



The Voice

The Quarterly Newsletter of
Bethel Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sangham, Sydney



INSPIRING READS IN THIS ISSUE

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Blessings

The Voice belongs to God and is so beautiful that it was first pronounced by Him at the creation of the universe. The world was created by His Word. Voice is powerful!

During the advent season we come across a powerful sound of greeting!

"Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you", the angel Gabriel said (Luke 1:28).

Mary with a shout of delight began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting. After six months we again read about the sound of greeting of Mary in her visit to Elizabeth.

"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:41).

Doesn't it mean that greeting has a ripple effect?

It not only breaks the silence, but creates a magnificent world of joy and wholeness.

During this Christmas, let our voices be sweet, powerful and gracious. In a world full of noises, let our voice of greetings be heard by the voiceless. May our greetings move the hearts of the people, by the power of the Holy spirit.

I appreciate the efforts of the team behind this newsletter, and wish God's blessing on all Sevika Sangham initiatives.



Rev. Nixon Daniel

Welcome

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Welcome to our first issue of 'The Voice'. This is an official quarterly newsletter of the Bethel Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sangham, Sydney, aiming to bring regular bible study columns, short stories, upcoming events, member news and reports of the past events.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God." - 1 Peter 2:9

God has chosen and called us to use our voices to share His word. This publication is a platform for every woman to use our unique voice to empower, encourage and engage with other women within our church community.

I hope you enjoy reading the first issue of this newsletter.



Mrs. Sinu Thomas

The Manna in Psalms 91



Dr. Betsy Joseph E.

I recently lost one of my spiritual godmothers. She had witnessed to me how the presence, protection and promises of the Lord stated in Psalms 91 had taken her through tough times. As a young wife and mother, she sought to protect her husband and four sons from those who tried to induce them into the world of addictive pleasures and lead them astray from faith.

Vulnerable and anxious, she turned to the Lord. This Psalm strengthened and sustained her. The Lord kept her family safe from the fowler's snare and never allowed a plague to near her tent.

This Psalm teaches us three things:

- Dwell in the Lord (Psalms 91:1-6)

Whom do we look to for protection? I love the coincidence that the universal emergency number is 911. We have a shelter in the Lord to run to, in times of emergency.

- Defense of the Lord (Psalms 91:7-13)

The Lord will arrange for your security and wellbeing, in ways and through people you never expect.

- Declarations of the Lord (Psalms 91:14-16)

We have eight promises –The Lord will deliver, protect, answer, be with, rescue, honour, satisfy with long life, and show the salvation.

At the age of 94 when my aforesaid godmother passed away, I was able to see that God had fulfilled each of His promises in her life. Psalms 91 has the potential to help us thrive.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for your presence, protection and promises. Amen

Sevika Sangham Events List 2021-22

Nov 2021	14-30 Nov Online Sapling Sale
Dec 2021	04 Dec Sapling Sale 19 Dec Christmas Carol Song
Jan 2022	First Annual Food Sale Sevika Sangham Webinar
Feb 2022	20 Feb Bible Quiz
Mar 2022	19 Mar Retreat "Wonder Woman"
Apr 2022	10 Apr Prayer Box Sale
May 2022	Second Annual Food Sale
Jul 2022	Third Annual Food Sale

Other Events

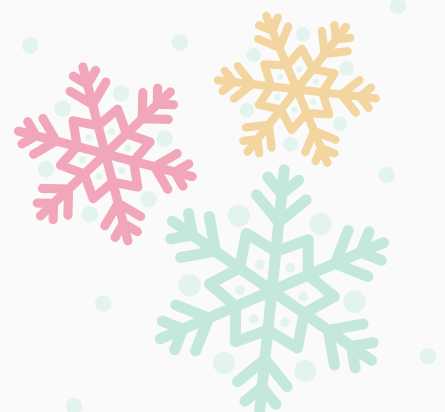
Quarterly Newsletter

Pre-Delivery Prayer

Pickle Sale & Traditional snacks sale

Sevika Sangham Day (Sept 2022)

Monthly Bible Class on 2nd Sundays (7pm via Zoom)

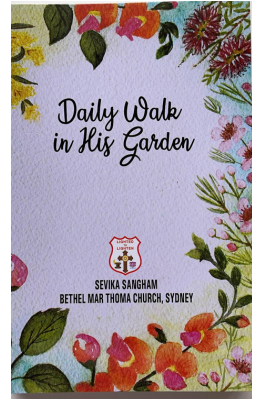


Ongoing Initiatives

Devotion Book

"**Daily walk in His Garden**" is an initiative by Sevika Sangham. It comprises of 365 – days devotionals envisaged to enhance the bonding between our Creator and His creations. The personal stories, scripture passages, and inspirational quotes will challenge and inspire you in your faith journey.

This devotional can be purchased from the Sevika Sangham Secretary for \$10 each. (Only limited stock left)



Return & Earn

We continue to participate in the NSW initiative to collect and return the recyclable bottles and cans marked with 10c on its label. You can either deposit the bottles and cans at the designated return points and donate the voucher to Sevika Sangham or bring the eligible containers to church and we will return them for you.

Church Donation

Sevika Sangham is sponsoring 30 chairs worth \$2100 for our new church.



Annual Donation

Sevika Sangham provides financial assistance to those in need and continually supports many non-profit organizations including:

- Sevika Sangham Kendram, Thiruvalla,
- Balika Mandiram, Perumbavoor,
- Asha Bhavan, Pidavoor
- Education expenses of nursing student

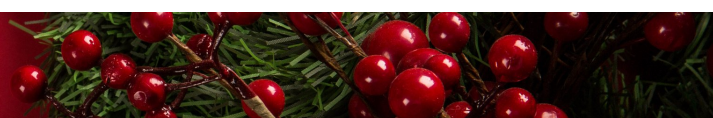
This year again we seek everyone's support and participation. Thank you for your contributions over the year. Please make all donations to:

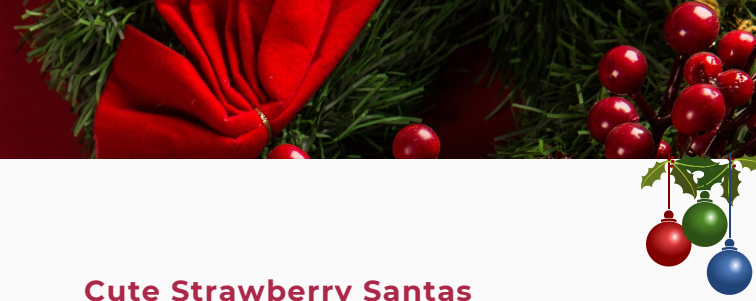
- Account name: Mar Thoma Sevika Sangham Charity
- Commonwealth Bank – BSB: 062139, Account no. 10100480
- Please add your name and 'Annual donation' in the description.

Pre-delivery Prayers

Mrs. Haritha Alexander	- Due Date: 07-Dec-21
Mrs. Jemi Rachel Varughese	- Due Date: 15-Dec-21
Mrs. Sherrin B Jacob	- Due Date: 16-Dec-21
Mrs. Sherin Thadathil	- Due Date: 19-Dec-21
Mrs. Diya Rojith	- Due by Dec 2021 last
Mrs. Aarsha Ann Jacob	- Due Date: 29-Jan-22

Please keep our expecting moms in your prayers.





Chocolate Covered Strawberry Christmas Trees



Ingredients

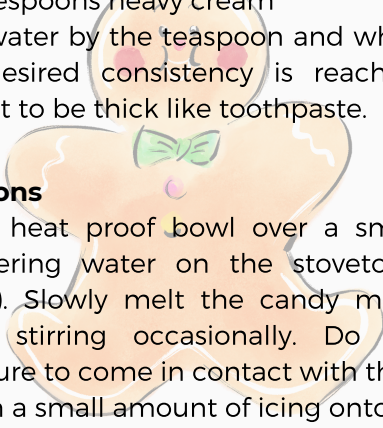
- 12 ounces dark green candy melts
- 1 pound of strawberries, stems removed
- 24 Oreo cookies
- White Icing
- Sprinkles
- Candy Stars (order them from Amazon)

ICING

- 2 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 3 tablespoons heavy cream
- Add water by the teaspoon and whisk until the desired consistency is reached. You want it to be thick like toothpaste.

Instructions

1. Set a heat proof bowl over a small pot of simmering water on the stovetop (double boiler). Slowly melt the candy melts in the bowl, stirring occasionally. Do not allow moisture to come in contact with the candy.
2. Spoon a small amount of icing onto the top of each Oreo to hold the strawberry to the cookie base.
3. Once candy melts are fully melted, turn the heat to low and dip the strawberries using a toothpick inserted into the cut end.
4. Shake off excess candy coating gently. Using a second toothpick inserted into the pointed end of the dipped strawberry, carefully place the strawberry on top of the icing on the Oreo.
5. Decorate with sprinkles and a candy star while the candy coating is still wet. It will usually dry in about 10 minutes.



Cute Strawberry Santas



Paper Plate Christmas Masks



Remembering a Childhood Christmas



Mrs. Susie Abraham

Another Christmas season has arrived - a wonderful and joyous season of the year. I remember strolling through the shopping malls with the children every year just to watch the dazzling display of Christmas decorations, while the presence of Santa Claus and Carol singers would herald the festive season. Since we are in the grip of a pandemic the festivities are low key and our present way of life has many limitations. Yet Christmas brings magic into our lives. It brings family and friends together, creating many memories to cherish and it is centered on the spirit of giving.

During one Christmas as I watched the children's faces, brimming with excitement while opening each present, beautifully wrapped and piled beneath the Christmas tree, my youngest granddaughter wanted to know whether I got many presents when I was a little girl. I told her that we children never got any presents as there were no toy shops or bookshops, but still had lots of fun. "Oh, that is sad, Nana" she said with sympathy and ran away to help her sister to decorate cupcakes. Left alone with just my thoughts I was transported back in time to a faraway place, memories of my childhood Christmases emerged, filling my heart with a special kind of joy and nostalgia.

Christmas at my native village in Kozhencherry, Kerala was a religious event with church services and Carol singing in Malayalam. The children listened in wonderment as the Sunday school teachers and our mothers told us every year the story of the birth of Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem, the three wise men coming from Far East, led by a Star, carrying gifts for baby Jesus. We also heard about the poor shepherds in the field getting terrified when the angels appeared to them singing heavenly music.

Our houses had no Christmas decorations except for the homemade star hung up in front of the house. We took great pride in making the frame from bamboo strips and then covering it with coloured tissue paper. While a lighted candle would glow inside the Star, we would sit at the front doorsteps and wait for the carol singers to visit our homes. Sometimes we were lucky to see a shooting star dashing off to some mysterious errands in the night sky.

The carollers would visit our homes in groups, singing and dancing to the drum beat while the Santa Claus clowning around! We had seen Christmas trees only on the Christmas cards, which used to arrive from overseas. Looking at the beautiful pictures of snow-clad houses, Santa Claus and reindeers, my imagination would take flight to a winter wonderland.

Christmas was also a time for family bonding as we used to invite cousins to spend a few days with us. Laughter and noise echoed in our house all the time while the kitchen buzzed with activities, producing delicious and traditional food for the dining table. Roaming around the country sides, bathing and swimming in the river Pampa riding high on the swing, put up on the Jackfruit tree were some of the fun things we did.

We did not mind walking the few miles to the Church on a Christmas day without breakfast, as we knew a late brunch of delicious lace Appams and mutton stew would be waiting for us. My Mother's specialty was spicy country style roast duck with vegetables and rice, which she would serve for the late lunch. We had never heard of Biryani and the village bakery had no Christmas cakes either. I am talking of the bygone days of the 1950s.

Though we did not exchange presents among ourselves, Christmas was also a time to show kindness and good will to others especially the poor and the needy. So, it was customary at our house to give gifts of money or new clothes to labourers and helpers who worked in our land and paddy fields as well as in the kitchen. Through this gesture the children were introduced to the joy of giving and being helpful towards the less fortunate.

My childhood Christmas at Kozhencherry has become a distant memory. Now in my golden years, every Christmas I spent in Australia in the company of my children and grandchildren are precious and joyful.

For all those who celebrate Christmas, no matter how old or young you are, may it be a time to spread joy and love among mankind. Let us always remember that -

"Jesus is the reason for the season"



New Borns



Evangelyn Sarah Joseph
(Jyothis & Ann)



Zachary Babu Bejoy
(Bejoy & Reeni)



Renae Susan Reno
(Reno & Nima)



Zara Liz Mathew
(Shinoy & Ambily)

Forever in Our Hearts



Mrs Saramma Mathews



Achamma Joseph (Achu)

Events

Sapling Sale 2021



Liverpool Sevika Sangham Night Out



The Visitor



Mrs. Shilpa Susan Philip

One morning, while Eve was checking her mailbox, she saw a strange envelope with no stamp or postmark, with only her name on it. The letter in it read

Dear Eve:
I'm going to be in your neighbourhood tonight & I'd like to stop by for a visit.
Love, Jesus

Her hands trembled as she placed the letter on the table. She wondered
"Could this be some prank?
Why would the Lord want to visit me?
Neither am I special nor do I have anything to offer."

She skimmed through her empty kitchen cabinets & her purse which had only five dollars and forty cents.

"Oh dear, I really don't have anything to offer. I'll have to run down to the store and buy something for dinner. At least I might get some bread and cold cuts!"

She threw on her coat and hurried out. A loaf of bread, half a pound of sliced turkey, and a carton of milk was all that she could manage to get. Nonetheless, she felt good as she headed home.

On the way back, she heard a feeble call from behind. Eve was so absorbed in dinner thoughts that she did not notice the two figures huddled in the dark alleyway. An old couple dressed in shabby rags.

"Dear lady, we are homeless and unemployed. We are starving for two days. Please help us with some food, we'd really appreciate it." said the old man

Eve looked at them. "Sir, I'd like to help you, but I'm a poor woman myself. All I have are these and I'm expecting a very important guest for dinner tonight. I have nothing else to serve to Him."

The old man though evidently sad just greeted her. and they both headed back into the alley.

As she watched them leave, she could see the old lady shivering in the snowy weather. Her heart felt a twinge.

"Sir, wait!", Eve called out.

The couple stopped and turned as she ran down the alley after them.

"Look, why don't you take this food. I'll figure out something else to serve to my guest. Also its too cold, I've got another coat at home. Here, why don't you take this one." Eve unbuttoned her jacket and slipped it over the old woman's shoulders.

A sigh of joy and relief flashed through their face as they thanked Eve.

Then beaming with joy, Eve turned and walked back home, with a happy heart and nothing to serve her guest.

As she reached the threshold of her home, Eve remembered that the Lord was coming to visit her and she didn't have anything to offer Him.

As she fumbled through her purse for the door key, she noticed another strange envelope in her mailbox.

"That's odd. The mailman doesn't usually come twice in one day." She opened the envelope. The letter in it read

Dear Eve,
It was so good to see you again. Thank you for the lovely meal & the warm coat.
Love, Jesus

This story shows us the best way to demonstrate your love for the Lord is by showing compassion & care to others. Most of us feel that what we do is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean will always be less because of that one missing drop. So dear friends-

"Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices." - Hebrews 13:16



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For any queries or prayer requests, please contact us at 0400 221 158 or email to us at sevika.sangam@gmail.com.

This newsletter is intended for internal circulation between members of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Sydney.