



MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JULY 1998



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MAR THOMA MESSENGER UPCOMING ISSUES

OCT., 1998—**CHURCH COMMUNITY OF LOVE**
Articles, News etc. due by September 30, 1998

Message From The Diocesan Bishop



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The Sinai Mar Thoma Center has become a living reality by the great grace of God through its dedication by His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan on the 27th of June 1998. The Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheous Episcopa, bishops, clergy, and lay members of numerous other denominations participated in the dedication service with joy and gratitude. The Sinai Center is very functional and useful to the work and mission of our Church here. The provisions for Bishop's house, Secretary's quarters, secretarial offices, chapel, guest house, etc. make it a very livable place. The Center is more accessible to our people, we are happy to have many visitors and well-

wishers. Hope the Center will play a wider role in establishing and strengthening ecumenical and social relationship among members of various churches and communities.

July and August were the months of camps and conferences in this Diocese. Families, Sunday School children, youths, physicians, and all were enriched by the conferences for the respective categories. Many participants were blessed by the experience of renewal. Only few members of this diocese get the chance to attend these conferences. There is a dire need for more conferences on a regional level where the Word of God is studied and Christ's experience is shared. One of the important events of this year was the inauguration of the Doctors and Dentists Fellowship in U.K. following the Family Conference at London.

I was in Germany during the second week of August. I was happy to celebrate Holy Communion in the Mar Thoma rite for the joint congregation of the marthomites in Germany and the members of the St. Lucas Evangelical Church in Essen. Our members and the German friends very gladly participated at the Lord's table as well as in the Indian lunch served after the communion. Rev. Abraham Scaria who ministers to the St. Lucas Parish as an Assistant Pastor is rendering valuable service to both the Malayalee Mar Thoma community and the German Evangelical Church members. Superintendent Wolfgang Glade, and Pastor Alfred Koynicker, are giving good guidance and support to the Mar Thoma community in Germany. The Mar Thoma Congregation in Germany was formally organized with Rev. Abraham Scaria as Vicar and an Executive Committee of seven members. I hope and believe that from now onwards our members in Germany will stand together to serve the Lord as one community of faith, hope and love under the guidance of Rev. Abraham Scaria. They need our prayers and support to progress effectively and positively. I am happy to welcome them to the mainstream of the North America and Europe Diocese.

I was privileged to attend the 13th Lambeth Conference held at Canterbury in Kent, England representing the Mar Thoma Church last July. Nearly 850 bishops and their spouses of the Anglican Church from all over the world participated in the Conference. Delegates from various churches in communion with the Anglican Church, Ecumenical participants including Roman Catholic observers made it a very fascinating event. Common worship, Bible studies, section discussions, plenary session, and special events made the conference a memorable one. The theme for Bible study, "Leadership Under Pressure" was based on St. Paul's second letter to Corinthians. Issues like international debt clearance, human rights, interfaith relationships, evangelization, human sexuality, reconciliation, world peace, unity of churches and humanity were debated and plans were chalked out for the next decade. The stories from different continents and contexts shared by bishops about preaching of the gospel, persecution, poverty of the people, religious conflicts, church growth, political and religious oppression, economic exploitation and ecological carelessness were thrilling as well as painful.

Archbishop George Carey emphasized on 'transformation and renewal' in his presidential address. Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke fervently for the debt release, dignity of human kind, eradication of poverty, sickness and illiteracy, during the luncheon at Lambeth Garden. Queen Elizabeth and Duke of Edinburgh received and greeted the bishops for the garden party in Buckingham Palace. It was an enriching experience to know all the bishops of the Anglican community and to learn of the current complex issues that the world and the churches face at the dawn of a millennium. Each parish is kept in a complex situation, not to curse the surroundings but to change the situations in the power of God by serving together in love and forgiveness to the glory of God. We need to examine our church membership very seriously. We need to be renewed for the renewal of the world.

The Mandalam is meeting during the first week of September at Tiruvalla. I am glad many of our members will be attending this time. I hope they will participate positively in the discussions and contribute much to the common growth of our church with their experience as a diaspora community. I am very happy that Mr. Manoj Zachariah of St. Thomas parish has just joined the Vaideceka Seminary Kottayam for theological education. Mr. Roy Thomas of Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Grand Prairie would be graduating shortly. So two of our youngsters are studying for ministry in Kerala while six priests of our church are having higher studies in theology in USA. Let us pray to God to bless all of them and to raise more people for ministry from this diocese.

I shall be completing 60 years of God's grace by the end of this month. I am very grateful to God and the members of the Church for the love and care showered upon me. I wish and hope all of you will continue to pray that I may serve the master who had called me and the people whom he had entrusted with me with more diligence, dedication and devotion.

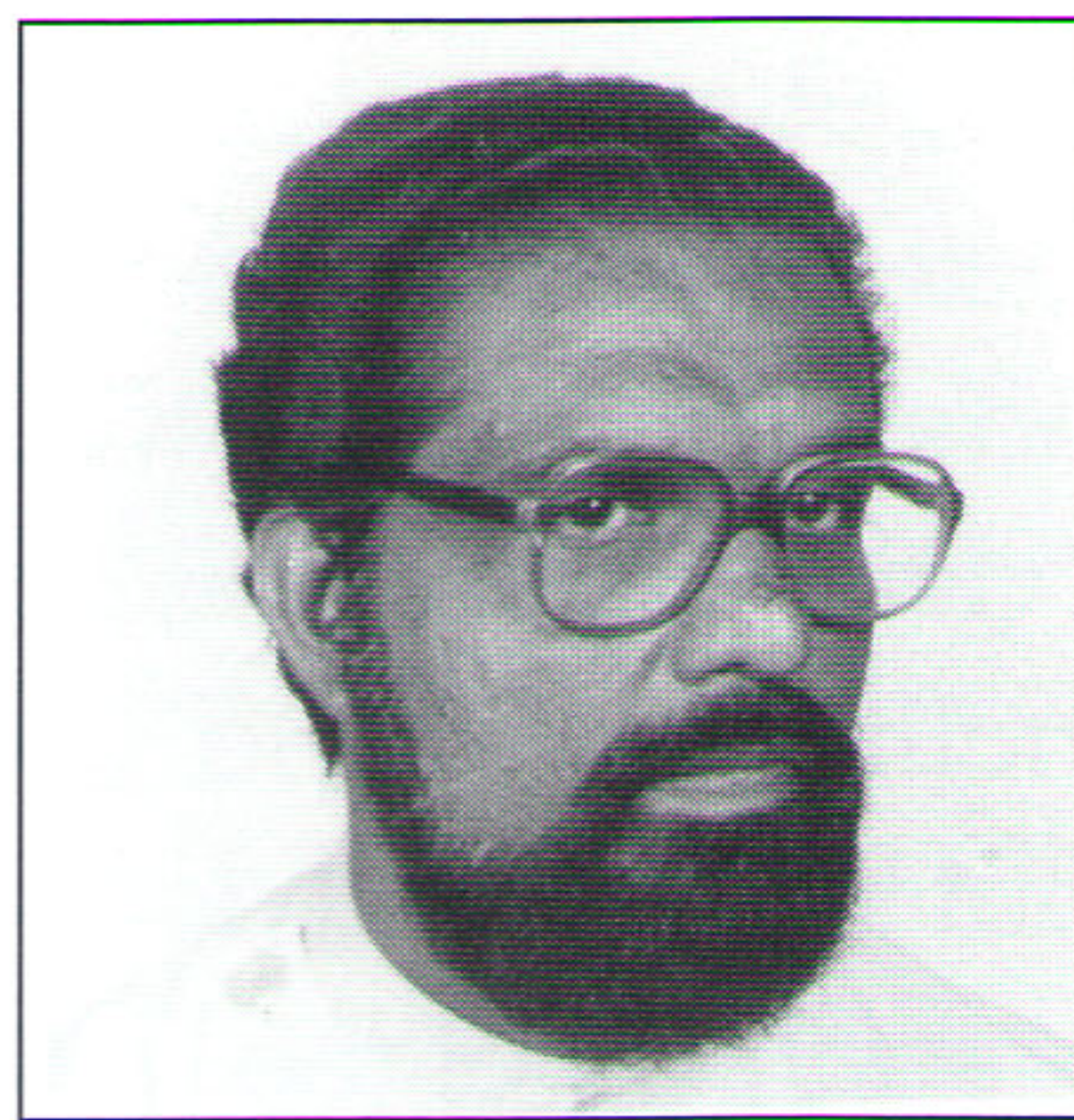
May God's blessing be upon you all.

Yours in Christ's Service,

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

Church as a Community of Hope

Rev. K. V. Simon, Los Angeles



In the previous issue when I dealt with “Church a community of faith” I have highlighted the different characteristics of the community. So I am not elaborating that aspect again. The GTE telephone company in its advertisement stated, “A community is made up of dreams, ideas, and hard work. It is a blend of the ideals of men and women from diverse backgrounds like woven threads in a colorful tapestry. Each new idea inspires us to work and grow within this diverse fabric called community.” The Church also is a community woven with the threads of diverse gifts into the same texture of faith in Jesus Christ. Man's salvation in Christ provides the great example of interdependence which is the cement of community. One of the clearest marks of authentic Christianity is that it is the religion of a reasoned and triumphant hope—a hope for the future, a hope for the world and human destiny. Hope is the highest degree of a well-founded expectation of something good. Our hope is in relation to the Kingdom of God inaugurated in the person of Jesus. We affirm in our faith — “We believe that He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead and of his kingdom there will be no end. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the new life of the world to come” (Nicene Creed). The Kingdom of God is a reality and also the same time its consummation is yet to be realized. We are living in between times—between the past and the future, between the first and second coming of Christ, between the present reality and the future destiny. We look back to the incarnation and look forward to the parousia. There should be this tension in the life of a Christian. Jesus emphasized both these aspects. “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). “From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right-hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64). Let us now consider the different dimensions of the Christian Hope in relation to the Kingdom of God.

1. Physical Dimension

At Jesus's time the Jewish people had the great expectation of a messiah coming and establishing a political kingdom. The apostles also asked Jesus, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Act. 1:6). We cannot deny or neglect the physical aspect of the kingdom. Jesus's ministry was inaugurated with signs and wonders, he changed water into wine, walked on the waters, healed the

blind, and raised the dead. He gave authority to his followers also to perform the same ministry. When John the Baptist sent disciples to inquire about the mode of his ministry, Jesus replied, “Go and tell John what you hear and see, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them” (Matt. 11:5). So Christian hope is not a mere philosophical idea, but God's activity in

the real life situation of the individual. This is a transition that the kingdoms of this world will be transformed to the Kingdom of our Lord (Rev. 11:15). The whole world order is to be radically redeemed. Christ's final and complete triumph is to be vindicated in this very world which rejected him and put him to an open shame. The whole life of nations is to be radiantly transformed under the mastership of Christ so that the glory of God may be fully revealed therein. Christianity is not a world-negating religion but a world-affirming religion. The ideal society is not to be built by the power of man, but it is the work of the majestic power of God. This is symbolized in the doctrine of the Millennial Kingdom. This hope is expressed in the prophet Isaiah — “With righteousness, he shall judge the poor; And decide with equity for the meek of the earth. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Isa. 11:4, 9).

2. Spiritual Dimension

Jesus, while sending the seventy, commissioned them to preach the kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons. All the demons that negate the human dignity need to be cast out. There are many more mysteries yet to be revealed in the spiritual realm, because we walk by faith not by sight. It is the glory of God to conceal the matter from human perception. Bruce Larson has said, “I am going to explain to you the unexplainable, to define the undefinable, to ponder the imponderable and to unscrew the inscrutable.” Apostle Paul also said that his knowledge was limited and partial, like that of a child and as distorted reflections in a mirror. He is looking forward to the perfect and at that time this partial will come to an end. St. John also says that we are hoping towards that glory which is to be revealed in us one day. It is very important to maintain this distinction between the revealed things and the mystery of the hidden. God is transforming us by degrees into the image of Christ. We are not made perfect, we are pressing

on to that goal with the confidence that he who began the good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Bishop Handley Moule said, "We aim at nothing less than to walk with God all day long, to abide every hour in Christ, to love God with all our heart and our neighbors as ourselves, and to break with evil and to follow all good". We must not be diffident in believing, expounding and defending what God has disclosed. We are caught in a dialectic between defeat and victory, between dismay over failures and promise of the ultimate freedom. We have the assurance in Christ, "He will strengthen you to the end so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:8).

3. Eschatological Dimension

Christ has been hidden from the gaze of the natural eye for over nineteen centuries. He is now in the tabernacle above ministering as the High Priest in the Holy of the Holies. He will come again attended by a host of angels. The angels promised, "This Jesus who has been taken up from you to heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven" (Act. 1: 11). The angel Gabriel said, that his kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:32). As Christians we believe in the resurrection and the life of the world to come. The natural body is sown, the spiritual body is raised, the perishable becomes imperishable, the mortal becomes immortal, and the terrestrial becomes the celestial. Christ will sit on the throne of David and will reign over the whole earth. Death is the last enemy which will be abolished. The temporal phase of the kingdom will be changed to the eternal. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. God's city with its purity, beauty and perfection will be established. It is the constant abiding place for the

people of God, when God tabernacles among his people. Lord illumines the city with his glory and majesty. When we consider God's plan and provision for men, we may well exclaim with St. Paul, "Oh! The depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and unfathomable his ways!" (Rom. 11:33). The New Testament uses three metaphors to illustrate the fullness of the kingdom—The Holy Spirit is the first fruits pledging that the full harvest will follow; the deposit pledging that the full payment will be made; and the foretaste pledging that the full feast will one day be enjoyed.

We eagerly await God's plan of the fullness of time to gather up all things in Christ; things in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:10). Not yet has the justice of the Kingdom of God ousted all oppression. There are still wars and rumors of war. Not yet have swords been beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. We know the transforming power of the gospel and we have confidence in the ultimate triumph of our Lord. Christ in his second coming will eradicate all evil and enthrone righteousness for ever. With this hope and expectation we pray "Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Our hope is based on the spiritual constancy of God. It is not the illusory man-centered hope of those who are seeking comfort of themselves, but the secure and God-centered hope of those, whose concern it is to see the holy love of God fully vindicated. He who is with us will manifest his presence in a way which will transcend in glory even the gracious and awesome presence which was seen in the man of Galilee and the risen Christ.

"We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain" (Heb.6: 19). ■

LEFT BEHIND

Gina Mathew
Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston, TX

*Restless in Bed
Prayers unsaid
You alone are left to die in dread;
If only you were ready.*

*Thinking back
To see what's lacked
You realize you've cracked;
If only you were ready.-*

*Repentant tears
But no one hears
To forgive your sinful years;
If only you were ready.*

*No time to change your mind
The Son resigned
You've been left behind;
If only you were ready.*

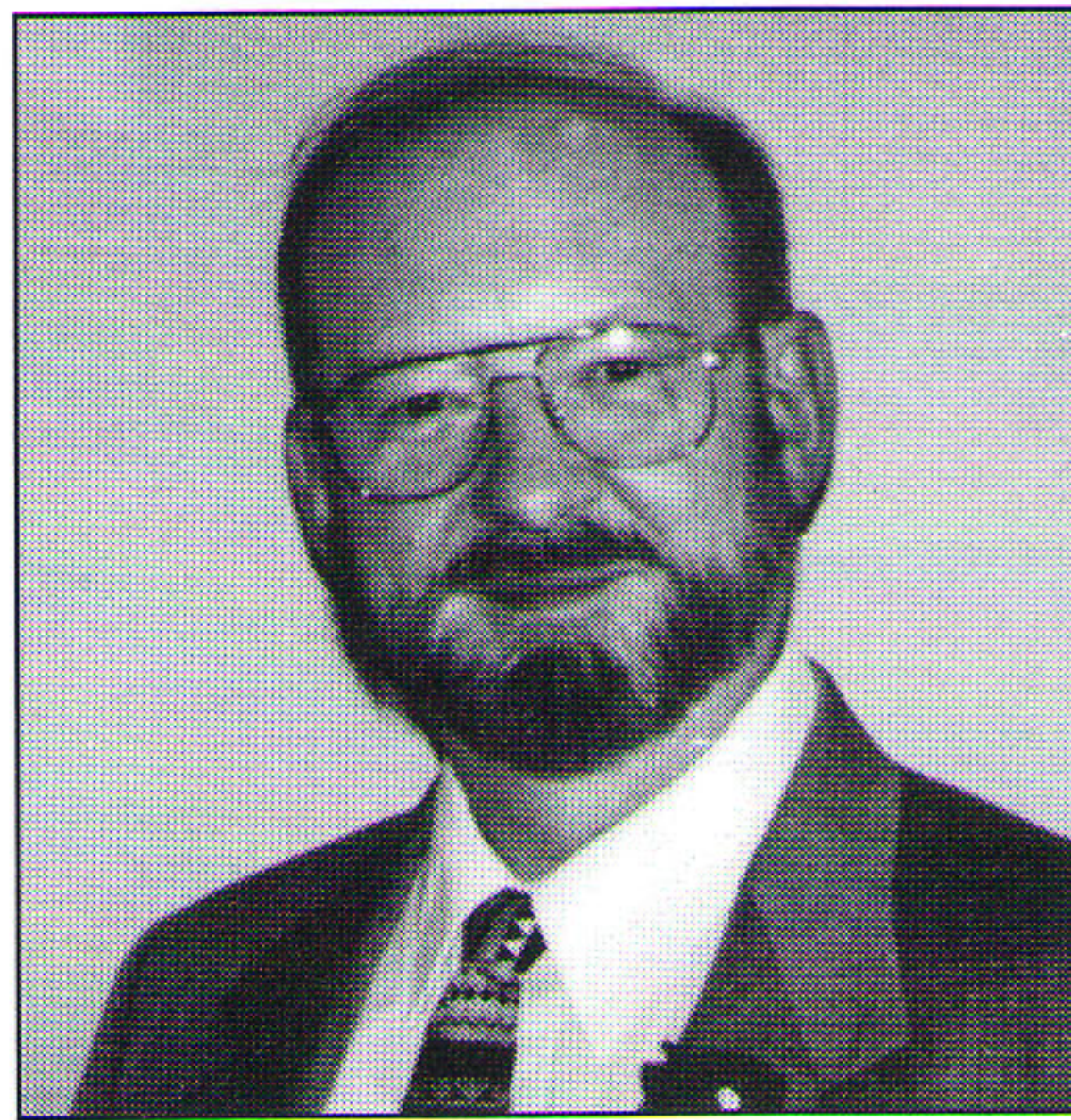
Mar Thoma Family Conference

Keynote Address

Dr. Robert C. Neville

According to the media and politicians, the social institution of the family is in great trouble today. The divorce rate is high. Many children are born out of wedlock. Many single parents, men and women, are struggling to raise families while addressing economic responsibilities and pursuing careers. Laws are changing to recognize the rights of domestic partners who are not officially married. All of the religions practiced in America, including Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, and Hindu, as well as the many denominations of Christianity, are struggling to define what a religious marriage means in the modern day when the secular state defines its legal contours. That struggle is complicated when persons of one religious tradition marry a person of another. The traditional understanding that children belong to their parents who exercise sole responsibility for them is being challenged both by modern medicine which claims in some instances to know better what serves children's health, and by the growing body of human rights laws that define children's protection against abuse and neglect by parents. High mobility in American society weakens the effective links of extended families. Medical insurance and retirement plans diminish some of the economic reasons for family connections. I could go on and on. So it is a very good thing indeed that you are having a conference for families pursuing the theme, "Turn to God, rejoice in hope."

Yet for all the publicity, I suspect the dire warnings about families in America are sometimes overdrawn when looked at in historical perspective. They make sense only against the background of a supposed ideal for a family, which consists of a mother and father and two or a few more children. The father determines family policy and makes the crucial decisions, working outside the home to support the family while the mother raises the children and the children are schooled into careers to succeed their parents as breadwinners or homemakers respectively. This is the ideal proclaimed by the Southern Baptists recently, by the Promise Keepers, and by many conservative Christians, Jews, and Muslims who speak about "family values." My own family is rather like that, judged in economic terms alone, except that my two daughters became breadwinners as an architect and a professor respectively before either started a family, modern education for women being what



it is. In historical perspective, however, I doubt that ideal has ever been commonly the practice.

Most, though by no means all, immigrants to America have come from peasant cultures in Europe, Africa, Latin America, South or East Asia, and in peasant cultures the social unit is the village or community as much as the family. Economic structures are communal and do not depend so much on the bread-winning capacity of the husband, as the so-called American ideal holds; in most peasant societies women are extremely important for economic production. In most sub-Saharan African tribal societies, a family consists of a man and his several wives with children; the wives often do most of the farming and other economic work while the husband ideally is free to attend to community affairs, which so lamentably too often means tribal warfare. When that pattern is transferred to American ghettos, it does not look much like the ideal. African-American women, however, are not the only women who make important economic contributions to their community. In every society which is organized around community structures rather than free standing nuclear families, women have been economically productive, men have served the community as well as provided for their families, and children were raised by the village, as Hillary Rodham Clinton would say. The American ideal family is really based on a 19th century need of economic capitalism, that is to support workers and raise more workers who are mobile enough to go to where the work is regardless of other community ties.

As to the divorce rate, it indeed is high. But then so is the expectation that everyone should get married. In most traditional societies there are many roles for unmarried people. Moreover, without modern medicine the death rate from disease, and also from the accidents of economic life and from warfare, are more than enough to offset what might be a lower divorce rate, so that single parent families are far more common in those traditional societies than in modern America. Of course, the single-parent family is not much of a problem in a society where the community structure is as strong and caring as that of the nuclear family. Only in a late-modern society such as ours, which views community as a luxury and the nuclear family as the true reality, is a single-parent family so problematic. And even here, many single-parent families are extremely

successful. So I think the media and politicians' warnings about the family are important but exaggerated.

Concerning family values, there is an extremely important principle that must be observed, which is that values have to be relevant to the situation. Family values of the conservative Christian kind are just right if you have that kind of family. But they are destructive if you are a widow or orphan, are in a single-parent family, or are not married for any number of good reasons, or are homosexual, a hero in some important line of accomplishment, or disabled so as to be economically unproductive or incapable of caring for a household. In all those circumstances and many others the family values of the so-called ideal American family simply make people feel bad for not being something that they should not be anyway, and they do not supply guidance for their own situation. The American ideal is particularly destructive for societies that are trying to retain or to build a strong community structure in which the work of both women and men and the care and education of the children are embedded in the community itself, for that ideal promotes the false view that the nuclear family is the only real community structure. What we need are much broader ideals that encompass not only nuclear families but entire communities with many different kinds of roles and ways of life, many not taking place within such a family. I would guess that the Mar Thoma community is struggling to maintain just such a community solidarity in the face of pressures in America to consider the family alone as the only real social unit.

In this context let me address the first half of your conference theme: "turn to God." Specifically, I want to look at the family situation for Jesus and his time. Traditional Jewish society of his time was based on extended kinship families with the added category of "stranger within the walls." People's identity derived from their family role more than anything else. Women were legally owned by men, first by their fathers, second by their husbands, and third by their sons. To be widowed and sonless, or to be an unmarried orphan, meant you were without status, a social castoff; men who did not marry were also outcasts, lacking identity.

Jesus rebelled against this in the most dramatic terms. First of all, he vigorously attacked the model of the nuclear family. When his mother and siblings came to take him away from the embarrassing business of preaching and healing, according to Matthew 12, he denied that they were his family. According to Matthew 10, he said he came not "to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household." When a follower wanted time off to bury his father, an important family ritual, Jesus said "let the dead bury the dead." That's in

Matthew 8. According to John's account of the crucifixion, Jesus on the cross asked his mother to adopt the disciple John as her son, and John to adopt Mary as his mother, despite the fact that Mary had other children, including the future Christian leader James, and John had his brother James and living parents mentioned in the gospels. Jesus was creating an artificial family to supplant the kinship families. Sometimes we do not recognize how radical Jesus was about nuclear families. The only thing he said good about them is that fathers would not give their children stones instead of bread or snakes instead of fish.

But then the next dramatic thing Jesus did was to co-opt the ideals of family relations for universal relations. In Matthew 12 when he denied his mother and brothers, he pointed to his disciples and said "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." (*Matthew. 12: 48-50*). This was quickly expanded, especially by St. Paul, to symbolize God as father of all people, with all people being brothers or sisters of one another. The church community Jesus urged upon his disciples at the last supper according to John was one of friendship, love, and supportive care, like a family but inclusive of people who have no kinship ties. The organization of the Church at large is to replace the nuclear family with a more genuinely caring community. Add to that conception of the Church that it is the body of Christ, animated by his mind in the Holy Spirit, and the Church is far more than one realistically would expect of a nuclear family.

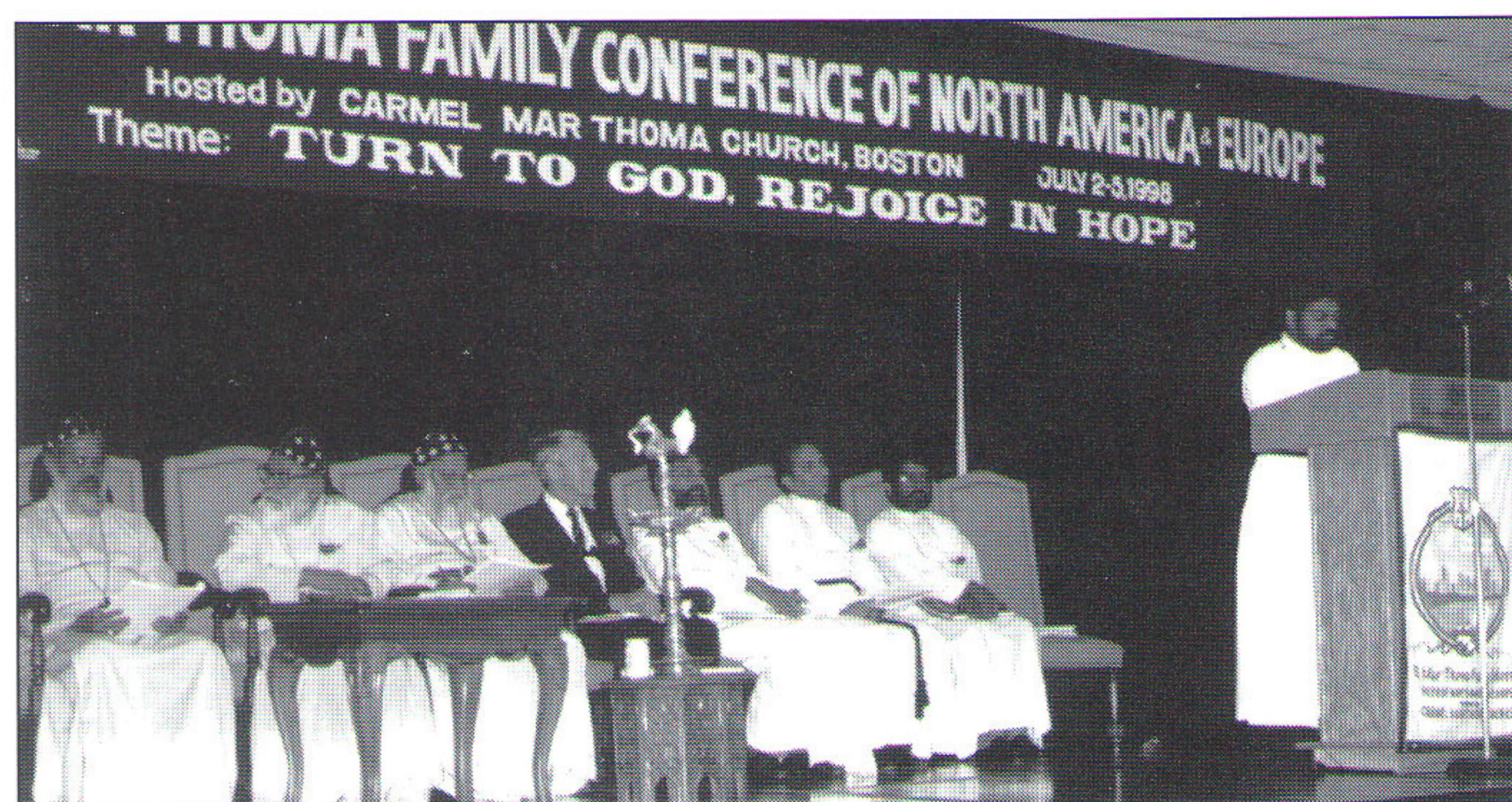
Now we have a clue to the genuine Christian approach to family values. It is not to impose on everyone a single pattern for what a family is supposed to be like. Rather, it has two parts. First, consider every human being to be a child of God who would want the best for them in their life circumstances. For some people, perhaps most in our economically structured society, that would mean joining in a nuclear family with a male boss and breadwinner, a female mother and homemaker, and children setting out to do the same, depending on gender. But there are many other forms of family that might be what God the Father would want for other children. And many people might fulfill their divinely ordained destiny in other, non-familial roles, all the while being devoted children of God and effective brothers or sisters to one another.

The second part of the principle for genuine Christian family values is that the Church needs to exert its efforts to make sure that the community does approximate God's family in all its respects, serving the fulfillment and growth toward God of all people, only some of whom are members of healthy nuclear families. Where nuclear families are dysfunctional or broken, the Church can help. Where a community's economic structure is exploitative of women, or of men, or of racial or social classes, the Church should step in to help. What to do to create an effective family of

XVI Mar Thoma Family Conference of North America & Europe



The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan inaugurating the Family Conference by lighting the lamp.



Rev. Alexander M. Issac (welcomes speech)



Inaugural Ceremony



Welcome: Carmel MTC Children

The XVI Mar Thoma Family Conference, hosted by the Carmel Mar Thoma Church, was held at the Tara's Ferncroft Conference Resort, Boston from July 2-5, 1998. The theme of the conference was "Turn to God, Rejoice in Hope", which also is the chosen theme of the eight assembly of the WCC to be held at Harare. The main leaders of the conference were His Grace the Metropolitan Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, Dr. Robert C. Neville, Rev. A. T. Zachariah, Dr. William P. Barker, Dr. T. V. Thomas, the clergy and lay leaders of the Diocese.

Separate sessions were held for children of various age groups. About 300 families attended the conference.



Talent Night Presentation: Philadelphia MTC



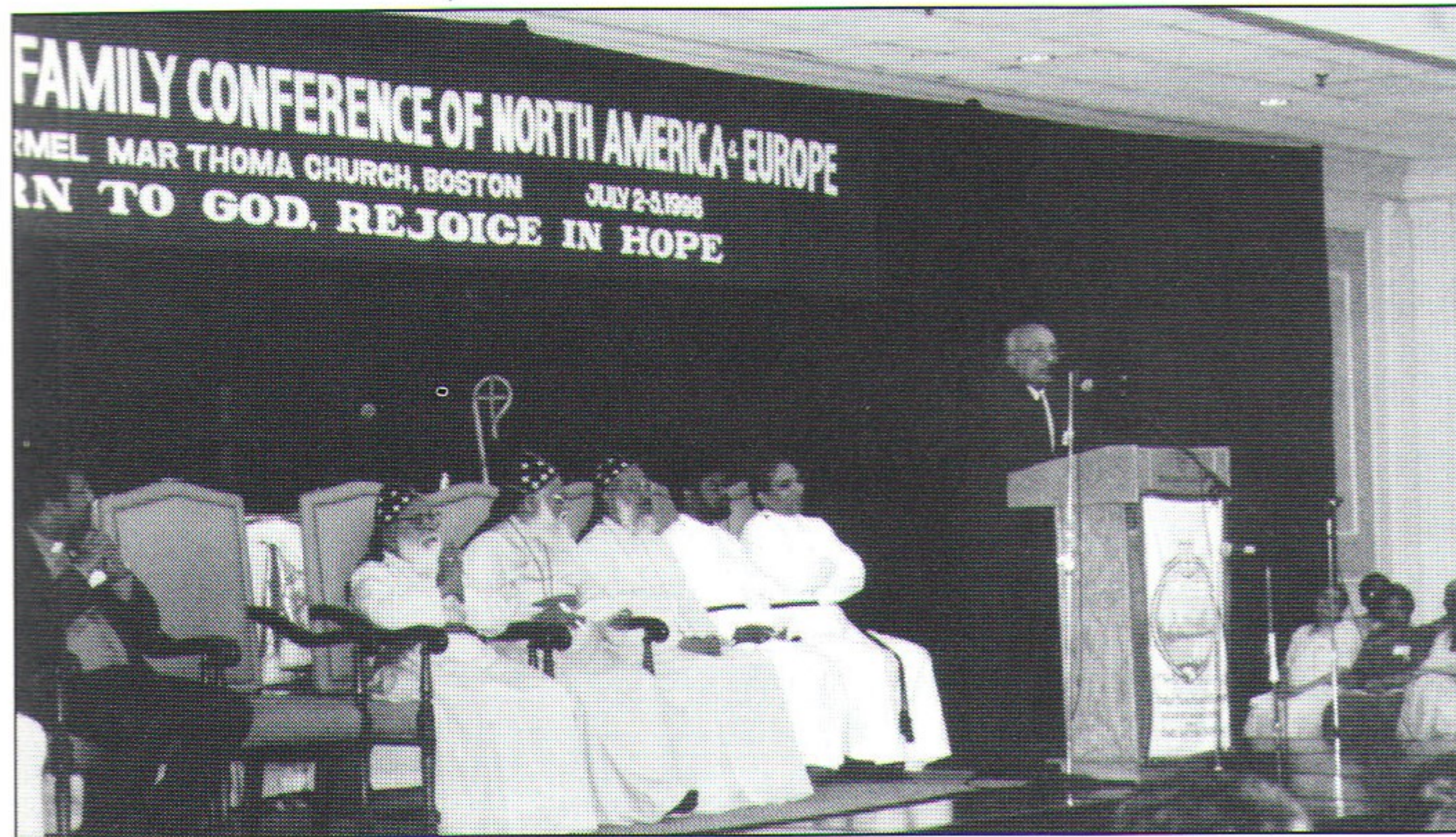
Youth Session



Valia Thirumeni participating in the games



Valia Thirumeni delivering the winning Joke



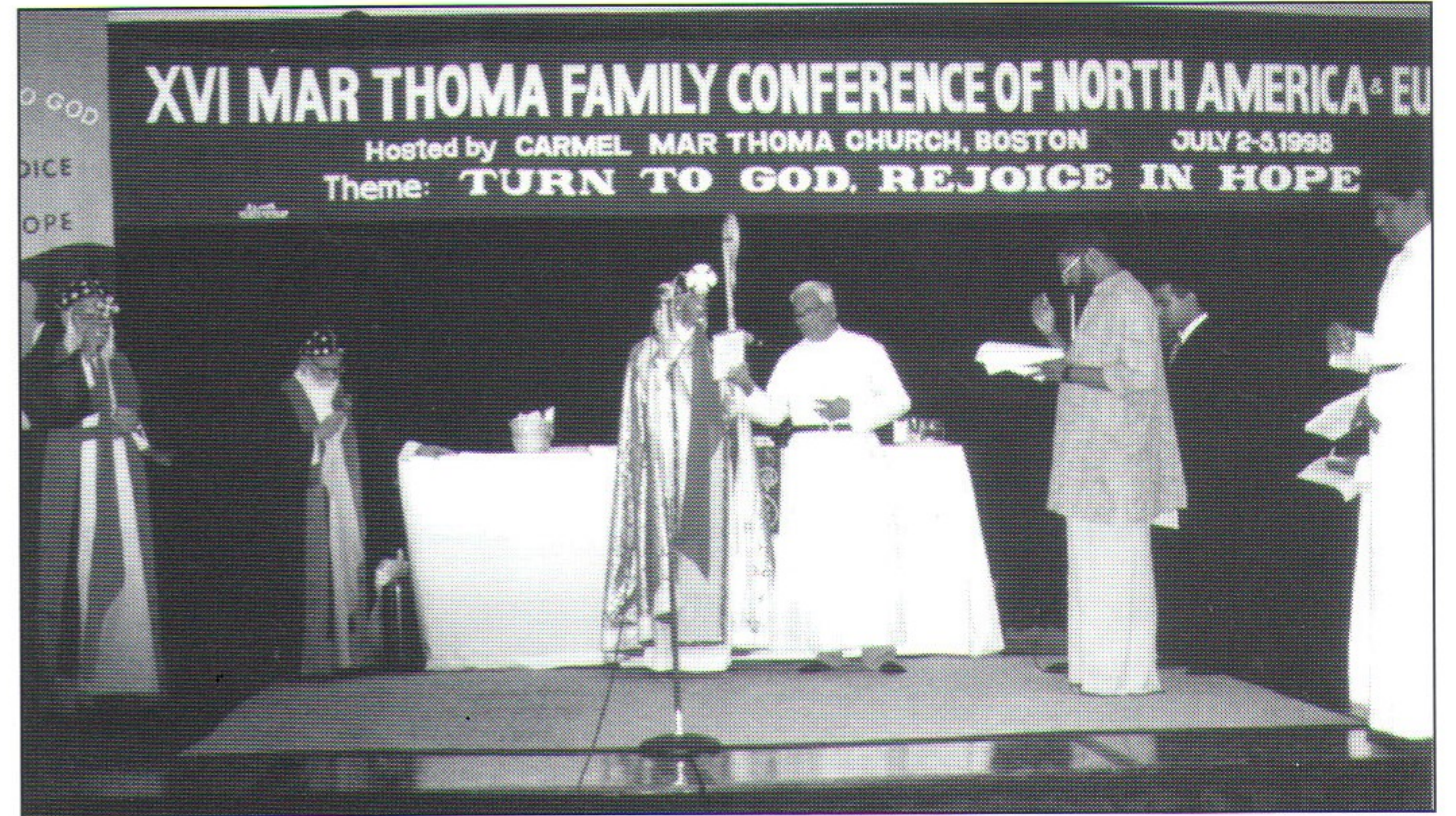
Hon. Justice K.T. Thomas of the Indian Supreme Court addressing the Session



Valia Thirumeni at the Suvisesha Dhoothan Booth with its coordinators



Valia Thirumeni with participants during leisure time



Sunday Holy Communion officiated by Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos



Hon. Justice K.T. Thomas receiving communion from Valia Thirumeni



Valia Thirumeni addressing the Youth Session

God in the conditions of modern American life is by no means a simple thing. Nor is it simple to say what the Church should do or how it should be structured. But two things are clear. First, the Church needs to maintain clear continuous contact with the ancient traditions in which Jesus decisively defeated the stranglehold of kinship families on personal life. We need constantly to be reminded that God is our father, all of us are siblings, and that Jesus is our eldest brother, the first one to inherit the stakes of God's family. Second, the Church needs to be very closely attuned to the contemporary situation to determine just what God's family requires. It cannot take its patterns for community life from those offered by the secular situation. But it needs to address the conditions constituting that situation.

Having turned our attention to God, let me now rejoice in hope. Hope because Mar Thoma community in America is gathered not just in families but as a family is a great source of hope. You have not lost the ancient vision. Hope and believe that through constant prayer, seriousness of effort, and willingness to be led in new directions, we can

trust to the Holy Spirit to put new wine in the wineskins of this new day, is an even greater source of hope. So it is with great confidence that I ask you to pray with me: O Father God, we acknowledge ourselves to be your children. Where we have been prodigal, we want to come home. Where we feel alienated, we want to come into your inheritance. Where we are turned from you, we want to come daily into a greater family resemblance to you through our brother Jesus. When enemies pursue us, remind us they are our brothers and sisters. When we are falsely accused, remind us we are of their family. When people are different from us, remind us of the vastness of your creation. Where we disapprove of people, remind us that everything you create is lovely, like a son or daughter. Where people are unjust, or suffer from injustice, remind us that it is our family that suffers. Remind us of the mind of Christ Jesus, the soul of our true community, the way to you. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Love One Another

Shane Ninan, Trinity Mar Thoma Church Sunday School, Houston, Texas

During mid June, a shocking crime occurred in the small county of Jasper, Texas. James Byrd Jr. was dragged to death down a winding country road just east of town. Three white men were charged with this murder, and it is believed to be a hate crime. Although we usually don't hear about gruesome murders like this, we do hear about crimes performed out of hatred and anger whether it be on the news or in the newspaper. But whenever we hear about these crimes, some of us wonder, "Why can't we all get along?"

As easy as it is to ask this question, it is not as easy to get along with everyone. For example, there may be a person that you know who is known to be the biggest gossip in the school. Then when you least expect it, this person starts to spread a rumor about you. The first thought that comes to mind is to go and say something to this person and hate them for life. This is an example of how hard it is to get along with everyone. However, Jesus said in John 13:34, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." As Christians, we should make a daily attempt to portray this verse in our lives.

When illustrating this verse in our lives, we must remember what love is and what it does. In 1st Corinthians 13:4-8 it describes what love is. It states, "Love is patient, love is kind; it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily

angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." Once you understand that this is the love that God wants us to demonstrate toward others, you will not only show others the nature of God, but you will be able to make a difference in at least one person's life. There was one person who portrayed this same love while experiencing very painful suffering. That person was Jesus Christ.

Before Christ was crucified, He went through a series of beatings. Throughout these beatings, people spat on him, mocked Him, and demanded that He be crucified. However, while hanging on the cross, instead of condemning all the people that had tortured Him, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." This statement alone shows Christ still loved and understood the actions of the people and was willing to pay the price for their sins. This is the type of love that Christ wants us to show, a love that is forgiving and unfailing.

In conclusion, with all of the hatred that surrounds us in our society, Jesus said something that should be illustrated in the life of a Christian. He said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." This means that we should portray a love that is forgiving and unfailing just as Jesus did on the cross. So when doing your daily activities ask yourself, "Am I loving like Christ wants me to?"

Eli Stanley Jones, Missionary Extraordinary

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E. Stanley Jones was a theologian, a scholar, a preacher, and a statesman. He greatly influenced the course of events throughout the twentieth century. The world has never been the same, and will never be the same since Stanley Jones walked across the stage. But in all the ways his influence was felt throughout twentieth century life, his most important influence has been as a Christian missionary. He set the stage and raised the standard for the twenty-first century Christian missions.



The success of the Christian mission in the twenty-first century requires that we make the gospel relevant to our day and age. Our task is not to promote the church or Christianity as important as this may be. Our task is to present Jesus Christ. We must simply enable Jesus Christ through our proclamation and witness to meet and to confront our age in the open market of religious pluralism, in what we speak of today as the "public square." The centrality of Jesus Christ and the "open market" approach were crystal clear in the evangelistic message and method developed by E. Stanley Jones. He worked in the most religiously plural part of the world, the sub-continent of India. His entire message and method were hammered out in this religiously plural society. Therefore, they are particularly appropriate for the kind of pluralism we face around the world today.

Actually there is nothing really new about pluralism and relativism. Christianity was born in the midst of a religiously plural world, and even a casual reading of the New Testament makes this abundantly clear. So a study of E. Stanley Jones as a missionary in the midst of religious pluralism can offer insights for our day.

Before going in some depth into Jones' missionary approach, however, we need to give a brief introduction to the man and the missionary. Stanley Jones was born just outside Baltimore, Maryland, January 3, 1884. He was educated in Baltimore public schools and studied law at City College before being graduated from Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky, in 1906 with an A.B. degree. He was a brilliant student and on graduation was asked to serve on the faculty at Asbury College where he taught for one year. However, he was already feeling a strong call to missionary service and in 1907 went to India under the auspices of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church. As was characteristic of missionaries going to India at the time, he began his work among the members of the very low castes and the outcasts. He did not attack Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or any Indian religion. He simply presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ, disentangled from western systems and cultures and their non-Christian and sometimes unchristian expressions. "The way of Jesus should be—but often isn't—the

way of Christianity," he said. "Western civilization is only partly Christianized."

After a few years of preaching in India, Jones, because of his intelligent and reasonable approach, began to attract wide attention among the high castes, the students and the intelligentsia. He was invited to speak at ancient universities and before learned societies. Soon he was set aside by his church to interpret the Christian Gospel especially to educated men and women. Jones conducted great mass meetings in leading cities of India. At one such meeting, their leader, an Indian and not a Christian, said, "We may not agree with what Dr. Jones is saying, but we can certainly all try to be like Jesus Christ," clear evidence that Jones was making Jesus Christ, not Christianity central in his message. He inaugurated what he called "round table conferences" at which Christian and non-Christian sat down as equals to study the basic beliefs that motivate persons. Thirty years before the United Nations came into being, he proposed a Round Table of Nations.

In 1925, while home on furlough, he wrote a report on his eighteen years of service—what he had taught and what he had learned in India. It was published in a book titled, *The Christ of the Indian Road* and became a best seller. It sold over a million copies and has influenced the entire course of missionary thinking. Other books followed and certain books or single chapters became required reading in various theological seminaries or in degree courses at government colleges in parts of the world. They have been read around jungle fires, studied by armies and governments, quoted in parliaments, and banned and burned by Communists. In all, he wrote twenty eight books, an average of one every two years for almost sixty years.

In 1928 Jones was elected a bishop by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. However, he felt God had called him to the work of a missionary and an evangelist and resigned on the eve of his consecration in order to continue his work as a missionary and evangelist. His work became interdenominational and world wide. He held before persons the reconciliation of humanity to God and of humanity to one another through Jesus on the cross. He made Jesus Christ visible as the Universal God-man who had come for all people. This opening up of nations receiving Christ within their own framework marked a new approach in missions. It came to be known as "indigenization." He helped to re-establish the Indian "Ashram"¹ (or forest retreat) as a means of drawing men and women together for days at a time to study in depth their own spiritual natures and quest, and what the different faiths offered individuals. Some came to refute the Christian Gospel or to extol their own faith. Others found themselves accepting Christ's way of life. These confrontations of person with person and

religion with religion greatly influenced the thought life of India's leaders and the views and activities of its ancient faiths.

Then in 1930, along with a British missionary and an Indian pastor, and using the sound Christian missionary principle of indigenization, Dr. Jones reconstituted the "Ashram" with Christian disciplines. This institution became known as the "Christian Ashram." It centers in study, devotion, fellowship, and spiritual formation with distinctively Christian motifs and disciplines. Stranded in the United States during World War II because the only overseas travel allowed by the United States government was for the military, Dr. Jones transplanted the Christian Ashram in the United States and Canada where it has become a strong spiritual formation ministry and has grown into a world-wide movement.

Stanley Jones went to earth's trouble spots helping to promote international understanding. "Peace," he said, "is a by-product of conditions out of which peace naturally comes...If reconciliation is God's chief business, it is ours...between man and God, between man and himself and between man and man." His efforts in Burma, Korea, and the Belgian Congo, between China and Japan, and between Japan and the United States, to mention only a few, received wide attention. In the months prior to December 7, 1941, he was a constant confidant of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Japanese leaders trying to avert war. He was actually at Warm Springs, Georgia, consulting with President Roosevelt when the Pearl Harbor attack came. In Africa, he was called the "Reconciler." On his first visit to Japan after the war, he was met with banners saying "Welcome to the Apostle of Peace." He also won the esteem of all India. Men in the old British colony and in the new Indian nation, which came into existence after World War II, counseled with him. He had been so strongly outspoken for Indian independence before the war that for a time the British government had banned him from India. To this day he is spoken of in India as "The American Gandhi," a term of highest respect. His influence had no small share in establishing religious freedom in the new Indian constitution.

In India Jones was involved in many activities in the various churches. He subsidized schools for lay leaders, provided "Church extension gifts" to build churches and schools in Indian villages and cities. He also supported students of the Mar Thoma Church preparing for the ministry, students at Leonard Theological Seminary, Indian students studying in America, and itinerant evangelists and Christian workers in rural areas. The Mar Thoma Church has now spread around the world with approximately two million members. Recently the Mar Thoma church in Baltimore named and dedicated a building as "The E. Stanley Jones Memorial Building," and at the event which we are now celebrating here in New York another building is being dedicated. Jones had a strong influence in preventing the spread of Communism in India. One of his books is titled *Christ's Alternative To Communism*. He founded, developed and supported Sat Tal, a full-time ecumenical Christian Ashram as a spiritual center for India, Europe and America.

An ardent supporter of Christian unity, Dr. Jones worked for Christian unity in India, and in 1947 launched a crusade in

the United States for a "Federal Union of Churches." He conducted mass meetings from coast to coast in the United States, speaking in almost five hundred cities, towns and churches. He advocated a system through which denominations could unite as they were, each preserving its own distinctive emphasis and heritage, but accepting one another and working together in a kind of federal union patterned after the United States system of federal union of states.

In 1950, Dr. Jones provided funds for India's first Christian psychiatric center and clinic, the now noted Nur Manzil Psychiatric Center and Medical Unit at Lucknow. The staff today includes specialists from India, Asia, Africa, Europe and America who have given up lucrative practices to serve in this Christian institution which serves thousands of patients. In time Dr. Jones' missionary work extended far beyond India and reached to the far corners of the world. He has been spoken of as the greatest Christian missionary since Saint Paul. He traveled among the peoples of the earth, speaking to all kinds of audiences, civic and governmental as well as religious. A heavy correspondence, writing a book every other year, and constant personal counseling, completed a program that went on round the clock, round the year, and round the world---a miracle of physical achievement. The years did not weary him, for he was blessed with physical stamina, mental vigor, and God's grace to sustain him in the rugged schedule he imposed upon himself.

In December of 1971, at the age of 88, while leading the Oklahoma Christian Ashram, Jones suffered a stroke that seriously impaired him physically but not mentally and spiritually. He was severely impaired in his speech, but dictated into a tape recorder his last book *The Divine Yes*, and in June of 1972 gave moving messages from his wheel chair at the First Christian Ashram World Congress in Jerusalem. He died January 25, 1973 in his beloved India. Indeed, E. Stanley Jones was truly a "Missionary Extraordinary" to the twentieth century! He points the way clearly into the twenty-first century.

One clear requirement of mission and evangelism in the twenty-first century is that it appeal to both head and heart. Years ago on the mission field there were mass movements on the part of some non-Christians to the Christian faith based primarily on emotion and mass psychology. When followed by adequate instruction and discipling, such massive "heart" religious movements have in many cases become solid. However, for the most part, such evangelism is a thing of the past. Evangelism for the twenty-first century must focus both on intellect and emotion. This is one reason for selecting Stanley Jones as the model for twenty-first century evangelism. He very clearly stressed both heart and head. When he went to the mission field, he was convinced that his message had to be both reasonable and appealing. His Alma Mater, Asbury College, had given him a thorough grounding in the Bible and the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith. However, his basic theology was hammered out on the mission field in the praxes of missionary engagement.

India, the birthplace of both Hinduism and Buddhism, was invaded around 1000 A.D. by Islam. For several centuries Islam controlled much of the life of India, and the Islamic religion was

thoroughly implanted. Hinduism alone, with its "330 Million Gods"²² provides a profuse religious pluralism. Add to Hinduism the other religions—Buddhism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism and hundreds of smaller sects, both ancient and modern—and we have probably the most religiously plural society in the world. This was particularly true around 1907 when Jones went to India. It is our thesis that the study of Stanley Jones' evangelistic message and method hammered out in this thoroughly pluralistic setting may give some guidance as we face the religiously plural twenty-first century. We look, then, at his guiding principles.

First, Stanley Jones' mission work focused not on Christianity or the Christian church, but on Jesus Christ. Also the focus was not on the theology of the Christian church, but on the person, Jesus, himself. Obviously these two are difficult to separate, and we are not suggesting that they either can or should be completely separated. Such separation would certainly be impossible. But there is a difference, and the point of one's focus is important. From the earliest days, the Christian community stated beliefs about Jesus, and these beliefs about Jesus, set forth in the New Testament, are of crucial importance. Stanley Jones held firmly to the basic biblical and evangelical beliefs of the Christian faith all his life. He believed in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, the Incarnation, the virgin birth and deity of Jesus, the Trinity, the atoning death of Jesus on the cross, the resurrection, Christ's second coming, the fallenness of humanity, salvation by the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ, and the church as the body of those joined to, and under the Lordship of, Jesus Christ. These beliefs were the bedrock of all his preaching and teaching. Yet, they were not the center. The center was Jesus Himself, the "Word become Flesh," the person, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and living today. Some modern scholarship under the influence of Rudolph Bultmann and others has tended to view the resurrection as simply the "Easter Faith" that arose in the consciousness of the early Christian disciples. This modern view tends to speak of Jesus' presence today in terms of human consciousness as a vague "spirit" or *Logos* that pervades the world as a kind of power of "Creative Transformation" (John Cobb). For Jones, Jesus' presence today was simple. Jesus is a living person (He is risen!) with whom we can have an intimate personal relationship.

Jones went to India thoroughly grounded in the Bible. His message remained Biblecentered throughout his entire career, but with a definite shift of emphasis as a result of his encounter with India's religious pluralism. In his first book, *The Christ of the Indian Road* written after he had been in India for approximately twenty years, Jones says that as he went about evangelizing in India, he soon found himself "trying to hold a very long line a line that stretched from Genesis to Revelation."³ In the biblically oriented western culture of America, defending such a line is at least a possibility. In the non-biblically oriented, religiously plural culture of India Jones found increasingly that it was a hindrance to Christian evangelism. After much struggle, he decided to give up trying to hold the entire line and instead to focus exclusively on the center, namely on Jesus Christ as the "Word become flesh." This turned some "fundamentalists" off.

He was branded by many as a "liberal" or "modernist" and rejected. Jones held firmly to the authority of the Bible, but he rejected fundamentalist "literalism" and "verbal inerrancy." To use a modern expression, Jones interpreted the entire Bible Christologically. A thorough Wesleyan in his theology, he followed the injunction of John Wesley to Francis Asbury as Asbury set sail for the American colonies: "Offer them Christ."

Second, Stanley Jones' mission work and evangelism focused not only on Jesus himself, but also more on what Jesus Himself preached than on what was preached about Jesus. In the context of a religiously plural culture, Jones discovered what many Christian evangelists have overlooked: Jesus is not only the content, but also the model for preaching and evangelism. It is not that what was preached about Jesus is any less important. In fact, it is crucial. The early Christian community proclaimed the Gospel—the "Good News" about Jesus recorded in the New Testament. This gospel about Jesus, who he was and is, is central to the Christian faith and proclamation. However, in preaching about Jesus, as important as this may be, one may fail to emphasize what Jesus himself preached, namely the Kingdom or rule of God and Himself as the embodiment, the incarnation of this Kingdom. Mark 1:14 says: "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand..."—at hand in Jesus himself. He was saying, "The Kingdom is here." He was himself the embodiment of God's rule. In Luke 4:43 Jesus says, "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God." The Gospels are unanimous that Jesus' preaching centered in the proclamation that "The Kingdom [or rule] of God is at hand."

God's rule is the great reality with which we human beings must come to terms. Jesus declared that this rule of God is absolute and all pervasive, controlling every aspect of both the physical universe and human existence. If we wish to live well, to possess abundant, eternal life, we must live in harmony with the way God has made us to live. There are no exceptions. One of Jones' earliest books, *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?*, set forth and sought to demonstrate the thesis that all creation is made to function in Christ's way: "All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together." (Col. 1:16-17) Rather than being an unrealistic idealism, as many suppose, Christ's way is the most realistic of the real. It is Reality with a capital "R"—Reality embodied in Jesus himself, the enfleshment of God who came to live among us. It is in this sense that Jesus is spoken of as the unique revelation of God, the absolute in a relativistic world. Whether any other person in history so embodies the revelation of God, that is, the way the universe is created to operate, is a question we will deal with later. But in Jones' view, he definitely is such an embodiment, and, Jones believed, the only one.

Third, this means that Stanley Jones' mission and evangelism focused not on religion, but on reality. A plurality of religions is thus basically irrelevant to his message. True, Jones was a devoted Christian, but his message was not about Christianity or about a set of religious beliefs. It was about Jesus Christ as the embodiment of Reality. We say that Jones focused

on Jesus Christ. Actually the ultimate focus was on Reality. Jones focused on Jesus Christ in no sense as “my religion” or “You must be saved through my religion”—a kind of “exclusivism” based on an arbitrary argument. Jones believed that Reality is enfleshed in Jesus Christ and that if you want to find reality, you will find it in him. The Logos—Ultimate Reality—actually became flesh and bones in Jesus Christ. Jones never put Christianity over against any other religion. He put Reality over against unreality and proclaimed that living in harmony with Reality meant abundant life, whereas living in accord with unreality meant destruction and death, both for the individual and for society. He certainly believed that we are saved through Jesus Christ. He dared to put this belief to the test of living, and found it to be true. Jones might be called one of the first “scientific” evangelists. He believed firmly in the scientific approach, that is, in putting the way of Jesus Christ to the acid test of daily living.

The sciences of psychology and psychotherapy were just coming into their own during Jones’ ministry. Jones’ study of these disciplines together with his own experiences in counseling and his keen observation of the human scene convinced him that what is revealed in Jesus Christ is identical with what was being discovered about life, about reality by the psychologists. He found that what Jesus says about the way to live harmoniously, peacefully, joyfully, and abundantly is exactly what psychologists were discovering as the way to live harmoniously, peacefully, joyfully and abundantly. Scientists were running head on into the reality proclaimed by Jesus: It is only by losing one’s life, by finding a focus outside of oneself, centering one’s life in service to others, that the abundant life is to be found. Psychologists were beginning to preach what preachers had often failed to preach—that is, that a selfish, self-centered life is always an unhappy life. “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt.10:39). Hence Jones’ overarching emphasis on self-surrender. He has a book titled *Victory Through Surrender*. His many books, particularly his ten books of daily devotional readings, though some are as much as fifty years old, are as pertinent to life today as they were when written. This is because they simply “offer them Christ” as the way to live—the way God has created us to live!

Following his explorations into psychology, Jones was emboldened to explore other social sciences—sociology, economics, political science, and the health sciences. It became clear to him that these sciences also confirm what God has revealed in Jesus. The Christian way is the right way in economics, in politics and in all social, family, community, national, and international relationships. The health sciences and medical studies in general give abundant evidence that the way of Jesus Christ set forth in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout the New Testament is the healthy way to live. Also studies show that the way of Jesus Christ is the only way that will ultimately work in economics, politics, and other social relationships in general. We live in a world where human selfishness and sin have skewed everything in such a way that much of our social, economic and political life is based on

unchristian principles. In such a skewed and twisted world the Christian way often seems idealistic and unrealistic.

But ultimately the Christian way is the only way that will work because it is the only way that is in harmony with reality. As stated above, reality is structured by Jesus Christ, and life will only work harmoniously if it works as it was structured to work, that is, in Christ’s way. Just as an automobile will not run on water because it has been made to run on gasoline, so life will not run on hate because it is made to run on love. Life will not run on dishonesty because it is made to run on honesty. It will not run on selfishness because it is made to run on unselfishness. Jones’ writings amass evidence, in the spirit of scientific inquiry, that the way of Jesus Christ is *The Way*--not just the way to heaven, but *The Way* in everything, whether personal, family, social, economic, political, national, or international, and that this is evidence that Jesus is the unique revelation of God’s will for the universe. This is the gospel, the “good news” of Christian evangelism.

There was nothing mushy or maudlin about Jones’ evangelism. He did not use “tearjerkers”, exploit guilt complexes, play on emotions or appeal to fear. He was always cogent and appealed to intellect as well as to emotion. He confronted the hearer with a reasoned and persuasive discourse on Reality and the way in which Jesus Christ is the incarnation of this Reality—the Logos (Reality) become flesh. Dr. William E. Berg, outstanding Lutheran minister from Minneapolis, Minnesota, describes Stanley Jones’ approach as “evangelism without fanaticism; urgency without frenzy; proclamation without manipulation; promotion without pressure; enthusiasm without theological naivete; and personal regeneration with social concerns.”⁴

This focus on reality rather than on religion is the key to the relationship of the Christian faith, and particularly Christian evangelism to other religions. In a sense it renders a plurality of religions irrelevant to the message of Christian evangelism. It means that Christian evangelism relates to other religions only as each relates to Reality and unreality. It is true that Christian evangelism, in Jones’ view, asserts that Jesus is God incarnate, the embodiment of Reality, and for many non-Christians this will be seen as a dogmatic claim, bringing in a controversial element. But this claim is rescued from its seemingly “dogmatic” nature by the focus on scientific testing, as we have shown above. Jones held that the crucial test is the test of living. Does it square with the facts? Does it express reality? Is it in harmony with what we actually experience in daily life personally, socially, politically, economically, nationally, internationally, and in every way? Is it the way to live? Is it the only way that will ultimately work? The answer to all these questions is “Yes.” The focus is on Jesus Christ who is *THE WAY*—the way in everything, and not on belonging to an institution or accepting certain beliefs, though certainly faith in Christ is essential to following His way.

Fourth, Jones’ evangelism therefore focused not on diatribe, but on dialogue. He never criticized other religions. He did not hesitate to discuss issues and to point to that which he felt was not in harmony with Reality, that is, with Jesus Christ, and thus not a correct reading of God’s will. But it was always in the spirit

of friendship and the facing of facts. He says, "I've been enriched through them [other religions]. Life can never be quite the same again." He respected and honored all persons and their religious commitments. His analyses were intellectually sharp, but he never cast aspersions. Likewise, he never dodged the scandal of the cross, but it was always presented in love, which is, of course, the major theme of the cross.

Jones' favorite method of relating to persons of other religions was what he called the "Round Table Conference." Representatives of all religions were invited to sit down as equals around a table and to share their faith. And it is interesting that many non-Christians not only participated in and supported such conferences, but joined in both sponsoring and leading them. There was no confrontation or tension. Everyone felt comfortable. The atmosphere was one of mutual respect together with friendly sharing and caring. Let Jones describe the "Round Table Conference."

In our Round Table Conferences we gather about thirty people, the best representatives of the various faiths, and of no faith, and we say to them, "We have had the dogmatic, the controversial, the traditional approaches to religion. Shall we take an approach more akin to the method of science? In the scientific method there are three things: experimentation, verification, and sharing of verifications. We have been experimenting with this business of religion, using it as a working hypothesis of life. What have you verified in experience? What has become real to you? Will you share with us your verifications? I suggest that no one argue, no one try to make a case, nor talk abstractly, nor preach at the rest of us, but that you simply share with us what you have found in experience through your faith. If you have no faith, if you are an agnostic or an atheist, tell us how that is working. We will not sum up at the close. We will leave the facts to speak for themselves."⁵

Note Jones' emphasis on the scientific method. In an age when the warfare between science and religion⁶ was still being waged in many circles, Jones boldly declared that we must use the scientific method in religion exactly as we do in other areas of life. He believed in, and championed revelation, but insisted that science, putting beliefs to the test of daily living, was also a way to arrive at truth. The truths of revelation tried, tested, and shown to be true, and the truths of science insofar as they relate to the same area of life are the same, for truth is truth, however one arrives at it. One of his dictums was "Whether we come from revelation down or from the facts up, we arrive at the same place: Jesus Christ." He would agree with the astronomer who, in a moment of ecstasy while scanning the heavens through his telescope, exclaimed, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee." He never feared putting the revelation in Jesus Christ to any test that can be devised, for he was absolutely sure that Jesus Christ expresses the reality of the universe. He was sure because across many years and in many diverse cultures and situations with

individuals, groups, and nations he had used the scientific method, putting the Way of Christ into the test tube of daily living. He knew that the revelation in Jesus Christ would stand the test.

Much is being written today about dialogue with persons of other faiths as the wave of the future, and there is wide difference of opinion as to the value and place of dialogue in the Christian mission. Some Christians are presenting dialogue as a kind of substitute for proclamation and evangelism, the new way to relate to persons of other religions, which rules out evangelism. Others are seeing dialogue as simply a new strategy for a kind of hidden or covert evangelism, which amounts to proselytism. The first view ignores the Christian mandate of the "Great Commission." The second is dishonest and unworthy of the name "Christian." There are many proposals for dialogue today somewhere between these extremes. To discuss these different types of dialogue is beyond the scope of our purpose in this essay and would make the essay too long. But dialogue is certainly not new. It is precisely what Stanley Jones was doing in his "Round Table Conferences" with great effectiveness, and we will focus only on this type of dialogue since we believe that this is the fruitful way to dialogue.

In the Round Table Conference there was no pitting of one religion against another. There was only witness to what one's own religious faith has done and is doing in life. This is dialogue at its best—and evangelism at its best. In regard to the Christian's participation in the Round Table Conferences, the Gospel is presented in the form of personal testimony. It is done in the context of a thoroughly democratic atmosphere that respects and honors each person's religious commitment. The Christian simply presents and talks about the meaning of his/her own personal I-Thou encounter with Jesus Christ as a living person today—not as a dead figure of the past whose teachings or example we may look back on and honor. All others are encouraged to share their own witness. There is no institutional focus, and indeed no focus on religion as such. There are no ulterior motives in terms of religious or institutional affiliation. All is focused on "What is Reality and have we found it?" "Is what I have found working in my life?" "Have I found joy and an abundant life in spite of problems?" "Have I found the way to live?" "What is the evidence of this?"

Of course, the Christian wishes for others the joy that she or he has found and she or he shares this joy with enthusiasm. It is precisely the Christian's contribution to the dialogue. For too long religious dialogue has been conceived of primarily in terms of talking about the religions, their beliefs and practices, etc., and how they relate to one another. The goal has been to get together and understand and appreciate each other better, which is certainly a worthy and necessary goal. But also we would insist that understanding and appreciation certainly cannot for the Christian be the be-all and end-all of dialogue. This focus, however, seems to remain the goal of most dialogue today. It is clearly the focus of Leonard Swidler mentioned above. Michael Barnes in his recent book *Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism*, with the sub-title *Religions In Conversation*,⁷ presents dialogue in this way. In the section on "Dialogue In Practice"

Barnes speaks of dialogue as a process of communicating and understanding ideas and concepts and that we must encourage the partners in dialogue "to look for common ideas and values."⁸ The overall purpose of dialogue is "the pursuit of understanding."⁹

This need for friendship and understanding between persons of different religions is urgent, as we have made quite clear above, and dialogue for this purpose is extremely important. There is a need for persons of all ethnic and religious backgrounds to sit down together in mutual friendship to get to know, to respect, and to appreciate each other. This is precisely what we do in the city where I live, and in other cities all across the United States in inter-religious "ministerial unions" or "ministerial associations," and they are quite effective.

Charles Foreman says of dialogue: "The purpose is mutual knowledge and growing friendship, the clearing away of prejudices and those ideas which are false or only partly true and in need of correction."¹⁰ No one would disagree with this statement. But many, if not most Christians would not wish to leave it there. In certain contexts dialogue goes beyond this point. Stanley Jones insisted that we go beyond this "friendliness" stage of correcting errors and creating understanding, as important as it may be. Sitting at the Round Table together as equals in mutual fellowship and friendship, we can engage in dialogue that reaches to deeper levels of personal existence. The Christian's part in this dialogue is to make Jesus Christ known in a rational, intelligent, and compelling way as a real person living today, winsome, loving, not only demanding as the embodiment of God's rule, but redeeming as the loving forgiving power of God enabling the human race to meet God's demands.

This witness is made not only verbally, but also by winsome loving presence and service. Telling the story of Jesus and his love, making him known is crucial, but the witness must be more than verbal. It must also be vital. It must be a living witness. Others must see Christ in us. Likewise, it must be clear that argument over religions is absolutely ruled out. Of course participants representing other faiths have exactly the same privilege (and in so far as they feel it, the obligation) in regard to sharing their faith. It is a thoroughly mutual existential dialogue. Jones had a profound belief that Jesus Christ as a living person would stand on his own and speak to persons if there was a genuine encounter. In fact, this is the ultimate faith in Jesus Christ. Jones makes the astounding statement after years of experience at the Round Table Conference:

There was not a single situation that I can remember where, before the close of the Round Table Conference, Christ was not in moral and spiritual command of the situation. ...wherever men are in fellowship with Christ in a personal way, this does happen, and it happens with almost mathematical precision.¹¹

This is a very strong statement, and it is important to note in connection with it that the Round Table Conference strictly forbids preaching to the others or in any way seeking to

"convert" others. It specifies that each participant can only share what his or her faith has done and is doing in his or her life. Immediately following the above statement, Jones says:

There was no drawing of contrasts between the different disclosures of the adherents of the various faiths, no pointing out of superiorities by a clever summing up—we left the statements to speak for themselves, to be their own witness by their own worthwhileness.¹²

Fifth, and finally, this conviction led Jones to focus on personal existential encounter with the risen and living person, Jesus Christ, as the heart of evangelism. God's power to transform persons comes through the mystery of interpersonal encounter, not through any "thing," even the church, or the cross, or the altar, or the sacraments, or preaching, as important as all of these are. These "things" are instruments God uses. But salvation comes through the actual interpersonal dynamics of the encounter of two persons, Jesus Christ and the human person. This is the heart of Person Christology.

The goal of all of Stanley Jones' preaching was simply to introduce persons to Jesus Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" meant for him a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. "Believe" in this verse meant to him "faith," "trust." It was never a *fides quae*,--accepting beliefs about Jesus—but a *fides qua*--a trust in and surrender to Jesus Christ as the "power of God unto salvation." The personal encounter with Jesus had transformed his own life, had given him a new power, and had brought unspeakable joy and fullness of life. He simply wanted everyone in the world to experience this same encounter with Jesus, the victorious joy that it brings to the individual, and the peace and happiness that it brings to the world. Remember again our paradigm of how an interpersonal encounter with Jesus can totally transform life. Jones insisted that every person, regardless of his or her accomplishments or character, needs Jesus Christ, and he carefully showed why. In an address given in Memphis, Tennessee following the 1928 Jerusalem Conference of the international Missionary Council, he pointed to the exemplary character of Mahatma Gandhi, who was his personal friend, and asked the question: Does a great and good man like Mahatma Gandhi need Jesus Christ? The answer is, emphatically, "Yes," and the balance of the address seeks to show why.¹³

In preaching the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ as the embodiment (incarnation) of this rule or Kingdom, Jones was clearly aware that God makes absolute demands: Live in harmony with God's rule or perish. But likewise he was aware that such a demand is impossible for fallen human beings out of their own human resources to meet. It is not that the human race has not tried. In fact, across the centuries persons of all races, religious and ethnic backgrounds have struggled with great determination to meet God's demands. The noble teachings of the great sages of all cultures and religions, the lofty ideals of the great philosophers, the stirring challenges of the great moralists, the rigid self-denial of the great mystics and ascetics, and the

unsurpassed devotion of the saints of all religions testify to the tenacious commitment of the human race to measure up to God's demands. Jones had a great respect for all the great religions and philosophies, the beauty of their precepts, and the nobility of many of their adherents.

But alas, the tragic experience of the human race has been that commitment and determined effort are not enough. The beauty of the ideals expressed in the world's great scriptures and philosophical writings only underscores the tragic wrecks of human history. The heroic nature of the human struggle to measure up only underscores the depth of human failure. With all the admonitions in the world's religions to integrity and rectitude, dishonesty and corruption run rampant. With all the exhortation to practice love and brother/sisterhood, strife and wars continue. With all the stirring essays on service to our fellow man, greed and self-seeking still control the human race. What more eloquent testimony could there be for the fact of what Christians call the "fall" of man or "original sin?" Can it be true after all that the human race really cannot out of its own resources measure up to the demands of God's rule?

The absolutely overwhelming evidence of history says a resounding "Yes." We cannot save ourselves. The great religions and philosophies point the way. But the testimony of humankind seems to be that only the transforming interpersonal encounter with Jesus actually enables us to find and follow the way by giving us a new power. We must have a power from outside ourselves, and Jones presented the life-transforming encounter with the risen living person, Jesus Christ, as this power. How this power operates, how it happens that the person in interpersonal encounter with Jesus is transformed, is a mystery. But that it happens is a fact which cannot be denied. When such a transforming miracle takes place, "religion" as such is clearly secondary. Religion is important in the sense of a "community of faith" that nourishes, informs, and inspires through worship, ritual, education, involvement in service, and other forms that can lead persons to Jesus Christ. But "religion" as such, however it may be defined, is not the essential thing. Rather, such a transforming interpersonal encounter is open to every person through simple faith and an interpersonal encounter with Jesus Christ risen from the grave and living today in person, regardless of the person's race, religious background, or ethnic and national origin.

This, again, is in no way to minimize religion with all of its heritage, ritual forms, and inspiring, sustaining worship and fellowship. But it is to make clear that the crucial, essential ingredient in a transforming experience is the interpersonal encounter with Jesus Christ. This is the heart of Jones' evangelism and also the heart and essential meaning of Acts 4:12, ("no other name") which we will discuss below. In a very real sense Jones was not a religionist, though he devoted his entire life to a religious vocation. In fact, he was what we might call an existentialist—though certainly not in the sense of modern philosophical existentialism. He was an existentialist in the sense that he focused on personal existence and on the interpersonal, I-Thou encounter with the living person, Jesus Christ, as the heart of the Christian faith and Christian evangelism.

Of course we need to be careful to underscore that evangelism for Jones in no way ends with this personal I-Thou encounter. This is only the beginning. Jones' dictum was "Evangelism that does not begin with the individual does not begin; evangelism that ends with the individual, ends." He stressed that conversion is both individual and social. There is no such thing as personal salvation apart from social salvation. A saving relationship with Jesus Christ must of necessity involve one in community with other Christians and in a saving relationship with society. Thus, the crucial importance of the church as a fellowship of those surrendered to and committed to Jesus Christ. For Jones, the dichotomy between the so called "personal gospel" and the "social gospel" is a false dichotomy.

Jones' evangelism worked. He preached an average of three times a day, for over fifty years in nearly every country of the world, with time out only occasionally to write a book. No evangelist in modern times has been more active. Whatever the audience or congregation, he always preached Christ, never deviating in the slightest. Also, He never omitted or tried to gloss over in any way the scandal of the cross. In fact, he always magnified it. "Surrender" and "You must be born again" were always at the center. Yet, he probably had more close friends among leading non-Christians than any other Christian in the twentieth century. This fact clearly refutes those who argue that we must soft-pedal emphasis on the uniqueness of Jesus if we are to relate to persons of other religious faiths. Jones said, "You cannot be more universal by being less Christian."¹⁴

In his last book he records:

I once went to speak to the Rotary Club. I sat down alongside a Jewish Rabbi when I finished. I asked him, "Rabbi, was I too Christian for you today?" He said, "Oh no. The more Christian you are, the better you'll treat the Jews!" Whether it is Jews or nature or yourself, the Christian way is the natural way to live, and you find you are in your homeland the moment you become *Christian*.¹⁵

Note that he does not say, "a Christian," but "Christian"—that is, a follower of Jesus in your commitment and in the way you live. Harvard University theologian, Harvey Cox, one of the leading liberal theologians of our day and one of the chief architects of the secularization movement in theology, discovered to his amazement this fact which Stanley Jones had found earlier. He went on the dialogue trail and found that "Jesus is not merely a background figure. He is central to the Christian faith. Not only do the Christian dialoguers recognize this, but so do their Muslim, Buddhist, Shinto, Hindu and Jewish conversation partners."¹⁶ Cox discovered that "any honest dialogue between Christians and others will sooner or later—and in my experience it is usually sooner—have to deal with the figure of Jesus."¹⁷ He then continues, "My problem with dialogue tactics that I lay down the Jesus factor is that—surprisingly—it is just this factor that the non-Christian participants often seem most interested in and most eager to discuss. This is not something one is led to expect will happen in interfaith dialogue. But it does."¹⁸

Because of his Christ-like character and openness, Jones became a friend of Mahatma Gandhi and spent considerable time at Gandhi's Ashram. He had many conversations with Gandhi and witnessed to him many times. Gandhi never professed faith in Christ, and this was one of the great disappointments in Jones' life. However, Jones was a true missionary in witnessing to Christ (not trying to "convert" Gandhi), and Jesus had a profound influence on Gandhi's life. Many have observed that Gandhi in his character and life was more like Jesus than the large majority of Christians. In this sense he was Christian, though not "a Christian" in the sense of affiliation with the Christian faith.

Jones also became a good friend of most of the major leaders of India following independence. The majority were Hindu or Muslim. I recall that once when Jones was visiting in the Philippines, where we were missionaries, a leading cabinet minister in the Indian national government had been invited to speak at the University of the Philippines. We attended and when we went up to speak to him after the address, the speaker saw us and blurted out, "Dr. Jones, what are you doing in the Philippines?" Jones was known, respected, and loved far beyond Christian circles in India. Gandhi was asked one day by a mutual acquaintance what he thought of Stanley Jones. His reply: "He is a very nice young man. But he is too sure of his religion." Jones was genuinely "Christian," devoted to Jesus Christ—not just an affiliate of the Christian faith.

Among Jones' twenty-eight books is an appreciative biography of Mahatma Gandhi, which is titled *Gandhi Portrayal of a Friend*.¹⁹ It is still in print. Martin Luther King, Jr. told Stanley Jones' daughter, Eunice Jones Mathews, (wife of Bishop James K. Mathews of the United Methodist Church) that it was reading her father's biography of Gandhi which led him to adopt the strict non-violent method in the civil rights struggle in the United States. Bishop and Mrs. Mathews have remained close to the Gandhi family across the years, forming bonds of friendship with the children and grandchildren that reach far beyond religious affiliation. The entire Gandhi family and indeed all Or India have been profoundly influenced by the evangelism of Stanley Jones. This, in my judgment, is Christian evangelism at its very best and is a viable model for mission and evangelism in the twenty-first century.

Stanley Jones remained a fervent evangelist to the day of his death at age eighty-nine. He wrote his last book, *The Divine Yes*, from his death bed by dictating into a tape recorder. Thousands came to a vital, life-transforming encounter with Jesus Christ through his ministry and thousands more have discovered under his preaching, through his books, and through the Christian Ashram ministry which he rounded in 1930, more and more of the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. Jones was truly a "Christ intoxicated" man, a worthy model for evangelism in the twenty-first century. Following this model, Christian evangelism for the twenty-first century will enthusiastically present Jesus Christ to the world as God's revelation of himself, and as the model for the way God created humanity to live—that is, how things really are as verified in the burning crucible of daily living.

This evangelism will not only present Jesus as God's revelation of the way we are created to live, but also as the power of God through the cross and the interpersonal transforming encounter with the risen living person Jesus Christ to enable us to live as God intended. It will also create a support and growth fellowship (the "church" in some form) for those centered around Jesus Christ. We will become skilled in how to communicate as equals and to dialogue with persons of all cultures, all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds, as brothers and sisters. We will simply become the "friends of Jesus" making him known in a loving and winsome way to those who do not know him. We will carry out his commission: "You shall be my witnesses...." (Acts 1:8). Through the interpersonal transforming encounter and continuing fellowship with Jesus Christ, we and all those of whatever ethnic or religious or national background who come to him will be transformed, will receive power for living in the twenty-first century. We will find meaning, fulfillment, and joy both for this world and for the next. This is the Christian world mission for the twenty-first century. We will simply "offer them Christ" in as appealing, compelling, and loving way as possible.

- 1 A religious institution common to India. The word comes from the Sanskrit, A ("away from") and shram ("hard work.") It is a spiritual retreat, usually held in the forest or some other remote place, led by a religious leader or "holy man."
- 2 Time/Life film by this title.
- 3 E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (New York: Abingdon Press) 1925, p. 11.
- 4 Dr. Berg is a retired Lutheran minister in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has held many prominent positions in the Lutheran Church of America and was for many years a close associate of Stanley Jones. He is a permanent member of the Board of Directors of United Christian Ashrams International, a ministry which Dr. Jones founded.
- 5 E. Stanley Jones, *Christ At The Round Table* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1928) p. 21, and *The Word Became Flesh* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 362.
- 6 White, Andrew, *History of the Warfare Of Science With Theology in Christendom* (N.Y.: Appleton, 1908).
- 7 Michael Barnes, *Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1989).
- 8 Barnes, p. 59
- 9 Barnes, p. 138.
- 10 Charles W. Foreman, "Christian Dialogues With Other Faiths," *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission*, James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote, editors, (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), p.338.
- 11 Jones, *Christ At the Round Table*, pp. 50, 51.
- 12 Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, pp- 50-51.
- 13 See *Transformation*, vol. XXVIII:1 (Spring 1993), pp. 4-5
- 14 Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, p. 295
- 15 E. Stanley Jones, *The Divine Yes* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 66.
- 16 Harvey G. Cox, "Many Mansions Or One Way? The Crisis in Interfaith Dialogue." *The Christian Century* 105:731-5, August 17-24, 1988.
- 17 Harvey C. Cox, *Ibid.*
- 18 Harvey G. Cox, *Ibid.*
- 19 E. Stanley Jones, *Gandhi, Portrayal of a Friend* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1948).

Mar Thoma Church, A Bridge Church between the Eastern and the Western Churches

Dr. Anna A. Panackal

The Eastern Churches are mainly Orthodox Churches and the Western Churches are the Catholic Churches as well as the reformed churches such as the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, etc. Though the basic teachings of Christianity and the Holy Scriptures were formulated by the Eastern Churches, they remained virtually unknown to the West. The members of the Orthodox Churches form the second largest body of Christians, second only to the Catholics. After the second world war, many orthodox Christians migrated to Western Europe and America. Then the world began to notice them.

The Eastern Churches have never experienced a renaissance or reformation or influenced by the scholasticism or political secularization that the Catholic Church or the Reformed Churches in Europe faced. The Eastern Churches managed to preserve the original teachings and practices of the early Christians and the apostles. The isolation of the Eastern Churches from the Western political history kept them from secularization. But the influence of Islam and Hinduism helped it to maintain spiritualism and an ascetic life for the members. Therefore we find practices such as fasts, meditation, prayers, repentance, confession, and regular participation in Church's sacramental life in Eastern Churches. The ascetic life emphasized in the Eastern Churches helped the development of an inner spiritual life among its members. The Eastern Churches emphasizes the internal life more than the external life. Today we find that the Western Churches are trying to emulate the concept of spiritualism found in the Eastern Churches.

Orthodoxy is the true undistorted and un-perverted genuine teachings of Christ in its fullness and purity. It emphasizes traditions and is opposed to changes. Priests are the leaders who are knowledgeable in the traditions and are authorities. Changes in any aspect of church life is very slow, if not impossible.

The Mar Thoma Church is the outcome of reformation in the Malankara Church (a part of the Orthodox Churches in the East) brought about by the Anglican missionaries who worked with the church to reform it. Because of the influence of the Anglican missionaries, the Mar Thoma Church continue to reform its administration and functions. Presently, it is a dynamic church based on the teachings of Christ upholding the traditions and reformed liturgy of the Orthodox Church, stimulating and being stimulated by the Western Churches.

We have full communion with the Anglican Church, the Episcopal Church, and the Churches of South and North India. We have functional relationships with the Presbyterian and the Methodist Churches. We were the founding member of the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches in India. Recently, we became the 34th member of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. When we were installed into the membership of the NCCC, our diocesan bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, very appropriately said in his acceptance speech, "We are liturgical, biblical, missionary, and ecumenical. Some historians call our church as Bridge Church in India and now, we are a Bridge Church between the East and the West."

We are an evangelical church taking very seriously the commission Lord Jesus Christ gave his disciples. "Evangelize the whole world." We respect our traditions and liturgy, but our governance is democratic and our constitution places the authority on Sabhamandalam and the Synod. We accept the Bible as the final authority and believe in the Grace of God for salvation and not the deeds. In short, we have the appearance of an Orthodox Church, but function as a dynamic church similar to the reformed churches in the west. In fact, when we were voted into the membership of NCCC, the representative from the Greek Orthodox Church gave the most creative and affirmative vote saying, "We welcome this new Church who walks like us and looks like us, but is not us."

When we are in the west and when our children are born and brought up in the western culture, there will be questions on some of the conservative attitudes of the Church. One important current issue is the liturgy of the Church which insist on chanting the same praises and prayers for each service. The youth wants to have flexibility and to have more songs witnessing, open prayers, interactive sermons, etc. The older generation, who is used to the traditional liturgy will not tolerate a different order of worship. Currently, Malayalam is functional in many of our families because parents talk that language all the time. But as generations pass on fewer parents talk in Malayalam and then the language will cease to be functional in our community just as many Italians and French immigrants have lost their well developed language in a few generations. We have to emphasize English services and give the youth some flexibility to have services with more music, witnessing, and open prayers under the guidance of the clergy. Our Valiathirumeni wrote in his book, "The Mar

Thoma Church: Its Heritage and Mission', that we should be able to identify the problems of our current generation and solve them with understanding and Christian love. If we chose to be adamant and inflexible, in a few years down the road, the beautiful million dollar churches we worked so hard to build will be occupied not by Marthomites, but by some charismatic religious groups. Currently, we are seeing a large group of our youth going and worshiping in other churches instead of attending our services. We are fortunate to have a church which is flexible and understanding.

According to Orthodox tradition, marriage is the establishment of a relationship between two families, but in the western churches it has become a relationship between two individuals. We have to recognize that the possibility for some of our children to marry from other communities and/or other religions in this culture is very high. Many of the older generations find it very hard to relate to the concept of America as a melting pot of different cultures. The new generations would like to have their own vows for the wedding ceremony and would like to insert songs and blessings of parents in the ceremony. Church will have to make more adjustments to do things that are not against our faith and practices.

We have to evangelize this country, and that is our Christian mission. But we are not willing to accept other Americans to our Churches as members. We feel that we should keep ourselves ethnically pure and homogeneous. We are conservative to that extent as to keep our churches closed to other ethnic members. We have to become more missionary oriented and not feel threatened by the presence of 'others' amongst us. Currently, we are a growing church, not through conversions, but through immigration. We have to work among the non-Christians around us, baptize

them, and accept them as full members of our Christian fellowship. Then only we will be a true Christian Church.

When we grew up in India, we had the opportunity to participate in social service activities of the Church in our communities. Our youngsters do lack the pleasure they can receive in serving their community on a regular basis. Of course, our youngsters may be serving in a few soup kitchens here and there on a few occasions. Only when they could organize their own soup kitchens or other social services, finance them, and serve there, their leadership will develop fully. Only when they work continuously within their community they will feel that they belong to the community and then, their self estimate will enhance. It is very encouraging to see that the diocese is taking part in outreach programs such as the "Habitat for Humanity", but we have to open up new missions and participate in more local and national human service organizations. The youth in each parish should participate local social services so that they can see and feel the benefit of their own participation.

We, as a people, are conservative and have the appearance of an Orthodox group, but our Church is dynamic making adjustments to suit the environment in which we are placed without sacrificing any of the Biblical tenets. The Church is trying hard to accommodate the needs of its members and the people around upholding the traditions given to us by our fore-bearers. Sometimes we may be a little slow or make some misjudgments. Our great leaders in the past and the present were and are very farsighted and guided by the Holy Spirit to provide us with a structure and a set of dynamic functions and programs that helped us to become a World Church from its humble beginnings. Let us work hard on it and develop it further so that our next generation will turn around and say, "Thank you." May God bless us all. ■

VALEDICTORIANS — 1998



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Do We Know Our Church?

Rev Dr. K.T. Joy

Division in the Malabar Church:

The once united Malabar Church of St. Thomas up to the 16th century was divided into two communions, the Roman and the non-Roman. Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan has remarked thus, "members of the Roman communion came to be called as Pazhayakuttu or the old community and the non-Romans were called Puthiyakuttu or the new community. This is a strange use of terms; The Romans who came a century and a half ago are called the old and the centuries old independent Malankara Christians are called new." As the Jesuits were unpopular, priests of a different order. The Carmelites were sent to Malabar. Within a few years, the majority had been won back to Roman allegiance. But Metropolitan Mar Thoma I and his followers stood faithful to the old Malabar Church. However it is worth mentioning here that the position maintained by the Mar Thoma Church for the independence of the Malabar Church was fully justified later. The Metropolitans of the Mar Thoma Church claim to be the successors of St. Thomas.

The Malabar Church and the Jacobite connections (1665-1843):

With the decline of the Portuguese and the rise of the Dutch in India, fresh hopes inspired St. Thomas Christians to re-open communications with the heads of the Eastern Church. In response to their correspondence in 1665 A.D. Mar Gregorius, a Jacobite Bishop sent by the Patriarch of Antioch came in contact with the Malabar Church through 'Laying his hands' on Mar Thoma, the then officiating Metropolitan of the Malabar Church. This can be considered as the starting point of the Jacobite connection with the Malabar Church. What we looked for from Antioch was relationship with one of the Eastern non-Roman churches and not for doctrinal and ecclesiastical affiliation. This was possible because of the Church's free nature to welcome others into its friendship. And that is why later Palakunnathu Mathew was sent to the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch for acceptance of Episcopal Ordination.

Metropolitans with the title of Mar Thoma & Mar Dionysius:

Some nine Metropolitans with the title of Mar Thoma and four with that of Mar Dionysius were consecrated and held ecclesiastical authority over the Malabar Church from 1653

to 1843. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan in his book 'The Mar Thoma Church Heritage and Mission' writes: "some of the consecrations were conducted by visiting Bishops from West Asia as before and some by the local Metropolitans." Therefore we have every right to believe that there was no binding rule in this respect owing to the independent nature of the Malabar church of St. Thomas. However, the historical Episcopal continuity was restored with Mar Thoma I.

The Malabar Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyur:

During the time of Mar Thoma VI (Mar Dionysius I) a foreign Jacobite Prelate, Mar Gregorius, consecrated a kattumangattu Priest as Bishop with the title Mar Kurilos without consulting Mar Thoma VI or getting the consent of the people and gave him all his wealth. Naturally this led to a dispute between Mar Kurilose and Mar Thoma VI. With the assistance of the government the old Bishop succeeded in sending the new Bishop out of the territory of Travancore and Cochin. Thereby Mar Kurilos went to British Malabar and bought a property in Anjoor for the establishment of his Church which subsequently came to be known the Independent Syrian Church of Thozhiyur. This incident shows that consent and support of the local Bishop and the people to a Bishop consecrated by a foreign was necessary under the prevailing circumstances. However it has played a significant role at certain critical stages in the subsequent history of the Malabar Church as shall be seen later. This Church maintains friendly relations with the Mar Thoma Church especially for inter-church consecration of Bishops. Dr. juhanon Mar Thoma writes thus: "It was a gracious act on the part of Philexenos II of Thozhiyur to consecrate Bishops in the Malankara Church and not to claim any authority over them."

The Malabar Church and the Church Missionary Society:

The British East India Company became a dominant political power in India and Travancore and Cochin entered into a treaty with the British in an attempt to defend the states from the aggressive designs of Tipu Sultan. This had its repercussions on the history of the Malabar Church as well, as it led to the advent of the Church Missionary Society.

Mar Thoma VI, the Metropolitan of the Malabar Church told Buchanan at an interview that he had come to

visit a declining Church. Buchanan said that the main object of his visit was to investigate their historical literature, collect Biblical Manuscripts and render their scriptures in vernacular languages. The Metropolitan was pleased to present an old Syriac bible to Buchanan and the latter on his part, promised to make arrangements for its translation in due course. On returning to England Buchanan published a book entitled 'Christian researches in Asia' which captured the imagination and sympathy of many readers. His address at the anniversary of the Church Missionary Society in 1810 led the people to take more interest in the Malabar Church and its antiquity.

Colonel John Munro was the second British resident to Travancore and Cochin and also acted as the Dewan of the State between 1810-1819. He took keen interest in the social and religious renovation of the ancient St. Thomas Christian community there. During his time, Christians were appointed to public offices with one Christian judge in every civil court. He wrote to the Church Missionary Society of England to send missionaries with a view to revive the old church. Thus began the C.M.S. Mission in Kerala.

Punnathra Mar Dionysius (Mar Thoma VIII) and the C.M.S.:

Being conscious of the needs of his church, Mar Thoma VIII, the Metropolitan welcomed the C.M.S. Missionaries to work in the Malabar church. The three pressing needs of the church were that the clergy must be given an adequate and efficient education and the scriptures must be translated and distributed in the vernacular and discipline within the church must be strictly enforced. In 1816, Thomas Norton arrived at Aleppy as the first missionary and was placed at the disposal of Colonel Munro who gave him cordial support and assistance. Then he took sometime to study Malayalam language. During an interview, Norton assured the Metropolitan of the church and Munro that the object of C.M.S. Mission was to find out ways and means to benefit the old church. He paid frequent visits to Kottayam to note the progress of the college, the system of education and to confer with the Metropolitan who was desirous to implement a plan of having the Bible translated into Malayalam by teachers and the students of the college. Middleton, an Anglican Bishop, also visited the Metropolitan and Norton in 1816 and 1819. Rev. Benjamin Baily took keen interest in literary pursuits. He set up a press in Kottayam and translated the Bible and the English Book of Common Prayer into Malayalam. The New Testament was published in 1829 and the whole Bible in 1842. The old seminary Kottayam functioning as the training ground for the clergy was placed under the

supervision of Joseph Fenn. Rev. Henry Baker worked in the sphere of education. Schools were started at different places. These pioneer efforts were of immense value to the people, Mavelikara Synod of 1836 and the C.M.S.

Cheppat Mar Dionysius, the Metropolitan, suspected the work of the C.M.S. missionaries and reversed the policy of his predecessors and adopted a hostile attitude towards the reforms of the Church. Unlike early missionaries namely Fenn, Baily and Baker, the new missionaries Joseph Peet and W.J. Woodcock were rash and hasty in their actions. Through Mavelikara Synod, accepting the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch, Cheppat Mar Dionysius, sent a circular prohibiting any association with the missionaries. The Mavelikara Synod resolved that "we Jacobite Syrians, being subject to the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch...cannot deviate from such liturgies and ordinances... without the permission of the respective patriarch." Strained relations naturally led to a separation and a partition of common property followed.

The old seminary and the trust fund of Rs. 10500 (Vattipanam) were given to the Metropolitan and the missionaries received Munro Island and the funds for education. This ended the connection of the Malabar Church of St. Thomas with the C.M.S. of the Anglican Church in England. However, no one can easily deny that the good work of the C.M.S., was mainly responsible for the spread of English need for reforms in the Church.

Though the Roman supremacy had been thrown off in 1653 through the Oath at the Coonen Cross. Some of the imposed doctrines and practices continued to be observed and the Malabar Church of St. Thomas was in a state of decline. Conscious of the need for reforms in the church, Mar Thoma VIII (Punnathra Mar Dionysius III) appointed a committee of the clergy, including Abraham Malpan to examine the liturgies and remove the unscriptural practices which had crept in the church. But there was a temporary setback as Mar Thoma IX (Cheppat Mar Dionysius IV) managed to obstruct the reforms through Mavelikara Synod in 1836 maintaining that any change in the existing conditions and practices must have prior sanction of the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, a condition which none of His predecessors ever insisted. The purpose of the reformation was to create new life in the old Malabar Church of St. Thomas. It was a spiritual movement in accordance with the Biblical teachings and traditions which awakened the church to its evangelistic responsibilities.

(To be continued)

Are We What We Are Not?

Dr. Zac Varghese, London, UK

If someone were to ask us, “what kind of a Church is the Mar Thoma Church?, what would be our answer? The options for labeling our church as some recognizable entity in the directory of Churches is not easy. The options are many: Catholic, Orthodox, Jacobite, High Church, Traditional, Middle Church, Low Church, Eastern, Liberal, Protestant, Evangelical, Reformed, Methodist, Radical, Pentecostal, Baptist, Post-evangelical, Post-modern, Ecumenical, Charismatic and so on and on. I wonder where you put Mar Thoma Church at the present moment? Perhaps like me, you too find it difficult even in understanding what some of the above labels mean- for instance what on earth is “Post-evangelical” and “Post-modern”? What is the difference between “Pentecostal” and “Baptist”, between “Reformed” and “Liberal”, or between “Jacobite” and “Eastern”?

I have been struggling with this question for quite some time and I have been exploring for a unique Mar Thoma identity like late Glen Miller searching for a unique and distinct note for his jazz band. However, the importance of this struck me more acutely when I attended the dedication service of the Mar Thoma Diocesan Center in Long Island. There it was, architecturally very beautiful, but a distinct Kerala style building in the middle of 14 or so other Churches in the heart of Long Island. A breathtaking view because of its break with architectural traditions in that part of Long Island; for a traditionalist, it is outrageous, it does not merge smoothly with other buildings, it stands out to prompt the question, “what is it?” Was this a deliberate attempt to provoke exactly the same question I wonder? If so it really hit the target. The answer is obvious and simple to some of us; it is the headquarters of the Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church of North America and Europe. However, this simple answer is evolved from the realization of a dream of our Metropolitan- The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma and interpreting that dream into a reality through dedicated and untiring work of an equally great Diocesan Bishop- The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus. Among two thousand people who attended the dedication and thanksgiving service, conducted by our venerable Metropolitan, were a large number of Bishops of sister Churches and other dignitaries and politicians, but there was also a very special group of people, pioneers, a group of stalwart mar Thoma Christians whose strong heart throbs brought tears to my eyes and reconfirmed my realization what Mar Thoma Church is all about. Every

brick and mortar, tile and structure of this building declares emphatically the loyalty of our people to their church and their trust in their Lord. this loyalty and trust are legacies that we have received from our parents and I am really glad that we, in our generation, are able to follow in their footsteps by living out our faith in the way that we know and build on what they have built so that we may be able to leave religious and cultural legacies for our children. Now every Mar Thoma Christian, irrespective of the place they live and work, can be proud of this ‘reference point’ in the center of the most powerful nation in the world. Everyone involved in this magnificent project should be congratulated for making this possible. Now we have a visible identity, but how do we go about answering the question I posed at the beginning? So often, when we describe Mar Thoma Church, we do so in many negative ways. We find it easier to say what we are not than what we are. I have been told from my childhood that our Church rejected theology behind, prayers for the dead, the intercession of the dead, invocation of Saints including “Hail Mary”, private confession with priest, the doctrine of transubstantiation and so and on. Then I have been told that we are far removed from the orthodox or the Jacobite Church, but we are something called Eastern, and we follow St. James liturgy. These things confused me no end because my maternal uncle who was a venerable old priest (Valiaya Achen) of the Jacobite wing used to argue about these things with my paternal uncle who was an equally venerable old priest of the Orthodox wing of the ancient Malabar Church. Then there was my relatively young father, my hero, my role model, standing between two giants and arguing logically like an experienced lawyer and theologian about the truths behind the reformation and thereby defending Mar Thoma Church. I admired him enormously for having the courage to leave the security of a family Church and generations of tradition on the basis of his faith and convictions. He fought valiantly from his corner to the end of his days in this world and helped to establish the legitimacy of the Church in that corner of Kerala. I have picked up many other snippets in my childhood from my parent’s dinner table with the visiting clergy and other Church-related people. These include the facts that during the latter part of nineteenth century the Orthodox Church of Malabar divided into two over the issues of autonomy from the Patriarchate of Antioch and the removal of non-biblical emphasis from teaching and

worship, the later issue being a result of the influence and intervention of Church Missionary Society. This reformed branch of the Old Church accepted or maintained the name of Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar. Now towards the end of the 20th century, realizing the global nature of this ancient, but reformed Church, there is genuine plea from eminent people like the honorable Justice K. T. Thomas for dropping both "Syrian" and "Malankara" from the title of the Church. At other times, I have been told that we are not Orthodox or Protestants, but we are an Eastern Episcopal Church. Our late Metropolitan, The Most Rev. Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma, wearing badge and belt of the World Council of Churches, thought of the need in becoming a "Church of India." Interestingly, a very small group of people with global aspirations have told me that they have been leaning towards Anglicanism and how much they value the establishment, in 1974, of full communion with the Anglican Church. However, my impression is that Anglicans do not think very much of this. However, in the 'post-Lambeth-98' situation, probably, the Anglicans need us more than we need them. Our Eastern spirituality is something that the Western Christians would like to know about and here is an opportunity for us to share the values of meditative Christian lifestyle. We who live in the West may be able to tell our friends in the West about the virtues of quiet life in Christian Ashrama and this I hope will be a very effective way for fostering ecumenical relationship with other Churches in the West.

It seems to me, as a layman, there are elements of "Catholic, Orthodox, Eastern, Evangelical, Liberal and Charismatic" in our parish life. I used "Catholic" in the sense that we are conscious of being part of the wider Christian Church, with its roots in the teachings of the Apostles including Apostolic succession and all Holy sacraments. We are "Evangelical" because of our appreciation of the centrality of the Bible and the importance of evangelism attached to it. We are also at heart a "Charismatic Church" in the true sense of the word.

The word "charismatic" is an expression for the gifts of God's spirit. You may recall that in I Corinthians 14:1, St Paul encourages us to "be eager for the gifts of the Spirit", and furthermore, St. Paul gives us a list of the "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22. These are gifts God gives to Christians to build His Kingdom here and now. These are very special gifts which are given to the youngest and the oldest, not on merit because we could not deserve them, but by grace because God is so generous to us at all times.

These generous gifts which St. Paul writes about are wide ranging, to be used in total humility, to be used to

build up our faith in God, but not a badge to wear proudly and to declare the membership of an elite club within the Mar Thoma Church. These gifts are not weapons to destroy reputations of others, these are not weapons to be used to humiliate others. We should not be standing and shouting on others "fallen nature" to declare our "Holiness" and "Sainthood." These gifts are painkillers and tranquilizers to bring about healing in relationships. As The Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan would put it, "Christians who display the 'fruit of the spirit' are aspirins of the society." Then we become "builders" not "breakers" of people, families, and communities.

The gifts or "charisma" are given to be used. I think that God in His mercy has given each of us a special and unique gift of the spirit which we are free to use or not, depending upon our willingness to do so. We often fail to notice, or to underestimate these gifts, because they may not seem so spectacular or well recognized as the gift which other people so obviously possess or shout about. Perhaps one does not know what one's gift is. Whatever gift that we have and whatever gifts God may give us in the future, we need to remember that Lord entrusts us with these gifts for healing, performing well in our professions, providing good administration, caring for the hidden and unspoken needs of others around us, understanding, providing hospitality and finally for loving so that His Kingdom may grow.

Therefore, with humility and understanding, we can move away from being a bundle of negatives to areas of positive commitments so that others may see "fruit of the spirit" in our relationships and in our daily living. This will tell others what Mar Thoma Church is all about. Our Lord is not concerned with our definitions and labels (be they "Eastern", "Evangelical", "Reformed" or "Charismatic") as He is with our heart. The important question is simply this, "Are we in love with our God and our neighbor?" The answer to this question will tell everyone that who we are and who we are not. At the end of the day, the label matters very little to Him; it is the love that counts most. Then we become the heart of a heartless community, society and nation. A very scholarly gentleman recently wrote to me to say that Mar Thoma Church has created a "Taj Mahal" in New York. What is wrong with a "Taj Mahal?", it was one man's supreme attempt to express his love and loyalty to a beautiful queen that he loved. Even if it were true and the gentleman is correct in his assumption, we do not have to be ashamed of expressing our love and loyalty to our Church in this way because this is the base camp, Sinai, from which God may help us to display an Eastern Meditative lifestyle and the "fruit of this spirit" to America and other countries.

Finding Hope in a Hopeless World

Mini Alexander, St. Thomas MTC

A report on a recent mission trip to India at her own expense, sponsored by the North American Diocese Youth Department.

I have just recently returned from a six week mission trip to India. I had the opportunity to travel to many mission centers and to meet many people in different circumstances. After arriving in Bombay, I visited the Santa Cruz Mar Thoma Church and met one of the vicars there, Rev. Raju Philip. They have a very strong youth group there that participate in various outreach programs. One of the programs they have started is recruiting the slum children of Santa Cruz and educating them. They presently have 14 kids from the ages of 4-15 years. They are taught how to read and write Hindi as well as teaching them about Jesus. After the classes are over, lunch is provided by the church for them,



Slum children of Santa Cruz, Mumbai with Mini Alexander

and afterwards they return to their respective homes. On one of the Saturdays I was there, a couples meeting was held in the church for which dinner was provided for. There was so much food left over that we decided to bring it over to the slum children the next day. There were 6 of us who went and served the food. The smiles that showed forth on the faces of these children was the best reward any of us could have asked for. So as George Bernard Shaw once said, "Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself."

From Santa Cruz, I went on to visit Vasi, to the Navajeevan Center which is headed by Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa. A main focus of ministry is the commercial sex workers of Kamatipura, Mumbai, an area known as the red light district. I was able to visit the homes of several of these women who have been in this business since childhood. Some stay because they feel they know no other profession and will be unable to survive outside the "adopted family" of women. Some stay to raise money to send to their homes or marry off their children. But most of them remain due to the fear of being killed by the harem owner. The AIDS population in Mumbai is skyrocketing, and once a sex worker has contracted HIV they are no longer allowed to stay in the harem and are kicked out and forced to live in the streets. The mission workers, especially 2 persons I had the opportunity to work with, Anson Thomas and Moses, start very early every morning and visit these women and counsel them. They tell them about the love and

forgiveness of Jesus Christ and how much God loves them and is willing to help them if only they will take the first step, and ask for help. Every visit was ended with a prayer and a promise that they will be returning again. Anson and Moses were able to reach out to a few women and take them out of the streets. The Mar Thoma Church built them small homes and found small jobs for them to survive on.

Anson Thomas has started a new project called "Sports Mission", which focuses mainly on AIDS awareness. He sets up his microphone system on every train and bus he travels everyday and speaks about the prevention of AIDS. Many may ignore him but he continues regardless. I do believe that a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step, but that initial step is the most difficult one to take for all of us.



Children of the Navajeevan Center at Vapi, Gujarat with Mini Alexander

From Bombay, I went to Vapi, Gujarat where the Navajeevan Center takes care of 22 boys, ranging from the ages of 3-14 years, who are mostly taken from the commercial sex workers. There are 2 house parents taking care of them. They attend school and are also taught about Christ and His love for them. Every night they all gather together for Bible reading, singing, and prayer. There is a prayer before eating as well, and no matter how hungry they may be they won't start before giving grace. I felt ashamed at myself for not having as much devotion and reverence for my God even after being born into a Christian home. Almost all of these children are of Hindu parents. The mothers are allowed to visit their children twice a month with special permission. And when they visit the children feed their mothers the food that was served while tears roll down their eyes. One 8 year old child looked at his mother and stopped her from feeding him and said "I have all that I need and more here, and I eat well here everyday, and I know you don't, so you eat, and I will watch you." No matter how little the mothers may visit, the bond between them is never broken. The mothers feel a sense of peace inside because they know their children are well taken care of and taught moral as well as spiritual values. I do believe that we can't change the whole world, but we need to try and start somewhere. A man

who removes mountains always begins by carrying away small stones.

I went on to visit Hoskote Mission in Bangalore. The center consists of a theological school for men and women, a mission hospital, a nursing school, a nursing home called Shanti Mandir, and a leprosy home. The main focus of their outreach program is evangelical work where volunteers go out to villages and preach about God's word. They reach out to alcoholics, slum dwellers, and families with social problems. They have several schools that are open to village



Residents of the Jubilee Mandiram—Kottarakara

children to learn Kannada, mathematics, Christian songs, and about Jesus. They are given baths and fed everyday until they reach a certain age to either continue their higher education, or find work.

I left Hoskote and went to Kerala, where I visited 2 old age homes, the Jubilee Mandiram in Kottarakara, and Dharmagiri in Kumbanadu. These 2 centers house the old age destitutes regardless of sex or religion. There are prayers



Residents of Dharmagiri Asram, Kumbanadu

twice a day where everyone gathers for a small service. These people don't expect much from you except to just listen to them. They have so much knowledge in them that they want to share with whomever is willing to just take the time to listen. The love these people showed me is beyond explanation. And as Mother Teresa said "We can do no great things, only small things with great love."

I visited the Jyothis Bhavan, a home for the mentally handicapped in Mavelikara. This center provides shelter and systematic training for the mentally retarded children between the ages of 5-16 years. There are about 36 students and 9 staff members. Jyothis ministers to the needs of the children irrespective of color, caste, or religion.

I was also able to visit Charal Mount with Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa. This is a training and educational center for children. It helps them to learn the Bible with scenes built by different artists in the form of statues, pictures and maps.



Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus Episcopa at Charal Mount.

With that, my mission trip came to an end. It was the most rewarding journey I have ever undertaken. The main question that comes to mind is "Am I my brother's keeper?"



Mentally Handicapped Children of Jyothis Bhavan, Mavelikara with Irenaeus Thirumeni and Staff.

If you would like to find out more information on any of the above mission centers, or want to help in any way please write to them at the following addresses:

Navajeeven Mar Thoma Center

Sec: 10-A Plot: 18
Vashi, New Mumbai 400 703, India

Jbilee Mandiram

Pulamun P.O., Kottarakara 691 531
Kerala, India

Jyothis Bhavan

School for Mentally Retarded
Puthiyacavu, Mavelikara 690 101, Kerala, India

Hoskote Mission & Medical Centre

Hoskore 562 114
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Dharmagiri Mandiram

Kumbanad 689 547, Kerala, India

The Future of the Mar Thoma Church in North America

Gina Mathew, Trinity Mar Thoma Church Sunday School, Houston, Texas

Many of us attend Church every Sunday, going with the flow of things, unaware of where we are and what we are supposed to be doing. What is the definition of a true church? Why and how was our Church established? What will the future be like for our Church in this land?

The Church of Jesus Christ is pictured in the Bible as the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, and also as the spiritual house made of believers who are transformed by the life of Christ. Before discussing the future of the Mar Thoma Church, we should reflect upon the history of the Church.

St. Thomas, an apostle of Jesus, who was commissioned to preach the gospel to all nations, came to India and established a Church in Kerala. This Church went through a series of changes at different periods in history because of the influence of the Churches of Syria, Persia, and other oriental countries, and also the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, it was the coming of the Anglican missionaries and the translating of the gospels that brought new life into the Church. Abraham Malpan, along with Geevarghese Malpan, two professors in the Bible Seminary, brought reformation in the Church. Taking the Word of God as the foundational teaching of the Church, the experience of salvation by grace as the faith of the Church, and evangelism as the mission of the Church, the Mar Thoma Church flourished in Kerala. But it was the seeking of better employment opportunities that resulted in the transplanting of the Mar Thoma Church to the continent of North America, and as you can see, it has grown dramatically. How can we envision the future of the Mar Thoma Church in this land? For the continued growth and refinement of the Mar Thoma Church in the twentieth century and beyond, I suggest four important points.

1. Vision

Vision is the ability to see God's presence, perceive God's power, and focus on God's plan no matter what obstacles may form. Moses, seeing the vision of God, led the Israelites to their ultimate goal- the promised land. So also must our people see the needs of others through the eyes of God so that we may grow as a Church. We must also be open-minded and encourage our youth, envisioning them as our future leaders, as God saw the king in the life of David, a young shepherd boy. One hundred fifty years ago, it was the vision of Abraham Malpan and other visionaries that reformed the Mar Thoma Church, and now it is the vision of the leaders and members of our Church that can continue to refine and strengthen the Church in the years to come.

2. Priorities

Priorities can be described as "first things first." For the growth and stability of the Mar Thoma Church in this land, we have got to set our priorities right. As mentioned before, the three aspects of reformation were the teaching of the Word of God, the experience of salvation, and evangelism. As a Church, we need to set these as our priorities. I know we are living in a completely different world with completely different lifestyles, compared to the past. We may say that things are different now, and the ideas used in the past are too old fashioned and traditional. Well, then we must be willing to adopt different methods for the teaching of the word of God, and bringing people to experience of salvation, as well as evangelism within the church and outside the Church.

3. Determination

This is a major step beyond vision and priorities. It involves the discipline to remain consistent to achieve the goals we have set. No matter what the obstacles are, no matter how much fire is hurled at us, no matter how much discouragement we receive, we, as a Church, must be determined to be persistent to reach the goals we have set.

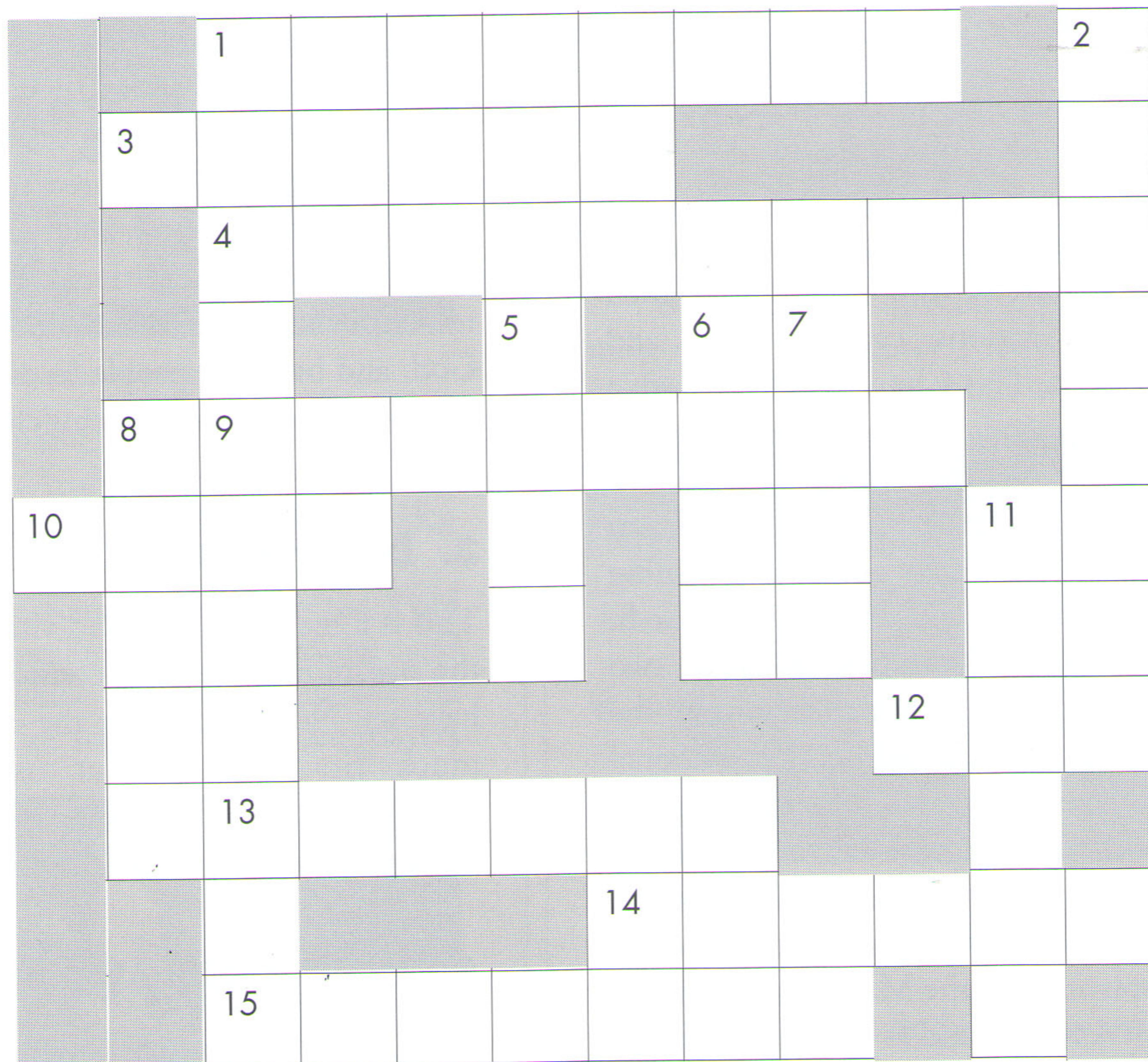
4. Accountability

As part of the Church of Jesus Christ, we are first of all accountable to God. We need to examine ourselves as a whole. Are we fulfilling Christ's mission to take the gospel outside of our Church in this land? Accountability to our spiritual leaders is inevitable for the growth and stability of our Church in the midst of this wavering society. We are also accountable to one another. Let me summarize this accountability by quoting St. Paul from his letter to Romans: "Love must be sincere, hate what is evil, cling to what is good, be devoted to one another in brotherly love, and honor one another above yourselves."

In conclusion, let us be determined to continue the work that our forefathers have set for us. The future of the Mar Thoma Church in this land is dependent on each and every one of you, especially the young people, because you are the promise of tomorrow. With the right vision, with the right priorities, with determination, and through our accountability to God and others, we will have a future Church that will accomplish many feats.

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
 (based on the book of St. John Chapter 1-15)
Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)



Across

1. A high priest.
3. If you had been here, my brother would not have died. Who said this?
4. One night he went to Jesus.
9. Another name for lake Galilee.
10. He is God's messenger.
12. Number of stone water jars filled with water.
13. He took Simon to Jesus.
14. He who reveals the truth about God.
15. Jesus called him out of the grave and raised him from death.

Down

1. Jesus turned water into wine in _____.
2. It has taken ____ years to build Jerusalem temple.
4. He is a real Israelite: there is nothing false in him.
5. Meaning of Siloam.
6. The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your _____ for them.
7. She wiped Jesus feet with her hair.
8. He lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert.
11. He is Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth. Who said this?.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION
(based on the book of St. John Chapter 18-21)

Mrs. Mini Joys Thomas (New York)

C	L	M	N	R	A	B	B	O	N	I	K	L	M	R
G	I	O	P	Q	A	N	N	A	S	O	P	A	B	G
A	S	A	B	C	D	I	A	G	E	F	C	D	I	J
B	S	I	M	O	N	C	T	A	L	A	T	I	N	K
J	E	P	G	H	I	O	H	B	N	M	L	O	P	R
J	O	S	E	P	H	D	A	B	T	H	O	M	A	S
K	L	M	N	O	P	E	N	A	T	H	Y	E	L	A
Q	R	S	T	U	V	M	A	T	M	A	R	C	H	L
W	X	Y	Z	M	N	U	E	H	L	S	T	U	V	Y
V	L	O	P	O	P	S	L	A	P	I	L	Y	O	N
J	V	T	L	M	A	L	C	H	U	S	F	R	U	E
P	K	Y	P	I	L	A	T	E	O	N	E	T	R	O
O	N	S	A	B	B	A	T	H	F	O	U	R	P	L
L	M	A	R	Y	M	A	G	D	A	L	E	N	E	M
O	C	D	F	G	O	L	G	O	T	H	A	O	N	S

- Simon Peter cutting off his right ear.
- Jewish guards arrested Jesus and took him first to _____.
- "I cannot find any reason to condemn him." Who said this?
- Hebrew name of the stone pavement.
- Jesus crucified there.
- Soldiers took Jesus clothes and divided them into _____ parts.
- Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews is wrote and put on the cross in _____.
- Jesus robe was made of _____ piece of woven cloth.
- Jewish authorities did not want the bodies to stay on the crosses on the _____.
- He was a follower of Jesus, but in secret, because he was afraid of the Jewish authorities.
- He went with Joseph taking with him about one hundred pounds of spices.
- Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark she went to the tomb.
- This means teacher.
- Stop your doubting and believe. Jesus said to _____.
- The disciple from Cana in Galilee.
- Son of John.

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS SEPTEMBER 30, 1998

DIOCESAN NEWS

SINAI MAR THOMA CENTER DEDICATION

The Dedication ceremony of the newly built diocesan center, The Sinai Mar Thoma Center located at 2320 South Merrick Avenue, Merrick, New York 11566, was held on June 27, 1998 at 3:00 p.m. The celebrations started with the dedication service held at the Chapel of the center under the leadership of The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan and accompanied by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, the Diocesan Bishop of North America and Europe, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos, Bishop of Madras-Calcutta Diocese, The Most Rev. Mathews Mar Barnabas, Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, and Rev. Oommen Philip, the diocesan secretary. Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, the General Secretary of NCC, The Hon. Justice K. T. Thomas of the Supreme Court of India and the Clergies of the Diocese and many dignitaries also attended the service.

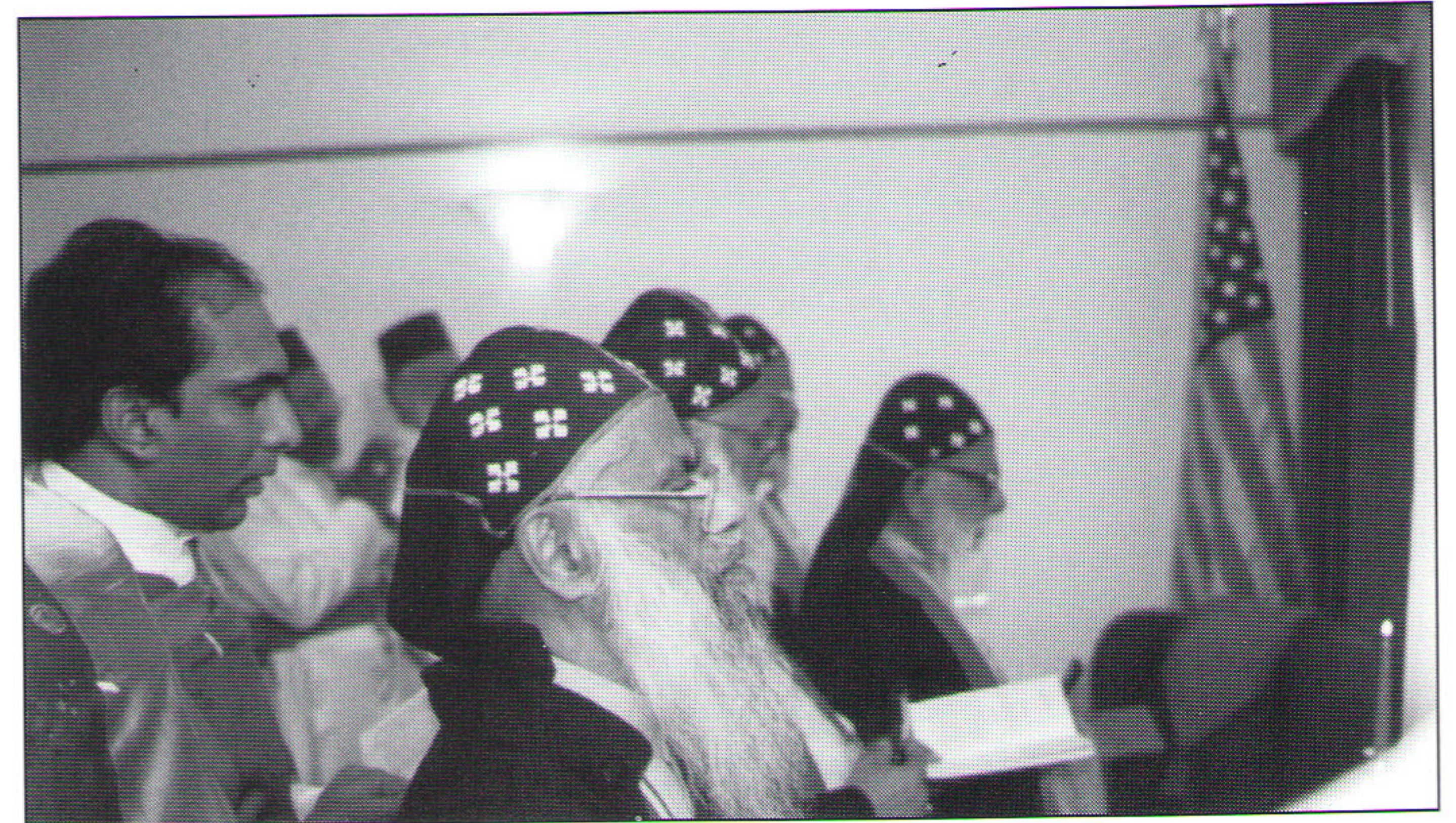
After the Service, the Metropolitan unveiled the plaque, Rev. Dr. Joan Campbell hoisted the American Flag and the Metropolitan hoisted the Diocesan Flag.

The Public meeting that followed was attended also by the Most. Rev. Thomas Mar Makarios Metropolitan, The Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Nicholavas Metropolitan, the Indian Counsel General of New York Consulate, Rev. Winston Ching of the Asiamerica Ministry of the Episcopal Church and many church and political leaders from the U.S. and India and hundreds of members of the diocese from U.S., Canada and Europe.

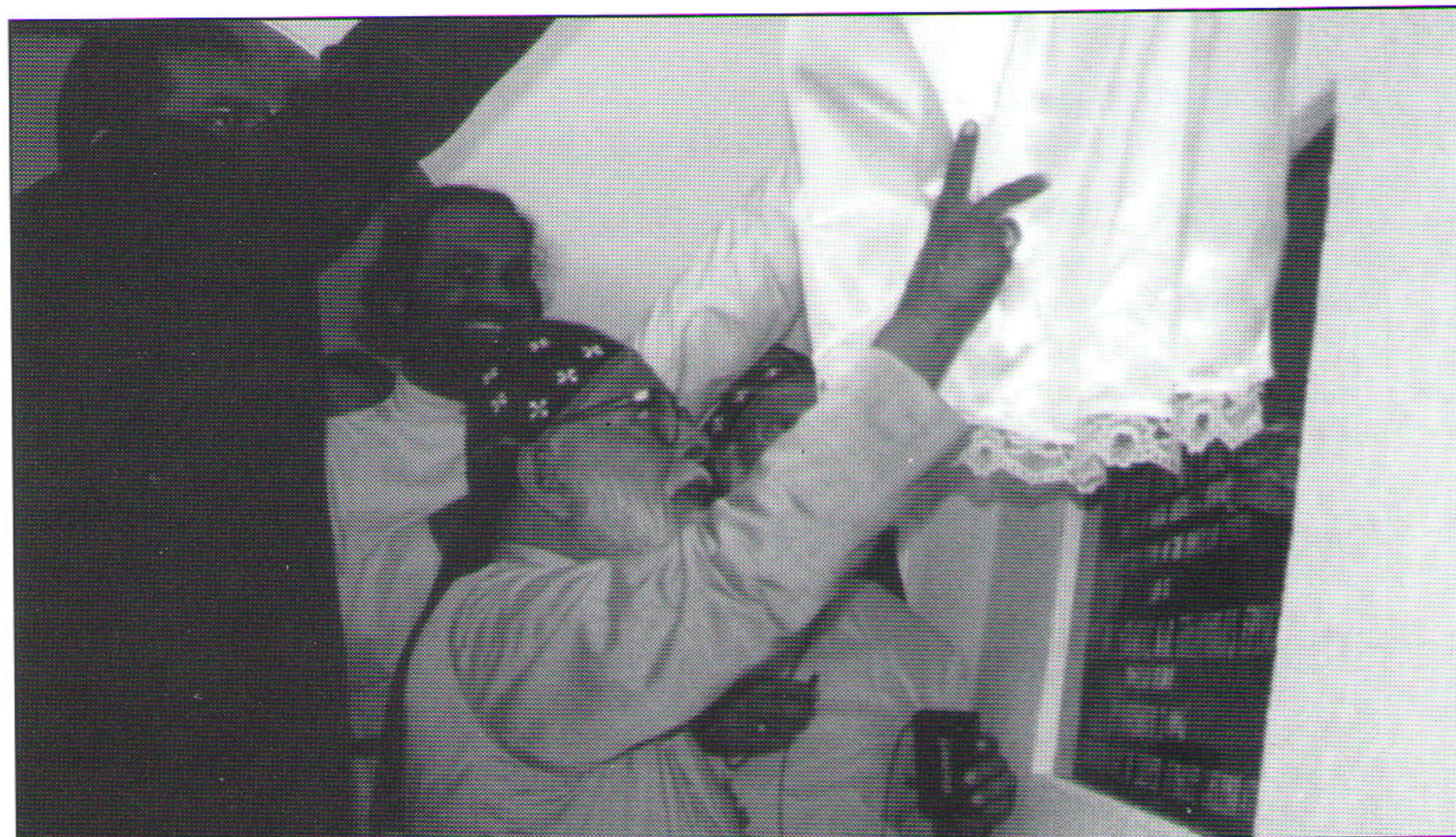
The diocese is now fully operational from its newly built center.



The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan leading the Dedication Ceremony.



Worship at the Dedication Ceremony



The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan unveiling the plaque at the Dedication Ceremony.



Metropolitan hoisting the Diocesan Flag



Metropolitan lighting the lamp at the public meeting.



Dedication Ceremony—Public meeting



Public meeting— Dignitaries on the stage.



Zacharias Thirumeni addressing the meeting



Public meeting— Dignitaries on the stage.



Zacharias Thirumeni presenting a plaque to Metropolitan



Public meeting— Worship service



Public meeting— Worship service

THE XVII MAR THOMA FAMILY CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN HOUSTON

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa presided a meeting of the XVII Mar Thoma Family Conference committee in Boston during the XVI Family Conference. The XVII (1999) conference will be held at Adam's Mark Hotel in Houston on July 1-4, 1999.

T.A. Mathew, Convener

Family Conference Participants from Trinity MTC, Houston with Valia Thirumeni at Boston



MAR THOMA REUNION

A reunion of Marthomites resided in New York area during the formation of the Mar Thoma Congregation of Greater New York was held on Friday, June 26, 1998 under the auspicious of the Diocese Council at Long Island Mar Thoma Church. The celebration began with a thanksgiving service and followed by a fellowship dinner. This joyous occasion was blessed by the presence of His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Diocesan Bishop, His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos Episcopa, Hon. Justice K. T. Thomas, Supreme Court of India, and several political, religious leaders. Clergies from the tri-state area with families were also in attendance. Invitations were extended to 115 families and 75 families participated. We are grateful to Almighty God for leading us through the past 25 years.

Jacob Chacko, Convener



Worship service during the reunion.



ZACHARIAS THIRUMENI VISITS U.K. & GERMANY



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Worship service during the reunion.



ZACHARIAS THIRUMENI VISITS U.K. & GERMANY



SANTHIGIRI MEDICAL MISSION CLINIC

The Santhigiri Medical Mission Clinic donated by Association of Physicians and Dentists of Mar Thoma Church, North America was dedicated by Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan on February 27, 1998.



Clinic Building



President of A.P.D.M. Dr. Thomas Abraham speaking at the public meeting Rev. A.C. Kurien, Bernabas Thirumeni, Chrysostom Thirumeni, Valia Thirumeni, Smt. Sugatha Kumari (Kerala Women's Commissioner), Zacharias Thirumeni, Athanasius Thirumeni and Dr. Marina (Clinic Physician).

MAR THOMA YUVAJANA SAKHYAM

The inaugural meeting of the Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam was held on July 4, 1998 at the Boston Family Conference. Rev. Kurien George welcomed the delegates to the meeting. The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan made the inaugural address, Zacharias Thirumeni conducted the presidential address, Timotheos Thirumeni, and Rev. Sajan P. Mathew made felicitations.

Gigi Tom, Joint Secretary



THE MOST REV. DR. ALEXANDER MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN, RT. REV. DR. ZACHARIAS MAR THEOPHILUS AND RT. REV. THOMAS MAR TIMOTHEOS WITH CLERGIES AT THE FAMILY CONFERENCE



STANLEY JONES SYMPOSIUM AND EXHIBITION

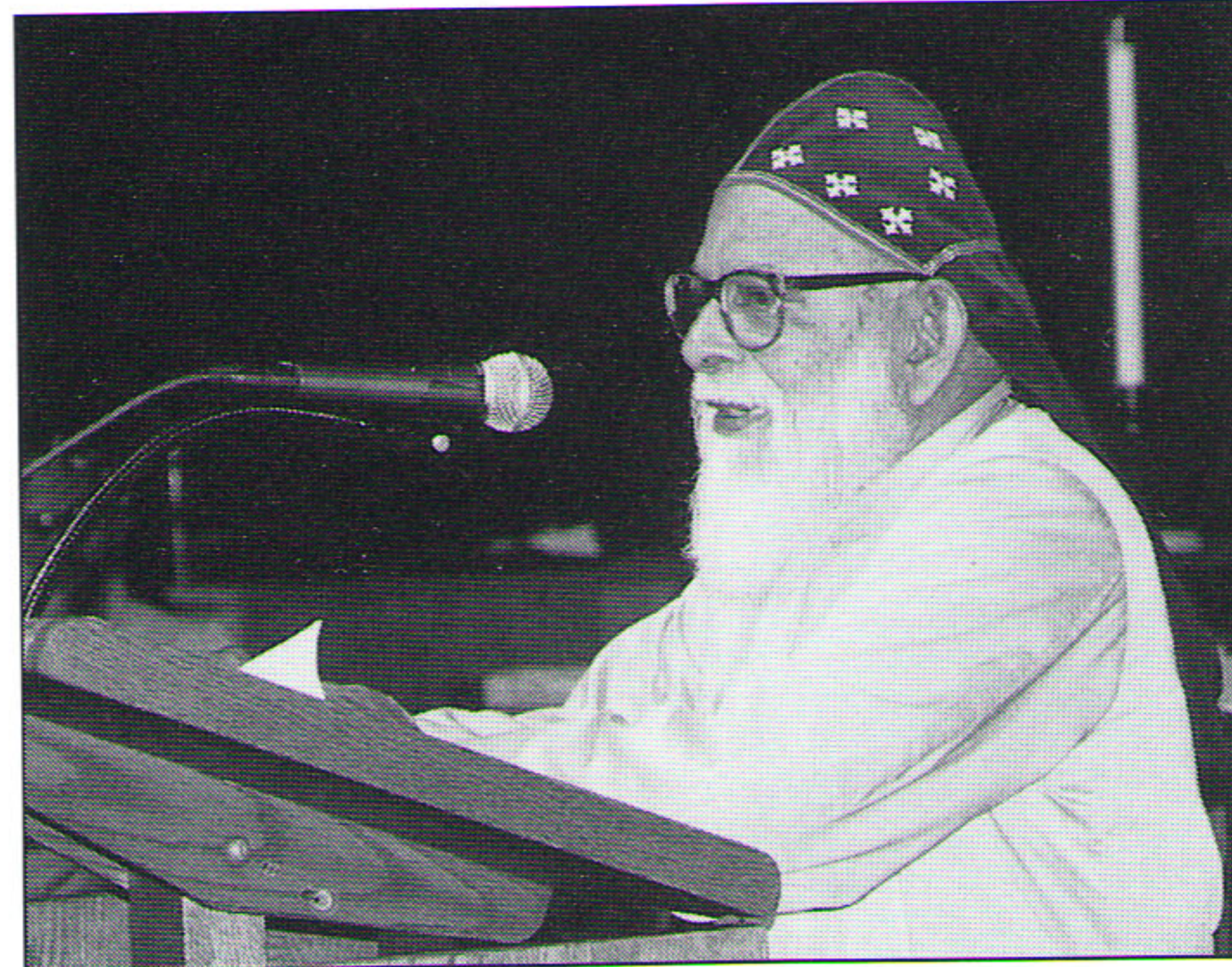
In memory of Stanley Jones, a well known evangelist and a lifelong friend of Mar Thoma Church, a symposium was held on June 28, 1998 at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church. The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan and Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, the diocesan Bishop spoke at the occasion and Dr. William M. Pickard, Jr. presented a paper on the works of Dr. Stanley Jones.

An exhibition of his works and books also was arranged by Rev. Jacob Mathew and the members of the Baltimore Parish. A similar symposium was held in the past at the Baltimore Mar Thoma Church.

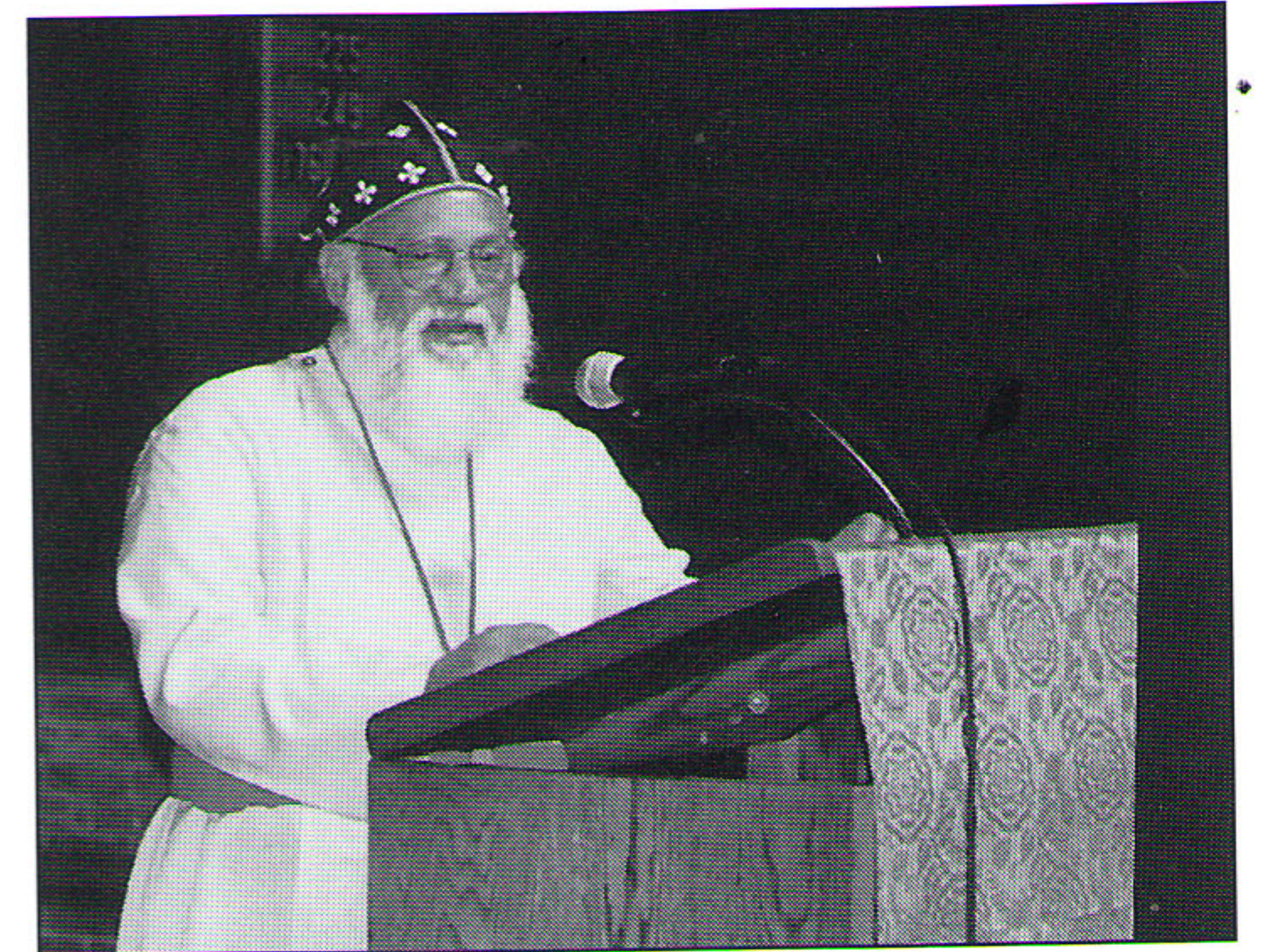
The books may be obtained by contacting Rev. Jacob Mathew. 410-602-1623.



Dr. William M. Pickard, Jr.



The Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan



Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

FRIENDS OF THE FELLOWSHIP MISSION HOSPITAL

A meeting of the Friends of the Fellowship Mission Hospital was held at the Boston Family Conference and Mr. O. C. Koshy of Seattle Mar Thoma Church was elected President and Mr. John Abraham of Boston Mar Thoma Church was elected secretary of the association.

Mr. O. C. Koshy presented a check of \$35,000.00 towards the construction of a surgical operation theater complex. Mr. Koshy, who is very much involved in the Fellowship Hospital activities, had made other donations in the past towards various other construction projects.



Mr. O. C. Koshy presenting a check for \$35,000 to the Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan.

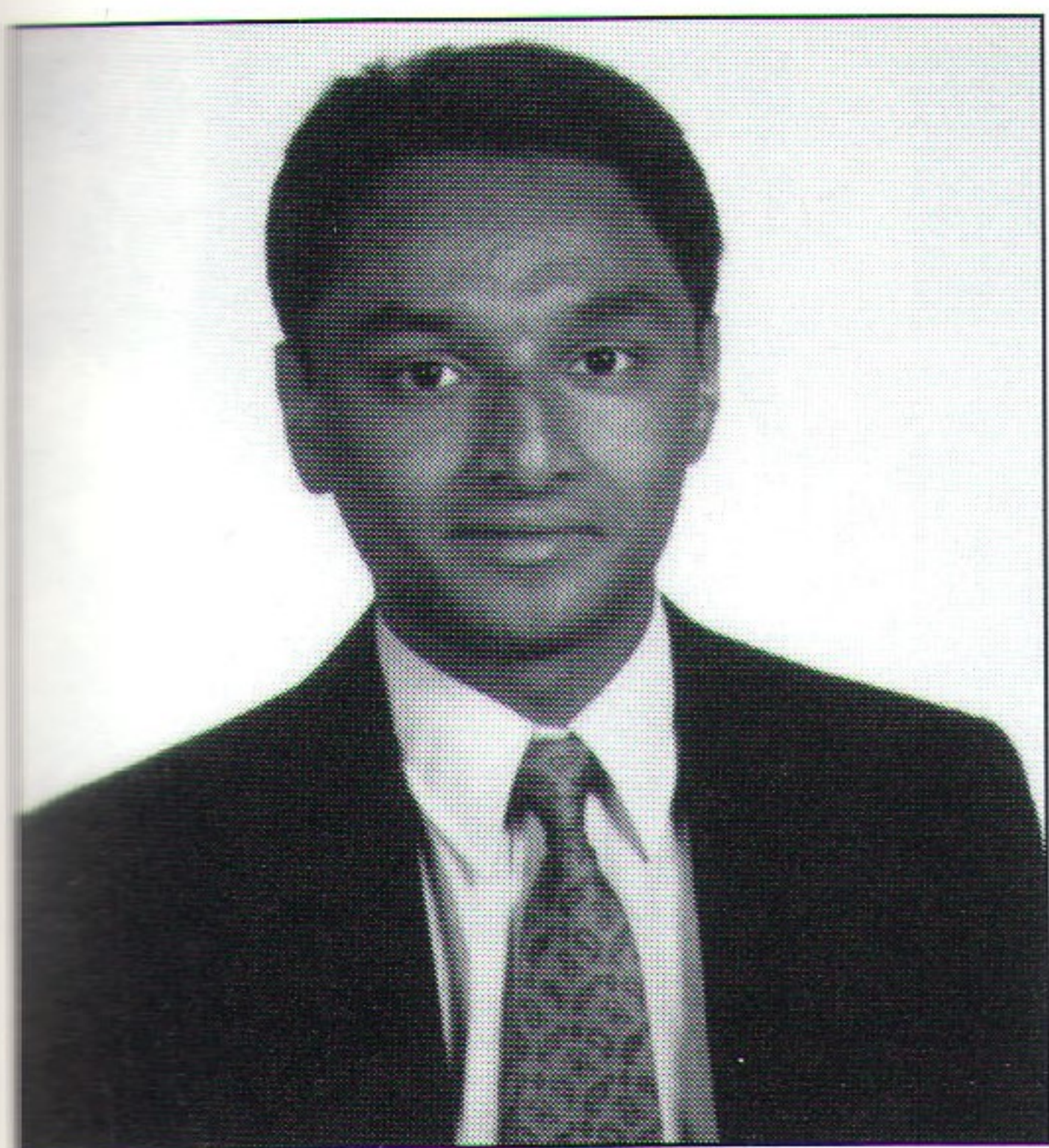
ZACHARIAS THIRUMENI ADDRESSING THE SENIOR CITIZENS MEETING AT THE BOSTON FAMILY CONFERENCE



METROPOLITAN VISITING THE YUVAJANA SAKHYAM BOOTH AT THE FAMILY CONFERENCE—BOSTON



ANIL LINCOLN RECEIVED DOCTORATE

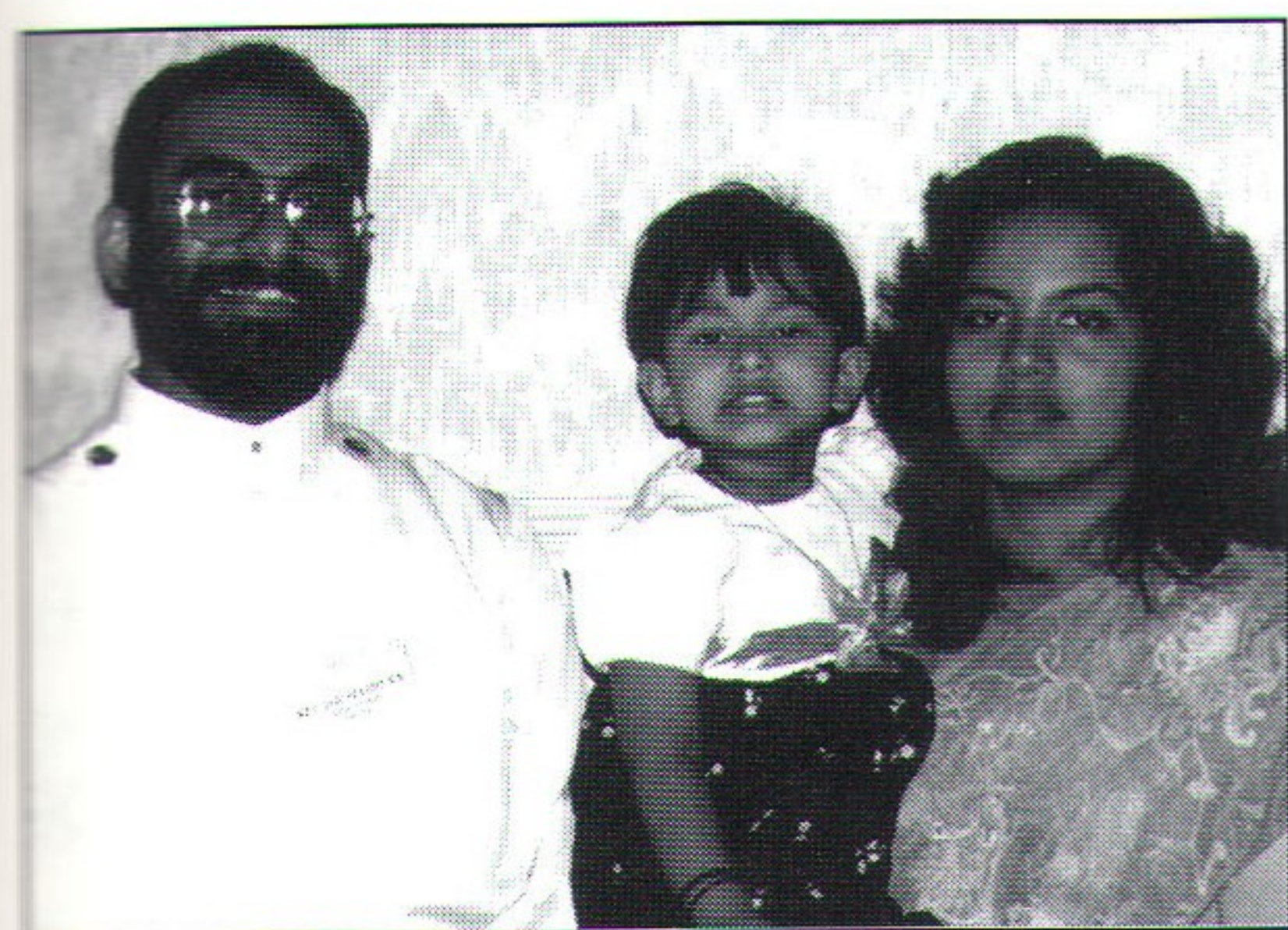


John Anil Lincoln, son of Dr. P. John Lincoln and Dr. Annie Lincoln (Emmanuel MTC, Lubbock, Texas), was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Biology with a specialty in the area of Immunology. Anil received his Bachelor of Science degree in

Genetics from Texas A & M University in 1992 and his Master of Science degree in Microbiology from Texas Tech University in 1995. While at Texas Tech, the area of research was on the effect of eosinophil peroxidase on various macrophage functions associated with allergy and asthma.

Rev. Jiji Mathew, Vicar

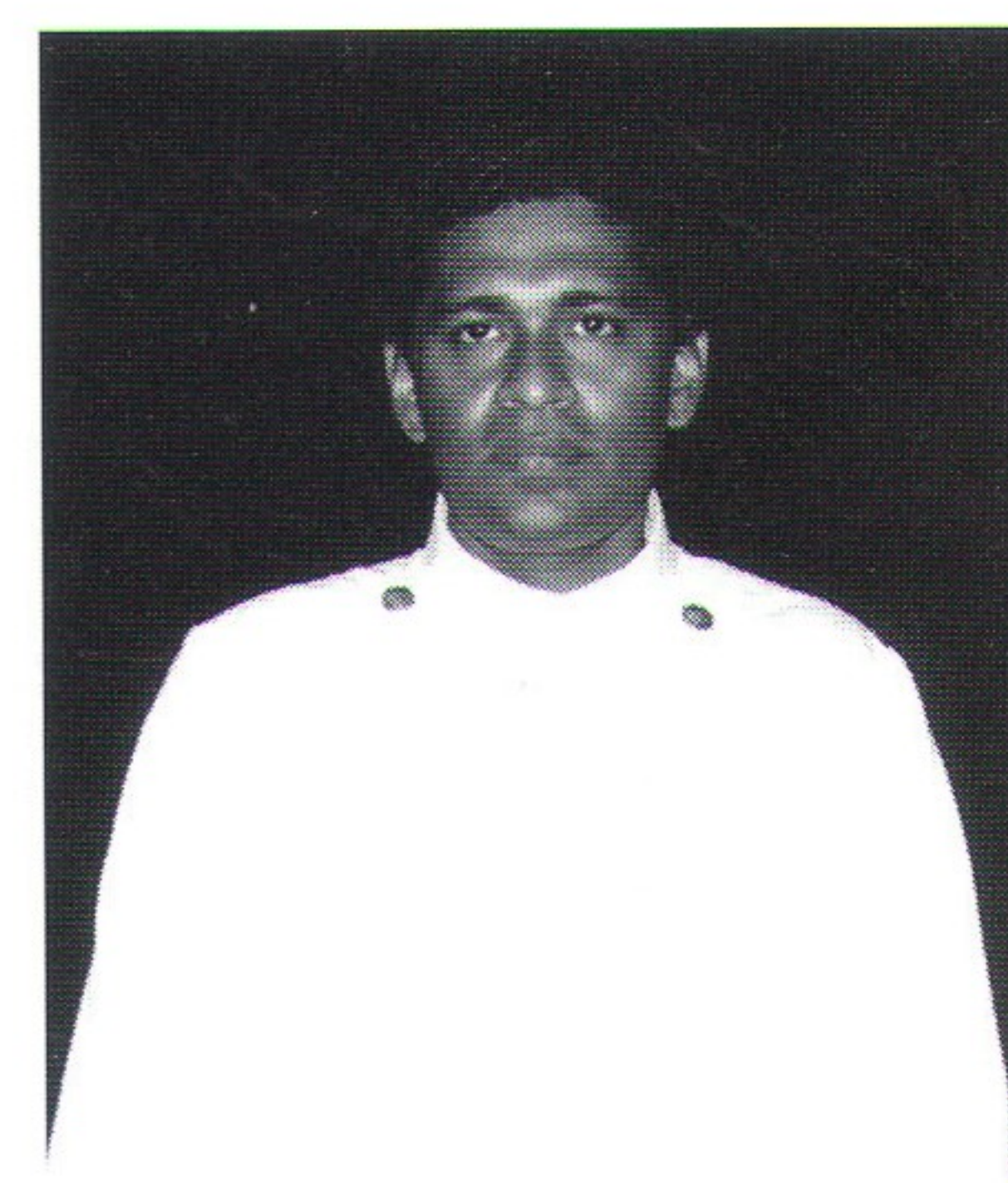
OUR NEW ACHENS



REV. JIJI MATHEW of Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Pazhavangadi, Ranny, has joined the diocese as the vicar of the Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Grand Prairie and Emmanuel Mar

Thoma Church, Lubbock. Achen studied at the Kottayam Theological Seminary and was ordained in June, 1991. He has served the Kumali (Anakara) and Faridabad parishes. He is accompanied by Bindu Kochamma and daughter Arpita (2 years).

REV. ALEX THOMAS of Kallooppara St. Thomas, MTC has joined the diocese as the vicar of Carmel Mar Thoma Church, Boston. Achen took his BD and MTh degrees from the Kottayam Theological Seminary and was ordained in 1986. He has served Kallada, Rajkot, Thuruthikadu and Perumpavoor parishes. Achen is accompanied by Sally Kochamma and sons Naveen (9 years) and Melvin (4 years). Achen's Telephone number is **619-243-0520**.



ST. JOHN'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, UK

The Vacation Bible School (VBS) the first of its kind in the U.K. was held by the Sunday School of the St. John's M.T.C., from May 23-25, 1998. The theme was "Jesus: the King." 42 children from different denomination attended the VBS which was thoroughly enjoyed by the participants.

A five member team of St. John's Mar Thoma Church, U.K. participated in a BBC quiz programme called Q.Asia. The team came second in the competition.

Rev. John T. George, Vicar

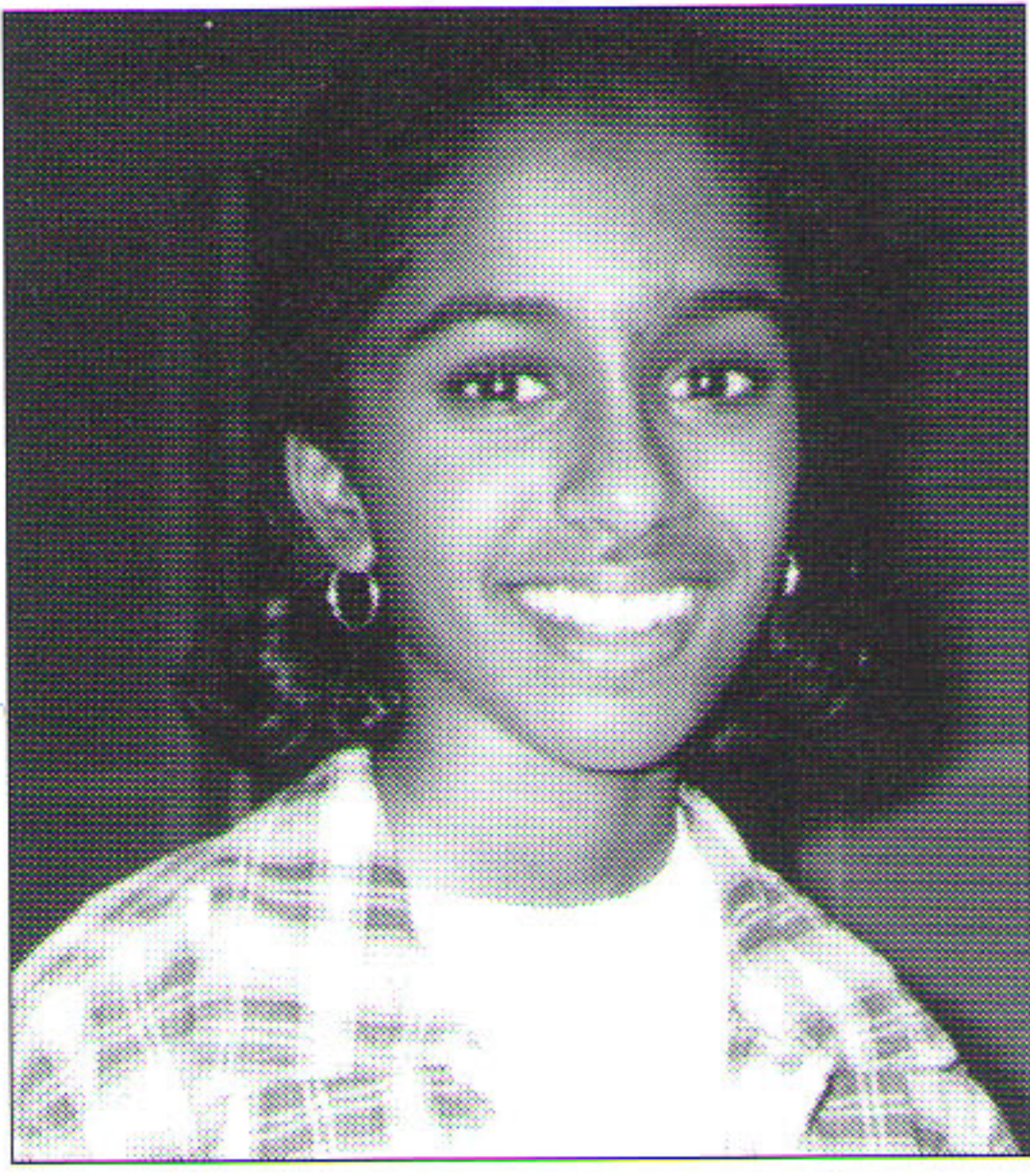
JUNIOR/SENIOR CONFERENCE 1998

The Junior/Senior Conference of the North East and South East Sunday Schools of the diocese, hosted by the NE region, was held at Wagner College, Staten Island from July 16th to 19th, 1998. The theme of the conference was "You are the Temple of God." His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheus Episcopa, Dr. T. V. Thomas (Canada), Mrs. Patricia Betty (CEF), Rev. Kurien George and Rev. V. S.

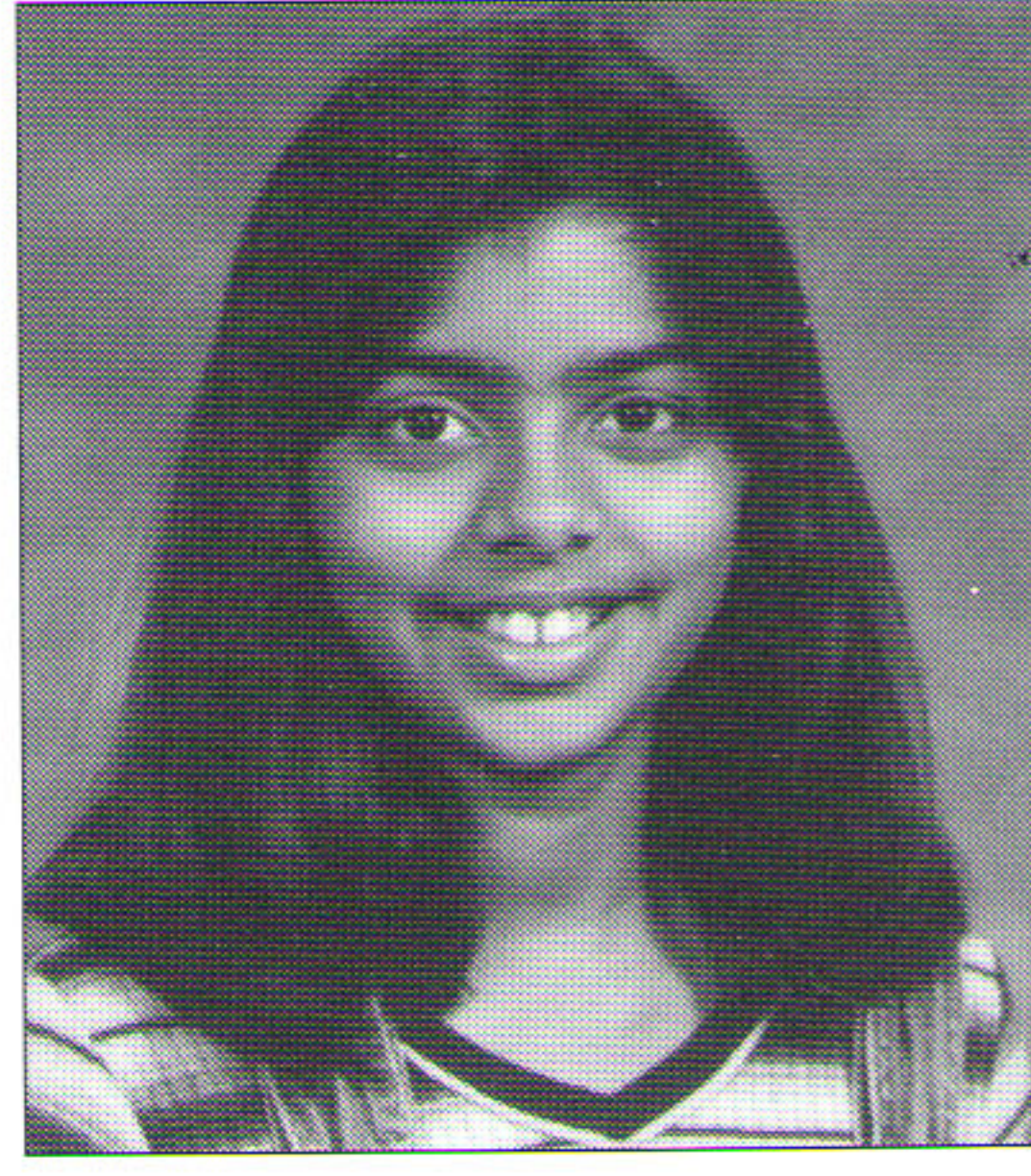
Varughese were the main leaders. About 380 students and teachers from 16 Sunday Schools of these regions attended the four-day conference. The Sunday School offertory (\$1,500) was donated to the Metropolitan fund for charity in Kerala. It was a time of dedication and commitment for most of the students who attended.

Thomas K. Jose, Diocesan Sunday School Secretary

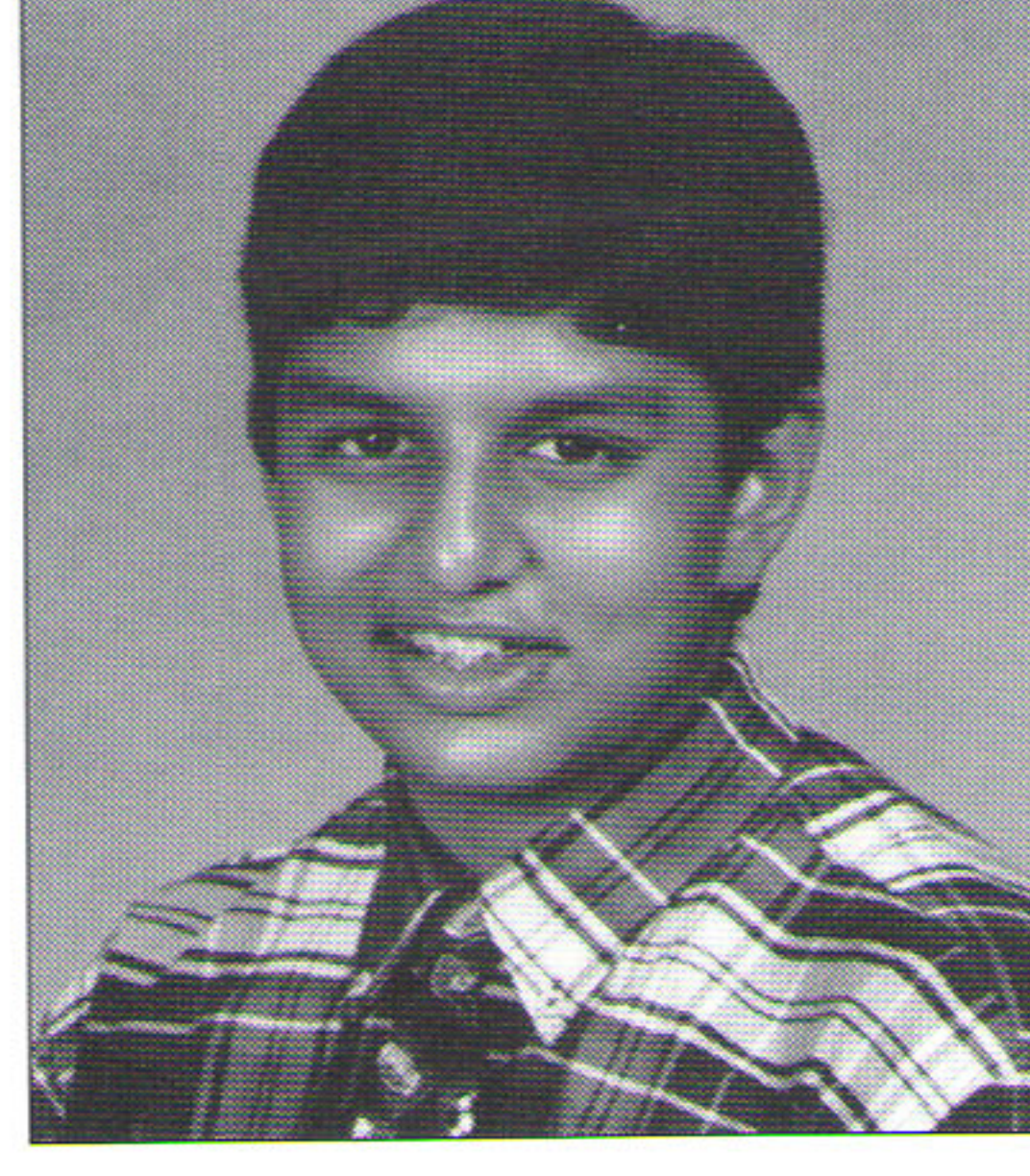
FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD PLACE WINNERS OF THE DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL EXAM—1998



Simi Abraham
Junior (Grades 5 & 6)
1st Place, Trinity MTC, Houston



Kavya John
Junior (Grades 5 & 6)
3rd Place, Los Angeles MTC, CA



Jay Chacko
Junior High (Grades 7 & 8)
2nd Place, Trinity MTC, Houston



Maxine Mathew
Junior High (Grades 7 & 8)
3rd Place, Los Angeles MTC, CA



Jasmine Samuel
Senior (Grades 9 & 10)
3rd Place, Trinity MTC, Houston

Junior (Grades 5 & 6)

Simi Abraham, *1st Place*
Anita Mathews, *2nd Place*
Kavya John, *3rd Place*
Justin John, *3rd Place*

Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
Ascension MTC, Philadelphia, PA
Los Angeles MTC, CA
Epiphany MTC, NY

Distinctions

1. Priscilla Rajan
2. Anika Chacko
3. Nishina Ann Thomas
4. Anisha Jacob
5. Joyce James
6. Jenny Ann Varughese
7. William Samuel George
8. Tiji Varghese
9. Georgy Das
10. Jebin Mary Varghese
11. Runcie Jacob
12. Jency George
13. Christina Kurian
14. Jennifer George
15. Pratheek M. Philip
16. Dennis Abraham
17. Shane Thomas
18. Christy Abraham
19. Mathew Verghese
20. Ashish Abraham
21. Praveen Varghese
22. Anila Thomas

Epiphany MTC, NY
Detroit MTC, MI
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX
Bethel MTC, Frankfurt, IL
Ascension MTC, Philadelphia, PA
Staten Island MTC, NY
Los Angeles MTC, CA
Toronto MTC, Canada
Chicago MTC, IL
Staten Island MTC, NY
Detroit MTC, MI
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
Ebenezer MTC, NY
St. Peters MTC, NJ
Boston MTC, MA
St. Johns MTC, NY
Toronto MTC, Canada
Ascension MTC Philadelphia, PA
Greater Washington MTC
St. Johns MTC, NY
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX
Long Island MTC, NY

Junior High (Grades 7 & 8)

Preetha Kurian, *1st Place*
Jay Chacko, *2nd Place*
Pushpa Samuel, *3rd Place*
Maxine Mathew, *3rd Place*

Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
Chicago MTC, IL
Los Angeles MTC, CA

Distinctions

1. Joseph Varghese
2. Jerry Mathew
3. Sheba Manuel Philip
4. Daisy Cherian
5. Shanu George
6. Libby Zachariah
7. Sherina Mathew

St. Johns MTC, NY
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
Boston MTC, MA
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
St. Johns MTC, NY
Dallas MTC, Farmers Branch, TX
Chicago MTC, IL

8. Sansu Eapen
9. Melanie Zachariah
10. Shaun Ninan
11. Sonia Easaw
12. Prahaba Mathew
13. Naveen Varghese
14. Roshini Thomas
15. Aju Raju
16. Subin Jacob
17. David Cherian
18. Sherry George
19. Christopher Daniel
20. Aisley Jacob
21. Anish Mathew
22. Sharon Chackalamanil
23. Nethu Mathew
24. Samuel Thomas

Ascension MTC, Philadelphia, PA
St. Thomas MTC, NY
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
San Francisco MTC, CA
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX
Philadelphia MTC, PA
Staten Island MTC, NY
St. Thomas MTC, NY
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
St. Johns MTC, NY
Dallas MTC, Farmers Branch, TX
Ebenezer MTC, NY
Staten Island MTC, NY
New Jersey MTC, NJ
Detroit MTC, MI
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX

Senior (Grades 9 & 10)

Justin Sadhu, *1st Place*
Melvin Varghese, *2nd Place*
Bibin Varghese, *2nd Place*
Jasmine Samuel, *3rd Place*

Bethel MTC, Frankfurt, IL
Dallas MTC, Farmers Branch, TX
St. Thomas MTC, NY
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX

Distinctions

1. Arun Varghese
2. Philip Varghese
3. Sujith John
4. Celia Thomas
5. Melvy Mathew
6. Vineetha Zachariah
7. Maureen Mathew
8. Christine Verghese
9. Shane Ninan
10. Julie Jacob
11. Vivin Varughese
12. Lincy Thomas
13. Bobby Varghese
14. Mancy Koshy
15. Alvin Rajan
16. Shanty Mathew
17. Jewel Varghese
18. Benson Mathew
19. Beena Cherian

Dallas MTC, Farmers Branch
St. Johns MTC, NY
South Florida MTC, FL
Staten Island MTC, NY
Chicago MTC, IL
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX
Los Angeles MTC, CA
Toronto MTC, Canada
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX
St. Thomas MTC, NY
Staten Island MTC, NY
St. Thomas MTC, NY
St. Thomas MTC, NY
Chicago MTC, IL
Staten Island MTC, NY
St. Johns MTC, NY
St. Andrews MTC, NY
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX
Ebenezer MTC, NY

Jose K. Thomas, Diocesan Sunday School Secretary

Justin Sadhu is the First Place winner of the 1998 Diocesan Sunday School Examination in the Senior (Grades 9 & 10) Division. His answer to the essay question is printed below in its original form.

Explain with the illustration of a parable the following: (a) Repentance; (b) Salvation; (c) Unconditional love of God; and Provide Biblical references, quotations, and benefits?

Ever since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, God set forth a plan to reconcile mankind to Himself. He became man in the person of Jesus Christ, suffered and died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again from the tomb. By his sacrificial death, we can come to God in full assurance of having our sins forgiven. To illustrate the nature of our redemption, Jesus used the parable of the Prodigal Son, perhaps more aptly named the parable of the Loving Father. When we repent of our sins and turn to God, we receive salvation and the promise of God's unconditional love.

The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates perfectly our relationship with God. In the story, there is a father with two sons. The older son is hard-working whereas the younger is lazy. One day, the younger son asks for his inheritance, showing extreme disrespect (as though he can't wait for his father to die, so he can get the money). The father lovingly gives him his share. Upon receiving the money, the younger son leaves the family, travels to a distant land and squanders his father's wealth in wild living. He eventually hires himself out to a farmer to feed the pigs. He is so hungry that he longs to eat what the pigs are eating. When he comes to his senses, he returns home, repents of his disobedience and asks for the forgiveness of his father. His father lovingly and joyfully receives his son, even throwing a party to celebrate. The older son cannot understand why the father would be so forgiving and kind. The father replies by saying that his son was lost and now is found, was dead and now alive.

Repentance is the hardest part of reconciling ourselves to God. In order to repent, we admit that we are wrong and always were and confess our inadequacy to come to God by following His law. When we repent, we swallow our pride and say, "Have mercy on me, Lord. I am a pitiful sinner not worthy of your love." The younger son repented when he came to his senses and realized how better off he had been when he lived with his father. When we repent, we realize that we are living in "a pigsty of sin" and must humbly walk back to God on His terms, not ours. As I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." So, the first step is to confess our sins.

Salvation is God's gift to us that we receive when we repent. As Ephesians 2:8,9 tells us, it is "by grace, through faith" and "is not from [ourselves]". Salvation was made possible by Christ's death on the cross. He was and is the perfect sacrifice- the lamb of God. In his death, he abolished our dependence on the rules and regulations of the law and freed us to serve Him willingly. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father symbolized God our Father, accepted his son, when he came in repentance. Salvation is the process of being reaccepted into God's family. God loves us unconditionally. As the parable showed, the father loved his son even though his son had rejected him and squandered his wealth. He still received him with open arms. As the bible says, "But God demonstrates his own love

for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Christ did not die for us because we were good, because we deserved it, or because He needed us. Rather, he died for us because He loved us so much that he felt the benefits outweighed the pain and suffering He would undergo. As we come to understand the full extent of God's unconditional love for us, we should be moved to a full expression of humble gratitude and love for the God who brought us at so high a cost, the life of His Son.

We are not worthy of God's approval or forgiveness. We never can or will be. But due to Christ's voluntary death on the cross, we can be reconciled to God. It starts with our repentance for the sins we have committed that hurt God's heart. It ends with the salvation of our souls and the assurance of eternal life. no matter what we have done, God waits for us with His promise of unconditional love; we must stop rebelling, come to our senses, fall before His knees, and accept the gift of salvation. God has waited for mankind to accept His Son, and He is still waiting today.

Preetha Kurian is the First Place winner of the 1998 Diocesan Sunday School Examination in the Junior High (7 & 8) Division. Her answer to the essay question is printed below in its original form.

Write an essay on Daniel's explanation of the mysterious writing on the wall?

Beltshazzer was having a grand party. He had wine, the finest food, all his noble men and his numerous wives. Little did he realize that his arrogant actions of drinking from the sacred vessels of the temple and praising gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone were the greatest possible insult to the one true god of Israel, the God who was even greater than the great Beltshazzer himself.

Shortly after Beltshazzer's sinful act, a mysterious hand appeared and wrote a message on the palace wall. MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARISIN were the words written on the wall that sent fear through Beltshazzer's soul. King Beltshazzer went into a frenzy searching for anyone who could reveal this strange message that foretold his future. But before Daniel explained the message he pointed out the proud, sinful life that Beltshazzer's father, Nebuchanezzar, who had led before him. Nebuchanezzar, like Beltshazzer, had gotten too proud and arrogant and so God brought him down from his mighty throne to live with the wild donkeys. god made Nebuchanezzar's mind like that of an animal and his daily diet was grass. Nebuchanezzar remained in this sad state until he recognized that God alone reigns supreme and that all things come from God. Beltshazzer's lesson was harsher. Daniel explained that MENE meant God had outnumbered the days of his kingdom and brought them to an end. TEKEL meant you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. PARSIN meant that his kingdom would be divided among the Medes and Persians.

The lesson to be learned here is about God's superiority and God's judgement. We must realize that everything we have is a gift from God and is not a result of our own merit. We must be cloth with humility and remember the severe, harsh consequences of arrogance and pride.

Answers to your questions

Rev. Kurien George

Acts of the Apostles

Let us now study the various references in the Acts regarding Baptism.

Acts 1:38- Peter is speaking to the new converts, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." There is an important verse which follows: "This promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him."

Three aspects emerge from this portion:

1. The baptism was only in the name of Jesus, not in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as given in Mathew 28:19.
2. The promise is for you and your children.
3. The promise is for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him. Acts 8:12,16- In these portions we again find the formula for baptism, (in the name of Jesus) however, verse 16 also shows a different dimension which is important: People were baptized in the name of Jesus but did not receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:18- At the baptism of Saul we do not find any Baptismal formula.

Acts 10:44-48, Vs 44: "When Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word."

Let us break down this verse:

1. While Peter was still speaking: Peter had not finished speaking, this would indicate that the people who heard Peter, who were Gentiles would not have grasped the full implication of what Peter was speaking about.
2. The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. Nothing is mentioned about their belief. This is because the Holy Spirit is independent and is given as an experience of grace.
3. The Holy Spirit is received before baptism.

Vs 47-48: Peter is asking the question about baptizing the Gentiles who have received the Holy Spirit, and he orders them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Again we find the formula for baptism as "in the name of Jesus" not as in Mathew 28:19.

Acts 16:14-15 The baptism of Lydia.

Verse 14 describes Lydia as a "worshipper of God", further, "the Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul.

The emphasis is on the opening of her heart by God, as she was a worshipper of God.

Vs 15: "When she and her household were baptized..." There is an interesting aspect to be noted i.e; Paul was initially speaking to the women (Vs 13). There is nothing to suggest that the whole family was in the same experience as the woman Lydia, yet the whole family gets baptized. We cannot have a standard gradient of faith, since perceptions and expressions differ. The important fact that comes to light is that the whole family joined the community of believers- the Kingdom of God's community.

Acts 16: 30-34 The jailer apparently did not believe in God. We understand this from Vs 34, which speaks as follows: "he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God." We also see that initially the response of the jailer was based on fear and when he asks about what he should do to be saved, it was a fear response rather than a genuine desire to seek salvation. Paul and Silas answer him that he should believe in the Lord Jesus, "and you will be saved, you and your household." The portion goes on to say that the apostles spoke the word of the Lord to all who were in the house. Subsequently, he and his entire family were baptized without delay.

There are three aspects to this whole issue:

1. Belief is not a one time experience, we should realize that at the stage at which the jailer stood a concrete experience of the salvation experience would be still be very incomplete. All that the jailer would have done would be to initiate a process of change and he had a lifetime ahead of him to make the belief a meaningful and complete one. Even so his belief would only be complete in eternity, as Paul says in I Corinthians 13:12 "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."
2. Vs 31, "believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." Paul speaks about a (I Cor 7:14) situation where one of the partners in the marriage is an unbeliever. Here he says in Vs 14 that the unbelieving husband is made holy through wife and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. This

brings us to the fact that salvation is an available grace not only for the believer but for the household of the believer. There is an extension of the grace experience to the whole family. Of course, to make the experience concrete the believer as also the others in the family have to make the experience real in their life by appropriating that grace. This portion has important consequences for the community of the church as the Kingdom of God. The church as the Kingdom of God community is made up of people of different experiences of faith and also of persons who may not have faith. Yet, the church cannot reject anyone because the encompassing grace of God has made the person a member of the Kingdom community. Whether the person appropriates the grace or not, how the grace is appropriated and how the person responds, is his/her responsibility for which the person will have to answer God. of course, the church has the responsibility to nurture, admonish, correct and do everything for helping the person to grow in grace. Therefore the church cannot reject anyone born into a family where the faith experience persists, and the child has to be initiated into the Kingdom community.

3. Vs 33b is as follows: "kai e'baptisthe autos kai oi'autou pantes parachrema."

"And he was baptized he and all the ones of his immediately."

The revised Standard Version translates this as follows: "then he and his entire family were baptized without delay."

There is a specific understanding that comes from this and the proceeding verses, the family was considered as a unit of the kingdom of God and no one was left out, neither child nor adult.

Acts 18:24, 19:7 Apollos was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord (as the church was then called); and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Vs 26 speaks of how Priscilla and Aquilla "took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately."

19:1-5 Paul passed through Ephesus and met some of the disciples (though it does not say that they were the disciples of Apollos); however, by association we can safely assume that they were. These disciples had not heard of the Holy Spirit, moreover they had only been baptized with the baptism of John and were not baptized in the name of Jesus.

When we correlate the above with the disputes in the Corinthian church (I Cor 1:10-17) we are able to understand the growth pains in the early church. This also enables us to gain an insight into the development of faith practices in the early church, the Body of Christ, the Kingdom of God. We shall continue our study into these aspects in the forthcoming issues, thereby understanding the whole issue of infant baptism.

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MAR THOMA MESSENGER SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I, Rev./Mr./Mrs./Miss _____ would like to subscribe to the Mar Thoma Messenger for one year at the rate of \$10 [\$15 CANADA] (4 issues); for two years at the rate of \$18.00 [\$25.00 CANADA] (8 issues)

New

Renewal

Please fill out this form and send to the following address along with check payable to:

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Signature _____

Date _____

Parish _____

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REV. K. O. MATHEW

Our beloved Achen entered the eternal glory with the Lord that he trusted and served on May 19, 1998. Achen was born on February 18, 1936, into the Kayamkatitil family in Pathanapuram. At the age of 16, he joined Shora Ashram as a missionary. After his theological studies, he was ordained in 1971. Achen was in the ordained ministry for 27 years and rendered his valuable services in parishes like: Avaneeswaram, Attachackal, Andamans, Ambasamudram, Shenkottai, etc. Achen was the president of the Executive Committee of the boys' home in Punalur. Achen's funeral was conducted on Saturday, February 23, 1998 at the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church in Pathannapuram, by Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mary Irenaeus Episcopa and Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa and in the presence of fellow clergies and a great multitude of people. Achen's dedication and missionary zeal are a real challenge before us. Achen's Bible studies and interest in maintaining personal relationships will linger as fond memories in our mind. A memorial service was conducted on June 21, 1998 at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church. We express our deepfelt condolence to Mariamma Kochamma, Roy, Rony, Roshen and all the near and dear ones.



M. C. THOMAS

Mr. M. C. Thomas was called to eternal peace on June 24, 1998 at the age of 85. He is belonged to the Mannoor family, Mangalam, Chenganoor. During his long career as an educator, he served as high school teacher, Head Master, and AEO in various parts of Kerala. He was a very active member of the church in Kerala as Sunday School Head Master and in various administrative bodies. He was buried on Sunday, June 28, 1998 in the West Laurel Hill Cemetery following the funeral service conducted by Vicar Rev. Joseph Chacko. He is survived by five sons, Mannoor Thomas, Mathew, Abraham, Jacob, Thomas and daughter Annie. We express our deepfelt condolence to the bereaved family.



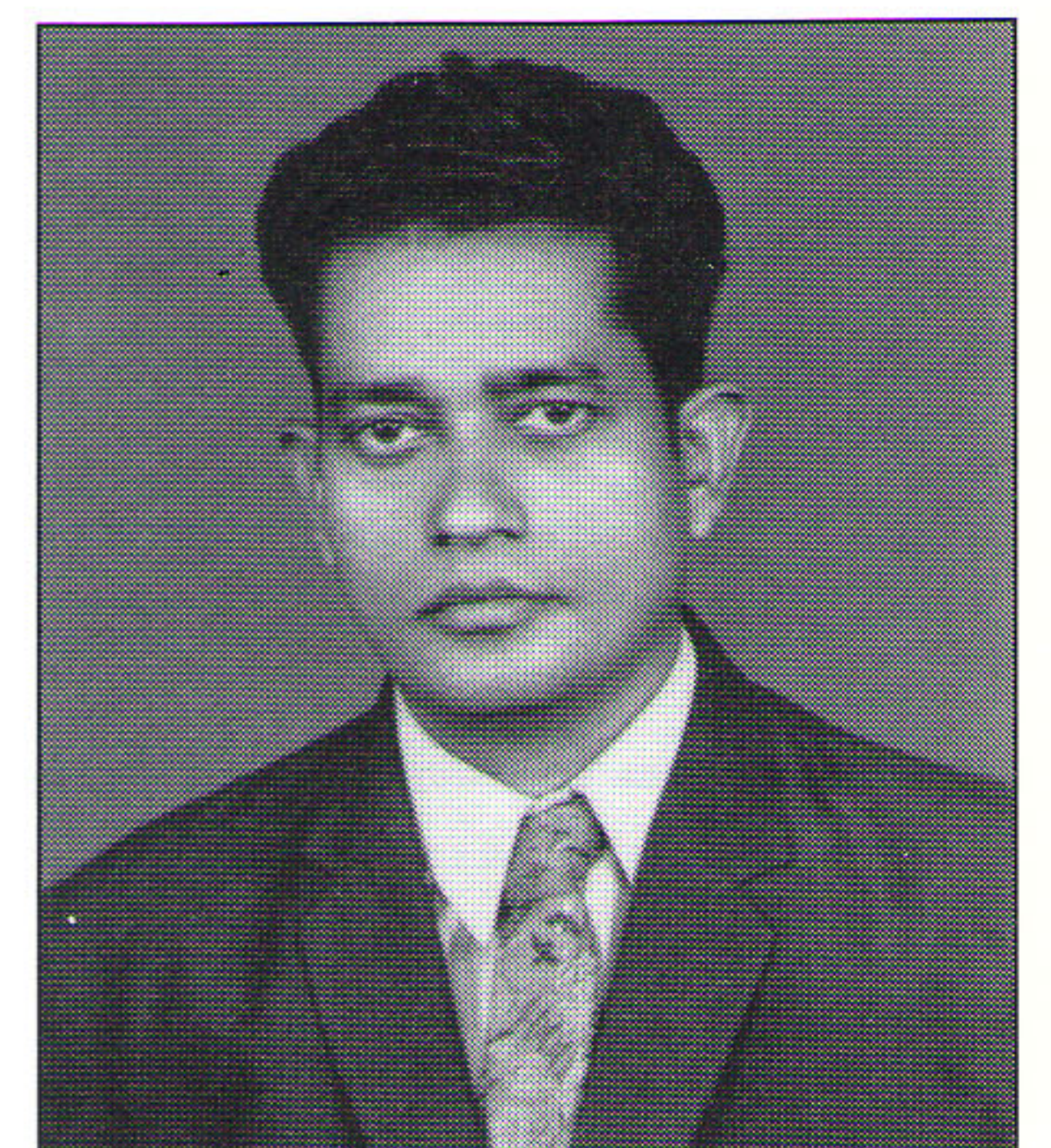
P. M. OMMEN

Mr. P. M. Oommen, 74 years old (Puthenpurakel, Anjilithanam, Kaviyoor) passed away on January 15, 1998 in London. He joined Air India in 1946. He was appointed as the administrative manager for the airline's operation at Heathrow Airport, London and in 1968 the whole family moved to the U.K. He retired from the services of Air India in 1977 and joined Gulf Airways where he continued until 1991. He married Ammini from Puthen Veetil, Elanthoor, they

have three children and seven grand children. The late, lamented departed was an ardent devotee of the Mar Thoma Church and served the church in various capacities. He was the editor of St. John's Voice, Church Mandalam Representative from the first Mar Thoma Church U.K. and Europe and founder director of St. Paul's Nursery (Finance) until October 1996. His family life was an example for all and he was generous in his donation to worthy causes. He was the chain to connect all people. At the condolence meeting Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus expressed his deep sorrow and he said that P. M. Oommen gave his health, wealth and time to God's glory. His faith in God was always visible. He is to be remembered for his prayerful life and love for the Mar Thoma Church. We express our deepfelt condolence to the bereaved family.

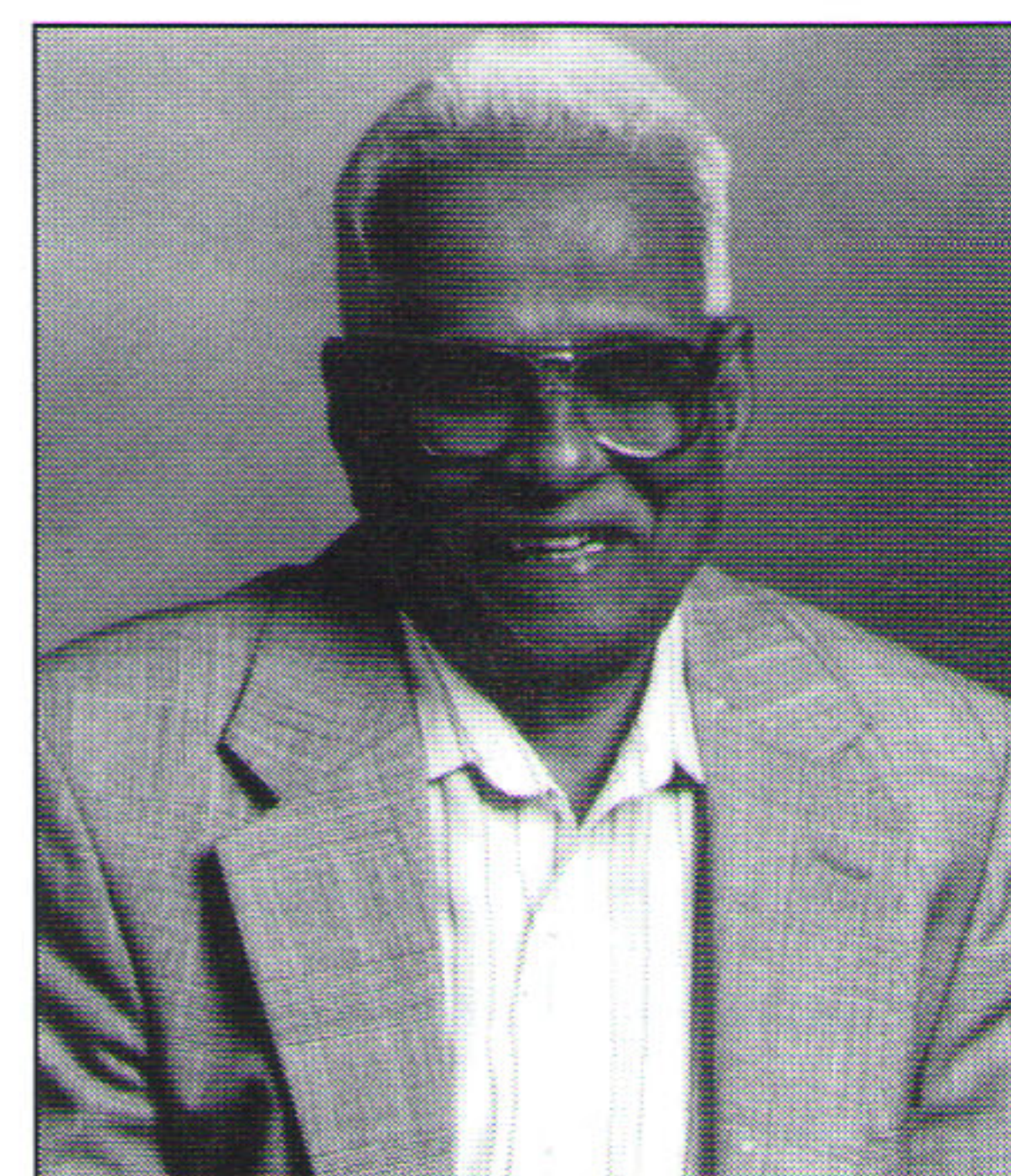
KOSHY K. THOMAS

Mr. Koshy K. Thomas (K. T. Koshy) passed away on Saturday, June 21, 1998 after a prolonged heart ailment at the age of 67. He was the third of six children to the late Mr. & Mrs. K. Thomas of Kizhavaramannil house, Varayanoor, Pullad, Kerala. Mr. Koshy emigrated to the United States in 1974. Before his emigration he was employed by the Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam, Sabha Office in Tiruvalla. He was an active member of the Staten Island Mar Thoma Church. Viewing service was held at Matthew Funeral Home on Sunday and Monday June 21-22, 1998. Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Episcopa, Diocesan Bishop, Vicar Rev. John Thomas and clergies from the Diocese and sister parishes conducted the service. Respecting his wishes his body was taken to Kerala and buried at his home parish, Maramon Mar Thoma Church. The funerals service was conducted on Friday, June 26, 1998 by Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Suffragan Metropolitan and in the presence of former vicar Rev. Thomas George and other clergies, relatives and friends. Mr. Koshy is survived by his wife Annamma (Ammini) and two daughters, Suja and Sunita. We express our deepfelt condolence to the bereaved family.



JOHN CHANDAPILLA

Mr. John Chandapilla 91 years of age (Plammottil, Puthencavu) passed away on May 1, 1998, in Rockland, New York. He was a member of the St. James Mar Thoma Church, Rockland, New York. He is survived by two sons, John K. Alexander, Thomas John and three daughters Ammukutty, Mariamma and Annamma. We express our deepfelt condolence to the bereaved family.



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