

Remember, Renew and Rejoice: A Year of Thanksgiving and Praise

175th Anniversary Celebrations of St Paul's Church, Kandy

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" Lamentations 3: 22 – 23

This year, 2018, was a year full of events, organized with the confidence that the journey that began in 1843 has inspired every parishioner, visitor, neighbors of other faiths and friends of St. Paul's here and abroad. These events were organized to thank God for his blessings bestowed upon St. Paul's for the past 175 years and to walk with hope towards an unknown future, as a parish.

January

A Retreat was organized to commence the 175th Anniversary celebrations which was held on 13 January 2018, from 8am to 5pm at the Fatima Retreat House, Lewella. Parallel sessions were held for children youth and adults, followed by periods of prayer, praise and worship and meditation. Dr. Arul Anketel, Pastor Andrew Kimand, Rev. Ravindran, Lalindra Wickremeratne and Manju Nirosh were the inspiring speakers.

The Thanksgiving Service held on 27 January began with a procession in the streets of the city of Kandy, followed by the Holy Eucharist and a Public Meeting. Rt. Rev. Keerthisiri Fernando, the newly elected Bishop of Kurunagala, Bishop Emeritus Kumara Illangasinghe, Archdeacons, Clergy, Deacons, sisters and brothers from neighbouring parishes of the Diocese joined the congregation of St. Paul's to give thanks to God for his abundant blessing bestowed upon the church and its people. Friends, from here and abroad, supported and celebrated with St. Paul's. Our sincere thanks is extended to Canon David Whittington, Mr. Trevor Turner, Canon Paul Watson, and Rev Christine Jack and to the Principals, staff and students of Trinity College, Hillwood College and Mowbray College who joined in our celebrations. The Public Meeting, held immediately after the Holy Eucharist, also included the reading of the greetings from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the presentation of souvenirs to dignitaries. Parliamentarians and the Moulavi representing the Islamic Community participated at this event. A logo, a flag, a Souvenir magazine, mugs, fridge magnets and book marks, display of Archives and our History were specially done for our anniversary. A theme song in Sinhala for St. Paul's was specially written for the first time by Rev. Jayanath Panditharatne for these celebrations.

February – The Mission Committee

The month of February commenced with the mission team organizing a month full of activities with the theme of "Salvation, Sanctification, Service and Surrender." Several revival meetings were organized on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th Saturdays of the month. Rev. Ravindran, General Srilal, Ms. Dilhani Weerasooriya, and Mr. Dhanan Senathiraja inspired these events. Jeevanthi Edirisinghe, a differently able girl, enriched the sessions with singing while playing the keyboard, moving the congregation to accept the talents God has given each person.

March – The Mothers Union

The Mothers' Union organized several guest speakers for the four Sundays in the month. Pastor Kithsiri Mudalige, Mrs.Lakdini Panditharatne, Mrs.Rachael John and Ven.Nimal Wickremaratne delivered Gods word. The Mothers Union continued to actively render their service to the Nephrology Unit of the Kandy Hospital and visits to the eventide home, being with elders praying with them and keeping them happy, throughout the year.

April – The Youth Fellowship

On 7 April 2018 an Inter Church Youth Get Together was organized by the Youth Fellowship of St. Paul's and it was held at the church premises in order to strengthen the relationships with the fellow churches. The theme was "Love your selfie: Appreciating God's Masterpiece in the Mirror." A time of worship with Rev.Ravindran and Mr.Dhanan Senathiraja was followed by dramas and a few activities such as a treasure hunt and strong tower. The Sinhala and Tamil New Year were celebrated in a meaningful way on 15 April following the traditions of the New Year. On 30 April a *Shramadanaya* was held at the Eventide Home to help clean up the internal and external premises which was followed by a fellowship lunch with the elders. Bible studies were conducted on Saturdays by parishioners, Ruvini Katugaha and Bhanuka Warnasooriya, throughout the year and it is a joy to see youth getting involved to learn God's word with love.

May – The Outreach Team

The Outreach Team organized various activities in the month of May. On the first Sunday Mr. Sene Seneviratne presented a detailed presentation to the congregation on the activities of the team. The congregation was touched to see the poor, weak, homeless and helpless beneficiaries receiving support from the church and many offered to render their services more, realizing the tremendous amount of work the team tirelessly offered and the challenges they face in terms of assistance in kind and cash. The second Sunday preacher was Rev.Vathsala Seneviratne and the Holy Eucharist was held with the participation of the congregation from the Holy Emmanuel Church, Hanguranketha. Mrs.Lakdini Panditharatne conducted a home gardening and mushroom growing self-employment project to all who needed education towards this.

Rev. Melvin de Silva's words inspired the third Sunday service and Rev. Desmond de Silva, a friend and continuous supporter from the USA, was the fourth Sunday preacher. As a project, a washroom was built for the Hanguranketha Church Day Care Centre and a kitchen was built for a poor family in Wattegama. On 21 July, a medical Camp was conducted in Talampitiya with the assistance of the Lions Club of Kurunegala and FRIDSRO. Four doctors and the District Medical Officer in Mathawa Hospital and doctors from St. Paul's joined to provide healthcare to 379 villagers who arrived seeking their services. The team thanks all who constantly support in many ways to carry out this ministry smoothly.

June – The Environment Committee

On 3 June, the church celebrated the Environment Sunday with a special bilingual service. Dr Lakmini Illangasinghe, in her sermon, highlighted the perfect creation of God and His expectations of humankind to nurture and care for the earth by becoming good stewards. Prior to its celebrations in June, the Environment Committee invited all parishioners, including children and adults, to participate in essays, poems and drawings in four given topics. At the end of the Holy Eucharist, all children who participated were given certificates and special gifts were given to the winners in all categories. Rev. Shelton Daniel and Prof. Nedra Karunaratne delivered God's word on the other Sundays and they too highlighted the destruction and carelessness of human beings, which has led to the present condition of the environment, and the congregation's duties as Christians towards the planet. Free pepper, tomato and chilly plants were distributed among all parishioners to promote people to grow and love the earth. Further, an environment friendly bag was designed and introduced.

On 9 June a spiritual gospel singing event in Sinhala (*mihitalayama sumudu karamu senehasin api*) was done by Bro. Anton Charles Thomas which ensued a full church with people from all walks of life, including non-Christians and visitors from abroad. It was an evening full of inspiration, which was continued on Sunday with a special worship session. It was a great witness and the Committee believes that the seed of faith was planted in many and that more were touched.

On 27 June, a nature excursion was organized with 113 parishioners in three busses to experience the glory of God's creation. The aim was also to show the need for preservation of land, fresh water, forests, and the creatures. The parishioners experienced the mighty wind in the Corbett's Gap, Hunnasgiriya, a walk through the forest, the breathtaking view of the Mini World's End and a bath in the springs, all in all a memorable day out with nature.

On 31 August, the Environment Committee organized a one day session for spouses of the theological students, outreach beneficiaries, and other parishioners on the topics of a healthy life style, cost cutting, waste disposal and home gardening. Dr. Lakmini Illangasinghe, Mr. Senerath Yatawara, Prof. Nedra Karunaratne and Mrs. Lakdini Panditharatne spoke at this event and several practical demonstrations by the Agriculture Instructors provided valuable information to begin and develop their own self income projects.

July – Men's Fellowship

The Men's Fellowship organized Sunday services with guest preachers, namely Bishop Kumara Illangasinghe, Ven. Devapriya de Silva, Ven. George Melder and Rev. Shelton Daniel. Rev. Canon Neil van Dort, the former Vicar of St. Paul's too helped with these services. Ven. Devapriya de Silva had a Sinhala revival session with the congregation and the Sunday school after the service on the second Sunday of the month. A fellowship breakfast was organized and it was a refreshing and a wonderful surprise to see men serving breakfast, for a change.

August – The Simeon and Anna Fellowship

The Simeon and Anna Fellowship organized two services of thanksgiving was held at the Eventide Home followed by lunch and the other at St. Paul's Church followed by tea. The Sundays were inspired by the preaching of Mrs. Racheal John, Dr. Suresh de Mel, Rev. Canon Gabriel Wimalsena and Rev. Canon Neil van Dort who shared God's word with the people. Several house bound members were visited and bible study, prayer and singing enlightened their lives which are now limited to their homes.

September –The Choir

The Choir rejoiced with glorious singing in the month of September and enriched the Sunday services with several guest preachers, namely Mr. Lasantha Tennekoon, Mrs. Ramya Wickremratne, Mr. OHS Perera. The Sing along with Clifford Richards on 15 September was an inspiring event for the parishioners. The Trinity College Choir was invited to sing at the Service on 16 September and the people were grateful to hear the boys worship God with their singing. Mr. Denham Pereira, organist and Director of Music of the Church of St. Michael and all Angels, Colombo, was invited to enrich the Sunday service with organ music on the fourth Sunday. A long-standing tradition within the Anglican Church of reading/chanting of psalms and the chant of the Gospel was re-introduced to the weekly services by the choir.

This year, the Harvest Festival held on the first Sunday of September turned a new leaf emphasizing the true meaning of harvest instead of a bring and buy sale which was practiced in the past. Embracing this change, a successful Harvest Festival was held with people offering their labour and skills to God.

October – The Sunday school

It was a beautiful and encouraging sight to see children taking part in all services, especially during the month of October, and the sermon for one Sunday was done by a Sunday school student, Bhanuka Warnasooriya and the second Sunday by Mrs. Sriyani Edwin. Jeevanthi Edirisinghe, a differently able child, played the keyboard and sang. Celebrating the feast of St. Luke on the third Sunday, Dr. Aruni Jayaskera preached an inspiring sermon.

November –TheMission Team

The year's activities concluded with a mission on 3 and 4 November. Praise and worship was led by the theological students and Rev. Ravindran. There was a time for bible study, testimonies and prayer sessions thanking God for the blessed years throughout the past of St. Paul's, remembering the Bishops, Vicars, Chaplains and pilgrims gone by. The mission was led by Revd Roshan Mendis who shared God's word and ways to journey with hope to the unknown future. The Sunday school and the Youth fellowship staged two dramas titled *Waduwege Golaya* and *Dearest Timothy*.

Anniversaries

The mothers' Union celebrated their 110th Anniversary on the 28 October with the participation of many members from other parishes in an inspiring way.

The Eventide Home too celebrated their 10th Anniversary on the 10th of November with a thanksgiving service at St. Paul's Church. The dedicated service of the staff and the committee is much appreciated.

The Evelyn Nurseries celebrated their 90th Anniversary on the 25th November with a large gathering of visitors, present children, old girls and Matrons. Ven George Melder, the Archdeacon of Kurunagala shared God's message. He was also an old student of the Nurseries. Ven Sam Ponniah joined in the Eucharist with his wife Roshini and family. Roshini too was an old girl from the nurseries. The Thanksgiving service was an inspirational one with special songs and an offertory dance by the Evelyn Nursery children. A sale was held after the service. Ms Lena Chapman the founder Missionary and all others who served were remembered with gratitude. The Present Matron Mrs Sriyani Perera, her dedicated service and the love she gives to all the children is commendable. May God bless her and all who render a wonderful service to the Nurseries.

This successful year of thanksgiving and praise would not have been possible without God's blessings and strength to the Vicar Rev. Shelton Daniel, to every committee and parishioners. The fullest cooperation and assistance by the staff of the Church, including Ms. Eileen Selvathurai, Upali Jayasinghe, Nalin and Rajendran, is commendable and greatly valued. May God bless and guide them for their continuous untiring work.

Running the race of faith with the teachings and following of Apostle Paul remain a challenge for the future of St. Paul's. **While completing this year of activities, we pray that God's heart be revealed through the works of our hands as it was in yester year and to the unknown future.** May God continue to bless St Paul's to be a witnessing, spiritual caring community in the city of Kandy and to the country and world at large.

Dr. Lakmini Illangasinghe
Secretary to the Trustees