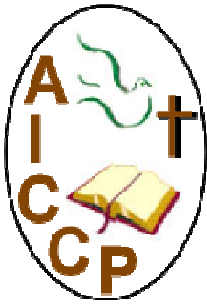


June, 2009

Volume 3, Issue 5



Bible based, Christ-centered,
Spirit empowered

Asian Indian Christian Church of Pittsburgh

A newsletter of the AICCP community



Gospel Street

12 questions for Terry Koontz

Inside This Issue

<i>12 questions for Terry Koontz</i>	1
<i>Pastor's Word— From Down Under</i>	2
<i>Pinching Pennies in Pennsylvania</i>	3
<i>Discussion Starter— The poor will always be with us?</i>	4

Upcoming Events

*AICCP Food Festival— June
20th, 10 AM-2 PM*

*Nepali Happy Evening, June
27th, 4 PM to 7 PM*

*AICCP Picnic— July 18th, 3-
7PM*

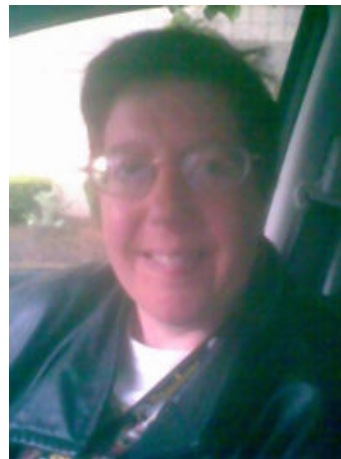
*AICCP Day Retreat, August,
09, Pine Valley Bible Camp*

Q. What was your childhood like? **A.** I was born in Chalfant, PA. I had a broken family. When I was around 8 years old I was removed from my home and sent to foster homes. In 1976 my dad committed suicide. I did not have good experiences in my foster homes too and was moved through 8 or 9 foster homes till I became 18. **Q. What was the greatest thing that happened to you and what gives you the most joy?** **A.** 18 years ago I became a Christian.

Now being with the Lord and being among other Christians is what gives me most joy. **Q. What is your greatest fear?** **A.** That I will make the Lord angry with me. **Q. What is your hope for the future?** **A.** That I will be raptured and go home to the Lord. **Q. How are your financial needs met?** **A.** I receive Section 8 that covers my rent, I receive food stamps and

social security for my expenses and Medicare covers my health expenses.

Q. Are there any charities that you support? **A.** Yes I support CBN, a Christian organization called the 700 club, and I sponsor a child



in Africa whom I call Kaddy through the Christian Children in Africa and I support Feed the Children. **Q. How do you spend your time?** **A.** Well, I volunteer at Montefiore and Presby on Mondays and Thursdays and at West Penn on Wednesdays and Fridays. I prepare consent forms and patient charts and patient packets. I also deliver the

mail to the patients. Then later in the day I pass out tracts. I have been passing out tracts in Oakland for the past 18 years. **Q. What are your most memorable moments in life?** **A.** When someone I gave a tract to told me, “you made a difference in my life” or when one of my patients told me, “you brought joy to my life today”. **Q. If you were to do it all over again what would you change in your life?** **A.** I would be closer to my family. **Q. Whom do you miss the most?** **A.** My schoolmate Tracy and my foster parents at Mercer, Bill and Sherlot Crammer. **Q. What advice would you give to other families?** **A.** Love each other unconditionally as God has loved you. **Q. What are your greatest blessings in life?** **A.** Eternal life, that I am not hurting myself anymore, that I am not in hospital and that I have lots of friends. Thank you. —Ed.

Pastor's Word



From Down Under ...

I always thought that I was an underdog – even before I knew what that word meant. I could not help thinking that someone else received preferential treatment – my older brother, my younger brother, one of my cousins. Jacob might have felt the same way. In a society where the firstborn son was kind of celebrity, Jacob lost to Esau by few inches at the finish line. My mother used to say of her younger sister who always complained of preferential treatment to her older sister. When she was told by my grandparents that my mother got something because she was old enough to get it, she used to retort saying, “I told her to wait till I was born but she came first!” Being an underdog has its disadvantages!

Jacob probably grew up listening to all the privileges that go with the status of firstborn in the ancient culture. Esau would be the one who would carry their father's name, keep the land, and perpetuate the heritage. Jacob felt that he was truly an underdog. The story, however, had a different ending. Jacob, not Esau, inherited Isaac's heritage. God's promise to Abraham would be carried through Jacob, the underdog. It seemed that somehow Jacob's scheming and cheating had succeeded. Jacob robbed Esau of what rightfully belonged to him through careful and cunning planning. How could God allow such trickery to succeed! And why would God do that? Tough questions and no easy answers. But I think that God chose Jacob and God would have chosen Jacob with or without Jacob's unfair tactics. Jacob's stories, I think, went on to prove what kind of man he was before who he became. The stories also tell us that it was not God who rejected Esau but Esau did it unto himself by his personal choices. Esau proved that he could not

be trusted with the responsibility. Thus the first became last and the last, the first.

There are numerous examples in the Bible that tell us as to how God chose the least and the last to accomplish His purposes. The last and the least became perfect instruments in the hand of God. They had nothing to lose and everything to gain. Their weakness actually became God's strength. So, God chose the underdogs. He chose the last and the least probably because they were eager to go up north. It is also to be noted the first and the best made poor choices and fell out of grace.

In my personal story, I would not say if I was truly an underdog. Sure, I felt like one and that counts. I also knew that God did not give a preferential treatment to me over my brothers. God chose them too. The important thing was that I felt like an underdog and God rescued me and chose me to be his servant. There are any numbers of reasons you and I have for being left out or marginalized or being underdogs. The good news is that God comes through for the underdogs. When we feel like the last or the least, it is time to think otherwise. The very reason we are down should give us hope because God has taken notice of you and me. The more we reach the depth of despair, the greater we find God's strength. When I am weak, then I am strong. It is one of those ironies of the Gospel. God works from down under. God gets down and lifts us up. Not once, not twice, but every time and always. The only blunder we could commit is to think God's lifting us is for our own sake. It is not for privilege but for responsibility. God chose us underdogs so that we may eventually uplift the underdogs of society. There is no other reason God comes through for the underdogs. Please remember something I read recently: “*God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.*” Underdog! No Problem! One who called you will give you strength.

Pastor Thinagar Sittler

Pinching pennies in Pennsylvania

Now even a cursory examination of Scripture will reveal God's great concern for the poor. From the laws that were given for the governance of Israel, through the prayers of the Psalms to prophetic proclamations in Isaiah, the wisdom literature and right through the Gospels and the letters of Paul and James, God's concern for the poor and his concern that His people treat the poor with kindness and generosity could not be clearer. Proverbs 19:17 which also finds echo in the New Testament reads like this, "If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord-and He will repay you". So if God is so concerned about the poor, then perhaps we should be too. As a group of people who have crossed over to the modern day promised land in pursuit of the American dream it is easy to lose sight of the fact that there is poverty right around us if we care to look.

In Pennsylvania, the facts are more than a little surprising. A Pittsburgh Tribute Review article quoting a Federal Study states that one in five households do not make enough to meet their basic needs. This is considering the fact that only one in 10 are living in poverty according to the Federal definition for poverty. This definition only looks at the food budget, and as per the 2008 HHS Poverty Guidelines anyone with an income of less than \$10,400 per year or \$21,200 per year for a family of 4 is considered living in poverty. In other words while only 10% of the state's 3.4 million households are considered living in poverty by Fed standards, when you

consider not just food, but shelter, childcare and healthcare costs, those unable to make ends meet total 20% of the households in Pennsylvania. While many people are under the impression that poverty is the result of not being in the workforce, the facts indicate otherwise. The study points out that 85% of the households that have trouble meeting basic needs have at least one person who is employed some of the time, while half of all these households have someone working full time.

Another unsettling trend seen is that children are additionally impacted by poverty so that between 2001 and 2006 the number of children (younger than 18 years) in PA living in poverty in the state has increased from 24% to a whopping 33.5%. Can this really be happening in this land flowing with milk and honey? Is there a role for the church here? Most importantly is there a role for our church? The problems are always on a relative scale so that we can always look at another country and say that relatively the problem of poverty may be much worse elsewhere. Then there are other organizations and churches better resourced and equipped to deal with such issues. Yet the question remains, as a church in Pittsburgh that represents the love, compassion and heart of Christ is there a greater role for us to play among the poor around us? -Ed



The recession has made the need at the local food banks greater and has simultaneously reduced funding sources.

Discussion Starter-

The poor will always be with us?

In a remarkable response to the consternation of some of the disciples at Mary Magdalene's anointing of Jesus with the super expensive perfume, Jesus asks his disciples to back off from criticizing Mary Magdalene's act. Jesus reminds them that the poor after all are always going to be with them and that they could do things for the poor at any time. Now this is an interesting statement to make for a person who came to herald the kingdom of God and preach Good News to the poor (Luke 4:18-19) among other things. What is interesting to note is that in spite of the great concern for the poor throughout the Old Testament and Jesus' emphasis on the poor in the beatitudes and other places, he seems to be saying that poverty eradication in this world is either not his goal or his mission. How is it that Jesus who has his eyes focused so much on the poor does not believe that poverty is a problem that must be or can be dealt with? Now the UN and governments all over the world talk about the eradication of poverty. Is poverty eradication then just foolhardiness

of a humanist governments or is Jesus too easily giving up on the problem. Then again is Jesus trying to make some other point about the poor or does He have his sights on some other more urgent priorities? It is not easy to come on either side of the debate, yet the issue has important bearing on the Christian world's schizophrenic approach to mission that chooses between social justice and evangelism in almost every denomination. This debate also speaks to the secular humanist institutions who set deadlines for the eradication of poverty. Is this really compassion or just a prideful statement of what they think the human spirit is capable of achieving. It seems that both the church and the non-church world may be missing something in their understanding of the issue of poverty. Perhaps a closer study of Jesus' words and actions might provide the answer. Then again it may not be that easy to read between the words of Jesus. What do you think? -Ed



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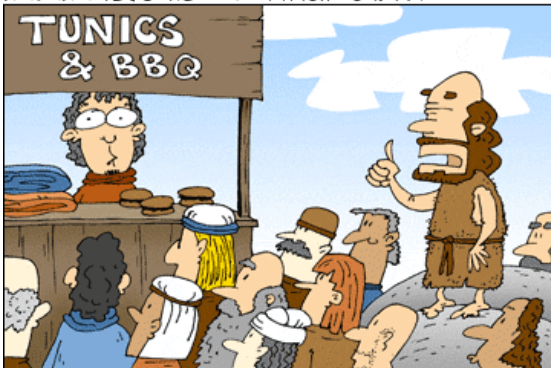
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On the lighter side...

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Thanks to Mikel Rice (See Luke 3:1-20) 02-07-2005
THE MAN WITH TWO TUNICS SHOULD SHARE
WITH HIM WHO HAS NONE, AND THE ONE WHO
HAS FOOD SHOULD DO THE SAME

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www.aiccp.org