

## **Death of Balwantsingh Dasrat - Longstanding Layman in the ELCG -**

The Ministry Among Guyanese is saddened by the news of the death of our dearly beloved brother in Christ and servant of the Lord, Balwantsingh Dasrat. He was tragically killed after being hit and run over by a minibus that was driven by a drunken driver on the morning of September 24, 2007. Many of the Guyanese leaders in MAG as well as countless others here in the U.S. knew Balwant for his love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his unswerving loyalty and faithfulness to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana and to his home congregation of St. James, Whim Village, Berbice, in living out the faith that was engendered and gifted to him in the waters of baptism. He was a regular participant at the annual Convention of the ELCG and was known to speak out passionately on the many issues of the church, both local and national. MAG shares in the grief of his family and friends, the saints of St. John, and indeed the entire ELCG.

Well done thou good and faithful servant, Balwant, child of God. You have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith. There is reserved for you the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give you on that day, and not only to you but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

See more information below on Balwant's death that was received from Pastor Judy McGuire, Pastor of St. James and Director of the Christian Education Department, ELCG, and from Martin Lalsingh on funeral arrangements and a Memorial Fund in Balwant's honor.

9/24

News within the Guyana community travels so quickly that I'm sure it's all over the US by now. However, when you have contact again with Errol, would you kindly tell him that my lay leader - Mr. Balwantsingh Dasrat - died this morning after being hit then run over by a drunken minibus driver. He died an hour later at the New Amsterdam Hospital on the Xray table. They phoned me this morning at 6:30 and asked me to meet him upon arrival at the hospital. He died of head injuries. It's a terrible blow to the entire ELCG as he was THE lay leader of this country and instrumental in retreat planning, to say nothing of being my right hand. It's like having an associate pastor killed with no replacement unless you train one first! I've no idea when the funeral will be as I'm sure some of his family will come in from NY. It will be a nightmare to plan as he literally knew half the population of this country being a former school headmaster serving in many schools before becoming a church leader.

9/26

**Dear friends,**

**I know it's time for another newsletter, but let's just say I'm too numb to think straight.**

**I returned a little over two weeks ago from the US after a refreshing vacation . In the short time back, I've done services in 12 churches in 3 different parishes and funerals in two parts of the country. Yesterday, when I thought life could get somewhat back to normal, I received news that the lay leader and my right hand in the parish had been hit by a drunken driver. I rushed to the hospital and was there when he died an hour later on the Xray table.**

**Mr. Balwantsingh Dasrat, or Brother B as he is known, was THE lay leader in the ELCG. I was the one blessed to have him in my parish. Brother B was the one who revived St. Barnabas Church healing rifts after it had split. He was the instrumental contact person in the St. James reconstruction negotiating with the contractor and smoothing ruffled feathers with the congregation. The rebuilding has just begun.**

**Losing Brother B means losing not only a friend but an associate pastor with not one replacement in this country until one is trained. Brother B could run circles around me when it comes to ministry. How does one train such a replacement? Brother B is the one to whom I intended to hand over St. Michael Parish next year.**

**“Comfort, O comfort my people” is the verse from Isaiah which rings in my mind. Somehow in the midst of loss and grief there are four congregations which need to be comforted and consoled. St. Barnabas Church is the church suffering the greatest loss as Brother B was their well-loved pastor.**

**The matter of planning a funeral is also monumental. Before Brother B retired at the age of 55, he was the headmaster of several schools in this country. I would dare say everyone in this part of the country and much of the population in the rest of the country knows him as a teacher - to say nothing of members from countless churches of many denominations.**

**I keep reminding myself – the one leader of us all, Jesus Christ, is still alive and present with us.**

**Pray for us,**

**Judy**

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Balwant' funeral is scheduled for tomorrow, 10/1. The funeral service will be held at Sr. Michael Lutheran Church, Alness because the church building at Whim (St. James) is under repairs. Burial will take place at Whim cemetery.

I have copied below two emails from Pastor Judy McGuire reflecting Balwant's current and long standing involvement and ministry in the church. (Pastor McGuire is a missionary pastor.)

I remember times in the '60s when Balwant and I sat for long periods awaiting other Luther Leaguers to

arrive.

If you would like to contribute to a memorial fund for Balwant please **make your check payable to: Our Saviour Lutheran Church, with the memo stating Balwant Singh memorial fund.** Please **mail your check to:** Rev. Robert Fritch, (Pastor Bob), Our Saviour Lutheran Church, 90-04 175 St. Jamaica, NY 11432.

Pastor Bob will be going to Guyana for a workshop and study tour during the second week of November (as he has done several times in the past). Pastor Bob will present a cumulative check to Pastor Judy McGuire for a memorial at St. James Lutheran Church, Whim, in honor and memory of Balwant and his service and ministry to the parish and the community as a whole.

All checks should reach Our Saviour, as described above, by November 6, 2007. I will inform you of the total received towards the memorial. At a subsequent time Pastor McGuire will let us know specifically about the use of the memorial fund (possibly a picture).

Please forward this mail to others who you feel may want to contribute to the memorial.

Folks in Guyana can make their checks payable directly to St. James Lutheran Church and mail to Pastor McGuire at the Whim.

God's peace and blessings to you.

*Martin Lalsingh*