

**ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH**  
CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA

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**NEWSLETTER**  
**FEBRUARY 2022**



(For Private Circulation Only)

## Almanac and Lectionary: February 2022

Date	Theme & Readings	Liturgical colour
<p><b>Sunday, 6 February 2022</b> Holy Communion Services: 9 a.m.</p> <p><b>Those who wish to attend must do prior registration.</b></p>	<p><b>Seventh Sunday after Christmas</b> <b>Theme: Whole-hearted service of God.</b> O.T. : Ezra 8:15a,21-23,31-32a Psalm : Psalm 137:1-6 Epistle : Hebrews 6:1-12 Gospel : Luke 9:57-62</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 207</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>
<p><b>Sunday, 13 February 2022</b> Holy Communion Services: 9 a.m.</p> <p><b>Those who wish to attend must do prior registration.</b></p>	<p><b>Ninth Sunday before Easter</b> <b>Theme: God created men and women to be joint-heirs of his kingdom.</b> O.T. : Genesis 1:26-31a Psalm : Psalm 148:7-14 Epistle : I Peter 3:1-7 Gospel : Mark 10:2-9</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 43</p>	<p><b>Violet</b></p>
<p><b>Sunday, 20 February 2022</b> Holy Communion Services: 9 a.m.</p> <p><b>Those who wish to attend must do prior registration.</b></p>	<p><b>Eighth Sunday before Easter</b> <b>Theme: Only by the grace of God can our hearts be made pure.</b> O.T. : Jeremiah 17:5-10 Psalm : Psalm 51:10-17 Epistle : Romans 7:15-8:2 Gospel : Mark 7:14-23</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 46</p>	<p><b>Violet</b></p>
<p><b>Sunday, 27 February 2022</b> Holy Communion Services: 9 a.m.</p> <p><b>Those who wish to attend must do prior registration.</b></p>	<p><b>Seventh Sunday before Easter</b> <b>Theme: God has promised forgiveness to the penitent.</b> O.T. : Ezekiel 18:25-32 Psalm : Psalm 6:1-9 Epistle : Acts 26:12-20 Gospel : Luke 15:1-2,11-32</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 49</p>	<p><b>Violet</b></p>
<p><b>Wednesday, 2 March 2022</b> Holy Communion Service: 7 p.m.</p> <p><b>Ash Wednesday</b></p> <p><b>Those who wish to attend must do prior registration.</b></p>	<p><b>Ash Wednesday</b> <b>Theme: The spirit of Christian discipline.</b> O.T. : Isaiah 58:1-9a Psalm : Psalm 32:1-7 Epistle : I Corinthians 9:24-27 Gospel : Matthew 6:1-6,16-21</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 53</p>	<p><b>Violet</b></p>
<p><b>Sunday, 6 March 2022</b> Holy Communion Service: 9 a.m.</p> <p><b>World Day of Prayer</b></p> <p><b>Those who wish to attend must do prior registration.</b></p>	<p><b>Sixth Sunday before Easter</b> <b>Theme: The victory of Jesus when tempted helps us when we are tempted.</b> O.T. : Deuteronomy 6:10-17 Psalm : Psalm 95:6-11 Epistle : Hebrews 4:14-16 Gospel : Luke 4:1-13</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 56</p>	<p><b>Violet</b></p>

## **FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK**

### **THE GOLDEN RULE**

Jesus lays down God's standard for practical ethical conduct in Matthew 7:12 - "In everything, therefore, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." In other words, 'treat others the way you want others to treat you.' Some translations of the Bible give the heading "The Golden Rule" for this verse.

It, first of all, tells us that it matters how we treat others. Christian faith has a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension. Christian faith is not about just "me and my God." It is also about how we relate to others; how we treat others. Here, Jesus is also asking us to think about others rather than being pre-occupied with ourselves. Often, we tend to focus only on ourselves, our feelings and our needs. But Jesus wants us to think of others; how they feel and what their needs are.

God commanded the Hebrews: "You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21). God wanted them to remember their painful experiences and be mindful of others who may be in a similar situation. Whatever experiences we may have in our life, whether good or bad, must help us to understand others better and to do what is best for them.

Jesus did not say "Treat people the way they treat you." "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" is not Christ's way. Some may treat us badly but that is not the way we must treat others. Instead, he says, 'treat them the way you want to be treated.'

We also note that Jesus wants his followers to be active rather than be passive. There were sayings like 'Don't do to anyone, anything you wouldn't want them to do to you.' To not do something to somebody, you just don't have to do anything. Jesus, however, wants us to be pro-active. He wants us to actively do good to others that we want others to do for us. What would you like other people do for you? Jesus says, 'Well, do that to them; don't wait for them to do it to you.'

The context of the Golden Rule can be seen in Matthew 7:1 - "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." We don't like others passing harsh judgments on us. We should not then pass harsh judgments on others. We like others to love and appreciate us. Well, love and appreciate others! The Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12 should be applied in our everyday life. If I am a businessperson, for example, I must ask myself if I am treating my customer as I would have wanted to be treated if I was on the other side of the deal. Or, if I am a teacher, "Am I treating my students how I would have wanted to be treated as a student?" The Golden Rule can be applied practically in every life situation.

"Do to others what you would have them do to you." May this principle guide our conduct in relation to others.

**In His Grace,**

**Thomas Jacob**

## **NEWS & NOTES**

**Worship Services:** Holy Communion services were conducted at 9 am on all Sundays in January, except on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, with in-person attendance. New Year Day service was held at 9 am on 1 January 2022. Entry was allowed by prior online registration.

**Sunday School:** The Sunday School continued to hold sessions online.

**Mid-Week Prayer Service:** Mid-Week Prayer Services were conducted on the last two Wednesdays of January at 7 pm on Zoom, for a duration of 30-40 minutes.

**Ecumenical Sunday:** 23 January was observed as Ecumenical Sunday. Dr.Fr. Fiorello Mascarenhas, the Emeritus Chairman of the Catholic Bible Institute, Mumbai, was the guest speaker.

**QCCCS Sunday:** 30 January was observed as QCCCS Sunday. Pastor Jimit Mehta, NLF Avatar Church, was the guest speaker. QCCCS Managing Committee members took part in the service.

**Membership:** We are glad to welcome and introduce our new members:

1. Pankaj Robinson, Janet Robinson, and their son Shane (Full Membership)
2. Christopher Sunny Kumar, Keren Rebello, and their son Noah (Full Membership)
3. Marshalene Moses Sibloon (Associate Member)

**Sick & Home bound:** Let us continue to pray for the sick and elderly, especially Prakash Naik, Olga Nazareth, Loolu Thomas, Lizzy Kurian, Padmini Abraham, Joyce Nichols, Vijaya Rajaratnam, Shalini Dongre, Rt.Rev.S.B.Joshua, and the Pratap family. Pray that they are protected and healed and that God's hand be upon them.

**Sushill Augustine**  
**Hon. Secretary**

## HEARD FROM THE PULPIT

1 January 2022 ~ New Year Day

**Theme: ‘Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.’**

Isaiah 40 begins with the words “Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God” (v.1). This, in fact, sets the fundamental theme for the rest of the book of Isaiah: encouragement and comfort. In the previous 39 chapters, though there were certainly words of comfort and hope, the focus on God’s judgement because of the sins of Judah. Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity. God announces that the people have paid the price for their sins: “...proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins” (v.2). Life was tough in captivity. In that context, Isaiah is prophesying God’s comfort and favour upon the suffering people of God.

Where does the comfort come from for God’s people? It comes from God. Someone said: “Look at others, and be distressed. Look at yourself, and be depressed. Look to God, and you’ll be blessed!” God takes the initiative to come to his people to help them in their time of distress (v.1). When we go through difficult times, we must remember that our God is greater than our circumstances. He is incomparable (verses 18-26). “If you look at God through your circumstances, he will seem small and very far away, but if by faith you look at your circumstances through God, he will draw very near and reveal his greatness to you” (Warren Wiersbe).

In verses 27-28, Isaiah rebukes those who distrust God. The people who were in exile in Babylon largely doubted God. As they were taken into exile, they thought God had apparently discarded them and was not concerned or aware of their plight. Therefore, Isaiah affirms that God is the Creator and the Preserver of all things. He will not forsake what he has made. And God does not grow tired like humans. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

2 January 2022 ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas

**Theme: ‘The coming of the wisemen is a sign that Christ has come for all humankind.’**

Epiphany means “to manifest” or “to show”. On Epiphany Sunday we commemorate the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the magi, who visited the child Jesus. The coming of Christ was in fulfilment to the Old Testament prophecies, like “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1). The Jewish people had received the prophecies. They were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. But when the Messiah came, many of them failed to recognize and acknowledge him. Instead, it was the magi who responded. The manifestation of God to the magi from the East, who were Gentiles, was in fulfilment of the prophecy that all nations will be drawn to the Lord. It was also in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:2). This is significant, because from the very beginning, Jesus is worshipped by shepherds and angels, by commoners and royalty, and by Jews and Gentiles alike. From the very beginning, the light that dawned with the birth of Jesus was a light that shines for all people. As John writes: “In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind” (John 1:4).

Matthew 2:1-12 shows us three possible responses to the revelation of God: Hostile like Herod. Indifferent like the chief priests and scribes were indifferent. Worship like the magi. ‘What is our response to the manifestation of God?’ We may not be hostile like Herod, but aren’t we guilty of being indifferent to the good news?

9 January 2022 ~ Covenant Sunday

**Theme: 'God who is faithful establishes his covenant with us.'**

Covenant is a very important concept in the Bible. God enters into a covenant relationship with his people. The Old Covenant was based on the law that was given through Moses at Mount Sinai. But people continually failed to live according to God's standards. Bible mentions several "covenant renewals." Before the people of God entered the promised land there was a renewal of the covenant under Moses, as recorded in Deuteronomy. Then, in the last chapter of Joshua, we read about Joshua leading the people into a covenant renewal. This was before Joshua died. There were also covenant renewals under prophet Samuel (I Samuel 12), and under kings Hezekiah (II Chronicles 29-31) and Josiah (II Chronicles 34-35). But these covenant renewals only brought temporary blessing since it didn't change the hearts of people.

The Old Covenant only directed the conduct of the people, as to how they should live. But it didn't bring any change from within. It didn't change their heart or character. So, God announced, in Jeremiah 31:31-34, that a new covenant would replace the old covenant. This New Covenant will be different from the Old Covenant is that it will be written in the minds and hearts of people.

What does it mean, when God says he will write his law on people's hearts? It is understood metaphorically, not literally. Today we tend to think about the heart as the seat of the emotions, particularly emotions such as compassion and love. In contrast to the heart the *head* is the logical, the reasoning part of us. But for the ancient Hebrews, the heart wasn't just associated with emotions, but with the rational, decision-making part of us as well. So, when Jeremiah speaks of God writing his law on our hearts, he doesn't just mean that we will have a warm emotional feeling toward God; he means that the desire to put God's will and purposes into practice will be absolutely engrained in our deepest being. The basis for this new covenant is the work of Christ on the cross.

16 January 2022 ~ 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Christmas

**Theme: 'Jesus brings joy through the fulfilment of God's gracious purpose.'**

Within the Jewish community before Christ, there were several strong divisions and class distinctions between particular groups of people. This is well illustrated in an ancient Jewish daily prayer: "Blessed are you, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe who has created me a human and not beast, a man and not a woman, an Israelite and not a gentile, circumcised and not uncircumcised, free and not slave." This prayer describes three major divisions and hierarchies that are based on gender, social and economic status, and ethnicity. Apostle Paul would have prayed this prayer before his encounter with the risen Christ. Yet Paul takes this prayer and reverses it, saying to the Galatian Church: "There is now no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Christ through his life, death and resurrection has brought an end to unjust societal and cultural divisions. And so all who are "in Christ" are now one. Differences no longer matter. Whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, rich or poor, young or old, powerful or outcast, native or immigrant, all are God's children, all are equal, all are united as one.

This message to the Galatian Church would have been good news to the Gentiles. It is also good news for each one of us today. It reminds us that in Christ we are all equally united as one body and as children of God – no matter our differences. And it calls each one of us to reach out in love to include and care for all of God's children.

## GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

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



## REGULAR ACTIVITIES

Activity	Venue	Day & Time	Contact Person	Phone No.
Sunday School	Online		Preethy Dhanaraj Raj	9920723235
QCCCS: Day Care Centre & Study Centre	PHCC	Study Centre Monday-Saturday 4 pm – 7 pm	Maria Kumary Koshy	9820217524

<b>Church Office: Charmaine Rego</b> Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.	26423955 9820738735
<b>Rev. Thomas Jacob</b> , Presbyter-in-charge	9820736359 / 26428803
<b>Sushill Augustine</b> , Hon. Secretary	9820657433
<b>Surekha Marandi</b> , Hon. Treasurer	9167291120
<b>Raj Bowen</b> , Hon. Jt. Secretary	9820183951
<b>Brian Tellis</b> , Hon. Jt. Treasurer	9920432056

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