

# **Rebekah Naylor's ministry has made mark on Bangalore\_122004**

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Dr.  
Rebekah  
Naylor  
says she  
hopes  
Southern  
Baptists  
will send  
1,000  
workers  
to India.

## **Rebekah Naylor's ministry has made mark on Bangalore**

BANGALORE, India—Ask people around Bangalore, India, what a Christian looks like and many would describe Rebekah Naylor, the Southern Baptist missionary surgeon who has labored at Bangalore Baptist Hospital for the past 30 years.

Some have seen Naylor as a cool, precise, professional medical doctor who has performed countless surgeries and other medical procedures. She has

saved lives, delivered babies and relieved suffering for thousands of people over the years.

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But others know Naylor through her soft-spoken but persistent sharing of the gospel, her training and encouragement of Indian Baptists in how to witness and plant churches. In this role she has helped thousands of people find eternal life in Christ.

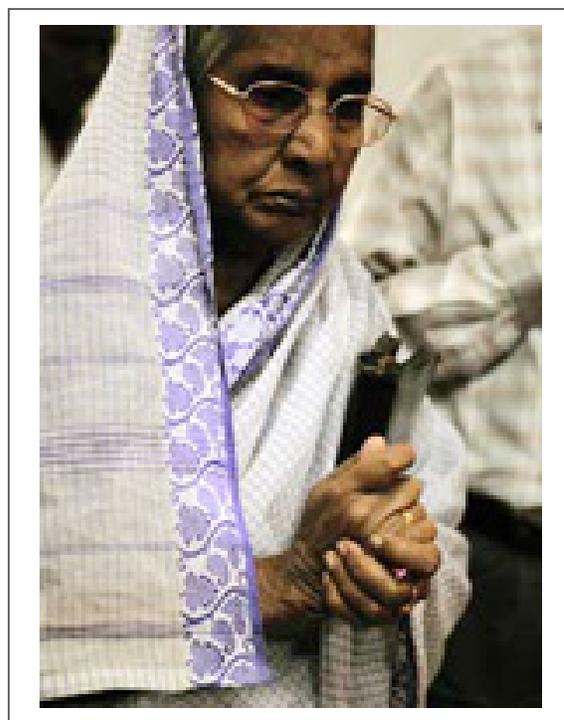
For Naylor, the missionary calling and the drive to become a physician were one calling.

“I experienced a call to missions specifically when I was 13 years old,” she said. “God spoke to me very clearly about personal involvement in foreign missions service.” That calling combined with her interest in medicine.

“My ambition in medicine was basically to use it as an avenue to share my faith in Jesus Christ,” she said, summing up a vision for her life she pursued with steadfast devotion over the following decades. Already she had plowed new ground. Few women became physicians, much less surgeons, in the 1960s.

By the time she arrived in India as a newly appointed missionary in 1974, she had managed to get through university, medical school and related training. From a comfortable home in Fort Worth, the medical and missionary newbie found herself stepping through India’s poor who slept on sidewalks for want of homes.

She arrived at Bangalore Baptist Hospital when it had been open for just six months. The building sat then on a bare, 15-acre site outside the city. Although she was anxious, the Indian staff and the 12 patients welcomed the American warmly.



India boasts nearly 20 million evangelicals, such as this member of Andheri Baptist Church. Yet the country's 1.05 billion people are 80 percent Hindu. (Matt Jones Photo)

“The foreign doctors were supposed to know something more than others, so they came hoping that they would find excellent care. They did find excellent care, but they also found people who really cared about them,” she said.

As years passed, the city grew out to surround the hospital compound, and the hospital also grew, from 80 beds to 160. The hospital began to help educate doctors and train Indians to become X-ray and lab technicians.

Today the hospital delivers 1,500 babies a year—average of about four babies a day. Doctors there treat more than 100,000 patients a year and impact five times that many for the gospel.

Naylor served in several key roles at the hospital, including administrator, coming to be accepted more as family than foreign staffer. She also became honorary “Auntie” to hundreds and hundreds of Indian young people and children.

From its inception, the hospital maintained pastoral ministry and outreach. “Its reason to exist was to tell people about Jesus Christ,” she said.

Today Indian Baptists point to a map of Bangalore that is dotted with Baptist churches, most the result of the hospital’s outreach. When workers went to one community a couple of miles from the hospital years ago, there were no Christians and no churches. Within a year, there were 20 baptized believers. Today Trinity Baptist Church is a thriving congregation that has

started 18 other churches and is working in many other communities to start more.

When a man died at Baptist Hospital some years ago, the staff gave the man's wife and family a Bible. Though they grieved, they began reading this strange book they had never seen before.

Years later, the hospital staff learned the family had turned to Christ and all the children had become ministers. Naylor has a treasury of such stories.

One family she ministered to was that of Mutes Khan, a Muslim social worker and community leader. Naylor got to know the Khan family when his first wife developed breast cancer. After his wife died and he remarried, Naylor delivered his new son.

As Baptist Hospital was looking to extend its medical care to villages outside Bangalore, Khan wanted someone else to take over a small medical clinic he had developed. Because he had come to know and trust the hospital through Naylor, he donated the clinic to the hospital in 2003.

Although Khan remains Muslim, he has heard the gospel from Naylor and works to maintain good relations between the two faiths. That's important in India, where militant Hindus, Indian Muslims and Christians often have clashed in recent years.

Despite a career most missionaries and physicians would envy, in recent years Naylor has realized that even the many churches started through the hospital's ministry never will be enough to reach all of India. In Karnataka state alone, 52 million people represent 300 language/cultural groups. Missionaries have learned that when a group begins to respond to the gospel and start new churches, the growth stays within the group and only rarely crosses into another.

To reach the spiritually lost people in this one state, Christians must deliver the gospel in 300 languages and in 33,000 villages, towns and cities linked by few roads.

“I think this gives you just a small picture of one part of India as to how difficult it is and challenging it is to access all these different communities and people groups and languages and to communicate effectively,” Naylor said.

Beyond the people group divisions, India’s social castes create still more barriers. “It is difficult for a person of one caste to reach into another, but I firmly believe that this can happen,” she said.

Her experience has made Naylor into a cheerleader for the whole nation and its peoples. “When we think of all of India, our vision is that we would like to see at least 1,000 workers come into India,” she said. Southern Baptist workers have identified 50 megacities (with populations of more than 1 million) and 1,100 unreached people-groups in South Asia, most in India.

“In order to engage them with the gospel, I think it’s evident that many, many, many workers are needed,” she urged.

India’s millions are open to the gospel, Naylor insists, and they constitute an open door. “They are waiting to hear. They are ready to respond.”

*Article courtesy of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, [www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org).*