



Brenda Murti <brenda.murti1@gmail.com>

Linnea's Blog VII: Bengaluru

Brenda Murti <brendamurti@msn.com>
To: Linnea Good's Administrator <brenda.murti1@gmail.com>

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Carving of Jesus at a Bengaluru artisan shop



Linnea's Blog VII: Bengaluru

Bengaluru (Bangalore) is considered the Silicon Valley of India, so much of what David and I saw on our last visit was modern, highways and highrises and

a bustling shopping strip. This Christian College we are visiting in the city is nestled in a residential neighbourhood, with a comfortable hotel next door. Half of us are housed in the hotel, the other half in the school's visiting accommodations. The school has an enormous metal gate at the front, as most institutions do, staffed by an elder security guard who greets us, finds people and keys for us and sometimes sweeps under the enormous tree that overarches the entry, brushing with a broom made from a tied packet of branches. The entry opens into a circular courtyard, with offices and classrooms stretching along one side and the worship building ("chapel") facing it on the other. We will spend the next four days in this circle.

Pastor Charles, a handsome young leader, sits down to plan with me the plenary gatherings. He is energetic and eager to check in about the repertoire I am bringing. We agree that he will do the song-leading at the beginning of our first Gathering and we will attempt to back him up. It is good for me to see the high energy he brings to their time of praise because I might have made a mistake and started out with "Be Thou My Vision". "Can I get an Amen?!" he calls out. The students - seemingly 3 to 1 males to females - call out at once, "AMEN!!" The music is spirited and full-on.

This leads me to quick decision-making: Either I stick with the repertoire that I have brought, which spans old hymnody (which we share), and 70s praise choruses (which we can do), world refrains (awesome, but why teach Swahili when students come with Telugu or and are learning English?) and Linnea compositions, OR I get off my resistance to Hillsong.

And honestly, I am moved by the heart-ful singing that these students belt out. I feel it myself. I also know myself to be a servant of a process that I believe will be truly transformative in their lives: learning to tell scripture from the heart. Heightening this work with songs that they know and love is the job. And so, I ask Pastor Charles to do some more leading and we follow him by ear - which David, Larry and I can do. And I literally begin to learn new praise choruses as I lead them from the stage.

This is the Linnea-eye view of the conference, because I am not teaching biblical storytelling on this tour. I am planning our devotions and the music, and acting as a second set of eyes for leader Ron, who is busy teaching. However, I catch glimpses of Juliana reminding these theology students that they will meet people in their lives who need healing and will understand this particular story in a way none of us can. I see Bonnie laughing along with students who are

encouraging one another. Barbara has sent her students out to walk and tell along the long front balcony of the building and they wave at me across the courtyard, mid-sentence. I constantly see groups of young men clustering around Larry, whose animated gestures and college prof voice make him a student magnet.

It is usually the second day, when participants start to “get” what it is that we are all doing - and the assurance that they can do it. Some report to the principal that this discipline is going to help them in their other studies. Energy is building. But, when David and I break into the rap “Jesus When Did I See You” on stage that afternoon, the place erupts. It is truly something to watch the utter bafflement of young students watch a 55-year-old start to rap a response to Matthew 25 and to see their faces turn to joy and move-busting as it dawns on them what is happening.

The conference ends with certificate presentation, formal thank-yous and gifts, endless selfies and supper with the school director. The hospitality has been so warm, all the while sprinkled with warnings and requests from her that we not publicize our mission and make no reference to the name of the school. Even as we leave for the train, Director asks us westerners not to walk out the door just that moment, as the police have come (at 8pm) to ask for college certification papers and other formalities. “This is not police work,” she mutters, as she walks back out to tell them to come back during the day. She returns to tell us they have left, while the Hindu police officer has asked her (genuinely) for a bible in Hindi for himself.

The team is somewhat giddy, as we board the overnight train for Thirruvalla. Elaine attempts to get up on the second of three bunks in their compartment and cannot, for the life of her, figure out how to negotiate the ladder and get herself on the bed. They ask their accommodating young Indian compartment-mate to show her how it is done - repeatedly. The resulting video shows little because all one can hear is the videographer (Bonnie) in utter hysterics. Ron is living on the edge, getting off the train at (supposedly) 1-minute stops and knocking on our windows. By the time we disembark in Thirruvalla in the morning, he almost doesn't make it off the train, as he is chatting amiably with some new Indian friends about their family photographs.

Linnea Good

"Enlivening Faith through Story and Song"

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To contribute to Linnea and David's Music Ministry: <http://www.linneagood.com/>



Fay addresses the group (boys on one side, girls the other)



Lg and Barbara tel



Pastor thanks the team



Students at the college make us welcome!



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