



June 17, 2009
IPM Faith Connections

Dear Friends,

With this issue of *Faith Connections* we are saddened to share the tragic news I received this morning regarding the passing of Helen Jacob, IPM's Regional Coordinator in India. While at breakfast this morning in St. Louis with IPM co-founder, Paul Strege, I received an urgent call from Mahesh Upadhyaya—IPM's Interim Director of Programs & Partnerships—sharing this news. I was able to call Doctor Vimala Charles, Director of the Kanyakumari Health Trust and personal friend of Helen, Mahesh, and mine, who shared with me the tragic details of Helen's passing. Helen was killed almost immediately in an accident involving her cherished motorbike and some sort of government vehicle. She leaves behind her spouse, Nelson, and her beloved son "Jack."



I first met Helen in a Tsunami survivors' camp on the Indian Ocean in South India in 2005. Her smile lit up the literal darkness of the sheds where so many Indians were still being housed, and her spirit was reflected in the children who clung to both of us as we walked through the camp in search of Health Trust patients and staff. Her spirit was contagious, and over the intervening years I have come to call her a colleague and friend. When I was with her in India earlier this year I was struck, once again, by Helen's particular gift for service among the residents of the Mary Jenkins' Hospice Center, a longstanding IPM Project Partner, and later that evening by her pride in her only child, Jack. Her love for Jack was contagious, and as she headed off into the busy Nagercoil night on her trusty motorbike—which she purchased with one of her first paychecks from IPM—I was reminded of how important IPM is in the lives of so many intelligent and yet so often socially marginalized women around the world. Helen was a shining example of the pride that comes from the type of work IPM provides and how easy it is then to dedicate one's life to community, service, and partnership.

Later this morning, when I opened my Outlook in-box I was met by my daily reflection from the Henri Nouwen Society. Entitled *Witness of Love*, today's message encompasses well what one always felt in Helen's presence: "The knowledge of being loved in an unconditional way...comes from people who witness to God's love for us through their words and deeds. These people can be close to us but they can also live far away or may even have lived long ago. Their witness announces the truth of God's love and calls us to act in accordance with it," (Henri Nouwen Society, June 17, 2009). Helen's loving style and daily actions witnessed to her deep faith and her profound commitment to the women and children of Tamil Nadu. She will be missed by many and her memory will live on the hearts of us all.

Given the distance and cost, Mahesh will be attending Helen's memorial on behalf of IPM. I will carry my personal condolences on behalf of the IPM Family when I travel to India later this year. At this time, please keep Helen's spouse, Nelson; her son, Jack; and her mentor, Dr. Vimala Charles, in your thoughts and prayers. Condolences may be sent to them directly at 23 Yesudian Street, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, INDIA, 629001 or via IPM. Donations in Helen's memory may be sent to IPM and designated for the *Mary Jenkins' Hospice Center*. May her indomitable spirit live on in Jack and in all those lives she touched in her years with IPM.

Peace,

Joseph F. Cistone
Saint Louis, USA
June 17, 2009