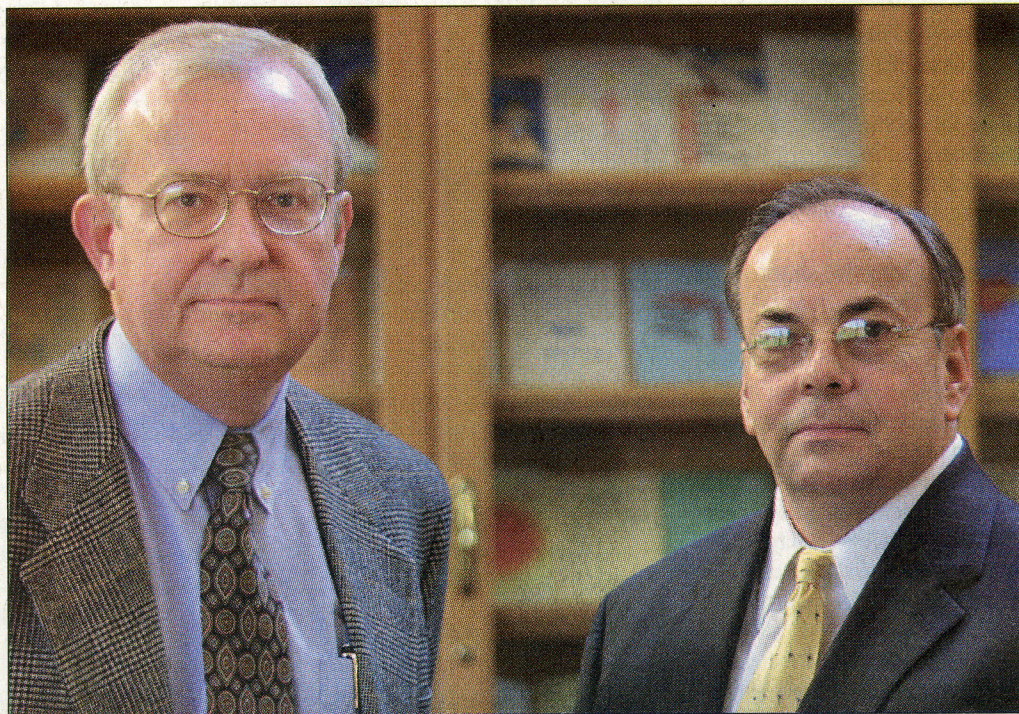


Help on the way



The Rev. Richard Stiles, right, and Don Sandusky, representatives of Jeffersonville's Christ Gospel Church International, are traveling to India today to see the consequences of the December tsunami and to contribute to relief efforts on the country's east coast. STAFF PHOTO BY C.E. BRANHAM

Church coming to aid of tsunami victims

By GREG GAPSIS
Staff Writer

News reports have brought the devastation wrought by December's Indian Ocean tidal wave into America's homes. Shock and horror typify the reactions to the deaths of more than 222,000 people and the destruction of entire communities, caused by the tsunami that spread from Indonesia to Africa.

The Rev. Richard Stiles and Don Sandusky, representatives of Jeffersonville's Christ Gospel Church International, are traveling to India on Monday to see first hand the consequences of the natural disaster and to contribute to relief efforts on the country's east coast.

"Our relationship goes back to 1975 and we have supported local efforts there for many years," said Sandusky, director of the church's Asian ministry, which includes Japan, China,

So you know

People wishing more information about the church's tsunami relief effort or to make a donation for victims in India can call the Rev. Richard Stiles' office at 282-8458.

India and Korea. "The India association, based at Rev. Joseph Yelchuri's church in Kakinada, now includes about 425 churches across the country."

While many of the churches are only modest structures in small villages, Yelchuri's church includes an orphanage that is now acting as a relief center for about 2,000 tsunami victims.

"Much worse damage happened south of Madras along the coast," Sandusky said. "Kaki-

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nada is 1 1/2 miles from the coast and is now helping with feeding programs, clothing and shelter in response to government pleas for help. Indonesia is getting a lot of attention, but India was also hit very hard."

The pair's trip was initially planned to give Stiles, the recently-appointed vice president of Christ Gospel Church International, an introduction to a region that has seen enormous growth. Then the tsunami hit.

"We planned to have a pastors seminar and handle some administrative matters before the tsunami came up," Stiles said. "Now we will try to support relief efforts there."

"I think this disaster has touched the world community because it hit the poorest of the poor," Stiles said. "Yes, the Red Cross is there, but people are still needy, still hungry. All of our churches have taken special collections to help."

To assist the India organization, the Jeffersonville church has set up a special account in a local bank that Yelchuri can access with a debit card in India to pay for press-

ing needs.

"Every dime goes directly to aid," Stiles said. "We don't take any administrative fees out."

Christ Gospel Church was founded in 1957 by the Rev. Bernice R. Hicks in Jeffersonville, according to Stiles. The main sanctuary of the fundamentalist, Pentecostal congregation is at Indiana 62 and Oakwood on a 37-acre campus near Jeffersonville High School. The offices of the international church are on Indiana 62.

When asked for the reason of the church's growth India, Stiles referred to cultural values there.

"India is a very religious county and people are very curious and serious about it," Stiles said. "Even if not Christian, they will come to our meetings with notebooks, pay close attention and try to learn. Sister Hicks teaches there is a pattern of spiritual growth based on scripture that allows one to develop a relationship beyond just salvation."

While the current visit will last must more than a week, Stiles said the need for help is immediate and large. "The urgent need is not going to go away for at least two months," he said.