

Veteran missionary called to bring healing in Christ's name_122004

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BANGALORE, India (BP)-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 the past 30 years.

Some Indians have seen Naylor-who currently is clinical assistant professor and surgeon at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas- 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 her years in India.

Rebekah
Naylor,
who has
served at
the
Bangalore
Baptist
Hospital
more
than 30
years, has
come to
be
accepted
as an
honorary
“auntie”
to
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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.

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She arrived at Bangalore Baptist Hospital when it had been open 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.

“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—an 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.

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