

**Jeyakanth: “One of the hardest years of my life”**

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**The history of Jeyakanth and the LEFC: Part 1**

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**“Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.”**

Psalms 55:22 (NKJV)

# Lanka Link



## Families pushed to the brink

Believers like Jeyarani leave home in desperation to find work

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Firstly I want to say how indebted we are for the generosity you have shown towards our LEFC churches in this last year. It made an enormous difference and is very much appreciated by the believers in Sri Lanka.

It has been a very difficult year of trials and heartaches which I explain further in the magazine. But at the same time we have known a precious unity and blessing. We have a wonderful God.

Yours in the Lord

Ps. Jeyakanth

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## Mailing list, additional copies of the magazine and email news updates

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, be sent additional copies or be kept up to date with news via email please contact Gary Donaldson:

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# Short reports

By Ps. Jeyakanth and Paul Fountain

There has been increasing persecution this last year from both Hindus and erroneous churches. Please pray for God's strength and wisdom for the church leaders

## Church in Thannanmunnai facing major challenges

The teaching of other Christian denominations is causing confusion and doubt in the minds of our believers. Pastors from these churches are trying to infiltrate our congregation and draw our members away with teachings of blessings and prosperity. This is a big challenge to our reformed teaching.

The individual actions of a couple of our believers

have been criticised by a member of another church as well as a non-Christian, with a view of bringing the church into disrepute.

One of the church families had borrowed a large sum of money and are unable to pay it back. As a result, they are shying away from church meetings and gatherings. Sadly, their situation has brought the church under criticism.



Subashini by a new house built for her and her sisters

## Girls leave cruel step-mother

Please pray for three sisters – Pushparani, Jeyarani and Subashini. After their mother's death, their father has married another woman. The three girls suffered ill-treatment at the hands of

their step-mother. When they accepted Jesus and started attending church, their step-mother had asked them to leave their home. We have managed to build a small house for the girls to live in.

## Distress caused by Hindu teacher

Sandanawatte is a village made up of only 65 families – most are Hindus, and many are quite fanatical about their faith. Christian children are treated differently at school by the teachers. The new head teacher at the village school is a staunch Hindu who forces the Christian children to observe Hindu traditions and practices. This has caused confusion and distress among believers. Yet, our Lord has strengthened the faith of our believers and the church is growing.

## Deeply moved by your clothes donations

Clothes that were sent by our brothers and sisters abroad were sorted, parcelled and distributed to our church families. As good clothes are quite expensive here, all who received them were deeply moved by the generosity and thoughtfulness of Christians abroad.



Ganesh was baptised by Jeyakanth

## Ganesh wanted to kill Jeyakanth

Ganesh joined a terrorist group to take revenge on Jeyakanth

Ganesh is one of four brothers whose father went missing during the civil war. LEFC financially supported him through school. At 18 he tried to rape a girl at night, but she shouted out and the Thampalagamman villagers stopped him. The village leaders asked Jeyakanth for advice on how to deal with him. In these situations the girl is considered 'spoilt goods' with no marriage prospects. Unless Ganesh

was willing to marry her, he would be sent to prison. Afraid of the alternatives both agreed to marry. He had expected Jeyakanth to be 'soft' on him and was ashamed and angry with Jeyakanth. He had no intention of staying with her and two days after the wedding he ran away to join the terrorists because he wanted to be trained how to kill him. However the training was so hard he could not cope. He could not return to his village

so went to Colombo, here he developed mental problems. In time he recovered and married a Christian girl. She was a good influence on him and he became a Christian. So 10 years after leaving he returned to Thampalagamman and was baptised by Jeyakanth! He humbly apologised for his behaviour. He said his desire to kill Jeyakanth followed a period of demon possession.





# Drought leads to family breakdown, weakening LEFC Churches

We've made Jeyarani the front cover story as it typifies the trauma many families are now facing. Debt forced them apart with devastating consequences, their experience is all too common. LEFC are doing all they can to keep the families together. You can read Jeyarani's story on page 6

## SPECIAL REPORT

**S**o what are the causes? And how are our churches affected?

A legacy of a 25 year civil war and in recent years a series of poor or failed harvests has left rural families in increasing debt. With many farmers giving up (and consequently fewer jobs for day labourers), it means that men leave our churches in desperation to find work in cities and abroad. Also, some women go to the Middle East. As a result attendance at most of our churches has fallen.

The impact on families and churches is very damaging. With long periods apart, men and women often fall into sexual sin and marriages break up. When the women either work abroad or are just not coping as they have been deserted and are the only bread-winners, children are often

passed on to relatives or friends to look after and are neglected.

The long term impact of family breakdowns on both the families and the churches is a great cause for concern.

### Has the drought situation improved?

Sadly although in some ways the situation is marginally better than last year, in other ways it's worse. Initially encouraging rains stopped during the final six weeks before this year's main rice harvest. Consequently, of a total of 358 acres of rice planted by LEFC churches, 263 acres (74%) were lost.

Realising food would be very scarce later this year, LEFC tried to maximise food production while the well water lasted. All available LEFC land was cleared and planted and advice sought from the Ministry of Agriculture to



obtain best quality drought resistant seed. With more out-of-season rain this spring than expected, vegetables and peanuts were grown successfully. Although a great help in the short term, these do not replace the staple diet of rice.

The summer has been very hot and dry. Many food prices have doubled, particularly vegetables. Animals are dying and any remaining water in most

### Social impact of drought

An extract from August's report from the Northern Province talking about the social impact of the ongoing drought



*'The constant hunger and thirst give rise to arguments and fights in families and the loss of livelihood has led to depression and suicide. Some, especially the young, have been forced to steal in order to survive.'*

*Many had started the year by borrowing heavily to prepare the soil and buy rice seed. When the crop fails, they have no means of repaying their loans. This leads to a state of helplessness.*

*There are arguments and fights in the family and seeing one's children go to*

*school on an empty stomach, all lead some believers to discouragement and apathy.*

*Family women are tempted to go to Middle Eastern countries to earn some extra money. Without proper supervision of the mothers, children in such families tend to go astray.*

*Many families are broken, and husbands and wives remarry without a thought for their children. Many children endure abuse and ill-treatment at the hands of step-parents. Some children have dropped out of school.'*

### Sri Lanka: No.1 country for suicides, again

Debt in war-affected communities is driving many to suicide

The World Health Organization recently confirmed Sri Lanka is yet again the No.1 country for suicides in the world. And the national crisis is affecting Christians too.

There has been a systematic exploitation of war-affected communities by loan sharks targeting women in particular. Once they fall into that debt trap, there is no coming back. A family is faced with dire choices: to sell valuable property, be displaced from their homes or go to West Asia as housemaids — and then families can fall apart. Loans come with

25-30% interest with repayment due inside a year. The very next day after the sign up, they get their money, and once they make an initial repayment their credit limit is doubled, encouraging them to borrow more.

The struggling borrowers then find themselves forced to obtain fresh loans from new lenders just to keep up. Thus the scheme goes on and many see suicide as the only way out.





wells is undrinkable. The social impact of another year’s suffering, on top of last year, is disastrous.

How can LEFC help keep families and churches together?

As Christians, we need God’s guidance and support as we provide practical answers to our brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka.

LEFC is doing all it can to keep families and churches together by helping to provide a sustainable life in the villages. Culturally and practically, people find it very difficult to move away.

Help involves ensuring basic ongoing needs are being met, such as water, food, housing, medicines and clothes. But we’re also putting in steps to support existing employment or provide new work.

LEFC projects include:

- Digging or deepening 28 wells to extend the growing season
- Buying several acres of land for church members to grow crops
- Reducing dependence on rice crops by helping set up small businesses, e.g. Home Gardens (small holdings), goats, poultry, fishing and more

Financial support has been invaluable

The financial support provided from abroad this last year has made an enormous difference to families and churches. They are full of thanks. Here is just some of the feedback:

‘We thank God for the love and concern of our brothers and sisters abroad. I feel privileged that, we in

Kekirawa are united with Christians in the UK, Germany, Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka in the building of God’s kingdom’ – Ps. Samaracon (Kekirawa)

‘Some of our new converts were quite overwhelmed by the love and concern shown by the greater church. They said that it was the first time they had been shown kindness by someone they did not know’ – Br. Yoganathan (Haputale)

‘We thank our Christian brothers and sisters abroad whose love and concern for us has been great. We pray that God would bless them abundantly’ – Br. Mylanantham (Kallappaadu)

How can we further support LEFC churches?

Any help is greatly appreciated. This could be to meet ongoing basic needs or

to help with funding self-employment requests. Churches could consider linking up with a sister LEFC church to support them.

LEFC church workers visit all the families to pray with them and assess their needs. They send requests to the office at 6 Mile Post, detailing the history of the family and the needs. These are prioritised and as funds are available requests are approved and funds released.

Details of self-employment needs are available on request. See our contact details.

Please pray for the LEFC churches, that the Lord will keep their faith strong in these times of hardship – ‘Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.’ Psalm 55:22 (NKJV)



Sewing machines provide an income for many women

Jeyarani: story of poverty, abuse and a scarred life



Jeyarani’s family fell into debt and they felt the only solution was for her to work as a house maid in the Middle East. It had a devastating impact on the family

Jeyarani is married to Jothirajah and they have four children. She was brought up as a devoted Hindu and was involved in all the rituals, witchcraft, devil dancing,

horoscopes and more.

After much suffering during the civil war, they settled in Vishvamadu and started attending the LEFC church. She was baptised in 2012 and they both became zealously committed to the work. Since her husband is partially blind so cannot work, she had to take on labouring work to provide for the family.

In desperation left for the Middle East

However, the labouring work was irregular and she was not earning enough to feed and educate her family. They sank into debt and extreme poverty and she went through a period of depression. In desperation, she eventually decided to go to Saudi Arabia to work in a Muslim house, which an agent arranged for her.

Jeryarani received an

advance payment that she gave to her husband and children before leaving home in tears. The whole family accompanied her to the airport in deep distress.

Family suffered

Slowly her family fell apart. Her daughter Thivya was taken to her cousin’s house, 50km away. She became sick and, because there was little medical care, got worse, which was a great worry for her mother. The eldest son went astray, married a non-believer at the age of 19 and gradually stopped attending church services. Eventually, only Jothirajah the father and the younger son were living in the house while the others had scattered and were doing their own thing. The younger son’s education was affected by his parents’ inability to take an interest in his progress.

Abused by employer in Saudi Arabia

At first Jeyarani was sending money each month, but as time went by her master in the house delayed paying her. With no money reaching her family, shop owners eventually refused to give them any more food.

Meanwhile the master of the house mistreated Jeyarani and abused her when his wife was away. She was very depressed and was all alone thinking and crying to the Lord about her desperate situation.

She thought of her past life in Sri Lanka, when (even though they had only one meal a day) they were together as a family and happy in the Lord. Now she was alone and, having little understanding of Arabic, was being intimidated when she had to ask for things to be explained again.

She got little rest and wasn’t allowed to sleep even when very sick. She was only allowed to eat leftover food and had to work from early morning until late at night without a break.

Damage still to be healed

She had intended to work in Saudi Arabia for three years but returned to Sri Lanka after two years.

Today, she is still suffering extreme poverty and hardship, but is happy to be reunited with her children. LEFC have provided a garden and goats for her to earn an income. Sadly the strain has deeply affected her marriage. Please pray the Lord will restore her husband to Himself and her and heal the scars the family bears.

Helping church members set up new ventures

LEFC provides funds for a variety of small businesses

Knife sharpening

Namnathan (45) has a wife and four children. He ran a small business sharpening knives. It did not bring him a steady income as his machine was old, needed expensive repairs constantly, and could only sharpen kitchen knives. With help from the church, he was able to buy a better machine that can sharpen larger tools – sheers and cutlasses. He is now able to make a steady income to support his family.

Selling fish

Puvanenthiran (60) has a wife and six children. For the past year, he had been

unemployed, following an illness. Although back to good health, he is unable to get suitable employment. So the church provided him with a push bicycle, weighing scales and weights to enable him to start work as a fish vendor. He can buy fish from the fishermen returning from sea with their catch, pack them in ice in the box fixed to the back of his bicycle, and then sell them from door to door. Now he can care for his family.

Goat herd

Thurainayagam has a wife and two daughters, both of whom are married. In 1991, during the civil war, he was injured and lost the use of his legs and his wife has to support the family. They were given a small goat herd to provide an income from goat’s milk and breeding.

Keeping hens

Vijitha (26) is married with three children. She has had a very hard life and has been in a violently abusive marriage. Once her husband tried to burn her alive. Amazingly, his behaviour improved and they started attending the 6 Mile Post church. They were allowed to live in a house belonging to the church. In exchange, Vijitha does some work in the kitchen and her husband carries out some odd jobs for the church. They’ve been given help keeping hens to supplement their income.





These news items and prayer requests are from some of the churches in Sri Lanka. They tell us how much your care and practical support means to them as they often face great hardship

## Neenakeany



Neenakeany is one of the poorest villages in Sri Lanka. Since 2011, our church has been providing a nutritional mid-day meal to school children. The cooking took place in a hut made of woven palm leaves. Not only was it very inconvenient, but dangerous too. We have now been able to erect a brick building for cooking and preparation of food.

As most of the villagers are very poor, children do not get sufficient nutrition to enable them to study well. Hence, the provision of a hot nutritional meal after school is of great benefit. 60 – 70 children are fed every day. Two of our church widows are engaged in the preparation and cooking of the meals, for which they are paid a small amount from the church funds.

Mannar

Unlike other areas of Sri Lanka, opposition to our church comes, not from Hindus or Buddhists, but from Roman Catholics. Under the direction of their new bishop, at every mass, the priests warn their congregations to resist the teachings of the “Pentecostal churches” (which is any church that is not Roman Catholic!). In addition, the new bishop has given permission for catholic priests to change the worship format, so that it is similar to the worship at protestant churches.

The map displays the following provinces and their major cities:

- Northern Province:** Jaffna, Nalloor, Achuveli, Elephant Pass, Puthukuyyuppu, Vishvamadam, Selvapuram, Nachchikuddah, Mannar, Adampan, Madhukarrai, Vavuniya, Alampil.
- North Central Province:** Mannar, Adampan, Madhukarrai, Vavuniya, Pulmoddai, Hammillewa, Anuradhapura, Thampalagamam, Sandanawatte, Poonagar, Kallady, Vaddavan, Verugal, Kattumuriyepu, Palalyootheru, Trincomalee, Veeramanagar, Neenakeany, Uppural, Elangathurai, Vinayagapuram, Mutichennai, Amandanaveli, Komathalamadu.
- North Western Province:** Kalpitiya, Puttalam, Maho, Kekirawa, Polonnaruwa, Wallaichennai, Urugamam, Karrayanaru, Thannanmunnai, Batticaloa, Kattankudi, Kalmunai, Wallatappiti, Ampara, Kataragama, Kumana, Pottuvil, Monaragala, Hambantota, Galle, Matara, Dondra Head.
- Western Province:** Colombo, Sri Jayawardanapura Kotte, Mount Lavinia, Moratuwa, Kalutara, Ambalangoda.
- Southern Province:** Galle, Matara, Dondra Head.
- Eastern Province:** Batticaloa, Kattankudi, Kalmunai, Wallatappiti, Ampara, Kataragama, Kumana, Pottuvil, Monaragala, Hambantota, Galle, Matara, Dondra Head.
- Northern Muthur:** Trincomalee, Veeramanagar, Neenakeany, Uppural, Elangathurai, Vinayagapuram, Mutichennai, Amandanaveli, Komathalamadu.
- Southern Muthur:** Trincomalee, Veeramanagar, Neenakeany, Uppural, Elangathurai, Vinayagapuram, Mutichennai, Amandanaveli, Komathalamadu.
- Eastern Batticaloa:** Batticaloa, Kattankudi, Kalmunai, Wallatappiti, Ampara, Kataragama, Kumana, Pottuvil, Monaragala, Hambantota, Galle, Matara, Dondra Head.
- Uva Province:** Badulla, Haputale, Nuwara Eliya, Bambaragalla, High Forest, Meddakumbura, Kandy, Matale, Kurunegala, Negombo, Chilaw, Puttalam, Maho, Kekirawa, Polonnaruwa, Wallaichennai, Urugamam, Karrayanaru, Thannanmunnai, Batticaloa, Kattankudi, Kalmunai, Wallatappiti, Ampara, Kataragama, Kumana, Pottuvil, Monaragala, Hambantota, Galle, Matara, Dondra Head.

The attendance of believers at Bible study and prayer meetings has dropped due to the problems in the country. Many men have had to move away from the village to find jobs. As a result, people seem to have less time for church affairs.

## Valachennai

## Palaiyoothu

## Meddakumbra

Last year Ps. Joseph's (56) health started failing rapidly, and on the 20th of December he went to be with his Lord. Many LEFC pastors and staff travelled a long distance to attend the funeral service. He was a zealous, gentle assistant Pastor of the Meddakumbra church in the tea growing region of Hatton. His wife and the four daughters are still in shock. One is married, and the other three are teenagers. They worry about the future.

Joseph was brought up as a Roman Catholic. He started his working life at a tea factory and through a friend, who also worked there, became a Christian. Together they started an evangelical outreach into the community, which led to the birth of a church and Joseph was made the Pastor.



## Vishvamadu



Grace Children's Home has been built in Vishvamadu. This area suffered very badly in the war and there are many children whose parents are either dead or were not able to look after them. So far the 9 living here are provided with three meals a day. A further 32 receive two meals. It doubles up as a tuition centre. Work has also started on separate boys house and units for widow and children.

## Komathalamadu

There is much black magic/witchcraft practiced in our village. Please pray that people will be freed from its bad effect, and that God would change the hearts of those who practise it.

Many of the villagers are addicted to alcohol. Please pray that God in His mercy would deliver them from this.

## 6 Mile Post







Sr. Shanthi's seven children came to the Children's Home shortly before she died of cancer

# One of the hardest years of my life

**Ps. Jeyakanth** recounts two great trials he's faced since Spring 2017, resulting in many sleepless nights

**W**e've experienced two great trials in the last year or so, which have caused us great distress. Firstly the authorities have tried to close the Children's Home and take some of our land and it seemed as though the powers of darkness were doing all they could to destroy the work LEFC had built up over the years. Secondly the drought has taken a heavy toll on the churches (ref. Special Report). On top of this, harassment of Christians has increased from Hindus and false churches.

**Attempt to close Children's Home**  
Just over a year ago, it came to light that two of the long-term 'Christian' workers, George and Sasikumar, who had been disciplined for sinful behaviour, had turned against LEFC. They have vindictively tried to destroy

the Children's Home and also bribed the local police to support their fraudulent claims of ownership of the homes they had been living in at 6 Mile Post.

They used inside knowledge of legal complexities surrounding registration of the ownership of the 30 tsunami homes to try to have them taken away from LEFC. At one point, Sasikumar broke open the gates to the tsunami homes' compound while corrupt local officials encouraged Hindu families to come and take possession of any temporarily empty homes.

It is grievous that they have repaid kindness over many years with such ungodly behaviour. They have made many false accusations to the authorities. Sasikumar once called in the inspectors claiming the Home was not safe and then poured broken glass around the premises just before they arrived. Local Hindu authorities willingly went along with the lies.

The authorities contacted Hindu relatives of the children claiming that the Home was anti Hindu and would be closing and advising them to remove their children from it. The Government officials hoped that a mass exodus of children would force us to close the Children's Home.

**16 children removed**  
In September officials, without warning, removed 9 children from the Children's Home and placed them in a very strict Hindu children's home. They chose soft targets. The group included 7 children from the Christian family whose father was trampled to death by an elephant and whose mother died of cancer. Their closest relatives are strongly Hindu and complied. These children had been at the home for nearly 4 years and were distraught, pleading not to be taken away. In all, 16 children left the home.

Despite our best efforts, the situation in the Children's Home is sadly unchanged. The family of seven came out of the Hindu Home for a while but their relatives were threatened with jail if they did not return them. They are now back and

are often beaten. Anusha, the oldest, is 18 now and could leave but she doesn't want to abandon her siblings. Ravi, Savithri and Kajenthini are in the same Home: their mother also tried to take them out but was threatened with jail if she did.

**Heart-breaking situation**  
Every Friday the children are brought to the big Hindu temple near our Children's Home. Sometimes our workers can see them from the street, but every form of contact is prevented. It's really a heart-breaking situation. Against their will their foreheads are marked with a red dot, the sign of Hindus. Ravi (15) secretly passed a message to Jeyakanth saying, 'Tell pastor I'm quietly praying to God in the bathroom and at bed times. When we worship their gods I pray to Jesus, I will not let them force me to accept Hindu markings. I promise to do all I can to come back to my Christian Home.'

Let's continually pray that the Lord may strengthen their faith.

Meanwhile the land registration is not resolved. Although George has left,

**"They have repaid kindness over many years with such ungodly behaviour."**

Sasi is still refusing to vacate his house. He has no documents for the house but the authorities have let him live there until now.

The spiritual warfare continues and your prayers are vital and much appreciated. We long to see a just outcome to the ongoing cases that are awaiting rulings from the courts.

**Drought has a distressing impact on the churches**  
Church life has changed in many of the churches as the devastating impact of the 2017 drought is realised. To compound the situation 75% of the main rice harvest was lost. After



Many animals are dying

encouraging unseasonal spring rain the drought is returning and the latest reports in August indicate that the remaining well water is largely undrinkable so that water bowzers are now being used.

Most of our churches are in rural communities which have been hit hard. As a result of crippling debts to loan sharks, many men, in particular, have left their villages to travel to big cities or abroad to find work. Families are separated and the few men left are often the less able ones. Attendance at most of our churches has fallen and in some the congregations are almost entirely made up of women and children.

In many rural villages up to one third of the women have left for jobs as housemaids in the Middle East. Agents go round the villages promising them money up front to clear their debts, which they find difficult to resist. We are doing all we can to keep the Christian families together by providing work in the villages.

The help provided from abroad, particularly this last year, has been invaluable in helping in stemming the flow and keeping church families together.

With persecution on the rise it has been a hard year. However we have a wonderful Heavenly Father who knows our situation. We have had many baptisms this year, we enjoy unity among the churches and we look to the Lord who will supply our every need.

Thank you very much for all your prayers. Please continue to remember our ministry in London and my family.

Yours in the Lord  
Ps. Jeyakanth



# Inspirational lessons

**Tamsin Isaac**, on her first trip to Sri Lanka was challenged as a teacher and as a person, and returned to the UK inspired in her own work, prayers and outlook

Teaching in the UK is a great job and one perk to working in state education is the free time in the summer. Through family and friends, I was put in contact with Care Sri Lanka to enquire about working for them for a few weeks. After booking flights, my eager planning still failed to paint a full picture of what to expect and I headed for Colombo in July with little more than an address and a photo of Ambrose who was to pick me up. One thing I have learnt this summer is that God really does have a plan and will guide us.

**Unlike any other place**

Sri Lanka is unlike any place I have visited, with its busy roads, dense palm trees and impressive heat. The colour and vibrancy of Sri Lanka hits



you the moment you step out of the airport and I had a front row seat to near-misses with dogs, painted lorries and families of five astride a single moped. I was privileged to see a lot of the country; whilst the coastal areas are sandy, tropical and dusty, the

“Pastors and families invited me to eat with them, work alongside them and share many a good joke!”

higher country stunned me with the rolling tea plantations and clouded peaks. Temples, churches and mosques are dotted along roads as contrasting as the change between coastal sand and rocky mountains. The food has changed curries for me forever; aubergines, spices and fish cooked in so many ways that curry for breakfast, lunch and dinner becomes a treat, and fresh fruit that makes my mouth water even now.

**Made to feel so welcome**

I have stayed with families all over the world, but no-one made me feel as welcome as the people I met in Sri Lanka. Travelling as a woman in my twenties and alone, I had concerns, but as soon as I arrived in busy Colombo, Jeyakanth and Vani made it clear I could rely on the people I would meet. The pastors who showed me around their churches and the members I shared lunch with taught

me much about their own lives and the growth of their faith; testimonies that demonstrate the grace of God in so many seemingly impossible situations. It is often said that Christians around the world are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and I have never felt this to be more real, as pastors and families invited me to eat with them, work alongside them and share many a good joke!

**Hadn't grasped scope of the work**

Before the trip, I found it hard to get a realistic idea of how the work Jeyakanth coordinates in Sri Lanka is lived out day by day. Yes, I did my research and read the newsletters, but I didn't grasp the scope of what is actually happening. I was incredibly blessed to be sent all over Sri Lanka to see pre-schools, churches, and food programmes and to teach at many of these; I witnessed how honest people in their communities carried out the work.

I spent a few days at 6th Mile Post Children's Home and taught the girls and boys some basic wood working skills in a small, outdoor workshop. I demonstrated some simple joinery with the tools and materials available; thankfully the only cut hand was my own! With school during the day, tuition after lunch and my class after that, I was impressed by the focus of the children and their enthusiasm to practise a new skill.

**Pastors humbly serving**

One evening I returned to Jeyakanth's home to find a large team of pastors and helpers packing up food parcels. Working for hours, we weighed and bagged lentils, flour, sugar, soya beans, tea and rice to send out to Muthur – an area badly affected by the drought. There were small and large parcels for



families of different sizes and all were loaded into vans to distribute through the churches. I went back to South Muthur the following day and after a sermon from Pastor Jeyakanth it was a privilege to give out some of these food gifts to people in need.

Not only are pastors growing church congregations, but they are also serving and providing practical help to people in need, such as food for people with not enough due to the drought, or wells for villages with little access to reliable water supplies. I helped teach the children and saw the baptism

of 25 people in the sea one Saturday; something that really showed me the authenticity of how faith is changing peoples' lives in dramatic ways. It was difficult to know exactly what I could bring to such extensive work, but I found that through teaching some basic carpentry, English and pre-school sessions not only did I meet some amazing children, but I myself was also inspired by the commitment of others to learn and work hard. I had a taster of many aspects of the Care Sri Lanka network and look to going back with a more specific focus in the future.

**I was challenged as a teacher and a person**

My solo trip to work in Sri Lanka was not exactly as I expected, but then who could prepare you for such a varied and engaging experience? I was challenged as a teacher and as a person, and have returned to the UK with an insight that I would never have achieved 'hostel-hopping' or chilling on the beach. The people I have worked alongside, who have hosted me and given up time for me, will continue to inspire me in my own work, prayers and outlook.

“It is often said that Christians around the world are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and I have never felt this to be more real...”

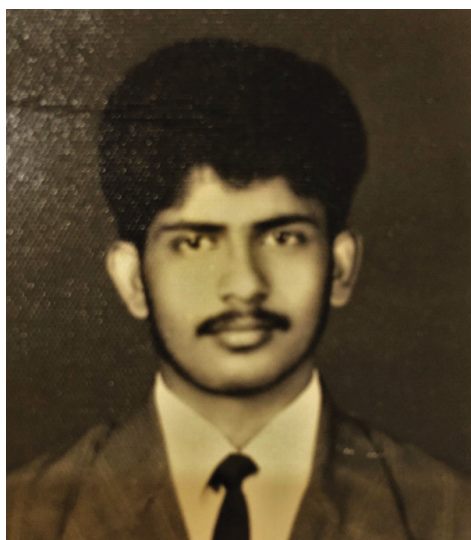


# Jeyakanth's early life

This is the first of a series of articles on the history of Jeyakanth and the LEFC (Lanka Evangelical Fellowship of Churches). It covers how he was saved and the dangers he encountered as he began to evangelise



SANKA VIDANAGAMA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



facing considerable opposition and danger from the ongoing civil war that raged in the area. The main village he visited was Thampalagamam, 20 miles from Trincomalee and home to a Telegu gypsy community. Theirs was a primitive way of life: living under the trees, making money from palm reading and fortune telling and speaking Telegu, an oral language spoken by only a few thousand in Sri Lanka. Jeyakanth learnt their language.

## Persecuted for his zeal

At first, the gospel provoked strong opposition; some accused him of being a conman out to deceive them; there was even a poster campaign against him claiming he wanted their children's eyes to sell abroad! A group of young men once came with sticks and metal whips to intimidate him; they pushed him around, saying they did not want Christians there and threatened to kill him if he returned. He was called for an interview with both the village leaders and the Tamil Tigers and warned not to preach anymore. As a result, Jeyakanth no longer preached in the open and instead met people in secret. His first convert was a Catholic medical doctor who subsequently offered his home as a place from which to conduct the ministry.

Opposition to Jeyakanth was so

strong that some villagers secretly planned to kill him. However, God protected him. Despite receiving further warnings from the local government officers, he carried on witnessing for Christ.

## Civil War erupts

There was an ongoing civil war in Sri Lanka which lasted from 1982 to 2009. It was between the majority government backed Sinhalese and the minority Tamils, who wanted independence.

Thampalagamam was a Tamil Tiger controlled area and in 1990 when the civil war erupted again the village was destroyed. Most of the villagers hid from the government forces in the jungle; the fledgling church being built up in the doctor's home, came to an abrupt end.

Jeyakanth found himself homeless. Caught between the warring factions, with the Hindu villagers and Tamil Tigers who opposed his work on one side and the government forces on the other, he felt exposed, vulnerable and fearful for his life, but God faithfully provided for him: the same Christian doctor who had been his first convert found him a place to stay in a nearby Muslim village. During this time, Jeyakanth visited many people in the jungle, where he found he was able to

witness freely without opposition. In their desperation and fear people were very open to the gospel and many were converted.

## Jeyakanth a suspected Tamil Tiger

A few weeks later, the local Muslims spread rumours that he was a Tamil Tiger. It was a fearsome situation, as he knew that the government would come looking for him. Jeyakanth went into hiding in a small cellar beneath the doctor's house and only came out briefly at night.

After spending two weeks alone in the cellar, Jeyakanth heard an audible voice which he knew was from God: 'Don't be afraid, I am with you, I will send an angel before you'. He felt his fear disappear and God strengthening him. Emerging from the cellar, he told the doctor he was going to the army camp. Knowing they would find him sooner or later, he thought it better to go to them and hope they would show him mercy.

Cycling down the streets to the army camp, along a road littered with dead bodies being eaten by wild dogs and crows, Jeyakanth felt his whole body shaking and began to cry.

## Befriended by the enemy

By God's amazing providence, the army commander happened to be

coming out of the camp as Jeyakanth cycled in. Under normal circumstances there was no prospect of a young Hindu man having a meeting with the commander. He stopped Jeyakanth and asked him who he was. Jeyakanth explained he was a Christian pastor and preacher trying to help the people

**“Along a road littered with dead bodies being eaten by wild dogs and crows, Jeyakanth felt his whole body shaking and began to cry.”**

in Thampalagamam. He could not return to his home in Trincomalee because of the war and was afraid to go back to the house in Thampalagamam to collect the things he had left behind. The commander gave him permission to return to get his belongings. As he made his way back, unbeknown to him, the commander secretly followed from a distance using binoculars. Jeyakanth had no idea why he would do this.

As Jeyakanth reached the outskirts of Thampalagamam, he was approached by a group of Sinhalese villagers; the very men that the

government had used to infiltrate the gypsy community were returning to loot the village. One of them asked Jeyakanth in Sinhalese, “Are there any Tigers in the village?” since they wanted to know if it was safe to loot it. Full of fear, Jeyakanth thought that as soon as they realized he was a Hindu they might suspect him of being a Tamil Tiger and try to kill him. Jeyakanth could speak Sinhalese fluently, so adopting the pose of an official, he said loudly, “How would I know?”

At this point the army commander appeared and approached the group. Having witnessed the whole exchange, he was very angry with them, accusing them of giving the government a bad reputation. He ordered his soldiers to beat them up and warned what would happen if they looted the village.

## Facing probable death

The commander turned to Jeyakanth, calling him 'Father', a term used for any Christian leader. He told him to collect his possessions and then return to the army camp. This frightened Jeyakanth, as being taken to the army camp usually meant you would be killed. But with his options exhausted and nowhere else to escape to, he picked up his things and headed for the camp.

*To be continued in the next magazine*



# Other news

By Ps. Jeyakanth and Paul Fountain

## Family suffering

Suman nearly died and his wife and daughter have health problems

Br. Suman used to be a terrorist. He now lives with his family in Veeramanagar and works as social worker for our churches in the Muthur area, and as Gospel worker for Uppural and Neenakeany churches. He also helps at the centre in Neenakeany where children from poor homes are given a daily meal. He is a Godly, hardworking, caring brother. His family has experienced a lot of suffering.

Leading up to the rice harvest Suman was on guard duty in the field belonging

to the church, protecting them from wild elephants, who can wreak havoc by trampling the tender rice plants. While asleep he was bitten by a snake, on his face. It looked as though he would definitely die as he had not received treatment quickly enough. Six men from the church at Veeramanagar have died of snake bites. The church people prayed earnestly over him and he was taken to hospital in an unconscious state. Although he was treated and sent home,

he suffers from frequent headaches; from time to time his face swells up. Traces of the snake venom still linger in his blood. The family is very worried.

His wife, Sellakkili works from home, running a small shop as well as caring for their two daughters. During the civil war in 2001 she was injured very badly in an attack, which severely damaged her right leg, her hip and head. After more than one year in hospital, she was able to lead a normal life to a certain degree. But she repeatedly falls down and has got severe pain in her hip.

Suman's second daughter, Thamilarasi is only 4 years old. When she was a six-month-baby,



she was diagnosed with some liver disorder; with treatment she was healed. Recently, she has fallen ill, and doctors say that there is a problem with her digestive system. The parents plan to take the girl to Jaffna for treatment. Please pray for the little girl, that God would deliver her from this illness.

Please remember the family in prayer.



## Food prices rocket

The price of all basic foods has increased. As local rice cultivation is feasible only in areas where there are channels and streams, rice is in very short supply; and terribly expensive. As vegetable prices have gone up so much, people resorted to eating more fish. As a result, fish prices have gone up. The prices of most food items are much higher than

prices last year. Coconut and green chillies are being sold for silly prices. Last year, this month a coconut sold for Rs 30. Now Rs. 60 for a coconut is considered cheap. Most villagers have stopped using coconut, which used to be a basic ingredient in most cooking. Manioc yam (Cassava) is replacing rice as the staple diet.