

# The Herald

· OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF SRI LANKA ·



**FAITH**  
*without WORKS*  
**is DEAD**

" 35 KM WALK OF FAITH " - SEE INSIDE  
ALSO INSIDE - THE FAITH THAT WORKS



**FAITH IT AND  
WORK IT!**



It was sometime last year that I preached a series of Sermons on the general theme, “Faith it till you make it!” and thinking about the theme of this third quarter issue of the Herald, I thought I could change that somewhat to read, as in the caption – “Faith it And Work it!” After all, the theme of this third Quarter issue is entitled, “Faith That Works!”

And do make sure it is “Faith it..” not “Fake it..” like it happens all the time in different ways !

The book of James is a good place to focus on when we do think of the theme before us. He has so much to say, especially in the third chapter of his letter. His letter generally is a pastoral one concerning the attitudes and actions affecting the spiritual life of the church. As the leader of the very first church, in Jerusalem, James felt an enormous responsibility for the spiritual growth of Christ’s followers everywhere. And this letter was written to encourage Christians who were suffering because of their faith and it was passed around and read in several churches.

His writings may seem on the surface to contradict Paul’s emphasis of Salvation by faith alone, especially in the Book of Romans. However, it is simply a protest against hypocrisy. James wants the world to know that faith is a transforming force. Salvation by faith results in holy living. And this does not oppose Paul’s teaching – actually it complements it!

True faith is a creative power. It leads to a transformed life – a new kind of love for God and for people. We must never settle for an attitude that wants to put our faith or beliefs and our living in separate compartments. It is always Faith and Works. Conviction and Conduct. Belief and Behaviour. In other words, Performance must follow Profession.

Having spoken with great emphasis about the truth that faith if not accompanied by deeds is dead, he gives a knockout blow with the last verse of that chapter. I am referring to verse 26. It is a vivid illustration that anyone can grasp – *“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”* That is the bottom line which we must seriously take to heart.

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**Cover** - Faith demonstrated by good works by the Local Congregations at Hatton and Dehiwela

It is a vivid comparison of faith with the body. We are body and soul, as we do read in the Creation account in the Book of Genesis. Attending a funeral can certainly attest to the emptiness of a deceased human body. The emptiness is amplified when the person is someone we were familiar with. All the unique characteristics that made up his or her personality are gone. Without the spirit, a human body is an empty shell. According to James, it is also true of faith devoid of works. It is empty and useless. To use James' very words, it is dead.

Just in case there is some misunderstanding, it must be said that we cannot earn our Salvation by serving and obeying God – in other words by our works. But such actions do show that our commitment to God is real and the works of love, compassion and obedience, are all a result of our Profession in Christ our Saviour and a verification of our faith in Him.

To turn to James, one last time...ultimately, we are on show. In verse 18b he makes that clear..."show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do." Are we ready for that "show and tell"? Or perhaps better the other way around, "tell and show"? - If so, then we must *faith it and work it !!*





By Roshni Foenander

## 35 KM WALK OF FAITH !

John 4:46-51

*“And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. “Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.” The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” “Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.*

When we speak of faith, the first person that comes to mind is - Abraham - Father of the Faithful. But today I like to focus on another father who also had to exercise his faith, the Royal Officer in John 4:46.

In this story we see a desperate father who makes a long journey from Capernaum to Galilee, to plead with Jesus to save his son. He makes this journey believing that Jesus can heal his son. The journey from Capernaum to Galilee is about 35 km and he, like Abraham takes that walk of faith.

However, Jesus doesn't hurry with this Official back to Capernaum, but Jesus replied, “Go, your son will live.”

The Official had to take Jesus at his word and believe that his long, exhausting journey was not in vain—that Jesus was true to his word and faithful, and most of all that he was placing his trust in the right person. He also had to be obedient to Jesus's word, even when he didn't see the miracle.

Today we live in a world where everything is instantaneous and waiting on God and trusting in him, is an uncommon act. The Official never grumbled or complained to Jesus regarding his long journey, but took Jesus at his word.

Do you feel like you're forever waiting on God for a miracle or a breakthrough?

Consider this: What if it's not that God isn't hearing your cry? Maybe you are just in the middle of a 35 km miracle walk of faith, just like the Official.

When my daughter's Australian visa delayed we were upset and devastated, as the university said that she will have to defer an year. But we had to make a choice to trust our God to come through for us, and he did, and his plan was far superior to ours.

So my fellow Christians, don't lose heart or hope just put your trust in Our Lord Jesus Christ - for Faith in Him Really Works.

**(Roshni is a Deaconess with the Dehiwela Local Consistory and also the Convenor of “Caring Hands” an United effort of the trilingual Dehiwela Congregations that feeds school children and adults from the Community with cooked food on a regular basis.)**



# THE FAITH THAT WORKS !

By Pastor Rickson Anthony

Once a Pastor was preaching about holiness inside and out, and a brother interrupted the Pastor and asked this question: “When you eat a banana, what do you eat? The inside? Or the outside?” The Pastor answered him, “The inside.” The brother responded back to him, “So God is more concerned with what is on the inside (the heart) than what is on the outside (appearance).” The Pastor immediately received a word from God and asked the brother this question, “when you go to buy bananas, what do you notice first? The inside? Or the outside?” The brother said, “the outside.” The Pastor replied, “Because Holiness is inside and out. Having a clean heart is important. But dressing as children of God is also important. “



A criticism often leveled against Reformed or Calvinist theology is that it tends to emphasize divine grace and God’s actions in the process of human redemption to the exclusion of human deeds. This critique suggests that such an emphasis may lead to a misunderstanding or incomplete portrayal of the doctrine of salvation. Critics argue that by focusing predominantly on God’s grace and sovereignty, Reformed theology may inadvertently neglect the role of human responsibility and moral conduct within the broader framework of salvation. This perceived imbalance can lead to a skewed interpretation of how human actions interact with divine grace in the theological discourse on redemption.

Human deeds play an important role in the process of human redemption, though it is understood that salvation cannot be earned through one’s actions alone. According to this view, while humans cannot achieve salvation through their own efforts, God redeems us through His grace, which serves to demonstrate His mercy and to glorify Him. In this framework, good deeds are seen not as a means to attain salvation but as a response to divine grace, reflecting our commitment to living as a living sacrifice in honor of God.

In theological terms, the relationship between “orthodox” and “orthopraxis” can be understood as follows: The Greek word “orthos” means “correct” or “straight,” while “doxa” refers to “belief” or “opinion.” On the other hand, “praxis” translates to “action” or “practice.” Consequently, the transition from “orthodox” to “orthopraxis” suggests that correct belief, or orthodoxy, should be explicitly demonstrated through correct action and practice, or orthopraxis. This means that one’s adherence to true beliefs is expected to be reflected in corresponding ethical actions and behaviors.

In the New Testament, the Epistle of James emphasizes the critical role of deeds in the Christian life, stating, “You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without

deeds is useless?” Some early manuscripts even use the term “dead” instead of “useless.” While Jesus completed the work of salvation on the cross, and no further actions are required for our salvation or that of others, the purpose of redemption extends beyond mere salvation. It is intended for us to live for God and His glory both on earth and in heaven. Even after our redemption, God calls us to live as living sacrifices, as articulated by Paul in Romans 12.

In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus distinguishes between true and false disciples, stating, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). This highlights the necessity of fulfilling God’s will through our actions. Additionally, Jesus asserts, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 7:19), and, “Thus, by their fruit, you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:20).

However, it is crucial to remember that deeds alone are not enough. The motives behind our actions are equally important. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees performed good works, but their motives were misguided. Jesus emphasized that true worship arises from loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). When our actions are driven by the right motives, they become a form of genuine worship and bring us true joy

Therefore, both our inner beliefs and outer actions, when guided by the right motives, are essential. Our internal convictions must align with our external behaviors, ensuring that our actions are not only consistent with our beliefs but also driven by a sincere and appropriate purpose. This alignment is fundamental to authentic discipleship and worship.



*(Pastor Rickson is Vice President for Ministry CRCSL and pastors the Tamil Language Congregation at Wolvendhal.)*



# ***A Faith That Works: Living Out Your Belief in a Real Way***

In today's world, where distractions and temptations are around every corner, it's easy to say we have faith, but much harder to live it out. As young Christians, we're called to have a faith that works—not just in theory, but in every aspect of our lives. But what does it really mean to have a "faith that works"? And how can we live out our beliefs in a way that honors God and makes a difference in the world?

## **Faith Is More Than Words**

One of the most challenging verses in the Bible comes from James 2:17: "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." This verse isn't saying that we earn our salvation through works. Instead, it's a reminder that real faith naturally produces action. If we truly believe in Jesus, our lives should reflect that belief through our actions, decisions, and how we treat others.

Imagine you have a friend who constantly says they care about you, but they never show up when you need them, or they always put themselves first. Eventually, their words start to lose meaning, right? In the same way, if we say we have faith but it doesn't impact the way we live, our faith can become empty words.

## **Living Out Your Faith in Everyday Life**

So, how can we make sure our faith is more than just talk? Here are a few practical ways to have a faith that works:

**Serve Others:** Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). Whether it's helping a friend, volunteering at church, or showing kindness to someone in need, serving others is a powerful way to live out your faith.

**Stand Up for What's Right:** In a world that often promotes selfishness and sin, standing up for what is right can be difficult. But being a follower of Christ means living according to God's standards, even when it's unpopular or uncomfortable.

**Be Honest and Authentic:** The world needs Christians who are real, not perfect. Be honest about your struggles and shortcomings, and show how God's grace is working in your life. This kind of authenticity can encourage others to seek God in their own lives.

**Grow in Your Relationship with God:** Faith is like a muscle—it needs to be exercised to grow stronger. Spend time in prayer, read the Bible, and surround yourself with other believers who encourage you to deepen your relationship with Christ.

## **Faith in Action Changes Lives**

When you live out your faith, not only does it strengthen your own relationship with God, but it also impacts those around you. People are watching how you live, and your actions can be a powerful testimony to the love of Jesus.

Consider how the early Christians were known by their love for one another (John 13:35). Their faith was evident because it was lived out in real, tangible ways. They took care of each other, shared their resources, and loved their neighbors. This kind of faith in action not only grew the early church but also changed the world.

### Conclusion

A faith that works is a faith that is alive, active, and making a difference. It's not just about saying the right things or believing the right doctrines; it's about letting your faith shape every part of your life. As you continue to grow in your relationship with God, ask Him to help you live out a faith that truly works—a faith that shows the world the power of His love.

Remember, it's not about being perfect or having it all together. It's about being real, being available, and letting God use you to make a difference. Your faith, when put into action, has the power to change lives—including your own.

Remember: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples." Let's live it out together!

# Youth Page

Edited By: Joshua Aldons

## Dig Deeper

Whether it's helping a friend, volunteering at church, or showing kindness to someone in need, serving others is a powerful way to live out your faith.

Set a goal for yourself at the start of the week to look for opportunities in your day to day life to help someone out. Start small & day by day you will start to live out the teachings of Jesus.

You have a wonderful chance to be an advocate for God, so reach out & grab it by Living Out Your Faith Everyday !





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# Just For Laughs

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**What did the schoolboy say when asked why he kept walking next to the same girl at school?**

"I was told I'm supposed to walk by Faith!"

**Why did the Bible study group bring umbrellas?**

Because they were expecting showers of blessings

**Why should Christians always be busy?**

Because faith without works is just a day off!



A Religious man was on his roof during a flood, and as the water rose higher a guy in a boat comes by and asks him to get on.

The religious man declined the offer, and says "I am faithful, the Lord will protect me."

A while later the water is up to his waist and a rescue team comes by. Once again the man denies their help.

"I have faith, the Lord will save me."

As the water rises up to his chin a helicopter comes by and he refuses to be saved by them, saying only,

"I am faithful, the Lord will save me."

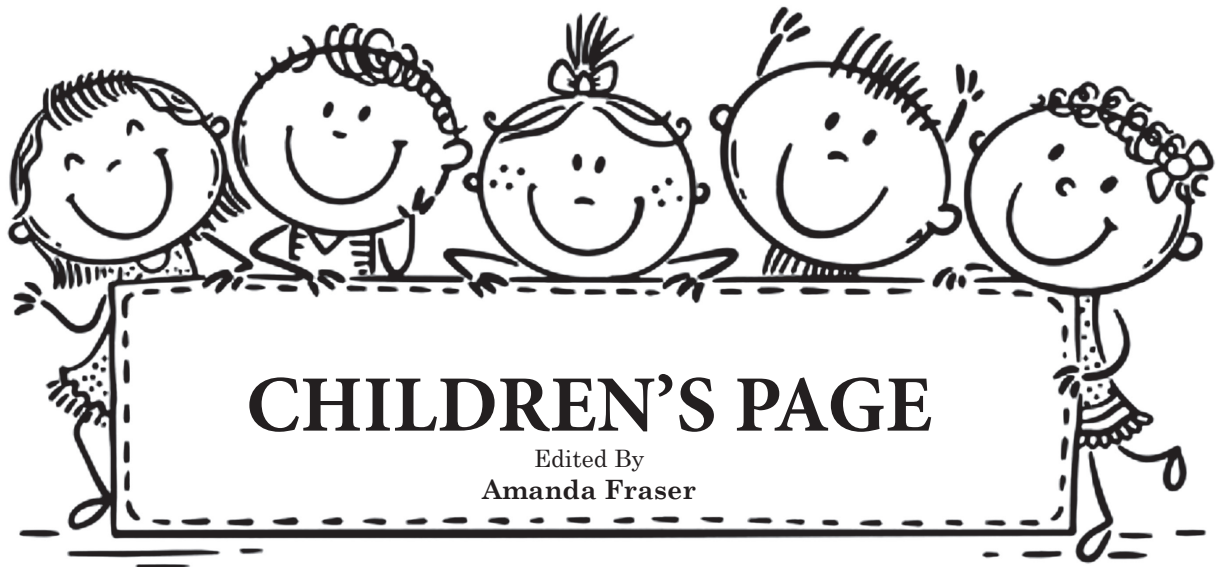
He drowns.

So he gets up to heaven and meets God. He then asks god,

"My Lord, my entire life I have been a pious and faithful man. I have done all you have commanded, and lived a virtuous life according to your gospel. Yet when I needed you to save me you let me drown. I can't understand why you would do this?"

To which God replies...

"I sent you two boats and a helicopter, what else did you want from me?"



**Hi boys and girls,**

Do you like Mac n' cheese? How about jam and butter on toast? Mmmm...some things go together very well huh?

Can you think of other things that usually go together? Like thunder and lightning, a bat and ball, cheese on pizza.

Another thing that should always go together is faith and actions! Do you know what that means? James is a special guy from the bible, he said that having faith and believing in Jesus is great but if we don't do anything to show it then it's as good as dead!

It's like having the coolest bicycle ever but not riding it! If we say we love Jesus and trust him then we need to show it by doing good things and serving others.

Simple things like helping out and being kind to others without having mum or dad remind us, is a good way to start.

Faith = actions

Actions = Serving others

Serving others = love

**With lots of love,  
Aunty Mandy**





# CASEY'S DAY



Have you ever felt like you couldn't do something because you weren't big enough? If you have younger brothers and sisters, what can you do that they're not yet able to do? Maybe go on a certain ride, or eat more junk food, or choose when your bedtime is?

In Exodus 2:1-10, you read how God used Miriam, a kid, to save baby Moses. Imagine how Miriam must have felt when God used Moses to save Israel, knowing that she played such an important role in his life! While Miriam was a kid doing normal everyday things—watching her brother, helping her mom—God used her!

We may have to wait until we're bigger to do some things. But, just as God did not wait until Miriam was bigger, he does not need to wait until you are bigger to use you to bless others. Maybe you enjoy making beautiful works of art: God can use that to teach a new way to look at his creation. Maybe you enjoy growing things in a garden; God can use that to remind someone that he cares for them. Maybe there is a kid at school who others bully: God might put you beside them at lunch and through your kindness show that kid how much he loves them. God can use the things you are able to do right now to serve him. How might God use you this week to bless someone else?

## Prayer

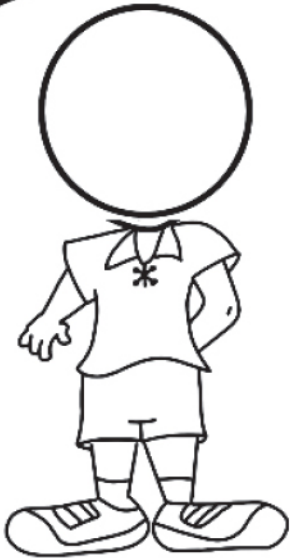
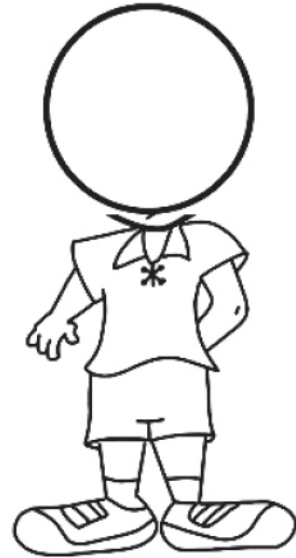
Dear God, thank you that you are able to use me right now where I am. Thank you that you do not wait until I am bigger, but let me serve you today. Help me to see how you can use my words and actions to bring you praise. Amen



**I can show Jesus I love Him by  
serving in the church!**



Now:



When I'm older:



# Sharing Your Faith with Your Grandchildren

By Marsha Nawamanie

In the last article we discussed ways to interact in a planned way with our grandchildren, to be mentors for them. This article will focus more on our witness to them, to influence them in their Christian life. Hopefully our children are following the Lord and will be the primary source of information for your grandkids, but whether they are or not, there are ways that Grandparents can be a witness.

Timothy was a young man that the Apostle Paul came across in his missionary work. He was impressed with his knowledge of God which he learned from his mother and grandmother, Lois. Paul specifically mentions Lois in *2 Timothy 1:5 - I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*

He expands on Timothy's knowledge of Scripture in *2 Timothy 3:14-15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from **childhood** you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* Lois had an influence on Timothy. He learned the Scriptures from his mother and grandmother. This was very useful to Paul, and helped Timothy to be a leader in the First Century church. Can we also have an influence on our grandchildren? And if we don't have grandchildren yet, maybe we can find some young people without grandparents and be a mentor or influence on them.



Prayer is the most important gift you can give your grandchildren. I hope you ask God regularly to help them, at least once a day. You can have specific prayers that you pray for them, prayers for protection from evil, from bad influences, for wisdom when using social media, in what they watch and who they find as friends. You can pray for the person they will marry someday. That that person will find the Lord and be ready to meet your grandchild. The world is very different than when we were children. There are so many more opportunities for their faith to be derailed.

And don't be afraid to pray with them when you are together, and teach them to pray too. One grandparent always prays the Aaronic blessing over his grandchildren whenever he sees them.

**The Aaronic Blessing** The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Exodus 6:24

Be an example to them of what it means to follow Jesus. Share God stories from your own life. I really appreciated my husband's father. He would share with

all the grandchildren about how he became a believer in Jesus, when he had a impossible problem and God intervened in miraculous ways to help him. I'm not sure that they didn't get sick of hearing it, but they sure knew about the miracles in his life. Make sure they know that you spend time every day with the Lord, in a quiet time. Share things God has taught you during that time. It is not easy for young people to develop that discipline of having a quiet time. Be an example of how to do it. Pray with them about their problems.

Always be available to listen to what is happening in their lives. Sometime parents are too busy to really hear what is going on with children. Make sure they know that you will always listen without judgement.

If your children are not attending church and Sunday School, you can be the one to take your grandchildren to Sunday School at your church. It means you will have to pick them up and make sure they are enjoying their time there and listening. Spend some time after church to talk about what they heard or learned. Explain why you enjoyed Sunday school and how it can help them have a knowledge of God’s truth. Show them why it is important for you.

Be an example in other ways too. Say grace before meals. Always let them know we believe that everything comes from God. Be honest with them. Show them what integrity and honesty mean. If the shopkeeper gives you too much change, be sure they see you give the money back. Don’t let them hear you lying to get out of a difficult situation. Be sure to admonish them if you hear them doing something that isn’t right, or gossiping about someone.



Make a big deal about special events. Give a special gift when your grandchildren are baptized or do Profession of Faith. Give special reminders of following Christ on

their birthdays and other special events. Offer to give a special prayer at such events.

He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.  
Ps. 78:5-7

Teach your grandchildren to be grateful. Tell them all the things you are grateful for. Gratitude acknowledges the goodness in our lives. We can help them realize that that goodness is the influence of God on our lives.

Sing with your Grandchildren if you have that talent. Teach them to play an instrument and use it to worship God. Teach them your favorite hymn. I

remember my husband’s mother singing “What a Friend we have in Jesus.” I hope it was an influence on her grandchildren.

You can also volunteer for events in your grandchild’s world. Help out at VBS, camp or youth group. Or, be a chaperone at a school outing. Show them you are interested in their lives

Write out your own testimony and give it to your grandchildren when they can read. Be sure to share what you struggled with when you were their age. Having something in writing can be helpful to them long after you have gone.

Be prepared for questions. One of the nice things about being grandparents is that you can have an influence on them without any of the responsibility of parenting. So, be available.

Material based on the book: **Faithful Grandparenting**, Practical Ideas for Connecting the Generations, by Becky Danielson and Carol Olsen, Equip Press,

*Marsha Navamanie and her husband Ron have been working with the CRC SL in Sri Lanka for the past 23 years. They recently returned to the U.S.A.*



## +++ CHURCH NEWS+++



### ❖ Leadership Training.

The annual Leadership Training programme organised by the Teaching and Training Committee of the CRC SL took place on Saturday the 29th of June, 2024 at the CRC Wellawatte. Since there are a number of new Elders and Deacons in our Local Churches, the focus this year was on their “responsibilities and expectations”.

Bro. Dinesh Kanaganayagam an Elder from Wolvendhal gave the Key Note address whilst Pastors Lakmal, Clement, Suresh and Revds; Faber, Nelson and Jansz conducted the respective sessions, which were done trilingually. A meaningful Panel discussion, led by the Presenters, concluded the programme, which was followed by a fellowship lunch. A total of 47 of the Leadership participated.

### ❖ 44th Anniversary

Revds; Shirley Faber commemorated 44 years in ministry and the Wellawatte Local Consistory recognized this milestone at the Worship Service held on Sunday 16th June, 2024. Revds; Faber has served as a “Suba Asna” worker, Associate Pastor and a Collegiate Minister and has held many leadership position within the CRC SL, including the Office of President. He has also served many Evangelical and Ecumenical Organisation outside of the CRC SL.

### ❖ Memorial Plaque.

The Local Consistory of the CRC Dehiwela decided to install a memorial plaque to honour the memory of the late Bro Darrel and Sis Ingrid de Zilva for their faithful involvement in the leadership and ministry at Dehiwela through many decades. The plaque was unveiled by Bro Steve Schubert, who sustained the ministry with Bro Darrel, during a time when the Congregation was bereft of a Pastor.

Members of the family, including their daughter, Darine and family were present at the service held on Sunday the 30th of June, 2024.

The Pastor Revd: Jansz preached on the theme, “A Psalm Twenty Three Philosophy.”



### ❖ Sunday School Teacher Training.

The Annual Sunday School Teacher Training took place on Saturday the 27th of July, 2024 in the premises of the CRC Wellawatte. Approx 127 teachers from the three language streams and local CRC Churches came together for this training based on “The Seven Laws of the Teacher.” This year the focus was on, The law of the heart, the law of encouragement and the law of readiness.

Pastors Andrew Wickremasinha, Namal Nuwan, Suresh Karmeham, Augustine, Sashikumar and Lakmal did the presentations, according to the three Language groups, which met in the Wellawatte Sanctuary, the GC Board Room and Calvin Hall. The program ended with Lunch, whilst Basic Training in the Sinhala Language, took place in the afternoon.





❖ **NCC Sunday.**

As a Constituent member of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, the CRC SL observed Sunday the 28th of July, 2024 to remember the ministry of the NCC through prayers and necessary presentations, in addition to donating the Offertories received on that day, towards the work and services of the NCC SL.

❖ **Missions Sunday**

The GCEC through the GCMC has also decided to emphasize the third Sunday of every month as Missions Sunday. A decision of decades ago, it had seemingly been forgotten. As was the practice the Offertory would be donated towards the Mission work of the Denomination, whilst particular Mission Stations would be focussed on each Sunday for prayer whilst sharing the necessary information.

❖ **FAREWELL...**

**Mrs. Delani Mitchell** who served as Administration Manager for approximately six and a half years left us on the 1st of July, 2024. **Mrs. Pavithra Dharmasinghe** has been appointed to this position as from 1st July, 2024. We are grateful to Delani for her many years of professional and devoted service and warmly welcome Pavithra, wishing her the Lord's good guidance as she fulfils her responsibilities.

**Mr. Matthew Jeyaseelan** who gave leadership to the "Gana Oli" (Tamil Language Correspondence Course Ministry) for many years left us to further his career concerns. Mr. Jeyaseelan also helped with much of the technological aspects involving the publication of the Herald as and when required through many years. His vacant position is in the process of being filled. We express our gratitude to Mr. Jeyaseelan for his many years of service and wish him well in his future pursuits.

❖ **A Mission Visit – and Ordination of Deacons...**

The Dehiwela English language congregation made another "Mission visit" to Galle on Sunday the 1st of September, 2024. These Visits which did take place annually to the



Mission centers of the CRC SL took place on



an annual basis prior to the Covid years.... This year the visit was not only to strengthen the relationship with the congregation in Galle but also to participate in the historic event of the Ordination of a Deacon (Bro Asela Pintu) and a Deaconess (Sis G A. Suneetha) in addition to celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The ministry of Galle, comes under the purview of the Dehiwela Local Consistory and all things being equal the approved recommendation to have a Galle/Matara Local Consistory could see implementation by the end of this year. Pas Clement Yogarajah is the current Pastor of the Galle congregation.



❖ **IN Memoriam.**

❖ **Jeyaprakash Sofalas.**

It was with great sadness – and somewhat of a shock that we heard of the demise of Jeyaprakash Sofalas – Rajah as he was better known.

Being part of the CRC SL Committee to review the "Viva Voce" Examination for those aspiring for the Collegiate Ministry, he was to attend a meeting scheduled for the Wednesday of that week. We did receive an apology that he was not well and would not attend.

On the Friday of that week we were informed that he was hospitalised. On the Saturday we were informed that he was doing better and the Doctor had even asked the family to have him sit on a chair. We were encouraged and thanked God. On Sunday morning, we were informed that he had passed away, once again reminding us that life is both uncertain and fragile.

Rajah was part of the Sofalas family who were deeply involved with the Tamil Ministry particularly at Wolvendhal. His father served as a Elder for many years and gave of himself and his resources to build and sustain that ministry with much passion and faithfulness.

Recalling those years, we remember that all of the siblings too were involved too – and then most of them left for India and other parts of the world. Rajah continued in Sri Lanka, sustaining the business and continuing where his



late father left off – serving Wolvendhal as an Elder, Lay Preacher and giving leadership to every possible form of ministry. His initiative to grow the Church and the Kingdom led to the beginning of a Bible Study in his home, that became the precursor to the vibrant congregation at Wattala.

He also served the Denomination as Honorary Secretary of the GCEC whilst also being involved with Christian Organisations outside of the CRC SL, especially the Gideons and Youth For Christ.

He had a great passion to communicate the gospel and grow the Church and remained faithful to the CRC SL and the Church at Wolvendhal, through the changing scenes. At a time when denominational loyalty has taken a back seat it is good to know that there are second and third generations that continue with the faith of our fathers.

Always willing to understand the other, work through differences and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, his demise leaves a void at Wolvendhal and the CRC SL that would not be easily filled.

We do thank God for his exemplary life of witness and service whilst resting in the firm assurance that he ran the race well, finished the course and today enjoys Heaven's welcome and commendation.

❖ Church Register

❖ Ordination.

*"...serve the Lord with gladness..."*

**Lisa Perera** (nee Bartholameusz), to the Office of Deaconess, with the Bambalapi-tiya Local Consistory on Sunday 28th July, 2024.

❖ Baptism.

*"For the promise is unto you and to your children..."*

**Tyronne Mikai Andrew**, infant son of Andrew and Sabrina Passe, at the CRC Regent-Street on 25th August, 2024, at the CRC Regent-Street.

*(The "News" in these pages is gathered from the Bulletins published by the respective local churches and available in the Church office. Any other news of events or involving the membership could be sent directly to the Editor of "The Herald," for publication according to the established criteria. – Ed.)*







Photo by Kelvin Balingit for Unsplash

# A Stagnant Church

By Jay Shim

**T**hanks to technological progress forged in an individualistic culture, believers today can find Christian community in a nontraditional way.

Not only do online platforms offer timely alternatives to in-person gatherings, but they also create alternative Christian communities. Online, everyone is welcomed without prejudice, regardless of one's background or circumstances. Some prefer online communities because of the anonymity it allows and the control it gives over whom one associates with.

But while online platforms might seem to satisfy personal needs and offer conveniently selected unity, it also removes participants from traditional church responsibilities.

These days, people are asking questions like: Should I go to in-person church as people traditionally did? Is that the only or best way of being a Christian? Is traditional church membership a necessary condition of being a believer? What options do I have if the church decides or acts against my Christian conscience? Some believe that there are diverse ways of "being church," such as house churches, parachurches, café churches, or online churches, and that the church needs to change to meet contemporary needs.

While church leaders are understandably concerned about the church's

future, most people today are instead asking about what the gospel means for them in their own lives. They are not simply seeking excuses to stay away from church; instead, they are searching for what it means to be a believer in today's context.

The real challenge facing the church is not that people are not coming back to in-person church in the post-pandemic era, but that the church might have become stagnant with tradition. We can see examples of such stagnancy in how the church usually proclaims the gospel and in how the church handles the growing concerns of justice in our society.

Let's take a look at gospel proclamation. In the last half-century, the fastest-growing church movements tend to have an individualistic and utilitarian view of the gospel and consequently a narrowly pietistic spirituality. In some developing countries, such as Korea in the past, people absorbed the simple message that "faith alone" (in a personal, individualistic way) guarantees salvation. Weary fathers, mothers, and widows would attend Sunday services, early-morning prayer meetings, and revival meetings to hear the gospel message. The simple "faith alone" gospel worked, and the church grew even in harsh situations. However, once the gospel had been set in such personal and narrowly spiritual terms, many of those same people, now that they are richer and

freer, struggle to find how their faith is relevant to their lives. With their eyes set on heaven, many of them fail to see how God's salvation can impact their society. Consequently, the church's apathy toward justice issues and amoral social behaviors invites criticism from society.

Christians in advanced countries too face challenges when they sever their faith from their everyday lives. When the meaning of our Christian faith is not lived out in a conflict-torn society, when it merely looks forward to an otherworldly heaven, such a pietistic gospel can dwindle to focusing only on the self.

The challenge for ministry today is how to revive the church to live out the gospel of Christ in a polarized society. Diverse conflicts such as polarized political situations, approaches to gender and sexuality, or issues related to economic and racial justice produce anger, misunderstanding, prejudice, and suffering. These conflicts aggravate an already fragmented society and its relationships. The church is a victim of these conflicts even though it creates some itself and bypasses others.

## Salvation Issues

Therefore, an essential goal for ministry today is to form a community whose aim is the justice, reconciliation, and unity that the gospel makes possible in the world. The Bible teaches that God is reconciling creation to



himself—the fundamental reason we should be asking how God is working salvation in and around ourselves and our communities. Reformed theology has long cherished this comprehensive theological view of God's salvation. It's not just about saving individual souls; it's about God reconciling all things to God (Col. 1:20). This theology was formed through a trinitarian reading of Scripture, which describes the Christian vision for life as ultimately universal, not narrow. The Reformed mind sees the broad, comprehensive work of the triune God, who redeems the sin-damaged creation through Christ. There, human salvation, achieved by grace through faith, is only one part of God's greater vision of cosmic salvation.

Within this greater context we can better understand God's original purposes for humanity in God's world. Salvation is creational in the sense that salvation achieves the Creator-ordained purpose of creation, and the Christian life is therefore communal, in that believers are born again to live in the creational community.

In this biblical view of cosmic salvation, human salvation is more glorious and dynamic than a merely passive movement of being transferred to heaven when we die. The Christian life in the present age is not meant to be a waiting room for heaven-bound passengers, but rather a stage to live out a glorious new life in Christ. Our present lives have purpose in God's schedule of salvation. They are new and glorious lives because God has commissioned and equipped the redeemed to be the "rulers" of the world—or in Christ's words, "ambassadors." The new creation has already come and is working among believers (2 Cor. 5:17). Whatever believers do with this new life in Christ affects not only their own lives, but also God's

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kingdom. Living this new life is meant to be a joyful responsibility, never a grudging duty. And the community, big or small, is the stage where believers live out their new life. This Reformed vision of the Christian life can serve as a needed antidote to modern individualistic and utilitarian ideas of salvation and of the Holy Spirit's work.

Yet Christian responsibility to be active participants in creational reconciliation does not happen automatically. Most of the conflicts that undermine the church, whether confessional or practical, involve suffering. The conflicts regarding justice, reconciliation, and unity are never resolved by the church's decisions alone. They require the church, individually and communally, to commit to humble listening, fair discernment, and long-suffering love.

Scripture gives many examples of God's people proclaiming the gospel message within a cross-cultural context. Look at what happened to the

Israelites when God led them through all the surrounding cultures and formed his people out of all nations. Israel's dealings with other people often included prejudice, misunderstanding, and even wars. The Israelites had to learn new languages and cultures wherever they went because they were called not only for their own sake, but also to serve as priests among foreign nations (Gen. 12:2-3). Through this long and arduous process, Israel came to realize its God-endowed identity for the sake of the world. Much later, in Acts 6, we witness an internal church conflict between Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews. A series of compassionate and humble conversations were needed to deal with that conflict.

As long as we interpret Scripture's teaching of God calling his people out of all nations and cultures as simply a religious or spiritual phenomenon, we are far from grasping the biblical mandate of practicing justice, reconciliation, and unity. We are commanded to understand and practice the spiritual fruit that can help resolve our human conflicts (Eph. 4:1-4). Christ has already established unity among believers of all people groups. On this basis, the church is Christ's body together. In today's terms this might mean that Christ has established unity among believers with diverse consciences. It is not our decisions or work that establishes unity; rather, we are called to joyfully recognize and faithfully live out that unity by practicing justice and reconciliation.



Jay Shim earned his M.Div. and Ph.D. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He served Dordt University as professor of theology for 20 years and retired in 2023. Dordt University Press recently published his book *Engaging Faith: My Story in God's Story*.

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# Love and Practice: Becoming Comfortable Sharing Our Faith

**TWENTY-FOUR YEARS AGO** my wife and I were aspiring young pastor candidates who felt a call to mission ministry but were not clear about where or what that meant. We knew that sharing our hope in Jesus Christ with nonbelievers was part of the call, but I had introverted tendencies at that age and found the prospect quite intimidating. Thankfully, I benefited from several mentors who helped me develop confidence in what God was doing in me and comfort in sharing my personal faith story.

Most Christian Reformed folks are like me. As a group, we tend to be fairly knowledgeable about the doctrines we learned in catechism class and through Christian education, yet we find it difficult to share our personal hope in Jesus Christ.

Every year, our CRCNA communications team sends a survey to a cohort of CRC congregations. Each congregation encourages members to complete the survey, and when the results are tallied, a predictable trendline emerges.

Every year, only a third of respondents claim that it is “definitely” or “mostly” true that they regularly talk to others about their spiritual lives. I suspect this is one reason our statistics (and our personal experiences) indicate that adult baptisms of new believers are rare in many of our churches. (If you are interested in learning more about these statistics, please visit [crcna.org/yearbook](http://crcna.org/yearbook) or [crcna.org/survey](http://crcna.org/survey)).

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How do we become more comfortable talking about our faith and doing evangelism? First, we acknowledge that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ through the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit that saves those whom God chooses (Eph. 1:3-14; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 21). It’s not—and never will be—the result of a confident and polished presentation.

However, we also acknowledge that confessing this is not an excuse to neglect our witness. Rather, it is a comfort knowing that in evangelism God is the primary actor and we simply cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Instead of hanging back, Reformed believers can share their faith liberally and joyfully, knowing that in Christ seeds have already been sown.

Second, we realize that personal relationships are the primary vehicles of gospel communication. God can use apparent coincidences and providential appointments to bring people to faith, but more often God works through the obedient and intentional

efforts of believers to reach to the lost and hurting.

During the early days of the church, the most effective gospel witness happened when Christians cared for the sick, gave food to the poor, and rescued abandoned infants (see *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, by Alan Kreider). Today, the most fruitful witness often happens over a cup of coffee, a cancer diagnosis, or a lunchroom conversation with a confused coworker.

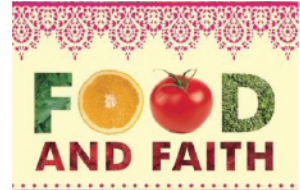
As I think about what I learned from my mentors about how to be a better witness, two words stand out: love and practice. Love for nonbelievers drives us to build relationships and attend to conversations. Practice at sharing our faith stories and a few special Bible verses helps us feel more comfortable. God will do the rest in God’s time. **B**



Rev. Zachary King is the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He is a member of Fuller Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.



## **FAITH AND FOOD!**



Someone said that when it comes to ministry and especially reaching out to those on the fringes and the unchurched – faith and food make a great combination! In other words have coffee and donuts!

Turning that over in my mind, I thought how true that seems to be to a lesser or greater extent. It appears that in church circles, we cannot do too much and sustain ministry without food and drink with a measure of faith thrown in!

The other day I heard someone talk about a church locally, that has been named as the “Food Church”! With all kinds of weird names that Churches have adopted, I was not surprised! ! My mind went back to what I did hear about Christian conversions of decades ago. Many were called “Rice Christians” !

Interestingly I also read about a Restaurant where the menu has all Biblical themes ! Adam’s Ribs. Mt. Sinai Mash, Lazarus Burger, Forbidden fruit punch, Thou shalt not Sundae and for indecisive patrons like me, “The Pontius Pilate”!

Of course, food always adds value to good fellowship, which should also be one of the marks of a true church. But the food must also come with some value added to faith. When it comes to church stuff, food without faith is like salt that has lost its saltiness and light hid under a bushel !

Remember what Jesus said in St. John 6: “Do not work for the food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life , which the Son of Man will give you...” A practical recipe when it comes to food and faith.

Faith and food make a great combination to grow, sustain ministry and spread the gospel in any Church, but let us make sure that there would always be the balance that matters and for which we would work towards! Then lets stand in line for both !

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