

## **SATURDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2007**

at the YMCA Indian Student Hostel, Fitzroy Square, London

This year we met to celebrate a special occasion, for 60 years ago the Church of South India was formed. This Diamond Jubilee was celebrated with great enthusiasm and thanksgiving in India on 27th September. We too rejoiced in the blessings that the CSI had both received and given over these years.

The day started as usual with the celebration of Holy Communion led by the Rev Jessie Anand from the CSI and now working in London. She was ably assisted by the Rev Gordon Shaw, Chair of the FCI Management Committee, and the Rev Julie Lipp-Nathaniel, Chair Elect. Dr Martin Heath made the arrangements for the service. The Rev Dr Israel Selvanayagam preached the sermon on heresy, unity and the changes in theological correctness over the years, basing it on Jesus' prayer in St John's gospel chapter 17. A beautiful liturgical dance on the hymn 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty' was performed by the All Saints' Church Dance Group from Battersea. The offertory, which amounted to £504 plus Gift Aid, will be sent to support the work of the Delhi Brotherhood Society Childrens' Homes.

After a delicious lunch of curry and rice and a sweet, the Chair, the Rev Gordon Shaw, led the short business meeting. We welcomed visitors and remembered those who had died during the year. A bouquet was presented to the Rev Dr & Mrs Israel Selvanayagam, congratulating him on his appointment as the Principal of the United Theological College, Bangalore. A card expressing both how much we shall miss them and wishing them well in their future work in India was also given. At this point the Rev Gordon Shaw handed the meeting over to his successor, the Rev Julie Lipp-Nathaniel. In a short speech she thanked Mr Shaw for his chairmanship over the last three years and hoped that, despite her living in Germany, she would be able to serve the Friends well in the years to come.

The Chair then introduced the speaker of the day, Dr Mrs Pauline Sathiamurthy, General Secretary of the Church of South India. Dr Sathiamurthy gave us a glimpse behind the scenes as she described the preparations for this Jubilee Year in the CSI. The slogan they had chosen, "Rejoice in Christ - Build Communities of Hope", contained two imperatives. Rejoicing in our common Lord and Saviour would help the church to overcome barriers of denomination and caste, and lead to further unity with the Church of North India. Members were already welcome and accepted in each other's churches. The Church was trying to be obedient to Jesus' high priestly prayer to become a church without walls, going into the community to bring the love of God through their social work. The Synod had challenged the 4 million members of the CSI this year so that their considerable resources could be made available for the growth of the church through building communities of hope. They had sought to raise Rs 10 million for an Education Endowment (received Rs 15 million); to drill 120 bore wells (CWM has made a grant); to build 60 houses for retired sextons; 60 couples to be given resources to enable them to marry (30 have already received); renovation of 60 heritage churches and to 60 parsonages; to improve homes for the aged and disabled; to create an endowment for pastors' pensions. Dr Sathiamurthy continued by outlining what the Church hopes to do to help girls gain employment, stop their exploitation and provide their families with alternate life-support skills. Dalits were also on their agenda as were pavement dwellers and rag pickers. She ended by expressing the

gratefulness of the Church to missionaries who had brought the gospel to South India and reminding us of Moses' rod (Exodus 4) signifying what great things God can do through us if we will believe in Him.

The Chair thanked Dr Sathiamurthy and presented her with a gift requesting that she take our greetings back to the CSI and assure them of our continued prayers for them. There followed more beautiful dancing by the All Saints Church Dance Group and the Chair then closed the meeting with thanks to all, especially the Secretary, who had made the day possible. 120 members and friends enjoyed a day of fellowship and celebration, which ended with tea.