



## Encountering the risen Christ in the stranger Luke 24 v 13-35

I have been reflecting recently what it is to be the stranger in a land far from home, and encountering the risen Christ in the strangers we meet on life's journey. Some of those strangers I will introduce to you in the course of this newsletter. Last July I returned to the UK to welcome my fifth grandchild Isaac into the world. Always a joyous occasion to do so, and spend quality time with family. In early December I had the opportunity to share two messages for the Christmas radio programmes, at the National Christian Council recording studio. This was a new and challenging experience, to speak for a short time!



In the last year the church has been walking alongside those seeking asylum from Pakistan. The board of Social Responsibility has supported many strangers as they have sought assistance during their appeals for refugee status. The board was able to support the various needs which included paying rent, medical needs, food vouchers, operations. Also a monthly Urdu services was organised for the strangers we met who became friends. However the

board was unable to continue to support financially due to financial constraints. As a result I started a new ministry called En Route to continue our response to those we find passing the church doorstep in great need, and continue to pastorally support them on their journey. The concert Retromas was organised last Christmas to kick off fund raising in order to continue the ministry. We are grateful also for the donations we received to continue the support. During December I met with the Chairman of the British Pakistani Christian Association, Mr Wilson Chaudhry during his visit to Sri Lanka. During his visit we had the opportunity to visit the Senior Protection Officer Mr Igor Ivanic and his colleague Menique at UNHCR. I have since been invited

by UNHCR to attend advocate meetings. We were also warmly welcomed at the Pakistani Embassy,) In March along with an asylum seeker, we were invited to the Embassy Pakistani Independence celebrations.

En Route have been blessed by a monthly donation of £200.00 from the BPCA of which we are extremely grateful. Recently we have celebrated with a young family who have relocated to Canada. Also with a family whose son has eventually after three years in Sri Lanka, been able to attend a school and have as all





children should have, the right to education. It has been a blessing to meet with these strangers and continue relations with them.

Earlier in the year I received a letter from a stranger who was an Anglican priest. He informed me he had come across Dolly who used to attend the Kollipitya Methodist Church and had not been visited. He also shared she would soon be celebrating 100 years. For some reason she had been omitted from the pastoral list. I met pastorally with Dolly, then on her birthday along with the Methodist Women's Fellowship we visited and sang with her favourite hymns. It



was lovely to be there when relatives from Canada also surprised her, and she was presented with a letter from the Queen.



Earlier in the year my Mum visited her winter residence in Sri Lanka (my house!). We had the opportunity to explore parts of the country. Trincomalee was one of those areas we visited. It was wonderful to meet Chandrika who had been brought up in the Methodist Industrial Home in Colombo. He had been given the opportunity of a job as a chef in the last year through a member of the church. It was great to see him happy and thriving in the hotel community and in his job. We had the opportunity to taste his dishes and watch him play cricket with the other staff. A stranger to me whom I have been



able to stay in contact with and learn of his progress.

In past months I had the opportunity to meet Deacon Marlene Skuce's parents. Marlene along with her husband had been former mission partners at the same church. It was great to meet them in their elderly years still with a passion for Sri Lanka and also hear about the various projects they are still involved in. I also met Rev David Read and his wife on a Fair Trade holiday as they toured the land visiting Fair Trade projects and also the people involved in them. It was fascinating to hear of Rev David's Grandfather who had been a mission partner in Sri Lanka from 1908-1916. He had been researching his grandfather's history and had the opportunity to visit where he had served. On the same trip was Anne Baldwin who I had met the previous year during her time in Sri Lanka with the World Church, on a three month volunteer programme. It was great to meet Rev Rosemary and James Fletcher, former mission partners in Sri



It was great to meet Rev Rosemary and James Fletcher, former mission partners in Sri

Lanka and catch up on each other's news, along with meeting their friends holidaying with them. Photo with Rev Rosemary. (Where do you read yours?)

Finally my news is that I became ill the week before Easter with Dengue for the second time since arriving in Sri Lanka. This time though was obviously a different strain and I spent one week in hospital being very ill, missing all Easter services. I had leakage to my pelvis, stomach, liver and lungs. My doctor was exceptional as were the staff. He told me he was a Hindu and that the rest of the staff both Hindus and Buddhists were praying for me, also that they cheered on the ward when my blood count stopped dropping! A very humble moment encountering Christ in the stranger. After a short time of recuperation I was given the ok to fly to an already planned trip to Israel/Palestine. This was a fact finding trip before arranging to take a group from church later in the year. I had the privilege of meeting Rev John Howard the Mission partner at the Methodist Liaison office and living in Bethlehem. It was fascinating to hear of his experiences living and walking alongside those he meets there. I have since returned to the UK to continue to rest and recuperate.



Over the last year I have met many strangers, some of whom I continue to meet, others who I will never meet again. I praise God for the impact they have had on my life and his presence seen in them.

God bless you

**Angleena**