

An Insight into the History of CSI Malayalam Congregation

This is a brief historical summary of the life of this Congregation, featuring the important milestones and people involved during the past 10 years.

The Church of South India (CSI) was formed in 1947 by the organic union of the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational traditions in south India. The CSI became a member of the Anglican Communion in 1990. The CSI recognises that the elements of all four parent traditions are important in its life. However, its liturgical heritage comes mostly from the Anglican tradition – and the CSI has also inherited episcopacy and church governance from the same source. So, it could be said that the CSI is the ecumenical expression of the Anglican Church in south India. And in Australia, therefore, the Anglican Church stands closest to the CSI compared to its other counterpart. This makes this congregation feel privileged and proud to become part of the Anglican Church, the source of its parent tradition in Australia.

The inspiration for this immigrant community to begin a worship together in Adelaide came from the CSI Church in Melbourne, Victoria. On April 24, 2012, six CSI families gathered at Ajith Simpson's residence for a prayer meeting. The members who attended this meeting were Ajith Simpson, Seena Ajith, Shobitha Raj, Sophia Beena Lazer, Bensilal Devadanam, Hepsi Stephenson, Joshitha Mathew, Bincy Baburaj, Justin Mathew, Subhash Abel, Suraj Samual Madathil, and Sania Suraj. These members decided to start a CSI Congregation in Adelaide.

In consultation with the CSI Church, Melbourne, it was decided that the Church would have its first service on Saturday, May 12, 2012. Eight families from the CSI Church, Melbourne came to Adelaide with the necessary arrangements in place for the Holy Communion. Thus, with their help and participation, the first Holy Communion was celebrated by Rev. Saji Thomas and Rev. Samson Aashirvadam at Woodville Gardens Uniting Church. After that service, a committee was formed under the leadership of Ajith Simpson as its President. It was then decided to have Holy Communion on the first Saturday of every month and the other services led by laypersons on every second and fourth Sundays. Sunday School and Women's Fellowship were also started then.



Members present at the first worship held at Uniting Church, Woodville Gardens in May 2012



*Rev Thomas Korah and Kochamma with members present during the Easter service held in 2013
St Clement's Church*



First Anniversary Celebration held in May 2013. Rev Jobby John, and Rev Samson Ashirvatham along with Bishop Tim Harris



Rev T Sadanandan during his visit in April 2016



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The congregation wanted to have its own space and thus desired to be under the auspices of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide. With this as its goal, the Committee approached Archbishop Jeffrey Driver and Bishop Tim Harris. They kindly permitted the Congregation to use St. Clement's Anglican Church, Enfield, for its worship. As per our request, the CSI Church, Melbourne agreed to send Rev Joby John on the first Saturday of every month. Later, the services were held by Rev Thomas Korah who also came from Melbourne. For some time, the services were held in St. George Anglican Church, Alberton by Rev T Sadanandan and Rev Samson Aashirvadam. From August 2015, Rev Vinod Victor started visiting once a month for the service. The first baptism of this Congregation was that of David Bensilal, s/o Bensilal Devadanam, which was held on July 19, 2015.

On June 4, 2016, the congregation moved permanently to St. Philip's Church, Broadview. This facility was provided by Bishop Tim Harris. For the first time in its history, on November 12, 2016, a Harvest Festival was organised. The Chief Guest was Rev. Varghese Cherian from the Mar Thoma Church, Adelaide. The Vacation Bible School (VBS) was also started in 2017 led by the Youth Wing of the CSI Church, Melbourne.

A Gospel convention was also held for three days as part of celebrating the 5th Church Anniversary May 11-13, 2017 with the theme 'Secrets of Happy Homes'. It was inaugurated by Rev Dr Tim Harris. Rev Vinod Victor was the main Speaker and Rev Dr Frederick Eluvathingal and Rev Varghese Cherian were the chief guests.

On October 25, 2017, Rev Santhosh S Kumar was commissioned as the Parish Priest of the Parish of Broadview and Enfield, appointed by the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide. On May 20, 2018 the members of the CSI Church, Adelaide, were integrated into the life of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide as a member congregation of the Parish of Broadview and Enfield bearing the name, 'CSI Malayalam Congregation, Adelaide'.



A few Melbourne CSI friends along with Bishop Tim Harris, Rev Sophie Relf Christopher and Rev Vinod Victor when the inaugural service was held at St Philip's in June 2016



Celebrating the inaugural service at St Philip's Church



The receiving Bishop Dharmaraj Rasalam at Adelaide airport by Bishop Tim Harris in April 2017

Over the years, the following people have held various responsibilities within this congregation from May 12, 2012 to May 20, 2018.

- ◊ President: (the respective vicars of that period)
- ◊ Vice President: Ajith Simpson, Bensilal Devadanam and Sudheesh Sadanandan
- ◊ Secretary: Sania Suraj, Bensilal Devadanam and Sunil Langlin
- ◊ Treasurer: Joshitha Mathew, Ajith Simpson, Dolly Binumon and Maria Abraham
- ◊ Committee Members: Sobitharaj, Suraj, Bincy Subash, Mattathil Ittyipe Johnson, Rony Jacob and Seena Ajith
- ◊ Sunday School Coordinator: Sophia Beena Lazer and Sara Langlin. Women's Fellowship Coordinator: Sara Langlin, Seena Ajith and Maria Abraham

After the integration of the congregation into the Parish, the following people were appointed to leadership positions from the Congregation till date.

- ◊ Presbyter: Rev. Santhosh S Kumar
- ◊ Wardens: Sangeet S Kumar (2018), Joshitha Mathew (2019, 2020), Sudheesh Sadanandan (2020 till June), Nevin Abraham (2021), Mathew Vargheese (2020 from July, 2021 & Present), Ajith Simpson (2018, 2019 & Present)
- ◊ Councillors: Joshitha Mathew (2018), Maria Abraham (2019), Sangeet S Kumar (2019), Ajith Simpson (2020), Prince John Abraham (2021), Seena Ajith (2021), Nevin Abraham (2018, 2020 & present), Samuel Cherian Thoppil (present)

These representatives bring the concerns of the Congregation to the Parish Council and, along with the representatives of St Philip's and St Clement's, make the decisions for the Parish.



Episcopal visit during the Passion week 2017, Bishop Dharmaraj Rasalam from South Kerala Diocese



Children who participated in the VBS held in 2017 with the organisers



Below: Celebrating 5th Church Day by cutting the cake



Youth from Melbourne CSI took the leadership to conduct the VBS



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The Sunday School was coordinated by: Jositha Mathew (2018-2020) and Sneha Elizabeth Thomas (2021-Present). Women's Fellowship: [internal activities] Sneha Elizabeth Thomas (2020), Seena Ajith (2019, 2021, present), and [External activities] Maria Abraham (2019-Present). Ajith Simpson was elected to the team to represent the Parish in the Diocesan Synod (2019-present).

During the Kerala flood disaster in 2018, the congregation lent a helping hand to a family in rebuilding their house. A couple of other families were also identified, and through the generous contributions of friends and well-wishers, the congregation continues to provide those families assistance mainly in regard to children's education and building of a new house.

During the unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic, worship services were regularly streamed via an online platform.

The food stalls set by the Congregation in the Prospect Spring Fair have won the prize for the best stall several times – and it continues to generate income for the Parish along with the major event, the Harvest Festival, that is successfully organised each year.

'Carol Nite' is organised by the congregation every year, and it continues to be an ecumenical event celebrating Christmas with the music of different cultures.

An important occasion for the congregation was our first Confirmation Service which was held on May 2, 2021. The Most Rev Geoffrey Smith, our Archbishop, confirmed eight members to the full membership of the Church.

Currently the congregation has thirteen families (51 members) on its roll. The services are held on Sundays at 4 pm in Malayalam at St Philip's following the CSI Liturgy. The three congregations join in worship together on special occasions such as the Patronal Festivals of St Philip's and St Clement's, and when there is a fifth Sunday in the month.

We feel blessed to be part of this Parish, receiving much love from both St Clement's and St Philip's – and pray for God's continued guidance in the life of this Parish.



Above: Participation in All Australia CSI Family Conference held at Grampians in September 2018

*Right:
Following
Easter
service in
2019*



*CSI Cong
Stall at the
Prospect
Spring Fair*

*Right:
Women's
Fellowship
members
with Bishop
Tim Harris
and Fiona*



Below: Australia's Biggest Morning Tea held to raise funds for Cancer Council is held regularly





Left: During Onam, the traditional festival of the State of Kerala, the members of the congregation with the other parishioners, enjoying 'Onasadya', delicious home-made vegetarian cuisine of Kerala, on a banana leaf.



Below: Outdoor picnics are held to enrich the comradeship



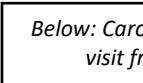
Left: A group selfie never fails to capture the happy faces



Below: House Caroling to spread the joy of good news that Christ our Saviour is born in Bethlehem



Left: Blend of professional and amateur musicians in the Christmas band



Below: Carol Nite concludes with a visit from Santa Claus!!



Above: Children performing the Nativity Show during Carol Nite



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Above: Outreach organised by Women's Fellowship External Activity



Right: Watchnight service on December 31st followed by cake cutting.... We are ready to welcome new year!!!



Left: "Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song."



Children who were confirmed pose for a photo with Archbishop Geoffrey Smith



Left: Children enjoy a round of Badminton after the Sunday worship, Sunday school and Malayalam class



*Harvest Festival brings excitement to welcome our friends.
This is our major fundraising event.*

The Covid pandemic saw us going to lockdown, but worship services were regularly streamlined through online platforms.

CSI Church Day—10th Year Celebrations

On May 15, 2022, the CSI Malayalam Congregation celebrated its 10th Church Day Anniversary with a service of Thanksgiving Worship and celebrations to follow.



*Thanksgiving Service
at St Philip's*



CSI Church Day—10 Year Celebrations



Bishop Tim Harris begins the service and below left, he and Fiona are welcomed by shawling and given a bouquet



Below right: Children presenting a special song



Women's Fellowship present special song

Celebrating after worship with shared meal

