

AUGUST 2025
VOL. 08



NEWSLETTER

CHURCH OF SS. MARY & JOHN

03, Stanley Tilakaratne Mawatha, Nugegoda.
Tel : 0112854067

WELCOME!

We warmly welcome all newcomers to the Church of SS. Mary and John, Nugegoda. We are delighted that you are a part of the worship community of this parish. All those who wish to enrol as members are kindly requested to fill in a membership form which can be obtained from the Vicar or one of our Wardens.



SERVICE TIMES FOR THIS MONTH

01st, 02nd and 04th Sundays

- 07.30am English
- 09.15am Sinhala
- 10.45am Tamil
- 05.30pm English

03rd Sundays

- 08.00am Trilingual Service
- One service for the day. No evening service*

OUR CLERGY

Vicar : Rev. Sam Ponniah
Tel : 011 281 1072, 077 741 6681
Email : samueljponniah@gmail.com

Curate: Rev. Gamini Perera
Tel : 077 770 0712
Home : 011 285 2243

Curate: Rev. Ramesh Schaffter
Tel : 077 730 7544
Email : ramesh.schaffter@gmail.com

VISITORS!

We are glad to have you!

Ask for assistance from our ushers as you enter our Church and they will welcome you with warmth and kindness and usher you to your seats.

Web: www.ssmaryandjohn.com
Email: ssmaryandjohnnugegoda@gmail.com



PARISH DIRECTORY

BOARD OF WARDENS

Ms. Rukmal Fernando (Vicar's Warden)	Tel. 0777720823
Mr. Hiran De Mel (People's Warden)	Tel. 0767732506
Mr. Niren Wikkramatilleke (People's Warden)	Tel. 0771712251
Mr. Chumley Ranatunge (People's Warden)	Tel. 0773476579
Mr. Julian Manuel (Hon. Treasurer)	Tel. 0717441745
Ms. Niluka Wickremesinghe (Hon. Secretary)	Tel. 0774679256

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mrs. Ramani Jayasundera (Hon. Secretary)	Tel. 0777792962
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BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OF THE SENIOR FRIENDS' HOME

CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROJECT

Mrs. Ramani Jayasundera (Hon. Directress)	Tel. 0777792962
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PRE SCHOOL

Mrs. Shiromie Dharmadasa	Tel: 0773317501
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PARISH OFFICE

Parish Administrator - Ms. Ranmalie Seneviratne	Tel. 0112854067
Accountant - Mr. Basil Perumal	Tel. 0112854067
Property Secretary/Fabric Supervisor – Mr. Ravi Peeris	Tel. 0777531675

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Superintendent - Ms. Romela De Mel	Tel. 0773583351
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COMMUNITY CENTRE

Manager - Ms. Kethaki Piyasena	Tel. 0112821097
Caretaker	Tel. 0766299344

SENIOR FRIENDS' HOME

Matron - Ms. Debbie Coggins	Tel. 0770608168
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HEAD SERVER

Jenitha Jacob	Tel. 0716276187
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Your Vicar's thoughts...

My dear Friends in Christ,

Reflection

Living as True Disciples: Faith, Generosity, and Readiness

The Sunday Gospel readings for this month are from Luke 12:13–14:14 which offers a profound roadmap for Christian living—one that challenges our priorities and invites us into deeper freedom. Jesus' words are both comforting and unsettling, reminding us that discipleship is not a passive endeavor but a daily choice to align our hearts with God's Kingdom.

Where Is Your Treasure?

Jesus begins with a warning against greed, sharing the parable of the rich man who stored up earthly wealth but was "not rich toward God" (12:21). In a world obsessed with accumulation, Christ redirects us: "Sell your possessions, give alms... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (12:33-34). True security lies not in what we own, but in what we give away.

Ready for the Master's Return

Like servants awaiting their master (12:35-40), we're called to live with watchful hearts. This isn't a posture of fear, but of joyful expectancy—our lamps lit, our hands open. Discipleship demands surrender, yet Jesus tenderly reminds us: "Do not be afraid, little flock" (12:32).

The Cost and Gift of Discipleship

Following Christ disrupts complacency. He "brings fire" and division (12:49-53), challenging even family idols. Yet this same Lord breaks chains, as seen in the healing of the bent-over woman (13:10-17). His compassion triumphs over rigid legalism, restoring dignity to the marginalized.

The Way of Humility

At the Pharisee's banquet (14:1,7-14), Jesus flips social norms: "When you give a banquet, invite the poor... and you will be blessed" (14:13-14). The path to exaltation begins by taking the lowest seat and serving without expectation of return.

This month's Challenge:

- **Detach:** Identify one way materialism distracts you from God. Give generously—time, resources, or forgiveness.
- **Trust:** Embrace a situation where Christ's truth unsettles your comfort. Pray for courage.
- **Serve:** Reach out to someone overlooked—a neighbor, a stranger, or the "difficult" person in your life.

Critical Issues in Education, Road Safety, Gaza, and Justice in Sri Lanka

1) Proposed Educational Reforms Under Discussion

The government is currently deliberating on significant educational reforms, which include. Increased timeslots for periods and extended school hours, reducing subjects for O/L exams that are compulsory, ability to choose focus for higher studies earlier etc.

Pros:

- Teachers will have more time for instruction, interactive discussions, and group work, enhancing student engagement.
- Students can spend more time on each subject
- Students can choose subjects that are relevant to the field they want to pursue in life at an earlier stage.

Cons:

- Working parents may struggle with adjusted drop-off and pick-up schedules.
- Tuition teachers' schedules could be disrupted.
- Less time may be available for extracurricular activities.
- Students will lose out on gaining knowledge on basket subjects they don't choose.

However, a more urgent issue is the insufficient funding for education in the national budget. Although there has been a persistent call to allocate 6% of GDP to education—a proposal first put forward by FUTA—current spending stands at just 2%, far below the required level. Strategic investments in curriculum updates, teacher hiring, nutritional aid for disadvantaged students, and fair resource allocation will be essential.

Another contentious issue is the permission granted for tuition classes during school hours. Authorities justify this by claiming that "second shy students" benefit from additional coaching, but this reasoning is weak. There should be a ban on tutorials operating during school hours to ensure that formal education remains the priority.

In Sri Lanka, meaningful education reform will require a broad, inclusive consultative process that transcends political cycles. Policies must be evidence-based, equity-focused, and aligned with long-term national priorities. The active involvement of the Church in these discussions is important. Their input is crucial for balanced and effective reforms.

2) Alarming Rise in Road Accidents

Sri Lanka faces a shocking surge in road fatalities, with an estimated one death reported every three hours. Key contributing factors include:



- Road rage and indiscipline
- Lack of awareness of traffic rules
- Reckless driving and haste
- Poor maintenance of vehicles and roads

This crisis demands immediate intervention, including stricter law enforcement, public awareness campaigns, and infrastructure improvements.

3) The Humanitarian Catastrophe in Gaza and West Bank

The situation in Gaza has reached catastrophic levels, with 'man-made famine and forced starvation' unfolding while the world watches. Despite warnings from aid agencies and the media for months, the international response has been shockingly inadequate.

- Eight months ago (November 2024), the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the war crime of starvation. However, the U.S. dismissed the ICC's authority, imposing sanctions even before Trump took office.
- For the past three months, Gaza has been under a 'complete siege', with all food, water, and medicine cut off.
- The blatant disregard for humanitarian law sets a dangerous global precedent.
- The live-streamed suffering is unbearable to witness.

Global Responses:

- The U.S. and EU continue their support for Israel.
- Russia and Arab nations have not imposed boycotts or halted supply chains.
- An increasing number of countries and media outlets are now labeling this a genocide.
- France, Netherlands, UK, Malta and Germany are the latest EU nations to join calls for accountability.

Dan Cohn-Sherbok an American-born rabbi and professor emeritus of Judaism at the University of Wales argues that, the Jewish people have put their faith in God as Redeemer and Saviour for nearly 4,000 years even in the face of persecution and death, believing that God providentially guides their destiny, and will reward the faithful in the world to come, no longer believe in a providential Lord who watches over his chosen people. Instead, more and more Jews worldwide (with the exception of the strictly Orthodox) have come to regard the State of Israel as their only hope for salvation. He believes this shift took place due to the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis. Where was God in the death camps? How could God have allowed the Jewish people to be nearly annihilated by the Nazis? Are some of the questions posed that enable them to change their belief. Dan Cohn-Sherbok writes

“Jewish religious institutions continue to function around the globe, but there has been a fundamental shift in Jewish self-consciousness. No longer do the vast majority believe in a providential God who intervenes in human history. Jews pray in synagogues as they did in previous centuries. But in a post-Holocaust world, for most Jews, the prayers have lost their meaning. The Jewish religion, Judaism – with the Lord of history at its centre – has been eclipsed by the belief that the State of Israel is the Jewish people’s salvation. Zionism has replaced God as the only hope for the Jewish people.”

He laments that this profound shift in Jewish consciousness has significantly influenced how Jews interpret events in the Holy Land. The conflict with Israel’s adversaries is seen as an existential fight for survival. Rather than relying on divine intervention to prevent destruction, it is Israel itself—through its armaments and nuclear capabilities—that ensures its people's safety.

The Church's Stance?

There is growing concern over 'certain Christian groups' with 'an apocalyptic theology' who:
 - Pray for Armageddon, believing that a nuclear war (potentially involving Iran) will hasten Christ's return. This ideology supports Israel not out of love for Jews, but due to a warped belief that their salvation depends on Jewish presence in Israel—even at the cost of Palestinian lives, including Christian Palestinians. The recent IDF attack on a Roman Catholic church in Gaza underscores that Christians are also victims of this violence.

4) Justice issues

The decision to remove IGP Deshabandu Tennakoon who is currently suspended from his duties, came about when he was found guilty of serious allegations by a constitutionally appointed Committee of Inquiry, setting the stage for an unprecedented parliamentary vote that is scheduled to take place, on August 5. A motion seeking the removal of Tennakoon was submitted to Speaker of Parliament, (Dr.) Jagath Wickramaratne on 25th July by a group of National People's Power (NPP) MPs. The motion, signed by 115 MPs, lists 27 corruption charges against the IGP. Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa announced that the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) would fully support the motion.

The Supreme Court ruled that the State of Emergency declared in 2022 by then Acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe was unconstitutional and violated fundamental human rights. In a majority decision of the three-judge bench, including Chief Justice Murdu Fernando and Justice Yasantha Kodagoda, it held that the emergency regulations issued under Section 2 of the Public Security Ordinance were arbitrary and



invalid. The regulations had been enacted to control mass protests during the height of the Aragalaya movement. The Court determined that the imposition of emergency law disproportionately curtailed basic freedoms. However, Justice Arjuna Obeyesekere, dissenting, ruled that the regulations did not infringe on fundamental rights. The Court also ordered the Government to pay legal costs to the petitioners.

The Judicial Service Commission (JSC) has officially suspended Magistrate and District Judge Thilina Gamage of Moratuwa amid fresh investigations into his alleged role in a high-profile elephant trafficking case dating back to the Yahapalanaya government. Gamage is accused of illegally keeping a baby elephant named 'Sakura' with a fraudulent permit, violating the Public Property Act. The Attorney General has now filed a 25-count indictment against him in connection with these charges. Additionally, Mahiyanganaya Additional District Judge Rangani Gamage, and three newly appointed magistrates who had not yet completed their probationary periods were suspended on the 6th of August.

Justice Preethi Padman Surasena's name was approved by the Constitutional Council for the vacancy created by the retirement of former Chief Justice Murdu Fernando and was sworn in as the 49th Chief Justice of Sri Lanka.

Those in power must remember: the wheels of justice cannot be outrun. Abuse of authority will never go unseen, and accountability, though sometimes delayed, is inevitable. These recent developments renew faith in Sri Lankan democracy. Yet, many injustices remain unresolved, and many still evade answer for their crimes. The Chemmani mass graves will stand as another critical test of our justice system's integrity.

Final Thoughts

From education reforms and road safety to global humanitarian crises and unresolved wartime atrocities, these issues demand urgent attention, transparency, and action. Will policymakers, religious leaders, and the international community step up-or will silence and inaction prevail?

Stay informed. Demand accountability.

Pastoral/ Parish matters

The parish bid farewell to Mr. Lucas Seneviratne who served in the Community Center since December 2002 faithfully and loyally with much dedication and commitment on the 3rd Sunday in July. We wish him well and share our blessings as he awaits to join his son's family in Canada in his retirement. Mr. Niranka Seneviratne retired at the end of July. We wish him well in his future endeavors. We wish Mr. Romesh Perera

well as he has joined the diocesan office as an accountant from mid-July. We welcome to the parish office staff Mr. Basil Perumal, Ms. Ranmalie Seneviratne and Mrs. Kethaki Piyasena. Mr Nimal Rathnayaka has joined the sextons team from mid-July. The parish office and vestry have a new look with the facelift, thanks to the efforts of the board of lay officers.

The new Lay officers took office in July. The board appointed Mr. Julian Manuel as the Treasurer, Mrs. Niluka Wickremasinghe as the Secretary and Mr. Ravi Peiris as the Fabric/Property Supervisor. Our thanks go to Mrs. Rani Jesudian the outgoing Secretary of the parish for her dedicated and conscientious service to the Board of Lay Officers.

We hope to have the Harvest Festival on the 3rd Sunday in September. We will have a meeting of the PCC on the 3rd Sunday in August to discuss and plan this event in addition to discussing the mission of the parish. All are welcome. The board of Lay Officers have agreed to have breakfast served on the day of the Fellowship Sundays to encourage more interaction among parishioners after witnessing its success in July. I wish to express my gratitude to Mrs. Rani Jesudian who coordinated the arrangements for the fellowship breakfast in July, very specially the beef curry which I am told was a big hit.

The WeCare Kitchen members had a discussion with the Board of Lay Officers in July to explore the way forward to this program that was initiated post covid during the economic crises when there was an acute shortage of nutritious food. We have agreed to serve food in place of distributing food packets from the month of September, the wardens took on the responsibility to provide the logistics for this transition. The WeCare kitchen group headed by Sonali Figueredo will continue their routine operation other than for packeting the food.

Personal

I will be attending a conference on Migration from 13th to 15th August and will be out of the country during this period. For any urgent pastoral needs, kindly contact Fr. Gamini or the Board of Lay Officers. I'm also looking forward to the August school holidays, as it will give me a brief respite from juggling parish and school commitments. If schedules allow, I hope to take a short family trip outside Colombo.

I have invited my curates to write the message to the parish newsletter once a quarter. Accordingly, Fr. Gamini will write next month's message.

With Prayers and Blessings

Samuel J Ponniah



Announcements

PCC Meeting



The Church PCC Meeting will be held on **17th August 2025**, (3rd Sunday) soon after the 8.00am Family service.

Harvest Festival



Harvest Festival will be held on **21st September 2025**, (3rd Sunday) soon after the 8.00am Family service.



A Young Adults meeting will be held on **22nd August 2025**, (Friday) – For more information please contact Ms. Niluka Wickremesinghe on 0774679256

VACANCIES

Senior Friends Home

- Assistant Matron
- Assistant Caterer cum Cook

Please contact Ranmalle at Parish Office

175th Anniversary Preparations

Historical records show our first Church building was consecrated on 06th November 1851, making our 175th anniversary in 2026 (Friday 06th November). The Bishop will join us for a Thanksgiving service on Saturday 07th November 2026. Let us pray together, seeking God's guidance as we prepare to celebrate this milestone with gratitude and reflection on our parish's mission

CONFIRMATION SERVICE

The Bishop has scheduled our Confirmation service for **16th November**. Baptised individuals aged 13+ who have not yet been confirmed may collect the required form from the parish office.



Sunday school will close for the second term on 10th August 2025

Direct Bank Deposits for Tithes & Offerings

Parishioners can now make direct bank deposits for their tithes and offerings using the following details. Please email a copy of the receipt or a screenshot of your deposit, along with your name and address, to ssmaryandjohnnugegoda@gmail.com for record-keeping and receipt issuance. Kindly mention your name and the purpose of your tithe in the reference section.

Bank Details:

Account Name : SS. Mary & John, Nugegoda
 Bank Name : Hatton National Bank
 Swift Code : HBLILKLX
 Account Number : 027010001201
 Bank Code : 7083
 Branch Code : 027
 Branch : Nugegoda



Church Doors will be open



Please note that the church will be **open daily from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.** We warmly encourage you to stop by and offer a prayer whenever you are passing by. May this sacred space be a place of peace, reflection, and connection with God throughout your day.

For further inquiries, please contact the church office.

THEME & THE BIBLE READINGS FOR AUGUST 2025

03.08.2025 - Proper 13

Colour - Green

- Hosea 11:1-11
- Colossians 3:1-11
- Psalm 107:1-9, 43
- Luke 12:13-21

10.08.2025 - Trinity 8

Theme " Be prepared: God is ever faithful"

Colour - Green

- Isaiah 1.1, 10-20
- Hebrews 11.1-3, 8-16
- Psalm 50.1-8,22-23
- Luke 12.32-40

17.08.2025 - Trinity 9

Displaced persons & Migrants Sunday

Theme " Persevere like Jesus to alleviate the sufferings of the present time"

Colour - Green

- Jeremiah 23.23-29
- Hebrews 11.29- 12.2
- Psalm 82
- Luke 12.49-56

24.08.2025 - Trinity 10

Theme " The Lord of the Sabbath sets us free to unite"

Colour - Green

- Jeremiah 1.4-10
- Psalm 71.1-6
- Hebrews 12.18-29
- Luke 13.10-17

31.08.2025 - Trinity 11

Theme " Humility and Care for Others "

Colour - Green

- Jeremiah 2.4-13
- Psalm 81.1, 10-16
- Hebrews 13.1-8, 15-16
- Luke 14.1, 7-14

Children's Programme
"Be Strong and Courageous"



Parents' Programme
"Positive Parenting"

Date and Time:
20th September 2025,
9.00 am to 1.30 pm

Venue:
Cathedral of Christ the Living Saviour
and the Chambers of
Diocese of Colombo.

Medium:
Separate session in all three
languages.

Registration fee:
Rs 200.00 per person



For further details and registration:
Please contact Romela de Mel or Ruby Solomon
on or before 20th August 2025

Child Sponsorship Project of the Church of SS. Mary and John, Nugegoda

The Child Sponsorship project is presently sustained by the sponsorships received from our parishioners and a part of the income received from the Community Centre.

Currently there are 50 children and of which 28 are sponsored with a very nominal amount. The board of lay officers are working on increasing this amount. However, since only 28 out of 50 are sponsored, you may come forward to partner this project

Classes are conducted after school for children from Grade 6 – GCE Ordinary Level in English, Mathematics, Commerce, Science and Dancing. Very soon a Tamil class too will begin. All classes are conducted by qualified government school teachers.

The Children who qualify to do higher studies are given Rs. 2500/- where they produce monthly tuition class receipts as we do not conduct classes for GCE Advanced Level.

In December a Christmas party is held for the children. In May the Annual concert is held where they can display their talents for the families and sponsor and board.

In August/September they are taken on an annual trip out of Colombo. As the new school year begins the children are given material for one set of school uniforms, books, socks and shoes and a school bag.

The voluntary Directress over looks all the activities and is a member of the Board of Management.

These Children are from the underprivileged families and the intention of the project is to assist them to educate them so that they can make maximum use of their talents and lead a better life and be useful citizens of the country.

