



TIRUNELVELI LINK NEWSLETTER



**NEWS FROM THE LINK OF
CHURCHES TOGETHER IN LINCOLN SHIRE
WITH THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA DIOCESES OF TIRUNELVELI
AND TUTICORIN/NAZARETH
NO.7 . APRIL 2010**

CTAL TIRUNELVELI LINK

Report presented to the March Methodist Synod

By Rosemary Gaskell, Link Secretary

2009 started well for the Tirunelveli link with a party of 8 people from Lincolnshire leaving the sub-zero temperatures at Heathrow and flying out to Trivandrum. Here we were met by Rev. Raja Christopher from the Tirunelveli diocese and Rev. Thomas from the Tuticorin diocese who had been charged by their respective bishops with the task of looking after us for a fortnight. They did a wonderful job and we had a very memorable and informative visit. High lights of the trip included being invited by a total stranger to watch her Pongal celebrations outside her house before dawn (Pongal is a South Indian festival celebrating the overflowing love of God) and afterwards being invited into her house to share a cup of tea. At six in the morning! Imagine that happening in England!

We also visited three orphanages and saw how well the poorest children can be made to feel special and thrive in a loving community; saw the work of the dedicated staff at the leprosy hospitals and visited various schools and colleges.

Our trip had two main objectives, in addition to cementing links of prayer and fellowship nurtured over the years the link has been in existence. The first was to establish a formal link with the new diocese of Tuticorin, bifurcated from Tirunelveli in 2006, and the second to make links between primary schools in Lincolnshire and those in India. Both these aims were successfully achieved.

In June two delegates from Tuticorin came to Lincolnshire for three weeks. They were given a full programme of activities designed to give them an insight into many different aspects of life in Lincolnshire. To this end, they visited homeless shelters in Lincoln and Skegness and, at the other extreme, were given a specially arranged guided tour of Burghley House and the Burghley estate; they attended services at the Cathedral and at New Life Christian fellowship; went out on the streets of Lincoln one Saturday night with the Street Pastors and visited a youth project in Louth.

In August, the Bishop in Tirunelveli, the Right Reverend Jeyapaul David retired and was replaced, with unusual Indian haste, by the Right Reverend J. J. Christdoss.. In February this year Bishop Christdoss was invite by the Archbishop of Canterbury to attend a conference of new bishops at Canterbury and decided to extend this, his first visit to England, with a trip to Lincolnshire. He had been warned that an English February is the most miserable of months, but I doubt anything could have prepared him for the cold, damp, foggy, dull climate that characterised his experience of England. It is to be hoped that this will not form the basis of his memories but rather that he will remember the warmth of the Lincolnshire welcome that he received here. This was, necessarily, a whistle stop tour but nevertheless he managed to see the work of the agricultural and industrial chaplains, visit a primary school, secondary school and Bishop Grosseteste College, as well as meeting with some of the CTAL leaders.

Our thoughts are now turning to preparations for future events. A party of four will be visiting us from Tirunelveli in the summer – whether in May or September is as yet undecided - and we are already making preliminary plans for a further visit of a party from Lincolnshire to both dioceses in February 2012.

One of the great advantages of these exchanges is that we can find out the mission priorities of the dioceses. For Tuticorin, being a newly created diocese that was formed without any diocesan infrastructure (all the administration of the old, larger diocese had been carried out in the town of Tirunelveli), it is of great importance that they build a diocesan centre where all the various departments can have their offices. The need for this becomes obvious when one has visited the present diocesan centre which consists of borrowed rooms in a school where each department is crammed into a very small office.

The Tirunelveli diocese has plans for a new sheltered housing project where elderly people who have had leprosy can live and die with dignity. Here 40 units will be built, each accommodating a couple, and a chapel and a clinic will also be built on the site. The complex will have enough room for the residents to grow their own vegetables and keep chickens. As yet there is no building on the cleared site but construction will start soon. It was with great joy that we learned that this project will be the subject of our own Bishop John's harvest appeal for 2010.

It is a great privilege to meet with other Christians in another country in this way and share ideas and friendship. Thank you for your continued prayers.

Rosemary Gaskell

Visit of Right Reverend J. J. Christdoss, Bishop of Tirunelveli

During his visit to Britain Bishop Christdoss was able to visit St. Peter in Eastgate, Lincoln on the first Sunday of February 2010. The parish of St. Peter in Eastgate has had a link with the Diocese of Tirunelveli since 1998 when Dr. Ida Joseph stayed with me for almost a year. Since then we have welcomed other visitors from the diocese and through their visits developed a strong sense of solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the world Church through prayer and generous giving to the many Diocesan projects.

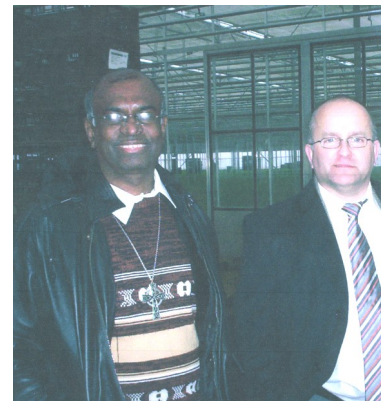
Members of the congregation welcomed Bishop Christdoss with great joy in their hearts. He was able to visit St. Peter's in the Pub. This is a *Fresh Expressions* initiative to encourage people on the Carlton Estate to discover more about the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through worship, prayer and a programme of activities. Then it was a quick dash with our minister, the Rev. Edward Bowes Smith to join the worship at St. Peter in Eastgate where Bishop Christdoss was invited to celebrate the Eucharist and preach. He took as his text a verse from the first Letter of Paul to the Church of the Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 16 - **Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

In order to build on the partner relationship we already have with the Diocese of Tirunelveli it was decided that the best way to get to know Bishop Christdoss, this very humble man of God, was to entertain him for lunch with a small group of people from the parish rather than the larger Bring and Share.

After lunch he was able to spend quality time with the Rev. Edward Bowes Smith and his family. Then after a short pause, in the evening, the Bishop and I attended Evensong at St. Mary Magdalene Church where he was able to bring greetings from the Diocese.

It was a short but very happy visit that has helped to strengthen our partnership in mission with the Diocese of Tirunelveli. Many people now feel that they *know* the Bishop and what is more important that he *understood* what we are trying to do on the Carlton Estate and within the wider community of the Parish.

*Bishop Christdoss with
Rev. Alan Robson*



Margaret Ford

St. Luke's Leprosarium, Peikulam

We welcome the appointment of Dr.Haebus Solomon Vethabothagam, the great-grandson of Dr.Rathnam Vedabodakam, founder of St.Luke's Leprosarium, Peikulam as the new Medical Superintendent and assure him of our support and prayers..

He has succeeded Dr.Kingsly Robert Gnanadurai whose appointment, we understand, was temporary awaiting the appointment of a permanent Medical Superintendent and we wish him well in his future service.

Visit of Rev. D. G. A. Thomas

Rev. Thomas visited Lincolnshire last December staying in Grantham and visiting Lincoln and Norwich. We had an enjoyable meal with him at Metheringham. We wish him well and pray that he may be supported in his ministry.

Brian Mounter