

The Herald

· OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF SRI LANKA ·



"Grooming for the future....Leaders who know the way, go the way and show the way...."

"A COMPASSIONATE CHURCH ! " - SEE INSIDE
ALSO INSIDE - A COMMUNITY WITH SENSITIVITY



“Twelve Inches From The Heart...!”

As you would have gauged from the cover caption, the theme for this Quarter of the Herald is a “A Compassionate Church”. Something that must firstly be part of the DNA of Church people, if the Church is to be compassionate.

In the ancient world, compassion was in short supply both among the gods and men. It was rare then, as it is now in the everyday world of people, but it was seemingly virtually unknown as a divine attribute. The pagan gods of Greece and Rome were heartless, cold and as a rule, indifferent to human suffering. This is in total contrast to the God of the Bible. His very nature is compassion and as the Bible says, His delight is to show mercy.

If we take a look at the life of Jesus, of all the many virtues displayed by Him during His public ministry, none is more attractive – or more often exhibited – than His compassion. “Compassion” is a beautiful word that designates an even more desirable quality. The Latin root of the English “compassion,” literally means to “suffer with”. It means feeling along with another person, having the willingness to sympathize with the pain of a fellow human being who is suffering. More than that, compassion is the pity that stirs one to act and help relieve the suffering of others. The word is used numerous times by the writers of the Gospels to describe the attitude and actions of Jesus towards the suffering people whom He met during the course of His life on earth.

The Scriptures remind us that Jesus felt compassion toward those who suffered physically and also with those in emotional distress. Most of all Jesus had compassion on people who were suffering spiritually. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, ch 9 vss 35-36, we have a wonderful snapshot of the entire ministry of Jesus – **“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”** This verse is really descriptive of everything that He did during the three years of His public life. He preached. He taught people how to live but because His ministry was “holistic” He did more than preaching and teaching. He was also concerned about human physical needs. He cared about people’s bodies as well as their souls. And it is there that the Church must be! A holistic ministry, involving body and soul.

So, as that snapshot reveals, when Jesus “saw the crowds,

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(Pic of the CRCSL Leaders
who attended the Leadership
Seminar at the Ecumenical
Institute on 24th June, 2023)

He had compassion on them..." Like us today, people in Bible times identified the emotion of compassion with a certain part of the body. For us a good way of translating that would be, "Jesus' heart went out to them," or even "His heart broke for them," because the heart is the organ that we identify with compassion or caring. For the Hebrews compassion was also identified metaphorically with an organ of the body. Like the caption of this editorial says, they located it twelve inches lower than the heart! To them compassion was something you felt in your intestines, your guts, so when Jesus saw the crowds, his guts were churning as He saw these suffering people.

A certain Professor of Theology in California, has founded the "Center For Engaged Compassion," and as their website describes it, "offers unique processes of "Engaged Compassion," that transforms the desire to help others into practical actions that change the world for the good. "Engaged compassion" should also be part of the DNA of the Church.

Everything that the Church does should be a fulfillment of our two-fold calling - to Worship and Witness. Compassion belongs to the Witness part, that needs to be fulfilled, as we demonstrate our caring and sharing to neighbours and communities – not forgetting the Church family itself. That is really what we are focused with in this issue of the "Herald." The Church bears witness to the compassion of God through seeking to give people a taste of His love through compassionate acts. It is so vital that the Church as a whole sees itself as such a Community where people can find compassion in its fullest sense of the word.

Like Jesus, the Church, (which is basically you and me), must "feel" for people in need holistically. And that should be from the heart or perhaps like the Hebrews, from twelve inches below the heart!

Max Lucado once said, **"Compassion in Evangelical Churches is out of balance. When I talk about it, I get a lot of gazed expressions."** Maybe it is time to think how balanced CRC SL Churches and people are, when it comes to Compassion !

*" When the Holy Spirit empowers followers of Christ to
be faithful witnesses of Christ, then our world will be
brought into His glorious light and salvation."*

... Dr Corne Bekker

By Kiara Wickremasinghe

A Compassionate Church !

I was recently deemed “spiritually unfit to serve (sing) on the chancel” by the choir director in my church where I had served for 10 years. I was advocating for an inclusive culture within the choir (and church more broadly) but came to be seen as a threat. I appealed to senior leadership but was silenced and forced out of the church entirely – it probably seemed easier to wipe out a person-of-colour who was contesting spiritual legalism than to acknowledge discrimination and enter into genuine reconciliation.

Thankfully, due to my amazing upbringing at CRC Dehiwala and College Chapel at Cambridge University, my faith was unaffected and I was able to recognise that the actions of my church were not a reflection of the Christianity Jesus taught us. But so often, people tend to equate unpleasant experiences and messages of hatred (often under the guise of ‘care’) in churches with Christianity and abandon their faith altogether. This is why it is paramount for leaders and congregations in churches to uphold values of Christianity including love, compassion and humility.

A compassionate church is ideally unconditional in its show of hospitality, love and generosity, foregrounding how Jesus modelled these qualities. A compassionate church does not put everyone in the same box but makes room for those who might struggle to fit into mainstream culture, inviting them to be an active part of church life and even contribute to culture changes. A compassionate church remembers that we must welcome others and feel welcomed ourselves, just as God welcomes us through His grace even though we do not deserve this. When we remember the providence of God’s grace, we become less judgmental about others and accept people for who they are without turning them away. All of this does not mean aspiring for the perfect church, but we can at least be committed towards figuring out how to live out our faith together and be beacons for Christ in our world.

“Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians, 3:12)

(Kiara, works as a mental health practitioner in the UK’s NHS and is also on the home stretch in her Phd in Anthropology at SOAS University of London. She is also a professional singer and violinist)

A COMMUNITY WITH SENSITIVITY

CHURCH AS A COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY

by The Revd: Stanley Nelson

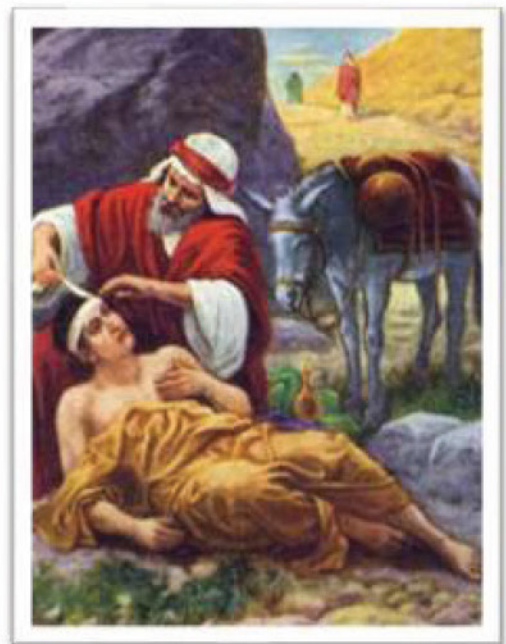
We as a Community of believers live in a multireligious context. This unique opportunity gives us various perspectives in responding to vulnerable or afflicted people. As human beings, all of us possess an inbuilt quality within us that makes us react or respond in those situations. An empathetic feeling deep within us toward another who is in great suffering and sorrow, that engages our wholeness to bring about relief in such a situation is described as compassion. Compassion is a form of love, which boils within us when we are confronted with those who agonize in pain or innocently live under vulnerable conditions.



We read in Exodus 2:6 about the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter when she saw weeping baby Moses from the ark. Though it is only an ordinary human response, her pity crosses the boundary from an Egyptian princess to a helpless Hebrew baby when a hostility existed between both nations. The (Good) Samaritan who was the neighbour of the (presumably a Jewish) victim of the road robbery shows compassion according to Jesus' story in Luke 10:33. The mercy shown by the Samaritan to the victim goes beyond the borders created by centuries-old bitterness, hatred, and

animosity between both Jews and Samaritans.

The most striking and strange part of the story is not the Samaritan helping (presumably) a Jewish victim. It is receiving help as a victim from a person who comes from a community that we treat as outcasts. It challenges our pride and prejudice to be helped by a person whom we refuse to recognize and receive as a neighbour. The question is who is my neighbour who deserves my love? Jesus replies it is not who we think of as our heroes, but who we treat as zeros. The hero of Jesus' story is the compassionate Samaritan! His compassion has no limit. It went from the road to the inn and beyond until his return from his journey. Love has no limit, and neighbourhood has no boundaries. The compassion crosses and oversteps all of them.



Since Man is created in the image of God, God's compassionate nature flows from Him to Man. God reveals Himself through His Word, as an essential being emotionally moved and actively engaged in human affairs. It is this nature of God, that sustains His covenant with His people. It is this nature of God, that the Jews sang about. The Hebrew words used in the Old Testament for compassion are "hamal" and "rachuw" and the equivalent Greek word in the New Testament is "splachnismos". This unchanging and unconditional characteristic of God is available eternally.

Compassion is divine nature, likened to a father's pity for his children in Psalm 103:13 and a mother's pity on her nursing child in Isaiah 49:15. It is this divine characteristic that gave His people hope when they were disobedient and unfaithful to overcome His wrath according to Hosea 11:8. God's One and Only Son becoming a human being to suffer together with them is the demonstration of His compassion.

Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus continued to reveal His nature of compassion. When He saw the helpless people He viewed them as wearied and subjected to mauling (Matthew 9:36). He reached out to the patients with His outstretched arms (Matthew 14:14). He was moved for action when He saw the people starving for three days (Matthew 15:32). When He heard the cry of the visually handicapped, He not only stopped and paid attention but also He touched them with His healing hands (Matthew 20:34).

The heavenly Father's compassion is beautifully described through a waiting father, who saw his wayward son coming back, and was still a long way off, he felt compassion for his son and ran and not only embraced him and received him but also celebrated his arrival with joy (Luke 15:20). In fact, the compassion involves the joy of heaven celebrated on earth when a sinner repents and returns home.



We as a community of believers learn and practice compassion by imitating the heavenly Father God and Jesus His Son Who is the greatest example of compassion. The Scriptures give us examples and exhort us to make compassion an integral part of our lives. The lack of compassion or absence can make us meaningless ritualistic and purposeless legalistic. A community may exist without meaning and purpose like the Priest and the Levite who distanced themselves from a suffering victim of the road robbery.

The church building may be full on Sunday for activities there. The community may surrender itself to the liturgies and rituals within the four walls of the building. It may seem so spiritual inside there. But if it is not practical on the road, home, or workplace, there needs to be serious thinking. The spirituality of a community can be evaluated only through its compassionate activity. The spirituality is reflected when the church recognizes hunger, thirst, loneliness, nakedness, woundedness, and imprisonment, to feed the hungry, to quench the thirst of the thirsty, to receive the stranger, to clothe the naked, to dress the wound, and to visit the prisoner.

The visibility of our spirituality is a possibility only through our charity and practicality. Christian compassion can be viewed as religiosity becoming a reality through sensitivity to the community. Compassion is a true mark of the Christian Community. When it becomes truly a compassionate community, it is reformed to be the body of Christ. It gathers to worship God on Sundays and scatters to serve Him during the whole week in the world where He has placed it. There is no better way of saying it than Saint Theresa of Avila:

*Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are His body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*



(Revd: Nelson is a former President of the CRCSL, currently Hony Secretary of the General Consistory and pastor of the Tamil Congregation of the CRC Dehiwela.)

"Caring Hands...Extending Compassion"



"Caring Hands" is an united effort of the Dehiwela English, Sinhalese and Tamil Congregations to feed the less fortunate with a hot meal. This programme began on the 1st of September, 2023. 54 children and 74 adults were blessed with cooked food. It is the intent of the Trilingual Committee to initially do this twice a month. Support in diverse ways has come from near and far. And anyone wishing to add to this support can do so contacting Roshni Foenander, Deaconess of the Dehiwela Local Consistory.

Compassionate Youth at Church

Compassion is not something we possess until we demonstrate it to others. It's an action that shows we care when others are sad, hurt, or suffering. In case you had not experienced compassion from others, when you learn to understand how much God loves you, you will share that love with those around you. Imagine your friend is having difficulty in completing a video game or forgot his lunch one day at school. Do you help them out in such instances? If you do, that is an accurate representation of how we should treat others as Christians.

We label ourselves as Christians, but do we realize the weight of such a term? If we claim to be Christians, we must be like Christ. So, today we're going to discuss an attribute of Christ that we may often disregard.

Compassion.

What is it?

Compassion is "sympathetic pity and concern for the misfortunes and suffering of others." Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on this earth and, although he was a strict teacher, he repeatedly modelled a life of compassion and mercy for the unfortunate.

He is our model, so if compassion matters to him, it should matter to us.

Read Hebrews 4:15-16.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

In Jewish tradition, a high priest was one who would be allowed to enter the Holy of Holies to make sacrifices and ask for forgiveness, on behalf of himself and the people of Israel. This was allowed only one day of the year: The Day of Atonement. Today, we don't need to send a priest into a temple to get forgiveness for our sins because Jesus was the ultimate and final sacrifice when he died on our behalf.

That makes Jesus the high priest that Hebrews 4:15 is referring to!

How does Jesus' role as our high priest show his compassion on us? Well, our sin condemns us to death. But instead of letting us die in our sin, Jesus had mercy on us in our weakness. Through his compassion, those of us who have surrendered our lives to him can sit here today knowing that we will take hold of eternal life with Jesus! In other words, God's compassionate plan led to the most amazing event in history:

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Now, here lies the issue. You're probably thinking: *How can I possibly follow Christ's example of compassion?*

And you would be right to question it. There's no way we can show the kind of compassion that Jesus demonstrated to us by giving his life on the cross for us - it was the single greatest act of love and compassion to have ever happened!

However, Christ modelled compassion throughout all of his time in ministry. We can see how Christ's loving compassion astounded people and revealed their need for a saviour. We have the

same need today. Let's look at an account where Christ showed his sympathy for those who suffered. And let's see if we can imitate Christ in these simple, loving ways.

Read John 11:28-36.

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."

And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

In this passage, we see a family reacting to the death of their loved one: Lazarus. Jesus, instead of showing up when Lazarus had just passed away, showed up four days later. Mary, Lazarus' sister, tells Jesus that if he just would've shown up earlier, Lazarus would not have died. What an accusation!

But instead of reacting in anger to Mary's unbelief and lack of trust, Jesus responds with tears. Deeply moved by his friend's pain (even though he KNOWS he will raise Lazarus in only a few minutes), he cries tears of sadness and grief along with Mary.

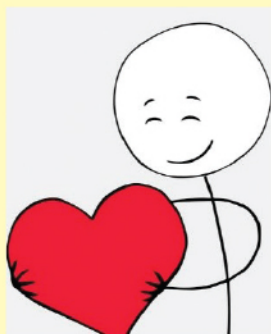
Why?

If he's not sad over the death of Lazarus - a death that he knows he can reverse, then why is he so upset? The simple answer is that Jesus was moved by compassion. He could have screamed out, "There's no need to cry, everyone! I'm about to do a miracle!" However, he took a moment to grieve alongside this family.

Sometime in the future, you may have an opportunity to grieve alongside someone. To show someone compassion for his or her pain. Don't rush past the moment to try to fix the problem because odds are you won't be able to. Show how much you value this person (whether friend or family) to listen to, cry with, hold, or hug a person who is suffering.

Why?

Because this is what Jesus did, and as Christians, we need to reflect Christ.



As a Christian Youth, how can I be compassionate to others ?

Compassion is a universal virtue that transcends boundaries, cultures, and religions. Within the Christian faith, compassion holds a special place, as it embodies the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. For Christian youths like me, embracing compassion isn't just a moral choice; it's a spiritual calling.

Compassion lies at the heart of Christianity. It is rooted in the biblical commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). This teaching forms the cornerstone of our faith and influences our attitudes and actions. Compassion should be more than a feeling. It should be a way of life that reflects Christ's love.

At church & during youth fellowship is a great place to start to demonstrate compassion & make a positive impact in our communities. Here are other ways we can be a more Compassionate Church :

- **Volunteer Work:** We can help out in the Community Outreach programs our church organizes : feeding the homeless, visiting the elderly, or assisting in disaster relief efforts. These actions reflect our commitment to serve others in need.



- **Mentorship and Support:** As a youth at church you tend to become a role model or a mentor to the younger members of the church & community. Even if you don't feel like it. You should take up this challenge to guide, provide emotional support, share wisdom, and help build a sense of purpose among your peers.



- **Prayer and Spiritual Guidance:** Pray for those facing difficulties and offer spiritual guidance to help others find solace and strength. Understand the power of prayer in fostering compassion. The monthly prayer time comes to mind. Join & become a Prayer Warrior !



- **Simple acts of kindness** : Help your neighbours & family members with chores, try connecting with that peer who seems to always linger in the background or even help a complete stranger who looks like they need help. Even small gestures can have a big impact on someone's day.



Compassion in the Face of Challenges

When you see adversity or social injustice, draw inspiration from the teachings of Jesus. For instance:

- **Forgiveness:** Understand the importance of forgiving those who have wronged you & follow Christ's example on the cross.
- **Social Justice:** Advocate for social justice issues such as poverty, abuse & inequality. Your faith should drive you to address injustices and work towards a fairer world.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Seek peaceful solutions to conflicts, emphasize reconciliation and understanding rather than division and hostility.

The Ripple Effect of Compassion

The compassionate actions of Christian youths often have a profound ripple effect. When you reach out to help, you inspire others to do the same. This multiplication of compassion creates a more caring and harmonious community.

In a world that sometimes seems to prioritize self-interest over the welfare of others, we as Christian youths can stand out as beacons of compassion. We understand that compassion isn't just a feeling; it's a powerful force for positive change. By embodying the teachings of Christ in our daily lives, we illuminate a path for others to follow. As the future leaders of our communities, our commitment to compassion ensures that the world will be a kinder, more empathetic place for generations to come.

Youth Page

Edited By: Joshua Aldons

Dig Deeper

Does your church have programs going on to foster Compassion? If yes, get involved!

Do you have any ideas for initiatives we can do to become a more compassionate church? Don't be shy!
"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline"

We are blessed to be part of a resourceful church & we can make a marvellous change as youth!



Just For Laughs

Which Bible character was the best musician?

Samson—he brought the house down.

Why was Adam a famous runner?

Because he was first in the human race!

What did pirates call Noah's boat?

"The arrrrrrrk."

What types of boats do believers want to go on?

Discipleship and worship..

A man dies and goes to heaven. St. Peter meets him at the Pearly Gates and says, "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven.

You tell me all the good things you've done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in."

"Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithes and service." "Terrific!" says St. Peter. "That's certainly worth a point."

"One point!?! I started a soup kitchen in my city and also worked in a shelter for homeless people." "Fantastic, that's good for two more points," St. Peter says. "Two points!?!!" Exasperated, the man cries, "At this rate, the only way I'll get into heaven is by the grace of God." "Bingo! 100 points! Come on in!"

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Edited by Amanda Fraser

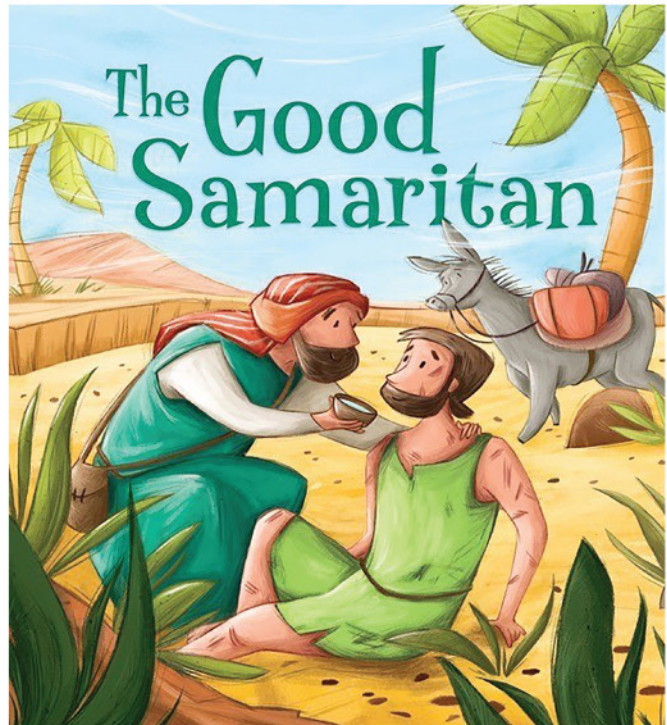
Hi Kids

Do you remember the story about the Good Samaritan?

Jesus told a story about a man who was hurt and left on the side of the road.

Two people passed him by without stopping to help until finally a man from Samaria passed by. He had compassion on the man who was hurt and helped him.

Compassion means to think and care about other people's feelings and show kindness and love to them.



Sometimes this can be really hard! Especially when someone is being mean to us. But guess what? God gives us the strength to show love and compassion to others even when it is difficult. All we have to do is ask Him for help. Jesus showed love and compassion to people when he was here on earth and even now God has compassion on us and forgives us when we sin. In the same way we need to also show compassion to others.

We might not know what kind of problems other kids are going through so it is always good to remember that a little bit of compassion might make a huge difference to them. And who knows....maybe they might start being kind in return too!

Lots of love,
Aunty Mandy.





Character Stories

Compassion

Story by Andrew Frinkle

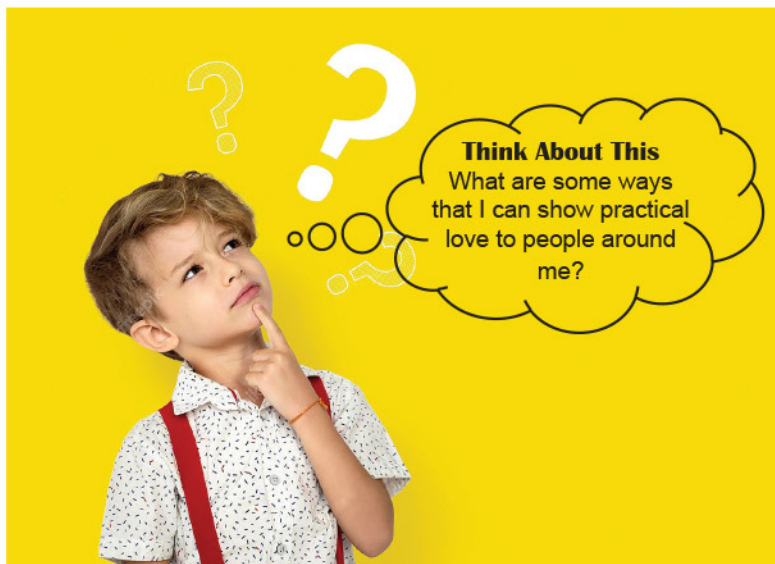
Compassion is showing empathy, kindness, and charity. It is also thinking about others. There are many ways to show compassion.



Heather was always the first person to help when someone in the class was sad. If someone came in crying or sad, she always gave them a hug. She was there to listen. If someone got upset in class, she could make them feel better. Heather had compassion.

Tommy liked to help people when they needed it. He opened doors if someone's hands were full. If you dropped your stuff, he'd be the one to help you pick it up. He didn't laugh at people, because he knew how it felt to be laughed at. Tommy was great at showing kindness.

How do you show compassion?



How do you
get a squirrel
to like you?
Act like a nut.

Good Samaritan Word Search

Find the words on the list that are hidden in the puzzle. the words can right to left, up and down or diagonally.

I	B	J	O	U	R	N	E	Y	U	S	C	I	L	I
T	A	T	I	S	I	T	E	R	S	E	N	T	G	R
I	S	R	N	O	S	T	O	R	O	D	O	L	R	F
E	R	M	O	N	J	R	U	J	E	R	I	C	H	O
T	R	T	I	N	E	H	E	N	I	T	R	D	D	I
O	R	D	O	E	R	I	S	T	R	U	M	R	F	S
O	L	J	E	S	U	S	G	R	F	A	E	G	C	A
M	R	V	E	R	S	T	R	H	L	R	R	U	G	M
C	I	D	U	T	A	D	O	L	B	R	C	R	F	A
O	L	O	R	R	L	A	C	I	N	O	Y	E	B	R
R	U	T	A	U	E	S	A	N	D	I	R	R	P	I
H	S	L	C	O	M	P	A	S	S	I	O	N	U	T
E	R	T	A	T	U	T	R	I	N	R	H	E	N	A
L	M	C	R	O	N	Q	U	I	S	R	A	L	I	N
P	F	R	T	R	A	V	E	L	R	I	L	R	I	U

COMPASSION
HELP

JERICO
JERUSALEM

JESUS
JOURNEY

MERCY
NEIGHBOR

SAMARITAN
TRAVEL

Lovers and Friends

In the past articles based on Tim Keller's book, *The Meaning of Marriage*, we have looked at the **secret** of Marriage (what Christ did for the church, he "gave himself up for her...") and where we get the **power** to love our spouse as Christ loves us (the Holy Spirit). We talked about commitment and the piece of paper and the value of making vows that last. We want to go back a bit and ask "What is marriage for anyway?" Why did God institute this very exclusive union between men and women?

When God created the world, he said that everything was very good. But when he created man he said, it was "not good" for man to be alone. In a perfect world, not having a soul mate was a problem. Man was made in God's image. God himself lives in a relationship with the different parts of the Trinity. God designed us to need horizontal relationships too, even though we have a vertical relationship with him. Loneliness is a terrible thing, even in paradise. So, God created a "helper-companion", a friend, for the man. In Song of Solomon 5:16, the woman says about the person she loves, "This is my lover, this is my friend," The guarantee against loneliness is having a partner who is your friend.

We need to ask ourselves first, what is friendship? The writer of Proverbs gives some ideas:

1. Friends love at all times, especially in adversity, (constancy) Prov. 17:7. They stick closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).
2. They are honest with each other, transparency and candor, encouragement, Prov. 27:9, 1 Sam. 23:16-18. They are also willing to correct you, Prov. 27:5,6, 17.
3. They have sympathy or a common passion, common interests and longings.

Keller states, "When we come to the New Testament, there is a new layer added to our

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. Ephesians 5:25-27



understanding of friendship. Friendship is only possible when there is a common vision and

passion—think of what that means for all Christians. For believers in Christ, despite enormous differences in class, temperament, culture, race, sensibility, and personal history, there is an underlying commonality that is more powerful than them all.... Christians have all experienced the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus. We have all had our identity changed at the root, so now God's calling and love are more

foundational to who we are than any other thing. And we also long for the same future, journey to the same horizon, what the Bible calls the "new creation." Paul speaks of "the good work" God is doing in believers that will be complete at the end of time (Philippians 1: 6)."

Christian fellowship, or friendship as defined in the Bible is remarkable. When you have a common goal it unites you, much like the fellowship in Lord of the Rings, or the Dirty Dozen. You can meet another Christian in any part of the world, and although you have little in common, you immediately sense a bond of fellowship because of your common relationship to Christ and your goal to serve him.

Keller states that biblical Christian friendship involves transparency, the ability to confess our sins to each other (James 5:16), to help each other find our potential in Christ (Hebrews 10:24; Ephesians 4:32; Galatians 6:1).

The other thing he mentions is spiritual constancy. Christian friends bear each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and are there for each other, encouraging growth (1 Thessalonians 5:11,14-15), sharing what they have. Friends identify and call out each another's gifts, strengths, and abilities. They build up each other's faith through study and worship (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19)

Your spouse should be your best friend. This idea is clear in the Bible. Prov. 2:17 uses a Hebrew word that refers to the wife as companion, confidant or best friend. It is remarkable that in a day when most marriages were based on social status and stability, that there is a high regard for the institution as a relationship in God's sight. In the Ephesians 5 passage Paul is speaking to a formerly pagan audience who would have married for social status, and he makes it clear that marriage is a partnership and that we have a higher purpose as married couples. He calls husbands to sacrificial love for their spouses, comparing them to Christ and the church. The goal is to sanctify, present them holy, glorious and blameless. This process will never be completed, we can't achieve perfection before heaven, but we must work at it, slowly but surely. Phil. 1:6, Eph. 4:24, 2 Cor. 3:18, 4:16-18.)

Keller again, "What then is marriage for? It is for helping each other to become our future glory-selves, the new creations that God will eventually make us. The common horizon husband and wife look toward is the Throne, and the holy spotless and blameless nature we will have. I can think of no more powerful common horizon than that, and that is why putting a friendship at the heart of a marriage relationship can lift it to a level that no other visions for marriage approaches."

I lived in Kenya for a while. Mount Kenya was near the equator, in the middle of the country. You could drive right past it and never see it because it was usually covered in clouds, but occasionally, the clouds would part, and the view was glorious.



That is how the old self hides the new creation, sometimes the clouds part and you can see what you are capable of: wisdom, love, courage. We see what God is trying to make out of our spouse and it excites us. Each of us should give ourselves to helping make the other person all that he can be in Christ.

A note for those who are single: The most important things in choosing a marriage partner are not attraction and wealth, these things fade over time. Find a friend who has the same dreams and values and you will never be lonely. Many people when they are looking for a spouse are looking for a finished "statue", when they should be looking for a good solid piece of marble. Jesus is the sculptor, but we can help by looking inside and bringing out the good things in the other person. We can see the flaws and imperfections, but underneath them all we see the growing person God wants them to be. This is a radically different approach to the search for compatibility.

Jesus died, not because we were lovely, but to make us holy. This is what Paul is calling husbands to do in Eph. 5. If I love Jesus more than my wife and my emotional tank is full of his love and power, only then will I be able to be patient, faithful, and open when the problems come. The more joy I get from my relationship with Christ, the more I can share that joy with my wife and family. Build your friendship. We will talk more about what this sacrificial love looks like in our next article.

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.

Timothy Keller died on May 19, 2023 after a long fight with cancer. We are grateful for his ministry and his many books. He was a Presbyterian pastor in Manhattan, New York, author of numerous books and prolific speaker. Check him out on YouTube.

+++ CHURCH NEWS+++



- ❖ **CRC SL Leadership Seminar....** The Annual Leadership Seminar, organised by the Teaching and Training Committee, and which did not take place for nearly three years, due to Covid and Transport challenges, took place this year on the 24th of June, 2023, at the Ecumenical Institute For Study And Dialogue, at Havelock Road, Colombo 6. The theme this year was "Grooming Leaders For Tomorrow."



The Key note address was given by Revd: Charles Jansz, whilst the main sessions which were both interactive and creative, were led by Bro Shane Dirckze, and Pastors, Suresh Karmegam, Lakmal Wijeratne, Ajendran Dhanaraj and Clement Yogarajah. The sub committee comprising of Bro Dirckze, and Pastors Karmegam, Wijeratne, Ajendran and Yogarajah had spent many hours in planning and prayer and all who attended were blessed. Fifty eight of our Denominational Leadership attended. The day concluded with afternoon tea. The suggestions resulting from the interaction and group discussions would be collated and sent to the Local Consistories for consideration with a view to implementation where possible with the objective of grooming leadership for the future.

- ❖ **Retirement** - Mrs. Vino Schubert retired from her Secretarial duties at the Denominational Office on 30th June 2023. Vino had served under four CRC SL Presidents over a period of 23 years, in that specific capacity, in addition to being involved in different ministry Committees

of the Denomination. Ms Punitha George has been taken on to fill the Vacancy.

- ❖ **Mini VBS – at CRC Dehiwela.** The Dehiwela English Sunday School hosted a mini VBS on Thursday the 29th of June, attended by many children and young people, on the theme "J O Y" ("Jesus First, Yourself last and Others in between"). It was a combined effort of all the teachers with the support of RYM (the youth group).



Children from the Wellawatte Sunday School also attended. All the children enjoyed a fun day of activities and learning about sharing and caring. Mandy Fraser was the main Speaker.



- ❖ **Graduation – Pas M.Sashikumar,** was awarded the B.Th degree at the 14th Graduation Ceremony of the Colombo Theological Seminary held on the 15th of July, 2023. This was also the first National Graduation Ceremony of C.T.S. Pas Sashikumar ministers with the Tamil Congregation of the CRC Regent-Street.
- ❖ **Ordination/Installation of Elders and Deacons** - The following were Ordained/Installed to the Office of Elder, Deacon, Deacons within the Dehiwela Local Consistory on Sunday 30th July, 2015 – Elders – Steve Francis Schubert, Ralston Shane Ingram, Shane Edwardo Dirckze, Bevin Clyde Mack: Deacons/Deaconess – Roshni Angelique Foenander, Jerome Alfred Marianayagam, David Lindsay Melder, Lasitha Manindajith Wijeratne, Marlon Timothy Jansz, Tamara Turzah Rebeira.

- ❖ **Redeemers Youth Ministry – Office Bearers -**
At the AGM held on the 29th of July, 2023 the following were elected to serve:
President – Ex-Officio The Pastor Vice-President: Shenaya Fernando, Secretary: Joshua Aldons, Asst Sec: Leanne Melder, Treasurer: Maurice Jansz. Asst Treas: Tia Werapermall. Youth Reps: Jonathan Melder, Melshaun Dirckze, Tashia Jansz, Ridge Grero, Graham Mack, Xania Werapermall.

The new RYM Committee kicked off their plans with a Sports Day on Saturday the 2nd of September, 2023. Originally to be held at the Municipal grounds in Pepiliyana, the venue had to be changed at the last moment due to the incessant rain and the grounds being water logged. Shifted to the Dehiwela Church premises it turned out to be a day of great weather and many events enjoyed by all who were present of all ages. The Youth of the Sinhala congregation also joined by invitation, together with many families of the English Congregation.Games of Cricket, Human Netball, Scarecrow relay, Water Volleyball, Circular Ball relay, Passing the Ball relay were all part of the day – climaxing with the ever popular Tug-O-War. With creative and delicious eats and drinks some with a price tag and some with no cost, kept all present well nourished through the day... while the music which included the “papare” tunes added to the fun. And just as the Prize giving was done and words of thanks expressed, the heavens opened again! But all present would have left singing a slightly different version of. ...“O what a wonderful, wonderful day – a day I will never forget...”

- ❖ **Visit to the Wolvendhal Church -** The Ambassador of the Netherlands, Her Excellency Ms. Bonnie Horbach visited the Wolvendhal Church on the 5th of August, and met with the Leadership of the Local Consistory, and the Denominational Leadership. Matters pertaining to the maintenance of the Wolvendhal Church building featured amongst the discussions and deliberations that took place.
- ❖ **Visits...**
Revds Crosbie de Kretser and Michael de Kretser were on a brief private visit for two weeks in July and also found the time to fellowship with many and minister God’s Word in some of the Local Churches.

Revd: Crosbie is former minister of the CRC SL and Minister emeritus of the CRC of Australia.

Revd: Crosbie ministered at Kohuwela, Wellawatte, Regent Street and Dehiwela congregations, in addition to sharing the Word at the Devotion Time for our Ministry workers, whilst Revd: Michael, who is currently a minister without charge of the CRC Australia and serves three retirement villages and an aged care home in Melbourne, ministered the Word to the Bambalapitiya, Kohuwela and Dehiwela congregations. They also visited the “Little Lambs” Montessori at Dehiwela, which was started by Revd: Crosbie, whilst serving as Pastor.

Revd Caspar Van Dorp was also briefly here from the Netherlands in connection with some official Government work.

In Memoriam – Cheryne Perera.

Cheryne Juliet Perera passed away on Friday the 30th of June, leaving all those who knew and loved her in a state of shock. Many had spoken with her through that week, and some even on that Friday morning. She was taken to hospital on Thursday with some abdominal pains. She had the great expectation that following a medical process, she would be back home the next day. But sadly that was not to be. Her Lord had other plans and took her speedily to His Eternal Home, that afternoon, leaving Robert and all those who were part of her life numb in shock and grief.

Cheryne was a people’s person, keeping in touch with many personally, through the telephone and in the recent years through social media at which she was very adept. Face book was very much part of her daily routine where she touched base with many throughout the world, especially on their special occasions, whether it was birthdays, anniversaries or a special event. Both herself and Robert were also known for their hospitality and many who were part of their lives enjoyed a meal if not a stay in their home that also included a nice cool well water bath !

She was a member of the Dehiwela Church, and was involved in diverse ways and always made it a point to support any endeavour which required, her presence or skills. She was part of the choir at one time, and helped many a time with the floral arrangements within the Sanctuary. But most of her service was with the WMU. She was Vice President at the time of her demise. She was always there for the meetings and events and on some occasions even provided light refreshments to sustain the meetings of the Committee. When it came to other local Church events, she

was always willing to participate even if it was fancy dressed ! Many would remember “Dr Colin Rodrigo” at the Centenary event of the Dehiwela Church...and some would remember “Punky Brewster.” During the Covid years she shared the Online sermons to all she could think of those here and also those in other parts of the world. She also complemented Roberts efforts, in fulfilling the assignment he had every first Sunday to count and record the Offertory following the morning worship service.

Her involvement with the ministry and mission of the Church was linked to her faith in her Lord that held to the very end. Especially during the last few years she looked ardently in faith and prayer to her Lord – to sustain and bring her through the physical challenges that both she and Robert faced. We will certainly miss her wit, her caring and also the good information she had of people and matters.

Cheryne now rests in perfect peace in the nearer presence of the Lord she believed and loved with much hope all the time. Robert is bereft like many of us. Robert very much more and whilst we extend our deepest sympathies to him we pray the Lord’s courage and grace to sustain him in the days ahead.

❖ **Primrose Ingram.**

After a very brief illness, caused by a stroke, that took her to hospital, Primrose passed away in the early hours of the 19th morning, much to the dismay of her dear family.

Primrose was a member of the CRC Dehiwela ever since her marriage to her late husband, Percy Ingram. She worshipped faithfully and participated in the life and ministry of the Church with much faithfulness. Having lost Percy in the very early years of her marriage, Primrose as a single parent nurtured her children in the Reformed faith and to be what they are today.

Whilst involved in many areas of church life, her retirement from the Corporate world, led her to give leadership to the Community Project of the Church, the “Little Lambs Montessori” It was a change of career but her integrity, love for children and the church helped her to adjust to the demands and responsibility of a nursery school. Her hard work came through especially at the special events of the Montessori – Parents days, Sinhala and Hindu Avurudhu Commemorations and the Easter and Christmas services. Soft spoken and kind she was also able to negotiate the challenges that came her way

from the different segments of Montessori life. The curtain finally came down on her Montessori involvement, when she had to reluctantly resign, mainly due to health issues.

We do give thanks for the relationship we shared, her life, witness and involvement in the life of the Church and for the legacy of faith and faithfulness she leaves behind.

We pray God’s peace upon Shane, Vanessa and their families, mindful also of her brothers, Winston, Valentine and their families too.

“To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

❖ **Yvonne Marvis Herft.**

Having commemorated her 92nd birthday on the 13th of August, whilst in hospital, she passed into the nearer presence of the Lord on the 15th of August.

Yvonne and Anselm Herft and family were members of the Dehiwela CRC prior to their emigration to Australia and were involved in the life of the local Church and Denomination in different ways. Anselm was an Elder with the Dehiwela Local Consistory and also served as Scriba of the General Consistory for many years. Yvonne basically was involved mainly in the life of the Dehiwela Congregation and helped with her culinary skills on many an occasion when the church family got together whether it was the annual “Family Night,” the Annual Denominational Sports Meet or the traditional New Year breakfast. Those were the years when the food and cooking were provided by families of the congregation and outside catering was not heard of – dear people made loads of food for any occasion in their own kitchens and with their own hands!

On the emigration of the family to Perth, Australia in 1987, for many years Yvonne and Anselm were part of a Presbyterian Church and later moved to the Reformed Church and came under their pastoral care.

Blessed with a good measure of health for most of her long life, she continued to demonstrate her caring both to family, church family and friends. Her hospitality which went together with her culinary skills was looked forward to by many who were privileged to visit her home. And even in Australia, where life seemed more settled and comfortable she did not forget her roots and continued her caring and sharing of whatever resources she had with family and others.

As her obituary read, she was the “strong and kind matriarch of the family to Children, Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren, whose memory will live forever in their hearts.” As it has been said, “when someone you love becomes a memory, that memory becomes a treasure.” And so family and those who knew and loved Yvonne, can treasure the memory of a kind and caring mother, grandmother and great grandmother who now rests in peace. “...and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

❖ June Passe.

June Passe was called to her Heavenly Home on Monday 24th July, after a long life filled many a blessing, but also with many challenges. But those challenges did not keep her from remaining a faithful member of the CRC at Regent-Street, right to the very end. At times life can be hard for some people – brought about by varied circumstances which perhaps we may not understand nor should we try to. And in those circumstances, it would be better for us to live by the saying, attributed to John Bradford, “there for the grace of God go I!” June faithfully attended the worship services and also was at one time a faithful member of the Adult Class which was a great blessing to the Seniors at Regent-Street.

I was told that at the time when she was physically weak and struggling with health issues, even when the Pastor wanted to give her Private Communion she insisted on receiving the Sacrament in the Regent-Street Church.

In the times I was privileged to touch base with her, she was always cheerful, at times even with some humour, although those times too would have been stressful.

June is now resting in peace - enjoying a rest – that perhaps eluded her most times, in life. We wish the family near and far that same peace and God’s comfort. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me...”

❖ Ven Lokendra Abhayaratne.

It was with much sadness that we did receive the news of the passing away of Ven Abhayaratne after a few years of declining health.

Ven Abhayaratne served many parishes within the Anglican Diocese of Colombo and retired as Archdeacon of Galle. He also gave visionary leadership to many Ecumenical and Evangelical Organisations, including Youth for Christ and World Vision. He was a very welcome “Pulpit Supply” to many of our English speaking and Sinhala Congregations and ministered the Word faithfully and at times with much humour. He was also a popular speaker to Children and found himself speaking at the opening assemblies of some of our Vacation Bible Schools. Many a time we also found him attending worship services, together with his wife, Mohini, at the CRC Kohuwela, which was in close proximity to where they lived.

Ven Abhayaratne’s many years of experience in the Corporate world and market place, gave him the necessary mindset to minister effectively both within and outside the walls of the Church.

When called upon to fill a pulpit, when there was such a need, he gladly accepted this call, even though it meant additional preaching turns for him, on a Sunday.

We of the CRC SL thank God for Ven Abhayaratne’s faithful ministry of the Word and also for being a faithful shepherd to the flocks under his care.

We do remember with gratitude his wife Mohini, who walked along side with him in ministry and mission and cared for him to the very end. We do pray God’s peace upon her and the rest of the family.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news...!”

❖ Church Register

❖ Deaths.

“Forever with the Lord...”

Cheryne Juliet Perera, on Friday 30th June, 2023, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Primrose Ingram, on Wednesday 19th July, 2023, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

June Passe, on Monday 24th July, 2023, of the Regent Street Congregation.

(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.)

TAIL LIGHTS

BY C.N.J

ICE CREAM !

It certainly is a favourite of many – little children, young and the not so young. Age and even health issues do not matter – there is a raid on the refrigerator when ice cream is present!

I recall the days growing up when we waited eagerly for the “Alerics” van of yesteryear – arriving at dusk, blinking lights and all with just the cones and popsicles, vanilla and chocolate. Today the flavours are many and irresistible with nuts, chips, berries, cherries and what not! Also with weirdest and at times embarrassing names!



The good Pastor I am, I scoured the Bible for any reference to ice cream and found no reference, but in the process hit upon a legendary story that talks about the first reference to ice cream. Isaac giving Abraham goats milk mixed with snow! Of course in Genesis 18: 8, we have Abraham giving his visitors “curds and milk” but like some so called preachers we would have to let our imaginations run riot to say it was “ice cream” ! What drove me to write this tail light, was a post I saw recently, whilst preparing my key note for the CRC SL Leadership Seminar. It read “If you want to keep everyone happy don’t be a leader sell ice cream!” In that sense we can agree that some in leadership should be selling ice cream!

In the Key note, to CRC SL Leaders, I quoted Vince Lombardi the legendary American football coach who said, “Leaders are not born. They are made. And it involves the hard work of grooming, coaching, sustained by encouraging.” It involves what I called the Barnabas recipe.

In the context of that post I quoted, one emphasis in this recipe would be to groom Leaders who could handle turbulence. And that comes in different forms, from different quarters, sometimes with reason, most times without any reason, the bottom line being, you cannot keep everyone happy !

So thinking of and thanking God for all those who give leadership in our different areas of our Church life and those would be leaders we are hoping to groom, my simple conclusion would be , remember we can’t please everyone all the time and even some of the time especially if we strive to please the Lord , all the time! If that remains a leadership challenge that we cannot deal with, then it is time to sell ice cream !!

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