

NOVEMBER 2025
VOL. 11



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 : Ven. 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: 077 331 7501
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PARISH OFFICE

Parish Administrator - Miss. Ranmalie Seneviratne	Tel. 011 285 4067, 072 426 6366
Property Secretary/Fabric Supervisor – Mr. Ravi Peeris	Tel. 077 753 1675

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Superintendent - Ms. Romela De Mel	Tel. 077 358 3351
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COMMUNITY CENTRE

Manager - Ms. Kethaki Piyasena	Tel. 011 282 1097, 072 954 4644
Caretaker	Tel. 076 629 9344

SENIOR FRIENDS' HOME

Matron - Ms. Debbie Coggins	Tel. 072 454 4644
Asst. Matron - Mrs. Christabel Wijesinghe	

HEAD SERVER

Jenitha Jacob	Tel. 071 627 6187
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This Month from the Curate...

My dear Friends in Christ,

As we enter the final month of our liturgical calendar, we look back with gratitude at the year that has rushed by. During the month of October, we had several highlights as a parish. Immediately following the late September success of the harvest festival and the subsequent lunch that followed, the parish went into October full of enthusiasm for the return of Dingisi Dingale on 11th October. The youth fellowship, organizing an amazing evening of fun and entertainment, which included our very own Father Sam Ponniah riding in on Babi Archie's bicycle. It is great to laugh together as much as it is to worship together.

The euphoria of Dingisi Dingale had barely subsided when the parish celebrated children's day (belatedly) on 19th October. The Sunday school children put on some marvelous performances and led the service beautifully with Father Sam preaching a sermon targeted appropriately at the young children. Soon after on 26th October, we celebrated healthcare workers Sunday, where members of Hospital Christian Fellowship some of them doctors shared God's word with the people.

As a Diocese of Colombo we have just completed our annual council sessions. The Church is in a season of change with the announcement of Dame Sarah Mullally as the new Archbishop of Canterbury. This will be the very first time a woman is appointed to this position and a motion was tabled wishing her in her capacity of Archbishop and also as the Metropolitan of the Church of Ceylon.

So onto this month of November, which is the last in the liturgical calendar. This is a month that is packed with great significance for all believers. It is a month that is intended to stir up Christian awareness of Eschatological themes, of heaven and death, and Hell and judgment. First November is traditionally marked as All Saints Day. A day when the faithful remember the Saints of the church

who have gone before us. We learn from their lives of service, sacrifice and surrender to God's will. The very next day we will mark All Soul's Day when we particularly remember the faithful including our own loved ones who have departed their mortal lives and are basking in God's presence. We remember with a hint of sadness our loved ones and pray that one day we will be reunited with them when our time comes. Services are customarily held in the evening at our parish and at the cemeteries around the city.

The Liturgical year will end on 23rd November with the reign of Christ Sunday. This Sunday will call us to reflect upon Christ and his reign in this world and in eternity. Believers are challenged to surrender to Christ's will even as we pray in the prayer that Christ himself taught us "thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven".

We will commence the season of Advent where we look forward to Christ's coming again even as we look back at his previous coming. Even as we celebrate with joy Christmas parties and such like, as a Church we are called to look forward with joy to his glorious return.

The world around us is a tumultuous one and we see conflicts around the world. A cessation of hostilities in Gaza gives us much hope amidst the horror that the people have faced. Continue to pray for peace and justice. Continue also in your prayers for our nation that is still grappling with issues of justice, gun crime and drugs. As commanded in God's word pray for our leaders, both spiritual and political.

I urge you my dear brothers and sisters in Christ to focus on the things of God during this season so that our hearts will be well prepared for the season of Advent that is fast approaching.

Rev. Ramesh Schaffter
Curate

What is All Saints' Day? All Souls'? Are they the same thing?

By St. George's Admin

There are a couple of ways of understanding the word 'saint', and the church has seen some evolution in the way All Saints' Day and All Souls' is understood and celebrated. In the more traditional sense, the 'saints' of the church are those whose lives are seen as having so witnessed to the love of God and the faith of the church that they reveal a particular, widely-recognizable closeness to God, both in their lives, and even after their deaths. We also use the term 'the saints' in a more all-encompassing way, referring to those many brothers and sisters who walk the life of faith, who share in God's life both before and after death, and yet who do this in the more ordinary, everyday, flawed, but no less beautiful way we see all around us.

Although many of the more prominent saints had specific Feast Days on which to celebrate and remember their lives, it eventually became important to have a 'catch all' holiday to honour them within the contribution that their lives as a group, a communion, make. November 1st was traditionally All Saints' Day, with All Souls' celebrated the day after. All Souls', in many parts of the world, became the bigger of the two festivals, as this was a time for honouring the family and friends of individuals in a faith community who had died. The church taught that, for most ordinary people, heaven would not be an immediate reality. The purification of purgatory must be endured for an appropriate amount of time before an ordinary, flawed person would be ready to make that next step into God's heavenly graces.

Purgatory is not a part of our Anglican teaching. We remember and pray for our loved ones, not because we want to get them out of purgatory, but because we understand that they remain an important part of our lives, even after they have died. This is a fundamental principle which is at the heart of our worship today, just as it was 1400 years ago. Many of us have experienced – some in very concrete, or some in deeply intuitive, ways – that those who have died continue to be present to us. For all of us, it is an affirmation that

we make regularly in our practices and in our worship: our lives are of deep value to God, our lives hold the possibility of participating in God's life and truth, our lives are joined in Christ's resurrection, and death does not destroy us. Now the celebration of All Saints' and All Souls' is often rolled into one all-embracing worship observance, and we mark this day in the church year on the Sunday closest to November 1st.



Our worship today honours the range of emotions present in the beliefs we profess. It begins on a celebratory and triumphant note. We give thanks for the courage, love and faith of our saints: this is praise for the God who is continually working in and through ordinary human beings in order to communicate with us. Our worship also has a solemn note, remembering those who are close to us who have died in this past year. No matter how certain a person is in their faith, losing a loved one is devastating, grief can be overwhelming, even crippling, time and space and support is needed to walk through the grieving and healing process. And within that recognition, we celebrate the sacrament of Eucharist, gathering at God's table to receive God's good gifts to us once again. We receive those gifts and perhaps we experience the thinness of the veil between this world and the next: God gathers us and all of the faithful before and after us into the eternal song of heaven, into the vast and enduring promise of God's love working in and through us, walking beside us on our journey.



Announcements



All Souls' Day Service

There will be an evening service Sunday, **2nd November, at 5.30 p.m.**

Morning Eucharist

There is a service of Holy Eucharist every morning (except Sundays) at 7.00 am

Confirmation Service

Due to a change in the travel itinerary of the Bishop and his unavailability on the 16th of November, the confirmation service has been **rescheduled** for the **7th of December 2025**.



However, the confirmation classes will continue to be on Sundays from 12.30 pm

We Care Kitchen

The We-Care Kitchen operation transitioned from giving packets to serving food at the church premises. Volunteers to help serve food to the recipients of this community project are welcome

Archbishop of Canterbury

Please pray for the newly-appointed Archbishop of Canterbury,

Bishop Sarah Mullally,
and for unity in the Anglican Communion

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 : Church of St. Mary and St. John
Bank Name : Hatton National Bank
Swift Code : HBLILKLX
Account Number : 027010001201
Bank Code : 7083
Branch Code : 027
Branch : Nugegoda



For further inquiries, please contact the church office.

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.

Nicaea for the Sri Lankan Church Today

The faith entrusted symposium organized by CTS on 31st October 2025.

The response to the key note address given by
Rev. Dr. Varughese John & by our Vicar Ven. Samuel J Ponniah.

Thank you for this invitation to CTS. I did a session in the 1st conference in 2019 in Tamil.

Rev. Dr. Varghese John, Thank you for your profound presentation on the Nicene resolution - a journey that led the Church from confusion to clarity, from controversy to confession.

I have to qualify where my response comes from. As Anglicans- we confess the Nicean creed at each Eucharist service, I am influenced by both by the evangelical/ conservative- tradition in the Anglican Church through my father and the Anglo Catholic tradition through school. We are a bit of a confused lot many say.. Reformed/Catholic. Faith/ works. Scripture/ tradition and reason... distinct! Unique! The Church of Ceylon embraces the Nestorian cross. Nestorius was condemned a heretic by the council of Ephesus in 431.

However, Your keynote rightly reminds us that Nicaea binds all of us as it was not about words alone but about salvation itself: Who is the God we believe who saves?

The Emperor Constantine who was not a baptized Christian at the time he summoned the council (baptized by Eusebius of Nicomedia on his death bed) might have been politically motivated with a desire to bring about unity in the Empire. The legacy of the marriage between the state and church is a result of this council one could argue. The bishops gathered there might not have been philosophers debating abstractions. However, as pastors and confessors they used the opportunity to faithfully express the mystery of their encounter with the living God.

1. The Person in the Pew

As I listened, I could not help but think of the person in the pew - the ordinary believer who during catechism is trained to answer the question:

“Who is our God?”

I recently tried to explain to such a man - an

ordinary daily wage earner - the triune nature of God.

I spoke of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of one essence and three persons, of unity and distinction.

After each class when asked who is our God, he kept replying “my God is Jesus Christ”

After many attempts, I had to give up. He looked at me kindly, but it was clear that my words had not bridged the mystery.

That moment reminded me of the story of St. Augustine walking by the sea, trying to comprehend the Trinity. He sees a little boy scooping the ocean into a hole in the sand. When Augustine asks what he's doing, the boy replies, “I'm trying to put the sea into this hole.” Augustine suddenly realizes that he, too, was trying to fit the infinite mystery of God into the narrow vessel of his mind.

And yet - while full understanding is beyond us, our effort to speak truly about God is essential.

Because when there is no effort to clarify what we believe, we leave room for misrepresentation, misinterpretation, and falsehood.

The Nicene Creed was precisely such an effort - an act of faith seeking understanding, a Church refusing to remain silent before confusion.

2. Arius in His Context

Arius himself was not a villain in black robes plotting heresy. He was a priest in Alexandria, earnestly reading Scripture and striving to honour the transcendence of God. Can he be condemned for deviating from orthodoxy that emerged after the controversy over his views asks Rowan Williams.

In his letters to Eusebius of Nicomedia the one who baptized Constantine and to Bishop Alexander, Arius protested that he was upholding “the faith of the fathers.” He quoted the Bible: “The Father is

greater than I" (John 14:28), "the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15).

In one of his surviving letters he wrote:

"We say and believe that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; ... before He was begotten or created, He was not."

(Letter to Eusebius, Theodoret, Hist. Eccl. 1.4)

As Rowan Williams several times puts it, Arius was both conservative and radical-conservative in his theological concerns, radical in pursuing consistently one of those concerns (for the freedom and transcendence of God) in such a way as to challenge others.

Arius wanted to defend the uniqueness of the unbegotten God. But in doing so, he placed the Son among the creatures - noble, exalted, but not truly God. His was a sincere but tragic attempt to protect mystery by diminishing it.

3. The Church's Response

The bishops at Nicaea saw that such a Christ could not save. If Christ were not truly God, then our redemption would be the work of another creature, not of the Creator Himself.

And so they declared that the Son is homoousios - "of the same substance" - with the Father. This word was not an invention of philosophy; it was the Church's shield against spiritual collapse. It affirmed that when we look upon Jesus, we see the very face of God.

4. The Struggle for Language

Yet Nicaea was only the beginning.

The Church had found the right confession but not yet the right grammar. The term homoousios safeguarded unity but left the question of personal distinction open. For decades the Church wrestled with words - ousia, hypostasis, persona - until the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus, gave the Church the luminous formula:

One ousia, three hypostaseis - one essence, three persons.

Gregory of Nazianzus captured the wonder of this mystery when he said:

"When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one light; when I look at the One, I am illumined by the Three."

5. The Gift of Clarification

In the end, the story of Nicaea and its aftermath is not the triumph of one party over another, but the Church's faithful attempt to speak truthfully about the God she worships.

We embrace the history of the church- the tradition of the church- we embrace scripture given by the church. We embrace the church's attempts to rationally explain God.

The Niceness creed shows us that theology is not the enemy of faith; it is faith's companion.

Our doctrines are not walls to keep mystery out, but windows through which light enters.

The Nicene Creed, then, is not a relic of an ancient dispute. It remains our Church's answer to the simplest catechism question:

"Who is our God?"

Our God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - one God in a communion of love, the God who creates, redeems, and sanctifies.

6. Conclusion

Like St. Augustine, we will never scoop the sea of divinity into the small pit of human reason. In a world and culture that seeks a rational explanation to everything, we can stand on the shore, gaze at its vastness, and speak what we know to be true: that the mystery we cannot comprehend is the mystery that saves us. We embrace the mystery of the Trinity.

The Nicene Creed is the Church's way of saying, with both humility and conviction, This is the God we have encountered in Christ; this is the God who gives us life.

And so we continue to confess, Sunday after Sunday, after reading, from the Hebrew scriptures, Psalms, Epistles and Gospels after an attempt to explain God in the sermon - not as scholars alone, but as believers, worshippers, and pilgrims:

"One ousia, three hypostases - One God, forever worshipped, world without end. Amen."

THEME & THE BIBLE READINGS FOR NOVEMBER 2025

02.11.2025

All Saints Sunday and All Souls Day

Theme 'The Faith of the Saints'

Colour - White/ Gold

- Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4
- Psalm 119: 137-144
- 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12
- Luke 6: 20-26

16.11.2025 - Confederation Sunday

Theme "Courage to Endure: Stir up our Faith"

Colour - Red

- Isaiah 65:17-25
- Instead of Psalm, Isaiah 12
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 • Luke 21:5-19

23.11.2025 - Reign of Christ Sunday

Theme "Reign of Christ in this world and in Eternity"

Colour - Red

- Jeremiah 23: 1-6
- Instead of Psalm Luke 1: 68-79
- Colossians 1: 11-20 • Luke 23: 33-43

09.11.2025

Remembrance Sunday

Theme "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"

Colour - Red

- Haggai 1:15- 2:9
- Psalm 98
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17
- Luke 20: 27-38

30.11.2025 - 1st Sunday in Advent

Theme "The vigilant wait of hope; Advent, the Day of the Lord"

Colour - Blue

- Isaiah 2: 1-5
- Psalm 122
- Romans 13: 11-14
- Matthew 24: 36-44

Children's day Service...



Daily Prayer till Advent

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your incarnate Child Jesus Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.