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# The Midlands Prayer Group

## News & Views

January 2007  
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Dearly Beloved in the Lord

in our faith, by participating more regularly in the life of the Church, and by reaching out to others with compassion and love. As we begin every new day, we pray that our repentance will bring us into a more intense relationship with God, with others, and even with ourselves, seeking to accomplish not our own wills, but the will of our Heavenly Father.

The beginning of the new year offers us an opportunity to make a resolution that matters, that transcends the goals inherent in so many "new year's resolutions" and offers us a foretaste of the very Kingdom of God that, while yet to be fully revealed, is already fully present in the life of the Church. It affords us an opportunity to pursue a new beginning, to transform our commitment and words into conviction and action, and to put our spiritual households into order, not only during the coming year but for the remainder of our lives. Ultimately, making the resolution to repent is not something restricted to the beginning of a new year; rather, it is the challenge - the Gospel's challenge - to be renewed in body and soul every day of our lives, to change our focus and direction in our pursuit of holiness rather than our own trivial pursuits.

We are blessed by God with the beginning of a new year. In thanksgiving, let us make our resolution one of repentance and interior change, aimed at "the one thing needful" - pursuing our lives in accordance with the will of God and the example of our Saviour. Let us "lay aside all earth cares" - and "resolutions" - replacing them with a firm commitment to seek renewal in the Lord. And let us resolve to remain

The beginning of every New Year finds many people making resolutions to improve their lives. Some people make a resolution to strengthen their financial or professional standing. Others resolve to lose weight or stop a bad habit. And there are many people who express the desire to improve their relationships with their families or co-workers, to help the needy, or to pursue some other lofty goal in life.

While it is natural to make such resolutions at the beginning of a new year, it is also more often than not the case that, within a few weeks, such resolutions are broken or forgotten. Life returns to "normal," to the "status quo." During the subsequent months, little attention is paid to broken resolutions which, by the end of the year, have been thoroughly forgotten.

The very heart of the Gospel may be summed up into a single word: repent! To be a follower of Christ means to resolve to change our minds, our hearts, and our lives, resolving to discern not our own wills and desires, but the Lord's.

Resolving to live according to God's will and the example we have been given by Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is something that is not restricted to the beginning of a new year, but faces us every day of our lives as Christians. We are continually challenged to embrace change by growing stronger

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- \* Services are held on the second Saturday of every month at  
 St. James Hill Church  
 Mere Green Road  
 Four Oaks, West Midlands  
 B75 5DD

**Next Service 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 2007**

**The Midlands Mar Thoma Prayer Group**



vigilant in fulfilling this resolution, especially in times of temptation or distress - times when Our Lord is quick to hear our prayers for help, guidance, and direction. In so doing, we will discover that indeed the Lord is with us at every moment and in every circumstance, giving us the resolve to grow in and with Him now and in the days to come.

May the good Lord bless us all this New Year.

With love in Christ,  
Gigy Achen

**A Leaf**

A little boy opened the big and old family Bible with fascination, looking at the old pages as he turned them. Then something fell out, and he picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed in between the pages. "Momma, look what I found," the boy called out. "What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked. With astonishment in his voice, he answered, "It's Adam's Suit!"



**An account of the Choir activities in 2006 – by Modit Monsi**

Hi!! Happy New Year!!

Where do I start?? Probably from the conception of the choir itself to sing on 9th Dec 07. Two songs were chosen by our choir master, Giboy George, two very wonderful songs that reflected the spirit of Xmas, and we – the choir - were put to task, to sing the 2 melodious songs to the best of our ability. From the outset, it was a hard song to learn, but it was learnt, honed in on every note by the choir master perfected (that I think)

by both his students and himself, coupled with the generous contributions from various members of the congregation in providing meals, drinks, places to practise. Practise sessions after practise session, should the carol service be a competition??, Various locations, times not being adhered to, all had to be seen through and eventually, on 9th Dec, the choir sang, they gave it their best shot, you decide whether it was the best, they sang their hearts out.

The Midland tots had their share of attention singing a very happy Xmas song with supervision from Reena chechi!! A tough task but got them singing as one!!

Following the carol service, what was there to bring the choir together again?? Surely we were not going to sit back and wait for the next year for us to get to know each other more! Hence, a meal was conjured up, to foster a unity and togetherness within the choir, a foundation stone was laid, with the members of the choir bringing in various edibles, each being allotted an item. The day coincided with a carol service in Bristol (30/12/2006). We planned the day with some fun and games first, a short practise session followed by a meal together and then heading to Bristol in a coach.

What a day it was, dark and grey clouds, ominous with rain and rain it did!! It kicked off at around 10.30am, games, various active games, musical chairs, with an impromptu setup, then came the blind man's game with a spoon and finally the word game with certain forfeits ranging from drinking a glass of coke in one go, to dancing!!, A very hurried practise session, did we remember the words and how the songs go? With a bit of nipping and tucking, got things rolling to what it was like 9th Dec. Definitely not rock bottom, but not top class either!!! A quickly gulped down meal with the coach waiting, and a hop onto the bus

leaving the hall in pristine condition. Entertainment on the bus was quite varied, jokes a plenty, quizzes, various song rounds. We got to Bristol in time, sang the 2 songs with the little ones chipping in with the 3rd. We all took part in the service and after the service, had a pleasant meal with the various other carol choirs. The return journey was as entertaining as the first if not more, jokes, new words being discovered, song rounds. All of us had a whale of a time. We got back within the time expected, ending it with a speech from Giboy, and a prayer from Gigi Achen.

All in all, everybody did have a brilliant time, hopefully with more planned in the near future. A foundation has been laid, let us work together, to build a stronger church. It should not stop with the choir and their immediate family but involve everyone. That way we stand united; divided we fall by the wayside.

**Something special for January**

-Mrs. K.M. Mathew

Masala Kadala

You will need:

1. 2 cups whole Bengal gram
2. 4 ½ cups water
3. Salt to taste
4. 1 ½ cups refined vegetable oil
5. 1 ½ cups onion, finely sliced
6. ½ cup potato, cubed
7. ½ cup bread, cubed like croutons
8. 6 green chillies, half slit
9. 2 large tomatoes, each cut into 8 pieces.
10. ½ tsp sugar
11. ½ tsp mustard seeds
12. 1 dsp chilli powder
13. 1 dsp coriander powder
14. ¼ tsp turmeric powder
15. A few coriander leaves
16. 1 lime



Method:

1. Wash and soak Bengal gram in 2 cups water overnight. Pressure cook with salt in 2½ cups water for 40 minutes.

2. Heat 1 cup oil. Add 1 cup sliced onion. Fry well, drain and keep aside. Fry and drain potato cubes. Fry cubes of bread; drain and keep aside. Sauté green chillies and tomatoes. Sprinkle salt and sugar on all the above ingredients. Remove from fire.

3. Take another pan and heat ½ cup oil. Splutter mustard seeds. Add ½ cup onion and fry till brown. Mix the chilli, coriander and turmeric powders in a little water and make into a paste. Lower the flame and add the paste to the pan. Add the cooked Bengal gram and mix gently. Spread the curry on a large, flat dish and garnish with the fried onion, potato, green chilli, tomato and cubes of bread. Coriander leaves and quartered lime may also be used to garnish the dish. To serve 6



**Letter from the editorial desk**

Dear friends in Christ,

A Happy New Year to you all. Due to popular demand, I have decided to work during the holiday season to bring you the January edition of the newsletter.

My email id is [nellikala@aol.com](mailto:nellikala@aol.com) should you wish to send in your articles, or comment on any related matters

Regards  
Sajini



**Announcements**



**The next Service**  
13<sup>th</sup> Jan 07

**There will be refreshments after the service.**

The Committee members are striving to make this prayer group into a parish shortly. For details, please contact the Secretary.

**New Year History And Traditions**

"Happy New Year!" That greeting will be said and heard for at least the first couple of weeks as a new year gets under way. But the day celebrated as New Year's Day in the modern times was not always January 1.

**ANCIENT NEW YEARS**

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical or agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Babylonian new year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison.

The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

**THE CHURCH'S VIEW OF NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the

new year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and New Year's Day was no different. New Years is still observed as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision by some denominations.

During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

**NEW YEAR TRADITIONS**

Other traditions of the season include the making of New Year's resolutions. That tradition also dates back to the early Babylonians. Popular modern resolutions might include the promise to lose weight or quit smoking. The early Babylonian's most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment.



The Tournament of Roses Parade dates back to 1886. In that year, members of the Valley Hunt Club decorated their carriages with flowers. It celebrated the ripening of the orange crop in California.

Although the Rose Bowl football game was first played as a part of the Tournament of Roses in 1902, it was replaced by Roman chariot races the following year. In 1916, the football game returned as the sports centrepiece of the festival.

The tradition of using a baby to signify the new year was begun in Greece around 600 BC. It was their tradition at that time to celebrate their god of wine, Dionysus, by parading a baby in a basket, representing the annual rebirth of that god

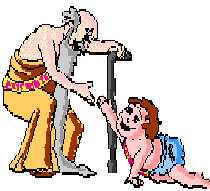


as the spirit of fertility. Early Egyptians also used a baby as a symbol of rebirth.

Although the early Christians denounced the practice as pagan, the popularity of the baby as a symbol of rebirth forced the Church to re-evaluate its position. The Church finally allowed its members to celebrate the new year with a baby, which was to symbolize the birth of the baby Jesus.

The use of an image of a baby with a New Years banner as a symbolic representation of the new year was brought to early America by the Germans. They had used the effigy since the fourteenth century.

**FOR LUCK IN THE NEW YEAR**



Traditionally, it was thought that one could affect the luck they would have throughout the coming year by what they did or ate on the first day of the year. For that reason, it has become common for folks to celebrate the first few minutes of a brand new year in the company of family and friends. Parties often last into the middle of the night after the ringing in of a new year. It was once believed that the first visitor on New Year's Day would bring either good luck or bad luck the rest of the year. It was particularly lucky if that visitor happened to be a tall dark-haired man.



Traditional New Year foods are also thought to bring luck. Many cultures believe that anything in the shape of a ring is good luck, because it symbolizes "coming full circle," completing a year's cycle. For that reason, the Dutch believe that eating donuts on New Year's Day will bring good fortune.

Many parts of the U.S. celebrate the new year by consuming black-eyed peas. These legumes are typically accompanied by either hog jowls or ham. Black-eyed peas and other legumes have been considered good luck in many cultures. The hog, and thus its meat, is considered lucky because it symbolizes prosperity. Cabbage is another "good luck" vegetable that is consumed on New Year's Day by many. Cabbage leaves are also considered a sign of prosperity, being representative of paper currency. In some regions, rice is a lucky food that is eaten on New Year's Day.

**AULD LANG SYNE**

The song, "Auld Lang Syne," is sung at the stroke of midnight in almost every English-speaking country in the world to bring in the new year. At least partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700's, it was first published in 1796 after Burns' death. Early variations of the song were sung prior to 1700 and inspired Burns to produce the modern rendition. An old Scotch tune, "Auld Lang Syne" literally means "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days."

**Auld Lang Syne**

Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot and days of auld lang syne?  
For auld lang syne, my dear,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot and days of auld lang syne?  
And here's a hand, my trusty friend  
And give's a hand o' thine  
We'll take a cup o' kindness yet  
For auld lang syne

**Birthdays This month**

Our greetings and best wishes to all who are celebrating their Birthdays this month especially to Anthea Abraham from Nuneaton.



**Wedding Anniversaries**

Congratulations to Biji and Susan, Saji and Sonia, Suraj and Indu on their wedding anniversary.



**URGENT – STOP PRESS**

Please register your names to attend the Golden Jubilee celebrations at the Guildhall on 14<sup>th</sup> April 07. Booking forms have been sent to you but if you have misplaced them, they are available with Achen. If there are enough people a coach can be arranged, if necessary.

**Our website:**

[www.marthomamidlands.co.uk](http://www.marthomamidlands.co.uk)



**The 2006/7 managing committee of the Midlands Mar Thoma Prayer Group**

**President** Rev Gigy Thomas  
**Hon Vice President**

Sunny Thomas  
**Hon Secretary** Biji (Varghese V Abraham)

**Hon Trustee** Simon Idiculla

**Some useful telephone numbers**

Rev: Gigy Thomas: 0161 223 2199  
Dr Sunny Thomas: 0121 308 1200  
Mr V V Abraham: **07737216172**  
Mr Sanu P Varghese: 01922628343  
Dr Simon Idiculla : 01902380363

**Editorial Desk: 0121 308 1200**



Letter from the secretary – Mr Varghese V Abraham (Biji)

## Core Committee of North West and Midlands – UPDATE

**I thought it is very important all the members of our prayer group must know the developments taking place with regard to the formation of Parish.**

Midlands, Manchester and Liverpool representatives meet on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2006. All the three parties agreed on the following points.

### **Ascension of North West & Midlands prayer group to Parish/Congregation Status.**

Following a thorough deliberation, all the three prayer groups of Liverpool, Manchester and Midlands decided to work towards becoming independent Parishes by 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2007 subject to the approval by the Synod of Marthoma Sabha. The committees of these prayer groups will lead on the process of applying for the Parish status.

### **Demarcation of Boundaries of the Prayer Groups.**

Area served by Midlands Prayer Group will be Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire & West Midlands.

### **Arrangement on sharing Vicars Pastoral Service and Arrangement of sharing Vicars expense.**

Liverpool will have two Holy Communion Services (led by the new Vicar) on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays of every month. Besides, this the Vicar will provide one week of pastoral care (excluding the Saturdays and Sundays) spread over the same calendar month.

Midlands will have two Holy Communion Services (led by the new Vicar) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of every month. Besides, this the Vicar will provide one week of pastoral care in a single block of 5 working days (Monday to Friday), preferably during the third week of a calendar month.

Manchester will have two Holy Communion Services (led by the new Vicar) on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of every month. Besides this, the Vicar will lead the cottage prayer meetings on 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays and provide one week of pastoral care (excluding the Saturdays and Sundays) spread over the same calendar month.

Edinburgh will continue to have one Holy Communion Service on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month and an additional day (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) for the pastoral care.

Joint Outreach Service of the three prayer groups would be conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of calendar months with 5 Sundays.

Manchester Prayer group will contribute 37.5% towards the total expenses of the new Vicar.

Midlands Prayer group will contribute 37.5% towards the total expenses of the new Vicar.

Liverpool Prayer group will contribute 25% towards the total expenses of the new Vicar.

Edinburgh Prayer group will bear all expenses of the Vicar relating to his travel to and from Edinburgh to provide pastoral services to the Edinburgh prayer group.

Income and expenses from the joint outreach service to be shared between Liverpool, Midlands and Manchester prayer groups on above agreed proportions of 25%, 37.5% and 37.5% respectively.

### **Achen's Headquarters**

After reviewing the geographical orientation of the three prayer groups, it was agreed that the new Vicar should continue to be based at Manchester.

If you have any suggestions or wants to know the details of the above points please contact me or Dr Sunny Thomas.  
Thanks and regards

**Mr V.V.Abraham (Biji) - Secretary**

