



Church of St. John the Baptist,

Church of South India - Diocese of Medak

*Great is Thy
Faithfulness*

PARISH MESSENGER








Harvest Festival Edition - October 2020

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From the Editor's Desk

"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad". Psalms 126:3

What an apt title has been chosen by our pastor, Rev James Cecil Victor, for this edition of the Parish Messenger at such a crucial phase of our life's journey! Never ever has this generation witnessed such chaotic occurrences subsequent to the prevailing and dangerous pandemic that persists unabatedly. All efforts to bring this pandemic to an end with a suitable vaccine have been in vain.

The God Omniscient has taken control of the entire situation and has guarded His flock (Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad) according to His promise found in Isaiah 43:2 *"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee::when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee"*. Yes, indeed, even this pandemic cannot devour us as per His promise.

My dear readers and fellow church members, I am sure each one of us is filled with gratitude and thanksgiving unto our supreme Lord who has protected us thus far and has not allowed Satan's evil designs to come anywhere near us. The Holy Spirit has engulfed our homes and vicinity in order to shield us from all evil occurrences and deliver us from the clutches of Satan. **What A Mighty God We have!**

During this pandemic, we have faced great challenges and fear the unpredictable. We become anxious and tense and start thinking very deeply about the repercussions of this deadly virus, forgetting that we have an all-powerful God whose touch can shield us. In fact, the entire world has been gripped with this great fear resulting in danger to the welfare and well-being of humankind. Only the blood of Christ can save us from this eternal

destruction.

God's faithfulness cannot be narrated in words and cannot be quantified, especially during this pandemic. As for my family and I, we prostrate in front of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who has reigned Supreme, omnipotent taking complete control of our lives. He has provided for us, protected our jobs and has been constantly watching over our welfare and well-being. **What an awesome God we have!**

In Christian circles it has been predominantly discussed or pondered over that the COVID-19 was unleashed by Satan, the evil one to afflict our entire world. However, He has not been able to restrain the faithful, the plethora of Churches from connecting with their congregations. The Church has efficiently transitioned itself to address the challenge of the **new normal**. Consequently, all services are being streamed 'LIVE' facilitating the congregation to worship our living and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, this harvest is unique in many ways, as it presents us with an all pervasive occasion to surrender our lives afresh unto our Lord who has been faithful through this pandemic.

I thank the editorial team for painstakingly reviewing every article to ensure they are error free, also a profound word of thanks goes to the Pastor, the pastorate committee and all the authors of articles and the Sunday school children for chipping in and making the Harvest edition an impressive release.

Mrs Satri Chandrika Samuel



From the Presbyter's Desk

Rev K James Cecil Victor

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness." Lamentations 3: 22-23

Dear members,

Greetings in the most precious name of our faithful friend, Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I am overwhelmed with joy and gratitude to God for another opportunity to serve the congregation at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad from 27 July 2020. My wife Suhasini and our daughter Evelyn Natalia join me in thanking God the almighty for his faithfulness that we experienced all through these 14 years since we left this Church in 2006. We solicit your prayers and kind cooperation to render my pastoral responsibilities for **building up the body of Christ**.

Ever since the world is faced with Covid-19 pandemic, we are unable to congregate in the Church to worship God and to experience closer fellowship with one another. However, we could quickly switch over to the alternate medium to conduct worship services, Sundayschool and youth meetings uninterruptedly. I'm happy to note that at least 125 people attend the worship service being premiered at 8:30 am every Sunday and about 750 view our worship service by end of the week from different parts of the world. Our Sunday school and youth meets are well attended week after week. I would like to appreciate the Women's Fellowship for conducting a webinar on 'Empowering Women' on 12 September 2020. About 45 women from our church and even from other CSI churches have attended the webinar being led by Mrs Aruna Bahuguna on 'Women and Leadership'; and Dr Madhulatha on 'Women and Health'. Besides, we are connecting with the members in each area through Zoom. I express my sincere thanks to the Area Coordinators for effectively organising these

online prayer meetings every weekend. It is providing a space and opportunity for members in the area to see each other, interact, pray with one accord and be blessed by the word of God. For all these and for the healing, protection and comfort that all of us have been experiencing, I give thanks and praise to God.

During these tough times we have come to realize that life is more uncertain than death! We have become more conscious about life and the protocols to follow in order to protect ourselves. The pandemic also made us more God-conscious as we take on board our frailties and limitations. Just as the Psalmist recounts a lifetime of God's faithfulness in Psalm 71, we too delineate the way God has helped us, healed us, saved us, given us hope and strength to endure these difficult times. Indeed, God's steadfast love never ceases and his mercies never come to an end. St. Paul's letter to Hebrews reminds us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (13:8). The unchanging nature of God is a pointer to his faithfulness which makes him trustworthy. Now as we celebrate Harvest Sunday on 11 October, let us celebrate God's unfathomable love towards us.

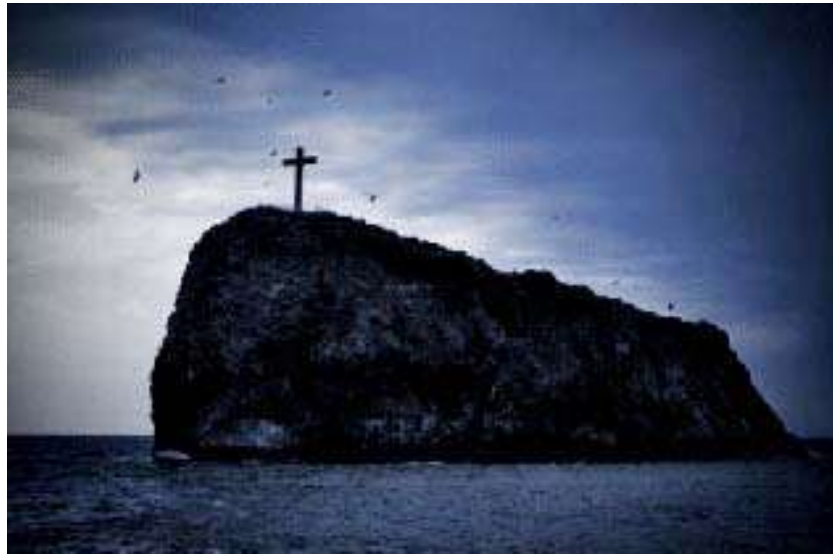
Harvest Sunday, the Annual Thanksgiving is an occasion that we all look forward to every year. For it is a time to recount God's blessings upon us and our families. We decorate the Church with produce of the land symbolising God's blessings and providential care. We bring tithes and thank

offerings as mark of our gratitude to God. However, this year, due to Covid-19 the only possibility is to worship God virtually and offer our gifts digitally. Let us not forget that we are enriched in every way to be generous. So, I encourage each one of you to give not reluctantly or under compulsion but just as you have been blessed by God.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Pastorate Committee and particularly the office bearers for their support and guidance for an effective pastoral ministry during these difficult times. My whole hearted appreciation to the sectional secretaries, area coordinators, choir and organists for their

active role in sustaining the ministries at this juncture. Parish Messenger editorial board deserve a special word of appreciation for taking up the responsibility in not only gathering the information, articles and necessary data to be incorporated in the E-version of the Parish Messenger but also painstakingly editing the write-ups. Kudos to our dynamic media team for an appropriate cover design. I trust and pray that this will connect us to our church life that we are missing and also reflect our faith and witness.

God bless you all



*The Rev K James Cecil Victor is Presbyter-in-Charge at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.
He is also the Vice President of All India Sunday School Association (AISSA)*

Farewell and Welcome to the Presbyters

A brief function was held in the Church on August 15, 2020 to bid farewell to Rev Dr T Bhasker, Presbyterian-in-charge and Rev K M Charles Wesley, Resident Presbyter and also to welcome our new Presbyterian-in-charge, The Rev K James Cecil Victor. Due to the prevailing pandemic situation, only the members of the Pastorate Committee were present, representing the entire congregation.

The Honorary Secretary of the Church, Dr M Udaia Kumar, who presided over the function, thanked Rev Bhasker for his efficient guidance to the Pastorate Committee, as its Chairman for over two years. He also acknowledged the services of Rev Charles Wesley to the church for almost four years from 2016 to 2020 and especially appreciated his initiatives in creating the Church WhatsApp group and starting the online worship services. All the other members who spoke recollected the various contributions of Rev Charles Wesley, including the regular visits he organised to the sick and the elderly. The leadership skills of Mrs Shebah

Wesley (Pastoramma) in guiding and motivating the Women's Fellowship were also appreciated.

Everyone joined in wishing Rev Charles Wesley 'All the Best' in his new assignment as the Presbyterian-in-charge of Dammaiguda Pastorate.

The Rev Bhasker, Rev Charles and Mrs Shebah were felicitated with gifts from the Church. In their response, they thanked the congregation of St John's for their affection and support during their tenure in office. They expressed the hope that St John's would continue to uphold its traditions and remain a model congregation.

Rev K James Cecil Victor was then heartily welcomed as the new Presbyterian-in-charge. He recollected his earlier tenure at St John's from 2001 to 2006. Rev Cecil and Pastoramma, Mrs Suhasini Cecil solicited the prayerful support of the congregation as they begin their second stint at our Church.







Farewell Note

Mr I P P Prabhakar Rao

We attended St John the Baptist Church CSI on the second Sunday in May 1974, on our return from our foreign assignment. St John's was well known to us even before this date, as my sister and her family since 1960, and my son Prem Swarup who was a student in the HPS since 1966 and my parents who relocated to Secunderabad since 1968 had been worshipping at St John's. My mother regularly attended St John's till she was 98 years old.

In Zambia, we regularly worshipped in The Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross, for nearly 6 years. When the Dean Rev Patrick Appleford requested me to join the Pastorate committee, I did so willingly and served for two terms till I left the country. So, it was natural for us to attend St John's. Our children too found the atmosphere homely. We continued to worship in this Church since then. Rev Gordon Shaw was the Presbyter at that time and a short while later, it was Rev Bob Marsh. The prayer book in use was the present one (Series III). Coming from a very Anglican background this prayer book looked strange to us. Rev Marsh informed me that use of Series III was actually to be discontinued, but for want of a simple English Prayer book this was being used. However, we got used to this Order gradually.

We slowly started taking part in the Church activities and soon our family became a part of the life of St John's. Our son Paul, was a keen Youth Fellowship member and our daughter Johannah was a good Sunday School teacher and, along with Rajni Comfort, taught well and managed to sweep many prizes in the City 'Rev Daivaashirvadam Memorial Sunday School annual competitions' every year. Both our children, Prem and Paul were married in this Church. Our children are

grateful for the nurturing they received in their growing years.

When Rev B P Sugandhar was appointed as the Presbyter in the mid-eighties, I took his permission and streamlined the Bible Reading rota. For the ushers, we started a Bible Study programme in a member's home and Rev Sugandhar inaugurated this in 1992. We are happy that this Bible Study is continuously meeting every week till today (except in December to facilitate Carol Rounds). In the early years of our attendance, there were quite a few British and Anglo Indians amongst the Church attendees and there was not much of interaction after the service. Tea was served by the Church, in those days and members used to disperse quickly after having this. Later, some of us took the responsibility of providing tea as an option.

Later, when Dr and Mrs (Dr) Udaia Kumar donated the Annexe complex, I think Mr Jason Wilson, arranged for a private caterer to provide idli/vadai/upma on payment after the service. He reasoned out that members had no interaction, as quite a few members attended the service without having their breakfast and therefore rushed home or to a hotel. The tea continued to be served by the Church as before. This resulted in a good interaction and members got to know each other better. This also proved to be a time to encourage each other by prayer or feel refreshed by suitable spiritual help.

The Church Services, Sunday after Sunday, were repetitive and the sermons were like in any Church some good, some thought-provoking, some inspiring and some sailing over the members' heads. For me, every Sunday I attended

with an expectation that God was going to feed me with some thought specific to my personal need and I was not disappointed as I was always either encouraged or exhorted.

Somewhere down the line, Mrs Yashodra Desappa became inspired to collect some of the women members at the end of the service and pray for several members' prayer requests. This gave them an opportunity to know the power of prayer and probably encouraged them to share their experiences (Testimonies). Further, Women's' Fellowship programmes on special occasions were so popular that sometimes as many as thirty women participated in such programmes with members spilling over the chancel. These programmes gave a spiritual boost to many members. We also used to conduct a monthly programme after the Sunday service known as a 'Spiritual Development Journey'. It was a time of singing, sharing testimonies and concluded with a short message to encourage each other, I used to share the message in this programme sometimes. This used to go on till about 3 pm and ended with a light lunch provided by Mr Desappa. My wife used to be an active member in these programmes for women.

On Good Fridays, I had the opportunity to speak on one of the Seven Words for a few years including the Third Word. The Men's Fellowship held seminars occasionally on contemporary themes and I was able to speak on two occasions.

The Church began to grow, and it stands at about 450 members today. The congregation was a good mix of people from all over the country. The Church Service began to gain an aura of multilinguals worshipping gloriously our One Triune God in one language, a forerunner to what we are going to experience in Heaven. As a matter of regret, I suggested to Rev Sugandhar to start a Telugu service to draw more members to the Church. He shot down my proposal promptly and just said 'What is happening is good. Let it remain so'. I saw the wisdom in this and agreed with him.

In 1997-98, God gave me and my brother-in-law Mr Y S Purushotham (retired Engineer-in-Chief) an opportunity and enabled us, to repair the badly leaking Church roof. The repairs are still holding up well.

The Church being at the crossroads, encourages some students who come to write competitive exams to saunter into the Church and ask for prayers for their immediate needs. Mr Martin David regularly looks out for such people, brings them in with a welcome, encourages them to share their needs and prays for them. This has become a useful ministry to the strangers in a big city.

St John's is specially favoured in that we had a qualified organist in Theodore Comfort, a member of the Royal College of Sacred Music who played the organ in the Church for 62 years. He was followed by Commodore TMJ Champion, a self-taught organist but sound in Anglican liturgy and tradition whose descants I always enjoyed. Sadly, we have a poor choir today. They have the talent to sing, but as a choir they make an appearance on festival or special occasions only. I wish Commodore would build up a fresh choir with selected youngsters. This needs to be a disciplined choir, willing to learn and practice regularly, voluntarily offering their sacrifice of praises and thanksgiving to our God on all Sundays and on any other occasion.

Having written these thoughts, it is a time to bid goodbye and farewell. I am really sorry to leave you all, friends with whom I have grown spiritually over the last 46 years. The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented us all to meet to worship together joyously. I wish to also apologise to any of those whose toes I might have trod on unintentionally in my interactions. My sincere apologies to each of those.

My grateful thanks to all the Pastors, PC Members who ministered to our family on various occasions and on Sundays particularly. It is difficult to name them. Finally, let us all ensure we all meet our

Saviour and Lord with the Father and the Holy Spirit in Heaven. What an awesome meeting that would be! God be with you all.

Gratefully,

I P P Prabhakara Rao and Mrs S Syamala Devi

Mr I P P Prabhakara Rao and his wife Mrs S Syamala have been stalwart members of St John the Baptist Church for over four decades. Their contributions to the church are immeasurable and they have been a source of blessing for many people. We are indeed grateful to them for this. We wish them God's protection and blessings in this new phase of their lives. Pastor, Pastorate Secretary, Steward and some of our members met them just before they left and bid farewell on behalf of the entire congregation.)





Great is thy Faithfulness, O God my Father — *Lamentations 3:22*

The Rt Rev Dr P Surya Prakash

A Memorable Hymn of Praise and Faith

1. "Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changes not, thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain: "Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness, " Lord, unto me!

2. Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Refrain: Great is thy faithfulness!

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain: "Great is Thy faithfulness!"

Author: Thomas Obadiah Chisholm (1866 – 1960)

The hymn, Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father, was introduced in England through the Billy Graham Evangelical Crusade in Haringay, in 1954. Ever since, it became one of the best-known hymns in English speaking congregations and people found it very meaningful and spiritually enriching. The poem was written by Thomas Chisholm, a Methodist minister in Kentucky, United States and was first published in 1923. William M Runyan another Methodist minister set the tune for it.

It is said that Chisholm wrote over 1200 poems, many of which appeared in various Christian publications. He wrote in a letter 1941: "My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here

the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness” (page 84 of 101 Hymn Stories).

Many of us will say the same as Chisholm. That “God is faithful” is one of the fundamental assertions of the Bible. One of the sayings of St Theresa of Kolkata goes like this: “God has not called us to be successful, but faithful”. See the parable of the talents. God is faithful and God expects His people also to be faithful in their lives.

The first stanza of this hymn emphasises God’s unchanging character. With Him there is “no shadow of turning” (James 1:17). The second stanza affirms that the constancy in God’s creative order makes it clear that God is faithful. The third stanza points to the assurance of God’s pardon, peace, and presence, of daily strength and future hope, “Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside”.

Hence the refrain:

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see,
All I have needed thy hand has provided,



Sources: A HYMN COMPANION, Insight into 300 Christian Hymns by Frank Colquhoun, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1985. 101 HYMN STORIES, Inspiring, factual, backgrounds and experiences that prompted the writing of 101 favourite hymns by Kenneth W. Osbeck, Ben Publishing, Secunderabad 1982.

The Rt Rev Dr P Surya Prakash is Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Karimnagar, CSI



Great is Thy Faithfulness

Dr M Udaia Kumar, Honorary Secretary

*“His compassions fail not; they are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness”
Lamentations 3:22-23*

God has always been faithful through generations and has called us to be faithful as well. The Bible gives several examples of individuals who lived to this calling of faithfulness. God promised Abraham and blessed him with a son. Abraham too answered in faith, even during the trial of God asking him to sacrifice his son. Moses was also one of them. In Numbers 12:7 God says, “My servant Moses, he is faithful in my entire house.” Daniel was another. Daniel 6:4 tells us that the governors and satraps sought to find some fault with Daniel, “but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful”. Paul testified to Timothy’s faithfulness. I Corinthians 4:17 says, “Timothy... is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord.” Paul also tells us in I Timothy 1:12, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.”

So often, faithfulness is something that is hoped for. Employers hope their employees are faithful to their company, and stores hope customers are faithful to their brand, individuals hope that people are faithful in their relationships with each other. To know that God is faithful, is to know Him as reliable, stable, and sure.

There are times in our lives, when we go through troubles and it is difficult to believe that God is faithful. Our faith is sorely tried, our eyes dimmed with tears, and we seem to be no longer able to trace the workings of His love. During the last 6 months of the COVID-19 experience, we have faced uncertainty in a way never before experienced by our generation. The newspapers have consistently reported the growing number of

people suffering with depression and loneliness during these difficult times.

In such times, we need to seek God’s grace. Isaiah 50:10 says, “Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of His Servant, yet walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and have faith in his God”. Our faith is based on the assurance of God’s everlasting love and faithfulness towards us. In Deuteronomy 7:9, it is written, “He is the faithful God who keeps His covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes His unflinching love on those who love Him and obey His Commands”. Through Isaiah, the Lord declared, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (7:14).” And, it was several hundreds of years later that this promise of God was fulfilled, through Jesus Christ.

What should be our response and attitude to God’s faithfulness?

There is but one answer we can give to that question. We, too, must be faithful to Him! Revelation 2:10 says, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Galatians 5:22 assures us that “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness”. As we give our hearts and lives to Jesus, He fills us with His Holy Spirit and the Spirit enables us to be faithful.

We need to be faithful to God, faithful in worshipping Him, in keeping His commandments,

in serving Him, and we need to be faithful to one another, to parents, to husbands and wives, faithful to neighbours and associates, and to our word no matter to whom it is spoken. Let us as Christians give ourselves to faithfulness, because God is faithful and wants His children to be like Him.

In these dire times, let us remind ourselves of God's faithfulness in preserving us and getting us this far. Within our Church, we have experienced God's faithfulness time and again. He enabled us to stay connected with the help of technology. Through virtual Sunday services, various fellowships are able to stay in touch and meditate on God's Word. Our children's spiritual nurturing has continued through the virtual Sunday School classes. The electronic version of the Parish Messenger is being published successfully. There are several other such examples of God being with us. We have experienced God's grace and blessings even in these difficult times where some of our church members were tested COVID-19 positive but were able to come overcome the sickness and recover well. Our church has remained sustainable in spite of very few physical meetings. Our church members, inspired by the Holy Spirit, have made generous offerings which have enabled us to meet the expenses of our church. Indeed, God has shown us in our church that God is faithful in *preserving* His people. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son" (I Corinthians 1:9).



It is, therefore, important for us to ponder and ask ourselves the question— have we been faithful? Have we been true to our calling of being faithful to God, our Church, our family, and the community around us?

Let us pray that the God Almighty enables us to be faithful in all ways, so that when the day comes, when the trumpet of God sounds and we all stand before His throne to be judged by Him, the one thing each of us want and hope to hear Him say of us is, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Amen.

Dr M Udaia Kumar, is the Honorary Secretary at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad



His Mercies are New Every Morning

(The Story Behind the Song: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*)

Dr Joel Bunyan

The hymn ‘Great is Thy Faithfulness’ was written by Thomas Obadiah Chisholm in 1923, when he was 57. In this hymn, he describes God’s faithfulness over his lifetime. He was inspired by the Biblical verses in Lamentations 3:22-23 to write the following verses for the hymn.

*“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end.
They are new every morning.
Great is Your faithfulness.”*

Chisholm was born in a humble log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, USA, on July 29, 1866. With no high school or advanced training, he began his career as a schoolteacher, at the age of 16. When he was 21, he spent six years as the associate editor of the newspaper, *The Franklin Favorite*. In 1893, aged 27, Chisholm accepted Christ his personal Saviour during a revival meeting conducted by Dr Henry Morrison in Franklin. Later, at Dr Morrison’s invitation, Chisholm moved to Louisville and became the editor of Morrison’s publication.

In 1903, Chisholm aged 36, was ordained into the ministry and served as a Methodist minister for only one year before resigning due to poor health. After 1909, he became a life insurance agent in Winona Lake, New Jersey. For some time, he also served as an editor of the *Pentecostal Herald* in Louisville, Kentucky.

Chisholm suffered ill health most of his adult life and, therefore, had an extremely low income. Of this circumstance he said, “God has given me many wonderful proofs of his providing care,

which have filled me with astonishing gratefulness”. His aim was to incorporate as much Scripture into his writing as possible and to avoid flippant and sentimental themes.

In 1953, he retired and spent the remaining seven years of his life at the Methodist Home for the Aged in Ocean Grove, New Jersey. He died at the ripe old age of 94 on February 29, 1960.

During his lifetime, Chisholm wrote 1220 poems, many of which have appeared frequently in such religious periodicals as the *Sunday School Times*, *Moody Monthly*, and *Alliance Weekly*. In 1923, Chisholm sent several of his poems, including ‘**Great is Thy Faithfulness**’, to his friend William Marion Runyan, a musician associated with the *Moody Bible Institute* (1870–1957). Mr Runyan wrote the music to this great poem and in the same year it was published by *Hope Publishing Company*.

The usefulness of this hymn spread to churches everywhere. The hymn was exposed to wide audiences after becoming popular with Dr William Henry Houghton of the Moody Bible Institute.

Houghton invited the Canadian bass-baritone, George Beverly Shea, to sing various hymns, including his favorite hymn 'Great Is Thy Faithfulness', on the Institute's radio station. Billy Graham, then a student at Wheaton College, USA, heard this song through those radio broadcasts.

Later in 1954, on an invitation from Graham, Shea become part of his ministry of evangelism and sang this hymn often. It was through their crusades that this hymn became internationally popular.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Thomas Chisholm

William M. Runyan

Great is thy faith-ful-ness, O God my Fa-ther; there is no shad-ow of
Sum-mer and win-ter, and spring-time and har-vest, sun, moon, and stars in their
Par-don for sin and a peace that en-dur-eth, thine own dear pres-ence to
turn-ing with thee. Thou chang-est not; thy com-pas-sions they fail not.
cours-es a-bove join with all na-ture in man-i-fold wit-ness,
cheer and to guide, strength for to-day and bright hope for to-mor-row:
As thou hast been thou for-ev-er wilt be. Great is thy faith-ful-ness!
to thy great faith-ful-ness, mer-cy, and love.
bless-ings all mine, with ten thou-sand be-side!
Great is thy faith-ful-ness Morn-ing by morn-ing, new mer-cies I see. All I have
need-ed thy hand hath pro-vid-ed. Great is thy faith-ful-ness, Lord un-to me!

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Dr Joel Jayawanth Bunyan was a Petroleum Geologist. He is the coordinator of the Men's Fellowship of Church of St John the Baptist. He is the Board Member of TENT Ministries and MERIBA, a Rural Development organisation.



Great is Thy Faithfulness

Mr Jason Wilson

Reflecting on God's saving grace and His abundant blessings.

"He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that He may bring forth food out of earth." Psalms 104:14

With our hearts full of gratitude, we come before the Lord giving thanks and praise for His abundant blessings.

The present pandemic that we are experiencing has made us aware of the real value of food. The supply chain was abruptly halted due to the lockdown and many were stranded at different places, suffering from lack of food, sometimes to the point of death. While paying tribute to those who lost their lives, we thank God for sustaining us and providing our needs. God, at the time of creation made provision for all nature to survive and sustain itself. God, who created the trees, birds, animals, fish, human beings and all living creatures, had authorised human beings to safeguard and have dominion over the entire earth.

However, humans, in their greed to produce more for their profit use chemicals and unhealthy practices harmful for human consumption. A WHO report says food poisoning kills 420000 people every year and people using unsafe food and water cause most the most outbreaks of disease.

This staggering figure has led to the thought process of safe farming. Conventional farming relies on chemicals, while organic farming depends on the natural principle of composting to produce healthy and abundant food.

Efforts are being made to focus on healthy farming by Government, National and International organisations. I had the opportunity to work in International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), at Patancheruvu from 1974 to 1976, where 3 villages of 3500 acres were converted to build this Institute. The complete process of land development, building of water reservoirs and a lake for agriculture were constructed. Scientists from all over the world were working in this institute to benefit farming in different climatic conditions.

For over a year now I have been associated in coordinating with the Kapra Lake Development project. The water hyacinth that grows rapidly there is the best source of compost, because it richly benefits farming, in terms of quality and quantity. Hyacinths also regenerate the water.

The Bible teaches us, right from the beginning of creation, about farming practices with divine wisdom to sustain and have abundant produce for all. We Christians, with the knowledge of the Bible and power of the Holy Spirit can participate in building a healthy and happy world.

Bringing in the sheaves
Bringing in the sheaves
We shall come rejoicing
Bringing in the sheaves



*Mr Jason Wilson is a Retd, AGM with Bakelite Hylam LTD
and is a member of Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.*



Believe: God is Faithful

Mrs Prameela Sadanand

Our theme, 'Great is Thy Faithfulness' is spoken by Prophet Jeremiah in the Book of Lamentations. As the name indicates, Jeremiah wrote this book when he was grieving for the children of Israel for their rebellious and unfaithful nature towards God. He expresses his tremendous pain and sorrow by saying, "For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water...." (Lamentations 1:16). Why was Jeremiah worrying and weeping? He wept because He thought that the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the beautiful temple, and the captivity of the people by the Babylonians could have been avoided if they would have been submitted to God and His commandments.

The heart of the Book of Lamentations is found in chapter 3: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore, will I hope in Him" (v. 22-24). The words spoken by Jeremiah reveals his unfailing trust and hope in God, because he was worshipping a faithful and compassionate God. Our God is a faithful and holy by nature. So, whether we are faithful to Him or not He is faithful to us (2 Timothy 2:13). Our God is a dependable God.

In what ways is God faithful to His people?

- ❖ He cannot tolerate His children disobeying Him. So, He chastens them and tries to bring them back into His fold because He loves them. "When the Lord loveth, He chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6).
- ❖ He makes us steadfast in our faith till the end when we waver, which means, when we have accepted God, we are confirmed as His children. This status of Father and children will not change (I Thessalonians 5:23-24), because He is a faithful God.
- ❖ He cares when we are hurt. In times of need we can feel free to go to His throne of grace. (Hebrews 4:16).
- ❖ He will control us when we are tempted. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (I Cor 10:13).
- ❖ He is faithful to cleanse us when we confess. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:8-9). How does God forgive us? He

forgives us through the blood of the cross. The Lord is faithful and just to keep His promise. Because God knows His Son paid the full price on the cross of Calvary, so, He will not punish us for the sin that His Son died for. He will discipline us, if we rebel against Him, but He will also forgive us, when we confess our sins.

Hudson Taylor once said, the secret of a victorious Christian life is “not by striving after faith, but resting on the Faithful one.” So, if we put our complete trust in Him and totally lean upon His faithfulness, He will perform greater things in our lives.” Praise the Lord.



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Dr K Sukumar

Faithfulness of God

Many passages in the scriptures extol the faithfulness of God. "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22–23).

So, what is faithfulness?

The Hebrew word translated 'faithfulness' means 'steadfastness, firmness, fidelity.' "Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations" (Psalm 119:89-90). Here, faithfulness is equated with God's Word. God speaks never-ending truth. If God spoke something a thousand years ago, it still stands firm. He is faithful to His Word, for His Word is an expression of His character.

"The promises He made still hold true because He does not change" (Malachi 3:6). We see this illustrated from a human perspective in a couple married for eighty years. When the wife lies on her deathbed, her husband sits nearby holding her hand. He will not leave her, even though she no longer recognises him. He is faithful to the promises he made to her. In the same way, God remains faithful to His promises, even though we are often unfaithful to Him (2 Timothy 2:13).

We learn to trust the character of a person by getting to know that person. There are three ways we can get to know 'the true God': by studying His Word, by reviewing His work in our own lives, and by learning to follow His voice.

When we study God's Word, a pattern emerges. We learn that 'God never changes and never lies'

(Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29). We learn through the Scriptures that "God has never failed in the past" (Isaiah 51:6). He was always true to His Word, as He worked in the lives of the ancient Israelites. When He said He would do something, He did it (Numbers 11:23; Matthew 24:35). We begin to build trust upon His proven character. We can trust that God will be true to Himself. He will never cease to act like God. He will never cease being sovereign, being holy, or being good (1 Timothy 6:15; 1 Peter 1:16).

We learn through our own history that He has never failed us, either. One command God often gave the Israelites was, "Remember" (Deuteronomy 8:2; Isaiah 46:9). When they remembered all God had done for them, they could more easily trust Him for the future. We need to intentionally remember all the ways God has provided for us and delivered us in the past. Keeping a prayer journal can help with this. "When we come to Him in prayer, we know that He always hears us" (1 John 5:14; Psalm 34:15). "He provides with what we need" (Philippians 4:19). And "He will always make everything work together for our good when we trust Him with it" (Romans 8:28). We learn to trust God's future faithfulness, by remembering His past faithfulness.

We can also learn to trust Him by learning to distinguish His voice from the others that compete for attention. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). We who belong to Jesus need to cultivate the ability to hear Him. He speaks primarily through His Word, but He can also speak

through other people, through circumstances, and through the inner confirmation of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). As we carefully read and meditate upon the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit often quickens our hearts to a verse or passage and helps us claim His promises and applying them to our lives.

“Above all things, God loves us to demonstrate faith” (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is trusting in the character of God before we see how He is going to work things out. He has given us His Word, and His promises still stand. As we see the ways He brings His promises to fulfillment, our trust in His faithfulness grows. Just as our trust in other people grows with daily interaction, our trust in God grows the same way. When we know Him, we can rest in His goodness, even when we do not understand the circumstances that seem to contradict it. We can trust that God's plan for us will prevail (Proverbs 19:21). As a child trusts a

loving father, we can trust our heavenly Father to always do what is right.

Finally, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:9). “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5: 10). “And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:11).

Our sojourn on earth is comparatively short, but God is going to give the faithful believer eternal life, to be with Him in heaven, which is the greatest faithfulness of God. Amen.



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Give Thanks

Dr M Anthony David

Selvan gritted his teeth and set out in the morning. He had to find some food. Amongst the wild weeds growing haphazardly in the stretch of land, he sought some edible leaves or fruit. All his clan, all those accursed people dumped in this godforsaken island, were in the same plight.

Then, one morning a priest arrived on their island. This priest did not dump some things amongst the people and disappear after praying, as some had done earlier. Father Damien, as he was known was not just visiting them. Bringing his few paltry belongings, he came to stay with them, lock, stock and barrel!

He built little huts for them and taught them to grow food. Clearing the land of weeds was arduous work. Father Damien also laboured with them, sweating together with them, to get the land cleared. They planted vegetables, corn, and paddy for their staple food.

One Sunday morning Father Damien addressed them in the makeshift chapel., "Brothers, I am now one of you! I thank the Lord for that privilege," he said and went on with his sermon. At the end of the service, he went to hug each one of them. Selvan cried as he hugged Father Damien. "For our sake, you got our disease," he blubbered to the priest. Father Damien smiled, "Our Saviour died for us on the cross even while we were yet sinners, Selvan, what is my little deed?" he admonished. While Selvan and he sat having a cup of tea, later on, he told Selvan what happened, "This morning, before my bath, I was trying to pour boiling water from the stove into the bucket. Some water spilled on my hand. It scalded my skin. Blisters came up, but I did

not feel any pain. Then I realised that I have become one of you all, Selvan. And I thank my God for that." Selvan was dumbstruck with this selfless attitude.

Finally, it was harvest time. Selvan went to his little patch. Kneeling down, he tried to pick up one large cabbage. His short finger stubs could not hold it properly. It fell down. Again and again, he kept dropping them but somehow, he managed to get them into his basket.

Meeting Father Damien, he held out his basket of cabbages and laid it at his feet. The priest protested. Selvan said, "Father, I offer you, my first fruits, to you who taught us all we knew. You came and lived with us, teaching us dignity and self-help. These cabbages fell down from the stumps of my hands many times. I did not swear. You taught us to persevere. I did. Here finally, are the fruits of my labour. They are for you. Please accept them, Father. You were like Christ to us. What more can I say?"

Father Damien's eyes filled with tears. Tears of joy. Tears of gratitude. "Praise our Lord God, Selvan. Let us give thanks to Him. He gave me this love for you. I thank Him for you, Selvan, and for your cabbages."



Father Damien

(Loosely based on the real-life story of Father Damien of the Molokai islands.)

Dr M Anthony David is a creative communicator for God. He teaches at a medical college and facilitates at seminars, helping ministries such as PTP and YFC. He has been worshipping at the Church of St John the Baptist for over 3 decades.



Great is Thy Faithfulness

Ms Samarana

Great is Thy faithfulness. This phrase is found in the Bible and comes from the Old Testament book of Lamentations 3:23.

'Great is Thy faithfulness' is a popular Christian hymn written by Thomas Chisholm. Thomas Chisholm originally wrote the song as a poem which was set to music by William M Runyan. The lyrics in this song speak about how great God's faithfulness is and every time as we start our day, God's love and mercy falls on us.

Just like the words of the song say, God is always looking over us and His love, grace and mercy fall upon us and no matter how many sins we commit, if we ask for forgiveness wholeheartedly, God will forgive us, no matter what time of the day it is or what season it is, as our God is a forgiving, loving, almighty, merciful and life-giving God.

It is difficult to describe our God on a piece of paper as He is the same God who sent His son to save us for our sinful deeds. As we all praise and worship our Almighty Lord from our homes this harvest season, let us all pray for the well-being of

our church and our congregation. Let us give thanks to our Lord for keeping us safe all these days and beseech Him to keep us safe in the ongoing days of trial that we are facing. Give thanks to the Lord for keeping your family safe and pray to continue to keep them safe.

Thank the Lord for all that He has done for us, as our Lord is faithful. For this is the same God who led the Israelites out of Egypt, with help of His faithful servant Moses.

For great are His followers and His prophets and as we humble ourselves in front of our faithful and gracious God, we ask for forgiveness from our transgressions. For, we can move mountains if we have faith in our God.

For great is Thy faithfulness O, God and as we give thanks to you on this thanksgiving day (Harvest festival) shower us with Your mercy and grace for You are the only almighty, loving and merciful God for in Your name everything begins and nothing ever ends.



Miss Samarana Thomas is in the Intermediate class in Sunday school at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.



Let us Remember to Remember

Mrs Yashodara Dessappa

Our Salvation should result in Godly living which should result in an adequate expression of thanks to God.

Remember His Deliverance. When the Israelites were fleeing from bondage in Egypt, the Lord brought them out with a mighty hand and an arm stretched out, when He parted the Red Sea and performed many miracles in the wilderness. God gives and forgives. Human beings get and forget.

When David defeated the Philistines, he built an altar for Jehovah Perazim, which means God of the breakthrough. Do we build an altar for Him, at least in our hearts?

Remember His Healing Ten lepers were healed by Jesus, but only one came back to thank Him and this man was made whole and complete.

Remember to Give Just as how Hannah gave Samuel to the Lord and was blessed with more children, have we given our time, talents and treasures to the Lord?

Remember to thank God Even during 'belly of the whale' kind of situations, which life may throw our way, we must always thank God. We know that God is bigger than any of our problems.

Remember by building a memorial for His faithfulness. When the Lord parted the Jordan river for the Israelites, on the way to the Promised land, He asked Joshua to bring 12 big stones, each representing the twelve tribes of Israel, and asked him to build a memorial so that future generations, too, can know of this miraculous path made by the Lord for the Israelites.

Again, Abraham built an altar of stones to thank



God, for providing him a ram for the sacrifice, when his son, Isaac was spared from being sacrificed.

Build an altar Our Lord is *el hagadol* the great and awesome God and we need to build an altar to acknowledge His greatness.

How do we do this? We can read His Word and testify about His faithfulness before the congregation so that others too can be encouraged, to sing psalms or songs to please Him and spend time with Him.

God has deposited several blessings in our ATM account to be used at all times. The pin code is prayer and thanksgiving. Every day is a testimony to His faithfulness. When we build an altar for the Lord, it alters things in our lives.

The Bible tells us to remember many things. Jesus said as we partake of the Holy Communion, we remember His suffering and death on the Cross. We should never allow the Communion service to become a formality, because it is an experience where we can thank Him for dying for us.

Today, with the Covid situation, people have difficulty in breathing. When we say, 'Let everything that has breath Praise the Lord, He moves mountains we can and cannot see'.

Let us **remember** Jesus and His faithfulness, because He remembers us.

Mrs Yashodhra Desappa, Businesswoman, an Ambassador for Christ, and Pastorate Committee Member at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.



A Thankful Heart

Mrs Sujatha Madhukar

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

Thanksgiving has a significant power of bringing joy and breaking the power of an enemy. Whenever we thank God even during the most challenging circumstances, Satan loses a big battle in our lives. When we give thanks in hard times, we bring happiness to God. Paul says in everything give thanks because it is the will of God.

A thankful heart does not have a room for jealousy, selfishness, anger, bitterness but possesses contentment and gratefulness. Let every breath praise His name.

Let us examine the lives of a few figures from the Bible who praised God with a thankful heart even in times of adversity.

Jehoshaphat’s Thankful Heart

When the Moabites and Ammonites and some of the Meunites came again to Jehoshaphat for battle, he was afraid, and set his face to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout Judah (II Chronicles 20).

Jehoshaphat prayed earnestly and was told by the Lord that the battle was not his but God’s. And, when he had taken counsel with his people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise Him as they went before the army and say “Give thanks to the Lord for his steadfast love endures forever. The Lord delivered Judah.”

Jehoshaphat’s life demonstrates how to worship and praise even before prayers are fully answered.

We too face similar situations in our lives and once we overcome these, let us worship God with a thankful heart and not forget His mercies.

The Sinful Woman

In Luke 7:36-50, we are told of the woman who washed Jesus’s feet with her tears, dried them with her hair and poured an entire bottle of expensive perfume on them. The Scripture indicates that this woman was a sinner. The woman had recently come to believe in Christ, and her affection for the Saviour drove her to this noteworthy and extravagant expression of thanksgiving and love. Her conduct was, extraordinary, yet Jesus did not recoil from her bold and demonstrative adoration. Indeed, the Lord showed great mercy towards her. The regenerated heart rises to any opportunity to glorify the Lord.

What about us? Do we show love towards God when we are relieved from all kinds of problems and testify about Him boldly like this?

The Samaritan Leper

In Luke 17:12-19, when Jesus healed ten lepers, only one returned to thank him. Although all these lepers were physically healed, Jesus pronounced this grateful leper further healed by His faith,

suggesting that our gratitude imparts our soul-level healing and closeness to God.

Jesus was moved by the man's response, which must have been almost as rewarding to the man as the healing itself. Because he went that extra mile to express his thankfulness, this man was able to connect with the Lord in a profound way.

How far are we able to connect to God and praise Him after we are physically and spiritually healed? Do we also have a thankful heart like this leper?

Looking at the characters discussed here, God looks at our humble hearts with an attitude of appreciation. The Lord does not delight in burnt offerings or sacrifices (1 Samuel 15:22), but the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). Let us also submit ourselves and ask God to create in us a pure and a thankful heart.



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Thanksgiving



Mr Joel Victor Annaladas

Each day, we wake up with new challenges, new situations, new choices to make and changes to adapt to. Each new day is made up of success and failure. Each new day is a mixture of joy and sadness. And, everyday things change, people change, situations change, priorities change.

Amid all such scenarios, God's faithfulness is a shoulder we can lean on. It is so nourishing and uplifting to meditate on His faithfulness in the present days of pandemic, economic slowdown, job losses and all other troublesome situations.

With all such things that each day brings in our lives...Still... ***"His mercies are new every morning, and His faithfulness is great."***

1. Faithfulness is God's innate character:

When Moses encountered God on Mount Sinai, in Exodus 34:6, the Scripture says, "The Lord passed before him (Moses) and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding **in steadfast love and faithfulness.**"

Faithfulness is the innate nature of God. And God is the 'very meaning' of faithfulness. **God's faithfulness is deeply rooted and is an integral part of who He is.**

The very danger that Satan can cause you is doubting His faithfulness. Satan used the same technique to cheat Adam and Eve. The fall of human beings started by the simple doubt, created by Satan, about God's Word, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis

3:1), and we know the rest of the story. Understanding this very profound truth about His faithfulness acts as an anchor for us in all the situations, so that we will not have a wavering mind. Besides, it helps us to focus on Him rather than focusing on other things.

2. God's faithfulness is unchanging:

God's faithfulness is His very character. It does not change with change of times, place, people or situations. In Psalms 119:89-90, the Psalmist says "Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations...."

God's faithfulness helped his people through the history. The Bible has irrefutable evidence of God's faithfulness through the pages of history. In spite of this, circumstances or situations override our trust in God's faithfulness. Most of the time, we measure God's faithfulness with a measuring rod of human understanding. When God acts, people call such things as miracles because it is beyond their understanding and comprehension.

Even though we are ungrateful for His blessings, and put our desires above His, even though we sometimes doubt His goodness, even though we struggle with temptations, God remains faithful.

James 1:17 says Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

3. God's faithfulness gives us hope:

God's faithfulness is His very character, and it is unchanging, it gives us hope to live and fight against all odds. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, "The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it".

When we remind ourselves of God's faithfulness, we cannot help but be uplifted, and that is exactly what David is saying: "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1).

As believers and followers of Christ, He is our hope and with this hope we will conquer all the challenges we face every day. This hope enables us to make the right choices, to handle all failures and bounce back with vigour. This hope helps us to absorb the sadness and smile back.

Great is Thy Faithfulness O Lord (My Conqueror) My God (My Creator).

When we come to thank You for Your goodness, it renews our hope in You.



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Morning by Morning New Mercies I See

Dr Maneesha Esther Mohanty

Ever since I started pondering over the theme for this edition of the Parish Messenger, I often found myself humming the magnificent hymn 'Great is Thy faithfulness'. Perhaps the line most apt to our daily lives is 'Morning by morning new mercies I see'. Indeed, we have the privilege to praise God each morning for all His mercies. If you look up the word mercy/mercies in Google, the first few meanings that pop up are 'compassion' and 'forgiveness' shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm. The Prophet Isaiah explained that 'though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool' (Isaiah 1:18). This, indeed, is the biggest act of mercy shown by God Himself. He had the authority and power to condemn us for our sins, yet He showed us mercy, because of His great faithfulness.

Hebrew and Greek languages have different forms of the word 'mercy' with different meanings such as: to love, goodness, kindness, to have pity and divine forbearance. The word mercy may also refer to an event to be grateful for because it prevents something unpleasant or provides relief from suffering. The event that provides us relief from suffering is that God gave His son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Sometimes, we refer to His mercies as all the big and small blessings that God gives us not because we are worthy of them or deserve them, but because He is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3), because the Lord God is compassionate and gracious (Exodus 34:6), and because great is His faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23). And this is the kind of mercy the hymn writer is probably writing about.

From morning till night, day in and day out 'mercy-drops round us are falling'. The dawn of new day, a



loving family, our jobs or ways in which we keep ourselves busy, friends to make us smile, food to eat, water to drink, the ability to do things, to see the world, to listen to music, to walk around, to be able to talk to people and to have people whom we can talk to, good health, a time to play and a time to rest — everything is like mercy drops falling round us. We are grateful to God for all these little things that form such an important part of our journey on earth. And as we take this journey Jesus tells us to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:16). For, Jesus while talking about the parable of the weed, explained to His disciples in Matthew 13: 36-39 that "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The harvest is the end of the age and the harvesters are the angels".

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Temptations and God's Faithfulness

Captain IN A J Manohar

Human frailty and vulnerability are greatly exposed when faced with the storms of life. Mere mortals as we really are, get tossed about, buffeted by the sheer momentum of situations wherein the time to react on most occasions is almost limited or even non-existent. What is the way out? This is the question that haunts us during life's difficult situations.

The patriarch Joseph faced a similar situation where Potiphar, an official in Pharaoh's court employed him. Potiphar's wife desired a physical relationship with Joseph and tried to entice him. Joseph's refusal to fall prey to the temptation is a great testimony of triumph over evil. The question that may arise in all our minds is: How could Joseph handle this? He had everything going well for him. He had an offer which might have been enticing and alluring to a young man. He could have easily succumbed to the temptation, but in the heat of the moment he had the wisdom and courage to restrain himself. He was exemplary in his devotion and fear of God. He had only one focus in his life, to please God at all cost. And, as we know, his restraint actually cost him his freedom, as he was sentenced to undergo imprisonment for this. How did he overcome such a great temptation? The only way of escape here was to flee from the scene. Yes, my dear friends, when we genuinely want to overcome temptation, we will be presented with a way of escape, which we must grab quickly.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ demonstrated several ways to overcome temptation when faced with difficult situations. When Jesus fasted in the wilderness, Satan tempted him by telling him to turn stones into bread. But Jesus defeated Satan by the word of God at every step and overcame the

offer of power and to test God. At the tactical level, we need to see as to what the way of escape is in our situation. Therefore, we need to use the word of God and not rely on our own strength to escape from temptation.

Another big weapon in our arsenal, is prayer. Jesus gave an ample demonstration of the power of prayer or the consequences or the lack thereof at Gethsemane. Jesus asked His disciples, "To watch and pray, lest they fall into temptation".

1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength. But, with the temptation, He will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it".

In conclusion, let us thank God and say, "Great is thy faithfulness O Lord" and acknowledge the weapons in our arsenal to overcome temptation. Truly, the word of God, prayer and finding ways of escape gives us the strength to overcome temptations. Amen



Captain IN A J Manohar is a trained faculty at the School Programme of the Bible study Fellowship International and leads a Bible study group for families every week on Zoom and is a member of Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.

A Life of Faith

A tribute to Late Mrs Susan Ittoop



*“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.*

*On Christ the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand ...”*

As I listen to this hymn I’m transported to a time when my mother would listen to hymns on a tape recorder in her kitchen whilst cooking before she left for work. This hymn would be rewound and played often. It’s also a hymn which describes her faith.

Christ was the foundation of my mother, Susan’s faith. It was her faith in Him and His plans that helped her tide many an obstacle that came her way. Whether it was the difficulty in having a child early on in her marriage or overcoming breast cancer later on in life, it was her faith that sustained her. She always said that I was born because of prayer, it took eight years of it and she never wavered in it even when some doctors told

her she could never have children. Her faith in Christ blessed her with two, the second when she was 42!

We, as a family, often woke up to the image of my mother reading her Bible surrounded by prayer books. Such was the importance she placed on prayer that even when she was unwell she made it a point to read her prayer books and pray while lying in bed.

My mother taught us as a family the importance of prayer and to trust God’s plans. I have to confess my faith wavers at times, but then, my mother’s steadfast faith comes to mind and like a compass it points and leads me to Christ.

Mrs Mariam Ittoop

Daughter of Late Mrs Susan Ittoop



Men's Fellowship Report

Dr Joel Bunyan, Men's Fellowship Coordinator

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

MISSION STATEMENT:

- To provide leadership and direction through a Christ-centered fellowship and spiritual growth, by sponsoring inspirational programmes to motivate our men to become Godly influences in their homes, workplaces, church and community.
- To ensure that each man has an opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ and His purpose of the sacrifice on the cross.
- To seek Pastoral support. To garner the support of the pastor to provide the extra push behind the fellowship ministry.
- To strive members to grow themselves as useful pillars of the Church.
- Outline what the men's fellowship will be responsible for doing in their lives. To build the Christian family and become better husbands, fathers, brothers and human beings.
- To determine what type of curriculum will be used to guide the biblical development of the members.
- To participate in the Outreach Ministry and to work for the welfare of the society on the whole.
- To abide and uphold the well-established standards and norms of the Church of South India, Diocese of Medak and Church of St John the Baptist. To adhere to the Almanac and the CSI Magazine, wherein the instructions and all suggested activities are communicated for the edification of the Church.

A Christian Men's Fellowship helps facilitate the gathering of Christian men for the purpose of sharing experiences, encouragement, support and biblical study. The resultant of such a fellowship is men who are strong, encouraged, fortified, better husbands, fathers, brothers, bosses and co-workers, living a life that exemplifies Jesus Christ.

Reviving Men's Fellowship Activities (February 2020):

The Resident Presbyter Rev K Charles Wesley and Dr Joel Bunyan discussed about reviving the Men's Fellowship of our church, in the month of February, 2020. But no devotional meeting (after the Sunday Service) could be conducted since then, due to the pandemic situation.

Routine Activities conducted by the Men's Fellowship:

- Participated in the Weekly Bible Study (on Wednesday evenings). (The Bible Study always has proved very helpful in enhancing the group's spiritual growth.)
- Participated in Evening Prayer Fellowship on Fridays, which includes prayers for our Church, our congregation and for any special prayer requests.
- Assisted the Presbyter and Pastorate committee in the Church activities.
- Assisted and attending Church Music classes and Choir and Special Song practices.
- Practised and rendered special songs on appropriate themes during the Sunday services.
- Were actively involved as Area coordinators and participated in the Lenten Cottage Prayer Meetings.
- Involved ourselves in outreach programmes: visiting the elderly who cannot attend Sunday Church and visited and praying for those who are sick, both in their houses and in hospitals.
- Coordinated the Senior Citizens felicitation programmes.
- Took care of the poor and needy with financial assistance.
- Helped in the preparations for Harvest Festival Sunday.
- Participated in the laity meetings organised by the diocese.
- Arranged innovative seminars with in-house resource persons.
- Assisted in arranging area-wise coordinators and musical team for the annual carol rounds.
- Helped the bereaved families, during burial services.

Activities during COVID-19 pandemic period (from March to October 2020):

Before we could start the regular Men's Fellowship meetings in the Church premises, the COVID-19 virus became pandemic. Therefore, no Men's Fellowship meetings could be conducted.

On the advice of Rev Charles Wesley and the Pastorate Committee, the *Men's Fellowship WhatsApp group* was created on June 6, 2020. At present the strength is nearly 40 members and more are expected to join, once regular church services commence. Members of this group are participating daily with vigour and everyone is being blessed with Bible verses, Biblical articles, songs, prayers sent to them.

Online Bible Study Daily Refreshing verses from the Website www.stjohnscsi.org/bible_study/ are posted on the WhatsApp group. Exposition of few verses from daily scriptures reading from CSI Almanac, are also provided in the group.

Online Friday prayers, for families and after prayer requests are also attended to.

The Men's Fellowship Members are also active in reading the Lectionary Bible reading, conducting Intercessory prayers and Choir singing for the 'Online Sunday Church service'.

After a call by our Bishop Rt Rev Dr Solomon Raj for a 12-hour Fasting and Prayer for lessening of the COVID-19 Pandemic on May 22, 2020, by all Men's Fellowships of the Medak Diocese, eight of our Men's Fellowship members recorded ardent prayers at their residences. The audios of the prayers recorded were clubbed and a video was made and uploaded in the Diocesan website.



Since July 5, 2020 the Men's Fellowship members initiated special prayers for Rev Dr A B Joseph Kishore, who was in ICU in a hospital in the city. We thank God that Rev Kishore was discharged from hospital and is doing well now.

On July 5, members of Men's Fellowship participated in the Zoom online 'Worship and Prayer'. We thank to our Youth Fellowship, Secretary for arranging the programme. The topic was 'The Blessing – Live Worship from the Living Room'.

Over the YouTube channel, our Members witnessed the CSI Department of Youth's 'Motivational Web Series for the Young People during COVID-19', on July 11, 2020. Youth of various dioceses participated with songs and prayers to the Glory of God.

After receiving a prayer request on July 11, members specially prayed for IPP Prabhakar Rao uncle who was weak with fever. We thank God he is doing well now. Mr Prabhakar Rao who had turned 94 on August 26, 2020, is the most senior member of the Men's Fellowship and of St John's Church.

Both Mr Prabhakar Uncle and Shyamala aunty (as we fondly call them) travelled to Houston, USA on September 9, to live with their son. On September 5, Rev Cecil Victor, some of the Pastorate Committee members and others including some members of the Men's Fellowship and Youth Fellowship Secretary visited them, prayed for their travel and felicitated them on behalf of St John's Church.

On July 18, we received a prayer request healing for Rev A Bennett Raj, Presbyterian-in-charge, CSI Wesley Church, Musheerabad. He had been put onto the ventilator because he had contracted COVID-19. His wife and two sons also tested positive and were kept in quarantine. Members of the Men's Fellowship prayed daily for Pastor and his family and liberally donated for the hospital expenses. Sadly, our dear Lord took Rev A Bennett Raj to his heavenly abode on August 3, 2020. Since then, we have continued to pray for his wife and sons.

Through the Men's Fellowship WhatsApp group, the 'CSI Life Magazine' for the month of July, was distributed by Rev Charles on July 21, 2020. The magazine has many motivational articles including Synod activities. Our Members were encouraged to subscribe for this magazine.

On August 15, 2020 the Pastorate Committee members, Officers, and Secretaries of Women's Fellowship, Youth Fellowship and Men's Fellowship welcomed the new Presbyterian-in-charge, Rev James Cecil Victor and his family on his appointment as Presbyterian-in-charge of St John the Baptist Church. At the same time, Rev K Charles Wesley, the previous Resident Presbyterian and his family were given a farewell on their transfer to another Pastorate.

Since September 5, 2020, 'Area-wise prayer meetings' have been introduced on every Saturday and Sunday from 7 to 8 pm, via Zoom. Members of the Men's Fellowship are actively involved as Area coordinators in contacting the members and the families of various areas and requesting them to attend these Weekly Online Prayer Meetings.

Biblical articles posted in the Men's Fellowship WhatsApp group:

- Articles on St Paul, St Peter and the Twelve Apostles by Mr Jason Wilson.
- The Life of Thomas'; 'Christ the Healer' and 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near' by Ms Sheba Mridula Sagar.
- Companions of our Lord – Martha, Mary and Lazarus of Bethany' by Mr Vijay Joel.
- Transfiguration of Christ.' Mr Joshua Kamal Kumar.
- When Jesus asked His disciples, 'Who do you say that I am?'; 'The significance of the colour green in the Bible'; 'King Asa of the Kingdom of Judah' by Dr Joel J Bunyan.
- Bartholomew, Apostle and Martyr' by Ms Joyce Thompson.
- Mathew, Apostle and Evangelist' by Mr Jason Wilson.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, we thank you for the model that you have given us for community and fellowship. You have created a structure that gives us, as Christians, a place to grow, serve, and be held accountable to our faith. Lord, we pray that Christian men would find real fellowship with other brothers in Christ. We pray that they would find accountability and encouragement. Give us opportunities with these relationships to be used to help another brother grow and become more of the man you have made them to be. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Dr Joel Jayawanth Bunyan is the coordinator of the Men's Fellowship at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.



Women's Fellowship Report – 2020

Mrs Angelina Clement

What better opportune time, than this wonderful moment to praise and thank God for guiding us through these troubled times and to review the past nine months in this blessed ministry, and place perspective on what we have accomplished. I hereby present our Women's Fellowship report of 2020.

Our Fellowship's main aim is to encourage, to equip, to empower and to promote unity and fellowship in our journey as members of His Church. As women are the backbone of the church, their contributions are vital to the mission and success of the church. Our fellowship is ministry driven, although nurturing social activities play a part in the overall women's ministry programme.

Objectives:

- ❖ To include every woman of the Church who is willing to participate in all its plans and activities.
- ❖ To promote a closer fellowship with Christ and His Church and to ensure that every woman experiences a beautiful and a life changing relationship with Jesus.
- ❖ To visit and minister to the sick, lonely and the bereaved.

Our theme verse for the year is taken from Hebrews 10:24-25.

'And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

We prepared a calendar so that throughout the year our fellowship follows planned activities, and ministry among women.

We started this blessed journey on a joyful note, we rendered a beautiful song on Advent evening, on December 1, where we were all united in our songs and praises to God. The enthusiastic ladies of our Church joined in door to door carol singing, which is an integral and indispensable part of Christmas. We also participated in Town DCC Women's Fellowship Fraternity Christmas Celebrations.

Every Sunday the Women's Fellowship met regularly after the morning service in the side chapel. As part of our ministry, we encouraged women to get involved in Evangelism, as we have many women in our Church who are gifted with the ability to share the word of God. Our blessed time includes prayer time, praise and worship, testimony and an interactive session.

We visited the sick at the hospitals and at their residences and prayed in one spirit to destroy strong holds.

All through the month of February, we meditated on the theme “The power of our supernatural weapon – Prayer”. We dug deeper in the theme and discovered more through discussions and sharing during our Women’s Fellowship Meet after the Church service.

Retreat

We all prayerfully prepared for our Women’s Retreat 2020 which was scheduled on February 21. The highlights of this event were as follows:

- St John’s first Women’s Worship team leading in praise and worship
- Challenging and heart-rending testimony by Mrs Sujata Naik, who lost her three children in a devastating house fire in Collierville, Tennessee USA.
- Inspiring message by Mrs Debjani Srinivasan
- Bible Quiz on the theme Prayer, Garden, Trees, Nourishment, Growth and introduction of area wise coordinators for the smooth functioning of our fellowship activities.
- Exciting prizes were given, and delicious lunch was served.

Women’s Day

We celebrated International Women’s Day on March 8. Theme: “I am generation equality realising women’s rights”.

We presented a song titled, ‘Women of Faith’. The Rev Jacqueline Prasanna Kumar delivered a meaningful message on the theme.

This year gives a wonderful opportunity for all the women of our Church to set their minds on eternal things to serve the eternal king and live to please only Him. Small actions can have a big impact in making this vision a reality.

We are all given indispensable roles in the achievement of God’s ultimate purposes. As part of our church body, let us work for His Kingdom and bring glory and honor to our Lord and Saviour.

World Day of Prayer

We observed the World Day of Prayer worship service on March 18, 2020 with a theme ‘Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk’. The order of worship prepared by the women of Zimbabwe was followed. We received a wonderful response and message of appreciation from the government of Zimbabwe.

Transitioning from an in-person Women’s Ministry to virtual Women’s is something that we never imagined would be needed. But nothing could deter us to achieve our purpose in our ministry in our commitment to our goal.

During the lockdown

We embarked on four phases of Bible study. We started with a 7-day (March 24-31) Bible study Project **'Re-reading the Bible from another's Eye'** to shift our focus and fix our eyes on Jesus in these uncertain and troubled times.

Women groups from various nations and different parts of our country joined us in studying same passage considering the following:

- the context and culture at that time
- the Cross and its significance in light of that passage
- the present context we are living in COVID-19 etc.,
- how or what can we apply in our lives, in our culture

We meditated on the passage during our quiet times, or as a family and shared our personal reflections on it.

The theme for the month of April was **'Whispers of God's Love'**

We meditated on the 7 beautiful passages reflecting God's love from a women's perspective and did a visual reading of 7 passages on the 7 declarations of THE WORD, Jesus Christ! We posted the reflections, and all the creative work done by our members on that particular topic each day.

Bible study on the book of Daniel

During these uncertain and troubled times, with so many signs happening, pointing to the end times, after much thought we felt it would be apt to spend a week with this amazing book from the Old Testament – Daniel.

Every day, we read two chapters, did our personal study, and in the evening at 6 pm every day, a small and simple quiz was posted on WhatsApp for those two chapters.. Individual scores were maintained all through the week and final winners were declared the following week.

We had an exciting and creative time at 6:00 every evening when we revisited the chapters of book of Daniel with a difference. The members were asked to make bookmarks, prayer cards and other creative items related to the given chapters

We celebrated Mother's Day, and paid respects to all the mothers of our Church.

We observed a three day fasting prayer and prayed for each and every woman of our Church and her family. And Day 3 was observed as a day of Thanksgiving and Consecration.

We did a special study on the Holy Spirit through the book of Acts in the third week of May. Every day a passage was posted to the members, and few points of reference were pondered upon.

That week was really significant. We reflected on a few passages about the Holy Spirit, God, His manifestation and work from ***The Acts of the Apostles***. This was totally one's personal time with God, meditating on the scripture and preparing for a fresh anointing, breakthrough in bondages.

Women's online meet

We had a Women's online meet on the theme 'You're Adored and Anointed.' We had a blessed time of prayer and learning. The speakers for the day were from Indonesia. We also had an exciting quiz on the Book of Acts.

After the lockdown we embarked on a devotional study on the book of Nehemiah.

Our subject for the study was a deeply inspiring one 'Staying Spiritually Fresh and Rebuilding Broken Walls'. We understood the spiritual principles set out in the book to be able to serve the Lord effectively.

We also had a devotional study on the book of Ruth, a beautiful pastoral story which reveals the love of God towards women and makes it clear that God has a special and unique purpose for the family. And presently, we are meditating on the only other book of the Bible named after a woman, Esther. We have many events lined up for the rest of the year.

- Pastorama Mrs Suhasini Cecil James took charge as the President of Women's Fellowship on August 15, 2020.
- It has been decided to have WF Virtual Meetings from 1 October 2020, every Thursday, at 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm and grow spiritually together in God.
- We had a webinar on 6 September, the meeting was an experience and a blessing.
- Our Presbyter-in-charge, Rev Cecil led us in the opening prayer and our Women's fellowship President Mrs Suhasini Cecil conducted the proceedings of the programme.
- Bishop amma Mrs Vajra Solomon Thalligaru extended her loving and encouraging greetings to the members.
- Mrs Aruna Bahuguna, DGP (Retd) and Former Director of NPA spoke on 'Women and leadership', concept of Christianity and how to resolve to break the traditional glass ceiling that barred women from entering leadership positions.
- The Rev Hemalatha John, Director for Ecology and Environmental Concerns was to give a talk on Women's connection with environment and its theoretical perspectives, but this was cancelled at the last minute.
- Dr Madhulatha Alexander, Obstetrician and Gynecologist, gave a power point presentation on the health concerns, problems and solutions and stressed on the importance of women's health.
- The speakers answered all the queries put forth by the members patiently and adequately.
- Mrs Anna Alexander compiled the questions put forth by the members to the speakers and made the questionnaire very easy.
- Dr Sravanthi Udaia, GHMC, Co-option member offered a powerful closing prayer.
- Mrs Rama Varghese rendered all the technical assistance and helped in organising the Women's meet.

I take this wonderful opportunity to express my sincere thanks to our Bishop thandrigaru and Bishop ammagaru for their prayers and encouragement.

I sincerely thank Rev Charles Wesley Pastorgaru and Mrs Shebah Wesley Pastorama for their immense support and spiritual guidance.

I express my sincere thanks to Rev Cecil James Pastorgaru and Mrs Suhasini Cecil, President of our Women's fellowship for their continued support, able guidance and we are looking forward to working together for the glory of God through this blessed ministry.

My sincere thanks to our church secretary Dr Udaia Kumar garu for the immense moral support and guidance and I sincerely thank all the pastorate committee members as well as the leaders of Men's fellowship, Sunday school and Youth Fellowship for all their encouragement and support.

I express my sincere gratitude to my support team for their advice and guidance and also thank the beautiful members of the Women's Fellowship and our church for their love and encouragement.

May the Almighty God strengthen the Women's Fellowship to continue to unite members in prayer and work together for the service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



Mrs Angelina is a teacher at St Andrews, and Secretary, Women's Fellowship at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.



A Youth Report - FOG

Ms Sheeba Roy

"Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Psalm 103:1-5

The year 2020 will be remembered as one that brought Churches to our homes and redefined the word 'Fellowship with Christ and Church' for each one of us. Fortunately, the lockdown due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic did not lock down the FOG Fellowship, but rather encouraged us to be locked in with Christ and make this the focus of our lives.

We continue to meet every Sunday over Zoom at 6.30 p.m. Every session begins with a word of prayer, followed by an incredible time of Praise and Worship lead by our FOG band (Joshua Manuel, Aaron, Nidhi, Nikitha, Joash, Neria, Jennifer, Rohan). After this, we reflect and meditate upon the word relevant to the theme chosen for the month. This task is taken up by either the Youth Secretary or a guest speaker. We have so far meditated on the themes 'Holy Week', 'Rooted in Christ', 'Challenges are Opportunities', 'Great is Thy Faithfulness', 'Joy of the Lord' and 'Building a Community of Faith'. The theme for meditation for the month of September is 'Surrender'.

In addition to the Sunday Sessions, we meet every Saturday for a Bible study session called 'Youth at Home.' Every session begins with an opening prayer, praise and worship, session, discussion and closing prayer. Till date, we have completed meditating on the Books of Nehemiah (led by Mr Maju George), Ezra (led by Mr Maju George) and Esther (led by Ms Junia Sucharita). We are currently meditating on the Gospel of Mark (led by a different FOG member every week).

This year, we also started a Wednesday Prayer Group, which primarily began as a small group that would meet midweek during the Lent season at Church. We continue to meet post lockdown through Zoom (led by Ms Nidhi) to pray for each FOG member and their family, the Church, and any other specific requests.

To bring the Church onto the digital space, we organised the first **Live Worship Evening** in July, inviting all our Church members to participate from their living rooms as a family. The evening was themed 'The Blessing' and focused on Numbers 6:24-26 and witnessed 100 members participating via Zoom. The worship was led by the FOG band (Peter, John Reynolds, Ajay, Ms Junia and Mr Maju) invoking God's blessings in the form of protection and good health of the Church family. The special message for the day was shared by Rev Praveen Bunyan and later, Rev Veena Bunyan interceded for healing and strengthening of the Frontline Warriors in general and, specifically, for our Church members. Rev Charles Wesley closed the session with a prayer and Benediction.

As a perfect finale to our August theme 'Building a Community of Faith' and to create a fun time slot we hosted a 'Game Night' for all the FOG members. We kick started the evening with a Zumba Worship Session (facilitated by the Clement Sisters) and continued with Picture Building, Pictionary and an exciting Man Hunt. The night was a great success, as all the members participated enthusiastically.

We will be continuing with the virtual session over Zoom until further notice and extend an invitation to the youngsters to participate in our sessions, to build a stronger community of faith among the youth in our Church. As we look ahead adapting to the new normal, FOG is planning to reach out to the youth from the rural areas to support them by providing training sessions in basic computer skills, communication and life skills.

At this time, we would like to thank the Lord Almighty for leading us and keeping us together as a Youth Group and speaking to us in an incredibly special way. We also express our gratitude to Rev Charles Wesley for his support and encouragement during his tenure as the Resident Presbyterian. We are glad to welcome Rev Cecil James and are grateful to the Pastorate Committee for all the support and opportunities provided for the youth. We will always be grateful to our parents for being patient with us and for encouraging your kids to attend and participate in the FOG Fellowship.

Last but not the least, The FOG Fellowship journey is incomplete without our dear youth members who have been the pillar of strength for our growth and we congratulate each of you for being there with us, praying and taking up different responsibilities to reach out to more and making Christ known to many more ! May Our Lord God continue to bless and use each of us more and more to spread his Gospel.

PS: You can now follow us: Facebook page – FORCE OF GOD – fog and Instagram – forceofgod

Ms Sheeba Roy is the Coordinator for FOG-Youth Fellowship at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.





TINTINNABULATIONS

Mr Ajit Alexander George

Any visitor to St John's church will notice the 'belfry' (*pronounced 'bell free'*) at the entrance but few would observe that the belfry is separated from the main body of the church building. While the construction of the Church was completed in 1813, the bell was installed on the Church in 1836 and the belfry was constructed only around 1923.

In early August this year, it was noticed that the wooden structure at the top of the belfry was in a very precarious condition, the wood having decayed over the years due to its exposure to rain and heat. The beam to which the bell was fixed could have given way at any time.

After a detailed inspection, it was decided to replace the wooden structure with a steel structure. It was also decided to retain the same design for the structure, for fixing the bell. The bell was brought down carefully from the top with the help of five to six persons handling a supporting rope and chain. The bell weighed approximately 400 kilograms. It was a pleasant surprise for everyone to read the marking on the bell in capital letters: "**THOMAS MEARS OF LONDON FOUNDER 1836**". The bell was subsequently given a light buffing to clean it up.

The steel structure was fabricated mostly at the site and lifted to the top. The main beam (head stock) and the frame were grouted to the wall and the other steel panels were welded to it. A pulley system helps to guide the rope from the clapper, tongue of the bell, while ringing it.



It took almost three weeks — with short breaks— to complete the job on September 22, 2020. The bell was finally hoisted to the top after a prayer. It was a moment of great satisfaction and relief when finally the bell was fixed to its earlier position and echoed with all its earlier glory.

We praise and thank God for His mercy and protection during the entire proceedings. We also thank our members Mr Vinod Kumar and Mr K Sumanth for their meticulous supervision from beginning to end.

Mr Ajit Alexander George is the Property Secretary at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.



Roof Repairs at St John the Baptist Church (CSI) – II

Mr I P P Prabhakara Rao

This is the second fascinating and detailed report regarding the extensive repairs carried out on the roof of St John the Baptist Church by Mr I P P Prabhakara Rao and a group of committed members of our church. This is especially significant if roof repairs need to be carried out again

After 9 years, some new leaks were observed in different places both on the right and left sides of the chancel. The team met to deal with these new leaks. This report also covers the leaks observed till 2015.

The team: Pastor G Suresh Kumar; Mr NSJ Devadatham, Property Secretary; Mr Norman Isaac, Assistant Treasurer; Mr Sam David, Member Pastorate Committee; Mr IPP Prabhakara Rao; Mr Philip, Sexton and three workmen.

Date: July 14, 2008

The repair work was required immediately, and it was decided to go ahead with it. This work was started on July 14, 2008 at about 11.00 am. Pastor Suresh Kumar, the Resident Presbyter prayed for the successful and effective completion of the repairs and for the safety of the workmen. The date wise events are listed here:

14-7-08: The tar from the old joints and the UV tape was brushed and cleaned up. At the NE end the rubber jointing was trimmed. The NW corner also was cleaned up. Mr Theophilus inspected the work later.

15-7-08: The cracks on the inside of the parapet walls and the trough joints were sealed with silicon sealant. Half an hour later, these joints were covered over with a mixture of epoxy and resin. Even while still green, another mixture of cement and fine silica was applied over the SE joints.

16-7-08: The SW and the SE corners were taken up and similar treatment was given as in the NW and NE corners

17-7-08 and 18-7-08: Fixing up of all the GI sheet roofing, which had come loose on all the four sides of the roof. The bolts were fastened to the roof timber and the bolt holes sealed with the epoxy. Work was completed.

Material used:

- Silicon Sealant
- Epoxy
- Resin Cement Material Supplied by the Consultant/Contractor
- Silica

Total cost of sealing work: Rs. 20,000; Fixing the loose eve boards all round (Carpenter): Rs. 300; Plastering the exposed brick work at the SW Corner: Rs. 400.

Roof Repairs, Continued

The team: Mr NSJ Devadatham, Secretary Property; Mr M James Samuel, Secretary, St John's Church; Mr Manu Theophilus, Consultant/Contractor; Mr I P P Prabhakara Rao, Member, St John's Church

Date. July 29 2008, 11:30 am

The team met to look into the problem of the further leaks developed. The leaks were observed on Sunday evening. This was due to incessant rain. This was after the leak proofing work was completed. This needed detailed investigation. We pumped up water and sprayed all around the north west corner and the sides. Mr Theophilus and I got up the roof to examine this, as there was no point in merely discussing the issue from the ground. Various theories were floated, but we could not come to any conclusion.

On the next day, (July 30) I went up to check again. We blocked the drain holes to simulate the worst conditions. This time we put water in a controlled manner and in sequence. First, we put water into the aluminum trough along the parapet that was sealed recently, and it was observed that there was no leak anywhere.

We put in water along the parapet walls both inside and on top. Mr Theophilus expressed a strong suspicion that water was finding its way through these walls. But again, it was observed that there were no leaks.

We then put water on the GI Sheets on both the west and the northern sides. Immediately, a heavy leak was noticed along the wall right from the roof junction along the wall where Mr Purushotham's memorial plaque was placed. Water also started dripping from the arch over the window nearby. There were no other leaks.

Next, we put water on the sloping valley trough from the top, both, on the valley at the tiled roof as well as the GI sheet roofing. A number of leaks were observed.

1. A leak near the pillar in left first pew in the nave (viewing towards the altar).
2. A leak at the third left pew in the aisle
3. A number of leaks near the pillar in the passage in line with the valley
4. The leak along the wall nearby referred to earlier had increased

The test was conducted for a total of 45 minutes. We realised that detailed study was required to define the sources of leaks before further action could be taken.

Detailed study done

The team: Rev G Suresh Kumar, Resident Presbyter; Mr N S J Devadatham, Property Secretary; Mr James Samuel, Secretary; Mr Norman Isaac, Asst Treasurer; Mr Manu Theophilus, Consultant/Contractor; Mr I P P Prabhakara Rao, Member, St John's Church and Mr. Philip, Sexton

The team met to get into the details to determine the causes and possible locations on the roof where water seeps through.

This time we did not block the drains as we did earlier, and the same sequence was followed. Water put in the drain along the wall and on the walls and even on the GI Sheets did not leak through.

When we put water on the lower portion of the valley water started leaking as before near the pillar and around it but, surprisingly, not along the wall but along the gusset support of the wooden beam.

So, I got up to look into and checked the GI sheet trough at the junction of the lower and upper valleys. A loose and a clear gap, though small, was noticed. Water could easily seep through uncontrolled and leak through anywhere from the wooden ceiling which is not expected to be watertight.

It was therefore decided to replace, if possible, the whole valley, both upper and lower, and their junction. For this we need a good mason and a good sheet worker.

With some effort we were able to locate Shaik Mehboob the mason who had done the tile repairs and the whole repair job in 1997 we had to still get a good sheet metal worker. Now these repairs had to be taken up.

Scope of the roof repairs by RJ Tech Services

Repairs for stopping the observed leakages, was taken up and RJ Tech Services were entrusted with this work of sheet metal fixing and leak proofing. Mr C J Scott the proprietor RJ Tech Services then made a detailed study and submitted a plan of action costing Rs 86000. I discussed the plan with Mr Scott. A few minor changes were suggested like reduction of quantities and the necessity of insuring the workers at our cost and this was accepted.

Pastor Wilson, Presbyter, Pastor Shanthi Kumar Moses, Resident Presbyter, Mr James Samuel, Steward and Mr Norman Isaac, Property Secretary, were also at this discussion. Accordingly, work was taken up on March 26, 2009.

Scope of Work inside parapet wall all round:

Cleaning with wire brushes, filling cracks with acrylic sealant (Zycosil) and with ALGI Coat RC104.

Valleys at the junctions at the tiled portion and at GI sheeting

APP membrane 3mm thick (torch Shield supplied by ALGI tech) were laid on the valleys hugging the slopes, the valleys and the membranes were heated with the torch. In the case of the valleys along the GI sheeting the membrane was laid out and fixed to a width of 10ft of the valley. This makes the runoff of the rainwater easier and also makes the roof covered over to cut out any possible leaks along the valleys. (We bought two small Fire Extinguishers and kept them on the roof for emergency use. Fortunately, there was no emergency, and the heating was controlled) .

This additional protection could not be made in the tiled portion because of the irregularity of the tiles. We have to employ a mason for straightening out the irregularities by plastering with cement mortar

with a chemical additive to be supplied by RJ Tech Services. This work will be taken up later after negotiating the rate with the mason.

Drains along the Parapet Walls

The aluminum sheet drain fixed in 1997 has been further made watertight by filling the suspect joints. The APP membrane was snugly laid out by heating the drain sheet as well as the membrane. As in the case of the valleys, the joint between the drain and the G.I. sheets was sealed with silicone sealant.

Changes in the scope

As the work went on, it was felt that the southern parapet up to the chancel, was in good condition, so the repair to this side was deleted from the scope.

In the northeastern roof, the drain was a bit irregular and water was getting stagnant. The joints were tapped into position and sealed. Hence, the APP sheet was not laid on this portion to an extent of 25ft. As a result, the scope of the work reduced, and work done so far was estimated at Rs. 65000.

Further work not covered in the scope

Philip explained to me that the inside of the parapet walls on both the porticos (north and south) were in a bad shape and needed attention. I found it so too. So, these walls were cleaned up with wire brushes and sealant was applied. This work was completed. The roofs over the two porticos are left untouched as no leaks were observed.

In addition, two gable portions on the north and south transepts were flaking up inside, due to ingress of water. This work also was taken up and completed.

All cement work was cured, not by water, but by curing compound. Please see the first report for details.

P.S. During my absence on my holiday (2016), a mason was found and the joints between valleys and tiles were set right and plastered. We have had no problem since then. However, we cannot rest contented; the roof needs to have a pre-monsoon check every year and due repairs noticed, attended to promptly. The roof is old, and repairs have a limited life. A maintenance schedule recommended in my first report, needs to be taken care of fully.

I was informed that Mr R J Scott passed away. His technicians completed the job.

People involved in the repairs:

- Mr Rajasekhar, Civil Engineer(9290848895)
- Mr Manu Theophilus, Chemical Consulting Engineer (9848080312)
- Mr Poojary, Algitech Chemicals Mangalore (9246509422)
- Mr David Shalem, Prudence Pest Control Systems (Anti termite treatment) (9346619996)
- Mr Shaikh Mehboob
- Late C J Scott, R J Tech Services wound up.

Grateful thanks be to God, our Lord, the repair work done, is holding up till date and for the safety granted during the repairs.

Thanks to all the Presbyters of the time Pastor G Suresh Kumar, Pastor B Shanthi Kumar Moses, and Pastor M Wilson for their supportive prayers and the PC Members Mr Norman Isaac and Mr James Mesa for their ready cooperation.

Thanks are also due to all those mentioned above, who helped technically, to get the work done well.

Special thanks to Philip and Rani for their enthusiastic and willing help.

In respectful memory: Y S Purshotham, Sam David, N S J Devadatham and R J Scott

*And let the beauty of our God be upon us,
Establish the work of our hands for us,
Yes, establish the work of our hands. Psalm 90:17
Except the Lord build the house,
They labour in vain, that build it. Psalm 127:1*



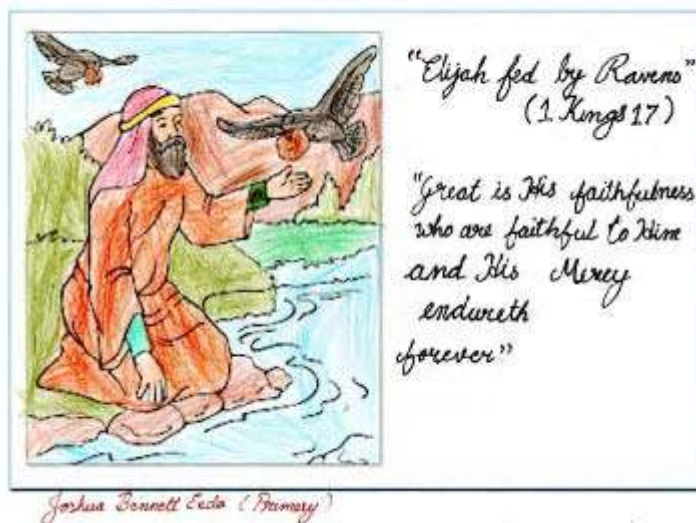
Sunday School Children's Corner - Growing in Faith



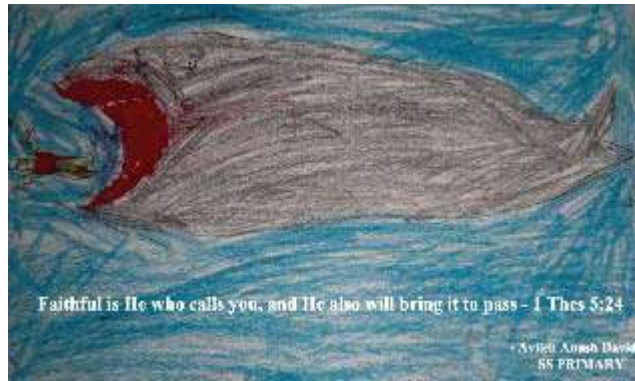
Artwork by Joanna Joel Siriki, Primary Class, Sunday School



Artwork by Joshua Bennett, Primary Class, Sunday School



Artwork by Avileli Anush David, Primary Class, Sunday school



Joan Jaden Martina is in Grade 8, sings about God of wonders which says small acts by people can transform the environment



K. Evelyn Natalia is in grade 5 Actively participates and expresses concern to nurture the nature to save the environment, so together we can save the planet.



Akhil Abraham Iza is in grade 5, actively participates and says a beautiful environment starts with you so save nature save environment



Akshay Paul is in grade 5, Says everything that God made is good in His creation, so conserve nature



Jacey Joshika is in grade 5 expresses that plants to protect air, water and plants are in fact plants to protect man so let us join hands to protect nature

Record of Deaths of Members of Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad

(May to August 2020)

S. No	When Died	Name	Surname	When Buried	Church Membership
1	10.05.2020	Mrs Iris	Joseph	11.05.2020	Mount Hermon Church
2	11.05.2020	Mrs B Kamala	Benjamin	13.05.2020	St John's Church
3	23.05.2020	Mrs Angelina Johnston	Vara	24.05.2020	SJC, Buried at SPG
4	03.06.2020	Mr Reuel	Salins	03.06.2020	Methodist Church
5	08.06.2020	Mrs Sarah Pramila Kumari	Jannu	09.06.2020	Methodist Church
6	09.06.2020	Mrs Sarojini Francis	Rajasekharan	10.06.2020	St John's Church
7	15.06.2020	Mrs Ruth Janaki	Addanki	16.06.2020	St John's Church
8	20.06.2020	Mrs Pushpavalli	Gundugollu	21.06.2020	St John's Church
9	01.07.2020	Mrs Renuka	Manda	02.07.2020	Christu Sangam
10	06.07.2020	Mr Gary Francis	Williams	07.07.2020	Methodist Church
11	21.07.2020	Mrs Saramma	Babu Kutty	21.07.2020	CSI Malayalam
12	18.08.2020	Mrs Thabitha	Pulla	19.08.2020	Methodist Church
13	25.08.2020	Ms Elizebeth J Morine	Patnam	26.08.2020	St John's Church
14	29.08.2020	Mrs Collen	Pawle	30.08.2020	Buried in Old Grave

Record of Marriages Solemnised at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad

(May to August 2020)

S.No	Date of Marriage	Names of Couples
1	17.06.2020	Raj Kumar Thudi and Sunitha Kalle
2	31.07.2020	David Tarakanath Relangi and Catherine Florence
3	14.08.2020	Lyon Ronith Cherla and Salome Erapogula

*We thank you for the Meaningful Articles
The Pastor and
The Pastorate Committee*



Please share your feedback with the editorial team, email at

parishmessenger@stjohnscsi.org