

STIPENDS FOR 10 PROBATIONER-AS-  
CHURCH PLANTERS IN SRI LANKA  
\$10,500



*Worship service in Sri Lanka church.*



*Probationer Gnanadoss with his congregation.*



*Probationers in Sri Lanka*



*"Road" to church in Sri Lanka.*

# STIPENDS FOR IO PROBATIONERS

Formerly known as Ceylon, Sri Lanka is a beautiful island nation in the Indian Ocean, off the southeastern coast of India. Within its 25,332 square miles live more than 19.2 million people. The majority (75 percent) of the population is Buddhist practicing Sinhalese. A substantial minority is Indian Tamils (17 percent), who practice Hinduism. An ethnic conflict between these two groups came to a head in 1983, resulting in a civil war that has endured since that time. Presently, the country is enjoying relative peace because of a cease-fire. Education is highly valued by the Sri Lankans, and they boast of a higher literacy rate than most third-world countries. As a former British colony, the country has a well-developed bureaucracy and a parliamentary democracy.

Buddhism is the state religion and, as such, is protected and promoted. The country has a history of religious harmony, but these divisions have become heightened and tense in recent years, because of the Tamil rebellion and the rise of Buddhist nationalism.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) began work in Sri Lanka in 1927 as a natural outgrowth of its work in India. Missionaries worked primarily in the mountainous tea estate region of central Sri Lanka, among the Tamil-speaking Hindus. The last LCMS resident missionary left in 1998. LCMS consultants visit annually to conduct leadership training among the church workers.

The Lanka Lutheran Church (LLC) was accepted as a partner church at the 2001 LCMS convention. Two of their 17 congregations are in Columbo City. The remainder are located on tea plantations. A major development in the church's outreach work has been a series of pre-schools, which meets a major need on the tea plantations.

As in India, new seminary graduates, called "probationers," are sent out on three-year assignments to unchurched areas as church planters. Most of their work is done on the distant tea plantations. They commute from their homes daily for three to six hours by bus and on foot. This means that they often must stay overnight, since the workers are only able to meet with them in the late afternoon and evening and the buses stop running. Each probationer works on two or three tea plantations. Each has had many baptisms, which are performed by one of the five ordained LLC pastors who come once a month to administer Holy Communion. They provide regular reports on their work to their supervising pastors.

As part of the probationer training, the young men are regularly sent to a local Bible college to supplement their training. There are currently eight young men serving full-time as church planters. The LLC has set a goal of starting new ministries on 200 of the 500 tea plantations. Thus far, there have been approximately 20 new churches planted.

Funding will be used for:

Because the people who live on the tea plantations are very poor, stipends provided by LCMS World Mission cover the living expenses of the probationers (\$800), as well as the cost of transportation (\$300) and program expenses (\$150).

Prayer needs:

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen the faith of Lutheran Christians in Sri Lanka who may be persecuted for their faith.
- Pray that God will continue to bless the efforts of the LLC so that it may become self-supporting.
- Ask God to continue to bring more Tamil people into His family through the preschools serving children of the tea plantation workers.