

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

(CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA)

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2017



(For Private Circulation Only)

Almanac and Lectionary: February 2017

Date	Theme & Readings	Liturgical colour
<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>
<p>Sunday, 12 February 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>9th Sunday before Easter Theme: God creates and redeems all things through Christ. O.T. : Genesis 1:1-5,26-31 Psalm : Psalm 104:24-30 Epistle : Colossians 1:15-20 Gospel : John 1:1-13</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 43</p>	<p>Violet</p>
<p>Sunday, 19 February 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>8th Sunday before Easter Theme: Our sins begin with refusing to hear God. O.T. : Isaiah 1:1-9 Psalm : Romans 1:18-25 Gospel : Matthew 13:10-17</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 46</p>	<p>Violet</p>
<p>Sunday, 26 February 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>7th Sunday before Easter Theme: It is God's will that all humankind should be saved." O.T. : Isaiah 56:3-8 Psalm : Psalm 100 Epistle : I Timothy 2:1-7 Gospel : Matthew 8:5-13</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 50</p>	<p>Violet</p>
<p>Wednesday, 1 March 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m. & 7 p.m.</p> <p>Ash Wednesday</p>	<p>Ash Wednesday Theme: The spirit of Christian discipline. 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>Violet</p>
<p>Sunday, 5 March 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p> <p>Mission Sunday</p>	<p>6th Sunday before Easter Theme: God's Word gives us strength to resist temptation. O.T. : Deuteronomy 8:1-5 Psalm : Psalm 91:9-12,14,16 Epistle : I Corinthians 10:6-13 Gospel : Matthew 4:1-11</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 56</p>	<p>Violet</p>

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

GOD KEEPS

During the Old Testament times, every devout Jew made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at least once in his lifetime. The pilgrims, who usually travelled in caravans, faced many dangers on the way like exposure to heat, thirst, hunger, illness, accidents and attacks by robbers. At nights when they had to rest, they would have guards, who would watch out for robbers.

Psalm 121 was written in that context. The main emphasis of this psalm is that God keeps. God kept the pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem. Today, he keeps his children in the journey of life. In this short psalm of 8 verses, the word 'keep' appears six times.

This psalm is composed of four couplets, each having an introductory line, which the rest of the couplet develops. The first verse has a question, "...from where will my help come?" The answer is in the next verse: "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." It underlines the power and might of God. The psalmist is simply declaring that the same God who made heaven and earth would provide any necessity and help in any difficulty.

Often, we tend to look at all the wrong places for help before we finally turn to God. We tend to put our confidence in our intelligence, jobs, bank accounts, investments, and our loved ones. But the psalmist asks us to look no further than God because He keeps us.

Sometimes our circumstances, trials and troubles may seem overwhelming. They may indeed be difficult and even impossible for us to handle but not for our all-powerful and all-knowing God. The encouragement from Psalm 121 is that God keeps. When God keeps there is no reason to doubt, worry or fear. Therefore, in times of adversity, we must follow the counsel of the psalmist and look to the Lord who made heaven and earth, our Creator. He is our help and refuge. He is our keeper.

Life is short and there are dangers all around. Yet, the psalmist realized, as we all must, that when troubles arise we should not look around for protection. We cannot depend upon our parents or our children for security. We cannot count upon fortune or fame to sustain us. We must not aim to obtain security from our job or investments. We must look to God.

God keeps us with diligence. "He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night" (Psalm 121:3-6). The Lord watches over his people carefully and diligently. The NIV puts it plainly, "He will not let your foot slip -- he who watches over you will not slumber". When we sleep, we are unaware of our surroundings. But God never sleeps. He does not take Casual Leave, Sick Leave or vacation.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills - from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth." We must look beyond all the sources around us to the all-powerful and all-sufficient God.

**In His Grace,
Thomas Jacob**

NEWS & NOTES

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles ...”
II Corinthians 1:3,4

Weekly Bible Study: On Thursdays at 7.30 p.m. in PHCC.

Website: I am thrilled to officially announce the re-launch of our Church website.

Church Day & Covenant Sunday: Was observed on 8 January.

Teens Meet: Teens and college students met on 8 January in the Parsonage with guest resource persons for a time of games, Bible-based discussion and fellowship.

Unity Sunday: January 22 was observed as Christian Unity Sunday. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas, parish priest of St. Peter's Church, Bandra, along with a few of his parishioners participated in the 9 a.m. worship service. Fr. Frazer shared the message.

QCCCS: January 29 was observed as QCCCS Sunday, Pastor David Luke (World Vision) was the guest speaker at the 9 a.m. service. The QCCCS children presented a short dance programme in the PHCC after the service. Three students who passed the Std.X were given prizes.

Voice Training: We have started a voice training session on 15 January. Those who are 8 years and above, are welcome to join these sessions held on Sundays at 10.30 a.m.

Republic Day: A Thanksgiving service followed by the Flag-hoisting ceremony was organized on 26 January.

WFCS: The members of the WFCS will organize a Food Festival on Sunday 26 February at 10.45 a.m. in the PHCC.

Holy Land Tour: A 10-night/12-day Holy Land tour is being planned for the later part of this year. Those who are interested may contact the Presbyter.

Membership: We are happy to welcome and introduce Mrs. Shylaja Naik Satam (Full Membership)

Baptism: Two children were baptised on 28 January:

1. Ainat Bishwas, daughter of Tania and Shobek Joel Bishwas.
2. Veronica Sridharan, daughter of Jane and Vivek Sridharan.

Obituary: We are sad to announce the demise of:

1. Benoni Soans (70 years) on 6 January 2017.
2. Hebic Jathanna (82 years) on 24 January 2017.
3. Asha Michigan (75 years), wife of Malcolm Michigan on 3 February 2017.

May our Lord console the bereaved families.

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 and Anita Thakur that God's merciful healing hands be upon them and strengthen them.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
II Corinthians 12:9

Isaac Cladio
Hon. Secretary

HEARD FROM THE PULPIT

8 January 2017 ~ Covenant Sunday

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

Covenant is a very important concept in Scripture. There are many similarities between the ancient Near Eastern treaties and the Old Testament covenants. First of all, the covenants resemble treaties in language. The purpose of a treaty is to secure the allegiance of a vassal king or state to the other partner in the treaty. Likewise, God's covenant with his chosen people was to secure their allegiance to him.

Secondly, in its structure, both the treaties and covenants have a historical prologue that states the relations between the parties prior to signing the treaty. Also, in both, the basis of the stipulations is the undeserved favour of the overlord. When a king conquers a new territory, sometimes the enemy king is spared and they enter into a treaty. Since his life is spared and since he is allowed to remain the ruler of his territory, the vassal king is to obey the stipulations of the treaty out of gratitude. Similarly, in the Old Testament covenant, because of the way God has saved them, Israel is encouraged to obey.

The covenants started with God's declaration, "I will establish my covenant with you" (e.g. Genesis 6:18; Exodus 6:4-5). God promises to be ever faithful to his covenant (e.g. Leviticus 26:44-45; Deuteronomy 4:31). The distinction between the old and the new covenants comes from the Scriptures themselves (Jeremiah 31:31-32; II Corinthians 3:3-6,14; Hebrews 8:8-9,13; 9:15). Both are same in substance in that they contain God's promise that he will be the God of his chosen people by redeeming them in Christ. Yet, the new covenant is superior to the old covenant as the writer of Hebrews says, "... Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7:22).

15 January 2017 ~ 3rd Sunday after Christmas

Theme: 'At his baptism, Jesus is revealed as the Son of God.'

The baptism of Jesus is recorded in all four gospels showing the importance of the event for the gospel writers. But to many it just does not seem to make sense. John's baptism was the baptism of repentance. It was for those who repented of and confessed their sins. But Jesus, the Son of God, was sinless. Then, why did he come to John to be baptized?

The first reason can be found in Jesus' response to John. When John tried to deter Jesus saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus answered him saying, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." He wanted to identify with the sinners (Isaiah 53:12 ~ "... he ... was numbered with the transgressors...")

The second reason why Jesus stepped into the Jordan River was because baptism was symbolic of his death. His stepping into the Jordan River was symbolic of how he would enter into death for us. Thirdly, it was at his baptism that God the Father revealed Jesus to be the Son of God. Fourthly, it was at his baptism that Jesus was equipped and empowered for the task for which he came into this world.

22 January 2017 ~ 4th Sunday after Christmas
Theme: 'Jesus is revealed as the Lamb of God.'

Behind the expression 'the Lamb of God' are various Old Testament texts and images. In Exodus 12, we read that while they were in Egyptian bondage, the Israelites were instructed to kill a lamb without blemish, one for each household. They were to then put some of the blood on the doorposts and lintel. When the Angel of death passed through Egypt that night and struck down every first born (men and animals), he passed over the houses of Israelites because of the blood on the doorposts. Likewise, the blood of Christ has been the means of exodus from the bondage of sin and the means to enter into the freedom which God gives. What the Passover lamb did for the children of Israel, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, does for us. He saves us and frees us.

As the Passover lamb was to be without blemish, so Jesus was the Lamb without blemish. He had no sin of his own to atone for.

The blood of the lamb protected the Jewish households from the wrath of the Angel of death in Egypt. So Jesus, the Lamb of God offers us protection from the effects of our sin, which ultimately lead to separation from God – or to eternal death. As the Passover lamb (during the 10th plague in Egypt), died in place of the first born, so Jesus died in our place – for our sins. The Passover lamb was slaughtered annually, whereas Jesus the Lamb of God would die once and for all to deal with sin.

29 January 2017 ~ 5th Sunday after Christmas
Theme: 'Jesus has brought us out of darkness into light.'

Though the Jews were privileged to have been entrusted with the very words of God (Romans 3:2), their teachers had reduced it to a legalistic code of "dos" and "don'ts" whereby it was impossible for the common person to have a relationship with God. Jesus rebuked them saying, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them."

The Gentiles had it even worse. They lived without hope and without God in the world as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "...remember that you were at that time without Christ ... and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). So, the Jew and the Gentile alike were lost in darkness when Jesus came.

It was in that setting that Jesus began his ministry. Matthew tells us that Jesus began his ministry in the city of Capernaum, to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah (Matthew 4:12-23). Seven hundred years earlier, Isaiah had announced that God would bring the Assyrians as a final punishment for the rejection of Yahweh by the people of God (Isaiah 7:17). Therefore, people lived in "distress" and "fearful gloom" (Isaiah 8:22). But, in the midst of that gloom and despair, God made a promise about "a great light" (Isaiah 9:1-7). The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the region of Galilee, has now seen the light. Jesus was there in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy (cf. Isaiah 9:1-7).

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.

YEAR	NAME
1898	DUNLOP ELIZA
1900	GOSTLING SARA
1900	FRANKLIN JAMES
1902	BROOKS ANNIE
1902	NASH WILLIAM GEORGE
1918	HERBERT ASHTON
1943	LANGLEY ISABEL LOUISE
1950	ROPA MABEL DOROTHY
1952	CORKE OLIVER ETHEL
1957	ROBERTS ELIZABETH
1957	SMITH RICHARD HENRY
1975	JAMALUDDIN NASIM
1978	SANJEEVA RAO
1983	NATH HENRY GEORGE
1984	NATH JOGINDER JAWAKI
1986	JACOBIE
1987	SWAMI VICTORIA ANANT
1992	RAO EDITH
1998	MATHEWS JOHN LIND
2000	DAS NILOY KUMAR
2000	GEORGE MATHAI
2003	KANGA PAWKAJAH
2005	DEVASAHAYAM JOHN
2007	RAPAZ THEODORE
2013	EILEEN CALEB

IMPORTANT DATES

WFCS FOOD FEST	26 FEBRUARY
ASH WEDNESDAY	1 MARCH
MISSIONS SUNDAY	5 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	Thursdays 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, Presbyterian-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

<p>St.Stephen's Church 46, Mount Mary Road, Bandra (West), Mumbai – 400 050 E-mail: sscbandra@gmail.com Website: www.stephenschurch-bandra.com</p>
--