

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

(CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA)

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2017



(For Private Circulation Only)

Almanac and Lectionary: May 2017

Date	Theme & Readings	Liturgical colour
<p>Sunday, 7 May 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>Third Sunday after Easter Theme: The Good Shepherd. 1st Reading: Acts 2:32-41 Psalm : Psalm 23 2nd Reading: I Peter 2:19-25 Gospel : John 10:1-10</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 114</p>	<p>White</p>
<p>Sunday, 14 May 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>Fourth Sunday after Easter Theme: Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. 1st Reading: Acts 6:1-7 Psalm : Psalm 63:1-5 2nd Reading: I Peter 2:2-10 Gospel : John 14:1-14</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 116</p>	<p>White</p>
<p>Sunday, 21 May 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>Fifth Sunday after Easter Theme: The promise of the Holy Spirit. 1st Reading: Acts 16:6-10 Psalm : Psalm 32:6-11 2nd Reading: I Peter 4:7-11 Gospel : John 14:15-21</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 120</p>	<p>White</p>
<p>Sunday, 28 May 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>Sixth Sunday after Easter Theme: Christ's Ascension is a sign of our glorious destiny. 1st Reading: Acts 1:12-14 Psalm : Psalm 73:1-3,22-26 2nd Reading: I Peter 4:12-19 Gospel : John 17:1-11</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 126</p>	<p>White</p>
<p>Sunday, 4 June 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>Pentecost Theme: The gift of the Holy Spirit. 1st Reading: Acts 2:1-11 Psalm : Psalm 139:1-4,7-8,11-12,23-24 2nd Reading: I Corinthians 12:1-13 Gospel : John 20:19-23</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 129</p>	<p>Red</p>

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Understanding the Church

Christian life is not a solitary matter. Even as our society is becoming more individualistic, we must recognise that there is a corporate relationship among believers. The collective dimension of the Christian life is called the church.

The Bible does not give a clear cut definition of the church. However, it provides several images that would help the church to have a better self-understanding of its nature and mission. A better self-understanding would help the church to be effective and relevant because images help to have a vision, which in turn would determine what the church would be (or, would become).

The English word 'church' comes from the Greek adjective *kyriakos* which means 'belonging to God.' This usage is seen in the New Testament only twice. The first is to entitle the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20). The second instance is in found in Revelation 1:10 where it is used while talking about the Lord's day. The church in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, which is an assembly of Christians. *Ekklesia* was never a building. The New Testament writers understood *ekklesia* as a local assembly of Christians.

In the New Testament, 'church' is understood in two senses. On the one hand, it refers to the believers in Christ across time and places (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23). The more frequent usage of 'church' is to refer to a group of Christians in a particular geographical place (I Corinthians 1:2; I Thessalonians 1:1).

There are several images of the church in the New Testament. Paul Minear identifies ninety six images in his well-known work *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. Not all of them are exclusive images of the church. They, however, somehow speak about the life and the mission of the church. Those images that are not frequently referred in the New Testament may be called 'minor images'. Even though the so called 'minor images' are not repeatedly used in the New Testament, it does not mean that they are not important. Each of the images of the church, irrespective of its level of significance, helps the church to have a better self-understanding. The minor images of the church include: The Salt of the Earth, Temple of God, and The Flock.

1. The Salt of the Earth

Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 5:13, "You are the **salt of the earth**." Even though there is no direct statement that the church is the salt of the earth, this may be considered as an image of the church. Jesus was not speaking to any individual here. Rather, he was speaking to a group of disciples. As a single unit, the disciples were to be the salt of the earth. The salt has the function to season, cleanse and preserve. The church is warned not to lose its saltiness or to disregard its assigned role. If the church fails to be the salt of the earth, "it is no longer good for anything" (Matthew 5:13). This image reminds the church of its role of seasoning, cleansing and preserving the earth and all life on it. More importantly, it is a warning to the church against complacency that would prevent it from fulfilling its assigned purpose.

2. The Temple of God

The Jewish-Christian tradition emphasises on the one hand, the transcendence of God, and on the other hand the nearness of God. During their wilderness journey, to the people of God in the Old Testament, the tabernacle signified the presence of God. Later, they had the temple in Jerusalem.

John's Gospel emphasises the function of the whole church as "the **temple** that bears God's presence." In I Corinthians 6:19, Paul speaks of the body of individual Christians as a temple. He also speaks of the whole church as a temple (Ephesians 2:21; I Corinthians 3:16-17). As the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple signified the presence of God among the people, the church must be a sign of the presence of God. Also, as the temple was meant to glorify God and serve him day and night, the church should glorify and serve God at all times.

3. The Flock

"Do not be afraid, little **flock**, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). In John 10, Jesus speaks about himself as the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14). Then he said, "So there will be one **flock**, one shepherd" (John 10:16). This implies unity. This unity is not forced upon the flock but is the result of the sheep hearing and obeying the shepherd's voice. In I Peter 5:1-3, Peter urges the elders to "be examples to the **flock**." In Acts 20:28, Paul is found urging the elders in Ephesus saying, "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the **flock**, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son." The death of Jesus, the good shepherd, for his flock is the climax of the incarnation story. Minear says that due to the several usages of the image of the flock, it is no wonder "that the flock image became so closely bound up with the Eucharistic life of the church and that the picture of Jesus as the shepherd became so dominant in Christian art." The church must hear and obey the voice of the Good Shepherd which would bring in unity as well. As the sheep is dependent on the shepherd for direction, protection, and sustenance, the image of the flock reminds the church of its need to completely depend on God for its life.

**In His Grace,
Thomas Jacob**

NEWS & NOTES

Presbyter's Leave: Rev.Thomas Jacob will be away for 12 days (8 -19 May). Members may contact office for Pastoral care needs.

Lenten Prayer meetings: During the Lenten season, prayer meetings were conducted in 13 homes which were well attended. Meditations were based on some of the great prayers in the Bible.

Holy week: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter services were well attended. Mr.Joshua Tanaami was the guest speaker on Good Friday.

Confirmation classes: The confirmation classes will start from 28 May. Interested candidates may give their names.

Obituary: We are sad to announce the demise of Ms.Prescilla Sinha (98yrs) on 21 April. May our Lord console the bereaved family.

Teens Meet: Teens and college students met on 9 April in the Parsonage with Rev.Thomas Jacob for an interactive session. Nine youngsters participated.

Marriage: We congratulate Russel Josef Cherian, member of St.Stephen's Church, and Smita Pawar who got married on 22 April at St.Ann's CNI Church, Indore.

Senior Citizens: We pray for all the senior citizens of our Church that our merciful God will give them good health and strength.

Sick & Homebound: We continue to pray for the sick and house bound members of our Church: Rani Biswas, David C. Matthew, Prakash Naik, Olga Nazareth, Promila David, Loolu Thomas, Padmini Abraham, Lizy Kurian, Judith Rallia Ram, Anitaa Thakur, Sumitra Figueredo and Pushpa John that God's merciful healing hands be upon them and strengthen them.

Isaac Cladio

Hon. Secretary

HEARD FROM THE PULPIT

2 April 2017 ~ Second Sunday before Easter

Theme: 'The meaning of the death of Christ.'

Why did Jesus Christ die on the cross?

1. Jesus Christ died for all of humankind.

"For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all..." (II Corinthians 5:14). "But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9)

2. Christ died to pay the cost of sin.

"For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). Christ died to pay the cost of sin, which is death. "And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (I John 2:2)

3. Christ died so that all those who would believe in him would no longer live for themselves.

"And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them." (II Corinthians 5:15)

9 April 2017 ~ Palm Sunday

Theme: 'Christ enters Jerusalem to offer his life for the salvation of the world.'

When Jesus rode into the city, and the crowd waved their palm branches, little did they know that they were celebrating the victory that the King of kings would win for them on the cross. Things changed quickly in five days' time. The crowds who greeted Jesus in jubilation shouted for his death. Instead of "Hosanna" they now shouted, "Crucify him".

Why did the crowd demand that Jesus be crucified? Because he refused to be the kind of Messiah that the people expected him to be. They wanted a revolutionary who would come and free them from the hands of the Romans.

From the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, we can see some remarkable characteristics of Jesus:

1. He walked fearlessly to accomplish his life's purpose.

Even as he was entering Jerusalem, Jesus knew that he would be killed shortly. But he was not afraid. He marched towards his death.

2. Jesus lived with an attitude of humility.

At least on one earlier occasion, the crowd wanted to make him their king, but Jesus quietly slipped away from the scene. On that first Palm Sunday, people's emotions were running high. Jesus could have easily manipulated them in an attempt to grab power. But he didn't do that. And that's the model for us to follow.

3. Jesus came to bring peace.

When he came to Jerusalem, Jesus came riding not on a horse, an animal of war, but on a donkey, a peacetime animal. He came to proclaim peace to the nations.

13 April 2017 ~ Maundy Thursday

Theme: 'Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment and institutes the Lord's Supper.'

During the evening meal, on the last night before his death, after inaugurating the Lord's Supper, Jesus demonstrated his servant hood by washing his disciples' feet. A little later, Jesus gave his disciples the new commandment to love one another: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

In the Ten Commandments, the first four commandments are with regard to our relationship with God. The last six are to do with our relationship with our fellow human beings. The Ten Commandments were summed up by Jesus in Matthew 22:34-40 to loving God and loving fellow human beings.

If both the Old Testament and Jesus taught that the greatest commandments were to love God and also one's neighbor, what is "new" about Jesus' new commandment to love one another? The ESV Study Bible note states, "The command to love one's neighbor was not new; the newness was found in loving one another as Jesus had loved his disciples. In the light of Jesus' subsequent death, we understand that loving one another implies a love that is even willing to lay down one's life for another."

16 April 2017 ~ Easter Day

Theme: 'The Lord is risen, he is risen indeed. Alleluia!'

Jesus says in John 11:25-26, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Jesus is asking us the same question, "Do you believe this?" Do we believe in him? We are not talking about belief only at the mind level. It is possible that we can intellectually accept that Jesus is risen and that those who believe in him will have eternal life. And yet, it may have no bearing on our lives.

The resurrection of Jesus dramatically changed the lives of the apostles. They had run away from the scene of Jesus' suffering and death. Post resurrection, however, all of that changed. Suddenly, they were emboldened. For example, when Peter and John were arrested for preaching Christ and was presented before the Sanhedrin, Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4). This was the same Peter who had earlier denied even knowing Jesus.

The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives tremendous courage and confidence. It enables us to face any situation with boldness. The chorus of the song 'God sent his Son' written by Bill and Gloria Gaither expresses this well:

"Because He lives I can face tomorrow, Because He lives all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future. And life is worth the living Just because He lives."

23 April 2017 ~ First Sunday after Easter

Theme: 'Joy and peace, power and new life are given through the Resurrection of Christ.'

We associate rejoicing with something we get or receive. But the disciples rejoiced to share all their possessions (Acts 2:41-47). The early Christians did not sell all their properties and bring it to a common pool. What they did was sell and share as and when someone had a need. "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need" (Acts 4:34-35). There was no needy person in the early Christian community. Why? Because there was genuine *koinonia* (fellowship). There was a readiness to share one's possessions with those in need. There was generosity.

Even today, every Christian and Christian community must decide before God how to respond to the needs of others. We are called to be generous, especially towards the poor and needy. Later, John wrote in his first letter chapter 3 verse 17: "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" If there are fellow Christians who are poor and needy among us, it is because those of us who have possessions and goods are unwilling to share. If we are unwilling to share in the needs of others, it means that there is no true *koinonia* among us. There is no genuine Christian fellowship; no real generosity. It is only when we learn to share what we have with those who are poor and needy, will we experience true joy.

30 April 2017 ~ Second Sunday after Easter

Theme: 'Witnesses to Christ's Resurrection.'

In Luke 24:13-35, the gospel writer **includes this story of the two disciples who were walking to Emmaus. They** were dispirited to say the least. Their master, Jesus, the one whom they revered, loved and followed, had been put to a horrible death. Their hopes and dreams were dashed. Even the reports of Jesus' tomb being empty didn't raise their spirits; it only seemed to confuse them even more. In fact, their mood is best summed up in their words, "We had hoped". They had hoped. But now there was only a sense of hopelessness. And it is in the midst of their despair and confusion that Jesus began to walk with them.

One of the encouragements from this account is that Jesus is willing to walk with us, and talk with us when we travel down the road of disappointment, disillusionment, and despair. Jesus took time to come and accompany them on that road, and explain to them all that God had said in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah and how all of it fits the events surrounding Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. It shows how much he cares for ordinary people. And in the same way he cares for you and me. He knows where you and I are heading. He knows what we are going through. He knows and cares about what is happening in our lives. Therefore, he comes along side in the midst of our helplessness and hopelessness, to help steer us back to God's purposes and promises for our lives.

GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

We thank God for the lives and faithful service of all those who passed away in month of May of earlier years.

YEAR	NAME
1894	HOWELL HELEN FRANCIS
1899	ALLTREE ISABEL
1900	MORRIS AUGUSTINE
1902	DALL JAME JOHNSTONE
1905	CHRISTIAN BARBARA
1967	DODD FLORENCE MAUDE
1979	KOSHY P. KURUVILLA
1986	TRUMAN ELISHA RAJA RAO
1990	KADNAR MANUEL S.
1994	GAIKWAD S. PUSHPA
2000	NATH SURESH JOGINDER
2001	SOANS CLEMENT EZRA
2003	RAPAZ HELEN
2005	DONGRE RAJESH
2005	CHERIAN K.C.
2005	JOHN MATHEW BENJAMIN
2007	ANCHAN HENRIETTA
2009	THOMAS MANGALATH THOMAS
2009	SUBHASH THOMAS

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

**Worship Services on Sundays: Holy Communion (Said): 7 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Holy Communion (Sung): 9 a.m.**

Activity	Venue	Day & Time	Contact Person	Phone No.
Sunday School	PHCC	Closed for Summer. Reopens on 18 June.	Beulah Tellis	9820432056
Bible Study	PHCC	Thursdays 7.30 p.m. No Bible Study on 11 & 18 May.	Rev.Thomas Jacob	9820736359
QCCCS: Day Care Centre & Study Centre	PHCC	Closed for Summer.	Sumitra Figueredo	26050229

Church Office: Saguna Doshi (Monday to Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)	26423955
Rev. Thomas Jacob, Presbyterian-in-charge	9820736359 / 26428803 presbyter@stephenschurch-bandra.com
Isaac Cladio, Hon. Secretary	9869513872
Sabina Solomon, Hon. Treasurer	9820080456
K.P. George, Hon. Jt. Secretary	9821074653
Vimla Philips, Hon. Jt. Treasurer	9892624886

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