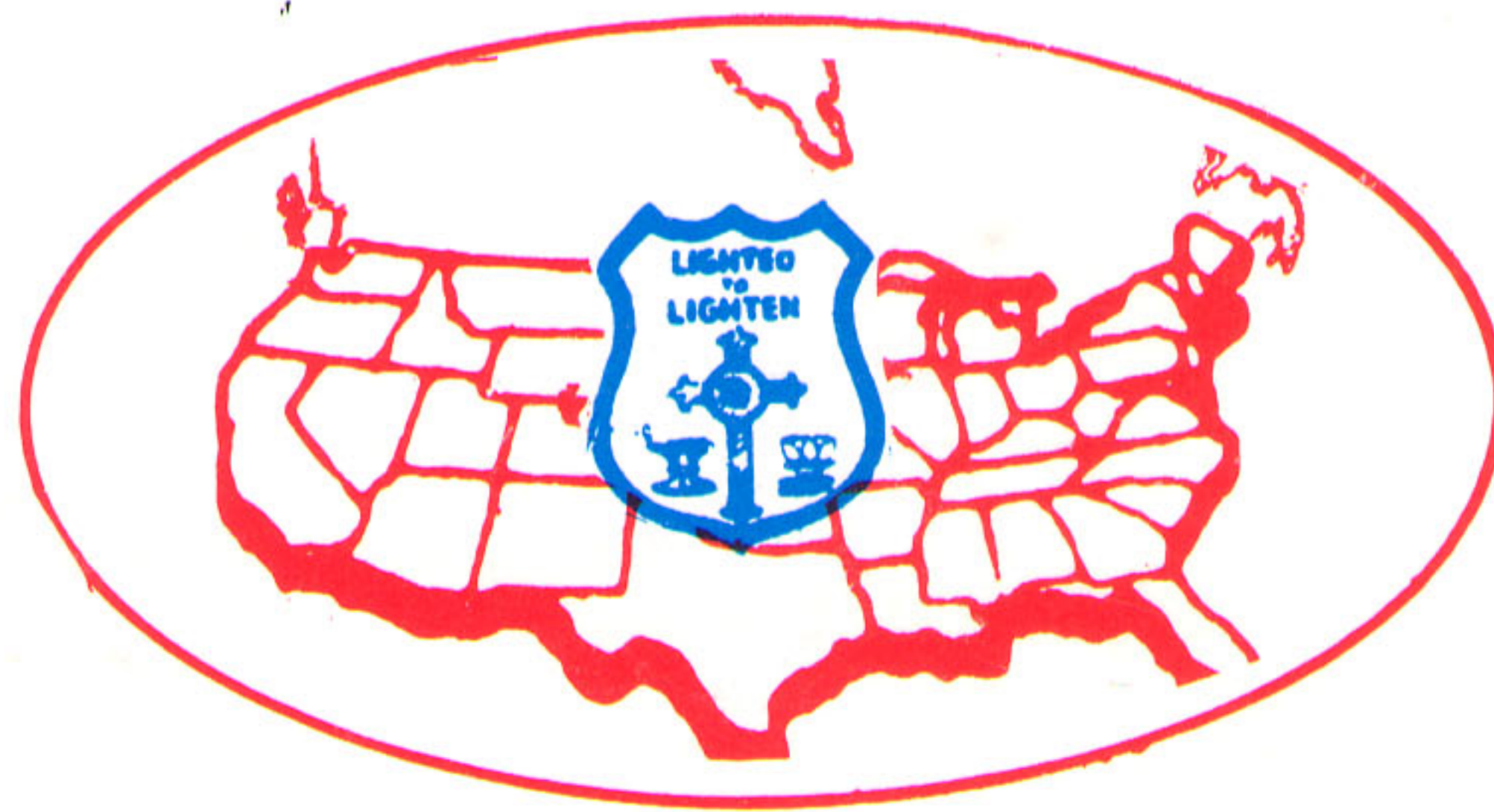


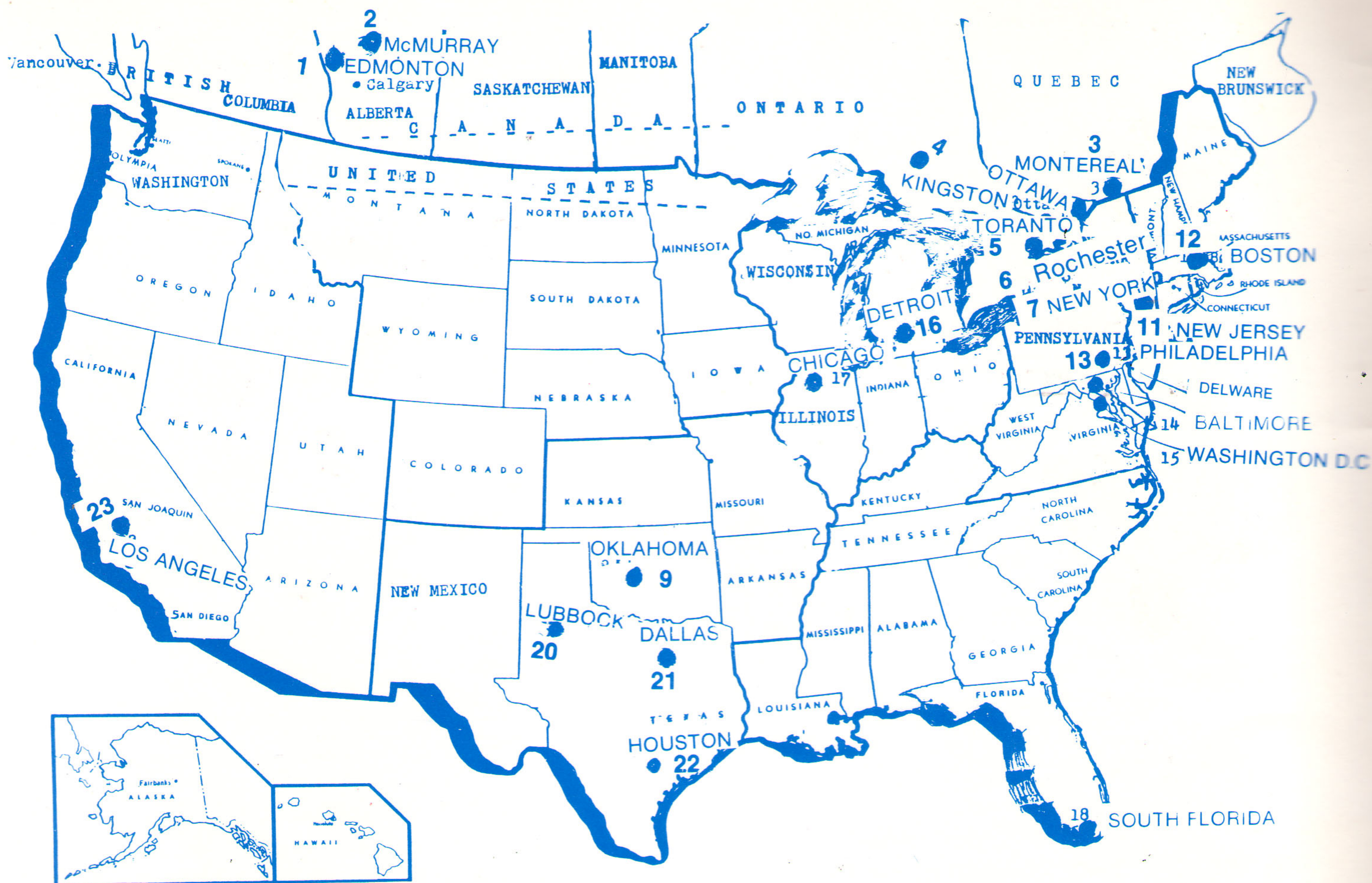
# MAR THOMA MESSENGER



MAR THOMA ZONAL COUNCIL OF THE  
MAR THOMA CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

INAUGURATION SOUVENEIR AUGUST 15 AND 16 1982





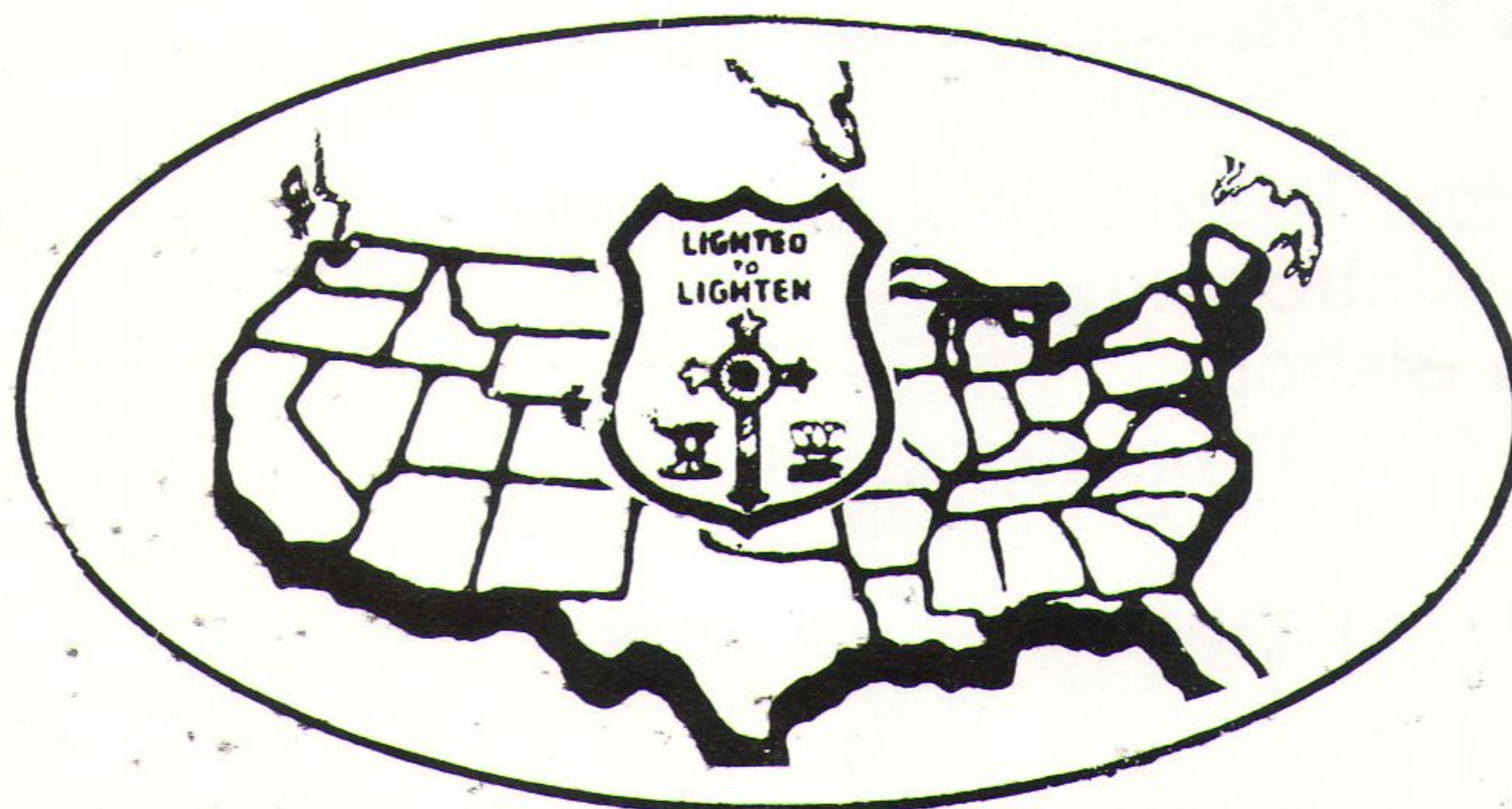
## CANADA

1. Mar Thoma Congregation, Edmonton.
2. Mar Thoma Congregation, Fort McMurray.
3. Mar Thoma Congregation, Montreal.
4. Mar Thoma Congregation, Ottawa, Kingston.
5. Mar Thoma Church, Toronto.

## UNITED STATES

6. Mar Thoma Congregation, Rochester, New York.
7. Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York.
8. St. Andrews Mar Thoma Congregation, New York.
9. St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York.
10. The Mar Thoma Church, Staten Island, New York.
11. The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey.
12. Mar Thoma Congregation, Boston.
13. Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia.
14. Mar Thoma Congregation, Baltimore.
15. Mar Thoma Congregation, Washington.
16. Mar Thoma Church, Detroit.
17. Mar Thoma Church, Chicago.
18. Mar Thoma Congregation, South Florida.
19. Mar Thoma Congregation, Oklahoma.
20. Mar Thoma Congregation, Lubbock.
21. Mar Thoma Church, Dallas.
22. Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston.
23. Mar Thoma Church, Los Angeles.





VOL — 1  
NO - 1

DECEMBER 1982

## MAR THOMA MESSENGER

**Mar Thoma Messenger is published by the Mar Thoma Zonal Council of the Mar Thoma Church in North America.**

**This first issue is published as a Souvenir of the inauguration of the Council on August 15 and 16 at Philadelphia, by the Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan.**

**Editorial Committee:**

**The Rev. P.V. Thomas, Houston (Editor)  
The Rev. N.M. Cherian, New York.  
Dr. A.M. Alexander, Toronto.  
Mr. Cecil Mathews, New York.**

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The Editorial Committee invites articles and other literary contributions, reports and photographs of events in parishes, Sunday Schools, Youth fellowships, etc. for publication in the Mar Thoma Messenger.



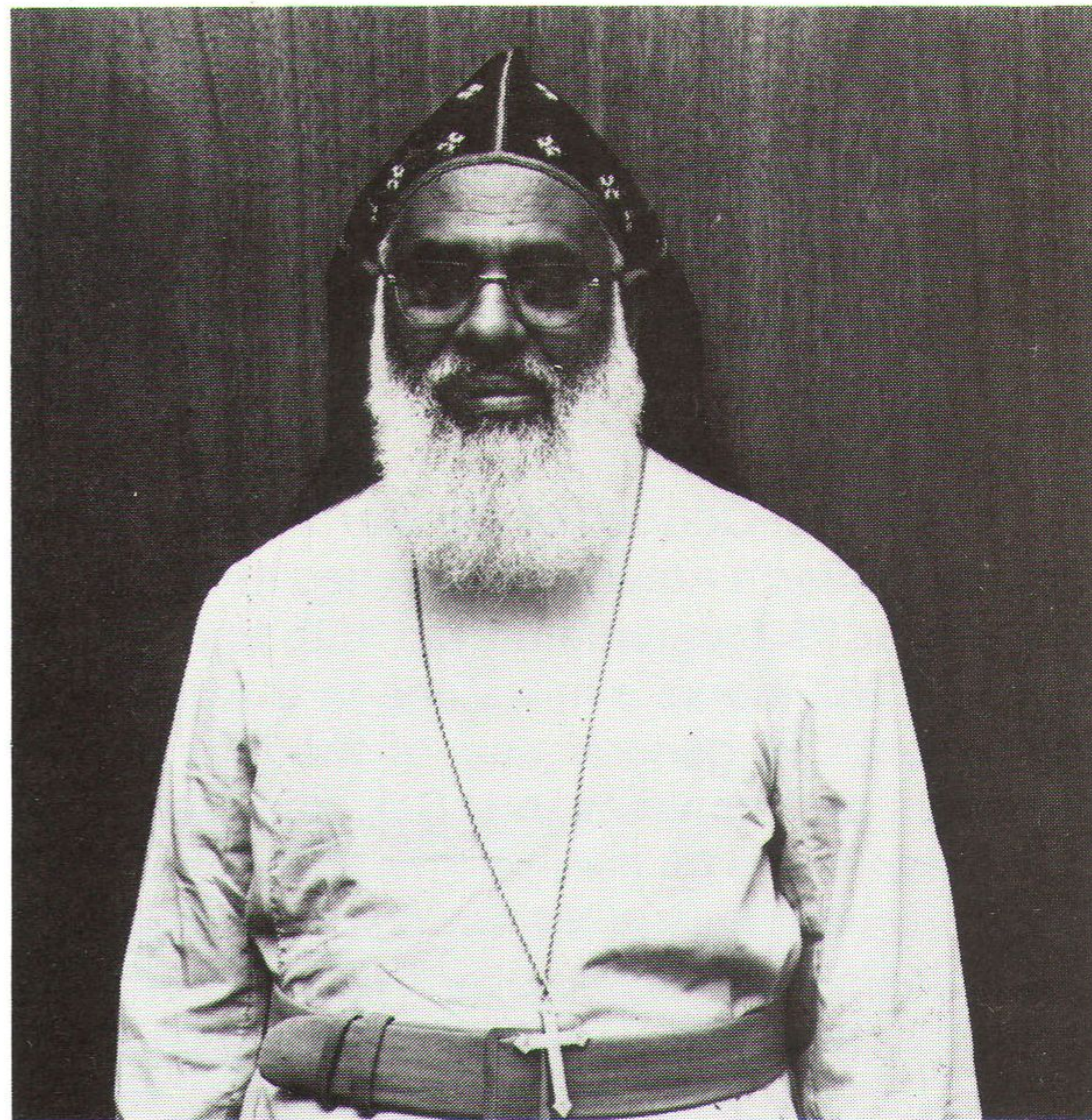
**Mar Thoma Zonal Council  
of the Mar Thoma Church  
in North America**

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Suffragan Metropolitan  
(Diocesan Bishop)
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2. Mr. V.P. Abraham, New York.



**FROM THE DIOCESAN BISHOP**  
**The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius**  
**Suffragan Metropolitan.**



The inauguration of the Zonal Council marks an important stage in the history of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. A few decades ago nobody could predict the formation of parishes and congregations of our Church in America. But significant, though unexpected, events have happened. And today we have about 1250 families and 23 worshipping centres enjoying the status of parishes or congregations. Constitutional provision for the Zonal Council is admittedly a recognition of both of the importance of this expansion and the need for pastoral ministrations. The new door that God has thus opened, for our people to make their homes permanent or semipermanent in this country brings in its train new challenges, different from those in India, yet concrete and real, for the fulfillment of Christian mission in this land. The challenge to mission brings the need for co-operation with sister Churches in this country. Viewed in this way, the Agreement between the Mar Thoma Church and the Episcopal Church is creatively meaningful and undoubtedly prophetic.

The Zonal Council in its first meeting has evinced a genuine concern for God-given mission not only in our motherland, but also in the country into which He has led us. No doubt, for mission to be effective, the life of the parishes must be well organised on a solid foundation taking into consideration loyalty to the traditions of our ancient Church and eagerness to live out the meaning of Christian life as individuals and parishes in the context of the demands of life in this country.

The attention of the Zonal Council was naturally drawn to the promotion of the well-being of individual parishes in close association with other parishes and the need for strengthening activities like Sunday School, Youth League, Women's Department etc. The Zonal Council has taken all the needed steps for strengthening these areas of Church life. I am particularly happy at the suggestion that these ideals be communicated to every member through the medium of a periodic publication with the name "Mar Thoma Messenger". I solicit the co-operation of every member of our Church in this new venture and pray that in the days to come, this effort may help to strengthen our Church and make it ever conscious of its calling.

Yours ever in Him,

Thomas Mar Athanasius

Bethel Aramana, Manganam P.O.  
Kottayam 686018, Kerala, India.  
Tel. 8420.

Camp: 167 Sunset Avenue, Staten Island,  
New York 10314

September 1, 1982



## EDITOR'S PAGE

Dear Friends,

The Zonal Council of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of North America which had its inaugural meeting at Philadelphia on the 15th and 16th of August 1982 marks a milestone in the annals of our Church in general and of the Mar Thoma members and parishes in U.S.A. and Canada in particular. It was for the first time that Aghens and lay representatives of the various congregations and parishes spread all over this vast continent had an opportunity to meet together as a Zonal Council. We thank God for the able leadership and guidance of the Diocesan Bishop His Lordship Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan which made this possible. It was indeed a memorable event. The deliberations and decisions covered a wide range of subjects and they have been conveyed to all the parishes through the circular kalpana of the Diocesan Bishop dated September 1, 1982. This council meeting in fact laid the foundation stone of a future diocese in this country.

Hereafter we are no longer isolated entities of small congregations and parishes which have nothing to do with each other; but parts of a larger whole, called and sent into a different cultural context to be the agents of recreation and renewal. The problems we are facing are more or less common to all of us. In an entirely different culture, how can we coming from a traditional life style and set of values live our lives meaningfully and fulfill our mission? Should we preserve our identity? What should be the plight of the second generation born or brought up in America? Should we not intelligently help our children to absorb what is good in this culture and thus to be sober and sound in their mental make-up? These are all our common concerns.

The publication of the Mar Thoma Messenger is aimed at giving encouragement to our people in parish life, to equip them for the church's mission, to provide a forum for mutual exchange of ideas and to bring the parishes in North America closer.

The church is a visible community of people scattered all over the world in various occupations. And it never ceases to be the church in its scattered state. It is the people of God. And this people, the laity of God, is a priesthood, set in the world and for the world. They are called to live a life not in seclusion, but within the ordinary life of the world. They are a holy nation living a life of "holy-worldliness". God's people are called to be a bridge between God and the world. They are

called to identify with others in lowly and costly service. They are also to speak with authority to the world it is called to serve.

The central importance of the church is its fellowship. It is the common life in Christ. We are incorporated into him. Fellowship is a visible reality; but unfortunately it is absent today in parishes. We are not inclined to share our lives at any basic level. And this is due to sin. The structure of our parishes is another reason why this is lacking. In smaller groups fellowship becomes a reality. There should be a concerted effort on our part to recapture this idea of fellowship in our congregations.

The church is the Servant People of God. At present it is an institution and its structure is like that. But service belongs to the very heart of our life together. It has to become a personal reality in the church. If the agony of Christ on the cross is real to us, let it be demonstrated in our lives. Let ours be the servant church.

The church is the witnessing community. The whole people of God are called to witness for Christ. Live the Gospel and be God's people in healing, reconciling, loving, forgiving, serving, believing, so that we can witness with power. It points out the need for Christian involvement in the world. "Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning". There is a real need to fulfill this mission.

And finally, the church is a worshipping community. It is a visible social entity. More than that it is the church of God, of Christ. It is a new creation of the Holy Spirit. And without its relationship to God, it is no longer the church. So worship of God must be at the heart of its life. But in this point the church is impoverished and weak. It lacks reality and is empty, formal, cold and meaningless. There is no vision of heaven, no power, no word of life. Do we worship God in spirit and truth? Is our worship realistic and related to actual life?

We want our members not only to read this publication but to contribute to these columns. Aghens are specially requested to send reports and news items of interest so that they can be published in these columns.

Rev. P.V. Thomas, Editor



# Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar



Headquarters: TIRUVALLA — 689101, KERALA, INDIA



*From left to right:*

Rt. Rev. Easow Mar Timotheos - *Madras-Kunnamkulam Diocese including Arabian Gulf*

Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Irenaeus - *Bombay-Delhi Diocese & Malayasia -Singapore Diocese*

Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius, Suffragan Metropolitan - *Kettayam-Ranni Diocese  
including U.K. & U.S.A. & Canada*

Most. Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma - METROPOLITAN — *Niranam-Maramen Diocese*

Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Suffragan Metropolitan - *Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese*

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October 15, 1982

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, I am pleased to send greetings and best wishes to all of you who are members of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar in North America through this first issue of the North American edition of the MAR THOMA MESSENGER which commemorates the inauguration of the Mar Thoma Zonal Council of the Mar Thoma Church in North America.

It was my privilege to be present for the inauguration of the Zonal Council this past August when the meeting was called to order in Philadelphia by the Right Reverend Thomas Mar Athanasius, Suffragan Metropolitan and bishop-in-charge of Mar Thoma parishes and congregations in North America.

We pray that the establishment of the Zonal Council will enable the development of Mar Thoma parishes and congregations in North America by providing opportunities for discussions of common concerns and mutual planning on ways in which the members of the church can be strengthened and nurtured for service in this new land where God has called you to be.

With the Agreement between the Mar Thoma Church and the Episcopal Church, we are entering a new chapter in the life of our two churches. Our unity in the body of Christ takes on a new reality for many of our people and helps us to see more clearly what it means to be partners in mission as members of Christ's body.

I look forward to working with members of the Mar Thoma Church in the days ahead as we try to be faithful to God's call to preach the good news of his great love for all in Creation and to share the gifts we have received from his great goodness.

With all good wishes, I remain

Faithfully yours,

(The Rev.) Winston W. Ching  
Officer for Asiamerica Ministry



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## GATHERING THE MARTHOMITES IN NORTH AMERICA

Christians from Kerala began to come to the North American continent in the 1950's mostly for educational purposes. Whenever a priest from Kerala was available, they met together for worship in Malayalam. In the 1960's, the number increased and according to the availability of priests who came for studies, Malayalam worship services became more frequent. During the 70's the immigration laws were relaxed and large

number of people began to immigrate to North America. Subsequently small prayer groups and congregations began to spring up in various parts of this continent. The visits of the Bishops of the Church and the clergy who came for studies from time to time, enthused the people to organise themselves as congregations belonging to the Mar Thoma Church, remaining loyal to the Church and supporting the needs of the Church.



THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

© CHRIS DEN BLAKER

In 1973, a group was organised in New York with members of the Mar Thoma and C.S.I. churches, to meet together once in a month for worship. As the number increased, in 1975, the Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York was organised. Subsequently, C.S.I. also formed their own congregation of the Madhya Kerala Diocese. The Number of immigrants increased rapidly. The Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York was divided into four separate parishes by the Kalpana of the Metropolitan in 1980. In Texas, both Dallas and Houston, the initial formation of congregation took place in 1974. Philadelphia and Los Angeles Churches have their beginnings in 1976 and Chicago in 1978. At present, (Dec. 1982) there are 23 parishes and congregations in North America -- 5 in Canada and 18 in U.S.A. constituting about 1,250 families. The style and demands of the life situation in the North American Continent bring a lot of pressure into our families. Competitive working conditions, fragmented family systems, sociological problems etc. make life very hectic in this part. Still the people are mostly active in church life. Regular worship services, cottage prayer meetings, Bible classes, annual conventions, retreats, picnics etc. are the highlights of activities in all congregations.



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The pioneer effort of bringing together the Mar Thoma congregations scattered all over North America, was made by the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, during his visit in 1981. A special conference of the clergy and the lay representatives of the Mar Thoma congregations in North America was held at the University of San Francisco from July 26 to 31, 1981. Six clergy and eleven lay members attended the conference. This was jointly sponsored by the Diocesan Bishop and the Episcopal Asiamerica Ministry. The conference made creative effort to study, discuss and clarify the issues arising out of the Agreement between the Mar Thoma and Episcopal Churches; to discuss and resolve common concerns and problems confronting the Mar Thoma congregations in North America and to design the structure of a Zonal Council for the congregations in North America to facilitate joint endeavours.

Subsequently in 1982, the Mar Thoma Zonal Council of the Mar Thoma Church in North America was formed. The Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan inaugurated the Zonal Council on August 15, 1982. The first meeting of the Council was held at the Philadelphia parish (Messiah Lutheran Church, 4400 N. Broad Street) on August 15 and 16, 1982. Out of the total 31 members, 26 attended the meeting. The discussions and deliberations of the Council were mainly centered on various aspects of church life, such as, worship, Sunday school, **Sunday school teachers' training programmes, youth work, students' conferences, women's auxiliary, lay training seminars, family conferences, church's mission, etc.** Detailed discussions on the Agreement with the Episcopal Church of U.S.A. and the implementation of the

concerns of the Agreement on the people's level, were also held, in the meeting. The council decided to have a periodical publication called 'Mar Thoma Messenger'. The first issue is published as a souvenir of the inauguration of the Council. The formation of the Council has brought together the Marthomites scattered all over North America and has mobilised church life by sharing, planning and co-ordinating. The function of the council is expected to bring an organised dynamic momentum to the congregations and parishes.

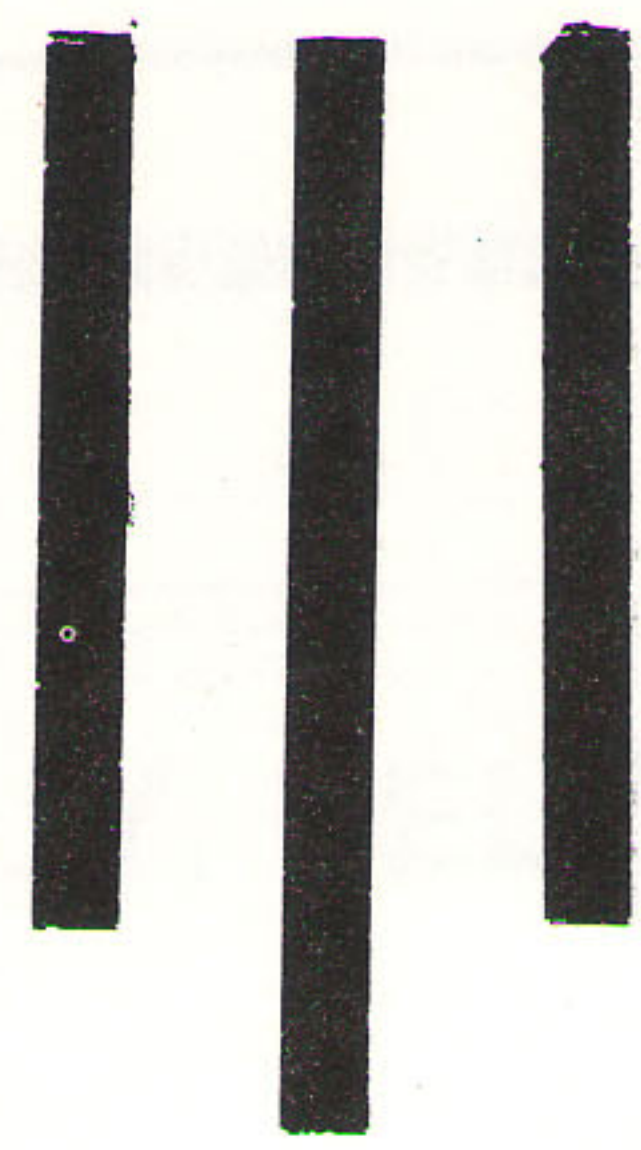
During the visits of the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, in 1981 and 1982, keen effort was taken to solve the problems in the parishes here and establish organisational solidarity. The parishes here are on the road to their growth and development. The growth of the Mar Thoma church here, in the midst of numerous churches and forms of religious movements, will depend on equipping the people to translate meaningfully the heritage of the Mar Thoma Church into the North American context. The Church's task is to lead the people to share the new life in Jesus, to personalise the confession of St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God" and to train them to follow the Master in the North American secular context of affluent materialism. The task ahead is to foster the congregations and parishes as loving, caring and sharing people of God, in true devotion to the Lord and loyalty to the Church, so that they will ever be energised for the fulfillment of the church's mission.

Rev. N.M. Cherian, New York  
(Secretary, Zonal Council)



THE ZONAL COUNCIL IN SESSION.





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## THE MAR THOMA CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

There are twenty three parishes and congregations in North America--five in Canada and eighteen in U.S.A.

The Canadian Mar Thoma Church, Toronto (Post Box No. 427 West Hill, Ontario, M1E 4Y9, Canada) was recognised as a parish, in September 1981. There are 85 families. Holy Communion services are conducted bimonthly and prayer meetings are conducted on other Sundays. Sunday School, Youth group, and Sevika Sanghom are functioning very actively. Vacation Bible School is conducted annually. The parishioners enjoy close fellowship with the Anglican Church of Canada. The Rev. George Jacob is the present Vicar.

The Alberta Mar Thoma Congregation, Canada: The first major event in the life of this Mar Thoma Congregation, was the visit of the Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan to Edmonton in the Spring of 1974. Since then, they gathered together every month as a prayer group. Regular worship services were begun in 1976. In September 1981, the prayer groups of the Marthomites in Edmonton and Calgary were together organised as a congregation. At present there are 41 families. Worship service is held once in a month and prayer meeting is conducted once in a month. The Rev. George Jacob is the vicar.

ALBERTA MAR THOMA CONGREGATION MEMBERS WITH THE DIOCESAN BISHOP - AUGUST 1982.



The Fort McMurray Mar Thoma Congregation, Canada. In 1980 the Edmonton prayer group expanded its fellowship to Fort McMurray, the oil town of Alberta, 300 miles north of Edmonton. On August 8, 1982, the ten families residing in Fort McMurray were organized into a Mar Thoma Congregation. Prayer meetings are held every weekend and worship is held once in a month. The Rev. George Jacob serves as the Vicar

The Ottawa-Kingston Mar Thoma Congregation, Canada has a membership of 16 families. This congregation was formed in September 1981. Prayer meetings are held every weekend and worship is conducted once in three months. The vicar is the Rev. George Jacob.

Montreal Mar Thoma Congregation, Canada was formed in September 1981, with a membership of 16 families. They meet together for prayer meetings every weekend and for worship once in three months. The members join for worship with the Anglican Church on other occasions. The Rev. George Jacob is the vicar.

The eighteen churches in U.S.A. are scattered all over. In the State of New York, there are three parishes and two congregations.

The Rochester Mar Thoma Congregation, New York, was formed in September 1981. There are six families in the congregation. Mar Thoma services are conducted once in four months. The Rev. George Jacob is the vicar.

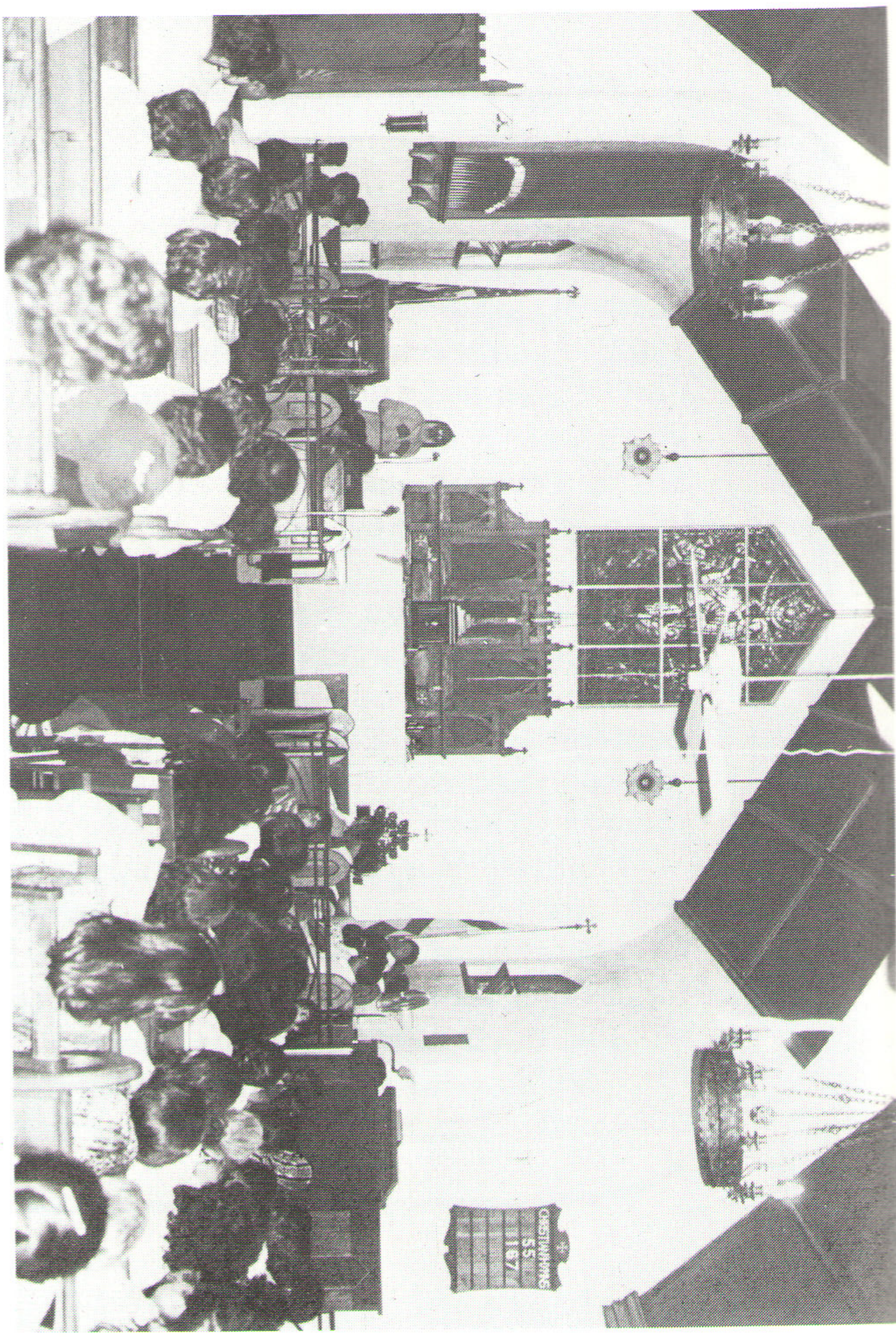
In 1975, in the city of New York, the Mar Thoma Congregation rapidly increased to about 350 families. In 1980, the Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York was divided into four separate parishes, three in New York and one in New Jersey, by a Kalpana of the Metropolitan.

The St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York was inaugurated in January 1981. There are





THE RT. REV. PAUL MOORE, BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF  
NEW YORK AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE ST. THOMAS PARISH



THE RT. REV. THOMAS MAR ATHANASIOS SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN  
INAUGURATING THE EPIPHANY PARISH

Photo Credit  
Chris Den Blaker



MEMBERS OF THE STATEN ISLAND PARISH SINGING  
CAROLS AT THE CHRISTMAS IN 1981.

Photo Credit  
Marcus Cherian



THE RT. REV. STUART WETMORE READING THE  
GOSPAL AT THE INAUGURATION SERVICE OF  
ST. ANDREWS CONGREGATION.



103 families in the parish and they meet at the Synod Hall of the Episcopal Church (1047 Amsterdam Ave., NY 10025) for worship. Sunday School is held regularly. Prayer meetings are held in different areas. Youth Fellowship and Sevika Sanghom are organised in the parish. Vacation Bible School, Retreat, convention, picnic, parish day celebration etc. are annual events of the parish. Rev. N.M. Cherian and Rev. T. Jacob Thomas serve as vicar and assistant vicar respectively.

The Mar Thoma Church, Staten Island, New York was inaugurated on February 1, 1981. Services are conducted at the All Saints' Episcopal Church (2329 Victory Blvd., Staten Island, NY 10314.) There are 33 families. Sunday School is held every Sunday. Youth Fellowship functions actively. Prayer meetings are held regularly. Sevika Sanghom is organised. Vacation Bible School, Parish day celebrations, retreat, convention, picnic etc. are the main annual events. The parish has close fellowship with the All Saints' Episcopal parish. Rev. N.M. Cherian is the vicar and Rev. T. Jacob Thomas is the assistant vicar.

The Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York, was formally inaugurated on July 19, 1981. The parish has 153 families. Services are conducted at the Epiphany Episcopal Church (103-10, 103 Street, Ozone Park, NY 11417, Tel: 212-848-5231). Sunday School and Bible class for adults are conducted every Sunday. Prayer meetings are conducted on alternate weekends. Youth Fellowship and Sevika Sanghom are formed. Retreat, picnic, convention, parish day celebration, Vacation Bible School, Sunday School Teachers' Training Seminar etc. are conducted annually. Vicar is Rev. N.M. Cherian and Rev. T. Jacob Thomas is assistant vicar.

The St. Andrews Mar Thoma Congregation, New York, was formed on Nov. 1, 1982. There are forty families in the congregation. They meet for worship every Sunday at the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (20 Cumming St., Inwood, NY 10034, Tel: 212-567-1177). Sunday School is held regularly. Prayer meetings are conducted at the residence of members. Rev. N.M. Cherian is vicar and Rev. T. Jacob Thomas is assistant vicar.

The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey was



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THE Rt. REV. JOHN S. SPONG, BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NEWARK CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION AT THE NEW JERSEY CHURCH ON PARISH DAY

inaugurated on April 5, 1981. There are 35 families in the parish and they have their worship at the Christ Episcopal Church (74 Park Ave., Glen Ridge, NJ 07028). Sunday School and prayer meetings are conducted regularly. Sevika Sanghom is organised. Retreat, picnic, convention etc. are the major annual events in the parish. The first anniversary of the inauguration of the parish was celebrated as Parish Day on April 3, 1982. The Rt. Rev. John S. Spong, Bishop

of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark was the chief guest and he celebrated Holy Communion, using the Mar Thoma liturgy. A combined service with the Christ Episcopal parish was held on June 6, 1982. The vicar is Rev. N.M. Cherian and the assistant vicar is Rev. T. Jacob Thomas.

The Mar Thoma Congregation, Boston, Massachusetts, was formed in September 1981. They meet together for prayer meetings occasionally and once in two months for Mar



Thoma worship. There are 18 families in the congregation. The vicar is Rev. Abraham Thomas.

The Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has 134 families. The beginning of the parish can be traced back to October 1, 1976, when the first meeting of the Marthomites in Philadelphia took place. The meeting decided to form a congregation. In September 1978, the congregation was officially approved as a Mar Thoma congregation and in 1982, it was raised to the status of a parish. Services are conducted at the Messiah Lutheran Church (4400 N. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19140). Sunday School functions very effectively. Vacation Bible School, Dedication service, picnic, anniversary and Christmas celebration are the highlights of Sunday School activities, besides the regular classes on Sundays. Youth League, Sevika Sanghom and Choir Group are very active. Convention, picnic, parish day celebration etc. are other annual events in parish life. On September 15, 1981 there was a joint service with the Episcopal Church. The Rev. Abraham Thomas is the vicar.



The Mar Thoma Congregation of South Florida was formed on March 10, 1982. There are 24 families. They meet for worship service once a month at the Holy Sacrament Episcopal church. The members have very good fellowship with the Episcopal parish. Rev. Cherian Thomas is the Vicar.

The Mar Thoma Church, Chicago was recognised as congregation on May 1, 1978, though the members met as a prayer group, even earlier. This was made a parish on March 10, 1982. There are 125 families. Services are held at

The Mar Thoma Congregation, Baltimore, Maryland, was formed in September 1981. There are 11 families. worship service and prayer meeting are conducted every month. Sunday School is conducted during these times. Rev. Abraham Thomas is the vicar.

The Washington D.C. Mar Thoma Congregation was formed in August 1982. The members used to meet together for prayer meeting and occasional worship services prior to this. Now there are 27 families and they meet twice in a month for prayer meetings. Worship services are held quarterly at the St. Michael's and All Angels Church (8501 N. Hampshire Ave., Adelphi, MD). The Rev. Abraham Thomas serves as the vicar.

The Mar Thoma Church, Detroit was formally organised as a parish on March 10, 1982. The thirty-two families of the parish meet for worship twice a month at the St. Peter's Episcopal Church (1950 Trumbull Ave., Detroit, MI 48201). Sunday School, youth meetings and prayer meetings are held regularly. Picnic and convention are held annually. The parishioners enjoy good fellowship

with the Episcopal parish and also hold combined services occasionally. The Rev. Cherian Thomas is the vicar.

THE Rt. REV. THOMAS MAR ATHANASIOS SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN AND Rt. REV. LYMAN OGILBY, BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AT THE JOINT SERVICE ON SEPT. 15, 1981.

the First United Methodist Church, (1630 Hinman Ave., Chicago, IL). Sunday School functions effectively. Besides regular Sunday classes, vacation Bible School, picnic, competitions etc. are held for students. Youth group and sevika sanghom are active. Bible study, choir practices, intercessory prayer group, cottage prayer meetings in various areas, annual retreat, picnic and convention etc. are other major parish activities. The Rev. Cherian Thomas is the vicar.

The Mar Thoma Congregation, Oklahoma. The first time the Marthomites in



Oklahoma met together for a Mar Thoma worship service was on November 30, 1980. In March 1981, the congregation was formally approved. The 13 families of the congregation meet for worship on every third Sunday of the month at the St. Mark's United Methodist Church (8140 N.W. 36th Street, Behtany, OK 73008). Prayer meetings are conducted twice a month. There is very close relationship between the St. Mark's parish and the Congregation. Combined service and joint lunch were organised during the year. The Rev. Philip Varghese is the Vicar from the beginning of the Congregation

In the State of Texas, there are three Mar Thoma Churches. The Lubbock Mar Thoma Congregation was formally approved on September 1, 1982. The members used to come together for prayer meetings for about three years prior to this. There are ten families in the congregation. The Rev. Philip Varghese is the vicar.

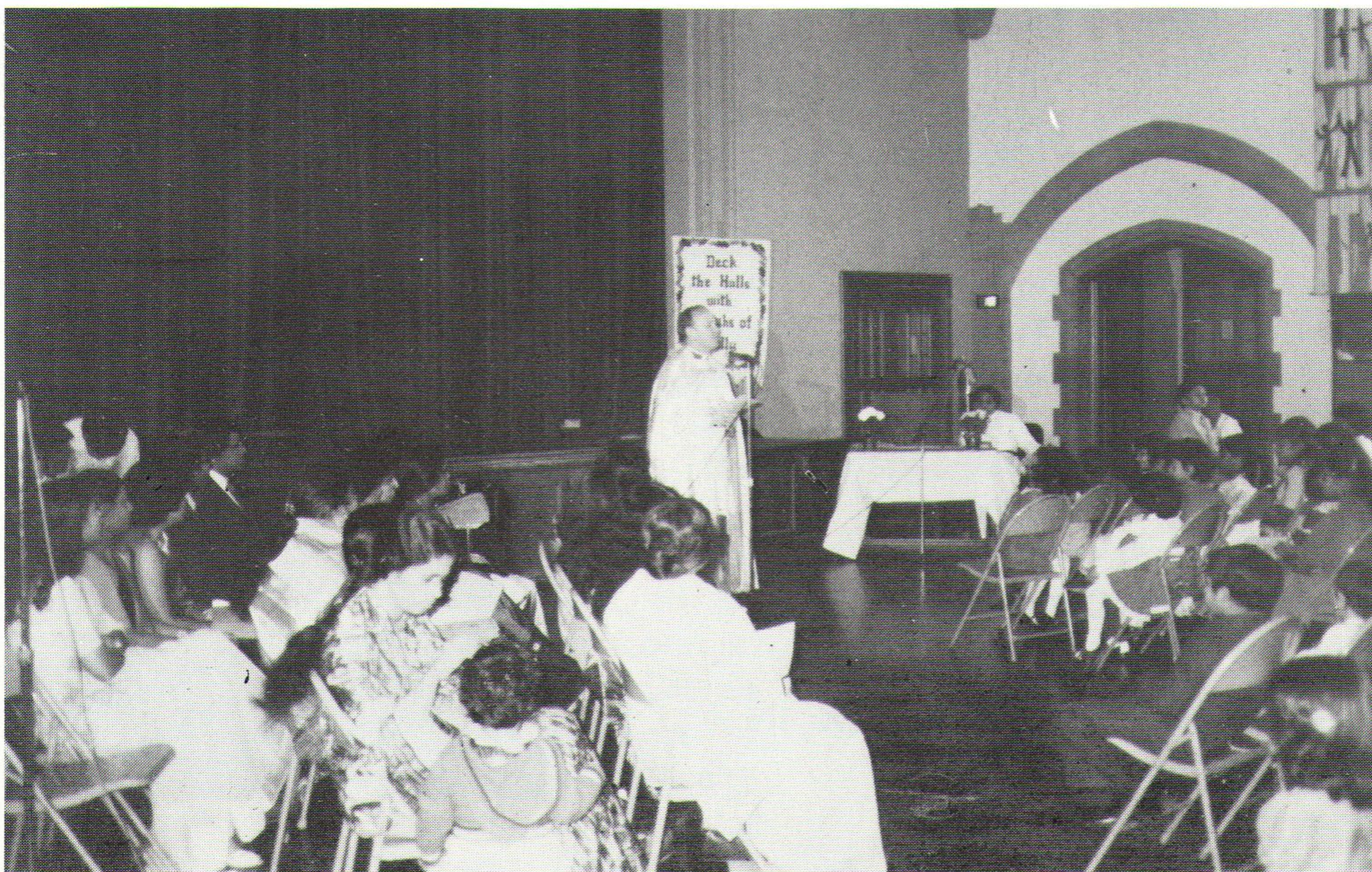
The Mar Thoma Church, Dallas, was formed on August 15, 1976. The beginning can be traced to the formation of a prayer group in 1972. In March 1978, this was approved as a congregation and in March 1982, this was raised to the status of a parish. There are 85 families. Worship services are held at the Cochran Methodist Chapel, Northwest Highway at Midway, Dallas. Prayer meetings are held twice a month. Sunday School and Sevika Sanghom function very effectively. A parish convention is held annually. The parish enjoys good fellowship with the local Episcopal and Methodist parishes. The vicar is the Rev. Philip Varghese.

The Trinity Mar Thoma Church Houston began as

small group in 1974. Its formation as a parish took place in 1981. The parish has 200 families. The members meet for worship at the Shearn Elementary School auditorium in Steella Link. Sunday School classes, sports, picnic etc. are held for children. Prayer meetings are held regularly on Sundays. The parish has a good choir group. The Sevika Sanghom is very active. Parish Day celebration convention, picnic etc. are the major annual events of the parish. The parish has bought land for a church building at a cost of \$58,000. The foundation stone was laid by the Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan on August 29, 1982. Fund raising efforts are in good progress. The Rev. P.V. Thomas is the vicar of the parish.

The Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles was formed in 1976. There are 50 families in the parish. They have their worship services at Holy Trinity Episcopal Parish Hall (416 N. Garfield Ave., Alhambra, LA 91801). There is regular Sunday School. Prayer meetings are conducted once in a month. Parish Day celebration, picnic, convention, family Sunday program etc. have been the annual events of the parish. Youth League and Sevika Sangham meet regularly. The Rev. Philip Daniel is the vicar.

THE Rt. REV. JAMES W. MONTGOMERY SPERKS AT THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS OF CHICAGO PARISH





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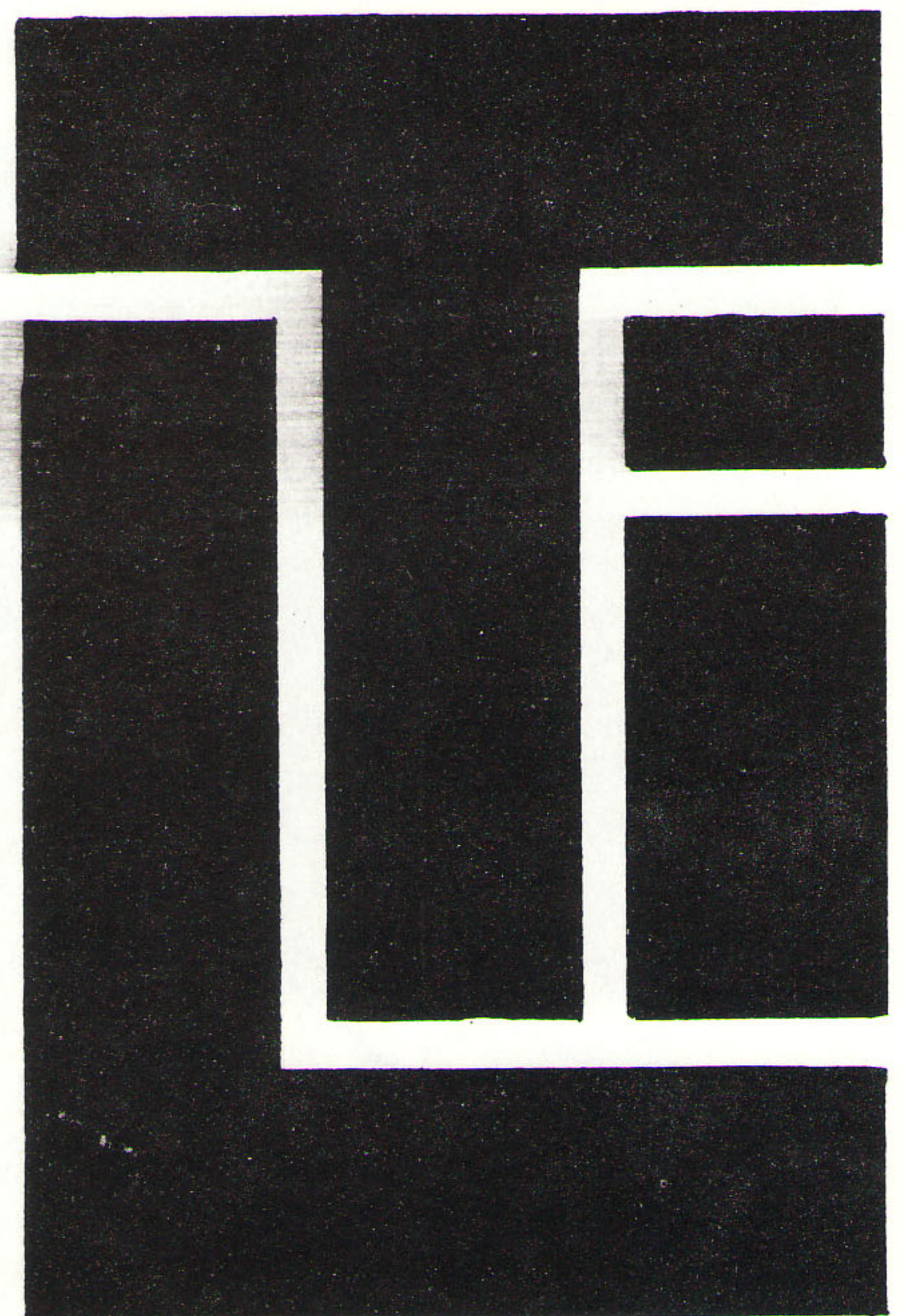
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**THE MAR THOMA STUDENTS'  
CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA  
A Reflection**

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The North American continent has been and will be a melting pot of so many cultures. Among these were a small number of Indians during the 1960's. Most of these people had come to advance in an academic career. However, during the 70's the immigration laws were relaxed and the gates were opened for a large number of people to immigrate. Small Malayalee communities began springing up in various places in the U.S. and Canada. Very soon, these groups formed worshipping colonies according to their traditions and affiliations back in Kerala. Congregations of the Mar Thoma Church were thus born in various cities. With the help of the clergy who were sent here for higher studies, the congregations began to grow and expand. The Church was especially concerned about the youngsters and began channeling more energies towards the nurturing of their spiritual growth. Sunday Schools, Vacation Bible Schools and other meetings were conducted locally.

The Students' Conference has its origin in the New York Mar Thoma Congregation. During 1976 to 1988 a few one day retreats and other meetings were conducted for the older students of the Sunday School. As a result of these, a need was felt to organise a students' conference, based on conferences conducted by the church in India. The first attempt was made in 1979 at Stony Point, New York, under the leadership of Rev. K.V. Mathew of the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam. Thirty-five students from New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington attended. The theme of the conference was "Christian Faith in an Age of Science." In view of the enthusiasm and good response, it was decided to conduct such an event in the following year. The news of the conference became more widely known through the clergy at various places. The second conference also was held at Stony Point in 1980. The conference was greatly blessed by the presence of the Metropolitan, Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma. The theme was "Is Christ the Answer?" A need was felt here to be organised at a national level as an official organisation of the Mar Thoma Church. On the advice of the Metropolitan, an appeal was sent to the Synod, by the president of the conference to grant full recognition to the conference, under the title, "The Mar Thoma Students' Conference of North America". This request was graciously granted by the Episcopal Synod.

In 1981 conference held at Chicago was truly an all American conference. The leader was Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan and the theme was "The Transforming Friendship of Jesus Christ". The students also became acquainted with the eleven clergymen who had come from different places. For the 1982 conference at Allentown, PA, one hundred and fifty-six students from all over gathered together. The theme of the conference was "Christian Discipleship, Challenge for Youth Today" The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan was the leader. The highlights of the conferences have been addresses on the theme, Bible study, group discussion, panel presentations and entertaining talent night. The students have displayed a great deal of enthusiasm and zeal for the conference. The Conference is open to all students who have completed ninth grade.

The future of the Mar Thoma Church in North America greatly depends on the younger generation that is growing up here. The growth and survival of our church among the hundreds of churches and all forms of religious institutions, will be defined by the love, support and interest shown by the youngsters towards it. It therefore necessitates that the clergy and laity ensure that the boundless energies of the youth today be channeled in creative and tangible ways in all areas of church life. A combination of our rich and meaningful traditions with the environment we live in, will make opportunities for more enthusiastic participation in all church activities.

The conference aims at instilling such values in the youths and teenagers of the church. The 1983 conference will be held at Toronto, Canada. As larger number of delegates can be expected, various questions regarding the size, program, discipline etc. are raised. One also begins to speculate if at a later stage, zonal conferences will be conducted. Let us pray that God in His wisdom shall guide the conference through its organisers and leaders in the future as He has so wonderfully done in the past.

Cecil Mathews, New York.





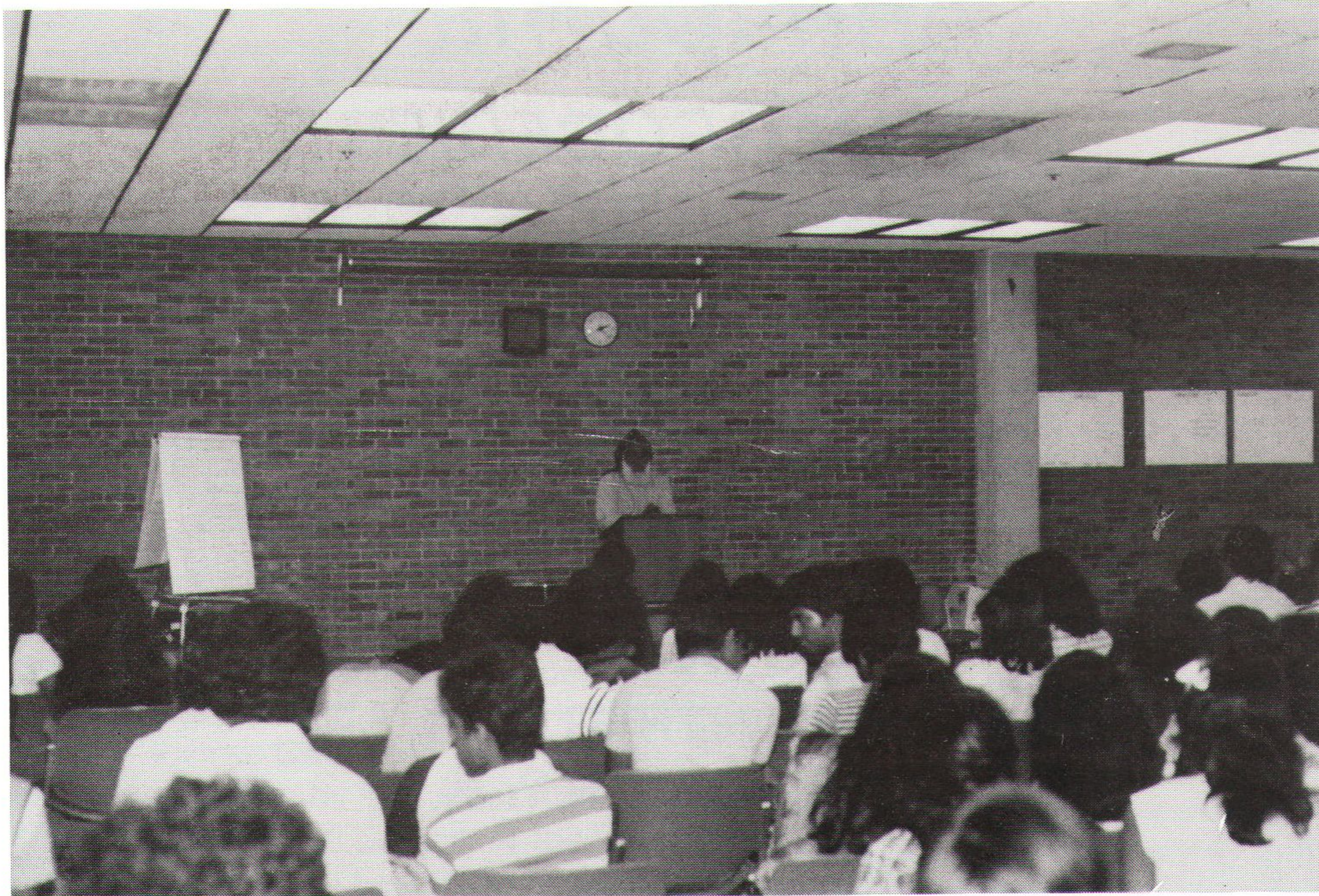
THE CONFERENCE IN 1979

MOST.REV.DR.ALEXANDER  
MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN  
ADDRESSING THE CONFERENCE  
IN 1980.



PARTICIPANTS AT THE 1981 CONFERENCE





THE Rt. REV. THOMAS MAR ATHANASIOS SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN ADDRESSING THE CONFERENCE IN 1981



1982 CONFERENCE  
THE TORONTO GROUP AT THE TALENT TIME.



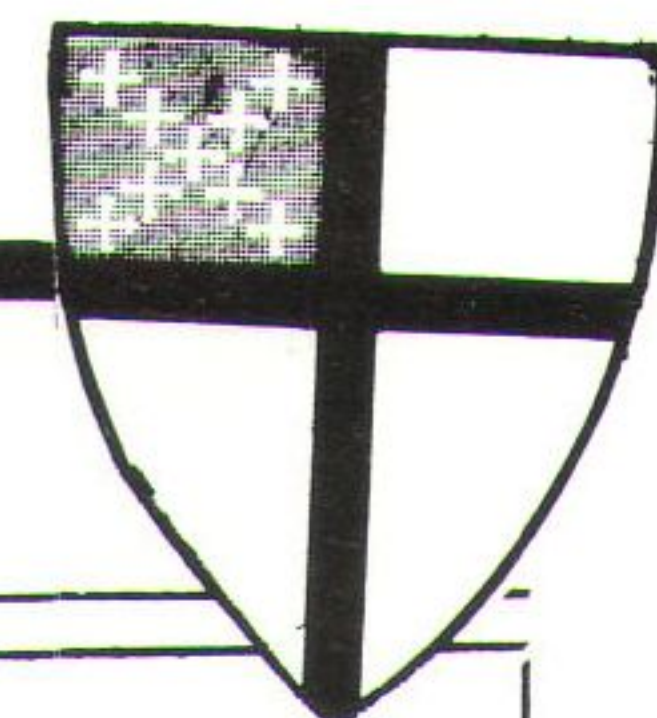
PHOTO CREDIT  
© CHRIS DEN BLAKER

1982 CONFERENCE  
THE Rt. REV. THOMAS MAR ATHANASIOS SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN, MINISTERING HOLY COMMUNION TO THE PARTICIPANTS.









## THE AGREEMENT

The Agreement between the Mar Thoma Church and the Episcopal Church of U.S.A. is a significant milestone in the history of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. In 1977 at the meeting of the World Council of Churches, the Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan held discussions with The Most Rev. John M. Allin, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of U.S.A. During his visits in 1978 and 1979 to U.S.A., the Diocesan Bishop continued the discussions on a closer relationship between the two Churches. In 1978 a draft of the Agreement was drawn out by the two Churches. Early in 1980 the Agreement was signed by The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church and The Most Rev. John M. Allin, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. By this Agreement, the Episcopal Church would invite the Mar Thoma churches in America to be part of the Church's Dioceses in which, they are located. The Bishops of the Episcopal Church would provide Episcopal oversight of the churches and the clergy. This Agreement provides the unique opportunity for the two Churches to share one ministry in the Body of Christ. In 1981, the Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, during his visit to North America met the Presiding Bishop and the various Diocesan Bishops at the Episcopal House of Bishops and

worked out the details of the Agreement. This has strengthened the relationship between the two Churches, very much. Also, during his visit, he explained to the Mar Thoma churches in U.S.A. the implications of the Agreement. By this effort at the grass root level, the people have been greatly enthused and encouraged to find practical expressions of the concerns of the Agreement. Visitations by the Episcopal Bishops and celebration of the Mar Thoma liturgy by them, combined services with Episcopal parishes etc. are taking place in many Dioceses.

The first celebration of the Mar Thoma liturgy by an Episcopal Bishop was on April 3, 1982. The Rt. Rev. John S. Spong, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, New Jersey, visited the Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey and celebrated the Mar Thoma liturgy on April 3, 1982, the first anniversary of the inauguration of the parish, which was celebrated as parish day. The Rt. Rev. Henry B. Hucles III, Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of Long Island, New York, celebrated the Mar Thoma liturgy when he visited the Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York, on July 18, 1982, the first anniversary of the inauguration of the Parish and the first Parish Day celebration.

The 18 Mar Thoma churches in U.S.A. are scattered in 16 Episcopal Dioceses. The Rev. Winston W. Ching of the Episcopal Church is the liason with the Mar Thoma Church and the Rev. N.M. Cherian is the liason with the Episcopal Church. **The Diocesan Bishop has taken initial steps to establish a similar relationship with the Anglican Church of Canada.**

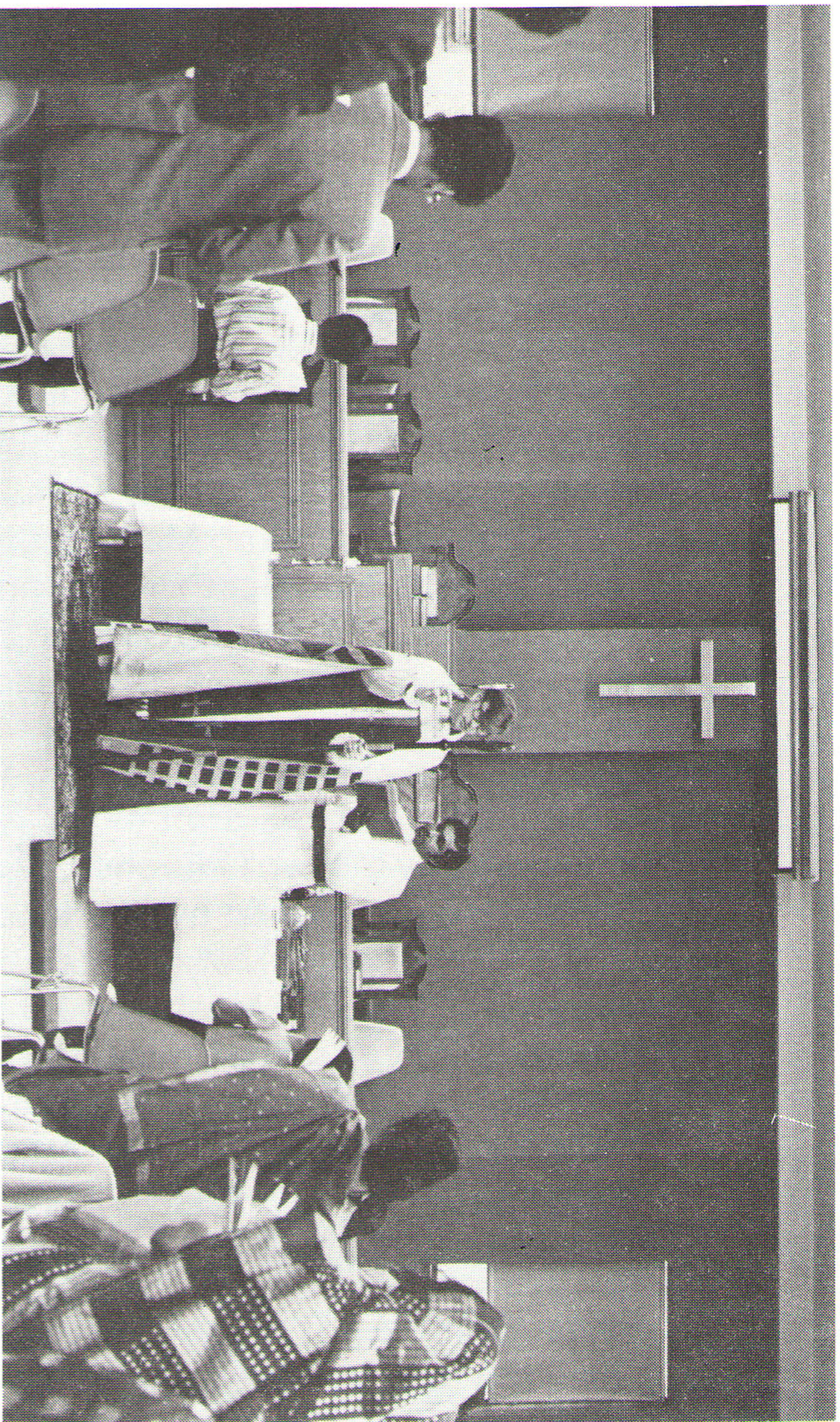
--Rev. N.M. Cherian



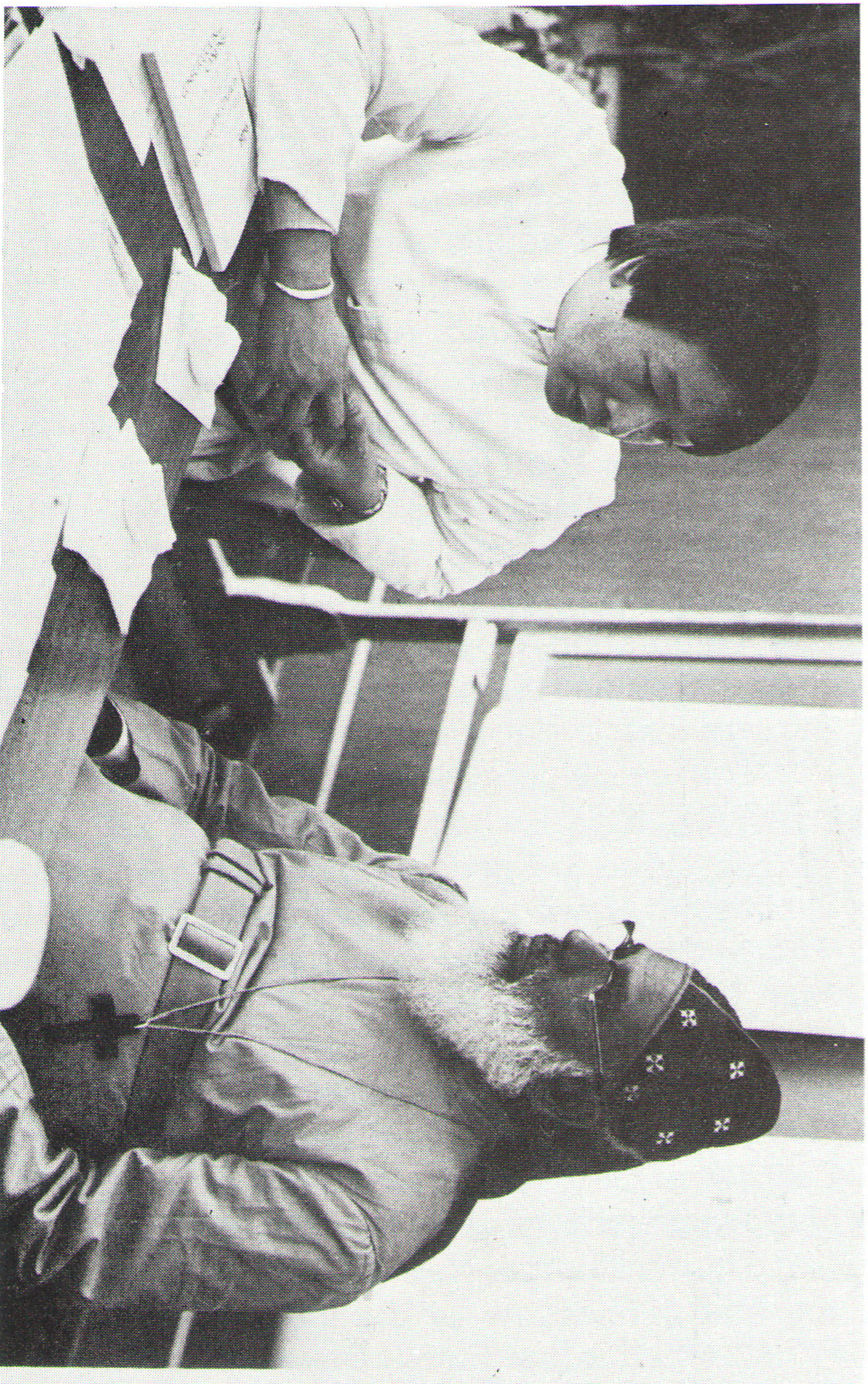
THE Rt. REV. THOMAS MAR ATHANASIOS SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN AND THE MOST REV. JOHN M. ALLIN PRESIDING BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

1981

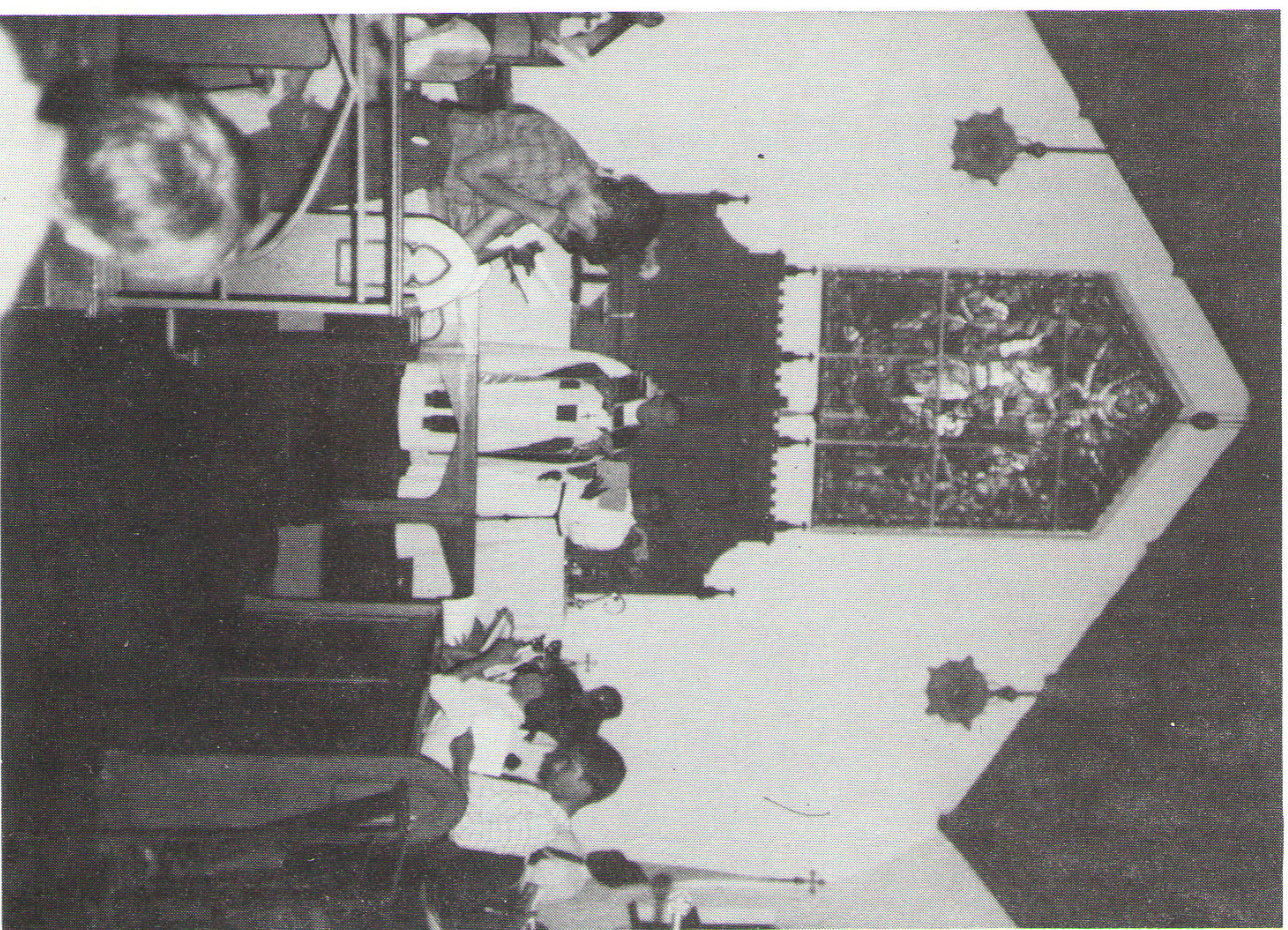




THE RT. REV. JOHN S. SPONG, BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL  
DIOCESE OF NEWARK, CELEBRATING MAR THOMA LITURGY  
AT THE NEW JERSEY PARISH, DAY, ON APRIL 3, 1982.



THE REV. WINSTON W. CHING WITH  
THE RT. REV. THOMAS MAR ATHANASIOS  
SUFFRAGAN METROPOLITAN



THE RT. REV. HENRY B. HUCLES III  
SUFFRAGAN BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL  
DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND CELEBRATES  
THE MAR THOMA LITURGY.  
EPIPHANY CHURCH  
NEW YORK, ON JULY 18, 1982.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL IN TODAY'S WORLD

Traditionally, Sunday School occupies a prominent position in the Mar Thoma Church, thanks to the wisdom, foresight and leadership of our Church leaders, both clergy and laity. The Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam, has published recently its 1981 annual report, which is the 77th annual report. The number of Sunday Schools in our church and the various activities carried out under the auspices of the Sunday School Samajam, are truly praiseworthy. At the time when changes are happening rapidly in the world in so many areas, at many levels, when the daily living of individuals and families are becoming increasingly complex, when the religious faith and beliefs are often questioned and challenged and when respect for traditional values are diminishing, the importance of Sunday School and its role in the proper development of our children cannot be but emphasised.

For us, Mar Thoma Christians in North America, Sunday School is even more important. All or most of us came to this country, either as students or for employment, hoping that we would soon be going back. However, for economic, professional or other reasons, realisation of that hope has become a distant possibility. A great majority of us has decided to settle down and thus adopted America as our own country. We are now faced with the great responsibility of raising our children in a country, very different from the one we grew up in. Many are experiencing the difficulties, typical to immigrants and minorities. But they see a good life and unlimited opportunities for their children in this great land of opportunities, a land that still offers fair and open chance for individual effort and merit. Many parents, however, are concerned about the decline in the moral and ethical standards seen in recent years in American society and its possible effects on their children. They find, despite one of the highest standards of living in the world, many Americans are unhappy, neurotic, driven and miserable.

Under these circumstances, Sunday School has a great responsibility to serve the special needs of these first generation Mar Thoma Christians in this country. We have to realise that the future of Mar Thoma Church and the Mar Thoma Christians in this country, to a large extent is going to depend on the present generation children. They are the ones to light up and lead our future generations in this country. The major responsibility of Sunday School is to teach our children, our faith, beliefs and heritage. We have to understand, however, that our children are growing up in a different culture and in a different social environment. Therefore it is necessary that we train them in our faith and beliefs in the cultural context in which they live. In addition to meeting their spiritual needs, Sunday School should be concerned about and provide opportunities for the social and other needs of our children.

Sunday School has become an important component of our parishes and congregations in North America. One of the major items discussed by the Zonal Council at its first meeting in Philadelphia was Sunday School. Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, as well as, the Clergy showed great interest in the affairs of Sunday School and its future in North America. A sub-committee has been appointed by the Council to study the concerns of our Sunday Schools, to explore the possibility of arriving at a common policy for the consideration of parishes and to suggest programs of training for Sunday School teachers.

May God bless our Sunday Schools and help us all in our efforts to build a foundation for the future generations of Mar Thoma Christians in this great land on earth.

--Dr. George Chacko, Philadelphia



PHILADELPHIA SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS AT A CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME



**THE DIOCESAN BISHOP LAYS THE  
FOUNDATION STONE OF THE FIRST  
MAR THOMA CHURCH BUILDING  
IN NORTH AMERICA**

August 29, 1982 marks a milestone in the annals of the Mar Thoma Church in North America. The Diocesan Bishop Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan laid the foundation stone of the first Mar Thoma church building in U.S.A. and Canada. So far the Houston parish is worshipping in available halls and auditoriums. Of late, the number of Marthomites coming into Houston has increased considerably. The need to keep our identity and to fulfill our mission is a problem. This is very much linked with worship and a place for it. It is very essential that a congregation has as its base of operation a place to meet for prayer, worship, study, planning and deliberation. Without such a base it cannot function effectively or grow. This is exactly the problem which the Houston parish is facing ever since its inception.

As a result of repeated requests the Episcopal Synod granted the parish permission to acquire a land and to construct a place of worship of its own. A five acre land has been bought on 5810 Almeda Genoa Road for \$58,000 and efforts are being made to build a church, a Sunday School building and a parsonage in three stages; but the immediate plan is to build the church. The Diocesan Bishop laid its foundation stone on Sunday the 29th August 1982 at 6:30 p.m.

Apart from the vicar Rev. P.V. Thomas, Rev. T.I. Joseph, Rev. Joseph Thomas, Rev. Philip Varghese and six ministers from the sister churches attended the function. Rev. Winston Ching, Executive Officer, Asiamerica Ministry of the Episcopal Church also attended the function. About 700 people attended the service. It was followed by a meeting in which His Lordship presided and Rev. Winston Ching spoke on behalf of the Episcopal Church. There were messages from the Mayor of Houston, the Episcopal Bishop and others. Refreshments were served to all who attended the function. The Houston parish needs your prayers.



Rev. P.V. Thomas  
Vicar



# MAR THOMA SUVISESHA SEVIKA SANGHAM

## A BRIEF REVIEW

The period between the first World Missionary Conference in 1910 and the World Council of Churches in 1966 can be understood as a 'progressive encounter between mission, church and theology'. Like every other topic of theology today, thinking about mission is being profoundly influenced by the church's new openness toward the world, especially by the phenomenon of secularization. The church has become aware of the whole range of human aspirations and needs in testimony to the saving concern of God, revealed through His son Jesus Christ.

The latter half of 19th century saw the renaissance within Syrian Christians of Malabar in India. The Mar Thoma Church increasingly realized that the question of 'mission' relates also to the general question of the role of women in the church. The spirit of revival among women made its first impact upon the parishes. Women met for Bible study, prayer and fellowship and carried the gospel to the nearby non-christian homes. Helping the poor and needy became part of their mission.

Abraham Mar Thoma, the then Metropolitan of the church inspired the movement and convened a meeting of all women in the church on a Friday at the Maramon Convention of February 1919. This exclusive meeting gave birth to the Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sangham.

The formation of an organization further activated the work among women. Leaders like Polachirackal Kochuveetil Mariamma and Anjilivelil Rahelamma acted as the secretaries of the Sevika Sangham and brought together the women in the parishes for further action. In the first year itself Sangham was able to organise 50 Sevika Sangham units in and around Kerala. Srimati Kandamma Varughese, with her missionary zeal travelled to distant places to preach the gospel and to organise the Sevika Sangham activities. Following this, many women missionaries were sent to places outside Kerala. Soon missionary work started in places like Ankola, Sihora, Satna, Hoskote and Tibetan border. The work carried out by women missionaries was directed primarily to women and girls and was concentrated in the areas of

evangelization, education and health. In many instances medical work was the inroad for creating a climate favourable to other types of missionary activity. From the very beginning, women missionaries were heroines to the supporting church members at home, sources of inspiration and reasons for continued prayer.

Miss Kellavy, an Australian Missionary dedicated her service to the activities of the Sevika Sangham. Vanithamandiram, a house for women, was started with her initiative in 1923 with the special intention of training young women for dedicated service in church and society. Now this has become a centre for diversified activities. The trainees stay at the centre and spend time in Bible study, prayer and meditation. Vanithamandiram organises study conferences, counselling classes, seminars and refresher courses for the women of the church.

The Sevika Sangham started the Salem Orphanage in 1923. Since then, this has been a home where many orphaned children found love care. At present there are about 76 children staying in 4 groups. The Punalur Boys' home houses boys who are above 9 years of age. (Grade IV). Children are given education in the nearby schools. Morning and evening worship, Sunday school classes, Summer Bible School, camps, picnic etc., are arranged for the children at the Salem home. The grown up boys are given technical education at the Punalur Boys' home. Trained young adults with vision and Christian character have started going out to serve the church and society.

Sevika Sangham started a school and nursery in 1955. The school which started with 28 children now have 440 children in 12 classes. 80 children are staying in the boarding home. The Nursery Teacher's Training School serves the purpose of training young people yearly. The Vanitha Hostel at Kottarakkara houses working women and students irrespective of age or creed. At present there are 76 ladies staying together in the hostel with good understanding and fellowship.



Muktimandiram was started to provide a home for the unwed mothers who are cast out of homes and society. This refuge home is helping the fallen women to understand better the meaning and purpose of human life and to confront the redeeming love of Christ.

Kuwait Home at Elanthur is a place where retired ladies could find a home. This home for the aged is still in its infant stage. It needs more facilities and dedicated workers for managing it successfully.

The work among staff and student nurses started a few years back at Delhi. This is done in order to equip them for serving the sick effectively. Importance is given to lead them to a Christian commitment. They are strengthened to see their work as a ministry among the sick together with the Divine Healer Jesus Christ.

The Development Department of the Sevika Sangham is providing training for women in tailoring and mat making. The Snack Centre and Show Room at Tiruvalla gives employment for a few and serves the public. This is also a medium for the Sevika Sangham to be in touch with the secular world.

Sevika Sangham takes keen interest in expanding the activities of its units in the parishes in Kerala and outside. The visit of Mrs. K.K. George in 1979 encouraged the parishes and congregations in U.S.A. and Canada to organise Sevika Sangham units and support its activities. The leaders are visiting the various units in and outside Kerala to organise centre meetings and encourage its members.

"Vanitha Bodhini" is the official monthly publication of the Suvisesha Sevika Sangham. This is the means of communication between the Sangham and its members. It is published with relevant articles for women, reports of the activities of the Sangham, its units and with Bible study materials. If the purpose of this publication is to be fulfilled and communication to be strengthened, it needs more members as subscribers.

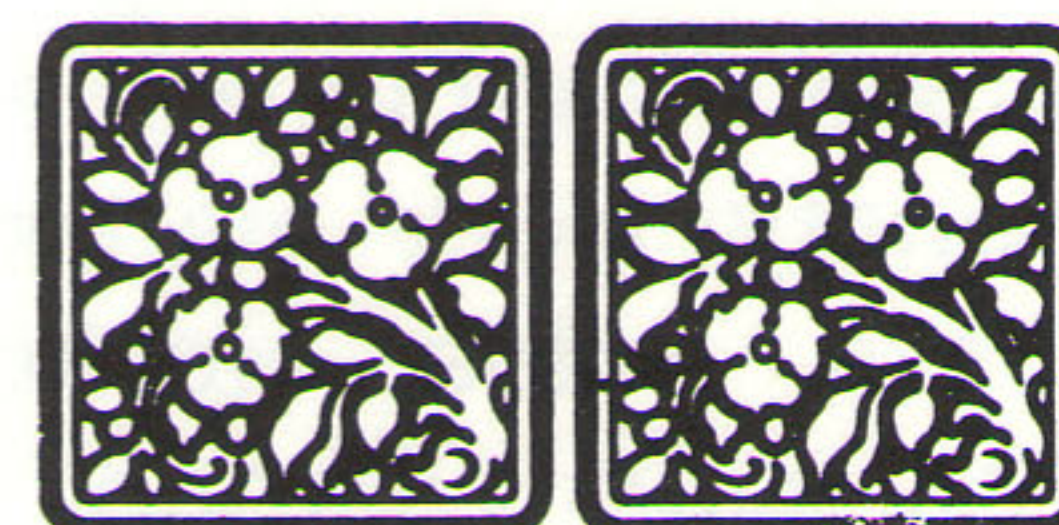
The Church and its leaders have been a constant source of inspiration for the life and growth of Suvisesha Sevika Sangham since 1919. "The more the church helps women within the People of God, to take the place and fulfill the mission traced in the first prophetic pages of the Bible, and later proclaimed in the Gospels, the more it will be helping human society in a similar effort for the promotion and liberation of women at the level of earthly realities..." (Vatican Study Commission Report on Women in Society and in the Church.)

--Mrs. Omana Joseph, Ontario, Canada



*We appeal to the generosity of friends and well-wishers to send donations to  
The Mar Thoma Zonal Council  
167 Sunset Ave., Staten Island, NY 10314  
to form an initial fund for the Council.  
Thanks and appreciations to those  
friends who have already sent their  
donations.*

*--Secretary*





## MAR THOMA CHURCH - YESTERDAY AND TODAY

"They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word!" During the "scattering", Thomas, an Apostle of Jesus came to Cranganore in North Kerala in AD 52. He preached the gospel to the Jewish settlers in and around Cochin, Kerala and later preached among Hindus. He founded seven Churches for the use of Christian converts and ordained presbyters from four families. The Brahmins, out of jealousy for his success speared St. Thomas to death in Mylapore, near Madras. "Acts of Thomas" an apocryphal book of the early 3rd century, says that Thomas visited the Indo-Parthian kingdom during the reign of King Gunda-Phorus, who according to Indian history, reigned in the middle of the first century.

Very little is known about the history of the Malabar Christians in the first few centuries. In AD 189 Pantaenus was sent by Demetrius of Alexandria at the request of the Christians in Malabar. During his visit Pantaenus found a gospel of Mathew in Hebrew which he took away to Alexandria. In AD 345 the Catholics of Jerusalem learning the needs of the Malabar Church, sent Joseph, Bishop of Edessa, some priests and deacons and about 400 people under the leadership of Thomas of Cana, a Syrian merchant. They settled in and around Cranganore. During the persecution of Christians in Persia in the fourth century a number of refugees came and colonised in Malabar. Cosmas, the great sailor on Indian seas has left a record that during his visit in the sixth century he saw Christians in Ceylon and Malabar as a well organised community with a Bishop from Persia ruling them. In AD 825 a group of Persian Christians under Marwan Sabrison, along with two Bishops came and settled in Quilon, southwest of Kerala. In 1293 Marco Polo visited Malabar and he left on record his visit to Mylapore.

There were several Roman Catholics among the preachers who visited Malabar. John of Mone Corloino, a contemporary of Marco Polo, on his way to China stayed in India, for 13 months and he speaks of India as "the place wherein stands the Church of St. Thomas". From 1498, when Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut, for a century and a half, the Portuguese had command of the eastern seas. St. Francis Xavier who landed in Goa in 1542 made extensive missionary tours in India, Ceylon, Malacca, East Indies and Japan. In 1592, Archbishop Menezes arrived in Goa. With the backing of the

Portuguese Viceroy, he tried to Romanise the Malabar Church. In 1599 he called a synod at Diamper in Kerala to be attended by four representatives from each congregation. In the council, all present were asked to sign the decree which the Archbishop presented. Thus the Syrian Christians were forced to become part of the Roman Church. Till 1653 the Malabar Church was under Roman domination.

In 1653 offended by the harsh Romanisation efforts of the Jesuits, a crowd of 20,000 people under the leadership of Archdeacon Thomas, gathered together in front of a Church in Mattanchery, near Cochin and took vow abjuring Rome and declaring freedom from Roman rule. Only 400 families remained faithful to Rome. But later 84 congregations went back to the Roman rule and only 32 congregations stood faithful to the Archdeacon. Up to the 16th century the Malabar Church was one united in communion with the Babylonian Church and for half a century united under Rome. Henceforward there were two communities.

As the 32 congregations had no bishop, twelve priests joined together and as a provisional arrangement raised Archdeacon Thomas to the episcopate. This first bishop was called Mar Thoma I. In 1683 the Dutch, who were Protestants, captured Cochin from the Portuguese. In 1665 Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Jerusalem came to Cochin and consecrated Mar Thoma I. Nine bishops with the title Mar Thoma and four with the title Dionysius ruled over the Syrian Church in Malabar between 1665 and 1843.

Towards the close of the 18th century, the British East India Company became a dominating Western power in India. The Anglican missionaries who came during this period made distinctive contributions to the Malabar Christians. The emphasis on personal religion, people's worship - a worship in their own language and the Church's duty to preach the gospel to the non-Christians, are some of them. In 1836 when Cheppat Mar Dionysius was Metropolitan of the Malabar Church, revived by the reformed teachings of the missionaries, two priests - Abraham Malpan of Maramon and Geevarughese Malpan of Kottayam - initiated a reform movement within the Syrian Church. In 1843 Deacon Mathew, was consecrated as Mathews Mar Athanasius, in the Syrian Church to work for the cause of the Patriarch. In 1868



Mathews Mar Athanasius consecrated his cousin as Thomas Mar Athanasius. Following the death of the former in 1877, there followed a series of court cases between the orthodox and reform parties.

In 1889 in the Royal Court of Trivandrum two judges decided that the Malabar Church was under the Patriarch of Antioch and Joseph Mar Dionysius was the Metropolitan. The one Christian judge, Justice Ormsby decided in favour of Thomas Mar Athanasius and held the Malankara Church had always been an independent Church.

Without a place to live, Thomas Mar Athanasius returned to his home church. Without places of worship the reform party left the Churches where their parents had worshipped. At this time, of material loss and abandonment, the Church experienced a great spiritual revival. The Reformers called themselves the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Titus I Mar Thoma, Titus II Mar Thoma, Dr. Abraham Mar Thoma, Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma and Dr. Mathews Mar Athanasius were the ecclesiastical heads who followed.

Today the Church has six Bishops - Metropolitan Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, Suffragan Metropolitans Thomas Mar Athanasius and Philipose Mar Chrysostom and Espicopas Joseph Mar Irenaeus and Easow Mar Timotheos and Zacharias Mar Theophilus. There are 890 parishes, 453 priests and 600,000 members living in all parts of India, Ceylon, Malaysia, Singapore, Arabian Gulf, U.S.A; U.K: Africa, Australia etc. The Church today is spread out in many parts of the world, actively involved in the fulfillment of its mission, keeping up the noble heritage of the Malankara church in its independent and indigenous nature, in its Biblical and evangelistic emphasis, in its oriental church forms, with a progressive and reforming outlook, social and economic concerns and ecumenical approach.

The Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association was founded in 1888 - a time of litigations and disputes in the Church, when a group of twelve, stirred by a higher vision met together for prayer and started the organisation for the preaching of the Word in and outside the Church. At present it has 157 mission centres in Kerala and 33 outside Kerala with 36 ordained missionaries, 96 evangelists, 47 catechists and 18 doctors. There are 5 Ashrams, 6 Hospitals and 2 Destitute Homes. The Maramon Convention begun in 1896

has greatly influenced the spiritual life of the Church and is attended by thousands of people, every year, without denominational differences.

The Sevika Sangham which is the association of women for evangelistic work, founded in 1919 is another powerful evangelistic agency. This has local units in parishes and runs a training institute for women, orphanages, medical and educational institutions, hostels etc. The Voluntary Evangelistic Association was founded in 1924 to work for revival within the church. This has "Parish Mission" activities in parishes, runs Institute of Evangelism for training young people in evangelism and conducts lay-leadership programmes. The Sunday School Samajam was formed in 1905 for the instruction of children. This co-ordinates the important work among children, trains Sunday School teachers and has a well-equipped Camp Centre. The Yuvajana Sakhyam was established in 1933 to concentrate on youth activities. This has local youth fellowships in parishes. The main activities are Mission Tour, Parish Tour, Music Training Programmes, Leadership Training Camps, Special Conferences for Young Teachers, Young Writers, Young Political Leaders etc. Retreats and Study Conferences, Manual Labour Programmes, literary and musical competitions etc. There is an annual conference for university students. The Mar Thoma Theological Seminary affiliated to the Serampore University offers theological training for candidates for the ordained ministry of the Church. The Church has its own Publication Board Printing Press etc. and "Malankara Sabha Tharaka" is the Church magazine.

The Church, which is for the world, has made significant contributions to the society as a whole. Educational activities are another major sphere in which the church has made its impact. Under a Corporate Management there are 14 high schools, one training school and 135 primary schools. Besides there are 5 colleges, one training college, one industrial training centre and one basic training school. Under the Church's Medical Mission there are 5 hospitals. The Church's Development cares for the underdeveloped. There are 5 destitute homes caring for the disowned. The Church has several other projects to help the needy. The Metropolitan's Fund, begun in 1969, helps people, who do not have land or houses of their own, to possess one. The Marriage Aid Fund



started in 1972 provides financial help to the needy for marriage expenses. The Relief Fund provides help to the victims of natural disasters, rehabilitation projects etc. Mar Thoma Center for Rehabilitation and Development, at Thelliyoor, shelters the retarded in the society.

The life and witness of the Church and the realisation of its mission "Lighted to Lighten" are to be expressed through the life of personal commitment to God, corporate worship, fellowship and brotherhood and response to the contemporary challenges for the fulfillment of the Church's mission, of all its members. "We look back so that we may look ahead."

--Rev. N.M. Cherian

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## THE YOUTH LEAGUE OF THE MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

The Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam or Youth League is one of the most active organisations of its kind among churches today. Established in 1933 as part of the church's ministry towards youth, it has now grown into a major department of our church.

The Sakhyam is functional in a variety of ways. Locally, in the churches, youth meetings, Bible studies, retreats etc. are conducted regularly. Regionally, in various parts of India and abroad, annual youth conferences are held. The organisation is also involved in the construction and building of projects as part of the ministry towards the poor and the needy. The church also has a Youth Center at Adoor, Kerala, which can accommodate three hundred people and has facilities for retreats and conferences. The Youth Center also provides employment training such as, printing technology, book binding, cover making etc. to help unemployed youth, Mission Tour, parish tour, musical training, leadership training, camps and conferences for teachers, writers, political leaders etc; work camps, gospel squad training etc. are the regular activities of the Sakhyam.

The programs of the Sakhyam are centered on its major emphasis on Worship, Study, Service and Witness. "Yuvadeepam" is the organ of the Sakhyam. This monthly publication provides devotional notes for Daily Bible reading and meditation, as well as contains biographies, stories, testimonies, history, etc. This provides a medium for the youth of the church to say their views and express their various literary talents.

The Students' Conference in North America is the first attempt to bring together the younger generation of our church. Through this and other activities, we can hope to give our youth and teenagers, a sense of identity and help them to be valuable assets in the communities around them.

--Cecil Mathews, New York



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