

LENT

A SEASON OF RENEWAL

LENTEN MEDITATIONS 2021 | "I AM" SAYINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

First Meditation - 24 Feb '21 "I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE: HE WHO COMES TO ME SHALL NOT HUNGER." JOHN 6:35

> Second Meditation - 3 Mar '21 "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: HE WHO FOLLOWS ME SHALL NOT WALK IN THE DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE" JOHN 8:12

Third Meditation - 10 Mar '21 *"I AM THE GATE*: IF ANYONE ENTERS THROUGH ME, HE SHALL BE SAVED, AND SHALL GO IN AND OUT AND FIND PASTURE" JOHN 10:9

> Fourth Meditation - 17 Mar '21 "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP" JOHN 10:11

Fifth Meditation - 24 Mar '21 "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHALL LIVE EVEN IF HE DIES." JOHN 11:25

> Sixth Meditation - 31 Mar '21 "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE, NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER, BUT THROUGH ME." JOHN 14:6 "I AM THE TRUE VINE, AND MY FATHER IS THE VINEDRESSER. " JOHN 15:1

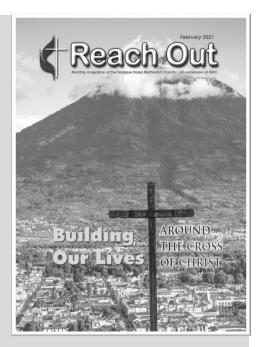
ALL LENTEN MEDITATION MEETINGS WILL BE TELECAST THROUGH OUR WEBSITE: WWW.SRMCBLR.ORG | @ 6:30 PM, EVERY WEDNESDAY



Beside St. Patrick's Academy, Kodathi Gate, Sarjapur Road, Bengaluru - 35

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Pastor

Rev. Alfred Sudarshan Raju

Mobile: +91 98445 64695 Email: alfredsraju86@gmail.com

> Worship Service Sunday | 9:00 AM

Mission Statement

"To be obedient, cheerful, compassionate, humble stewards of God's Word and resources, in utter dependence upon God through prayer, so that we as a congregation and those we reach out to, will experience transformation through the saving grace of God and grow as Christ-centered people, guided by the Holy Spirit."

SARJAPUR ROAD METHODIST CHURCH

Beside St. Patrick's Academy, Kodathi Gate, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore - 35.

Web: www.srmcblr.org

YouTube: youtube.com/srmcbangalore

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SarjapurRoadMethodistChurch





ear SRMC family,

Greetings to you all in the blessed name of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. It gives me immense joy to write to you all through this Pastoral Letter once again. We have completed one month in the new year 2021 and we acknowledge God's faithfulness and goodness in our lives throughout the month. I hope and believe that we had a wonderful month meditating on the topic "Faith in Hard times" in the month of January. We entered the new year with great faith in God, that God would, restore, renew, refresh and re-build us in this promised year. God is good to all of us.

As we move forward with great faith in our God Almighty, let us be assured that He journeys with us, as He did with Israelites. He will remain faithful to the covenant he has made with us. As he has promised us in Jeremiah 30:22 "And you shall be my people and I will be your God." As we approach this new month of February with great faith in God, the theme that came to my mind is "BUILDING OUR LIVES AROUND THE CROSS OF CHRIST." It is important, as Christians, to build our lives around the cross, rather than moulding our own moulds of cross. Therefore, our meditations will be centring around this topic. As we are preparing ourselves to approach this Lenten season with prayer, I ask God Almighty to speak to us, convict us in the places where we are going wrong and restore us to the purpose that he has created us for.

Lenten season is the season that we approach with great reverence and belief, as Christ came to this world to die for our sins. Every year we go through this calendar of Lenten season meditations, but what change has it brought to us? Are we the same people, or every time, are we transformed by the power of the Cross? We need to ponder or reflect on our lives as we enter this season. My humble prayer for SRMC is that may the Cross of Christ bring transformation in us and may it embrace us in our point of need for His glory. As we move further, let us see what the Cross means for us and how we can build our lives around the cross.

Cross: A Place that Embraces Us

The Cross is an integral part of Christian Life. It has become more of a religious symbol in our present-day spirituality. Though Cross stands as a sign and symbol of treason and death, with the act of Christ on the Cross, it has given us a new meaning, new hope, new perspective, new approach towards Christian life. Cross of Christ for Christians today stands for salvation and ultimate act of God love towards humanity. It also depicts the solidarity of God expressed towards people who go through isolation, hatred, shame and suffering. In other words, it stands in solidarity with the broken people who turn to God for help.

Jesus, even though he was innocent, he was brutally killed on the cross. He identified himself with the broken communities. The broken people or communities we see in today's context, lack socio, political, economic and cultural support. They are vulnerable to the hegemonic forces of the society. In the wake of the on-going farmer's protest, religious intolerance, economic crisis and social exclusion, The Cross of Christ expresses God's love for the neglected group of people in the society. The Cross came in search of the suffering people, for all those who are experiencing pain, suffering and isolation. Cross continues to bring them hope and assurance, to build their lives.

Cross: A Place that builds our lives

As Jesus said in Luke 9:23-25 "if any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up the cross and follow me," in Luke 14:27 he further says, whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. The call is to follow the way or path of cross. No matter what, instead of running away from the challenges, let us face the challenges with the power of Cross, as Christ embraced the Cross so that lives of people can be re-built. We also should embrace the cross of Christ and re-build our broken, shattered lives. Many people's lives were built around the cross; be it Mary, Jesus' disciples John, Peter, the Roman Soldier, etc., all their lives were transformed and changed for ever. They experienced God in person and they had strong faith to live their lives even when there was external threat and challenges after the death of Jesus.

Dear beloved people of God, as we enter this season of Lent. I encourage each of you to kindly spend some time in prayer and reflection in your families. May God speak to each of us and empower us to build our lives around the Cross of Christ. May God bless us all.

Yours in Christ, **Rev. Alfred Sudarshan Raju** Pastor, SRMC



- **PASTORAL CARE** is available through the Church, you can avail the services by speaking to the Pastor personally.
- **REACH OUT** is the in-house magazine of the SRMC and you are welcome to contribute your stories, missionary stories, testimonies, activity pages for children and other articles. You also have the opportunity to suggest the theme for the next Month and related resources.

Please continue to support through your tithes, faithfully every month.

- NFG meetings are currently suspended and will remain so until the end of the Lent season. More details will be given at a later date.
- You can offer **offerings and tithes** by utilizing online payment options given in our website (www.srmcblr.org) or cash. It is only through your contributions that you can build the Kingdom of God. Giving is a sign of a good Disciple.
- ◆ Project 'Arise, let us build' contributions can be made through our website as well.
- Sunday School is now Online and is conducted via ZOOM, at
 12 PM every Sunday. Please encourage and motivate your children to attend without fail, for a blessed and fruitful time.
- **Humble request:** Please be consistent in your attendance to the Church—either for the live service in Church, or via the Live Stream of the service on our website, every Sunday. This will help you to grow spiritually and it will also help the Church to grow both Spiritually and Missionally.
- **ONLIVE LIVE STREAMING** of our Sunday Worship Services can be viewed on our website www.srmcblr.org. Please do attend the service virtually, if you are unable to attend the service in Church, in person.
- ◆ Please note the new address of our Church, it is "Beside St. Patrick's Academy, Kodathi Gate, Sarjapur Road, Bengaluru—35." You can easily find the location on Google Maps under "Sarjapur Road Methodist Church."



Praise God

- Praise God for His help, as we meditated on the theme "Faith in Hard Times" during the month of January.
- Praise God for the wonderful way in which SRMC service has been conducted since the Church re-opened, both in Church, as well as online.

Remember and Pray

- Continue to pray for our Bishop N. L Karkare, Madam Kamal Karkare, Executive Secretary Rev. David Nathaniel, Conference Treasurer Rev. Mathew George M., District Superintendent Rev. Sebastian Ravikumar. Pray continuously for the Bangalore Regional Conference and that God's will be accomplished through the conference.
- Pray for our dear Pastor, Rev. Alfred Sudarshan Raju and his family. Also, kindly keep our extended Pastoral team & their families at KMC; Rev. Mathew George, Rev. Daniel Ezra Naveen, Rev. John Shikamani and our Pastorate Committee members and their families in prayers.
- Pray for all the Covid-19 frontline workers who are striving hard to attend to patients of this pandemic. Also, pray for all the families who have lost their dear ones to this disease, that God may give them strength to cope and hope to move ahead.
- Pray that God may raise people in the Church and outside, who can own the Project 'Arise, let us build' and support God in building up the place of worship at Sarjapur Road.
- Pray for the Management Team of SRMC and their families as they help in various activities of the church.
- Pray for the TAFTEE Bible Study group, Worship team, Men's & Women's fellowships, Sunday School and all the volunteers who are striving hard to serve and raise the resources for our Church.
- Pray for the sick, elders, widows and the poor, who need help in our church. Pray also for all the families that you remember at our Church.
- Pray that God may reveal His Plan for us in this locality and that the SRMC family may become a channel of blessing in this vicinity.

Lent

A SEASON OF REFLECTION, RENEWAL AND PREPARATION.

Lent is a season of self-discovery. The more we look at the cross of Christ, the more we discover ourselves. In the light of the Cross we renew, refresh, restore and rebuild our faith. Cross that stood as a symbol of shame and death stands for us today as honour and life. Today, for those who believe in cross, it has become a powerful symbol of God's unceasing love. The Cross connects us to God, it cleanses us, it heals us and it grants hope to live. Our shame guilt, pain, and suffering were nailed to the Cross of Calvary.

The Lent season is a very significant in the life and activities of the church which enables to introspect and rededicate ourselves to God. Lent enumerates the church to meditate upon Christ and his suffering on the cross, which would bring spiritual revolution in the lives of believers in and through the scripture, in our faith journey. It is a time of repentance. "*Metonoiao*" in Greek means turning from our folly to God, accepting His will in our lives for his ministry. It also refers to spring season, falling of the old leaves of and blossoming of new leaves, indicating the renewal of life, and spirituality.

Lent is also a time for lending our blessings of gifts to the needy and identify ourselves with suffering communities and the oppressed. Many Church leaders like Martin Luther, the great protestant church reformer, were touched by our Lord during the lent season, to be committed to their calling of God. At this time it is obvious and imperative to meditate on the theme "A Time of Reconciliation" which brings peace and joy among the individuals and corporate. The word used in Greek for Reconciliation APOKATALIASSEIN refers to bringing two parties into peaceful relation or bringing together friends, who have been estranged or hostile.

As we observe Lent, my humble prayer is that let us "**be still and know God**." May this lent help us to know God and know ourselves. It is in knowing God we know ourselves

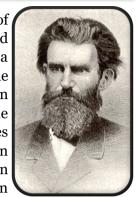
- Rev. Alfred Sudarshan Raju

Lenten meetings schedule is listed on Page #2



SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER

Coleshill, England, was a simple wood carver with no education, yet he had a very sharp memory and held the reputation of "knowing the Bible from heart" - an impression given by the fact that this humble Englishman was able to quote the Scriptures accurately, including the precise chapter and verse, in spite of being absolutely blind! Walford relied on others to read the Scriptures to him, which he then rehearsed and committed to memory as he whittled away bone to make shoe horns, or wood to make trinkets.



Walford's mind so dwelt upon Scripture, and his communion with the Lord was so sweet, that this humble little man was often asked to share a sermon at the Congregational services he attended. The overflow of the Word of God within him also came forth in the form of poetry.

One day around 1845, when Pastor Thomas Salmon visited Walford, Walford shared a poem about prayer which he had perfected unto memory and he asked Salmon to write it down for him. Salmon, seeing the beauty of the poem, sent it off for publishing as a poem but it was not until a number of years after Walford's death that the poem was set to music by William Bradbury. The poem then flew around the world upon the wings of its popularity and was translated in to several foreign languages. The Hymn is "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

The kind of prayer fostered in this hymn is private prayer, rather than prayers of the body of Christ gathered in worship. Stanza one focuses on petitionary prayer that responds to "seasons of distress and fear." Stanza two focuses on prayers of thanksgiving where the singer shares "the joys I feel." Stanza three returns to petitions, but the focus is on the God "whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless."

The story goes that a Congregational minister and friend, Thomas

Salmon, stopped by Walford's shop one day in 1842. Walford asked if Salmon would write down his new poem on the subject of prayer. Three years later, Salmon was in the U.S. and showed the poem to the editor of the New York Observer, who printed it in the Sept. 13, 1845 issue.

The text first appeared in the 1859 Baptist Hymnal Church Melodies, edited by Thomas Hastings and Robert Turnbull. The famous American gospel song writer, William Bradbury (1816-1868) - who composed music for so many beloved gospel hymns such as "Just As I Am" (Charlotte Elliott), "The Solid Rock" (Edward Mote) and "He Leadeth Me" (Joseph H. Gilmore) - also wrote the music for this favorite hymn in 1861.

The tune and text appeared together for the first time in Bradbury's collection Golden Chains, from which it has become a staple of hymnals around the world. The late William J. Reynolds, noted Baptist hymnologist and former author of this column, questioned the authorship of the hymn as described by Salmon. His extensive research could not locate a William W. Walford in Coleshill, but did note that there was a Rev. William Walford, a Congregational minister who served as president of Homerton Academy, who wrote several books including The Manner of Prayer.

Coleshill and Homerton are about 110 miles apart, more than two hours by car today, but much longer in the mid-19th century. Reynolds noted, however, that there are similarities between The Manner of Prayer and the hymn. It is entirely possible that Salmon embellished his story to the editor of the New York Observer. It is also possible, Reynolds suggested, that William W. Walford of Coleshill and William Walford of Homerton are one and the same.

The original stanza four has been dropped from many hymnals today, but it stresses the eschatological nature of prayer as the gateway to heaven:

> Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, May I thy consolations share, Till, from Mount Pisgah's lofty height, I view my home, and take my flight.

This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise, To seize the everlasting prize; And shout, while passing through the air, Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer.

The romanticized language adds a tone that stresses withdrawal from the world rather than engagement with the needs of the world as the body of Christ. Thus, while a powerful hymn and a sentimental favorite, I suggest that it has little use in public worship, but is more appropriate for individual devotion.

Beyond the fact that he was blind and the few details recorded by Thomas Salmon, we know little of William Walford. But his hymn, Sweet Hour of Prayer has touched hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides of the Atlantic, expressing the genuine joy he found in prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
The joys I feel, the bliss I share,
Of those whose anxious spirits burn
With strong desires for thy return!
With such I hasten to the place
Where God my Savior shows His face,
And gladly take my station there,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
Thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose truth and faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His Word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Compiled by Joel Dubba

Sources: umcdiscipleship.org | christianity.com | limerickcitychurch.com



WHAT IT MEANS TO SURRENDER TO GOD

he act of surrendering is very difficult for those who realize that the battle is lost. In his book No Surrender: My Thirty-Year War, Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda tells a fascinating tale of being one of the last Japanese-born soldiers to surrender in World War II. Onoda had been stationed on Lubang Island in the Philippines when it was taken over by U.S. forces in February 1945. Almost all of his comrades were killed or captured, but Onoda and several other men hid deep in the jungle. While his fellow evaders were eventually killed, Onoda held out for 29 years, dismissing every attempt to coax him out of the jungle as a trick. His primary motivation for not surrendering was his devout belief in the Japanese military code of discipline and honor. Because of this, he had been ordered by his superiors to never leave his post until he received a specific order enabling him to do so.

In 1974, the Japanese government sent its commanding officer to Lubang to order Onoda to surrender. When Lieutenant Onoda stepped out of the jungle to accept the order, he did so in his dress uniform and sword, with his rifle still in operating condition. Even in surrender he maintained his discipline and retained his honor.

This incredible tale of one man's discipline, honor, evasion, and surrender could be compared to our Christian walk. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are duty-bound to him—purchased by his blood and redeemed from sin—and we are to be disciplined by grace through his teachings, drawing near to him as he drew near to us. As believers, we make Christ a daily priority—but all too often we mix our duty and honor to God with duty and honor to ourselves. Sometimes we evade being captured by God because doing so would mean surrendering areas of our lives that we like to control. To live the life that God has planned for us, which he promises is best (Romans 8:28; Jeremiah 29:11), we need to wave the white flag of surrender.

But how do we do this?

In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus Christ gives us very clear instructions on how to surrender to his loving authority:

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Should I Surrender?

The answer is: Yes! In this passage, there are four challenging but necessary steps to take if we want to lead a surrendered life following Christ our Lord:

- Be open to surrender
- Deny yourself
- Take up his cross
- Follow him

1. Be open to surrender

The first step is perhaps the hardest one. Please note Christ's subtle invitation to join him: "If anyone would come after me." Here is an open invitation to surrender to, and walk through life with, the Creator of the universe and the Savior to sinners. As wonderful as that sounds, it is hard to do, for surrender goes against the grain of our stubborn, sinful hearts. For a non-believer, it takes admitting that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and embracing Jesus Christ by faith, receiving his eternal, loving grace, which enables a person to surrender in the first place. As for me, it took many years to surrender to him.

For believers, your Christian walk reveals that you have the greatest Advocate (1 John 2:1) and Friend that you will ever have in Jesus (John 15:15). But he has expectations that are for your good, and he lays out some very specific conditions to his disciples on how to follow. This brings us to our next step.

2. Deny Yourself

...let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (v. 24b)

The second thing Jesus calls us to do is to "deny ourselves," which means that we are to surrender self-will and embrace his perfect will. It is daunting task to be sure and one that we are under-powered to do on our own (2 Timothy 1:7). Think for a moment of your life. Are you living it on your terms? Or are you living it on his terms? When you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you said in essence, "I surrender all to you, Lord." Can you honestly say that you have done this in all areas of your life? If you are like me, the answer is No—but I really want to. Take a moment now and pray to the Lord to reveal those areas in your life that you have failed to surrender to him.

3. Take Up His Cross

The third thing Jesus calls us to do is to "take up his cross" (v. 24b). What does this mean? As followers of Jesus, we know that we were

crucified with Christ on the cross (Galatians 2:20). Because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for the sins of all mankind, his crucifixion gives us the opportunity for open fellowship with him for all eternity (1 John 1:3). But it also means that we will share in the burden of carrying the cross (Matthew 10:38). We are to seek and follow God's will no matter the cost (1 Thessalonians. 4:3).

In today's world, your relationship with God might cost you your family, your friends, your job, or, in some extreme cases, your life. Fortunately for us, Jesus Christ was the perfect model of surrender (John 5:30). Because he loved his Father and us so much, he surrendered his perfect and sinless life to God, making a way for us to enter into fellowship with him (Matthew 26:39).



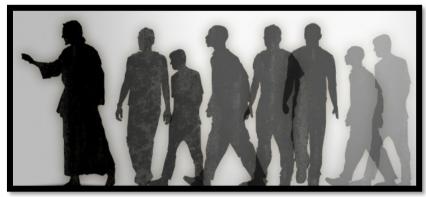
Believer, will you surrender the self-will that hinders you from having a better relationship with Jesus Christ? Or will you evade capture by his Lordship, holding tight to earthly things that will eventually fade away at the expense of forfeiting all that God has for your soul?

4. Follow Christ

The last thing Jesus asks us to do is to "follow me." For humans, following anyone is a difficult task—especially when it involves giving up any measure of control. A perfect example of this is Jesus inviting Andrew and Peter to follow him (Matthew 4:17-19). They left everything behind when they did. Jesus also encouraged the rich, young ruler to follow him (Luke 18:18-23), but he refused to sell everything he owned and thus wouldn't follow him.

It is tough to follow because we like the feeling of leading. How many of us like to drive behind a slow-moving truck on a two-lane highway? As impatient as we are, it won't be long before we pass it, thereby enjoying the wide open road ahead of us. How often do we feel that God is moving too slowly, causing us to sprint ahead and leave him behind? When we do this, we leave the safety of his will for the uncertainty of our own. That usually doesn't lead anywhere good. Being dedicated followers of Jesus Christ takes strength and wisdom but, more importantly, it requires us to surrender control of lives once and for all to him, the Lord of all creation, for he is the source of such strength and wisdom.

Will you deny yourself, take up his cross, and follow him?



Find Your Life

It is worth pondering: Is there any downside to not surrendering? In verse 25, we see a clear warning for failing to surrender to Christ: For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Quite simply, anyone who seeks to save his life by pursing their own interests and rejecting God's gift of Jesus Christ will live a shallow, meaningless life devoid of him and an eternity apart from him. While he may choose to bless people with earthly riches, those who reject him will have no place with him in heaven. Hell is full of "wealthy" people who never surrendered any portion of their lives—and especially not their souls—to God in Jesus Christ.

That's why total surrender to God through faith in his Son is the most important decision a person can make.

In the final analysis, Lieutenant Onoda needed to be coaxed into surrendering. If you have not placed Jesus on the throne over your life, can I encourage you to do that today? Can I encourage you, my fellow believer, to make the choice to surrender all you have to God? I fear that if we, the body of Christ, don't surrender all, we will be like Lieutenant Onoda and stubbornly stick to man-made duty, honor, and plans that do not draw us closer to God. Waving the white flag of surrender never looked so good.

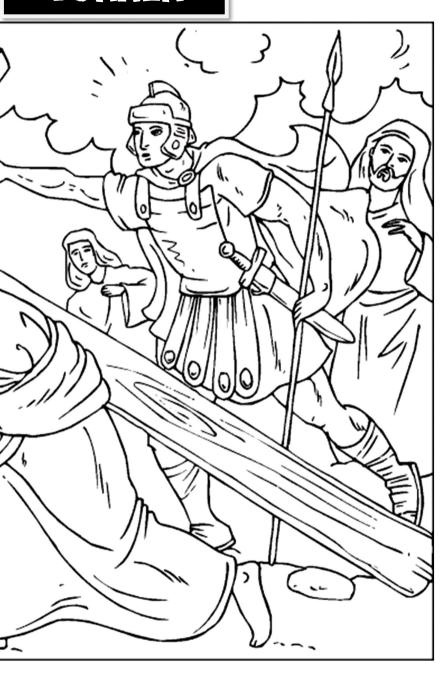
Which of these four steps is the most challenging for you?

Written by Doug Andre
For unlockingthebible.org

CHILDREN'S



CORNER





JUST FOR FUN!



A married couple were arguing who is making the coffee, the wife said that in the Bible it says that men should make the coffee and the husband asked her where it said that. The wife opened the Bible and said: "Right here in HEBR EWS!"





A Woman went to the Post Office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards. "What Denomination?" asked the clerk. "Oh, my goodness! Have we come to this?" said the woman. "Well give me 50 Methodist and 50 Baptist!"

As the storm raged, the captain realized his ship was sinking fast. He called out, "Anyone here know how to pray?" One man stepped forward. "Aye, Captain, I know how to pray." "Good," said the captain, "you pray while the rest of us put on our life jackets - we're one short."





Little Johnny's new baby brother was screaming up a storm. Johnny asked his mom, "Where'd he come from?" "He came from heaven, Johnny."

Johnny responded: "Wow! I can see why they **threw** him out!"

Flag-Hoisting at Church on 26 Jan 2021

















FEBRUARY 2021

BUILDING OUR LIVESAROUND THE CROSS OF CHRIST

"Every year we go through Lenten meditations. But what change has it brought to us? Are we the same people, or are we transformed by the power of the Cross? We need to ponder or reflect on our lives, as we enter this season."

1st Sunday - 07/02/2021*

THE MESSAGE OF CROSS

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

2nd Sunday - 14/02/2021

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

1 Peter 2:24-25

ASH WEDNESDAY COMMUNION SERVICE - 17/02/2021*

CROSS - A CALL TO SELF-DENIAL

Luke 9:23-27

3rd Sunday - 21/02/2021

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

4th Sunday - 28/02/2021

THE CROSS THAT EMBRACES SINNERS

Luke 23:32-46

*Holy Communion

SARJAPUR ROAD METHODIST CHURCH

Beside St. Patrick's Academy, Kodathi Gate, Bengaluru - 35