

Rob and Rebecca Gaebler - serving at Gospel for Asia

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM



But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ~Matthew 6:33

Extreme Flooding in Kerala, India

Monsoon rains are a normal part of life in India. The economy of Kerala, which is the state at the very southern tip of the country, actually depends on a moderate amount of flooding because of the many rice fields in the area. But this year Kerala experienced monsoon rains unlike any that have been seen in almost 100 years. In mid-August the Cochin international airport (where we flew into Kerala a couple of years ago during our visit to the field) was closed for several days because of the flooding, and in some areas houses were under 10 feet of water. Over 1 million people were evacuated to relief camps before the end of the month.

This boat is traveling up a road... normally the place where people drive vehicles



Thousands of homes are completely ruined, and crops are devastated. More than 400 people have lost their lives, some as a result of landslides triggered by the downpour. And although the flood waters have started receding, the greater concern now is the possibility of outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

GFA-supported relief teams mobilized almost immediately to help with the rescue and relief efforts. Later, after the waters started to recede, Bridge of Hope (BOH) staff members brought supplies such as blankets, firewood, clothing, food kits, plates, and glasses to relief camps in some of the most affected areas. Churches led by GFA-supported pastors and BOH Centers that are located on higher ground were used as places of refuge for many of the flood survivors. Our brothers and sisters serving in Kerala are also going to be there for the long-haul of rebuilding, which will take years - long after the initial disaster-response teams have moved on to the next crisis.

Here in USA office we got “flooded” as well, as we started work right away to get the word out about the disaster. There wasn’t much coverage on international news channels about the flooding, but we wanted to let people know about those suffering in Kerala and how to get involved through prayer and providing resources. Our Web team had a webpage up in short time where individuals could go to make a donation and also to get latest news on the status in Kerala. You should check it out! You’ll find lots of pictures and some on-the-ground video footage. Here’s the link: tinyurl.com/keralaflooding. We’ve also published press releases, had several radio interviews, and mailed an Emergency Gram appeal to a large group of people in our database.

Almost everyone on staff got to be part of the Emergency Gram mailing, in one way or another. The two of us helped put together the criteria for selecting who should be mailed. Then over the weekend of August 17-18 GFA had a work party in the Mail Room as we printed, folded, inserted, sealed, and stamped about 78,000 Emergency Gram appeal letters. It was a massive effort, but it was also very special to come together as a community to accomplish this project to serve our brothers and sisters in Asia.



Above: One of the inserting machines, affectionately known as “Big Red”

Right: In the folding room (the machine is loud)



Answer to Prayer!

Every Monday morning we gather as a department to pray for the projects we're working on or ways we need to see the Lord provide solutions. One prayer request we had for several months was for the implementation of an automatic process to update donors' credit cards based on information provided by the credit card vendor. Praise the Lord, we were finally able to start using this feature at the end of July! There are multiple benefits, including convenience for supporters (now they don't have to call GFA when their card is going to expire or they get a new number), and an increase in sponsorship retention for GFA (many missionary and Bridge of Hope sponsorships are canceled each month simply due to failed recurring credit card transactions). This is by far one of the biggest answers to prayer we have seen in the last few weeks.

Neighborhood Prayer Meetings

In August we started something new: one Tuesday evening, instead of gathering in the GFA Chapel for our weekly prayer meeting, we met in five or six homes around the campus depending on what "neighborhood" we live in. These neighborhood prayer meetings won't be a replacement of our regular Tuesday prayer meeting, but we will probably meet in this structure every few months. Gathering in smaller groups is another way to promote the community, and is also reminiscent of the first GFA prayer meetings when the whole (smaller) staff body met in Brother K.P.'s home for prayer. Rob helped coordinate the prayer meeting in our neighborhood, and Rebecca played the piano during worship. It was a sweet time of fellowship, first in prayer and then afterward visiting with each other.



During one of our times of prayer

Other Recent Happenings

One of the activities Rebecca has enjoyed this summer has been "Reading Evenings" with one of the staff families. Every other week or so she will go over to their house and read aloud a couple of stories from the original Winnie the Pooh books, written by A.A. Milne. Pooh stories lend themselves well to reading aloud, as there is plenty of opportunity to use expressive voices and accents for each of the characters.

We've also had the opportunity to host different people in our house over the past month, which has been a blessing! A couple of friends here got married at the beginning of

August, and one of the bridesmaids from out of town stayed with us for about a week. Then right after that Rebecca's mom and sister Gretchen came for a weekend visit. During their stay they helped us rearrange the furniture in our living room and bedroom. After moving the bed, the three ladies took a break to comment about memories from the fabric pieces Rebecca used in the quilt.



Top: Reading Winnie the Pooh

Bottom: Fabric fun

In Christ,

Rob & Rebecca

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Praises

- **Praise** God that we were able to get the credit card auto-update process implemented!
- **Praise** the Lord that GFA has hundreds of national workers in Kerala who were able to start doing relief work immediately!
- **Praise** God for special times of visiting with friends and family in our home and around the campus!
- **Praise** the Lord for many people who have sponsored staff members over the past couple of months through the Mission Support Team process!

Prayers

- **Pray** for the ongoing relief and reconstruction work in Kerala, and for protection against outbreak of disease from stagnant waters
- **Pray** for the many initiatives we at GFA are doing to communicate about the disaster and how to partner in the relief work
- **Pray** that the church in Kerala would be able to shine Christ's light to all those who are suffering from the flooding
- **Pray** for us to grow in having a diligent, focused life of prayer and dependence upon the Lord



Thank you for your prayers

“...be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18)