

## It May Take Twenty Years



Vish and Shiv, identical twin boys, walked into All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center asking, “Where is the cross on the steeple?” What a wonderful question! All Saints campus ministry has shared friendship and faith with the boys’ grandparents, parents, and aunts and uncles for twenty years. We hoped seeds had been planted. This question suggested that our hope may have been fulfilled.

It is important to realize that God does accomplish His purpose. It is encouraging to see the impact campus ministry can have, even when it takes twenty years to see growth. It is especially important after the long battle against covid. Vish and Shiv represent what God does and gives hope to campus ministry when the fall semester begins in a few weeks.

The story began twenty years ago when Vish and Shiv’s mother came to study at Slippery Rock University. Her parents were born in India. Her mother was a devout Christian. Her father, Joy, was a strong and determined Hindu and follower of Zai Baba. Early in their marriage they moved to Africa where they managed a huge vegetable-flower export business. The mother spent her time running a Christian school for the farmworkers’ children. In the meanwhile, the father remained Hindu and the mother, who became a dear friend, remained Christian. The children, two daughters and one son were raised Hindu.

The parents wanted their children to have good educations. So, after boarding schools in Africa, they sent them to Slippery Rock University. The first to arrive was the twins’ mother, Nishi. Their grandmother, Mala, came with her for a prolonged time to see that Nishi settled in

well. During this time Mala came to All Saints where we had time for wonderful Bible studies. When Mala went back home, she was certain that All Saints would take good care of her daughter.

And we did. All her siblings came to All Saints and shared their lives with us. They came for student meals and their parents came too when they were visiting their children.

The children graduated, married, and got very prestigious jobs. It was normal to think they would remain in the United States. In fact, the twins attended an excellent Christian preschool in Boston while their parents worked at their jobs. The grandparents regularly came to America to spend weeks with their children and, of course, were heartbroken when once again they had to return to Africa and later India, leaving the grandchildren and children behind in the USA.

Naturally, the boys' father's parents, who are elderly and unable to travel to Boston from India, were heartbroken that they had never seen their only grandchildren.

This all leads up to why Shiv and Vish came to All Saints' door. They and their parents were coming to say goodbye before flying to India, where they would now live permanently. His parents and hers wanted time with their children and grandchildren. That would be a huge change, but one they were willing to risk.

The two boys noticed we did not have a cross on the steeple, so it was interesting to see their reaction when they came inside All Saints. They went into the sanctuary and saw the beautiful and striking crucifix hanging over the altar, a crucifix Reverend Larry K. Loree, Jr. and the congregation had dedicated recently. The boys were at ease in the sanctuary because they regularly had been inside of the church located inside their school in Boston.

Naturally, I wondered if there was any chance the Christian education would continue in India. I asked their father, Karen, if he had been baptized. He asked in return, "Should I have been?" I replied, "Are you a Christian?" He said that he respected all religions, but added that he had attended a fine Jesuit school in India and that his best friend was an orthodox Catholic priest who is going to open a school in India. He said that if anyone would baptize his sons it would be this friend.

I felt so relieved that he had such a good relationship with a Christian. The seeds planted at All Saints added to the seeds planted in Karen's life may lead to baptism.

Encouragingly, Karen had seen a book in my bookcase that interested him. It was called Seeking Allah – Finding Jesus, by Nabeel Qureshi. He asked if he could take it with him to read. The book is one of the best defenses of the Christian faith that I have ever read. Nabeel describes his conversion from Islam. He knows Jesus as his Savior.

Twenty years later the Holy Spirit is still wanting this family to know the love of Jesus. All Saints campus ministry will continue to thank God for this opportunity and to pray to continue

this mission work to His glory. It may take another twenty years, but campus ministry will never stop.

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