CHAPTER II

The Churches of the London Missionary Society (L.M.S)
CHAPTER II

THE CHURCHES OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY (L.M.S)

West European Countries in the eighteenth century witnessed religious revivals of one kind or the other. This revival caused the emergence of missionary societies for overseas expansion of the Christian faith. One such was the London Missionary Society.¹

London Missionary Society

Seven ministers and a few laymen met in a meeting at London on 8th January 1795 for prayer and consultation. In that meeting they decided to organize a missionary society for the over-seas expansion of the faith. Accordingly “Missionary Society” was started on Monday 21, September 1795 at the Castle and Falcon in Alders Gate Street in London.² The name London was prefixed in 1818 to be known as the London Missionary Society.³ Ever since its formation the Society started sending its

---

missionaries to the overseas countries. Accordingly, its first missionary to reach the princely State of Travancore was the Silesian William Tobias Ringletaube.⁴

**Advent of Ringletaube to South Travancore**

Ringletaube’s desire for missionary work in India inspired him to join the L.M.S.⁵ Responding to the pressures from various guests, the L.M.S. sent Ringletaube to India along with five other missionaries on 10 April 1804.⁶ Their vessel reached Tranguebar on 4 December 1804. There at Tranguebar Ringletaube started learning the native language.⁷ Ringletaube while staying at Tranguebar got a chance to come to South Travancore. The socio-economic condition of the region seemed to offer him a rich ground for the establishment of a mission centre there at Mylody in South Travancore.

**Socio-Economic Condition**

The socio-economic conditions of the lower strata of the South Travancore Society roused pity and concern in him. The people lived in darkness. They were victims to ignorance and poverty as well as enslaved by tradition and superstition.⁸ Taking into consideration the wretched condition

---

⁴ Ibid., pp.36-39.
⁵ Gunamony, loc.cit., p.3.
⁸ Missionary Chronicle for January 1822, p.36.
of the masses Ringletaubé started his work and established the mission centre at Mylody. The caste-Hindus ill-treated the unprivileged sections like the Nadars and the Ezhavas and enslaved the Parayas and the Pulayas. The high caste people having taken the upper hand in the society and the administration denied justice to the downtrodden. They treated the unprivileged as animals and criminals.\(^9\)

In Kanyakumari (the erstwhile South Travancore) the Nadars, despite their numerical majority had a degraded social status.\(^10\) Caldwell described them as “Poor but not Paupers, rude and unlettered”.\(^11\) Ringletaubé says that “The habits of the Shanars are extremely simple. They are quarrelsome, avaricious, and deceitful”.\(^12\) This unprivileged section was highly illiterate, ignorant and superstitious. The members thereof lived under most unhealthy and insanitary conditions and became easy victims to epidemics and other diseases. Life itself had become meaningless in the presence of an oppression. At this juncture they stood ready to accept any faith which could give relief to them. Utilising this opportunity Ringletaubé started the Mylody Mission.\(^13\) His entry into South Travancore was

---

12. Ringletaubé's Journal, 19 June 1806, p.82.
facilitated by two natives of Mylody namely Maharasan and Sivagurunathan.\textsuperscript{14}

**Arrival of Ringletaube to Mylody**

Vedamanickam invited Ringletaube to Mylody saying that a large number of people were ready to embrace Christianity. So Ringletaube applied for a Passport to enter South Travancore.\textsuperscript{15} He was permitted to travel to South Travancore, but faced opposition from the Caste-Hindus\textsuperscript{16} With the help of a small group of people he set out on his journey to South Travancore on 12 April 1806 and passed the Aramboly Pass to reach Mylody on 25 April 1806.\textsuperscript{17} At Mylody he was welcomed by Vedamanickam. The intention of Ringletaube was to start a mission in Kanyakumari.\textsuperscript{18} But because of the opposition of the Caste-Hindus again he left for Palayamkottai on 10 July 1806. In March 1807 he came to Kanyakumari for the second

\textsuperscript{14} Maharasan and Sivagurunathan of Mylody were responsible for bringing protestant Christianity to Mylody. They were Saivites and uncle and nephew respectively. They went on a pilgrimage to Chidambaram in 1806. On their way back to Mylody they listened to a Sermon preached by the Tranquebar missionary J.C. Kohlhoff at Tanjore. Attracted by the Sermon they accepted Christianity and received baptism at the hands of Kohlhoff. They also accepted the Christian names – Vedamanickam and Masillamoni respectively. After reaching home they explained the developments to their neighbours. They also expressed their desire to embrace the new faith. Thereafter Maharasan went to Tanjore twice and met Ringletaube. (Inscription on the Pillar in front of the Mylody Church).

\textsuperscript{15} Ringletaube’s Journal, Palayamkottai, 12 to 13 March 1806, p.77.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.78.

\textsuperscript{17} Joy Gnanadason, op. cit., p.60.

\textsuperscript{18} I.H. Hacker, op.cit., p.29.
time. Soon he visited Anjugramam a village situated 17 km south-east of Nagercoil on 1 April 1807.\textsuperscript{19}

Ringletaube selected Mylody as the centre for his missionary work. The natives of Mylody wanted him to erect a church in their village.\textsuperscript{20} At that time there was not even a single protestant church in the princely state of Travancore.\textsuperscript{21} Therefore, to seek the state permission for the construction of a church at Mylody, Ringletaube went to Trivandrum in April 1806 and from there he went to Cochin on 8 May 1806.\textsuperscript{22} There he met Col. Macaulay the British resident.\textsuperscript{23} Macaulay promised him to obtain royal permission to build a Church at Mylody. The Caste-Hindus on the other hand opposed the move vehemently. Veluthampi, the Dewan of Travancore stoutly opposed Ringletaube’s plan for constructing a Church at Mylody.\textsuperscript{24} Disappointed Ringletaube left for Palayamcottai on 10 July 1806.\textsuperscript{25} But very soon every thing ended in favour of Ringletaube to establish the first church at Mylaudy.

**First Church at Mylody**

With Macaulay’s help Ringletaube obtained the Royal

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Ringletaube’s Journal, 10 October 1807, p.7.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} I.H. Hacker, \textit{op.cit.}, p.22.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Ringletaube’s Journal, Tranquebar, 4 October 1805, p.66.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Samuel Mateer, \textit{Native Life in Travancore}, p.394.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} C.M. Augur, \textit{op.cit.}, p.501.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Samuel Mateer, \textit{The Land of Charity}, pp.262-263.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, p.268.
\end{itemize}
permission to build a church at Mylody. In May 1809 Ringletaube laid the foundation of the church in the land of Vethamanickam.\(^{26}\) The construction work was completed within four months and the church was dedicated in September 1809.\(^{27}\) Ringletaube appointed Vedamanickam as the catechist of the Mylody church.\(^{28}\) The construction of the first church was followed by that of other six churches.\(^{29}\) But the advancement of the mission required further help for which he got a royal gift.\(^{30}\) Towards the end of 1815 due to his ill-health Ringletaube wrote to the London Board of Directors requesting them to entrust the responsibility of the Mylody Mission to another missionary.\(^{31}\) As none came forward he decided to handover charge of the Mylody Mission to Vedamanickam.\(^{32}\) He was empowered to administer all the churches and the other establishments under the Mission till the arrival of the next missionary.

**Arrival of Rev. Charles Mead and Rev. Mault**

Vedamanickam discharged his duties relating to the mission work up to the arrival of the next missionary Charles Mead in December

\(^{27}\) C.M. Augur, *op.cit.*, pp.130-131.
\(^{28}\) Ibid.
\(^{29}\) The six churches are Tamarakulam, Puthalam, Zionpuram, Pichakudiyiruppu, Kovilvilai and Eathamozhi.
\(^{30}\) Some fields at Tamarakulam and Vailakulam near Mylaudy were offered to the L.M.S as royal gift in 1814. The income from these lands was used to pay the local teachers and execute the other charitable works of the Mission.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p.68.
1817. For the further expansion of the work Mead shifted it to Nagercoil in April 1818. A royal gift of Rs.500/- and a building at Nagercoil and the circuit Bungalow of Col. Munro, helped Mead to shift the mission centre. He did missionary work in co-operation with Richard Knill who came to South Travancore on 29 September 1818. Mead's mission was further strengthened by the arrival of Mrs. And Rev Mault in 1819 at Nagercoil. These factors favoured Mead to construct the spacious and prestigious Home Church at Nagercoil.

**Construction of the Home Church**

Help for the construction of the church came from several sources including the royal family of Travancore. The king of Tanjore extended generous help to the mission. The Rajah of Cochin also donated Rs.5000/-. Help from these sources enabled Mead to plan the construction of the proposed church. In the meantime the Rani Gowri Parvati Bai

33. L.M.S. Report, 1819, p.53.
34. Ibid., p.54.
36. Richard Knill was born on 24 April 1787 at Braunton in England. He reached Travancore in 1818. Mead invited Knill to assist him in the construction of the Home Church (Kalkoil) at Nagercoil which he started on 1st January 1819. He worked only for 2 years in India and spent thirty eight years in England and Russia.
37. L.M.S. Report, 1819, p.54.
38. Charles Mault: He was born on 1 May 1791 in England. He was ordained in October 1818 in the congregation church and reached Travancore on 11 December 1819 as a L.M.S missionary.
40. Missionary Chronicle for May 1819, p.207.
(1815-1829) of Travancore gave the land, timber and some other materials for the construction of the church. Richard Knill laid the foundation stone for the church on 1 January 1819. Only 18 people belonging to 12 families of the Nagercoil congregation attended the function on that day. The construction work started with the permission of the Maharanee of Travancore. She permitted Mead to take the required teakwood from the government forest and to employ the elephants of Nagaraja Temple and the inmates of Nagercoil Sub-Jail in the construction work of the church. With the help of the elephants and the prisoners the huge dressed stones were shifted from the dyke of a tank near the Nagaraja Temple.

With the help and co-operation of the state the building of the imposing structure of the church in Greek style was completed in 1843. It was dedicated in 1843. This massive structure, being built with huge stones, got the name “Kal-koil”. The church is 140 feet long and 70 feet wide. It consists of a spacious hall and a veranda in the front and office rooms in the rear. The 12 massive double pillars erected inside the Church in

41. C.M. Augur, op.cit., p.704.
42. Inscription on the front wall of the Home Church, Nagercoil.
44. S. Padbanabhan, op.cit., p.15.
45. The tank was later drained under the Madras administration to construct the present Anna Stadium at Nagercoil.
46. Inscription on the front wall of the Home Church, Nagercoil.
47. I.H. Hacker, op.cit., p.34.
two rows support the entire structure.\textsuperscript{48} Today this Home Church is one of the oldest and biggest of the protestant churches in South India. It was constructed with a view of accommodating about 2500 people at a time.\textsuperscript{49} This shows the astonishing vision of Mead. He tried hard for the development of the place and its people.\textsuperscript{50} But at the time of dedication of this Church Mead had already left for the Neyyoor Mission allowing Mault to be in charge of the Nagercoil Mission.\textsuperscript{51}

Mault's attempts at getting more converts was a great success and even some high castes came to embrace the new faith. One among them was a Brahmin named Neelakanta Subaiyar. He was Christened as Devadhason\textsuperscript{52} and became the first converted clergy of the church. Mault stayed at Nagercoil and worked for 35 years for the development of the Mission. He died on 17 October 1858 and the inner wall of the Nagercoil

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.15-16.
\item \textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Tablet on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Samuel Mateer, \textit{Land of Charity}, London, 1871, p.273.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Rev. Devadhason with his original name Neelakanda Subaiyar was born in December 1816 in an Orthodox Brahmin family in the Tirukzhilur village of Sreevaikundam Taluk of Tirunelveli District. As he was not interested in his school education his mother placed him under the care of Miller pastor. There he studied scripture along with school education and became a school master in his own village. He married his uncle's daughter Lekshmi, when she was 4 years old. Following that with the help of Mault he became a teacher in the Thovalai school. Soon he gained mastery over scripture and in 1839 he embraced Christianity with the new name Devadhason. He worked at Jamestown and on 30 October 1860 he became a catechist of the Nagercoil Home Church. He was ordained as the first Indian pastor of the Nagercoil church on 13 February 1866. He was promoted to glory on 10 January 1874 and was buried in the Home Church graveyard. (Tablet fixed on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil).
\end{itemize}
Home Church bears an inscription in memory of this veteran missionary. In addition to this in commemoration of the fruitful service of Mault, an endowment has also been made by the congregation to be known as Mault scholarship. 53

**Rev. Devadhason**

Rev. John Joll Dennison, the L.M.S missionary succeeded Charles Mault as the Nagercoil missionary. To assist the new missionary in the evangelical work Devadhason was appointed as the catechist of the Home Church in October 1860. 54 His untiring efforts saw the member strength of the church grow day by day. He went to the market and festival places to preach the Gospel. The church became a pastorate on 13 February 1866. 55 On the same day catechist Devadhason received ordination at the hands of Dr. Mullens 56 at the request of the Nagercoil congregation. 57 The Nagercoil Church under the pastoral care of Devadhason moved in the path of progress. The member strength of the church swelled considerably. All the members wholeheartedly received the holy communion administered regularly. The services conducted by this pastor, especially his special prayers at times of epidemics, were laudable. 58

---

53. Tablet fixed on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil.
55. Name Board showing the name of pastors who worked in the Home Church, Nagercoil.
56. Dr. Mullens visited India on a deputation of the Directors of the society. He took part in the ordination service of Rev. Devadhason in the Home Church.
57. T.D.C., Report of the seminary and Home Station for the year 1866, p.16.
58. Ibid., 1865, p.12.
First Church Committee

After 1866 the church became independent with an elected committee of three deacons. The deacons imparted religious instruction to the coolies and distributed tracts among the Non-Christians. A female Colporteur was also employed to sit by the way side gave tracts and hand bills to passers-by. Besides these, a large number of developmental activities were handled in the name of the church.

Developmental Activities

In 1871 Rev. Devadhason brought out a detailed report on the development of the church. In that report he mentioned the total strength of the Nagercoil L.M.S. congregation as 837. Many auxiliary services like the Sunday School were worked out. It was during this period that the church was beautified with foreign lights and new seating arrangements. The establishment of a village school along with the church was another achievement of the pastor. The bell tower of the church came up out of the contributions of his wife and children. These developments along with a host of others led the church in the path of progress and promotion.

60. Ibid.
64. The original name of Mrs. Devadhason was Lakshmi. Later she was baptised as Sornammal.
65. Inscription on the Belfry of Home Church, Nagercoil.
midst of these achievements Devadhason died on 10 January 1874. After the death of Devadhason Rev. J. Duthie the missionary took care of the church. In 1875 the congregation at its expense replaced the thatched roof of the church with Galvanized Iron sheets. In 1879 Rev. J. Joshua became the Home Church Pastor.

**Rev. J. Joshua (1879-1900)**

Rev. J. Joshua shouldered the responsibilities of the church for 22 years. His period witnessed the further growth of the congregation, improvement of the Church economy and the rejuvenation of the church auxiliaries like the Sunday School, the Mault Mission and the Christian Endeavour. The report of the missionary Allen, discloses the fact that public worship was conducted in the Church at 7.30 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Sundays. Similarly a scripture class for the Church adults was conducted at the close of second service on Sundays and mid-day of Saturdays. This was further confirmed by the One Hundred and Second Report of the L.M.S.

66. Tablet fixed on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil.
68. Inscription on the front wall of the Home Church, Nagercoil.
69. Mault missionary society was established in the year 1872 in memory of Rev. Charles Mault, who served as missionary in Nagercoil from December 1818 to December 1854, and went back to his British home. Yet his friends wanted to establish a native missionary wing in the church in India where he served. So they wrote to Rev. James Duthie, the then missionary at Nagercoil and got established the Mault missionary society in 1872. The aims of the society are preach gospel to the Non-Christians in the Nagercoil town and establish the new congregations to be taken over by the Kanyakumari diocese on the attainment of self-sufficiency.
Children’s Meeting

On 19 November 1897 the Home Church organised a children’s meeting presided over by Rev. Duthie, the Nagercoil Missionary. It was attended by dignatories like the Peiscar of the Southern division. The meeting began with a song followed by a Bible recitation. Four speeches were made on topics, ‘Children at Home’, ‘Children in School’, ‘Children in the Church’ and ‘Children at Play’. This meeting was a landmark in the history of the Nagercoil Home Church.

The catechists were expected to visit the houses of the congregation on all the week days to teach them catechism. The work of Rev. Joshua helped in the spiritual advancement of the neighbouring places especially at Vadasery. A piece of land was purchased at Vadasery and a Church was constructed. In 1899 the Nagercoil Church was associated with the Congregational Union of England and Wales. Joshua died on 1.7.1900. Then Rev. Yesudian came in his place as the third pastor of the Nagercoil Home Church.

Rev. S. Yesudian (1901-1908)

S Yesudian joined the Home Church as a catechist in 1866 and became a full-time evangelist in 1874. He was ordained on 14 February

1901 as the pastor of Home Church. He was the first Indian District Minister of Travancore. The work of Rev. Yesudian was largely focussed on the uplift of the poor out castes. To educate their children this pastor started the "Philips School" with the help of his friends in Nagercoil. The Church Sunday School had been reorganised on new lines in co-operation with the catechists and seminary teachers. The church in the long run became prosperous enough to extend financial assistance to the Nagercoil Hospital. In fact it became one of the largest churches in India. During this period the Mault Mission brought new places like Puthukudi and Kottar under its jurisdiction. Thus the church was on its onward march. When the Church stood at the zenith of its growth Pastor Yesudian died on 13 August 1908 and the vacancy was filled by Rev. John M. Kesari.

Rev. John M. Kesari (1912-1921)

During Rev. S. Yesudian’s period J.M. Ambrose had been appointed as his assistant. At the death of Yesudian there was no qualified pastor for immediate appointment in his place. Hence assistant J.M. Ambrose looked after the church up to 1912. Later John M. Kesari took

74. T.D.C., A Brief Report of the Nagercoil Home Church for the year 1901, p.3.
75. Tablet fixed on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil.
76. Report of the Philip’s Puram Church, Nagercoil, 1999, p.4.
charge of the church as Pastor on 9.3.1912 and served for nine years. In 1919 the church witnessed its pastoral Golden Jubilee and the church centenary. In 1921 J.M. Kesari was promoted as the first Indian District Minister of the Nagercoil District. He enjoyed a dominant position in the church administration and served as Home Church pastor from 1912 to 1921. While serving as the district minister of Nagercoil District he was elected president of the newly formed Travancore Church Council in 1923. He continued in this post up to his unexpected death after a short illness on 14 April 1930. His successor to the Home Church was Rev. J.M. Ambrose, who had been serving as assistant pastor of the church.

**Rev. J.M. Ambrose (1921-1928)**

In 1921 J.M. Ambrose was elevated as pastor of the church after the retirement of J.M. Kesari. When he was the pastor of the Home Church he did three memorable things. The first was the flooring of the Home Church with Quilon tiles, the second the building of the porch in front of the church and the attached steps with special granite pieces. Setting up of the holy Communion Table with the wooden platform was the third important work of J.M. Ambrose.

81. Tablet fixed on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil.
83. Tablet fixed on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil.
84. Ibid.
85. Name board showing the name of pastors who worked in the Home Church, Nagercoil.
Rev. J.M. Ambrose introduced many new programmes on spiritual lines. The children’s service that he started became an important factor for the growth of the protestant community in the region. Altogether he created a spiritual awakening among the people. Following his retirement in 1928 the catechist Mr. Ahimas looked after the administration of the church up to his death in 1929. After his death D.M. Yesudian was appointed as catechist of the Home Church. He served from 1929 to 1953. Thus whenever the Pastor’s post fell vacant the catechists filled the place and served the church.

**Rev. J. Ebenezer Kesari (1930-1933, 1941-1946)**

In 1930 Ebenezer Kesari was appointed as pastor of Home Church. During his period the wooden roof of the porch was replaced by cement roof in 1933. In the same year he was transferred as District Minister to the Neyyoor district and subsequently got transferred to Trivandrum District. Following the Transfer of Ebenezer Kesari to Neyyoor Rev. Meadperdhas Nallathambi Charles (1934-1939) became the pastor of the Nagercoil Home Church.

**Rev. Meadperdhas Nallathambi Charles (1934-1939)**

Meadperdhas Nallathambi Charles became the pastor of the Nagercoil Home Church in 1934. During his period English service was

---

87. Name board showing the name of pastors who worked in the Home Church, Nagercoil.

revived in the church. The electrification of the church and the modification of the Allen Memorial Hall were the few important works of the period.\textsuperscript{89} He retired from service in 1939. The catechist J.C. Rajaretnam, a native of Nagercoil looked after the affairs of the church till the return of Rev. J.E. Ebenezer Kesari from Trivandrum as the next pastor of the Nagercoil Home Church for the second time.

At the request of the Home Church, J.E. Kesari once again became the Home Church Pastor in 1941 and continued up to 1946.\textsuperscript{90} During these years Mr. J.S. Mault belonging to Yacobupuram in Tirunelveli district and Mr. Visuvvasam belonging to Karumpattoor worked as catechists in the Home Church.\textsuperscript{91}

In the meantime Rev. Paul Nesamony who had been serving as the district minister of Nagercoil, died in 1949.\textsuperscript{92} So Rev. J. Ebenezer Kesari took charge of the Nagercoil District as District Minister in 1949 and served for 3 years. Then he was transferred to Trivandrum.\textsuperscript{93} Since 1946 the church had been under the pastoral care of catechists due to lack of ordained pastors. To remedy the situation the Home Church invited Rev. V.D.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{89} Home Church Nagercoil (C.S.I) 125\textsuperscript{th} Church day Souvenir (1866-1991), Nagercoil, 1991, p.11.
\textsuperscript{90} Name board showing the name of pastors who worked in the Home Church, Nagercoil.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p.30.
\textsuperscript{93} Home Church Nagercoil (C.S.I) 125\textsuperscript{th} Church day Souvenir (1866-1991), Nagercoil, 1991, p.11.
\end{flushleft}
Sahayam from Madhya Pradesh to assume charge of the Nagercoil Home Church. He took charge as its pastor in 1950 and continued up to 1963.\(^{94}\)

He took keen interest in the development of the branch churches of the Home Church like Henrypuram, Kamarajapuram, Puthukudy, Edalakudy, Arul vilai and Philipspuram.

**Henrypuram Church**

Henrypuram church is located east of Vadasery market. It was built with the contribution made by the Womens’ Fellowship of the Nagercoil Home Church. Its members visited this area and preached Gospel to the Non-Christians of the place.\(^{95}\) Their work had the required response and a church was found necessary. Then the fellowship gradually collected a sum of Rs.5500/- and entrusted the same to the Home Church for the purchase of a site.\(^{96}\) Thus a land was purchased and a small church building was also constructed in the place during the time of the catechist Visuvasampaul to be dedicated on 1.01.1969.\(^{97}\) Since then the church has been growing slowly but steadily.

---

94. Tablet fixed on the wall inside the Home Church, Nagercoil.


Kamarajapuram Church

The Nagercoil Home Church Gospel Team often visited this area and preached the Gospel to the people. For the promotion of this work the Arulvilai Church catechist Isha was sent to Kamarajapuram. As a result of his hard work many people accepted the Gospel and requested Baptism. Accordingly on 21.09.1958, eighty one members of Kamarajapuram Church received baptism at the hands of Rt. Rev. A.H. Legg (The Bishop of South Travancore Diocese of C.S.I) at Arulvilai church. A thatched shed was constructed on 28.10.1958 for worship. The hard work of the first catechist Y. Isha brought many new members to the church. At this stage of its growth, in 1961, the church was brought under the control of the Home Church.

The Kamarajapuram church members longed for a permanent church and a separate entity. Towards the same Dr. William family donated 5 cents of land for the construction of a new church. A building committee was formed in 1965 with E. Paul Natarajan the Tamil Pandit as the Convener. The foundation stone for a new church was laid on 22.11.1965 by IRH Gnanadhason the Bishop and it was blessed by the same Bishop on 24.12.1967.

99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
Puthukudi Church

The Home Church Pastor S. Yesudian started the work in the neighbourhood of the present Women's Christian College, Nagercoil mostly inhabited by charcoal dealers. They were ignorant and illiterate and lived under most unhealthy and insanitary conditions. Work among them was first started in the form of a Sunday School by Arumanayagam Catechist of the Home Church, Nagercoil in his own house. Then it became a night school with a student strength of 35 boys and girls. The immediate requirement was a building to be used as school and for worship. P. Arumanayagam and P. Devasahayam (sons of late Mr. Packianathan, Deacon of the Home Church) donated a site for the purpose. Others in the meantime started to take keen interest in the erection of the building. The entire construction work was financed by the Home Church and the Church was blessed by Rev. Duthie on 1.1.1900. Within a short period an agent was appointed to work among them.

New members were added to the church day by day and many Hindus accepted the Christian faith. P. Devasahayam took keen interest in

104. Ibid.
105. Ibid., p.10
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
the conversion of the Non-Christians. He and other well wishers of the area donated liberally for the enlargement of the school.\textsuperscript{110} From 1918 onwards, when Yesudian had been the Home Church Pastor, a Sunday evening service was held in this school building. Initially the people attended morning service in the Home Church.\textsuperscript{111} The name of catechist J.C. Rajaretnam is closely associated with the Puthukudi church. The Home Church Pastor M.N. Charles appointed him as catechist in the Home Church. His devotion to duty and gift of preaching attracted many people.\textsuperscript{112}

In 1933 Rajaretnam was put in-charge of the Puthukudi church controlled by the Home Church. Most of the Puthukudi Church members were addicted to liquor and indulged in frequent quarrels and fighting. Also, they were very poor. The dedicated work of the Catechist among them had the desired effects. Many of them gave up the evil practice of drinking and turned their ears to the gospel. The Catechist also collected cash and kind from the rich to help the sick and the poor of Puthukudi.\textsuperscript{113} It is said that the untiring work of Rajaretnam backed by the wholehearted assistance of his wife Lily paved the way for the spiritual revival of the Puthukudi Church.\textsuperscript{114} His death in 1960 became a great loss to the Church. Rajaretnam was succeeded by Y. Isaiah Catechist. He also worked with great enthusiasm. In

\textsuperscript{110} 'Puthukudi Church', loc.cit., p.87.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
1967 a separate committee was formed. The size of the Puthukudi congregation expanded day by day. More space was now needed. So a new church was built in a central place. It stands on the northern side of the Moderator Gnanadhasan Polytechnic College. The old church is used as a parsonage.

**Edalakudi Church**

This Church is located at Edalakudi on the Nagercoil-Kanyakumari Highway, 1.5 km from Tower Junction. A small Church was constructed through the hard work of Arulanantham Catechist.

**Arulvilai Church**

Arulvilai Church was the first Church of the Nagercoil Gospel Team which was started by D.M. Jesudhas, Catechist of the Nagercoil Home Church. The Student Christian Movement of Scott Christian College used to conduct a Sunday school at Arulvilai in a building belonging to that College on the west of the Catherine Booth Hospital. The then Gospel Team came forward to conduct the Gospel service and the night school in the above mentioned building. Principal Marsden permitted them to use the building for both the purposes. Dr. C. William, a native of Arulvilai, did his best in

---


116. Inscription on the wall of the New Puthukudi Church, Nagercoil.


many ways for the development of the Church. The converts of the place were given baptism at Home Church by J.E. Kesari.119

The number of the converts at Arulvilai grew day by day and hence came the need for a Church. Twenty one cents of land was purchased in 1957 and the foundation was laid for a new Church. It was blessed by Mrs. Marsden on 22-7-1957.120 Rev. J.A. Jacob, Rev. V.D. Sahayam and S.P. Solomon, the press worker did a lot for the development of this Church. Isaiah Catechist was a source of inspiration for the further development of the Church.121

Vadasery Church

The Mission already had a reading room at Vadasery It had been purchased by the Home Church Pastor Rev. Joshua.122 Then with the addition of a bell tower the building came to be used as a girls school. On Sunday evenings V. Moses, the seminary teacher, conducted a service in the school building for the benefit of the converts of the village.123 The people of this area had been generally indifferent towards the new faith for a long time. But they were gradually convinced of the folly of idolatry.124 Some of

119. Ibid.
120. Inscription on the wall of the Arulvilai Church, Nagercoil.
124. T.D.C., Appendix Seminary and Home Stations, Nagercoil for the year 1862, p.15.
them went through the tracts issued by the agent of this area. Their desire to know the truth paved the way for the formation of the first congregation. But the Vadasery congregation was very thin as well as economically very poor. However, some devoted members were there in the congregation.¹²⁵

Newport made periodical visit to the area and preached the Gospel.¹²⁶ The school at Vadasery was built in 1876 by Mrs. Newport. Before that a few children gathered in a house and were taught by a teacher engaged by Devadhason, the beloved pastor of the Nagercoil Home Church.¹²⁷ The people living in the Vadasery area were mainly weavers and most of them were economically very poor. The teachers of the Vadasery school took pains to improve the lot of the people.¹²⁸ For a long time the Vadasery Gospel Centre did not have a separate congregation of its own. They conducted worship services on Sunday mornings at the reading room when convenient. In 1891 the Mault society appointed a catechist to preach the Gospel and distribute tracts and issue newspapers and books to the students. The catechist conducted Sunday services in the reading room and for the noon service they all came down to the Nagercoil Central Church.¹²⁹

The work of Joshua, Pastor of Home Church, went a long way in facilitating

¹²⁵ T.D.C., Report of the Nagercoil District for the year 1862, p.18.
the spiritual uplift of the Vadasery people. In appreciation of that work a piece of land was bought at Vadasery and a church was also constructed.\textsuperscript{130}

**Philipspuram Church**

The Philipspuram Church stands almost at the centre of Nagercoil town. It is situated on the Kanyakumari highway in front of the Nagercoil Anna Bus stand. The elders of the Nagercoil Home Church established this Church for the spiritual development of the backward communities. To begin with, a Sunday School was started among the large number of shoemakers living in the eastern extremity of the Home Church.\textsuperscript{131} Gradually it developed into a day-school. Later a small congregation developed there. This school was named after Dr. Philip, the secretary of the L.M.S. Sunday school union. It was this Philip who inspired S. Yesudian for this work.\textsuperscript{132}

In 1893 Rev. S. Yesudian got 37 cents of land, mostly contributed by the natives for the construction of a Church. Along with it his son Y. Yesudhas bought a building with 17 cents of land in 1896.\textsuperscript{133} There the first church established in the year 1896 flourished under Semmankudy Upadesiar.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{130} Home Church Nagercoil (C.S.I) 125\textsuperscript{th} Church day Souvenir (1866-1991), Nagercoil, 1991, p.7.
\textsuperscript{131} T.D.C., A brief Report of the Nagercoil Home Church for the year 1901, p.8.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} K.K. 9574 Executive Committee Minute of the Kanyakumari Diocese dated 3-1-1981.
\textsuperscript{134} Inscription on the front wall of the Philipspuram Church, Nagercoil.
Semmankudy Upadesiyar

The first catechist Gnanamony of the Philipspuram Church was called as Semmankudy Upadesiyar as the place was inhabited by Cobblers. He worked from 1892 to 1925 and was assisted by Rev. S. Yesudian, Pastor of the Home Church, from 1892 to 1908. The church was very poor in the beginning and could not pay the catechist. In 1901 J.E. Dennison of England sent £3-10s to Rev. Yesudian, to be spent for the work among the non-Christians. Accordingly Rev. Yesudian used this amount for paying the catechist and the Philip school master. The church grew day by day with the able assistance of Rev. Yesudian. The tireless work of the Catechist Gnanamony got many converts to the church. He worked up to 1925. He was followed by S. Gnana Sigamony. He worked as a Catechist from 1926-1932. Gnana Sigamony conducted regular prayer meetings in the church and distributed tracts among the non-Christians.

Gnana Sigamony was succeeded by J.S. Yesudian teacher who worked hard for the development of the Philips school. He was the son of Rev. Yesudian, the Home Church Pastor. After his retirement he became the Catechist of the Church in 1933 and worked up to 1935.

---

139. Ibid.
Rev. Meadperdhas Nallathambi Charles became Home Church Pastor he appointed J.C. Raja Retnam as Catechist in the Home Church. Then he was sent to Philipspuram Church to work as Catechist. He served there from 1936 to 1938. In 1939 to 1942.

In 1943 V.Y. Ebenezer worked as Catechist of the Church and was succeeded by Y. Muthunayagam (1944-1947). He roused spiritual awakening among the Hindus and the Congregation. In 1948 once again the Home Church sent J.C. Rajaretnam to work as Catechist in the Philipspuram Church. He was succeeded by S. Thiraviam (1949 to 1951), J.S. Mault from Tirunelveli District (1952-1956), Mr. J.S. Kesari (1956-1960) and S. Gnana Sigamony (1960-1962). A Church Committee began to function in the church from 12 August 1962. It became a pastorate church on 01.04.1974. Today the church situated on the Kanyakumari highway in front of the Anna Bus stand looks very imposing. It is a standing monument to the suffering and sacrifices of the early missionaries for the cause of cross in the region.

141. 1999 Annual Report of Philipspuram Church, Nagercoil, 2000, p.82.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid., p.4.
Kaliankadu

Origin: The Kaliankadu C.S.I. Church is one of the important churches in the Nagercoil town. Its origin is not so clear. There is a hearsay that three families came from Padukkaipattu to settle down at Kaliankadu. Among them one family was very poor. So the other two ill-treated the members of this family. The ill-treated family embraced Christianity to escape from this torture. The first church was established in 1821 at Panavilai where the land was given by Thiruppapu Nadar and Nalpackianathan. It was a shed with mud walls and a thatched roof. The shed served as a chapel for service on Sundays and as school in rest of the days.

The First Church

The first church was located on the Northern side of the Church street near the well. Mead who supervised this church wrote to the Home Board that “the school at Kaliankadu near Nagercoil is in a good position. Eleven families who profess Christianity are determined to remain with us. Many have fallen away, Christianity is too good for them”. The letter of Mead made it clear that 11 families attended the church service regularly at Kaliankadu. Nagercoil Home Church assistant pastor Sathianathan visited the church and preached Sermons to the people regularly. The strength of the Congregation increased day by day as many accepted the faith.

147. Ibid.
Rev. Duthie the missionary of the station visited the non-Christians of the place many times. A good many had promised to discontinue the idolatrous practices and to attend the services in the chapel.\(^{149}\) The Home Church took interest in the development of the church.

**The Second Church**

The deacons of the Kaliankadu church planned to build a church where the thatched shed was put up. But they soon changed their mind in favour of a church on the side of the highway named Rajapathai. One of the deacons of the church Masilamony gave one acre of land to the Mission in 1868. In 1869 the foundation was laid to build a church of 50'x 22' size.\(^{150}\) In the beginning of the year 1873 the church suffered a heavy loss due to the death of Chinnanadar\(^{151}\) deacon. Throughout his life he stood as a rock behind the congregation. He donated liberally for the development of the church.\(^{152}\) The women of this church regularly conducted prayer meetings in the houses of the believers. They also went to the non-Christian

\(^{149}\) T.D.C., Report of Seminary and Home Station Nagercoil, 1862, p.9.

\(^{150}\) 175\(^{th}\) Annual Report of the Kaliankadu Church, Nagercoil, 1996, p.2.

\(^{151}\) Chinnanadar was the first deacon of the Church. He was the only member of a large and wealthy family to come over to Christianity. He grew in knowledge, love, piety and good works. He was very kind to the poor and fond of preaching Gospel to the non-Christians. He set his heart on having a new nice Chapel at Kaliankadu and offered a thousand of Fanams to begin the construction work. He used to pray for the conversion of his relatives to Christianity.

\(^{152}\) T.D.C., Report of the Nagercoil Mission District for the year 1873, pp.7-8.
houses of the village to enlighten their women about Christ and Christianity.\textsuperscript{153}

In the year 1873 the church had 126 adherents including 54 baptised members. It shows the development of the church.\textsuperscript{154} Muhilan worked as the first Catechist of the church in 1874.\textsuperscript{155} The Kaliankadu Congregation paid the salary of the Catechist and spent 100 Fanams for improving his house.\textsuperscript{156} Chinna Nadan the first deacon of the church served as a senior teacher in the Girls Boarding School, Nagercoil. He preached the Gospel systematically to the poor, the neglected and the oppressed.\textsuperscript{157} Muhilan was succeeded by Joseph.\textsuperscript{158}

The Kaliankadu Congregation grew day by day. Gnanamuthu, Nalpackia Nathan, Masilamony and Samuel were the early deacons of the church. Among them Nalpackia Nathan Athithan contributed generously, much more than any one else in the Congregation. He donated a Bible, a Lyric Book, a Candle stick and a Chair for the use of the church. He died in the year 1877. Sathia Nathan, Evangelist of the Home Church, Nagercoil, reported the death of Nalpackia Nathan Athithan.\textsuperscript{159} The Catechists Muhilan,

\textsuperscript{153} T.D.C., Report of the Nagercoil Mission District for the year 1873, p.8.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 1874, p.2.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p.3
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p.4
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 1877, p.1.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p.4.
Masilamony, Sathianathan, Yesudian, Nallathampi, Packianathan, Vethamony and Vethamanickam worked here from 1821 to 1904.\textsuperscript{160}

During the period of Packianathan Catechist many Hindu families came to the church. He converted the village headman cum priest named Maleichudum Perumal Nadan. While he was attending worship regularly his wife fell sick. His Hindu neighbours told him that she became sick because of his religious conversion. They also insisted him to return to his original faith for her recovery from illness. But he stood firm and said, "If she died she would go to God and that he would not be sorry on that account".\textsuperscript{161} After few days she got better and became ready to receive baptism. It is surprising to know that his father, though a Hindu, gave a piece of land where the Kaliankadu Church stands today.\textsuperscript{162}

C. Yesudian, the Catechist of the Church, worked hard for the spiritual development of the people.\textsuperscript{163} A report was sent to the Home Board in 1884 about the position of the Kaliankadu Church saying "This Congregation is one mile from Nagercoil. The old Kaliankadu Chapel has been in existence from Mr. Mault’s time and though the roof is still good, the situation is too confined and a new one is soon to be began".\textsuperscript{164} Duthie visited the Church on 23 June 1884. He was much impressed with the

\textsuperscript{160} 175\textsuperscript{th} Annual Report of the Kaliankadu Church, Nagercoil, 1996, p.9.
\textsuperscript{161} T.D.C., Report of the Nagercoil Mission District for the year 1881, p.1.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 1883, p.17.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 1884, p.1.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p.9.
improved condition of the church and according to him the church had a strength of 190 in 1884 and 2500 non-Christians lived in the neighbourhood of the Kaliankadu church.\textsuperscript{165}

The Catechist Yesudian made efforts to build the new church. The building work continued up to 1891. At the close of the year 1891 it appeared sufficient for service and on 29 December 1891 it was dedicated.\textsuperscript{166}

Many Hindus of the neighbourhood were favourably inclined towards Christianity believing that Christ is the only Salvation. Packianathan Catechist of Kaliankadu Church died on 30 August 1891.\textsuperscript{167} He was succeeded by Vethamony Iyer as Catechist. In 1896 famine attacked most of the families of the church and 50 beneficiaries were selected for extending help.\textsuperscript{168}

\textbf{Tower Work}

The tower work of the church started in 1900. The Congregation and the Committee of deacons helped in the construction work. However, the work could be completed only with the help of benefactors.

The school was shifted to the Church compound in 1920. Thus the old church was left vacant and it was occupied by some people.\textsuperscript{169} Vethamonickam Catechist was succeeded by Iyavu Catechist and Eramiah.

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} T.D.C., Report of the Nagercoil Mission District for the year 1891, p.28.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 1892, p.6.
\textsuperscript{169} 175\textsuperscript{th} Annual Report of the Kaliankadu Church, Nagercoil, 1996, p.3.
They served the Church from 1905 to 1925.\textsuperscript{170} Eswarapackia Esac, father of Late. I.R.H. Gnanadhason the first Bishop of the Kanyakumari Diocese worked there from 1926 to 1931.\textsuperscript{171}

**Development of the Church**

S. Gnanamuthu succeeded Eswarapackia Esac. During this period with the help of Mrs. Abraham Annamuthu and the Congregation an altar was constructed and dedicated on 22.12.1931 by G.W. Trowell, the L.M.S. missionary and an educationalist, working in Scott School and College. In 1932 the foundation stone was laid for a new parsonage and since then church day has been celebrated. He worked as Catechist from 1931 to 1933 and died on 25.11.1933. He was followed by John in 1934. The parsonage was dedicated in 1934. A Choir was set up by Dr. Solomon. Tile flooring was laid in the church with the help of Mrs. Annamuthu, wife of Jebagnanam Abraham, and the Congregation.\textsuperscript{172} John continued his work up to 1935. Solomon, Esac and Manuel were the deacons who helped the Catechist in his work.

John Catechist was succeeded by Gnamamony Catechist (1935-1938). In 1938 it became a branch church of the Perinbapuram Circle formed in 1938 and continued so up to 1961. In May 1938 James Visuvasam took charge as Catechist of the Church and continued up to January 1939.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., p.10.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., p.3.
\textsuperscript{172} 175\textsuperscript{th} Annual Report of the Kaliankadu Church, Nagercoil, p.3.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., p.11.
During his period 10 cents of land was bought to be the graveyard. James Visuvasam was succeeded by G. Devadhason (1939-1946). His regular house visits caused the conversion of many Hindus. The Church was electrified with the help of Mrs. Rosalint Samson Daniel and P.M. Isaac. G. Christopher helped to instal the sound system of the Church. Devadhason was followed by M. Gunamudian (1946-1953). He took charge in November 1946. During his period prayer meeting of women, Sunday School and child mission were started. A new organ was bought for the church and was blessed on 01.01.1947. In 1950 the church report was published for the first time.

P.J. Charles came to the church as Catechist in June 1953 and worked up to May 1960. During his period Y.M.C.A. was started in the church. The foundation stone for a Y.M.C.A. building was laid by A. Nesamony on 19.01.1955 and the building was dedicated on 13.10.1956. The church grew day by day in strength and stature. For want of accommodation the church was extended with wings of 50' x 22' size. The extension work started on 28.04.1956 by John A. Jacob was completed and dedicated on 26.04.1958. This Kaliankadu Church was elevated to the status of District on 01.05.1961 with Rev. R. Edward Sam as the first District

174. Ibid., p.4.
175. Ibid., p.11.
176. Ibid., p.4.
177. 175th Annual Report of the Kaliankadu Church, Nagercoil, 1996, p.4.
Chairman (Pastor). However, this Church in the early decades of the nineteenth century denied position of dominance to the repressed sections like the Parayas and Sambavars. Hence the dejected depressed people longed for a Church of their own, which was given to them by the Salvation Army.