



Off the beaten path

As I travel around the country for work, I have a strange identity crisis. I am a trained doctor and development professional and this is how I have always known myself. When working in secular institutions earlier, my principal identity with my audience was my professional one-people knew me no other way. That has changed.

During my first visit to Tezpur in Assam recently, a meeting with several Bodo pastors had been arranged. When my hosts at the hospital introduced me to the church leaders, a few said that they already knew me. I was confused as this was my first visit to this politically troubled area. When a church leader got up to introduce me, he did so not in terms of my professional identity or what I had come there to do, but as someone who wrote articles for some Christian magazines that he and his colleagues had been blessed by.

I was uneasy but also secretly pleased: uneasy because I wonder if I am losing touch with my profession and the identity and purpose it gives me; but pleased at the tangible success of my tent making that it is possible to have two equally meaningful identities and somehow integrate them. It is possible to practise a profession and also help in the task of evangelizing and discipling if not directly, then at least working alongside those who do. In this instance, I could never dream of doing anything

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purposeful among the Bodos, but the fact that whatever I was doing was providing nurture to those who work and serve among them was a great encouragement.

The well beaten path of the modern missions movement is the road of the supported worker. One often hears inspiring testimonies of zealous Christians who laid down their secular employment to enter missions "full time". The professional missionary, with a Bible School diploma and technical training

in development, is the epitome of a successful missions strategy. He or she is also the spiritual icon of the Church, held up as an example of counting the cost and a model of spirituality. However, in the history of the Church, the professional missionary is a recent phenomenon. During its first four hundred years of existence, the Church grew from being an obscure religious sect of Judaism to a

dominant global religious influence, principally through people who lived their faith in the marketplace. Paul's missionary efforts had their greatest success among the middle and upper middle classes. The converts were like Lydia, a business woman, who had the freedom to associate and to gather others to hear the good news (Acts 16:15). It is likely that these Christians traveled as merchants and traders to new lands and introduced nations to the gospel as they plied their wares. (Continued on page 2)

Jesus was a 'full time' carpenter before he became a full time "Rabbi". He served as a rabbi for only three years but was a carpenter probably from his teens. He started as an apprentice to his 'father' Joseph. He was later entrusted with the responsibility of supporting his mother, brothers and sisters through his trade. He knew the struggles of earning a livelihood. When Jesus chose his disciples, it was no surprise that they were either accomplished fishermen or tax-collectors. He found them better suited for ministry than the Pharisees and Sadducees of the day. They knew the struggles of day to day living better than the theologians and missiologists of the day. The message of the Kingdom needed to be lived out in the daily life of the market place than just repeated in the pulpits of the synagogues.

Have we lost the true essence of the Great Commission by handing over the role of proclaiming the Good News, discipling the believers, pastoring the flock, leading in worship and serving the neighbours to the so called "full time ministers - pastors & missionaries". Why should we leave the task of the Great Commission to the 'priestly clan' or the 'super-evangelists'? Why are bishops, moderators, missionaries, pastors, evangelists etc. put on a high pedestal and given honour more than even Christ himself? I am not against full timer workers, serving as one but should we not be the servants to mobilize the whole

COUNTRY TEAM LEADER'S HEART TALK



church rather than perpetuating ourselves?

The whole community of believers is called to fulfill the Great Commission, not just the few who claim to have received the 'call'. If only we can get today's equivalent of carpenters, fishermen, tax-collectors, tent makers, traders etc. to become proclaimers, disciplers, pastors, bishops, evangelists, apostles and leaders - our churches and missions will be very different. They are the people who will turn the world upside down. The balance needs to be tilted in favour of the so called 'lay' people. We need to equip, envision and empower all believers to fulfill their calling. We need a paradigm shift. The ordinary Christians in the market place will make better 'Proclaimers' of the good news whether full time or part time.

As you read this issue, are you ready for a paradigm shift in your mindset about how to be obedient to the Great Commission? How many believers would you be able to influence to become 'proclaimers & disciplers' in the market place? Our goal is not to increase the Christian population in India by one or two percentage, but rather to see the whole nation transformed by the Good news of Jesus Christ. This can happen only when the whole church is mobilised to become proclaimers & disciplers, not just another fifty thousand full timers!

- John Amalraj

All around the world today, men and women are moving across cultures to use their professions and trades in the cause of world mission. There are several ways of looking at this movement. Each may have some truth, but if taken alone can be misleading or even damaging because they are only partial. For example:

Tent making is a substitute for explicit missionary work, necessary because of reduced freedom to enter countries as "missionaries".

Tent makers are just Christians who are part of the worldwide movement of people in trade, service industries etc.

Tent making is a cheaper means of world evangelism, because it is self-supporting.

Each of the above can distort the true picture of what tent making is. It is inadequate to view tent making as simply a new response to the Great Commission of Matthew 28. It is something more. Tent making is one facet of renewal in the church worldwide, essentially a renewed understanding of the priesthood of all believers. This ministry is not for "specialists", but for every Christian.

This is the road for 21st century missions. It is the obvious road of the future. It is the road once traveled with great success by the Church in its early history. It is the road the Apostle Paul exhorted the church to travel when he stated that the purpose of

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the church professionals prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers is to equip the saints to do the ministry rather than doing the ministry themselves (Eph 4:11-16). However, the influence of a Greek worldview has sometimes caused us to separate ministry from work spiritual work from secular work and reserve the spiritual work for ministry professionals. It has also caused us to reserve ministry to church-based programs rather than seeing our secular work as a ministry. For example, tent making Christians are rarely asked to share about their ministry in the marketplace at church meetings but they are encouraged to "make time" for church ministry in the evenings and on weekends. Those who are especially good at church-based ministry are encouraged to leave their secular employment and join the church so they can minister "full time". Thus most ministries done by the church are church-based as opposed to marketplace-based, which distances them from the vast majority of people who live and work in the marketplace.

God values secular work, not just so because Christians can witness to unbelievers, but because, through transformed work, glory and honor will be brought into the New Jerusalem. All work has the potential for eternal significance. Tent making offers one way to learn how to become all things to all men, to introduce as many people as possible to the Lord.

- Shantanu Dutta

Workers of the Vineyard

Interserve has been a pioneer in Tentmaking ministry in India. We give a brief profile of three of our tent makers, who have been involved in the ministry while being employed elsewhere. Even as you read the profiles, keep them and other Tentmakers in prayer as they integrate their work and ministry to transform communities.



Reji and Betzy Daniel

Reji Koshy Daniel works as the Asst. General Manager of a leading Private Sector company based in Pune. Along with that, he and his wife

Betzy have been involved in ministering to university students as a couple since their marriage 12 years ago. Reji serves as the President of the Pune EGF (Evangelical Graduates Fellowship) and involved in discipling working professionals and students alike. Betzy serves in the Member Care Committee of Pune EGF, working towards strengthening fellowship and care within the UESI family in Pune. They are equally involved with another ministry bringing about wholistic development of slum dwellers in Pune. Reji serves on their Board while Betzy involves herself in other aspects of that ministry. They are proud parents of two children, Monica (9) and Roshan (4).

When the Developmental Pediatrics Unit, the first of such a facility in India, was set up at C.M.C Vellore in 1997, it was just the beginning of a new chapter for Drs. M.C. and Anna Mathew. They founded ASHIRWAD, Christian Concern for Child Care in 1983 with a vision to work towards the development of children with special needs. Since ASHIRWAD's was incorporation into C.M.C Vellore as its Developmental Pediatrics Unit, M.C. has been heading the Unit. They both also serve on the Faculty of the Medical College. Their involvement stretches not just to children, but to their families and also to the student community at the Medical College through their involvement with the UESI ministry there. Their profession has not just treated physical ailments, but scores of people



M.C. and Anna Mathew

have met their Saviour as a result their association with M.C and Anna. They have two children, Arpit and Anandit, both medical doctors, following in the footsteps of their parents, towards transforming lives through their profession.



Manoj and Remi Jacob

Manoj has been in the publishing industry (academic books) for the last 15 years now. Prior to that he worked as a teacher. Hence, his

love for students is understood. He has been involved with a ministry among University students for two decades now. His professional capacity as a publisher and his extensively itinerant job takes him to places and countries which are otherwise closed to the gospel and brings him in contact with people from diverse cultures. Remi, his wife, is equally committed to ministering to students and has been involved in the student ministry since her college years and works in an NGO in Kolkata. Together, as a couple they have been following Paul's example of using their professional skills and training to further the work of the Lord. They have a son, Noel who will turn 10 next year.

take a peek



“September 30, 1993. A devastating earthquake struck districts of Latur and Osmanabad in the state of Maharashtra. Twenty five thousand people died and around 150,000 were left homeless. Help flooded from within the country and around the world. How many Christians were affected? It turned out that not a single Christian had died.

Is it a miracle? No, the answer was much simpler. There were no Christians living among them and hence these people never had the opportunity to experience Christian witness.”

Such is the situation in many parts of the world. People perish for there is no one to tell. To complicate the situation, many of these least reached areas are either closed or hostile to 'full-time workers'. It is to answer this dilemma and also to bring about a paradigm shift in the understanding of 'missions', “Tools of the Trade” was published jointly by Interserve (India), IMA and GEMS. It contains invaluable information to encourage and challenge working professionals to use their skills and training to spread the gospel. This manual is a must have for any Christian in a secular profession, who believe that the Great Commission was not given just to a chosen few, but to every believer. Grab a copy of the book by writing to Interserve (India) for a donation of Rs. 100. Special and bulk orders are available at discounted rates.

interserve news

prayer weekends

The annual Prayer Weekends were held in four different parts of the country (Coonoor, Panchgani, Mussoorie and Serampore) during May-June 2006. 95 of our partners and staff met together for a time of prayer and fellowship. We had a refreshing time of praying for each other and for national and global mission needs. It is these get-togethers that provide a much needed getaway to our partners who labour hard throughout the year.

welcome to the family

Interserve welcomes the following partners who have joined us till August. We pray for God's protection and provision for you as you settle in your respective ministries.

- Bethany Wolf
- Lois Armstrong
- Jenghee You

events

The following important programmes and consultations will be held in Sept/Oct, 2006 -

14 Sept, 2006

Business as Mission Consultation for Interserve Partners at Hyderabad

15 - 16 Sept, 2006

Business as Mission Think Tank (with IMA) at Hyderabad

18 - 19 Sept, 2006

Sending Indian Tentmakers Overseas Think Tank Consultation (with IMA) at Hyderabad

29 Sept, 2006 - 1 Oct, 2006

North India MKs (Missionary Kids) Camp (with IMA) at Dehradun

new publication

Tools of the Trade, a Guide to Tentmakers, was published jointly by Interserve (India), IMA and GEMS. Please refer to page 3 for a review of the book and details to place an order.

news from partners/staff

Joseph and Laila Jacob visited the Middle East in April - May 2006 to build relationships with the local churches and introduce the ministry of Interserve India.

John and Jessie Amalraj, Chungnunga and Johns George participated at the IMA National Leadership Conference at Aizawl, Mizoram in May 2006. Chungnunga spoke at the plenary session and John was part of the Panel for the Panel Discussion.

Joseph and Laila Jacob were the response persons at the Family Life Seminar of Tamil Nadu EGF in May 2006.

Joseph Jacob was the speaker at the Inaugural Retreat for the Theology Department of Serampore College in June 2006.

Rob and Jenn were blessed with a baby boy, Dominic, on May 26, 2006.

Winnie had a surgery in June and is recuperating.

Debbie and Ramesh participated at the AMLT (Advanced Missions Leadership Training) organised by IMA in May 2006 at Hyderabad.

Kusuma's son Joseph and Sneha tied the knot on 24th June, 2006.

Hansraj and Kath pastored a church in the Arabian Gulf for 3 months as a summer replacement. They will return in Aug.

In June 2006, John Amalraj and Joseph Jacob were able to visit many Church leaders in North-East India and share the ministry of Interserve.

John Amalraj attended the World Evangelical Alliance - Mission Commission Conference at Capetown, South Africa in June 2006.

Chungnunga had an angioplasty performed on him in July.

Bijoy and Premi have moved to Thailand in July 2006. Premi is teaching primary children while Bijoy continues his role with Interserve International.



Please write to us your comments, criticisms and suggestions for improvement of the newsletter. Your feedback is valuable for us as we publish our future issues.

All donations (DDs/cheques) to be made in the name of 'Interserve (India)' payable at Pune (Indian donations) and Delhi (overseas donations). Your donations help us serve the people better. Thank you.

Interserve (India)
101, Mohit Highland
Nanak Society,
Off. Salunke Vihar Road
Kondhwa, Pune - 411 048

Ph: +91 (20) 26852234
Telefax: +91 (20) 26852064
Email: isvindia@postworld.net
Web: www.isvindia.org