

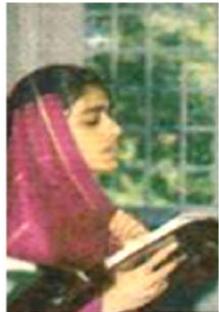
Greenwich Time

Flavor of India in town Church

By Donnette Dunbar Staff Writer

Once a month, the Samuel family takes a 2 ½ hour Sunday drive from their home in northeast Philadelphia to Greenwich. The family of four makes the trip to Christ Church of South India at the First Church of Round Hill in Greenwich to share the gospel and fellowship with friends and relatives from their homeland. "We love the pastor," said Raju Samuel a college nursing instructor who made a special trip for Mother's Day. "The pastor is very good and gives a good message. It takes us about 2 ½ hour to get here and even though we aren't members anymore, we still like to come." The Samuels join a congregation

of about 12 families from Fairfield and Westchester counties that worship every Sunday at the backcountry church. The 1 ½ hour service is conducted in

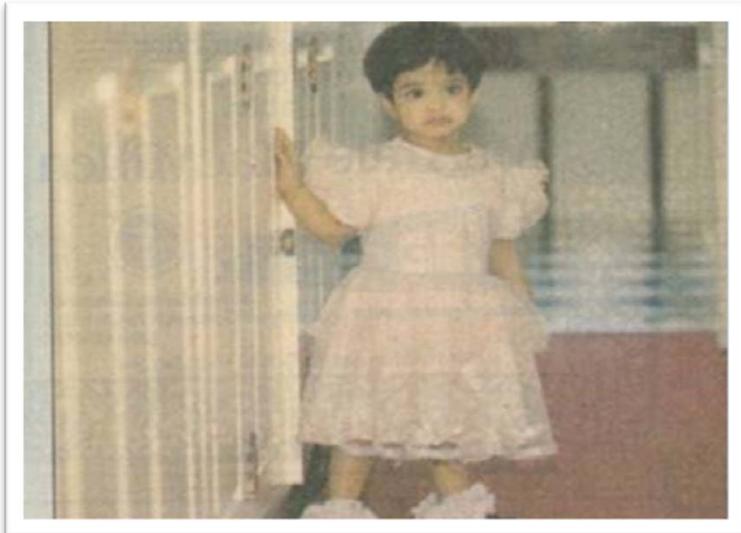


Malayalam, the language of the people who live on the southwest coast of India.

John Abraham, 42, and his family of four began attending the church a few months ago. "I enjoy our Malayalam congregation," said Abraham, an accounting clerk for Union Carbide who lives in Danbury. "I enjoy worshiping in our own language and the fellowship with my own people." The congregation originally worshiped at the Christ Church of South India in Tenafly, N.J., but many of its members from



Connecticut and New York found the weekly trips too long. "Some people were traveling 70 miles one way to make the service," said the Rev. John Williams, pastor of the small Greenwich church. "We decided to search for a church that was more convenient for those of us living in New York ruled Connecticut. The First Church Please turn to CHURCH. Page A4



Clockwise from above:
Members of the congregation of Christ Church of South India receive communion at the First Church of Round Hill ; Amy Kuruvilla, 20 months, roams the aisles during the service; and SuJa Williams sings.
Gregg Matthews

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of Round Hill graciously agreed to let us have our service after theirs,"The weekly interdenominational service at the First Church of Round Hills ends at 11 a.m., giving both congregations time to shuffle folks in and out of the building.

"There s no conflict at all," Williams said. "They are very happy 'to have us and we are always invited to take part in their service and they have taken part in our service as well."The congregations held a joint service last year in celebration of World Communion Sunday, according to the Rev. Heather Hopkins, associate minister at the Round Hill church.

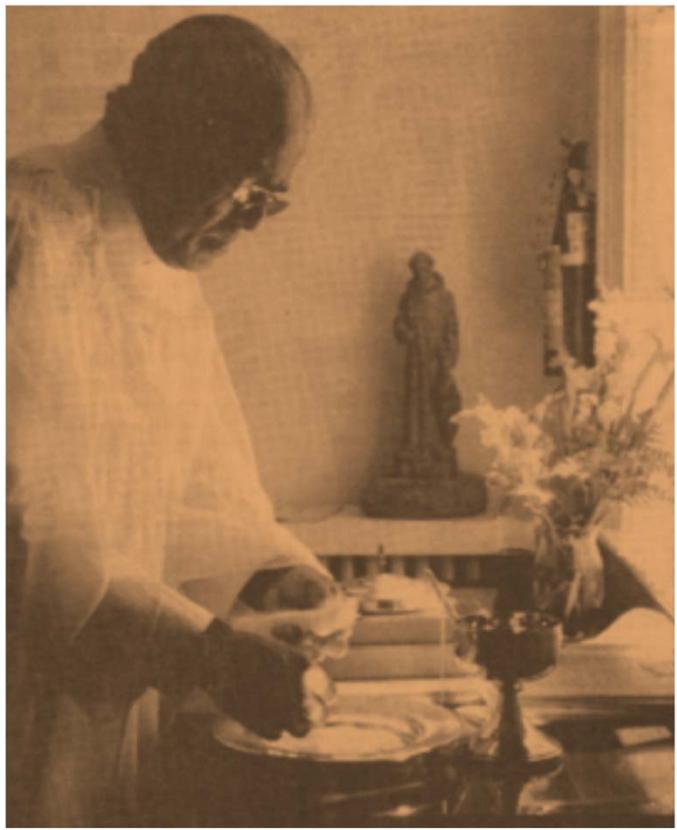
"We have a very happy relationship," Hopkins said. "This spring they participated in an Earth Day workshop that we had. Things are really going well,"The Christ Church of South India pays the First Church of Round Hill a maintenance fee of \$200 a month for the use of the church, said Williams, an auditor who lives in Danbury.

The congregants, who celebrated their one-year anniversary at the Round Hill church in April, are mostly white-collar workers, with the majority hailing from the state of Kerala on India's Malabar Coast.

The Church of South India was formed in 1947, through a merger of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalist, Methodists and Baptists in India and the countries then known as Burma and Ceylon. Other groups joined later and the church now has 21 dioceses worldwide and a membership of 1 ½ million, Williams said. In the United States, the church has congregations in Boston, Dallas and Chicago with the largest a congregation of about 350 members in Queens, NY.

On Mother's Day Sunday at 11:30 am., the Indian families filed silently into the 167-year-old white clap- board building at the corner of Round Hill Road and John Street. The women came dressed in traditional garb - brightly colored chiffon or cotton sarongs and stoles. And the men were dapper in their black or blue suits while the little girls wore frilly frocks and the boys were smartly suited in crisp shirts, slacks and ties.

Hymns and Bible passages were read in their native language and an emotional sermon by Williams was also delivered in Malayalam. During the service, Williams honored the mothers in the congregation with a special prayer. "Mothers are the core of the family," he in Malayalam "It is their responsibility to teach the children the ways of Christ.



The Rev. John Williams of Christ of South India breaks the bread for communion. Below Tobim Kovoov,4, peeks from a pew

"I enjoy our Malayalam congregation. I enjoy worshipping in our own language and the fellowship with my own people."

John Abraham
Christ Church of South India member



Many aspects of the service are similar to the American tradition, The group sings and reads Bible passages for a half-hour before the sermon is given and they have communion three times every months. But there a few difference Men and women take communion separately. And once a month, when there is no communion service, the church has a testimonial segment where members tell how God has blessed their lives. Toward the end of each the members greet each other with "Kiss of peace." This is done by interlocking the palm of one's band with another person's hand. "It is our special way of saying:hello to each other," said Williams after the service.