

## Editor's Note

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# THE MORNING STAR

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RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION BUT SIN IS A REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE

## Subscription

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## JDCSI

### Youth Federation Carol Service

The first ever Combined Christmas Carol Service of the JDCSI Youth Federation was held at the Uduvil Girls' College Hall on 18-12-82 at 5 p. m.

It was a Service of Eight Lessons and Carols in which Youth groups from nine Churches participated — Pandaiterruppu, Vaddukoddai, Manipay, Nunavil, Uduvil, Navaly, Karainagar, Chavakachcheri and Inuvil.

The strain of the participants of having had to contribute more than one carol could have been easily avoided if more Churches could have joined. Some of the conspicuous absentees have choirs with a rich tradition of carnatic music.

We hope next year our Churches in the JDCSI would give more serious thought and preparation to this common programme during Christmas in which Youth groups from our churches get together for a joint effort.

The Combined Schools Christmas Programme in November every year is now confined largely to Youth in our Private Schools. Our Churches have the responsibility of taking care of a much larger clientele.

A Common Christmas Programme of Carol Singing for our JDCSI Churches is a far more healthy activity, in our view, than the haphazardly organised mid-night carols sung from house to house, which in squally times as the present, tend to cause considerable embarrassment both to house holders, the choristers and to the Executive Committees of Churches.

### Colombo Church

The Christmas Programme for our Colombo Church started on December 16 with a Carol Service for the adults at the Dutch Reformed Church. The Children's Carol Service was on the 18th of December at the Church Chapel at Fussels Lane. The Church Carol Group visited homes from December 16 to 21.

The Christmas Service and Holy Communion will be at 6.15 a. m. at the Dutch Reformed Church. The Watch Night Service will also be held at the Dutch Reformed Church at 10.30 p. m. on 31-12-82.

The Colombo Church Watch Night Service will be on the air on 31-12-82 from 11.15 p. m. — 12.05.

### Christmas Programme in our Churches

All Churches in the North in our Diocese will have their Christmas Services on the morning of the 25th followed by Holy Communion.

## Wedding

Ambalavanar — Ratnasabapathy

The marriage was solemnised at the CSI Church Tellippalai on Wednesday (15-12-82) of Arthur Rajanimalan, younger son of Rev. D. R. Ambalavanar and Mrs. Ambalavanar of Tellippalai and Nivetha Sasikala, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. Ratnasabapathy of Mallakam.

Rev. D. R. Ambalavanar, the father of the bridegroom officiated assisted by Rev. S. Manopavan. Sevak Rev. Sam Alfred preached the homily.

## The Bible Society of India

Mr. Theodore John Ramakrishnan has been appointed as the General Secretary of the Bible Society of India. Mr. Ramakrishnan who is 58 years old, is an M. A. in Economics and Political Economy. He comes to the Bible Society from Government Service where he held several responsible posts till his retirement in October 1981. He holds diplomas in O. T. and N. T. studies

Mr. Ramakrishnan is a lay leader and lay preacher and is a member of the Indiranagar Methodist Church.

## The National Christian Council of India

The Rev. Y. Moses (29), a Minister of the Karnataka Central Diocese has been appointed as the Youth Secretary of the NCCI. He was the Youth Secretary of the Karnataka Central Diocese before he was appointed by the NCCI and was active in youth programmes at different levels. He will be stationed at Nagpur.

## At Rest

Mr. K. J. Chelvarajan

As we go for print, we have received the sad news of the passing away in England of Mr. K. J. Chelvarajan, of Araly North Vaddukoddai. A full account will follow in our next issue.

Christmas Carol Services will be held on the 24th in the evening. The Executive Committees in most Churches have decided on suspending mid-night carols this year. Watchnight Holy Communion Services however, will be held in most churches on 31-12-82 followed by the morning New Year Service on 1-1-83 for those who could not attend the mid-night Service. The Kankesanthurai Church has a special Christmas Service of Thanksgiving on 25-12-82 at 4.30 p. m. when the New Electric lights of the Church will be dedicated by the Rev. D. R. Ambalavanar, the Circuit Pastor.

## First Eye Donation in Jaffna

P. Karthigesu (55) of "Nayanmar Veethi" Nallur was the first one to leave behind the wish that his eyes should be donated to the Jaffna Eye Donation Society, inaugurated recently by the Jaffna Lions Club.

On the death of Mr. P. Karthigesu on 15-12-82, his eyes were given to the Society which accepted them and sent them to Colombo as there was no immediate need for the eyes in Jaffna.

## SLBC Advertisements on Referendum Night

On the night of the Presidential Election, the usual Rs. 250 for 25 words was charged for Advertisements by the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. But on the Referendum Night (22-12-82) the charges have been Rs. 500 for 25 words.

It is estimated that some 10.5 million people were tuned in for the Referendum Results on 22-12-82.

## Church News from Abroad

### Brain Drain of Theologians :

According to "Asian Theological News", the number of Chinese theologians in North America is greater than their total in Asia, 90 per cent of Indian Theological Students go study in the West do not return to India. In the US, there is a Filipino Church in Chicago, which has seven Filipino pastors "in its pews" while more than 50 Filipino pastors are "selling life insurance in Los Angeles".

### Accustomed to Danger :

When the delegates from Cuba arrived for the World Alliance of Reformed Churches General Council in August, Canadian customs officers confiscated all their printed material, including WARC literature and Bible studies.

— One World.

### Book Shelter :

It is learnt that the Vatican has begun work on a Bomb Shelter (1.6 million US dollars) to protect its priceless library against nuclear damage and earthquakes. The Library dates from the 15th Century and houses some 70,000 manuscripts, 750,000 books, 100,000 maps and engravings and many thousands of archival volumes.

### Cutting down on Masculine Language in the Bible :

The NCC in the United States has announced a plan for a "lectionary" that would cut down on masculine language in the Scriptures. A lectionary according to one of the committee members, is prepared for being 'heard' by the congregation, not read.

In Roman 8, 29, six masculine images pile up in short order. "For those whom he fore knew

## 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's Birth in 1983

Religious celebrations to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther will begin on 4 May, 1983, at the Wartburg Castle, GDR, where the Protestant Reformer translated the New Testament into German, and on his birthday, 10 November, a service will be held in Eisleben — Luther's place of birth and death, the Lutheran committee of the Evangelical Churches in German Democratic Republic (GDR) has announced.

In addition to these events the committee, after their preparatory meeting, said that several regional meetings are also to be held between May and November 1983. An exhibition will be shown in Erfurt on "Martin Luther's Life, Works and Influence". The committee is also preparing religious programmes for both radio and television on the life and work of the reformer.

According to a press release from the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR the central theme of the celebrations will be to explain Luther's interpretation of the first commandment: "To love, fear and trust God above all". According to the committee, this theme will explain Luther's conception of God, mankind and the church. The organizing committee hopes that the 1983 celebrations will also stimulate the public's interest in Luther's works.

## Church of Sri Lanka

### Diamond Jubilee of Kotte Church

Kotte Church, founded by Rev. Samuel Lambreck in 1922 celebrates its Diamond Jubilee from December 4 to 12. It was on December 9, 1922, that the Foundation Stone for the New Christ Church was laid by the Bishop of Colombo, Rev. E. A. Copleston. A year after, the new Church was consecrated with the Rev. A. C. Houlder as the superintendent Missionary.

The first Sri Lankan Incumbent was the Rev. C. B. P. Wickremasinghe, Christian College, Kotte and CMS Girls' College, Kotte were once under the Kotte Mission.

The Church membership today is reported to be in the region of 500. This year a mission was conducted by Rev. and Mrs. Bala Arulpragasam. During the Diamond Jubilee Week, the Archdeacon of Colombo, the Ven. J. J. Gnanapragasam will conduct a mission.

The Church today is associated with the Capital City — Sri Jeywardhanapura.

he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be..... brethren".

The 'lectionary' will clear up the confusion for listener by avoiding the excessive masculine sound of he, he, he, he.





## EDITORIAL

## "We have seen his Star"

Amidst the darkness and gloom caused by natural disasters wrought this Christmas Season on human beings in Matale, Pollanaruwa and parts of the Eastern Province and amidst the creeping shades of 'terrorism' and 'anti-terrorism' in various forms enveloping the Northern part of the country, we are privileged again to hear the strident voices of the Wise Men of the East "We have seen his Star".

At the first Christmas, almost two thousand years ago, the "little town of Bethlehem" was occupied, we know, by military forces who dictated the lives of the local people. Christ was born into a world, as Malcolm Muggeridge puts it in his book *Jesus Re-discovered*, "as troubled as ours and into one of its more troubled corners".

Among the first refugees in the Middle East were Joseph and Mary who had to take the baby and run to Egypt to escape the murderous decree of a King. They were both "displaced persons".

But the "little town of Bethlehem" does not appear today to lie "in deep and dreamless sleep". Contemporary accounts of Bethlehem tell us that some of the largest souvenir shops in the world have now grown up in the "little town"—a tasteless commercialisation which offends the romantic sensitivities associated with "royal David's city" where once a mother laid her baby "in a manger for his bed".

There are today, we read, three Christmases in Bethlehem—Roman Catholics and Protestants celebrate on the 25th of December, Eastern Orthodox on the 7th of January and the Armenians, on the 18th of January.

The largest one which attracts the tourists is the Roman Catholic Celebration. Tickets are needed for a place in midnight mass which is televised throughout the world.

It is not difficult to see that there are today two kinds of people pre-occupied with the birth of the Christ. The first category of people are the 'once a year' visitors who do not really see the city but only its embellishments and revel in it. The second category of people are the native Arab Palestiman population who live in Bethlehem all the year round and to whom the season brings few "tidings of great cheer".

We find a striking parallel to this dispensation in our own country. The 'once-a-year' Sri Lankans who come home for Christmas see a disney-land, the like of which they and their children had never seen before in their home-country.

But to the native population who live amid the Sri Lankan sites and sounds all the year round, it is doubtful if the season brings much 'tidings of great cheer'.

The 'Star' which the Wise Men saw symbolises, however, the great event that took place in history which we celebrate during Christmas. The Redeemer took on flesh amidst oppression, poverty, discrimination and in what we would call "an occupied territory".

The memory of the birth of Jesus should therefore be a moment of re-newal, of return to the roots of our faith. The Incarnation as a contemporary writer puts it "calls into question our life styles, our organisational structures, our idols. All is shattered and we must continually begin anew".

Christmas of 1982 has to be a feast of commitment to speak out and struggle against all kinds of oppression, be they classist, racist, socio-cultural, sexist or ageist. For, the liberator is in our midst:—

"..... this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death  
our Death,  
We returned to our places,  
these kingdoms  
But no longer at ease here,  
in the old dispensation  
with an alien people  
clutching their gods.....

T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi"

## Ourselves

An Irish news agent at a News-stand is reported to greet his customers every day with the words: "Sir, do you want yesterday's issue or today's. If you want today's, you will have to come back tomorrow".

We have been sharing the Irish news agent's predicament this year, when we had to put up weekly with immense difficulties in keeping to schedule. At times, we know, our issues have been late even by a fortnight.

Where there has been an undue delay and we had to combine two issues into one, we have been making up for it with an additional page.

Very little purpose is, however, served by reciting a litany of our ills. It has been fashionable for some of our readers to greet us with the remark that they intend cancelling their subscriptions to the *Morning Star* as the paper is unduly late in coming to their hands.

While we often feel guilty on this score, we also know that our readers, by and large, do not wait for the *Morning Star* to get the supply of their daily news.

Here lies the crux of the matter. *The Morning Star*, the only regional *Christian Weekly* (if we are correct) with a Tamil inset, serves a different purpose to its readers than the national dailies or other Weekly news papers.

The news we give are largely centred round events in our Diocese and even events in other churches besides those in our Diocese. The Sri Lankan news of political interest, if any, are also intended for our overseas readers.

The views we express on current issues are views of the Christian Church on those issues. We have also sought to give in a nutshell 'church news from abroad' so that readers may be able to enlarge their perspectives while being preoccupied and obsessed with our own problems.

In this context, we wonder if we should be unduly fussy about issues being 'late'.

Instead of receiving the *Morning Star* every week with a few protesting growls, we will be happy if our readers could understand and appreciate the difficulties under which the paper manages to make its appearance every week, in fair 'weather' and foul.

We bring to our readers in this issue our greetings for the Season. We hope to meet you again on 7-1-83, after a brief holiday of a week. There will no issue of the *Morning Star* on 31-12-82.

## Symbolic Meaning of Christmas Tree

The following is an explanation from the German Democratic Republic:—

In the Northern parts of the globe Christmas time is Winter time. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in autumn; fir trees retain their needles, in spite of snow and cold. So, fir trees can give us a parable. Christ our Lord also retained his divinity during his whole path of self-humiliation on earth, from his birth as a helpless child in a manger to his death on the cross. Some of our fathers in Christ liked to use the words from Hosea 14:8. I 'am like green fir tree' as a parable of the strength to survive, of the invisible but nevertheless really present kingdom of Christ. Thus the words 'a green fir tree' became the foundation for the triumphal progress of the so called Christmas tree around half the world.

The symbolic 'yes' to the coming Lord using the fir tree

in a conscious way is well emphasised by many burning candles on the branches reminding us of the Lord who said 'I am the light of the world'. But a burning candle has to be eaten up in order to shine and burn and give warmth, in the same way that Jesus himself, being the light of the world had to be eaten up.

There is also another Christmas tradition. From the first to the fourth Sunday in Advent in our Churches you can find the Advent Wreath, also made from the branches of 'needles' and carrying four candles corresponding to the four Sundays.

The Advent Wreath with its evergreen branches—but also with its stinging needles—reminds us of the two crowns of the Lord, the 'Crown of glory' belonging to the King of Glory for ever and ever, and the 'crown of stinging-thorns'.

## Comment

## The Churches and Visitors

Visitors do surely have some rights if Christian Churches are meant to welcome outsiders and be more than closed holy clubs.

Consider first the entrance and the notice boards. It is often not possible to smarten up the whole building. But can't the front door and the notices be clean and smart as Marks and Spencers or a private home? And is it clear when services are held and that strangers of any denomination are welcome?

Are visitors pleasantly shown a seat, and given some way of following what is going on—a decently typed order of service (without too many abbreviations

like 'gradual' or 'MYF' or Series 99). And please may we know whether we are welcome at Holy Communion or not.

And can somebody check, regularly, whether the people running the services and preaching can be heard, clearly and distinctly? Even the regulars need to be able to listen to the sermons and the informed prayers.

I'm not hard of hearing but it is extraordinary how often I have found a carefully prepared exhortation or meditation mostly lost to visitors either because it is full of private jargon or because nobody has checked the acoustics or the amplification system for months.

Is this good evangelism?

—Andenshaw Papers.

