

# *Kirkspire*

The Monthly Magazine of St. Andrew's Church (The Kirk), Chennai

For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand,  
Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'  
Isaiah 41:13

*June - July 2021*

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**Editor : Usha George**



## Word from the Pastor

# Decision-Making

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

I write this month's message to the church believing that God of all mercies has watched over you and your families during these troubling times. We know that His grace is sufficient for us at all times. I assure you of our prayers for you always and believe that you are praying not only for your own but also for others in need especially for the lost in sin to be brought into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Here is the Word for this month.

Everyone of us are good at this one thing: making decisions about others' lives and feeling that, "if I were in their shoes, I would have said this or done this". On the other hand, in our own lives, we all make decisions that we regret on hindsight. There is no one, who has ever lived, except Jesus, who has made perfect decisions all through their lives. My word of encouragement to you comes in these three forms.

1. Never lose focus on the motives of your decisions - Apostle Paul says in the verse mentioned above, that in all that you do, do it for the glory of God. In the book of Galatians, the same Apostle says that his change of testimony brought glory to God. Where Christians have failed to see their value

and the value of their faith is in the aspect of forgetting that God's name is at stake in and through their behaviour. When 'church politics' is brought out into the open and when the christian leaders are caught in secret sins, these cause greater damage to the gospel than to the individual. I do not mean that God's work can be stopped but the hill becomes steeper to climb.

2. Never compromise on obedience to God in your decisions - Obedience is the first command given in the garden of Eden to Adam and Eve. The test of obedience was the point of their failure. Do you see your decisions in life in light of the word of God? The Psalmist says in Psalm 19, 'May the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight O Lord, our rock and our redeemer'. Whether it is in choosing a life partner or a new job position or in financial decisions in families, ALWAYS ASK 'what does the Bible say?'
3. Never forget to analyse the eternal implications of your decision - We read in Psalm 32:8, 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you'. Galatians 6:8 says, 'For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life'. When the rich young ruler walked away from Jesus, his momentary decision had an eternal implication. When the criminal on the Cross repented, there was an eternal implication.

Follow Jesus carefully, lovingly, faithfully and hopefully. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

*Rev. Isaac Johnson*



## The Royal Law of Love

*"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well." James 2:8*

As the world goes through the chaos and fury of a ruthless pandemic, let us remember that hundred years hence, if planet earth is still revolving and the world is yet awaiting the Lord's return, the horror being experienced now will be reduced to mere words in a history book. Our response should be immediate and urgent.

Our Lord has given us luminous guideposts. They are certainties that stand firm in a rapidly spinning and fluctuating world. The world is a place where there sadly exists pain, disease, social injustice, and selfishness. Our Lord and Master Teacher points to a purpose in this bewildering state of events and chalks out success out of failure. Our Lord gives us a bunch of keys to open doors of compassion, purity, charity, and hope. The door leading to love is the greatest gateway to joy and to the heart of God.

Not ignoring the Ten Commandments which will all fall in line when Jesus' new commandment is in place: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." Jesus loved people, and was always there for them, to instruct, teach, help, and heal. He held high the right path, the pathway of love not based on dry regulations that make for dry hearts and dry bones. He was moved to tears when they grieved, fed them when they were hungry, cared for the vulnerable children and exalted them, and above all, made no distinction between the rich and the needy.

Are we endeavouring to follow the Master?

Let us not look at the mirror but out of the window. Do we make a difference between people belonging to a 'lower strata'? Do we

think arrogantly of ourselves? Loving our neighbour is a sublime command of our Lord. This beautiful expression of love cannot be appropriated by ourselves. We cannot reach it across the counter or get it from a store or order it online. It is only attained by a closer walk with God, and an indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

This pandemic can bear rich fruit in our lives. It is the darkness that tests the light. The love pictured in the parable of the Good Samaritan is laid out as a blueprint for our life. It urges us to cross the street to attend to a stranger in need.

Jesus has placed a totally new emphasis on the brotherhood of all men. Love is the cement that binds us together in Jesus Christ. Christ's sacrificial love on the cross for every miserable sinner is the ultimate hope of the world. This precious and brutal sacrifice of our Lord has been despised and stamped on by the bloody boots of men through the years. May the fragrance of this "Love beyond measure" be deeply inhaled by us believers, breaking down fences and walking in love, holding high the banner of the Royal Law of Love. We have inspiring examples of Stephen, Peter, John, James, Paul, and the long line of lovers of Jesus.

Napoleon, the proud Emperor of France, when defeated, deserted and exiled on St. Helena said: "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for him."

As the Holy Spirit manifests the love of God in our lives, may our hands be used by Him in bringing blessings to others and may we pray as David did: "Establish thou the work of our hands". Psalm 90:17

*Usha George*

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We should pray that the Holy Spirit would give us His illumination and thereby help us to understand rightly when we study Scripture or when we ponder situations in our lives.

*Wayne Grudem*

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## Broken Cisterns

The messages kept coming in quick succession, one after another – a dear friend was requesting prayer for her sister’s family. The entire family was infected with the Corona virus. Our group prayed fervently as one family, but within a matter of ten days, four members of that family passed away, including her sister’s son who had come down to take care of his father from UK, leaving behind a young wife and child. The family reeled under the shock and pain of the untimely deaths and we who prayed were devastated too. That whole week we heard of nothing but news of other members of the congregation, church staff, near and dear ones falling sick. Many recovered but quite a few didn’t make it. Families were fragmented and hearts shattered – broken cisterns strewn all around, leaking joy and trust, hope and confidence. Human lives broken in human misery!

At a time like this, one question needs to be pondered over and addressed. In times of disaster, do we as believers and children of God, remain leaking and broken like the foolish Jews of Jeremiah’s time, who turned away from the well spring of the Living waters, hewing cisterns of their own, which could hold no water? Trying to cope in the midst of turbulent storms, relying on our own strength and our own strategies is similar to that. In Jeremiah 2:11, God speaks through the Prophet, bringing out the two sins the Jews were guilty of. They had forsaken the Living God, the spring of Living Waters and secondly had hewn their own cisterns – broken cisterns, totally incapable of holding any water. In a crisis when trials and tribulations make us double up in pain self help and self effort are in vain, totally inadequate and we remain as useless broken cisterns unless we turn to the Source of free flowing invigorating Living Waters. Only Jesus can revitalise, only our Saviour can restore us, instilling new hope and new courage in us. Human resources can offer temporary encouragement and help but Christ alone can slake our thirst, refresh us in our arid dryness. Psalm 36: 8 says,

They feast on the abundance of your house, you give them drink from your river of delights”.

Recently I was reading about Kintsugi, the Japanese art of putting together broken pieces of pottery with gold. The scars and lines of brokenness remain but the new piece is far more beautiful than the original. God, the Master Potter puts back the fragments of our life to make it a 'thing of beauty' and a 'joy forever'. After Kintsugi, the broken vase no longer leaks neither is it ugly. The scars and lines remain, reminding us of the times God's Presence and Strength lifted us up, when we were drenched in tears. The Potter's Master touch, remoulding us into useful instruments in His hands – the beauty of Imperfections! We are fragile and vulnerable when engulfed in pain, sickness and death. But when we submit and surrender ourselves into the Potter's Loving hands He shapes us to become strong and useful jars of clay holding the light, the treasure – which is the knowledge of Christ, the Gospel of Salvation and the light filters through the splintered crevices illuminating the lives of those around us. (2 Cor 4:6-7)

As we face seemingly insurmountable mountains of pain and suffering, the agony of death and separation, can we surrender ourselves into the Loving Caring hands of the One whose unfailing Love reaches the Heavens? Can we remind ourselves that He can change and transform broken cisterns into beautiful jars holding the Living Waters, replenished and restored?

*Chitra Bennett*

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Christians may not see eye to eye, but they can walk arm in arm.

*Unknown*

You'll never be a failure if what you're doing is ultimately for the glory of God.

*Rick Warren*

Christianity can be condensed into four words: admit, submit, commit, and transmit.

*Samuel Wilberforce*

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## HOPE

HOPE can mean two opposite things. One of these is that in common usage it can mean being in "doubt" or being "uncertain." When we say "I hope..." it clearly indicates that we are not certain about what we are referring to. Invariably it refers to difficult circumstances and situations arising out of such circumstances. "We are going through an age which is doubtful and there is no hope of the future" is such an opinion people make based on how such circumstances impact their lives. People look at their circumstances and begin to lose faith because they cannot see any change in it. It may be uncomfortable and they may not like what they have to face now. The present single factor that is creating such panic in the minds of people is the Covid 19 pandemic. The circumstances people go through lead them to fear; and fear to loss of faith; and loss of faith to uncertainty. This is the worldly view of "Hope."

As believers in Christ do our difficult circumstances (sufferings) lead us to "uncertainty" or to "Hope" that can be a "certainty"? The Biblical concept of "HOPE" is "certainty". Romans 5:3-5 says "...suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us,.." A "hope" that does not disappoint is the hope that is "certainty." The key for this certainty is perseverance.

How do we persevere, particularly under unmitigated suffering when it is human nature to panic and give up under such circumstances? Exodus 14:13 says "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today." This verse contains God's command to us as believers for such times when we are confronted with dire circumstances and extraordinary difficulties. What are we to do when we cannot retreat or go forward and our way is blocked on all sides? The best thing to do is to listen to God's word and put our trust in Him. About circumstances and situations, in John 16:33, Jesus says "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." God has not promised a trouble free world; instead He has asserted the certainty of troubles in this life. However He has along with it confirmed that He has overcome it and therefore we need not be troubled by it or fear it.

Perseverance is the method by which our character is developed. In James 1:2-4 it says "Consider it pure joy my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of

your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete." This maturity and completeness is the character that is developed in us; the character of trusting God and having unshakable faith in Him in all circumstances.

This character, under the uncertain circumstances of what we are going through, is what keeps us from despair. It is not what we see, but it is what we believe. It may be uncomfortable and we may dislike it but be sure that God is preparing us for something better through it all. Under such trying circumstances let us be encouraged that God can deliver us. Therefore let our hope become a strong position to receive God's promises. In John 14:1 Jesus says "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me." Let us trust Him our "HOPE" - hope that does not disappoint us.

*John Rajanayakam*

### **Answers to Bible Quiz No. 115 – April 2021**

#### **Easter Quiz**

1. c) their own action. Matthew 27:3-5
2. d) strangers. Matthew 27:6-7
3. b) King of the Jews. John 19:19
4. d) He had made himself the Son of God. John 19:7
5. c) to mock Him. Matthew 27:27-31
6. a) myrrh. Mark 15:23
7. c) Sea of Tiberias. John 21:1
8. d) teach and baptize all nations. Matthew 28:16-20
9. b) healing one of the bystanders who had leprosy.  
Luke 24:36-43
10. c) grieved. John 21:17

#### **The winners are :**

- 1. Mrs. Alverna McGrath**
- 2. Mrs. Peace Rani Sudhakar**
- 3. Mrs. Victoria Basker**
- 4. Ms. Rachel Magdalene Sadhana**
- 5. Mrs. Aruna Asir**
- 6. Ms. P. Patricia**
- 7. Mrs. Suguna Joseph**
- 8. Mrs. Indira Rajanayakam**

***Hearty Congratulations!***

Bible Quiz No. 116 – June / July 2021



## A Shepherd's Quiz

King James Version (KJV)

Finish these Bible texts with reference. Answers in any version accepted.

1. "All we like sheep ... "
2. "I am the ... sheep".
3. "Other sheep I have ..."
4. "As a sheep before her shearers ... "
5. "They are as sheep without ... "
6. "The Good Shepherd giveth ... "
7. "Behold I send you forth as ... "
8. "The sheep follow him, for ... "
9. "He that entereth by the door ... "
10. "They (the harried ones) wander about in ... "

Kindly send your answers to the church office or email [admin@thekirk.in](mailto:admin@thekirk.in) by 24th July 2021.

*Usha George*

## VBS 2021 Report for Kirkspire

'The Guardians' was the topic for VBS 2021 with the theme verse Genesis 2:15 –'Keeping God's world beautiful'. It was conducted simultaneously for the Beginners, Primary, and Juniors to Senior sections on three Zoom platforms between May 12 and May 22, 2021. Cheryl Grace, Dolly Shanth, and Rebecca Devaprasad were the Directors of respective sections. Christine Ida Mohan was Tech in charge, responsible for registration process, data management, and overall tech support.

On an average, 385 students attended this VBS from Chennai and other parts of India and the world representing 18 different congregations, 16 cities in Tamil Nadu, 10 states and one UT of India—Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry and five other countries of the world. There were 15 classes and 30 teachers and 16 volunteers. The teachers also logged in from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Canada, Sweden, Central Africa, and Singapore apart from Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu. The teachers and volunteers hailed from varied professions including worship leaders, missionaries, doctors, lawyers, bankers, business analysts, research associates, teachers, professors, engineers, HR professionals, graphic designers, students, and home makers.

Throughout the Bible God is portrayed as 'Guardian' who created the world and who continues to guard it—caring and sustaining it. Created in God's image, we are called to tend, care, and subdue the earth. 'Subdue' in Hebrew is 'Radah' which means 'bend down to listen'. During the 10 days of VBS, we listened to God through His word and His world. We learnt to guard our relationship with God, His word and His world, guard our family and friends, and guard our time and our talents.

Our teachers quickly adapted to digital means to teach Bible truths through online puzzles, word search, crossword, etc. Meaning art and crafts were used to help children to look into themselves, God, and His word. It was a steep learning curve for both teachers and taught alike.

God was faithful in giving all VBS participants uninterrupted power supply and good internet connectivity. Even when the cyclone Taukteh battered the coast of Maharashtra, the participants from there recognized afresh God as the Lord of wind and waves and power supply and internet connectivity

VBS started every day with teachers' prayer and devotion time, bringing before God every child by name and committing the day's sessions into God's hand. Mrs. Meera Ninan's devotions based on the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians helped teachers recognize the spiritual wealth they have in Christ and encouraged them to walk in the light of that knowledge. The sessions encouraged teachers to exchange their inadequacies, fears, and inhibitions for the spiritual power and peace in Christ. As one teacher put it, "the devotion lifted me up to soar like an eagle."

The worship session that followed helped children to sing for the audience of One—the Lord Jesus who is worthy of all praise. These sessions were led by Prashanth and Anisha Lazarus, Andrea Nirmal, Judy James and Jemie Eapen, and Grace Aruliah for the different age groups.

Our 30 dedicated teachers supported by 16 volunteers delivered age-appropriate lessons to help children recognize who Jesus is and lead them to forge a relationship with Him. The Beginners as jungle explorers, bird watchers, and treasure turners learned that God is our Creator, Savior, and Friend and that we ought to be guardians of the earth. Learning memory verses through songs and listening to Bible stories using puppets and props brought faith and joy to these little ones. The Primary children looked into the Bible to explore the attributes of God and how knowing that applies to daily living. These young minds troubled by the pandemic learnt that 'when they are afraid, they will trust in God' and that 'nothing is impossible with God'. The Juniors searched the Scriptures to discover that God is worthy to be trusted, honored, and served. The Intermediate students discovered God through the Bible lessons and life lessons. The craft activities designed to teach great Bible truths helped each child in the quietness of his/her home. "I was able to get a lot of things out of my chest—my inadequacies, my hatred about myself, etc. and lay them on the cross," said one and another recognized, "I am who God says I am not what I think of myself or what others think of me." The Senior class for the first time had 50 students, and they

studied God's word to know God and learned to live as God's children. Many of them surrendered their lives to the Lord for the first time. Praise God for His work among the VBS children.

Special days celebrated in VBS assumed new meaning and significance. The day of beauty and cleanliness helped children look at the beauty in creation, in culture, inner beauty etc. They discovered that inner beauty needs no make-up but it just involves displaying the fruits of the Spirit as God does the sanctifying work in our lives. A child shared how cleaning a small part of her home helped her to realize the areas of her life that needed to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Love feast was different. Children could not share their food with others. But they learnt how to create happy faces with fruits, vegetables, and nuts, learning to guard their health. Some cooked their favourite dishes and shared recipes.

The final day program featured as our evening service on 23 May, 2021 was the climax of our VBS where each class presented their learnings in unique and creative ways. We were so blessed to have the silent support of many of our church youth in the compilation the programs for the final day and VBS Sunday. Many teachers said that even their families supported them in preparing or setting up for lessons.

During these 10 days, the VBS community experienced God's faithfulness in many ways. All of us recognized God's power, peace, and presence amidst the pandemic. As one Director remarked, "God indeed was our Guardian." Our hearts are full of gratitude for His grace.

"To your name be glory because of Your love and faithfulness." Psalm 115.1

*VBS Team 2021*



The Word of God is either absolute or obsolete.

*Vance Mayner*

You can no more die for your own sins than you can solve world hunger.

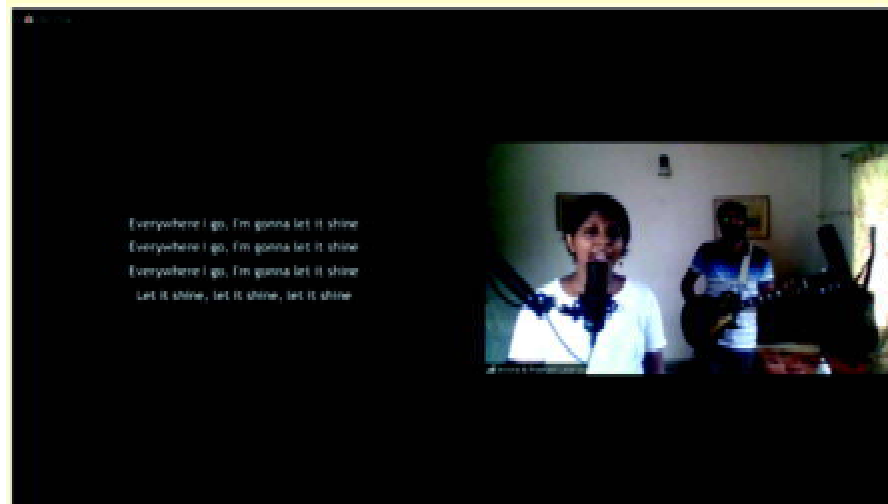
*Max Lucado*



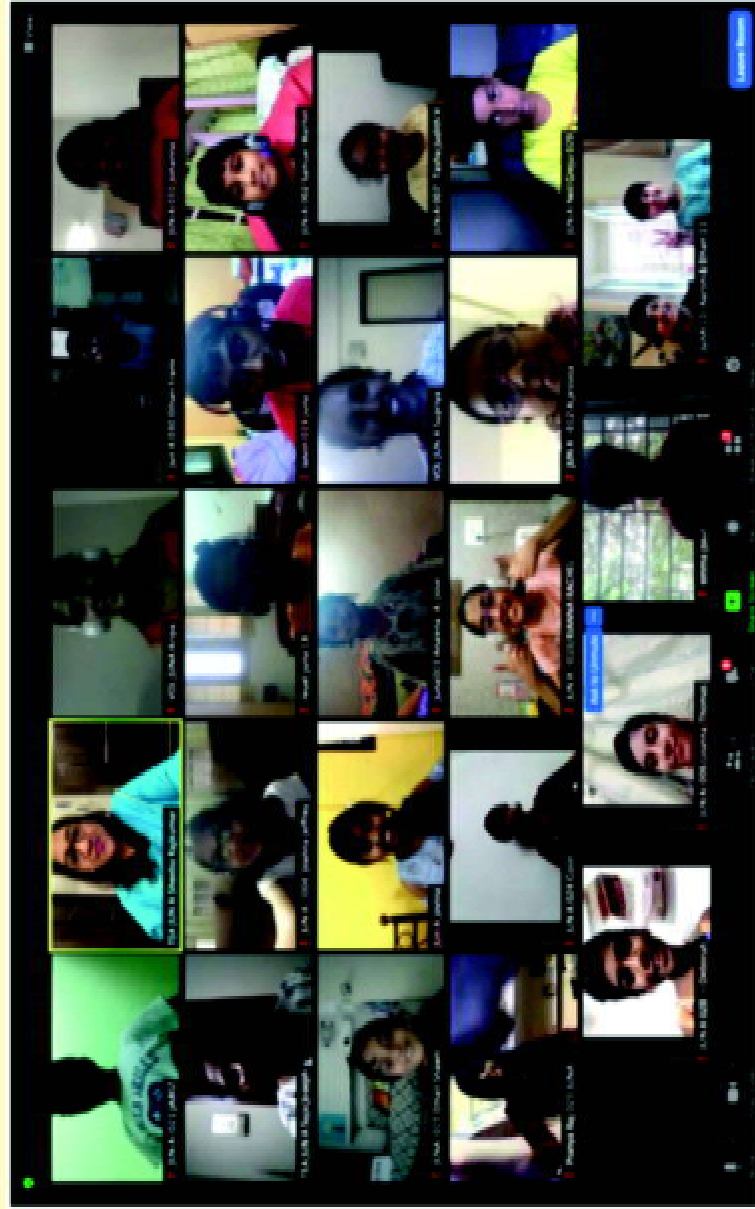
## Using Art to learn Bible truths



## Music Time at VBS

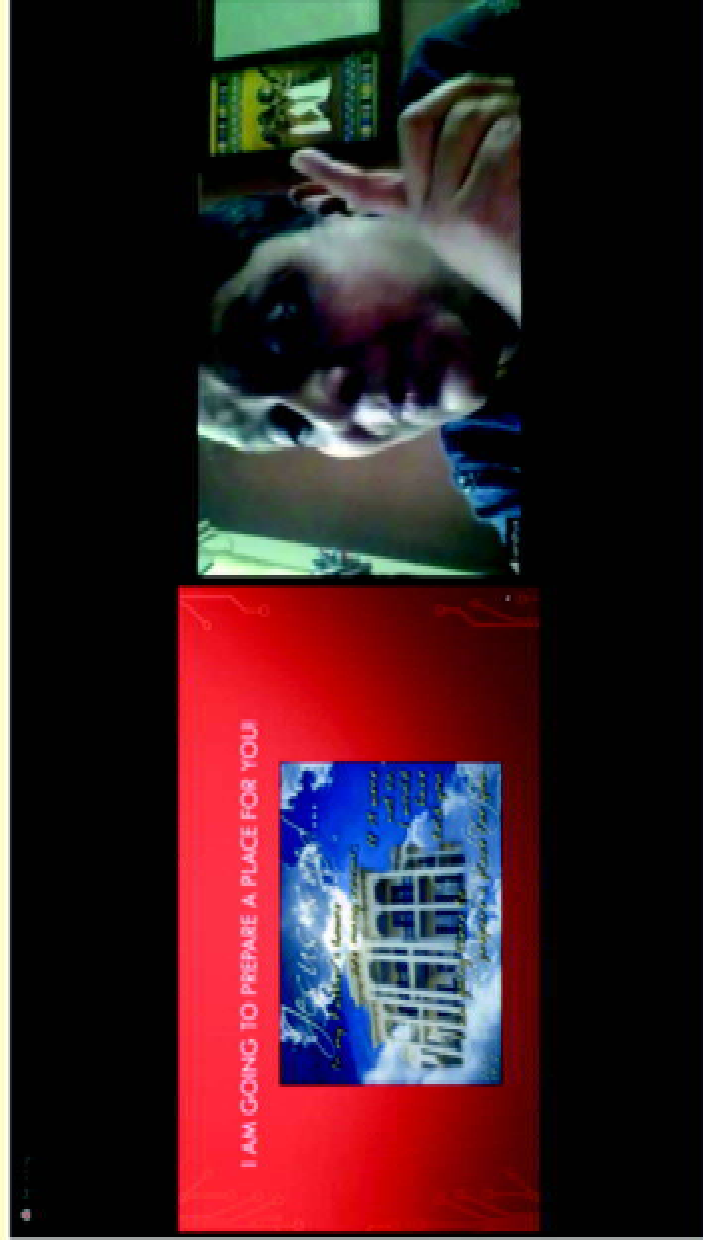


### Bible Lesson in Breakout rooms

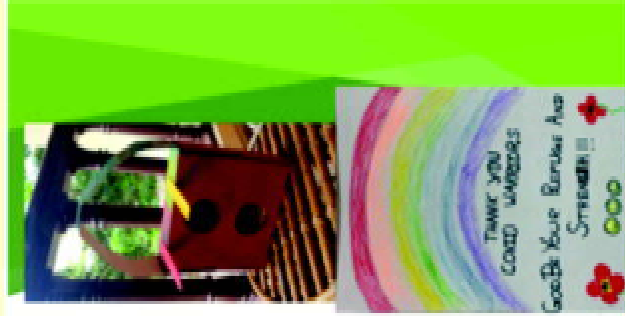
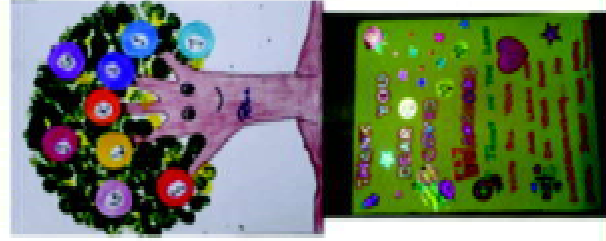
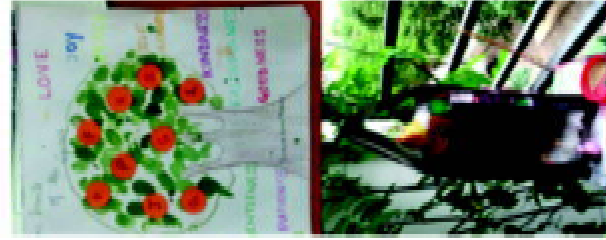




General Assembly at VBS



VBS Primary Art



KIRK ENVIRONMENT DAY CRAFT - BIRD HOUSE / FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT THUMB PRINTING /  
/ THANK YOU CARDS FOR COVID WARRIORS - PRIMARY SECTION - VBS 2021

## Asha VBS 2021



Asha VBS was conducted from June 1 to 10, 2021 on Zoom/Google meet platform/WhatsApp video call format between 10 to 11 AM for the children of Asha of both the Egmore and Thirupalayvanam campuses. Mrs. Nalini Manuel the Director and the teachers of Asha conducted the VBS. The students of Asha, their siblings and at least one care giver attended the VBS. Therefore the number of participants was at least 100 of which 58 were Asha Children. The theme of the VBS was My Rock - Sustaining God, Protecting God and Strengthening God – very appropriate for such a time as this.

Three Bible stories and three Bible verses (one from each attribute of God) were taught during these days. Every day the children had some craft activity to do-making lion face masks and Noah's ark, and colouring Elijah's raven and Samson's last triumphant moment etc. Parents helped children learn verses or do the actions for the verses. Siblings and students played teacher – student telling the stories learnt. Each day parents sent a picture of the activity done by the students.

The final day program held in each classroom was a moment of gratitude to God for the way He led the first virtual VBS for Asha children. Each class had its own unique way of sharing the lessons learnt- children telling the story, parents telling truths they learnt, families acting out the stories and all including parents and siblings reciting memory verses and singing the VBS songs.

Certain images lie etched in my mind. After listening to the incident of the feeding of 5000, one student took three pots of rice and millets and bent his knee and prayed "Thank you Jesus". The story of Naomi and Ruth was enacted by a family – moving from one room to another depicting the movement from Moab to Bethlehem, a green cloth on the floor represented Boaz's field and rice on the cloth was gleaned, of course there was a wedding and baby Obed. A big sister sharing the story of Daniel and lion's den, imitating the

way the story was told in class, brought great truths of God's protection.

Here are a few extracts of appreciation received:

*The way the VBS programme was conducted was remarkable!*

*The efforts gone behind in making children understand stories, learn songs, recite memory verses and above all to \*know Jesus\* are breathtaking. Wonderful, dear team of teachers ! Your dedication is much appreciated.*

*Sending activities and getting children to do them is not an easy task. Creative activities were given and children showed their involvement. A big hand of applause to the parents who encouraged their kids to do them!*

*I was much impressed by Saraswathi's (hope I am mentioning the right name) father who shared the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the teacher encouraged him to remember that Jesus will be with his family in any trouble. I did enjoy the story of Ruth. Hats off to the effort taken by the parents!*

*The way Satish encouraged and appreciated his friends for the drawings they did is something to be admired.*

*To God be the glory!! He gave me an opportunity to see and know about ASHA.*

*How can I end my epilogue without mentioning the silent driving force behind this programme?:) Wonderful, Nalini Aunty ! You are the biggest support for your team. I pray that God gives you all the strength you need to be a blessing for many more lives. Thank you.- Jesuleena*

*God bless you all what a wonderful opportunity to see eternal investments into these little lambs. Appreciation to Mrs.Nalini, and the team, God bless each teacher, volunteer and the tech team people. It's amazing that parents were willing too. May God bless these seeds and make it count for both now and future. - Pastor Paul*

*Very good programs and activities! Happy to see the enthusiasm and active participation from the children, parents, and the teachers & Mrs. Nalini. Best wishes & God bless!! - John Ravindran*

*A very good programme!*

*God bless Nalini, the teachers, the children and their parents. - Abraham Mani*

*Great job! Well done! - Rajan Paul*

*Truly a wonderful program by the children- Was lovely to see the participation of the parents too-Appreciation to the dedicated team at ASHA. God bless you all abundantly. - Archana Simon*

One Asha teacher remarked "This VBS was a fulfilling experience as the word of God reached the families of our children".

To God be the glory for the way He led Asha during the year and this family VBS. Amen.

*Sujatha Prasad*



#### **John's Corner**

### **HEAVEN ON OUR MIND**

(Read Ps.103:14-19, Mat.13: 41-43, Rev. 21: 3,4)

Man comes into this world and he  
Survives for but a little while;  
Soon he is gone and where depends  
On whether he's been good or vile.

All who received Christ and did good,  
Shall live with Him for evermore,  
In a mansion He has prepared,  
Where none shall pain or sorrow know.

But those who have rejected Christ,  
And lived in sin shall ever dwell  
With the devil in a furnace,  
A fiery lake, a place called hell.

So help us, Lord, to live each day  
With heaven always on our mind,  
Lest when we die with Satan we  
Our final destination find.

*John H. Bala Singh*



## The Food Samaritan

Night after night reading or listening to disturbing news associated with the pandemic sent me to bed with a heavy heart; sometimes, even making it hard to sleep. The only way to keep from spiralling downward in what otherwise seemed like a furious quicksand of bad news was to ask God, 'What do I do, Lord?'

Trust me, it wasn't my natural tendency to ask God that question. Yet, I saw God work with me to get me there. From ignorance, to avoidance of news, hearing news and trying not to care or be matter-of-factly, I tried everything to live in my own bubble. If you were like me, you know now that it was hard to stay that way, when every person six degrees from you (if not closer) had tragedy hit home.

"In the eye of the storm, keep your eyes on Me; I know what I'm doing" were the resounding words I heard from God. I surrendered and remember praying that night asking God to align me with His plans and purpose and show me what I could do. Little did I know that in another part of the city there was another restless heart like mine, having similar conversations with God. It didn't stop there! As we now realise, what first seemed like a burden God placed in individuals, He birthed beautifully a community that works together to serve people.

As God would have it, the Food Support community is a culmination of people of diverse age groups and backgrounds. We cooked and organised the distribution of food to those affected by Covid-19. Our unified goal has been to serve those whom we know God had deliberately dropped into our lives.

But that's not where it all began! We started out as a group that was created instinctively based on the needs that were arising in our Kirk community. We made a poster so that church members could get in touch with us for their needs. Little did we know or anticipate how far this poster would travel. We began receiving desperate calls from many people across Chennai. Well, honestly, we even got calls from other

parts of the country. Calls came from struggling patients, from families, concerned relatives and friends. We also had children living abroad calling us to help with providing food for their parents living in Chennai as there was absolutely nothing else they could do but depend on people like us.

Talking to some of these recipients, we realised that the food we sent to them was the first meal they were consuming in days; as they struggled under the weight of the virus. Through tears of pain we heard life stories of abandoned and lonely people. Through tears of gratitude we heard them bless us for the life saver our help was to them. We encountered recipients who were critically ill or had family members who were badly affected by Covid-19. There were some who had lost a loved one or in some cases had lost up to four family members. What was most heart-breaking though was losing recipients to whom we were still sending food and praying would somehow have their health restored.

On the brighter side, we also watched people who were really critically ill becoming well and getting discharged. We had a front row view of God at work in many lives. As volunteers, we saw God inspire us each day to extend compassion to our recipients. It added joy and purpose to our lives as we began to be mindful of the needs of those we were supporting. Careful thought went into not just preparing food but also in writing notes, Bible verses and prayers as led by the Spirit of God. Our recipients appreciated these words. Some later told us that they held on to verses we sent as God's personal promise to them, in their journey of recovery.

Our group of volunteers grew slowly. Who would have thought that helping could be contagious! We were blessed to see our eager and enthused volunteers bring their eager and enthused friends to join us in serving. Each time we felt it would be good to have more hands to help, even before we could ask, there was someone or the other who came forward and asked if they could join along and help. As the volunteers christened themselves as 'Marthas', I can say with absolute confidence that the Mary in them, brought forth the Marthas they have been to countless people.

The beauty of God is that He works always in multiple dimensions. As a community of volunteers, we stand witness to the truth that God deals with many lives at once. Though we cannot always see or know how, through this venture, we have seen and known that God

called some to serve, to some He brought purpose, some He healed and restored, some He provided for, some He revealed Himself to, and some He called home to Himself. He was at work in us individually, and we saw Him work through us, together. Sovereign as He is, we saw Him at work in multiple situations, in multiple ways, all at once; connecting people at the right time to bring to fruition His plan.

Ephesians 3:20 says, "To Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." Most individuals from the community we've become today will tell you that when they were asked to help and they said 'Yes', they didn't know it would turn out to be the outreach it has become today. And we know that God's power that was in work within us prepared us and helped us get to a place we didn't ask or imagine we'd be in when we uttered that prayer, "What do I do, Lord?"

Taking the five loaves and two fish we the 93 volunteers had to offer, God blessed about 123 families with over 4500 meals in about two months; and our cup still runs over.

At the end of June, as I write this, the number of requests has come down steadily and the Covid-19 situation has improved in Chennai. Therefore we are planning to take a break from our food support service. If there is need for such a service in future, I am sure we will rise to the occasion.

In closing, we request you to continue praying for us. We desire to follow the way Jesus leads us, be sensitive to His voice and reflect Him in every step of the way.

"To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (Eph 3:21)

Andrea Nirmal Rufus

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How can we live in harmony? First we need to know we are all madly in love with the same God.

*Thomas Aquinas*

The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart.

Psalm 34:18

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## MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

### ADDICTION-IV

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise (Proverbs 20:1 NKJV).

**Alcoholism** is a disease in which a person has an overwhelming desire to drink alcoholic beverages. A person who has this disease is called an alcoholic. A person may get drunk occasionally, but that does not make him or her an alcoholic. An alcoholic feels forced to drink. High levels of alcohol consumption are associated with social, psychological and physical problems. The majority of alcoholics do not have an associated psychiatric illness, but a few drink heavily in an attempt to relieve anxiety or depression. Some researchers believe psychological pressures, such as stress, may cause alcoholism. Alcoholics believe they can make life bearable only by drinking.

#### **Social problems:**

These include absenteeism from work, unemployment, marital tensions, child abuse, financial difficulties, and problems with the law such as violence and traffic offences.

#### **Psychological problems:**

Depression is common and is usually reactive to the numerous social problems which heavy drinking creates. Alcohol also has a direct depressant effect. Attempted suicide and completed suicide are often associated with alcohol misuse. Anxiety is relieved by alcohol. People who are socially anxious may consequently use alcohol in this way and may develop dependence.

Criteria of alcohol dependence are: - Increased frequency of drinking; Priority of drinking over other activities; Tolerance of effects of alcohol; Repeated withdrawal symptoms; Relief of withdrawal symptoms by further drinking; Subjective compulsion to drink; Resuming drinking after abstinence.

[To be continued]

*Dr. (Mrs) Rajini Kantha Narendranath*



## My Daily Walk...

Every evening I take a walk around my Apartment Complex, more as a ritualistic exercise for health purposes. Our Complex is surrounded by a compound wall with a row of crotons and potted plants along the walls and flanked by a variety of trees outside the wall. My walk is mostly solitary and when I walk, I either listen to music using earphones or talk to God, often interceding. I become oblivious of my surrounding when I do this. Then one day something happened, though nothing dramatic or extraordinary, but something subtle that changed my perspective about what I see around me.

Two weeks back when I stepped out to take my walk, what met my eyes was this huge tree outside, near our gate, in full bloom with bright yellow flowers, presenting a gorgeous sight. I stood admiring the beauty of it. But when my walk took me near the tree, I saw the very same flowers which I saw a few minutes ago, falling to the ground one by one. I felt sad seeing how transient their life is. We are no different. We also have a fleeting life. "Man springs up like a flower and withers away" (Job14:2)

Since then, during my walks I have started observing the greenery around, the various shapes and colour of the leaves of the crotons, the potted flowers (this being the flowering season) in full bloom throwing a riot of colours reminding me that even King Solomon in all his splendor was not dressed like these! The trees for shade and utility, in different shades of green serving as a home to birds and squirrels draw my attention too. Quite a few birds I see, crows, koels, pigeons and parrots and watching them I remember the verse "they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them". What I look forward to during the walk is the breeze which hardly sets in. But when it comes it feels so heavenly and I deeply inhale the cool air, wondering how Adam would have felt when God breathed life into him. And now, how acutely we are aware of our need for air to survive, seeing the shortage of oxygen which the trees can give so freely! At times I sit on the stone slab, to

take a break from my walk. I often look up at the sky, nowadays mostly a dull grayish blue sky with a few eagles circling gracefully high above and I feel like singing "I rise up like an eagle and I will soar with you..." I miss the clear blue sky with white cotton clouds floating and the pinkish orange tint of the sunset sky, beautifully proclaiming the works of His hand. I try to imagine how our Lord is enthroned high above in heavens...

My daily walk has opened my eyes to the beauty of Nature, nothing exotic perhaps but the simple things like a fluttering butterfly, a fresh bloom, an agile squirrel squeaking its lungs out and the lovely call of the koel all reveal God's awesome power, His creative design and perfection, His divine nature and His loving care. Nature is God's creation through which he teaches us, talks to us and provides for us but sadly "the earth is defiled by people" (Isa 24:5) Often when I get back from my walk, my heart is filled with a warmth and gratitude to see that despite living right in the middle of the city I am blessed with such treasures. I feel humbled knowing though the earth is our Lord's footstool He clothed it with so much of beauty and utility and how we have lost the urge to preserve it.

It is true in the present circumstances, we are too busy and our hearts grow weary under the stress of life and we wonder where and when is the time to "stand and stare" at nature. My walk reminds me that God who is mindful of the flowers, birds and the bees will never forsake us, created in His image. A few minutes of basking in the beauty of nature, enabling us to rise above the mundane problems is God's way of teaching us how much more we are valuable in His sight!

*Suguna Joseph*

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When I worship, I would rather my heart be without words  
than my words be without heart.

*Lamar Boschman*

The pierced hand, which gave thee healing, has appointed  
thee to the Lord's service, and made thee a chosen vessel  
to bear His Name.

*Charles Spurgeon*

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## La Connaissance

*'Knowledge' in French*

Once as a woman and her toddler were walking along a riverbank, the child suddenly slipped into the river. The mother was in the latter stages of pregnancy and besides, she couldn't swim. Hearing her screaming in terror, help finally arrived. However the tragedy was, when they stepped into those murky waters to retrieve the dead child, they found the water to be only waist deep! The child could have been easily saved but the mother didn't because of lack of knowledge.

'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,' says the Lord (Hosea 4:6) I don't know about you, but I for one do not want to perish for the above reason. Knowledge gives power. Scouting the Promised Land prior to waging war gave Joshua victory (Joshua 2). It enabled the Son of God to endure the cross. ('Jesus, *knowing* that the Father had given all things into His hands...' John 13:3)

So know God. Know His goodness. His character. Not about Him but know Him as you would your spouse or best friend. There is no greater thing. 'Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.' Philippians 3:8

Know yourself. Analyse your character. Identify your weaknesses. If lack of sleep reduces your threshold of patience with your kids then get a good night's rest. If minor disappointments wreck your mood, learn to work around it. Be objective. The way we Christians prioritise our health is sometimes appalling. "And it is true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with the world around them than are the children of the light." (Luke 16:8). God wants us to keep abreast with information. He is also into preventive medicine – that is His pattern (for He says "flee from temptation"). It's true, He

is our healer but He wants us to exercise, eat right and sleep for 8 hours as well, for we are His temple. We better take care of it.

Know your family. Know their likes and dislikes. Study them as you would a textbook of medicine. "Behold, God is mighty, but despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding." Job 36:5. God despises no one because He knows why they do what they do. Intimate knowledge paves the way for forgiveness and a happy home.

Know what is happening around you. Not gossip but facts – because Jesus did! (Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? Luke 13:4). How are we supposed to pray for our country if we don't know what is going on? A lot of people think that Jesus was an idealistic person but He was very practical too. He was a man who was aware of his surroundings.

Write down the things you are learning – from the Word, from time spent with God and from people around you (As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17). Keep a journal. We are prone to forget. That's why teachers recommend that we take notes and go through them. The same holds true in the school of life.

A knowledgeable person need not be boring. Look at God – He is a God of creativity with a great sense of humor. If you don't agree with me look at the giraffe, the hippopotamus or the orangutan. We desperately need that in the church. It's true that knowledge puffs up and that excessive study leads to sorrow (Proverbs 12:12). Solomon warns us with these famous words - "Do not be over righteous, neither be over wise — why destroy yourself? Do not be over wicked, and do not be a fool — why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes." Ecclesiastes 7:16-18. Oh! but the right kind of knowledge builds up. It leads to life everlasting. Learn to do good. Seek knowledge. Keep asking. Keep knocking and never stop learning.

\*"So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and *find the knowledge of God*. For the Lord gives wisdom;

*from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” Proverbs 2:2-6*

\*“Now here’s a surprise: The master praised the crooked manager! And why? Because he knew how to look after himself. Streetwise people are smarter in this regard than law-abiding citizens. They are on *constant alert*, looking for angles, surviving by their wits. I want you to be smart in the same way—but for what is right —using every adversity to stimulate you to *creative survival*, to concentrate your attention on the bare essentials, so you’ll live, really live, and not complacently just get by on good behavior.” Luke 16:8-9 MSG

*Dr. Susan Rajkumari*

## **OBITUARIES**

Mr. Ruolkhumlien Buhiril, our Elder, passed away on 15th April 2021 aged 60 years. The thanksgiving memorial service was held on 22nd April 2021.

Mrs. Jean Barbara Canthaswamy passed away on 30th April 2021 aged 91 years and was buried in the Kilpauk Cemetery.

Mrs. Prema Devakaran passed away on 6th May 2021 aged 84 years and was buried in the Kasimedu Cemetery.

Dr. J.D. Johnson, father of our Presbyterian Rev. Isaac Johnson, passed away on 13th May 2021 aged 77 years and was buried in the Kasimedu Cemetery.

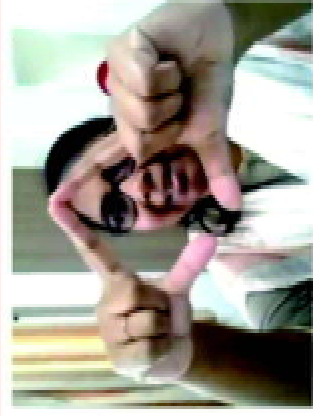
Mr. P.F.S. Venkatarangam passed away on 24th May 2021 aged 78 years and was buried in the Kasimedu Cemetery.

Ms. Premila Venkatarangam passed away on 25th May 2021 aged 75 years and was buried in the Kasimedu Cemetery.

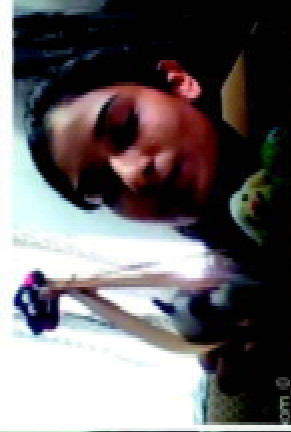
Mr. David Pacheco passed away on 30th May 2021 aged 70 years and was buried in the Kilpauk Cemetery.

Mrs. Lily Venkatarangam passed away on 26th June 2021 aged 69 years and was buried in the Kasimedu Cemetery.

We convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families.



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