

Tamil congregation celebrates 13 years of faith and community in Adelaide

In a celebration marking 13 years of spiritual journey, the Emmanuel Tamil Church Community in Adelaide reflected on its remarkable growth from humble beginnings to becoming a thriving multicultural faith community.

Founded 13 years ago under the leadership of Reverend Samson Asirvatham, the congregation began when then-Archbishop Jeffrey Driver posed a simple yet profound question: â??Why canâ??t you start an Indian congregation?â?• This spark of inspiration led Samson to gather a few families who began meeting and praying in homes, united by the desire to worship in their native Tamil language.

â??We were thinking, why canâ??t we worship in our own language? And by Godâ??s grace, this came into place,â?• Samson recalls of those early days.

What started as a small prayer group has blossomed into a congregation of 30-40 families who travel from across Adelaide â?? from Croydon to Mawson Lakes â?? to worship each Sunday afternoon at St Richardâ??s, Lockleys. The congregationâ??s journey has taken them from St Augustines Unley to Enfield, then Alberton, before finally settling at their current location in 2017, where they have remained for the past eight years.



The Tamil congregation has lots of children and young people attend regularly

The congregation stands out as a rare example of both â??biological and evangelical growthâ?•, as Samson describes it. The Tamil community features families across all generations, with a particularly strong presence of children and young people.

â??That is the beauty of this congregation,â?• Samson says. â??The church always has people, youngsters. Itâ??s an ongoing thing.â?•

The congregation represents a unique ecumenical gathering within the Anglican framework. While predominantly comprised of Tamil speakers from South India, the community also includes Sri Lankan Tamils, and unites people from various denominational backgrounds under the Anglican umbrella.

â??It is an ecumenical ethnic emerging congregation because we have people from all denominations coming together,â?• Samson says. â??It is very interesting and challenging as well to accommodate all traditions.â?•



The Tamil young adults choir share in celebrating 13 years of community



Members of the adult choir celebrate with songs in the Tamil language

The ministry is now shared between Samson and his wife, the Reverend Dr Gethzi Devasagayam, who is also parish priest at St Lukeâ??s Whitmore Square and previously served as a hospital chaplain and celebrated Mass at the anniversary service. She now balances her roles as a teacher, adjunct lecturer, and President of the Mothersâ?? Union while supporting the Tamil ministry.

The congregation maintains strong ties with the local English-speaking Anglican community, who have been â??very supportive and helpfulâ?•, Samson says. Sunday eveningâ??s service was attended by Anglican clergy from across the Diocese with the Venerable Andrea McDougall, Archdeacon of Sturt preaching the sermon and parish priests the Reverend Sally Sandford-Morgan of St Richardâ??s, the Reverend Stephen Bloor of Christ Church North Adelaide, and the Reverend Zinkoo Han of Kidman Park and Mile End among those attending.



The Venerable Andrea McDougall, Archdeacon of Sturt, with the Reverend Dr Gethzi Devasagayam and children of the congregation.



The congregation joins other members of the Adelaide Anglican community for a meal following the service

This relationship exemplifies the broader Anglican commitment to multicultural ministry in Adelaide.

Despite the challenges of coordinating a migrant congregation â?? with many members working weekends and taking turns to attend services â?? the community remains vibrant and committed. Their journey represents a successful model of cultural integration while preserving linguistic and cultural heritage within the broader Anglican communion.

As they mark this significant milestone, the Tamil Anglican congregation continues to demonstrate how faith communities can thrive through cultural connection, intergenerational participation, and ecumenical openness â?? creating a spiritual home where language, culture, and fellowship unite believers from diverse backgrounds.

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