

Kirkspire



**ASH
WEDNESDAY**

May your Ash Wednesday be a time
of reflection and promise.

February 2015

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Editor : Mrs. R. Chandy

Word from the Pastor



Very soon, we would be approaching the season of Lent. The church at large focuses on the vicarious sufferings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and all that our Lord went through to procure our salvation and sanctification.

In many ways, over the years, there are some good practices which are observed in order to be more focused on the Cross. Many take time to fast and pray as well as abstain from various foods, which is good.

As we focus on the Person of Christ and on the Cross of Christ, let's take time this season to allow ourselves to ponder on precisely this question: What is it that I am bent on doing, which will draw me closer to Jesus my Lord?

- *Can I take those steps which will cause me to be more real and practical in my Christian life?*
- *Whatever be that which is pent up in me already, am I willing to let go and let Jesus my Lord take control?*

It might sound strange to some of us that, in reality, already in less than 50 days of this new year, the old nature is still having a big sway over us.

We are not willing to take efforts to put off the old man and put on the new man.

Emotionally and physically we suffer because of all that which is pent up in us.

Think of the little things which disturb you the most in a large way.

This reminds me of an old story an old man told his grandson. "My son, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all."

"One is Evil. It is anger, jealousy, greed, resentment, inferiority, lies

and ego. The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, humility, kindness, empathy and truth."

The boy thought about it and asked, "Grandfather, which wolf wins?"
The old man quietly replied, "The one you feed."

- *Can I take time this season at least to starve the flesh and feed the soul and spirit?*
- *Can I take time this season to be more earnest for the upliftment of my own self?*

Jesus our Lord, the Bible says, withdrew to lonely places to be with the Father. *Can we take time to withdraw, to draw more power, more love and more of the Master into our lives?*

May good things happen this season and beyond within each of us.

Peter Francis
Pastor

Unbelief will destroy the best of us. Faith will save the worst of us.

- *C.H. Spurgeon*

Nothing in the Scripture indicates that the church should lure people by presenting Christianity as an attractive option.

- *John MacArthur*

Church Camp 2015



In what was for Chennai an unusually chill morning on the 14th of January, 160 members of The Kirk (including a few visitors) arrived at the Joe Beach Resort, for two days of spiritual manna amidst the sylvan surroundings near the sea. This is reportedly the biggest attendance at any Church Camp of The Kirk.

The theme was: 'TURNING SETBACKS INTO SPRINGBOARDS'

Rev. Dr. Wintle elucidated how Setbacks were turned into Springboards by The Lord Jesus, Peter and John and Paul, while Pastor CB Samuel did the same by exposition of the lives of Moses, Joseph and Ruth and Naomi.

From the two days' topics, the central thoughts were:

- Jesus Christ: Obedience to the Father's will is paramount, even to the point of death
- Joseph: God turns adversity into opportunity; reconciliation and not revenge is the answer to adversity.
- Ruth and Naomi: Attitude determines how we view situations. Whereas Naomi saw only misfortune, Ruth saw the opportunity for showing her love and shouldering her responsibility towards Naomi, even amidst a foreign people
- Peter: through his change from the impetuous Peter to the bold disciple who testifies for Christ before the Sanhedrin, we see how in every obstacle there is opportunity for transformation, when we allow God to lead the change
- Paul: willing to be in chains for Christ, did not seek only fame in serving the Lord
- Moses: there are Treasures in our wilderness experiences, which seem wasteful when they occur

The night of 14th January after supper drew young and not so young alike, to the starlit skies near the beach where a cheery bon-fire warmed everyone's heart. Dumb-charades, Bible quizzes and general banter filled the air and as the fire diminished and the embers glowed, all retired for a well earned rest.

The 'quiet time' the next morning, saw groups study Colossians 3: 1-17, recognise setbacks and springboards from the passage; relate the same to personal life and commit to transform at least one setback into a springboard. This was a well thought out manner of applying what was learnt.

Some 'Points to Ponder' from the speakers and the sessions:

- Some people are so cheerful, they refer to orthopaedic supports as "ornaments of old age"
- Our seemingly wasted and waiting years are 'Treasures in the wilderness'
- If like Peter in the initial stages, we depend on our ability we fail, we can only stand through sustained obedience to God, by His grace alone
- If you can stop your crying then you can hear God cry
- The Church that does not hear the cry of the people has no place in the ears of God.
- The Church should build 'communities of hope'
- Setbacks are never final, they are opportunities to bless others, even if your dream has not come true
- Do not fear to revisit your setbacks

As all good things have to end, the good food, the spiritual manna, the fellowship, all drew to an end with departure after tea on 15th January.

S. Gabriel

Turning setbacks into springboards

The theme was 'Turning setbacks into springboards'.

All of us experience setbacks in our lives, and the aim of the camp was to equip us spiritually to be able to emerge victoriously from them.

Pastor CB Samuel took us through a study of the Old Testament stalwarts who suffered setbacks, and how they emerged victoriously from them:

- The first was from the life of Joseph, and all that he suffered and how, in the end, when his brothers were apprehensive of what he would do to them, Joseph ascribed to God the plan for his being in Egypt so that many lives may be saved. He was a blessing as a slave, as a prisoner and, later, as Prime Minister of Egypt.
- The second was Ruth, and the contrast between Ruth and Naomi. Naomi saw punishment in the death of her husband and sons and her having to return. But Ruth saw her God and wanted to belong to Him and his people. Ruth was acknowledged as being worth seven sons for her dedication to Naomi and her love for God.
- The third was Moses, who suffered a severe setback and went into exile in the desert for forty years. Yet who better than him to go to the courts of Pharaoh where he grew up, and lead the nation of Israel through the desert where he had lived? Moses is an example of how our wilderness experiences are a treasure that teaches us to depend on God.

Pastor Samuel took us through their lives in a homespun, story-telling style, inter-woven with examples people of whom he knew, so that the lessons were real and vivid to everyone.

Dr Brian Wintle, the New Testament scholar, took us through a study of characters that illustrated victory over setbacks:

- The first example was that of Christ, and how He overcame the setback of his arrest and crucifixion through obedience to the father, to rise triumphant as the Lamb of the world who saves us from our sins. The key was obedience even to the point of death. What is our response when faced with adversity? Do we learn obedience through suffering? The example given was also the contrast between Adam, who was disobedient, and brought the fall of man, and the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who was obedient and restored us into a right relationship with God.
- The second example, and a very powerful one, was of Peter, and how when he relied on his own strength during the setback of Christ's arrest, he failed, rejecting Jesus three times. Yet the same Peter, when he was filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke boldly and was able to bring 3000 to Christ in a single day! In Acts 3 and 4 as well, Peter seized the opportunity to speak boldly, even to the Sanhedrin and left them unable to deal with his stout refusal to stop preaching Christ.
- The third example was Paul, who although in chains, never lost sight of God's purpose for him, and pressed on towards that goal no matter what his circumstances. His perspective was shaped by his devotion to Christ, and the commission he had received from Jesus. Similarly, who we are, and what our circumstances are, is shaped by our thinking; we must be able to see everything from God's perspective.

We also had group discussions where we shared our experiences with setbacks and springboards with each other.

The camp fire on the evening of the 14th after dinner was conducted by the youth, and enjoyed by all with lively participation in hotly contested games of knowledge of the Bible.

The children had their own program conducted by Albert and his team from Scripture Union, and they had a good time. They also presented songs and skits on the last day, and also during the camp fire.

Pastor Isaac Johnson summarised it at the end of the sessions with three questions:

- Who turns setbacks into springboards? The answer, of course, is God.

- How do we define setbacks and springboards in our lives? Often, what we consider setbacks are springboards, and what we consider springboards are actually setbacks from God's perspective.
- Why does God turn our setbacks into springboards? To advance the gospel for Christ. And for our progress and joy in the faith.

Thanks are due to District 9 for organizing the camp so well, and managing everything so that the focus remained on the spiritual training we received.

David Appasamy



Bible Quiz No. 53 - February 2015

(Based on the book of Jeremiah - King James' Versio



Note : Give only 1 reference

1. "The Lord has added grief to my sorrow" who said this?
2. "The strong staff and beautiful rod". Who is this?
3. Name the wind that strikes the head of the wicked?
4. What did the Lord call Pashur the priest?
5. What has become a degenerate plant of a strange vine though the Lord had planted a noble vine, a wholly right seed?
6. What is like fire and the hammer that breaks rocks?
7. The land of carved images which became mad?
8. Which is the animal that leaves its child because there is no grass?
9. Who all did anger the Lord in showing incense to Baal?
10. Who becomes like a heath in the desert?

Send answers by 25th February 2015.

Usha George

Interruptions - Bane or Blessing?

At the shrill ringing of the phone, I clamber down the ladder, thoroughly vexed and irritated. I am trying to clean the topmost shelf of the kitchen cabinet and this is the third time I am interrupted. A friend is on the line needing a sympathetic shoulder to cry on. She is having a tough time with her teenage son and is wondering how long she would be able to put up with this rebellious phase. As she disconnects, I lose all interest in finishing the job and just sit down wondering why we are seldom able to finish the job we undertake without being interrupted, making waves of irritation and anger well up within us. It is all the more irritating when we are engrossed in what we are doing like reading a book or writing something important as the trend of thought gets broken. How did Jesus cope, I wonder – after all, He was interrupted time and time again?

Jesus was sleeping when the storm hits the boat in which He and His disciples were journeying. Afraid and helpless the disciples wake Him up. While He chides them for their unbelief He quietly calms the storm. As Jesus goes to heal the daughter of the ruler He is interrupted by the timid touch of the bleeding woman. He could feel the power draining from Him. But He is gentle with her commending her for her immense faith in Him and then goes on to bring the dead girl to life as well. No anger, no frustration. He is not even allowed to grieve for the death of His cousin John the Baptist. The crowd follows Him to the solitary place to which He retires. But He only has compassion on them! On a Sabbath day when He is teaching in the synagogue Jesus sees a crippled woman bent double. He pauses in the middle of his teaching, calls her forward and heals her. In Mark chapter 7 we read about the Syrophenician woman whose persistent faith makes Him heal her daughter. We could do well to learn a few lessons on handling interruptions from the gentle Shepherd.

Jesus makes it clear that people – not en masse – but individuals, matter more than schedules and time frames. Every human being is special to Him – be it the woman of ill repute, the Centurion or the Samaritan woman. He was all there for them in times of need. Today

we are so preoccupied with our own affairs that we hardly have time for others. We are afraid that someone would barge in stealing our time and attention. Maybe God allows interruptions in our life to help us grow in our sensitivity to the needs of others – to realise that people matter more than deadlines – to make us grow in our love for each other. He works in our willingness to reach out and wipe a tear or offer comfort at the cost of our own work remaining unfinished. By the way, the friend who called in the middle of my cleaning later on said she felt so much better after our telephone conversation, that she was able to think of many constructive solutions for her problem – and all that I did was just listen to her.

Interruptions can also help us to rethink what we are doing often offering a fresh new perspective to the job at hand. A break may be just the thing we need to evaluate what we are doing and see if we are on the right track. Often this leads to new and better methods of finishing it. Thomas Edison once said “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work”. What is crucial is that we don’t let interruptions and hindrances discourage us to the extent of giving up. Interruptions on the other hand have stimulated the thinking and imagination of many a great inventor leading them on to bigger and better discoveries. Perhaps we too could learn to see interruptions not as sources of irritation but as opportunities for betterment.

Sometimes interruptions come in the form of a major crisis which disrupts and alters the very course of our life. When we are confronted with life altering interventions we would do well to remember that we have a God who is Sovereign, who is in total control of circumstances, One who has already gone before us and knows what lies ahead. Saul is on his way to Damascus to imprison the believing Christians when the Call comes. Saul becomes Paul with a radical total transformation in his way of life! God’s intervention in the life of Mary alters her otherwise mundane life and elevates her to become the mother of the Saviour. The disciples, simple illiterate fishermen, become fishers of men! When life deals a stunning blow plunging us into the depth of despair, like the loss of a loved one, a broken relationship or financial disaster, we would do well to remind ourselves that our God is a God of second chances and new beginnings. No matter how painful and bad the situation may be, we can always trust Him to chart a new way for us as long as we are willing to move onward with Him. Isaiah 41:18 says *“God will make rivers flow on barren heights and springs within valleys. He will turn deserts into*

pools of water and parched ground into springs". When a crisis turns our life upside down we can still come back right side up as long as we cling to our Lord and Saviour, looking out for new doors to open and new paths to tread on. Could we, this New Year, stop seeing interruptions as hindrances and impediments and look on them as opportunities for a fresh spate of blessings and new beginnings?

Chitra Bennett

Who is Jesus?

In chemistry,
He turned water to wine,

In biology,
He was born without the normal conception;

In physics,
He disproved the law of gravity when
He ascended into heaven;

In economics,
He disproved the law of diminishing return by feeding 500 men
with two fishes & 5 loaves of bread;

In medicine,
He cured the sick and the blind without administering a single
dose of drugs,

In history,
He is the beginning and the end;

In government,
He said that He shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
Prince of Peace,

In religion,
He said no one comes to the Father except through Him;
So, Who is He?
He is Jesus!

Remain in God and seek his face always. Amen!

Contributed by
Mrs. Mary Karkada



Medical Corner

Fever

“Doctors treat, but Jesus heals”.

What is Fever?

Fever is a rise in body temperature above normal (where normal is 98.40 F/370C). It may be accompanied by shivering, headache, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea or rashes. A fever is only a symptom, the body's defences kicking in to fight anything abnormal in the body, including infections.

It never is 'just a fever'. An elevated body temperature is a response the body sends out that all is not well. A fever is an indication that there is an indication that there is an infection in the body or abnormality that needs to be investigated. Good if the fever subsides by itself, with a few mild medications. But if the fever is prolonged, unrelenting or recurring, clearly it must be investigated. The worrisome thing is that people don't treat a fever seriously. If it is self-limiting, it does not matter, but if the fever continues, it has to be investigated for infection agents. Unless diagnosis is done at the right time, a whole bunch of complications can ensue.

Advanced fever clinics and hospitals aim at providing diagnosis of “fevers of unknown origin” (FUO) and treat the underlying condition. The entire spectrum may include a range of over 200 diseases. Top on the list are: Tuberculosis, cancer, common viral and bacterial infections that go untreated or develop uncommon symptoms and auto immune disorders. Three levels of tests are available for the patient, depending on how soon clues are spotted and diagnosis is arrived at.

Fever cannot be taken lightly, especially if it is above 1030 F, and is persistent over three days or more. We need to identify the underlying problem, and effectively treat it. Allowing fever to continue for a long while will weaken the body. It can also be fatal, if we do not diagnose the cause. Also if we don't suspect, we can miss the diagnosis.

John's Corner

DISTRACT ME, LORD!

Read Heb. 12 : 1, 2
(Feb. 18th is Ash Wednesday)

Distract me, Lord, from wickedness,
That I attracted be
To seek Your face, Your will desire,
And do what pleases Thee.

The pleasures of this world, dear Lord,
Lure me to go astray;
I'm tempted oft to please myself,
And not Your voice obey.

Except You guide me constantly,
The crown I cannot gain,
You've promised to all who endure,
And call upon Your name.

Keep me in purpose steadfast, Lord,
My eyes focused on Thee,
Lest by the devil I'm enticed
To sin and stray from Thee.

John H. Bala Singh

Answers to Bible Quiz No. 52 (January 2015)

Hearty Congratulations !

Right answers given by :

Mrs. Aruna Asir

The answers are :

1. House of Rekhav - 35 : 9
2. Jeremiah - 31 : 24
3. Coniah - 22 : 24
4. 'the host of heaven' - 33 : 22
5. 'With an everlasting love' - 31 : 3
6. The dungeon of Malchiah - 38 : 6
7. Turtle, Crane, Swallow - 8 : 7
8. Jerusalem - 13 : 27
9. Jehoiachin - 52 : 34
10. Egypt - 46 : 20

Usha George



To worship Only Thee

(A Lenten Introspection)

King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba spent a lot of time testing and learning from each other. A legend is told that Sheba sent two bouquets of flowers to King Solomon. One of them artificial and the other real flowers. She asked him to identify the true and the false. Solomon did that easily as he opened a palace window and in flew a few bees who promptly headed to the genuine flowers.

God is wiser than Solomon. He can always tell whether we are worshipping Him or the gods we have made with our hands and ideas. He is never deceived.

We consider ourselves 'enlightened' Christians. We do not bow to idols, wood or stone and yet in its place we have scores of other things. A friend quit her church because its minister had moved to another. Let us be wary of substituting humans for God. We remember Peter's words, "Stand up; I myself also am a man."

Not long ago I decorated a Christmas tree and covered it with shining bits of tinsel, coloured lights and other exquisite decorations. Everyone, admired it for its sparkling finery. In a week's time it was stripped bare of its artificial prettiness. It had no beauty of its own. The scriptures many times compare men with trees, which grow strong and beautiful and remain what God meant it to be. It is fed by the waters of life and when its day is over the world will be a richer place. What kind of trees are we?

Jesus does not accept hypocrisy in worship. Worship is far above and independent of tradition, rituals and liturgy. Do we say the Lord's prayer while the heart is not praying? Or repeat the Apostles Creed while the mind is wandering to the ends of the earth! Our worshipful activities should help us to love people and walk humbly before God - all seven days of the week.

How often Science marches ahead of God and is placed on the throne which belongs to God. We have yet to believe that we cannot carry

away wealth with us. This is not to decry education, money and other things but to express its tragic limitations to meet our deepest cries and our inevitable sudden needs.

We base our picture of the God we worship on the Biblical revelation of Him -- a loving heavenly Father, Mighty Creator, a Friend above all friends, and our Redeemer. Most of all we are to remember that He is a "jealous" God, who will not tolerate everything, because He is wholly holy. He has made us entirely by Himself, for Himself and expects us to live entirely for Himself .

Where can we worship God? Every where. In the sanctuary, in the glow of the stained glass, in a fellowship, in a sterile hospital room, on the tempestuous seas, a dark prison cell ,in the open fields, in an empty home or a thatched hut.

During this Lenten season, in everything we do or come across in our mundane everyday life may we be lifted higher and higher towards our Holy God. As we ponder on the awesome Passion of our Lord, let us forever worship and adore Him in spiritual Truth.

"The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee."

Usha Gorge

Kirk News



2015 started with the expectation of a fulfilling year ahead for the Church, a hope we could see reflected in the world around.

We can sincerely say that the first month demonstrated more than ever our need for the grace of God, which He is faithful to provide as the year unfolds. The forecasts for this year, be it economic, political or prophetic, make us turn our eyes to God for His renewing strength.

Certain events such as the AirAsia crash and more remind us to pray more fervently 'Thy Kingdom come'.

May we continue to rely on the Eternal King to fulfil His purpose for each of us as His beloved people, as He shepherds us from day to day.

Guest Speakers

4 th January Church	6pm	Rev. Douglas Campbell of the of Scotland spoke at the Healing service on "The Body of Christ" from 1 Cor.12:12-31.
25 th January	6pm	Dr. Naveen Narendranath, our member, spoke from Job 42:10-17 about "Our Master Restorer" at the Youth & Koinonia service.

Special events during January:

Covenant and communion service was held on the 4th – a special time of confession and commemoration of the covenant God has made with us through His Son Jesus Christ enabling us to lead a life pleasing to Him. This special service is held on the first Sunday every year.

The **Annual Church Camp** was held at Joe Beach Resort on East Coast Road on 14th & 15th. 160 people took part. The theme was

“Turning setbacks into springboards” from Philippians 1:12-26. The speakers Rev. Dr. Brian Wintle and Pastor C.B. Samuel conducted 5 sessions, teaching from the lives of Biblical personalities on how they handled adversities with God’s help.

The **Annual General Assembly** of the Kirk was held on 25th January after the 9AM service. On this occasion, which is open to all registered full communicant members of the church, a presentation was made on the life of the Church during the year 2014, along with the Audited Statement of Accounts for the Year 2013 – 2014.

House Church resumed on 23rd Jan. in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Anil Oommen.

The second house church of January was held on the 30th in the home of Dr. S. Mohan & Dr. (Mrs.) Thuthi Mohan.

District Meetings were conducted by,

District 5 on 11th Jan. in the home of Mr. & Mrs. D.S. Dennis and

District 1 on 25th Jan. in the home of Mr. David & Mrs. Abha Appasamy.

We thank the members for opening their homes in Christian love and fellowship.

Monday Bible Study resumed on 19th Jan., continuing with the Gospel of Luke while

Manse prayer resumed on Friday, 23rd Jan. and continued to study the Book of Psalms.

Evangelism & Missions Movement Fasting and Prayer resumed their weekly meetings from the 22nd of January. As you may be aware, the prayers focus on upholding our Evangelists, Missionaries and their ministry, apart from our Outreach Churches, Projects and Mission fields, various other matters concerning the life of our Church, and many crucial issues concerning our Nation. If you are free between 10:30am and 12:30pm, do join us every Thursday for a time of intercessory prayer in the SACCE building.

Kirk Sunday school resumed classes on the 11th of January and met every Sunday thereafter.

Kirk Youth Fellowship met on the 4th for a time of prayer. On 11th they attended the service in Tirupalaivanam and spent time with the youth there. Youth-led Bible Study was held on the 18th, and CATALYST Youth Worship happened on the 25th.

Congratulations!

Timothy and Amreetha were blessed with a baby girl on 7th January. Granddaughter to Mr. Joshua Paulraj and Mrs. Diana Paulraj (our Elder).

Please send your articles, poems, photos to the Editor or to the Church office by 30th of every month so that we can include your contribution, if selected, in the next issue.

Mahendra Kumar

OBITUARY

It is with deep grief that we announce the passing away of Rev. Murdoch MacKenzie in Edinburgh, Scotland on 2nd February. He was the Presbyter of St. Andrew's Church from 1972 to 1978.

Many of the projects of the church, particularly the Village Project, were introduced by him.

Our heartfelt condolences to Dr. (Mrs.) Anne MacKenzie and the children.



Church Camp 2015