

Presbytery History with BIRDS

Barbara Carnegie Campbell met Mr. V. Paul Raja Rao in 2001 while serving as Associate Pastor of Education at First Presbyterian Church, Portland. Because Dr. Virginia Feldman, a member at FPC and Dr. George Feldman of Portland, had served as mission doctors at St. Stephens Hospital in Delhi, "Ginny" encouraged FPC to invite a "Mission Associate" from India to join the FPC staff for 3 months. "Mr. Paul" was called to serve in that position. Barbara and Ginny encouraged FPC to develop a mission vision supporting the Bharati Integrated Rural Development Society, (BIRDS) in the state of Andra Pradesh in south central India which Mr Paul had just founded.

FPC organized their first mission team to BIRDS in 2002, under the leadership of the Drs. Feldman and Barbara. The Women's Bible of FPC donated money for the first well on the rural property of the BIRDS "farm." During their first visit the team of 30 stayed in 2 grass thatched open-aired buildings.

Today the "farm" property holds a PreK-10th class school for 800 students, a medical clinic, a chapel, two boarding homes, a large dining structure for the school, a hostel for visitors, a dining hall for hostel, staff quarters, and an administrative building which houses the start of a Technical Junior College.

Teams of Presbyterians from Oregon churches have continued to visit and work at BIRDS every 2-3 years since. Barbara, having grown up at Albany UPC and having served at Albany UPC as Director of CE and Youth from 1980-1988, graduated from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2001 and served at Portland FPC from 1995-2003 when she was called as Pastor at St. Mark Presbyterian in Portland. The mission of service to BIRDS expanded with Barbara to include St Mark.

During that time, members of United Presbyterian Church Albany also began traveling to India with Barbara to serve at BIRDS. These BIRDS team members include Greg Anable, Kevin and Marta Decoster (Barbara's sister and brother -n-law), Sten Carlson and his sons, and others, some making several trips to BIRDS over the years.

Barbara served St Mark for 13 years until it closed in 2017. At its closure, Barbara asked United Presbyterian Church in Albany if they were willing to become the financial conduit for BIRDS donations from supporters across the Presbytery and country. The church agreed and Greg Anable, Sten Carlson, and Jeff Smith have coordinated the collection and wiring funding for BIRDS since that time.

Mr. Paul has made many trips to Oregon to visit churches that have supported BIRDS. One of the individuals who met Mr. Paul at Albany UPC and became an enthusiastic supporter was Doris Scharpf. Although she never traveled to India, she contributed substantial funds for years which enabled BIRDS to build their medical clinic, Boarding homes and school as well as provide operating funds for these three programs and others as needed. Following her death, her foundation continued to generously support BIRDS annually.

Albany UPC has been able to record contributions through the church accounting system, send tax donation statements and complete annual disbursements of contributions to BIRDS and our accountant has had success transferring funds to support BIRDS several times a year.

Sten Carlson and Barbara Campbell have led several "Travel with Heart and Hands" trips to India recently, which include time spent at BIRDS as well as other service and tourist sights. Because of the love and compassion of the Oregon Presbyterian Church, especially UPC Albany, BIRDS has grown since their beginning 27 years ago, into a non-profit, non-governmental organization serving hundreds of thousands of the Untouchable/Dalit poor all over south-central India and becoming one of the most highly respected service organizations in India.