

## AGTS Professor Ministers to Tsunami Victims

On the day after Christmas in 2004, the second most powerful earthquake ever recorded caused a tsunami in the Indian Ocean that killed between 200,000 and 310,000 people in 14 countries. The actual number of lives lost may never be known. As of February 2005, 500 bodies a day were still being found.



In March 2005, Dr. Melody Palm, director of counseling programs at AGTS, spent 10 days in Chennai, India, which was the third most affected country with over 16,000 persons presumed dead and 380,000 displaced. As a member of a nine-person medical team from Assemblies of God (A/G) Health Care Ministries, Palm worked with A/G missionaries, local doctors and a ministry based out of New Life A/G, the largest A/G church in India, to offer free medical care to those in need.

Fifteen medical camps were set up across the southern tip of India. It is estimated that over 5000 people received medical attention and close to 1000 received counseling services.

Palm's team visited camps of thousands of displaced persons who were living in huts and tents without electricity or running water. On one visit, she talked

with over 30 fishermen who ran for their lives when the giant wave hit. Many were experiencing classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, feelings of helplessness and symptoms of



Palm and Elaine Bennet, a nurse with Health Care Ministry, with three children who ran from the wave before watching it destroy their village.

depression. "It was so rewarding to be able to help a fisherman who was having flashbacks and nightmares understand what was happening to him," said Palm, "and to give him tools to assist him through his healing." New Life A/G purchased five fishing

boats to help men like these get back on their feet again.

Palm counseled victims in village squares and fields, on the steps of a Hindu temple, in a Catholic school for girls, and in a rickshaw body shop swarming with mosquitoes. She talked with children who had witnessed the tsunami and were struggling with terrible fears that it might happen again. Palm led a young boy to Christ and helped him understand that he can pray to his heavenly father to deliver his earthly father from alcoholism.

"I was able to teach a young mother, who survived the tsunami only to be assaulted by thieves the following week, how to control her anxiety and manage her fears," said Palm. "And then I saw God flood her with a healing peace that can only come from the one true God who hears and answers prayers. God is good. And God heals." ■