

NEW ZEALAND THIRUMURUGAN TEMPLE SOCIETY INCORPORATED

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 20 SEPTEMBER 2009

Dear Members,

Greetings and very warm welcome to all of you. Thank you very much for your kind presence here this morning. With absolute surrender to the Almighty, it is with great pleasure that I present the President's report for the last 12 months.

Without doubt, the distressing situation in Northern Sri Lanka dominated our thoughts and prayers, particularly since the beginning of this year. The temple community along with Tamils and peace loving people all over the world were extremely traumatised by the turn of events. Several special prayers and congregational devotional singing were held at the temple including a wonderful sacred "Homam" by all the Hindu priests residing in Auckland. Our priest and the temple community took part in many public inter-faith prayers around Auckland. Let us all take a moment to pray, remembering those who lost their lives, those who lost their families, those who lost everything in the war and those who are presently in the IDP camps in extremely appalling conditions.

As temple management we recognise that prayers and unshakeable faith in God is what is helping most people get through this difficult period. We are very conscious of providing an environment that is conducive for the community to continue steadfastly with their prayers and share their feelings. We also believe that the temple must show the required leadership that despite the set backs; our faith, religion, culture and heritage will go on forever. It is also very humbling that in conjunction with the community, we were able to do a specific fund raising food parcel event to support the affected people in at least a small way. The event was very successful and resulted in us donating \$7,112.63 (GBP 2,750) to "Sivan Arul Illam" in Thirukketheeswaram, Mannar. A separate statement of accounts and a letter of acknowledgement from "Sivan Arul Illam" are attached to the set of documents distributed.

The management committee held a planning session earlier in the year to review current activities and to identify short to medium term initiatives. In the main, in addition to some new initiatives, opportunities to fine tune and enhance current activities were also identified. These include:

- Extending the opening hours further.
- Encouraging wider participation in devotional singing.
- Addition of musical instruments to enhance the vibration at devotional singing.
- Look at opportunities to have more special poojas to meet the community expectations.
- Tamil to English translation of key messages at all major festivals to make the events palatable to children and non-Tamils.
- To produce and release a DVD with explanation of rituals by the Priest in Tamil and English
- Organise a music and food festival for fund raising
- Allocate sponsorship of a special festival ("Karthigai Theepam"?) for female youth.

Over the next few months we will work towards implementing all or most of these initiatives.

The following outlines our progress with on going activities during the last 12 months:

Cultural

With the blessings of the Almighty, all spiritual services are proceeding well to the high standard we have come to expect now. Subtle enhancements to poojas and festivals are being made continuously. There is greater awareness and commitment to manage within planned time without compromising the quality of service. Temple patronage shows a continuous increase in trend particularly during week days and major festivals. Sponsorship of special poojas and festivals are usually fully taken however we do have periodic gaps in sponsoring poojas on Fridays. The committee would continue to make efforts to invite more sponsorship on Fridays.

Educational & Welfare

- Educational classes held every Sunday are progressing well. These classes incorporate Hinduism as well as value based practical teaching.
- Hinduism classes held on Sundays are also going well although the number of students attending is dwindling to an extent, as children face competing demand on their time.
- The weekly radio broadcast is used as a medium for educational purposes as well updating the community on temple activities. Our feedback suggests a broad level of regular audience.
- A number of well researched educational books and "Saiva Neethi" were published. These were well received by the community.
- The weekly library system is now well established and used regularly. A list of books available has been published on the Temple web site.
- In conjunction with the community around Auckland, the temple decided to cancel the "Waitangi Family Sports Day" as the situation in Northern Sri Lanka was intensifying and the community in a distressed state. The temple received a grant of \$1,000 towards celebrating "Waitangi Day 2009". Part of this was used to recognise winners of speech competitions at "Pannum Parathamum" and unused amount of \$616 was returned to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

Membership

Our legal status is an incorporated society and therefore membership of the society is central and fundamental. I am very pleased to report that our ordinary membership increased by nearly 8% to 179 as at 30 June 09. There were also 24 life members and 17 trustees at the same time.

Financial

Financial systems and practices that ensure discipline and integrity are well entrenched. The current economic environment and the situation in Sri Lanka possibly had direct impact on our finances during the year as donation levels dropped and operating costs increased. During the last year for the first time we held a fund raising food stall at the Deepavali Festival over a whole weekend in central Auckland. While this venture resulted in a relatively small surplus, it did not justify the enormous time and effort that was put into doing it. We are hoping to apply some of the learnings from this experience at the same event next month. The decision to forego one of the food parcel rounds for supporting the relief effort and cancelling "Muthucharam" reflecting the mood of the community is likely to have direct impact of around \$6,500 on our overall income in the current financial year. As always we welcome suggestions from members as to how this gap could be bridged.

Costs of regular maintenance and minor projects of capital nature are particularly high. We often attempt to seek sponsors for capital type of work however some of them are urgent and need to be attended to without delay. A number of projects were completed during the year and others have been identified but held back seeking sponsors. These include replacing a faulty refrigerator, constructing an awning in front to provide some weather protection, installing efficient drainage facilities, plumbing from the Altar to avoid the use of buckets, upgrading our sound systems, improving the appearance of the frontage and refurbishing the wash room upstairs. Members and well wishers are welcome to support one or more of these projects by sponsoring them.

Future

We are very enthusiastic about entering the next phase of the temple that would resolve some of the present frustrations such as not having a wedding/dining hall, not enough facilities for educational classes, lack of facilities for large scale cooking, insufficient storage areas and so on. However, we are very conscious that any solution that we come up with would need to be practical and financially sustainable. We are progressing well towards raising a deposit towards the next stage but are not yet at a comfortable level to minimise our borrowing. We will work closely with the board of trustees and keep you involved as well.

Acknowledgements

It is over eight years since we moved to the present location and with the Grace of the Almighty and the unwavering support of the community we have come a long way from where we started. It is absolutely important that we acknowledge and place on record the massive contribution of the community that has been an integral part of our growth. While it is almost impossible to single out individuals we humbly wish to express our gratitude to the following:

- Our Patron Mr P Murugasu for his valuable advice, encouragement and guidance at all times.
- The Board of Trustees for their vision and direction.
- Our Priests Brahmashri Raja Rajeswara Kurukkal and Mayuranatha Kurukkal for their commitment to excellence in conducting the poojas at the highest standard.
- The members for renewing their membership annually and supporting the temple society.
- Our Honorary Auditor Mr S Navaneethan for his auditing services and recommendations.
- The regular financial donors without whose support we will not be able to meet our on going costs.
- The members who demonstrate great commitment by taking the regular Hinduism classes and Pannisai Classes.
- Members of the community who regularly volunteer their time to look after the reception area and also help out with the pooja proceedings.
- Members who volunteer their time to look after the weekly library system.
- The volunteer/s taking responsibility for on going maintenance, regular cleaning after poojas, and "siramathanam" such as one held last Sunday.
- The volunteers who make garlands for the temple week after week.
- The volunteers who support our food parcel fund raising activities with order taking, purchasing, donations, purchasing of ingredients, cooking, packing, delivering and cleaning.
- The co-ordinators, teachers, students, parents, food donors, advertisers, decoration experts, car park helpers and audience at our annual cultural programmes "Pannum Parathamum" and "Muthucharam".

- Those members who provide material for our weekly radio programme and help to present them.
- The music teachers, students and parents for their contribution to Friday devotional singing.
- Those members, particularly the youth for the help with “prasatham” packing and distribution at major festivals.
- Those members who help us with maintaining our web site, email communication, and community newspaper pick up and distribution.
- The community as a whole for the remarkable, unwavering, continuous support at all times.
- The generous donors in various forms towards our special fund raising project to support the relief work in Northern Sri Lanka.

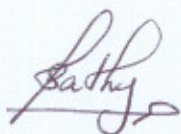
The list goes on and on and is certainly not exhaustive. We the members of the management committee are truly humbled by all your generosity and support and would like to record our sincere appreciation to each and everyone who has been part of the on going growth of the Society. We are truly grateful to God for giving us this opportunity to serve the community to the best of our abilities.

Management Committee

On a personal note, I wish to take the opportunity to acknowledge the support and enormous contribution of the management committee over the last 12 months. We have an expectation that serving the community in the name of God is a privilege and calls for humility, commitment, discipline, personal sacrifice and above all an attitude of selflessness. With our Lord Muruga’s grace we will strive to demonstrate these characteristics at all times.

“The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts life”

May our Lord Muruga’s blessing be with everyone!



S. Sathiyaselvan
President

20 Sept 09