

## Link between Virginstow Church and India

Virginstow Church began an overseas link with an Indian charity around twenty years ago. Keen to use a proportion of their annual income to serve others, St Bridget's chose to support the work of Brother Samuel-John in his apostolic ministry. It proved a good choice. Brother Samuel-John has visited Virginstow twice and two members of the church have travelled to India where they visited fifteen churches and five orphanages. The Christians in India are faithful and enthusiastic prayer partners, and St Bridget's continue to regularly support a church leader and his family.

One such church leader lives in an isolated tribal region. He has established a school for children who would otherwise not be able to access education. Education is a means of hope for better living conditions and employment. Many impoverished families in rural areas send their children to one of Brother Samuel-John's orphanages so that they might receive good food, clothing and education. A few of them will move onto higher education and obtain good jobs. They will all leave with the necessary skills to set up a small business or enter employment.

Brother Samuel-John supports a network of over 250 churches and more than 70 church leaders. He is a man of prayer. Daily he prays for three to three and a half hours. Church members also dedicate much time to prayer and to reading the Bible. Those who are illiterate are keen to learn to read so that they can read the Bible for themselves. Perhaps the biggest lesson Virginstow Church have learnt from the International link is the joy and dedication of the Christians in India to prayer, and to living faithfully as a Christian community serving those around them. One group they support are around seventy lepers who live on a beach not far from one of the orphanages. The church provide monthly gifts of rice and clothing.

This photograph shows Brother Samuel-John and his wife Sarala on his first visit to England at Virginstow Church. Some ten years later he returned with his son, Azariah. The treasurer of St Bridget's, Mike

Hancock writes: ' It has always been a wish of the PCC of Virginstowe to support an overseas mission and Samuel John came along at the right time. We have been supporting his work in a small way ever since.'



A church in prayer at the start of a service.



Boys preparing chillies for their evening meal.

Boys praying together before walking to school.

