

The Prestons' India Trip 22nd Sept –20th Nov 2022



THE GOAL

Let us return and visit the brethren...and see how they are

THE VENUES

Palampur, Dharamshala, Ludhiana, Chennai, Vijayawada and Nandigama in India, and Colombo in Sri Lanka.

THE TRANSPORT

Plane, taxi, train, auto and bicycle rickshaw and YES – shank's pony

India had reopened one year tourist visas with a maximum visit length of 60 days per trip. We booked for late September to late November and set off for the North of India.

The people we spoke to, the messages we were able to give and the timeliness of much that we did, speak volumes of the difference prayer makes. We are deeply grateful for the support of those of you at home who gave money, emailed encouragement, and prayed for God's enabling.

Belfast → London → Delhi and a 16-hour taxi ride and we arrived at our first stop...**PALAMPUR – The Himachal Bible School & Seminary**



We only managed two hours at the Bible School before the girl students asked Janet to take them for exercise at 6:30 am and for sport at 5:00 pm!

Between us, we taught in the school on “Women in Ministry” and “The way Jesus ministered in the Gospels.” Added to this were Chapel services and Talks for YouTube. A highlight for Janet was listening to the students’ stories and praying with them - several had come from Myanmar.

Another from Nagaland explained how he had come to faith through an out-of-body experience when he was dying from addictions to drink & drugs.



Over a weekend we visited some missionaries working with Tibetans in Dharamshala and David had a word of wisdom for a young Pastor who “happened” to be visiting, thus highlighting God’s perfect timing.



Janet invited two young missionaries to the college to share their testimonies and vision for the Tibetan people. They imparted such heart and zeal to everyone.

LUDHIANA, in the adjoining State of Punjab, was our next stop. It has not yet embraced the Anti-Conversion Law as the Punjabis are mainly Sikh. In the past, we had spent five consecutive months here,

three years in a row, at the request of the New Life Fellowship close to the big Christian Medical Centre – a teaching hospital with high-quality medical and dental training.



Our hosts Drs Joseph and Sangeeta

Out of the blue, I was invited to speak with the Principals of the Faculties, to help unite them in working together rather than independently within their own specialty. I was asked again to repeat this with the Deputy Principals and to speak at the graduation ceremony for those specializing in Stem Cell Transplants. The given topic for the latter? – Purpose in Life! These were God-given opportunities to infuse some God-ordained ways of living life into the hospital culture.

Several times we had significant meetings with people who needed a word from the Lord. God pressed on Janet's heart the need to see these folk and it was only afterwards that I (David) recognised the importance of what Janet had sensed. Apart from Adam's obvious mistake, it is usually a good thing to listen to your wife!

The visits and meals out were daily events – Aruna and family to see the new roof we had help to be able to fund, Drs Vineeth and Preethi, Drs George and Shereen – Leaders of the New Life Fellowship, Shalmon and Sangeetha, Rahul, and his wife Dr Dorcas and finally our hosts Drs Joseph and Sangeeta. These are names that some of you will recognise.

And we made full use of the facilities available at the hospital– new glasses and minor surgery for us both, physio, and a laptop repair.

The most striking memory of this fortnight was the last Sunday in the New Life Fellowship church where under a heavy anointing I exhorted them with tears to realise the significance of their training, the privileged opportunities afforded them in life, and the importance of the choices they make.

Time to leave ... A train to Delhi to stay overnight with Tom & Mary – missionaries to Nepal - and a plane onto ...

CHENNAI

A timely visit because Sheeba was rushed to hospital with severe stomach pains, the day after we arrived. The previous operation, three weeks ago, had not put an end to the problem. We were able to organise financial help through the previous newsletter as their café had had to close while she was unwell and unable to bake. The final count of money raised was just over £2300. The latest report as of the last day in November is that Sheeba is feeling considerably better. Do pray for that to continue.

It was only a few days but we managed to squeeze in a couple of meals out. One with Praveen & Shanna – leaders of Freedom church in Chennai and another with Sanjay a businessman and local friend in need to Colin and Sheeba.

And then we were off again!

Next stop? VIJAYAWADA

VIJAYAWADA weddings – one Indian & the other Anglo Indian



Lucy – David Mark's daughter



Priscilla – Pastor Hamilton's daughter

David was asked to speak at both weddings and addressed the couples rather than preach to the guests. These two radiant brides, we had known, from their early years.



While in Vijayawada we ran a semi-Christmas party for the AIDS folk – now seventy-five in total.

The CFC mission team gave a very welcome hand in serving the snacks, helping with the games, giving out the food bags and praying with folk.

David pressed home the urgency of the hour for them.



It was also good to spend time with the UCCI Pastors & their wives and some members of staff. One of the wives had just led 3 Muslim ladies to the Lord and the Bengali nursing students were coming to a staff member to ask about Jesus. Janet shared about the importance of relating well together and so demonstrating Kingdom living with all those training to be nurses.

Joshua took us to the Selah centre to visit the girls' training in tailoring & beauty therapy. Most of these girls are from a Hindu background. David gave them a sweep of the Bible leading to the time of Christ.



NANDIGAMA is twenty-five miles from Vijayawada. We held a two-day Alpha Marriage course here with 30 couples – all Pastors and their wives. Their response was palpable as they enjoyed having the time and space to discuss these very important topics together. We have since been asked to take another marriage course in the next State of Telangana. What a privilege!

And now a God-ordained intervention!

I (David) nearly cancelled the course because the promised workbooks never arrived. But our friend Joshua had kept transcripts of previous translations, so he quickly put together a spiral-bound workbook for all the participants and we ran the course as though there had never been a hitch. David's teaching was translated for each session and Janet shared testimonies from our married life. What an answer to prayer!

We arrived in **SRI LANKA** and stayed in a little granny flat owned by one of the leaders of the Ratmalana Christian centre.

This is a Buddhist Nation with statues of the Buddha at many street corners. The week was full of meals out and earnest conversations with members of the leadership team.

David preached at the 3 Sunday services. Firstly, at the Tamil congregation and then to the Sinhalese folk, two hours later. The word spoken arrested the Senior Pastor and he asked David to give the same message to the English congregation in the evening and then again to the thirty-five pastors gathered for a Conference the next day.

Sri Lanka is in a deep economic crisis and thousands have left the country. David spoke from Esther and being in position "at such a time as this." God could redeem Sri Lanka, but he needed faithful men and women to partner with Him in the critical time they faced.



Our last stop was in **Bangalore** for two days catching up with Raj, a leader of a camping ministry & Pastor Henry and his wife Patti, who lead a thriving church plant. It was fun to be able to spend time with such great people before taking the 7 am flight from Bangalore back to the UK.

This is a testimony of God's enabling and your prayerful support. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

David & Janet