
SRI LANKA

Area in km ²	65,610
Population	(July 1996 est.) 8,553,074 Sinhalese 74%, Tamil 18%, Moor 7%, Burgher, Malay, and Vedda 1%
Religions in %	Buddhist 69%, Hindu 15%, Muslim 8%, Christian 8% (of which, RCath 85%, Angl, Meth, Bapt, Presb 15%)
Official/other languages	Sinhala 74%/Tamil (national language) 18%

NCC (National Christian Council of Sri Lanka)

Christian churches have existed in Sri Lanka (until 1948 known as Ceylon) sporadically since the 6th century (Nestorians) and continuously since the arrival of the Portuguese on the island in 1505. The first Prot Church was the **Dutch Re-**

LIST OF REFORMED CHURCHES

formed Church (no. 1), which was formally founded in 1642 and supplanted the RCath Church in the role of the “established religion” in the maritime provinces of the country until the end of Dutch colonial rule in 1796. Under British domination (1796/1815-1948) several Prot groups started missionary work in Ceylon, among them the American Congreg in the Jaffna peninsula (1816). In 1947 the congr founded by them joined the **Church of South India** as the Jaffna diocese (no. 4). In 1842 the Church of Scotland established **St. Andrew’s Church** in Colombo (no. 2) as an overseas congr to serve the Scots community in Ceylon; in 1845 a second church was opened in Kandy. These two Scottish communities came together in the Presbytery of Ceylon. The Dutch Reformed Church subsequently joined the Presbytery of Ceylon. In 1952 doctrinal controversies occurred in the Dutch Reformed Church, which led to a split. The dissenting group founded the Presbyterian Church Colombo, and the Presbytery of Ceylon was eventually broken up. In 1954 the Presbyterian Church Colombo came together with the Scots’ Kirk Kandy to form the **Presbytery of Lanka** (no. 3).

Sri Lanka became independent in 1948, and the Christian community had to redefine its role as a minority within a Buddhist majority system. Attempts by the Prot churches (Angl, Meth, Bapt, Presb, and the Church of South India) to form a united church failed in 1975. Since the late ’70s attempts have been made by the Ref and Presb churches to bring about common understanding and to work together (Ref and Presb in Dialogue, RAPID). In 1983 ethnic tension in Sri Lanka developed into open civil war. Today national reconciliation is one of the major issues challenging the Christian community.