

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! I am finally starting to be able to map out where I will be spending the rest of 2012. My Home Assignment starts in July and I hope I can visit as many of you as possible.

A group of 13 music therapists, joygivers and a videographer called ReSounding Joy came to visit us on their first trip to India. The welcoming program was amazing, even though it didn't quite go as planned. The musicians performed first. There were four of them and they were great. Our music therapists were thrilled and full of questions. A young classical Indian dancer performed after that and she was amazing!

The team was just thrilled. Her performance ended abruptly five minutes early with a power failure, but she had already danced for 30 minutes at an incredible energy level.

The next morning was at the Lutheran School for the Deaf and Sneha Deepam Hospice. The children and the volunteers had a wonderful time and the team fell in love with the kids! They were great with them. In the afternoon, ReSounding Joy went to the Sneha Deepam School and visited as many of the 1,600 students as they could. Then the school had a program for the team including some music, dance, skits and speeches. One of the speeches was mine. Then we had dinner on the roof of Grand Krishna. The manager opened it just for us. That was very nice. It was pretty windy so we opted for the indoor portion where we could arrange tables there into one big table. I think that everyone enjoyed it.

ReSounding Joy performed at Mother Teresa's orphanage and home for mentally ill and mentally challenged women the next day and then I took them to Curry & Hurry for lunch. Many enjoyed a burger (no beef, just chicken or vegetarian) and fries with a diet or regular soda. Americans! So maybe you can take us out of McDonald's, but you can't take the McDonald's out of us! After lunch, they got a tour of Christian Medical Center.

The next day was busy but a very wonderful day. The children at Anbu Illam were wonderful and the team had an amazing time with them.

Lots of smiles and laughs and joy among them. There is something special about children with cerebral palsy. The 12 of them worked with 60 children - 6 with two groups of 30. They told me that the Mother Theresa orphanage was a heavy experience for many of them, but this experience was energizing.

ReSounding Joy sang at the service we had to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Palliative Care Team, and it was awesome! The music that they provided was outstanding! I don't know even how to describe it other than inspiring and invigorating. For my sermon, I used the text from Genesis 12:1-5 - thinking that I would focus on the "blessed to be a blessing." But I ended up focusing on the word "go." You don't use the word "go" in Tamil, you say "go and come." (Saying go would be a rude command). That was the first Tamil lesson I had and it was from Isaiah, my friend JP's son, almost 10 years ago. And I have remembered that.

Never say "go!" he told me. But in this passage, God says, "GO!" and not "go and come." This is the call for special missions and the call at the end of life. We are called to something that takes us away from the known and leads us to the unknown with nothing but a promise - "I will bless you, that you might be a blessing, so that all the world will be blessed through you." It was a powerful message that got very good responses.

The next day at the Sunday Service, the group sang two numbers and led the children from the school for the deaf in two numbers. My sermon was about the Transfiguration, and I said that it was an invitation to see Jesus in a different way - to see him with our hearts. I suggested that they will marvel when they see the Taj Mahal, but that what will have changed them will be the deaf children of the Lutheran School, the women at Mother Teresa's Home, and the children with cerebral palsy at Anbu Illam. Those, they saw with their heart's eye.

As I write this, I am on the road again. I'm in Padhar and leaving soon for Kolkata. Please keep me in your prayers and I will keep you in mine. And if you haven't responded to my emails about my home assignment, please do so! Peace, John