

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

(CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA)

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017



(For Private Circulation Only)

Almanac and Lectionary: March 2017

Date	Theme & Readings	Liturgical colour
<p>Sunday, 5 March 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p> <p>Mission Sunday</p>	<p>Mission Sunday Theme: Christ commissions us to make disciples of all nations. O.T. : Genesis 12:1-3 Psalm : Psalm 107:1-14 Epistle : Philippians 2:5-11 Gospel : Matthew 28:16-20</p>	<p>Violet</p>
<p>Sunday, 12 March 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p> <p>World Day of Prayer</p>	<p>5th Sunday before Easter Theme: Christ gives the 'living water' of the Spirit. O.T. : Exodus 17:3-7 Psalm : Psalm 104:10-15 Epistle : I Corinthians 10:1-5 Gospel : John 4:5-26</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 59</p>	<p>Violet</p>
<p>Sunday, 19 March 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>4th Sunday before Easter Theme: Christ is the Light of the world. O.T. : Exodus 13:17-22 Psalm : Psalm 107:1-2,10-16 Epistle : Ephesians 5:8-14 Gospel : John 9:1-17,32-41</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 62</p>	<p>Violet</p>
<p>Sunday, 26 March 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>3rd Sunday before Easter Theme: Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. O.T. : I Kings 17:17-24 Psalm : Psalm 36:5-9 Epistle : Romans 14:7-9 Gospel : John 11:1-3,17-44</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 66</p>	<p>Violet</p>
<p>Sunday, 2 April 2017 Holy Communion Services: 7 a.m., 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.</p>	<p>2nd Sunday before Easter Theme: The meaning of the death of Christ. O.T. : Isaiah 50:4-10 Psalm : Psalm 89:19-22,34-39,49-50 Epistle : II Corinthians 5:11-19 Gospel : John 11:45-53</p> <p>Refer to <i>Readings for Sunday Worship</i> ~ page 70</p>	<p>Violet</p>

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

MEANINGFUL OBSERVANCE OF LENT

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lent. Sadly, however, the observance of the Ash Wednesday and the Lent is today reduced to a mere religious ritual. So, is this going to be just another Lent season? How can this period be observed in a meaningful way? How can this opportunity be used to bring freshness to our relationship with God? How can I grow closer to God? In Isaiah 58, the Lord commands the prophet to lift up his voice like a trumpet and announce God's judgment upon his chosen people. Considering that the people were religious, this may be surprising. God said, "... day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways... they ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them" (v. 2). The people of God fasted and prayed regularly. Why judgment then?

The people of God faced the prospect of God's judgment since they did not practice righteousness. They did not live rightly in the sight of God. They lived as it pleased them and failed to keep the commandments of God. Fasting had reduced to being a show instead of being a life changing experience. They fasted supposedly to set their lives right with God but their relationship with one another was broken. There was no integrity. They fasted and at the same oppressed the poor. They would fast and then quarrel and fight.

Aren't we a lot like the people of God during Isaiah's time? We may appear to be humble and righteous. But that could be far from the truth.

After pointing out the wrong kind of fasting (verses 1-5), God speaks about the kind of fasting that pleases him (verses 6-12). It is fasting accompanied by genuine repentance, especially turning away from exploitation and quarrelling. It is not merely about going without food on certain days, but embracing a lifestyle in which self-indulgence and greed are totally given up and replaced by generosity towards the poor (v. 7). This is the kind of fasting that pleases God (v.9). There are times when we wonder why God does not seem to be hearing our prayers? Why is that there seems to be no blessing from God? May be, you are wondering why nothing seems to be going well, may be with yourself, your family, your children. Of course, even when we walk closely with God, there could be hardships and trials. But, many a times if there is no blessing in our lives, it is because we are selfish and self-centred. We exploit the poor/vulnerable, and we quarrel with each other. So, if you are thinking that there is no blessing from God in your life; that nothing is going right with you or your family, don't look elsewhere, look inward.

May we be able to earnestly search our hearts and examine our lives during this Lent season, and set our lives right in accordance to the word of God. May the days of Lent be opportunities to rekindle the fire of our faith and our passion to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

**In His Grace,
Thomas Jacob**

NEWS & NOTES

“If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.” (James 1:26)

Reminder: As we are coming to the end of this Financial Year (2016-17), members are reminded to ensure that contributions towards the ear-marked offerings are made.

Special Sunday: 5 February was observed as the Gideons Sunday. Mr. Stanley Mathew was the guest speaker. Gideons representatives thanked the members for their generous contribution, which will enable them to print 900 New Testaments.

Teens Meet: Teens and college students met on 12 February in the Parsonage with Mr. Cyril Georgeson for a time of interactive Bible study and fellowship.

WFCS: The members of the WFCS organized a Food Festival on 26 February at 10:45 a.m. in the PHCC. It was a quick sell out with active participation from the members generating a record income. The Sunday school children also contributed immensely through their active participation with a food counter.

QCCCS: The QCCCS will admit new children in the month of April, depending on the vacancies.

Senior Citizens: Members who joined the octogenarian club were honoured with a shawl, prayer and blessing during 9 a.m. worship service on 19 February.

Membership: We are happy to welcome and introduce our new members:

1. Mr. Paul Ghosh, Ms. Arunita Ghosh and 2 children (Full Membership)
2. Mr. Paul Thomas D., Ms. Victoria Thomas & 2 children (Full Membership).

Transfer: Eshita Chanda has transferred her membership.

Ajaya kumar & Premalatha have requested cancellation of their membership.

Baptism: Amelia Hombal, daughter of Ashita and Ashish Hombal, was baptised on 12 February.

Obituary: We are sad to announce the demise of Ms. Asha Michigan, wife of our member Mr. Malcolm Michigan, on 3 February. May our Lord console the bereaved family.

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, Pushpa John, Loretta Suchitta and Sumitra Figueredo that God's merciful healing hands be upon them and strengthen them.

“Those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit.” I Peter 3:10

Isaac Cladio
Hon. Secretary

HEARD FROM THE PULPIT

5 February 2017 ~ 6th Sunday after Christmas

Theme: 'Jesus calls his disciples to work in God's kingdom.'

First of all, Jesus calls us in the midst of our daily lives. Peter and Andrew, James and John, were simply going about their daily routines. It was in the ordinariness of the everyday life that Christ called them (Mark 1:14-20).

Secondly, Jesus expects a response from us. When Jesus came and called these fishermen, he expected an immediate response, and he got one. It must also be noted that Jesus did not ask them to support him, but to follow him. It is the same with us. He does not want supporters, but followers. He wants us to be his active followers, not his armchair supporters. Following him will mean that we will have to change as people. Our character will change to become more like his. Our priorities would change. It means that if I am still exactly the same person as I was a year ago, then I have not followed Jesus. I might say that I am following him, but if I am going nowhere and not allowing him to change me, then I am just watching him from a distance, not following him.

Thirdly, Jesus calls us with a purpose: to work in God's kingdom. Jesus' call to work in God's kingdom is to seek his reign and to do his will here on earth. What drives our lives must be the desire to do the will of God daily.

12 February 2017 ~ 9th Sunday before Easter

Theme: 'God creates and redeems all things through Christ.'

Often, we have a narrow view of who Jesus is. So, who is Jesus? In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul answers that question for the believers at Colosse.

- 1. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (v.15).** "He is the image of the invisible God..." Jesus makes visible the invisible God. In Jesus we see what God is like.
- 2. Jesus Christ is the firstborn of all creation (v.15).** It means he is pre-eminent over all of God's creation. He is above all of creation. The whole creation belongs to Christ.
- 3. Jesus created everything (v.16).** Nothing exists that Jesus did not create. And nothing continues to exist that Jesus does not sustain.
- 4. Everything has been created for Jesus Christ (v.16).** Not only has Christ created everything, everything has been created for him. Even the visible and invisible non-human powers of the universe are created to serve Christ.
- 5. It is in Christ that everything holds together (v.17).** Christ is the integrating centre. Without that centre, everything would dissolve into chaos and we would have no meaning for our existence.
- 6. It is through Christ that God has reconciled everything (v.20).** It is through Christ has reconciled (and continues to reconcile) relationship between God and humankind as well as between God and the physical world.

19 February 2017 ~ 8th Sunday before Easter

Theme: 'Our sins begin with refusing to hear God.'

When Jesus had finished telling the crowds the Parable of the Sower, his disciples asked him, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" Jesus replied, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom, but to them it has not been given... This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matthew 13:11,13). This quote from Isaiah is not an expression of Jesus' desire that some of his hearers would not understand. It is simply stating the sad truth that those who are not willing to receive Jesus' message will find the truth hidden from them. The parables were a kind of filter. Those who were not genuinely seeking the truth, could not receive any spiritual illumination.

Some of the things that can keep us from hearing God's voice include:

1. Prosperity. Jeremiah 22:21 ~ "I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, 'I will not listen.' This has been your way from your youth, for you have not obeyed my voice."

2. Our hearts are turned away. Deuteronomy 30:17 ~ "But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish..."

3. Stubbornness. II Kings 17:14 ~ "But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the Lord their God."

4. Rebellion. Isaiah 30:9 ~ "For they are a rebellious people, faithless children, children who will not hear the instruction of the Lord."

26 February 2017 ~ 7th Sunday before Easter

Theme: 'It is God's will that all people should be saved.'

By including the account of the centurion (Matthew 8:5-13), Matthew encourages his Jewish Christian readers in the Gentile mission. Jesus told those who were following him, "I tell you many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus took this opportunity when the centurion, who was a Gentile, showed remarkable faith, to tell the Jews that the basis for invitation into God's kingdom is faith alone. Irrespective of their race and nationality, people will be included in the kingdom of God on the basis of faith. From Isaiah 56, we learn that God will gather to him eunuchs and foreigners/refugees. So, the invitation to the great banquet is irrespective also of gender and social status.

So, on the one hand, we have no reason to be proud of our background including our Christian heritage. And, on the other hand, we have no reason to look down on others on basis of caste, class or gender. At the great banquet, all those who put their trust in God through Jesus Christ will be seated around the same table.

LENTEN THOUGHTS

CARBON FASTING

Lent, a season of fasting and penitence in preparation for Easter, can also be the time to go on a 'carbon fast' and reduce the carbon footprint. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Marthoma, Senior Metropolitan of the Marthoma Church, has come out with a 50-day prescription for the faithful to do so.

The recommendations aimed at addressing global warming have been included in the book *Lenten Thoughts: Reduce Carbon Footprints, Practise Carbon Fasting*, co-authored by the Metropolitan and Roy P. Thomas, Deputy Conservator, Forest Department.

'Carbon fasting' is described as "a 50-day journey through Lent, towards a lighter carbon footprint," and church members should implement one thing a day to reduce their environmental impact. "The carbon fast is in response to an urgent need to reduce carbon emissions and to protect poor communities around the world that are already suffering from the ravages of climate change," the book says.

The carbon reduction propositions include talking about carbon fasting in churches, switching off electrical equipment, when not in use, and removing one electric bulb and living without it for the 50 days.

Tread lightly, recycle everything possible, run the washing machine with full load, shop from local markets, refuse food imported by plane, use ink pens, and candles made out of natural wax in churches ... thus goes some of the green ways of life advocated by the authors. On Easter day, the "Christ is risen. Your lent is over but carbon fasting continues. It should become a way of life," they say. The 50 {+t} {+h} day should be marked by replacing the missing bulb with an energy-saving one. Over its lifetime, it will save 60 kg of carbon dioxide per year and up to Rs.500, they add.

Last year, the senior prelate had requested the Marthoma Church members to cut down on personal carbon use for 50 days. He had enlisted energy-saving measures that could lead towards a lighter carbon footprint, including no to plastic bags, a day off for dishwashers and avoiding travel by vehicles. "This year, let us reiterate our pledges which can be practiced for carbon fasting this lent season. These Lenten thoughts are mostly ecological with a biblical/ethical footing. May God Almighty help us understand these thoughts in their true spirit and be our inspiration to walk accordingly," the authors hope.

"Faithful told to go on 'carbon fast' during Lent" by K.S. Sudhi
in *The Hindu* (Kochi edition January 25, 2011)

GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE

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

YEAR	NAME
1895	CORKE T.
1904	JOHN HARRY
1910	THOMAS STEPHENSON WEIR
1911	JOHNSTON ROBERT
1917	CORKE CHARLOTTE SUSAN
1930	CORKE TERRENCE KENNETH
1967	DORRENT MABEL
1970	LAZARUS GOLDBURN C.
1973	KARI JOYOTIBAI JOHN
1981	DAVID GRACE L.
1994	PAUL RUBY
1994	RODRICKS IRENE
1994	KEYMER BABY
1995	JACOBIE MERVIN LANGSDALE
1995	LEWIS ASHOK HAROLD
2004	GRIFFIN ELIZEBETH
2006	MULIYIL SARASWATI
2009	BENJAMIN STANLEY E.
2009	PREMLATA PARMAR
2012	RAJA SAGERN DHASER
2013	HIGGINS ARUN
2013	MURMU PRAVEEN
2016	DAVID M M
2016	FRANK ARUN S
2016	BOWEN ESTHER

IMPORTANT DATES

MISSIONS SUNDAY	5 MARCH
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER	12 MARCH
PALM SUNDAY	9 APRIL
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	19 March 10.45 a.m.	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.	Rev.Thomas Jacob	9820736359
Teens & College students meet	Parsonage	Second Sundays of the month 11 a.m.	Rev.Thomas Jacob	9820736359
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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