



**CHRISTMAS  
2025**

**Issue 31**

the Saint  
**Andrew**



The Congregational Choir of St. Andrew's Scots Kirk together with the children of the Sunday School (who sang Silent Night) at the St. Andrew's Carol Service – O Come, Divine Messiah – held on November 30th 2025  
*(more photographs of the Carol Service inside)*

**Church of Scotland – Presbyterian**  
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# FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK



- 11 *Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*
- 15 *When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."*
- 17 *When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.*

[Luke 2: 11, 15 & 17]

## **Dear Readers, Members and Friends of St. Andrew's Scots Kirk,**

I count it a great joy to pen a few lines as a Christmas meditation. During the month of December, we have been focusing on the shepherds out in the fields, watching over their flocks by night when the peaceful night was disturbed with the appearance of angels who heralded the good news that a Saviour had been born to them.

It is interesting that this good news was not first shared with a priest in Jerusalem, or a religious person like the Pharisee, or a Sadducee, but with shepherds who were shunned by society and even 'labeled' as thieves. The good news is that Jesus did not come to save the self-righteous, but the lost and sinners, such as the criminal on the cross, the woman who committed adultery, the fraudulent tax collector named Zachcheus for example. No one is a write off in God's eyes as He can save the worst of sinners. This was Paul's experience on the road to Damascus.

Now when the angels returned to heaven, after sharing the good news that the Messiah, the Saviour, and Lord had been born in Bethlehem, the shepherds went to check things out for themselves. They did not blindly say, "Ah! That's

good to hear!" But instead, they left their work and rushed to see things for themselves. It is important that if we are not yet convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour and Lord, that we check the scriptures for ourselves by reading the Gospels, the prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus years before, and the book of Acts and the Epistles to observe how lives were changed when people accepted Jesus as their Saviour and their Lord.

We also see that the moment they found that this good news was factual and experienced meeting Jesus, that the Shepherds shared the good news with all those they met on their return journey. God wants all who have encountered Jesus, to share the good news and not to selfishly keep this good news to ourselves. God has chosen us - who know Him and not angels today - to share the good news, just as the angels shared the good news with the shepherds two thousand years ago. We are not all called to preach but we can share as to what Jesus has done in our lives, or even invite people to church to hear the good news at a church service.

We are 'saved to serve'.  
**Rev. Roshan Mendis**

# INTERNATIONAL PRESBYTERY MEETING OCTOBER 2025 - AMSTERDAM



Presbyters and spouses pose in front of the English Reformed Church, Amsterdam

The second International Presbytery meeting for 2026 was held in Amsterdam from 10 to 13 October, in the 17th century English Reformed Church located in a heritage site in the Amsterdam centrum, which is a busy place sprawling with tramways.

Attending the Presbytery meeting with Rev. Roshan Mendis gave us an opportunity to meet with Presbyters of the International Presbytery. This was Rev. Roshan's first Presbytery visit and my final visit as Presbytery Elder. Mrs. Rebecca Mendis too joined us on this Presbytery visit.

The current Moderator Thijs Polstra commenced the first Session on 10th October with a prayer and bible reading.

This was followed by a tribute to a former Minister who passed away in Geneva.

A glowing tribute was paid by Rev. Aaron Stevens to Rev. Derek Lawson who has been the Presbytery Clerk since 2021. Rev. Derek was responsible in steering the International Presbytery through difficult and challenging times. Rev Derek stepped down as Presbytery clerk at end 2025.

The business committee not only elected a new Presbytery clerk for 2026, but also elected a new Moderator. Rev. Scott MacSween was sworn in by Rev. Derek Lawson on 10th October 2025. Rev. Scott MacSween took over duties as Presbytery Clerk from 1st January 2026.

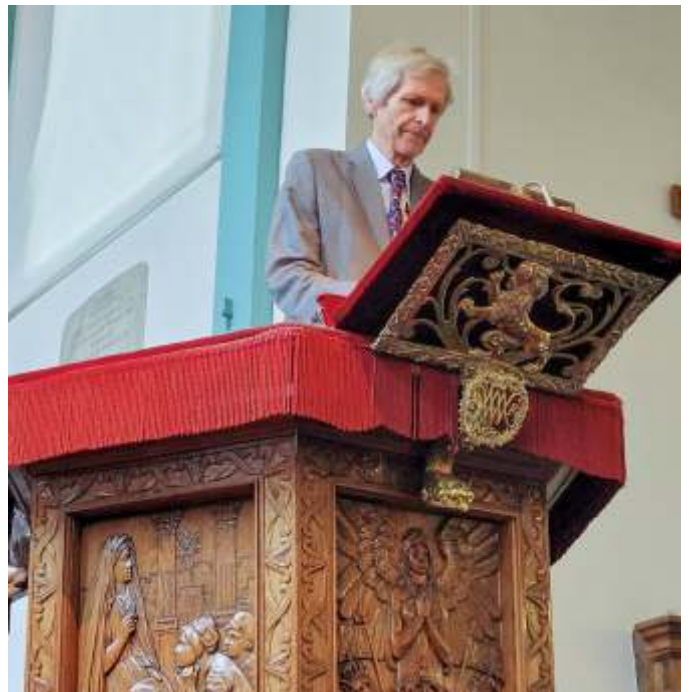
The Minister of the Rotterdam church of the Church of Scotland Rev. Graham Austin was elected Moderator designate for 2026.

Rev. Twaddle also resigned as Minister of Church of Scotland Geneva church. Rev. Paraic thanked him for his good works for the Geneva church.

A Jesuit priest brought local ecumenical greetings from the nearby churches of ERC namely the Lutherans, Mennonites and the Catholics.



Rev. Roshan Mendis (at left) participating at the fellowship dinner



Moderator of the International Presbytery Thijs Polstra



# INTERNATIONAL PRESBYTERY MEETING

## OCTOBER 2025 - AMSTERDAM (...CONT)



Presbytery Clerk Designate 2026 Rev. Scott MacSween is sworn- in by outgoing Presbytery Clerk Rev. Derek Lawson



Rev. Derek Lawson inducts Christine Colliar as Ordained Locum Minister

Some of the other vital points raised at the Sessions are as follows:

The Presbytery Clerk drew special attention to the depleting finances of the IP and that funds will last only till 2030. Hence, new direction is needed to sustain the International Presbytery.

The Presbytery agreed that the Principal Clerk should be invited for the March 2026 Presbytery in Geneva.

A course for worship leaders was discussed by the Education and Training Committee Convenor Christine Colliar. Rev. Colliar was also appointed as the Digital Ministry contact of the IP to encourage congregations to participate in the Advent bible studies and use the Church of Scotland learning platform.

The Technical team convenor mentioned that AI must be used with caution.

Furthermore, the names of Rev. Roshan Mendis as well as another Elder from the Church of Scotland Church in Bochum, Germany were added to the Education and Training Committee.

The Finance Convenor advised those present that the finances of charges must meet OSCAR ( Scottish Charity Regulator) requirements. The Finance Committee agreed to pay 600 euros as accommodation for the youth who attended the youth Presbytery.

The Restricted Certificate of Eligibility will now be known as the International Certificate of Eligibility. The Certificate is for an initial period of three years, with the possibility of an extension for a further period of up to 3 years.

The Mission and Creation Care Convenor urged churches to pray for conflicts around the world - human loss, devastation to the environment, long term pollution and landmine contamination and to be peacemakers in the world. Furthermore, he asked for churches to care for persons with disabilities, being the voice for vulnerable people. She also urged congregations to support Mediterranean Hope, a refugee and migrant programme of the Federation of Protestant Churches. The Presbytery will help to support this project until March 2026.

The importance of safeguarding was also stressed. Every two years, a police report should be obtained by those who serve on the staff and volunteers in projects. Safeguarding should be on the agenda at every session.

The five yearly LCR visit to congregations was removed. The Superintendence Committee intends to continue with visits to congregations as and when required.

After the Friday programme, the Presbyters were invited for a sumptuous Italian meal prepared by some members of the congregation.

The second session commenced on Saturday 12th of October after a short service of Holy Communion. This was followed by two members of the congregation giving an interesting and comprehensive account of the life of the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam.

Many other committee reports were also discussed.

It was agreed that further meetings would be held from the 6 to 8 March 2026 in Geneva and 9 to 11 October 2026 in Malta. The sessions concluded with everyone saying Grace.

Yet another night of fellowship followed – this time in a Chinese restaurant.

On Sunday October 12th, worship was led by Rev. Marius Lou, the Minister of the English Reformed Church Amsterdam, with the sermon preached by the Moderator. It was wonderful to listen to the singing of the ERC choir and the Flentrop pipe organ played by the ERC Music director. The music and singing were truly ethereal.

Christine Colliar, former Reader from Geneva was inducted as an Ordained Locum Minister by Rev. Derek Lawson. The Presbyters laid hands on her and subsequently offered the right hand of fellowship. Rev. Christine composed and read a moving poem, 'Enlarge the place of your tent'. After the service, everyone enjoyed a pot-luck lunch.

The pronouncement of the benediction at the close of the service, ended the meeting of the Presbytery.

In conclusion, each Presbytery meeting I have attended has been a unique and memorable experience.

**Lakshmi Seneviratne**  
Presbytery Elder



# WHY DO WE SING CHRISTMAS CAROLS?

Christmas carols have been part of the celebration of Christ's birth for almost as long as Christmas itself. The earliest known Christmas hymn, *Jesus, Light of All Nations*, was written by St. Hilary of Poitiers in 336 AD—just twenty-three years after Constantine legalized Christianity across the Roman Empire. While the original melody has been lost to history, modern choirs keep its spirit alive with hauntingly beautiful renditions.

For centuries, Christmas songs were primarily hymns sung in church services, their solemn melodies echoing through sacred spaces. It was St. Francis of Assisi, with his creation of the first Nativity scene, who helped bring these hymns into the homes and hearts of ordinary people, giving birth to the carols we know today. Many of these songs have fascinating stories that connect faith, history, and human experience in unexpected ways.



Take **O Come, O Come Emmanuel**, for example. Its plaintive melody is rooted in Gregorian chant and dates back to at least the twelfth century, though the tune we know today was paired with English lyrics much later. Each verse reflects an ancient tradition called the "O Antiphons," a series of prayers sung as Christmas approaches.

Similarly, **O Come, All Ye Faithful** has a medieval origin, possibly composed by Cistercian monks. Its English version, credited to John Wade in 1751, emerged during a time when practicing Catholicism in England was illegal. Wade, an exiled English Catholic, helped bring this hymn to the wider world, giving generations a song of joy and devotion.

**God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen**, with its lively, enduring melody, dates back to the time of the 15th century English poet John Audelay, affectionately known as Blind John. While his own carols have not survived, this song remains a perennial favorite, famously making an appearance in Dickens' **A Christmas Carol**.

Other carols carry personal tales of faith and resilience. **What Child Is This?** emerged from the near-death experience of William Chatterton Dix in 1865, a story of renewal and gratitude set to the timeless melody of **Greensleeves**. **Silent Night**, composed in 1818 by an Austrian priest, was born out of necessity when the

church organ failed; a simple guitar accompanied the first performance, creating a melody that has since become universally cherished.

Even **Hark, the Herald Angels Sing** has a surprising twist: Charles Wesley envisioned a slow, somber tune, but the joyful melody we know today comes from Felix Mendelssohn, originally composed to celebrate Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. And **O Holy Night**, penned in 1847 by a French poet, faced temporary censorship by the church due to the backgrounds of its creators—but the people sang it anyway, even inspiring a Christmas Eve ceasefire during the Franco-Prussian War.

American contributions abound as well. **Away in a Manger**, written around 1885, was cleverly attributed to Martin Luther, though this was likely a marketing ploy to lend prestige to the song. **The Little Drummer Boy**, written in 1940 by Katherine Kennicott Davis, draws inspiration from a medieval legend of a humble juggler offering his talents to the Christ Child when he had no other gift to give.

And of course, no carol list would be complete without the enigmatic **The Twelve Days of Christmas**, a song believed to have secretly taught children their faith during times of persecution in England, with each gift symbolizing a facet of Christian belief.



# WHY DO WE SING CHRISTMAS CAROLS? (...CONT)

From ancient hymns to timeless melodies, each Christmas carol carries its own story—tales of faith, devotion, resilience, and creativity. Each season, as we sing these beloved songs, we are reminded not only of the birth of Christ, but of the generations who have carried these messages of hope and joy through the centuries.



## How the Ave Maria came to be

Franz Schubert's famous Ave Maria was not originally written as a church hymn.

Composed in 1825, it began life as *Ellens dritter Gesang* (Ellen's Third Song), part of a musical setting of a German translation of Sir Walter Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake*. In the poem, the heroine Ellen Douglas is fleeing with her exiled father during a rebellion and finds refuge in a cave. There, she sings a heartfelt plea to the Virgin Mary, asking for protection and comfort.

Although Schubert did not set the Latin prayer, the song opens with the words "Ave Maria, jungfrau mild," which led to its adoption as a sacred work. Its serene and prayerful tone soon made it a favourite in churches and devotional settings.

The Ave Maria prayer itself, known as the Angelic Salutation, draws from the Gospel of Luke and was formalised in the 15th century. Other beloved musical settings include Charles Gounod's 1859 version, written over a prelude by J.S. Bach.



# CHRISTMAS FUN FACTS -SRI LANKAN STYLE



**Carols with a twist:** Traditional English carols are often sung alongside Sinhala and Tamil Christmas songs, blending global and local musical heritage.

**Special Christmas food:** In Sri Lanka, the festive table may feature breudher (Dutch cinnamon bread), milk toffee, and rich curries alongside the more global Christmas cake.

**Community nativity displays:** Many churches and neighborhoods set up elaborate Nativity scenes, sometimes including local flora, clay animals, or even coconut trees.

**Secret Santa goes local:** In some communities, gifts are exchanged during church gatherings or carol nights, often including homemade sweets and handicrafts.

**Christmas in the tropics:** Unlike snowy imagery abroad, palm trees and tropical flowers decorate Sri Lankan Christmas celebrations, giving a unique local flair.

**Family and faith first:** Christmas in Sri Lanka is often less commercial and more about family meals, church services, and community charity, reflecting the core meaning of the season.





# THE SILENT CHARACTERS OF THE NATIVITY

The Christmas story is often remembered through angels' songs and Mary's Magnificat. Yet some of its most powerful figures speak hardly at all. Joseph, the innkeeper and the unnamed shepherds shape the Nativity not through words, but through quiet obedience, practical action, and attentive listening.

Joseph never utters a single recorded sentence in the Gospels. And yet, his silence is active, not passive. He listens—to dreams, to God, to responsibility—and acts decisively. He protects Mary, accepts a child not biologically his own, and uproots his life when danger looms. Biblical scholars often describe Joseph as a model of righteous obedience, showing that faith is sometimes revealed not in speech, but in steadfast action (Matthew 1:19–24; 2:13–15).



The innkeeper is even more elusive. Contrary to popular retellings, the Gospels never explicitly mention an "innkeeper" turning Mary and Joseph away. Luke simply tells us, "there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). This silence has prompted theologians to reflect on absence itself—on overcrowded systems, overlooked needs, and how easily the vulnerable can be missed without cruelty or intent. The unnamed figure becomes a mirror, asking us what we fail to notice in our own hurried lives.

Then there are the shepherds—nameless, ordinary, and socially marginal. They speak little, but they listen. When angels appear, they do not debate theology; they go, they see, and they return changed, "glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:15–20). Their silence before the mystery reminds us that awe often precedes understanding.



In a season filled with noise, the silent characters of the Nativity invite a countercultural lesson: that faith can be lived deeply without being loudly proclaimed. Sometimes, the most profound witness is found in listening, noticing, and quietly doing what love requires.

## Sources

- The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): Matthew 1–2; Luke 2
- Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Yale University Press)
- N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (SPCK)
- Pope Francis, Patris Corde (2020), reflections on St Joseph



# THROUGH THE LENS – SERVICES, EVENTS & MISSION PROJECTS

## O Come, Divine Messiah – ST. ANDREW'S CAROL SERVICE

As December unfurled, St. Andrew's was gently wrapped in the warmth, wonder, and holy expectancy of the Christmas season. From the quiet reverence of Advent Sundays—each marked by the lighting of the Advent candle—to voices raised in joy at the Carol Service led by the St. Andrew's Congregational Choir directed by the accomplished Eshantha de Andrado and accompanied by the extraordinary Neranjan de Silva, our church journeyed together towards the miracle of Christmas.



## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services drew us into reflection and celebration, while the Watchnight Service on New Year's Eve invited us to pause, give thanks, and step prayerfully into the year ahead.



## SERVICES AT ST. ANDREW'S

Throughout each month, inspiring sermons from gifted preachers stirred hearts and minds, and each Sunday concluded not as an ending, but as a continuation—through lively, laughter-filled fellowship that echoed under the porch of the church of community, connection, and hope.

Scroll through our gallery of photographs in the following pages.

## SUNDAY SERVICES



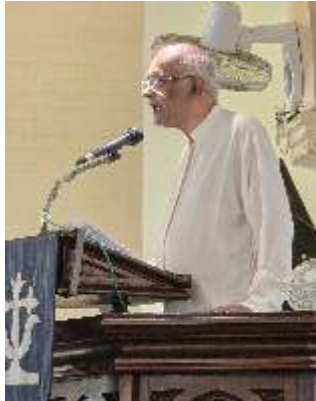
# THROUGH THE LENS – SERVICES, EVENTS & MISSION PROJECTS (...CONT)



## THE SHEPHERDS



Rev. Roshan Mendis



Dr. Ajith Fernando



Rev. Charlie Jansz



Pastor Abby Schaffter

THE MUSIC MAKERS



Juanita



Eshantha



Angelo and Rev. Roshan



Nadine



Nethan



Senaya



Shevan



Nilhan



Savindu



Neranjan



Anagi



Singers from the Methodist Home

**THE WORD SHARERS**



Shelini



Michael



Julie



Nethan



Juanita



Hiranjan



Angelo



Shanthini



Nirusha

**THE HELPERS**



Steve



Kumar and Stephan



Salani



## FELLOWSHIP AFTER SUNDAY SERVICE



FELLOWSHIP AFTER SUNDAY SERVICE



**SUNDAY SCHOOL CORNER**  
**A Year of Growth, Joy and Fellowship**  
**in Our Sunday School**

The Sunday School continued to be a vibrant and nurturing space where faith, fellowship, and joy came together throughout the year. Each Sunday, the children gathered with enthusiasm to learn, share and grow in their understanding of God's love through engaging lessons and a wide range of activities. These regular sessions formed the heartbeat of our ministry, creating an environment where learning was interactive, meaningful and fun.

Throughout the year, we were blessed to welcome new members to the Sunday School, whose presence brought renewed energy and excitement. At the same time, our Sunday School family grew stronger with the addition of new teachers to our team — Fallon, Senaya and Shelini. Their willingness to serve, their gentle guidance and warm interaction with the children is deeply appreciated. They have quickly become a valued part of the team, contributing not only to teaching but also to building a caring and encouraging atmosphere for the children.

One of the most memorable moments of the year was the children's participation in the Carol Service, where they sang "Silent Night." Their heartfelt performance beautifully reflected the spirit of Christmas and touched the hearts of the congregation, reminding everyone present of the true meaning of the season.



Bringing the year to a joyful close, a Christmas party was held on 22nd December. Filled with laughter and simple joys, the celebration allowed the children and teachers to come together beyond the classroom setting, strengthening the bonds within our Sunday School community.

As we reflect on the year with gratitude, we thank God for His constant guidance and blessings. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the teachers, parents and church leadership for their continued support. With thankful hearts and renewed enthusiasm, we look forward to another year of growth, service and joyful learning in our Sunday School.

## CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

### WEDDING

Members of our congregation Shelini Rowena Hettiarchchi and Hashan Clement Anthony were married at St. Andrew's Scots Kirk in December



### CONFIRMATION

Jade Sueli Tissera, daughter of Dirk Michael Tissera and Sueli Ramani John was confirmed at the Christmas Eve service



### NEW ADDITION



Sanjiv Niles, who more often than not filled the church with his rich voice at many a service and his wife Mariangela were blessed with the birth of a baby boy - Andreo Jayden Liam, a brother to Mikael Brinsley Luca. Before the family moved abroad, Mikael would often play the violin to add to the rich tones of the organ or the piano during services.



### RUNNING AGAINST TIME

#### *After a six-year break, David Ostwald's comeback turns into an unexpected victory at the Colombo Half Marathon 2025*

After a six-year hiatus caused by the Easter bombings, the pandemic, and Sri Lanka's economic crisis, the LSR Colombo Marathon made its long-awaited return this October. One of the island's most anticipated running events, it featured a full marathon, half-marathon, and shorter fun runs. Among the eager participants was veteran runner and member of the SASK congregation David Ostwald, who had been preparing for the full marathon—but decided to scale back to the half-marathon after realizing he hadn't logged enough long-distance training this year.

It turned out to be the perfect choice. Having completed a half-marathon in Arugam Bay just weeks earlier, Ostwald redirected his focus to speed and endurance over the shorter 21.1 km distance. Determined to cross the finish line in under two hours, he fine-tuned his pace during training and arrived at the starting line feeling strong and confident.

The race began at dawn, with runners surging forward under the early morning sky. Ostwald paced himself carefully, mindful not to start too fast—a mistake many



make in long-distance running. Settling into a steady 5:30 per kilometre rhythm, he soon found a companion runner who kept stride for most of the race, helping maintain consistency and momentum.

Around the 15 km mark, the two overtook another veteran competitor who appeared to have taken a questionable shortcut, fueling Ostwald's resolve to stay ahead. With only a few kilometres to go, he caught up to yet another veteran runner—possibly third place—and knew the podium was within reach. Muscles burning, he pushed harder, overtaking his rival and maintaining his pace until the finish line.

He crossed it in 1 hour, 56 minutes, and 30 seconds, achieving his goal and later discovering he had placed first among veterans. It was a moment of disbelief and quiet triumph.

For Ostwald, the victory carried deep personal meaning. His late wife, Sani, had always been his biggest supporter, cheering him from the sidelines and teasing him after every race with, "Did you win?" This year, at last, he could answer with a smile, "Yes."



## FAREWELL

One of the SASK regular worshippers ever since being posted to Colombo – US Ambassador Julie Chung bade farewell to Sri Lanka on the end of her term. She was a much loved member of the congregation and on her last Sunday in Sri Lanka, Indonesian Ambassador Dewi Gustina Tobing sang "God will take care of you" in a tribute to the lasting impact Ambassador Chung had made in Sri Lanka and the diplomatic corps as well. It was an emotional farewell. We wish Ambassador Chung the very best as she returns to Washington year ahead.



US Ambassador Julie Chung (left) with Indonesian Ambassador Dewi Gustina Tobing



Ambassador Dewi singing, 'God will take care of you'



Regular members of the SASK congregation – US Ambassador Julie Chung, Indonesian Ambassador Dewi Gustina Tobing and South Korean Ambassador Miyon Lee

## SASK YOUTH

SASK has fostered a vibrant youth group who meet regularly for prayer, worship and fellowship. In December, the youth group was even more active, conducting a Sunday service with much creativity and carol singing at the homes of members of our congregation who may be alone at Christmas.



YOUTH SERVICE



YOUTH GROUP GOES CAROL SINGING



## MISSION PROJECTS

### Helping Hands



On a bright December morning — the 10th of December 2025 — the Church Hall echoed with laughter, music, and the unmistakable joy of Christmas. The Helping Hands Project hosted a heart-warming Christmas celebration at the Church Hall, bringing festive cheer to the beneficiaries of the Helping Hands Project from the community.

The day unfolded with lively games, shared moments and plenty of interaction, creating an atmosphere where everyone felt welcome and included. Adding to the joy, residents from Netherlee Cottage joined in the celebrations, filling the hall with smiles and camaraderie.

In the true spirit of giving, Christmas gifts were lovingly distributed, and Helping Hands beneficiaries received Cargills gift vouchers valued at LKR 2,000 each — a thoughtful gesture to support families during the festive season.

The celebration concluded on a joyful note, complete with a delicious lunch and hearts full of gratitude. More than just a party, the event was a beautiful reminder of what Christmas truly represents — love shared, kindness extended and a community coming together in faith and fellowship.

#### *Helping Hands Team*

### MULLERIYAWA HOSPITAL – WARD 38



Long before the first carol was sung, Christmas had already arrived quietly at Mulleriyawa — in fragile smiles, tentative hope, and hearts longing to be seen and remembered. On Sunday 14th December, a gentle light shone at the Mulleriyawa Half-way Home, Sooriyakantha Ward 38 for Mentally Disturbed Women, as residents and visitors gathered for a midday of hope and joy through a special afternoon of Christmas Carols. The hall, usually marked by silence and routine, was transformed into a space alive with song, laughter, dancing, and heartfelt fellowship.

The women of the halfway home, many of whom walk daily through long and often difficult journeys toward healing, lifted their voices in familiar hymns and seasonal songs including Bethlehem Purai, Kalakata Pera, Mary's Boy Child, Go Tell It on the Mountain, and We Wish You a

# THROUGH THE LENS – SERVICES, EVENTS & MISSION PROJECTS (...CONT)



Merry Christmas. Though each voice carried its own strength and struggle, the sincerity behind every note was unmistakable.

In those moments, the heart of the Christmas message — Emmanuel, God with us, bringing comfort to the brokenhearted — was deeply felt, especially as Reverend Roshan Mendis blessed the ward and offered earnest prayers for both patients and the devoted nurses who care for them.

Volunteers and caregivers, whose compassion sustains these women throughout the year, joined wholeheartedly in the celebration, offering encouragement, companionship, and presence. Treats were shared, blessings and small gifts exchanged, and smiles lit up the room — simple yet powerful reminders that love, when given freely, speaks louder than any material offering.

A particularly joyful highlight was the lighting of the Christmas tree and a surprise visit from Santa. The

patients, dressed in their Sunday best and adorned with cheerful Christmas hats, welcomed visitors warmly. Adding a deeply personal touch, the congregation was greeted with a handmade Christmas card and a sheaf of delicate paper flowers, lovingly created by the nurses and patients themselves — gifts rich with meaning, creativity, and gratitude.

As a church community, we are reminded to continue holding these women in prayer — that God may bring peace, restoration, and dignity into their lives. May we also be moved to step beyond our church walls, to visit, support, and extend the love of Christ to those who are often forgotten or unseen by society.

This Christmas, we remember that Jesus came for all — the weary, the lost, and the hurting. And on that afternoon in Mulleriyawa, His presence was unmistakably felt in shared laughter, gentle prayers, and a simple chorus of carols that echoed hope.

## Ward 38 Team





**NETHERLEE COTTAGE**

The recent weeks at Netherlee Cottage have been a gentle reminder of how faith, friendship, and community continue to shape this mission in deeply meaningful ways. But firstly, there's a new look at the Cottage – as you can see!



# THROUGH THE LENS – SERVICES, EVENTS & MISSION PROJECTS (...CONT)

Lisa, a longtime donor and former volunteer at the Cottage, returned for a special visit, bringing with her thoughtful gifts for the residents. Her time with the ladies was filled with warmth and conversation, and the visit ended on a cheerful note when she took the ladies out shopping. Exhausted, they all sat down for a well-earned cup of tea and heartfelt thanks all around. It was a day marked by generosity, laughter, and renewed connection.



Reflecting on her visit, Lisa shared:

*"It's wonderful to see these vulnerable ladies receiving such Christian fellowship from the congregation of St. Andrew's. It was a pleasure to see how completely integrated they are into the community and how they continue to thrive after all these years. The Cottage has faced tough times recently, but it has once again created the right environment to help more ladies transition back into society."*

Lisa's day began with warm hospitality from Buddhika's family, setting the tone for a visit rooted in friendship and shared purpose.



During this time, we were also delighted to welcome Lekha, our new housemother, to the Netherlee family. Lekha comes with excellent references and a wealth of experience, and she has already earned the affection of the residents—despite, or perhaps because of, her gentle insistence that they always strive to do better than their best.



# THROUGH THE LENS – SERVICES, EVENTS & MISSION PROJECTS (...CONT)

Strengthening the Cottage's mission further, visitors from the National Institute of Mental Health recently met with the team to discuss sending more women to Netherlee Cottage for rehabilitation. This ongoing partnership plays a vital role in preparing residents for a gradual and supported transition back into their own communities, within the warmth of a homely environment.

Church remains a central and much-anticipated part of life at Netherlee. The residents continue their early Sunday visits to church—an experience they have eagerly looked forward to almost every month for nearly 20 years.



Recently, Hafeela, Chandra, and Seelawathie also expressed their heartfelt thanks to the Helping Hands team for inviting them to the Christmas party. Their excitement was so great that they asked to bring along new friends—relatives of our new housemother – highlighting how support at Netherlee has truly become a family affair. The occasion was also an opportunity to present them with their Christmas gifts.



The Netherlee Team wishes to extend its deepest gratitude to Netherlee Parish Church in Glasgow for their unwavering support over the past 20 years. The Parish's faithfulness and generosity has made this work possible, and without you, Netherlee Cottage could not continue its mission of hope, healing, and restoration.

Happy Christmas to everyone!  
**Netherlee Cottage Team**



## THE LUNCH PROJECT

### Weekly Lunch for The Needy

Each Thursday our Church hall becomes a place of care and connection through the Weekly Lunch Project. For several years the program has provided a warm, nutritious meal to roughly 80-90 men and women facing hardship. For many attendees this meal is more than food; it is often the only one they receive that day and a vital reminder that they are not alone.



#### Special thanks to

- > Rev. Roshan Mendis: for his meaningful prayers before each meal service
- > Thomass Atkinson (Session Clerk): for consistent encouragement
- > Kumar (Church Officer), volunteers Selvini, Jessica, Malcolm, Padmini and Yamini along with the church staff, for their weekly dedication, kindness and hands-on service.

This year, the project's highlight was a special Christmas lunch and grocery bag for each attendee, made possible by the generosity of a kind donor. The joy on the recipients' faces was truly priceless.

This work is sustained by the continued generosity of donors and sponsors from the congregation and well wishers. Thank you to each of you.

#### The Lunch Project Team



## THE THRIFT SHOP

### Serving with Heart, Community, and Purpose

St. Andrew's Thrift Shop continues to be a vibrant and meaningful outreach of St. Andrew's Scot's Kirk, bringing people together in service, fellowship, and generosity. Behind every successful thrift shop day is a dedicated team whose commitment and care make this ministry possible.

#### *With Grateful Thanks to Our Volunteers*

We warmly appreciate the faithful service of our volunteers — Karen, Selvini, Jess, Maureen, and Aruni. From sorting and organising donations to welcoming shoppers and managing sales, their time, effort and enthusiasm ensure that each thrift shop day runs smoothly and joyfully. Their teamwork and servant-hearted spirit reflect the very best of our church community.

Our dedicated volunteers sharing a moment together during a busy thrift shop day.

#### *Appreciating Our Support Staff*

Our sincere thanks also go to our invaluable support staff — George, Adrian, and Kumar — whose behind-the-scenes work, practical assistance, and reliability are essential to the smooth running of the thrift shop. Their support before, during, and after each sale is deeply appreciated and does not go unnoticed.

#### *A Ministry That Makes a Difference*

The proceeds from the St. Andrew's Thrift Shop directly support Ward 38 – Half Way Home (Female) at Mulleriyawa Mental Hospital, contributing towards its ongoing maintenance and care. In addition, funds raised help sustain other mission and outreach projects of the church, allowing SASK to continue responding to needs with compassion and purpose.

# THROUGH THE LENS – SERVICES, EVENTS & MISSION PROJECTS (...CONT)



A glimpse of the thrift shop in action — a space of generosity, community, and shared purpose.

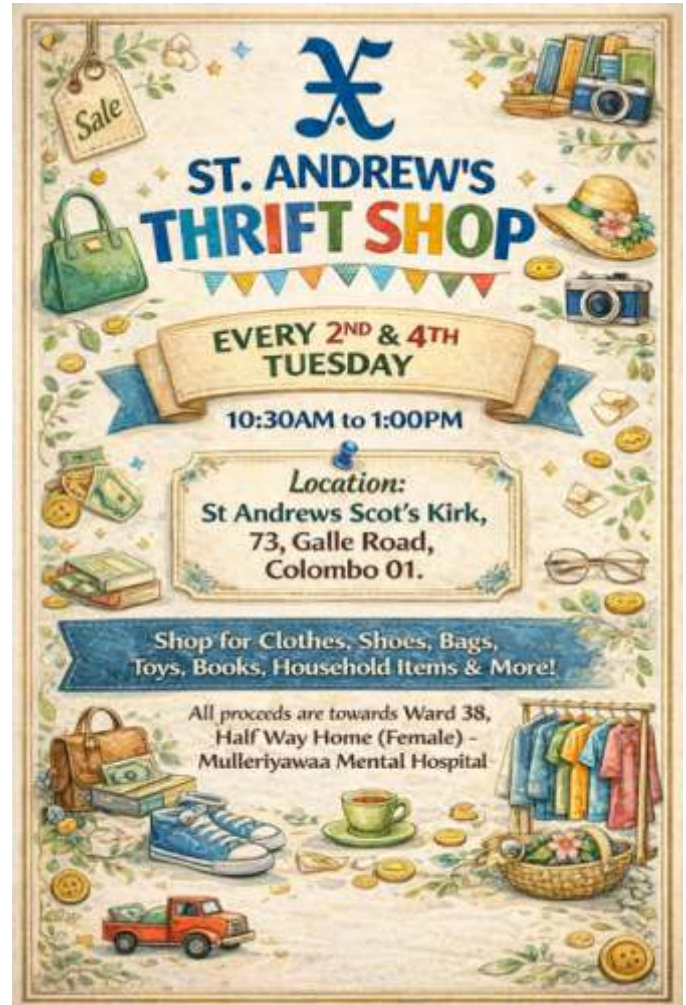
## Join Us

The thrift shop is held every 2nd and 4th Tuesday, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at St. Andrew's Scot's Kirk, 73 Galle Road, Colombo 01.

We invite everyone to support this ministry — by shopping, donating, or volunteering — and to be part of this

With heartfelt thanks to every volunteer, staff member, and supporter who helps make this ministry a blessing to many. Together, we continue to serve with love and purpose.

## The Thrift Shop Team



## 17th COLOMBO ST. ANDREW'S NETHERLEE SCOUT TROOP

It's been a very busy time for the scout troop having worked on projects nearly every month and actively participating to give of their time and energy.

### Adventure Camp

Three of the Girl Scouts participated in an adventure camp organized by the Asian International School Scout Group, held at Sense Pavilion, Horana in July.



### Scouts Sports Gala 2025

Three of our Girl Scouts participated in the Colombo District Scouts Sports Gala, held on the 26th of July at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Stadium, Diyagama. Of the nine events they competed in, our girl scouts secured an impressive total of four Gold medals and four Silver medals.



### President's Scout

G. B. Rashmi Jayodha Jayaratne was awarded the highest accolade in scouting - President's Scout at the President's Scout Award Ceremony held at Holy Cross College, Gampaha.



### Pioneering Training Programme

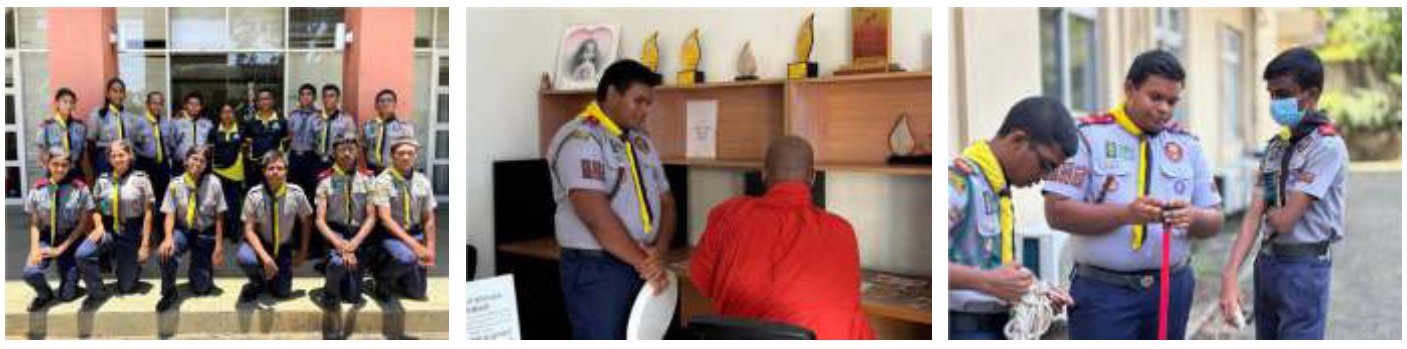
The Pioneering Training Programme was organized to equip scouts with essential pioneering skills through practical and hands-on activities. The programme was conducted by District Scout Leader Sujith Priyamangala, who provided clear instruction on knots, lashings and pioneering constructions. The training encouraged teamwork, discipline and leadership among the scouts, while ensuring safety and proper technique. The project was organised by Senior Scout Prasheema Jayaratne.



# THROUGH THE LENS – SERVICES, EVENTS & MISSION PROJECTS (...CONT)

## “Praana” –Blood Donation Project

A blood donation program - “Praana” - was organized by our Senior Scout, Tharul Dissanayake, at Apeksha Hospital, Maharagama in August. The initiative aimed to support cancer patients in need of critical blood transfusions and had the participation of numerous donors from the community.



## Zahira Jamboree

Eight Scouts from our troop participated in the Zahira Jamboree held in August. Recognized as a national event, the Jamboree brought together Scout groups from several districts across the country. It was a memorable and enriching experience for our Scouts, who took part in a variety of adventurous activities, team building challenges and cultural exchanges. The event not only strengthened their scouting skills but also fostered lasting friendships and a deeper sense of unity among Scouts.



## Art Exhibition & Plant Cultivation Programme

The Cub Scouts of the 17th Colombo Troop successfully organised an art exhibition and a plant cultivation programme under the guidance of Cub Scout Leader Mrs P Sithara Thisera.



## Organizer Badge Project

Senior Scout Tharul Dissanayake organized a community outreach project in August together with Scouts from St. John’s College to educate young adults on the importance of understanding the law and their legal rights.



## Camporee & HIV Prevention

The Troop also participated in the Colombo District Camporee and the Youth HIV Prevention Programme.





# TEST YOUR NATIVITY KNOWLEDGE



**1. According to the Gospel of Luke, why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?**

- A. To visit relatives
- B. For a census
- C. To attend a festival
- D. To escape persecution

**2. Which Gospel gives us the story of the shepherds?**

- A. Matthew
- B. Mark
- C. Luke
- D. John

**3. How many wise men are mentioned in the Bible?**

- A. Three
- B. Two
- C. Twelve
- D. The number is not specified

**4. What sign did the angels give the shepherds to identify the baby Jesus?**

- A. A shining crown
- B. A star overhead
- C. Wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger
- D. Surrounded by angels

**5. Which Old Testament prophet foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem?**

- A. Isaiah
- B. Micah
- C. Jeremiah
- D. Ezekiel

**6. True or False: The Bible mentions animals being present at Jesus' birth.**

**7. Which Christmas carol is based directly on the song of the angels in Luke 2?**

- A. O Come, All Ye Faithful
- B. Silent Night
- C. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- D. Away in a Manger

**8. What was the reaction of the shepherds after visiting the baby Jesus?**

- A. They returned quietly to their fields
- B. They went to Jerusalem
- C. They spread the word and praised God
- D. They followed Mary and Joseph

**9. Which country is traditionally credited with starting the custom of Christmas trees?**

- A. Italy
- B. Germany
- C. England
- D. France

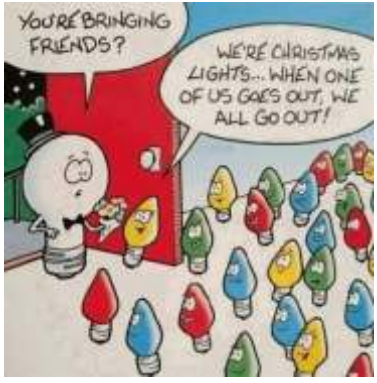
**10. Finish the verse: "For unto us a child is born..." (Isaiah 9:6)**

- A. ...and the angels rejoiced
- B. ...and peace filled the earth
- C. ...unto us a son is given
- D. ...and the world was changed

**Answers**

- 1. B – Luke 2:1–5
- 2. C – Luke 2:8–20
- 3. D – The Bible does not specify a number (Matthew 2:1–12)
- 4. C – Luke 2:12
- 5. B – Micah 5:2
- 6. False – Animals are not mentioned in Scripture
- 7. C – Based on Luke 2:14
- 8. C – Luke 2:17–20
- 9. B – Germany
- 10. C – Isaiah 9:6

# GRAHAM'S FUNNY BONE





# THREE THINGS TO CARRY INTO THE NEW YEAR

As the calendar turns, we often rush to leave the past behind. Yet faith invites us not simply to move forward, but to carry wisely—choosing what will sustain us in the days ahead.

## First, gratitude.

Not because the year was perfect, but because God was present in it. Gratitude steadies the heart, helping us recognise grace even in unfinished stories. It teaches us to begin the new year not with lack, but with thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

## Second, compassion.

The world enters the new year wounded—by conflict, inequality, and quiet personal griefs. Compassion keeps us human. It urges us to listen more carefully, judge less quickly, and love more deliberately, following Christ's call to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

## Third, hope.

Not a shallow optimism, but a resilient hope rooted in faith. Christian hope does not deny uncertainty; it insists that God is still at work within it. As Scripture reminds us, "those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).

As we step into the new year, may we travel light—but not empty-handed—carrying gratitude for what has been, compassion for those we meet, and hope for all that is yet to come.





# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

We are international, interdenominational, open to all.  
All are welcome.

## SERVICES & PRAYER TIME

Sunday morning service - 9.30 am

Every first Sunday is Communion Sunday

Every fourth Sunday is Family Sunday

Lunchtime service every Wednesday - 12.45 pm to 1.15 pm

The church is open from 6.30 am to 6.30 pm every day for those who would like to have personal prayer time. Our Daily Bread and Bibles in three languages are available.



Sunday service is livestreamed on St. Andrew's Scots Kirk Facebook page



<https://scotskirk.lk/>



@St.AndrewsScotsKirk

Our Church is used by The Korean Church every Sunday

The publication - Our Daily Bread is available in the Church.

## Mission Work at Scots Kirk

**Helping Hands** – Financial support for those disadvantaged and living around St Andrew's

Contact Selvinee Kumar +94 77 307 8059

**Netherlee Cottage** - Rehabilitation Centre for Mental Health issues

Contact Gillian Mailler - gillmailler@gmail.com

**Lunch for the Needy** - Held each Thursday from 11.45 am to 1.30 pm.

Contact Church Officer Kumar

**Mulleriyawa Hospital Ward 38**

Contact Shanthini Ahangama - shani\_ahangama@hotmail.com

## Other Activities at Scots Kirk

**SASK Thrift Shop** – The sale of pre-loved and new goods at very competitive prices to serve and support the local community open every second and fourth Tuesday of each month

Contact Karen - +94 773429734, kamerasinghe@gmail.com

**17th Colombo St Andrew's Netherlee Scout Troop**

Contact Church Officer Kumar

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Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editorial Committee.

