

# ***Lutheran Mission Matters***



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# Reading the History of MELIM (the Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission) in Context 120 Years Later

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**Abstract:** Archival research on MELIM (Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission) invites contextual reading on the co-religions of Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, on the social situation of outcasts or pariahs of whom MELIM reached most of its followers, and the political transition from nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century colonial and monarchical rule of subjects to the governance of citizens post Independence in 1947. How MELIM advanced God’s Mission in this context from 1895 amidst human rights, information diffusion, and identity politics, stems from the prior 190 years of Danish and German Pietist Lutheran mission which started in Tranquebar in 1706.

In 2014, I found almost no information on the internet to read about MELIM. This was surprising when I considered all that I knew from having grown up in MELIM and from the extent of activities of the men and women missionaries I knew. My memory about my past is murky, but I maintain contact in the present with India and with many of my peers who grew up with me in India. My father and mother, Rev. Dr. Clarence and Emma Rittmann, were missionaries in Travancore and Tamil Nadu for 42 years (1928–1970). My brother and his wife, Dr. John and Lorraine Rittmann, were medical missionaries in northern Kerala for five years (1965–970). I studied at Loch End and graduated from Kodaikanal School in 1966. I completed my undergraduate education at Concordia Junior College, Ann Arbor, and Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne.

Recently, at my St. Paul, Minnesota, congregation’s adult forum, we engaged in discussion of “God’s Mission Statement: Good News to the Poor (Luke 4:16–21).”



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After a lifetime of working for human development and being concerned about human rights, I was pleased to find an ecumenical sense that, in addition to the classic Lutheran emphasis on confession and baptism that led to MELIM proselytizing and conversion, there can be a biblical basis for the holistic sense of the MELIM mission, despite the LCMS debate on a divide between confessional and humanistic tendencies. I consider that the 1965 LCMS Mission Affirmations were an earlier vision of “God’s Mission Statement,” even if the LCMS and MELIM held for the first half of the twentieth century a sense that a caring or healing or mercy ministry was secondary.

After two years of hunting for MELIM sources, I am grateful that I have gained access to original and other documents for archival research on the MELIM mission through the Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis. Most of these sources are not found by a quick search on Google, quick being the operative term. I know some missionary names and titles based on publications that others with a MELIM background have shared with me. I have found many published articles by Rev. Dr. Herbert Hoefer and Rev. Dr. Roland E. Miller and others in *Missio Apostolica*, in other publications, and in formal libraries.

What was most prominent for me was that I met church historians educated in India whose doctoral dissertations and research are focused on the MELIM mission. These include Rev. Dr. Christudas at Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil; Dr. Victor Raj and Dr. Stanish Stanley at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and Dr. Daniel Jeyaraj, now at Liverpool Hope University. The Concordia Historical Institute archives the original MELIM meeting minutes from 1925 to 1985, the letters from and to the Honorable Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, who commissioned missionaries to MELIM, as well as photographs and the accessions of individual missionaries.

I reached out to 150 MELIM friends for whom I had e-mail addresses. Now in 2015, 120 years from the start of MELIM in 1895, I count the names of about 560 first-, second-, and third-generation missionary men, women, and children. Of the original 250 commissioned men, women, and wives, I count about forty who are still living. Some served as short as a few days and some as long as 42 years.

Some of those friends I contacted sent me or pointed me to several important works they had in their personal libraries and pictures they had on hand. The works of Rev. Dr. Herbert M. Zorn (1970), Rev. Dr. Luther W. Meinzen (1980), Rev. Earl Mueller (1974), Rev. Norbert Hattendorf (2001), Dr. N. Mitchell (1976), Rev. Dr. R. Miller (1964) were important. These documents pointed to other personal collections in storage but lacking lists of what is contained. By reading these works, I located in the archives at CHI and at Concordia Seminary Nagercoil unpublished theses, letters, and minutes of a thousand meetings that MELIM held until 1984.

### Three Contextual Frames of MELIM History

My reading to date suggests three lifelong contextual frames for MELIM; these may be viewed as dynamic, interactive, and organic (see also D. Jeyaraj, 2006) challenges for archival research <http://missionstudies.org/archive/rescue/jeyaraj.htm>). These shaped the missional Gospel that MELIM preached in India and shared with its members.

The first frame is India, its religions, and its life under the British Raj and other ruling Maharajahs, where humans were subjects or slaves, until 1948, when India became democratic and its constitution changed human status to citizens. Bound hand and foot with this civil status in India is the identity given by caste and the non-identity of being non-caste or Pariah, which continues as a crucial current crisis today in the politics, economics, and society of India (Doniger, 2010). MELIM offered a unique ministry to the Pariah non-caste in Travancore (Meinzen 1981, Christudas 2015). Religion in India has a long co-eval history, documented from before the Hindu Vedic and Purana texts, which embraces Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism, as well as primitive religions (Frykenberg 2014, Doniger 2010).

Readers will find extensive writings by Dr. A. J. Lutz, MELIM missionary, on caste and theology in the *Concordia Historical Quarterly* (Vol. 20, p. 95 and others). Caste and non-caste considerations determined much of MELIM's direction from its earliest times, underlining its progress in gaining members (Meinzen 1984, Christudas 2014). Criticisms of mission generally are related to enticing converts from their natural identity with material incentives. In India, however, Hinduism itself had, through its own development of Brahminism across its centuries, cast out the Pariahs from joining the Hindu religion to avoid polluting the caste Hindus. Thus, there was no conversion per se by Christianity, but rather a first human recognition of the Pariahs' universal humanity, an uplifting of their group, and an expression of their voice.

The second frame of how MELIM advanced its own mission is what we will consider a continuing discussion of human rights, information diffusion, and identity politics, reviewed in Meinzen (1981) and elsewhere. Mission in general focuses on the person and on his or her group (as in a society, a congregation, or a church) and involves a diffusion of innovation, knowledge and information, which by rights a person may adopt, or not. Men and women from many societies have long traveled from their home lands to new lands to learn new things and share the knowledge they brought with them. The spread or mutual sharing of Indian and Chinese experience (Doniger, 2010) and the movement of Islamic knowledge to Medieval Europe is fundamental in human development history (Frankopan, 2016). The adoption and adaptation of ideas, or diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1962), was evident in India at the time of Buddha, which predates the formation of Hinduism. Every historical

development brings with it new ideas, benefits, and advantages, separate from the political and economic exploitation that is characteristic of history as well.

When MELIM started in India in 1895, it entered at the end of almost two centuries of royalist mission work, first of the Danish King and then German King, and then in India, which was ruled by the British monarchy. Most of the population of the world for this period was subject to a monarch (rajah, king, emperor), except in the United States, or was a slave.

Violation of human rights continues throughout history. Slavery of subjects was abolished by Great Britain and its Empire in 1833, though India was exempt. Status by caste and non-caste continued and was not abolished in India, despite the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar (1936). The German trained MELIM missionaries had been working in India for as many as 10 years before continuing under an American mission. They arrived in India just 50 years after slaves were emancipated in the United States in 1860, which was just about the time that the pietistic German Lutherans fled to the U. S. and formed the new synods that supported MELIM just 40 years later. MELIM's approach to mission, caste and non-caste, and identity politics is reviewed through a subaltern lens by Dr. Christudas from Concordia Seminary Nagercoil in his 100-year historical dissertations (STM 2014 and Dr Th 2016). MELIM's accommodation of Indian independence at the end of World War II coincided with the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights—a culminating document replete with liberal, humanitarian, and democratic values. These events preceded the establishment of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1959 and later the reduction of MELIM by 1980.

The third frame is the peculiar history of MELIM that stemmed from 190 years of Danish and German mission in India, beginning with Ziegenbalg and Pluetschau coming to Tranquebar in 1706 to 1895. This long mission presence in India led the first two MELIM missionaries, Rev. Naether and Rev. Mohn, to exit the Leipzig Mission in India in 1884 and to return to India in 1895 for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, later known as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Curiously, the distinctive issues faced by MELIM throughout its history, that is, separation from other Christian missions as well as internal steps to limit unionism or fellowship, such as with Rev. Dr. A. A. Brux (1929), reflected the disputes between the first MELIM missionaries and the Leipzig Mission. F. Dean Lueking's *Mission in the Making* (1964) also suggests that the mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States in St. Louis generally struggled with pietism and scholasticism.

## Holistic Mission of MELIM

At the same time that MELIM and its pietistic, scholastic origins focused on doctrinal rectitude (Meinzen 1981), MELIM missionaries also offered a holistic, caring ministry, which included medical mission, Muslim missions, mission to tribals, urban ministry, literacy and communication ministry, music, education and training ministry, sometimes livelihood and social assistance, even identity and freedom from the oppression of the caste system. Ziegenbalg is well-known for his commitment to education ministry and his unwillingness to subject his ministry to differentiation by caste. The extent of MELIM holistic ministry is discussed extensively in the MELIM General Conference minutes from the outset of mission.

F. Dean Lueking's *Caring Ministry* (1968) offers again some background on the American LCMS approach. However, the Lueking review ends before the 1965 Detroit LCMS Convention presentation of Mission Affirmations which summarized the Synod's view of holistic ministry. In the decade following, the LCMS experienced changes in its focus on social ministry as an aspect of mission work. In 1967 the name of the Department of Social Welfare was changed to the Board of Social Ministry. The latter was merged in 1969 with the Board of World Relief into the Board of Social Ministry and World Relief. These changes related to criticism of mission in the context of colonialism and imperialism and hinged on the extent to which mission was holistic, to the whole person and their identity, and not only a person's belief and confession.

After initial efforts by Nurse Ellermann in 1913 in medical missions, MELIM extended itself for medical missions in 1921 with the commissioning of Nurse Angela Rehwinkel, who was instrumental in establishing Bethesda Hospital in Ambur, North Arcot District, Madras Presidency. MELIM also conducted other caring ministries, including school education, communication, literacy work, deaconess and livelihood work with women, famine relief, and missions to minority groups, including Muslims, tribal communities, and hearing impaired. Due to the historical gender structure of MELIM, the volunteer caring work of wives of the male missionaries is generally underreported (Brauer, 1996). Often caring ministries are viewed as incentives to attract followers, but MELIM missionaries viewed this as

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a natural extension of their Gospel mission, as noted in their General Conference minutes.

### Summary of Chronology of MELIM

From 1895 to 1909, MELIM brought 17 missionaries and wives to India. One died in service, and his wife left India. From 1910 to 1919, another 20 entered service and 16 ended service. From 1920 to 1929, another 95 missionaries entered MELIM service and 16 ended service. From 1930 to 1939, another 30 joined before World War I and 31 ended service. From 1940 to 1949, 27 more joined and 35 ended service. From 1950 to 1959, 35 more joined and 49 ended service. From 1960 to 1969 38 more joined and 44 left service. From 1970 to 1979, 4 joined and 51 left service. From 1980 to 1986, 4 joined and 16 left service. The total of 270 who entered service is matched by 260 who left plus 10 who were married in India.

**Figure 1. Summary of MELIM Missionary Entry and Exits by Decade.**

MELIM Decade	Notable Event	Entered Service	Exited Service
1895–1909	Start of MELIM	17	2
1910–1919	World War I	20	16
1920–1929		95	16
1930–1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Depression USA</li> <li>• MELIM registered under India Societies Act.</li> </ul>	30	31
1940–1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War II</li> <li>• Indian Independence</li> <li>• UN Human Rights Declaration</li> </ul>	27	35
1950–1959	IELC established	35	49
1960–1969	Loch End School closed	38	44
1970–1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IELC Trust</li> <li>• Kodaikanal School, Orissa Tribal Mission</li> </ul>	4	51
1980–1989	Decline of MELIM	4	16
	Total of Missionaries 1895–1989	270	260

MELIM was charged with a democratic organizational structure of a conference and elected officers, typical of the German Lutheran church tradition in the USA, and conveying reports to the Honorable Board in St Louis. MELIM began as a handful of independent men, learning to work in the Tamil language under the Nawab of North Arcot District of the Madras Presidency in 1895, near the location where they had worked earlier. In 1907, MELIM was invited by a non-caste

Christian in Nagercoil, several days journey to the south, to commence work in the Kingdom of Travancore. In 1912, a similar invitation by a non-caste Christian was made for MELIM to commence work in Trivandrum in the Malayalam language. During these first ten years, the missionary structure was more akin to Indian host and missionary friend, while literature was translated and worship took place before church buildings were built.

In 1912, MELIM settled on Kodaikanal as its mission health retreat, which in time became the MELIM “citadel.” Loch End contained the largest concentration of purpose-built homes for missionaries, with a church, boarding home, and primary school for their children. Developing and managing this compound required that MELIM organize its corporate structures, beginning with the Bergheim committee that later became the General Conference of MELIM and constituted the general order for MELIM. The gentleman’s agreement was no longer adequate for a mission with over one hundred units, conferences in three territories, and a general conference overall.

After three decades of management by privilege, MELIM was registered in India under the India Societies Act of 1880, and the General Conference meetings were conducted under legal stipulations. By 1925, MELIM had held 14 general conferences and the Mountain Home Committee became the Hill Station Committee. These conference meetings were the corporate forum for MELIM management. They were democratic and transparent, and all actions were documented in the minutes, which stood as policy for the missionaries. They were copied to the Honorable Board in St. Louis, but the time lag between the general conference and the Honorable Board Secretary review was so great that the review had little effect on MELIM policy. The Concordia Historical Archives has copies of the 32 MELIM General Conferences held up to 1960, when the IELC was established. In addition, CHI has archived minutes from 206 conferences of the Ambur District, 130 conferences of the Nagercoil District, and 136 conferences of the Trivandrum District to the time that MELIM was transformed by the establishment of IELC in 1959. From 1960, the count of conferences started again from one for the each of the following 25 years, at which point CHI has no more accessions from MELIM.

It is hard to imagine that there were no conflicts in priorities and decisions that arose in the triangle of individual missionaries, the Honorable Board, and the General Conference. These are referenced in some of the missionary writing, but I did not find sources in the archived minutes. The individual missionary was commissioned by the Honorable Board and assigned to work according to the missionary General Conference. The General Conference was the democratic structure for managing all of the affairs of MELIM in India, including assignment and administration of missionaries. With the establishment of the IELC in 1959, 60 years after MELIM began, MELIM stood in the shadows while it defined a new role.

However, Indian nationalism led to visa restrictions, so that by 1980 MELIM had been reduced to fewer than 5 missionaries in 20 years.

The end stage, from 1960 to the present, coincided with the establishment of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church and then the formation of the IELC Trust in the 1970s, for the purpose of transferring land ownership from MELIM to the IELC. Due to Indian visa restrictions, MELIM shifted its focus to international education through Kodaikanal School and towards tribal or Adivasi groups in Orissa with missionaries from the Commonwealth (from Australia). At the last from 1990, MELIM continued in the person of one retired former missionary, Dr. Nurse Alice Brauer, still living in India and who carries with her the final stage “gentleman’s agreement” between MELIM and the IELC and is a member of the defunct IELC Trust.

**Figure 2. Chronology of MELIM (adapted from Dr. H. M. Zorn (1969, 1970) and L. W. Meinzen (1981). Dates may be approximate. Apologies that missionary wives not named in source lists.**

- 1706. Ziegenbalg and Pluetschau land in Tranquebar, first Protestant missionaries of German descent abroad with Danish Halle Mission.
- 1840. Leipzig Mission takes over Danish Halle Mission.
- 1874. Willkomm (in India since 1873), C. M. Zorn (1871), Zucker (1870) break from Leipzig Mission and enter into fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States in St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1875. Naether (1887) enters MELIM mission in Krishnagiri, North Arcot District, met by Kempff (1885). Died in India in 1904.
- 1896. Mohn (1889) enters Ambur and Kellerbauer (1893) enters in Bargur.
- 1897. Freche (1891) enters Vaniyambadi.
- 1900. First MELIM member. Heubener enters, first US trained.
- 1902. Eight MELIM members in all. Forster and Naumann enters.
- 1904. Naether dies of bubonic plague.
- 1905. Nau enters.
- 1906. Fifty-nine MELIM members.
- 1907. Invited by Jesudason (later ordained), a Pariah Christian, to work in Nagercoil. Huebener moves to Nagercoil. Gutnecht enters. 209 MELIM members. Comity with LMS.
- 1909. Huebener brother enters.
- 1910. Zucker, Kuechle enters. 350 MELIM members.
- 1911. Eleven MELIM missionaries in India.

1912. MELIM invited by Paulose (later ordained), a Pariah or Sambavar Christian, to work in Malayalam in Trivandrum. Loch End, Kodaikanal purchased. Stallman, A. J. Lutz, and Harms enter.
1913. Nurse Ellermann begins medical work. Ehlers, Goerss, and Williams enter. 675 MELIM members with 15 missionaries in 7 stations with 96 Indian national helpers.
1915. German descent missionaries exit due to World War I and British rule. Five missionaries present and Hamann and Ludwig enter (died in India in 1919).
1916. Roman Catholic members request MELIM to begin mission in Vadakkangulam in midst of caste and non-caste issues to be revisited in 1927. 1,378 members with nine missionaries and 2,315 students in MELIM schools with 128 Indian national helpers.
1919. Ludwig dies of malaria and typhoid. 1,681 members with five missionaries and 1,681 students in MELIM schools with 179 Indian national helpers.
1920. Nurse Georgi (Resigns in 1926), Heckel, Noffke, Kauffeld enter.
1921. Rev. Jesudasan, first Indian national pastor. Boriack, A. C. Fritze, Jank, Levihn, Oberheu, Nurse Herold (later marries Noffke), Nurse Rehwinkel, Schroeder, Strasen, Nurse Ziegfeld (later marries Strasen), and Dr. Doederlein enters.
1922. Bachmann, first Boarding parent at Loch End. Blaess and EH Meinzen enter.
1923. Nurse Rehwinkel establishes Bethesda Hospital, Ambur. Brux, Kuolt, and Strieter enter (later marries Heckel).
1924. Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil established. Brux documents prayer controversy.
1925. Caste issue re-emerges at Vadakkungulam. Lutz documents controversy. R. Brauer and Schulz enter.
1926. Brux established printing press. Christensen, Eckert, Gnuse, Lang, Rasch, Nurse Rathke, Stelter enter.
1927. Ezhavan mass conversion movement in Travancore. Hattendorf, Nurse Mahler (later marries Hattendorf), Knoernschild Mueller (later marries Lang), Schrader (later marries Leckband), Meyer, Mueller, von Schlichten, and K. Zorn enter.
1928. Buehner, Burrow, Landgraf, Luedtke, Manns, Miller, Mueller, C. Rittmann, and Wyneken enter.
1929. Evangelist Duriam posted in Ceylon. Dr. Bohnsack, Chuvala, J. Naumann (son of George Naumann), Peckmann, Nurse Oberheu (later marries Stelter), Wetzel, and R. Zorn enter.
1930. 145 IELC congregations with 7,170 members with 52 missionaries (Meinzen 1981). Dukewits, Hahn, Kraemer, and Kretzmann enter.

- 1931. Bertram, Kline, and Reiser enter.
- 1932. Mt. Zion Church, Loch End, Kodaikanal dedicated. Doctor (deaconess, nurse), Feddersen, Grumm, and Prange enter.
- 1933. Brux dismissed while on furlough. Koehne School, Loch End built.
- 1935. Lutz (later marries Reiser) and M. J. Lutz.
- 1936. Lachmann and Dr. Leckband enter.
- 1937. Loch End Teacher Mueller, Sieving, and Steinhoff enter.
- 1939. World War II.
- 1940. 205 MELIM congregations with 14,388 members with 47 missionaries. 15 national pastors and 177 other leaders.
- 1945. Wynaad, Travancore mission opened. Michalk, Griesse, and Graf enter.
- 1946. Krafft (wife Winifred 2<sup>nd</sup> generation daughter of Schrader), Koepke and A. J. Lutz (son of A Lutz) enter.
- 1947. Indian Independence. Ziemke (deaconess) and H. M. Zorn enter.
- 1948. UN Declaration of Human Rights. MELIM joins National Christian Council (NCC). Heinlein, May, L. W. Meinzen (2<sup>nd</sup> generation, son of E. H. Meinzen) enter.
- 1949. Ambur District Synod established. J. Mayer and Trautmann enter.
- 1950. Muslim mission re-commenced. Dr. Bulle Gall, L. E. Meinzen, Nau, Otten, and Smith enter.
- 1951. Bombay urban mission established. Nurse Gronbach enters.
- 1952. Rink (deaconess) enters.
- 1953. A. Fritze (son of A. C. Fritze), E. Hahn, Luecke, and R. E. Miller enter.
- 1955. M. Philip first Indian national seminary professor. Engelbrecht enters.
- 1956. Nagercoil and Trivandrum District Synods established. Mitchell enters.
- 1957. 283 IELC congregations with 29,185 members with 41 missionaries. 105 national pastors. (Meinzen 1981). Loch End Teacher Hennig, Nurse Kropp, and Nurse Leo enter. Suehs enters Ceylon.
- 1958. IELC (India Evangelical Lutheran Church) established. MELIM focuses on mission personnel. Fergin enters Ceylon. Dr. Langsam enters.
- 1959. Concordia Seminary affiliates with Serampore Seminary. LCMS accepts IELC as sister church. Dr. Crimm (formerly Bohnsack enters).
- 1960. Dr. Pueschel enters.
- 1961. Nurse Math and Nurse Sorenson enter.
- 1962. Gundulupet mission opened. Dr. M. McCreary (3rd generation, daughter of J. Naumann) enters.
- 1963. Nurse Kitzmann (later marries Howe) enters.
- 1964. IELC joins national Federation of Lutheran Churches (FELC). MELIM plans new missions. Nurse R. Meyer and Nurse Patzschke enter.

1965. Mission Affirmations at LCMS Detroit Convention. LCMS accepts freedom of sister churches in fellowship matters. Howe (Loch End boarding parent), Pollex, Schirmer (dies in India from car wreck), and Vidler enter.
1966. MELIM commences 'adivasi' mission in Orissa with JELO-Brekklum. Nurse Anderson. Bjornstad (Kodaikanal School), Kleinig, Nurse McNabb, Nurse B. Mayer, Noack (Loch End teacher), and Dr. J. Rittmann (2<sup>nd</sup> generation, son of C. Rittmann) enter.
1967. 326 IELC congregations with 38,148 members with 21 missionaries. 117 national pastors and 99 other leaders. 66 primary school and 5 high schools, 2 hospitals and 2 clinics. 1 seminary, 1 teacher training, and 1 printing press. (Meinzen 1981). LaDassor enters Ceylon. Dr. Thude enters.
1968. Nurse A Brauer (2<sup>nd</sup> generation, daughter of R Brauer) and Hoefer enter.
1969. IELC joins LWF. Koehne School, Loch End closed. MELIM in fellowship with other Lutherans, ALC and LCA. Dearmun and Riemer (teacher Kodaikanal School) enter.
1970. Missionaries excused by IELC from privilege status on committees. IELC Trust established. Loch End and Trewin properties not included.
1975. Kessler (Loch End boarding parent)
1976. M. Engelbrecht (Kodaikanal International School, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, son of L. Engelbrecht)
1977. T. Engelbrecht (Kodaikanal International School, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, son of L. Engelbrecht)
1988. Paul (wife Alice, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, daughter of A. J. Lutz, Loch End boarding parent)
1989. Loch End taken over
1999. Loch End returned for Kodaikanal International School use. A. Brauer last MELIM missionary. Retires but lives in Ambur.
2015. 120 year anniversary of MELIM.

## **MELIM Transitions**

MELIM transitioned through the profound political and social transformations occurring in India and globally during the past 120 years. The first MELIM missionaries were European borne and educated under the German monarchy, while India continued as a monarchical society until 1947. The American educated missionaries that populated MELIM after World War I entered India with a stronger sense of their own German heritage

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than consciousness of India's traditions, ethnicity, or religions. Yet their missional commitment to "disseminate the innovation" that all people are equal before God and have a right to voice their love of God motivated them to recognize and give voice to all persons they touched, regardless of caste and non-caste, health status, and gender through holistic ministry.

At the end of the two great World Wars, Indian Independence, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights, MELIM transitioned to a mission for the whole person with a sense of human rights, citizenship, and nationalism. The IELC continues as a legacy of MELIM mission, with a diverse membership, property and buildings, and institutions, including Concordia Seminary and other educational institutions. Many of the holistic missions, such as medical services, literacy and communication services have not continued.

My challenge remains to continue reading and to disseminate the considerable, even vast, MELIM mission and work, digitally on the internet. I also hope that considering MELIM in context will help me understand the short-term outcomes of MELIM as well as the long-term effect of sharing the Gospel in India holistically.

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