

## News from Sri Lanka

June 2019

The atmosphere here is so different compared to when I last wrote in March. The bombings at the churches and hotels on Easter Day, 21 April, continue to have a huge impact on everyone. The great sadness and grief for those who lost loved ones, the continuing physical pain and suffering for those injured and the psychological impact on everyone.



*St Anthony's Roman Catholic Church in the days following the attack with symbolic black and white streamers*

This happened just as Sri Lanka was about to celebrate ten years of peace following the civil war. For many people the recent events brought their memories of the war to the surface again.

The college students were on placements over Easter, they all returned to college safely with varied experiences, from helping at the scene of devastation at one of the churches, donating blood, to learning from the Intelligence Services that their church had just escaped.

I was at the Methodist Church in Kandy and the sermon came to an abrupt end when we heard the news. Some of us stayed for communion before following police advice to return to our homes.

There has been much interfaith activity since the terrible bombings, which gives hope for the future.

The new intake managed to arrive for their orientation programme by the end of April and we held a special memorial service in the college chapel exactly one month after the tragic events of Easter Day.



I have attended the Induction Services of several former students as they move to become Methodist probationary ministers and I have seen a wide variety of countryside in our travels. Varied churches too, prosperous town ones and small isolated rural ones. What was different this year was the presence of Buddhists at two of services, one a monk who has close links with the college and the other the local police chief who both spoke of the need for peace.



*Following the Induction of Rev. Luke*



*The Induction of Rev. Hansini*

A major part of outreach in the Methodist Church here is providing education and social welfare to youngsters, regardless of their faith especially in the rural areas. Often halls are built next to the church to undertake this work. The classes prove very popular.





Since I saw some wall hangings in a craft shop I have been keen to visit the area where traditional weaving is done. I managed to visit the very rural area of Dumbara. This proved quite an adventure to find the homes and the small government workshop where the weaving takes place. It seemed we travelled miles on local tracks well away from the roads, by paddy fields where some harvesting was done by a thresher and in another area traditional winnowing was taking place.

I found some beautiful work made by very skilled people, and yes, I did buy a wall hanging



.....*this black and white one!*



*A cushion design*

**I am returning to the UK for most of July** and hope to meet up with many of you. I plan to be at the **Methodist Conference in Birmingham 1-3 July** so I may see you there!

At this time please pray for

- The people of Sri Lanka as they seek to return to a more normal way of life and that there may be peace.
- Rev. Arulnathan Nadarajah as he takes on the responsibilities as Principal of the college.
- His wife and nine month old daughter as they settle into their new home here.
- Those students who left a couple of months ago as they begin their ministry.
- The students here, at the Theological College of Lanka, facing new challenges of study and formation for ministry.
- For me, as I return to the UK for a few weeks to share my experiences of Sri Lanka.
- For us all as we seek to do God's will.

Please do keep on touch, it's great to hear from you!

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