



William Carey welcomes guest professor from India

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William Carey University recently welcomed a guest professor with connections to the college co-founded by Carey's namesake nearly 200 years ago in Serampore, India.

Dipankar Haldar is an associate professor of New Testament at Serampore College, which was founded by William Carey, now known as the "Father of Modern Missions" and his colleagues, Joshua Marshman and William Ward, near the site of their mission in West Bengal in 1818. Haldar arrived in Mississippi for his first visit to the United States on Nov. 7 and will remain at Carey through Saturday.

Serampore's relationship with the Baptist university bearing Carey's name in Mississippi dates back a number of years, according to Haldar. Carey has received students from Serampore and has hosted the principal, or president, of the college in the past. Professors and students from Carey have also traveled to the college.

"Several Carey professors, including Dr. Jonathan Brooke, Dr. Howard Keever, Dr. Scott Hummel, Dr. Myron Noonkester and Dr. Bennie Crockett, have visited Serampore for research purposes," Haldar said.

These visits led to friendships between Haldar and his American colleagues and strengthened the relationship between the two institutions. The cultivation of relationships — helped greatly by Facebook, said Haldar — has led to his contribution of several works to the Center for Study of the Life and Work of William Carey, which is located on the Hattiesburg campus. Haldar has translated Bengali hymns written by William Carey and has also contributed an original piece.

In early 2012, Haldar served as a host for a group of 12 Carey students led by Hummel and Brooke. The 10-day cultural exchange involved the group observing classes, touring historical sites relating to the university's namesake and assisting with projects around the Serampore campus, including painting a dormitory. Haldar also welcomed the group into his home, where they met his wife, Samapti, and his sons, Mark and Matthew.

"We enjoyed and loved their visit," Haldar said. "Since then, I have found myself wanting to visit Carey and learn more about this place in Mississippi."

Haldar has served at Serampore College since September 2004 as a member of its theology faculty. He teaches Greek and courses in New Testament history. The college is divided into two entities, including Haldar and his colleagues in theology, and a separate school for the arts, science and commerce. The theology school has around 150 students while the arts, science and commerce school has nearly 4,000 students.

“There are many similarities between Serampore and Carey,” Haldar said. “Many of the same courses are taught, such as classes in Greek and New Testament, and there are well-versed professors in many of the same areas.”

In addition to his work as a professor, Haldar has also published 14 books, including works in theology, New Testament, the history of the early church and collections of sermons. He has served a pastor since 1990 and is a presbyter in the Church of North India, a church organized from six different Christian denominations. He is also the chaplain at Serampore, where he is in charge of all worship services.

“We have three daily worship services at Serampore College and two on Sundays,” Haldar said.

Haldar is the chairman for the Kolkata branch of Compassion International, which provides 70,000 Indian children in his region with needed services each year. He also serves as the Hooghly District’s coordinator for Samaritan’s Purse and is in charge of distributing the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes. Thousands of boxes are shipped to the district each year for Haldar and a team of pastors and community leaders to distribute.

“We train for six months on how to distribute the shoeboxes and also how to share the Gospel during the distribution process,” Haldar said. “The excitement at Christmas, when the children know the shoeboxes are coming, is great.”

Haldar said outreach organizations, along with an increased focus on mission work within Indian churches, is leading to a growth in the number of Christians in India.

“We are seeing a growth in the number of churches and in the numbers of people attending churches,” he said. “Our churches are reaching out and sharing the Gospel.”

During his visit to Carey, Haldar has shared stories of Christianity’s growth and of William Carey’s 41 years of service in India. He has lectured in several history, music and religion classes and was the guest speaker for the November colloquium of the Presidential Honors Program. He has also visited New Orleans and sampled many kinds of new cuisine.

“I have liked many of the new foods I’ve tasted, but especially alligator, jambalaya and catfish,” he said.

Haldar said his entire experience at Carey has been beyond meaningful for him.

“It was my dream and my prayer that I could come visit and see Carey,” he said. “The love I’ve been shown here, the hospitality ... it has overwhelmed me.”

If you go

The public is invited to attend Dipankar Haldar's address at William Carey's weekly chapel service at 9:25 a.m. Wednesday in Smith Auditorium and to his university lecture at noon Wednesday in the Student Conference Center. Both events are on the Hattiesburg campus and are free of charge.