

Australian congregations extend generous support to our children with their Lenten offerings



A group of children of the Wannī's war-torn families were at play at one of the Day Care centres when news reached them from the Reverends John Bottomly and Angela Tampiyappa and Christy Thiagarajah of the Sri Lanka Partnership Project Committee of the Uniting Church of Australia (UCA) through their leaders that a generous gift of funds has been made available for work among them by way of the 2010 Lenten offerings of the Victorian and Tasmanian churches of the UCA.



By Udara Soysa

Children of Wannī express their feelings and gratitude to the members of the Victorian and Tasmanian UCA churches in art

Pictures dedicated to our Australian friends



Moderator
Dr Isabel Thomas Dobson



Mr David Hickey
Director
Share Community Appeal



It took them a few minutes to realize what was happening and understand and appreciate the gift from Down Under. When they learnt that many families and individuals in Australia care for them and were keen to support them from such a distance away, they were emotionally moved.

Instantly, they wanted to express their gratitude from deep within their hearts, and art being an ideal media of expression, they drew some pictures in gratitude for the Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Isabel Thomas Dobson, Rev David Hickey, the director of SHARE Community Appeal and the members of the Sri Lanka Partnership Project Committee, the Reverends John Bottomly and Angela Tampiyappa and Christy Thiagarajah. Some of them also remembered the recent visit of the Rev John Barr from the UCA.

Picture dedicated to Rev Aistair Macrae
President of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia



Jaffna Diocese

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We are sharing those pictures with our readers with the message that those who touch the hearts of the children positively lay the foundation for a better world.

Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah, in appreciation of this great gesture of the Australian congregations said, 'We treasure the future well being of every child and for us all children are special and very dear. The solidarity of the Australian church with us in our grass roots ministry is highly commendable.'

Picture dedicated to Rev John Barr

The children naturally expressed in art their nightmares and hopes. They are still going through a period of emotional recovery from the incredible and immeasurable hurts they have suffered. Many have lost one or both their parents and also older siblings. Some have serious injuries to their limbs.

One child said she will draw beautiful flowers and playful monkeys on the trees when she has overcome her fears. She said she would love to see elephants at play in her garden but not bomber planes in the sky nor hear gunshots in the surrounds. She has spent a good part of her life taking refuge in bunkers.

Wanni's forests have elephants, bears, leopards, monkeys, deer and wild buffaloes and many of them may have been killed or fled to the neighbouring jungles during the civil war. Wanni also has many species of deadly snakes.



Pictures dedicated to Mr David Hickzy

It is good that the Day Care leaders and minders keep the children knowledgeable of kindness and hope that are available to them to overwhelm the nightmares they have undergone during the civil war.

Re-building their hope is essential for reconstruction and reconciliation and children's visions of idealism must be rekindled and given all facilities to develop hope, build confidence in themselves and trust in their faith.

The children at this stage are still struck with the terrors they faced but there are already signs they are coming through this well with committed Day Care leaders to help them. This effort has to be sustained and see these children through their childhood and adolescence to adulthood. They are the future nation builders of their people and their country and their will must be strengthened to pursue their visions of peace and good.

We the media team of the JDCSI Newsletter too express our gratitude to the members of the Victorian and Tasmanian churches. Such partnerships are also the roots that can spread far and wide to bring peace in the world.

We also express our thanks to Angela Goodwin for her hardwork and Kathy Pereira for being instrumental in sending out to us a missionary to work with us in our grass roots projects.



thank youSRI LANKA PARTNERSHIP PROJECT COMMITTEE



Rev John Bottomley
Director
Creative Ministries Network



Rev Angela Tampiyappa



Mr Christy Thiagarajah

Jaffna Diocese

Jaffna College and the challenges of our times



By Christie Richards in New York

Mr Christie FJ Richards based in New York is an alumnus of Jaffna College who also served on the staff for sometime. He takes up expert assignments in various parts of the world for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Mr Richards was principally responsible for initiating the Cross Country Festival at Jaffna College, the first of its kind in the north.

Jaffna Diocese

Jaffna College is a unique educational institution that came into being in 1872 after seventeen years of determined hard work by the leaders of the local church, the Congregational American Ceylon Mission following the closure of the unique and renowned Batticotta Seminary in 1855.

The reason for closing a great institution which certainly would have become a university in course of time, perhaps the first in Sri Lanka and one of the finest in Asia, remains a mystery; it will remain so for all times. The local leaders were helpless to prevent the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) from implementing the Rufus Anderson Commission's recommendations which were certainly insensitive to the local needs and interests

The commission's contention evidently was that such institutions were founded purely for proselytizing purposes. The ABCFM was too young a body operating from too far a distance to realize the scope and potential of liberal education in countries that came under colonial rule and Sri Lanka has been under the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English in that order since the beginning of the 16th century. The closing of the Batticotta Seminary was a colossal unacceptable error; in fact a betrayal.

The great gesture of the local church leaders at that time was not only to found Jaffna College as an independent institution but also to ensure continuing the traditions the Batticotta Seminary had fostered and generally consider it as emerging from that foundational bedrock. They invited the last principal of the seminary to be the first principal of Jaffna College. They could have continued with the Vaddukoddai English School or founded Jaffna College as a church school like Uduvil Girls College and later Union College, Tellipallai, Driberg College, Chavakacheri, Pandatheruppu Girls College and the two American Mission Colleges in Udupiddy as well as the Memorial English School in Manipay.

The church leaders even helped set up a funding organization in the United States which was incorporated under the Trust Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds. The initial trust funds were raised in Jaffna. Trust funds are sacred and are solely for the use of the predetermined beneficiaries.

The Trustees of Jaffna College Funds are a fiduciary organization and certainly not a mission body and are not in any way linked or beholden to the ABCFM or any of its successors such as the United Church Board for World Missions (UCBWM) in 1961 and later the United Church of Christ – Wider Church Ministries (UCC-WCM) based in Cleveland, Ohio, July 2000. They cannot even be beneficiaries of the trust under any circumstances.

The trustees in this respect can only deal with the Board of Directors of Jaffna College whose needs, advice and directions are key to the administration of the trust; likewise the advice of the trustees to the Board of Directors of Jaffna College. The trustees cannot err on their obligations to Jaffna College and their consultative responsibility with the school's Board of Directors.



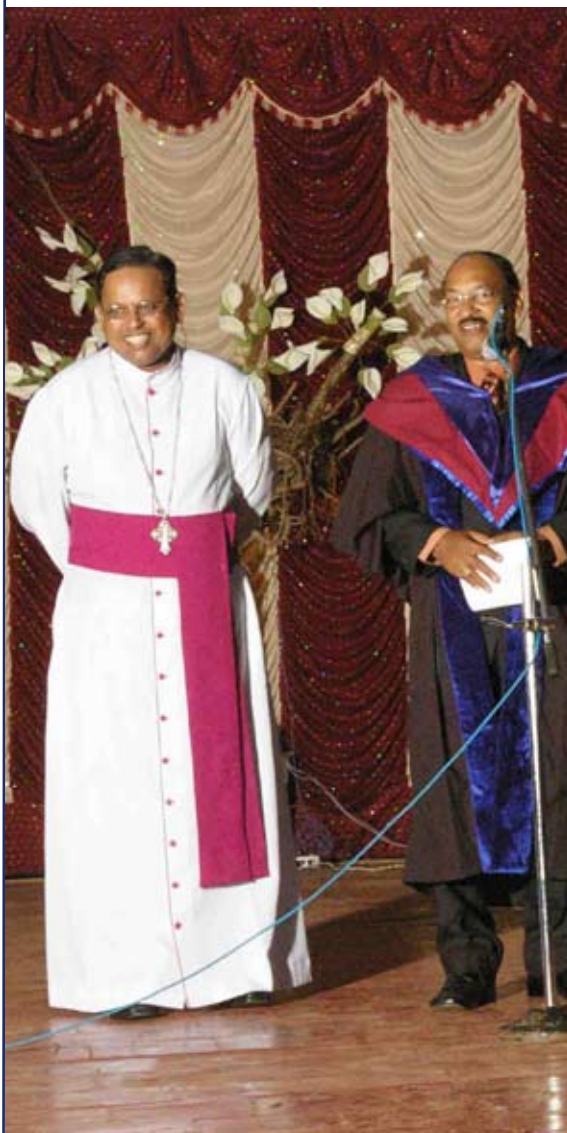
President's Counsel and Counsel Consultant to the JDCSI Mr K Kanag-Iswaran recently made an informal visit to Jaffna College. During which time he talked freely with some of the students. His father, Senator S R Kanaganayagam, a highly renowned lawyer himself was an alumnus of Jaffna College who firmly believed Jaffna College should develop into a comprehensive Community College serving the entire province and beyond in all aspects of education.

Two of the children he is seen talking to on the A C Sundarampillai Drive, named after a popular Discipline Master, leading from the main gate to the Administration Block, cycle over four miles each way to school; seen on the left are the College Library and the Otley Hall. In the other picture Mr Kanag-Iswaran is seen with a group of children some of whom had taken part in a variety programme earlier in the evening. Seen in the background are the YMCA Block, the seat of the oldest school YMCA in Asia, a new set of classrooms and the Brown Green Field.



President's Counsel Mr K Kanag-Iswaran and Counsel Consultant to the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (JDCSI) observed, "The Trustees of a Trust hold the title trust property whatever the nature of the property, for the benefit of the beneficiaries which in the case of the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds in the US is Jaffna College in Sri Lanka and they have to work in close liaison with the Board of Directors of Jaffna College and none other."

He added: "I believe that the Trustees of Jaffna College is an incorporated body based in Boston, Massachusetts in the USA as much as Jaffna College is under the laws of Sri Lanka."



The Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Jaffna College and the principal, Mr Noel Wimalendran and behind them is a magnificent history of traditions and commitments and before them a wide vista of challenges they are determined to work together with dedication and commitment. This is a role model partnership in the field of Christian commitment and community education.

No sooner Jaffna College was founded it developed as a great school and set the pace for the educational development of Sri Lanka's northern region. Several good schools were founded on the peninsula including four great schools for girls, Chundikuli Girls College, Vembadi Girls College, Ramanathan College and Hindu Ladies College; more followed later.

The finest hour of Jaffna College was the Bicknellian Era, headed by the Rev John Bicknell who was principal from 1916 to 1936. Many Tamil educationalists who spearheaded the educational development in the north irrespective of their religious affiliation were students of the Rev John Bicknell and to them he was an illustrious example in this field and even a hero they very much admired.

A graduate of Yale University, he joined the staff as a professor and became its acting principal. However, a year later, he had to return to the US on account of his wife's ill-health. He returned in 1916 and became its principal and heralded a liberal era of education that meant educational opportunities as wide as possible in set curriculum as well as several extra-curricular activities in the campus and outside in areas far beyond formal education. He also cut through certain social restrictions that denied to some communities the right of educational opportunities, and this needed a lot of courage.

The Bicknell Era has been aptly marked as the Golden Period of Jaffna College which no doubt inspired his successors to sustain his spirit and mission to the utmost.



My peers and I were the beneficiaries of the Bicknell impact on education during the Bunker-Selliah Era and we had on the staff many students of the Rev John Bicknell who would often reminisce in the classroom about the Bicknell Period and the rich traditions he ingrained on the school. We prided in the freedom of expression students had through their own elected leaders in the Students' Council as well as the various literary associations, the Lyceum, Forum, Brotherhood, Academy and the Undergraduates' Union.

From time to time people and nations are called upon to rise and bring about changes to existing orders to keep pace with progress; even to be at the vanguard of it. A society has to be dynamic and charged with visions.

This is the time for Jaffna College that has historically gone through so many changes splendidly as a great educational institution committed to serve the people of the region to rise up and meet the challenging needs of the times; the death-grip of doldrums must disappear and we must pursue educational options on all frontiers of development especially with the entire region devastated by the 30-years civil war. What we need is intense and rapid development and this must be backed by suitable educational and training programmes as a matter of great urgency.

Our educational approach as visualized by the Rev John Bicknell in his time should be as wide as possible and Jaffna College should be able to charter a blueprint that will incorporate all forms of education from the formal to the non-formal.

Foundations for with such a development have already been laid during the time Professor Luther Jeyasingam was the president of Jaffna College with the founding of the Jaffna College Technical Institute and the School of Agriculture. He courted a vision for Jaffna College as a multi-educational campus spread over in many parts of the Northern Province including a centre for research on various natural resources of the region, one of them being our underground water availability and how we should manage it.

What is needed now is a whole series of off-campus educational projects especially in the Wannu area where the JDCSI is at the forefront of a massive ministry of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. It is engaged in rural social and economic development with agriculture as its base. The JDCSI has also prioritized the needs of one hundred thousand children and young people traumatized by the war in its



Mr Noel Hoole and Mrs A Varnothini Emille, Director of the Jaffna College Institute of Technology, Vaddukoddai and Principal of the Jaffna College Institute of Agriculture, Maruthanamadam respectively. Mr Noel Hoole is the brother of Professors Rajan and Jeevan Hoole whose father was a priest with the Church Missionary Society.

Several non-formal educational ventures are needed to educate and train people in the fields of agriculture, agro-industries and industries and also to help to empower women in particular to augment the work force that has suffered through loss of lives in the civil war and the migration to developed countries of thousands of able-bodied and skilled persons, apart from professionals. .

In reality, now is the time for Jaffna College to become a full-fledged Community College as an adjunct to the JDCSI and still retain its independence and for the latter to develop the Green Memorial and McLeod Hospitals as teaching hospitals in all disciplines, ideally in association with the University of Jaffna but keeping their own identity in the traditions they were founded. These hospitals should have medical missions of their own wherever the church serves and focus on the needs of people who live in remote regions as they do in the Wannu now and certain parts of the East and are generally too poor or immobile to have good medical facilities.

This is our social and educational challenge and we must be more than equal to it. Jaffna College has to take that lead just like the Batticotta Seminary laid the seeds for an educational revolution in the Northern Province,

Uduvil student excels in scholarship examination

The principal of Uduvil Girls College, Mrs Shirani Mills conveyed to us the good news that one of her students, Tharani Balendran scored 187 marks at the Grade Five Scholarship Examination and was placed first in the Jaffna District Examination held recently. She comes from Chunnakam in the Uduvil Constituency. Last year this honour went to a student from Jaffna College. He was from Chulipuram in the Vaddukoddai Constituency.

Mrs Shirani Mills daughter of the late Rev and Mrs N W G Sugunarajah and daughter-in-law of the late Rev and Mrs K J Mills, as head of Uduvil Girls College follows the traditions of great principals. She has been a student of three of them, Miss Hudson Paramasamy, Mrs Saraswathy Somasunderam and Dr Miss Chelvi Selliah, all of whom have made every child at Uduvil feel very special. Mrs Mills has been invited to attend the annual meeting of the Trustees of Jaffna College Funds in the autumn.



Wanni women hold the key for development

By Rev V Pathmathayalan, Colombo

Conscious of the terrible loss of able-bodied human power, many of them as war victims and many more immobilized through injuries to their limbs and also quite a number having migrated overseas, the war-torn areas are faced with the serious problem of manpower to resurrect this vastly farmland region.



Farm infrastructures have been badly mauled, livestock lost and even homesteads devastated. This is the state that is confronting the Wanni families many left with only women to take over all responsibilities; there are far too many widows and orphans and hardly any of them skilled in farm work and income generating craft and other industries.

Soon after the war came to an end it was reported that one hundred thousand children and young people were traumatized. The JDCSI came into this scene immediately conscious of the instant needs to address the traumatic nightmare situation and also embark on a women empowerment programme just the way the countries that lost manpower in the last World War addressed themselves to develop human power. They felt this need to help empower women and organize them to become skilled in various trades including farm work was urgent.

This is no easy task for involved are not only the need to give confidence to the people that this can be done but also to launch extension educational programmes to make them become skilled. These educational extension programs, mostly non-formal, have to be launched throughout the Wanni and even in other parts of the North and East.

The main focus of the JDCSI is on the war widows, wounded and disfigured women especially young persons and women without any income. Self-help programmes (livelihood), sustainability initiatives, capacity building are some of the features of the Women Empowerment programme. Overall emphasis is to make them feel and determine that they can be motivated to stand on their feet, a process we describe as from victimhood to sovereignty.

What is key to us about Women Empowerment is to ensure the victims do not suffer the “dependency syndrome” but instead they appreciate that developing their own ability and power to make decisions and determine their destiny is real development.

We believe in all these the Diaspora can be of great help with investments and volunteers; they owe this to the people of the Wanni from whom all dignity and pride was wrenched away. We also believe our own educational institutions, Jaffna College, the Jaffna College Institute of Technology, the Jaffna College Institute of Agriculture and the Uduvil Girls College can be partners in extension and off-campus education typical of how Community Colleges function in many parts of North America.

In the meantime, the JDCSI is trying to create scholarships for IDP returnees (internally displaced people) so that they are brought to these institutions as boarding scholars, trained and sent back to the Wanni to be on their own and self-dependent in their projects and ventures.. Some of them will be given job opportunities in the farms organized by the JDCSI.

An inspirational visitor from Boston, Mass



By Our Jaffna Correspondent
Thaya Rajkumar (B.Com Jaffna university)

The Chavakacheri Church of the JDCSI is Ruba Gnanaratnam's mother church adored and loved by her and her family for several generations. When the church was damaged almost to the ground during the horrendous civil war, she was one of those who played a major role in its renovations.

Now a US citizen, a visit to this church is a pilgrimage to her but her recent visit was even more special that inspired her to a wider commitment to her church and people. She was struck beyond belief at the devastation she saw for herself.

Apart from her visit to Chavakacheri and as always wondering how she could offer her helping hands and heart, she also visited our churches in the Wannu especially the Konavil Day Care Centre where the children and leaders were warmly endeared by her. It was mutual.



During her visit to Jaffna she was the guest of Bishop Daniel and Thaya Thiagarajah which enabled her to discuss many ideas about how best her church in Boston, Mass as well as her friends can be of help to the diocese. An immediate gesture may be a visit of a trauma expert from the US to help with the trauma counseling programme particularly for the people of the Wannu.

In a recent communication to us, Ruba Gnanaratnam shared with us her plans to approach some people to help the Konavil Child Care Centre which could eventually become a role model extension educational centre too supported by Jaffna College. Some people have already come forward to help this centre.

Educational expansion into areas where not non-formal educational is crucial to development at the grass roots is very much in the plans of the JDCSI and beginnings have already been made with the help of an expert supported by the Uniting Church of Australia.

Women Empowerment is dear to the heart of Ruba Gnanaratnam and she is very much experienced in this work with her congregation in Boston. We look forward to a dynamic relationship on this programme between her church and ourselves.

When we have visitors who see for themselves the problems we face, the needs that stare at us and how we are confronting them, we are sure, they will want to be partners with us and in this distance do not matter but the spirit does and we are greatly encouraged.



Jaffna Diocese



Canada's Homes of Hope helps the hospitals

The Canadian organization Homes of Hope has come in a long way to help the Green Memorial and McLeod Hospitals as our partners in the re-building, re-furbishing and re-equipping of the two institutions. According to Frank Seevaratnam of the **Homes of Hope, a sum of \$38,000** has been allocated to these projects on the recommendation of Dr Preman Jeyaratnam, former Medical Superintendent now in the United Kingdom. Among the projects would be the provision of a generator for the Green Memorial Hospital. Homes of Hope also helps the teaching hospital in Jaffna as well as the Moolai Cooperative Hospital, Chulipuram The gesture is very much appreciated.

Melbourne's Festival of Lights for Peace

Victor Karunairajan, an investigative freelance journalist and author and one of our writers, has been invited to deliver this year's message at the Annual Multicultural Festival of Lights for Peace at St Kilda's East Church, Melbourne. Mr Karunairajan who will be conducting a series of Development Communications Workshops in Sri Lanka along with his colleague Udara Soysa before and after his visit to Australia will be meeting some of the leaders of the Uniting Church while in Australia.



Dr Nithi Kanagaratnam

Charged with the responsibility of helping the JDCSI grass roots ministry of reconstruction and rehabilitation especially in the areas of rural farm and agricultural development, Dr Nithi Kanagaratnam of the University of Victoria has arrived in Sri Lanka sponsored by the Uniting Church of Australia. He will also be helping us with our medical work.

Our legal consultant friend leaves for UK

Miss Buddhinee N Herath, Junior Counsel Consultant to the JDCSI from the Chambers of Mr M A Sumanthiran M.P., has left for the United Kingdom to pursue her higher studies in law at the Honourable Society of the Lincoln's Inn. She will return to her practice in Sri Lanka September 2011.



Breaking news

Breaking news

Breaking news

Together we can achieve peace and development

Editorial:

JDCSI's ministry of reconstruction and rehabilitation in the north and east, especially in the Wannai and reconciliation nationwide has been acclaimed all around as the appropriate frontier approach to what has been termed as sparking the Revolution at the Grass Roots.

We are constantly examining and re-examining our plans and projects, discuss with people who matter and experts in various development fields and keep ourselves alive and conscious to the primary needs at the grass roots especially of those of the war-torn communities.

We also depend on regular feedback from our visitors whom we encourage to see for themselves various places of needs and value their observations, ideas and criticisms very much. We are seeking partnership with churches, institutions and even individuals, for every bit of support helps; and every bit of positive involvement is a move forward.

Naturally we are careful about Cowboy Do-gooders who take advantage of the circumstances prevailing in Sri Lanka and exploit the needy ones with operations outside organized efforts that have been planned and focused well. Even the patronizing types are not our cup of tea; we want partners head, heart and shoulders with us. We have to work together.

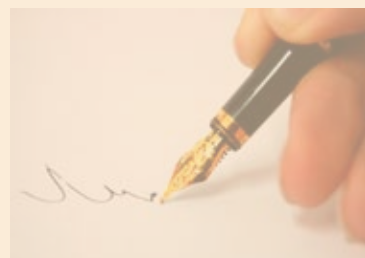
Some even raise funds overseas, have a tropical holiday of some sort under the guise of being development volunteers and eventually give a false impression

that they have links with us or others in this field. There are some who have generated an industry out of charity funds keeping much more than the lion's share for themselves under the pretext of administrative expenses. Because we often turn a blind eye to such outrage, millions of rupees are being ratted away by the clever and the crafty.

We yearn hard to avoid such for it can create complications and even give a false impression about ourselves. We are transparent and freely report the activities of the JDCSI which is committed to be accountable at all times.

We would also appeal to those who deal with us from overseas, especially missions, trustees, boards and institutions, to be transparent and accountable in all their dealings. This is not only ethical and moral but also legally duty-bound and obligated. Failing in this have created complications in relationships and mutual commitments, even contracts.

Our visitors in particular are always welcome and we appreciate their views and invite them to stay in partnership with us and together become a major force in the 21st century development ideals worldwide relentlessly striving for peace and goodwill.



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Jaffna Diocese