

Trip to At Andrews Scots Kirk, International, Intedenominatonal, Colombo, Sri Lanka : 10th – 26th September 2004

Asked for appointments from God – talked to Rashi in the waiting area at the departure gate - a trainee doctor studying in Leeds who's home was Bombay. Going back home for a short trip to see his wife and 6-month-old daughter. Shared the purpose of my trip and gave Him a card. Pray he'll visit the website and find something of the Lord's truth for Himself.

On board Manchester to Dubai leg. Had a long conversation with Carol (Pensioner lady on her way to see her Daughter in Brisbane) Shared about each other's family and background etc...opened up to me about her childhood in the church and how she felt that although she wasn't a Christian, saw a need for 'Christian morals and standards in our society. As we left I blessed her and prayed that she would dwell on some of her own thoughts about God and that which I'd shared.

Dubai Leg found myself next to a man who obviously wanted peace and sleep, so took the opportunity to do likewise.

Met by minister John Purves at Colombo an off the plane onto the Tarmac experience to be hurtled into the crazy driving world of Sri Lanka. First stop – the Yamaha agent. Collected keyboard and then headed out to my accommodation with Jane and Dean Thompson. Dean works for the American Embassy in Economics, Jane offers tuition in American History and they are part way through a 4-5 year stay in Sri Lanka with their children, Marshall, Kendall and Gracie. Very much at home with this family situation!

Stayed awake until 8.30 Sri Lankan time to try and get into the zone. Woke at 10.30pm and felt a strong word for the eldership team. Prayed it through, wrote it down and then found myself prompted to pray for home and other issues. Finally dozed off about 1.30am!!

Sunday

Introduced and interviewed at St Andrew's by Rev John Purves. Time to meet the children too.

Coffee and straight into first workshop. A pleasant surprise for all as the planned 12, turned into 30!!! About 6 instrumentalists but many others who wanted to sing and be a part of what we were doing.



Good time with Thompsons, out for lunch and then walk into Victoria Park.

Feed the Elephant (As you do) then on to first planning meeting with John at the Manse that evening.

Good open conversation and agreement as we discussed plans to date. Able to share my 'word' given during the waking hours of Saturday and the plan to share with the elders in week Monday's workshop.

Monday

Trip to Odel's one of the few Mall's – bought some gifts and strangely western oasis in the middle of an underdeveloped city. Spent time with Thompsons.



Tuesday

Led worship for ladies home study group. Chance to meet some more people and share a time of drawing near to God. PM – relax at The American Embassy's Swimming Pool with Gracie Thompson prior to Scottish Country Dancing in the evening.

Very interesting Colonial Swimming Club, Dinner outside with a sea breeze – wonderful.

Turned out of the bar for wearing shorts after 8pm – there's a first for everything!!

Wednesday



Technical check up at Church with Kumar – Church Warden. Went better than expected. Good sound and most equipment at hand. Travelled on onto 'Pettah' – bustling retail area outside Colombo City near to the harbour. Found cheap cheap electronics with John to fulfil our needs for Sunday and then met with ladies who were shopping. An amazing mix of western style with shanty town stalls and buildings mixed. The usual chaos on the roads with buses, bajaj, cars, bikes and animals.

Thursday

After an early morning walk in Victoria Park took the bumpy mini bus trip to Mulleriyawa Hospital, an Institution outside the city. Helped with the singing of simple Christian songs and nursery rhymes while others provided food and crafts.



Thursday evening brought the next musicians workshop and opportunity to work further on songs that we were due to share on the coming Sunday. Real mix of abilities and ages, but an encouraging sense of music coming together and a heart of worship together. A good development time.



Concluded Thursday night with a visit to the home of Ian and Alex Wolvers, ex my home church to have a meal and spend some time with their newborn, Callum James, whom it has been the honour for Tracy and I to be requested as sponsors.

His dedication service will be on my last Sunday here . I will also represent Tracy and our commitment to keep a connection.

Friday

Fantastic opportunity to have a full day with John and Patrica Purves. Short trip South to Mt Lavinia.

Spent the day by a lovely swimming pool. Took a walk on the beach, dipped my toes in the Indian ocean and conversed with native 'visitors' who were keen to ask many questions and try to get us to visit their villages to buy shell, crabs and the like. Thjs is very common on the Island as is begging on the streets as the standard of life for the average Sri Lankan is very poor.



Saturday



First of 2 workshops beginning with new songs for the congregation. This was 'eventually' well attended (Around 30) Sri Lankan time being quite flexible. Good mix of people and a good sense of participation

This was followed after a ½ hour break with a children's workshop, sharing and teaching action songs and fun children's stuff. Excellent response from all. Will be sharing one song on the coming Sunday and I wouldn't be surprised if children and parents invite friends to next week's session.

Sunday 19th

An 8.30 start at church organising and setting up our newly formed worship team. Eager anticipation of the service.

Began the service with my song 'Fill this place' a real prayer of invitation to the Lord. The band offered 2 songs, well played and sensitive. I shared the Gospel Rocky riddle and dished out the Rocky Rock (Candy Sticks) and the kids all shared in the singing and actions to 'The Lord wakes me every morning'. It was incredible to see the amount of children who came forward. Apparently more than have ever been at the Church. The same was true of the Adult numbers. Many having trouble finding a seat. The Sunday school and Youth group were bursting at the seams. A great problem to have and an anticipation of having to bring in more chairs next Sunday – Praise the Lord!!

Followed through the Sunday Morning service with the 3rd of our musicians' classes. Well attended as we began to look at new material and in particular the transition of a contemporary to a traditional piece of worship music.



Monday

An early start today 7.30 am at Colombo YMCA. Early devotions for those on their way to work and followed by prayers and a thought for the day for the YMCA staff. I was able to provide thoughts around Psalms, to offerspecific prayer for some requests and have my thoughts translated into Singhalese 'A first for me!'

Monday evening saw the second and final meeting with the elders where we were able to discuss our journey together so far and hold open discussions about possible ways forward for the church with such an international and multi-denominational background



Tuesday

Second opportunity to share in the ladies morning bible study. A chance to provide some reflective worship as we each opened ourselves to the word and had opportunity to discuss its application for our lives.

The evening gave way to my second exposure onto the Scottish Country Dancing scene. Though my dancing skill may not have been the best, good opportunities were taken to share my purpose for being on the Island with new found friends.

Wednesday



A chance to catch up on some shopping and take my long awaited Bajaj ride (Not for the weak or faint hearted – Bajaj are the common taxi of Colombo. Roaring through the streets with no concern for fellow drivers or pedestrians. Though this is the norm for anyone driving in Colombo.

Wednesday evening was my opportunity to lead mid week bible study, which was a full house, looking into our own perceptions of worship, how this translates to

Sunday Service and personal daily life.

This was my 'change over night too, as I was to begin my final portion of this trip with Reverend John and Patricia Purves. Leaving behind my new found family 'The Thompsons'



Thursday

More shopping and time to rest prior to our last formal musicians workshop. With our established new musical team, we were able to work on songs and arrangements for the coming Sunday's service. A good time together cementing relationships and exploring what it is to work together and make a joyful noise to the Lord.

Friday

This was to be our day for train travel into the town of Kandy 2 ½ hours inland. Unfortunately due to illness, I was unable to make the trip and instead experienced a slice of the health service in Colombo. God was so good to me. I had been to the clinic for a consultation, travelled to the other side of town to see a second consultant and bought my medication within 2 hours of leaving home – amazing.

Putting this eventful time aside I was able to join John and Patricia as we invited to the home of the British High Commissioner in Colombo, quite an honour. We had a time of interesting discussion where I was again able to offer my thoughts on worship in this new cultural setting and had chance to meet one of the commissioner's relatives who was now offering muscular

therapy to sports people and musicians having herself been a professional classical guitarist. An interesting evening and a very posh dinner!!!

Saturday



The last of our workshops began with songs for the adult congregation where we looked at songs to be used for the Sunday service and at some new contemporary worship. This was followed by another great time with lots of kids coming to bounce, dance and jump around in fun praise. We also had our first slice of worship on DVD for the children which was enjoyed by all. Many of these children will take part in the Sunday Service presenting 2 new songs to the congregation – what fun!!!

Sunday 26th September.

My final service at St Andrew's, drawing together elements from all that has been covered together during workshops over the last 2 weeks. Another full church and a great crowd of children, joining together in a service which sought to blend contemporary and traditional elements. The new music team played very well, united in purpose to praise the Lord and our opportunity to join with David on the churches new organ brought a wonderful time of worship to a fitting end. This was also a



special time of dedication for Callum John Wolvers for whom it was an honour to stand as sponsors. (I take news of our missionary family back to England where many remember them with fondness and pray for their family in Sri Lanka)



My final meeting with Reverend John was a good time of practical feedback and reflection on what God had begun in this place and time with prayerful consideration on how

to continue and sustain an expectancy that had so obviously been felt. Not an easy time for John and the eldership, but a wonderful challenge!

It has been a pleasure and privilege to share part of this church's journey as it seeks to serve God in its International and Interdenominational context. While this holds its individual challenges, there is a real heart of service here. A desire to meet the needs of the community and to worship God in a way which is worthy.

It is my prayer that seeds sown here will be watered, nurtured and bear much fruit in coming months.

And now, homeward bound!!!

**God Bless
Paul**