



New Zealand Thirumurugan Temple Society

MURUGAN THUNAI

President's Report – 27 September 2020

Dear Thirumurugan Devotees,

“Vanakkam” and a very warm welcome to you all. With the grace of the Almighty, it is my pleasure to present to members the annual report for the year 2019– 2020. The purpose of this report is to highlight and reflect on the activities of the year, celebrate our successes and to acknowledge the contributions of all our devotees.

Our Management Committee sincerely and wholeheartedly thank you all for your kind presence this morning at our Annual General Meeting (AGM). We are entering our 21st year since starting the journey to build a permanent abode for our Lord Thirumurugan. This has only been achieved because all of you and many others not here today, made it happen through your significant contributions financially, physically and in numerous other ways. We humbly request you to continue your support for the further growth of our much-treasured temple.

Covid 19

It has been an extra-ordinary year for all of us. COVID-19 has presented us an enormous global challenge that has required levels of intervention on a scale that is unprecedented. It has emerged as a novel virus to which humans had no immunity, it spreads exponentially, carries a high mortality and can overwhelm the capacity of health services. Effects of this virus worldwide has been significant affecting thousands of lives, jobs, businesses and leaving huge social consequences. We are fortunate to be living in a country that has world class health systems and authorities willing to work in conjunction with health experts.

Covid-19 has had significant impact of our temple operations. As you are all aware, our temple was fully closed for 68 days during the first lock-down.

Timeline of Temple Activity during First Lockdown

- 21 March - 24 March 2020 – Temple operation was then level 2 limit of 100 devotees
- 25 March 2020 – Temple closed in level 4
- 26 March 2020 – Commenced Facebook live stream of evening poojas on all days and morning poojas on Tuesdays and Fridays
- 14 April 2020 – Saravari Tamil New Year Pooja special abishegam and Pooja was held to dedicate to the wellbeing of all communities in New Zealand and overseas. Facebook live stream of this event
- 29 May 2020 – Temple re-opened every evening and also in the mornings on all days except for Monday, Wednesday & Thursday with level 2 limit of 100 devotees
- 09 June 2020 - Temple returned to Normal Operations

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you for your understanding, support and patience. It was an unprecedented experience for all of us and we thank the Almighty for blessing and guiding us through this challenging period.

We also would like to thank and acknowledge our wonderful Kurukkals Mayuran Iyah & Ratha Iyah for their tremendous dedication and commitment to the temple and the devotees, particularly during the lock-down period.

Covid-19 has had significant negative impact on the Temple's finances. Although we have been able to claim certain eligible Government assistances, they have only partially cushioned the impact from the lock-down. The committee is acutely aware that this will be a challenge for some time in the future and your on-going support would be greatly appreciated.



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Minor Improvement Works

We have carried the following minor improvement works during the last 12 months:

1. Installation of TV and Camera in order for the devotees to watch poojas from various positions in the temple during big festivals
2. Modification of Vasantha Mandabam and installation of electronic curtain
3. Shoe racks for the convenience of devotees
4. Installation of additional safety cameras to strengthen our security

Project 145 Update

When the building consent for "Project 145" was obtained in late 2013/early 2014, it included three major aspects:

1. Temple Development
2. Community Hall Development
3. Rajakopuram Construction

Temple Development has been completed fully. It has been decided to defer the construction of Rajakopuram for further discussions. While the community hall development has been completed to a large extent and used well by the Thirumurugan community, it is our belief that the full completion of the development will enable the society to realise the full potential of the investment considering the perspectives of both financial and non-financial benefits.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, we have temporarily shelved this project. Our funding strategy to complete this project is based on the assumption of not adding to our borrowing. It is based on doing our own series of fund-raising activities, applying for grants and sponsorship by the community. We look forward to your generous support to complete our collective dream in the not too distant future. We have also completed our detailed operational plans for the on-going use of the facilities.

Maha Utsavam (Annual Thiruvizha)-2020

This year our Annual Thiruvizha (Maha Utsavam) was celebrated during January/February with devotees from all suburbs taking part. It was very pleasing to note that the number of patrons sponsoring the festivals increased this year. Overall, 273 families and 25 youth took the opportunity to sponsor the daily festivals and poongavanam respectively. We believe the opportunity for more devotees to participate could be further increased next year with all your support and network. As in the last five years, we were grateful to have the services of renowned Nathaswaram & Thavil artists, enhancing the vibration of the festivals with their divine music.

We look forward to next year's Mahotsavam that is scheduled to commence on 22 January 2021 and concluding on 01 February 2021.

Pooja Initiatives

Recently conducted a **SHRI RUDRA HOMAM** - a powerful homam and chanting for the very first time. The purpose of the event was to pay homage to the Almighty for keeping our country and our community safe from the pandemic and seek His blessings. Large number of devotees participated in the vent that is believed to offer benefits to individuals and communities alike.

SHRI VISHNU SAHASRANAMA PARAYANAM on First Saturday of every month - This pooja encompasses the chanting of 1000 names of Lord Vishnu which is said to evoke goodness in devotees' lives.



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Priests

Our priests are central to our success and on-going progress. We are blessed to have as our Chief Priest, Mayuranathan Kurukkāl, someone with deep knowledge of Hindu rituals and traditions conducting his services at the highest standard. He takes pride in innovation and perfection in his planning, preparation and performance of his role with high level of energy and enthusiasm. The colorful "Alangarams" (decorations) of deities during special festivals is second to none. His has precise time management in sometimes challenging environment.

We are also truly fortunate to have someone in the calibre of Rathakrishnasarma Kurukkal with us. In the short time of one year he has been with us, Rathakrishna Kurukkal has captured the hearts of all devotees with his deep knowledge of Hinduism, his ability to work harmoniously and pro-actively with the Chief Priest and his inter-personal relationships with the devotees. His short speeches of various topics on Fridays and special days are valuable and informative. He also contributes to our temple weekly radio programme.

We also would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank Venkatrama Iyer for giving remarkable moral and physical support to both Priests. We also would like to thank both Balachandran Iyas, Jega Iya and Nada Iya for their support and assistance through the year.

Fund Raising Activities

Food Parcel Distribution

From a humble start in year 2000 doing less than 300 parcels, this important fund-raising initiative of the temple has exceeded our expectations and has now grown to more than 900 parcels. The planning, cooking, logistics and various other activities involved have made this a phenomenal achievement by our wider temple community. We sincerely thank all volunteers who support our quarterly food parcel fund raising activities with order taking, donations, purchasing of ingredients, frying eggplant, cooking, packing, delivering, cleaning and of course purchasing the food parcels. We had to cancel one of our food parcel fund-raising activity due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Deepavali Food Festival

Deepavali Food Festival is an annual event which has been running for the past six years. This popular event has had great participation from the wider community, enjoying the delicious food, entertainment and the friendly atmosphere. The management committee takes this opportunity to thank the chief organizer, all sponsors, volunteers, music teachers and all participants who make this function a very enjoyable one for everyone, while of course generating much needed funds for the temple society.

Cultural Programmes

We have three cultural-entertainment-fund raising events in the Temple's annual calendar – "Pannum Bharathamum", "Muthucharam" and "Innisai Thendral". These events are presented by our community for our community. These programmes, while they help to promote our culture and engage our youth with the temple are also essential parts of our fund-raising and financial plans. Unfortunately, due to the Covid Pandemic, we have been forced to cancel these cultural programmes. Naturally, these cancellations have impacted our finances.

Educational & Welfare

Hinduism, Pannisai and Vedic classes are held every Sunday. These classes are well attended. The weekly radio broadcast is used as a medium for educational purposes as well as updating the community on temple activities. Friday speeches are going very well. The topics young and adult speakers deliver are very informative and promote values

Youth Participation

The contributions our youth are making by participating regularly in the temple devotional singing, the various dramas and musical programs they have been taking part in, such as Pannum Parathamum, Muthucharam, and Innisai Thendral are commendable. It must be recognised here that cultural activities such as music, dance, etc have been designed to confer health and happiness on youth. Physical fitness and mental health are equally



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important. Three unique benefits can be derived from these activities- team spirit, mutual understanding and joy. Hence cultural activities and music should be encouraged for young and adult youth. Youth will always continue to remain a priority for us. This is an area of challenge and opportunity. We are in process of working with youth to provide an environment where youth will have the opportunity to incorporate a value-based education and lifestyle into their fast-paced lives. We have revamped our Navarathiri Programme by including dance programme as well.

Communication

Regular communication with the members and community is vital for any organisation. We share this view strongly and place a lot of emphasis on keeping on everyone informed. We have many forms of communication with the members and the wider community. They include emails, web-site, radio, face book, Temple TV screen, announcements, and notices and so on. We continue to provide all our e-mail communication in timely manner in the past twelve months. We also continue to publish our quarterly newsletter. We are delighted to inform you that our revamped website (<https://nzmurugan.org.nz/>) went LIVE on 24 July 2020 featuring more information and convenience for the devotees.

Health & Safety

There is a concerted effort to enhance the overall Health & Safety standards of the temple. Health & Safety is everyone's responsibility, so your support and co-operation are vital. Our Health and Safety policies primarily focuses on the following:

- Employees (Priests) Health & Safety
- Physical Hazard Management
- Operational (Festival) Activity Based Hazard
- Emergency Planning & Response
- Food Hygiene
- Control of Hazardous Substances
- Electrical Installation & Equipment
- First Aid & Medical Emergency response
- Incident Management
- Building Safety & Security

Over the past three years, we have worked hard to ensure that devotees have a safe and healthy environment. We have area wardens on Fridays and Special Pooja days. There is a doctor on duty for all special functions.

During operating of our temple in level 2, we followed all health & safety procedures to ensure well-being of the Priests, devotees and volunteers.

Regular Financial Donors

With a large outstanding building loan of around \$1.0m, we have significant monthly mortgage commitment. These commitments have been met through the kind generosity of regular payments by many members and devotees. We do however have a large shortfall between the donations received and our monthly commitment. We would greatly appreciate if more members and devotees come forward to join the regular contribution scheme. The temple bank account details to set up your regular payments are: New Zealand Thirumurugan Temple Society Inc. - **12-3077-0455971-00**

There is no minimum amount that one can contribute. Every dollar will count towards helping the temple. If you wish to discuss further about any financial matters, please feel free to speak to the treasurer or other Finance Committee members. Please note that as a registered charitable organisation, all donations made to the Society are eligible for a tax credit at applicable (presently 33.3% for individuals and tax-deductible expense for companies and partnerships) rates.



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One-Off Appeal

We are very grateful to those devotees who have continued their sponsorship of festivals and other services offered by the temple even during the lock-down. We are also thankful to devotees who made spontaneous donations during the lock-down period. While this helped to reduce the impact, it was the cancellation of fund-raising events that have had the greatest negative impact on our finances. In order to avoid further borrowing from the bank to bridge this gap, we made a special appeal for donations. We sincerely thank for devotees who responded to this one-off appeal.

Appreciation & Acknowledgement

Our Management Committee would like to appreciate and acknowledge some of our devotees for their great support and enormous contribution to the temple activities:

- Our Patron for his valuable advice, encouragement and guidance
- The Governing Board for their vision and direction
- Our Priests for their commitment to excellence in conducting the poojas and festivals at the highest standard
- All members for renewing their membership annually and supporting the core temple society
- Our Honorary Auditor for his auditing services and recommendations.
- The regular financial donors without whose support we will not be able to meet our on-going regular costs and build towards the future.
- All regular donors who contribute towards the servicing of the temple building loan.
- Devotees who contributed to the modification of Vasanthamandabam and automatic curtain during the year
- Devotees who contributed the camera and TV during the year
- All donors who have supported the temple capital project so generously over the years
- The volunteers who commit their time on a regular basis to look after the reception area and help with the pooja proceedings.
- The volunteers who look after the weekly library system.
- The volunteers taking responsibility for ongoing maintenance, regular cleaning after poojas and "siramathanam" days.
- The volunteers who make garlands for the temple every week.
- The volunteers who regularly help with sewing of clothes and other requirements.
- The sponsors and volunteers who provide meals after poojas
- The Thirumurugan Poongavana Team who take care of the temple garden
- The volunteers who regularly wash and iron the Deity materials.
- The volunteers who clean brass items.
- The annual "thiruvizha" co-coordinators for their energy and commitment
- Those members who provide material for our weekly radio programme and help to present them.
- Health & Safety representatives, area wardens and duty doctors
- Volunteers who carried out stock taking
- Volunteers who prepare Annual Calendar
- Pannisai, Hinduism and Vedic Teachers
- The music teachers, students and parents for their contribution at every Friday and at other special festivals.
- The volunteers organise Friday speeches and devotees and children who deliver speeches
- The youth for their contribution in temple help, fund raising and other requirements.
- Those members, in particular the youth who take an active part in helping at major festivals and events.
- Those members who help regularly with video and photography at temple events.
- Those members who help us with maintaining our web site, social media updates, audio-visual updates and email communication.



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- The devotee who tirelessly help our priests, booking of Poojas and reminding sponsors
- The devotee who maintain our temple to high standard keeping tidy and clean
- The devotee who purchases all Pooja materials and other consumables for weekly use and various functions and also organise flowers for garlands
- The devotee who is behind the new pooja initiatives.
- The two dedicated young devotees who have been fully instrumental for revamping our website despite their busy work life.
- The community as a whole for the remarkable, steadfast, continuous support at all times

I may have missed out on thanking some of you in this report. Overall, we would not have achieved these tasks without the support from you financially and physically.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the support of the entire management committee over the last twelve months. I would also like to thank the past presidents for their valuable advice and support.

It is very pleasing that we have come a long way to have a temple in Auckland to perform our prayers and celebrate all important festivals. With the provision of new facilities, one could see an increase in public participation in our temple with more and more new people attending.

This journey we cannot make alone as a committee, but it is through your support, encouragement and constructive suggestion for improvement that we shall do together for the benefit of our great temple.

I hope that everyone continues to keep in good health and that we will all get through this extraordinary period in our lives.

May Lord Murugan's blessings be with all our devotees.

Manoharan Subramaniam

President

The New Zealand Thirumurugan Temple Society

Auckland

