learn and tell were interspersed with songs. At the end of a vibrant worship, groups were formed and paired with facilitators.

The students were enthusiastic and eager to learn; a few who thought internalizing a story was impossible, were attempting to tell the story they learned that day in two 45-minute sessions. Most of them were quick learners. I wondered how medical students and health workers in my group intend to share the new art they were acquiring. Some said with immediate family members, others with children and youth in their churches. A female hospice chaplain said she will share her stories with dying patients but even more with their grieving family members, who would need them. There is no shortage of where and how biblical stories can be used!

We used virtually the same program in all three towns. The team was prepared to be flexible and to be ready 'to go with the flow.' Were they tested! And did they come out spotless. They excelled! What a great team!

In all three towns our seminars were with staff and students of Christian institutions and we were safely housed within the campus of each institution. I was not surprised to find that theological staff and students and medical staff and nurses comprised the majority of those in attendance. A handful of people from the outside were also present.

Another first in this mission was a last-minute request to do a concert of biblical stories and familiar songs at the end of a long normal mission day. We did and it was most successful.

At Thiruvalla, the liaison warned us and the attendees that with Christians being only one percent of the population, and with all the restrictions they are under, there is no telling what the future holds. If everything is taken from them, the one and only thing that will remain with them will be the Bible stories in their hearts. He encouraged the audience to take biblical storytelling very seriously.

Plenary Presentations

Biblical Storytelling How-To Workshops

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Ron

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Juliana

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Barbara

[Bartimaeus Rap](#)

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Elaine

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Bonnie

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Fay

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Larry

Biblical Storytelling Workshop: Linnea

Singing Hallelujah sheet music

Singing Hallelujah powerpoint

Honey From the Rock sheet music

Theme Workshops

Biblical Storytelling and Healing Stories: Elaine

[Definition of a Miracle](#)

[Review the 12 Healing Stories in Mark: Elaine \(reference revision world\)](#)

Biblical Storytelling with Children: Barbara

[Biblical Storytelling with Children Handout](#)

Biblical Storytelling and Pastoral Care: Bonnie

Biblical Storytelling and Spiritual Discipline: Juliana & Ron

Biblical Storytelling and Team Telling: Fay

Biblical Storytelling and Worship/Preaching: Larry

Biblical Storytelling and Music: Linnea