

Rev. Nirmala Vasanthakumar  
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ASST. PRESBYTER

Editorial Board  
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Panchasheila Qadri

Sarojini Sargunraj

Grace Vani

Anna Varughese

Matilda Yorke – Convener

Send all Contributions to

The Editorial Board

Pulse Magazine

St. John's Church

Cleveland Town

Bangalore 560 005

**Phone:**

080-25513805, 25305212

**Email:**

[sjchurch@dataone.in](mailto:sjchurch@dataone.in)

[sjchurchblr@gmail.com](mailto:sjchurchblr@gmail.com)

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For unto us a child is born...

He is our Saviour and King...

It's the time we celebrate His birth...

And the blessings His love does bring



# Editorial Pulse

**T**he Christmas season is always hectic. All the Wings of the Church are busy organising celebrations. The Editorial Committee too had its share of activity; two issues were published to keep you up-to-date on the events of the church. My sincere thanks to the Editorial Committee members, especially Dr. Eva Bell and Anna Varughese and her family for their wonderful and proactive proof-reading support, the staff of the church office and to Reena Mohan and Lotus Printers for meeting our stringent deadlines.

While we are busy getting ready for the season, many of our writers have touched upon one aspect - what is Christmas all about? Is it just the physical aspect of "getting ready" with new clothes, delicious sweets, lovely gifts and rich food? On the contrary, the message in the articles is "Christmas is a time of hope, love and peace". This is very contextual, points out Pastor Nirmala, as the world is being taken hostage by terror attacks, global recession, personal and professional uncertainty, and anti-Christian elements. The cover, done by David Qadri, shows the light and hope that Christmas

brings in this dark and depressed world.

Pulsonality features Juliet Thomas, who not only feels the physical and emotional pain of women, but also helps them to act upon it.

Pulse Impact features Rev. P. Jayanesan's reflections on the rationale behind the horrific attacks on Christians, a review of the book 'I dared to call him Father', and Mel Twigg's contemplations on the contribution of Christians to India's progress.

Sunday School steals the show with their musical, and the other Wings of the Church speak of their dedicated work.

Have our children caught Affluenza? Read Pulse Care for some timely advice about this new syndrome that is beginning to worry parents.

Featured in Pulse Beat is the trip to the Holy Land and the delightful Golden Age Fellowship with our Sunday School children.

On behalf of the Editorial Committee, I would like to wish all our readers a Christmas and New Year that is filled with hope, peace and love.

Matilda Yorke

# Presbyter's Letter



*Dear Friends,*

We are in another advent season, and we need to thank and praise God for all His mercies, providence and guidance we have received from him in the past 11 months. We need to be grateful to God for enabling us to enter into the twelfth month and celebrate another Christmas. What is Christmas all about is a question asked by many? Why is it so important for us? Each of us will have so many things to say and share. I would like to share few of my thoughts with you in this advent season.

The first Christmas was the time when God intervened decisively in history to end the enmity between God and humans. God took the initiative to re-establish the relationship that was broken by the disobedience and other shortcomings that followed after the fall of the humans. With the coming of Christ, the wall of enmity broke down and the relationship was revived. This was an expression of God's love towards humans. So it is not inappropriate to say that that love came down at Christmas.

I would like to share how the song 'Love came down at Christmas' influenced a poor farmer's and a rich man's life. This is a real life story that happened in Scotland. One day a poor farmer was walking home, very tired after a day of backbreaking work. As he was passing a swamp he heard a feeble voice crying out for help. When he looked around he saw a boy struggling in the slush and at the point of drowning. The farmer was so tired that he just wanted to ignore and go away.

At that time he heard the song 'love came down at Christmas' sung in the village church. He thought -- when Christ, God's son' came to the earth to sinners and undeserving people like himself how he can walk away without saving this small boy? He rushed to the boy and helped him out of the slush.

The next day the richest man in the village who was from a noble family visited the farmer and offered him lot of money because he saved his only son. The farmer refused to accept the money saying that he did that to express his thanks to God for saving him

through his son Jesus Christ and God will not get paid for that. He refused to accept any money despite repeated requests. At that time a young boy came out of the farmer's house. The rich man asked the farmer who this boy was. On learning that the boy was the farmer's son, the rich man pleaded with the farmer to allow him to support the boy by paying for his education. The farmer agreed, and the rich man supported the boy till he became a doctor, and famous for his discovery of penicillin. Some years later when the rich man's son fell ill, the medicine which was invented by the poor farmer's son saved him.

The poor farmer's son who became the doctor was Dr. Alexander Fleming and the rich man's son who was saved by penicillin was Sir. Winston Churchill.

The farmer and the rich man never forgot the impact the song 'Love came down at Christmas' had on their lives and on the lives of their children. . Yes, friends how many of us take it to heart the meaning of Christmas and how many of us try to practice it in our lives. When we respond to the message of love in a small way great things can happen.

Today we are living in a time of tension and fear. We are not sure as to what will happen to us, our city, our country or the world tomorrow. Life has lost its value, and people do not hesitate to take it away at the slightest provocation or some times without provocation also. We have lost human values and respect for one another which has led our society to a state of callousness. There is a breakdown in relationships between the spouses, parents and children, between the neighbours and communities which has paved the way to intolerance.

If we share the love that came to us in the form of Jesus there will be no more hatred or violence in our society, and we will live together in peace and harmony with one another. We will be able to accept the differences in our religious, social and political areas and respect the differences which will enable us to live together, sharing and caring for each other. We will be able to build communities of hope and justice if we try to imitate God in our lives and will become the promoters of God's values.

Let us welcome the prince of peace into our lives and hearts so that the peace and joy that came into the world will fill our hearts

and minds and help us to forget the differences, and come together not on the basis of class or caste, region or language, nationality or ethnic basis but on the basis of our commitment to Christ.

May God bless us all during this festive season and enable all of us to enter the New Year with joy and peace that comes from God. Let God Immanuel come and dwell among us all in the real sense and help us all to understand the true meaning of Christmas and help us to internalize the same so

that our lives can reflect the love that came down at Christmas.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year,

Shalom.

Nirmala Vasanthakumar

## SIMPLICITY

A spider's web hangs glistening  
Between two leaves,  
And on each leaf, a drop of water  
Sparkles in the sunlight.  
I watch her work contently,  
So focused on the work on hand  
That ever moment shines with grace,  
A miracle revealed.  
Ah, yes! This is simplicity  
To let the weavings of my soul  
Spin on, forever outward,  
From the centre of my being.  
To seek the sacred threads of life  
That honour me in selfless love,  
And not be distracted by  
The things I must let go.

Sent by  
Edna Mathew

## All Saints Day

It was for the first time we attended the Memorial service on All Saints Day, November 1, at the St. John's Cemetery, Kalpally. "We are gathered here to remember our dear ones, who departed from this world, to live eternally with God", was the call to worship. These words of comfort, faith and hope, and the reassuring hymns were poignant moments for many. For us, the Memorial Service had many touching moments as both our mothers passed on to their eternal home this year. The names of members who had passed away were read, and then each person present lit a candle in memory of their loved one. As the Pastor said: "The saints were faithful unto death and now dwell in the heavenly kingdom forever."

Matilda Yorke

## The S.P. Balasubramaniam Musical Evening

I am aware of the several views and opinions that are being expressed about the S.P. Balasubramaniam Musical Evening. There are several rumours that are circulating, and lot of discussions about this programme.

I had not responded to these as I wanted to ascertain the real situation. Now we have a fairly clear picture, so I write this brief report.

The programme was proposed more than a year ago. It was discussed in the Pastorate Committee, and only after the committee gave the approval, did we go ahead with the planning. Likewise, in good faith and on the advice of the people who organized the programme, we went ahead with the planning. This was also informed at the General Body Meeting we had on the 15th of June 08. But no adverse comments were received from the congregation at that time.

So the Pastorate Committee took the silence as approval and went ahead with the planning. When we started to announce the programme, we began receiving adverse comments,

But it was too late to go back and cancel the programme. In spite of the efforts of the persons responsible, the programme was not financially successful. We are awaiting the entertainment tax refund after which the accounts can be finalized and exact amount of loss will be known. When this work is complete, I will write an explanation to the congregation.

Till such time I request the congregation members to be patient. Kindly co-operate with me as this was done with the intention of raising finances for the 2nd phase of the Community Centre. When the 2nd phase is completed, the income from this building and the existing building will be used for our projects like Asha Nivas, Stephen's Home for the Aged, St. John's Hostel and St. John's School.

The programme was organised with good intentions, but we did not succeed. We assure you that such a situation will not arise in future.

**Nirmala Vasanthakumar**  
*On behalf of Pastorate Committee*

# In the Holy Land

*Israel is as it is described in the Bible says **Leslie Bonnell**,  
who was a member of the group from St. John's to visit the Holy Land.*

**O**ur Church had announced that as a part of its 150th year celebrations, members would be encouraged to visit the Holy Land. There were not enough volunteers from our church, and so a few from other churches were included to make the tour viable. We left in September as a polyglot group of Protestants, Catholics and three Muslims, who went on their own to visit their special sites, but we were amazed to see them fall on their knees at Bethlehem.

## **Cairo – our first stop**

We landed first in Cairo to visit the Holy Family Church where baby Jesus was taken to escape the wrath of Herod. Here we visited the only non Christian site of our trip - the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx. The Sphinx looked rather puny when compared to the Pyramids.

We found that on most Christian sites (except the shepherds' fields or the house of Peter), Christian denominations like the Greek Orthodox Church or the Catholic Church had

constructed grand churches. In Bethlehem at the place where Jesus was born in a manger, the actual manger is now underground and can be entered only by negotiating ill lit uneven steps. This is because the land having sunk over the ages, it was necessary to find a secure place to hide relics during troubled times, when looting was the order of the day.

## **To Mount Sinai**

From Cairo we left by an air conditioned bus and crossed the Red Sea through an underground tunnel, and then through the Sinai desert by a road running parallel to the Red Sea where we could see ships. The Sinai desert is dry with no greenery, and we were told that it was full of poisonous reptiles. This brought to our mind the need for manna, the snakes and the saltwater wells that the children of Israel experienced.

We ultimately reached Mount Sinai where we saw the burning bush (it is now not burning) which seems to be a kind of briar with

tightly woven branches. That night the more energetic ones climbed Mount Sinai. That trip started at 10 p.m. and ended early in the morning. The next day we continued towards Israel and reached the border crossing. We were dropped some distance away from Egyptian immigration check point, and had to drag our bags to the building in the hot sun, then once more to the Israeli immigration building, and finally, to our bus.

Our daily drill thereafter was to get up by 6 a.m., finish breakfast before 730, and leave by bus for the day's trip only to return at 7 or 8 p.m. We had to keep ready sufficient amount of dollars to buy water as the climate was very dry and for souvenirs, which were constantly being thrust at us.

### **From Jerusalem to Galilee**

Israel is a very clean place with orderly traffic. We stayed in a hotel outside Jerusalem but travelled into Jerusalem daily to walk around the different sites. The most strenuous was walking up the Via Dolorosa where Jesus was made to carry the cross. Even without a cross I found that walk quite laborious, and look back on Jesus' suffering with sympathy. We ended up at Golgotha. But as for the Temple, all that remains is a wall — the Wailing Wall as it is now called abutting the famous Jerusalem mosque.

From Jerusalem to Galilee area, where we visited Bethlehem, Cana, Lazarus' house and tomb and even a house where Peter lived. This was the area that Jesus wandered around and we could only be amazed at what an active man he was. The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater sea and when we tasted the water we found it to be quite clean. We ate the fish from the Sea of Galilee, which Jesus also ate - it is now locally called the 'Jesus fish.'

### **Crossing the River Jordan**

The River Jordan is very narrow. We would not give it a second glance in India, and we could very well appreciate the indignation of the Syrian General when he was asked to bathe in the river Jordan to cure himself. The river which comes from Hebron - the Golan Heights - as it is now called is kept very clean.

We finally crossed the Jordan into the State of Jordan to climb Mount Nebo where Moses was given a glimpse of the Promised Land before his death.

Periodically some so-called researcher raises doubts about the authenticity of the Biblical account of Jesus. But we have come back with our faith enhanced as we found Israel as described in the Bible.

# Poinsettias in Bloom



*What is Christmas if it is not a time of hope, of loving and sharing says Anoop Daniel Gordon, who studies in standard VI at St. John's School*

**W**hen the poinsettias are in their full bloom, we know it's Christmas season. They help us create the mood for Christmas with their vibrant red, and they bring colour to our decoration too. Now is the time, we start with our music, carols, which are sung the same old way by the young and the old all over the world.

I love Christmas time more than my birthday because it lasts the whole month. Christmas is the only festival that has taught us to love, care, share and it gives us peace and hope. Though I never liked giving and sharing when I was in the lower classes, now I get immense joy by doing so.

I like Christmas time as we do a lot of shopping and of course "poinsettias" are the first on my list. I have noticed that Christmas has beautiful smells like the aroma of cookies, cakes, marzipans and a whole lot of eats. I have also noticed that the stars in the sky shine their brightest during this season.

I wait for this long holiday for it's time for friends to come home. I have my sisters, brothers and my relatives visiting, and it's so much fun, and never happens during any other time of the year.

My prayer at Christmas is that our hearts may see the poinsettias, stars and candles as reminders that Christmas is a time of hope, of loving and sharing.

"I have three treasurers which I hold and keep. The first is mercy, the second is economy; the third is daring not to be ahead of others. From mercy comes courage; from economy comes generosity, from humility comes leadership".

Lao T sa, T ao T c Ching

# A Candle in the Window



*Vasanth Davis shares this story he read*

**T**he story is told of a royal family that lived 500 years ago in a castle in Rheims France. A mutiny led to the father- a knight being taken away in chains by the civilians and the mother and her two children Louis and Jeanne fleeing through the night for safety. Lost to the world and left to fend for themselves in misery, loneliness and poverty the threesome struggled to survive the harsh winters. Living off the odds and ends of what was left of them, they tarried on, clinging to the memory of a beautiful life that was once theirs.

One evening, Louis looked at his mother, who was sewing, and exclaimed that it was Christmas eve. With not much to cheer about, no Santa's gifts to open, no Christmas tree to decorate, it truly appeared like a bleak Christmas. As night fell upon the town, Jeanne took out a little candle, lit it and placed it on their home's window saying 'maybe a weary traveller would be encouraged by

the glow from the window and with renewed hope travel on'. Mother and Louis agreed and at once felt the gloom lifting.

Out in the village was a young boy freezing in the cold in his wooden shoes. Seeing a little light suddenly appearing at a window he smiles, and in hope slowly heads in its direction. Jeanne hears a faint knock on their door. Opening it she finds the young boy barely standing and hurriedly brings him in.

Mother moves swiftly to warm some of the little soup that's their supper and Louis starts to rub his cold hands and feet.

The young boy recovers from the cold, relishes the soup given, thanks them and leaves almost as soon as he came.

Soon there is an excited knock on the door. Opening the door the threesome are amazed to see father at the door. Hugging, kissing and laughing all at once, mother asks how he knew where they lived. With a twinkle in his

eye that chases all the darkness away, he smiles and speaks of a boy in wooden shoes he met down the road. The boy says to the man, "Look for the house with a candle in the window. Your family is waiting for you."

Boy Jesus' visit to the house with the candle in the window inspires many around the world to share the good news of hope as a candle that lights up a dark world would.

**Is there a candle in your window this Christmas? Are you the candle?**

## Blessed Hope

*Sarojini Sargunraj relates Peter Bilhorn's story of Hope*

**S**imeon holding baby Jesus in his arms rejoiced and said, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation". Jesus Christ came as the Messianic promise to the Jew and the Gentile, foretold and revealed by prophets and awaited by saints of old. He came as the Redeemer of lost mankind, giving us the blessed hope of a renewed life-free from the curse of sin, Satan and death. No more bondage for He breaks the gates of brass and cuts asunder the bars of iron.

Once Peter Bilhorn, a popular American singing evangelist, sang the song entitled "The Bird of the Broken Wing" to the inmates of the Iowa State Prison. It was about a pathetic wounded bird that lost all hope of soaring free into the blue sky again. The song ended

with the doleful lines— *But the bird with the broken pinion, never soared as high again.*

A young convict broke the silence and said tremulously — "Sir, if this is true, we who are scarred by sin are doomed to die in hopelessness".

Bilhorn went home reflecting and added two more verses to give hope to the lost.

*But the soul that comes to Jesus  
Is saved from every sin:  
And the heart that fully trusts Him  
Shall a crown of glory win.  
Then come to the dear Redeemer  
He'll heal and cleanse every stain;  
By the grace He freely gives you  
You shall soar as high again*

Bilhorn was happy to return to the prison and sing again the song with the added verses.

Years sped by. One day at a YMCA gathering, a colonel in smart uniform approached Bilhorn and said, "Sir, you may not know me but I do remember you. Eighteen years ago, you came to the Iowa State Prison and sang of the bird with a broken wing. The plight of the bird, likened to a criminal's bleak future, grieved us. You came again and sang a

song with the added stanzas telling us of the love and peace in Jesus. I accepted Christ that day. Now I am a living proof that by His grace, we "can soar higher again".

"Yes, my friend", Bilhorn smiled and clasping his hand in a warm handshake said, "Jesus is the blessed hope for you and me and all mankind".

## Christmas Royalty, Divinity, Humanity

*Sarah Jaikumar on the significance of gifts*

'The most widespread of all Christmas traditions - the giving of gifts to loved ones —has its roots in the gifts the wise men from the East presented to Jesus namely, Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh.

- 'The gift of Gold signified His royalty
- The gift of Frankincense signified His divinity
- The gift of Myrrh signified Jesus' humanity

That same unspeakable joy can still be felt today by all those who open their hearts to receive God's love in Jesus if we can all make concrete efforts to

- Mend a quarrel,

- Seek out an old friend
- Apologize for our wrongs
- Be prayerful
- Gladden the hearts of the afflicted and the sorrowful; especially those who are persecuted for their faith in Christ and express solidarity in whatever form is meaningful to each of us.

May God use each of us to play the role of the wise men as we begin to share our most precious gifts emotionally, physically, spiritually and financially. Giving from our hearts only demonstrates our true gratitude and appreciation for all that God has given us.

# Christmas Love

**Elizabeth Cherian** sends us this cute story by Rev. Arthur Caliandro from the Marble Collegiate Church. This church was made famous by the late Rev. Norman Vincent Peale who was well known for his books on many aspects of life. Here is the story...

**T**he School Christmas Pageant had many items on it. One of them was a song called 'CHRISTMAS LOVE'. Each letter of the song signified some aspect of the season— C is for Christ, H is for Happiness, R is for Remembering, etc. Each child held one letter of the words of the song 'CHRISTMAS LOVE'.

As each alphabet of the song was called out, a child would lift the card for it. Till C -H-R-I-S-T- everything went on fine. Then, a very shy little girl had the letter M. She became so self-conscious and confused that she held the letter upside down and it became a 'W' instead of the 'M'

At first there was silence in the audience and then there was a titter of laughter. But the children went on with the song as the letters showed up one by one, and it read thus CHRIST—WAS LOVE. Then the parents saw that what had been held out by the children during their song on 'CHRISTMAS LOVE' stood out as CHRIST WAS LOVE, and it is still today!

The Christmas story is all about love, and how love overcomes hatred. It is the story of the inevitable force of God's love coming onto earth and through Jesus transforming the lives of people.

*In a world filled with despair,  
there is His marvellous Hope  
In a world filled with war, there  
is His abiding Peace  
In a world filled with hate, there  
is His everlasting Love  
Thank you, Lord for Christmas*



REV. ARTHUR CALIANDRO  
I DIDN'T THINK THEY MADE MOVIES BACK THEN

# Love... Joy... Peace...

*Pradeep Maduram talks about love,  
the one word that keeps popping up in the Bible.*

**L**OVE, JOY, PEACE are all part of the fruits/qualities of the spirit. The entire list is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, humility, and self-control. These are called fruits of the spirit, but in reality these are the basis on which we were created. Our creator, in all his love, made us in his own image. God is spirit and we have been created in his own image. We are not to be side-tracked by our physical self for the body is made up of mud and dust and after its shelf life/life span it is returned from where it is taken.

Whether our spirit returns to its creator or not depends on the spirit, if it had lived as per its created qualities or had it lived as per its acquired qualities. The only requirement of the created is to worship its Creator and the methodology required to worship is spelled out in the Bible. Throughout the Bible, we have been provided with guides for our worship and presently the guide is the format of our churches. If the acquired qualities are not up to the standards set by the Creator, it will be rejected by the best quality

control manager in this business of life for HE is not only the Creator, but also the Quality Control Manager.

The reason why he is also the quality control manager is that on the day of judgement it is he who decides who gets his approval and who does not, based on the lives led by the spirit. Those who are found not up to his mark will be classified as chaff. All the qualities are given to the spirit, and the spirit has also been given the ability/power to choose the path by which it wants to go and its destination.

The expectation of the Creator is that the path and destination is always heading towards him. It has been reported that the path leading to our Lord is a narrow path and it is difficult to find by those who think they are greater than the Creator and never for those who always remember that they are only the created – is this why humility and self control are also included in the list of the fruits of the spirit ... Those spirits who hand over control to the Creator have found the path easier than those who are searching by themselves.

Throughout the Bible the one word which keeps popping up, is the word "Love": the Greek, in their poetic language, have managed to express their love in four different words

EROS: love between sexes,  
PHILIA: affectionate human love,  
STORAGE: for family love and  
AGAPE: meaning unconditional love

The Bible is overflowing with the unconditional love our Creator has for us. We do believe that He so loved the world that He gave his only son to us, to die for us (the created).

All that is expected of us is to worship Him with all that we have. Is there anything wrong in Him to expect our worship of Him to be equated with the life that we

lead? We are being guided by the Bible that tells us that the fruit of the spirit is (Gal 05:22), love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, faith, goodness. The greatest of all is love.

*Love suffers long (long suffering)*

*Love is kind*

*Love does not envy (goodness)*

*Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up (meekness or gentleness)*

*Love seeks not its own, is not easily provoked (self control/humility)*

*Love rejoices in the truth (joy)*

*Love bears all things, hopes all things (faithfulness)*

Having love, we have all the fruits of the spirit and as we ripen in our journey of faith, when the time of harvest comes, it will be the time for celebration of our lives/spirit.

## The Path of Peace

By Eva Bell

*To guide our feet in the path of peace.*  
Luke 1:79.

"Peace on earth" which the angels sang about as they heralded goodwill among men, seems such an elusive dream in the present context. As the country is torn asunder through caste and communal violence, as brother slaughters brother in the name of religion, our world is over-

shadowed with gloom. Millions of children have forgotten how to laugh. Widows rend the air with their wails of mourning. Despair and hopelessness settle like a dark cloud over the country.

Yet, as Christians, we cannot lose hope. It behoves each one of us to pray for the renewal of the spirit and hope of that first

*Continued on page 22*

# Christmas is Love in Action

By Elvis Jonathan

*To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.* Calvin Coolidge

**A** mention of Christmas immediately brings to mind gifts, carols, decorations, the crib, Christmas tree, snacks, cakes and candles and celebrating a bond that we share as part of the family of Christ with our near and dear ones.

A typical Christmas for most of us would be to start planning well in advance about buying gifts, decorating our homes, and making all those yummy snacks and buying those that we can't prepare or are too busy to prepare. Attending Church service without fail [I like this part], where the pastor attempts to "re-invent" the meaning of Christmas and tell us every year just why Christmas is so different this year and not like other Christmases celebrated in the years gone by. Meeting and greeting family and friends after the service, inviting each other home, and proceeding to enlist the entire day's schedule; Then going back home, to exchange gifts and wine and dine with our families. There, Christmas has gone by once again; it isn't so different now. Somehow, every year we are left

searching for the true joys of Christmas.

So what are these true joys that make Christmas so special and unique. Why is it that Christmas brings with it every year an inexplicable feeling of warmth and wonder? Wonder at God's great love for us his children and the warmth and fellowship we share being one in the Lord.

The light shone by the star that guided the wise men to baby Jesus on that first Christmas day in Bethlehem still shines to this day, through us and through our lives and beckons us to share the light with the whole world. The only way to truly experience the joys that Christmas brings is by selflessly burning bright and lighting up the lives of the less fortunate, spreading warmth and fellowship among all those around us thus guiding people to experience the true joy and happiness of Christmas and experiencing the same ourselves in the process.

Christmas therefore is not restricted to a season or to a time of the year. Christmas is love in action. Every time we love, every time we give, every time we share, it is Christmas.

# Bringing Joy in Christ's Name

By Juliet Thomas

**D**uring my recent ministry in Manipur, on behalf of Thara Wholistic Development of Women, I met several groups of women in desperate needs with alcoholic husbands, women suffering with HIV/ AIDS, abused women and widows. I encouraged them talking of Jesus' care of women in distress, praying with them and also helping them with small credit amounts towards Economic Development Projects mainly Piggery, Weaving, Soap Making and Candle Making.

A story: I remember one group of women suffering abuse from their alcoholic husbands who stay drunk the whole day, without bothering to do any work at all! It is the women who labour hard in whatever they can do to bring in some income to feed the family and hold it together. These are women at risk, because in their utter helplessness and poverty they are sometimes driven to prostitution, drugs!

They told me their stories of abuse and struggle for survival,

that tore at my heart! When I asked them what I could do to help them do something more, they replied that if they had a candle-mould then they could make 1000 candles at a time and sell them. They had so many power cuts that candles were always in demand! They also mentioned that if they had a weaving loom, they could weave and sell their products. (All the women there are naturally skilled in weaving from generation to generation!)

I was deeply moved to grant them their requests. What I will never forget is the way their faces immediately lit up with wide smiles and shining eyes, reflecting their joy that now they had something they can do to earn something more! With tears they embarrassed me by thanking me again and again for helping them as they now may look at a future with more hope and joy!

I was forcibly reminded of us in the cities, and churches who take our health, and joys of family life, so much for granted; who

grumble and complain at what they do not have, and at their `so-called rights' that have been violated! Where are 'rights' for these women? I am reminded of women in our urban society who are seldom content with what they have- but keep craving for more and more - when there are millions more around who beg for a bowl of rice for the day!

How very sad that Christmas has become just a festive season, where we shower ourselves with more food at parties/homes, and more clothes than we need! If you look at what you spend and for whom at Christmas, we will find that most of it is just on ourselves-for our increased pleasure or in the name of `fellowship'! Oh yes! We may give-token sums as our contribution to some charities – but it is nothing in comparison to what we spend on ourselves ! How

tragic too that Christmas has degenerated into `Xmas'-symbolic of Christmas without Christ!!

I was delighted and praised God that my little granddaughter, Rachna, just turned four last month, after some conversation on the phone, said: `Patima, I am going to give away ALL my gifts to Jonathan'. Our son Peter explained that Jonathan is an orphan boy they knew! How wonderful if Christian parents would teach their children, from small, that it is 'more blessed to give than to receive'?

This Christmas let us put Christ back into Christmas. Giving in Christ's Name , for His sake, is not for `ourselves' but for `others' who are without the joy, hope and peace that Christ came to give as our spiritual heritage to all those who receive Him into their lives and follow in His footsteps!

*"Somehow not only at Christmas  
But all the long year through,  
The joy that you give to others  
Is the joy that comes back to you."  
"and the more you spend in blessing  
The poor and lonely and sad,  
The more of your heart's possessing  
Returns to make you glad."  
– John Greenleaf Whittier*



# Singing Liars

By Col. Mani & Jean A nandam

*Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying and from a deceitful tongue: Psalm 120:2*

**T**here are many ways of telling a lie. Some people who pride themselves on never speaking a falsehood would be amazed if they would begin to recount the number of lies they sing each Sunday in church.

This I discovered in an article by an unknown author who wrote, 'We sing 'Sweet hour of prayer' and then content ourselves with only 10 to 15 minutes of intercession each day.

We sing 'Onward Christian soldiers' but wait to be dragged and drafted into God's service.

We join in the song 'O for a thousand tongues to sing' and then do not use the one tongue we have for His glory.

We sing 'There shall be showers of blessings' very enthusiastically in dry and sunny weather, but when the Lord sends a few literal showers we find it impossible to go to church because it's raining.

We sing 'Blest be the tie that binds' and then let the least little offence sever that precious tie.

We sing 'Serve the Lord with gladness' and then complain constantly about all that we have to do.

We sing 'Pass me not O gentle Saviour', but choose to stand in the crowd and not in the front row.

We sing 'The Lord is my shepherd', but deliberately go astray like lost sheep.

Every December 25, we sing 'Joy to the world the Lord has come' — the joy is seen only in festive celebrations, and the Lord has never come into our homes or into our hearts.

Remember, lies are lies whether we speak them or sing them. Next time we open the hymn book, be sure you mean the words that come out of your mouth. Let's not be singing liars.

*Tell the truth and tell it right,  
A lie will never do;  
The Bible says that God is truth —  
He wants the truth from you.  
After all is said and done,  
More is said than done.*

# Juliet Thomas – A Woman of Great Faith

*The unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (1Pet 3:4.)*

*These are the words that spring to mind, as Juliet Thomas humbly but confidently recounts, to **Dr. Eva Bell**, the events of her life for 'Pulse.'*



*Juliet and Edison Thomas*

**J**uliet's tryst with John's Church began in 1962, when she came from Malaysia as a young bride. Her husband Edison Thomas is an eminent scientist. He has been a very supportive life-partner and given her space to grow into a woman of great faith.

Her home and care of her parents-in-law became her priority for the first twenty years of her married life. After they passed away, she took up teaching at the Cathedral School for three years, teaching Math and Physics to VII – X classes. She also got involved in counselling difficult children.

Juliet recalls that it was Edith Mullins who initiated her into

leading the eight-week Bible Home Study for women on the Book of Ephesians. She also took Sunday School for the seniors and became a well-loved teacher. Because of her love for the Church, she got involved in several programmes of the Church, including the Pastoral Care & Nurture Committee, and for a term in the Diocesan Care & Nurture Committee. Under Rev. Vinay Kumar Samuel, Juliet, along with others, did systematic training in developing Neighbourhood Fellowships which grew to about 25-30 active groups.

1982 was the turning point in her life. She was invited for a conference in Korea, and was greatly challenged by Korean women, who for more than hundred years had no part in the ministry, but were now actively participating in Church services, Bible study, prayers and evangelism. 'If this could happen in Korea, why not also in India?' was the question that haunted her.

That same year, at the request of Dr. John Richard of Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), Juliet organized prayer seminars in five cities, to be led by Evelyn Christianson, who one evening, commissioned Juliet for women's work in India, in the privacy of her hotel room.

In 1983, Juliet joined EFI, heading their first Department for Women. This prayer movement spread to several cities over the next five years. She also chaired the first Asian Conference for Evangelical Women in Singapore in 1988.

After resigning from EFI, in 1989 Juliet was invited to join Operation Mobilization, where she served for 18 years. She had a burden for Indian women whose physical, emotional and spiritual

problems she was able to study first hand. She developed leadership qualities in marginalized women, encouraging them to experience wholeness within, take ownership of their lives, and retrieve their self esteem and self confidence through their faith in Jesus Christ.

Juliet served on several Committees and Boards.

- On World Vision Board for 12 years, stepping down as its Chairperson.
- On the Executive Committee of Lausanne Committee of World Evangelism for 17 years and Chairperson of their Intercession Group for 10 yrs.
- At many national and international fora always speaking and presenting papers on the development of women and their leadership.

In 2003 Juliet felt the strong stirring of God within her, often moving her to compassion and tears for the suffering poor women. God was calling her to another level of wholistic service to the poor. So after much prayer, in 2005, after retirement from OM, the Lord led Juliet to start an NGO for women by women: *'THARA Wholistic Development of*

*Women*'. THARA stands for Transformation, Healing, Awareness, Reconciliation, Advocacy. In this short time, she has helped many tribal/rural women and urban poor especially in the turbulent North East, HIV positive patients and wives of alcoholic husbands to improve economically, grow spiritually and develop leadership qualities.

Juliet is a prolific writer and is the author of several articles, six books – two for women, two for families, and two for Bible study. Three more are in the pipeline.

Her daughter Bella is senior manager in HCL and her husband Anand Pillai is senior VP in HCL. They have two children. Her son Peter, with his wife Vanita, has settled down in USA after his post-doctoral studies. They have three children.

Juliet is a woman who fears the Lord; 'Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value;' 'She is clothed with dignity and strength'...' and her children arise and call her blessed.' (Prov. 31: 11, 25, 28.).

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### **The Path of Peace** *Continued from page 15*

Christmas; that goodwill and compassion may enrich our lives, and that we may help build a new society devoid of violence and hatred.

As Sir Walter Scott wrote in 'Mermion,'

*"Heap on more wood,  
The wind is chill, but let it whistle as it will,  
We'll keep our Christmas merry still."*

Let us look for what is good and positive around us and build on it. If each one of us were to light a candle of love, we could pierce the darkness of this world with the dazzling light of Christ our Saviour. Has He not declared, "I

am the light of the world"?

We must put Christ back into Christmas, and give Him all eminence. He must not remain 'God in absentia' but an active force in our Christmas celebrations. He alone can enhance the dignity of the lowly, wipe away the tears of the sorrowful and shatter the arrogance of the wicked. He alone can banish hostilities that divide and alienate us from each other.

This Christmas, may He bring healing and hope for our country. Has He not promised, "Take heart for I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

# Jesus is our Guru

By Rev. P. J ayanesan

**R**elections in the background of churches and innocent Christians being attacked, persecuted and killed.

The reasons for such attacks by the BJP, Bajrang Dal and RSS are that Christians are forcefully converting the people and Christians are not Indians, but aliens, and belong to America or England.

I would like to differ from this. Christ didn't give us any command to convert people. He said, "Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples" (Mt.28.19)

It means that Jesus is our Guru, Master and Lord; we are His disciples (students, who learn from Him.) And in Mark 16:15 Jesus said, "Go and preach the good news to every one in the world." It is the duty of a Christian to preach the good news of the love of Christ. This love of Christ is forgiving, accepting, saving, liberating, healing, protecting and peace giving love. In this there is no conversion. People who listen

respond to this good news and it is God who works in their lives, and God is the one who brings change in their life. This change is in their mind, Change of their purpose, which brings change in their very life and action, which leads them to put their faith and trust in Christ. When a person, who has heard Christ's call, turns to Him, the whole direction of his life is reversed or converted; when he entrusts himself entirely to Christ in an act of faith, repentance, and commitment, his relationship with God is set right and he receives the forgiveness of sins. Then new life begins – THAT IS NEW BIRTH. This new life brings a change in every aspect of their lives. They become a new creation in Christ. The things they once loved they would begin to hate, the things they once hated, they would begin to love. They will have a new sense of values, their priorities would be different, their very reason for living would change. They will become New Persons leaving all their sinful life and evil acts. Christianity is not a religion, it is

a way of life. Christianity needs to be practiced in one's life, to be like Christ. So it is meaningless to say that and people are forced to become Christians, for it is a natural response of people who experience God's love in their lives.

To the comment that Christians are not Indians, I would like to differ strongly. A person's citizenship does not depend on the origin of the religion that person practices. All those who are born in India are the citizens of India irrespective of their religious identity. In fact if we take the statement that people who follow foreign religions are aliens then Brahmins, who belong to the Aryan race are not the sons of the soil. They are aliens. Most of the Christian communities are originally from the Dravidian communities. The Dravidians are the natives of our land. The Aryans came down to India from central Asia and with them came the Caste System, Varna System and the divisions and disparity in society. And in order to get power and position they include all Dalits and other tribals whom they considered as avarnas, those who are outside the caste system and actually they still keep them as untouchables. In conclusion I would affirm that all Christians of

Indian origin are genuinely Indians and they are authentic people of the land.

**"CHRISTIANS ARE BORN TO LIVE A LIFE OF ABUNDANCE".**

Yes we Christians are born to live; no one has a right to touch us, and to take away our lives. Jesus said, "I came so that everyone would have life in all its fullness".

(Jn 10:10) To all human beings God wants to give this life. If anyone is against it, then he is against God himself. We see in Gen 4:1-16 Cain killed his own innocent brother Abel. Gen 4:10. God calls Cain and questions him, "Why have you done this terrible thing? You killed your own brother, and his blood flowed onto the ground. Now his blood is calling out for me to punish you. And so God said, I will put you under a curse (v.11). The killers of Christians should know that they will be questioned and judged by God

It is easy to kill, but it is very hard to win a person's love and confidence. Even animals don't kill their own kind without reason, now human beings have become lower than animals. Humans were created to nurture one another, but because of selfishness, they cultivate hatred and take away the lives of people.

They think they are powerful and great. Actually they are weak and of low esteem.

Christians need to raise their voices for justice. The perpetrators of violence are answerable to the victims' families. They need to repent. God is a forgiving God, and Christians who receive forgiveness from God, are expected to forgive others. Forgiveness is a divine quality. But there is a requirement to receive that forgiveness – those who have done injustice, wrong, and evil deeds should realize what they have done is wrong; they need to feel sorry for it. They should admit that they have done evil against another person and so against God. Only then forgiveness becomes meaningful to the wrong doer; if not, the forgiveness has no value. When we forgive but do not help them to realize their mistake then we will be encouraging them indirectly to continue to do the same evil deeds.

### **Suffering - Pain - Tribulation - Death of Christians**

There is a big difference between Christians' understanding of suffering, pain, tribulation and death, as a result of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Hindus' belief in Karma Marga, which means the sickness, sorrow, pain, bondages, afflictions and

poverty which a person suffers in this life are because of *poorva genma karma* (deeds of the past life). When people face the above problems, immediately they will say it is all because of their karma. They will just accept it; they are not allowed to ask question or reason about it.

But we Christians don't believe in the karma theory to accept every injustice, and persecution. We will ask questions, and seek justice.

I would like to take two scripture portions to understand the pain, tribulation and the death of martyrs. 1) Daniel 3 and 2) Revelation 7

### **Daniel 3rd Chapter**

1. God was with the three men inside the fire. Even today when we undergo persecution in our lives let us remember that God is present with us releasing us from bonds and chains. God strengthens us to face the tribulations that come in our way. King Nebuchednezzar was able to see the power of God and this experience transformed his life. When we experience the liberating presence of God it becomes an experience to change the heart of our persecutors.

2. God delivered his faithful followers from death (though not from the threat of it). Their courageous stand for God influenced the king and the people to acknowledge God as a Powerful God, and resulted in the destruction of trouble makers. Therefore dear brothers and sisters in Christ stand firm in faith, the Lord is with us.

### **Revelation 7th Chapter**

The first Century believers faced stiff opposition from political authorities determined to stop the spread of the Gospel. Nevertheless, despite increasingly harsh treatment, they were able to go a long way towards fulfilling the Lord's command to take the Gospel everywhere in the world including India. In fact, within a few decades they had preached the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire, including its capital, Rome.

The Roman Emperor Domitian commanded the entire empire to worship him. But the Christians refused to accept any one else but Jesus as their King and Lord. Because of this they had to face the Emperor's persecution.

During this time, John wanted to encourage the Christian believers to stand firm and not

give up their faith as many of the Christians died as martyrs.

Rev. 7: 9-10: John in his vision saw a large crowd of people from every race, nation, and language. They wore white robes and held palm branches. All of them were calling out in a loud voice: "Our God, who sits on the throne, has power to save his people, and so does the lamb".

**OUR GOD:** is the faith declaration. In the Lord's prayer, He taught his disciples to say, OUR FATHER in heaven, which implies that there is only one God and only one Father and mother to all of us. We can relate to God as his sons and daughters. In this case why should there be any division among us. All the people in the world belong to one family as brothers and sisters. Let us live in harmony with one another.

There is only one God who came to this world as a human and died on the cross. People challenged Jesus to show his power if he is the Son of God, to come down from the cross. They thought that Jesus was hanging on the cross because he did not have any power. **THEY FAILED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS VERY POWERLESSNESS OF CHRIST BECAME THE POWER TO SAVE THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY FROM THEIR**

SINS. The Roman Government and Pharisees thought because they crucified Jesus, they were powerful. But the true power becomes evident when we bear the unjust persecution that is perpetrated on us. The Christians in Orissa, Karnataka, and other parts of the country are the **PEOPLE WITH POWER. THOSE WHO PERSECUTE THEM ARE THE WEAK PEOPLE.**

Rev.7:9, 13, 14: Do you know who these people are that are dressed in white robes? These are the ones who have gone through great suffering; they have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb and have made them white.

Therefore brothers and sisters, who undergo problems and sufferings need not worry, thinking they are alone, for God is there with them sharing their pains. He gives strength, courage and ability to the believers to overcome their trials.

Every day when we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are to remember that power, glory, honor belong to God only. History teaches us this truth. Our God is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Only His power is Eternal.

Rev. 11:17 "Lord God all powerful, you are and you were and we thank you, you used your

great power and started ruling". Business, government, nonprofit organizations, and churches all feel the impact of people pursuing and defending power. John's vision shows God triumphing over evil, God holds the ultimate power (Rev.11:17).

#### **Points of powerfulness in our life.**

- There is tremendous power in humility. It gives us strength that is a gift from God to be used for his purposes (Mt.3:11)
- Forgiveness is a strong and liberating power that Jesus has delegated to his followers (Mt. 9: 4-8)
- Like fire, power can be used to accomplish good. But always lurking in its shadow is the temptation to abuse. (Lk.3:14).
- Jesus said the power that comes from God enables a person to lay down his life for others. (power of sacrifice) John 10: 17,18.
- The source of power is God, and we are accountable to him as to how we use the power (Jn 19: 10.11)
- The message of Christ has the power to transform lives (Romans 1:16).

All power should be used responsibly to nurture humanity and nature.

"to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one Head even Christ" (Eph:1:10).

In this passage Paul makes it very clear that God's plan is to gather all people and the whole universe under one head i.e. Christ.

So it is time for all Christians to come together in unity forgetting their denominations. By coming together we must realize that

- we are acting according to the plan and will of God.
- Coming together is our strength
- Our hope
- Our power in Christ
- Our victory
- Our witness

- Through our coming together we bring honour and glory to God.

- We live in harmony
- When we unite, it will inspire others (people of other faith) to become part of us.
- Our coming together will be a source of strength to the weak and marginalized
- It will bring hope to those who are the victims of oppression.
- It will expose injustice. Then "justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream (Amos 5:24)

LET US COME TOGETHER,  
LET US LIVE TOGETHER.

## The Young Charm Our Elders

The evening of July 12 was a delightful one at Asha Nivas. The young and the old got together at the Golden Age Fellowship.

Sunday School organised and hosted the programme, and the teachers and children participated. Rev. P. Jayanesan opened the meeting with a prayer. Ashish Phillips compered and Col. Thomas John led the singing, with his selection

of olden-goldies. Our senior citizens joyfully gave their voices to the songs with full gusto. Among the games was a Bible game where 30 Biblical names had to be identified. The winner was a Sunday School student who is also a Hostel resident.

After sumptuous refreshments the meeting ended with a prayer.

L.D. Bonnell  
*Treasurer, PC*

# I Dared To Call Him Father

Bilquis Sheikh

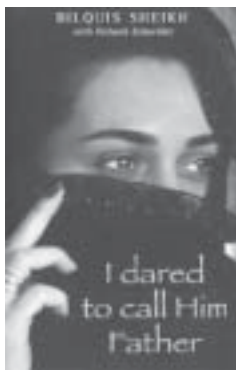
*Mary Paul reviews a Muslim woman's encounter with her "Father".*

**B**ilquis Sheikh is a wealthy landed person, married to a diplomat from Pakistan and separated because he did not love her any more. Her home, a beautiful mansion, is in a village called Wah!

Story goes that the Moghul emperor Jehangir travelled through here and his caravan stopped to rest by a spring. He gratefully sank down under a willow and exclaimed in joy "Wah" thus naming the area forever.

In a strange way God drew Bilquis to the Quran, a book she was familiar with but had read it more as an obligation. At the age of 54 living the life of a recluse she began to read it with interest and although the poetry was inspiring it was with distaste that she read 'when ye have divorced women, and they have reached their term, then retain them in kindness or release them in kindness'. Was not she quite rudely released? The

Quran drew her to the Bible. She manages to get a copy and although some of the verses were quite difficult to comprehend, God spoke to her through dreams.



Bilquis had a problem with accepting the fact that God has a son and the concept of the trinity. This was beautifully explained by Rev.

Mitchell who compared the trinity to the sun with its properties of heat, light and radiation.

During those lonely months her thoughts went back to her kind and loving father who she missed sorely. Having adopted her divorced daughter's only son, she spent her time with him teaching and playing with him. During one of her visits to the local hospital, a physician happened to see her reading the Bible. Bilquis looked at her compassionate face and was horrified to hear her softly say 'talk to God as if He is your Father'.

Thereafter we see a confident Bilquis actually debating whether or not to do so, and ends up calling God, father, even though she is not comfortable with it. In one of her dreams she asked God which book was the 'right' one. God answers her with a question. In which book do you see me as a Father. That settles the matter.

This book shares the difference that God's presence makes in one's life. His presence moving in and out even as Bilquis oscillated between love and hate experiences. Bilquis also shares her amazement at the fact that not one Christian who she had interacted with over the years had shared Jesus with her.

After her baptism she was boycotted by the family. Still she was able to touch the hearts of a few hurting members.

God provided her the props in the fellowship she shared with the American missionaries for a while and slowly removed them one at a time until she realized that God was her only solace and help. God's supernatural protection saved her from death on several occasions even as he prepared her for ministering to His people abroad. At the age of 55 she first testified at a Billy Graham crusade in Singapore and six years later she moved to the U.S where she continued to minister and visited other parts of the world. Her love for Jesus shone through and brought many more into God's Kingdom.

In 1989 after a massive heart attack, her family persuaded her to move back to Pakistan where she continued her work until 1997. At the age of 85 she readily passed on to be with her loving Father and God.

## Contributions of Christians to India

By Mel T wigg

About eight years ago there were attacks by communal forces against Christians in various parts of the country – notably the case of Dr. Graham Staines and Fr.

Arul Doss. Christian institutions were also attacked. A local Christian ventilated his views in the press in which he suggested that the blame lay mainly with the

Christian community. In his letter he stated. "Amazing wealth, leading corrupt lives, taking part in anti-social violent activities, undue favoritism is predominant (emphasis supplied)".

Alongside this letter, the newspaper published a strong defense of Christians by an eminent Bangalore Muslim in which he stated:

"It has become a routine feature to attack the Christian missionaries and principals of convents." He concluded: "All non-Christians want to use Christian school, colleges, hospitals, homes for the aged, orphanages etc." This letter said it all.

Since, I felt there should be a rebuttal from a Christian, my letter was published later in which I stated: "Where corruption is endemic in every walk of life where Christians are not in control, is it reasonable to talk of public wrath against Christians only?"

I have cited these extracts to indicate that Christians still enjoy a reputation for integrity and fairness even if the barrel may

contain one or two bad apples. From the time of Independence, non-Christians have flocked to our schools, colleges and hospitals. We have always risen to the occasion in time of crisis.

To recall my own experience as an Income-tax official. When the Chinese troops were massing on our border, Mr. Kenneth Johnson, Commissioner, driving himself, visited all the Income-tax offices on the border, exhorting the officers there to stand firm and to safeguard the income tax records. When the Chinese invaded, not a single officer left his post. In contrast the Deputy Commissioner in the area fled for safety. Subsequently, only Christians were posted to the senior posts in Assam as they were the only officers who accepted the posting without protest. I was one of them.

Christians may not have contributed very much to industry and the material wealth of India, but by and large, their contribution in terms of moral values, education and devotion is unparalleled compared to its size.

***"When we store more grudges than happy memories, we lose sight of our right to be joyful" A Cherokee feast of days***

## Men's Fellowship

Good Christian Men Rejoice  
**I**t is good to see many more men, and especially younger men, joining the Men's Fellowship. We do hope that many more become members.

Several topics have been discussed. At our Independence Day Social on August 21, Pastor Samuel Koshy shared on "The Role of Christians in Independent India". Pastor Gavin Cunningham spoke on "Raising Righteous Children" on November 6, to commemorate Children's Day. The problem of the persecution of the Christians in Orissa was explained by Vinod David,. This was followed by devotion from the Psalms on facing persecution by Rev. Gnanamitra on September 5. Following the attacks on churches in Mangalore, Ingrid Solomon, spoke on October 2, on the issue of conversion and our response to the persecution in the land of Gandhi. L. D. Bonnell shared on the Church's trip to the Holy Land and Jonathan Jeyadev spoke on the topic of "Faith".

As always, at the bi-monthly meetings, we greet members who

are celebrating their birthdays or wedding anniversaries with prayer and song, and specially designed cards signed by all members. These members respond by hosting the refreshments for the meeting.

Our Bible Studies on the first and third Sundays of each month are going on. They were conducted by Vinod David, because of my accident.

At the Church Harvest Festival, the Men's Fellowship took charge of four coupon sales stalls. It was wonderful to see some of our younger new members enthusiastically taking part. We also had the ever-popular Men's Fellowship Dosa Stall. Members also donated saris and other items for the auction as well as the vegetables and fruits to decorate the church.

Two Men's Fellowship members manned the registration table for the Vacation Bible School for the whole ten days besides helping with the judging of the classes, and donated towards the refreshments for one day. The Fellowship also contributed to the

Women's Fellowship Sale and to the Friend in Need Society, which is one of our projects.

Several of our Men's Fellowship members attend the meeting of the Men's Fellowship of the First AG Church on the first Saturday

morning of each month. This ecumenical cooperation and fellowship is greatly appreciated and leads to a greater relationship together.

Peter S. C. Pothan  
*President*

## Sunday School

### Activities Galore

The last few months have been event-filled, keeping children and teachers busy.

**Independence Day** was a special time when our children felt proud to be Indian and were reminded that God wants each one to do their part for our country. The children wore orange, white, green and blue, and the worship was oriented around this theme, ending with a moving video of Jana Gana Mana.



*Lara Jacob conducts Quiz Time*

**It's Quiz Time!** We are constantly striving to make studying the Bible an enjoyable activity in a world with so many competing interests. One new initiative we introduced this year is a series of quizzes – the main purpose being to get the children to read the Bible carefully. Our first was based on the Gospel of Mark and the second was a Christmas one. Four teams:



*"We know the answer."*

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John had a lot of fun competing for the rolling trophy. So far Mark won the first quiz and Matthew won the second. Surely John and Luke will catch up next time?

**Harvest Festival** was another occasion of bustling activity, beginning with the special service of Thanksgiving. The hall was decorated beautifully with fruits and vegetables. We sang songs of thanksgiving. Mrs. Sarah Chandrakumar brought out the message through a puppet show and the children brought gifts to express their thanks. At the Harvest Festival stall, the Lucky Dip was a huge success as usual, as were the sweets in little baskets, each one uniquely decorated by the children.

That brought us to the preparations for **Christmas**. With no ready-made play or musical this time, and barely three weeks, the teachers frantically searched the internet, pooled their ideas and with a lot of prayer, pulled together a programme that would present the message meaningfully and involve every single child. The Community Centre was a hive of activity with children practising in every corner, while teachers chased after missing shepherds

and wise men who had run out to play... Costumes, props, backdrop, sound and lights all had to be arranged. It was a team effort, and the result? Read on.....

### **A day that was!!**

Red was the chosen colour. The colour of Christmas; the colour of passion. Both these were present in abundance that day, the spirit of Christmas and the passion to make this work. But red also stood for the fear written large across all our faces. There were 200 plus kids, loads of acting parts, a choreography that involved children with twice the energy, a beginners programme that required sequence and dedication and to top it all the coordination of sound and lights which were crucial for all of the above to work!! Hands full? You bet!!

Prayers went up and hands reached out to provide support. The team was at work!! The initial technical glitch in the senior's choreography had us wondering, if this is the prelude of things to come? Worried faces and stressed kids waited and wondered as mortal hands worked to make this all work and then ...

The Master took over, the God who said “Be still and know that I am God” had begun his magic, right in front of our eyes. The seniors performed to precision, not a word missed and not a false move, it was the fitting beginning.

“Gerry’s Christmas team” took over the stage and our hearts. Candies, trees, candles, and angels. They howled, threatened to fall of the stage, poked each other and then they sang, like their life depended on it, with innocent smiles and tiny hands that moved to the rhythm. What a heart warmer! Aren’t these a few of our favourite things?

Choreography with a bunch whose energy is incomparable was next. They were restlessly waiting their turn. When the rest of us were tired of shushing them up, they took over the stage and literally burnt it. Energy, grit, grace and stamina, they had it all. Nothing else mattered to them, neither the clapping crowds nor the rotating lights, they had fun while the audience gaped. What followed was a deafening applause, truly well deserved!!

Searching for the King said the announcement and we were ready to roll — 100 odd lines and a load of kids, with intersecting parts that needed concentrated effort, two weeks of practice and a bunch of nerves (dressed in red of course!). But roll we did with colourful costumes and excited faces. Not a line forgotten, not an expression missed, they did it all. As Gabriel climbed on the stool, we looked on helplessly. He did not have a mike in his hand!! Then miraculously, one of the shepherds handed him his and Gabriel’s voice boomed “Do not be afraid...” Was it a part of a script or a reminder from the Master who was in control?? As we sang ‘Joy to the world’, there was abundant JOY in all our hearts.

Could there be a more fitting beginning to this magnificent Christmas season? As we revel in the spirit of Christmas, let’s stand tall because at Sunday School we are a team in the true spirit of the word.

Lara J acob

***A Christian is like a teabag- he is not much good until he has been through some hot water.***

## Stephen's Home for the Aged

The Lord is our Shepherd  
**T**he poet who was speaking of God's creation being all round us, exclaimed how "...earth is crammed with heaven". Members of Stephen's Home, as they walk outside in the yard, or sit on the stone benches or chairs, can delight in earth's beauty - reflected even if in just a small measure -- in the surrounding garden with its greenery and lovely colours. For this, and for more, praise to God - Creator and Giver - is offered up every day.

S. Rosy is a new Resident of the Home. A widow, she does have three children; but as in the case of some others also, was led here after a time of struggle with the inability to find security & support. Rosy said, " ... I thank

God for all I now receive. I am at peace, and live in friendship with my other sisters in this home--." THANK YOU, members of St. John's for your continuing care and support.

In keeping with regular practice, during the last quarter, several birthdays were 'celebrated'. Simple evenings but for them greatly looked forward - to and special occasions.

The Committee renews an appeal to those who can share a little part of their valuable time with our residents - even if by way of brief visits. May they, and we, say, with the song-writer of the beautiful 23rd Psalm, O Lord, my Shepherd, thanks for my green pastures, and for my restored soul.

*The Stephen's Home  
Managing Committee*

## St. John's Hostel

Thank you for the joy  
you bring all year round

**T**he St. John's Hostel is solely supported by St. John's High School and the Church, and spiritual nurturing by the Sunday school staff. So it is heartening to make those who support, aware that your giving in many ways has resulted in abundant joy,

happiness and hope. We praise and thank God for such sharing, caring church members.

The boys are growing up well with guidance and encouragement. It is so nice to see a positive attitude to life and the way they rise to the occasion. Many of them are quite talented, innovative and creative. They excel in what they do.

We deeply appreciate and thank the Principal and the staff who take special personal interest in their studies and all-round performance. It is not easy to extend extra time after school hours to coach the boys in their studies besides counseling and solving psychological problems.

I would particularly like to make mention of Deepak Abraham who helps the Std X boys, encouraging them to do well in their final exam. Thank you for being there at the hostel \_ rain or sunshine. Our thanks to other volunteers as well.

These are the achievers:



**Terrence Sathya John** has passed his B.B.M and is now working in a reputed firm.



**Dasarathy**  
scored 54%  
in ICSE



**Gideon**  
scored 62%  
in ICSE

Ramakrishna is the school's sports Vice Captain. Many of our boys have come out as champions in various divisions of sports. They are endowed with gifts such as painting, drawing, singing and dramatics. They are innovative and creative, and help out at the Women's Fellowship sale and Harvest Festival, and the School and Sunday School functions. Ramakrishna assists the Warden in the day-to-day activities, and even when he is not there, especially when he attended the Diocesan Wardens' Retreat at Kodai Hills.

The hostel bathrooms and toilets have been renovated; the cement flooring has been replaced with beautiful tiles, and the frontage is paved with concrete as it would become slushy during the rainy season.

**Our special need** - we need 18 more cots. Earlier 12 were donated by a generous, caring member.

We thank all our donors especially Leslie and Edna Bonnell for the Aquaguard for pure drinking water, and Rekha Matthew and Susie Verghese for computers. Our heartfelt thanks to members who visit the hostel, and to those who sponsor the high

tea and sumptuous special dinners. We would also like to thank our Presbyter-in-Charge, the Warden and Board members who regularly attend meetings and guide us in this ministry.

Without Christ's love poured on both benefactors and beneficiaries, it is not possible to share the love, joy and hope of Christmas with others.

We earnestly wish and pray that these boys of St. John's Hostel, who graduate, and who are placed well in society, visit the hostel and encourage other boys. This will bring joy to the school and Church - fulfilling the saying "If you have a kindness shown, pass it on".

J yothi Parker  
*Convener*

## Women's Fellowship

Christmas Peace to the St. John's Church Family

This term is a rather busy one for us. We had many interesting programmes and important events. Our group is an active, energetic and co-operative group. We plan our programmes well in advance. God being our guide and leader, we find success in every performance. We had our Annual Sale on September 17, 2008 for which we all worked very hard. Our sale was a grand success and a big thank you to all our friends in the congregation for their liberal donations.

We celebrated Women's Sunday on September 21, with a special programme. Our speaker was Jessie Hebbal, who spoke how Jesus empowers Women for transformation. On October 19,

at the church Harvest Festival, we had four stalls. The produce was more than last year. On November 15, the full-day Retreat was held at U.T.C. Our resource person was Rev. Sam P. Thomas, whose message was inspiring and meaningful.

It was a time of fellowship and sharing God's words with residents of Stephen's Home for the Aged. Our visit to St. John's Hostel lifted our spirits. The boys exhibited their skill in singing and dancing. The Bible Studies continue to enrich us. We close our programmes with the Christmas party on December 9, and re-open in January 2009. The Women's Fellowship sends its Christmas peace and wishes to each member of St. John's family.

Rani Samson, *Vice-President*

## Our Children Catch Affluenza

**I**n a world that seems to revolve around money, Christian parents can have a tough time finding a balance between down-to-earth values and the comfortable lifestyles we've grown accustomed to. It's easy to justify giving our children the best. "We love our kids/" "We work hard, and while we don't live extravagantly, we do live comfortably. We want to share the good things we have with our kids. Who wouldn't want that?"

Even if we don't indulge our own kids, grandparents and other well-meaning relatives are often more than willing to do it for us. But the nagging questions remain: How can we teach our children the difference between wants and needs when there is literally nothing they need that they don't already have? Is it possible to raise well-adjusted, godly children when they are surrounded by this sort of affluence and materialism?

At the same time, many Christians feel guilty for living in relative wealth when so many of God's people live in poverty. "I

hate the idea of my house being filled with toys when there are families just a mile down the road who struggle to buy food," says a father of two. "I've never felt good about buying toys for my children, even at Christmas, because they already have more than they can play with. Sometimes I feel like we give them gifts because society expects us to, not because they need that new tricycle or that doll."

If you've paid any attention to the kids at the mall lately, you know what I'm talking about. Today's kids are really into stuff. Targeted by multi-million dollar marketing campaigns, kids are blasted from every angle with the same message: Buy more, spend more, have more.

It seems to really hit them about fourth grade. That's when they start to notice the differences in who has what. It's mostly in the clothes; kids are really into what other kids are wearing and the brand names. This is also the age they start talking about the future, about the fancy cars they're going to drive and the big houses they're going to have.

## **Kids have affluenza**

Psychologists use the term affluenza to describe the unique set of problems that are created when children grow up in a wealthy society. Some believe the epidemic is downright dangerous because this generation has not learned to work hard, to save money, or to wait to get the things they want. "I want what I want when I want it," seems to be the mantra among many young people today. And Christians are not immune.

Middle class parents may be feeling the pinch of spiralling prices and the recession, but it seems their teenaged children have never had it so good. A survey finds that the pocket money of urban Indian kids aged 10-17 years has gone up more than four times in the past 10 years, and children in Delhi lead the pack with a princely average of Rs 1,800 to spend in a month.

Quoting the survey, The Times of India states that even the spending pattern of children in this age group is changing fast - it now typically includes investments on DVDs, mobile phones and multiple outings.

According to the survey - "Trends of pocket money in urban areas" commissioned by industry chamber, ASSOCHAM - the average monthly allowance of

urban children in this age group was Rs 300 in 1998. It has now shot up to Rs 1,300.

## **More pocket money**

Kids in Bangalore are the richest after Delhi, with an average pocket money of Rs 1,600, followed by young Mumbaikars who get to blow up Rs 1,500. Children in Chennai follow close behind at Rs 1,450 per month while Kolkata kids seem to be poor cousins in comparison - they get just Rs 1,200. The survey was done through interviews with 2,500 children across the country.

The survey said, in the 12-15 age bracket, the average monthly pocket money was Rs 125 in 1998. This has risen by 550% to Rs 800 at present.

Principals say it is the "most natural thing" that Delhi with its substantial number of nuclear families and families where both parents earn, tops the chart. Says Usha Ram, principal of Laxman Public School, "I can't really give a quantitative tag to it but it is very obvious that pocket money has really gone up in the last few years."

"As a school we have had to consciously take measures to curb flaunting of wealth inside the school. Till Class V, a child cannot bring more than Rs 10 to school. After that, though we say that

kids should not carry more than Rs 50, it is more difficult to enforce because there are children who come from some distance away and do not bring lunch either," said Usha Ram.

Many schools have banned on-campus birthday celebrations to maintain some kind of equality. But, off the record, principals say it's tough to rein in expenditure when parents are increasingly looking at money as a substitute for not spending time with their children.

Some 65% of the children surveyed said that they received pocket money, with children aged between 15-17 years receiving an average of Rs 350 per week and those between 12-15 years getting about Rs 200 per week. In an interesting finding, the survey shows that girls aged between 15 and 17 years receive more pocket money than boys even though the trend is reversed for younger children. "This may be because girls are supposed to be bigger spenders with their penchant for shopping, and more importantly, parents often trust daughters more," said an ASSOCHAM official.

The amount spent on various items varies according to gender - girls spend the most money on clothes, cosmetics and toiletries while boys spend most on computer games and the like.

The allocation of pocket money was found to differ with age and gender with children aged between 15 and 17 years being more likely to receive it than those aged between 10 and 14 years.

In fact, the amount is enough for children to save up for quite "grown-up" things, the survey showed, including vacations.

A lot of times, pocket money is linked to academic performance. Of all the children interviewed, 24% said their pocket money increased once a year while 6% said it was revised more than four times a year. For 26%, the timing of the increase varied while 22% said their pocket money never went up. Birthdays are the most common occasion for parents to revise the amount of pocket money they give, with the annual increase at times being as high as 33%.

### **A Christian perspective**

We Christians tend to harbor conflicted feelings about material wealth. We often assume that anything to do with money is evil, and yet we are as motivated by financial success as anyone.

In fact, the Bible is filled with verses that warn against the love of money, not against money itself. It's our attitude that needs watching, not our bank balance. While Scripture is clear that we're

to store up our treasures in heaven rather than on Earth (Matt. 6:19-20), it's also clear, especially in the Old Testament, that God often chooses to bless his people with material wealth. "The Lord has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy," says Abraham's servant in Genesis 24:35. "He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys."

Even though money and material possessions are not evil in and of themselves, it's easy for them to become central to our everyday lives. The real challenge for parents is to instill in our children an attitude of contentment for all they have, as well as the belief that their joy and happiness come from God, not from a cool bike or the latest video game. And that's not easy.

### **A cure**

If you feel like your family is caught in the spending trap, try these ideas for teaching balance and responsibility:

**Be a role model.** Kids are quick to pick up their parents' attitudes toward money. Track your own spending habits for a month, then determine how much of your money is going to wants as opposed to needs. Are there any areas in your budget where you

could exercise additional restraint? Maybe it's something as simple as eating at home more often or renting a video rather than going to the theater. Through your example, your children will learn that having money doesn't necessarily mean you need to spend it.

**Talk about money, a lot.** Discuss finances with your kids, even if they seem too young to understand the finer points. Talk about spending wisely even though it's not until about primary school that kids can fully grasp all the concepts involved. By the time they reach fifth standard, they are more reality based. They are better able to understand the ideas of work and money than they could when they were 8 or 9 years old. As your children reach their teens, talk to them about the dangers of credit card debt and the need to budget even small amounts of money. Don't be afraid to admit the mistakes you've made in your own life.

**Watch TV.** Sit with your kids for a half hour of after-school programming, and you'll be amazed at the number of advertisements targeted directly at them. Glow-in-the-dark toothbrushes that sing, funky purple tennis shoes that magically transform into inline skates, plastic puppies that eat, sleep, and

make messes just like the real thing. We've talked about the fact that even though the kids in the commercial say the singing toothbrush will make you want to brush longer, it's not necessarily true. And no toothbrush, no matter how special, is worth Rs. 1200. I'm not sure they believe me, but at least they've been warned.

Turn off the TV. You can't isolate your kids completely from all the cool gadgets begging for their attention, but you can keep the sales pitches out of your home, and this is one way to do it.

**Shop with your kids.** Use your weekly trip to the grocery store as an object lesson. Before you go, have the kids clip coupons and help write the grocery list. Once you're at the store, talk to them about the purchases you make. Compare the prices, quantities, and value of each item and work together to make wise purchases. At the mall, talk to them about differences in price and value, warranties, and long-term use. Allow them to make their own mistakes and learn from the consequences. Let your daughter buy that cheap plastic necklace even though you know it will be broken by bedtime. She'll soon learn not to spend her money on things that won't hold up.

**Take advantage of special occasions.** If your son has been

begging for the latest Nintendo game or designer jeans, have him add it to his birthday or Christmas list. This way, he appreciates the item more and learns a lesson in patience as well.

**Give them a job.** My son files papers for my husband for about five minutes every day. He gets paid Rs. 200 a week, but he must tithe and deposit a portion in his savings account. While he's not making much money, he is motivated to keep working because he sees his savings account growing each week. Even small jobs—setting the table, watering the plants, or keeping their rooms clean—gives kids a sense of pride, self-discipline, and a work ethic.

**Set limits.** If your daughter needs a new pair of jeans, decide on an amount that you feel is reasonable for the purchase, say Rs. 1200. If your daughter has her eye on a pair of Rs. 2000 brand-name jeans, give her the Rs. 1200 and ask her to earn the difference. This puts the power in her hands. She has to decide if the jeans are really worth the extra work and cash.

**Go through the toy box.** Before birthdays and Christmas go through the toy box, and put in a carton, toys they no longer use and take them to an orphanage. After the couple of times, the children themselves will bring you

a toy and tell you to give it to another kid.

**Give a little cash.** Once your kids reach the fifth standard, you can let them start making some of their own financial decisions. For example, before you go shopping for school clothes, have your children make a list of things they need (and want). Then, "give" your kids a reasonable amount, and talk about the best way to spend the money and still get the essentials.

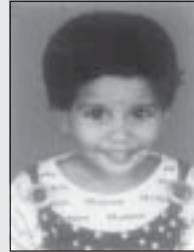
**Teach them to tithe their money ...** Encourage your children to give 10 percent of their allowance or job earnings. That doesn't necessarily mean it has to

go in the offering plate. Help them sponsor a child, buy supplies for an orphanage, or purchase small toys to be sent to needy children at Christmas.

**... And their time.** Get the whole family involved in community outreach. Deliver food baskets, clean up litter in your neighbourhood, or spend some time at a orphanage, old age home, or homeless shelter. As your children learn to contribute to their community, they'll also learn lessons in compassion, gratitude, and selflessness.

*Adapted from articles from Christian Parenting Today, March/April 2002 and <http://news.in.msn.com>*

**C**hristmas is a time of hope, peace, loving and sharing. For us the last two Christmases have been exactly that – but in a different way, after we took into our home a little baby girl who was abandoned by her parents when she was a few days old because she had a hole in her heart.



The arrival of Sneha into our home has brought us in touch with many people who have the love of Christ. Right from Rev. Daniel Ravikumar, Dr. Colin John who got the surgery, costing Rs. 2 lakhs, done almost free, to Rev. Nirmala Vasanthakumar who is keenly interested in Sneha's progress, and the many well-wishers who readily donated Rs 15000 towards hospital expenses.

All this has shown me that if we have the love of Christ towards anybody lessprivileged than us, especially an abandoned baby, the inner peace we gain is so immeasurable that nothing in this world can bring greater happiness.

David Samuel