

Another month is gone. Even with the extra day this year, February is just too short at least in some respects. The coldest of weather should be finished but not always. We seem to reserve at least major snow storm for March each year and everyone is waiting for it to happen, but not with much joy.

Monsoon season in Sri Lanka is over and within a couple of weeks from mid March through mid June the hottest months begin. I can honestly say I'm not looking forward to leaving cold temps here to upper 90's there but that's just how it is.

Most of our lives are filled with change whether by necessity or by design, our location, situations, attitudes, moods, and weather. But one thing remains constant and that is our Lord Jesus Christ!

Scripture refers to our Lord as a Mighty Fortress, a Strong Tower, the Solid Rock; the idea is something immovable, unchanging, steadfast, and faithful. The list could go on but I think we all understand.

Things in this life are in a constant state of flux but God is always the same. Hebrews 13:8 tells us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." The previous verses speak of God's faithfulness to us and that he is our helper so why be afraid, even of change.

One thing for me doesn't change and that is my gratitude to you for your faithful prayers and financial gifts to the ministry. I know I may sound like a broken record, (boy that dates me), but I sincerely thank you and thank God for you. You make this ministry possible by your partnership with us.

May God bless you for your love and faithfulness to this ministry and may he use you where you to his glory.

Because of Christ, Steve

### **PLANS TO RETURN TO SRI LANKA**

Yes you read that correctly, I have made plans and even have my ticket purchased to return to Sri Lanka this month. I will leave March 24<sup>th</sup> Lord willing and return to the States April 22<sup>nd</sup>. I actually got some of the best connections ever and a good price.

This is going to be a rather short trip. I can no longer get the two year resident visa that I have enjoyed for many years. This is due to the fact that as I was married to Shanthi, a Sri Lankan citizen, I could get the two year visa. Now with her passing that is no longer an option another change.

I can get a one month visitor visa and then if they grant it a two month extension. Then if I were to go to immigration there, pay more money, fill out lots of forms and talk and beg they usually will extend it for three more months.

Right now though there seems to be a fair amount of friction between the Sri Lankan government and the U.S. so who knows how that will pan out.

I have continued to wait for my two children's visas to come through but with all the delays I decided I am going to Sri Lanka regardless. After the last filing of forms, January 29<sup>th</sup>, I should have a response actually the last week of March while I am in Sri Lanka, but I don't know if it will be positive for the visas to be issued or if they are going to request more forms and documents to be sent.

If God works it all out then I may be able to bring them to the States when I return home the end of April.

Also I want to see first hand the things that are taking place in the ministry. I have been away from Sri Lanka for four years now and the last two years in Sri Lanka were consumed with lots of trips to doctors and hospitals for Shanthi.

Consequently there is lots of paperwork that must be taken care of when I get there; filing forms with the government, changing of names on property deeds, bank accounts and on the list goes as Shanthi's name was on all these documents.

So even though it may be a short trip I've got lots to occupy my time.

I am looking forward to going but this is another source of change for me as nothing will be the same for family and ministry, but this is in God's gracious hand!

Please pray that my plans will be successful that God will be glorified in all things.

### **THINKING BACK**

As I consider what lies ahead for the ministry and the changes we will go through I have been thinking of where we started and some of the journey to get to where the ministry is today.

In May of 2000 Lamp Lighters was incorporated and later that year we began the work in Sri Lanka, so our presence has been there for almost 20 years.

Our purpose was to establish churches in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka and in other provinces of the island as God would lead.

We now have ten churches in the Eastern Province that we have started either directly or through our national coworkers. This was accomplished by God's gracious hand and lots of work. You also have been a part of this work from the beginning.

Another goal was that these churches would grow to where they were self supporting and reproducing themselves by starting new churches in other areas.

Currently we have three of these congregations that within a year or two will by God's grace will be self sustaining. Inflation in the Sri Lankan economy has played a big part in delaying this process. Two of these churches are already involved in the starting of new congregations.

We worked to bring our coworkers to where they were training up new workers to carry on the work. This is one area where they continue to struggle and this deals more with the culture there than lack of ability and training.

My intention from the beginning was never to be an American preacher preaching in a church in a foreign country but to get things going and allow the nationals to take responsibility for the churches and the growth of the ministry.

Two areas of ministry that never were fulfilled were to start an actual Bible training school and also children homes.

The government closed almost all faith based children homes several years ago and would not allow Christian organizations to open homes even though the government operated homes were overcrowded and not run properly. This was done to hinder the Gospel from being spread through the young people raised in the Christian children homes.

We did make an attempt at starting a small Bible school but finding other teachers was so difficult we decided the time was not right.

Overall I'm happy with the progress made and looking forward to years of additional involvement in the ministry there in Sri Lanka.

### **PERSONAL NEWS**

The preachers and coworkers along with my children are thrilled with my return to Sri Lanka; it's nice to be loved! I am looking forward to going back but I'm sure it will be difficult at first.

Oldest son Vijay seems to be doing okay running the three wheeler as a taxi, this is a concern as there are so many of them available for hire.

Sowmiya just had a birthday she turned 24, doesn't seem possible she is this old.

Second daughter Tharsha tested for and was accepted into university. She will be living on campus which is about 7 hours from home. She will be studying what they call hotel management and food service. She is enjoying this so far. Pray for her protection and that she will do well in her courses.

Tharshini and Prashanth are at home anticipating their visas hopefully very soon so they can come here. Please pray that God will work in this situation!

### **PRAYER CONCERNS**

1. My trip and success in all that needs to be done while I am there.
2. Future plans for the ministry I will be discussing with our coworkers.
3. My children and all that's going on in their lives
4. Coworkers to work faithfully to fulfill their goals for the year.
5. Additional workers and more souls to come to Christ.