



JMA projects for 2010

Sri Lanka – church children’s outreach and support



There has been much fighting in Sri Lanka over the last 25 years. It has been largely between two groups of people – the Sinhalese in the more southern part and the Tamil people in the north. In fact it is really a guerrilla group called the Tamil Tigers which has been fighting the government troops during this time but ordinary people have been caught up in it. Many people have had to leave their homes and become displaced. Most of the country are Buddhist with less than 10% being Christian. The Methodist Church of Sri Lanka works amongst Christian Tamils who are now living in Sinhalese Buddhist areas. So the Christians there can feel quite threatened at times. In Anuradhapura circuit, the church is taking a particular interest in children and wishes to run events and support for them. This will involve transporting children in from outlying areas for day events of fund and worship. There are quite a high number of children with disabilities and they will be supported as well. JMA money will help to run these events over the next 3 years or so and also support other children’s and youth

work carried out by the national church. An MMS(I) team travelled to this circuit in 2009. There may be a team member near you who would be willing to come along and talk about their experience and the children they met – contact the office.

Ireland - Crossroads Project

The Crossroads project is a drop in centre that was started up by members of Bloomfield Methodist Church in East Belfast. There had been trouble in the area e.g. fires had been set on purpose, there were break-ins including Church premises. As a way to deal with this the local community led by the Leaders and Congregation of Bloomfield Methodist Church set up a Promoting Community Care Initiative. They hoped that if people cared about their community more they wouldn’t want to mess it up. The Crossroads Project focuses on tackling some of the problems that had caused the young people to behave in this way. Such problems included drugs and alcohol. Another was that young people from the local neighbourhood which was mostly Unionist and Protestant were getting into trouble by fighting with young people in other neighbourhoods that were mostly Catholic and Nationalist.

The drop in centre provides a place for the young people to hang out so that they won’t get into trouble. It is also an opportunity for the Methodists that volunteer there to show the young people that God loves them and witness to them what a Christian is. There is internet access, a PlayStation, craft materials and they’ve also done cooking. There have been special events where people have come to talk about DJing, creating a graffiti mural in the back yard, a dance workshop and movie nights. Groups have also gone out on trips like bowling. These keep young people interested and encourage new people to come along. There are drinks and food too.

Peer pressure

Sometimes friends can make us do things we don’t want to. This is peer pressure. Our peers are people the same age and they can put pressure on us to do things. Teenagers can often be led into trouble due to peer pressure. The Crossroads drop in centre doesn’t allow drugs or alcohol, which means young people can hang out and not feel pressured to use them. There is some paramilitary influence in the area too. Some young people might feel pressurised into this, starting trouble, damaging property or other illegal activities.



At a crossroads

The centre is located at a crossroads in Bloomfield so there are a lot of people passing by. The centre is in a rented space between a fast food restaurant and a hairdressers instead of being in a church. People sometimes find it easier to come into a building like this instead of into a church. Sometimes people might say that they are at a crossroads in their life, they might have a big decision to make and are not sure which way to turn. Some of the young people that use the centre are at a crossroads in their lives, they could get involved in paramilitary violence, start drinking alcohol or taking drugs. The Crossroads drop-in centre is a place to help them make the right choices for their lives and the people who run the centre hope that they can have a positive impact on their lives.

When we are at a crossroads in life and need to think and make decisions we should choose God’s way because it is the best way!

This is what the Lord says: “Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls.” **Jeremiah 6:16 (New Living Translation)**