



St. John's Mar Thoma Church  
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# The Midlands Prayer Group

## News & Views

March 2007  
Volume 3, Issue 3



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#### Next Service:

24<sup>th</sup> March 07 at 5:30pm  
followed by send off for Achen & family

\* **Good Friday service on 6<sup>th</sup> April 07 at 8am.**

St. James Hill Church  
Mere Green Road  
Four Oaks, West Midlands  
B75 5DD

#### *From the Achen's Desk*

Dearly beloved in Christ,

#### *Warm Greetings!*

Lent is a time when we prepare ourselves to celebrate the resurrection. The scene of the transfiguration seems to be a high point on the way, but is it really?

The context of St. Luke's passage is the same as the one we find in St. Matthew and St. Mark. According to Paul, those who are considered as "acknowledged pillars" of the church (Gal. 2:9) accompany Jesus: Peter, John, and James (Luke 9:28). Matthew and Mark do not specify the content of the conversation of Jesus with Moses and Elijah. Luke on the other hand wrote of speaking of the "departure" of Jesus, of his death which was about to take place in Jerusalem. Significantly, Luke uses the term "Exodus" to refer to Jesus departure. The word is filled with meaning; it is a departure which allows coming to life, to the resurrection. This exodus is the Passover, the passage to the Promised Land a sign of the Kingdom. Calling death an exodus means that death is not the end of Jesus' plan. This is the conviction which has to sustain the hope of his disciples and of us.

As Jesus followers, we must proclaim a kingdom of life which encompasses every aspect of human existence. But it also implies an exodus for us, a

departure from every thing which prevents us from living in full communion with God and with others. This exodus is going to involve painful and unavoidable aspects from which, in his fascination for the moment he is living, Peter wants to escape (Luke 9:33)

Peter is mistaken. We can not stop on the way as we follow Jesus. We must not seek refuge in a tent. The text from Exodus also deals with an exodus. God is asking Abraham to leave the safe world he knows. The faith rooted in Abraham's heart makes him accept the adventure. He leaves in order to enter. God promises him he will be the father of countless descendants who will live in the land which God will give them.

"Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil.3:20) means that we have to know the ultimate criterion of our daily behaviour on earth. St. Paul reproaches his friendship of Philippi precisely because they are not living as he has instructed them in accordance with the testimony of Jesus and of Paul himself. Thus he is asking them to be "standing firm in the Lord"

The episode of the transfiguration reminds us that our being Christians has to be lived in the midst of the ups and downs and the difficulties of history. We welcome the gift of the kingdom in history and we become citizens of heaven, of the kingdom which is coming to us now.

May the Lord purify our hearts to see your ways clearly and walk in newness of life!

Yours in His service  
Gigy Achen



**TRUE STORY**  
**(Sent in by a member)**

This is a true story of something that happened just a few years ago at USA.

There was a professor of philosophy there who was a deeply committed atheist. His primary goal for one required class was to spend the entire semester attempting to prove that God couldn't exist.

His students were always afraid to argue with him because of his impeccable logic. For twenty years, he had taught this class and no one had ever had the courage to go against him.

Sure, some had argued in class at times, but no one had ever really gone against him because of his reputation.

At the end of every semester on the last day, he would say to his class of 300 students, "If there is anyone here who still believes in Jesus, stand up!" In twenty years, no one had ever stood up. They knew what he was going to do next. He would say, "Because anyone who believes in God is a fool.

If God existed, he could stop this piece of chalk from hitting the ground and breaking. It is such a simple task to prove that He is God, and yet He can't do it."

And every year, he would drop the chalk onto the tile floor of the classroom and it would shatter into a hundred pieces.

All of the students would do nothing but stop and stare.

Most of the students thought that God couldn't exist. Certainly, a number of Christians had slipped through, but for 20 years, they had been too afraid to stand up.

Well, a few years ago there was a freshman who happened to enrol.

He was a Christian, and had heard the stories about his professor. He was required to take the class for his major, and he was afraid. But for three months that semester, he prayed every morning that he would have the courage to stand up no matter what the professor said, or what the class thought.

Nothing they said could ever shatter his faith...he hoped.

Finally, the day came. The professor said, "If there is anyone here who still believes in God, stand up!"

The professor and the class of 300 people looked at him, shocked, as he stood up at the back of the classroom.

The professor shouted, "You FOOL!!! If God existed, he would keep this piece of chalk from breaking when it hit the ground!"

He proceeded to drop the chalk, but as he did, it slipped out of his fingers, off his shirt cuff, onto the pleat of his pants, down his leg, and off his shoe. As it hit the ground, it simply rolled away unbroken. The professor's jaw dropped as he stared at the chalk. He looked up at the young man, and then ran out of the lecture hall.

The young man, who had stood, proceeded to walk to the front of the room and shared his faith in Jesus for the next half hour.

300 students stayed and listened as he told of God's love for them and of His power through Jesus.

You have 2 choices:

1. Never read this.
2. Tell this story along to your Christian and non-Christian friends, giving them the encouragement we all need every day.

When you choose option 2, you have chosen to STAND UP

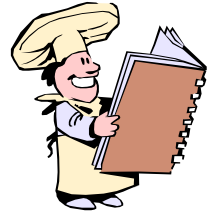


**RECIPE OF THE MONTH**

**Aloo Palak**

**Ingredients**

- 3 cups chopped spinach
- 2 large onions chopped fine
- 2 large potatoes boiled and peeled
- 1 tomato grated
- 2 green chillies
- 1" piece ginger
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. wheat or other flour
- 1 tsp. red chilli powder
- 1 tsp. cinnamon-clove powder
- 1/4 tsp. turmeric powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 pinches asafoetida
- 1/2 tsp. garam masala
- 1/2 tbsp. butter
- 4 tbsp. ghee
- salt to taste



**Recipe method**

Put the washed spinach in a pan; add very little water (just a sprinkle) and a pinch of salt. Cover and boil over a high flame for 2 minutes. Cool quickly, or hold under running water in a colander. Put in a mixie, add green chilli and run for a minute. Keep slightly coarse, do not make very smooth. Keep aside.

Cut the potatoes into big pieces. Heat ghee and fry potatoes till light brown. Drain the potatoes, keep aside.

In the same hot ghee add the cumin seeds. Add the ginger, onions and fry till very tender. Add the tomato and further fry for two minutes. Add all the dry masalas and fry till ghee separates.

Add spinach and potatoes. When it resumes a boil sprinkle the flour and stir well. Boil for 2-3 minutes. Add lemon juice.

Just before serving heat butter in a tiny saucepan and add the asafoetida.

Pour over the vegetable and mix gently.

Serve hot with naan or parathas or even rice.



**INTERESTING CONVERSATION.**

An atheist professor of philosophy speaks to his class on the problem science has with God, The Almighty. He asks one of his new students to stand and.....

**Prof:** So you believe in God?

**Student:** Absolutely, sir.

**Prof:** Is God good?

**Student:** Sure.

**Prof:** Is God all-powerful?

**Student:** Yes.

**Prof:** My brother died of cancer even though he prayed to God to heal him.

Most of us would attempt to help others who are ill. But God didn't.

How is this God good then? Hmm?

(Student is silent.)

**Prof:** You can't answer, can you?

Let's start again, young fellow. Is God good?

**Student:** Yes.

**Prof:** Is Satan good?

**Student:** No.

**Prof:** Where does Satan come from?

**Student:** From...God...

**Prof:** That's right. Tell me son, is there evil in this world?

**Student:** Yes.

**Prof:** Evil is everywhere, isn't it? And God did make everything. Correct?

**Student:** Yes.

**Prof:** So who created evil?

Student does not answer.

**Prof:** Is there sickness? Immorality?

Hatred? Ugliness? All these terrible things exist in the world, don't they?

**Student:** Yes, sir.

**Prof:** So, who created them?

Student has no answer.

**Prof:** Science says you have 5

senses you use to identify and observe the world around you. Tell me, son...Have you ever seen God?

**Student:** No, sir.

**Prof:** Tell us if you have ever heard your God?

**Student:** No, sir.

**Prof:** Have you ever felt your God, tasted your God, smelt your God?

Have you ever had any sensory perception of God for that matter?

**Student:** No, sir. I'm afraid I haven't.

**Prof:** Yet you still believe in Him?

**Student:** Yes.

**Prof:** According to empirical, testable, demonstrable protocol, science says your GOD doesn't exist. What do you say to that, son?

**Student:** Nothing. I only have my faith.

**Prof:** Yes. Faith. And that is the problem science has.

**Student:** Professor, is there such a thing as heat?

**Prof:** Yes.

**Student:** And is there such a thing as cold?

**Prof:** Yes.

**Student:** No sir. There isn't.

(The lecture theatre becomes very quiet with this turn of events.)

**Student:** Sir, you can have lots of heat, even more heat, superheat,

mega heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat. But we don't have anything

called cold. We can hit 458 degrees below zero which is no heat, but we

can't go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold. Cold is only

a word we use to describe the

absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat is energy. Cold is not the

opposite of heat, sir, just the absence of it.

(There is pin-drop silence in the lecture theatre.)

**Student:** What about darkness, Professor? Is there such a thing as darkness?

**Prof:** Yes. What is night if there isn't darkness?

**Student:** You're wrong again, sir.

Darkness is the absence of

something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing

light....But if you have no light

constantly, you have nothing and it's called darkness, isn't it? In reality,

darkness isn't. If it were you would be able to make darkness darker,

wouldn't you?

**Prof:** So what is the point you are making, young man?

**Student:** Sir, my point is your philosophical premise is flawed.

**Prof:** Flawed? Can you explain how?

**Student:** Sir, you are working on the premise of duality. You argue there is

life and then there is death, a good God and a bad God. You are viewing

the concept of God as something finite, something we can measure.

Sir, science can't even explain a thought. It uses electricity and magnetism, but has never seen, much less fully understood either one.

To view death as the opposite of life is to be ignorant of the fact that death cannot exist as a substantive thing.

Death is not the opposite of life: just the absence of it.

Now tell me, Professor. Do you teach your students that they evolved from a monkey?

**Prof:** If you are referring to the natural evolutionary process, yes, of course, I do.

**Student:** Have you ever observed evolution with your own eyes, sir?

(The Professor shakes his head with a smile, beginning to realize where the argument is going.)

**Student:** Since no one has ever observed the process of evolution at

work and cannot even prove that this process is an on-going endeavour,

are you not teaching your opinion, sir? Are you not a scientist but a

preacher? (The class is in uproar.)

**Student:** Is there anyone in the class who has ever seen the Professor's

brain? (The class breaks out into laughter.)

**Student:** Is there anyone here who has ever heard the Professor's brain,

felt it, touched or smelt it? No one appears to have done so. So,

according to the established rules of empirical, stable, demonstrable

protocol, science says that you have no brain, sir. With all due respect, sir,

how do we then trust your lectures, sir? (The room is silent. The

professor stares at the student, his face unfathomable.)

**Prof:** I guess you'll have to take them on faith, son.

**Student:** That is it sir... The link between man & god is FAITH. That is all that keeps things moving & alive.

WANT TO KNOW WHO THAT STUDENT WAS

**Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the present president of India.**

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*Collected by Giboy George.*

**A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO FASTING**

Fasts have a tendency to be oriented towards things like giving up food or television. But there are many other creative ways we can welcome Jesus' healing touch.

Here are suggestions you may want to consider

**1. Fast from anger and hatred**

Give your family an extra dose of love each day

**2. Fast from judging others**

Before making any judgments recall how Jesus overlooks our faults

**3. Fast from discouragement**

Hold on to Jesus' promise that he has a perfect plan for your life

**4. Fast from complaining**

When you find yourself about to complain, close your eyes and recall some of the little moments of joy Jesus has given us.

**5. Fast from resentment or bitterness**

Work on forgiving those who may have hurt you.

**6. Fast from spending too much money**

Try to reduce your spending by ten percent and give those savings to the poor.

Wishing you all peace love and Happiness during lent

**Smile-  
Jesus loves you.**

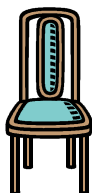


**JOKE OF THE MONTH**

**Philosophy again**

An eccentric philosophy professor gave a one question final exam after a semester dealing with a broad array of topics.

The class was already seated and ready to go when the professor picked up his chair, plopped it on his desk and wrote on the board: "Using everything we have learned this semester,



prove that this chair does not exist."

Fingers flew, erasers erased, notebooks were filled in furious fashion. Some students wrote over 30 pages in one hour attempting to refute the existence of the chair.

One member of the class however, was up and finished in less than a minute. Weeks later when the grades were posted, the rest of the group wondered how he could have got an A when he had barely written anything at all.

His answer consisted of two words: "What chair?"



**Letter from the editorial desk**

Dear friends in Christ,

Congratulations to all for the efforts taken to make this prayer a Parish. May we continue to grow and prosper!

It is the Lent season and I am sure all of you have given up something to celebrate.

It is with a heavy heart we must say goodbye to Gigi Achen and family who are being transferred to better pastures end April. His contribution to the prayer has been valuable and as a result we have grown and strengthened to become a parish.

At the next service, we are planning to say our Goodbyes officially to show our appreciation of his good work. I hope you will all come and make the day a memorable one.

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



**Birthdays & Anniversaries this month**

Birthday wishes to all who are celebrating their birthdays in March.



Congratulations on all you celebrated their wedding anniversary in March.

**Announcements**



There will be 2 services every month from March 2007. (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of the month in Malayalam and English respectively)

**The next Services:**

March 24<sup>th</sup> 5.30pm Holy Communion service in English

April 6<sup>th</sup> GOOD FRIDAY service at 8.30 am

April 14<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee

**Others:**

Website is up-to-date

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

**Please return Membership form and debit order immediately**

The combined Good Friday Service has been organised from 8am to 1pm at St James Hill Church, Sutton Coldfield followed by Kanji at the St James Hall until 2pm. The Manchester and Liverpool prayer groups are invited to this service. Hence we need volunteers to make kanji and payar etc...

Some of you will be working on Good Friday, but we hope you will all attend and make the Lord happy.

**Some useful telephone numbers**

Rev: Gigy Thomas: 0161 223 2199

Dr Sunny Thomas: 07798820433

Mr V V Abraham: 07737216172

Dr Simon Idiculla : 01902380363

**Editorial Desk: 0121 308 1200**





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