

CSI CHRIST CHURCH OF CHICAGO

Parish Messenger

HAPPY
NEW YEAR
2026

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

Malayalam service: 1st and 3rd Sundays.

English service: 2nd Sunday

Youth and Young Adults (YAYA) Worship 4th Sunday

Sunday services can be attended in-person or online.

[Zoom Link](#)

pwd=VjZoSHVvSnhmcElwSmJIYm0xL0paQT09 Or audio only

at 1 312 626 6799, Meeting ID: 757 719 2513 #, password

5857 #

Sun 9:15 - 9:50 AM : Sunday School

Sun 9:30 - 9:50 AM : Bible Study

Sun 10 AM - 12 NOON : Worship Service

Fri 9:00 AM : Fasting Prayer

Sat Evenings : Cottage Prayer

Be still, and know that I am God. Psalms 46:10a.

1095 E Thacker St, Des Plaines, IL-60016. PHONE : 773-234-1034





-Rev. Joe Varghese Malayil

Be Still When God Is Working for You)

Motto for 2026: "Be still, and know that I am God."
(Psalm 46:10a)

As we step into the New Year 2026, God speaks a simple yet life-giving word to us as individuals and as a congregation: "Be still." In a world marked by speed, uncertainty, and constant pressure to act, stillness may sound passive. Yet biblical stillness is not inactivity—it is deep trust, holy surrender, and confident faith in the God who is always at work.

Psalms 46 was written during a time of chaos and fear. Nations were in turmoil, and even the foundations of the earth seemed to shake. Yet in the midst of that storm, God declares, "Be still, and know that I am God." This is an invitation to stop striving and to recognize that God reigns even when life feels unstable or God is already at work.

This truth is powerfully illustrated in 2 Chronicles 20. When King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah faced overwhelming enemies, they did not rely on military strength. Instead, they stood before the Lord in prayer and worship. As God's people stood still in faith, the Lord fought the battle for them. Stillness became the space where divine victory unfolded (2 Chronicles 20:15-17).

Jesus echoes this same spiritual truth in Matthew 5:3:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

To be poor in spirit is to acknowledge our complete dependence on God. It is the posture of surrender—knowing that without Him, we can do nothing. This is where God's grace flows freely and His kingdom power is revealed.

As CSI Christ Church of Chicago, we are walking through a meaningful season of transition. We have sold our former church building, worshiped faithfully in a rented space, and now prayerfully look toward owning a new church home. In such moments, questions, anxiety and concerns naturally arise. Yet God's word to us remains clear: Do not fear. Do not rush. Be still.

Stillness does not cancel movement; it clarifies direction. When we surrender our plans, timelines, and anxieties to God, He works faithfully and decisively. The same God who guided Abraham step by step, who fought for Judah at the time of King Jehoshaphat, and who has sustained our church for over 40 years, **will surely continue to lead us forward.**

As we look back, 2025 was truly a blessed year for our church. By God's grace, we accomplished many wonderful things together. All our fellowships were exceptionally vibrant, new ministries and events were initiated, and our church life was enriched in many meaningful ways. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Executive Committee of 2025 for their dedication and committed service. I thank each one of you **from the bottom of my heart for your tireless service to the glory of God.**

At the same time, I extend my warm congratulations to the newly elected Executive Committee for 2026. May the Lord grant you wisdom, strength, and a spirit of humility as you lead the church in this important year.

May **this year be a year where we experience the truth of God's promise.** As we enter 2026, let us **be a people who embrace stillness rooted in humility, trust, and prayer**—confident that God fights for us when we fully surrender to Him.

To God be the glory.

Rev. Joe Malayil

Vicar, CSI Christ Church of Chicago

Thus far, He's walked with me.
From my mother's voice to mine.
Rachel C. Varghese

This time of year lends towards reflection and rest. I hope you can ease into the new year without feeling the need to have 2025 all wrapped up in a bow. Grace and peace, friends. Thanks for reading.



As I walk around our neighborhood on a dull, gray afternoon in October, I wonder how so much of this view reflects my life right now. A season that is filled with uncertainty and the tension of the unclear.

My anxiousness finds supposed peace when it's met with control. I thrive on clarity, on predictability, and yet, it seems so much of life leans toward the opposite. We're living in the gray.

These days, I'm just overburdened with so much, waiting and wondering when or if things will let up. Worries for my children, their own emotional and mental health, their physical health (that seems to have no point of calm in terms of # of appts). Worries for my own health that did not seem this complicated before children. Worries for the world and thinking about all the potential impacts of decisions being made and how that affects me, my family, my neighbors, and the witness of the Church.

My overthinking and worrying stretches back to childhood where my family would often avoid telling me things. Oddly enough, my brother had a shirt one of my favorite sayings as a 5-year-old was, "Don't worry. Be happy."

Now that phrase comes back to me from my mom and dad more frequently. They'll sense frustration or angst and say, "Don't worry. Be happy, Rachel." They'll hear my overwhelm and say, "Don't worry." It's ironic because they're both the same way. But with my mom's anxiety and worries, she probably prays at least half of it away.

As I continue my walk through my neighborhood, I recall a phone call I had with my mom that morning. I'm not even telling her some of the things I'm processing, but she tells me,

"Ithratholam Daivam nammale nadathy."

God has walked with us this far.

Unprompted, though I'm sure led by the Spirit, she pours out truth and testimonies of how He's carried us through so much, and we can keep going because of that. How even in the midst of struggle and hardship, He remained. How He didn't let go of them. How good and faithful He's been to me.

I do my best to receive it in the moment, but it's only later when I think of a song I can hear in her voice and the voices of the church aunties that raised me.

*Ithratholam Yahova sahayichu
Ithratholam Dhaivamenne nadathy
Onnumillaykayil ninnenne uyarthi
Ithratholam Yahova sahayichu*

While English cannot capture the essence or depth of these lyrics, I process them now in a way I've never done before:

*Thus far the Lord has helped me
Thus far God has led me
He lifted me up from a place where I had nothing;
Thus far the Lord has helped me.*

The second verse continues...

*When I wandered alone, despised, a stranger
When I left my land and my home
The Lord who promised to receive me into His own land
Thus far the Lord has helped me.*

Ithratholam. Thus far.

My mom is rooted in His faithfulness. Rooted in the spiritual heritage from her parents. My mom was the first in her family to come to the States. A single woman with just the connections of other immigrants who arrived before her and would take her in (one of whom I'm forever indebted to because she taught my mom how to make lamb biriyani and sambar).

When I process these words, I can recall her cries of desperation. I can imagine the ache for home as a young, single woman with no family nearby but dear friends who become family. I remember the struggle of a woman who faced breast cancer twice and the hidden grief of watching her oldest friends leave their church after a church split.

Ithratholam.

It's the same song my Appachen and Ammachy (Grandfather and Grandmother) sang at their own church gatherings and in their home. Maybe they were thinking about God's faithfulness in sustaining their lives over the years. Of His covering their daughter who made it to America, and her other siblings who would follow. Of living through the ups and downs of serving God in their church and city. Of watching each other battle various health concerns.

Ithratholam.

It's the same song I heard on cold basement floors during Saturday night prayer meetings. A mix of English and Malayalam songs, a devotion by our Achen (pastor), and a time of extended prayer. It's during that time where my friends and I anxiously waited for the time to pass quickly, for the aunty that prayed a little more... efficiently... to take space so we could go eat and hang out.

Yet now, I recall their weeping and wailing in a new lens. They were laying their burdens at the throne. As a child, I did not appreciate or understand the sacredness of the space. Discipleship was happening, even though it wasn't planned programming. They cried out for mercy, for grace, for their children, their lives, for the family that hosted that evening. Perhaps their pleading with the Lord for mercy, for grace, for forgiveness, was not (just) over their own depravity, but their own desperation. Their dire need.

Maybe in the sacred space of a crowded basement with uncomfortable folding chairs...there was incense rising up to the heart of God. Even as I think back to those Saturday nights, God was surrounding me with a great cloud of witnesses.

Ithratholam.

From generation to generation, He has led us this far.

I wonder, is my mom speaking to herself when she tells me, "Ithratholam?" To be rooted, to reflect, to consider that even in the ups and downs of this season of her own life of parenting, ministry, and grandparenting...that thus far, the Lord has helped me.

It's easy and valid to think through this year under its heaviness. Under its darkness. But perhaps, even through my mom telling me don't worry, it's a way to tell myself, "Thus far" He's got us. Even in your worry, be rooted in this truth.

The last verse of the song translates in this way:

Tears, sorrow, and despair

A Day will come when they are completely changed

On that day, among the angels, I will shout for joy with the redeemed

Thus far the Lord has helped me.

Like my own, my mom's worries can be heavy; they can be pervasive. But tangled in them is a persistent faith that reminds me that I can hold the tension of both. Both the wanting of what could be and the gratitude of what is. Both the grief of what's hard and heavy and the joy of God's past and present faithfulness to keep us going.

A few months later, winter has started, and while I expect the dreariness of the season to continue, we're gifted a rare day. The sun is out, and it's warm enough for my girls to get on their bikes and go around the neighborhood



Not much has changed about our circumstances, but just as the days get a little lighter after the solstice, I'm noticing some lightness drawn from deep roots of faith. Perhaps, like my mom and those before me, my desperation can meet his faithfulness. I can notice, even in the gray, His goodness surrounds me. The laughter of my daughters. The breeze on my face. Maybe even in the uncertainty or gray of life, these roots are reminding me that God has carried us thus far, and I can continue to take in glimmers of goodness. Clinging to them to see sparks of light now.

Holy Spirit, Corruption of Its Image and Christmas

By Mathew Karottu

Genesis, the first book of the Bible begins with the statement that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. We know that the Spirit of God is also referred to the Holy Spirit in other parts of scripture. The Bible goes on to say that out of all the creatures he made, only man was made in his image. We infer that humanity has a uniqueness of character and quality more than any other part of creation. The Bible also tells us that the Holy Spirit is in every human being as he/she is the image of God.

The Bible goes on to tell us how this image has been corrupted through the fall. Even though we know from scriptures that God can make possible what is impossible, there were no Prophets, Kings, Judges, or Psalmists that could restore the people of God to the image of God as it was in the beginning.

So we can ask the question as to why the Holy Spirit couldn't do much over the course of the Old Testament timeline to restore this image of God amongst his people. We see that in the Old Testament God even used non-believers to reveal his grace or to accomplish his plans. God made many attempts to save his people, but still the people were going in the wrong direction.

We know about the incarnation of God, the Father coming as his son Jesus Christ. When we look at Matthew 21:33-46, Mark 12: 1 - 12, and Luke 20:9-19 regarding the parable of the tenants, we see that God himself decided to appear, instead of keeping himself anonymous, taking the form of a human being in a humble way to live as one amongst them while maintaining the original image of God; uncorrupted. And this is the story of Christmas that we all celebrate now, that God came down as the Son of God and an earthly counselor. Yet, despite this, they killed him too.

We see that God the Father, the ultimate source of all counsel, will come again to put everything in the order.

DECEMBER MEMORIES

Ecumenical Christmas Program



Christmas Carol Service



CSI Unity Carol Service



DECEMBER MEMORIES

Sunday School Outing



Christmas Day Service



DECEMBER MEMORIES

Chicago Malayalee Association Christmas Program



December Carol Seranading





LECTIONARY & DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTS

January 11, 2025, 1st Sunday after Epiphany (Holy Eucharist- English)

Theme: Baptism of Jesus: Affirmation of Identity and Mission

Old Testament	Exodus 3: 1-15	Deepa Philip
Psalm	Psalm 98	Roshni Jacob
New Testament/Epistle	Galatians 4:1-7	Radha Joseph
Gospel	Matthew 3:1–17	Presbyter
Kiss of Peace/Elements		Joby & Ushua Karottu
Offertory		Jaden & Ethan Karottu

January 18, 2025, 2nd Sunday after Epiphany (Holy Eucharist-Malayalam)

Theme: Break the Chain: Finding Freedom from Addictions

Old Testament	Daniel 1:8–21	Meljo Varghese
Psalm	Psalm 1	Lubina Varghese
New Testament/Epistle	Colossians 3:1–11	Joshua George
Gospel	Mark 5: 1-21	Presbyter
Kiss of Peace/Elements		Mathew & Mariamma Karottu
Offertory		Abraham Joseph & Sheela Abraham

January 25, 2026 -3rd Sunday after Epiphany/ Ecumenical Sunday (Holy

Eucharist in English) -YAYA Sunday- First Part of Service led by YAYA

Fellowship

Theme: Unity in Faith and Action

Old Testament	Jeremiah 1:4–10	YAYA
Psalm	Psalm 67	YAYA
New Testament/Epistle	Acts 9:1–9	YAYA
Gospel	Matthew 19:27–30	Presbyter
Kiss of Peace/Elements		Joji & Deepa Philip
Offertory		Sarah & Shawn Philip

JANUARY CELEBRATIONS

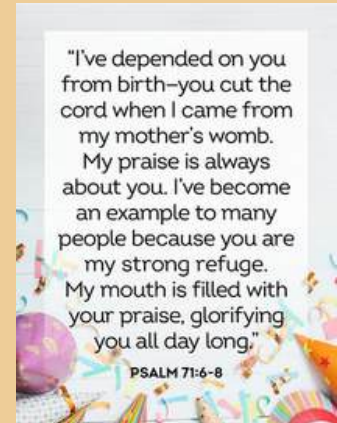


Birthdays



1 Kevin Kurian
5 Radha Joseph
5 Sam Joseph
6 Rylen Varghese
7 Deepa Philip
8 Roshni Jacob
10 Aiden Kurian
11 Jashley Thomas
13 Joshua George
14 Josh Joy
18 Julie Thomas
19 Rinu George David

20 Anna Jacob
21 Lovy George
23 Kalathumkal M Mathai
31 Akkina Abraham



*May God's blessing
be on each and
everyone of you !!!*

Anniversaries

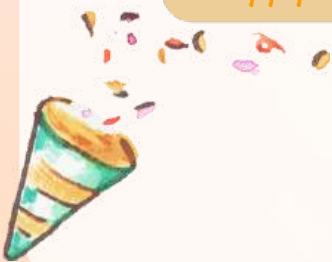


*Those who remain in Love,
remain in God and God remains
in them.*

John 4:16

Happy Anniversary

6 Rajan Kaleekal & Crissy Kaleekal
7 Joby Karottu & Ushas Karottu
9 Rev. George Pati & Suja George Pati
11 Alexander Jacob & Jessy Alexander
16 Mathew Karottu & Mariamma Karottu
16 Meljo & Lubina Meljo Varghese
18 Abraham Joseph & Sheela Abraham
31 Joji Philip & Deepa Philip





CSI Christ Church Monthly Accounts		Nov 2025	
Category	Income	Expense	
Subscription	\$3,490.44		
Offerory	\$942.00		
Thanks Offering	\$900.00		
Tithe	\$710.00		
Special Donation			
St. Martin's rent		\$2,200.00	
Church Supplies/Communion Elements			
Car Insurance		\$353.25	
Church Car Maintenance		\$20.00	
Church Maintenance/Emergency Repair			
Church Cleaning/Land scape/Snow removal			
Ch:ComEd			
Ch:Peoples Energy			
Ch&Pang Insurance		\$684.88	
Ch:Water			
Ch:Garbage			
Pang:ComEd			
Pang:Norcor			
Pang:Clean/Maint		\$175.00	
Pang:Internet		\$80.63	
Pang:Phone,cell		\$302.87	
Pang:Water		\$164.14	
Presbyter's Honorarium		\$2,200.00	
Presbyter healthcare			
Hospitality/Refreshments		\$369.83	Convention/senior citizen
Mission/Charity	\$1,525.00	\$1,500.00	United Mission Deri/Das
Women's Fellowship			
Mens Fellowship			
Sunday School	\$100.00	\$149.82	
Youth		\$372.00	Basket ball/yaya lunch
Choir	\$50.00	\$451.53	folder, retreat, carol Practice
Visiting Pastor			
Presbyter gift/Visiting Pastors			
Legal/Tax/Visa Processing-W2/W3		\$1,800.00	
Miscellaneous		\$381.14	Branson trip Achans exp, House
Carol Rounds	\$500.00	\$159.34	Visit, Chase Service Fee
Family Retreat			
Building Fund			
Kerala Fest Fundraising	\$32,723.87	\$14,165.50	
CSI Council Membership / Conf			
Ecumenical Council			
Family Sunday/Harvest	\$920.00		\$12,698.09
Confirmation			
Cottage Prayer			
Sub Total	\$41,861.31	\$25,529.93	
Ledger Summary	General	Reserve	Building Fund
Opening balance at the beginning of the month	\$49,586.22	\$6,068.00	\$678,257.55
Add income "in month"	\$41,861.31		
Move building fund donations to building fund			\$0.00
Less (Expenses) "in month"	\$25,529.93		
Interest credited and moved to building fund			\$1,360.95
Move Tithe to Building Fund	\$12,295.00		\$12,295.00
Move Harvest Fund to Building Fund	\$12,698.09		\$12,698.09
Move Kerala Fest to Building Fund	\$18,558.37		\$18,558.37
Closing Ledger balance end of the month	\$22,366.14	\$6,068.00	\$723,169.96

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Annual General Body Meeting Second Announcement

The annual body meeting will be held on **January 18th** after the Sunday service.

Agenda will be shared soon

Joint Committee Meeting

- The incoming and outgoing committee combined meeting will be held on **January 11th** after the service
- Agenda: The 2026 annual budget, calendar of events, and co-opting the vacant executive committee positions
- The following vacant positions for 2026 Executive Committee will be co-opted:
 - **Choir Director**
 - **Sunday School Superintendent**
 - **Youth Fellowship Director**

Urging to prayerfully consider offering your time and talent for God's purpose supporting our music, youth and children's ministries

Rental Agreement Update

- St Martin's Church last service is January 4th
- 6 month extension and month to month thereafter
- We have signed the agreement with the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago effective January 1st 2026
- We will be solely responsible for cleaning the spaces we use after January