



# Abiding's Tidings

Abiding Presence Lutheran Church

Volume 44  
Winter Issue, 2024

## Calendar

**Every Wednesday**  
Online Bible Study  
Confirmation Class

## January

**6<sup>th</sup> Monday**  
*Season of Epiphany begins*

**12<sup>th</sup> Sunday**  
*Baptism of our Lord*

**26<sup>th</sup> Sunday**  
*Annual  
Congregational  
Meeting*

## March

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday**  
*Transfiguration of Our  
Lord*

**5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday**  
*Ash Wednesday  
(Lent Begins)*

**9<sup>th</sup> Sunday**  
*Daylight Saving Time  
Begins*

## April

**13<sup>th</sup> Sunday**  
*Passion/Palm Sunday  
Holy Week Begins*

**17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>**  
*Maundy Thursday &  
Good Friday.*

**20<sup>th</sup> Sunday**  
*Easter*

## "The New Age We Live"

*"In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. To you is born this day a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:1&11)*

Luke proclaims the odd, astonishing arrival of a new world, a new time. The story begins, "In those days..." which means chronologically, the old times, shaped by the "powers that be." The emperor reigns. Time is denoted by who is in power. Here is the story of time in which many people live even today: the time of census and taxes and authoritative orders and pronouncements, time shaped by business as usual, by the world's accepted power structures. History is defined by those in positions of authority. So, the story begins in the old time – the old age, "In those days..." Even the words sound tired and hopeless.

Something happens, however, and the story ends on "this day (v. 11)." A new time has entered the world – a new age. "This day" is not merely a temporal notation, but an eschatological affirmation; it is time shaped by the character and quality of the new event that has happened and changed the world – the birth of the Messiah. This new time is characterized not by the drudgery of business as usual or the threat of imperial orders, but by the inbreaking of the heavenly realm, the song of angels, and the "good news of great joy for all the people (v. 10)."

With the Messiah's birth, comes a time characterized not by fear, but by the freedom and joy of the announcement, "Do not be afraid," which is repeatedly proclaimed by the angels. "Those days" are governed by fear. The political powers, in both Jesus' day and our own, play on fear to get their way – whether it be the fear of the emperor, the fear of terrorists, the fear of the "other," or the fear of death. With "this day," comes a new possibility. Jesus' birth moves us from the time of fear that still grips us in so many ways in our lives to the joyful "fear not" of the angels' proclamation. We are

now living in the new time of the Messiah, who overcame all of our fears through his death on the cross and resurrection. Now, we belong to a new age of the faith, courage, joy, and freedom as the children of God. It is the new age of the Messiah, where the heavenly realm breaks in and transforms our lives into the holy ones no matter what circumstances threaten to overwhelm us.

As we begin our journey of faith afresh confidently in the New Year of 2025, may Almighty God's power and wisdom guide, protect, and bless us always! Amen.

*Pastor Jongkil Na*

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## Message from the President

Most people can tell you about the origins of Christmas. They know that it's a remembrance of the birth of Christ, but that's often the extent of their knowledge. For many, the meaning of the holiday is that it is just a time for love, peace, and kindness. Do we truly understand why we celebrate Christmas? It's not just about Santa Claus, or the Christmas tree, or any other of the various traditions wrapped up into our celebration of it. Why do we celebrate this occasion, and what is the true meaning of Christmas? Christmas is a time of spiritual reflection on the important foundations of the Christian faith. It's a time when Christians celebrate God's love for the world through the birth of the Christ child, Jesus. The Bible tells of Jesus' birth, fulfilling prophecies about it made about it hundreds of years before.

Christmas truly is one of the most wonderful times of the year. We decorate our home inside and outside with lights to welcome Baby Jesus. We share gifts just as the wisemen brought gifts to the Christ child when they heard of the birth of Jesus. For many there are festive parties, cozy gatherings at home, and fond family traditions to celebrate this joyous time of celebration.

However, sometimes we get lost in the season and forget the real reason we celebrate it. Among the hustle and bustle, our focus is lost, and our priorities are misguided. That includes mine, as I try to get caught up with all of the deadlines and get everything done before Christmas day. Some celebrate Christmas without knowing its true meaning. This is a very festive holiday, and the world cannot help but partake in the festivity of it.

My Christmas day was spent with family. I think family traditions provide a sense of identity and continuity, connecting generations and building upon shared values. I hope every one of you had a wonderful Christmas, and I would like to wish everyone a blessed New Year as well. May God keep you and your family happy and healthy throughout the year. May God's presence never leave your heart, and may the Lord grant you His grace and strength as you start a New Year in 2025!

Peace,

*Congregation President  
Annie Gajadhar*

## ***Annual Meeting Coming Up – Sunday, January 26, 2025***

*Once again January rolls around, bringing up our Annual Meeting at Abiding Presence. The date is Sunday, **January 26<sup>th</sup>**.*

*Be sure to save the date when we conduct the important business of our congregation – Approving the budget, reviewing the annual report, electing council members, recognition of those who have served and whatever other business may arise.*

**In Our Prayers:** Angela, Betty, Bobbie, Brooke, Chris, Debra, Dong-Hoon Lee, Gene, Janet, Joan, Julia, Keith, Ken, Linda, Lisa, Matt, Meghan, Moon-Hee Kim, Neil, Norma, Pam, Pat, Ramesh, Wol-Mak Park and Zally

**Happy Birthday to:** Jan Kalshoven (1/1), Jongkil Na (1/20), Marlon Gajadhar(2/10),

Sherlon Gajadhar (2/10), Josephine Kalshoven (2/25), Stephanie Gajadhar (3/1),



Chris Ham (3/18), Joshua Ham (3/19), Pat Thornberg (3/20), Betty Wellborn (4/8), and Ramesh Das (4/20)

### Music Ministry



I continue to feel so blessed for the APLC choir! In addition to our wonderful tenor, Steve McKisson, Josephine has been a regular voice each week. For the holidays, Julia & Nick Hajek and Lydia joined us in singing. Julia was so gracious to bring her flute (all the way from San Diego) to play in one of our pieces! I eagerly anticipate all the good music 2025 will offer.

*Laura Kalshoven*

### Bible Study Notes



Sermon on the Mount or Sermon on the Plains or level place - take your pick. It really does not matter where it happened but what was taught. What I have learned in a few Bible studies would have taken a lifetime to understand and put into practice. What a blessing these Bible studies are for all of us.

With deep analysis of Bible verses from Matthew that we would have glossed over and taken at face value, gives us a deeper understanding what he is trying to tell us and helps us make sense of it. We are also getting to know about Matthew as a person, his beliefs, and his contradictions. When questions are asked of pastor, I sometimes wait for pastor to answer in the form of parables like Jesus sometimes did to make us find the answer for ourselves. I guess I am hoping for too much.

Thank God for the Bible studies and the Sermon on the Mount. We should be more at peace to face challenges and criticism knowing that the Holy Spirit will be sent to comfort us in times of need. I am trying to be more patient and tolerant and kind as we all should. It will not be easy, but it will be worth it. Jesus is a perfect example of showing forgiveness and mercy.

Yes, we should take the log out of our own eyes first because the speck we see in the eyes of others may be a reflection of our own shortcomings and behavior. The Sermon on the Mount teaches us to base our lives on God's principles. We should strive for love and peace. Our motives and actions should be honorable and our hearts pure. God bless us. God bless our Bible studies.

*Zally Thurairatnam*

## Memorial Service for Anna Graeber



On Saturday, November 23, Pastor Na led a Service of the Word celebrating the life of our beloved member, Anna Graeber, who died at the age of 82 on June 24.

With prayers and music, we thanked God for giving her to us to love and appreciate in her time here on earth.

Many friends, relatives, and former workers with her attended the service. During the time of remembrance in the service some of our members, one of her nieces, and many others recalled her loving service. Co-workers cited her many accomplishments in the field of education. Members of Abiding Presence recalled her constant dedication to the Lord through her time as a member.

After a reading of the Lessons, Pastor Na cited Anna's faithfulness and ever-present willingness, even as she fought many illnesses, to help our church through its trials and tribulations over the years. We will miss her profound intelligence, her attention to detail, her guiding hand and her loving spirit.

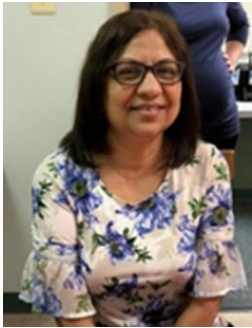
In closing, Pastor Na commended Anna to the mercy of God and into the glorious company of His saints in light.

*Jean Opeka*

### Birthdays from September to December



Here are the members who celebrated birthdays between September and December 2024. We sang Happy Birthday to those who showed up at church on a Sunday near their birthday and shared a special birthday dessert with them. Happy birthday, everyone!



Annie Gajadhar  
September 3



Gene Lehr  
September 11



Julia Kalshoven  
October 2



Murzeena Gajadhar  
October 18



Seonhee Ham  
November 7



Jean Opeka  
November 17



Jason Kalshoven  
December 13



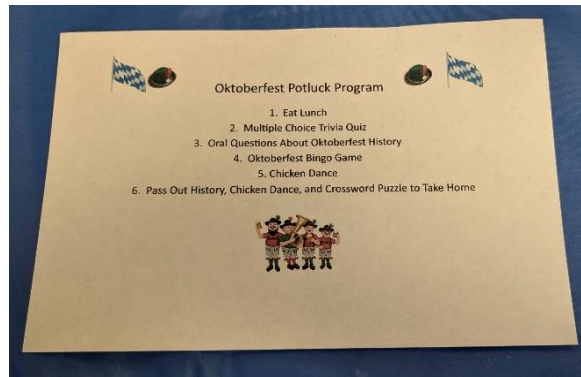
Keisun Na  
December 16



## Oktoberfest



The Fellowship Committee held an Oktoberfest potluck event on October 13, 2024. A signup sheet was circulated with suggestions for German food to bring. Annie Gajadhar and Bette Deller dressed in German style costumes and led the program following lunch. Green hats were given to some members to wear. We had bratwurst and sauerkraut, sauerbraten, sausages potato salad, cucumbers and onions, garden salad, pumpernickel bread, German chocolate cake, a Hungarian coffee cake, root beer and iced tea brought in by our members. The program after lunch consisted of a multiple choice trivia quiz, some oral questions about Oktoberfest history, a bingo game with prizes, and the chicken dance. Guests were given a packet to take home consisting of a crossword puzzle, a copy of the chicken dance directions, and some information about the history of Oktoberfests. Everyone had a good time.



## Thanksgiving Potluck



The Fellowship Committee organized Thanksgiving potluck for November 17, 2024. A signup sheet was circulated, and we had many delicious entrees to enjoy. The main dishes were ham and chicken. Side dishes consisted of a tasty green bean and mushroom soup casserole, a delicious sweet potato casserole, corn, cranberry brie bites, a spinach salad and pumpernickel bread. For dessert we had pumpkin pie, pumpkin bread with walnuts, and magic cookie bars.

There was no special program for this event. Pastor Na said grace in the kitchen around the food table, and we all filled our plates and enjoyed a great meal at tables set up in the sanctuary.



## December Events

**The Greening of the Church** – December 8<sup>th</sup> was the date chosen to decorate the church for Christmas this year. Members hung six wreaths on the sanctuary windows, and tacked greens around the doorways of each office, room, and the sanctuary. The tree and cross in the lobby were decorated with beads, ornaments, and lights. It was a great time of fun and fellowship.



## Christmas Potluck and Gift Exchange

On Sunday, December 22, 2024, we had a holiday potluck lunch following the worship service. Pastor Na said grace in the kitchen before the meal. The menu included ham and a casserole of sausage and cheese as main entrees. Side dishes consisted a potato and egg salad, a cornbread casserole, macaroni and cheese, and a green bean casserole plus a fruit salad and a salsa of corn, red pepper, and black bean. For dessert we had Christmas cupcakes and Christmas cookies. Everything was delicious!



Following our feast, fourteen of us played a gift exchange game. Players drew a number to determine the order in which each would choose a present from the gift table. They could either take one from the table or take one away from another player who had already chosen and opened a gift. This happened a couple of times, which made the game funny. President, Annie Gajadhar began the gift exchange game after lunch. Below are some photos of the potluck and gift exchange game. This event was a lot of fun!



Lyn Christie



Jan Kalshoven



Gene Lehr





Bette Deller



Julie Hajek & Son, Jimmy



Pastor Na



Chris Ham



Josie Kalshoven



Keisun Na



Laura Kalshoven



Kelly Christie and Pastor Na



Julie and Jimmy with Lydia Kalshoven

**Christmas Eve Worship Services** – On Sunday, December 24, 2024, we had a beautiful candlelight service of worship at 7:00 pm. Red jar candles were lit in each of the six sanctuary windows, and members sang the Christmas carol entitled “Silent Night” while holding small white candles as they entered the sanctuary. The altar was adorned with gorgeous red poinsettias, and a beautiful floral bouquet. The Christmas tree in the foyer was also beautiful with its white lights and gold and white ornaments. There were nativity scenes on the floor in front of the altar and on a table in the foyer. The church looked wonderful for the celebration of Christ’s birth! The choir sang a special Christmas anthem entitled “A Star Dances and Angel Sings” adding beauty to the service. Jean Opeka served as Assisting Minister and Bette Deller as Lector. Pastor Na’s sermon was entitled “God’s Chosen.” After the service, Annie Gajadhar provided egg nog and cookies to toast the event and the season. It was a lovely evening!





- Bette Deller



## COUNCIL REPORT

**September** – The September meeting was held on September 15<sup>th</sup>. Pastor Na thanked the fellowship committee for the pizza and ice cream party held on July 28<sup>th</sup>. He also thanked Bette Deller for decorating the coffee room table as the months and seasons change. He announced that we will no longer have ushers but will have greeters to hand out bulletins and greet worshippers as they arrive. Pastor Na also announced that Bible study classes began on Wednesday, September 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 on Zoom, and that he was excited to be teaching a new member in person who is brand new to Christianity. He asked us to pray for her. Pastor Na also reported that he ordered some new confirmation materials and Bibles. The planning of a memorial service for Anna Graeber is still ongoing. It will wait until her affairs are settled and Anna's sister and niece can be in town. President Annie Gajadhar will contact Ann LaVigna about updating the church directory. Jan Kalshoven will contact the condo management about the pest infestation noticed of late.



**October** – The October meeting was held on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Pastor Na reported that the Oktoberfest held on October 13<sup>th</sup> was a lot of fun. The cooking was delicious and Annie Gajadhar's surprise gifts to everyone were very much appreciated. Pastor announced that the building maintenance crew would conduct a checkup in November. Jan Kalshoven spoke to the broker/owner of the condo to see if he could do something about the pest infestation. We have no further word about that and no word from Ann LaVigna about updating our church directory. We received donation forms from Gifts of Hope. Laura Kalshoven will process these forms. Bette Deller will contact the Maryland Food Bank about reactivating our virtual food drive site for November. Annie Gajadhar spoke to Karen Coakley of the Beltsville Women's Club about Thanksgiving and Christmas donations. They would like gift cards to Aldi's by November 18<sup>th</sup> for Thanksgiving and toys or gift cards for Christmas by December 11<sup>th</sup>. Laura Kalshoven and her family will be away on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Anne Gardner will be the organist on that day.

**November** – The November meeting was held on November 24<sup>th</sup>. Pastor Na thanked the membership for their commitment, love, and sacrifice to our church, and claimed that he could not do anything without our devotion. He also commented that the Thanksgiving potluck was wonderful and thanked all who cooked for the event. The food was delicious, and everyone enjoyed the event very much. Pastor Na also thanked everyone for their participation for the Memorial Service for Anna Graeber. Laura Kalshoven commented that we had a bump in giving last month. Jan Kalshoven has not heard anything from the broker/owner of the condo association about the pest control issues. He will try to contact him again to follow up. Gifts of Hope forms are in the lobby and in the coffee room. Donations will be accepted during the first couple of weeks in December. Remember your donations to the Beltsville Women's Club. All current members of the church council will remain in office for the coming year.

**December** – There were no council meetings in December. The next meeting will be on January 12, 2025.

*Bette Deller*  
*Council Secretary*



## NEWS FROM THE PEWS

- **Jean & Matt Opeka** – The Opekas had a wonderful, and unexpected Thanksgiving Day this year. Ordinarily, our daughter-in-law does most of the cooking, and sets a very elaborate table – complete with place cards and decorations for the season. She had done all of that when Matt felt he was just too weak to go. So, what did they do?

They packed up everything, brought a folding table and set all the food on it, and the "movable feast" came to Matt! Since our two grandsons and wife were here for the occasion it was quite a memorable day. They did the same thing on Christmas Day, giving us two memorable days this holiday season. We thank the Lord for loving families who are here for us in our waning days.

- **Bette Deller** – Bette finally gave up her real estate career on October 1<sup>st</sup> of 2024 after being a realtor for 24 years. This was a



career that she began after retiring as elementary school teacher in 1999. Now she is fully retired! Life has become much simpler, and she finds herself stretched out on the sofa under a heated blanket watching TV much of the time. In November Bette celebrated Thanksgiving with



her daughter-in-law's extended family again, along with her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. She celebrated Christmas with her son, Steven, and grandson, Mitchell. They came to her home bringing a full turkey dinner for the three of them and stayed for about four hours. Bette's granddaughter, Brooke, was undergoing a delayed follow-up treatment following her surgery in August. Brooke was quarantined during her Christmas college break, so she and Bette's daughter-in-law, Denise, stayed at home this Christmas. I hope all of you had a very Merry Christmas and will have a happy, healthy New Year!

- **Ramesh Das – Christmas — A Magical Time Of The Year Or Is It?**

I remember vividly when I was young, at about the age of 6 or 7, that I could not wait for Christmas Day. I used to ask my mom constantly how long it would be before Santa comes or what we would say until Father Christmas comes. She used to laugh and say, "Don't be in such a hurry. He will get here when the time is right." I could not wait until Christmas to get my gifts and also sample the special foods my mom prepared. Her cake was out of this world.

Christmas Eve was unlike any other day. It was the evening when my siblings and I would accompany our parents to the nearby town. On that evening all the stores are opened extra hours and the main road is closed a few hours to allow families to walk in safety and enjoy the lighting and festivities and the roadside stalls selling a variety of foods and merchandise. It was a magical time for me and the friends I happen to meet along that stretch of road.

In later years, when I became a teenager and a member of the Lutheran Church, Christmas was even more special. Our church group went caroling in the village visiting every house along the road. It was a thrill seeing the welcoming smile on the faces of the family whether they were Christians or from other religions. Invariably we were served Christmas snacks and something to drink — like homemade ginger beer. This became a

Christmas Eve tradition with families waiting for our carol singing every year. The magic of Christmas was alive.

Then things changed in America, and somehow, that magical feeling was not as prominent. No caroling, neighbors were distant, and the weather was not very cooperative. Shopping for gifts became the primary goal with the TV and airways bombarding our ears with the number of days left until Christmas. What a travesty.

Where have all the people gone long time passing  
 Where have all the people gone long time ago  
 Where have all the people gone  
 Gone to Macy's everyone  
 When will we ever learn? When will we ever learn?

We need to put Christ back in Christmas and recreate that magic of Christmas. I have no one to blame but myself. I have to take responsibility for the things I let slip from my heart that are under my control. However I take solace from the fact that Christ himself said give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. So I consider shopping as giving to Caesar, but the love you give and get from sharing gifts Jesus would give his stamp of approval. The Lord tells us the essence of Life is Love, sweet Love, and the magic of Christmas is his unconditional gift of Love to us. Yes, let us make Christmas magical on Christmas Day, but let us make every day magical with shared love for family and friends and each other. May God bless us all.

- **Laura Kalshoven:** I found it interesting!

Happy New Year! Some MATH for 2025:

1. 2025 itself is a PERFECT square:  $45^2 = 2025$
  2. It is a product of two squares, namely:  $9^2 \times 5^2 = 2025$
  3. It is the sum of THREE squares, namely:  $40^2 + 20^2 + 5^2 = 2025$
  4. The last perfect square? 1936  
 $44^2 = \text{Year } 1936$
  5. It is the sum of the cubes of all the digits from 1 to 9:  
 $1^3 + 2^3 + 3^3 + 4^3 + 5^3 + 6^3 + 7^3 + 8^3 + 9^3 = 2025$
  6. It is also the squared sum of all the numbers from 1 to 9:  $(1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9)^2 = 2025$
- The year 2025 is MATHEMATICALLY remarkable.  
 Let's hope it is also remarkable on the human level!  
 Health, happiness, prosperity and peace for all!



## Trivia Corner



**January** - January is known for New Year's Day, symbolizing fresh starts and resolutions. It's a time for reflection and setting intentions for the year ahead. A favorite New Year's pastime across the globe is making a lot of noise and light—from fireworks to gunshots to church bells. January 1<sup>st</sup> is a federal holiday in the United States and Canada (as well as many countries worldwide). The general population has a day off, and schools and most businesses are closed. In Thailand, it was once tradition to fire guns to frighten off demons. In China, firecrackers routed the forces of darkness. In Denmark, they throw plates and glasses against each other's front doors to banish bad spirits. In Ecuador, it is tradition to burn the effigies of famous people to destroy bad "juju" from the past year and start fresh. In the early American colonies, the sound of pistol shots rang through the air. In the United States today, many watch the ball drop in New York's Times Square and shoot off fireworks. In other countries, many people wait for the church bells or the chimes of clock towers to ring out.



**February** - The second month of the year is probably the most notable for Valentine's Day. On Feb. 14, sweethearts of all ages will exchange cards, flowers, candy, and more lavish gifts in the name of St. Valentine. However, the root of our modern holiday is beautiful fiction. St. Valentine was no lover or patron of love. Valentine's Day, in fact, originated as a liturgical feast to celebrate the decapitation of a third-century Christian martyr, or perhaps two. So, how did we get from beheading to betrothing on Valentine's Day? According to legend, the priest signed a letter "from your Valentine" to his jailer's daughter, whom he had befriended and, by some accounts, healed from blindness. However, the true origin of the holiday is vague at best. Formal messages, or valentines, appeared in the 1500s, and by the late 1700s commercially printed cards were being used. The first commercial valentines in the United States were printed in the mid-1800s.



**March** - March has two birth flowers. March's birth flowers are delightful daffodils and charming jonquils. These flowers look alike. However they have different meanings. All jonquils are daffodils, but not all daffodils are jonquils! Daffodils represent rebirth and hope, while jonquils represent affection and love. Daffodils are believed to have been named after Narcissus, the son of the river god, Cephissus, from Greek mythology. Legend has it that Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection in the water. He was so entranced that he fell into the pool and drowned, with one daffodil blooming in his place of death.



**April** - April has two birth flowers. Both the daisy and the sweet pea are considered birth flowers for the month of April. The sweet pea is native to Sicily, southern Italy and the Aegean Islands. It signifies blissful pleasure, while daisies represent childhood innocence, loyalty, and purity. Daisies can be many colors, including yellow, white, orange, red, purple, and black.



April was the second month in an early Roman calendar but became the fourth month when the ancient Romans started using January as the first month. April is named for the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite. The name for the month of April originally came for Aprilis which means to open.

## SERVING IN WORSHIP

### JANUARY

		5 <sup>TH</sup>	12 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Ramesh Das	Steve McKisson
<b>Lector</b>		Steve McKisson	Ramesh Das

		19 <sup>TH</sup>	26 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Billy Clark	Jan Kalshoven
<b>Lector</b>		Jan Kalshoven	Billy Clark

### FEBRUARY

		2 <sup>ND</sup>	9 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Annie Gajadhar	Zally Thurairatnam
<b>Lector</b>		Zally Thurairatnam	Annie Gajadhar

		16 <sup>TH</sup>	23 <sup>RD</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Bette Deller	Jean Opeka
<b>Lector</b>		Jean Opeka	Bette Deller

### MARCH

		2 <sup>ND</sup>	9 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Ramesh Das	Steve McKisson
<b>Lector</b>		Steve McKisson	Ramesh Das

		16 <sup>TH</sup>	23 <sup>RD</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Billy Clark	Jan Kalshoven
<b>Lector</b>		Jan Kalshoven	Billy Clark

		30 <sup>TH</sup>	
<b>A-Minister</b>		Annie Gajadhar	
<b>Lector</b>		Zally Thurairatnam	

### APRIL

		6 <sup>TH</sup>	13 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Zally Thurairatnam	Bette Deller
<b>Lector</b>		Annie Gajadhar	Jean Opeka

		20 <sup>TH</sup>	27 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>A-Minister</b>		Jean Opeka	Ramesh Das
<b>Lector</b>		Bette Deller	Steve McKisson