

Kirkspire

St. Andrew's Church (The Kirk)

*Celebrating 200 Years of God's Goodness
1821 - 2021*



*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid,
which is Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 3:11*

February 2021

CONTENTS

Word from the Pastor	<i>Rev Isaac Johnson</i>	1
After his death	<i>Priscilla Singh</i>	3
A Church on the Move	<i>Usha George</i>	6
Answers to Bible Quiz No.112		8
John's Corner	<i>John H. Bala Singh</i>	9
Down Corridors of time	<i>S. Gabriel</i>	10
Medical Corner	<i>Dr Rajini Kantha Narendranath</i>	14
Bible Quiz No. 113 - February	<i>Usha George</i>	15
'Great is thy faithfulness'	<i>Chitra Bennett</i>	16
Press on	<i>Dr Susan Rajkumari</i>	18
The Kirk Virtual Choir	<i>Arul Chittaranjan</i>	20
Thus we remember	<i>John Rajanayakam</i>	22

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Centrespread: Source: British Library, engraving.
A painting of the engraving presented in 1921 to St. Andrew's by Lady Willington

Word from the Pastor



Unchanging Glory

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17)

Moments of Glory, whether they are in an Olympic final or when receiving the highest honor in one's career, are something that everyone cherishes and relishes. They bring a joy that cannot be expressed or described completely. However, do we take time to realize that it is not merely in the 'moment' that the 'glory' is achieved but it is the crescendo of the several moments of glory that go unnoticed or is not thought of as 'glorious'.

St. Andrew's Church (The Kirk) is celebrating the completion of 200 years as a house of prayer, haven for the hurting and the hallmark of grandeur and beauty. We thank God for this year and this month in particular but I always keep reminding myself and others that the beauty of this landmark 'moment' lies in the realization of God's faithfulness over 73,000 days and 10,500 Sundays. There must have been many amazing moments and many heart-breaking moments but all of them are part of this great journey. Here are three lessons that we can all learn from the Bible keeping the above as a pictorial representation.

1. God's plans are hidden from us

Jeremiah 33:3 says, 'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' The Bible is very clear on this very humbling but honest truth. Human beings (even the wisest) know very little. God knows EVERYTHING. In 1 Corinthians 13:12, we read, 'For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.' In our lives, God's glorious plans are not known in the feeble present, especially when we have a failed past or a fragile future plan. Trust His greatness, goodness and glory.

2. God's faithfulness is always with us

Life is one but moments in life are many. A day is one collection of 24 hours and every moment of that is filled with the faithfulness of God. He looks at the big picture but is all the more clear about and near to us in every minute detail. Psalm 139:1-6 reads "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it." Every disciple of Jesus Christ is a work of God's splendor through sanctification and will be presented before the Father spotless on that day. (Jude verse 24). His glory in us may not be visible in the mundane but His glory is present in us, for only He can see what we cannot, only He knows what we don't.

3. God's power is sufficient for us

Philippians 1:6 says, 'being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..' What good will any work be if the end is not glorious or victorious? That is the same when it comes to the work of God. The journey of God's church is not only in the splendor that we see today but in the glory that will be revealed very soon upon the coming of the Lord. We read in Ephesians 1:13-14, 'In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.'

What a landmark moment. BUT! the journey continues, worshipping God continues, praying for the lost continues, proclaiming the gospel message continues, singing the praises of God continues, being God's healing agent continues, bearing the fruit of the Spirit continues....until the Glorious Coming of Jesus Christ.

Have a blessed month.

Rev. Isaac Emmanuel Johnson

After his death

Simon Peter

Tired, heart-sick, aching to fill the void, Peter could not bear it anymore. He looked around him and knew the others felt the same. Moreover, all those pairs of eyes looked to him. How could he fill the Master's shoes? Looking back, grasping at a straw from the familiar, he said he was going fishing and some others said they would go too.

Had they lost their touch? They worked hard all night and caught nothing - a rare occurrence for such experienced fishermen. Daylight had not yet filled the morning when a figure walked on the shore and a voice called out to them, 'Friends, have you any fish?' None they replied. The voice called out again, 'Throw your net on the right side of the ship and you will find some'. They did so.

Now they were not able to haul the net in because of the many fish they found caught in their net. Nudging a memory, his love for Jesus prompting belief, John said to Peter, 'It is the Lord'. At once, Peter wrapped his coat around himself and jumped into the water, leaving the others to follow towing the net full of fish behind the boat.

Landing, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread. No one questioned who he was or where he came from. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.'

What joy to know Jesus the Risen Lord. Victory over death and sin was the Lord's. Eager to please, Peter climbed onto the ship and dragged the net ashore, showing how strong the power of God at work in Peter's life was. Even the net did not break though it held 153 large fish.

Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Jesus showed them what living in the new covenant was like, in the ease with which they could find fulfilment for hard work when they obeyed and believed his word. Added to that, he had miraculously provided a coal fire with fish and bread, graciously asking them to bring the fish they had caught so they could share the meal with him. They

knew it was the Lord. Jesus took the bread and gave it to them, and then served the fish also.

Peter took in the early light touching the waves and shore and gilding the sky. The chatter of friends around the fire and plenty of food brought a warm glow of life in all its perfect comfort. Once before Peter had seen Jesus in his glory on the mountain top. He had not understood then that Jesus was God. He could barely know now the abundance of grace that was his in Jesus and the eternal abundant life that Jesus offered.

Jesus spoke to Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you absolutely love me more than these?' Peter knew with certainty that things would never be quite the same again. Jesus would never be one of them and live out a normal life like one of the others would expect to. Peter answered, 'Lord, you know I love you.' Peter appealed to the all-knowing Lord for he loved him for all he was worth. Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

Peter had tried to do just that when he chose to go fishing. He was quite sure that he could obey that instruction and take care of the other disciples. Peter knew all the miracle working power of God would back him in obeying this command. His aim was to oversee and provide for the needs of the disciples and followers in their daily life by drawing on the faith of God. He felt that was the end of the matter.

Once more Jesus spoke to Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' And Peter said, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.' Peter had to learn that Jesus living in him was the Lord. Just as Jesus had laid down his life in obedience to his Father, Peter had to lay down his life in obedience too. Such a living sacrifice would bring glory to God and not to himself. Peter realized that his thoughts and life were not his own and that, in truth, Jesus lived in him to instruct and nurture the disciples to the glory of God.

Again, Jesus spoke to Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Hurt and grieving, Peter replied, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'

Peter, who had taken his eyes off Jesus while walking on the water and begun to sink, was like anyone who looks squarely at his own inadequacies. Yet by looking to Jesus, Peter would live and die as an example to other Christians. Jesus living in him would instruct and

lead his church daily and he had a part to play. If Peter had any doubts of his own ability to follow Jesus to the finish, and he had denied all knowledge of Jesus a few days earlier, Jesus cast them aside. 'I tell you, when you were young, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to: but when you are older, someone else will dress you and take you where you do not want to go.' This confirmation that Peter would obey Jesus to the point of death is his confidence, a reassurance that Jesus would see him through victoriously to the end, a restoration.

Simon, son of Jonas, was Peter, the rock on which Christ would build his church. Once Peter had declared, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Life would never be the same again, not with Jesus who was alive again. The purpose of life is to know God and the Son makes Him known. Jesus is risen, victorious over death, alive for evermore.

He spoke to Peter and he speaks to you today. He asks if you love him and encourages you to follow him. He wants to see you restored to God and to give you abundant eternal life.

Priscilla Singh

A Church on The Move

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism" Ephesians 4:5

The value of unity in the Church is a gift of the Spirit of God. This treasure cannot be achieved by laboriously working for it. A church has to experience the warmth of the grace of God. We believers cannot allow our own interests to blind us to our high responsibility for our standing as disciples of Christ is conferred on us by a divine act and it is our duty to live in accordance with this royal privilege. Today, as in ancient times, a Christian is a marked man, stamped by the royal seal of God, and is called to walk worthy of his calling.

The Church is not an intricate, mechanical entity but a living Body. The power which moves it is the power of God. When the call of Jesus rings out in every heart, and when the heart leaps out in response, there is a magnificent solidarity among believers and no power of hell can prevail against it.

The Church is our family, our support system, vital and vibrant and designed by God for the kind of unity Jesus wishes. The Church of Christ has been bought by Jesus' precious blood to present us as a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle; holy and without blemish. Are we aware of the depth of the grandeur of our mission? May we never take our Christ casually, the Church lightly or His judgement mildly.

As a Church we have one Lord, the one great Lover of mankind. We pledge never to allow our faith to grow faint and allow Him to become mere philosophy and history. Only if we hold Him as our living Lord, in whose service we pledge to be totally His, can there exist a Church of Christ. We believe that He is not a far-off God, but an all-pervading Presence, in whom all men move and live and have their being. "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." Then alone will our church find a fellowship which is like that in heaven.

As God's people, anciently and today, we are not immune to troubles, turmoil and tempests that may cruelly disrupt our lives. Homes and family circles can be broken into and changed forever. We may seem to be on a road that leads to nowhere. The fellowship of the Church strengthens the thread of our faith and courage. It lifts the

weak and despondent. The Church encourages us to lean on the Pillar- the Adonai.

The path of life is uncertain, even more evident in this pandemic. This is a "Kairos" time – an opportune moment, when we need to be alive and alert as stewards of the Lord, keeping an ever-watchful eye on the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. *"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."* Ephesians 5:15-16

As our church steps into the landmark year of 200 years of existence, may we also mark the maturity of our growing faith, trust and service to our Lord. Have we passed the complacency of cushioned years drinking milk and now mature enough to eat strong meat? (1Cor 3:1-3)

It is certainly not by chance that we are together in the sanctuary to worship and joyfully serve our Lord. We recall the mentoring words of Mordecai that awakened Esther's calling and courage. As God's people, are we ever ready to stand up together for Jesus and allow Him to use us as His human instruments to further His Kingdom?

We then say with joy and ardour **"For Such A Time As This"** – I am chosen.

Usha George

Answers to Bible Quiz No. 112 – January 2021

A Hymnologist's Quiz

1. Christ the Lord is risen today
2. Jesus, keep me near the cross
3. Rock of Ages
4. O, Love that wilt not let me go
5. Jesus Lover of my soul
6. Oh, God our help in ages past
7. Abide with me
8. My faith looks up to Thee
9. All hail the power of Jesus' name
10. The Lord is my Shepherd

The winners are:

1. **Mrs Elizabeth Jayaraj**
2. **Mrs Leela Coilpillai**
3. **Mrs Victoria Basker**
4. **Mrs Peace Rani Sudhakar**
5. **Mrs Suguna Joseph**
6. **Mrs Indira Rajanayakam**

Hearty Congratulations!

John's Corner

The Devil Laughed

(Read 2 Sam 22:6, 7, Isa 45:22, Ps. 34:18, Eph. 2:4,5, Acts. 2:21)

Meditation for Lent

The devil laughed incessantly,
'Another soul I've gained', said he,
When I to him yielded and sinned,
And saw as he with contempt grinned.

'Ah! woe is me', in pain I grieved,
'How can I ever be relieved
Of this my guilt, my utter shame?'
And humbly called on Jesus' name.

The Lord heard me and He replied,
'Look up, my child, I'm by your side,
Reach out to me and you'll withstand,
If you with faith cling to my hand.'

I turned from sin, my wrongs confessed,
Accepted Christ and now I'm blessed;
No longer need I Satan fear,
For safe am I when Christ is near.

John H. Bala Singh



Down Corridors of Time

Human nature has not changed in many ways and yet has in many ways. In the following excerpts from the Church magazines of yesteryears, we find echoes of present day experiences, in the life of the Church and the lives of the Congregation as they occurred then and as they occur today. Through all the ups and downs we find God's gracious leading of His flock over the years.

The Church consists of individuals with their daily challenges, at work, in worship and in society. Like us today, our forebears of the Kirk have faced the storms of life, its happiness and sorrow, its bright spots and dark patches through the spiritual journey that each of us has to undertake as witnesses for Christ.

In this Bicentennial Year of celebrating God's goodness, truly may we sing:

"Through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy
The praises of my God shall still, my heart and tongue employ"
(Psalm 34, in *New Version*, Tate and Brady 1696)

1. In the Parish Magazine, January 1921, the Year of the Centennial celebrations (100 years) the following lines appear:

'A Request- The Kirk Session will be glad to have as gifts, or as loan, any books periodicals, letters, maps, plans etc., bearing on the history or the building of St. Andrew's Church, that may be in the possession of members of the congregation or other readers whom these lines may reach. The old records of the Church may be supplemented with advantage and we shall be very grateful for any help in this matter'

As we celebrate the Bicentennial Year 2021, how relevant this is, even after 100 years. Our Secretary Mr. Dulip Thangasamy made a similar request some time ago. The congregation to please note that any old photographs of events in the Church with date and relevant details, or other memorabilia if sent to the Kirk Office would make a memorable walk 'down corridors of time'. Such material will be acknowledged and returned to the owners.

2. Parish Magazine- February-March 1921

'A Prayer: FOR MANY GENERATIONS

Gracious Lord, the wellspring of all felicity, grant unto us that we may always fear Thee and walk in all Thy ways. Bless us and all ours, that it may be well with us, that we may see many generations and children of faith, and that we may see peace upon Israel and so may glorify Thee all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ Thy Son.- *So be it. Amen. Old Scots Collect'*

How wonderful to meditate on God's purpose through generations! How true this message stands even today in our worship and in our lives. May we as the children of St. Andrew's Church, bear this legacy and be the torch bearers of God's goodness in the days ahead.

'Kirkspire' will feature more such snippets in the forthcoming issues that illustrate the life-blood of our Church.

*Compiled by
S. Gabriel*



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

St. Andrew's Church in the early days



Medical Corner

Mental and Emotional Health

ADDICTION- 1

The World Book Dictionary defines addiction as “the condition of being a slave to a habit”. The regular use of certain drugs cause dependence — that is, the use of the drug becomes a hard-to-break habit. There is craving for the psychological experience a drug provides. Drug users develop drug tolerance, which means they need increasing doses of a drug to achieve the same effect. Stopping the drug at this stage causes drug withdrawal. The body then needs the drug so badly that the user will seek more of the drug even though it is harmful. This condition is called addiction. Drug abuse is commonly defined as the harmful, non medical use of a mind altering drug. The continual misuse of one or more such drugs can lead to poor health, and to personality and behavioural problems.

Many commonly abused drugs are illegal — that is their possession and sale is forbidden by law. They include marijuana cocaine, heroin, L.S.D and mescaline. Other abused drugs can be obtained legally only with a doctor prescription. They include amphetamines, sedatives, morphine, and tranquillizers. Still other abused drugs can be bought legally without a prescription in most nations. They include alcohol and tobacco (cigarettes, cigars etc). Fumes from cleaning fluids, petrol and glue contain butyl nitrite which is highly addictive.

Dr. Rajini Kantha Narendranath

Bible Quiz No. 113 – February 2021



A Genealogist's Quiz

1. What four females are recorded in the descent of Jesus?
2. Who was the father of?
 - a) Milcah and Sarah
 - b) Leah and Rachel
3. Who were the "three fair daughters" of Job?
4. Who were the thirteen children of Jacob?
5. Besides being bosom friends, what relationship existed between David and Jonathan?
6. Which of the three famous kings Saul, David or Solomon, was a son-in-law of one of the Pharaohs?
7. Arrange in chronological order:
Abram / Jacob / Terah / Isaac
8. Arrange in chronological order:
Jesse / Obed / Solomon / Boaz / David
9. What relation were Zeruiah and Abigail to David?
10. What relation was Noah to Methuselah?

Kindly send your answers to the church office or email admin@thekirk.in by 15th February 2021.

Usha George

'Great is Thy faithfulness'



As we celebrate the Bicentennial of our church, St. Andrews, our hearts swell with gratitude spilling over in paeans of praise and worship. Great has been God's faithfulness in leading the Church through the last 200 years. But while it is easy to document the tangible elements involving the evolution of various ministries and projects, it is difficult to record the intangible ways in which God has been working in the life of the congregation. How can we enumerate the innumerable times God has wiped our tears away as we sat in the pews, distraught and distressed? How can we document the miraculous changes and turn arounds that have occurred after we prayed in abject submission? How can we put down in black and white the remarkable power of His Word that transformed our lives? How can we ever express the feel of His Hand on our head or the fragrance of His Presence as we worshipped in church together? From its inception in 1821, God has moved in mighty and mysterious ways in St. Andrew's Church, lifting up, edifying and refining, opening the hearts and minds of congregants to come alive to His Being and receive His Word.

Vivid are my memories of walking into the Church when I was all of three, with my father holding my hand tight. The eagle lectern looked foreboding but the deep azure dome, resplendent with the moon and stars was fascinating. We left Chennai for a while, but after returning, I remember the fear and excitement with which I walked down the aisle on my father's arm to meet my husband at the altar. Little did I know that my daughters would one day walk the same path or that my grandchildren would be christened in this very sanctuary. My father and mother, who always found it spiritually fulfilling to worship in the Kirk, were laid to rest after beautiful services here. Great has been His Faithfulness!

The richest and most glorious legacy of St. Andrews Church would be the spiritual enrichment of the worshippers who walked in. God has blessed us with Shepherds of His own heart, who led us with Knowledge and Understanding nourishing and nurturing us in manifold ways, always directing us to seek our Lord and Saviour, remaining focussed on Him. Whatever be the channel of worship, be it the music, listening to the Word and God's message or getting involved in outreach ministries and missions, the goal has been to glorify His Holy name. Over the last two hundred years God has opened His arms wide, through St. Andrew's Church to welcome congregants from diverse and varied backgrounds into His warm embrace. There is warmth and togetherness in the congregation helping us weather many a storm with fortitude. During the lockdown we missed being with each other but consoled ourselves by meeting on zoom. Even the Pandemic could not make a dent on the ongoing online services which mentally, emotionally and spiritually strengthened the congregation during very difficult and uncertain times. Great is Thy Faithfulness!

As we venture into 2021, we can be assured that the Great Shepherd of the sheep will walk with us, ministering to each of us in His Inimitable Way, that He will see us through mountains and valleys, through tears and laughter, enabling us to reflect His Light, drawing others to Him to find in Him the Ultimate Refuge and Peace. Great, indeed is His Faithfulness!

'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail, They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness.' Lamentations 3:22-23.

Chitra Bennett



Press on

Life is often like driving a car. One of the cardinal rules is to look ahead and drive with great caution (especially in Chennai traffic). However if you are constantly looking at the rear view or trying to figure out what lies 20 feet ahead, instead of the next 5 feet you are bound to be a road menace. It's a fact and the same holds true in life. Stay focused in the present. Sure, we can take glimpses of the past but undue reminiscence can lead to disaster. There's another mistake we can make and that is looking either way at other vehicles driving beside us. You may say, 'how stupid' but that is exactly how we live life and it's no wonder that we crash so often. Funny that Solomon in all his wisdom deemed it important enough to record it.

'Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left...' Proverbs 4:26-27

(These past few months have been crazy. Plagued by a longing for the past 'good old times' and uncertainty of the future has kept most of us from truly living in the present. I find myself worrying about things I have no control over and talking about it constantly. Dread has deprived me of energy.)

Strategies.

#1. Fix your eyes on what lies before you. Do what you have to do now. Keep sowing (even if you are crying while doing it). * Psalm 126:5 : They who sow in tears shall reap in joy and singing.

#2. Stop thinking about people and things over which you have no control. The amount of time we waste over it is amazing. Be faithful with whatever is in your control (your attitude, for example) and power.

*Luke 19:17 'Well done!' the king exclaimed. 'You are a good servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, so you will be governor of ten cities as your reward.'

#3. Set goals. Small ones. Simple ones for today. Write them down. Pray over them. Achieve them with His help.

*1 Chronicles 28:10 "So take this seriously. The Lord has chosen you to build a Temple as his sanctuary. Be strong, and do the work."

Someone once said that the way we go through life must be like an Indian bus driver. He is a species apart. Some wonder about his hearing ability. He just keeps driving despite the conductor hollering, passengers fighting, bad road conditions and all the ruckus around him. Keep moving. Make the necessary stops. But mostly keep moving for He goes before you :)

'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel.' Isaiah 45:2-3.

Dr. Susan Rajkumari



The Kirk Virtual Choir

The Kirk has always been blessed with an abundance of musical talent that has enriched the worship over the last 200 years and probably earlier, from when the congregation gathered, before this sanctuary was dedicated. However, we have unlikely, in living memory, seen the kind of challenges as well as God's provision as we have in the past year.

Though the live streaming of the services had become standard by the beginning of 2020, getting the various elements of the service together without gathering together or even having access to the church premises on account of the worldwide lockdown was a daunting task. The music was initially handled by families recording their singing at home. A few tech savvy members managed to harness technology to initiate the 'Kirk Virtual Choir'. However, even the most seasoned choristers found the process of singing alone to 'an inanimate object' rather intimidating at first and some regulars could not be persuaded to venture into the virtual space. On the other hand, the virtual choir brought together former choristers from California to Sydney to participate in the services.

The music elements in the services finally stabilised to consist of voluntaries, instrumental pieces on the organ or piano played as preludes and postludes to the service, Praise and Worship sessions that were handled by small groups, a set of two hymns by the virtual choir and the occasional anthem.

The process of creating a virtual choir recording starts with the selection of the hymn. While this may seem a straightforward task, during the complete lockdown, with our conductor stranded in Coonoor with neither hymn book nor musical instrument, it required quite a bit of back and forth between him and the accompanist to accomplish it. The next step was to decide the tones and the tempo, which also took a bit of toing and froing. Once the accompaniment

had been recorded and overlaid with the click track, it would go to one of the sopranos to record the lead voice for the rest of us to try and emulate. Each chorister then received the music score and the reference track. Individual voice recordings were then sent back. These were checked, redone when required, and sent for mixing the audio. Once the audio mix - done by rank amateurs on their home laptops - sounded acceptable, a final video file incorporating the words was made ready for use at the service.

The virtual choir hit something of a road block with the sudden and tragic death of Immanuel Thiyakeswaran, our regular accompanist, but it was completely God's enabling grace, raising up people to fill the gap, that the Festival of Nine Lessons, our traditional carol service on the evening of the Sunday before Christmas, could be held as usual.

The Kirk virtual choir has recorded over sixty hymns and anthems and is set to continue its virtual presence during the upcoming bicentenary service and Lenten season while we wait to see how the present restrictions evolve.

We acknowledge with gratitude the contribution of Immanuel Thiyakeswaran who shouldered almost the entire instrumental work, voluntaries and accompaniment, and Sam William, former member in California, during the period of complete lockdown. We also acknowledge the contributions of the other instrumentalists / accompanists (Arun George John (Sydney). Reuben Ruphus (Palayamkottai), Oommen George (Pudhucherry), Eby Mani, Arul Siromoney, Jim Satya, Paul Anbarasu, Atul Jacob Isaac and Jebin Thomas Mathew), choristers from across the globe, those who handled the audio and video mix and those who co-ordinated all the efforts so that we could continue to make a 'Joyful Noise unto the Lord'.

Arul Chittaranjan

Thus We Remember



Our Church had a couple of years ago celebrated the birth centenary of Padmashri Handel Manuel - the Musical Legend of his period – with a grand musical programme in our church participated by the choirs of the Madras Musical Association, the Handel Manuel Chorus and our Church. Here I write not about Handel Manuel the Celebrity but about

HANDEL MANUEL - THE MAN

I am not sure how many had the opportunity to know and have a close encounter with this “Man”. I had first met him around the year 1960 when I joined the Madras Musical Association. I had kept my reverential distance from him because of my awe and admiration at his musical greatness. But later I was drawn into closer contacts because of the various calls I had within the choir and so I share here about this “Man” based on my personal experiences, my observations about how he related with everybody and reacted to situations.

He was a man who respected the honour of others. He ensured that, in music, no one was discredited as substandard. During one of my early ears with the MMA he asked me to do a part in a duet for a public programme. During the practices I found it difficult to deliver what was expected and so I very frankly requested him to relieve me from it and have another better singer in my place. I knew the humiliation I will have to face, because the practices are watched by all the other choir members and to see being “dropped” will be humiliation indeed. He too was aware of it. So he answered my request with eye brows raised and wide eyes pointing to the music sheet with a crisp “sing”. I continued singing and he put in extra efforts to teach me. On the day of the programme, after the show was over, he came to me and said with a bright smile “You sang

well". That was more exhilarating than the applause from the audience.

He was a man who did not lose confidence in the capabilities of others. He believed that a couple of failures in one person did not confirm that person's inability and believed in the possibilities in a person. Again during another public programme, during my solo number along with the choir coming in between, towards the end of the song I crashed with a mistake. But the choir went on with the rest of the portion. I buried my eyes into the music book with shame, unable to look up. At the close of the programme, fearing some reprimand, I went to him and conveyed my apologies. But he was very calm and with much sympathy said to me "I wanted to help you re-enter and was looking at you but you never looked up". He did not seal my opportunities with this failure; he continued to have faith in me, infused faith in me and continued to encourage me with fresh and continuing opportunities.

He was a man open to simple things and simple joys of life. It is generally felt that people who have access to higher levels of good things in life seldom give expressions to the simple experiences in life. Uncle Handel was different. During the year 1992 he was invited to Mumbai (then Bombay) to conduct a very famous Orchestra for a grand programme. I was posted to and working in Bombay at that time. One evening I invited him out for dinner and so we went to the famous Juhu Beach area. This was my first time of having to entertain him all by myself and so was concerned how I would spend the time. But he put me at absolute ease talking about various things, savouring the moongaphalee (fried peanuts), walking up and down the beach and enjoying the whole casualness of that evening.

He was a man of wit and humour. He always preferred to make the practice times not one filled with tension. He kept everyone at ease. He pointed out mistakes with a light hearted humour so the one corrected does not feel humiliated. This one, I heard told to me by a senior person. During one practice for a musical play one of the persons playing a wind instrument repeated his mistakes in spite of many corrections. Uncle Handel was exasperated and everyone tensed. But without any show of anger he quietly commented "now the snakes will come" and was looking at the entrance to the room as if he was really expecting a snake to enter. Everybody laughed and the rehearsal went on in an absolutely relaxed mood.

He was a man with compassion and tender emotions. He had great compassion for the suffering people. The following was told to us by himself as an incident during his overseas tour, but it revealed his compassion for the suffering and how God had used him in the life of another. During this tour to the USA he was asked by a doctor to play piano music for his patients in his hospital. As he was playing some of the doctors there noticed that one of the patients who was on coma for many months suddenly started moving his fingers. The doctors were not only surprised but a thought dawned upon them. So the doctor explained to Uncle Handel what had happened and requested if he could play for some more time. Moved by what had happened and with great compassion for the patient, Uncle Handel, though his time was over, stayed on for a longer period and played for the patient. What resulted encouraged the doctors that with music as a therapy they might be able to heal and save this particular patient.

These are just some examples from his life and let us remember him for this part of his life too.

John Rajanayakam



Asha Sunday



Asha Classroom



KYF

Glimpses of
Some Activities
of our
Ministries



Friendship Club



RMDCC

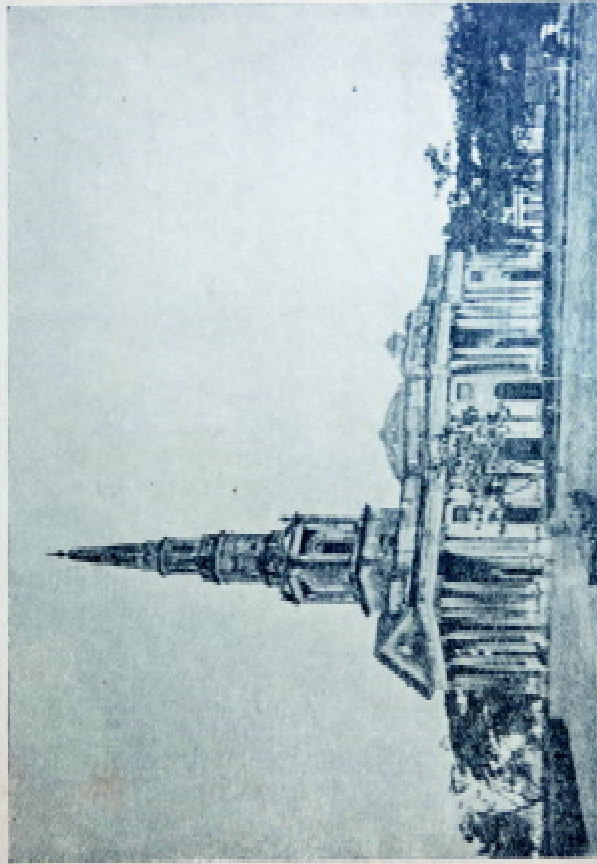


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