



PARISH MESSENGER

Christmas - 2024

Parish Messenger - Christmas Edition 2024

CHURCH EVENTS



Christmas Tree Lighting



Melodies of Celebration – Women’s Fellowship



Voices of Christmas Joy – Men’s Fellowship



Festive Moves in Motion – Flash Mob by the Immanuel CSI Malayalam Church



Symphony of Festive Spirit: Millenium Methodist Church Band



Telugu Melodies by Philip and Family

Presbyter's Message

To All the Honourable Members,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I thank God Almighty for your steadfast faith and witness as the people of God. Your active participation, contributions, and support for the ministry of the Church of John the Baptist are deeply appreciated. Your unwavering commitment has made our church a beacon of witness and service.

Our Men's Fellowship has extended the love of Jesus through initiatives like feeding the poor and distributing clothing. The Women's Fellowship has empowered the lives of girl children by organising tuition programmes. The Youth Fellowship has shared the love of Christ with communities in Manipur, while congregational sports, the Christmas carnival, the Christmas tree, and Sunday School programmes have brought joy and celebration to many.

We are profoundly thankful to God Almighty for His continuous grace, which has blessed all our Christmas and New Year programmes, making them a grand success for His glory.

The birth of Jesus, as prophesied in Isaiah 9:1-2, profoundly impacts humanity and reveals God's purpose. This can be understood in three key dimensions:

1. God's Resolution

The birth of Jesus reflects God's resolution to save humanity from the bondage of sin and death. He turns contempt into glory. In His divine plan, even the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

- Bethlehem, a small town, became the birthplace of the Saviour (Micah 5:2).
- Mary, a humble servant, gained God's favour to bear the Saviour (Luke 1:41).
- Shepherds, often marginalised, were the first recipients of the good news (Luke 2:9).

Christmas is a celebration of God's resolution to bring glory, dignity, and liberation to the downtrodden, the marginalized, and all who are enslaved by sin.

2. God's Intervention

Isaiah 9:2 declares, "Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shone."

God intervenes when humanity stumbles in darkness, losing sight of its path. After the fall of Israel in 722 BC and Judah in 599–586 BC, a dark age engulfed the people. Scattered and without a temple or kingdom, they faced despair. Yet, God sent prophets to bring hope, comfort, and reassurance of new life.

God's compassionate intervention brings order from chaos, freedom from bondage, and light from darkness. The angel proclaimed to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; I bring you good news of great joy for all people." God's intervention offers the joy of salvation to the whole world.

3. God's Salvation

Isaiah 9:2 further proclaims, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light". In creation, God addressed darkness with the words, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). Yet, the darkness found a place in the human heart, which no sun, moon, or star could dispel. God sent His Son, who declared, "I am the light of the world," to illuminate hearts and dispel sin.

Christmas is the festival of light. St John encapsulates this truth: "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). God, who created light by His Word, emptied Himself to become the light of the world, washing away the sins of the world and recreating humanity in His image.

May we shine as the light of the world, leading others to the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Wishing you a joyful Christmas and a blessed New Year!

May God bless you and your family with good health, peace, and the fulfilment of all your needs.

Thank you,

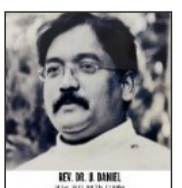
Yours humbly,

Rev Dr U. Daniel

Presbyter-in-Charge

CSI Church of John the Baptist,

Rev Dr Undunty Daniel, BSc, BD, M. Theology, (D Min) is the Treasurer Medak Diocese and Presbyter-in-Charge of Church of St John the Baptist, Secunderabad.





Santa's Workshop



Art and Crafts Corner



Christmas Transformations - Face Painting



May your Christmas be filled with joy and cheer, Bringing love and warmth throughout the year!

From the Editor's Desk

We live in a gated community in Secunderabad where all festivals are celebrated with great fervour and gusto —almost every community wants to showcase and bring their own special brand of religion and festivity to the fore-front. The small group of Christian families in our community want their place in the sun, too, and strongly feel that “we must be noticed”. So, over the last several years we have been putting up a Nativity Play as well as Christmas-related songs and dances with the kids. The adults render Christmas Carols with great gusto and enthusiasm. Of course, we also have the external trappings of Christmas, with a Christmas Tree, Santa Claus, and gifts for all children. All in all, it’s a magical evening.

What makes it especially interesting is that, apart from a core group of less than a dozen Christians, the rest of the performers belong to different communities and faiths —Hindu, Sikh, Parsi and Muslim—all singing Joy to the World the Lord is Come and Silent Night, with great fervour.

Indeed, religion can be a terrible destructor and wonderful unifier.

Personally, I feel that while the glitz and glitter of Christmas is fine and making and eating of cakes and various goodies over the season is wonderful, let’s keep in the forefront the reason for the season—Jesus’ birth under humble circumstances and His message of love for the whole world. This alone should be the message that we Christians must showcase to everyone.

This Christmas Edition of the Parish Messenger has not been easy to put together with everyone in the team and indeed all our regular contributors busy in various ways—with Church activities and their own commitments. Nevertheless, we are publishing a slightly shorter but no less meaningful version of the Messenger showcasing a host of events that took place since the Monsoon edition. The Reports of all the Fellowships and the photographs give us a complete picture of how eventful the last few months have been.

Once again, we thank all our regular members for their contributions and urge more parishioners to also their put forward thoughts and ideas to make the Parish Messenger truly representative of each one of us. May the birth of Christ be meaningful in our lives in 2025.

Mrs Sheila J Kurian worked in Orient BlackSwan Pvt Ltd for a career spanning over 35 years, starting as an editor. She retired in 2019 as a Senior Vice-President in the same company.



Reports

Men's Fellowship Report (August – December 2024)

During the period under reference, the Men's Fellowship met virtually on all Tuesdays for a little over an hour each time when we praised and glorified our Lord and savior Jesus Christ through singing, saying prayers and meditating on the scripture portion for about 30—40 minutes followed by brief interaction with the speaker.

Messages:

A heartening feature of our Fellowship is that many of our own members shared the word of God in our meetings and there was good interaction of our members with the speaker. Some speakers shared their powerful testimonies along with the message. Some of the speakers made their presentations participatory eliciting inputs and information from the audience while some others encouraged lively discussions that were spiritually beneficial.

The messages covered the following themes / topics:

- The withered fig tree (Mark 11:20,21):** The fruitless fig tree represents barren Israel (Jews) and in our times the church (believers). All believers are expected to bear fruit at all times! The Holy Spirit in each believer makes this possible.
- The Prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32):** This story tells us that
 - God gives us freedom and does not come in the way of our sinful life.
 - We pray for things without knowing to use them properly.
 - The son realized that his father is trustworthy and loving.
 - The father always looks for the return of his son
 - When God forgives a repentant sinner, He restores everything completely—identity, dignity and humanity.
 - To be “lost and found” is a life-changing blessing.
- (Psalm 20):** The key verse is “some trust in chariots but we trust in the name of the Lord our God”. We understood this verse by understanding the contrasting lives and characters of Sennacherib and Hezekiah as narrated in II Kings 18.
- Romans 16 (3, 4):** Aquila and Priscilla are a God-fearing couple who availed God-given opportunities and left a lasting impact on others by their exemplary faith and service.
- Repentance and forgiveness [Psalm 79 (1-5); II Chronicles 34(14-22); Heb. 6(1-10)]:** The history of Judea and Israel is replete with accounts of disobedience to the law and commands of God resulting in destruction, desecration and derogation of their Kingdoms and their inhabitants. God is always ready to redeem and restore us if we repent and seek his forgiveness.
- Prayer:** Bro. A. Sangeetha Rao, gave his testimony on how God delivered him from a serious illness through incessant prayers and steadfast faith. He made a reference to the many prayers of God's people in the Old Testament and New Testament which were effectively used by them to claim God's promises and achieve their objectives.
- Living to please God (I Thessalonians: 4: 11, 12):** While exhorting the Thessalonians to love each other and live a holy life Apostle Paul advises them to lead a quiet life, mind their own business, work with their hands and not to depend on anybody so that they will win the respect of outsiders.
- Nehemiah (1: 1-11):** This fervent prayer of Nehemiah concerning the plight of the Jews in Jerusalem and the condition of the broken walls of Jerusalem is generally considered as an ideal prayer as it contains all the essential elements of a prayer.
* Adoration * Confession * Thanksgiving * Supplication * Promise claiming
- Dual names:** The many dual names of Biblical persons (both in OT and NT) were highlighted along with their meaning and association with specific attributes. Names are usually given after careful / prayerful consideration keeping in view personal beliefs and predilections by the parents.
- Gospel (I Thessalonians: 1 and 2 chap.):** The word Gospel appears in these chapters many times. All believers (who are supposed to be the fifth gospel) should have a clear understanding on the following:
 - What is the gospel * Nature of the gospel * Impact of the gospel
 - Delivery of the gospel * Bearers of the gospel * Goal of the gospel
- Divine Truth (John 14:5-7):** The Key and famous Verse is "I am the way, the Truth and the life". The divine truth is in
 - The word of God * In all creation * In God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit
 Each believer should be very clear about the Divine Truth.
- Jude (1:1-11):** Jude exhorts all believers to keep away from sin and godless men and work out their salvation with steadfast faith, fear and trembling.
- The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31):** This story indicates how different and independent our earthly and heavenly lives are. All, particularly the rich, are advised to be conscious and mindful of the requirements of the poor and needy. Keep them in your mind when you celebrate festivals and other events.

Harvest Festival:

All the members of our fellowship actively participated in conducting and organizing the same in our church on 6th Oct 24. Some of our Fellowship members opened sales counters for fruit juices, tea, coffee, ballpens and handkerchiefs and raised an amount of Rs 16,200/- for the church.

Visit to the Home for the destitute:

In our quest for suitable places to reach "Feed the Hungry" programme, we came across a Home in Yapral, Secunderabad run by the Second Chance Foundation. This Home for the destitute which looks after uncared, unwanted, and neglected adults (some with serious illness) has about 40 inmates at Yapral. These inmates are provided with food, shelter, beds, proper hygiene, and basic medical care. At the instance of our Presbyterian-in-change, the Men's Fellowship visited this Home on 23 Oct 24 and donated, on behalf of our Church, rice, dal, oil, teabags, old clothes, bedsheets that had been earlier collected for the flood affected but remained unused. An amount of Rs 5000 was also given by our Fellowship.

Feed the Hungry:

This fortnightly programme, initiated by our church in the second half of June '24 is being continued successfully without any hitch. We are grateful to God for his continued support and providing finance through many willing sponsors from our Church. We thank and praise God for all the sponsors and pray for God's blessings on them.

Awaiting Christmas:

The scriptures reveal to us through Luke 2: 25-40 that Simeon - an old, righteous, and devout Jew was waiting for the consolation of Israel and that the Holy spirit revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Therefore, Simeon waited with expectancy for the Lord, with all his piety, praise, and prophecy. When Jesus was brought to the temple courts on the eighth day, Simeon also went there guided by the Holy spirit and praised God saying “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your Servant in peace; For my eyes have seen your salvation.” (Verses 29,30).

Simeon waited for the first advent with full hope and faith, and we are waiting for the second advent. How are we waiting? Simeon received salvation. What about us? We must have clear answers for these questions. The word of God reminds us that we have to await his second coming with humility and obedience (Phil 2:5-11) and with hope as well.

Mr PF Augustine has been a member of St John's for over 25 years and is the secretary of the Men's Fellowship of the church. He is a geologist by profession and worked in the Geological Survey of India, Government of India for 35 years, where he held the prestigious position of Deputy Director General before he retired.



Women's Fellowship Report (August – December 2024)

On behalf of the Women's Fellowship, I bring warm greetings in the magnificent name of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Observing God's love from afar
Is only a passing delight
But when we experience Christ's presence
Our darkness is turned into light!

Christmas invites us to step out of the shadows and to allow the light of Christ to shine into our hearts. As we worship Him this Christmas, may our adoration be filled with wonder at the fullness of what it means. Our Heavenly Father has given us His perfect sufficient Son. Let us adore Him

Thursday Prayer Meetings

A major part of our mission is to encourage women to get involved in evangelism. Many women in our fellowship have shared enlightening, inspiring and thought-provoking messages. Every Thursday evening, we spend our time in His Holy presence by singing praises unto Him, listening to His Word, sharing heart-touching testimonies, conducting quizzes, games and offering intercessory prayers to Him.

Women's Retreat

We embarked on a two- and half-hour journey to a serene Wadiaram church campus on August 19. The theme chosen for the Retreat was 'Beauty in Jars of Clay' which was appropriate because in 2 Corinthians 4:7, Apostle Paul tells us that we are like jars of clay. Though fragile and weak physically, God has put His greatest treasure in us. We had a blessed church service followed by an entertainment programme.

As a part of our Eco drive, we planted 100 mango saplings in the huge church campus. I sincerely thank the donors who contributed towards this project. We proceeded to Pocharam dam, which was full and offered a tranquil atmosphere perfect for a relaxed outing. We played some games and continued our journey to Medak. Visiting Medak Cathedral was a wonderful experience. The church is a stunning example of Gothic revival architecture. Its vast interiors and tranquil surroundings offered a perfect place for us for quiet reflection and prayer. We were so privileged to have participated in an exclusive Holy Communion Service.

We visited CSI Hostel for girls and had a blessed time of Praise and Worship. VBS gifts for the needy were distributed to hostel children. As the sun began to set, we started on our journey back to Hyderabad. Every retreat is an experience and a blessing. The external fades away and the internal lingers and echoes in the inner most depth of our hearts.

Women's Sunday

On September 8, we celebrated Women's Sunday, a very important event in our Church calendar. As part of the celebrations, we encouraged members to spread the Gospel and to exhibit their skills and talents to glorify His name. Making the week exciting, we conducted virtual competitions all through the week in Singing and Theme Talks on the topics— The power of a prayer / Prayerful life and Ecclesiastes. 3:7, A time to keep silence and a time to speak/The value of silence and quiet in a time when we are always plugged in.

The theme chosen for Women's Sunday was: 'Women Partners in Christ's Liberative Act'. Yes, eternity alone will reveal the extent of the influence of women whose spirit came to rejoice in God their saviour and who having discovered the well of life, left their waterpots. Mrs Shebah Wesley, Pastoramma shared an inspiring and thought-provoking message on the given theme. The Annual Women's Fellowship report was presented and a special song titled 'God will Take Care of You' was rendered by the Women's Fellowship members.

Outreach And Fellowship Care

As part Of Our Outreach And Fellowship Care initiatives, we visited our members who are facing various health issues, in their homes and at old age homes.

Free Dental Camp

We organised a free dental camp at our church premises to provide free dental check-up. Dental hygiene kits were distributed to the hostel students.

Flood Relief Efforts

In light of the devastating floods affecting so many lives, we raised donations for the victims who were in urgent need of assistance and every contribution by the members made a significant difference. We donated bed sheets, clothing, rice, footwear, and utensils to the flood affected people and to an NGO named Second Chance.

TUTORING 10th CLASS STUDENTS

We have taken the initiative under pastor's guidance to prepare the tenth-grade hostel students for their Board exams to strengthen their understanding core subjects, help them revise key concepts and prepare them through targeted guidance and practice.

Harvest Festival

We give thanks to God for the harvest, thanking Him so much for the wondrous way He fashioned this world with seasons, harvest time and with everything we need to exist. Our Women's Fellowship members with their families, generously gave their time and creativity to decorate the church. My sincere thanks to our fellowship members for their contribution toward making the stall a great success. We topped the list in harvest sales with just two stalls.

Wesleyan Questionnaire Examination

As part of the centenary celebrations of the Medak Diocese Musheerabad Church conducted a special exam. Our Women's Fellowship members took part in this exam, not just to test their knowledge in the scriptures but to deepen their faith and understanding of the church's history and legacy.

Town DCC Fraternal Women's Fellowship Meet

We participated in Town DCC Women's Fellowship meet at St Stephen's Church, Rahmatnagar. We started off our Christmas celebrations by joining this special gathering. Our Bishop and Bishopamma shared heart-touching messages and a beautiful skit was presented by the host church members.

Christmas Tree Lighting

The Youth fellowship ushered in the festive spirit with a heartwarming Christmas tree lighting ceremony. The event was a perfect blend of joy, togetherness and festive cheer making everyone feel that Christmas is truly in the air. To support the roof repair work of our church, we put up a food stall as part of Christmas tree lighting. The Women's Fellowship members generously contributed for the same. Every little effort counts towards preserving the sanctity and beauty of our church. The Christmas tree lighting was a wonderful way to kickstart the celebrations and spread the message of hope, peace, and goodwill.

We all yearn for miracles and December is a month when people celebrate miracles. Let us pray and believe that darkness and disease can be overcome through prayers. Let our December Desire for all to be well become a reality. God will one day begin His righteous reign as the rightful ruler of the universe.

We presented a medley on December 4th, as a part of our Christmas celebrations. As we worship our Christ this Christmas, may our adoration be filled with wonder at the fullness of what it means. May the joy of Redemption shine through us this Christmas and fill our hearts with peace, in the season of Advent and in the year 2025.

Mrs Angelina Clement is the Secretary for the Women's Fellowship at St John's. She and her family are committed to God's ministry. She has had over 25 years of teaching experience and works presently in St Andrew's School, Secunderabad.



Sunday School

(August – December 2024)

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." (Psalm 139:14)

This verse beautifully describes how our very being is so beautifully formed. Our Sunday school children are so uniquely created and precious in the sight of God. They truly are a blessing to the Sunday school and the Church at large.

Every Sunday we begin our programme at 8:30am with Praise and Worship, General Devotion, Birthday wishing, Offertory and Classes. For our Devotions, we have completed the Old Testament and have started with the parables from the New Testament.

- In the UCC CBQ (final round) that was conducted on August 18 —Ashray Nalli and Elina Chrysoprase won the First Prize in the Junior's category.
- On September 1, the children honoured their teachers by presenting them with beautiful handmade cards for Teachers' Day.
- On September 22nd, we had our Sunday school Beginners class competitions: Sing and Dress-up like a Bible character. We are grateful to Dr Grace Didla and Ms Joyce Thompson for judging these 2 competitions. The singing competition winners were: Jaydon Yohann (1st prize), Stephen Anmol (2nd Prize) and Shiloh Abigail (3rd prize). The winners of the Dress-Up competition were Kathryn Jeswin (1st prize), Kaniel Shawn (2nd prize) and Stephen Chandrahas (3rd prize).
- On September 29th, for Senior Citizens Sunday, our Sunday school children made cards for all the Senior Citizens of our Church. This was well appreciated by all our senior members and they blessed the kids.
- On October 6th our children participated enthusiastically in the Harvest Festival with the parents so wonderfully supporting and helping them at the stalls.
- In the Champs for Christ (CFC) competitions conducted during October-November at Wesley Degree College, many of our children participated in the Individual events and Group singing. (The team was trained by Dr Anina and we are thankful for all the efforts she put in). In the Individual event, Anna Faith Cassidy, and Nathan Andrew Pabbathi won the 1st prize in the Beginners and Primary categories for the memory verse competition on October 13th and Anna Faith Cassidy won the 2nd Prize for story-telling in the Beginner's category on October 20th.
- On November 3rd, we observed the World Sunday School Day. During the Church service, after the Sunday school report was read, two of our former students (Natalene Hannah and Jacob Rithvik) shared their testimonies and all the children sang and did the actions for a medley of all the memory verse songs they learnt at Sunday school. This was followed by a special group song by the team that represented our Church at the CFC competitions.
- On November 17th, 24th and December 1st the TDCC CSI Conquerors Competitions were conducted at Wesley School and over 40 of our children participated in the individual and group competitions and won many laurels for the Church. Here is the list of Prize Winners:

Solo Singing:

Hannah Eliana (Primary)– 2nd Prize

Nihal Devraj (Inters)–1st Prize

Story Telling:

Helen Srinidhi (Primary) – Consolation Prize

Memory Verse:

Kaniel Shawn Praneeth (Beginners)–Consolation Prize

Catherine (Inters)–3rd Prize

Olivia Evangelina (Inters)–Consolation Prize

Anush David (Inters)–Consolation Prize

Drawing:

Anaiyah Yohann (Primary)–3rd Prize

Aarik Liam (Primary)–Consolation Prize

Collage Making:

Catherine (Inters)–2nd Prize

Skit:

2nd Prize: Winning team–Nathan, Shonna, Anaiyah, Marcus, Aanshi, Ashray, Olivia, Ethan, Naathan, and Jenica

Group Singing:

2nd Prize: Winning team–Bedford, Nihal, Keenan, Sanay, Asher, Isabelle, and Joanna

Live Project:

Consolation Prize: Winning team–Aanshi, Anaiyah, and Ashvik

Overall Performance (Special Category):

1st Prize–Team St. John's.

(All these prizes were given on December 8, in the presence of the Bishop (Moderator Commissary, Medak Diocese) – Rt Rev Dr Reuben Mark, the Clergy, and leaders of the TDCC) Hearty congratulations to all our children and to all the parents and teachers for their help and support for all the competitions.

- On December 7, we celebrated the Sunday school Christmas Pageant. The children put up class-wise performances, displaying what Christmas really means to them through songs, skits, and choreographies. We are grateful to our parent Mr Robin Phillip who —gladly agreed to dress up as Santa Claus. He entertained the kids thoroughly. We are also thankful to all our teachers, volunteers, Worship Team, and all those who helped us with all the arrangements for the programme to make it was a grand success.
- We closed Sunday school for the year on December 8 with a 'Fun Sunday'. We invited Bro. Vivek Aquila a Children's missionary with CMPF. He conducted a Bible game, a fun group game for the kids and shared a Bible story using a puppet. The children rolled with laughter excitedly as they joyfully enjoyed the morning and attended their choir practices thereafter.

We resume Sunday school in the New Year on 5 January, 2025. May God continue to bless our Sunday school.

We are grateful to God and the Church, our Presbyterian-In-Charge Rev Dr U Daniel, Rev E Sumalatha, The Pastorate Committee, and all members of the congregation for their prayerful support, guidance, and love towards our Sunday school.



General devotion by Dr Irene Faith



General devotion by Mr Ashish Paul



General devotion by Mrs Sujatha Madhukar



General devotion by Ms Rheu Abraham



General devotion by Dr Anina Abraham



General devotion by Ms Sheena



General devotion by Dr Govardhini



General devotion by Dr Priya John



General devotion



General devotion by Mr Rohan Bellapu



Puppet Show



Teacher's Day Celebrations

Mesa Candita Hephzibah is the 3rd generation of the Mesa family faithfully serving the Church of St. John The Baptist for over 4 decades now. Her grandfather Maj. Mesa John Samuel was the First ever Treasurer of our Church. Her father Mesa James Samuel is the Hon. Secretary and has been on the Committee since 1991. She is currently the Superintendent of the Sunday school).



Youth Fellowship Report

Greetings!

I am glad to share the activities of the St John's Youth Fellowship —FOG for the months of August through December 2024.

Youth Sunday and Champs for Christ

The Youth Sunday on 27th October was an opportunity for us to participate in the church service in a special way. We're grateful to Pastor Cecil James who shared the word on the topic 'Youth in Search of a Meaningful Life'.

In the same month, our Force of God band won the third place in the Champ for Christ —Battle of the bands. They performed an original composition titled, 'Gone Astray'. Kudos to the band members: Joshua, Nissi, Ronny, Martina, and Joash.

Christmas Carnival and Joy Box

The annual Christmas Programme of the youth saw many changes this year. The Christmas tree lighting, transformed into the Christmas Carnival! The event showcased interactive nativity, carols, Santa's Village, and many interesting stalls. With several components to the event, it took the dedication and talents of each and every youth member to make this event a memorable start to the Advent season. While senior members held responsibilities like managing sound and stalls; younger members pitched in through music, skits, and design. The proceeds from the sales went towards the church roof repair fund.

Sheeba Roy led the Joy Box initiative on behalf of the youth, encouraging the church to donate utilities for children from underprivileged backgrounds. When Youth for Christ requested our partnership in providing for displaced children of Manipur, the church responded generously. You will find a Google location tagged image of the children, with items bought by the donations at the end of this report.

We ended the year with a flurry of activity and I'd like to thank Pastor Daniel for his encouragement. I'd also like to thank Pastor Sumalatha and the pastorate committee who supported us through funding and guidance. Special thanks to our youth advisors Maju George and Junia Sucharitha.

I end this report with a verse that encouraged me during this season: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Beulah has been an active member of St John's for over two decades. Apart from being a part of the youth, she is an energetic member of the Church choir. On the education front she has completed her Master's in Communication Studies from ASU



Articles

The Advent as prophesied by Prophet Isaiah

Advent is the period beginning four Sundays before Christmas. This was prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah around 740 BC. Isaiah 9:6 says, "For unto us a child is born" and he goes on to describe the many titles the baby Jesus will hold in His lifetime — namely: wonderful, counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. These titles indeed impacted humankind in several ways as His legacy extended beyond the cross for all eternity.

Jesus gives excellent counsel or advice as the counsellor. For example, He told the rich man the way to eternal life is a lifetime commitment. (Matthew 19) Therefore, Jesus told him to sell everything and follow Jesus. The rich man went away disappointed. Jesus knew what advice was right for each person.

The next title, 'Mighty God' showcases Jesus as the only person in history to have defeated death when He rose from the dead. How did He achieve this? The road to victory over death for Jesus was through humility. Jesus showcased humility as a great virtue. Paul says, "Being in very nature God, He did not consider himself equal to God, but became nothing by taking the nature of a servant." (Philippians 2:6) He is the epitome of humility by becoming obedient unto death. Therefore, He was exalted to the highest place in heaven, exercising the stature of a mighty God who defeated death on the cross. When the same humility becomes our lifestyles, we too are exalted as mighty Christians, showcasing Christlikeness in our lives.

Jesus as an everlasting Father means permanency in our relationship. Nowadays, a government job means a permanent income. After long years of service and retirement, an employee gets pension and continues even after death as the pension is given to the family too. God as an everlasting Father continues His relationship even after our death.

As the Prince of Peace, Jesus insulated us from the horror stories that are doing the rounds about the coming of the 'end of the world'. There are constant reports of natural calamities, wars and so on. However, as believers we have the Prince of peace to comfort us always.

We are encouraged by the assurance: "Have no anxiety about anything." (Philippians 4 :6, 7)

Therefore, this advent let us raise the stakes for hope, comfort, joy, and peace and celebrate the advent with gusto.

Let Jesus be our wonderful counsellor

Let us pass from death to life by accepting Jesus as our mighty God

Let us forever be with the Lord by receiving Jesus as our eternal Father

Let us usher the Prince of Peace and not be disconcerted by doomsday prophets. May the advent of Jesus make the festive season joyful, colourful, and filled with hope.

Captain IN AJ Manohar has had over 4 decades of experience in serving in youth fellowships at many churches. He is serving as a Children's leader in the Students' Programme of the Bible Study Fellowship International for several years.



The Cradle that Rocked the World

It is Christmas once again!

The Good news of Christmas centres around a single person, Christ the Lord—a Saviour, who is God's matchless gift to the world.

Why did Jesus come down to earth?

The simple response is He came to take the punishment for things we do wrong.

"Jesus, who was completely righteous, died for us, the unrighteous, so that He could bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18)

We know that Jesus is coming again.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:27-28)

When Jesus came for the first time, He came to be our Saviour. But, when He comes the second time, we believe "That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Philippians 2:10)

*The greatest thing we can do this Christmas is to accept what Jesus did for us on the cross, when He died to take the punishment of our sin, but by becoming alive again, He gives us new life. He stands at the door of our heart and knocks and we must open the door of our hearts to Him. It is not enough that He was born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. He needs to be born in our hearts.

In Sunday school, the children were enacting a skit on 'No Room'. While this was proceeding, a little boy replied, when asked, by Joseph if he had room in the inn, * "No room, but you can share my room. When asked, why he changed his dialogue, the boy replied, "I did not have the heart to turn away Jesus, saying 'No Room'."

Do we hang a No Room board in our House, Hearts, or Minds?

When Jesus stands at the door of our heart and knocks, can we open the doors of our hearts, in this busy Christmas time and allow Him to share our Room, and our hearts? And, importantly, can we tell others about Jesus?

We sing 'Go tell it on the Mountains, that Jesus Christ is born.'

Are we telling others about Jesus? This is mandatory, since that was Jesus's last command, before He left this world. "Go and preach the Gospel to the ends of the World."

Shall we make Jesus happy by adding more souls to His fold this Christmas season?

Only then it will be a Merry Christmas as we all rejoice together.

Jesus can be born in our hearts when we say this simple prayer, "Jesus of Nazareth, who died for my wrong doings and became alive again, I thank you for forgiving me and accepting me as your child. Come into my heart, as Lord."

If we say this prayer, Christmas will be truly meaningful. We need to think of Jesus, not merely as baby Jesus but as the Risen and Living Lord, who is coming soon as the King of Kings. He is Immanuel, which means "God with Us."

May we have a wonderful Christ filled Christmas and a Blessed New Year with renewed hearts.

Mrs Yashodhra Desappa is Church Steward, P.C member, Prayer Warrior and a Business Woman.



Is Santa Claus Christian?

The image of a jolly old man, dressed in red with a flowing white beard is the popular symbol of Christmas around the world. In this age of political correctness, of not offending anybody's beliefs, today's Santa Claus is a safe, non-religious universal figure. Santa is, of course, directly connected to gift-giving, or more to the point, gift-receiving. Many people love this image of Santa, though there are others who criticize the selfish, material, commercial aspects of Santa and his bag of presents.

Where did the concept of Santa Claus come from? Did he start out as a Christian symbol? As many know, there was once a Saint Nicolas who distributed gifts to the poor. In the 4th century, Nicholas was born to affluent Greek Christians who lived in Patara, a port on the Mediterranean Sea in the Roman Empire. He subsequently became a Bishop in the town of Myra (now in Turkey). This Bishop was known for his kindness towards the downtrodden.

After his parents died, Nicholas gave away his wealth to the poor. His good deeds include rescuing three girls from prostitution by paying their dowries. He saved innocent generals from prosecution, stilled the waves during a storm at sea, resurrected three children from a butcher's knife, and performed other miracles for which he was canonized. Nicholas attended the First Council of Nicaea in 325CE where he defended Trinitarianism. His good deeds made him a legend all across Europe in the Middle Ages. Known as the saint of children, he also became the favourite saint of sailors and the sea, because he was an important saint for the Dutch, who at the time were mostly sailors.

Dutch settlers first brought Sinterklaas (Santa Claus) to North America. The Dutch colony of New Amsterdam (today's New York) revived the celebration of St Nicholas Day in December. A Dutch poem that celebrated the saint's day contained the name Sancta Claus. From this, Sinterklaas morphed into Santa Claus and merged into Christmas Eve. Santa Claus was welcomed into Christmas tradition because he symbolised gift-giving. His red outfit was originally the red robe of European bishops, who were often older (white-bearded) and portly.

Meanwhile, England had its own Father Christmas, the personification of a festival that focused on feasting and merriment since the 17th century. It was later in Victorian times that Father Christmas became a gift-giver to children. Then, the American Santa Claus arrived in England. With Father Christmas having similar attributes as his American counterpart, the two characters were gradually merged into the shape of today's Santa.

So, Santa Claus is a win-win figure. Christians believe him to represent St Nicholas, while others focus on Santa's secular role as a benign gift distributor who brings happiness to all, even though it is through material goods.

Mrs. Nargis Abraham and Jaya (her husband) were members of St John's for 19 years, before they migrated to Vancouver, Canada. Nargish taught journalism in Osmania University and Communication skills at the British Columbia Institute of Technology.



Jesus is the Reason

Down came the chilly season,
embark on the holiday season.
The chosen season is the reason,
To celebrate the birth of the chosen.

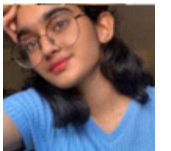
Emmanuel has come, open your doors
And let Him in.
Look up and follow the stars, He's born
In the inn.
Walking in the snow,
The thing you need to know,
Santa is coming to town,
And the King has worn His crown.

Oh! The Christmas Eve, that keeps us
All looking
As Santa rides his sleigh
To keep the presents where they lay.

Oh! How we await, to celebrate
The holiday so great,
So, let's get this straight...
God gave us the source of Christmas joy
A star shown a miracle in Bethlehem
The virgin birth of a baby boy.

A Saviour for us all,
We get to our Heavenly Father,
If we heed His call.
So, we shop, spend, and wrap up and enjoy
Christmas season, keeping in mind
The sacred truth;
"Jesus Is The Reason!"

Carolyn Paul is in her intermediate 2nd year at Resonance College, Secunderabad.



Kenosis: Divine Emptying

Can you imagine?

Logos. The Word. With God from the beginning. Indeed, from before the beginning. And was God. He created the flora and the fauna, humans from dust, customised the creation of Eve, for Adam, presented Eve to Adam and instituted marriage for humankind.

One day, the timeless potentate emptied Himself. He took the form of a human—not even a mature adult. He became, a babe. A neonate, totally dependent being!

Was he born in a palace amidst comforts? Not at all. He was born in a stable, redolent with the stink of animal dung. Laid in a manger, clad in swaddling bands. Perhaps, some angels may even have turned their faces away at this!

He chose a humble maiden. A poor maiden to be born of, betrothed to a carpenter. This maiden had to bear the brunt of a scandal. She was almost cast away by her fiancé. Shunted out of their little comforts in Nazareth, the virgin mother-to-be had an arduous journey to make. All the way to the town of Bethlehem in Judah.

"No room here. Go away" was the cry that greeted this poor teenager, as she was about to become a mother. Somehow, they land up in a stinking stable. Amidst the squalor, she gave birth. Who, do you think was born? The Saviour of all the earth! What a contrast! A Saviour born not in a palace, not of a princess. Kenosis, emptying, indeed!

No blue baby for this boy. Just some swaddling bands got together by His virgin mother. As they huddled in that reeking stable, they had guests. Not lofty courtiers, but poor shepherds.

As the shepherds shared their angelic vision, Mary started to ponder. And, Joseph wondered too. "What is happening to us? What does this all mean?"

The wise men from the East arrived. Mary and Joseph were flabbergasted. They offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the babe. Kneeling down, they worshiped Him.

Joseph gets another dream. The tiny family become asylum seekers in Egypt. The mothers of Bethlehem mourned the massacre of their boys by the evil Herod. After Herod passes on, they come back and settle in Nazareth.

That was the first Christmas. A story of divine kenosis and human disturbances. Contrast this with the brouhaha of Christmas today: Cakes, Carols, Cantatas, Celebrations, Carnivals!

Shall we for once look back on to the majesty of the first Christmas; muse on the great humbling of the Lord; the shattering of the dreams of the young couple; the arduous journey to Bethlehem; the flight to Egypt; the terror of the mothers of Bethlehem and their wails; the tentative return of Mary Joseph and Jesus; their eventual refuge in Nazareth.

The worship worthy, One and only, Righteous, Sinless, Holy, Immortal, Potentate beyond Time, emptied Himself to be a helpless babe. What a wonder! Let's pause in awe, admiration and adoration at this, the kenosis of nativity! Truly unimaginable are your ways O Lord God Almighty!

Dr M. Anthony David, a creative communicator for Christ, authored 'Choices for Life' published by the Person-To-Person Ministries, which deals with three crucial choices for Christ, Career and Consort. 'Soul Chargers for You' is a daily devotional he wrote under the pseudonym Hushai W, available online from Amazon. He hosts a podcast Choice Words for You, available on Spotify. He balances work, worship and family along with commitments to preach, counsel people and facilitate in seminars.



Endurance for Eternity—The Excellent Way

I am inspired by a child's prayer. I asked her to pray for people from Manipur who needed to celebrate Christmas in the midst of severe persecution and ask God to help them. As she began to pray, I listened and one phrase caught my attention. She repeatedly said, "Lord, you are here!"

It reenforced my belief that because God is always present, we can always celebrate Jesus, His Son, whatever the trials or hardships we go through.

Persecution calls for endurance. The Lord honored the churches of Thyatira (Revelation 2:19) and Philadelphia (Revelation 3:10) for their patient endurance. A believer, or a church can be subjected to persecution in different ways. Patient endurance, includes persevering in the mission of proclaiming the gospel in the absence of all rewards or even encouragement, except that which we receive from the Lord.

In extreme situations such as death, the reward is seen only in eternity (Revelation 5:11). Jesus set an example when He persevered, not allowing the lies, deceit, jealousy, or the foolish ignorance of His enemies to turn His attention away from the 'Joy that was set before Him'. (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus' joy was His obedience to the Father and His love for us. This is an excellent way! Love for God and love for people that kept His life on earth pure from all sin. For us, it is hope in Him that keeps us pure. (1 John 3:3)

Let Jesus' assurance of eternal joy working out through pure love, become our assurance too. May we unashamedly celebrate Jesus who, even today draws much hatred and rejection from the people created in His own image!

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer.

Dr Govardhini has been an active member of St John the Baptist Church for several years. She is a gynecologist by profession.



For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the LORD.
~ Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,
which is Christ the LORD.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. ~ Romans 15:13

News from Messa James Samuel from New Zealand

I am happy to inform St John's Parish, that my daughter Cassandra (Sandy) was ordained on Saturday November 23, 2024. She is now a Deacon of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia.

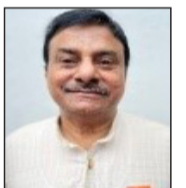
Cassandra is the first Indian to be ordained in the Wellington Diocese and the first Indian Woman in all of New Zealand to be ordained in the Anglican Church. She has completed her Anglican studies from St Johns Theological College Auckland. She is currently working for MBIE (NZ Government) as a cyber-security advisor.

Sulochana and I were witness to this amazing Ordination Ceremony that happened in the Wellington Cathedral of St Paul. I got the privilege of robing her with the special stole as part of the ceremony. Sulochana was asked by the Cathedral to read the Gospel lesson in Telugu for the service. This was to honour and recognise Sandy's mother tongue and culture.

The choir and the people who had come to support Sandy sang "There shall be showers of blessings" in Telugu and English. The first 2 verses of this song were re-written for Sandy that included her name and words of blessings for her.

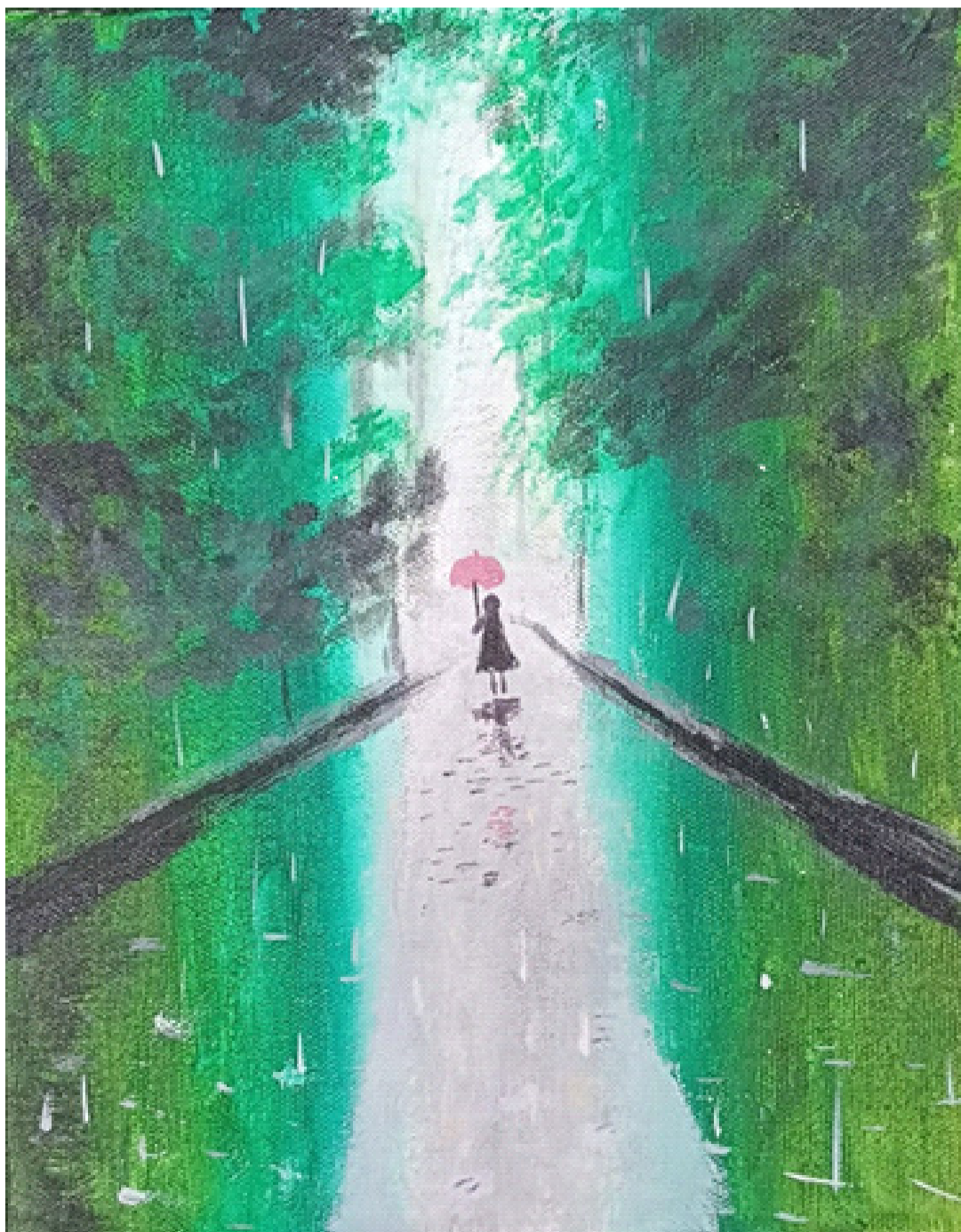
It was a very well-attended ceremony with almost 300 people present on the day. There were 7 other ordinands along with Sandy. We are happy and proud that we could witness and participate in the Ordination Ceremony.

Season's Greetings and Merry Christmas from New Zealand to the entire St John's Family.



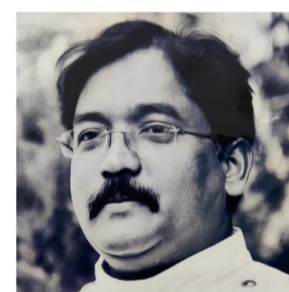
Mr Mesa James Samuel is the Honorary Secretary of St John's. He has been worshipping in this church for over 50 years. He and his family are active members of the church.

Art Work

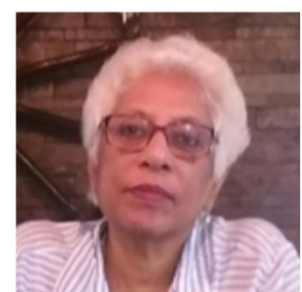


By Shonna Magdalene Nagathota (Inters, St John's)

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Tributes

Sri Jetti Alexander Charles



(16-06-1946— 01-12-2024)

Sri Jetti Alexander Charles, 78, Member of CSI Church of St John the Baptist passed away at 4.19 pm on Sunday the December 1, 2024 while under treatment —having suffered a cardiac arrest at Wellness Hospital, Hyderabad. A well-attended and a solemn funeral service was conducted at CSI St John the Baptist Church by the Presbyterian-in-Charge Rev. Dr U Daniel, assisted by the Presbyterian Rev. Sumalatha on Monday, December 2, 2024 which was followed by laying to rest of his mortal remains with full church honours at St John’s Cemetery at 3 pm on that day.

Sri Charles retired in the year 2004 from the Department of Marketing, Government of Composite A.P. as Gazetted Secretary of Agricultural Market Committees having served in the Districts of Warangal, Khammam, and Nalgonda. He was a very active member of CSI Diocese of Dornakal, a popular Secretary of Khammam and Sagar Group Church Councils for several years and a member of the Diocesan Executive and other Committees.

He participated in several CSI Synod Biennial Meetings, played a proactive role in initiating and nurturing several rural congregations in the border villages of Krishna, Nalgonda, Khammam, and Warangal Districts. Mr Charles was the founder, Honorary

General Secretary of YMCA Kodad, BSI Branch Kodad and SID Chapter Kodad. He was on several exchange programmes in United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Italy, and Israel.

He was an active member of the Church History Association of India (CHAI) and the most recent programme that he was part of the CHAI was the history Conference held at the CSI Laity Centre, Chennai in September 2024 where his interactions and contributions were admirably received.

On retirement, Mr Charles moved to Hyderabad and was living close to his children who are all settled here His family included his wife Mrs Nirmala Charles, their eldest daughter Saritha and family with two college- going sons; the younger daughter Niveditha and family with two school-going daughters and a son Ajit Jetti and family with two school going sons. His also leaves behind two brothers – Rev. Jetti Azariah and Dr Jetti Oliver and their families; scores of relatives, friends, colleagues, and well-wishers scattered in South India and the countries Overseas. God bless his soul; console and comfort the bereaved family.

Mrs Vasantha Jacob









(26-04-1971—03-12-2024)

In loving memory of Mrs Vasantha Jacob

With heavy hearts we announce the passing of Mrs. Vasantha Jacob who was called to rest on 03/12/2024. She was a devoted mother, loving wife and most importantly, a kind human being. Her unwavering faith and devotion to God was an example to all of our family members and friends.

May she rest in peace. Her beautiful memories will be with us forever.

Records of St John the Baptist Church August - December, 2024 <i>Compiled by Mr Sumanth Kumar</i>			
Baptism Records			
			
	Date of birth	Name of child & Parents	Photographs
1.	October 13, 2024	Kiara Amila Arava <i>d/o Arava Anmol Manohar & Jacinth Akhila Musuku)</i>	 
2.	December 22,2024	Maia Grace Andrews <i>(d/o of K Archan Andrews & Samantha Clare Donkin</i>	

Records of St John the Baptist Church August - December, 2024			
Death Records			
			
	Date of death	Name	Photograph
1	09-09-2024	Dr. A Ranendra Varma	
2.	01-12-2024	Mr Alexandra Charles Jetti	
3.	03-12-2024	Mrs Vasantha Kumari Bollam	