

A Day in the Life of Rosemary and James, Mission Partners in Sri Lanka

Often we have written about unusual days such as when Rosemary encountered a Russell's viper (February 2008) but most days are not so exciting so we thought we would write about a more ordinary day. Previous days are on our website. www.rosemaryandjames.methodistchurch.co.uk.

Monday 7th September 2009.

The weather has been very cool, wet and dull this month – it feels like September in England. One large tree even lost half its leaves overnight, which is unusual. The brown leaves remind us of the autumn in England. Strange to think we will be back there this time next year. Children are returning to school after their five week holiday although the new school year starts in January. The new Methodist year also starts in January when the ministers move stations – one of the complicated matters that is settled (supposedly) at the annual Methodist Conference.

The alarm went off at 6am as usual. On Fridays it goes off at 5:45am as the chapel service is an earlier Eucharist for which Rosemary plays the piano. We were both unusually in a deep sleep when the alarm went off – often the birds disturb us – so we got up a bit late. The heating element in the shower head has broken so Rosemary had to boil up the kettle to wash her hair. She couldn't face a cold shower in the cooler temperatures we are having. Rosemary had a cursory glance at the Prayer Manual over a cup of tea but a longer look at it during a Tamil sermon in Chapel. Today, Day 7, is a favourite day because we pray for Zambia and our main link District (Bristol), so many of our friends are thought of today. We also have a link with the Sheffield District.

Before going to Chapel, Rosemary quickly checked the e-mails – only two today – while James made himself his normal breakfast of porridge, banana, brown sugar and lime juice followed by a papaya and pineapple fruit salad. Rosemary eats later after chapel and prefers toast and marmite to lashings of porridge, although when she is teaching at 8am she eats with the students. She does sometimes eat porridge with James.

In chapel this morning Rosemary learned that the father of one of our students has died. This means that tomorrow some students and Faculty will attend the funeral three hours away near Negombo just north of Colombo. Because Franklin is in our fellowship group Rosemary will go. The service will be in Sinhala and Tamil as the family is bi-lingual. They are a Tamil family but some were educated in Sinhala medium.

Rosemary returned home from chapel to do some administration work for the counselling course for which she has recently been appointed the co-ordinator. Meanwhile James finished preparing his English class for the student spouses which he then taught from 9am to 11am. Today James used a story about Rosemary and an elephant to revise some grammar and learn about stress within polysyllabic words.

Rosemary has two budgets to prepare, one for the counselling course and one for a small conference in November. Budgets are much more James' thing so she asked him to do the necessary with the data she had.

Rosemary taught the Book of Revelation (Part 1) from 10 to 1 to the very nice third year batch. The subject is getting more familiar, this being the fourth time she has taught this particular course. We are trying to get into the habit of using the Prayer Manual together at lunchtime when we are both more awake than last thing at night but today we did not manage it!

Rosemary arrived back home for lunch – a quick sandwich and salad (students cannot understand why we do not have rice and curry every day) – and then hurried back up the hill to the college for a meeting concerning the counselling course. This is the first such course she has had to organise and she feels fortunate that her friend and Mission Partner colleague, Mrs. Malar Lawrence, is still around to help. Malar both organised and taught the previous 4 batches with Ina Watson. Malar, her husband, Lawrence, and two children, Felix and Felicita, have finally received their visas for a stay in UK but there were the normal delays. The family will be in Britain from 14th September for two months and will be based at Asbury House in Selly Oak, Birmingham.

When Rosemary returned home, she began the tedious task of writing up the minutes of last week's Faculty Meeting. At the moment she has also of administrative work to do. It will be completed later in the week as tomorrow will be taken up largely with the funeral.

After the Spouses' English class James spent the rest of the day working on a new governance scheme for the college that addresses some of the structural governance issues that arose during his interviews with governors earlier this year. This work is all part of the Development Plan for the College's 50th Anniversary in 2013. James has been involved in this project only since April 2009 but is determined to do significant work before we leave here.

It was Rosemary's turn to cook the meal tonight. She did something with a piece of chicken.

Sometimes Rosemary goes to chapel on Monday evenings but tonight she stayed at home because it was very wet and it was a sermon class in Sinhala and she is unable to contribute.

At nine o'clock a student, Brian, his wife, Chamila, and baby, Christina, arrived. Brian is going on a seven week exposure programme to Zambia funded by the Council for World Mission (CWM), a programme which two of our students Rukshi and Yeherome benefitted from last year. We are trying to prepare him for his time there although the job is easier this time because his predecessors can give him much more up to date information. Rosemary has left part of her heart in Zambia but she will have to make do with helping prepare Brian and then hearing about it afterwards. It really is most unusual for a Sri Lankan to go to Africa. The two who went last year loved it. They were the first two TCL students ever to go to an African country.

Our evening with Brian and Chamila and little Christina ended with a prayer and then it was bedtime.