

MISSION PARTNER UPDATE – SRI LANKA

DR MANO EMMANUEL

Dear friends,

Yes I am in UK. I had planned this visit last year, to coincide with my nephew Robin's wedding. I had almost given up the idea and then at the last minute decided to come. It was lovely to be able to attend the wedding, held In Bury St Edmund in a little church adjoining the bride's house. It was strange not to be able to sing, to have to wear masks during the ceremony and to be restricted to 30 people, but it was a beautiful ceremony, and the bride and groom were relaxed and enjoyed the day!

Sri Lanka has had around 3,000 virus cases so far. It appears that the infection arrived in the country through tourists and it is now returnees from other countries who are falling victim. Deaths are still low- 13 as of last week. Schools and universities have now re-opened and life is getting back to normal. Masks have to be worn even outdoors in Colombo, churches are allowed restricted numbers and though singing is allowed, masks are meant to be worn throughout the service. There seems to be no community spread which is a blessing because local hospitals would not be able to cope at all if numbers were high.

Politically, the 2/3rd majority won by the ruling party in the local elections looks like it will have severe repercussions on the constitution. The President is seeking to overturn the 19th Amendment which restricted the Presidential term and bring in a 20th Amendment which would then secure the government stayed in one family's hands for the foreseeable future. This is a huge blow to minorities (religious and ethnic) and to the future of the nation as a whole. The highly nationalistic party will now be untouchable having family members in all important positions and the support of opposition parties who will give in to pressure to conform.

Colombo Theological Seminary (CTS) swiftly moved to online teaching last term. This was a great encouragement to many students who can now proceed with their plans to graduate next year. It did however exclude some who did not have the necessary devices and internet for this. This term (Sept –Dec), most classes are on site but we are continuing with some on-line courses.

During my time here I am working on a book based on my PhD dissertation, on conflict resolution in an honour-shame culture. Of course, I was not expecting these circumstances when I planned the sabbatical and so have to adapt to the restrictions

which does mean I cannot meet many of you. I hope we can chat on-line or on the phone. So do get in touch if you have time.

I am expecting to be here till the 2nd of January. At the time of booking everything was so uncertain, I could only make an educated guess about how events would unfold over the next 5 months. Since things have taken a turn for the worse here, and since the airport in Sri Lanka has not opened for returnees, my re-entry into Sri Lanka could be very complicated, which is worrying.

May God surround you with his love and care at this difficult time. I join you in praying for his mercy towards the nations and that the pandemic will be stopped from causing further devastation.

With love,

Mano

PS since writing this, Sri Lanka has experienced an upturn in virus cases. They have closed most schools and encourage working from home but universities are open and there is no curfew.

Letter updated by Mano in October 2020