

JUNE 2026

INFORMATION

Newsletter of the Colombo Theological Seminary



INDUCTION OF THE NEW CTS PRINCIPAL

Nathanael Somanathan was inducted as the new Principal of CTS on 26th March 2026, at a special service held in the CTS Chapel. In attendance were representatives of the CTS community including current and former council members, faculty, staff, students, alumni, partners, as well as representatives from the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL), the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL), and other Bible schools.

Nathanael has served at CTS as a faculty member from 2019, and as Deputy Principal in 2025-2026. He is a graduate of Wheaton College USA, and a PhD candidate at the University of Birmingham UK.

He is married to Skyler, and they have an infant daughter, Maeva.

The service of induction included a message for the occasion by Dr Dennis Hollinger, President Emeritus and the Distinguished Senior Professor of Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary USA; a Statement of Gratitude to God by outgoing Principal, Dr Ivor Poobalan; a Charge for the New Principal delivered by Council President, Rt Rev Dhiloraj Canagasabay, followed by a Commissioning Prayer, led by Ajith Fernando, Founder President of CTS; and a Response by the new Principal.

[Click to watch the induction service on YouTube](#)

MESSAGE FROM THE NEW PRINCIPAL



Leadership transitions can be occasions for confusion, disorientation, and even rivalries. This is not news to many of us who can point to instances where transitions have gone badly, not least in narratives like Saul and David in the Bible.

However, in the case of CTS, I am glad to say that we have much to celebrate. The transition has been God-honouring and dignified for everyone involved. We are thankful that it has displayed God's grace and providential care in ways we could not have imagined.

The induction service for the new Principal, held on 26th March, is a microcosmic picture of this very thing I am describing. It was a profoundly moving service that was a beautiful blend of gratitude for what the Lord has done at CTS and a feeling of curious excitement about what He will do in the future. It was especially a privilege to have many church and denominational leaders, council members, faculty members, students, staff, and partners in attendance at the service, both in person and via livestream. It was a great occasion to reaffirm that CTS exists for the Church and its mission in the world.

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I owe much of my gratitude for a smooth and wholesome transition to my predecessor, Dr Ivor Poobalan. Dr Poobalan has exemplified a high standard of integrity and humility in his leadership and we congratulate him on having completed 27+ years of exemplary and fruitful service as Principal at CTS. We, as a CTS family, have no doubt that Dr Poobalan's next season of ministry will be an even greater blessing to the local and global Church.

On 1st April, I took office. Leading up to this and since, a passage of scripture that has come to my mind repeatedly as I have thought about my role is 1 Corinthians 4. This chapter is part of a longer argument that Paul is constructing to persuade the Corinthian Christians to stop creating personality cults around leaders. Paul reframes how leaders ought to be perceived – not as personalities to rally around or celebrities to put on a pedestal, but as "servants of Christ and managers of the mysteries of God" (v1). Nothing more, nothing less. Therefore, for Paul, Christians who boast about their leaders reveal a poor understanding of their own richness in Christ - who is the singular source of grace - regardless of ministry calling.

All is gift. Paul reminds leaders that every gift is received: nothing is self-generated.

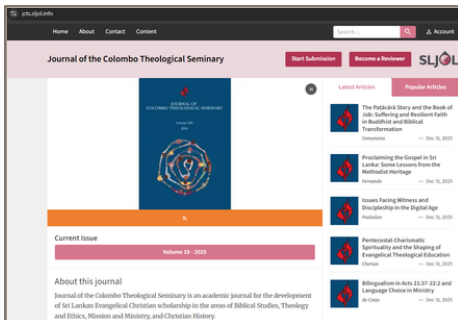
When Christians set up things and people as idols after their own image (v7), they are showing self-exaltation, not God-exaltation. Gifts become idols when they are not received in humility and are spoken of as entitlements. Rather than boasting about greatness, Paul models the opposite (vv.8-13).

Helping people see who they are in Christ is good stewardship of the gospel and the calling of leadership – revealing God's mysteries freely and without mediation that all may find the freedom, security, and status that can only be found in Christ. The leader chooses to be last and least so that others can be rich in Christ. The leader creates empowerment, not dependency.

I envision my role, for this new season at CTS, as empowering the gift of people and stewarding the gift of resources so that the ministry of the gospel may speed ahead through CTS. As the Church continues to navigate various national and ecclesial crises, I am convinced that CTS has unique gifts to bring to the Church. I invite you to pray with me that we do just that.

Soli Deo gloria!

JCTS NOW AVAILABLE ON SRI LANKAN JOURNALS ONLINE



CTS recently reached a milestone when volume 19; of the *Journal of the Colombo Theological Seminary* (JCTS) was published on Sri Lankan Journals Online (SLJOL).

SLJOL is managed by the National Science Library and Resource Centre (NSLRC) of Sri Lanka, and continues to grow as a key national scholarly publishing platform, now featuring 173 journals, 2,950 issues, and 25,163 articles.

The JCTS, published almost annually since 2001, features articles written by faculty members of CTS as well as leading scholars from around the world, contributing sound theological reflection and scholarship.

FELICITATION: DR MANO EMMANUEL CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SERVICE



Dr Mano joined CTS in 2001 as Accountant cum Lecturer. She was soon entrusted with the role of Academic Coordinator, and in 2005 was appointed Academic Dean. Following a tenure of 14 years in this role, she now serves as Head of Academic Advancement, giving focused attention to the development of CTS' faculty and pedagogical resources, while she continues to teach and write as a full-time faculty member.

We look forward to having all 19 volumes of the *JCTS* on SLJOL shortly.

[**Click here to access the SLJO website**](#)

FACULTY NEWS

DR IVOR POOBALAN AS PLENARY SPEAKER OF JOINT SYMPOSIUM OF CTIA AND JAET



Dr Ivor Poobalan, Senior Lecturer and former Principal, was the plenary speaker for the joint symposium organised by the Centre for Theological Inquiry in Asia (CTIA) and ATA's Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology (JAET), in February.

The symposium theme was 'Formed & Sent'. Dr Ivor's plenary talks were on "Leadership for Pioneering Ministries in Asia: Paul as a Model", and "The Phenomenon of First-Generation Christianity in the 21st Century: Theological and Pastoral Response".



VISITING LECTURERS AT CTS CAPITAL



Grace Al-Zoughbi, PhD

A theological educator from Bethlehem with a PhD in Theological Education from the London School of Theology, taught the MA course on 'Missiology in Cultural Perspective'.

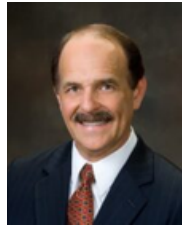


Choon Lee Soh, EdD

A psychotherapist, supervisor, trainer, and an adjunct faculty of the School of Counselling at the Singapore Bible College, taught a modular course on 'Counselling for Trauma and Abuse'.

Dennis P Hollinger, PhD

President Emeritus and Distinguished Senior Professor of Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, taught the MA course on 'Issues in Sexual Ethics and Biomedical Ethics'.



Bennet Lawrence, PhD

Regional Secretary of Asia Theological Association, India, and Graduate of the Asia Graduate School of Theology (Philippines), taught an MA course on '1 Corinthians'.



CONGRATULATIONS



Julian Devadason, Assistant Academic Dean, was awarded the Master of Theology (MTh) from the South African Theological Seminary, in March. For his dissertation he focused on pastoral counselling of first generation believers in Sri Lanka, paying special attention to the discerning of spirits.

In May, he received certification as a Religious Specialist in Christian Pastoral Counselling from the Association of Christian Religious Practitioners (ACRP) and the Council for Pastoral and Spiritual Counsellors (CPSC)- South Africa.



Dilip Gunaweera, Lecturer and Provincial Coordinator (North Central Province) successfully completed the Master of Social Work (MSW) from the National Institute of Social Development, Sri Lanka in November 2025. His dissertation explored the impact of social media usage on rural school education. Dilip is a CTS alumni (BTh '13).

STAFF

Prashanthi Fernando, Administrative Officer (North Colombo Study Centre) was awarded the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership from DAI Lanka in partnership with Lanka Bible College in March.



COUNCIL

Prashan de Mel appointed Country Director of Alpha Sri Lanka



Prashan de Mel (Treasurer, CTS Council) was appointed Country Director of Alpha Sri Lanka. The Alpha Course is a global series of interactive sessions designed to unpack the basics of the Christian faith in a relaxed, non-judgmental environment. It is completely free and specifically tailored for skeptics, new believers, or anyone curious about spirituality and the meaning of life.

Roshan Mendis appointed Global Director of Micah Global



Roshan Mendis, CTS Council member, was appointed Global Director of Micah Global earlier this year. Micah Global is an international network of Christians active in humanitarian response, development, creation care and advocacy.

A YOUTH LEADER FROM JAFFNA SHARES HER STORY...

Born in Sri Lanka's Northern Province in the aftermath of war, I grew up surrounded by scars. But through divine calling and spiritual formation, my path led to the Colombo Theological Seminary, where my broken beginnings were shaped into a ministry of hope. My life has become a beacon to many who wonder whether God still speaks, still sends, and still transforms.

In 2018, I was accepted into CTS as a diploma student. I soon learned that CTS wasn't just about degrees. It was about formation. From the beginning, I sensed a sacred rhythm of worship, community living, theological wrestling, and self-reflection. It was the beginning of a transformation that would reshape my entire identity.

(She received her Diploma in Theology at the Graduation service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning in 2025)

We have heard so many stories of transformation through the years as students engage in sustained theological education, especially for the first time. Our prayer is that every believer is able to receive this education and spiritual formation so that they may be fully equipped to serve God at their best level wherever God has placed them, whether in the Church, business world, or home.

Many keen students in Sri Lanka are hindered from pursuing theological studies because of financial constraints.

MAKE A WAY, TODAY!

Your gift to the CTS Scholarship Scheme will help CTS continue to equip believers for effective Christian service.

How you can make a change:

1. Contribute towards the CTS Scholarship Scheme on an ongoing basis - Monthly/Quarterly
2. Make a one-time donation

You could send in your gift in the following ways:

Bank Transfer/Deposit

Bank: Hatton National Bank (Kohuwela Branch)
Account name: Colombo Theological Seminary (Pvt) Ltd
Account number: 129010017539
SWIFT Code: HBLILKLXOO1
Ref: Your Name/Pledge

**if you make a direct remittance, please keep us informed at rochelle@cts.lk*

Cheque

Address to: Colombo Theological Seminary (Pvt) Ltd (Account Payee)
Forward to: The Principal | Colombo Theological Seminary
189 Dutugemunu Street, Kohuwela, Sri Lanka

**your gift will be acknowledged promptly with an official receipt.*

For more details, contact the Resource Development Manager, Rochelle Hakeel-Ranasinghe
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