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THE MORNING STAR

17, Frances Road,
Colombo - 06.
Sri Lanka.

THE MORNING STAR

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Uthayatharakai

Registered as a News paper at the General Post Office, Sri Lanka

Established 1841, A Christian Fortnightly Published Every other Friday

Vol. 189 - Jaffna - Friday Jan 2012 No.01-01

Righteousness Exalteth A nation, But Sin is a Reproach to any people

The Morning Star

Local
Annual subscription Rs. 300.00
Life Subscription Rs. 2000.00

www.csijaffnadiocese.com

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New Moderator of the Church of South India

The General Synod of the Church of South India has elected a new moderator. At the 13 January 2012 meeting of the synod held at the Bishop Selvamony Retreat Centre, the Bishop in Kanyakumari the Rt. Rev. G. Devakadasham was elected moderator.



We are all called to be one



*Bishop being honoured by the new Moderator
at a Public Reception held at CSI Scot College, Nagercoil*

The 33rd Synod of the Church of South India gathered together with the soul-stirring inspiring theme, In God's world we are one January 13-16 at Kanya Kumari, a picturesque site on the southern tip of India.

This is where one can view the rising and setting of the sun from the same spot and as Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah aptly commented, it is an exquisitely divine experience to feel the deep-seated spiritual message, the shine of the sunny side and the living force of the flowing waters that very much characterized the 4-day Synod sessions.

Kanya Kumari is a highly venerated spot in India for people of all faiths and often referred to as the sub-continent's southern hope of humanity. Apart from other members of the delegation from the Jaffna Diocese, to those who attended the Synod and visited India for the first time, the sessions and Kanya Kumari as well as a visit to a rural parish in Nagercoil where they were warmly welcomed was an unforgettable experience. They observed with great enthusiasm especially meeting our fellow folks of the Church of South India across the Palk Straits.



Rt Rev Dr A. Christopher Asir

Bishop in Madurai Kannad.

5 December 1947 - 3 February 2012

an interview with Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah Page 9



``We are a family,`` commented one of them.

The following are the newly elected officers of the Synod:

The Moderator: The Most Rev Dr G. Devakadasham, Bishop of Kanya Kumari Diocese

The Deputy Moderator: The Rt. Rev. Dr G. Devasirvadam

General Secretary: M.M. Philip

Treasurer: Dr Bennet Abraham



The following were the members of the delegation of the Jaffna Diocese headed by the Rt Rev Dr Daniel S Thiagarajah:

Presbyters: The Reverends S. Anthony Sawerimuttu, V. Pathmathayalan and K.S. Joseph;

Presbyters (under-35): The Reverends. S. Jude Elilamilthan and T. Dixon Uthayachelvam;

Lay Persons: Dr Mrs. Thayalini Thiagarajah, Mrs. Kokularasa Vijayakumari, Edward Arunthavaseelan and R. Dharmalingham; Lay persons (under-35): M. Rubavathanan, Miss. Grace Dilani Arnold and Miss. Komathy Sivarajah

Accredited Visitors: The Rev. D.S. Solomon and N. Victor Jeyakumar.

Synod Executive Members elected from the Jaffna Diocese delegation (Biennium 2012-14): The Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, Rev. V. Pathmathayalan (Presbyter), Dr Mrs. Thayalini Thiagarajah (Lay Woman), Mr. Edward Arunthavaseelan (Layman).

Member Synod Working Committee (Biennium 2012-14): The Rev. V. Pathmathayalan.

Following the Synod Sessions at a felicitation function held at the Synod Secretariat in Chennai, welcoming the new Moderator, the Deputy Moderator, the Secretary and the Treasurer, the Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, one of the senior bishops of the CSI referred to the quintessence qualities of the newly elected officers in his address.

He described the new Moderator as a person of prayer profound in faith and his wife, one of devotion and piety and together both complimenting each other as a fortress of spirituality which augurs well for the CSI.

Referring to the Deputy Moderator, Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah, referred to his untiring work and commitment to ecumenism nationally, regionally and internationally.

The General Secretary Mr M M Philip, Bishop Thiagarajah observed as indispensable to the CSI with his remarkable efficiency and integrity. Mr Philip, he said has served in several crucial committees called to make important and far-reaching decisions and even those that made the final approval for the election of bishops.

Bishop Thiagarajah apart from complimenting Dr Bennet Abraham for his efficient management of our assets and funds referred to his caring and compassionate personality that is his hallmark. He also made a personal appreciation of gratitude to how Dr Bennet Abraham rushed to his bedside when he was in the Intensive Care Unit of the Colombo General Hospital following the near-fatal attack on his life. As a medical expert, Bishop Thiagarajah said Dr Bennet Abraham spontaneously offered his services to assist the medical staff. His presence was a great source of consolation to his family, friends and the diocese shaken by the vicious attack on him, concluded Bishop Thiagarajah.

On his return to Colombo, Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah commented that the Kanya Kumari sessions of the CSI Synod was one of the finest he had attended and the cordiality and conviviality that prevailed there lived up to the spirit, commitment and expectations of the founders of the Church of South India.



An heroic modern day saint and evangelist

Jothi Hoole, Pastor, Friend and Loving Father



L to R: Ruth, Elijah, Jothi, Shreerani, Thabiththa, Mosay

We record with great sadness the passing away of John Ratnajothi Ireneaus Hoole (Feb. 11, 1955 – Dec. 27, 2011), the fourth son of the Rev. Fr. Richard H.R. Hoole and Jeevamany Hoole, the youngest daughter of the Rev. Canon S.S. Somasundaram – all of the Church of Ceylon.

It will be recalled that the Rev. Canon Somasundaram, B.A. Calcutta, whose biography was recorded by Bishop Sabapathy Kulandran, was a product of the America Ceylon Mission's Jaffna College. Both of Jothi's parents were associated with the undergraduate section of Jaffna College. The Rev. Hoole left his studies during the Second World War to answer the call of the Church when European priests left suddenly and the Bishop of Colombo successfully persuaded him to join the Divinity School in Colombo. Continuing family lines to Jaffna College and the America Ceylon Mission, Jothi's maternal great-great grandfather Appucutti Kingsbury was Native Professor of Mathematics at Jaffna College and Jothi's youngest brother Noel is presently the Director of the JC Institute of Technology which was set up by his maternal uncle George D. Somasundaram.

Looking back, like his ancestors, Jothi remained committed to his calling and academic endeavours in many ways. He sat the G.C.E. A Level during the worst period of standardization when there was media-wise standardization with a regional basis that worked against Jaffna Tamil candidates. Despite his results of 2As (in Pure and Applied Mathematics) and 1 C and 1 S, he did not receive admission to any Sri Lankan faculty. So at a time when British fees were only 250 pounds a year (rising to 450 pounds by the time he graduated), still a big sum in Sri Lanka, he was fortunate to read electrical engineering at the University of Birmingham, one of the UK's older and better universities. Unfortunately his father, the Rev. Hoole, passed away barely a month after his departure and Jothi was unable to attend the funeral because of the financial straits his family was then in. Yet, despite the emotional toll, financially supported by his elder brothers working in Singapore and Nigeria, he did so well that the university wrote a special letter to his alma mater, St. John's, commending the school for her excellent product and the letter was read proudly by then principal K. Pooranampillai at the school assembly. In 1978, immediately following his graduation, Jothi returned to Sri Lanka at a time when many Tamils refused to return. It spoke to his maturity when he decided to serve the Tamil people at a time when they were put

down so badly by their government, instead of making an empty political statement by refusing to return. After working for a year at Gnanam's as an electrical engineer in Colombo, he moved to the KKS Cement Factory where he rose to be Electrical Works Engineer, living with his since departed mother first in Udovil and finally in their ancestral house in Nallur. His uncle George Somasundaram had been Works Manager at the Cement Factory in the late 1950s after quitting the University of Ceylon.

Jothi became increasingly involved in the Church, becoming a regular preacher at St. James' Nallur (where the first Hoole of Point Pedro, baptised by Peter Percival, married at the CMS Nellore Girls' Boarding School and settled down in the middle of the nineteenth century, and his grandfather, Canon Somasundaram, had been incumbent for 32 years and his father, Rev Hoole, for 12). He was heavily involved with the Youth Group at church and later expanded to be active in Youth for Christ as well. He married Carmini Francis, whom he had met through his YFC work in Chundikuli

Some clergymen were able to use his talents in their own ministries for the glory of God and His Church. But others found it difficult when youth sought Jothi with their problems rather than them. Para-churches also demanded that he show full obedience to their leaders when working with them, citing the phrase "troops follow their general without question." Unfortunately, such an environment cannot hold thinking persons.

Over time, pushed out of formal church and para-church structures, his zeal for ministry and compassion for the poor and the many in the Mannar district who had joined the various militant movements and had left them in disillusionment, drove Jothi into independent evangelical work. He devoted himself and his work to the people in Mannar, working closely with Ragavan Alphonsus, the grandson of another Jaffna College stalwart, Boss Chelliah.

As he was increasingly drawn into his religious work in Mannar, realizing that weekends alone were insufficient, he quit engineering and moved with his young family to Mannar where he worked full-time with limited financial support from the impoverished communities he served through the Church he started, Grace and Truth Church, Mannar. Although he had quit engineering, he used his sharp mind teaching at his brother Muktan's Baldeus Theological College in Trincomalee, did extensive theological writing, pursuing a Master's Degree from the UK as a semi-external student.

Life in Mannar would not be easy without a salary or pension base. There are strong parallels in this to his grandfather, The Rev. Canon Somasundaram, who quit his special post as Dean at St. John's, a position from which he was expected to succeed the then principal, The Rev. Jacob Thompson, in order to carry out an evangelical mission in the Vanni. As the Rt. Rev. Dr. Subramaniam Jebanesan would remark later, Jothi has lived his life "obedient to the heavenly vision."

Indeed life was not easy in Mannar. At the birth of his third child, Elijah, under the care of well-qualified and well-equipped specialist doctors from Médecins Sans Frontiers at Mannar General Hospital, he lost his wife, Carmini. A routine drug to halt bleeding following successful delivery required a test dose to check for allergic reactions some women have experienced. Unfortunately, Carmini went into shock from the test dose itself and passed away. As difficult to bear as Carmini's death were the cruel self-righteous comments of those who never agreed with his decision to quit our settled upper-middle class form of life: that he had killed her by taking her to a place without hospitals. He got through the early years of life with three infants, thanks to the loving care and help of his sister-in-law Baba and mother-in-law Mrs. Francis. In time he would marry Shreerani Vethavanam of the Irrigation Department in Mannar who gave him a fourth child, Ruth, and a settled family life.

Regardless of nay-sayers two of his children, Thabiththa and Elijah ranked No. 1 and 2 in Mannar at Public examinations. Of his brother Muktan's family, which had joined them in Mannar subsequent to Muktan's early demise in Trincomalee, a son, Anbesan, ranked No. 1 in the intervening year. A hat trick indeed! Today his eldest daughter, Thabiththa, is at Jaffna's Medical Faculty reading medicine. It has to be remarked that Anbesan entered Cambridge to read medicine and Raghavan Alphonsus' son Daniel entered Oxford to read economics, both after going up to the O.Levels at St. Xavier's, Mannar – something few have matched even from the best schools in Colombo, Kandy or Jaffna, with a strict regime of incessant private tuition classes in every waking hour and being driven to and from classes with all luxuries. To those who believe that all the comforts of life are essential to academic achievements and speaking good English, his children are a true testament that all that is required is a happy home and strong family values. This is perhaps Jothi's best legacy to all of us.

Jothi's last years were troubled by the schisms endemic to evangelical churches without the structures that have come to the established Churches through long years of organizational experience. But he coped well and commanded immense respect among his parishioners of some 80 first generation Christians gathering regularly on Sundays and in between for the study of the Holy Scriptures who included many ex-militants who found solace in the message of the saving grace of Jesus Christ which he carried to them.

In a testimonial his life well-lived, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Daniel Thiagarajah remarked thus: Please know that he was a true blessing to many. He committed himself fully to the Lord and to His ministry.

Lesson from an exemplary life of a centenarian

Remembering the deeds of Centenarian

Mr S Rajanayagam OBE

On the 6th of January 2012, Mr S Rajanayagam passed away peacefully, at the grand old age of 103 having celebrated his birthday on 25 November 2011, lived by himself until the last day of his life. When I think of this great man, his considerable achievements and what I admired most about him, it was the way he lived that stands out the most. Here was a man who carried himself with great dignity and his conduct in his later years was a lesson to us all: that ageing is neither a handicap nor hindrance to leading a full life and to serving others.

Mr Rajanayagam grew up in an era in Ceylon where academic excellence was recognized on merit and he used that opportunity to excel academically and professionally. He entered Imperial College London and passed with First Class Honours in 1932. He then went on to a successful engineering career and made great contributions in the engineering field. He also held top positions in organizations he was associated with, such as the Institution of Engineers Ceylon, Tamil Union Sports Club & Jaffna Technical Institute.

After his house was bombed in Jaffna in 1985, he donated it to the Church of South India to run as an orphanage. Then he joined the growing exodus of Tamils from Ceylon and made his way to Adelaide, Australia. Though he had left his home far behind, Mr Rajanayagam's love for his heritage and his compassion for his people, did not waiver. He wrote four books in English about: Thus We Became (1994), How I Became (1997), Equality and Becoming Free (2000) and Becoming a Nation (2004). He may have left his Tamil Homeland a long time ago, but his country still resided in his heart and his mind. His last book, Life in Karainagar 100 years ago, was written in Tamil after he revised his Tamil language skill and will be published shortly. One can only hope that his rich legacy of historical documentation inspires others in our community to record their heritage for future generations.

In looking back on his life, many of you will have fond memories of this remarkable individual. Here is one of mine. About 15 years ago, a good friend of Mr Rajanayagam, of the same era and similar achievement from Karainagar, was staying with us. Mr Rajanayagam wanted to visit his dear old friend. Unfortunately we had no idea how he was coming? He got off the bus on the main road, and walked a km, in a suit, up a steep hill to our home. This was a man who would have been close to ninety years old. When the doorbell rang, he was puffing and sweating. For Mr Rajanayagam, seeing his friend was everything. Nothing else mattered or seemed impossible. It was a touching display of character, comradeship and personality that I will not forget.

At Mr Rajanayagam's funeral service, his great grandson gave a reading from "the Letter of St James Chapter 2". The reading spoke of the importance of deeds over faith. This is the best epitaph for an individual whose actions were always louder than words. And it is a reminder that the best way for us to celebrate his life is to live the way he lived. The message rings in my ears; I hope it does in yours too

Thanks

"South Australia Murasu".

My experience at the medial camp conducted at Vanni

Dr (Mrs)Roushini Rajanayagam, Green Memorial Hospital, Manipay.



A mobile clinic was held at Mukkompan, Poonari on Sunday 29th of January, 2012. This was organized by the JDCSI Centre for holistic approach as a remedial measure to tranquilize the war affected people in the Vanni region. The team consists of Doctors, nurses, counsellors, volunteers and members of the Rotary Club.

There were about two hundred patients eagerly waiting for treatment. They included women, children, elderly and youths. Many of them suffered emotional trauma due to the tragedies and distressing realities of war and thus have been unable to recover back to normalcy and experience the benefits of a peaceful day to day livelihood. They were not only mentally affected but suffered the physical injuries of the conflict.

Generally, the patients were affected by upper respiratory tract infections, skin infections, bronchial asthma, hypertension and diabetics mellitus. Almost all children were suffering from malnutrition and other physical maladies. We diagnosed the diseases and treated them with the medicines that we brought with us. We also screened them for diabetes and hypertension in high risk populations. In addition, we counseled individuals on how to live a healthy life.

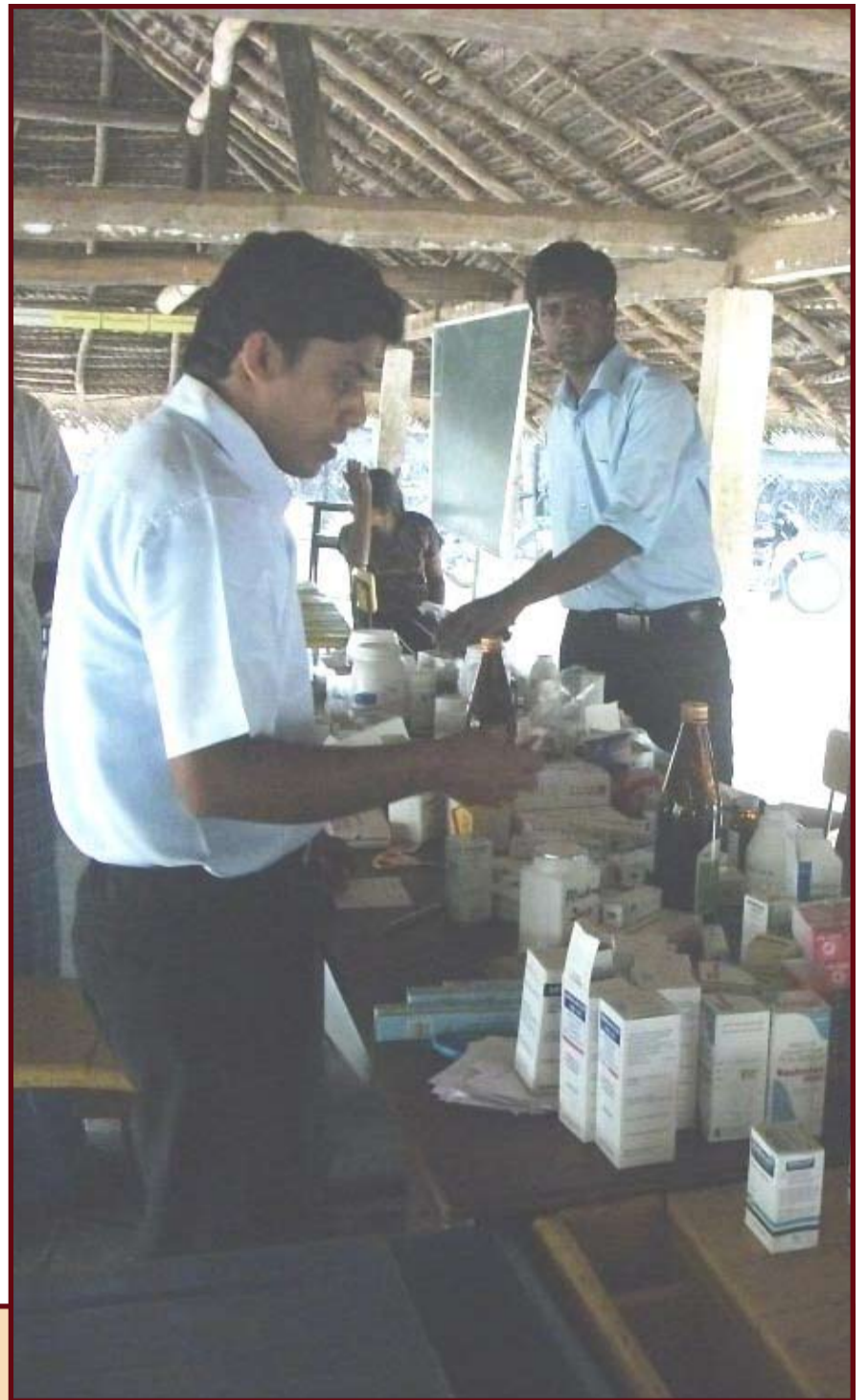


We realized that most of the children had anemia and we treated them with worm treatment. These children need healthy nutritious food and multi vitamins. Among the elderly population we noticed the common diseases were hypertension and diabetic Mellitus. These people not only need medicines but will need at least once a month clinical follow up and health education to keep them healthy. There were many patients suffering from bronchial asthma and they are in need for nebulisers.

The nearest hospital is about 10 kilometers away from their homes. In case of an emergency it is difficult to travel such a long distance without transportation services. This place needs at least a dispensary to look after the patients. They requested our team to make visits to this region at least once a month for a medical clinic.

This camp was organized by Dr(Mrs) Thayalini Thiagarajah, Director of Centre for Holistic Healing. I thank her for giving me this opportunity to participate in this event.

Lastly I am reminded of our Lord's saying in Matthew 25:40 ; "I tell you the truth ,anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me."



Free medical clinics

The impact of poverty on health is a key focus of public health. Studies have firmly established that those with low incomes have lower health status than those with higher incomes.



A buoyant Bishop resumes his parish visits. First stop, the Wann



Hardly had he recovered from the dastardly near-fatal attack on him last September, which itself was a miracle indeed, our bishop, the Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah commenced his parish visits Monday January 30 first to the war-affected areas of the Wann.

He was accompanied by Dr Mrs Thiagarajah who heads the unique pioneering programme of Holistic Healing an important aspect in the rehabilitation programmes of the Jaffna Diocese launched promptly at the conclusion of a horrendous civil war.

It was a civil war that virtually crippled an entire community from the richest farming region in Sri Lanka.

The first call of the day was Visuvamadhu which has the largest day care centre of the diocese and a frontline developing station.

Seat of miracles

The Visuvamadhu Church is considered a seat of miracles for no one who sought refuge there during the constant bomb attacks ever got hurt not even by any free flying shrapnel while all around there was massive destruction and loss of lives.

The JDCSI has encouraged families to settle on its lands for their livelihood and to enjoy privileges of having their own houses and that are never to be sold. These properties must stay within the respective families.

Bishop Thiagarajah distributed Certificates of Ownership under the stipulated conditions and this will enable the owners to obtain state assistance to set up their homes.

Some three decades ago a similar programme was launched in Mankulam by the JDCSI but unfortunately, they were totally destroyed during the war. Reparation work has already begun there.

The parish priest, the Rev Annalingam played host to the Bishop and MS Thaya Thiagarajah. They also met with many parishioners who were delighted to see their shepherd in good spirits none the worse for the cowardly attack on him.

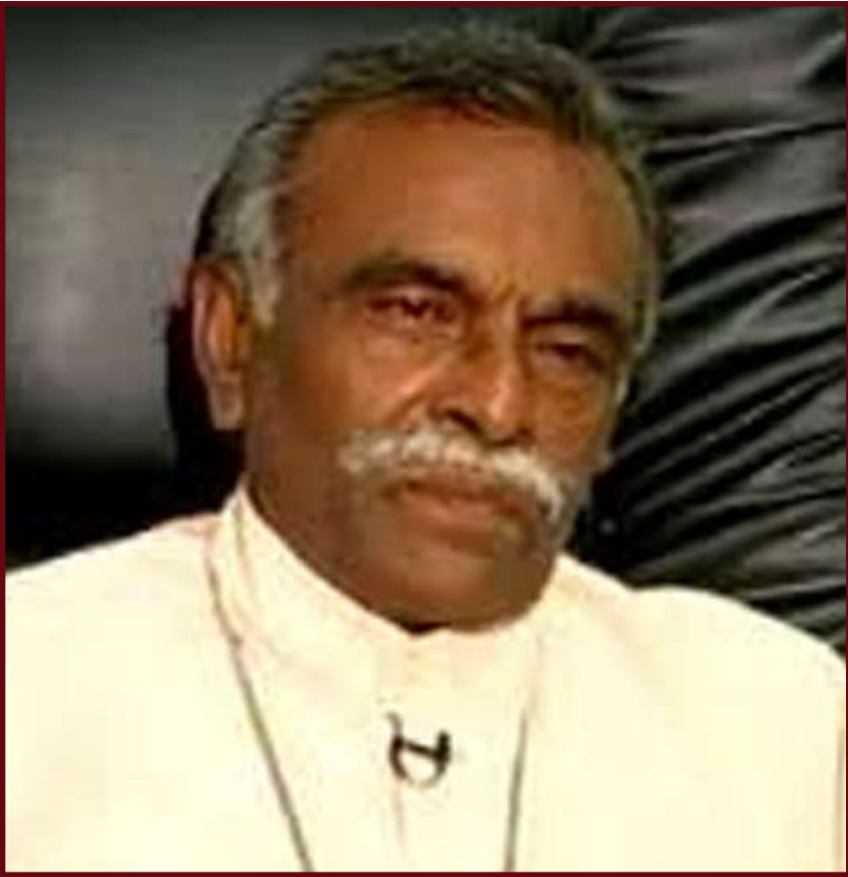
Their next call was the parish of Murippu where the diocese's most ambitious farm project Shalomnagar still needs to be reclaimed from landmines.

Following these calls, it was a luncheon fellowship at the Kilinochchi Church for all the clergy of the Wann region feasted by Bishop and Mrs Thiagarajah.

This get-together turned out to be an event where serious concerns that affect ministerial challenges in an area that was totally devastated, light-hearted and witty exchanges and ideas and action programmes were freely discussed. It was indeed a close-knit church family meeting together and that in a region of very special concern for the diocese.

Ever since he resumed his presence at Bishop's House, Vaddukodai and the Diocesan Office he has been visited by friends and associates relieved and delighted that he is back with his charm, confidence, compassion and determination that are his hallmarks.

Rev Dr A Christopher Asir, Bishop of the Madurai
Diocese of the Church of South India.



A dear friend departs to glory

by Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah

5 December 1947 - 3 February 2012

“A soft-spoken man of immense compassion and determination and his love for his community was unceasing,” reacted our bishop, the Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah when he received the news of the sudden death of his friend and colleague, the Rt Rev Dr A Christopher Asir, Bishop of the Madurai Diocese of the Church of South India.


Apart from the personal friendship we shared and valued, the relationship of our two dioceses with our long Congregational traditions go beyond the founding of the CSI. We were partners in the South India United Church that joined the other churches in South India to inaugurate the Church of South India in 1947, said Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah.

Bishop Asir's last engagement was his typically genial and good-natured presence at the 33rd sessions of the CSI Synod that was held in Kanya Kumari three weeks ago.

Late last year Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah was invited to preach at the two morning services in the vast arena-style Madurai Cathedral Church marking a festival of the mission. He recalled how inspiringly motivating it was to him to have Bishop Asir attending both services that morning.

Bishop Asir showed great concern for the Sri Lankan refugees in such places as the Mandapam Camp and was keenly interested in their welfare. A group of young people trained as choristers from these refugee camps took part in the Madurai mission festival.

Bishop Asir will be particularly respected, revered and remembered for his warm and kindly nature and the unique ways he expressed his faith and pursued his goals and ideals.



We regret to record the untimely
death of Joanita Swarnajothini Lyman
daughter of the late Mr R W Lyman
and Mrs Lyman nee Arnold of
Peacelyn, Manipay January 20, 2012.



A moving gesture in the cherished memory of Birgitte Mogenthaler

Birgitte Mogenthaler was a volunteer from Switzerland who was one of the key persons in the founding and functioning of the Vocational Training Centres (VTC) through the Palmyrah Project. This initiative came about consequent to a chanced meeting of two families on holiday in Madurai, India, the Rev Daniel and Thaya Thiagarajah and their infant daughter Gita and Ravi and Brigitte Subramaniam and their two little boys Raju and Micha. Birgitte was a Swiss NGO at that time in Sri Lanka.

With their shared interests and commitment to certain ideals in the field of development especially in the areas of the needy and the oppressed, the

Palmyrah Ecumenical Partnership came into being. The partners in this programme are the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India and the Reformed Churches, Berne, Switzerland committed in the task of sharing in the building of a worldwide multinational cooperation of hope. Among the projects supported in Sri Lanka one is the Holistic Healing Centre of the JDCSI which is primarily focused on the war-devastated Wannu.

Sadly, Brigitte Mogenthaler passed away some years ago. Recently we had Ravi Subramaniam, his wife Inthu and children visited us in the Wannu and they were impressed by the work we are doing there. They readily offered to help us with ten bicycles for the Wannu orphans and a water pump for a person maimed in the war and the family's sole breadwinner, all in the cherished memory of Brigitte.

They assured to keep this line of support as an ongoing project when they return to Switzerland supporting three of the most distressed families in the Wannu.

The faithful farmer – *By Victor Karunairajan*

A message to a dear friend who has made a personal commitment of great courage on his birthday when he could have opted for a trouble-free comfortable life. This is service above self.

Day in and day out from dawn to dusk a farmer worked hard in his fields where he cultivated a variety of food crops and raised his livestock with tender loving care.

He reared cattle, goats and chicken, both the deep litter and the free range.

He used biogas for his energy needs at home and followed strictly the precepts of the organic system.

In consequence his products were much in demand for their wholesomeness and his fruits were genuine in taste. His family led healthy lives.

But for all these the farmer had to strive hard, be consistent in his drive to tender his crops and livestock and dabble daily in dirt. There are times he got hurt using sharp implements or stung by bees in his garden. He had a few hives of them.

But these are occupational hazards that visit those who are committed to such activities.

What such people set out to do serves their community and the work of the faithful farmer is just an example.

This can apply to any task, any profession and any undertaking where the intended goal is aimed at the good of the society.