



KEEP OUR GREAT NATION IN YOUR PRAYERS, AS WE CELEBRATE OUR **72nd REPUBLIC DAY,**



MAY GOD BLESS INDIA

AND PROTECT US FROM ALL HARM AND EVIL

Inside

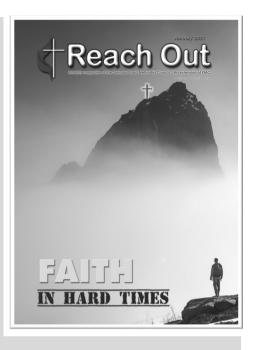
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Pastor

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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





Dear SRMC family,

Greetings to you all in the matchless name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It gives me immense Joy to write to you all through this Pastoral letter. I hope and believe that we had a wonderful Christmas season, we have celebrated the birth of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ with our families with much Joy and happiness. At the same time, some of us were not able to celebrate with joy and happiness due to various reasons that the Global pandemic brought in our lives. Yet, dear beloved people of God, we have to acknowledge that God has been faithful in our lives even during this global pandemic Covid-19. As we have entered this new year, with new hope, new faith, new aspirations, new visions in Jesus Christ, it is my prayer and encouragement to all of us that God would enable us to reflect on our lives and get inspiration to lead our lives as He wants us to live.

As I was meditating and seeking God's voice for the theme for our meditation in the month of January 2021, the holy spirit inspired me to think on the lines of "FAITH" as we have gone through difficult situations in the year 2020. Many have lost our loved ones, our jobs, our finances, our relationships, our hope to live, as COVID-19 shattered us physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. In theses times of hardships, trials and challenging environment, faith is an essential component, that is required for us to live. Faith in Jesus Christ is very essential for each of us in our life's journey. That's why I have entitled the theme for our meditation during the month of January as, "Faith in Hard times."

Expressing our faith in Jesus Christ during our hard times is important, as Faith can do wonders, it can save us, it gives hope to live, it helps us to see things unseen. Holding on to our faith during hard times is very crucial. As we see in Scriptures, that God is near us when we are in tough times, God's timing is perfect in assisting us, he appears to us in time of our need. Experiences of hardships in life helps us to remember, who God is in our lives, He is a faithful God and our help in ages past, and he will help now and he will be our help in our future too. This is the faith and trust that we should have, as we look ahead to the New Year to be a blessed one.

As we move on into this New Year, the time is right for us to adjust our vision to "new things" for our lives. While what has been in our past experience was comfortable, we are living and we are a changing community. Our ancient faith always remains beautiful as St. Augustine writes in his Confession X "*Beauty ever ancient, ever new*". It remains beautiful, true and eternal, although times and circumstances have changed and require us to develop new ways to foster, promote and witness our faith. Many of us are scared, even though we have entered this new year 2021, what will this year be like? Is it going to be the same as 2020? Will it be equally challenging, full of fearful situations?

Many of us are worried and anxious about our future, but dearly beloved in God, let us anchor our trust and hope, depend on Christ and derive Faith for our future. As God leads us in this year, let us surrender our lives to him so that he shall direct our path and lead us into safety. As the Psalmist says, *"even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me."* (Psalms 23:4), He shall direct our paths in this new year, as we read in Psalms 32:8 *"I will instruct you and teach the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."*

As Jesus also tells us that a new wine requires new wine skin. In Christian life also there are old structures, outdated structures that are to be renewed and we need to be attentive and allow God to work in us, to renew, to refresh and rejuvenate us. Whenever the angels or the divine proclamation came to humanity, it was "Fear not" or "Don't be afraid". The same message comes to all of us in this new year as well, that God is with us and we need not fear anything that exists in this world; be it our finances, our jobs, our relationships, etc. In other words, God tells us not to be afraid of our finances, our jobs, our new structures. God has promised to His people that He would rebuild us and restore everything that we have lost.

So, where do we go from our current situation? Is there an escape? **Giving up is not an option.** As Jesus assured us all in Matthew 18:20 "where two or three gathers in my name, there am I in the midst of them." **Losing faith is not an option.** The Lord Jesus promised "I will be with you all days even to the end of time" (Matthew 28:20). **Surrendering to the societal pressure or trends is not an option.** Jesus proclaimed" I am the way, the truth and the life (John14:6).

God has promised His presence in our lives, His providence and abundant life to all of us who believe and put our trust in him. With these promises, let us take our lives forward, let us derive courage through faith in Jesus Christ, for our future.

In the first epistle of Peter 1:5-9, it is written, "who by God's power are being guarded through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire- may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that in inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

May the God of hope lead us through his son Jesus Christ and bless us in this new year of faith. May we all grow in our faith, learn to put our trust in God our Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer, and through the eyes of faith may we all see and experience God's providence, protection and peace in our lives.

May God bless us all. Have a blessed and prosperous New Year 2021.

Happy New Year /// to Everyone. Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace to us on earth.

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 & Pray

Praise God

- Praise God for His help, as we meditated on the theme "*Celebrating the Love of God on Earth*" during the month of December.
- 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.

Wonderful Words of Life

ne would wager that many people who have sung this hymn can recall most of the hymn text in its entirety or, at the very least, the refrain. Clearly, **Philip P. Bliss** (1838-1876) knew exactly what he was doing with this text. He used his background as an educator to influence many generations of singers over the course of the last century and a half.

Man behind the

Hymn

Bliss is well-known from his work with the evangelistic revival meetings of the mid-nineteenth century with leaders such as Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) and Daniel Webster "Major" Whittle (1840-



1901). Bliss and his wife, Lucy, both joined these revival meetings as singers, leading the songs of what would be known as the gospel era of hymnody. This genre of hymnody was itself named from collections Bliss compiled with Ira D. Sankey (1840-1908), with titles such as Gospel Hymns and Sacred Songs and Gospel Hymns No. 2. The Blisses defined the era with a life on the road as traveling evangelists with their colleagues for many years to come. Most of these worship services took place in the mid-western and the southern United States, and they served as the framework within which Bliss wrote his hymn texts and tunes.

Before these evangelistic endeavors, however, Bliss had an interesting life as a child and young adult. Born in Pennsylvania, the industrious boy spent his early years working and learning, and he received training in music from teachers such as William B. Bradbury (1816-1868), whose well-known tunes include JESUS LOVES ME and HE LEADETH ME. Bliss eventually took on the roles of itinerant music teacher, composer, and editor.

One can assume his training included the pedagogical tools needed to teach music in the nineteenth century, and it is evident this experience influenced his work as a composer and enlivener of the people's song in worship. Bliss would have taught many of his songs in these revival meetings by rote, and "Wonderful Words of Life" is filled with examples of repetition. Though the second line differs from the first by only one note (the final note), it is almost an exact statement of the initial phrase. The third line contains two two-measure phrases that are exactly the same, and the refrain contains two phrases written almost note for note. The final musical form then becomes AA' BB CC'. In addition, the "wonderful words" themselves become a teaching tool that are deeply rooted in the ear, voice, and mind of the singer. The phrase "wonderful words" is repeated throughout this hymn a total of eighteen times, and the larger phrase "wonderful words of life," a total of twelve times! He uses means other than repetition to reinforce the teaching of the text and tune. The poetic devices he employs also help to teach the hymn. "Words" is personified throughout the hymn as teachers "wooing us to heaven" and "offering pardon and peace to all." Bliss's creative use of alliteration is also very prominent throughout, with a strong "w" sound adding to the overall rocking character of the 6/8 tune. These poetic devices were carefully chosen because they all add to the narrative of the text and the singability of the tune.

As the revivalist song leader, Bliss was obviously emphasizing the words of Scripture and the subsequent "gospel call" that results from the hearing of these words. The singing itself becomes the persuasive sermon as the text is directed toward a listener, the "sinner," and the sermon concludes with the following simple prayer:

Jesus, only Savior, Sanctify forever.

It is no surprise, then, that this hymn is included in Methodist collections, as the themes of holiness and sanctification appear at the end of the third stanza.

If only Bliss could have written more texts and tunes, it is certain they would have appeared in United Methodist collections and others within the global church. His life was cut short at age 38 as he and his wife **Lucy Bliss** were involved in a train wreck near Ashtabula, Ohio, on their way to Chicago to assist in evangelistic services led by "Major Whittle." According to The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology, "It is believed that Bliss escaped the crash, but the carriages caught fire and he returned to try to save his wife" (JRW, "Philip P.



Bliss"). Even the last moments of his life served as an example of one who followed the "gospel call." As one learned in and devoted to "faith and duty," Bliss spent his last efforts helping his wife, Lucy.

May the singing of these "wonderful words" be a reminder of the power of words, the Spirit moving through their proclamation, and the call of Christ.

Compiled by Joel Dubba

Source: www.umcdiscipleship.org

'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.'

– *Romans* 6:4

'Newness of life'—what does it mean? It means this. When we are born again, and believe in the Lord Jesus, which things take place at the same time, we receive a life which we never before possessed. We begin to feel, to think, and to act as we never did before. The new life is something foreign to our fallen nature: an exotic, a plant of another clime.'

– Charles Spurgeon

Do you share in this newness of life?

I'm not asking: 'do you share in forgiveness of sins?', or 'will you share in heaven forever?' These are important questions, but they're not the one I'm asking.

I'm asking: 'Do you have newness of life?'

It amazes me that the very best we humans can do for weary members of our species, for the lives of broken-down people, is to carry them from here to there, from one patch of turf to another, to change their circumstances, to convey them to a place where money can be thrown at their withered state! (Acts 3:1-10)

It shows you how superficially we address the problems of humanity. We don't try to cure them. We try only to manage them. We try to make people slightly less miserable, never addressing the cause of their misery, never expecting to change them from being beggars, but just trying to improve their prospects as beggars.

We don't expect change in our lives – not big change, not cures for what ails us. We expect life to be wearying. We anticipate a large amount of discouragement and despair. We accept our fears & worries as unavoidable features of our existence. We are resigned to broken relationships. We even accept the approach of our own deaths.

But God's plan was to kill sin in the death of his Son. His plan was to kill the cruel bondage suffered by all humans, in which they try to make a life for themselves and by themselves. By putting an end to that bondage, he re-introduces us to life. Resurrected life. Life back from the dead.

Wholeness of life, in which we look to God to fill us up with all the fullness of his very own life. All things are going to be restored. Life is going to be made full and perfect. And everything needed to make it so has already been accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We're not there yet. Human lives are not perfect. They won't be until the return of Christ. But, then, all the fullness of human life will be restored for those that God has called to himself.

Who are those whom God has called to himself?

- They are the people whose lives are changing right now.
- They are the lame who are beginning to walk.
- They are those who lust but are being purified.
- They are the discouraged who are leaping for joy.
- They are the broken who are being put back together.
- They are the lonely who are being comforted.
- They are the depressed, who are praising God.
- They are those once dead, now risen to newness of life.

Written by Timothy B Savage Author of **Discover the Good Life: The Surprising Riches in Christ**

Every year, 7 January is celebrated as

MCI Formation Day

Methodist Church in India (MCI) was inaugurated on January 7, 1981 at Madras (now Chennai), as an "autonomous affiliated" church in relation to The United Methodist Church ello everyone! A very happy New Year to you and your family! This is my testimony of what last year was all about and God's faithfulness in my life. I'm sharing it with my Church family and friends who've been continuously praying for me. It is only because of your prayers that I'm alive and well. Thank you all very much from the bottom of my heart.

2020 was the year that changed my whole perspective about life. I never knew this year would be so significant, when it first began. It started off like just every other January 1st, but little did I know that God had such an amazing plan for me and through me, this year. The biggest fear in everyone's mind became my daily routine. Covid was the word that I dreaded the most and going near it was my greatest fear.

It all started in March when I heard that a new disease is spreading around the world and it is a contagious, viral, killer. My first day back at work after my annual leave, I had to enter my otherwise-normal ward, to find out it had people affected by Covid. I was scared - one part of me wanted to run away and hide somewhere safe - and I felt I had no choice. I was already on medication for latent TB and so the thought of anything affecting my lungs again was a nightmare, especially Covid. I cried, I prayed 'God please do something I really don't want to encounter this virus'. I was scared; scared that I'd get it, that I'd die, that my husband would get it and something might happen to him. I cried almost every night praying and hoping that this thing would end soon and normalcy to return. I saw patients sick, some struggling to breathe, some deteriorating, others approaching the end of life, very anxious family members willing to do anything to see their loved ones, to have them back home well and healthy, others hearing the sad news of their loved ones passing away, some pleading to meet their loved ones for one last time, receiving endless phone calls about their progress and if we could put their phones for charging or pick the call so that they could facetime them.

It was a very emotional phase where lives were lost like a vapor in the wind. I always wondered what a massive impact a tiny little organism can do. That is when this verse struck me *'the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world'*.

Each time I entered into the isolation bay, my only prayer would be that if God shut the mouths of lions in a den then my God will definitely protect me from this virus. I've had patients cough on my face, confused delirious patients ripping off my protective gown, some who just wouldn't let go of my hand knowing that they would die soon, some just wanting a hug so that they'd feel a bit better, and all I did was to let myself into this knowing that I am the apple of his eye and that he who has called me to do this will help me through it!

And just when I thought it was all over came the second wave. The same experience all over again, only much more severe, intense and horrific. This time it was completely out of control and left me drained out, sick, exhausted and stressed. Just when I thought I could do this no longer I was reminded of God's promise 'even though you walk though deep waters I will be with you, I will never leave you nor forsake you' and 'even though I walk through the valley of shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me and God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever'.

Through Covid, God taught me to number my days as the psalmist mentions and to live for Him alone. Through this situation He has been faithful and has fulfilled his promise in my life. This pandemic is not over, I know I cannot really explain its impact on me in just a few words and I know I will be dealing with it for as long as it stays, but I believe that His purpose of me being a nurse is to stand for him and encourage people in this hopeless situation. To just be there for people who can't have their family near them while they are on their death bed and to rest their heads back to sleep in peace, once and for all. God has given me the strength to do this. All glory to Him alone.

- Mrs. Mona Keren Daniel Registered Nurse at Medway Maritime Hospital, Kent, England

FAITH IN GOD IN HARD TIMES

ne day, I read a fable. There was once a farmer who hoped that his wheat would not be affected by any terrible weather while it was growing, but would grow tall and strong in light winds and sunshine. But when his wish was realized and the time came to collect the harvest, the wheat held no grain. As it happens, if wheat is not baptized through all kinds of hard weather as it grows, it will not bear a rich harvest.

Article

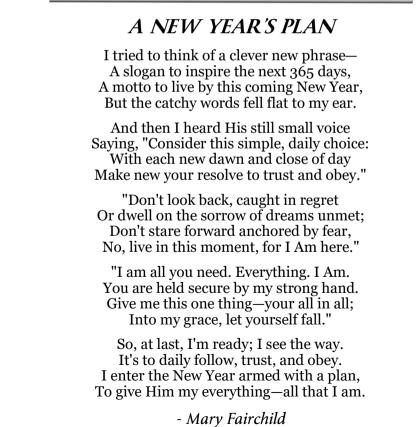
The growing of the wheat made me think of our own lives and how we also need to be tempered by wind and rain, otherwise we end up like flowers growing in a greenhouse, and we become very fragile, we fall at the first blow, and are unable to adapt to all manner of harsh environments and cruel realities. The Bible says, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:32). When our environment is comfortable and easy, all we do is enjoy our flesh and we are simply unable to sincerely rely on God, look to God or draw close to Him. When we experience many hardships, we learn how to sincerely rely on God and look to God, we establish a normal relationship with God, and little by little we become composed and steady, and our will, our stamina, and our ability to judge things and handle problems all grow apace. We also become increasingly mature and we grow in life with each passing day. Therefore, we only grow by experiencing hardships and tribulations.

Similarly, to those of us who believe in God, undergoing hardships and refinements is God's greatest blessing, for if we want to gain life, we must undergo hardships and suffering. The Bible says, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" (Daniel 12:10). "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but Jehovah tries the hearts" (Proverbs 17:3). There are many verses like this within the Bible, and they tell us that, only by experiencing hardships and refinements are we able to see our own true statures and discover our own shortcomings and deficiencies. At the same time, we come to have real knowledge of God's will that lies behind His arrangement of these hardships, as well as of His disposition and what He has and is. Throughout history, those ancient saints and prophets were tempered through hardships before they came to have true faith in God and obeyed God, and only then did they earn God's praise. Take Abraham, for example. God demanded that he give his son Isaac, who had been born to him when he was 100 years old, to God as a burnt sacrifice and, during this trial, Abraham gave up his most beloved only son in order to satisfy God. The sincerity and obedience he showed to God met with God's acceptance, and God promised Abraham that Reach Out | Jan 2021 15

the descendants of his offspring would multiply and increase, and Abraham became the father of many nations.

The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). Belief in God is a difficult, winding, bumpy road. As we travel along this road, we must undergo many trials and refinements, such as illness, poverty, being vilified by worldly people and so on. When these hardships and refinements befall us, are we able to hold our ground, not blame or misunderstand God, learn to accept it from God, and focus on learning the lessons and engaging in self-reflection, thus enabling us to grow in our lives? Actually, once we have passed through hardships and refinements, we can all truly appreciate that hardships are the greatest blessing that God can bestow on us! Only by undergoing hardships and suffering can we be rid of our corrupt dispositions and can our life dispositions then change. Only when our life dispositions change do we become qualified to receive God's inheritance and obtain His promise!

- Xiang Yang (for easternlightning.org)



Reach Out | Jan 2021







A pastor received a letter from a congregant. When he removed the letter from the envelope, it had one word written on it-"Fool"! "Well", said the pastor, *"the sender signed the letter, but didn't write anything else!"*





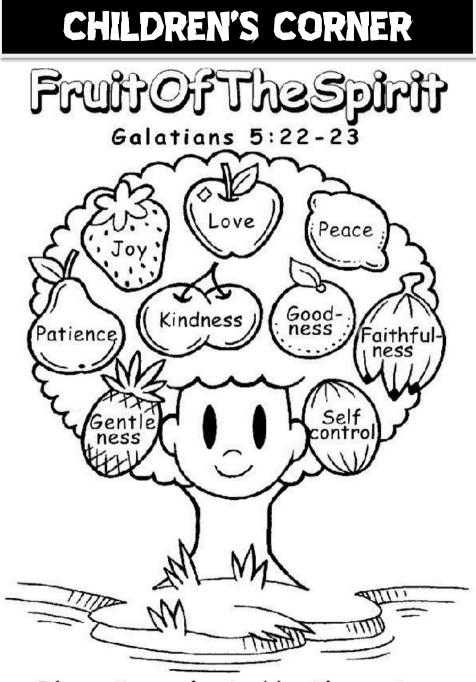
At the Christmas Eve service at my church, the pastor, quizzing some children about the nativity, asked, "What gifts did the three wise men give the Christ child?" "Gold!" one child yelled. "Frankincense!" shouted another. After a pause, a third child asked, *"Gift cards, perhaps?*"

A policeman pulls over a priest and immediately smells alcohol on his breath. The next thing he notices is an empty wine bottle lying on the passenger seat. "Have you been drinking?" the officer asks. "Just water," says the priest. "Then why do I smell wine?" The priest looks at the bottle and shouts, *"Good Lord! He's done it again!*"





Michael celebrated his birthday on crutches, so he couldn't carry the cupcakes into school without help. The teacher asked his elder brother Noah to help his brother carry them in. "I could," he said, "but I'd prefer not to." Spotting a teaching moment, the teacher asked Noah, "What would Jesus do?" Noah answered, *"Jesus would heal him so he could carry his own cupcakes!*"



I'm a tree planted by the water

Christmas Carols in times of Covid









Campfire & Conversations



Reach Out | Jan 2021

JANUARY 2021

FAITH IN HARD TIMES

"Expressing our faith in Jesus Christ during our hard times is important, as Faith can do wonders, it can save us, it gives hope to live, it helps us to see things unseen."

1st Sunday - 03/01/2021*

RISE UP FROM WHERE YOU HAVE FALLEN

Revelation 2:1-7

2nd Sunday - 10/01/2021

FAITH OF FRIENDS

Luke 5:17-26

3rd Sunday - 17/01/2021

THE POWER OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:1-7

4th Sunday - 24/01/2021

GENUINENESS OF OUR FAITH

1 Peter 3:3-12

5th Sunday - 31/01/2021 STRONG FAITH IN DIFFICULT TIMES Matthew 8:5-15

*Holy Communion

SARJAPUR ROAD METHODIST CHURCH

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