



INTERNATIONAL RAILWAY MISSION

International Review

For the last 90 years, the Association "International Railway Mission" (IRM) has been connecting Christians in the railways, all over the world. Here is a review of the 2016 IRM conference held in Goslar, Germany and a look at its global development.

For me it was a very stirring moment as the delegates from all four continents entered the conference hall, accompanied by a song and wearing their national flags. It was a impressive sign of unity, to which Goslar's lady mayor spoke of in her speech at the opening ceremony. After 21 years the "Christian Association of German Railwaymen" (Christliche Vereinigung Deutscher Eisenbahner) was again the host of the IRM Conference and Leisure Week. The conference motto was ***"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of sound mind"*** (2 Timothy 1: 7, NKJV). In the first few days, this motto was further expounded by three speakers to around 200 participants.

I found correctly pronouncing the many names, especially those of our Asian delegates, from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore, to be a real challenge. There were many tongue twisters there. Also our cultural differences often came to the surface, as for example: ***"We Swiss may have our watches ... but others have their time!"***.

New members

In addition to regular membership for associations, the IRM also links local groups (chapters) and contacts from various countries. At the General Assembly in Goslar, two new associations became members. These two are the "Railroad Evangelistic Association" (REA) USA and RailHope of South Africa.

The REA was founded in 1941. In the meantime it also goes by the name "RailHope America". IRM-Representative Don Howell represented REA. For many years now, their club magazine "All Aboard" has been sent to and appreciated from railroaders all over the English-speaking world.

RailHope South Africa is a young and dynamic association, founded this year in June. Present from South Africa were the IRM-Representative Hazel Govender together with six others from Durban. They brought and sold self-made T-shirts, of which the proceeds will sponsor their English-language project "Signals of Hope". The delegates from Asia, South Africa and the USA were very enthusiastic to the causes of our Lord. Their concerns for mission and a life lived for Him, reminds me of the passages in Revelation 2, in which Jesus calls the churches to return to an unconditional love of God, their first love!

Activities & Collaboration

A highlight of the conference was our trip from Wernigerode to Brocken on the oldest steam locomotive (year 1897) of the "Harzian Narrow-gage Railway". Brocken, at 3746 ft/a.s.l is the highest elevation in northern Germany. Arriving at the top, we were greeted with a fantastic view. Praise and honor be to the Lord!

In addition to professional railway-men and retirees, a dozen pastors and Bible teachers from Africa and Asia also attended the conference for the first time. These were encouraged to

come to Goslar, by our Indian representative Arulraj for the purpose of discovering how railway mission work can also be done in their own spheres of influence. At the end of October, Pastor Lazarus Milton invited rail staff from the "Mass Rapid Transit" (MRT) in Singapore to study the possibility of starting such missionary work there and to eventually lay the foundations for their own RailHope Singapore.

For the IRM board, we were able to elect a new coordinator for the prayer network with Steven Rowe, Railway Chaplain at London Euston Station. Liam Johnston, Managing Director of the British Railway Mission (BRM), was nominated for the post of IRM vice president. From 2017 onwards, we need a new secretary who can provide the minutes in German and English of our annual IRM meetings. We remember Elisabeth Andretti (CH) who has resigned after 21 years of faithful service to IRM, which included also being our conference secretary. Thank you Elisabeth!

The "Signals of Hope" Project

At the Goslar conference the project "Railroad Bible in English" was also presented. This planned edition of the Bible contains the New Testament, the Psalms and the Proverbs of Solomon, which are main parts of the Bible, which demonstrate the immense love of our God. The prerequisites to starting such a project are: people responsible to keep the project on course and basic funding. A first donation of Euro 2500,- have already been collected during the conference in Goslar.

Description of the project and a way to donate electronically can be found at the download section of our IRM website. Here the status of the project can be followed and a donation clock is also provided.

In addition to nomination of the project manager and further donation collections, the next steps should be:

- Consideration, how high the donation level should be before the work can be started.
- Creation of a time schedule for target completion and who should take on what and when.
- Consideration, all or which parts of the German "Eisenbahner Bibel" (Signale der Hoffnung) are to be translated.
- Search for suitable testimonials in the English-speaking world of railways.

Global networking and local activities

The goal of global networking among railways and our IRM conferences is to inspire and promote national and local movements in their mission work. RailHope Finland (formerly RKY) has shown in Goslar that this is also possible for older and smaller associations. Over the past three years, the Finns have implemented ideas, such as improvements in public relations and calendar distribution, as well as a change of leadership and few new active members.

Since their IRM membership (2013), RailHope India has extended its activities from originally three to twenty-one states, developed a hand-sized calendar in 14 Indian main languages, and attended this conference with 20 delegates. Some Indian brothers have saved up to two years to be able to come to Goslar! This is evidence of true devotion! All these are powerful signs of hope in the skies of global networking, encouraging local action - RailHope!

With kind regards and the blessings of the Lord

Ulrich Berger, IRM-President