

Already the first month of the new decade has slipped into history, where do the days go? It has been a busy month doing year end book work and such as well as supply preaching one Sunday at a small church in the area, which I enjoyed and hopefully was an encouragement to them.

We enter into February remembering that Valentines Day is coming, a day we celebrate with our loved ones. I still remember making a valentines box and exchanging small cards with classmates at school, eating those horrible candy hearts with the messages on them and thinking how great they tasted.

Now it's special because of love we can share with family and close friends and demonstrate our love for them and reminded of theirs for us.

But I'm reminded of the greatest valentine ever given, which is Jesus Christ, who God the Father sent to us to demonstrate his love for us. Romans 5:8 tells us this, God demonstrates his own love for us in this that even while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Can we really understand that kind of love? It wasn't a matter of we already loved God and he loved us back. It was we were in rebellion against God and living opposed to his will. Yet he chose to live among us as Jesus, and he died as the only sacrifice that could get us back into a right relationship with the father.

And we demonstrate our love for Him by our obedience to him and our service for His kingdom.

If anyone could truly celebrate Valentine's Day it's we who are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ and enjoy a glorious relationship with God the Father.

Happy Valentines Day!

Thank you for your demonstration of love to this ministry by your faithful prayers and gifts given to ensure this work in Sri Lanka can continue. May God bless you abundantly for your being a blessing to this ministry.

Because of Christ, Steve

## **MINISTRY REPORTS FOR 2019**

Just so you can get some idea of what is going on numerically in the ministry in Sri Lanka I've included a few items to report for the past years work by our preachers.

We had 68 baptisms during the past year which is up from years past. Primarily this is due to the 3 new house churches our preacher from Mahiloor, Sutha, has helped to organize and is working with.

For VBS last August there were 578 different children who came for the week long programs and a daily average of 324 children.

This is down from years past due mainly to the Easter Sunday bombings which actually caused the closing of most of the churches satellite Sunday school programs. Parents were afraid to send their children for fear of more bomb attacks on Christians which was a definite concern. But the programs went well and new children, as well as their families, were exposed to the Gospel.

For Christmas we always give special gifts for the children who have perfect attendance which was 53 children. In addition to the regular Christmas gift we give them a back pack filled with school supplies. This is a huge thing as these supplies are a big expense for many of the parents.

Those children who come for 90% or more Sundays receive in addition to the regular Christmas gift, school supplies.

This year the churches also recognized the children who had memorized the Bible verses assigned each week, they received a certificate and a medal.

### **PREACHERS SUBMIT GOALS FOR 2020**

Each year our preachers pray about and set goals for the coming year. This includes the number of new contacts they will make, people they will work with to bring to Christ, those they train for different areas of service within the church and those they want to send to Bible school for training for ministry.

This may not sound earth shattering to you but you have to understand that the Sri Lankan culture sets few goals for anything, is' normal and easy to just float along.

I'm reminded of the old saying of, "if you aim at nothing you're bound to hit it". We've seen significant changes in attitude and efforts put forth when they set goals and are reminded of them periodically.

The goals set are too varied to mention and most are centered on evangelism, overall I was pleased with what they submitted. Please pray that they will indeed work to fulfill these goals.

### **PERSONAL NEWS**

Vijay decided to purchase a used three wheeler to drive for hire in the area. I don't know if this will work out as the monthly payments are quite high, but at least he's not just pulling in a fish net in the mornings and then sitting the rest of the day. And this was definitely better than buying a boat and fishing nets which he considered. There are already too many fishermen in the area none can make a decent living.

Sowmiya is back at university her GPA was 3.42 for last semester. She truly loves to study and it shows! Sad news was her lowest score was in English a C+.

Tharsha took two different exams this past month one was for entrance into university for a degree in Food Service. The other was for a clerk position at the District Court in Batticaloa. She is supposed to get the results within the next couple of weeks.

Tharshini is busy assisting in Sunday school in the Koddai Kallar church and helping at home with cooking and cleaning.

Prashanth has started school again and is busy with studies and tutoring classes he attends.

I received a letter from NVC concerning the visa applications and once again they have asked for more and different documents to be submitted which I was able to do just this last week. One had to be signed by Prashanth so I had to email it to Sri Lanka, have it signed, scanned and emailed back here so I could submit it.

I'm also beginning to make plans to return to Sri Lanka toward the end of March. I want to see the ministry, spend some time with the preachers, and see my kids who I miss terribly; it's been four years since I have seen them.

A niece in Sri Lanka had a baby boy just 3 days ago. He was having a little difficulty breathing but is doing okay; Sona my niece is doing well.

### **SEARCH FOR PROPERTY IN PORUTIVU**

The church in Porutivu has been looking for a property to purchase for a permanent place for the them to meet.

They have been meeting in one of the believer's homes but this actually hinders the growth many times so a place is being sought either with an existing house or a bare land on which we can build.

Please pray for God's blessing in this as a building is necessary for the growth of the church.

### **PRAYER CONCERNS**

1. Coworkers to work to fulfill their goals they have set for this year.
2. Praise for all the work that was done and the 68 new Christians.
3. Preachers to be faithful in their work in ministry
4. The kids' visas to be approved and my trip in march Lord willing to go to Sri Lanka.
5. Property in Porutivu to be located which will be for the church there in that village.

