

GOSPEL BAND CHURCHES

We became acquainted with the Gospel Band churches through an American brother who began visiting India, and more particularly the state of Andhra Pradesh, in 1992. It was also through meetings with the Gospel Band that RHM got connected with Sister Buelah and ultimately HOPE.

The Gospel Band started in the 1950's, as a brother named Devasahayam (who was also a government employee) began going to the villages and evangelizing the lost. There were other believers who joined with him in the work, and soon some of the village people were giving their hearts to Christ. Devasahayam (name meaning "God's helper") and the others would follow up with the new believers and began to realize that this needed to be more than just an evangelistic effort. There was a need to establish churches and appoint leadership for these new congregations of believers.

Devasahayam was a faithful worker with these churches for around 30 years until his health began to go down. In the 1980's his son, Joshi K. Roy, began to take more of the leadership responsibilities for the Gospel Band. Joshi and other elders, including HOPE's pastor Bhaskara Raogaru, have been overseeing the work for many years now. At this time, Gospel Band consists of about 50 different churches in about 34 villages and towns. Brother Joshi, in his 60s, now devotes most of his time to visiting the churches and discipling the pastors and leaders. He feels a burden to make sure that the next generation of believers continues to walk faithfully with the Lord.

One of the reasons we feel blessed to be a part of assisting the Gospel Band is that they are for the most part poor people in need of help from the Body of Christ. In the bigger cities, there are many thriving churches with money and a vision to do big things for God. That's great and certainly has a part in the Kingdom, but India has an estimated 500,000 villages, and most of this money and vision doesn't reach down to the poor and needy within the villages. Most of these people are agricultural workers, and the offerings barely support a fulltime pastor and his family, even though they live very frugal lives. They have your typical needs within their congregations: poverty and lack of food among some, needy widows, medical needs, repairs to their churches (which they usually call "prayer houses"), money for Bibles, etc.. This is what the funds sent by



Inside a typical village church; this village is Swarnipalem

Using a tent as a temporary solution to the fact their church building collapsed due to high winds (fallen church on left). This congregation is in town of Bapatla



RHM is used for, to help the "needy in their distress". Let's not forget that more than half the world, and well more than half of the Body of Christ, our brothers and sisters in the Lord, are in this condition. Perhaps most of them have enough for food and clothing, but when extra needs arise, or the desire to do more to advance the Kingdom of God, the money simply is not there.

We have also begun to give regular assistance to one of the young pastors within the Gospel Band, whose name is Puthra. He has a humble, servant's heart, with a desire to touch many lives for Christ. He also has a desire to minister to widows. His family is poor, so what a blessing it is to be the Lord's vessel to help him fulfill the purpose of God upon his life. Pray with us, that we will be able to help more in the days ahead.

"For You have been a Defense for the helpless, a Defense for the needy in his distress, a Refuge from the storm, a Shade from the heat." Isaiah 25:4