

## A Day in the Life of James Rowley, Mission Partner in Sri Lanka

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008

It falls to me to teach English to a group of student spouses (in reality wives) - something I enjoy. I teach them for 2 hours a week. I teach the students for 4 hours a week. The group of eight spouses is a mixed ability group but I find that repeating a lesson given to my elementary student group the week before is quite sufficient. Everyone learns something – I think. We've had some fun, in particular, when we rehearsed the old Music Hall song, "Joshua" (nicer than lemon squash you are) for English Day earlier this year.

After the two hour lesson I walked down to the main road and hailed a Kandy-Colombo air-conditioned bus. By mid-morning there are always spare seats so the driver is very pleased to stop and pick up passengers. I've learned to avoid the south side of the bus and also the wheel arches that make for a very uncomfortable journey. It's also good to avoid the rather small pull-out seats that fill the aisle down the middle of the bus. Fortunately the road has been recently re-surfaced (or carpeted as they say here) so it is possible to read or even work. On this occasion I marked some book reviews done by the students for Rosemary's Spirituality course, giving extra marks to anyone who dares express a criticism of their book. Rosemary will of course double check my marks and comments!

My reason for travelling was a meeting in Colombo to discuss the first draft of a proposal for the funding of an electronics and computing school in Colombo for young people whose education has been interrupted by tsunami and / or war. An American NGO has expressed interest, and I have been asked to put together the proposal on behalf of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka. I've tried to imagine all the awkward questions the NGO officers might ask, and to provide evidence-based answers including assessments of different options. We'll see what happens.

On the way into Colombo the coach was stopped at a checkpoint and we all had to get out, show our ID and let the police or soldiers look into our bags. Everyone's bags are very neatly packed to make it easier to search and re-pack, thereby speeding up the whole process. We were delayed by less than five minutes. One gets used to this sort of thing but for Tamils it must always be rather stressful. Apparently the night before the Tigers had attempted an air raid on a power station near Colombo.

Before the meeting I grabbed a couple of curry-filled buns. The triangular ones have fish in them and the oblong ones vegetables. Rosemary and I think there is a business opportunity in UK for anyone who makes these in UK – they're very good especially when dipped in a small puddle of ketchup.

The journey home was in the rush hour so it was a lot slower than the journey to Colombo, that is, three and half hours rather than two and half. The newly surfaced road has made the journey so much quicker than it used to be. It is 100km. But all sorts of things can vary the journey time. I got home in time to have a piece of toast and some fruit salad – we always have a pineapple and papaya salad on the go. Then Rosemary told me about her day and the particular joy of the monthly Faculty meeting. She now has to think about the writing up of the minutes. Not her favourite job!