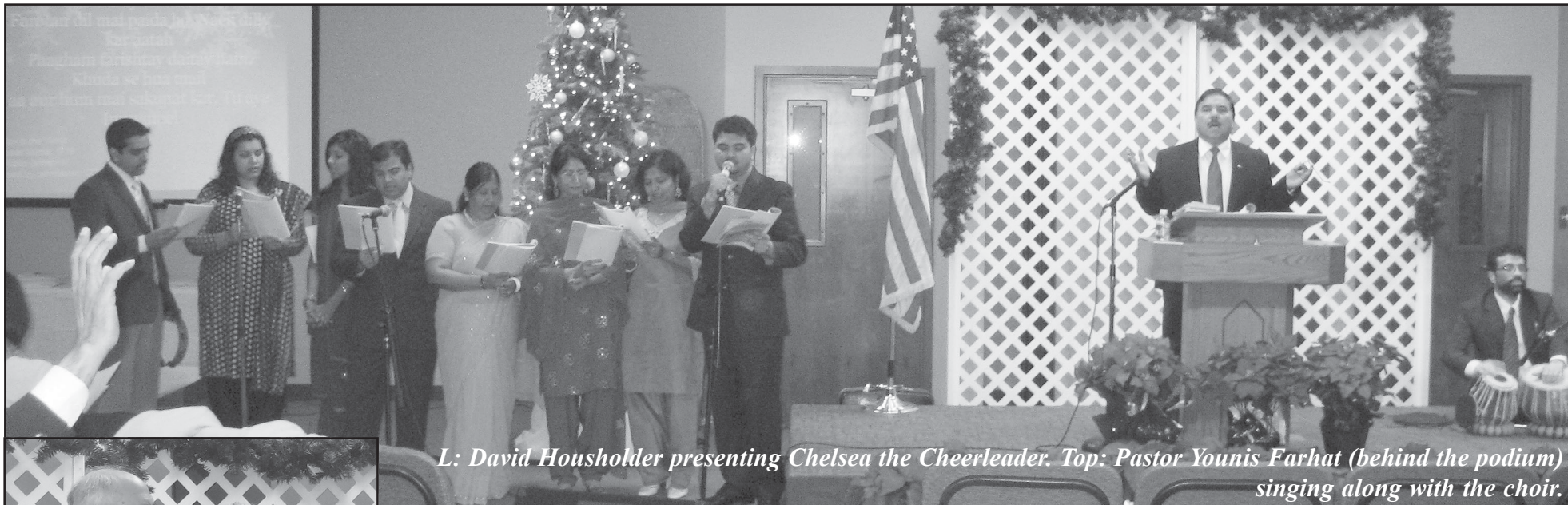


Message Of Hope At FAIBC Christmas Celebrations



L: David Housholder presenting Chelsea the Cheerleader. Top: Pastor Younis Farhat (behind the podium) singing along with the choir.

BY VEENA RAO

Atlanta: The First Asian Indian Baptist Church of Metro Atlanta celebrated Christmas with great music, an entertaining puppet show, an inspirational message of hope for the world, and delicious food. The event was held on December 25th, Christmas day, at the Piedmont Baptist Church premises in Marietta.

The attendees at the event represented a cross-section of the Atlanta Indian and Pakistani communities, making this a truly multi-cultural event. This was the 17th year of celebrations for the church.

The highlight of the event was Dr. David Housholder's puppet act with 'Chelsea the Che-

rubic Cheerleader'. With witty back and forth with his puppet cheerleader, the skillful ventriloquist shared the true message of Christmas with the congregation. Housholder is the author of 'Sharing Christ with Tibetan Peoples in Diaspora'; and a missionary and educator. He has lived in India, Nepal and Thailand for over 20 years, where he worked amongst Tibetan Buddhist people.

"We are living in troubled times," said Senior Pastor Rev. Younis Farhat, in his message. "There's conflict everywhere, and more so where we come from. But, in the middle of such conflict, people are celebrating Christmas." That's because this joyous day provides us with hope that things will get better. "Christmas offers us hope, peace and

love," he said.

The celebrations included some fine gospel music in English, Urdu and Punjabi led by Rev. Johnson Macdonal, who also sung several songs from his album "Cheeday Haath". Dr. Lakshmi Rao sang a gospel song in Hindi. Children participated in singing joyous praises to the Lord.

An audio-visual presentation, "A Christmas Story", presented by Sharoon Farhat enlightened those present, especially young children about the story of Jesus Christ's birth and life.

As always, the celebrations ended with a sumptuous lunch, and Santa's gifts for every child present.

Naila Mughal Regales Ghazal Lovers

Atlanta: Naila Mughal may not be as popular as Ghulam Ali, Jagjit Singh and likes in the USA, but in Pakistan she is a rising star and gaining popularity as ghazal and pop singer. On Saturday January 2nd Naila came to Atlanta and enthralled over 200 hardcore admirers of ghazals at the Global Mall.

Naila Mughal started singing from an early age when she competed and won many musical performances at her school and college. She was trained first by Ustaad Wajid Ali Khan Sahib and later on by A. B. Kabeer. Naila started her professional career in 2004 and started singing for the TV. She performed for live TV shows, as playback singer for TV dramas and films. She is a very talented and versatile artist who can sing Hindi and Urdu ghazals, geets, pop songs, folk songs and bhangra-style songs. She is a gifted performer on the stage. She has travelled all over USA, Europe, and different countries of Asia for her music tours.

The show started a little bit late but once

started it continued into wee hours. While temperature outside was falling, the audience inside the hall was warming up listening to Naila's melodious and spellbound voice. They kept making requests after requests and Naila kept singing without getting tired or losing her voice.

Among many items of the night Naila sang famous ghazals *Mujh se paheli baar* of late Noorjehan, "*Ulfat ki Nayi manzil*" of Iqbal Bano and popular songs "*ghoongru tut gaye*" and "*Damadar Mast Kalandar*" of Runa Laila and "*Hoton se chhulo*" of Jagjit Singh. She also sang famous ghazals of Films Umrao Jaan and Pakeezah.

When Naila sang last song of the night "*Damadar mast kalandar*" just before 2 A.M. the audience was still awake and began thumping and dancing.

Naila was accompanied by famous Pakistani tabla player Umaid Hussain and keyboard specialist Saad Ali.

The program was organized by Mustafa Ajmeri.



Photo by Girish Modi

Taste Of Faith At Petite Auberge



Atlanta InterFaith Leaders Fellowship led by Ben Campbell Johnson, PhD, professor emeritus in Christian Spirituality at Columbia Theological Seminary, organized an inter-faith event, "A Taste of Faith" at the Petite Auberge restaurant off La Vista Road on December 6th. The objective of the event was to learn about each other's cultures and religions through food. Members of different religious groups presented their cuisine; the tables overflowing with an abundance of food. NRI Pulse food columnist Lakshmi Rao presented the popular vegetarian foods of the Hindus. Dr Ravi Sarma and his wife Dr Seshu Sarma; Dr. Srinivas Bhadriraju and his wife Sangeetha Bhadriraju pitched in to put together a delightful spread, although they could not be present at the event. Dr. P.V Rao, who is a veritable storehouse of knowledge on Hinduism and spirituality, was present to mingle with the guests, and support his wife Lakshmi.