Pray for Buddhists in Sri Lanka

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Tools for ministry among Buddhists

Adventist Mission

Global Mission Study Centers

This week we are asking our friends to lift up the people of Sri Lanka in prayer.

In the steps of the Apostle Thomas?

Since the third century B.C., Buddhism has been a part of Sri Lanka. Most modern historians would say that Christianity was first introduced by the Portuguese Roman Catholics in the sixteenth century. However, there is some evidence that Christianity was introduced to Sri Lanka by the Apostle Thomas in the first Century, A.D. Many Christian Churches were already established when the Portuguese arrived. The Dutch displaced the Portuguese and in the 19th Century were themselves replaced by the British. However, since independence in 1948, Buddhism has been the state religion and is officially protected and promoted. Many Sri Lankans consider Christianity to be a foreign religion imposed by European colonials.

La Rue brings truth-filled literature to Sri Lanka

The Seventh-day Adventist message came to Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in the late 1800's. The first Seventh-day Adventist to visit Sri Lanka was Abram La Rue, an American. Born in 1822, he had been a gold miner, a seaman and a shepherd. It was then that he accepted the Seventh-day Adventist faith and became an ardent lay member/missionary. He established himself first in
Honolulu and then in Hong Kong. During his fourteen years in Hong Kong he travelled throughout the Far East, including China, Japan and Ceylon. Whenever his ship called at Colombo, he sold books and health foods and distributed literature. La Rue lived to see the day when the first baptisms in Honolulu and in Hong Kong took place, but he did not live to hear of the first convert baptized in Colombo (Sri Lanka) in 1904, for he had died a year earlier.

The church in Sri Lanka has 36 established churches across the island, four complete secondary schools along with seven elementary and ten preschools, one fully functional 40-bed hospital and a publishing house. The membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Sri Lanka stands at 3,681 members with a population to member ratio of 5476:1.

**WHY PRAY?**

Although we know that we ought "always to pray, and not to faint...", why specifically pray for Sri Lanka just now?

Ethnic conflict between the minority Tamil/Hindu and the majority Singhalese/Buddhist populations led to violence in the 1980s. Terrorism and reprisals went on for more than 30 years. A peace settlement was agreed to in December of 2001. Fighting continued between the armed forces and the rebels and came to an end in May 2009 when the Government forces defeated the rebels in the north of the country. Peace is prevailing and life is becoming normal in all parts of the island. Even so, decades of wounds are difficult to heal and some prejudice remains.

Even more important to Seventh-day Adventists, there has been a significant growth of evangelical Christianity since 1980. This has resulted in increasing opposition from the Buddhist majority. People in Sri Lanka need to hear the gospel message of salvation by grace and not by human merit. Also important, they need to know what Seventh-day Adventists know about the final events of earth's history and be able to make a positive response while there is still time. Earnest prayer is much needed to prepare the hearts of the people for the working of the Holy Spirit.

You may recall that three of those in attendance at our DMI (Disciple Multipliers Initiative) hold key positions in the Seventh-day Adventist Mission to Sri Lanka. Is it not clear that Satan is doing anything and everything he can to prevent the world from hearing the message of the 3 Angels?

It is encouraging to know that prayer is the key in the hand of faith that unlocks heaven’s storehouse.