



VISALIA FIRST

# WORLD MISSIONS

*Acts 1:8*

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

two thousand

twenty five





# FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear V1 Family,

I want to share my heart with you about an exciting opportunity we have through our missions giving. As followers of Christ, we are called to spread His love both locally and globally. Our continued initiatives allow us to support foreign missionaries, provide resources to local partners, all of which share the Gospel in places far beyond our reach. When we give, we join in God's work of transforming lives and building His Kingdom. I encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can be a part of this mission. Let's step out in faith, knowing that our generosity will make an eternal impact.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Merrill'.

In Christ,  
Pastor Mark Merrill, D Min

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**“SRI LANKA IS AN ISLAND THAT HAS EVERYTHING, FROM THE BRIGHTEST TROPICAL SUNSHINE TO THE DARKEST NIGHT SKIES, AND A CIVILIZATION THAT HAS LASTED FOR OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS.”**

**-SIR ARTHUR C. CLARKE, BRITISH NATURALIST**

Sri Lanka, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, boasts a rich and ancient history that spans over 2,500 years. Its civilization dates back to the arrival of the Sinhalese people, who, according to legend, were descendants of India. Its earliest kingdoms date back to 377 BC. These early years of national history marked the beginning of cultural and architectural flourishing. These early kingdoms built impressive monuments like the Sigiriya rock fortress and the massive reservoirs and temples that are now UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Buddhism, introduced to the island in the 3rd century BC by the missionary Mahinda, became deeply intertwined with the culture, shaping Sri Lanka's art, literature, and traditions. The island also saw periods of Tamil rule in the north, as well as the spread of



Hinduism, creating a blend of religious practices.

Colonialism began with the Portuguese in the early 16th century, followed by the Dutch in the 17th century, and finally the British in the 19th century. British rule transformed Sri Lanka's economy, focusing on tea, rubber, and coconut plantations, while also intensifying ethnic and social divisions.

After gaining independence in 1948, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) struggled with ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority, leading to a devastating civil war filled with violence and terrorism from 1983 to 2009.

Today, Sri Lankan culture is a vibrant tapestry that reflects its religious heritage, colonial past, and diverse ethnic groups. Its unique place as the crossroads between the Buddhist and Hindu worlds has led to this strategic partnership.

***IT IS ESTIMATED THAT EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS CONSTITUTE LESS THAN 1% OF THE TOTAL POPULATION, WHICH IS APPROXIMATELY 22 MILLION PEOPLE***



evangelical churches in the country. The church focuses on preaching the Gospel, empowering individuals spiritually, and serving the local community through various social initiatives.

It offers programs that cater to youth, families, and the marginalized, aiming to address both spiritual and social needs. Despite the religious diversity in Sri Lanka, People's Church

has gained a reputation for its commitment to faith, compassion, and social justice.

Under the direction of its lead pastor, Dishan Wickramaratne, this church has expanded from the urban city of Colombo to reach the many diverse regions of the nation. In 2025 People's Church plans on adding two more locations in Colombo and dozens more churches, house churches, and outreaches across the country. Each week thousands join for worship services, and they strive to touch double that number weekly through their many different outreach initiatives.

For evangelical Christians, converting believers in Sri Lanka is challenging due to the country's strong religious and cultural identity. The majority Sinhalese population practices Buddhism, and Hinduism is prominent in the Tamil community. Both religions have deep-rooted traditions that shape daily life and social norms.

Social stigmas, fear of ostracism, and interfaith tensions further complicate evangelical missions, making it difficult for Christian groups to gain acceptance or grow their following.

Evangelical efforts can be seen as a threat to the nation's spiritual heritage, often leading to resistance. Additionally, Sri Lanka's legal framework and occasional social pressures can hinder religious conversion.

Despite the resistance and difficulties, there is a church that stands as a beacon of hope across much of the nation. People's Church in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is a prominent Christian congregation known for its vibrant worship and community outreach. Founded in the 1980s, it has grown to become one of the largest and most influential



## 1. KIDS KLUBS

The first step in the vision strategy for People's church is centered on Kids Klub. This hour long program is opened to parents of all religions and teaches children character lessons that come directly from the Bible. Reaching the next generation is the key to winning Sri Lanka. People's church currently has over 5,000 children attending weekly Kid's Klub meetings.



## 3. CHURCH PLANTING

Church planting begins with small group Bible studies where, often families who have received care from the church come and hear biblical teaching. When a community has 2-3 Bible studies it is converted into a house church. A house church creates outreach initiatives and grows into a church that starts the vision process of outreach in a neighboring town. All church planting and campuses across the nation stem to the mother church in Colombo.



# PEOPLE'S CHURCH

# VISION STRATEGY

## 2. FEEDING PROGRAMS

Many children in inner cities and rural villages do not have a daily nutritious meal. People's church, with the help of their international partners, dig water wells and feed thousands of children each day in public schools. This has provided favor with school districts, parents, and government officials and gives the church its initial public witness to a community.



## 4. CHAMPIONS CLUB

Self-sustaining churches are incorporating Champions Club, ministering to children and parents of children with special needs. In Sri Lanka, other religions project heavy condemnation on special needs children and their parents. Champions Club is an opportunity to show the special needs community that Jesus loves them and cares for them.





## V1 REACH

V1 Reach is a ministry of Visalia First that is dedicated to meeting the physical and spiritual needs of our community. The ministry recognizes that while the gospel calls us to reach the world, it also compels us to start in our own backyard, addressing local issues and providing tangible support to those in our community.

The Central Valley faces numerous challenges that are an opportunity for us to be a witness for Jesus. Poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, homelessness, and food insecurity are just a few of the issues that affect the region. Many families live below the poverty line, struggling to meet basic needs. This is why V1 Reach exists! We seek to address these needs through strategic partnerships with local programs and initiatives that provide practical assistance while sharing the love of Christ.

While global outreach is important, this ministry emphasizes the need for local involvement. Reaching out to our neighbors, co-workers, and fellow



community members is a crucial part of fulfilling the Great Commission. In a world that is often focused on distant crises, it's vital to remember that the need for the gospel and practical care is just as urgent right where we live. V1 Reach is committed to being the hands and feet of Jesus, starting in Visalia and extending throughout the Central Valley.

Giving to V1 missions also fuels its local outreach arm, V1 Reach. From monthly financial support, partnering opportunities, and church-wide serve days, V1 Reach is committed to seeing our community impacted by the Gospel of Jesus!

# CATALYST BIBLE COLLEGE

Catalyst Bible College, is committed to raising up the next generation of Christian leaders who are both passionate and equipped to make a lasting impact for the Kingdom of God. At its core, Catalyst exists to provide a biblically grounded, Spirit-filled education that empowers students to embrace their calling to leadership and ministry. The college offers a dynamic



environment where students are nurtured spiritually, academically, and practically, preparing them for a variety of ministry roles, whether in pastoral leadership, missions, worship, or community outreach.

The vision of CBC is unique because it combines rigorous theological education with a deep commitment to discipleship and personal growth. Students are not

only taught biblical knowledge but are also mentored in their faith journey, learning to live out the teachings of Scripture in every area of life.

Providing education to young Christian leaders is crucial in today's world. We live in a time where there is a growing need for leadership that is rooted in biblical truth and driven by

a passion to serve others. As culture continues to shift, the church requires leaders who are not only prepared to navigate these changes but who can also guide others with wisdom, love, and conviction.

Through CBC, we are preparing students to step into that gap, answering the call to be change-makers in the

church, in their communities, and in the world at large. It is our goal to allow students to accomplish this as close to debt-free as possible. Missions giving provides scholarships directly to CBC students who are excelling in their preparation for God's call on their lives.

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Jimmy & Priscilla Abrams, Tanzania  
Micah & Karissa Adams, Latin America Caribbean  
Jamal, & Gwendolyn Alexander, LA inner City  
Tim & Deborah Anderson, Ecuador  
Katie Bailey, France  
Joshua and Erynn Beaty, Chi Alpha Campus  
Ministries West TX  
Lauren Becker, Thailand  
Boy and Girls Missionary Challenge  
Tom & Bonnie Bohnert  
Jonathan Bordan, Eurasia  
Robert & Cilinia Bueno, El Salvador/ LACC  
Dan Campbell, SoCal Missions Director  
Dale & Patti Coad, Caribbean/ LACC  
Gilbert & Virginia Contreras, Argentina  
Thom & Becky Davis, Ecuador  
Mark & Jean Devine, Colombia  
Ann Dimond (White), Ireland  
Troy & Ginnette Doudy, Peru  
Jeff & Michelle Dove, Asia Peninsula  
Norm & Heather Edwards, Eurasia  
Draper & Jennaya Encheff, Arab World, Eurasia  
Amy Farley, Vietnam  
JJ & Nelia Ferrel, Romania's Youth  
Michael & Dodey Files, Chile  
Mark Flattery, Northern Asia/ Network 211  
Jason & Cindee Frenn, World Crusades/ LAC  
Strategic Network  
Clarke & Jennifer Jensen, India  
Global University, Cuba

Raegan Glugosh, Romania  
David & Doris Godwin, Mexico  
Jeremy & Faith Godwin, Builders International  
Juan & Colette Gonzalez, Japan  
Mark & Dalene Good, Western Europe  
Simon & Anjana Gounder, US Asian Indians  
Judy Graner, Colombia  
David & Beth Grant, Southern Asia  
Christopher & Charisse Groh, Eurasia  
Jim & Karla Gutel, SoCal School of Ministry  
Austin & Tsehaynesh Henderson, Spain/ Europe  
Nicole Herrero, Europe  
Galen & Dickie Hertwick, Asia Pacific Seminary  
Jhan & Iris Hurst, Think A Minute Radio  
Inspire Project, Europe  
Daniel & Therese Irizarry, Cuba  
Ryan & Amy Jacobs, Malawi  
Marcus Johnson, US Maps  
Nellie Johnson, Anti-Human Trafficking  
Kirk & Yvonne Jones, Panama  
Ryan Jordan, Colombia  
Kautz Family, Colombia  
Paul Kazim, Latin America Caribbean  
Mark Kinney, Argentina  
Dan & Gail Klepel, Thailand  
Steve & Julie Kramer, USA  
Richard & Janice Larson, Hispanic Ministries  
Logan & Gabriella Lee, USA Church Planters  
Karissa Liebe, India  
Light for the Lost  
John & Adriana Lungu, Moldova  
Mary Mahon, Costa Rica

Sobhi & Jeri Malek, Eurasia  
Matthew & Debbie Mann, Botswana  
Maranatha Village  
Matt & Andrea Marlin, Mozambique  
Allen & Joann Martin, Latin America  
Abbie Masengale, Greece  
Ben & Wendy McClure, Thailand  
Ameryn Mickley, Eurasia  
Harry & Elizabeth Osland, Portugal & Angola  
Adam & Sarah Quinn, Costa Rica  
Joann Riley  
Gilbert & Gladys Rodriguez, Spain  
Joe & Nancy Saggio, American India College  
David & Carol Schmidt, Cameroon  
Jared & Kailia Shoultz, Mozambique  
Osmar & Linda Silva, Portugal  
Speed The Light  
Ann Steward, Eurasia  
Aldo & Liliana Suarez, Argentina  
Aaron & Sara Svenby, Central Eurasia  
Randy & Becky Tarr, West Africa  
Bill & Valerie Thomas, Church Mobilization  
David Trementozzi, Belgium  
Paul Trementozzi, Spain  
Soloman & Lori Wang, Asia Pacific  
Terry & Debbie Waisner, Thailand  
Sara Whitehurst, Thailand  
Gil & Chanel Williams, Austria  
David & Margot Woodworth, Colombia  
Puentes Dominican Republic  
Jude Rockwell Academy, India

## LOCAL PARTNERS

Project Hope  
Allegro Organizational Solutions, Inc.  
Bakersfield Teen Challenge  
Berean Pathway Ministries  
Bethlehem Center  
Builders International  
Care Pregnancy Center  
Central Valley Teen Challenge  
Circle of Love  
Dawnings, PRC  
Frontiers  
Good New Jail Ministry  
Hands in the Community  
Love, Inc.  
Mountain Gateway  
Safe Harbor  
Salt & Light Visalia  
Salvation Army: Visalia Corps  
SAT7-PARS  
Sisterhood of Grace  
Spirit 88.9 (Formerly KDUV)  
Students International  
The Promise Radio (formerly KARM)  
Tulare Kings Right To Life  
Visalia Emergency Aid Council  
Visalia Rescue Mission  
Wycliffe Bible Translators  
Young Lives of Tulare Co  
Youth for Christ/ Campus Life





*Romans 10:13-15*

*"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*



VISALIA FIRST

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