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## The Harvest is Plentiful

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd".  
Matt 9: 36/37



### *New Workers for God's New Vineyards*

In recent months the JDCSI has given a great deal of close attention to certain developing needs at the grass roots of the community, most of which caused by the circumstances of the civil war, communities of people uprooted and some with terrible losses of lives and property. Nature's horrendous outrage of Boxing Day 2004 was an added misery. We need to address to the needs of people so affected and equally to strengthen their spiritual forte and faith to sustain them through these calamities. The church has a role as a counselor, parent and guide apart from ministering to their faith.

"In such challenging situations, the ordination of Rev R. Joy Pradeepkumar Evangelists Sellathamby Kamalahasen , Singaretnam Sathiyathan to minister in the rural parishes of Bandarawela , Vaharai/Valaichenai, Akkaraipattu/Ampara is of great significance and hope. The second of such ordinations within a month is our dedication and commitment to our community," commented Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah after an im-



pressive and inspiring Ordination Service held in the Colombo Church of the JDCSI, **Sunday July 6, 2008.**

**Kalawanchikudy Church focus of the Month**

Our Church of the Month is Kalawanchikudy, an hour's drive from Batticaloa in the Eastern Province. Our parson there is the Rev James Shantakumar who was recently ordained as a presbyter of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South at our Colombo Church. Many from his congregation, most of them living in poor economic circumstances, traveled all the way to Colombo for the occasion which itself was a moving witness of their faith.

The Rev Shantakumar has also responsibilities to helping our churches in Batticaloa, Akkaraipattu, Vaharai and Kalmunai and the diocese has now gifted him with a motorcycle to be able to move around with greater ease.

When the tsunami hit the eastern coast Boxing Day 2004, the old church that stood there was washed off and for the family of Rev Shantakumar the tragedy was even more horrendous. They lost their 21-year old daughter to the whirling waters that swept at a height of a coconut tree. They are using a tent for their church activities and efforts are being made to build a proper church.

The Rev Shantakumar and his family believe in God's grace and when our faith is firm and sure, ways are opened. They are not miracles but God's steadfast love for us and he will make us strong enough to move mountains.



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## Safe Water Crucial to Our Health and Development

"Our mission outreach today must be on several fronts because there are many needy areas. Increasingly we are faced with a possible global fresh water crisis and we have to address ourselves as one of our top priorities," said the Rt Rev Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, the Bishop in Jaffna of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India when a fresh water source for the use of the public was installed at Colombo CSI Church Centre June 17, 2008.

"This," he said, "is our maiden venture to address as a church the need to bring potable water to the people. In this we will work closely with **Water Missions International** and also educate our people to become more aware of water conservation. Not only we will seek support from agencies, national and international, but enter into consultations with the country's water authorities as well to promote this programme all over the country."

Water! Every Drop Really Counts. Conserve it.



**E**very Drop Counts  
**S**ave water - Save lives

Conserve it.

Water! Every Drop Really Counts.

## Scholar and Gentleman

D R – A Tamil Scholar and Theologian par Excellence  
By Victor Karunairajan

I knew the Rev Daniel R Ampalavanar as a senior student when I was a shorts-wearing sans-sandal village boy and a student in the Lower School of Jaffna College. I had heard his parents were committed workers in God's vineyard but his family of five siblings lost their father early in their lives. Their mother brought them up as a strong, much loved and faith-fired Christian lady.

My earliest impressions of young D R Ampalavanar was the time, effort and joy he gave as a senior student to the well-organized rural Sunday School at Thunavy working closely with the Edward and Grace Knight family who were the leaders of that community. The leadership of this family headed by Chandra Knight and her parents was totally dedicated and a Christian witness by itself.

Eldest of four boys and a sister, D R as he was popularly called, committed himself to God's work from his student days. An excellent scholar in Tamil, he developed his theological studies on the richness of the Tamil language, its great literature but even more the philosophy that is so deep and meaningful which made him an authority on Christian and Hindu scriptures and an intellectual bond between both disciplines.

Within the framework of the Christian mission that is unduly constrained within western thoughts and concepts, had D R opted to join an institution like the highly prestigious Annamalai University, he would have become recognized as one of the great Tamil scholars of our time. He had a probing mind gifted with a flair for research and excellence but intellectuality was like that lovely flower that blooms in the desert and hardly appreciated. He was too humble a man to acknowledge his intellectual loneliness even more his strong faith; arrogant ambition was beyond him.

He served in many of the parishes of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India. It was when he was the presbyter of the Cathedral

Church, I was first elected to the Diocesan Council as a delegate of this parish. It was also the time I headed the Youth League of the church and under his leadership, we gave a new meaning to what it means to me a member of a Christian community.

In his time as a senior member of the clergy he has served in various capacities and also as an incumbent lecturer at the JDCSCI Theological Seminary at Maruthanadam and Visiting Lecturer of the Pili-mathalawa Theological Seminary. While his sermons and lectures in Tamil were a joy to listen, he was equally gifted in communicating in the English Language. The power of his communication reflected strongly two major aspects of his life; his strong Christian convictions and his understanding of Christian and Hindu Theology, even more, Tamil Literature and philosophy.

During the last stages of his life, he expressed his loyalty to the church in no small manner. The way he wanted his final and committal rites to be held was clearly indicated by him as a witness to his commitment to the JDCSCI. His funeral marked the affection with which he was held in the community and the large attendance was a testimony to it.

Father of Mohan and Nimal who has taken up the Lord's work as a JDCSCI worker in Pungudutivu, D R was a close friend of my family, married my cousin Kili (Evelyn Rajamalar nee Arumairatnam) and took care of the spiritual needs of my mother especially during her final years. Though a man of strong will who had to confront many a hurdle in his life, he never bore even a tinge of ill-feeling towards anyone. He was a good man.



## Hill Country is not forgotten by JDCSI

### **God's vineyard expands in the hill country.**

A mission dedicated to a spiritual journey is an eternal commitment. We not only tender known grounds and keep them in good order but also open new grounds. It is akin to responsible agrarian culture and today this even calls for more environmentally responsible systems. Large acres of land have become toxic through irresponsible and profit and greed motivated land use. Whatever that motivates us must respect God's creations.

Like in the fields of our spiritual missions too, we need to keep this in mind and our commitment has to be total. It is in this spirit we have committed the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India for resurgence rooted to the faith of our founding fathers. We are no doubt strengthened by what was said in 1 Peter 2:6: "Wherefore also it is continued in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." Our commitment is eternal.

Sri Lanka is a nation of diverse communities and we have a challenge today to bond them as one people and seek a unity in diversity. Prayerfully and steadfastly we are marching in this direction. It was in that faith we have begun to open up new areas, and the most recent one is in Kotagala in a region where a community that has labored on the tea gardens for many years as the most neglected people, socially, economically and politically live. We want to bring them a new hope.



## The Two Gardeners

By Victor Karunairajan

**R**hineland, December 2005: Over here in Burgan, a tiny German village along the River Mosel, I sat in a pensive meditative mood and visualized the passing events of life, at times at a slow pace but often rapidly. My contemplative thoughts traveled the grounds I have traversed some fifty years, east, west, south and north but one activity persisted most of the time like a river of life. This experience has come in various forms but the message that emanates from all of them are obviously the same.

**T**here were two gardeners, one worked from dawn to dusk and the other from dusk to dawn. They labored in the same field with the daytime gardener ploughing it, nourishing the good earth with manure and water and finally planting his seeds. The dusk to dawn farmer busied himself somewhat but during the dark hours and planted some seeds as well.

**I**n a matter of days, and of course nights too, the seeds brought forth their shoots, green and luxuriant and their growth was fast and steady.

**H**owever, there was something strange about them. Although the leaves looked the same in every plant, nearly half of the crop had different flowers and they were all mixed up. Perhaps the seeds planted during the night were of a different species which I could not see clearly in the dark. I had assumed they were the same as the seeds planted during the day.

**T**his mystery soon became clear when the flowers became pods, the fruits. Half the plants were tares, useless weeds



that sprouted, grew and flowered by absorbing the nutrients of the plants from the good seeds. They were stealthily planted in the night and obviously the intention was evil.

**T**he gardener who worked under the hot sun by day, sweated his blood out, carefully nourished the earth and planted good seeds was cheated by the one who planted the seeds without having to labour hard.

**P**erhaps there is a lesson to be learnt here. We may labour hard and give our best with total commitment and dedication but have to be wary of happenings that may foul up our efforts. Those who sow tares and weeds on the good soil are the agents of the dark and they profit by evil actions.

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## Unity in diversity is essential for peace in Sri Lanka – Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah

(July 03, Colombo, Sri Lanka Guardian)

**A**lthough I am the bishop of the JDCSI and primarily responsible to help with the spiritual life of the people, I also have a key role as a citizen of the community. In this, I have to be an example in the community not just for the Christians alone. Our needs are varied; social, educational, economical and many others. I have to be very conscious of my position and how I relate myself to the community and must always be in pursuit of justice and peace. We are all one people. Ahead of us is a challenging task of rehabilitation of our people who have gone through the darkest period of our history once peace is restored in the country. We need to prepare leaders for such a task and in this our schools and universities have to play a pivotal role.

**N**ilantha Ilangamuwa interviews the Rt Rev Dr Daniel Thiagarajah the Bishop in Sri Lanka of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India for the Sri Lanka Guardian.

**N**ilantha: What is this Church of South India of which the Jaffna Diocese in Sri Lanka is a part?

**B**ishop Daniel Thiagarajah: The Church of South India (CSI) is a unique union of churches of the protestant tradition that came together as one church in 1947. Among them were the South India United Church (SIUC), the Church of England, the Methodist Church and Church of Scotland, all of them widely spread out in India. We in Sri Lanka

belong to the congregational tradition founded by the American missionaries in Jaffna in 1816 and had a sister church in Madurai in South India also of the same tradition. The CSI has several dioceses in Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and has a strong relationship with the churches in North India.

**N**ilantha: How is it that the Methodist Church and the Church of England in Sri Lanka are not part of the CSI union in Sri Lanka? Bishop Thiagarajah: When the CSI became a reality in South India, it was hoped a similar Church of Sri Lanka would be founded too. Unfortunately, that did not happen even though there is a strong interaction among the churches in Sri Lanka under the leadership of the National Christian Council (NCC).

**N**ilantha: The Church is often identified as a reach out arm of the West in its pursuit of building a colonial empire in the East and helped to create an elite community in the countries that came under colonial powers. Has this been a problem for church union in Sri Lanka and what lessons do we need to learn from the CSI?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: Fortunately, the churches that are in union in South India, and that is true of the north too, were founded on India's indigenous base that is so diverse, rich and all encompassing. Despite the CSI being a church of four main language groups and hundreds of dialects, it has an awe-inspiring unity in diversity not just in language alone and the church too is one of the many healthy bonding factors of the incredible unity that vibrates India as a dynamic nation.

**F**urthermore, Indian culture and spiritual beliefs rent asunder the constricting factors of western concepts that

trapped Christianity as a religion to come from the West. Christianity is more at home in India than anywhere else in the world and it became such a nourishing factor that today western philosophers are beginning to acknowledge Christianity that has been enhanced on the India soil is what the west needs to accept rather than being caught up in the emotions and frenzies of fundamentalist groups that have become a threat to good order in many western countries.

**N**ilantha: Why is such a union not been possible in Sri Lanka?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: It is indeed a matter of regret too. Apart from our dear nation being caught up in a terrible ethnic crisis, the major churches such as the Church of England and the Dutch Reformed Church have been largely urban and catered to the elite sections that looked more to the west for its support and succor. They placed their major premiums on western values and hardly made their members appreciate our customs and traditions. Although the Methodist Church had a wider impact with several rural parishes, it too was seen as a foreign element in Sri Lanka. When the CSI was formed and the Jaffna Diocese became a reality, one would have expected at least the Anglican and Methodist churches in the north to have become a part of it. In contrast, in South India, the churches were very much rooted in the customs and traditions of the people of Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The Hindus and Buddhists in Sri Lanka view the church as foreign and this is also being, very unfortunately, politically exploited.

**N**ilantha: What role has the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India to play in Sri Lanka apart being a spiritual source to its members?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: We have to be forever conscious that our traditions, customs and age-old beliefs over eons of time are crucial to our well being. We have to acknowledge that we all have bonding roles to give our best among our people and the unity of all the communities in the country is cardinal. Our respective faiths must be the enriching factors and there are so many areas of unity in our beliefs that we need to cultivate further. Our diverse beliefs are like rivers of joy that inspire us and every individual should have his or her rights to understand the higher elements and the spirituality of our lives in a freer and all encompassing circumstances. We of the JDCSI are committed to this ideal. We are no more a church of the privileged in the north. Our doors are wide open and have become free of clan control. We have a commitment to become a bonding factor searching for unity in this country and a nation where everyone irrespective of ethnic or religious or cultural diversity will feel a full and responsible citizen. Already we have parishes in the East, up in the hills and in southern Sri Lanka. As much as other faiths exist in Sri Lanka, we are a church of the people of Sri Lanka just like the CSI in India.

**N**ilantha: Reverend Bishop, you were not originally a member of the JD-CSI? How come you are now the head of this church?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: My father was an Anglican that is Church of England. He has served as Vicar's Warden

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of the Holy Trinity Church. When he became a member of the St Peter's Church in Jaffna, he was appointed a lay preacher and leader of its quarterly meetings. My mother was a Methodist who has served as principal of Methodist mission schools and been a member of the Synod of the North-East Methodist Church.

When Dr D T Niles was felicitated at Trimmer Hall, Jaffna on his appointment as one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches, she was chosen to be the primary speaker at this function. My brother Christy who lives in Australia played a vital role in funding the renovation of the St Peter's Church, Jaffa. I had my education at a Methodist school, the Jaffna Central College.

My family is quite ecumenical and my belief being such, I had no problems joining the JDCSI as a presbyter in full appreciation of church unity for which the JDCSI is uniquely significant in Sri Lanka. I had prepared for this with a singleness of purpose both spiritually and educationally and, equally developing relationships in this direction. I was also aware that my parents committed me for such a role early in my life; their faith was an inspiration to me and my siblings too. They are all an encouragement to me and today stand head and shoulders with me in the work to which I am totally committed along with my family.

**N**ilantha: I am told that you were also quite a sportsman while at Jaffna Central College.

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: Sports is very much in my blood. Although the games were always quite competitive and yet healthy, it was a sheer joy to play with my peers from Jaffna College, St John's College, Jaffna Hindu College, Hartley College, St Patrick's College and several others, all of them from diverse religious traditions.

**N**ilantha: How is a bishop elected by the Church of South India?



**B**ishop Thiagarajah: There are two ways. Firstly and most acceptably, a bishop is chosen by the Synod of the Church of South India from an elected slate of candidates by the Diocesan Councils of the respective dioceses. In the absence of such being possible due to various circumstances that may arise, the Synod after giving

enough time to choose a slate of candidates to a diocese, may take upon itself to elect a bishop but will give due consideration to very candidate who it considers electable to the bishopric. It accepts the principle in biblical traditions that no flock should be without a shepherd.

**N**ilantha: What is the hierarchy of the Church of South India and where is its headquarters?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: The Moderator of the CSI elected for a period of time from the panel of bishops is the head of the Church of South India. He is assisted by a General Secretary and a Treasurer in its management but the executive body he heads is the Synod of the Church South India which has representation from all the dioceses of the church. The CSI is indeed a role model dem-

ocratic body and in respect of church union, it is a unique pioneer. The CSI has its headquarters in Royapettah, Chennai, Tamilnadu. It is also a hub of many activities the CSI is widely involved in, including social, communications, literacy, educational, medical missions and a vast field of training and development educational projects.

**N**ilantha: As the head of the JDCSI, what other roles do you have to play?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: Although I am the bishop of the JDCSI and primarily responsible to help with the spiritual life of the people, I also have a key role as a citizen of the community. In this, I have to be an example in the community not just for the Christians alone. Our needs are varied; social, educational, economical and many others. I have to be very conscious of my position and how I relate myself to the community and must always be in pursuit of justice and peace. We are all one people. Ahead of us is a challenging task of rehabilitation of our people who have gone through the darkest period of our history once peace is restored in the country. We need to prepare leaders for such a task and in this our schools and universities have to play a pivotal role.

**N**ilantha: Do you think church union is possible in Sri Lanka?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: This is one aspect of the many questions confronting us. We have to become a nation together and this is enabled if we all seek unity in our respective fields of involvement and activities. We should all be committed to this ideal in every aspect of life in this country, appreciate our diversities and seek a unity among them.

Yes, yes church union is possible in this country and we must make it realizable, sooner the better in the larger interest of unity in Sri Lanka.

**N**ilantha: Thank you so much Reverend Sir. Do you have a message for the readers of Sri Lanka Guardian?

**B**ishop Thiagarajah: Sri Lanka Guardian has become a fearless forum of public opinion in Sri Lanka upholding the great traditions of the Fourth Estate. The way it has opened its columns for diverse opinions and points of views are remarkable indeed especially amidst the current circumstances in Sri Lanka. History will one day reaffirm that the pen is certainly mightier than the sword and the writers who have subscribed to the Sri Lanka Guardian in these times have indeed served their people immensely.

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