

CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA - DIOCESE OF MEDAK

Church of St John the Baptist

SECUNDERABAD



The Parish Messenger

January 2020

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Editorial Board

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Editorial

At the outset, it has been an interesting journey of events ever since the publication of the last Parish Messenger way back in April 2019. I am overwhelmed to chronicle all the special events that have occurred through the several wings of our church, such as Women's, Youth [FOG], Men's, Sunday school and the flamboyant choir headed by Church organists and many more.

Our Church has been bubbling with a sea of activities throughout — participation of our Sunday School team in Inter-church competitions, special prayer meetings conducted in the congregation members' homes, medical camps, visitations to senior citizen members' homes, Harvest Sunday, Confirmation Sunday (confirming our youth as full-fledged members of our church by the The Bishop Rt Rev A C Solomon Raj), visiting of out-reach ministries from churches in other countries, Christmas Tree lighting, festival of 9 Lessons and the Christmas Social, baptism and matrimonial of few of our Church member's children, obituaries of few members and many more happenings, which give Glory, honour and praise unto our Lord Almighty.

A profound sense of thanks goes out to our Pastor and Pastora, Pastorate Committee Members and Sectional Heads of various wings for sharing all the wonderful events they have been hosting throughout this period in the life of our Church. Every year, there has been a significant growth in the church, extending the message of goodness and love of our Lord Jesus.

Last but not the least; our congregation has successfully constituted the Pastorate Committee for the Triennium (2019 – 2022).

WISHING YOU

"A BLESSED AND CHRIST CENTRIC 2020"

Satri Chandrika Samuel

From the Presbyter's Desk



The Rev KM Charles Wesley

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

(The OT Book of Isaiah, Chapters 60 & 61) Advent season is a time of awareness of the powers of the darkness, experienced by many people in the form of hunger, oppression and debt and a longing for the light of Christ Jesus that will comfort and warm as well as expose. It is a time of urgency and a time of waiting upon the Holy Spirit, a time for personal reflection on the Word of God: seeing things as they really are as well as dreaming of how they could be different. It is bringing down the powerful, lifting up the lowly, setting the spirit free and making the heart merry. May you have a Christmas with a difference! I would like to wish all the Parishioners of CSI Church of St. John the Baptist, Secunderabad a wonderful Christmas time and blessed New Year 2020.



Christmas and New Year Greetings

CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA - DIOCESE OF MEDAK



Church of St. John the Baptist



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It brings me immense joy and happiness to greet you in this very special season of Advent.

I thank God for all his blessings showered upon us throughout this year. Especially I thank God for His support and guidance for the peaceful conduct of the elections for the triennium 2019-2022. Indeed, I am very much happy and delighted to celebrate this Christmas with you all because this is the season of great joy and a time of loving, caring and sharing. Loving the one who are deprived, caring for the hopeless communities and sharing our privileges with the poorest of the poor. Because that's what Bible says in Galatians 6:2 *"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"* Christmas is not just only our merriment but it's an opportunity for each and every one of us to express our love and share our joy with the marginalized communities. Because as Thomas S Monson says

"Christmas is the spirit of giving without a thought of getting. It is happiness because we see joy in people. It is forgetting self and finding time for others. It is discarding the meaningless and stressing the true values."

At this juncture I personally would like to appreciate the entire congregation and pastorate committee members for the help which we have done for the Shankarampet Pastorate in building up the new church and many other pastorates as well. The real Christmas is when we take time to think of others who are going through difficult circumstances and trials. In this Christmas season we should express our solidarity with the bereaved families who lost their beloved ones and with the brothers and sisters living in different parts of the world who do not share in that peace and are suffering persecution and oppression. Above all it is the time of giving a space to the newborn king in our hearts, because two thousand years ago Jesus Christ took birth in a small manger but this year the same Jesus Christ would like to metamorphose our hearts like a manger to take birth in our hearts. Therefore, let us all introspect ourselves to know are we ready to give a space to the Emmanuel and the King of Kings who has promised us that he will be with us.

As we celebrate the glory of this blessed season, may God give us a heart to share our joy with our friends who are in crisis and may God fill our homes and hearts with love, peace, and joy. May these blessings follow us throughout the New Year 2020.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year 2020.

Yours in His Service

Rev. Dr. T. Bhasker
Presbyter-in-Charge
Diocesan Vice Chairman

Christmas Reflection 2019



The Rev Phil Turner

The big day, Christmas Day, will soon be upon us and amidst all the rushing around and busyness we may get time to think about the real meaning of Christmas and the nativity story. The whole nativity story is a fantastic one, and it seems so unlikely that the Saviour of the world would choose to be born in such a way.

It reminds me of the hymn God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. The birth of Christ certainly falls within the category of God's mysterious ways. It is amazing that of all the ways God could have come to us it was in the form of a helpless baby. It shows us that God works things out in His way and not ours.

Let us look at some of the significant details connected with Christ's birth:

- ♦ He chooses a God-fearing young lady, probably in her mid-teens from a poor family living in Galilee, an impoverished area in the north of Israel
- ♦ He chooses a miraculous way for her to conceive
- ♦ He chooses a faithful man to look after and provide for their family
- ♦ He forces Mary and Joseph to make an 80-mile journey to register their names in Bethlehem, just as she approaches the end of her pregnancy. It seems that the odds were stacked against Mary and Joseph
- ♦ He chooses a most unlikely place for the birth to happen, in a stable, a long way from home and family.

It is no wonder that the Bible says of Mary 'She

pondered these things in her heart.' (Luke 2:19). There was much for both Mary and Joseph to ponder on. God was sending the world the long-awaited Messiah. Many expected the Messiah to come with splendour and glory, but He was born among the poor and hungry, the disadvantaged and the unloved. He came from an ordinary family among ordinary people. He came as the Saviour, on a mission to rescue and liberate the world.

His coming was good indeed and we need to constantly remind ourselves that the good news continues because He still wants to be friends with us. He wants to bring to us forgiveness, a purpose in life, and a peace which defies all understanding, as we journey through life with Him.

This is what Christmas is really all about, not giving presents to each other and overindulging in worldly pleasures, but God giving Himself to us as our Saviour.

What then should our response be?

The final verse of O little town of Bethlehem sums it up beautifully:

O holy Child of Bethlehem descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell

O come to us, abide with us our Lord Emmanuel
My prayer is that this Christmas season we should all get to know Christ better, perhaps get to know Him for the first time. Knowing Him would be a life-changing experience and the beginning of a great adventure with Him.

I wish you and your family a happy and blessed Christmas season.



Following the Christmas Star

Secretary's Desk



Dr M Udaia Kumar

During the Christmas season, we celebrate the birth of God's only son, Jesus Christ—the Prince of Peace. We must remember that His birth represents: **peace, mercy, goodwill** and, above all, **hope**.

Our church services and programmes are planned so that we recollect the events recorded about the birth of our Lord during this season and meditate on what Jesus' birth means to us. One such group of people who stand out in the Christmas nativity scene are the Wise Men and of course, the star that guided them and continued to shine on the manger that Jesus was born in.

“There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, where is He that is born king of the Jews, for we have seen *His star* in the east and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:1, 2).

“As he (Herod) sent them to Bethlehem, and said, go and seek diligently for the young child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also, ...they departed *and lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over the place where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy*” (Matthew 2:8-11).

What was the star? It helps to remember that the Wise Men were students of the sky. That means they would not be frightened or put off by anything unusual

that suddenly appeared to them. In those days it was not uncommon to associate the birth of a great ruler with unusual heavenly phenomena. The star would have made perfect sense to them and would in fact completely fit into what they already believed. The role of the star was:

1. Direction — it guided them
2. Sign — it told them about the birth of a new king
3. Pointed to the future — they believed that the babe would be a king
4. Encouragement — they rejoiced when they saw the star and what it foretold

Let's remember that the Bible associates wisdom with the stars. “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3)

But what was the star? The Greek word for star is very general; it could refer to any bright object in the sky— a star or a planet or a meteor, or even to a comet. It could be some unusual conjunction of the planets that produced an extremely bright object in the skies. Or, it may be that “the star” was a special heavenly light, prepared by God to guide the Magi. Evidently, this “star” appeared in the east to alert the Magi to begin their journey. It disappeared and then reappeared after they left Herod to journey towards Bethlehem. They seemed to know it was “His” star and they were overjoyed when they saw it (Matthew 2:10). The Magi called the star they saw in the east, “His star.”(Matthew 2:2 and not

the big star, the bright star, the outstanding star, or even the eastern star. It was “His star” and it led them to the very home where Mary and Joseph were taking care of the baby.

It is good to remember that there are two kinds of stars —stars that shine with their own energy or light, like the sun. They burn brightly, giving off their light for billions of light years, from a distance. Some stars only reflect the light of other heavenly bodies. They have no light in themselves. This is like the moon.

Jesus Christ said, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12). He is the first star — the source of light.

Jesus also said, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Christians are like the latter stars; we reflect the light of Christ to the world.

The Magi themselves faced an important decision: Were they going to pursue the star? At what cost and for how long? Were they going to move out of their comfort zone in order to search for something small, yet priceless?

We are struck this Christmas season by the awareness that all of us face the same decision. Will we pursue Jesus? Will we recognise the amazing signs God places around us that point to the reality of the God-Man, Jesus Christ? Will we journey to get to know Him?

The story of teaches us several lessons...

The Magi were diligent in their search for Christ. They asked, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2). This is an excellent question for every person in the universe to ask.

They approached Jesus in the right manner. “When they came into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him.” (Matthew 2:11). They also taught us to be unselfish with our gifts. “When they had opened their treasure, they presented unto him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11).

At this time of the year, we are aware of the legendary stargazers whose focus was a single star —a star hidden among many others, but so different. A star that would lead them to the Light of the World.

Let us lay aside our cares and follow the Magi on their journey to Bethlehem. A baby lies there who is the Light of the world — The King in the cradle, Immanuel. God with us, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world —Jesus, Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

How different things seem today and how uncertain we all feel? However, some things do not change and will never change. There are who still seek him, and those who seek him will certainly find him.

On that happy thought, I wish you a Blessed Christmas Season and a Happy New Year.



All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed



Mr Jason Wilson

Advent is the harbinger of good tidings, a new season of waiting in preparation for the Messiah's birth. Advent begins every year on the Sunday that falls between November 27th and December 3rd each year.

As we sing the advent hymn, 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel redeem thy captive Israel', it re-affirms our hope, joy and peace in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Winter has already set in, preparation for Christmas celebrations, choir practice, carol rounds, Christmas tree decorations, pageants and Santa Claus bearing gifts have commenced. It is a time to enjoy ourselves and spread goodwill.

It was in the late 1980s, when Mrs Lalitha Christian invited the six of us to join the St John the Baptist's Church choir. We had to take an oath at the altar to serve in the choir. It would not be out of place to remember that wonderful and memorable experience. The choir had the opportunity to witness and sing along with trained choristers like Marina Oomen (soprano), Lalitha Christian (alto), Kamal Kumar (tenor), William Srinivasan (bass) to name a few. By God's grace, till date we are able to continue to serve Him with our voices.

Passing through the almost frigid zone behind the Military hospital area on bikes, balancing half-asleep kids, late in the night

after choir practice, was exciting. Our participation and contribution over the years has paid off. It is indeed heartening to see that the kids have now become parents and they bring their tiny tots to participate in all the Church activities.

Apart from the joyful ambience and merrymaking, decorating our homes, visiting friends and relatives, buying clothes and gifts that we love to do, Christmas is a time to reconnect with God's mission of welcoming, loving and living in solidarity with the poor and needy.

As we come to the end of the year, we thank God for guiding us and our families throughout the year in all our trials and triumphs and channelising our activities for the extension of His kingdom. This year's Biblical counselling session to train 16 members in counselling skills was well appreciated. We also introduced the learning of Almanac Lectionary texts for Bible study. We thank our Pastor and the Pastorate committee for their encouragement for all our endeavours.

'Friday Prayer Partners' continue to support and pray for requests and wellness of all members. The prayer partners will be completing 5 years of conducting Bible study, Friday prayers, music classes and other church-related activities, as the year 2019 comes to an end. For the year 2020, we hope to continue to support various useful activities in the Church and society, in accordance to His will.



The Bright Guiding Light of Christmas



Dr Maneesha Esther Mohanty

Sparkling gold, brilliant red, holly wreaths, jingling bells, sweet melodies, scrumptious munchies, cheery faces, love in the air, warmth in the homes -hurray Christmas is here!

But, hush, can you hear the Christ child, can you see Him, can you feel His presence, can you find Him amidst the shimmer and the glimmer? Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus and He should be the centre of our festivities. Let's invite Him into our hearts, lives and homes. The real joy of Christmas is in knowing Him and following Him. This may be an arduous task for some of us, but, as we make room for Jesus, shall we ponder on His words and understand what it means to be His true disciples?

Jesus says, "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." (Matthew 5:39). Can we reject the revenge and retaliations that we resort to in our lives?

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5:43-44). Does this thought even cross our minds, or do we continue in our haughty ways?

He also said "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away." (Matthew 5: 40-42). Are we able to let go

of our possessions, even for our loved ones? Or, do we give importance to our possessions above our relationships?

Jesus taught us to "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." (Matthew 7:1-2). Isn't it natural for us to judge people according to the clothes they wear, the houses they live in and the places they go to?

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22). Are we able to really forgive those who hurt us and continue ceaselessly seventy-seven times?

Jesus told us, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things." (Matthew 6:25 and 34). Is it easy to not worry about the ups and down that life offers us? Are we able to give enough time to God, our spouses, children and friends?

Jesus said, "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And, whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:11-12). Do we work for the Glory of God alone, humbling ourselves before God, who does mighty works through us?

Let's keep these thoughts in the forefront while we celebrate Christmas this year. May the love, joy and peace of Christmas fill our lives this season and may we follow the guiding light all through our lives. Merry Christmas!!

Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ



Ms Simadan Daniel

As written in the Bible, according to Matthew's Gospel, the emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone then went to register themselves in their hometowns. Joseph's hometown was Bethlehem since he was a descendent of David. So, he went along with Mary, from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register their names.

Mary was pregnant and while they were in Bethlehem the time came for her to have a baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, since there was no other room for them to stay.

The Shepherds and the Angels

There were few shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and they were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be the sign for you: You will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly, a great army of heaven's angels joined the angel, singing praises to God, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to men on earth to those with whom He is pleased!"

The Three Wise Men

King Herod secretly called the Wise Men, determined from them the exact time the star had appeared and sent them to Bethlehem saying, "Go and search carefully for the child and when you have found him bring back word to me, that I may come and worship him." (Luke 2:8) And, so they departed and behold the star which they had seen in the east went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy and when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with His mother Mary and fell down and worshiped Him. After they opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country in another way.

Christmas

Christmas is a major festival celebrated on December 25th every year by the Christian community all over the world to commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Preparations for the day begin months in advance and the festival includes decorations, cakes, celebrations with friends and family. People buy different sizes of trees to adorn their houses. The trees are decorated with lights and ornaments. Children adore the Christmas tree because it is in and near the tree that Santa hides surprises for them and friends and family gather around a bonfire at midnight sing carols, wish each other and feast on delicacies.



The Need for Christmas

"I am coming soon!" - Revelation 22



Mr Surendra Kumar Putla

December 25 is celebrated as the festival of Christmas, in commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born more than two thousand years ago in the city of Bethlehem. The birth of Jesus through the Virgin Mary was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 7-14), and His place of birth through the prophet Micah (Micah 5:2), 700 years before this joyous occurrence.

God created man and woman to praise and worship Him. However, when they disobeyed Him, they were rejected by God (Genesis 3) and, therefore, became sinners. After a gap of thousand years, God punished the people who sinned and destroyed them through the great flood (Genesis. 6-8) as they did not listen to His word about repentance.

Again, when there was no hope for mankind, God called Abraham and Sarah to prepare the way for their salvation. Abraham and Sarah received favour from the Lord and were promised a son, Isaac. God had promised a generation and holy nation through Isaac. However, when Isaac grew up, God asked Abraham to sacrifice this promised son. Abraham obeyed God and was ready to give up his beloved son. This act of sacrifice strengthened Abraham's relationship with God, and he came to be known as 'the friend of God'.

Isaac fathered Jacob, who in turn fathered twelve sons, who were the fore bearers of the twelve tribes of Israel, out of which, through Judah, Jesus Christ was born. Again, through the line of Isaac, many great prophets were born, through whom God communicated His message that He would send a saviour who would save the world from sin.

Jesus was born as a Jew because God had promised Abraham, who was the father of the Jews, to establish an everlasting covenant through his descendants (Genesis 17-19). God chose Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and all the prophets because He had decided to send Jesus to earth through the line of the Jews. The genealogy of Jesus proves that He is the anointed one, the Messiah.

The Bible says, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3-23). "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6-23). "Because of Jesus, the grace of God came to earth and now life can rule and lead to eternity." (Romans 5:12-20).

The prophecies about the birth of Jesus, His love, death and resurrection prove He is the only mediator between God and man, if one wants to communicate with God. The birth of Jesus means peace on earth and glory to heaven. The birth of Jesus brings hope for mankind and a blessing to all.



The Wise Men



Mrs Mary Sujatha

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem (Matthew 2:1) to worship the new born king. From Isaiah 60:6 we know that they would have probably been very rich and held in high esteem in their society. Although they are often referred to as the "three kings" the Bible actually does not say how many were there, or whether they were indeed kings.

What we do know is that they had seen an unusual new star in the sky and believed that predicted the birth of a special king in Israel. Numbers 24:17 records: "There shall come a star out of Jacob." The Magi would have known about the prophecies of the birth of a special Saviour of the Jews, also known as the "Messiah" from the time the Jews had been held captive in ancient Babylon, several hundred years ago.

According to historical evidence, by the time the Wise Men actually found Jesus, Mary and Joseph, they would have been living in a regular house, probably in Bethlehem or in Nazareth, and by this time Jesus would have been aged between one and two. Then they gave their gifts to Him. Isaiah 60:6 says, "They will come bearing bring gold and incense and proclaim the praises of the Lord."

The gifts seem quite strange to give to a baby, but Christians believe that they could have the following significance:

Gold: It is associated with kings. Christians

believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.

Frankincense: This is used in worship services in Churches and this gift indicated that people would worship Jesus.

Myrrh: This is a perfume that is put on the dead to embalm them and this predicts Jesus' death. Christians believe that it signified that Jesus would suffer and die.

When the Wise Men were about to inform Herod about where Jesus could be found, they were warned in dream not to do so. Thus, Herod could not carry out his dreadful plan of killing Jesus.

The Wise Men came all the way to worship Jesus with humble hearts and celebrated His birth. This was indeed a new beginning for them, and they began a new life. It was a New Year in their lives. II Corinthians 5: 17 says "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away behold all things have become new."

The Wise Men wanted to seek Jesus and found Him. What about us? Do we have the desire to seek Jesus? We are usually busy with our own work and give very less time for prayer in our life. The Wise Men gave precious gifts and spent time to find Jesus. Jesus doesn't want any gift from us other than our humble hearts. Therefore, let us ponder about this deeply and give time for Jesus in our lives.

What are we giving to Jesus for Christmas this year? Why not consider giving ourselves? Let us give our time to our family. Give our compassion to the hurting. Give our forgiveness to the isolated. And, most importantly give our hearts to Jesus.



New Year - A Fresh Beginning



Mr Joshua Kamal Kumar Thompson

People generally look at the New Year as a fresh beginning, as an opportunity to kind of start over, to overcome a not so good habit, or do a better job of something they see as important and that needs improvement. It may be good parenting, being a better spouse or even losing weight. It may be developing different priorities, using our time better, or a whole host of things that people would like to change. So, we usually hear a lot about New Year resolutions, resolutions which are usually broken in a matter of weeks.

However, the New Year is a time to reflect and think about what the past year has brought and what the New Year could bring. It is a time to stop and analyse, to take stock of our priorities, values, pursuits, and goals. We need to ask questions like: Who am I? What am I doing with my life? What should I be doing, as a Christian, with my life and the stewardship God has given me? After all, according to the Word of God, all of life is a stewardship – a stewardship of our *time, talents, treasures*, and *God's truth*. In other words, since God's plan for our stewardships revolve around and through the life of His Son, Jesus Christ, each of us need to ask ourselves: "How well am I responding to the Saviour and the spiritual life that He has given me?"

In Luke 2: 13-20, we see several things which bring acclaim to the person of Jesus Christ, but they also provide us with both an *example and a challenge*. We see both heaven and earth responding to the news of the birth of Jesus Christ in such a way that it exhorts and challenges us in our lives – in our attitudes, priorities, values, pursuits, and actions as it pertains to worship. It also challenges our behaviour towards spiritual things and even our reasons for living.

The response by the shepherds as seen in this passage sets a precedent. The events here teach us how we should respond in view of the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Firstly, we note that the response of shepherds was a result of the news of the angels, the revelation which they viewed in faith, as from God. Secondly, scripture teaches us that it is not miraculous experiences that change men; it's the Word and the Spirit of God. The power of God is in the gospel – the Word of God and not in experiences.

This provides a good analogy for our need to hear the Word on a regular basis, and, as a result of that, to act on what we learn and know. God is satisfied with us only when we are in His Son and when we allow His Son to live His life through us. Responding to our Saviour's call, let's step in faith in this New Year, fulfilling the stewardship God has given to each one of us.



One Step Closer



Ms Nidhi Anthea Clement

It is that time of the year when Jesus lives again and draws us near, when there is laughter in children's eyes and when under the tree the mist of wonder lies... What can you and I gift Jesus this Christmas as we celebrate His glorious birth? The beginning of fulfilling the very purpose He came for on this earth.

Letting go and letting Him in ...

Like insects, our wrong doings eat away at the fruitful, fragrant life God has intended for us. When we turn towards Him, and away from past choices, He promises to remove our shame and restore us with an abundant life in Him.

As a Christian, we have probably been asked a thousand times if we trust Jesus. We talk a great deal about trusting Jesus in problems, trusting Him for our good health, trusting Him in our marriage and for the well-being of our families and churches. However, have we ever asked ourselves whether Jesus can trust us with the responsibility He has bestowed upon us? If Jesus can trust us with the very purpose He has created us, with the loving families He has blessed us with, and the Salvation He has gifted us by shedding his blood and sacrificing His life, what a joy it

would be for you and me.

Let us therefore be mindful of this season of love that there is always an eternal purpose attached to our blessings. Every time we receive a blessing, we need to remember to pick up His purpose too; otherwise we would end up being miserable.

As we continue to find His purpose in our lives, just the way Mary and Joseph did amidst the most unexpected and uncertain circumstances, let us do what we know is right to do, while God works out his plans for us in his own wonderful way. Through His birth in this world, He has promised to eternally take birth in our hearts too, if we only open it wide and cheerfully for Him to take His place as the King of our hearts.

While we do so, let us also look back and cleanse our hearts of every hurt, disappointment, failure, misfortune, sorrow, regret, guilt as we come to know that the only set of 'Footprints on the Sand' were His alone; remembering that Jesus whispered 'It was then that I carried you'.

He will continue to carry us through this new beginning, as we let go off everything that hinders us in serving Him better, through our lives and our life's decisions. He promises to hold on to us as we purposefully, willingly, cheerfully, and lovingly take one step closer to Him!



It's a Season to Sparkle — Welcoming the Advent season by little young stars to the Senior Citizens of Church of St John the Baptist.



Christmas Tree 2019 launching by the Pastorate Committee and the Pastor



Little Red Riding Hoods on their way singing Jingle bells, jingle bells. Jingle all the way....



The FOG team in full-swing



The vibrant Women's team all dressed in green and red singing 'While Shepherds watch their flocks by night.'



The Christmas Tree programme by the Men of Church of St John the Baptist

Accomplishments by the members - The year in pictures



Officers of the Pastorate receiving a copy of the Hymn Book from the Vicars of Church of England on 24th November, 2019



The farm produce has been magnificent — Harvest Festival 2019, Speaker Rev Thomas R Albin



Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad congratulates Dr B Vimal Sukumar on being elected as the 'New CSI Synod Secretariat Honorary Treasurer' at Chennai for 2020 - 2023. God bless your work.



Honouring our Pastorate Treasurer on being elected as World Cup Basketball Commissioner and Technical Delegate from India



Welcome to the New Committee Members of the Pastorate along with the Sectional Secretaries



Our choir rendered special numbers during the visit of Archbishop of Canterbury - Justin Welby at Medak Cathedral Church (CSI) on Sept 5th, 2019



Guests from US visited the Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad during the Watchnight Service [31/12/19]. The message was delivered by The Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling (United Methodist Church, USA).

Festival of Nine Lessons ~ December 2019



Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad voice Choristers



Few glimpses during the programme...Candles, procession and distribution

*What a joy to watch the little ones sing...All glory to God
Sunday school pageant - December 14th, 2019.*

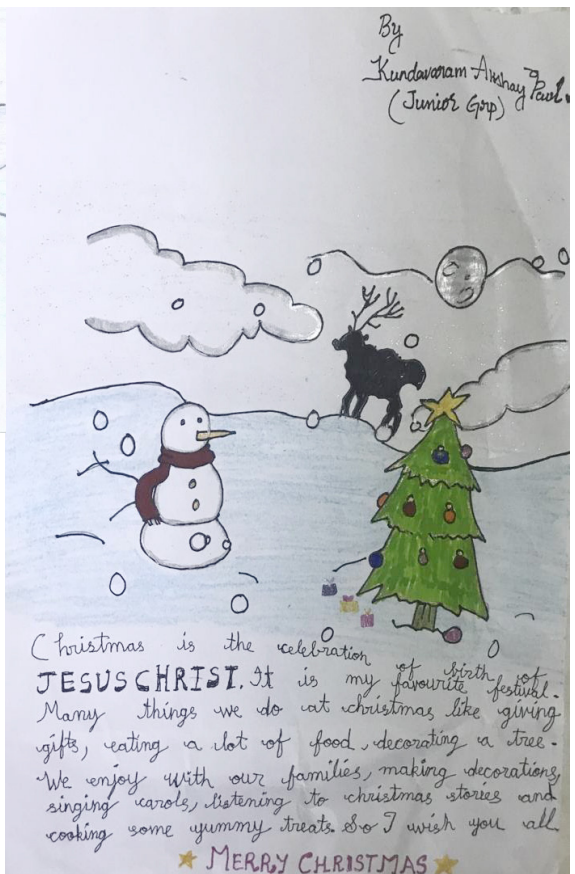




Little hands at work welcoming the Newborn King in various facets



Joshua Bennett Eeda
 "For unto us a child is born,
 unto us a Son is given:
 and the government shall be
 upon his Shoulder
 and his name shall be called
 Wonderful, Counsellor
 The mighty God
 The everlasting Father
 The Prince of Peace"
 Isaiah 9:6
 "MERRY CHRISTMAS"



Songs of Christmas

Dr Govardhini Chelapathy

The narrative of Jesus birth in the Gospel of Luke can fit into a charming, and tenderly rendered musical play. The happy ending can either be the angels singing Gloria to a decrescendo or a jubilant exit of the shepherds, unable to keep themselves from talking about the angel's songs and the Saviour in a manger.

However, the praise that rose in that holy moment in Bethlehem continues to ring in every heart that comes into a living relationship with the Father and will continue to rise from the lips of those saved as they experience new mercies and amazing answers to their prayers.

Christ's birth is a testimony of God's goodness to all who believe in Jesus' death and His resurrection. It is also God's challenge in all His love and wisdom to those who reject Jesus. A time is surely coming when each one of us will need to give an account to the Creator; an account of we choose to do with the Gospel message that came to us. The message that God loves us and gave His Son to die for us. That now, by believing in Him we will have eternal life.

Did this gospel message come to you? What have you chosen to do with it? We trust you made the right choice ... the choice for Life!

Because the song that was first given to those shepherds, which is now ringing in the hearts and homes of believers is going to continue into the hallelujahs of the thousands upon ten thousands we will see in our heavenly home! Do not miss out on the greatest celebrations of all!!



Dr Govardhini is part of Women's Fellowship and an active member of Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad

Joy, Peace, Hope, Love and Christmas

Mrs Mary Manjula Suhasini

My students are unbelievable. Naughty is a very mild word to describe them. Not only do they get very bored to learn, but when I am seriously teaching grammar, they want to sing and dance, just talk and have fun, making it anything but a study class. So, I was frankly worried, since I needed to teach them 'monophthongs' and 'diphthongs' and several other such expressions in English.

The semester exams came sooner than expected, which they had to appear in other college centres. I prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ submitting them and the exam into His hands. And He gave me the peace that passeth all understanding, which gave me great hope. Soon special joy flowed when one of the students called me, elated that the exam was a cake walk and that they have done it very well.

Like all the times, this Christmas I have the need to share more of God's peace, joy, hope and love. And I praise Him as in Psalm 9:1-2. "I will give thanks to you Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds, I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praises of your name, O Most High."



Mrs Mary Manjula Suhasini is part of the Women's Fellowship and an active member of Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.

Ebenezer— Our Help during the New Year



Mrs Yashodhra Desappa

We can remember the following Cs in the New Year, about Eben[Stone]-Ezer (our help).

Commemorate—Following Israel’s victory over the Philistines, in 1 Samuel 7-12, Samuel built an altar of remembrance and called it Ebenezer—Stone of Help as hitherto, ‘the Lord has been my help’. We too can build an altar of thanks, in our hearts, in remembrance of His good deeds in our lives. Holy Communion is taken in remembrance of what He has done on the Cross.

Count it as an experience, when we go through a *conflict* phase in our lives, tormented by a Jezebel spirit. He will be our Ebenezer and see us through, as in Exodus 14:14 He says “The Lord will fight for you”, and in Hebrews 13:5 He comforts us by saying, “I will never leave you nor forsake you”.

How does he do it?

Confuse the enemy. In 2 Chronicles 20, when King Jehoshaphat was attacked by three kings, he turned to Ebenezer in abject surrender and won the battle, by singing His praises. The enemies fought among themselves and were defeated and Israel won, with more than they could carry away.

Crush the enemy, as with the Philistines, Ebenezer thundered and crushed them. So, will He crush our problems.

Chase the enemy in Isaiah 34:36, we see when Hezekiah prayed; Sennacherib’s army was defeated by an angel. In Job 5:12 Ebenezer says, “I will frustrate the devices of the crafty, so that

their hands cannot carry out their plans”.

What should we do?

Be **connected** to him the source of our power by grasping His Hand and His Word. Then call upon His name and you will be saved.

Being **co-related** with believers —David had that inner circle of men, who were ever ready to help. “Our *help* comes from the Lord who made Heaven and earth.” Psalm 121-2.

A **committed** life to Jesus, without compromise, will be compensated with victory, though sometimes the enemy, seems to win, like Daniel in the Lion’s den. “No weapon formed against us will prosper — for the servants of the Lord.”

Christ shed His Blood for us, on the Cross and when we accept Him as Saviour, He as Our Ebenezer will help us live forever with Him.

Celebrate - Psalm 63:7 says “Because thou has been my help, in the shadow of Thy wings, will I rejoice”.

Jesus says in John 10:30 “I and my Father are one”. As Ebenezer told the deaf-mute in Mark 7:34, Ephphatha which means “Be opened.” Let our ears be open to His Word and our tongues loosened to preach His Word, even in the midst of conflict. He who has ears to hear will have a wonderful year. Let us look back and *thank* God. Look forward and *trust* God. Look around and *praise* God, in all circumstances.

This Christmas, let us gift our fount of blessing *Jesus*, by saying, “Take my heart and seal it, as here I raise my Ebenezer-Stone of help”.

SHANA-TOVA, which in Hebrew means **Happy New Year-to all!**



Vibrant Visitation



Dr K Karunakara Rao

Christmas is recognised as a time for celebration among Christians, as well as by interested well-wishers across the world.

Importantly, Christmas is a wonderful season when God visits His people, and we meet and celebrate this season with each other so that His great plans for us are fulfilled.

The people of Israel had been waiting for God's visitation for several years. Their hopes and expectations were that God would uplift His people from grief, misery and sin. We now know that God's plan was far greater and beyond this. His plan was to uplift all mankind from the evils of sin.

We must remember that God always loves His people and fulfils His plans through them.

Let us look at some very explicit examples from the Gospel to understand this:

We know that God sent the angel Gabriel to visit Mary to proclaim the birth of Jesus, with the promise to bring salvation to the whole world through Him. And, the Lord chose a Godly couple (Mary and Joseph) to carry out His plan. (Luk 1:26-31).

God's master plan was indeed wonderful, for He had a prepared a forerunner, 'John

the Baptist' to prepare the way for Jesus. For this, God chose Zechariah and Elizabeth to fulfill His marvellous plan. The Gospel tells us that God sent His angel to visit Zechariah in the temple to proclaim this good news. (Luke 1: 5-17).

God confirmed this plan to comfort Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph. Mary's visit to meet Elizabeth was also part of this plan (Luke 1: 39-43), as was the dream that Joseph had about the impending birth of Jesus. (Matthew 1: 19-21).

God's powerful intervention continued when He sent His angel to appear before the shepherds, who directed them to search for Mary and Joseph, soon after the birth of Jesus. (Luke 2: 8-12).

God also directed the three Wise Men from the east to follow the star and find the baby Jesus. (Matthew 2: 1, 10 and 11).

Thus, God's connection with His people was, and continues to be boundless, and it confirms that His presence with human beings has persisted unceasingly over the ages.

Through these examples, we also realise that God fulfilled His promise to David that an offspring from His line would bring God's kingdom to this world.

All these illustrations confirm that our God is a promise-keeping God and He never forgets or fails to keep the covenant He made to Abraham. This also confirms that His love towards humankind is everlasting.



A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols



Commodore TMJ Champion

Way back in 1880, the newly-appointed Bishop of Truro, Bishop Edward Benson, (who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury), created and performed an order of service for the Christmas Carols. The service, which subsequently came to be known as "The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols" was first held on Christmas Eve, in a large wooden building, since the Truro Cathedral was being rebuilt at that time

The idea of the service of 'Nine Lessons and Carols' travelled around the United Kingdom and became quite a popular service to hold on Christmas Eve. However, it was made very famous by the choir from King's College, Cambridge. The King's College Choir is considered one of today's most accomplished and renowned representatives of the great English choral tradition. It was created by King Henry VI, who founded King's College, Cambridge, in 1441.

The service was first performed at King's College in 1918, as a way of the college celebrating the end of the First World War.

The new college Dean, Eric Milner-White, who had been an Army Chaplain in WWI, wanted a different and more positive way of celebrating Christmas for the choir and people in the college. In 1919, he chose the opening carol to be 'Once in Royal David's City' and set the main order and structure of the lessons/readings as it still is today.

A service of Nine Lessons and Carols has nine Bible readings (or lessons), that tell the entire Christmas story, interspersed with one or two carols between each lesson, preceded by a 'Bidding Prayer'. The first verse of the opening carol of 'Once in Royal David's City' is generally sung by a single boy chorister in the King's College. Some of us in Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad might remember that it was the late Mrs Vasantha Purushotham, who sang the first verse mellifluously as a solo, way back in December 2004.

In the present-day Christmas tradition, many churches hold their own services which follow the pattern of "A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols". A few other churches hold carol services as a combination of 'Nine Lessons and Carols' and 'Carols by Candlelight' as we do at St John's Church!



Empowered by the New Born King



Captain IN AJ Manohar (Retd)

It's Christmas once again! As the choristers sing "Glory to the newborn king", people are filled with joyous delight.

Rarely has an event in history impacted society more than the triumphant entry of Jesus into this world. Christmas is more than a mere festival of joy and celebration, because of the strong belief that His entry into our lives and hearts will have a life-changing impact on us and everyone around us. Christmas is indeed much greater than the joy of singing, dancing and merriment, accompanied by the preparation of delicacies; excited greetings and the new clothes that children and adults love to indulge in and the glitterati of showbiz that add to the sheen of the festivities. Let us not forget the digital media which goes on overdrive to screen movies 24x7, loosely based on the theme of Christmas, while shopping malls and eateries announce tempting discounts. Bollywood artistes, too, have a field day pandering to people starved of entertainment, amidst the din and bustle of daily living. Housewives too escape into a fantasy world for a few hours of entertainment, far from the busy world of chores and the daily routine of looking after family, children and home.

However, have we paused for a moment to know the real meaning of Christmas? The haze of festivities sometimes takes away the very purpose of Jesus' humble birth. Most often, the message of His birth into this world is simply forgotten. In our own context, have

we invited our friends to these festivities to showcase the meaning and purpose of His unpretentious birth into this world?

Paul in his letter to the Philippians 3:10 emphatically says, "I want to know Christ yes, to know the power of His resurrection, participate in His sufferings and become like Him in His death. Have we harnessed this great power that the birth of Jesus can manifest in and through our lives? Apart from mere cleansing, we need to gain victory over the sins that can derail our lives and make us powerless in this world. That is the aim of Satan indeed. He wants us to be denied the power to overcome sin. As the first step, we need to follow St Paul's example and understand His passion to know Christ personally.

The second step is to know the power of His resurrection and to participate in His suffering, like missionaries did in the past.

I end with the testimony of Brother George Stephenson, whom I met at Dubai recently. He had a passion to serve Christ and enrolled in voluntary work as a student onboard the sailing Library, Logos. On reporting on board, the Captain asked him, "Have you received Christ as your personal Saviour?" Brother Stephenson left the ship as he had not committed to give his life for Jesus at that time and only later did he repent this lapse. Today, he is a missionary working for the tribals at Araku.

My dear friends, I urge you to receive the newborn King and your life will be transformed forever and you will be a crusader for Christ this festive season and eternally.



Cross - the Heart of Christmas

Compiled by Sunday School - Intermediate Class

One little star on the top of the tree,
Little presents underneath for all.
Silver ropes twisted around the tree,
Coloured lights and shiny balls shining prettily
Oh, what a sight for us to see!
Carols in the distance,
Laughter everywhere,
Then Santa goes out happy hunting
For the little girls and boys.
Up the street and down the street
And across and over the town
He searches and finds them everyone
Before the sun goes down.
Everyone is happy,
Do not be gloomy.
No time to worry
No need to hurry
Never feel lonely
You have a family!
Somehow, not only for Christmas
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
It's the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your hearts possessing
Returns to make you glad.
It's not about presents
It's not about food
But where there is light
There is hope.
The cross was at the heart of Christmas,
Light beamed into our darkness.
Christmas is a time for receiving and giving,
It's also a time to know why you are living.
Real Christians should be faithful, truthful, trustful, and prayerful,
Only then they can be fruitful.

What Christmas Means to me...



Mrs Rina Ratnam Boola

As I lie in bed, I'm thinking of how many times I have put away writing for the Parish messenger. And wondered what if Jesus Christ too put me away like I do him, then what would happen to me? Where and how would I be?

I immediately got up and decided that I should start putting my thoughts in writing...whatever comes to my mind.

Few questions popped up...

What does Christmas really mean to me? What did Jesus Christ do for me? Why am I here? What is my purpose?

God created me. Jesus died for me. God's spirit lives in me. I am God's masterpiece; I have worth and I am valued.

I must say, I am where I am purely because of God's grace and the valuable prayers of my parents and forefathers.

Christmas is a time to remember what a wonderful gift God the Father has made available to each one of us. I cannot ignore or take the gift of the Saviour lightly. What an awesome Saviour I have! And what a tremendous price He has paid!

Looking at what He has done for me, how can I not get excited and commit my life to Him? Because He is the resurrection, life and soon coming King. I will one day live with Him forever. Christmas reminds of a Saviour born for us, to win the battle against sin on the cross, making us heirs and co-heirs of His eternal kingdom (Romans 18:17). We can now boldly come

to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.

At this time of the year, specially, I often experience sad memories, remembering my dear ones who are missing from our celebrations. The excitement of how this Christmas would be, also brings in pain. However, as a Christian, I look forward to the day when my painful memories will be so thoroughly wiped away and redeemed, that they will be transformed into the joys of the kingdom of God.

The special joy of Christmas is spending more time with people in the family, those who profess faith in Him, and with all those around us, our friends and neighbours, by sharing the love, joy and peace we have in Him. Joy becomes the season.

It also reminds me to share the good news of the purpose of Jesus coming into the world. Am I in great need to share the good news? The shepherds did turn back but could not keep quiet. They kept glorifying and praising God over what they heard and saw, just as was told to them. What is our response to His birth? Let us be up-front about it. It is also a time to recommit and affirm my faith and love for Him.

For, I am convinced that neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). To the committed Christian 'Jesus is the reason for the season'.

May this Christmas arrive with forceful and throbbing impact on us and our children. And, as we enter the New Year, may we all, indeed, give thanks to God for the gift of His Son and our great salvation, and look forward to His coming.



The Four Advent Candles



Mr Joshua Virender

Advent includes the four Sundays and weeks preceding Christmas. This period is dedicated to preparing for Christ's birth. The four Advent candles that symbolise *Hope, Love, Joy and Peace* are reminders of Jesus Christ's coming into the world. Let us introspect and affirm our faith through these four beliefs connected to Advent.

Let us understand what the Bible offers to all who need Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.

The first candle is *hope*. 1Timothy 6:17: "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

We cannot assume what tomorrow has in store for us and therefore we fret, stress and grow anxious. However, when we have faith in Christ, we have hope not only in this life, but, also in the next. 1Corinthians 15:19: "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people are most to be pitied."

The next candle is *love*. 1Corinthians 13:13: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and *love*. But the greatest of these is love." "Love has the power to connect, correct and heal." 1 Peter 4:8." Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers

a multitude of sins. The surest way to make this world sin-free is to spread love. Let us not forget one of the greatest commandments "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Through love comes great *joy*, the third candle of Advent. Philippians 1:7: "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement." Let us encourage one another in the joy of salvation that the birth of Christ brings.

Hebrews 12:2: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." It is good to cherish and the joy we have and share it with all.

The fourth Advent candle *peace* is inevitable, if the other three pillars are laid as a strong foundation. Hebrews 12:14: "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." Wealth and richness will not guarantee happiness during Christmas. However, being at peace with everyone will enable us to receive the Kingdom of God.

We recall God's promise of hope when He says in Isaiah 55:12: "You will go in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you; and all the trees of the field will clap their hands." The true spirit of Advent is upheld by the four pillars of **Hope, Love, Joy and Peace** and if these become the cornerstones of our lives we will certainly be blessed.



And the Glory of the Lord



Mr P Samuel Albert

"And the Glory, The Glory of the Lord, shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together"!!!

At the outset, the Christmas celebration begins in the Western World right from Day 1 of November and culminates on Christmas Day's Grand Finale. The whole world waits for this glorious occasion to commemorate the advent season with great pomp and gaiety. There is strange feeling in the air, there is sweet fragrance everywhere, people are smiling more than ever before and greeting one another unusually and oozing love.

The glory of the greatest "King of Kings", "Lord of Lords" once again is manifested unto humankind by our Lord Jesus Christ who had a humble birth in a forlorn manger two centuries ago. There was no room for Him, and the world rejected Him. But, as prophesied many centuries ago in the Bible, the glorious birth of our God Almighty happened as it is written in Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace".

Christmas thus became a glorious event in the lives of every follower of Christ. The process of cleansing, purifying emancipation and restoration of mankind thus commenced with great commission by Jehovah, our Lord from the Heavens. It is an event which cannot be erased from the face of this earth since the redemption of mankind was not "the only"

thing in the plan of God but also redemption for the entire Universe. Christmas reassured the faithful followers of everlasting life as written in John 14:1-3.

Despite the unfavourable circumstances, very trying and precarious situations all around, the faithful or believers are steadfastly continuing their stand for Christ, come what may, without seeking immediate returns. They have set their eyes on the "Cup to be given to them by Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 9:24) as told by St. Paul. They are prepared to take the "Bull by its horns", the Satan, the Evil one who is scourging the media 24x7, netting all the faithful by a plethora of deceitful tricks He engages specially to attract the spiritual. The resurrected Lord continues to strengthen His children and their faith through his comforter, the Holy Spirit who is more powerful than the Satan. Holy Spirit enables us to pulverise the evil thought process through biblical revelations to the spiritual. He covers us from all the evil actions, and evil happenings and assures us of the overwhelming protection of God, our Father, until His second coming.

Christmas as an event, as an occasion and as a festival has revolutionised the entire world. Today, all over the nations, people fear Christianity because it preaches "love your neighbour", which is the most difficult thing to do. God loved us first and we are duty bound to share the same love with others whether or not he or she is our sibling, our family or our neighbours. Let us love our neighbours and embrace them with the love of Christ.

Wishing you all "a Happy, Prosperous God Blessed 2020"



Testimonies - Sunday School Children

When little ones give their heart to Jesus, this is what they have to say as the year 2019 ends:

Mast Leonard Jay Reddy



When I was a year old, I developed an allergy towards milk protein. Due to which I couldn't eat or drink anything that had milk or milk products in it. I could eat only limited things and if by mistake I ingested anything having milk my body would immediately show reactions. I would feel very sad when I could not eat cakes, I was invited for birthday parties. After relentless praying and having patience, God has finally delivered me from my situation. Now I can eat anything, and I give God all glory for curing me. Now, at the age of 14, my faith and confidence in Jesus is increasing by the minute, knowing that He helped me when I was little and He will always be with me through the coming years. Whenever I am in a difficult situation, I pray to God and my fears leave me. I praise God for using an allergy to build up my trust in Him which will last forever. May God work wonders for everyone.

Mast Koppula Jacob Rithvick



My name is Jacob from Inters. I am here to give my testimony for the year 2019. The year 2019 is a very special year for me. I used to be very arrogant before I came to Sunday school, but after coming to Sunday school my life changed. I am being very polite to everyone. I think this is the grace of God. I thank lord for this miraculous change. Amen.

Ms Carolina Harrison



I'm Carolina Harrison and God saved me from dengue as soon as my cousin brother passed away after being on the ventilator for a week. I was in the hospital for a week and everyone prayed and prayed, and my platelets rose immediately. I thank God for saving me from dengue and adding another year to my life.

It's Christmas Everyday

Ms Shirley Kumar

Everyday feels like Christmas,
For the gifts that God doesn't bring
Emmanuel here with us
Glory to the risen King.

Let adoration resound,
Praise arise to reverent heights
Overwhelming, all consuming,
Let hymns of His steadfast love
reign.

Enjoying daily His presence,
The gift we all can share
In perfect harmony His essence,
A sweet fragrance in the air.

Wrapped up in forgiveness,
Done up in a bow of grace,
That is why it feels like Christmas
Every single day.



Ms Shirley Kumar is a senior class Sunday school student at Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad

Christmas Lights

Ms Beulah Supriya

As I sit by the Christmas lights after a long and tiring day,

I just stare at the tree and don't really talk to people or have much to say.

And, yet, my mind keeps running through Noel's past; they were similar with days of joy and nights filled with vague hope.

Not about gifts or the next day of festivities, the more I pondered the answer seemed close but in vain I probed.

Is it expectation of a miracle two thousand years later? But what can be better than the birth of my Saviour?

That He came down into a manger lowly and lived among us fully God, fully man and eternally holy.

He loved us with all His heart and even death could not make Him from us part.

So, even after all this time why the anticipation? Is this the longing nature feels? Subject to futility due to man's deeds (Romans 8:20-23).

C.S. Lewis said, "A desire this world can't satiate, proves that for us another home

God did create."*

But I shelve this feeling at the end of the season; put it away in the attic with the decorations.

I don't want anything disturbing my quiet life. I want nothing to do with thoughts that can keep me up at night.

And yet I wait.

In silence more beautiful than song, my answer was found.

Pilgrim heart you will find rest. Your longings, your maker knows best.

With creation you await the King's return. Keep watch for the bridegroom, like the wise virgins with lamps that burn.

So, as lights twinkled in the night, I was reminded of the return of the Saviour; of future hope for those who draw near.

We rejoice here below but fix our eyes up above. Our hearts resound to the call of Love.

** *"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."* - C.S. Lewis



Come Let Us Adore Him - Youth Programme

The Youth Fellowship at Church of St John the Baptist decided to welcome 2019 Advent season with a brand-new annual programme “Come Let Us Adore Him”. The entire programme was planned in a way to encourage the congregation to prepare their hearts to welcome the Christmas season with Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.

The word Advent is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, which means ‘the coming’ or ‘arrival’ of a notable person or thing. Scholars believed that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January’s feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God’s incarnation. During Advent, we look back upon Christ’s coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ’s kingdom when he returns for his people. In this light, the Advent hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” perfectly represents the church’s cry during the Advent season:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

While Israel would have sung the song in expectation of Christ’s first coming, the church now sings the song in commemoration of that first coming and in expectation of the second coming in the future.

The programme consisted of lighting the 5 Advent candles by the women of our Church. The first candle, the ‘Prophecy candle’ which represents *Hope* refers to the

Prophecy by the prophets about the birth of Christ (Isaiah 7:14). The second candle is the ‘Bethlehem candle’, which represents *Love* and symbolises the manger in which Christ was born. The third candle is the ‘Shepherd’s candle’ which represents *Joy*. The fourth candle is the ‘Angels candle’ which represents *Peace*. The fifth candle is called the ‘Christ candle’ which represents *Purity*.

The vibrant evening featured the participation of all the different fellowships (Women’s, Men and Sunday school) of our Church. The FOG (Force of God) and the YFC (Youth for Christ) bands set the perfect stage with all the well-known Christmas carols while the FOG dance crew and Wesley Church, clock tower, Youth Fellowship grooved to Jingle Bells Rock. Rev Christopher Rajendra, Asst Pastor at Millennium Methodist Church, Secunderabad shared God’s word on the Christian Hope for the Advent season. Rev Charles Wesley, our Resident Presbyterian along with the members of the Pastorate Committee did the honours of lighting the Christmas tree after the countdown. The fun did not stop here — the food stalls and Christmas goody stalls, added to the excitement of the entire evening, which witnessed a huge turnout from our Church and guests from other Churches across Hyderabad.

We thank Rev Dr T Bhasker, Rev Charles Wesley and the Pastorate Committee for giving FOG an opportunity to kick-start this annual programme. We also would like to extend our gratitude to Mrs Vijaya Mary for giving us media coverage in The Hindu newspaper. Last but not the least, a big thank you to all our FOG members for planning and executing this event.

*The Members of the Pastorate Committee for the Triennium 2019-2022
CSI, Diocese of Medak, Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.*

S.No	Member Name	S.No	Member Name
1	Dr M Udaia Kumar	2	Mr Mesa James Samuel
3	Mr Norman Isaac	4	Mr Ajit Alexander George
5	Prof Dr B Vimal Sukumar	6	Mr A Anup Kumar William
7	Mrs Shebah Wesley	8	Dr Maneesha Esther Mohanty
9	Mr Maju Mathew George	10	Mr Joshua Virender
11	Mrs Yashodhra Desappa	12	Mr M Raj Kumar
13	Ms Sheeba Sam Roy	14	Ms Joyce Thompson
15	Mrs Phyllis Sebastian		

The Church Board Members Portfolio

S. No.	Member Name	Portfolio
1	Dr M Udaia Kumar	Pastorate Secretary and Officer
2	Mr Mesa James Samuel	Pastorate Steward and Officer
3	Mr Norman Isaac	Pastorate Treasurer and Officer
4	Mr Ajit Alexander George	Pastorate Property Secretary
5	Prof Dr B Vimal Sukumar	Convener for Outreach, Evangelism and Special Programmes.
6	Mr A Anup Kumar William	Church Steward
7	Mrs Shebah Wesley	Women's Fellowship President
8	Mrs Angelina Hilda Clement	Women's Fellowship Secretary
9	Mrs Mary Sujatha Madhukar David	Sunday School Superintendent
10	Mr Maju Mathew George	Youth Secretary
11	Mr Joshua Virender	Music Coordinator
12	Commodore TMJ Champion	Choir Director
13	Mr M Raj Kumar	Church Maintenance
14	Ms Sheeba Sam Roy	Youth Fellowship Coordinator
15	Ms Joyce Thompson	Senior Citizen and House Visit Secretary
16	Mrs Phyllis Sebastian	Offertory In-charge

The Pastorate Court

S.No	Member Name	S.No	Member Name
1	Dr M Udaia Kumar	2	Mr Mesa James Samuel
3	Mr Norman Isaac	4	Prof Dr B Vimal Sukumar
5	Mr T Jogram	6	Mr David Sam Roy
7	Mr Putla Surendra Kumar	8	Mr Ajit Alexander George
9	Mr IPP Prabhakar Rao	10	Mrs Yashodhra Desappa
11	Dr Anthony David	12	Mr Martin David



*Greetings and
Compliments of the Season*

**A Merry Christmas 2019 &
A Blessed New Year 2020**

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East Marredpally, Secunderabad - 500 026.

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