

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

(CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA)

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2017



(For Private Circulation Only)

Almanac and Lectionary: January 2017

Date	Theme & Readings	Liturgical colour
<p>Sunday 1 January 2017</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Year Day Holy Communion Service 9 a.m.</p>	<p>New Year Day Theme: Setting the priorities right. O.T. : I Chronicles 16:7-13,23-36 Psalm : 100 Epistle : I Corinthians 10:23-33 Gospel : Matthew 6:25-34</p>	<p>White</p>
<p>Sunday 8 January 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Church Anniversary</p>	<p>The Covenant Service Theme: God who is faithful establishes his covenant with us. O.T. : Jeremiah 31:33 Psalm : Psalm 105:1-8 Gospel : John 15:1-8</p> <p>Refer to <i>The Book of Worship</i></p>	<p>White</p>
<p>Sunday, 15 January 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>3rd Sunday after Christmas Theme: At his baptism Jesus is revealed as the Son of God. O.T. : Isaiah 42:1-7 Psalm : Psalm 2:1-8 Epistle : Acts 10:34-38 Gospel : Matthew 3:13-17</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 30</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>Sunday, 22 January 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>4th Sunday after Christmas Theme: Jesus is revealed as ‘the Lamb of God’. O.T. : Exodus 12:1-8 Psalm : Psalm 40:5-9 Epistle : I Peter 1:13-21 Gospel : John 1:29-37</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 32</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>Sunday, 29 January 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">QCCCS Sunday</p>	<p>5th Sunday after Christmas Theme: Jesus has brought us out of darkness into light. O.T. : Job 3:1-10 Psalm : Psalm 27:1,4-6 Epistle : Colossians 1:9-14 Gospel : Matthew 4:12-17,23</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 35</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>Sunday, 5 February 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>6th Sunday after Christmas Theme: Jesus calls his disciples to work in God’s kingdom. O.T. : Amos 3:3-8 Psalm : Psalm 126 Epistle : I Thessalonians 2:1-8 Gospel : Mark 1:14-20</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 38</p>	<p>Green</p>

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

GOD HOLDS OUR FUTURE

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet, not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So, don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” ~ Matthew 10:29-31

There is a lot of excitement at the threshold of a new year. Yet, we realise that there is a lot of uncertainty about what the year ahead holds for us. On the one hand, the threat of terrorism and religious fundamentalism across the globe terrifies us. On the other hand, at a personal level also future may seem very uncertain. While everyone hopes that all will be well, there are underlying fears. We worry about our health, jobs and finances. Parents are anxious about their children, and children are concerned about their ageing parents. So, do we need to worry? Or, can we face the future with confidence that God will see us through?

“I know not what future holds but I know who holds the future” is a quote familiar to us. That God is sovereign and is in control is a comfort to us. There is nothing that will happen to us without the knowledge of our loving God. Besides, the poem given below encourages us to see trials of life as stepping stones “to a fuller life than we've ever known”.

Make the New Year A Stepping-Stone to Growth (Helen Steiner Rice)

Whatever the New Year has in store
Remember there's always a good reason for
Everything that comes into our life,
For even in times of struggle and strife
If we but lift our eyes above
We see “our cross” as a “gift of love” ...
For things that cause the heart to ache
Until we feel that it must break
Become the strength by which we climb
To higher heights that are sublime ...
So we welcome every stumbling block
And every thorn and jagged rock,
For each one is a *Stepping-Stone*
To a fuller life than we've ever known,
And in the radiance of God's smiles
We learn to soar above life's trials ...
So let us accept what the New Year brings,
Seeing the hand of God in all things,
And as we grow in strength and grace
The clearer we can see God's face.

Have a blessed Christ-centred year 2017!

**In His Grace,
Thomas Jacob**

NEWS & NOTES

“Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgement.”

Ecclesiastes 11: 9

Weekly Bible Study: Weekly Bible Study will restart on Thursday 12 January. It will be a time of singing and interactive Bible study at 7.30 p.m.

Website: The re-designed website with enhanced content and improved navigation functionality will take us onto the information superhighway very soon.

Church Anniversary & Covenant Sunday: The Church Anniversary will be observed on 8 January with special worship service.

Season's Special Activities:

Carol Rounds: With the aim to encourage families living in the same area to have a meaningful fellowship, the carol singing was done area wise over four days. The youth co-ordinated with families and members to organize a purposeful time of singing, fun and good food. This concept was welcomed by the families and also resulted in saving travel time and transport costs.

Carol Service & Sunday School Christmas programme: The Christmas Carol Service was held on 18 December at 6 p.m. with the choir, conducted by Vinod Kuriyan, presenting the message of Christmas through beautiful carols with John Raj on the Organ and the young wizard Master Rohan Thomas on the violin. This was followed by the lovely presentation of the Christmas story by the Sunday School children through the nativity play and dance.

QCCCS: The Christmas programme for QCCCS children was held on 21 December in the car parking area.

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, Priscilla Sinha, Promila David, Loolu Thomas, Padmini Abraham, Lizy Kurian, Judith Rallia Ram, Anitaa Thakur and Loretta Suchitta that God's merciful healing hands be upon them.

“How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word.”

Psalms 119: 9

Isaac Cladio

Hon. Secretary

HEARD FROM THE PULPIT

4 December 2016 ~ 3rd Sunday before Christmas

Theme: 'Through Holy Scripture God gives us encouragement and hope.'

As his custom was, on the sabbath day, Jesus went to the synagogue. He was invited to read the Scripture and to give the sermon. He read from Isaiah 61:1-2. When he had finished reading, he sat down and began to speak saying, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The words that Jesus read sums up his mission. It must be noted that the anointing of the Holy Spirit is for the purpose of bringing 'good news to the poor.' This was the primary mission of Jesus. It is not that bringing good news to the poor was one of the activities among the other activities like 'recovery of sight to the blind' or 'release to the captives.' Bringing sight to the blind and release to the prisoners is an expansion on what it means to bring good news to the poor.

Jesus' mission embraces all those who, for whatever social, cultural or religious reasons, are marginalised. He conveys God's intention to break down barriers that exclude people. The 'outsiders' would now be part of God's covenant. They would receive the grace of God. This is indeed gospel – good news – to them. But, when we go further in Luke chapter 4, we see that the admiration of the listeners in the synagogue was short lived. Jesus' message of freedom and hope did not go down well with many of his hearers when they recognised the lavishness of God's grace. He used two incidents from the scriptures (vv.25-27). He referred to Elijah going to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon and to the cleansing of Naman the Syrian. Jesus announced that his mission is to all those who are poor or have claim to favour with God. Since that includes the Gentiles, this 'good news' became an offence to the Jewish religious leaders.

11 December 2016 ~ 2nd Sunday before Christmas

Theme: 'John the Baptist – a model for Christian ministers.'

Isaiah saw (Isaiah 11:1-9) the vision of the shoot from the stump of Jesse: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Isaiah sees the great tree of Jesse – the royal house of David – cut down to a mere stump, cut down by God's judgment. But a shoot grows out of the stump. Instead of worldly power and prestige, Isaiah's coming king is endowed with something else - the Spirit of God. "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD." What is the characteristic of his reign? The fundamental characteristic of his rule will be righteousness, which in practical terms will mean justice for the poor and meek.

The effect of the rule of the Messiah will be universal peace, an ideal described in symbolic language which recalls the paradise of Eden: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid..." It is a beautiful picture of creation in harmony with itself.

In Isaiah 11:1-9 as well as in 9:6-7, Isaiah looks beyond the disappointments of his own age to the coming of Jesus the incarnate. But these two passages are complementary. The first passage from Isaiah 9 - focuses on his birth, while the second passage from chapter 11 focusses on the actualisation of his reign over the earth. In other words, 9:6-7 was fulfilled in his incarnation (the first advent), and 11:1-9 will be fulfilled in his second advent.

18 December 2016 ~ Sunday before Christmas
Theme: 'Mary's Son is 'Emmanuel', 'God with us'.

The angel of the Lord declared to Joseph, "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us" (Matthew 1:23). Why did God do it? Why was it necessary for God to become one of us? Why did Jesus lay aside his majesty to be born in a manger?

That we might know God

God became human to reveal to us what he was really like. God came to the earth as one of us to show us exactly who he is and how we are to live. In Jesus, God came also to show practically how we are to live.

That God might know us

A second reason that God became human was so that he would be able to identify with us. Being the all-knowing God, he knows everything about us – even the number of hair on our heads. But Jesus the incarnate understands us and knows what we are going through because he has gone through it himself. God knows what you and I go through because he went through it himself. He knows what it is to be tempted, abandoned and mistreated (cf. Hebrews 4:14-16).

That we might be saved

The most important reason that God became human was so that he could die as the substitute for our sins. Jesus was born on earth with one main purpose – to give his life for ours.

24 December 2016 ~ Christmas Eve
Theme: 'The birth of the Saviour who is the Word made flesh.'

Gospels record the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Mark begins his gospel with the words, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" and proceeds to narrate the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. He doesn't include the events related to the birth of Jesus. Matthew begins his gospel with the genealogy of Jesus starting with Abraham: "An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham". Luke also has a genealogy but he starts even further back with Adam (Luke 3:38). But for John even this is not sufficient to understand who Jesus is and what he did. Before Abraham was, before Adam was, indeed before time began, God was. He starts his gospel with the words, "In the beginning..." The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ can be traced back before the beginning of the entire universe. There is no point in time before which the Word was not.

John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth". The pre-existent Logos became flesh, i.e., a human being, and lived among us. This is the greatest miracle in the history of humankind: the creator entered his creation by becoming a creature! That is why the story of Christmas is so remarkable. But, how have we responded to this God? Have you received him and believed in him? John said, "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (v.12). True celebration of Christmas would be to respond to his invitation of love.

GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

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

YEAR	NAME
1885	GRISWES MAY MANDELIN
1901	PEYTON JAMES
1903	WRENCH JOHN MERVYN
1941	MICHAEL MARY MATHILDA
1943	TOWNSEND MICHAEL JOHN EDWARD
1945	TOWNSEND PATRICIA LILIAN
1946	TRAVERS ADA BEATRICE
1956	EARLE EUGENE JAMES
1958	GOVE FREDERICK THOMAS
1959	KING GLADYS ESTHER
1967	CORKE VERNON
1967	FREDA WILLIAMS
1980	FAVILLE SYBIL MAY
1981	CHRISTIE RUTH KESHAV
1985	VICTOR VIRGO CEASER
1987	HUBBERD DOUGLAS LIONEL
1991	KADNER BERTHA
1992	RAO EDITH
1998	MATHEWS JOHN LIND
2000	DAS NILOY KUMAR
2000	GEORGE MATHAI
2003	KANGA PAWKAJAH
2009	SANGEETA SANJAY SILAS
2013	PHYLLIS GRIFFIN
2016	BRENDA PUSHONG
2016	ZARINA HIGGINS

IMPORTANT DATES IN 2017

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY & COVENANT SERVICE	8 JANUARY
ASH WEDNESDAY	1 MARCH
GOOD FRIDAY	14 APRIL
EASTER DAY	16 APRIL

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.
Pastorate Committee Meeting	Parsonage		Isaac Cladio	9869513872
Sunday School	PHCC	Sundays 9 a.m.	Beulah Tellis	9820432056
Choir Practice	Church	Thursdays 8.30 p.m. Sundays 10.45 a.m.	Vinod Kuriyan	9820239573
Bible Study	PHCC	Wednesdays 7.30 p.m.		
Senior Citizens			Loolu S. Thomas	9920290256
WFCS	PHCC	Fourth Sunday of the month	Silviya Marpu	9769565311
Youth Fellowship			Silas Stanley	9819648873
QCCCS: Day Care Centre & Study Centre	PHCC	Monday to Friday 9 a.m.to 4 p.m. 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.	Sumitra Figueredo	26050229

Church Office: Saguna Doshi (Monday to Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)	26423955
Rev. Thomas Jacob, Presbyter-in-charge	9820736359 / 26428803
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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