

# Summary of Visit to Palani Mission, Tamil Nadu October 2019

**Revd Ruth Dillon , Bee Griffiths and Val Cox**



## **Aims of the visit :**

- To deepen our relationship with Palani Mission, Revd John and Sheeba Abraham.
- To review existing projects and establish new projects within the mission area, in partnership with Revd John Abraham and the church .
- To understand the context and challenges the church faces.
- To report back to Fleet URC.

## Preamble

This is the second year that a church group has visited Palani, and once again the unexpected, the challenges and the spirituality of the people there made a huge impact on us.

This brief report is intended as an update on previous projects, and to inform you of new developments.

This year seemed to focus on **health and well being**, although this was not intentional. However the greatest privilege was seeing how the partnership is flourishing and encouraging God's people in a poor, poverty-stricken area of Palani.

Palani Mission, though, also encourages us in the so-called developed world:

- to depend on God more,
- to express our faith with no embarrassment,
- to be reassured that God's Spirit is everywhere we go,
- to be joyful in our faith and devotion to God.

Our thanks go to the many people who have enabled this visit to happen, to the fundraisers, the prayer partners, the Mathews family and the people of Fleet United Reformed Church.

It is with grateful and humble thanks that I offer this report.

Blessings,

# Tailoring Centre



Unfortunately, due to government provision of a free tailoring course, it was decided that this was no longer a viable project. The young girls who were trained were involved in making the Palani bags for Fleet URC.

After discussion, it was decided that the machines and equipment should be leased to the Hindu tailoring community, which would help with the Christian/Hindu relationships.

# Hardship Fund



This was a vital part of John's ministry, and a number of his congregation have benefited from the emergency fund. Many people in the congregations could not afford travel to hospital and did not the money to buy antibiotics etc. We decided to increase this fund to enable more people to access it. This is done under the discretion of Revd John Abraham.

# Goat Project



The goat project was immensely successful last year , with many goats getting pregnant and having kids. The families intend to sell a kid and therefore enable them to buy food , support children's education and buy medical items for health problems .

This year the church bought 16 goats for 8 families. The children especially enjoyed playing with the goats as we distributed them. There is now a waiting list for goats !!

Nehemiah, one of the evangelists, is still overseeing the project. The goats are located in very poor areas of Palani.

# Roofing



Housing, and in particular roofing, was also a major concern for Revd John. There are different types of housing in Palani, ranging from the rural houses built from banana leaves to the concrete houses in Palani itself; however the slum areas are more challenging. The slum houses are built from clay, and in wet weather the floors turn into mud pools due to the inadequate roofing. Three church members in the slum area were identified as having very poor housing and, due to the tensions in the community, John decided that only one person should go and visit. Ruth went with Emmanuel and Senthil to visit Arti, and her story will be told later during the Palani service.

## Funding a medical camp



Revd John told us about the possibility of running a free medical clinic/camp with the staff (ie doctors, nurses, pharmacist etc) from the Mission Hospital. The cost of setting up the clinic would be £50 a month, and Pulliampatty, one of John's areas was identified as being a place of need and possibility.

The clinic started a week after we left, and during the first session 128 people arrived, and many health conditions were treated and new conditions identified. Because of poor access to the church building it was decided to hold it in the house of one of the church members, where it was more accessible.



# Grace Sponsorship



Grace's story is one that started last year. She has a disabled child, and her husband Rajil is one of the evangelists at Palani Mission. I had asked if some money could be

used for education for Perses, Grace's daughter, who has a growth disorder. Some money was allocated, but it was clear during our visit that Grace and her family were living in a difficult and unsafe environment. After a conversation with Grace it was decided that rehousing would be a better option, to near the school Perses, would be attending.





# Sponsorship



During our time in Palani we were disappointed to learn that both of this year's sponsored girls, for various reasons, could not complete their chosen course. However two new girls have now started: Sowmiya and Elamathi. Sheba John, the wife of Revd John Abraham, a nurse tutor is supporting them, and will continue to do so .

# Borehole



Palani has had no proper rain for 4years , and so there was great rejoicing when we arrived.... as the rains arrived at the same time !

Unfortunately, this meant that the borehole could not be started, as the soil is clay and is not suitable for drilling. We did however visit the church where it is going to be situated. At the moment the wells are shallow and dirty, full of disease, and polluted in every way (see above).

Clean accessible water will enable people in the community to be more healthy. The borehole will be looked after by a church member.



# Programme

**Sunday:** Worship, Sunday morning; travelled to Puliampatty in the evening

**Monday:** Business meeting

**Tuesday:** Met roofer, evangelists, borehole worker; gathered items for Palani stall at Craft Fair

**Wednesday:** Pastoral care (Grace); visited borehole site, Pastoral visiting (Rani, Peter and Mary)

**Thursday:** Pastoral visiting (Nellama, goats, mental health, deaf and dumb family), Ayisha Church

**Friday:** Cottage group; sponsored girls; Arti visit; All-night Prayer

**Saturday:** Bought and distributed goats; Visited Graces new home; Pastoral visiting; Bought gifts for the Palani stall

**Sunday:** Worship, dedication of John Heavenson; lunch; left for Kerala

**Monday:** Visit to Daya Sadan day centre for people with special needs, and Janey day centre for children with special needs

# Expenses

Goats 10 goats	48, 000
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Free medical camp	20, 000
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Emergency medical Fund	30,000
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Roofing project x3	90,000
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Borehole	75,000
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Graces housing	20,000
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Total: 255, 000 IR  
= approx. £3,000

## Church Link

During our time in India, Ruth preached at both the Sunday morning services (approx 350 people) and we attended the evening service at a small church (20 people). We met with Junior Church and we gave out the friendship cards to the evangelists to distribute in all the areas.

We took an olive wood cross for each of the 11 churches, as a gift from Fleet URC.

## Conclusion

The visit went extremely well, and we came away feeling that this partnership should be deepened in three ways .

- To continue to promote the ***Friends of Palani Mission*** Group;
- To continue to raise money for existing and new projects and sponsorship;
- To visit again in October 2020;
- To display the photos and information about the partnership in a prominent place so all may pray and nurture their own relationship with Palani.

## Next Church Visit: October 2020

Would you be interested to visiting Palani ?

**If so please speak to Bee Val or Ruth.**

- Ruth will need to book the tickets by February 2020.
- Flights are much cheaper in October
- The weather will be about 30°C.
- This is an experience of a lifetime.
- The airfare is approx £350

We can only take a three people at the most due to the transport restrictions and accommodation in Palani.

Looking forward to hearing from you !

Nandri ( Thank You in Tamil )



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