

MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

JANUARY 2006



Happy New Year 2006

God, in your grace transform the world

“ HOME. AUTO. LIFE. ME.”



TALK TO A REAL,
LIVE PERSON WHO'S
IN THE SAME PHONE
BOOK AS YOU.

ROY C THOMAS, LUTCF

Allstate Insurance Company
224-17 Union Turnpike
Bayside, NY 11364
Phone (718) 464 - 8500
Fax (718) 464 - 4230
Roycthomas@allstate.com



Allstate[®]

You're in good hands.

Allstate property & Casualty Insurance Company. Allstate Indemnity Company.
Home office: Northbrook, IL, Allstate Life Insurance Company of New York.
Home office: Happaug, New York. ©2003 Allstate Insurance Company.



Mar Thoma Messenger

The official publication of the
Diocese of North America & Europe

VOL. XXV No. 1
January 2006

EDITORIAL BOARD

Diocesan Secretary
Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham
516-377-3311
Fax: 516-377-3322
marthoma@aol.com

Chief Editor
Eapen Daniel
Philadelphia
215-364-5459
eapen4@hotmail.com

Associate Editors:

Rev. Joseph Oommen [NY]
(516) 377-9803

Dr. Ashley Mathew
Council Member [Philadelphia]
(215) 288-4825
ashleymathew@hotmail.com

Atty. Lal Varghese
Council Member [Dallas]
(972) 874-7909
attylal@aol.com

John C. Thomas
Council Member [NY]
(914) 693-6547
jct247365@aol.com

Dr. P. V. Cherian [Ann Arbor, MI]
(734) 429-2808

Dr. Nancy George Maliacal [Canada]
905-799-2123
nancygmal@rogers.com

Shirley Chackalamannil [NJ]
(908) 832-5611

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Manager
James T. Philip (NY)
(718) 761-1295
(718) 761-1723 (Fax)
jtphilip@hotmail.com

C. V. Samuel (Detroit)
Manager
Subscription/Promotion (USA)
(586) 268-8007
cvsamuel@hotmail.com

Rev. John Thomas (U.K.)
Council Member
011-44-208-577-9981
regiachan@yahoo.com

Susan Johnson (Canada)
Manager
Subscription/Promotion (Canada & UK)
(905) 821-4385
susanjl@sympatico.ca

T. A. Mathew (Houston)
Manager/Advertisement
Diocesan Treasurer
(713) 455-7469
tamathew@hotmail.com

Thomas Mammen (CA)
(562) 431-6469

Gigi Tom (NY)
(845) 268-3532
gigitomelr@aol.com

Vinod Varghese (NJ)
(201) 836-3716
vveditor@hotmail.com

Koshy P. Koshy (NY)
(718) 987-5108

Mailing Addresses:

Mar Thoma Messenger
Sinai Mar Thoma Center
2320 S. Merrick Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566

Eapen Daniel
165 Springflower Court
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

James T. Philip
175 Sheraden Avenue
Staten Island, New York 10314

Websites:

Diocese of North America
www.marthomanae.com

Mar Thoma Church
www.marthomasyranchurch.org

CONTENTS

Message From the Diocesan Bishop	
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos	2
Message From the Metropolitan	3
God, in your Grace transform the world	
Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham	4
God Transforms the World Through His Grace	
George J. Poikail	7
Bible Society of India: Kerala Auxiliary	
Through 49 Years Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Varghese	9
Faith in Action by Ordinary Women	
Kunjumol Cherian	11
Conflicts: Biblical Rules of Engagement	
Thomas Koshy	12
Transforming Grace Dr. Mary Verghese	15
A Witness...2005 General Assembly of NCCC & CWS	
Mrs. Anuja S. Chacko.	17
A View From the Gallery Thomas Mathew	18
Living Home Shirley Chackalamannil	21
'Women in Transition; ... Nirmala Abraham,	
Suma Joe Chacko, Marykutty Thomas	23
A Call to Action Sunita Chandy	25
AMT: Are you subject to it? Shibu P. Thomas	27
Applied Christianity! Tara and Lisa Mathews	29
The Power of Grace Charles Babu	30
Seeds of Peace into a... Ancy Andrews	31
Medical Mission to Matamoros Betsy Alexander	32
Bible Cross Word Puzzle	38
Diocesan/Parish News	40

Cover Design: **Biju T. Mathew**, Houston

ADVISORY BOARD

Rev. Sajju Zachariah [Dallas]
(972) 226-0976
sajuachen@yahoo.com

Dr. John P. Lincoln [Lubbock]
(806) 797-6000

Dr. M. V. Mathew [Chicago]
(847) 991-6709

Benjamin George [NY]
(516) 616-5565

Benny Mathew [NY]
(914) 378-8028
chunackaraben@aol.com

Abraham K. Daniel [NY]
Council Member
(718) 417-8441 koabdan@aol.com

Subscription Rates:

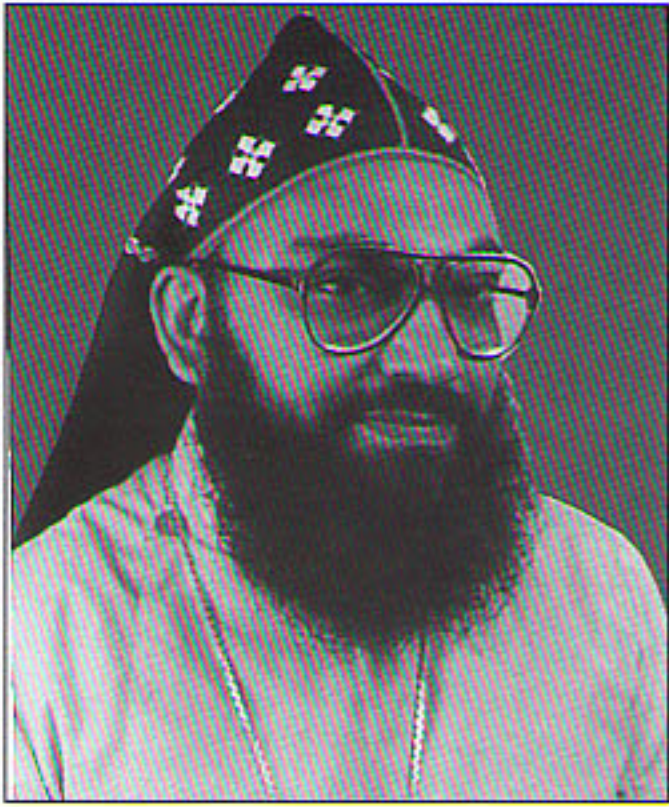
	2 Years	5 Years	Life
USA	\$20.00	\$50.00	\$300.00
Canada & UK	\$20.00*	\$50.00*	\$300.00*
*Plus Postage			

Advertisement Rates:

	Four Issues	One Issue
Back Cover	\$2,000.00	\$525.00
Front/Back Cover Inside	\$1,500.00	\$400.00
Inside Full Page	\$ 500.00	\$150.00

DISCLAIMER: Articles published in the Mar Thoma Messenger are solely the views of the authors. Messenger or the Diocese of North America & Europe is not responsible or liable for the contents of the articles or views in any form.

Message from the Diocesan Bishop



Dearly beloved in Christ,

We are on the threshold of a New Year. We are not sure what is in stock for us in 2006. But we know in whose hands we are as individuals and as a Church. Let this be an occasion for an introspection and reorientation in our lives.

The theme of this issue of Messenger, "God, in your grace transform the world" is very timely. After having tried several political systems and ideologies to transform the world, once again God's presence is being invoked in the affairs of the world. It doesn't mean that God will transform the world without human involvement. What we need today is a new awareness that 'the earth is the Lord's'. God is always active in the world. Very often we have failed to recognize His work in our midst. He wants each one of us to be His co-workers. To be with Him makes us humble and accountable in our lives. As we ponder on the theme in the days to come, let us be assured of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

By God's grace we have formed three new Parishes in the Diocese: Hermon in Atlanta, St. Thomas in Delaware Valley and Tabor in Staten Island. Since every transition is painful, within the framework of God's grace, let us try to avoid all win/lose attitudes and work together for the glory of God and the spiritual edification of all.

We are in the process of buying a house for our Youth Chaplain in Philadelphia. The Parishes in the region have agreed to arrange for the down payment. I commend all the Parishes and also the Sub-Committee which worked on this project.

The next Maramon Convention is scheduled to be held on the sand beds of river Pampa in Kerala from February 19-26, 2006. Elaborate arrangements are being made for the smooth conduct of the Convention. Let us remember the speakers and the organizers in our prayers so that the sessions will be a blessing to all.

I am grateful to all of you for your prayerful support to the ministry, especially during my illness. Let us continue to be with the Lord in the days to come.

Wish you all a meaningful and blessed New Year.

Yours in His ministry,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Coorilos Metrachan", written over a horizontal line.

Coorilos Metrachan

Message from the Metropolitan



Dearly Beloved in Christ,

This year 92 individuals submitted applications for selection to the seminary. All were graduates but some scored low on the interview. Applications were received a year ago. Parishes and clergy should make arrangements for them to study, serve, and increasingly take part in parish life.

The Sabha Council has decided to help the respective governments through relief funds as our gesture of sharing in the grief over the destruction and loss from hurricanes and earthquakes in America, Pakistan and Kashmir. Our support will not be in a material sense alone but stemming from a spiritual connection too. Admission to nursing schools requires hefty donations and even bigger tuition fees. Many poor families are struggling to educate their children. Parishes should take special interest in this matter and try to provide the required help.

We have started processing the transfer of clergy. Ideally, everyone should get parishes that suit their convenience; however, this is not possible always. Those who have served affluent parishes at home and abroad should understand the needs of others too. Those who do not live in parish parsonages should not think they would get a parish of their choice. It is good to let your needs be known but it is not proper to demand particular parishes. The Synod will decide on that based on work experience and the needs of the church. Everyone should heed to the needs of others.

Effort should be taken to organize senior citizens in every parish and simultaneously providing them with fellowship. Groups of youth members, Sevika Sanghom members and voluntary evangelists should visit the elderly who have difficulty with mobility and spend some time conversing, singing and praying with them. Especially, try to take part in the care of the invalid and those without food.

We have lost a few of our youth members as a result of our negligence in attending and catering to their needs. It wouldn't be too far off the mark to think there is an increasing disregard for spiritual values. We should also adapt the working style of our church taking into account the real needs of church members and how we can help them. Studies and constructive ideas to this end should be undertaken guided by the clergy. Growth is not merely increasing head count but also includes the depth and expanse of life-itself.

November 1 was celebrated as All Saints Day. Saints are not superhuman beings, but people who have experienced the incredible heights of humaneness. God has prepared this position for everyone. Although many are invited, few are selected. The saintly Christ came down from heaven to be born as a man in this world. The world is necessary and helpful to experience saintliness. Not escapism but facing reality in the fullness of the spirit and acceptance of the sacrifice on the cross is the foundation of a saint. A life in Christ, making the fruits of the spirit a part of life, these are the calls of saintliness. The Saints represent a challenge to overcome the resulting frustration from degradation of the three cardinal qualities of justice, love and peace we see spreading all around us today. Meditation is a means to the ultimate union. The lifestyles, working styles, and intensity of prayer challenge us. It is a need of the church and of individuals to read their histories and renew our lives with prayers to follow in their footsteps. It holds true even today that the just are but a few.

I was down with urinary infection from November 17th to 23rd and was hospitalized at Kumbanad Fellowship Hospital. I received expert and loving treatment in the hospital. The love and prayers of the people were joyful experiences. The illness was transformed into an opportunity to experience the grace of God. My gratitude to the people and God is profound.

Today our society and nation move forwards on a path of separatism, violence, and selfishness. Everyone point fingers at this, but no one takes any interest in steps to rectify this. God's intention is for everyone to see the light of the church and turn towards Him. Does the world see the light of the church today? Does not the evil that is rampant in the world exist in the church too? The purification of the church is a need of the world. The evil forces that encompass us today should be a challenge for our transformation. The church should evolve into a Godly people who seek and obey the will of God. Our transformation is the greatest need of the hour. May the Lord lead us.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

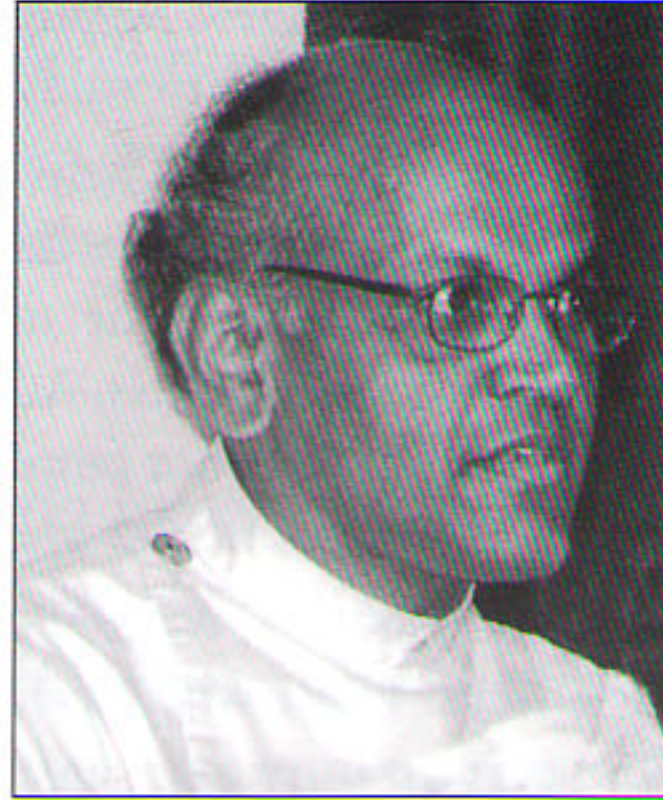
Philipose Mar Chrysostom
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Translated and Reprinted from Sabha Tharaka

God, in your grace transform the world: Biblical reflections

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham

The General Assembly of WCC, which meets once in seven years, is scheduled to meet at Port Alegre, Brazil in February 2006. Delegates from 337 Communions from all over the world will deliberate on the different dimensions of the theme 'God, in your grace, transform the world'. A delegation of seven members from our Church, including three Bishops will attend the Assembly. Here are a few Biblical insights on the theme.



At the outset, it should be remembered that we are not trying to suggest to God something that He has never thought of earlier. We cannot give God a mandate. Rather, at the heights of human self-sufficiency, science and technology, communication revolution, etc. on the one hand, and our contemporary historical predicaments, uncertainties and 'walls of partition' on the other, we are trying to see afresh the need for God in the transformation of the world. It is as if we are praying:

"God, we acknowledge that this is Your world, the entire creation belongs to You. We cannot transform this world without You. Sinners and sinned against as we are, we are sorry that we have tried to 'manage the affairs of this world' without You. We thought we were boundless and that we were on our own. Today, more than ever, we need You. We need Your transforming, healing and reconciling presence in the world. Enable us to go with you into the world with Your eyes, Your arms, Your Spirit. Amen".

1. A Prayer Theme

What we have in the theme is a cry for life; a cry of post-modern humanity who are at the zenith of human capabilities and potentials. According to Bishop William Temple, "The proper outline of a Christian prayer is not please do for me what I want; but Lord, do in me with me and through me what you want". Prayer is also a rediscovery of God's presence in His world and in our lives. Nevertheless, prayer is not an end in itself. So what we need in our times is acted prayers and prayerful actions. The genuineness of prayer is not about the number of times or the amount of time we pray but what kind of people we become through our prayer. It would be worthwhile to ponder on the question: Do we try to transform God, our situations or ourselves through our prayers?

2. An affirmation of God's world

Two notions are very often found in our life of faith: one, negation of this world, and two, glorification of this world. In the first, the world stands over and against us and this created order is not taken seriously. Here, our life in the world and its realities are ignored. In the second, the sinful structures and systems are ignored. What we have in the second notion is the absolutization of socio-political systems. Both these notions are to be challenged as God's agenda is basically this

world (Jn.3:16; 16:8) and not merely the Church. Our task is to live as God's people in God's world.

3. A rediscovery of God's grace

Two essential elements of Christian faith are God's grace and our response to His grace. Grace is the spiritual potential to see beyond the darkness and harsh realities of the present. Grace makes us strong when we are weak (2 Cor.12:10). God's grace is open to all. The entire creation is under the umbrella of His grace. Paul made such a rediscovery of God's grace when he was in a spiritual crisis. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, "All crisis situations are moments of grace when we enter into the very depth of life". All of us always stand in need of this fresh awareness of God's grace.

4. A message of Hope

Christian hope is not merely wishful thinking. When we are serious in our journey of faith, there is always the question of the ultimate meaning of life such as these: What is the ultimate meaning of life? Does this world have a future? As Konrad Raiser, the former secretary of WCC, points out, "Christian faith is a resistance movement against fatalism and resignation. When a person stops hoping, death has the upper hand. Hope is the breath of life". The theme of the Assembly assumes God's decisive intervention in the world. Let us remind ourselves that God has His own ways of doing things in the world and that He can make use of social forces, political systems and individuals to accomplish His purpose.

5. Human role in the transformation of the world

Human beings are God's agents and partners in the process of the transformation of this world. Both personal and

social transformation are interrelated. A brief survey of world history would reveal that much of transformation in history took place through conscientious political process. The task of the Church here is to identify those forces that are perhaps the partial historical approximations of the Kingdom of God. This has always been a problem in the life and witness of the Church. What we need here is the Spirit of discernment.

Ever since the creation of the world the Spirit of God has been active in the world so that the world may be redeemed from its bondage to sin and the forces of sin and darkness at all levels. The question is whether we have the preparedness to be with God in His transforming mission in the world. Let us wind up these reflections with the following prayer:

“God, come to us and journey with us so that we may walk in Your grace and peace. Fill us with

hope so that we may break through barriers. Inspire us on our ecumenical journey, making possible encounters and dialogue. Send Your Spirit to strengthen us in our prophetic role of proclaiming liberation. May Your Spirit be a gentle breeze when we need comfort and security. But let it be a strong wind when we are too settled and need to speak out. Let Your life-giving peace come into our bodies and be expressed in action for peace between people, churches, religions and nations. May Your transforming grace inspire us to join hands and declare the freedom given by Your love. Shower Your blessings upon us as we journey on, announcing the good news of justice, caring and acceptance. ■

(From Springs of Living Water, WCC Publication, 2005)

A Christmas Promise....

Aswathi Varughese (Mary)

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Chicago

*The golden glow of autumn
Beckons the wintry chill of winter
Orange leaves dancing in the glow of the setting sun
Summon silver snowflakes
Drifting earthward
Like Heaven's caresses
On a weary brow...
Seasons landscape earth
Elation and Distress temper life
Parameters of sadness blend into infinity
And yet -
With the dawn of each winter
Hope is renewed in the eternal promise
“For unto you a child is born*

*Unto you a son is given....”
HE came to love and forgive
To temper hatred with compassion
To render mercy for the broken hearted
To heal the hurting...
As bells peal again this Christmas
I promise to hear the cry of pain
For I cried and HE wiped my tears
I promise to forgive
As I was forgiven
I promise to comfort
As I was comforted
And with the dawn of each New Year
Hope is renewed in the timeless assurance
“My Grace is sufficient for thee”*

*Be Quick to Judge Yourself
and Slow to Judge Others.*

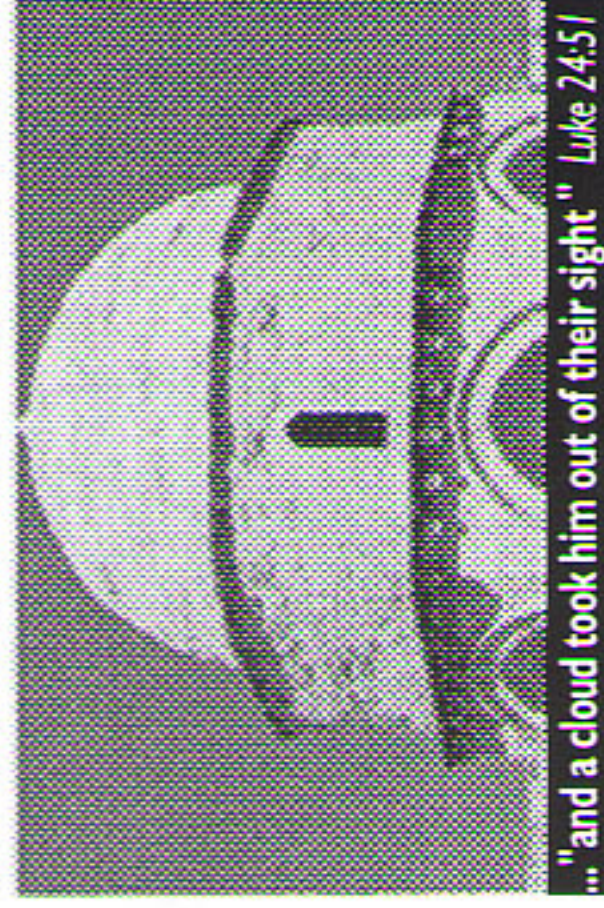
TO India VIA Israel



വിശുദ്ധ നാടുകളിലൂടെ

WALK IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

2000 Years later

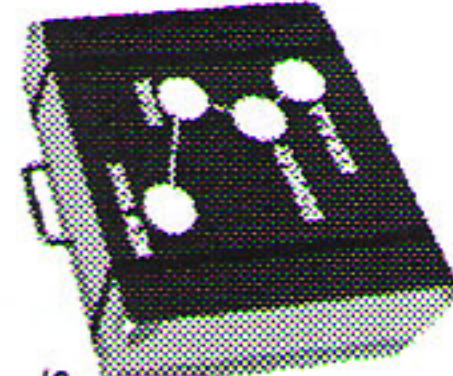


TOUR #1

Stopover in Israel enroute India 4Ns/5Ds or 7Ns/8Ds

TOUR #2

Newark / New York to Israel and return 7Ns/8Ds



Put your feet where Jesus walked...
View the sites where History speaks...
Feel the living touch of Jesus...
it is an experience !

EL THALTHE
It's not just an airline. It's Israel

Add only a little more to your India fares and have a 7 days "JOURNEY THROUGH THE HOLY LAND", Transfers, 5*/4* Hotel, all meals, conducted tours. Groups of 2, 4, 8, 10, 15 or more - any time.

2006 Departures:
Feb 14-23, Apr 19-28,
May 16-23, June 03-12
Sep 12-21



CAREWAYS
TRAVEL & TOURS
225 River Road (D.30) Bogota, NJ 07603

Contact: P.T. Chacko **TEL: 201-678-9501** ■ Fax: 201-880-0133 ■ E-mail: careways@optonline.com

SHLEP STUDIOS

God Transforms the World Through His Grace

George J. Poikail, Silver Spring, MD

It has been quite a while since this writer was asked to attempt an essay on the above-captioned topic. But every time he wanted to start it, he was struck by the utter anomaly of the topic and the world as it is. Beginning with the post Christmas 2004 tsunami, along with wars, genocide (Darfur), Katrina, Rita, Wilma, earthquakes in Kashmir, devastating floods in El Salvador, tornados in the Midwest, the threat of pandemic flu; lies and liars who lie in government, corporations and private agencies; their aggrandizement, deceptions, deviance, the degradation and decrepitude of private and public morals; the bankruptcy of liberal/radical/conservative/right-wing/left-wing rhetoric and behaviors; with mega churches spreading their inanities in the name of some antediluvian visions—all give one the impression that the world is going to hell in a hand basket! Then how does one talk about grace as the gift of God and His operating principle in transforming this world? And yet, it is precisely at such moments as these that one needs to talk about it. So here follow some reflections on the topic.



1. Grace and Human Institutions

Life cannot be sustained without form, and form without life is dead. Churches are human creations, certainly instituted by the grace of God, and despite repeating the Pauline discussions of the church as the Body of Christ, and despite singing "The Church's One Foundation" during the processions to dedicate a new church building, our church as well as others, are human institutions and as Franklin Littel cogently argued many years ago in his *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, the designs and accidents that have created our particular denominations are ethnic, doctrinal, social, economic, class, and multiple chauvinistic reasons. But this statement is not meant to be an indictment or denigration, but it is a recognition of who we are so that we can get off our highfalutin thinking and high-jumping horses of claims of uniqueness, antiquity or claims of the possession of the ultimate and absolute truth. The Mar Thoma Church also has its own structural as well as institutional issues.

That is the way it is, that is the way it will remain, and our growth will be amoeba-like, breaking off into little piddling groups and parishes. We will probably never amount to much in terms of vision or mission, other than congratulating ourselves as to how great we are, and going on peddling our Thomistic 'heritage'. We are tightly structured with a written constitution for everything,

whether it is the choir, or any supporting organizations of the parish. Very often it seems that church polity and legality loom large in our parish lives. Sometimes it appears that we Marthomites in North America constitute a colony to be exploited for every which monetary need in India.

Pope Leo V is quoted as saying to a visitor to the Vatican, "Brother, we can't say as St. Peter said, 'silver and gold have I none' (Acts 3:6). The visitor retorted, 'Yes, your holiness, but neither can we say, 'In the name of Jesus

Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk' The church as a human institution is necessary, but when it is empty of the grace of God, it becomes demonic and destructive to spiritual life and community. One of my seminary colleagues once said, "Jesus called us to be fishers of men, but we are keepers of aquariums." We have our Mar Thoma aquariums, some owned, some rented, and we keep our fishes there for exhibition. Some die, others escape, but some are born every month, somewhere. Perchance if a white American, or horror of horrors, a Black or Spanish American, comes into our parish through marriage or assimilation, we chase them out with vengeance. Where, O where, is the grace of God operative in our parishes? How can we make our liturgical practices meaningful to our youth? The church is the one institution that is meant to be the Body of Christ, and if and when it becomes empty and demonic, what is the hope of other institutions that do not make such divine claims as the church does?

2. Grace and Human History

Is history a mindless cycle as Arnold Toynbee argued? Is it a series of rise and fall of the various civilizations as Gibbons illustrated in the *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, or is history a self-deluding process in which mankind takes one step forward and two steps backwards as Paul Tillich posited? Or does history have a meaning as Collingwood argued in *The Meaning of History*? Does it move from Alpha to Omega as the great Jesuit priest theologian/paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin argued in *Phenomenon of Man and Future of Man*? Is there much meaning in the vexations and sermons that our scholastic priests give about *chronos* (ordinary time) and *kairos* (time with meaning and fulfillment)? An attempt to answer these questions may require a look at the Pauline thought on the two principles, the principle of the flesh and the principle of the spirit. These are constantly parallel, by their very definitions, are complimentary and at the same time, are in

conflict with each other. It is the life of the flesh that makes pleasure, procreation, and fulfillment of other mundane desires and necessities possible. Groups such as the Shakers or some Anabaptist sects who denied this area and chose purely a life of the Spirit, have disappeared for ever, although evidences of their high creativity, art, and history, are preserved in artifacts such as their signature furniture and community houses. But the life of the flesh in and for itself may degenerate into animal level without the life of the spirit. Sigmund Freud in his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, could draw only much on the animal nature of humanity, albeit a civilized humanity, striving for various levels of desire fulfillment, whereas Carl Gustav Jung, in his methodology and various works, or Norman O. Brown in *Life Against Death*, could go beyond the pessimistic (or realistic, as others may view) analytical structures of Freud and his disciples. Hence it is grace, as theologically defined as “freely given unmerited favor and love of God” that provides the glue, as it were, to the various disparate accomplishments of the human genre, the very ingredient that helps construct the rhizome, as Jung calls it, that becomes our individual, racial, and collective identity. Without God’s grace we are lost. Grace is God Himself and His means of reaching out to us.

3. Grace in Our Individual Lives

“Religion,” stated the great mathematician-philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, “is what a man does with his solitariness. It is a movement from God the Void, to God the Enemy, to God the Friend.” (*Religion in the Making*) The great Albert Einstein said, “...to know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religiousness.” In one of his writings, Whitehead characterizes life as the walk of a man through the woods. All around one is faced with decrepitude, decay, dampness, darkness, and death. One could easily become discouraged and stoop down with the burdens and loneliness of the walk. But then, one comes into the most unexpected, and the most sudden clearing in the canopy of woods, and the most glorious sunlight streams in, and the walker is assured that there is life, there is living that is way beyond and far, and one gets up hopes for the next clearing, and the next, and one goes on and on, till someday one comes out of the woods into the eternal clearing of God’s immediate and everlasting presence. This engenders hope, invigorating and reinvigorating the weary pilgrim to go on, and on, and Lo! And Behold, Jesus the Risen Christ Himself “draws near and walks with them.” (Luke 24:15) This is a mystery, the timing and manner of the Risen Lord walking with the weary pilgrim,

is unpredictable. But that He will draw near and walk with him/her is promised, and God never fails.

Who amongst us have not, at times, doubted God, His being, His purpose and direction in our lives? Who among us have not become discouraged, watching the world going to pieces, a world where the wicked flourish and the innocent suffer and die, a world that is splintered into various political and ethnic groups and segments; a world that is splattered with the blood of the innocent bystanders, children and babies, all caused by some maniacs or megalomaniacs somewhere, some time, with some real or purported grievance or vengeance? The problem of theodicy and individual sin of schadenfreud bedevil us if we lose hope that the grace of God is operative through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit enlivening the ministry that was started through Jesus of Nazareth who is our Christ. But that involves a choice. The great existentialist Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard stated in his book *Either/Or*, that either Christ is what He said He is, the presence of God to us in history; He does what He promised that He would do, OR He is not, but is a fraud, an illusion. One either affirms a grounding in history, singing, “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand” or one forever gets lost in the various ísms’, frauds, false prophets, sects, or sectarian claims, all of which makes a lot of loud noises without any substance or witness, and there one keeps sinking into the mire and miasma of gutless scholasticism, syncretism, pantheism, or panentheism! If you get caught in this way, it is only your fault, because Jesus of Nazareth still says, “I am the way, the truth and the Life.”

4. Grace and Fulfillment

Unless one wants to get caught up in the mindless political/cultural games of Intelligent Design vs. Evolution, one simply accepts God, our ever-expanding universe and the world as gifts, and recognize that the “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth until now.” (Romans 8:22) In fact, when you watch the news or read the newspaper the next time, and tend to get a bit downcast thinking that the world is going to hell, please read St. Paul’s paean for the grace of God as recorded in Romans 8. When he was alive, Mundakayam John Upadeshi, my illustrious father, used to say that one should read the newspaper with the Bible in one hand. He, a scholarly, erudite, informed, and yet simple Christian preacher with the most profound faith in the goodness of God and His purposes, would quote the entire chapter of Romans 8, especially vs. 39, and get a good sleep, day or night, whether he was hungry or full, poor or rich, because of his faith in the goodness and faithfulness of God. I wish I had, in my entire person, that faith, that devotion, that certitude, that hope, that peace, that he had at his fingertip.

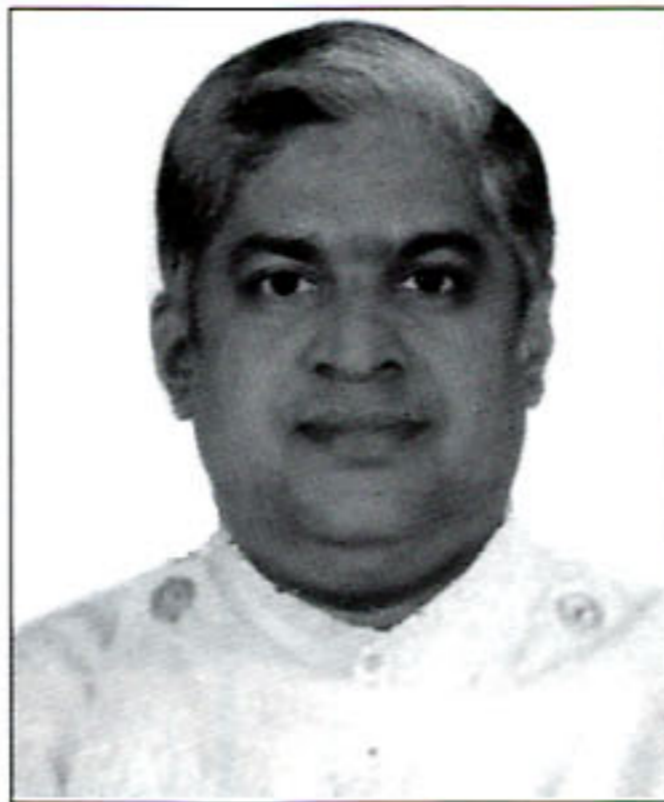
So friends, let me close this rather long essay with this thought: “Believing” may appear or sound simple. But as

(Cont’d on page 10)

Bible Society Of India: Kerala Auxiliary Through 49 Years

Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Varghese, Auxiliary Secretary

The Kerala Auxiliary of the Bible Society of India was inaugurated on 10 June 1956 at a solemn function at Baker Memorial High School, Kottayam with the motto "A Bible for every Christian home in Kerala". Before this, the work in Kerala was carried out as a part of the Madras Auxiliary. Bishop C.K. Jacob, the C.S.I. Bishop of Madhya Kerala Diocese was elected President (earlier he was President of the Bible Society of India Central council) and Rev. Thomas Cherian was appointed the Secretary.



visit of Rev. Claudius Buchanann in 1806. Buchanann was an Anglican clergyman and Vice Principal of Fort Williams College, Calcutta. He was a close associate of William Carey and so one could say that the real initiative for the Malayalam Bible came from William Carey himself.

Metropolitan Dianecious authorized Philipose Ramban (Arch Deacon) of Kayamkulam to undertake the work. Thus the four Gospels were translated into Malayalam from Syriac and given to Buchanann for printing, on his way to England. It is said that

Metropolitan Dianecious was very old at that time and was so committed to see the Bible translated into Malayalam that he presented the ancient Syriac parchments of the Bible to Buchanann and made him promise to translate and print the whole Bible in Malayalam. According to Metropolitan Dr. Mar Aprem of Trichur, a Church historian, the Syriac parchments are at present preserved at the Cambridge University, UK.

On his way to England Rev. Claudius Buchanann learnt that a new press was established in Bombay and so the four Gospels were printed there. Hand-written pages were etched on stones for printing. The Bible Society had just begun its work in India at that time in Calcutta and provided the paper for this printing. Hundred copies of the four Gospels were printed in 1811 and distributed to different Churches in Kerala. Today, four of the copies are available and one of them has become part of the Bible Exhibition of the Bible Society of India, Kerala Auxiliary.

During his visit to UK, Buchanann shared the need for an authoritative Malayalam translation of the Bible in the journal "Christian Research in Asia." Some outstanding Biblical scholars responded to this challenge and came to Kerala under the leadership of Rev. Benjamin Bailey. They were members of the Anglican Church and came as part of their Missionary Society, the CMS. By that time the Bible Society of India was desperately looking for a person with knowledge of Biblical Hebrew and Greek to head the Malayalam translation Project and Rev. Benjamin Bailey became the natural choice. Rev. Bailey had studied the Malayalam language but he needed local support. The local Orthodox Church readily responded by deputing eight clergymen for the work. Language experts were needed and the first choice was Chathu Menon with his knowledge of English and Malayalam. Then there were Vaidyanatha Iyar with knowledge of Malayalam and Sanskrit, Moses Isar Fenny, a Jewish business consultant of Trippunithara palace (with knowledge of also Hebrew) and others.

Bible Society Branches

There are 116 Branches of the Bible Society of India under Kerala Auxiliary. The first branch was formed in Thiruvalla in 1959 followed by Calicut in 1964; Kozhencherry came next. The branches serve as the backbone of the Bible Society ministry in Kerala.

As the number of branches grew, the Auxiliary Committee decided to coordinate the different branches in each district under a District Coordinator and a District Chairman. Thus 14 Districts were formed and one or more honorary Coordinators appointed for each District.

How We Got Our Bible

The Bible was the first book printed in Kerala—St. Matthew's Gospel in 1824. The New Testament was printed in 1829 and the entire Bible in 1841. Dr. Herman Gundart, a German Lutheran Missionary who worked on an independent Project based at Tellicherry in North Kerala brought out the New Testament in 1854 and Old Testament in 1859. In 1871 a Common Translation Committee, formed by the Bible Society representing all major Churches and various translation groups, published the present Bible—Sathya Vedapusthakam—in 1910.

The story of "how we got our Bible" will be incomplete without the beginning. God in Christ encountered the soul of this great nation 2000 years ago when Jesus sent one of his disciples, St. Thomas here. It is believed that St. Thomas established 7½ Churches in Kerala. Later, one of the Church fathers, Ambrose, brought leather parchments of portions of the Bible in Aramaic, better known as Syriac. Handwritten copies of this were made in later years and kept at different churches. Passages from them were interpreted during the Qurbana. But since the Bible was not translated into Malayalam, the common man was not touched by the power of God's Word. Metropolitan Dianecious, the head of the Kerala Churches, became convinced of this during the

Rev. Benjamin Bailey and the pioneering working group were ready with the manuscript for St. Matthew's Gospel. But the manuscript without a printing press was of no use. So they referred to the Encyclopedia Britannica, got some local carpenters and constructed a press. The CMS Press became the first printing press in Kerala and is now preserved at the CMS Press, Kottayam. The Bible Society of India made history as the first publisher in Kerala by publishing St. Mathew's Gospel in 1824.

The Bible was the first book to be printed in many languages in India. Today the Bible Society of India, after the Government of India, is the largest publishing house in Asia. Our motto is "God's Word: Life For All". This is an echo of Christ's proclamation: "I have come that you may have life and Life in all its fullness." (John 10:10)

The Bible Museum

Having celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2000, the Bible Society of India, Kerala Auxiliary is embarking on a novel and ambitious project. The Bible Museum, the first ever venture of its kind in India, is our response to the warm and enthusiastic reception of the Bible exhibitions in the state. The Museum will give information on the history of Bible, the people involved in the creation and promotion of the Bible, the influence of the Bible on society, the history of the Malayalam Bible, the history of Christianity in India and so on. By throwing light on the history of the Bible and its role in society, the museum will surely play its part in spreading God's message. ■

PAST PRESIDENTS

- 1956 Rt. Rev. C. K. Jacob
- 1957 Most Rev. Yuhannon Mar Thoma Metropolitan
- 1972 Rt. Rev. T. B. Benjamin
- 1978 Most Rev. I. Jesudasan
- 1979 Rt. Rev. T.S Joseph
- 1982 Rt. Rev. Philipose Mar Chrisosrum
- 1988 Most Rev. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios
- 1990 Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilos
- 1992 Rt. Rev. Dr. K.J. Samuel
- 1996 Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Irenaeus
- 2002 Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Themotheos

PAST SECRETARIES

- 1956 Rev. Thomas Cheriyan
- 1972 Rev. K. Thomas Mathew
- 1981 Rev. T.V. Thomas
- 1990 Rev. Zachariah Koshy
- 2000 Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Varghese

OUR MILESTONES IN PUBLISHING OF BIBLES IN MALAYALAM

- 2000 Senior Citizens Bible
- 2001 Children's Bible
- 2002 Malayalam New Script Bible
- 2003 Sathya Marga—John the Gospel (Interpretation)
- 2004 Malayalam Re-edited Bible
- 2005 Malayalam Study Bible (to be published)

God Transforms the World Through His Grace *(Cont'd from page 8)*

the great theologian Karl Barth argued, believing in God, His goodness, His mercies, and His overarching purposes for our individual, collective and national life is a gift of God, an undeserving gift, or in other words, Grace. So you see, beginning to believe in God and the sustenance of that belief are possible only through God's grace. Thus we come to the full circle. Prevenient Grace to enable us to believe, Redeeming Grace to help us recognize the grace of God through Jesus Christ, Sustaining Grace to keep us going, growing, and hoping, and Triumphant Grace that will help transform this sin-sick world into what God intends for it to be. May you daily experience the grace of God, as this writer does, so that we can shout defiance at the world and

all its demonic powers, as St. Paul does, and against the despair and desperation of our generation.

*To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck, the thing it contemplates
Neither change, nor falter, nor repent.*

(Shelly)

George Poikail is a retired psychotherapist who now lives at: 1939 Westchester Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20902-3564. You may reach him at that address or: Tel. & Fax: (301) 649-3980, or e-mail: gpoikail@aol.com.

*Don't Complain About Thorns Among Roses;
Be Grateful For Roses Among Thorns.*

Faith in Action by Ordinary Women

Kunjumol Cherian, Ann Arbor, Michigan

A Buddhist philosopher asked his Christian friend, "What is faith?" The Christian friend quoted Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Buddhist asked what it meant. The Christian read the Scripture louder thinking that it must clear his doubt. But the Buddhist asked again what it meant. At that point the believing Christian realized that he did not really know what it meant; he was unable to explain what faith is. Explaining faith is difficult for many Christians although we study the Bible, and often we are completely unprepared to answer questions about faith.

Faith has a starting and an end point. The starting point is believing in God, His power, character, personality and His ultimate plan and purpose for us. Faith is believing that God predestined us to be His children through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5). Faith is accepting Christ as our redeemer and Saviour, claiming our right to be God's children and heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). The end point is believing in God's promises – He will do as He says. The promise of eternity, though we are unable to comprehend it, is a surety for those who believe. The life of a true Christian between those starting and end points must be one of surrender under the Lordship of Christ. That is the essence of faith.

Most often when we say we have faith, what we mean is an intellectual assertion that we are in agreement with certain Christian teachings and by observing them we show our religious fervor. Affirmation of faith is good, but translating our faith into action will show that our faith is real rather than merely verbal. However we interpret Hebrews 11:1, faith is the absolute confidence in God's will, God's purpose and the absolute belief that by putting our trust in Christ we can achieve things that we hope for, and things that we have not seen or that are incomprehensible to human intelligence.

Faith is not something new or a reinvention of an old concept. There are numerous women of faith in the Bible, and many in modern history who translated their faith into action by simple trust in the Lord. Their faith helped to bring "Thy kingdom ...on earth as it is in heaven." Let me give a few examples of ordinary women who put their faith into action that made an impact on the world. Apostle James teaches that "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead" (James 2:17).

Amy Carmichael was an ordinary woman who became extraordinary by her faith in action. Amy was very



disappointed that she had brown eyes which she thought was unattractive, and she prayed to God to change her eye color to blue. It took a long while for her to understand that God was not granting her wishes. With help from her Christian parents she learned to deal with the stress and emotional strain and developed a determination to be obedient to God and understand the purpose of life with her brown eyes. She went as a missionary to Japan in 1892 and in 1895 she was sent to Dohnavur, India. Her work was to rescue children who were abused for temple prostitution, and unwanted children born out of wedlock.

In India she recognized the beauty of her God-given brown eyes. When she looked into the eyes of orphaned children she recognized the beauty of her own brown eyes. She realized that God gave her brown eyes to identify herself with those abused and suffering Indian girls. She rescued hundreds of such young children. She founded the Dohnavur Fellowship for homeless and abused children. Amy Carmichael's life was a life of passion, love and compassion and she put faith into action.

Pandita Ramabai was another great woman who put faith into action. She was born a Brahmin but accepted the Christian faith against all odds of adversity, famine, and death, and in spite of being shunned by her own caste for marrying someone of a lower caste. She became a Christian while in England. She had memorized 23,000 verses of the Hindu scriptures. But when she learned about the love of God that sacrificed Jesus Christ for redeeming humanity, she dedicated her life to emancipate women in India. Ramabai advocated education for women and the repudiation of child marriage. Today women in India have equal opportunity for higher education and more than 50% of the Indian work force are women. She fought against child marriage and rescued hundreds of child widows, whom she trained as teachers, nurses and missionary assistants. Love for fellow beings translated into action was exemplified in her life. She was a great evangelist in India until she died in 1922.

Mother Teresa's life was a life of faith in action. She realized that her calling was to care for the sick and dying, the hungry, the naked, the homeless and the destitute. Slums were her mission fields; faith, compassion, caring and unconditional love for others were her assets. The whole world acclaimed her as the "Angel of Mercy." She immortalized God's love through faith in action. There are hundreds of other examples from the past and present of women whose faith in action impacted the world.

(Cont'd on page 13)

Conflicts: Biblical Rules of Engagement

Thomas Koshy, Gaithersburg, Maryland

Conflicts do occur in all spheres of life but how we should engage the conflict has remained to be a serious subject of study for ages. There are various psychological and sociological books that address solutions with worldly wisdom.

In my years of commitment to study the Bible, I was pleasantly surprised on many occasions on the Godly wisdom communicated to us. I feel reassured of its authoritative position as an instruction manual for God's children that provides timeless guidance in spite of our technological and socio-economic advancements.

The Bible provides specific Godly wisdom on the rules of engaging conflicts within the church community. The Biblical procedure given is specific and requires us to follow its steps in exact order to preserve the harmony and mission of the faith community. Let us examine the scripture and gain wisdom.

First Step: Personal & Private Encounter

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." (Mat. 18:15) The directive is to meet privately for a "heart to heart" talk. "My friend, why are you avoiding me? Did I do something that hurt you? What can I do to resume our friendship?" When the conflict is handled in privacy, people talk without reservation and such conversations are generally sincere and yield better understanding. When we meet like this, it is an expression of commitment to solve the problem. Even if the confrontation is awkward, there is no new shame because the conversation is limited to the only two who stand to gain from it. This is how we eliminate a potential problem area by nipping it in the bud.

God knows that some of us are not so easily persuaded; therefore, He provided another contingency plan.

Second Step: Peer Mediation

"But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." (Mat. 18:16) Once we are in conflict we make passionate actions that are not well supported with rational bases. That is when we need to find two people who are recognized for their objectivity, impartial nature and has the respect of the concerned parties. The involvement of such people facilitates a rational assessment and rational solution after weighing evidence and honoring the higher call of truth. The influence of



these people is to persuade the right and wrong by adding independent opinions by duly weighing the facts.

Third Step: Judgment of the Faith Community

"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church,..." Mathew 18:17. "A duly constituted body of believers, acting in accord with God's Word has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or unforgiven."¹ God honors this

action when the decision is based on Biblical principles on which God operates (Mathew 18:18). This action is not to be seen lightly as a popularity contest, but to faithfully and delicately consider adequate bases to declare judgment. The hope is that the influence of many members of the faith community agreeing to a Biblical reasoning will become a persuasive force to convert the hard-hearted. There is hope of a victorious end even at this point.

Final Step: Exclusion

"...and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector." (Mathew 18:17) The last option is also given. These words have to be carefully understood. The decision of the faith community is to declare a hard-hearted impenitence.

Past failures of this process were that (1) Jesus was condemned for death through a majority decision of the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:64) and was crucified through majority consent of the Jerusalem church membership; (2) Joan of Arc was burned at stake by the condemnation of a Christian Council. The cavalier actions of the leadership and the faith community could lead to irreparable harm. I believe that God led us to democracy because of the exorbitant failures in the theocratic and autocratic governing of the people.

The process can work when the Biblical principles are closely adhered to without prejudice or malice. However, this does not mean such people are rejected forever. Quite the contrary, such people are removed only from influencing the operational process of the church. They are to be "regarded as an evangelistic prospect"¹ to be reached out by the church.

Jesus the Great Shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to search for one that was lost to teach us the importance of seeking the lost. "And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray." (NKJV Mat. 18:13)

“And above all things have fervent love for one another for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’” (NKJV 1Pet 4:8) It is the absence of love that allows minor irritations to grow into major engulfing separations. The old saying “put out the fire before it spreads” is very meaningful in this context.

Violated Steps

When the aforementioned steps are violated, the faith community should take a careful look at the motive. (When complaints are brought directly to the membership body in the pursuit of public shaming or seeking extrication is always driven by personnel agenda to disgrace someone without giving a fair chance to the due process prescribed in the Bible for the church.) When the church entertains such motions and the leadership bypasses the prescribed steps, the faith community loses its honor and Biblical bases. There is no excuse for not adhering to the Biblical process.

Misapplied Forgiveness and Its Price

In our eagerness to forgive, we have allowed negative influences to prevail in faith community. Selfishness and other personal agenda based decisions for worldly glory have become common in the leadership and the membership of the faith community. When such

conditions prevail, the faith community loses its Godly honor and purpose.

Adultery, fraud, and embezzlement are tolerated and becoming Christian leadership norms in several faith communities because such influences were not cleaned up from the faith community in its beginning. Many church majorities in this country agree on same sex marriage and ordain Bishops who are promoting and practicing gay and lesbian relationships. As mentioned in Philippians 3:19, we are observing a generation that finds glory in what is shameful and clearly labeled as an abomination in the sight of God.

When the corrective actions are not carried out in timely fashion, the organization becomes very large, the decisions would be based on revenue, membership and popular views to sustain the institution rather than serving the will of God. The church of Christ was never intended to operate in that manner. The operating standard of the church becomes less than the expected standards of a civil or community organization. Is this not one of the primary reasons why people are not eager to actively participate in a church?

Let us pray that the children of God will have a renewal to bring Christian Discipline back to the Church and reaffirm the priority to serve the will of God. ■

¹Bible Commentary by John MacArthur, Published by Thomas Nelson

Faith in Action by Ordinary Women *(Cont'd from page 11)*

How can ordinary women like us of the Mar Thoma Church put faith into action? We can respond to contemporary issues such as the negative impact of media that weakens family values and spirituality, racial bias, social injustice, and poverty. When people of faith become people of action, they can work together and win the culture war. We can set others free, and heal the wounds of the broken-hearted.

Do you think the problems Amy Carmichael saw in India, or the problems Ramabai encountered in India no longer exist? Aren't there poverty, slums, addiction and destitution in North America or India any more?

There are thousands of good things we can do with our time, and there are hundreds of groups to join and work for. The fields are plenty but the workers are few because of our lack of readiness to translate faith into action. The critical question to ask is whether we are able to distinguish between battlefields and mission fields. Life is a battle in itself, and the world we live in is a constant battlefield. We are in that battle daily, knowingly or unknowingly. Martin Luther once said,

“Though we be active in the battle, if we are not fighting where the battle is the hottest, we are traitors to the cause.” Poverty, hunger, social injustice, and oppression are the hottest issues we as Christians need to confront. As Edmund Burke said, “The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men (and women) to do nothing.”

God's love for humanity is not a passive or sentimental love, but a dynamic, active and sacrificial love. For God so loved the world that He acted to translate his love in action. That is the story from Bethlehem to Calvary. The Bible does not say that faith without action is not nice, or that it is not a good start. The Bible teaches that “Faith without action is dead” (James 2:17). Faith when translated into action affirms our commitment to God. Actions speak louder than words. May God strengthen us so that we may become doers and not just listeners. ■

(From her presentation at the 6th National Women's Conference, Mar Thoma Church, Diocese of North America and Europe, hosted by The Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia at Mensch Mill Retreat Center, Alburtis, PA, October 6-9, 2005).



THOMAS CONSULTING, LLC
PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING SERVICES

35 Norwich Street
Staten Island, NY 10314

Office: **718-698-2370/516-352-2856**

email: spt1040@aol.com

Website: www.spt1040.com

Shibu P. Thomas, MBA, MS

Tax Accountant

Quickbooks Pro-Advisor Consultant

Member AICPA, NYSSCPA

**INCOME
TAX
CONSULTANT**

SMALL BUSINESS ACCOUNTING & BOOKKEEPING

COMPLETE PAYROLL SERVICES

BUSINESS CONSULTING

FINANCIAL REPORTS

INCOME TAX PREPARATION

ELECTRONIC FILING

CORPORATE AND PARTNERSHIP RETURNS

NEW BUSINESS SET-UP

BUSINESS LICENSES

ALL STATE RETURNS

Free Review of last year's return

VISIT MY WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

Transforming Grace

Dr. Mary Verghese, Indiana

The changes we experience in life are influenced by many things such as, heredity, our environment, the decisions we make, and various types of training we receive. But by far the most powerful influence in a believer's life is the transforming grace of God, which is His kindness towards us, regardless of our worthiness in spite of every punishment we deserve.

God's ultimate will is for every believer to be conformed to the likeness of His Son. His grace is responsible for our rebirth, and from that point it directs, moves, and influences us to become increasingly Christ like. In that way, we can say with the apostle Paul, "By the grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

The apostle's life, in fact, is a powerful example of God's transforming grace. In Philippians chapter 3, Paul describes how he once depended on his good works, nature, and conduct to gain acceptance before God. He did not originally understand there is only one way to be made acceptable in God's sight—by His grace. If good works and religious activity could in some way gain divine approval, Paul would never have written about his former vain attempts to win God's favor and his numerous faulty reasons for confidence: he was an observant Jew from a family of esteemed lineage (v. 5); he had zealously kept the Law (v. 6); and he even tirelessly persecuted the church, which he saw as an enemy of his faith. (v. 6)

However, encountering the living Christ totally changed Paul, and he explains, "Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have [now] counted as loss" (Philippians 3:7). He recognized that all of his human titles and achievements had absolutely no spiritual value. We, too, must realize we will never gain eternity by depending on anything we are or anything we do—salvation is unrelated to how much money we give, what excellent citizens we are, or how well we treat our family. It is by grace, and grace alone, that we are saved. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Paul learned a valuable lesson: the only thing worth boasting about is the Cross. (Galatians 6:14) Jesus Christ offered Himself as a substitute sacrifice, not because He saw anything in us worth saving, but because of His great love.

There are millions of people who sincerely but wrongly believe they will be acceptable to God based on how good they are. It grieves my heart to think they are deceived by the false doctrine of working to earn the Lord's approval. By grace, Paul's thinking was corrected—he learned that everything he had counted as valuable was worthless. In this way, the worst enemy of Christianity became its greatest asset, its greatest motivator, and its dearest friend.

How did this change come about? Saul, the "Hebrew of Hebrews" committed to destroying anything related to

Jesus Christ, was approaching Damascus. After a sudden flash of light, he fell to the ground, blinded, and heard Jesus saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 22:7-9) The future apostle learned that being critical of the church or Christians was equivalent to opposing Jesus Himself (Matthew 25:40), and that to attack the body of Christ meant putting oneself under the condemnation and judgment of God. But God's grace was about to transform him by giving him a new nature and a fresh start—his hostile, vengeful heart would abruptly be changed, and he would become the church's most powerful promoter.

What made the difference was that Paul knew the Lord was talking to him. Is the Lord talking to you? Is He asking you to do something you don't like or something you are afraid to do? You have free will up to a point, but God's grace is compelling—you may rebel for a while, but ultimately, you cannot help yourself. George Matheson's hymn describes grace this way: "Oh Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee." God knows that we are children, growing and being gradually conformed into His likeness—and He is patient, kind, and forgiving in the process of our transformation. Sometimes we may say, "No, God," but He has a profound way of adding a little more pressure and a little more "incentive" until we say, "Okay, God!"

Remember that it is out of His gentle love—not out of condemnation or chastisement—that our heavenly Father arranges our circumstances and challenges. What He asks us to do is always in our best interest and will be part of the process that conforms us to Christ's image. If you find you can repeatedly disobey, you need to ask some serious questions about your relationship with Him. This is how I see it: when it comes down to a final decision either for God or against Him, how can I say no to Christ Who loved me enough to die an excruciating, humiliating death in my place?

This grace that saves and transforms today is the same grace that changed Saul, the sinner, into Paul, the saint. The apostle acknowledges that God's grace is completely responsible for what he had become, (1 Corinthians 15:10) and that is why he gloried in the Cross—he himself had no intentions of being saved, but God in His gracious love had wonderful plans for him.

Furthermore, Paul was an example to those around him as well as to future generations. God wanted all of us to know that, if He can come out of nowhere, knock Paul down, blind him, and transform him completely, then He can save anyone. Witnessing Paul's conversion makes us ask, "Who among us can not be transformed by the grace of God?"

But don't be deceived by Paul's dramatic experience. I was saved at the age of six. There was no flash of light; I simply asked the Lord to come into my life, and knelt down to pray. I came from a home where my dad and mom read the Bible to me, so my getting saved at age six was somewhat natural. But it took just as much grace to save me at six as it took to save Saul of Tarsus, the violent, hateful persecutor of the church. The Bible says we were dead in our trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1) How much life does it take to make a dead person live? It doesn't matter whether the dead person is seven or seventy—it just takes life! Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6) When we have Him, we are born again—and truly alive!

Once someone has been transformed from sinner to saint, four attitudes should become evident. First, we should exhibit true humility. Listen to Paul's description of himself, the pre-eminent missionary and preacher of the Gospel: "I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9). In the following verse, he credits God's grace for his transformation, and not anything he himself did. You will not find pride in the heart of a man or woman who truly understands grace—that person will always be pointing others to Christ, realizing that anything positive is due entirely to God.

The second attitude is one of obligation. Because Paul was so overwhelmed by the undeserved grace of God, he gave his life to fulfilling the mission the Lord assigned him. Paul acknowledged he was set-aside before birth to be a preacher of the Gospel (Galatians 1:15-16); he considered it an enormous privilege and gave himself wholeheartedly

to the task. The apostle had so much gratitude for his salvation that he had to tell other people what had happened to him. You also have a message to share. Don't be quiet about it. It is wrong to keep God's love to yourself when there is a world of people hurting and dying in agony, sorrow, frustration, anger, disappointment, and despair.

A third thing we should demonstrate is a sense of dependence. Paul mentions laboring "even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). He is saying he does not strive through his own efforts; the same grace, goodness, and power that transformed him is the same loving power at work in the believer's life every day. We do not have to depend on our own wisdom, abilities, talents, or strength. It is Christ in us who accomplishes (Philippians 4:13), and apart from Him, we can do nothing. (John 15:5)

One final attitude we should display is a spirit of absolute confidence. At the end of his life, Paul was able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). And he looked forward to receiving the crown of righteousness from the Lord Himself. (v. 8)

What an awesome example Paul is of the transforming power of God's grace, which can take a man murderously opposed to Christ and change him into the world's greatest missionary. He gave himself without reservation to proclaiming the Gospel, and he was able to say that God's grace toward him "did not prove vain." (1 Corinthians 15:10). Has God poured His transforming grace out into your life? Don't let it be in vain—tell God how thankful you are . . . and tell others why! ■

DIOCESAN WEBSITE—www.marthomanae.com

Our website is up and running again, thanks to Mr. Thomas Cheriyan. We have several features and we need your support and co-operation to make it fully functional. We can post information about our Parishes, links to Parish websites, Vicars, their photographs and their family photographs on our website. Please e-mail your information to thomas@wmcmail.com or click on the link "Contact Us" on our website and send us the information. We also need information about the various organizations. Please call or e-mail the information to any one of the following website sub-committee members:

Thomas Cheriyan

Website Manager
845-627-0227 (Home)
914-527-2457 (Cell)
e-mail: thomas@wmcmail.com

Jason M. Thomas

201-262-1370 (Home)
201-981-7778 (Cell)
e-mail: charmin_J@hotmail.com

T. A. Mathew

Website Coordinator
713-455-7469 (Home)
832-771-2504 (Cell)
e-mail: tamatthew@hotmail.com

Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham

Diocesan Secretary
516-377-3311
e-mail: kaabraham@yahoo.com

Thomas Easo

972-285-3276 (Home)
214-435-1340 (Cell)
e-mail: easo@sbcglobal.net

"A Witness... That The World Might Believe"

2005 General Assembly of NCCC and CWS

Mrs. Anuja S. Chacko, Mar Thoma Church, Detroit



The Mar Thoma delegation with the officers of the NCC-USA Assembly in Baltimore.

"A Witness..... That The World Might Believe", was the theme of the 2005 General Assembly of the National Council of the Churches of Christ. The theme was based on Jesus' final prayer before his crucifixion (John 17:6-25). This was the second assembly in the 2004-2007 quadrennium, conducted from November 8th to 10th, 2005 in Hunt Valley, Maryland. Approximately 250 delegates from 36 denominations from the Orthodox and Anglican traditions assembled at this gathering which was characterized by strength and vitality derived from a shared sense of purpose. Four delegates represented the Mar Thoma Church in North America at this national assembly: our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Dr. T. M. Thomas (St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York) and Mrs. Anuja S. Chacko (Detroit Mar Thoma Church). Our Diocese has been a member of this national council since 1999.

The primary goal of the NCCC-USA is to embody the unity of the churches and to bear common witness to our Lord's mission in this world. The 36 denominations covenant with one another to serve for the glory of God throughout creation. Over the past 53 years, this Council has been effectively utilizing its

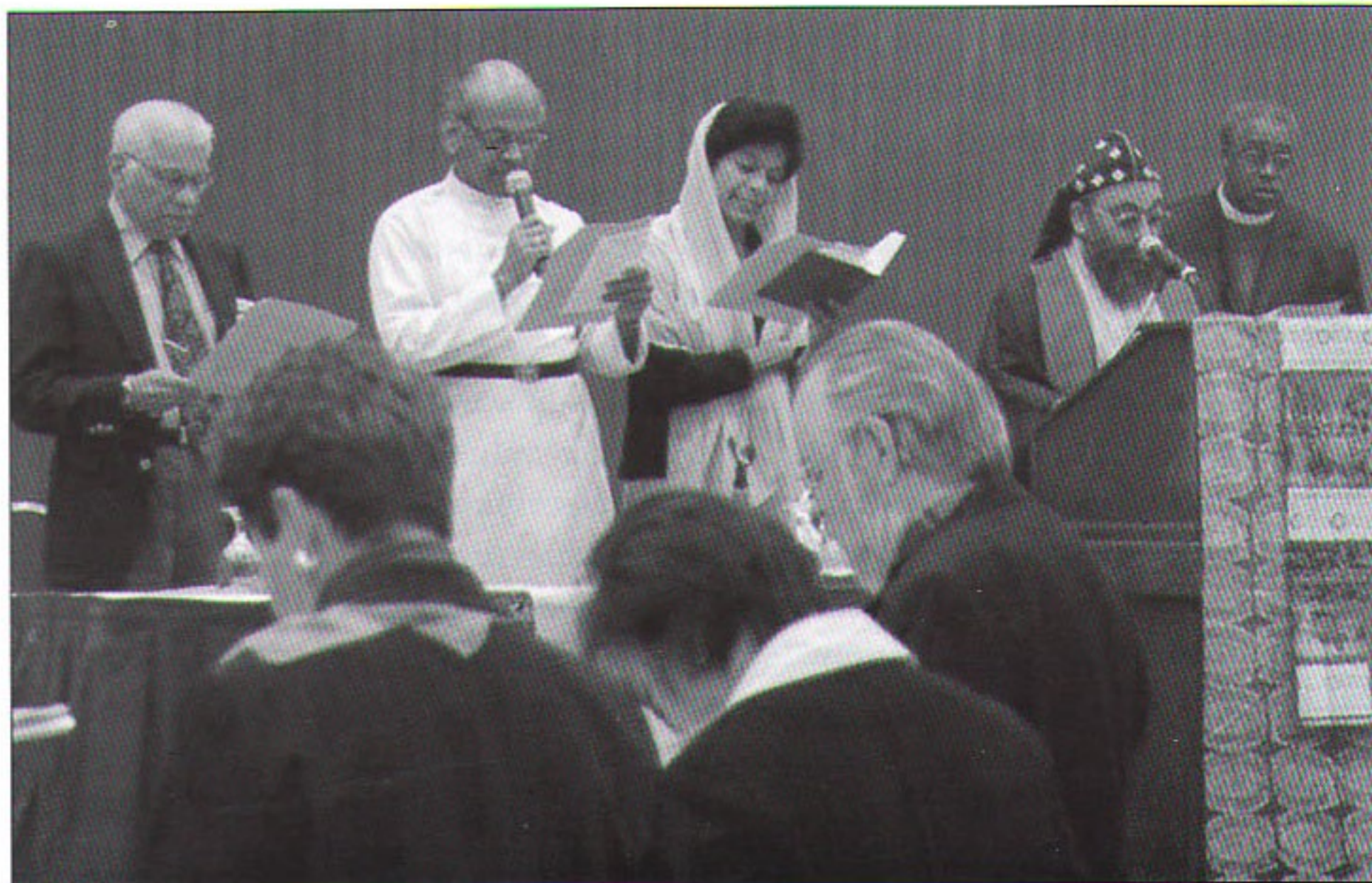
resources towards alleviating poverty, supporting public education, safeguarding the rights of children, promoting world peace, and protecting God's earth.

The Assembly commenced with worship, followed by the welcome and opening statement presented by the president of the Council, Bishop Thomas Hoyt of the Christian Methodist Church. Then the minutes of the 2004 General Assembly was presented and approved by the delegates. During the three days, the delegates were blessed with numerous opportunities for worship, bible study, and fellowship with one another. The Mar Thoma Church was privileged to conduct the worship on the second morning. All the delegates and the officers of the General Assembly were deeply apprecia-

tive of the poignant worship led by Coorilos Thirumeni. Our worship service represented a blend of both Eastern and Western traditions. The theme of the worship was "Vision for Peace". A Bible reading from Micah 4:1-5 was incorporated in our worship, focusing on peace.

Apart from the worship and bible study sessions, several presentations were rendered by the Church World Service (CWS), the humanitarian arm of the NCCC. For several decades, CWS has been passionate about providing relief to various areas throughout the world stricken with

(Cont'd on page 19)



The Mar Thoma delegation leading the morning worship at the Assembly.

A View from the Gallery

Thomas Mathew, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch

Sitting in the gallery, I observed for the first time the proceedings of the Sabha Mandalam from September 12 to 14, 2005 at the Alexander Mar Thoma Memorial Hall, Tiruvella. I recommend every Mar Thomite to do the same. I have developed a lot more respect and admiration for the founders of this great institution, the Mandalam and the framers of our Constitution. I will summarize my analysis in three categories: what went right, what went wrong, and what are areas for improvement.

What Went Right?

Checks & Balances

I found the Mandalam a good democratic model with checks and balances built in. For example, there were questions from the floor about interviews carried out for an appointment in one of the institutions run by the church. The person who asked the question wanted to know why a certain individual was not interviewed. Not satisfied by the initial response, the individual continued to probe until he received a satisfactory explanation from the Diocesan Bishop who was in charge of this process. The Diocesan Bishop assured the assembly that due process was carried out for the interview and that all documents related to this selection were open for scrutiny.

Transparency

Our accounts are open and are independently audited. Thorough questions are asked about spending. The Sabha Council, the Synod, and the managing committee demonstrated transparency in the discussion. If this transparency seemed threatened, lay members would raise concerns. In the above example, the Diocesan Bishop explained that all documents with regards to the appointment were open for scrutiny by any member of the assembly. That earned my respect for the system, a very good example of the Church's transparency.

Democracy at Work

I believe the reason our church does reasonably well in administrative matters is the core democratic values it upholds. The people's representatives have the liberty to ask questions on spiritual matters and business issues in the forum created by the Mandalam. Microphones, each numbered for easy identification, located at several places within the hall, ensured that voices were heard easily.

Accountability

I observed that no one was above the law. Someone asked why a bishop attended the inauguration of a retail business

on a Sunday. The bishop concerned answered very gracefully and explained the circumstances to the satisfaction of the person. This is a supreme example of accountability that gave me a lot of confidence in our Mandalam.

Holy Qurbana

The second day of the Mandalam began with Holy Qurbana at the S.C Seminary Church. This was a great example of how to begin the business of a Church. After all, the center of everything is our commitment to Jesus Christ.

Sense of family—Bishops, Clergy, and Laity

The Mandalam represents a microcosm to me of the larger Mar Thoma family consisting of the bishops, the clergy, and the laity. The three came together as a family and discussed the past year and the future in relative harmony. Disagreement was managed well within the framework of mutual respect and honor.

Good Facilitation/Presiding

The meetings were initially presided by the Metropolitan, and then for the major part by the Suffragan Metropolitan. Both demonstrated a high degree of dignity, respect, fairness and decorum at all times. They managed the business very effectively and efficiently.

What went wrong?

Naturally an objective review should include both positives and criticisms.

Lack of Spiritual Focus & Mission

In my opinion, a lot of time was used to discuss the business and administrative aspects of the Church, and little or no time was used to discuss the future of the Church, or our mission.

I was disappointed that there was nothing that I could take away from the assembly regarding how the church is going to manage its parishes outside Kerala (India) where most of the growth is happening within the church now.

Lack of Interest Shown by Mandalam Members

I noticed that about 25% of the people did not attend the meeting at all. They were loitering outside the hall, treating it as a place to meet friends and for campaigning.

Voting and Campaigning

Caucuses started to form soon after the first day. Campaigners stood outside handing out name cards and resumes of candidates indiscriminately. The whole assembly

seemed focused on the elections. Those scenes of campaigning conveyed a negative image to me about the Church. Maybe this type of on-campus caucuses and campaigning should be banned or at least reformed.

Passive Listeners

In my observation less than 1% of those who attended the meeting actively participated in the discussions. Those who participated demonstrated good understanding of the issues and presented them extremely well. But for the most part, attendees were either not informed or not interested in the issues.

Littering

Large receptacles were located all over the campus to deposit waste. However, many littered all over the ground. This was not proper conduct and should be prevented.

Areas for Improvement

I would like to present six items to be considered by the Sabha Council for improvement.

Form a study group well in advance to bring major Church issues to the Mandalam. What I envision is a brief statement on what the Church essentially stands for and where it stands on contemporary issues of community, our mission, family, marriage, education, corruption,

environment, etc. We have to accept the fact that we are not merely a corporation with a balance sheet; we are The Mar Thoma Church, lighted to lighten. We must let the world know where we stand on issues.

Educate and inform members of basic parliamentary procedures. A good guide to train people on parliamentary procedures is the book, Roberts Rules, considered the bible of parliamentary procedure. A Mandalam member suggested a class or training on this. This would improve the quality of meetings at the parish level too. I am positive that there will be a lot of participation in the discussions if this happens.

Though the Mar Thoma Church has become a "Global Church" by definition, we do not show the characteristics of a Global Church either in business transactions or in our outlook for the future. A few copies of the Annual Report in English would satisfy the needs of the non-Malayalam-reading members. This also acknowledges that the Church cares for the non-Malayalam-reading members.

The report should be sent to the members directly and on time. I know at least one member who received the report three days before the meeting, making it impossible to send questions.

Some questions were not answered due to lack of time. Questions could be streamlined so that everybody receives a chance. ■

"A Witness... That The World Might Believe" *(Cont'd from page 17)*

poverty and crippled by natural disasters. Our diocese has designated the offertories collected in the third week of October to support the outstanding humanitarian efforts sponsored by CWS. A compelling report "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: A Policy on Human Biotechnologies" was presented to the assembly, challenging the Christian community to respond to the advances in human genetics. We were reminded that the rapid developments in this area have extraordinary ethical and theological consequences on our society. It was also pointed out that disabilities enable us to have a greater awareness of our humanness. The delegates from the Mar Thoma Church contributed some valuable insights and suggestions on the topic, which were gratefully acknowledged by the presenters of this report.

During this assembly, rotation forums were held to assist the delegates to fully grasp the wide array of the programmatic efforts of the NCCC and CWS. Each delegate and the respective member church communions were exhorted to share their resources, time, and talents in fulfilling the purpose of the Council. Business sessions were conducted during which annual reports, statement of accounts, and budgets were presented and approved by the general body. Delegates of this assembly pledged more than

\$32,000.00 which will be dedicated to relief efforts across the world. An awards banquet was held to honor a few individuals who had made outstanding contributions in promoting peace and justice.

The three-day assembly concluded with an empowering worship service conducted at the Douglas Community Church in downtown Baltimore. During this service, Rev. Michael Livingston, Executive Director of the International Council of Community Churches was installed as the new President of the NCCC-USA. The delegates were commissioned to strengthen witness and unity so that the world might indeed believe. We were reminded that we are the disciples, prophets, and leaders who we have been waiting for. The members of the assembly were encouraged to utilize their unused power and untapped resources to make a difference in this world. The delegates returned home on November 11, 2005, blessed with a heightened awareness of God's call to each of us to get involved in promoting peace and justice in the world. The next assembly will be held in Orlando, Florida from November 8 to 10, 2006. The delegates of the Mar Thoma Church praise God for the awesome opportunity to represent our Diocese at this General Assembly. ■

PERFECT 37 TOURS AND PILGRIMAGE

Unique and Exclusive Cruise – November 2, 2006

Paul's 2nd and 3rd Missionary Journey

10 Educational Days to Greece, Italy and Turkey

Day 1 and 2 Departure and Arrival in Venice: Your pilgrimage begins as you depart the USA and arrive in Italy. You'll be met by our representative and transferred to your ship in the port of Venice for dinner and overnight.

Day 3 At Sea: Today will be a full day at sea. Biblical lectures and plenty of other onboard activities will set the tone for the day. There is an indoor pool and health club, great beauty salon, and plenty of deck space to just sit and watch the beautiful Adriatic sea that glides beneath you.

Day 4 Corinth: This morning we dock in Patras, Greece, and travel to Corinth (Acts 18:1-18), a city that inspired many of Paul's most familiar letters. You will visit the Archaeological Museum, the Market Place, and Temples. Walk among the ruins and stand on the Bema where Paul stood. Read Paul's letters to the Corinthians and visualize his address to the Gentiles as he began the task of building Corinth's church. Imagine where Aquila and Priscilla lived and where they had their tent making business.

Day 5 Athens: The architectural splendors of the ancient city of Athens are as magical as ever. Follow your guide on a journey to the ancient Acropolis where you will see the Propylaea, the Parthenon and the Erechtheum. View Mars Hill where Paul preached the gospel to the intellectual Athenian community of his day (Acts 17:15-34). View the ruins of the Agora, ancient market place and center of Athenian public life, where Paul preached to the skeptical Athenians. You will view the Olympic Stadium, where the modern Olympics began and where the games returned in 2004.

Day 6 Thessaloniki and Kavala: The New Testament books of Thessalonians are Paul's correspondence with the people of this church. In Thessalonika, visit St. George's Basilica, traditionally believed to be built over the synagogue where Paul preached. View the Old City Ramparts, and the Galerius Arch that rises over the Via Egnatia. Walk to the monastery built over the sight of Jason's House. This afternoon we visit Neopolis (Kavalla), one of Greece's most picturesque mainland ports. Paul landed here with his disciples, Timothy and Silas. You will see the Roman Aqueduct and Acropolis. In Philippi, Paul was moved to preach his first evangelical sermon in Europe to women who had gathered at the river. Among them was Lydia, a cloth merchant, who became the first Christian to be baptized on European soil. Visit the place where this event is remembered and see a crypt dating from the Roman period, which is thought to have served as a prison for St. Paul. You'll also see the famous Acropolis, the Market Place, Basilica and the Theater. Reboard the ship for dinner and overnight. Sail for Dikili.

Day 7 Dikili and Pergamum: Disembark at the port of Dikili and travel to Pergamum. Christianity reached Pergamum very early and the church was addressed by John the Revelator (Rev. 2:12-17) as one of the Seven Churches. The inhabitants of the city were condemned for their doctrines (Rev. 2:14-15) and those who overcame were promised a "white stone" and a "new name" (Rev. 2:17). The first Christian to die at the hands of a Roman state, Antipas, was put to death in Pergamum. As you enter the Royal Gates, you'll see the Temples of Athena and Trajan. You'll explore the Grand Theater, the Gymnasium and Health Center. You'll also view Pergamum's famous Library.

Day 8 Ephesus: Today you will journey to Ephesus, where Paul spent three years of his ministry. It was to this community that Paul may have written his Epistle to Ephesians. You will visit the ancient Agora and imagine where Demetrius, the silversmith, sold his silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. You will enter the Great Theater and have a communion service in the place where Paul witnessed faithful for Christ. During the night, the ship will set sail for Patmos.

Day 9 Patmos and Athens: When you awake, you will be docked in the harbor of the Island of Patmos. Disembark after breakfast for a field trip on the island. No record indicates that Paul ever visited Patmos. Visit the Monastery of St. John, high on the mountain overlooking the entire island. Visit the Grotto of the Apocalypse where the exiled Apostle John lived and wrote the Book of Revelation and other correspondence to the early church. During the night, the ship will return to the Port of Piraeus in Athens.

Day 10 Disembark and Return Home or Begin Post Tour: After an early breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for your international flight. You will return home with new images and new appreciation for the life and teachings of Paul and John.

CRUISE CABINS (all cabins have private bathroom with shower)

1. Classic Inside Cabin, 2 lower beds – avg. 142 sq. ft.
2. Superior Inside Cabin, 2 lower bed – avg. 142 sq. ft.
3. Superior Inside Cabin, 2 lower beds – avg. 142 sq. ft.
4. Classic Outside Cabin, 2 lower beds – avg. 142 sq. ft.
5. Superior Oceanview Cabin, 2 lower beds – avg. 142 sq. ft.
6. Premium Oceanview Cabin, 2 lower beds – avg. 142 sq. ft.
7. Deluxe Inside Suite, 2 lower beds – avg. 265 sq. ft.
8. Deluxe Oceanview Suite, 2 lower beds, avg. 265 sq. ft.

Base Price

- \$2598*
\$2648*
\$2698*
\$2898*
\$2948*
\$2998*
\$3098*
\$3398*

REGISTER WITH A DEPOSIT OF \$400.00

LIMITED SEATING. REGISTER EARLY

CALL RAJAN OR SUSAN THOMAS

85-65 150TH STREET, BRIARWOOD, NY

PHONE (718) 657-5714

*plus taxes, fees, etc.

PERFECT 37 TOURS AND PILGRIMAGE

DOING MORE TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU!!!

LIVING HOME

“Children are living beings—more living than grown-up people who have built shells of habit around themselves. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love.”

Rabindranath Tagore

HOME DECORATING TIPS

BY MRS. SHIRLEY CHACKALAMANNIL, NEW JERSEY

INDOOR GARDEN

You can enjoy a garden, regardless of the type of season, by bringing it indoors. You can have a table-top display by grouping together small flowering plants or you can change your windowsill into a miniature garden. You can use plants as your interior design accessories. In regions that are subject to frost, evergreen foliage or the exotic blooms of tropical plants in a protected environment will brighten up the duller days by giving a living décor of foliage and flower.

Plants may be chosen for their handsome foliage or the beauty of their blooms. The choice depends on your purpose for having plants indoor. If you want a permanent display, then the plants with unique forms and foliage are best suited for the purpose. However, if you desire a temporary arrangement, seasonal plants are your best bet. Plants can be used to reinforce or contrast with your current indoor settings. Plants can dominate the scene and give the room character or create small pockets of color to detail.

Foliage and form: For a long-term indoor display, plants with attractive foliage are desired. These plants may have large leaves like the Japanese aralia, or have striking patterns and colors such as plants from the Croton family and Calathea species. Such a display can also consist of plants with leaves of interesting shape as in the Swiss cheese plant (*Monstera deliciosa*), leaves with strange texture (specifically referring to a high gloss-rubber plant, the corrugated surfaces of a friendship plant, and the soft texture of velvet plants). When selecting a permanent plant, one with a strong form is also very valuable. Different kinds of palm trees and ferns are good examples of plants with unique forms.

Flower and color: All tropical blooming plants (available in nurseries and garden centers) are good as long as you will give them the right environment to grow and flower. Seasonal plants such as Tulips, and Hyacinths in spring, summer annuals, Chrysanthemums and Aster in fall, and Poinsettias in winter can be added to give color and excitement to your indoor garden

Temperature: In regions where winter is prevalent, most of us keep the house warm when everyone is at home, but the temperature is kept low at night as well as when no one is at home. Tropical plants will not survive in such conditions. In order for the tropical plants to survive, the temperature should be kept at least at 74°F at all times. Do not leave tender plants on windowsills, above the heating vent, or over the radiators. Place plants where there is no draft and no wide fluctuations in temperature.

Light: Most plants prefer bright, filtered light rather than direct sunlight. However, plants with variegated leaves need more light

than plants with plain green leaves. Some plants, like amaryllis will bloom only with good light while an African violet need less light. Excessive light can shorten the life of the blooms. Only a few indoor plants tolerate direct sunlight. If the light is insufficient, the plants will turn pale, new growth may be stunted with long leggy stems, and some plants with variegated leaves may turn to plain green leaves. The mature leaves may turn yellow and fall. Eventually, the plant will be vulnerable to diseases and pests.

The size, height, and orientation of the windows of the room should be considered when evaluating the amount of natural light in a room. We all know that the levels of light decreases as the distance from the window increases. In winter, the amount of natural light is less than in summer. Therefore, it will be a good idea to move your plants to different locations according to their need for natural light using a convenient plant trolley. Read the instructions that come with a plant before purchasing it to see if your home is a good environment to provide for their specific temperature and light needs.

Positioning the plants: When you place a plant in a room, consider the impact of plants in the room. If it is a small plant, it will get lost in the large space. Plant color also has to blend in with your décor. For instance, plain, pale walls can be an added advantage for flowering plants. Positioning at eye level will be best for plants with delicate flowers. You can use your mantle to train climbing plants such as pathos, ivy, or heartleaf philodendron. Empty corners and nooks can be stages to display your favorite plants. Hanging baskets of plants with different length could serve as an aesthetic addition to any open space, including spider plant and mother-in-law's tongue.

Temperature and humidity fluctuates in kitchens and bathrooms. So choose plants that can survive extreme conditions. Since bathrooms usually tend to have low light, plants like Boston fern, the Aluminum plant, and heartleaf philodendron thrive well. If your bathroom is well lit, then herbs such as chives and parsley will thrive and enjoy occasional high humidity along with the light.

Containers: Containers for indoor plants should have color and shape to blend in with the décor for your home. You could choose from rustic to modern as long as they show the plants to its best advantage. Essential requirements for such containers are as follows: they must hold enough potting mix for the plants to root securely, they must have drainage holes to allow excess water to escape, and if it is a hanging container, make sure it is light weight.

How to make a flower arrangement with dried flowers

Firstly, store the dried flowers and leaves in a dry shoe box for smaller specimens or a big cardboard box for long stemmed ones until you are ready to make a flower arrangement. Spray

the dried flower and seed heads with hair lacquer or acrylic sealer (available at any art and craft stores). Pack the dried specimens very loosely to avoid damage.

Before starting an arrangement of flowers whether fresh, artificial, or dried; you should have an idea about how to design your arrangement. There are five aspects to consider when designing your arrangement:

Style: Style can be interpreted as the form or shape of an arrangement, which may be formal or informal. Traditionally, most arrangements in the western world are made in either mass style with little or no open space enclosed within the boundary of the arrangements. It does not have to be triangular shape, but any shape such as oval or round will fit this category. Line style has open space within the boundary, while line-mass style has part of the arrangement with open space while the other part is filled with leaves or flowers. The contemporary style is much simpler with an irregular shape.

Proportion: Usually a flower arrangement consists of different elements, such as the container or the vase, the flowers, leaves and other accessories. A good proportion means the size and shape of all these elements should make the arrangement pleasing to the eye. The most common fault one can make is to have a container or vase that is the wrong size for the plant material. An established rule for the proportion of vase to plant material (mass style) is the ratio of 1:1.5. In other words, the height of the arrangement should be one and a half times the width, if it is a shallow container or one and a half times the height of the container, if it is a tall.

Background: An arrangement can be perfect in proportion but can be wrong for the background or setting in which you want it displayed. The style of the room, the size of the room, the type

of wall surface and the type of table you want to place your arrangement on are all important in bringing out the beauty of your arrangement.

Balance: When you look at an arrangement, you should feel a sense of balance or a feeling of symmetry. Visual balance calls for the arrangement to look stable even if it is heavier on one side. You could achieve side-to-side balance in various ways. Increasing the visual weight of the lighter side using dark colored flowers and round shaped flowers, which are heavier looking than trumpet shaped ones are examples of achieving this balance. For the top to bottom balance, you could arrange larger flowers in the bottom and along the central area of the arrangement. An incorrect placement could make an arrangement look unbalanced.

Color: Color is a matter of personal taste. However, there is a harmonious way to add color in the arrangement. The color of walls in the room and furnishings matter when you choose colors. Remember the importance of the background. For example, a dark colored display looks dim by a dark wood panel or burgundy curtains and a soft pastel arrangement is enhanced by a dark background. If you plan to put the display in a dark corner, it is not worth the effort if your arrangement is mostly blue or violet. The color of the vase should not be overbearing to detract from the arrangement. If so, the container will be the focal point of your arrangement. Do not use equal amount of colors in an arrangement. One color should dominate while the rest of the colors enrich the dominant color. You can give your arrangement depth by placing dark colored flowers deep in the display (in) and lighter ones on the surface (out).

The mechanics of how to make a flower arrangement will be in the next issue of Messenger magazine.

CHICKEN TIKKA

FROM ASHA MEHTA, NEW JERSEY

Marinade for the chicken tikka

1 cup low fat yogurt
3 garlic cloves crushed
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon chili powder
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
1 teaspoon Spanish paprika
1 teaspoon salt
Other ingredients
4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt
Vegetable oil for brushing

Cut chicken into small cubes. Add salt and lemon juice and set aside. Make marinade by combining all the ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Thread the chicken cubes on to the skewers, and immerse the skewed chicken into the marinade. Leave it in the marinade for at least two hours or, at the most, overnight in the refrigerator. Barbecue the chicken brushing with oil and turning frequently for 15 minutes or until the meat is cooked.

Garnish the chicken tikka with sautéed onions

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR GRADE ONE

USHA THAMPI-LUKOSE
Supervising Librarian
Cedar Grove Public Library

Happy Birthday, Moon by Asch, F
The Full Belly Bowl by Aylesworth, J.
Franklin Books by Bourgeois, P.
The Runaway Bunny by Brown, M.W.
Mr. Gumpy's Outing by Burningham, J.
Stellaluna by Cannon, J.
Freight Train by Crews, D.
Duck for President by Cronin, D.
Are You My Mother? by Eastman, P. D.
The Surprise Party by Hutchins, P.
Can I Keep Him? by Kellogg, S.
Mouse Paint by Walsh, E.
Sheep Take a Hike by Shaw, N.

'Women in Transition; Hopes and Challenges': A Report of the 2005 National Sevika Sanghom Conference

Nirmala Abraham, Suma Joe Chacko, Marykutty Thomas



Participants at the Inaugural Session.

The 2005 Sevika Sanghom National Conference, held from October 6th to 9th, 2005 at the Mensch Mill Retreat Center, Alburtis, Pennsylvania, was hosted by the Sevika Sanghom of Philadelphia MTC. The conference opened a new chapter in the history of Sevika Sanghom because of the level of participation—29 churches and over 155 registrants, contemporary worship services, a resolution to create a Young Women's Fellowship, a conference choir, and, two women—Kunjumol Alex and Sophy Thomas—assisting in the Communion Service (with the permission of the bishop). This conference was spiritually uplifting and provided the participants with many new ideas and new friendships.

The theme for this conference was 'Women in Transition: Hope and Challenges'. The biblical passage chosen for the conference was taken from the story of Ruth and Naomi, "Wherever you go, I will go, your people will be my people, your God will be my God" [Ruth 1:16]. The story of Ruth and Naomi is familiar to all women who have provided encouragement to others while going through trying moments in their own lives.



Scene from the Bible Story enacted at the National Conference.

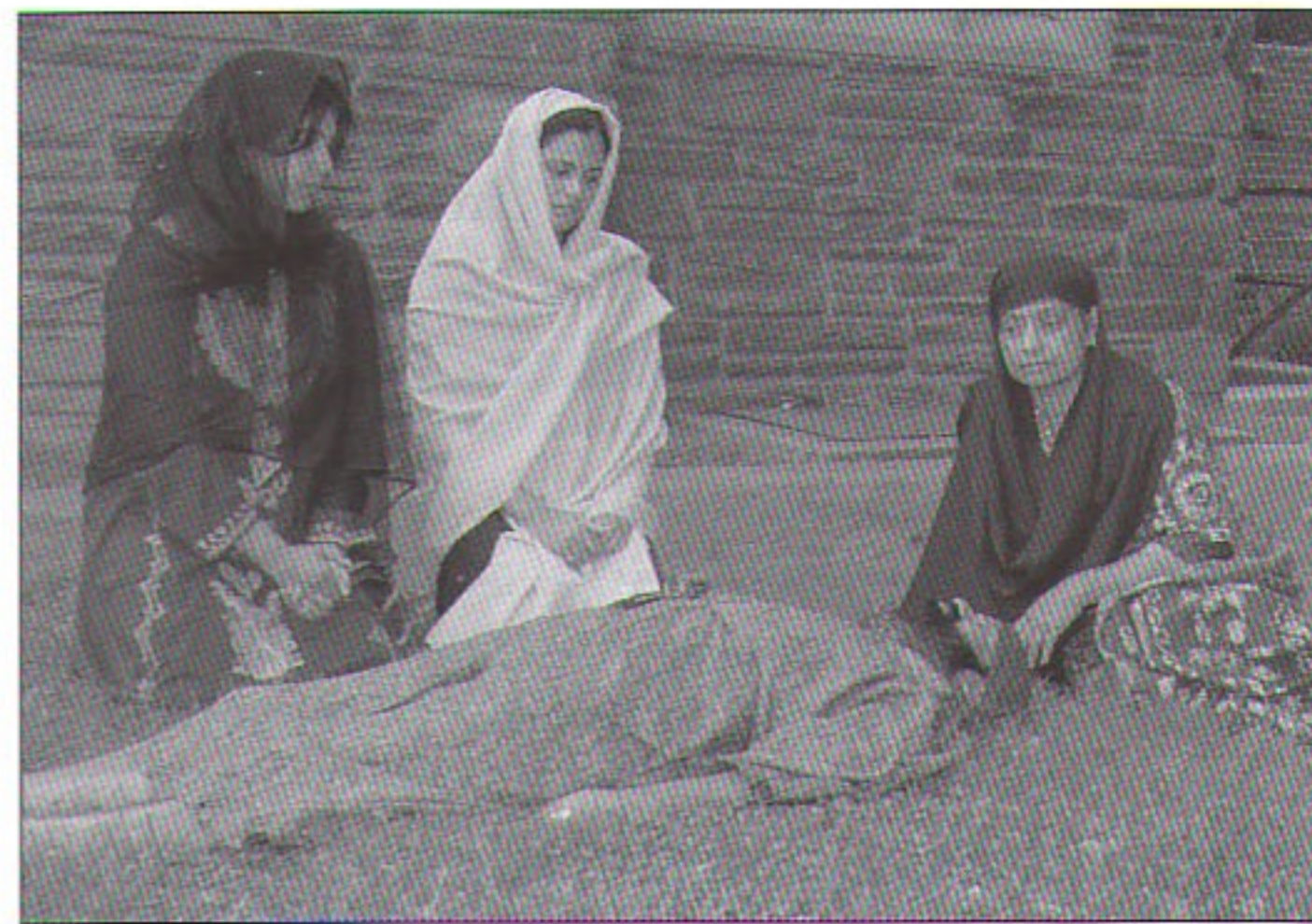
On the opening day, the story of Ruth and Naomi was presented using PowerPoint. The story defines specific moments in a woman's life: moments of loss, change, transformation, aging, independence, respect, recognition, insight, empowerment and self-definition. Rev. Suseel Varghese prepared this thought-provoking presentation with support from the host parish. Characters enacting the story were played by the members of the host church. Through the use of multimedia, the still pictures and video shots were transformed into a spiritual journey, explaining the Old Testament characters in a contemporary setting.

As we reflected upon the Ruths and Naomis in our lives, many identified the most influential women in their lives. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts and mothers-in-law who etched their own stories of Ruth and Naomi in your hearts have been honored by your recording of their stories.



Lighting the lamp.

The conference souvenir includes these marvelous testimonies. Our special thanks to Coorilos Thirumeni and Zacharias Thirumeni for sharing their personal reflections on their mothers.



Scene from the Bible Story enacted at the National Conference.

With our eye on the future, we held a small gathering for younger women on October 8th to discuss how they view their future role in the church and their hopes and dreams for future directions and leadership. Eighteen women from several parishes gathered. A resolution to create a Young Women's Fellowship under the Sevika Sanghom was the historical outcome of this meeting. An article in this issue, 'A call to Action' by Sunita Chandy, facilitator of the October 8th meeting, gives a detailed account of this gathering. In the words of the Psalmist, "One generation will commend your mighty works to another; they will tell your mighty acts".

Conference leaders present were Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Diocesan Secretary, Rev. T. A. Varghese, Vicar, Epiphany MTC, and Suma Cherian, Navajeevodayam, Tiruvella. Rev. T. A. Varghese conducted the Bible studies. Each leader touched upon the conference theme from his/her unique perspective. Other vicars present were Rev. T. K. John, Vice President of the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom, Rev. P. K. Zachariah, Vicar of the host parish and Rev. Suseel Varghese, Vicar of Bethel MTC.



Conference Choir.

Worship services were prepared and organized by Rev. Suseel Varghese, Bethel MTC, Philadelphia. It was prepared with a distinct theme for each day such as Forgiveness, Environment, Dedication, etc. The worship team also had a Choir. Thomas Abraham provided the musical accompaniment.

The conference included five concurrent workshops:

1. **I Can Do It: Joy of Healthy Living & Spiritual Fulfillment.** *Leaders:* Suma Cherian and Nirmala Abraham
2. **Pure Love: Understanding The Power Of Forgiveness.** *Facilitator:* Reena George
3. **Rooted in Christ: Resilience in Tough Times.** *Facilitators:* Dr. Annie Lincoln and Annie Chacko
4. **Women and Witnessing: Putting Faith In Action.** *Facilitators:* Rev. P. K. Zachariah, Kunjumol Cherian and Dr. Shantha Kurien.
5. **Five Love languages of God.** *Facilitator:* Rev. Dr. Asha George-Guiser



Dedication Session.

Other highlights of the conference:

- The open Bible Quiz on 'Women in the Bible' prepared by Mary Abraham of the host church in which everyone enjoyed participating.
- Small group sessions held to discuss relevant issues from the Bible. Group leaders from various churches provided a forum for active discussions.
- A brief presentation by Elizabeth John, Dallas MTC, Farmers' branch on the World Day of Prayer, an Ecumenical effort in Dallas where several denominations take turns in leading the celebration.
- An overview of the medical mission work in our Diocese as well as the Diocesan Youth Mission trip to India by Mariamma Thomas, Trinity MTC, Houston.
- Prayers of intercession led by the Sevika Sanghom members of Epiphany and St. Thomas MTCs.
- The trip to watch the Biblical play, Ruth, at the Millennium Theater in Lancaster, Pennsylvania was fitting. Since the conference theme was based on the Book of Ruth, the play was well received.



Concluding Session.

The conference center had a kitchen where we could cook on site. Rajan Abraham of the host church provided freshly prepared Kerala meals, including snacks, which were all delicious.

(Cont'd on page 25)

A Call To Action

Sunita Chandy, Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia

Several years ago while teaching Sunday School, one of the young girls from my seventh grade class, Tara (not her real name), asked if she could talk to me after class. I wondered what this could be about. Perhaps about the upcoming test...her grades...her family's trip to India...what else?

After all the students had left, Tara said, "Chechi, I don't think I am pretty?"

At fourteen years of age, the spectacled young, beautiful girl with a sharp mind and outgoing personality had uttered the words, which I knew lingered in the minds of many of her peers. I asked her why she felt that way...all Tara would say was "I am not good-looking". I tried to tell her that indeed she was beautiful and more important; she was beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, her Creator. I am not sure if I was successful in convincing Tara, although I desperately wanted to believe that I had done so as her Sunday school teacher.

Fast forward a few years and I speak to her while she is a senior in high school. She proceeds to tell me that she is deluged in the vast array of career options to choose from. "Chechi, mom and dad want me to be in the medical field." I know that's not what I want to do." The question rises, what do we as Marthomite women, do for the young girls, like Tara, growing up in our community.

Fast forward a few more years...Saturday, October 8, 2005...a day of torrential rains, poor visibility, flooded roads...a group of 18 young women representing the Marthoma churches in Washington D.C., New York and the Philadelphia area, braved the elements to attend a one-day planning meeting in Alburdis, PA, at the same venue as that of the Sixth National Sevika Sanghom Conference. The meeting was an 'envisioning' exercise – a planning, brainstorming type of session for all of us women who have (primarily) never been active in Sevika Sanghom and are past the age of youth league. There seemed to be unspoken overwhelming consensus that we need to establish our position within the Marthoma church as younger women. How do you envision yourself as Marthomite women into the

future? Of course, for me, my former student, Tara, was on my mind.

We talked about the creation of a "Young Women's Fellowship" (YWF) which would provide for an opportunity for both spiritual and social fellowship for us and also help us serve as mentors to young girls (and children) growing up in our parishes. Since this meeting, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, Diocesan Bishop of North America and Europe, in November, has issued a Kalpana directing the churches to 'form Young Women's Fellowship within the framework of the Sevika Sanghom in each Parish'. Collectively, our potential is enormous, both for fellowship with one another, and more important, for me personally, the 'coveted' position we have for mentoring the younger girls in our community. This is a call to action...envision the outreach ministry as women to younger girls, the nurturing of apple seeds, the joy of mentoring through informal talks, career forums, straight talks on spirituality, dealing with physical temptations, self-esteem, preparing for marriage...oh, the possibilities.

Young Christian Marthomite women are an absolute critical component essential for the growth of the Marthoma church. We are in a position to provide leadership both within the church and in the community at large. Let us attempt to create linkage between the women of all ages in our churches. Find ways to integrate the younger and senior women. Study and try to resolve the generational, cultural and social divide that exists between us. Undoubtedly implementation is always difficult—we need home-grown leadership and divine grace. Let us come together as young Marthomite women in fellowship to grow as individuals and to help all the young Tara's in our parishes. It is a biblical admonition to each of us women, to perhaps in our own way, to empower those younger to us, to create in them a love for the Lord, and serve as models of virtue and character (Proverbs). ■

If you wish to share what is being done in your parish in this regard or would like to simply chat about this matter, please do email me at chandys@comcast.net

'Women in Transition; Hopes and Challenges': *(Cont'd from page 24)*

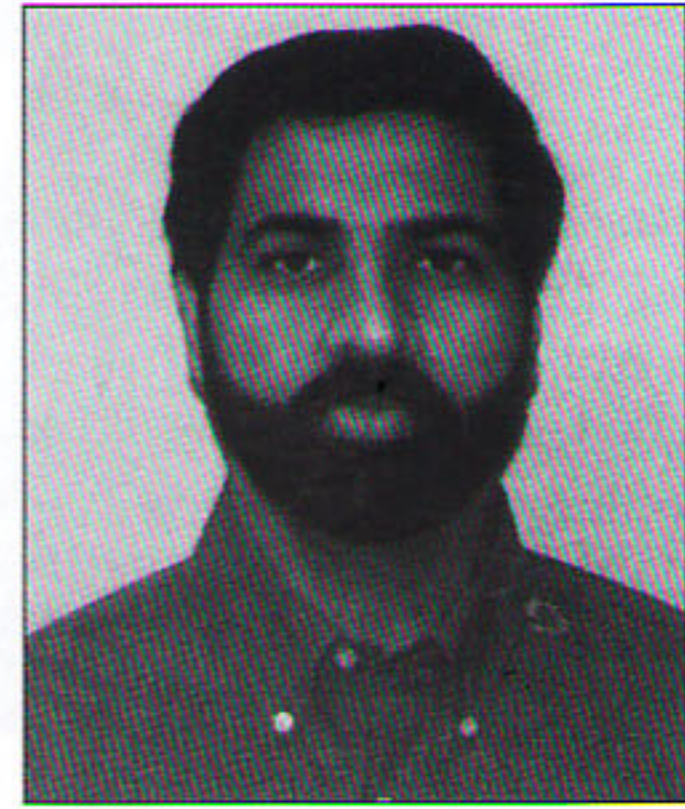
We express sincere gratitude to all those who supported the 2005 conference by sharing their wisdom, providing leadership, lending financial support and honoring us with their presence. The planning of this conference was a transforming experience. The teamwork between the clergy and laity was inspiring and set a new standard in co-

operative effort. The Spirit of the Lord truly guided us at every step. We wish and pray that God's blessings be upon us as the 'Women in Transition, face hopes and Challenges' in the years to come.

The 2006 National Conference will be hosted by the Sevika Sanghom of Detroit MTC to which Kunjumol Cherian extended welcome. ■

ഉത്സവം

Josen George, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch



ഉത്സവമായ് മന്നിൽ ഉത്സവമായ്
മാലോകർക്കേവർക്കും ഉത്സാഹമായ്
ഉത്സവമായ് മഹോത്സവമായ് ഇന്നു-
രാജരാജപ്പിറവി തന്നുത്സവമായ്

മണ്ണിൽ പിറന്നൊരു നാഥാ....
വിണ്ണിലെ തേജസ്വരൂപാ....
കന്മഷമെല്ലാം അകറ്റിയെൻ ഹൃത്തിൽ നീ
കൺമണിയായി വിളങ്ങു.....

പാലൊളിപ്പുഞ്ചിരിപ്പുണ്യം നുകർന്നിടാൻ
കാലിത്തൊഴുത്തിൽ വന്നെത്തി-
കാരുണ്യവാരിധിയാകും ഈ കുഞ്ഞിനെ
വാരിപ്പുണർന്നുമ്മ വെയ്ക്കാം

(മണ്ണിൽ പിറന്നൊരു....)

ശാന്തിപ്രവാചകനാകുമീ ഉണ്ണിതൻ
കാന്തിയിന്നെങ്ങും പടർത്താൻ
മോഹനഗാനങ്ങൾ പാടാം, പരസ്പരം-
സ്നേഹസന്ദേശങ്ങളോതാം

(മണ്ണിൽ പിറന്നൊരു....)

Mar Thoma Messenger Subscription Renewal Reminder!!!

As you all know, the Mar Thoma Messenger is the only official publication of our diocese and is mostly funded by the minimal subscription fees from readers like you. Even though many subscriptions had expired as far back as 2001, we kept sending the magazines regularly along with various reminders. We put Last Copy Seal, Parish promoters contacted them and finally send personal letters. However, despite repeated attempts to encourage all overdue subscribers to renew their subscriptions, some have chosen not to. **Now our funds have depleted to a point where we will not be able to send any more free copies to expired subscriptions.** Although the diocese wants every Marthomite to receive a copy of the Mar Thoma Messenger, regrettably it is not viable without timely renewal of subscriptions. Please pay your arrears and renew your subscriptions on time to keep receiving the Messenger regularly.

AMT (Alternative Minimum Tax) Are You Subject To It?

Shibu P. Thomas, Staten Island MTC



If you file taxes it is most likely that you have heard of AMT (Alternative Minimum Tax). What is it? Are you subject to it? Can you avoid it? What causes AMT? These are questions that you might ask your accountant you when filing your yearly tax return.

AMT is a separate method to calculate your taxes liabilities, and in some cases additional tax liabilities besides your regular taxes. The AMT is designed to provide a minimum amount of tax paid by taxpayers with large tax deductions, exemptions, losses and credits.

The original idea behind AMT was to prevent people with very high incomes from using special tax benefits to pay little or no tax. But for various reasons the AMT reaches more people each year, including some people who don't have a very high income and some people who don't have lots of special tax benefits. Congress is studying ways to correct this problem, but until it does, almost anyone is potentially subject to this tax.

You can have AMT liability because of one big item on your tax return, or because of a combination of many small items. Some things that can contribute to AMT liability are

mundane items that appear on many tax returns, such as a deduction for state income tax or interest on a second mortgage, or even your personal and dependency exemptions.

Avoiding AMT will be a challenge. If you try to avoid it that means either you have to make less income or show less deduction. Neither of these is a good choice. In other words AMT can be good. It only means that you (and your accountant) being well informed, used all available deductions and credits allowed to you by law to lower your regular tax liabilities. Taxpayers who are at the bottom of the income bracket usually don't have to pay the additional tax liability. Check your tax return and see if there is a form 6251 attached to the return. When you meet you accountant or your tax preparer ask to work out the AMT even though you may not need to file it. It is good to practice. Congress has been adjusting the tax brackets and rates for a long time but has neglected to adjust AMT.

However, remember just because you don't file form 6251—Alternative Minimum Tax—with the IRS does not mean that you do not owe the additional liability if you are subject to it. The IRS will eventually subject you to interest and penalty too for evasion of AMT. Here is a short list of items to consider when filing your tax return: Number of Exemptions, Standard Deductions, State and Local Taxes, Mortgage Interest, Medical Expenses, Misc. Itemized Deductions, Long-Term Capital Gain, and Tax-Exempt Interest. There are others, and it would be a good idea to consult an accountant. More information is available on my website at www.spt1040.com. ■



മലങ്കര സഭാസംഗ്രഹം

**10 Years Subscription
plus 5 years postage US\$45.00**

For subscription, postage, change of address and advertisement, please contact:

C. V. Samuel (Tharaka Managing Committee Member)

31811 Gloria Court • Warren, MI 48093

Tel.: (586) 268-8007 • email: cvsamuel@hotmail.com

RE-LOCATION!

CONSIDER DALLAS, TEXAS

You will enjoy a Kerala like climate, Bigger & Modern Houses on a Large Lots At Low Prices! Great Communities, Hospitals, Schools, Churches, Recreation centers, and much more....

TEAK HOME REALTY / BEAM MORTGAGE

Over 15 years of experience

Independent Broker - Member of MLS, GDAR, TAR, NAR

309 Ryan Ct. Murphy, Texas 75094-4720

E-mail: teakhome@hotmail.com

REAL ESTATE
Listing & Selling

New Home Communities

MLS Home Listings
HUD & VA Properties
Bank Foreclosures



Thekkil, P. Mathew
R/E & Mortgage Broker

MORTGAGE
Loans & Refinance

New Mortgage Loans

Equity Loans (Cash out)
Commercial Loans

972-578-8333

Our services offered to the buyers:

- Treat you fairly, honestly and professionally in the principles of Texas Real Estate License Act and the Code of Ethics.
- Conduct a prospective analysis of your need verses pre-qualification for the "right home".
- Will maintain strict confidentiality of your information.
- Provide you with pre-qualification letter, estimate of closing cost and monthly payment.
- Initiate suitable property search using different media for new and pre-owned homes.
- Line up most suitable properties to match your criteria and shown at your convenient time.
- Discuss the "Vastu" elements of the property based on the general principles of "vastu Sastra"
- Review the seller's disclosure or builder's options with you.
- Discuss all options and discounts available to you.
- Help you negotiate the price with the current market analysis and trend.
- Attend team meetings with the builders & monitor the progress and process of building.
- Accompany you at the walk-thru and inspection and explain the process and expectations.
- Review the closing statements prior to closing and discuss its details and attend the closing.
- Will discuss and provide information on matters such as Hazard insurance, Tax, Homestead exemptions, Utility transfer, Handyman services and HOA etc.
- Assist you in obtaining low rate and the best suitable loan programs.
- Communicate to you at all levels of progress from beginning to closing
- Will provide you all of the above services and much more with knowledge (real estate, mortgage and vastu sastra) and experience demonstrated thru performances of diligence, reliability, integrity and dedicated work.



***** Call for a free consultation *****



Applied Christianity!

By Tara and Lisa Mathews, St. Stephen's MTC, New Jersey

Do we just lie there, washed down with the mainstream of pop-culture, yet still desire some kind of change? In our minds there are fearful images of the accounts of what happened at Sodom and Gomorrah. We are quick to brush it aside as silly misgivings. Many of us have watched many disagreeable things happen but how many times have you told others it was wrong or done anything about it? I admit that I have gotten used to walking down the school hallways ignoring the foul language that is exchanged around me. While it makes me feel uncomfortable hearing it, I still don't do anything about it.

In this age of information and technology there are several theories, scientific records, opinions, reports etc. in stacks and stacks of books in libraries all over the world or whizzing around in cyberspace. Colleges often require students to do book reports and research projects to make sure all of it doesn't just sit there gathering dust or permanently get lost in outer space. They tell you how to lose weight, how to be the nicest person, how to be a great host, how to draw and so much more. Just by typing this I feel I am adding to this infinite stack of virtual pages to read. I once heard a speaker remark, "Too many people know too much and do too little."

The only book that has all the information we need is the Bible. In fact, it was the first book ever to be printed. In Sunday school, I had learned it is really a whole library of books bound together so that we can study it all in one unified context. The whole "library" was virtually written by God himself.

Do people say that you light up a room whenever you enter it? Do people want to be with you? Will a person feel happier after talking to you or will they feel dejected? There are two kinds of people. In a sermon, our Paul Achen said that some people radiate darkness and others radiate light. That got me thinking. Did whatever I say or do transform that group to feel more relaxed or did I stress people out? When a new kid is at the church or at school do I take the trouble to include them in the conversation? If a kid looked "nerdy", do I avoid them so that I won't be looked upon as a nerd? We watch our actions carefully so that we can get accepted into that exclusive group everyone wishes to be in.

We feel that we need to do more to impress others around us but how much are we doing to impress God? Some people I know dress to impress. Sometimes a new outfit we have on makes us look really great. People notice

and compliment it which makes us float on cloud nine. We tell them where we got it from so they can get stuff that makes them look and feel good too. Is there anything about the quality of life we lead that makes people notice and want more information on how they can have it too? God wants us to have that effect on people so that more people can understand His love and follow His instructions.

The point of being Christian is to show others how life in Christ is better than living without Him. If a non-Christian can't see Jesus in our ways and behavior, then we are hypocrites. My dad said that one of the Presidents of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, once remarked that the problem with Christ's teachings was that even Christians can't follow it.

Our faith should be reflected in everything we do, speak, or work for. We have to be different in a way that causes others to want to know what makes us stand out as believers of Christ, not because we are immigrants or a racial minority. We should not grab for the newest technology in gadgets or latest in clothes to climb up the 'coolness' charts. As an alternative, I am not suggesting we go around flaunting expensive leather-bound, gold-trimmed Bibles instead. The only person we really need to impress is God. We know what to do to impress our friends. We know how to impress our parents to get what we want. We do our best to impress our teachers to get better grades. We know we have to be impressive to be accepted in good colleges and get financial assistance. But what do we do to impress the most important One in our lives?

When Jesus came to Earth, He "preached and spread the word of God". Let me word that differently. He came with a message from God the Father Himself that we have to do things a lot differently if we wanted to please Him. What we were doing in the past was hurting Him through our sins. That was the explicit statement Christ made when He allowed himself to be physically tortured, humiliated, and nailed to die on the cross. Most of our worship and messages get so clogged up with clichés that it has lost its meaning and impact on listeners over time. It is therefore important to note that actions speak louder than words. Jesus showed us how to live a sinless life and influence other people in a positive way. Whoever can show by their actions that they believe—that's the way to go. A Christian is all set for a tremendous change in lifestyle for God's glory.

Sometimes we may feel that living like Jesus did is not practical in today's world. I don't think it was practical during Jesus' time either. He was up against the Pharisees

and other prominent members of society. He was not swayed by any of them, but instead He, though innocent and blameless, chose to endure the punishment that only we sinners deserve.

Today, all over the world people are clamoring for contemporary fashion, music, styles and even adopt the latest slang. They even say that America's biggest export is its culture. It is a composite of various cultures and evolving

very rapidly. But though we have been blessed to live in a country so open to controversial ideas and various cultures, we as Christians have a duty to use our place in this country, to grab the attention of the world. God has placed each one of us in an influential part of the globe, so that we may enable the ripples of change that radiate from each one of us to others in Christ's love. Indeed, God will see it and say it is good. ■

The Power of Grace

Charles Babu, St. Paul's MTC, Dallas

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now am found; was blind but now I see." Grace is a beautiful word; there is truly a great Bible truth connected with this word. In fact, it is a word and concept without which man's salvation would be impossible. Without God's Grace, we would not be able to talk, walk, or even be living today. We would not have been created at all if it wasn't for God's Grace.

God's Grace gave Martin Luther King Jr. the gifts he needed to be a successful leader. King protested peacefully for Civil Rights, especially against racism and for the right to vote. An interesting fact that many people may not know is that King was a Minister. He inspired his fellow Americans, (both black and white), through the word of God to protest peacefully against discrimination. King was one of the strongest influences that caused the justification of Black Rights. If Martin Luther King Jr. was not the influence he was in the civil rights movements, even we Indians would probably not have the rights we enjoy today.

Mother Teresa astonished the world through her loving and caring nature. Her work among the poverty-stricken and dying people in Calcutta is unremarkable. Dying people with no family or money were cared for as if it was by their own mother. Mother Teresa is well known for her practice of "baptisms of the dying". She once remarked about her "baptisms for the dying" as being "something very beautiful... not one has died without receiving the special ticket for St. Peter, as we call it. We call baptism 'a ticket for St. Peter.' We ask the person, do you want a blessing by which your sins will be forgiven and you receive God? They have never refused. So 29,000 have died in that one house [in Kalighat] from the time we began in 1952."

Billy Graham, one of the greatest evangelists in the world, has preached to over 210 million people in 185 countries! His sermons are usually very simple and center on the theme that 'Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.' He has been in the ministry for over 60 years. Some uncles and aunties I know recall the time he preached the word of God in India when they were small children.

What do these three extraordinary people have in common? They were all very successful because of the grace of God. How did God's Grace do this? God inspired these three people to make a change for good in the world. He gave these three leaders the will, power, skill, and guidance needed to accomplish such big goals. God's Grace can act through a person in many different ways with different effects -big and small. How can God's Grace work through you to change the world?

Though most of us cannot just leave our homes and jobs and just preach the word of God, you can still make a world of difference. Talking to co-workers, classmates, and friends about Jesus Christ is one of the many ways you can change the world. Think about it - he (or she) is one more person who knows and accepts Jesus Christ.

I believe that we cannot go out and correct the problems of third-world countries without correcting ourselves first. When was the last time that you were excited about serving God? It's the same routine over and over - waking up Sunday morning, going to church for a couple of hours, and continuing with regular life. Is this right? The only way we can truly change our hearts and souls into the way God wants them to be is by the help of God's Grace.

Having a good relationship with God does not mean that you have to always possess that good feeling inside of you every time you talk to Christ. Having a good relationship with God means that you accept Jesus as your Savior and you live your life in that manner.

I cannot tell you how God's Grace will work through you. What I will say, however, is that the Holy Spirit works in many mysterious, amazing ways. The smallest favor you do for someone may be the biggest help that person has ever received. Paying a little more for a mission fund could be one more lunch a poor girl gets to eat. If you ask the Lord to use you, your life will become a testimony to those who have yet to accept Christ. I will quote a favorite Sunday School song when I say, "... and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they'll know we are Christians by our love." ■

Seeds of Peace into a Garden of Peace

Ancy Andrews, St. Thomas MTC, New York



Ancy Andrews of St. Thomas MTC, NY receiving the 2005 Path to Peace Essay Contest Award from Arch Bishop Celestino Migliore on Nov. 9, 2005.

A father dies in a car accident. A little boy cries for his parents. A mother prays for her daughter. Parents report their little girl as missing. A new couple files for divorce and child custody. Where is the beauty? Where is the contentment? Where is the peace?

When the world around us loses its peace, where are we to turn? Whom do we consider as our refuge? In John 14:27, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid" (NIV)¹. This verse tells us that the peace of the world is not the peace that will bring us happiness and serenity. Instead, the peace of Jesus Christ is what will sooth us. When we talk about the "peace of Christ", this surely does not mean the peace that we pass to each other during Sunday worship, but rather something, that will help us regain control over our lives. In today's world, there are many examples of "worldly peace," such as beautiful cars, elegant houses, and fashionable clothes. In reality, all these things are temporary means of peace. In one of his monthly magazines, Dr. Charles F. Stanley wrote "and while the Lord gives us many good things to enjoy, contentment and peace are not based on what we have or do not have from a material perspective."² However, in a materialistic world as today, we sometimes believe that these comforts are what bring happiness and peace. When this happens, our next move is to turn to Jesus, because peace "is based on a relationship with a person—Jesus Christ."³ Turning to Jesus not only brings peace into our lives, but into our relationships. Our interactions with one another will be more interesting and much better.

Once we ourselves have received peace, we must think about all the people in other places that have no peace. What can we do that causes peace in our communities, our nation, and the world? In Matthew 5:9, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they will be called sons of God." (NIV)⁴ The mission of peace should be seen as the essence

of all religions. Peace is not a compromise with evil, but rather a deliverance from evil. Mahatma Gandhi is known for his mission of peace and reconciliation between the Hindus and Muslims in India. Did it matter that he himself was Hindu? Even the smallest amount of change a person can do is a change. When thinking about it, you can realize how special you are. There are millions of people in the world today so, what is the probability of God putting you in the place you are now?

There was once a story that was shared by my priest a few years ago, about a little boy who was seen throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide had come in and washed hundreds of starfish onto the beach. An observer told him that it would be impossible for him to save all of them, and that what he did would not make a difference. The little boy smiled as he picked one starfish up and threw it back into the ocean, and explained, "It made a difference to that one." There is something very special in each one of us.

In different communities there are different problems and situations. In a society of injustice we can help create justice. In a community of violence we can produce goodwill. In a nation of poverty we can share our wealth. In a world of despair we can generate hope and peace. Imagine if, we as students start now, what we can accomplish as we get older. The problem nowadays is time, but we need to remember that time is on our side. When all the members of a church help provide for the two cancer victims in the church, there is peace. When all the members of a community celebrate Thanksgiving dinner with those who cannot provide for themselves, there is peace in that community. When a whole nation helps to find the cure for cancer, there is peace. When the world unites in an effort to stop terrorism, there is peace. There is peace that passes all understanding!

As students, our potentials and talents are for the promotion of peace. Let us resolve and accept that in thought or in deed, we will not hurt anyone and as far as possible, we will stand for peace everywhere. Let us also be determined that we will love every one and will never look down upon any one. Only then can we say, "I am at Peace.!"

¹ Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

² Charles F. Stanley, "Lasting Peace" In Touch, Vol. 22, No. 8. (August 1999); p. 2

³ Stanley, p. 2

⁴ Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Medical Mission To Matamoros

Betsy Alexander



On the morning of May 26, 2005, the medical mission team started out for Matamoros, Mexico from the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Koshy. Led and organized by Mariamma Thomas, the team members were: Mr. Bobby Kurian, M.D.; Mr. Abey Mathew, PA; Mr. Chacko Nellikel, RT/PT; Mrs. Ann Jacobs, NP; Mrs. Achamma Chacko, RN; Mrs. Mariamma Koshy, RN; Mr. Steve Thomas, Pharmacist; Mrs. Joyce Thomas, Pharmacist; Ms. Jane Mathews, student; and, Ms. Betsy Alexander, student. During the long journey, we got to know one another, sharing stories and snacks.

In Mexico, we met Pastor Roberto, and followed him to the United Methodist Church in Matamoros where we found two large, clean, and air-conditioned rooms and several comfortable air mattresses waiting for us in the parsonage. The facility also contained a dining area, adequate bathroom facilities, and, an attached pharmacy room where all the medicines for the mission were kept. A short while later, dinner prepared in the kitchens of the church specially for us, was served, and we spent the rest of the evening planning the next two days.

The next morning, after a team devotion and prayer led by Mariamma Thomas we met Dr. Elias at breakfast, who



took us to the site of our first clinic, and remained with us. After loading the van with medicines from the pharmacy, we set out for what used to be a landfill, but now inhabited

by people living in shacks and poorly built houses. We unloaded our supplies, and set up a registration area, a triage, an area for the doctors and P.A., and a makeshift pharmacy. We officially opened the clinic with a prayer at 9 a.m., and very soon people began to trickle in. It was fairly busy, and very hot, but things ran very smoothly, as people entered from one door, flowed through the various areas, and exited through the back door. Pastor Roberto, Dr. Elias, and later Pastor Roberto's wife translated for us and taught us some rudimentary Spanish. We saw approximately 53 patients of all ages, with various ailments including diarrhea, back pain, abdominal pain, lice, and, worms. We closed the clinic at around 3 p.m. and headed back to the parsonage, physically exhausted, but excited to be a part of the Lord's work in these lives. After supper we gathered to discuss the first day's work, our reactions, and to express our gratitude to the Lord. After prayer led by Tobi Thomas, we dispersed for the night.



On the last day, we gathered in the morning for prayer and devotion led by Abey Mathai. We loaded the van and left for our second site, which was a small church in a rural area. We set up in much the same way as the day before and prayed before opening the clinic. It was very busy, and between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. we saw more than twice the number of patients we saw the day before. We took one short break for lunch, our last authentic Mexican meal. As on the day before, we saw patients of every age with various ailments. In addition to the three translators, one of our patients from the day before stayed to help translate. By the end of the day we had seen 117 people, and all of us were amazed at the way in which God allowed us to work in the lives of so many people.

We were particularly blessed by the attitudes of the patients, who were patient with our lack of fluency in Spanish, and very grateful for the services we provided. We were specifically blessed and grateful to have been able to

see God at work in their lives, through us, and in our lives through them. We gained a new appreciation for all of the material blessings God has showered us with, and a new sense of how God grants peace that transcends circumstance. We were especially blessed to have Dr. Elias, who was both organized and encouraging, and worked tirelessly with us, and Pastor Roberto, and his wife, both of whom translated and arranged for our food and accommodation. They, as well as the staff in the parsonage where we stayed were always cheerful and willing to serve. We all felt that our time and resources were well-spent and that we were privileged to have been able to be a part of what God had so clearly orchestrated. Praise be to our God



Almighty who is continuing to work through His Church in a foreign land! ■

KIDS CORNER

Middle School Valedictorian—2005

Valedictory Address – Sibimol Varghese

June 21, 2005 – the day 337 students of Herrick's Middle School were counting down to since Fall 2002. As I look back, I still remember walking into Room 108, Mrs. Richards's classroom. Despite the big transition from elementary school to middle school, do you know what I was most worried about? How am I ever going to carry all those textbooks without a school bag? Will I ever get a chance to use the bathroom during the 5-minute break between classes? Who would I sit with during 6th period lunch? Isn't it amazing how such trivial matters can cause such worries within us? Many of us were preoccupied with similar thoughts. We could have directed all that energy towards more meaningful purposes.



Today may be the last day of our lives in Middle School but if we put our hearts and minds to it, it can be the beginning of a new us—a generation of people who contribute meaningfully to society. It's not about giving the most; it's about giving the most of what you can. A dollar doesn't seem like much but a dollar from each person adds up to hundreds, thousands and millions of dollars—a significant contribution towards rebuilding the lives of victims of calamities such as the Tsunami. How many of us have thought about what we can do to improve the lives of those around us? For most of us, it's simply because we don't believe we can make a significant difference.

I found a short story on-line, attributed to Loren Eiseley, which might convince you as it did me that we can each make a difference once we've found our calling.

'Once upon a time there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of

walking on the beach before he began his work. One day he was walking along the shore. As he looked down the beach, he saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself to think of someone who would dance to the day. So he began to walk faster to catch up. As he got closer, he saw that it was a young man and the young man wasn't dancing, but instead he was reaching down to the shore, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?"

The young man paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish in the ocean."

"I guess I should have asked, why are you throwing starfish in the ocean?"

"The sun is up, and the tide is going out. And if I don't throw them in they'll die."

"But, young man, don't you realize that there are miles and miles of beach, and starfish all along it. You can't possibly make a difference!" The young man listened politely. Then bent down, picked another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves and said, "It made a difference for that one."

Instead of wondering if you can really make a difference, why not just give it a try? Find your talent, know your power and make a difference to the world around you! Congratulations class of 2005!

(Sibimol Varghese is the daughter of Varghese George and Mariamma Varghese, St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York)

FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD PLACE WINNERS OF THE DIOCESAN SUNDAY SCHOOL EXAM - 2005

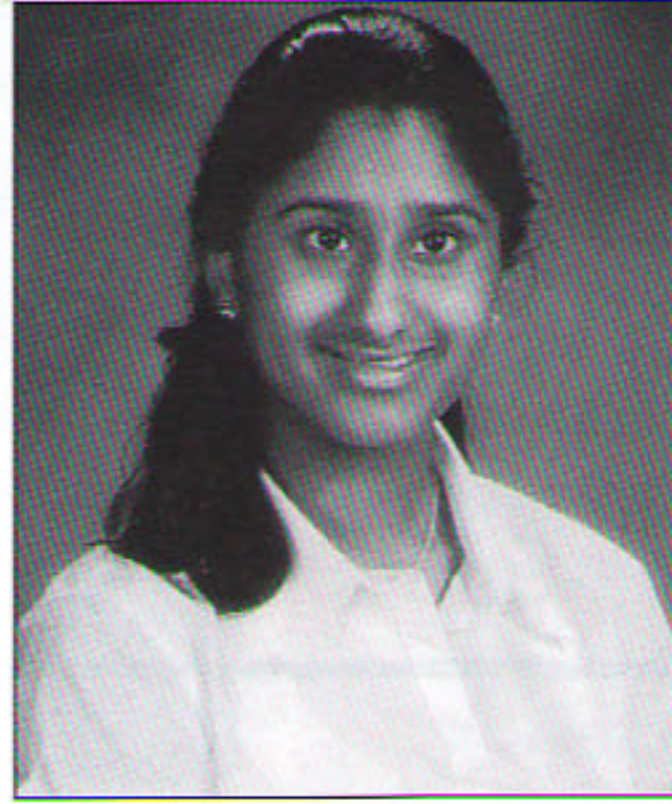
JUNIOR - GRADE 5

First Place



BENJAMIN THOMAS
St. Thomas MTC, Chicago

Second Place



SALOME SURESH
Atlanta MTC

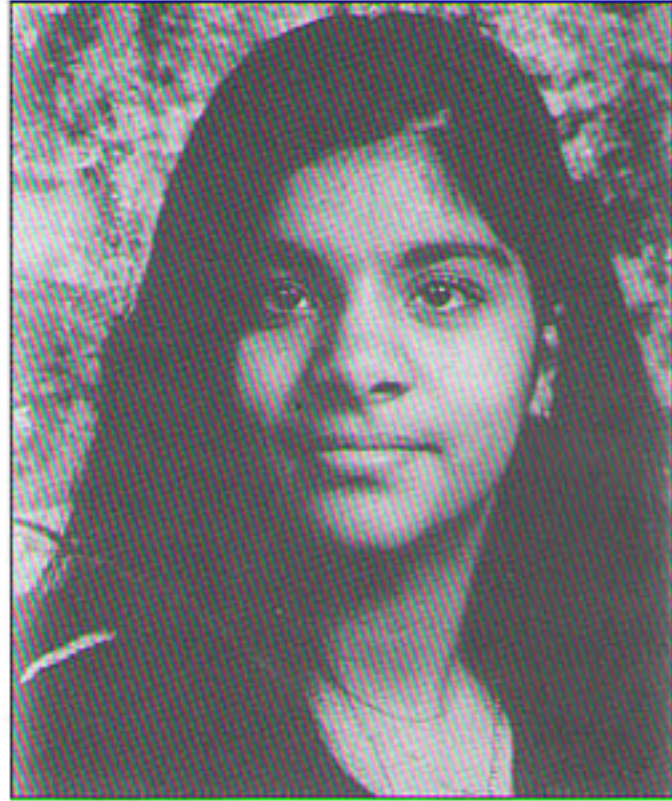
Third Place



PRIYANKA VALLIYIL
St. Thomas MTC, Chicago

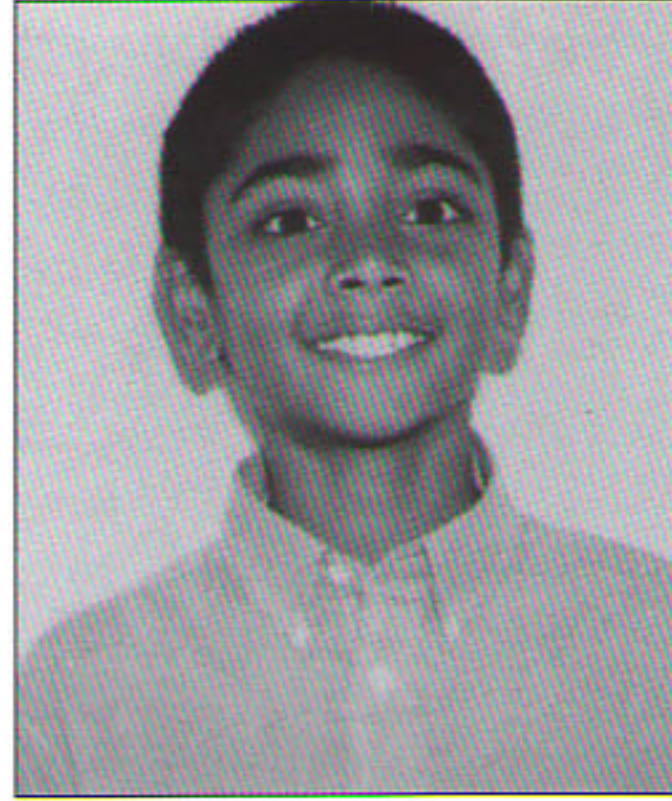
JUNIOR - GRADE 6

First Place



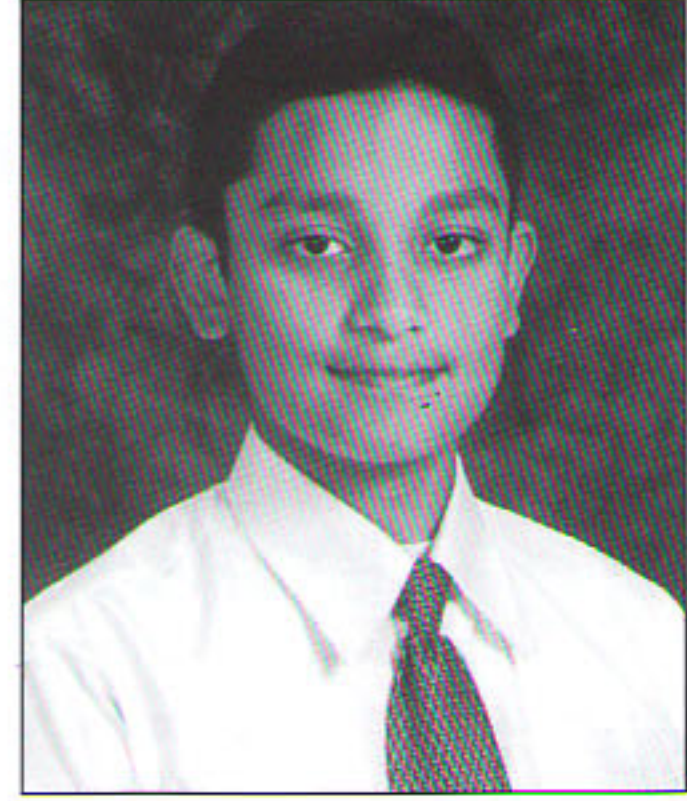
SHERIN M. JOHN
MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch

Second Place



NIGIL THAIMURIYIL
MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch

Third Place



NEVIN DANIEL
Salem MTC, NY

JUNIOR - GRADE 7

First Place



ANN MARY JOHN
New Jersey MTC

Second Place



JEENA MATHEW
St. Peter's MTC, NJ

Third Place



JOJO JOHN
St. Peter's MTC, NJ

JUNIOR HIGH - GRADE 8

First Place



JAUNITA JOHN
Epiphany MTC, NY

First Place



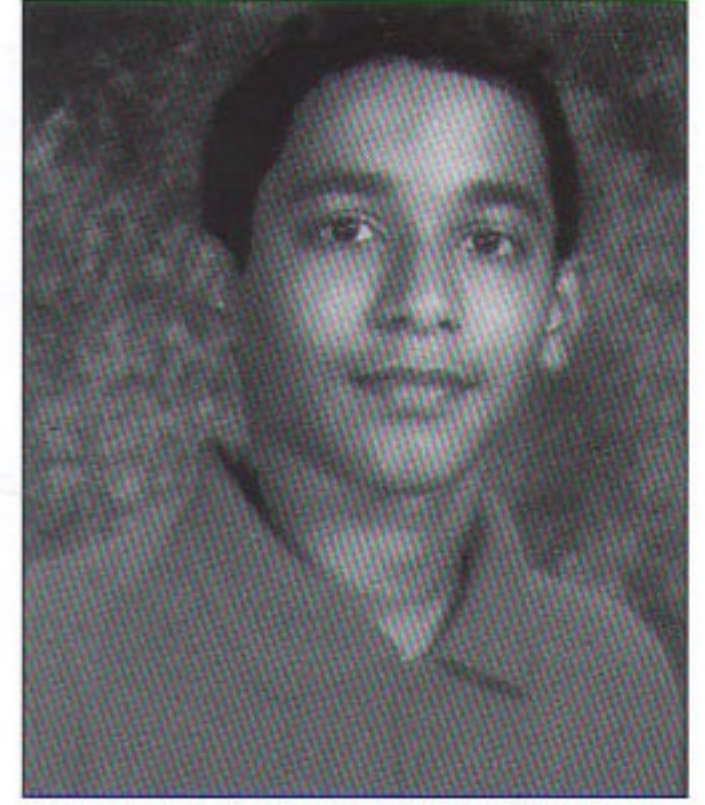
CHRISTOPHER CHACKO
Detroit MTC

Second Place



JAIN MATHEW
The MTC Staten Island, NY

Third Place



BRIAN BINOY
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX

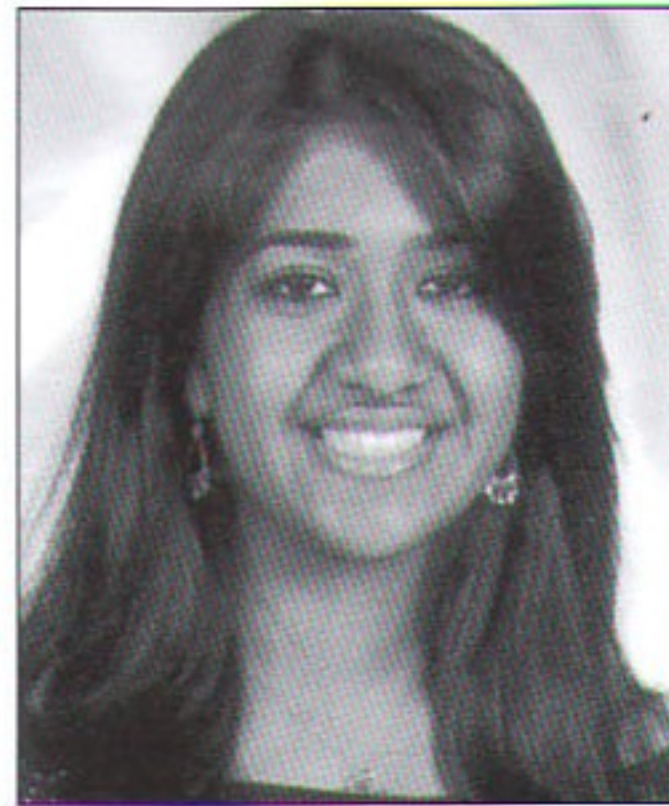
SENIOR HIGH - GRADE 9

First Place



MERILYN VARGHESE
St. John's MTC, NY

Second Place



TESSY SARA THOMAS
Epiphany MTC, NY

Third Place



ELIZABETH JOHN
New Jersey MTC

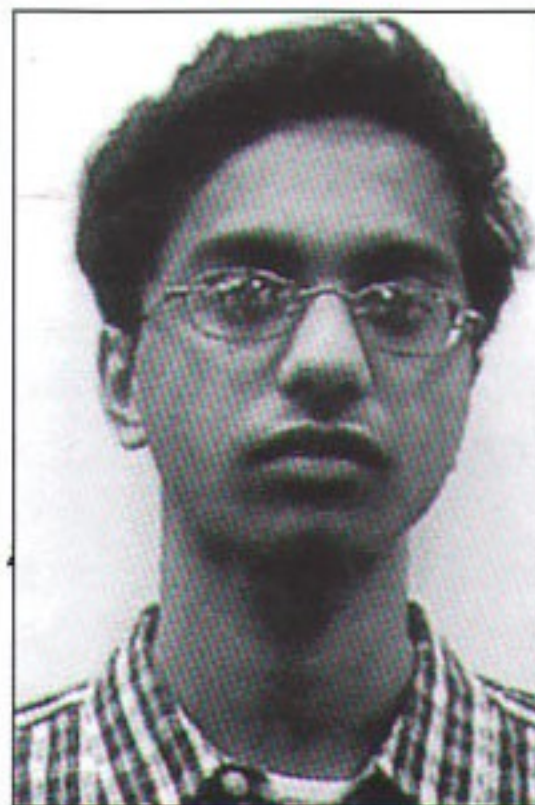
SENIOR HIGH - GRADE 10

First Place



IVY ABRAHAM
St. Thomas MTC, Chicago

First Place



BIVIN SUNNY
St. Andrew's MTC, NY

First Place



MIDHUNA JOSEPH
Philadelphia MTC

Second Place



CHERYL VARGHESE
St. Stephen's MTC, NJ

Third Place



ZANETA THOMAS
Bethel MTC, IL

IMMIGRATION



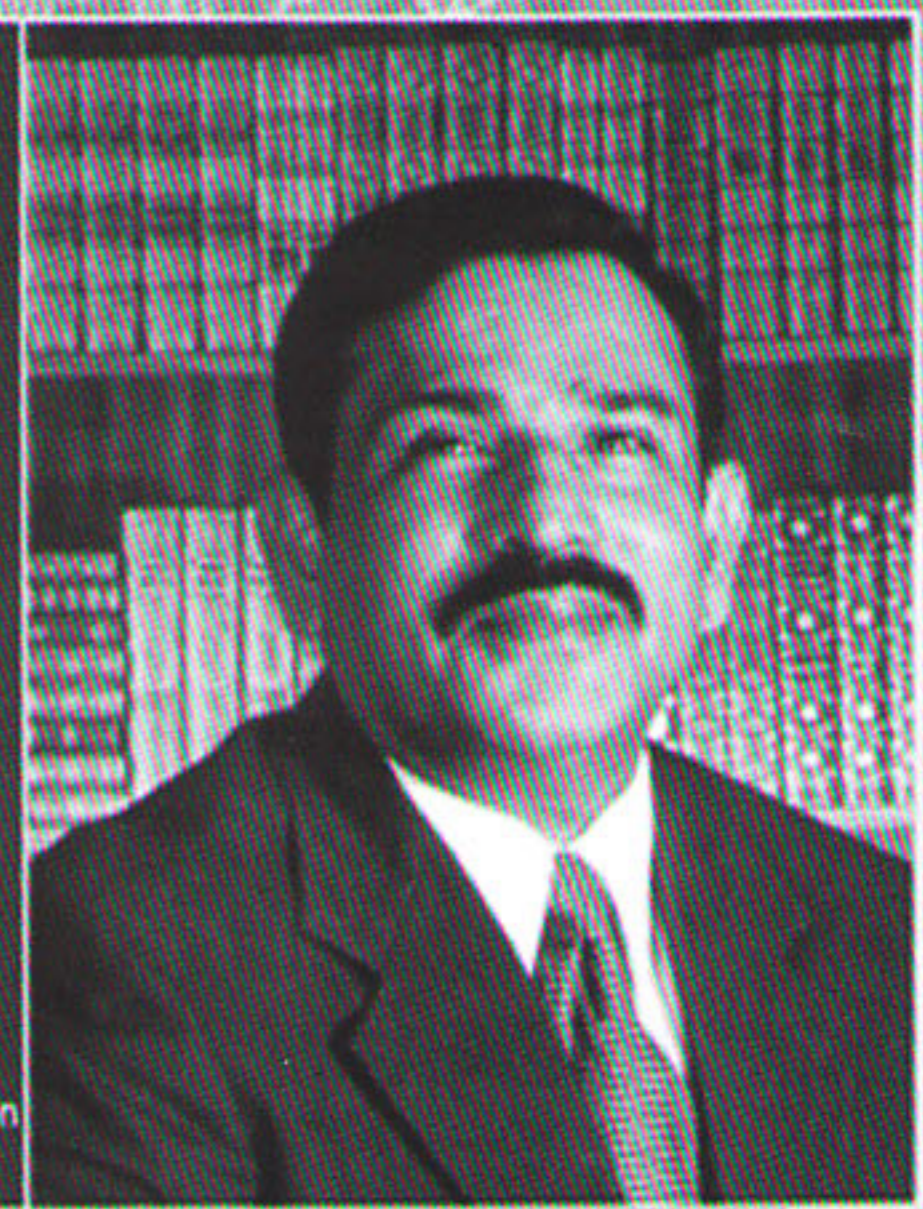
SUPPORT

Justice
is being
served
to the
Asian
Community

Lal Varghese
.....
Attorney at Law

Immigration,
H1-B,
Fiance Visa,
work Permit,
Green Cards,
Student Visas,
Visitor Visas,
K-1, K-3,
V Visas, Etc.

Not Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization



(972) 788 - 0777 (Main), (972) 788-1555 (Direct)
Fax (972) 556-1109, E-Mail: attylal@aol.com
www.indiaimmigrationusa.com

IMMIGRATION

Law Offices of Lal Varghese, PLLC
1111 Kinwest Parkway, Suite 120,
Las Colinas, Irving, Texas 75063-3409

SHILPI STUDIOS.COM

FAMILY

Swana Thomas, Bethel MTC, Philadelphia



*As days go by and as you grow,
It will take some time to realize this and know
Friends will say hello and
Friends will say goodbye
But your family will never leave you
Never go or never die.*

*As the cold rush of winter leaves
And the warm air of spring grows near
Dads and uncles say hello
And moms say "how are you dear?"*

*When you get older you will soon drift apart
But remember what they do for you
And love them with all your heart.*

*Soon this poem will end
and your life will again begin
Remember your family is precious
As even the smallest scrap of tin.*

OCTOBER WINNERS. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WINNERS!!!

Bible Cross-Word Puzzle Winners (October 2005)

1. Alex & Justin Vaidyan, St. Thomas MTC, NY
2. Aleyamma Mathai, Epiphany MTC, NY
3. Annamma John, St. Luke MTC, FL
4. Daniel P. Thomas, MTC San Francisco, CA
5. Elizabeth Andrews, MTC of Dallas, FB, TX
6. Elizabeth George, The Canadian MTC, Toronto
7. Eric George Varghese, Detroit MTC
8. Janet Jones, Detroit MTC
9. Kunjumole Jose, Chicago MTC
10. Mariamma Mathew, Sparks, NV
11. Molly Abraham, MTC of Greater Washington
12. Neetha Mathew, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
13. Omana Rajee, The MTC Staten Island, NY
14. Ponnamma Mathew, Philadelphia MTC, PA
15. Roshen Varughese, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
16. Sally Abraham, Epiphany MTC, NY
17. Saramma Poikail, MTC of Greater Washington
18. Sharon M. Thomas, The Canadian MTC, Toronto
19. Sheeba Abraham, Horeb MTC, Colorado
20. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
21. Susan Thomas, Epiphany MTC, NY
22. Valsamma John, St. James MTC, NY
23. Wilson Mathews, Ontario, Canada

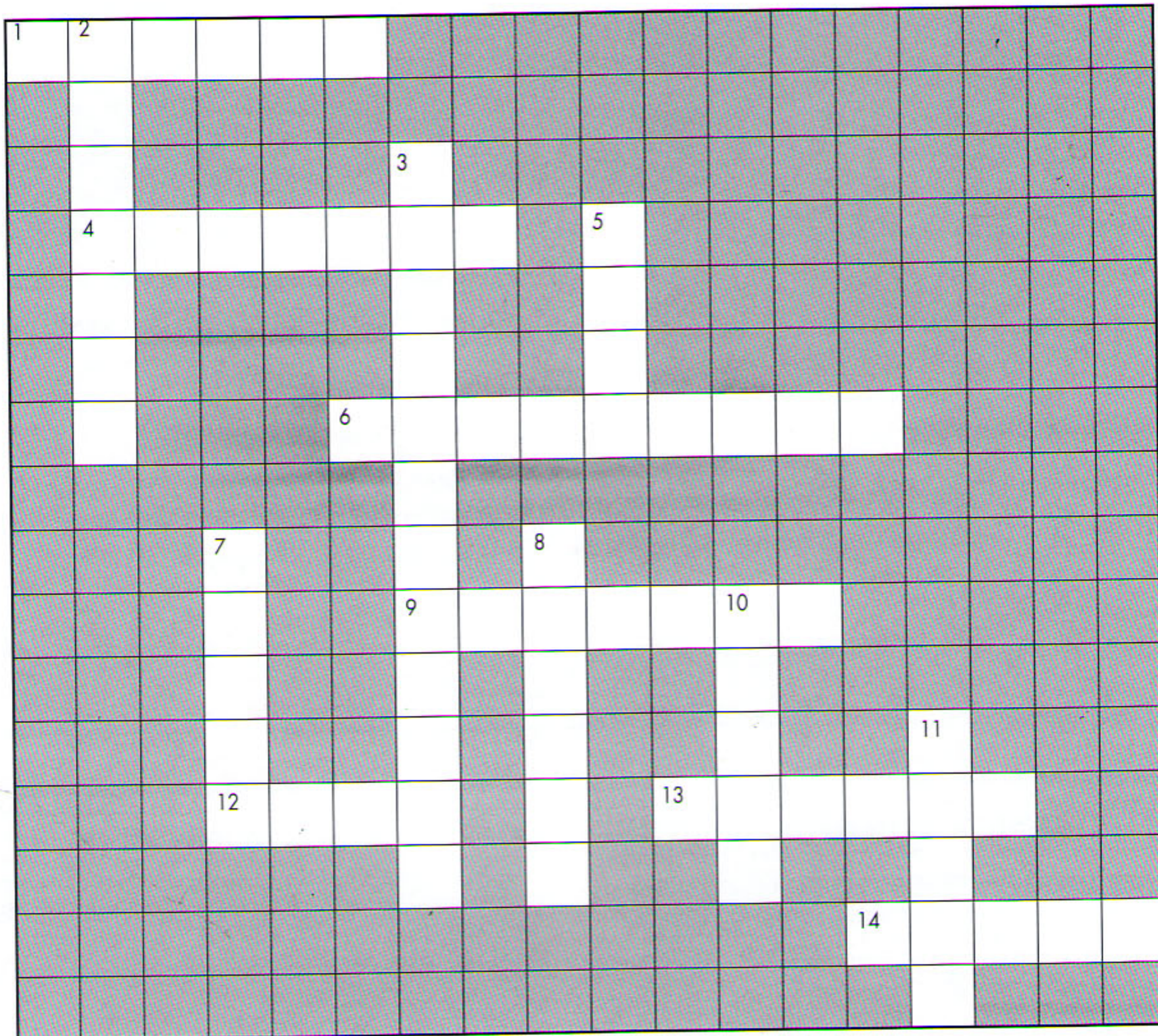
Bible Word Search Winners (October 2005)

1. Alex & Justin Vaidyan, St. Thomas MTC, NY
2. Aleyamma Mathai, Epiphany MTC, NY
3. Annamma John, St. Luke MTC, FL
4. Daniel P. Thomas, MTC San Francisco, CA
5. Elizabeth Andrews, MTC of Dallas, FB, TX
6. Elizabeth George, The Canadian MTC, Toronto
7. Janet Jones, Detroit MTC
8. Jessy Mathew, St. James MTC, NY
9. Joel Sam Thomson, The Canadian MTC, Toronto
10. Kunjumole Jose, Chicago MTC
11. Mariamma Mathew, Sparks, NV
12. Molly Abraham, MTC of Greater Washington
13. Neetha Mathew, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
14. Omana Rajee, The MTC Staten Island, NY
15. Ponnamma Mathew, Philadelphia MTC, PA
16. Roshen Varughese, St. Peter's MTC, NJ
17. Sally Abraham, Epiphany MTC, NY
18. Saramma Poikail, MTC of Greater Washington
19. Sheeba Abraham, Horeb MTC, Colorado
20. Shobi Mathew, Detroit MTC
21. Susan John, California
22. Susan Thomas, Epiphany MTC, NY
23. Valsamma John, St. James MTC, NY
24. Wilson Mathews, Ontario, Canada

BIBLE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF DANIEL: CHAPTERS 1-12

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (New York)



Down

2. The language in which the astrologers answered the king.
3. He was the chief of the magicians.
5. In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, Daniel saw himself beside the _____ canal.
7. Belshazzar appointed Daniel as the _____ highest ruler of the kingdom.
8. The king placed this person in a high position as ruler over the entire province of Babylon as well as in charge of all his wise man.
10. Upon seeing that the fire did not harm them, Nebuchadnezzar said: "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who has sent his _____ and rescued his servants.
11. The inscription word _____ meaning "You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting."

Across

1. This king decreed that anyone who prays to any god or man **except** the king be thrown into the lion's den.
4. The great prince who protects the people.
6. He was the king of Judah when the Babylonians came and besieged Jerusalem.
9. This is the original name of Abednego.
12. An image of gold ninety feet high and nine feet wide was set in this plain.
13. He was the father of Darius.
14. Furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the king ordered the furnace to be heated up _____ times hotter than usual.

BIBLE WORD SEARCH

AS IN TODAY'S NIV
BOOK OF ESTHER: CHAPTERS 1-10

Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia (New York)

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

- Name the king who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush.
- Queen _____ refused the command of her husband to be brought before the crowd to display her beauty and hence was deposed of her thrown.
- Esther was also known as _____.
- _____ brought up Esther as his own daughter after the death of her parents.
- Queen Vashti was deposed to teach a lesson to all the other women of the kingdom to respect their husband and regard them as the _____ over the household.
- Mordecai asked Esther not to reveal her _____ and family background to king Xerxes.
- Mordecai refused to bow down before _____ whom the king greatly favored.
- With the support of the kingdom, Haman sent the order to _____ all the Jews young, old, women and little children of the province.
- It was the law of the province to put to _____ anyone who approaches the king without being summoned by him.
- Esther asked Mordecai to gather all the Jews in the province and _____ for her for three days.
- Esther invited the king and Haman to a _____ which was prepared for them.
- The _____ seventy five feet high that was prepared to hang Mordecai was used to hang Haman himself.
- After the death of Haman, the king honored Mordecai and issued an edict all over his province granting the _____ the freedom to protect themselves or destroy anyone who attacks them.
- The Jews killed hundreds of men all over the province of king Xerxes but did not lay their hands on the _____.
- A decree was sent out all over the kingdom by Esther to remember and celebrate the victory of the Jews over their enemies and these days were recorded in history and widely called the _____.

Please mail your answers to:
Mrs. Joel M. Zacharia, 28 Graves Street, Staten Island, NY 10314

DEADLINE FOR ANSWERS March 31, 2006

DIOCESAN/PARISH NEWS

SEVENTH MAR THOMA YUVAJANA SAKHYAM NATIONAL CONFERENCE



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa inaugurating the Conference by lighting the candles.

The 7th National Conference of the Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam, Diocese of North America & Europe was held from October 14 to 16, 2005 at Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston, Texas.

The theme of the conference was **'Making a Difference in God's Way'**. The conference began in the evening on Friday, October 14, with a procession and Immanuel Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam leading the worship service. Rev. George Thomas, the president of the conference committee, chaired the inaugural program. He welcomed the guests and delegates from the parishes. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa inaugurated the meeting. In his inaugural speech Thirumeni pointed out the differences in God's way. He also exhorted us to accept the love of God and live in the world making a



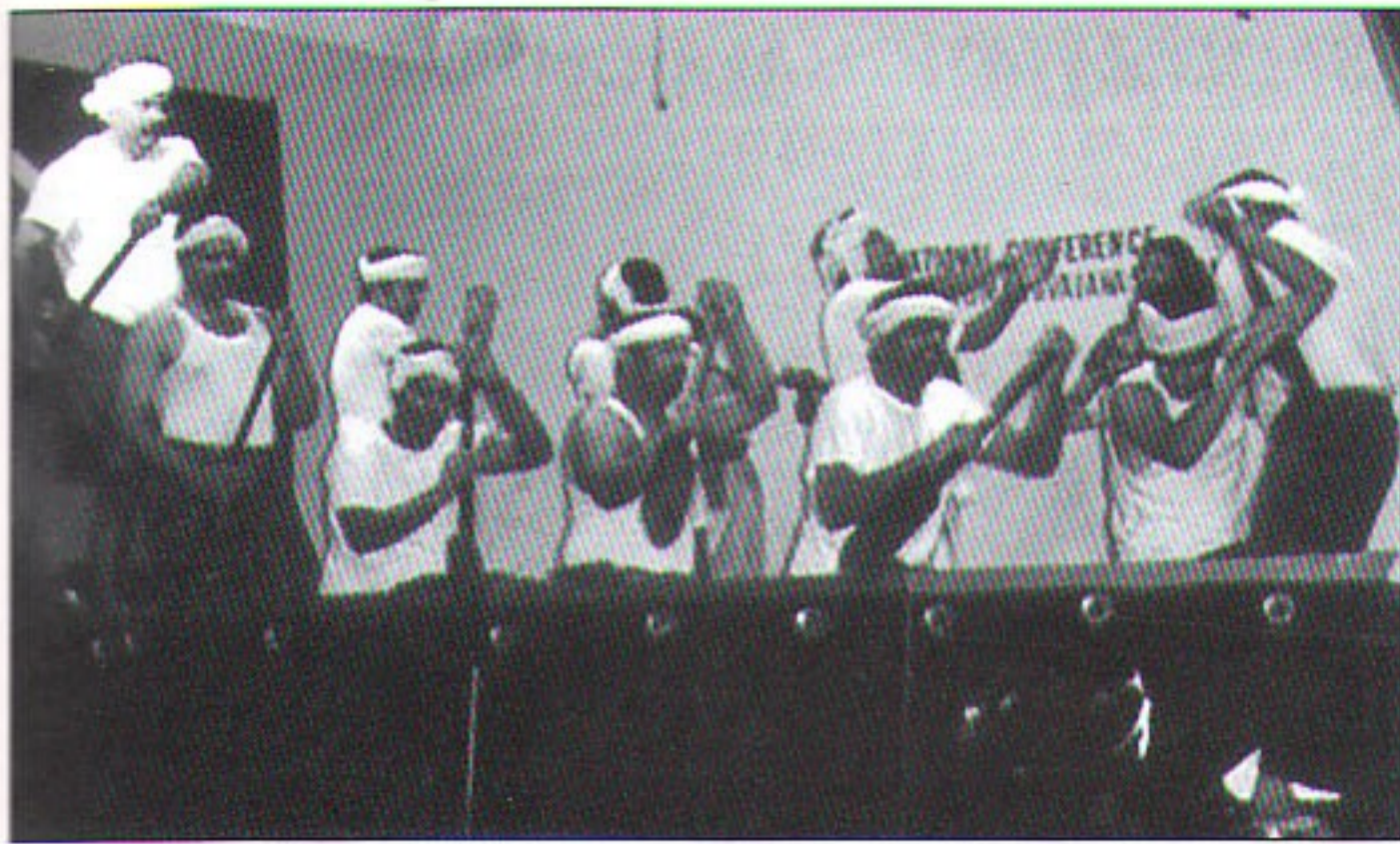
Inaugural Procession.



'Winners of the Kalamela' South West Region with Regional President Rev. Saju Zachariah and Regional Secretary Mereena Cherian.

difference in God's way. Rev. T. A. Varghese, Rev. Saji K. Cherian and Mr. Eipe C. Varghese gave felicitation speeches. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa released the conference souvenir. Rev. Mathew Thomas, Rev. Varghese John, Rev. Varghese Mathew, Rev. Jose Prakash, Rev. Saju Zacharia, Rev. Jacob Thomas, Rev. Anil George, Mr. John Varghese and Mrs. Maya Rachael Mathew were also present. The inaugural meeting ended with dinner and an entertainment program.

The second day began with worship service led by Detroit Mar Thoma Church Yuvajana Sakhyam followed by a Bible class led by Rev. Varghese John. Achen's speech was based on Genesis 32:22-32. Rev. Mathew Thomas from Toronto gave the main talk. Achen said, "Difference in God's way should be qualitative. God's way is the lifeline of each person that connects each one with ultimate reality. The lifeline should be authentic. God's way is creativity, salvation, history and covenant". Mrs. Maya Rachael Mathew from Toronto was the leader of the children's session and also led the singing session of the conference. The national kalamela was held on Saturday afternoon. Many Yuvajana Sakhyam members presented their talents at the Saturday night talent show. The



Scene from the Talent show.

conference came to a close on Sunday with Holy Communion Service led by Rev. Mathew Thomas. Rev. Jose Prakash from Chicago delivered the message. Rev. T. A. Varghese, Vice President of the Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam, chaired the



Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Office Bearers with Theodosius Thirumeni.

concluding session. About 200 delegates from various parishes attended the conference.

George Samuel, Conference convener

GIVING A VOICE TO THE DEAF & HOPE TO THE SICK



"Deaf & Hope to the Sick" is the new theme of the fest. On this day we open our doors and hearts to all communities to share with us a time of fun and delight while promoting our mission projects. This year's **Mar Thoma Fest** was held on October 1, 2005 on the grounds of the parish. A large number of people attended this year's fest filled with rides, games, and a special entertainment program in the evening, featuring a theatrical presentation of music & drama named 'Redeemer' based on the inspirational music of Dennis Jernigan, and presented by the 25th Hour Productions, Lewisville, Texas.

The arrangements for the **Mar Thoma Fest** were done by the fest committee which was led by

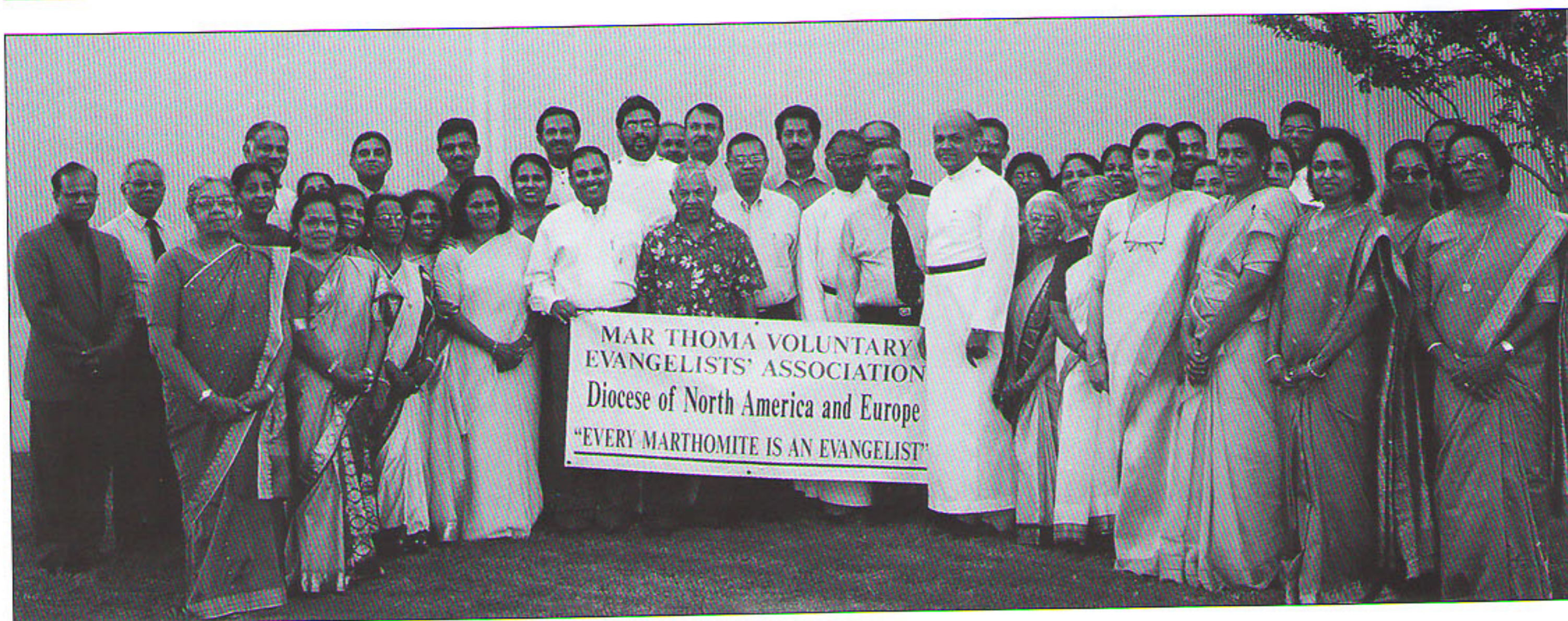
MTC Farmers Branch, Dallas to its real sense is a mission oriented parish by contributing more than \$75,000 per year, which is more than 10% of our annual budget for mission work both in India and Mexico. In order to raise funds for our mission works every year we celebrate the Saturday closest to October 2, as 'Mar Thoma Day', the day the foundation stone of our present church facility was laid. On that day we celebrate **'Mar Thoma Fest'**, a festival to come together, and to contribute our share to the mission. Since 2000, we have been celebrating this festival to raise funds for Kasargod Industrial Training Center & School educating and training those with disabilities, a project of the North Kerala Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church. This year we also began sponsoring the HIV/AIDS Rehabilitation Project of the Trivandrum-Quilon Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church in Manjalummood, near Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. **"Giving a Voice to the**



Convener Mr. George Varghese (Jayan). The Pro Term Mayor of the City of Farmers Branch was the main guest for this year's Fest.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar

THIRD VOLUNTARY EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Voluntary Evangelistic Association 3rd National Conference was held at Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch, Dallas, Texas, from September 23 to 25, 2005. **"Be a fragrance of Christ—to God"**, based on 2 Corinthians 2:15 was the theme for this year's conference. Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, Diocesan Secretary and Mr. George Cherian from Kerala were the main leaders. Nearly 150 people from various parishes of the diocese attended this year's conference including Rev. Anil George, Diocesan Voluntary Evangelistic Association President and Vicar of the MTC, Farmers Branch, and other vicars of the

local Mar Thoma parishes. A PowerPoint presentation on Saturday showed the work at various mission fields in India, and also in Mexico. The conference ended on Sunday with Holy Communion led by Rev. Dr. K. A. Abraham, and final message by Mr. George Cherian. The conference was coordinated by Dr. John K. Thomas, Diocesan Secretary, Voluntary Evangelistic Association, Mr. Abraham Mathew, Treasurer, Diocesan Voluntary Evangelistic Association, and Mr. George Varghese, Secretary, MTC Farmers Branch Edavaka Mission.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar

YUVAJANA SAKHYAM SOUTH WEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Yuvajana Sakhyam South West regional conference was held at MTC, Farmers Branch, Dallas on September 3, 2005. Rev. Anil George, Vicar of MTC Farmers Branch, led the study class based on the theme **"Called to be different"**. Rev. Saju Zachariah, Vicar of St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church and Regional President of Yuvajana Sakhyam coordinated the arrangements of the conference. More than 100 Yuvajana Sakhyam members from various

parishes of the region attended this year's conference. MTC Farmers Branch Yuvajana Sakhyam won the regional championship in the 'Kalamela'. MTC Farmers Branch Yuvajana Sakhyam had also won the national championship in the 'Kalamela' held at Houston during the Yuvajana Sakhyam National Conference in October 2005.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar



Yuvajana Sakhyam South West Regional Champions in 'Kalamela' at Dallas, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch with Vicar Rev. Anil George.



Yuvajana Sakhyam National Champions in 'Kalamela' at Houston, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch with Vicar Rev. Anil George.

DALLAS SUNDAY SCHOOL, MTC FARMERS BRANCH, CELEBRATES SUNDAY SCHOOL SAMAJAM CENTENARY

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Mathew 19:14). Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam has answered this call for one hundred years, true to its motto "Come to Jesus, Bring Every Child to Jesus."

Every Marthomite cherishes fond childhood memories of Sunday school days. Times and places have changed but not our faith. Oceans and continents far from home, in this land of plenty, we continue to tell our children the 'old old story of Jesus and His love.' And because of it, they will stand strong on the foundation of faith.

Sunday School Samajam celebrated its centenary year in a big way at the 2005 Children's Maramon. Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch began its celebrations in February 2005 by releasing a special bookmark and recognizing leaders who began our Sunday school in the late 1970s. In March we hosted the Southwest Region Junior/Senior Conference with special emphasis on the centenary year. The year-long celebrations came to an end with



Student editors: Lisa Jacob, Christy Mathew, Nincy Mathew, Jason John of MTC Farmers Branch Sunday School.

the publication of a beautiful souvenir edited and contributed by Sunday school students without any advertisements. Dr. Roy Mathew was the convener of the editorial committee who put together the souvenir under the leadership of Rev. Anil George, the vicar of the parish.

Rev. Anil George, Vicar

DETROIT MAR THOMA CHURCH



First Communicants with Diocesan Bishop The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa.

Welcome to Atlanta!

*If you are planning to move to Atlanta, please call me
for your relocation assistance with:*

- Residential
- Commercial
- Business Investments
- Mortgage

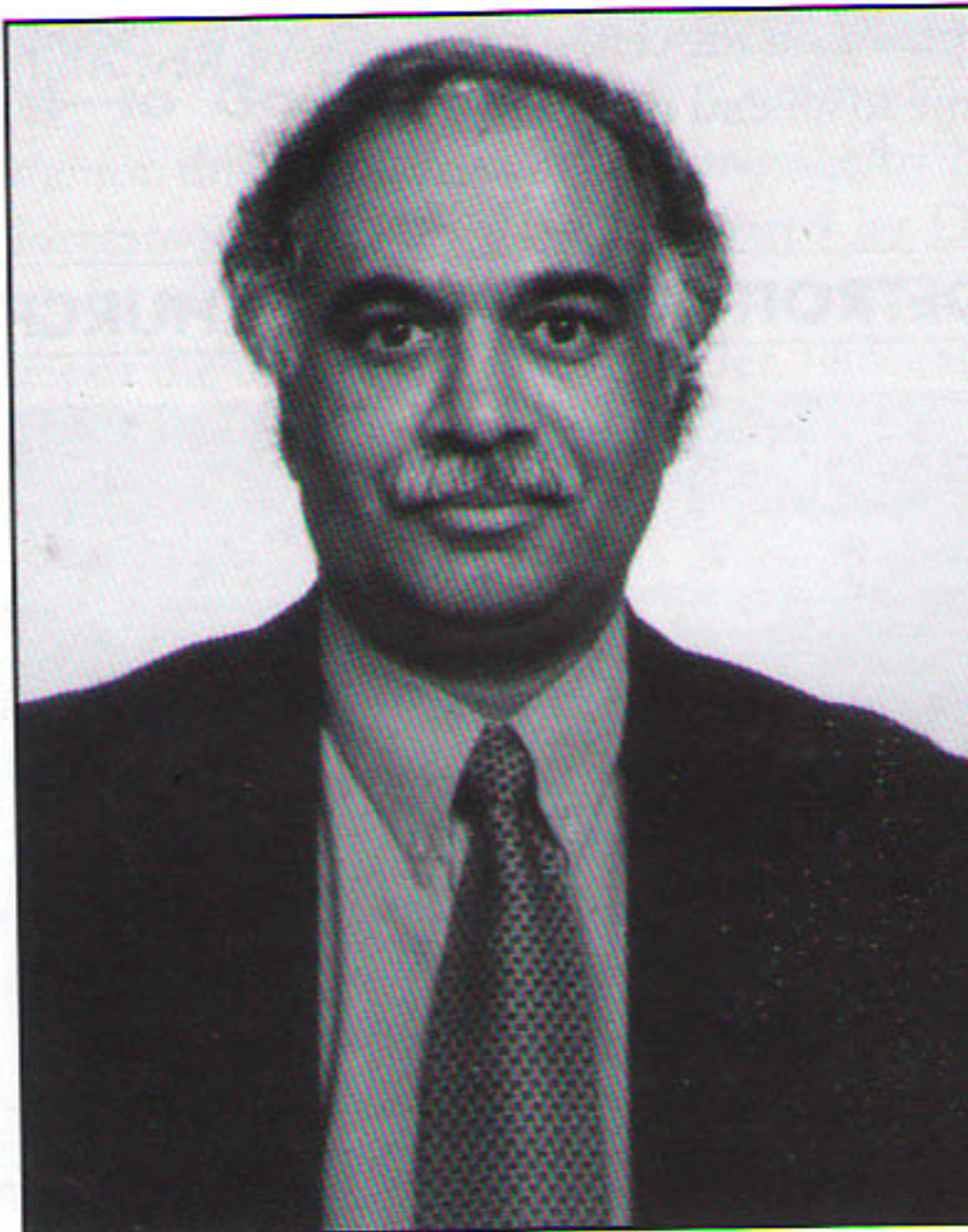


National Resources, Inc.

*A full service
Real Estate Company*

**Real Estate
Agents are welcome**

**Full commission
program with
low transaction fee**



Thomas Varughese
Broker



Atlantic States Capital Brokers, LLC

**Georgia Mortgage
Broker #19096**

**Now hiring Loan
Officers**

**Full/Part time
Training available**

Please call for details:

Office: **678-344-2084** Fax: **678-344-2085** Residence: **770-736-5216**

Cell: **678-557-3029** email: thomasfly6@aol.com

1988 B Dogwood Road • Snellville, Georgia 30078

Thank you for having "Georgia on your mind..."

CONGRATULATIONS TO MR. JOHN TITUS OF MTC OF GREATER SEATTLE



Mr. John Titus, has been nominated to the Washington Technology Center by the Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire for his excellent performance in the Aviation Industry. Washington Technology Center is a statewide economic developmental agency focused on technology and innovation.

He is the first Indian nominated to this position. He is the Vice President of and Mandalam member from the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Seattle.

Rev. Reji K. Philip, Vicar

YUVAJANASAKHYAM VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT



Winner St. John's MTC Yuvajana Sakhyam Team

This was the second year of the tournament, which was started at the behest of Rev. T. A. Varughese and the 2004 regional committee. A total of six teams had participated in the inaugural tournament, won by St. John's Yuvajana Sakhyam.

Eric Shoes was the chief sponsor. Salem Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam provided the venue and made arrangements for this year's competition. Plans for next year include changing the format to an invitational tournament and to expand it to the zonal level.

Zac Mathai

The Second Annual Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam, North East Region Volleyball tournament was held on October 29, 2005 in Huntington, Long Island, New York. Five Shakhas participated in the tournament, and St. John's Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam won the trophy. First-time participant, Bethany Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam finished runner-up scoring 22-25, 18-25.

The first round saw St. John's defeating all other Shakhas. Epiphany, Long Island and Bethany Shakhas tied with two wins each. The teams were again tied after a play-off with one victory each. However, Bethany Shakha advanced to the finals following a tiebreaker. Salem Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam provided stiff competition to all the teams.



Runner-up Bethany MTC Yuvajana Sakhyam Team

ST. JAMES MAR THOMA CHURCH, ROCKLAND, NEW YORK



INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE

St. James Mar Thoma Church of Rockland hosted the 26th Annual Hillburn Interfaith Thanksgiving Service,



Clergy with Zachariah Mar Nicholovos Metropolitan during the carol service.

organized by the town of Hillburn on November 22nd, 2005. Rev. Johncey George, Rev. Dr. Eleanor Moody Shepherd, Pastor Jerry Bricker, Pastor Philip Richards, Rev. Richard E. Collins, Reverend Allen Kemp are the clergy from the different churches in Hillburn village who attended this Meeting. The clergy led in prayer and spoke from the scriptures on Thanksgiving. Village Mayor Hon. Brian L. Miele made the Thanksgiving message. A community choir was organized for the event. Members

from the St. James Parish participated in the community choir. An offertory was collected for the Hillburn Village Housing Development Fund. Refreshments were arranged for all, which was contributed by the participating churches.

NORTH EAST REGIONAL YUVAJANA SAKHYAM CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

North East Regional Yuvajana Sakhyam Christmas Carol Service was held on the evening of December 25, 2005, at St. James Mar Thoma Church of Rockland, New York. Various Yuvajana Sakhyam Choirs presented the Christmas carol during the Service. H. G.

Zachariah Mar Nicholovos Metropolitan (Malankara Orthodox Church) delivered the Christmas message.



Christmas Choir Competition Winners—St. James Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam Choir.

Regional President Rev. T. A. Varghese, Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathew, Rev. Johncey George, Rev. Jojan Mathews John, Rev. Johnson Varghese, Rev. Biju S. Cherian were also present at the carol service. St. James Yuvajana Sakhyam got First place in the Regional Yuvajana Sakhyam Christmas Choir competition.

Rev. Johncey George, Vicar

*To Handle A Hard Situation,
Try A Soft Answer.*

MARTHOMA CHURCH OF SOUTH FLORIDA



Mission Field support

As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Marthoma church of South Florida, it is decided to support a missionary in India. House to House Christmas Carolling was arranged for this purpose and a substantial amount was collected.

National Literary Competition

As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, the Marthoma Church of South Florida is conducting a national literary competition for short story, essay & poem.

Theme: Remember, Repent & Return (Revelations 2:5). Members of the Diocese of

North America & Europe can send their entries based on the theme to: Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan, 4230 SW 82nd way, Davie, FL 33328. The First and Second prize winners in each item will be awarded and the first prize

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION PROJECTS

Home For Homeless: As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, the Mar Thoma Church of South Florida is helping more than 50 people in India through the Home for Homeless Project. In order to raise funds for this project, a musical concert by Mr. Binoy Chacko, Ms. Megha Jacob and Ms. Angel John was organized on 18 November 2005 at Cooper City High School. The Vicar, Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan inaugurated the program in the presence of Rev. George Daniel, Rev. George John, Pastor Babu John, Dr. Mammen C. Jacob (fund raising committee convener), Mr. Georgy Varghese (jubilee convener) and Jubilee Committee members. Mr. George Thumpayil was the master of ceremonies for the program. South Florida youth and kids also presented special programs of music and dance. Mementoes were presented to sponsors. Mr. Rajan George (Secretary) expressed the vote of thanks. It was a blessed experience for more than 750 people who attended the program.



winning entries will be published in the Silver Jubilee Souvenir. **Last date of entries receiving: February 28, 2006.**

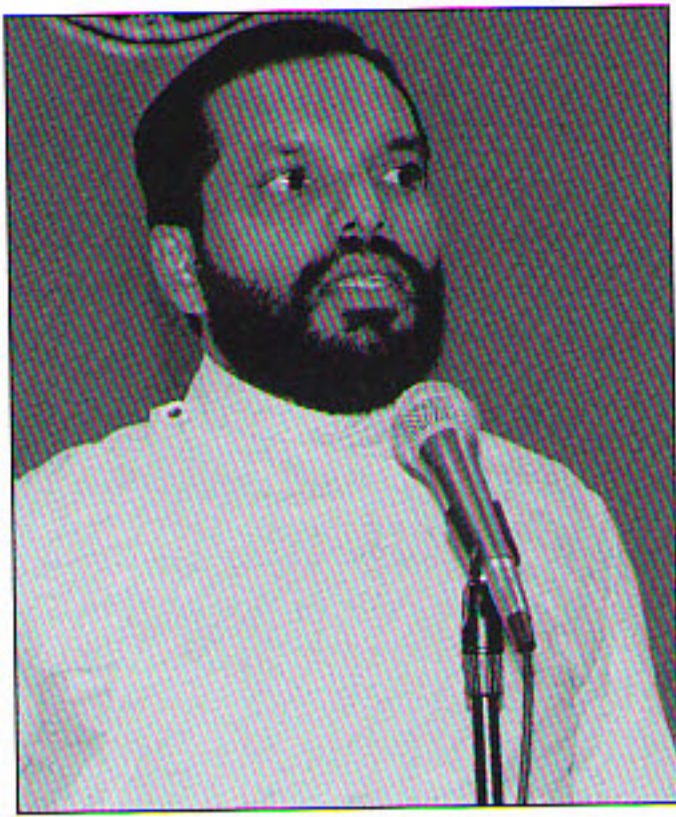
Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan, Vicar

Matrimonial

Marthomite parents settled in USA invite marriage proposals for their daughter, 26 years old and 5'4." She is a doctor currently in her first year of residency. We are seeking responses from professionally qualified young men with background in Medicine, Law or Engineering with good moral and spiritual upbringing. Please send all correspondence to DrIndiaUSA@aol.com or call (864)346-3875.

Marthomite parents settled in USA seeks alliance for their 29 year old son, MD 5' 7" family oriented, with high moral values, currently working in New York, from parents/relatives of girls with medical degree (finished MD or doing residency) from USA. Contact: mahan3385@yahoo.com with recent photographs.

ST. MARK'S MAR THOMA CHURCH, TAMPA, FLORIDA



Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan

PARISH DAY CELEBRATIONS AND FAMILY NIGHT

The St. Marks Mar Thoma Church, Tampa, celebrated

by the Vicar, Rev. T. K. Alexander Tharakan. Rev. M. C. Joshua gave the Parish Day message. The Secretary, Mr. Abraham P.



Rev. M. C. Joshua

its Parish Day on December 4, 2005. The parishioners praised God for the manifold blessings showered upon the parish from its inception. Parish Day Thanksgiving service was followed by Holy Communion. A Parish Day meeting was held after the Holy Communion which was presided over



Scene from Talent Show.

Chacko presented the parish report. The graduates were honored during the occasion. A fellowship meal was served after the meeting. The night before, many colorful talents were presented in a

family night program at the church.

Rev. Y. K. Alexander Tharakan, Vicar

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF OKLAHOMA

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma, a small congregation started at the latter part of 1970's has existed for the last 25 years as a parish in North America. A congregation started with 6 families grew to obtain a full fledged status as a parish in 1980.

resident vicar since 2000. A parsonage was also built in the church compound in 2002, and at present the parish has about 60 families in its roll.

While thanking for all the blessings of the gracious God, the Mar Thoma Church of Oklahoma is celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the parish in 2006.



The parish bought some land in Bethany, OK, and built a church building in 1990. Since then, a parish hall was also added to the church building and the parish has a

Almighty, earnestly requests the prayers and support of the well wishers from the diocese in this endeavor.

Rev. T. K. John, Vicar

HONORING THE PIONEERS OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS IN EASTERN ZONE



Dr. Thomas K. Jose receiving plaque from Coorilos Thirumeni.



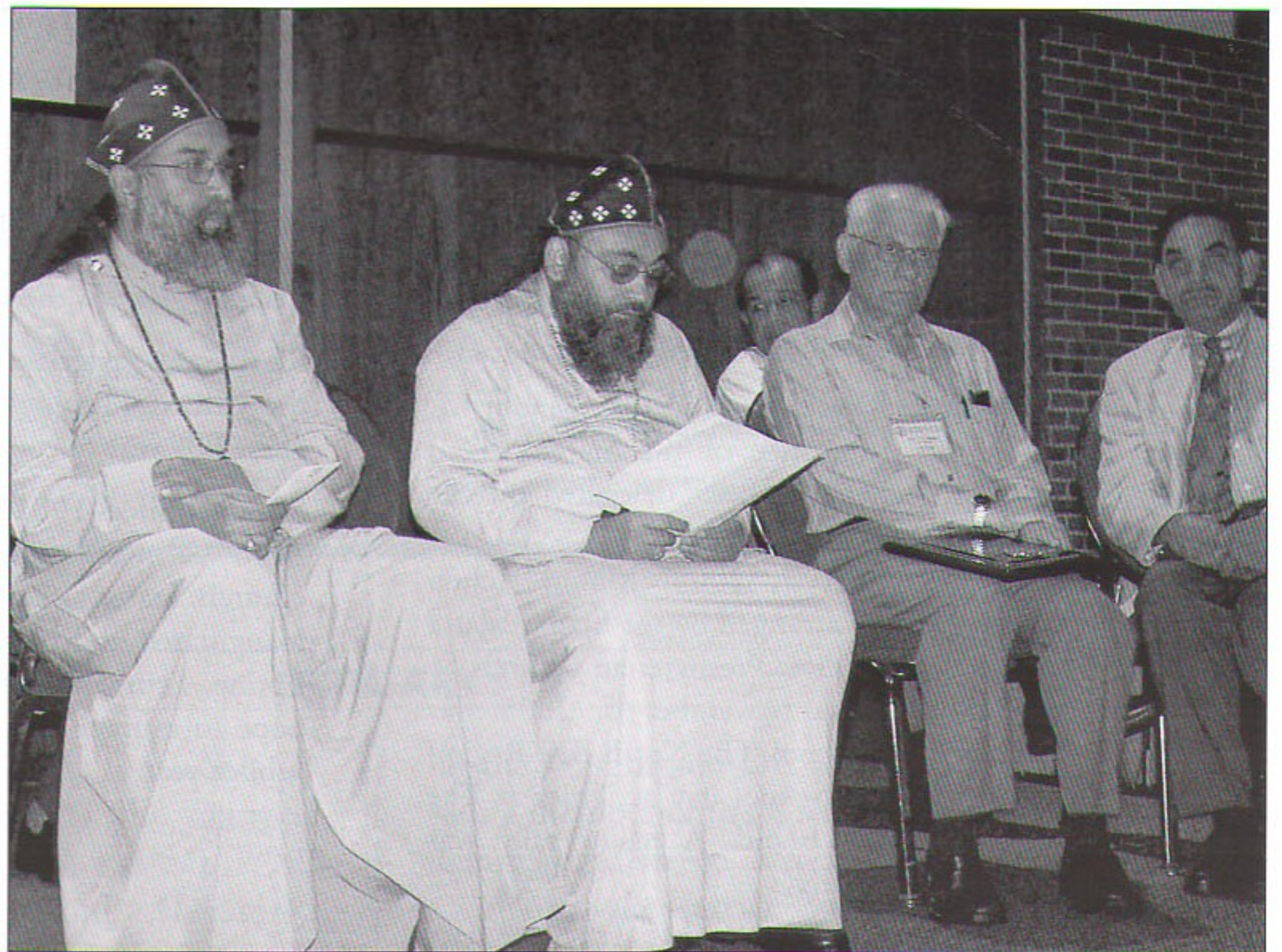
Mr. Easo Daniel receiving plaque from Philoxenos Thirumeni.

The pioneers of Sunday Schools in the Eastern Zone (both North East and South East Regions) were honored as part of the Centenary Celebrations of the Sunday Schools during the Junior/Senior Conference (July 14-17, 2005) at De Sales University, Allen Town, PA. The honorees were Dr. T. M. Thomas (St. Thomas MTC, Yonkers), Dr. Jose K. Thomas (Staten Island MTC), Mr. Samuel P. Abraham (St Peter's MTC, NJ), Mr. Thomas Koshy (Washington, D.C. MTC), Mr. Easo Daniel (New Jersey MTC, Randolph), Mr. Daniel Thomas (St Thomas MTC, Yonkers), and Mr. O. C. Abraham (Philadelphia MTC). These early leaders initiated not only the formation of the Sunday Schools at their parish level, but also worked relentlessly at regional level leadership and organization.

Soon after the parish formation, Sunday Schools were organized at church level. The Sunday Schools in Greater New York and Philadelphia worked together to arrange teachers' meetings and training sessions. Even before a diocesan structure had taken shape in 1982, a regional structure for Sunday Schools in the East Coast had emerged. It was the first in the nation. I salute these visionaries for their dedication and hard work.

The year 2005 is a special year for all Mar Thoma Sunday Schools throughout the world. Following the big event at Maramon Convention called "Children's Maramon" in February 2005, celebrations continued in North America. The Eastern Zone honored the pioneers during the opening ceremony of the Junior & Senior

Conference, presided over by the Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos on July 14, 2005. Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam President Rt. Rev. Dr. Issac Mar Philoxenos handed out plaques commemorating the contributions of these great leaders during the ceremony. Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos during the ceremony said,



Three of the other Pioneers of Sunday Schools who were honored with Plaques as part of the Centenary Celebration sitting with Thirumenies, Dr. T. M. Thomas, Mr. Daniel Thomas and Mr. O.C. Abraham.

"Through God's grace, these great personalities have been instrumental and pivotal in Sunday Schools' various stages of spiritual growth and development in North America. We should all remember and respect them with a grateful heart. They will remain luminaries in the history of Mar Thoma Sunday Schools."

Palakunnathu Mathew George
Sunday School Diocesan Assembly Member

THE MAR THOMA CHURCH STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

Since the consecration of her new church facility in June, 2005, the Mar Thoma Church Staten Island has been on a mission for internal as well as missiological and ecumenical development. Very rapidly, the church is becoming an active force in the Staten Island borough of New York City. Below is a glimpse of some of the activities we are actively engaged in:



The Staten Island Mar Thoma Sunday School presenting a skit at the North East Region World Sunday School Day Celebrations.

Children's Ministry:

Focusing on the needs of children between the ages of 7 and 11, we have developed the "KIDS Club." During these monthly clubs, children learn moral lessons, make presentations, complete book reviews, and make crafts.

Staten Island Council of Churches: We were privileged to host the annual Fall Assembly of the Staten Island Council of Churches on October 5, 2005. It was a grand occasion for the churches denominationally ranging from Catholic to Orthodox to Protestant to come and witness with each other. The meeting was well attended.

Ecumenical Leadership: The vicar, The Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia serves on the committee of the Staten Island Council of Churches. Achen has been delegated on the Social Justice and Witness Committee.

Moreover, on December 7, 2005, Manoj Achen delivered the Advent Homily arranged by the Staten Island Council of Churches at the Olivet Presbyterian Church.

World Sunday School Day: November 6, 2005 was celebrated as World Sunday School. The North East Region celebrated the World Sunday School day activities at The Mar Thoma Church Staten Island. A major rally was coordinated and well participated.

Concert: On November 19, 2005, a concert was arranged by our church. Binoy Chacko and troupe blessed the occasion through his melodic voice.

The "Cocoa House" Ecumenical Christmas Carol: We were blessed with the presence and leadership of His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios of the Orthodox Church during an ecumenical youth Christmas celebrations. The North East Youth Chaplain, Rev. Biju S. Cherian also led the meeting.

Christmas Festivities: Dr. M.P. Joseph, former professor of the United Theological College, Bangalore, was the chief guest this year for our Christmas Carol.

Silver Jubilee-1981-2006: The first Sunday in February, 2006 will mark the 25th Anniversary of the Mar Thoma Church Staten Island. The Jubilee Celebrations will be inaugurated and blessed by The Rt. Rev. Dr. Christopher Epting, Ecumenical Bishop for the Episcopal Church. We hope to initiate many activities and programs during the Jubilee year.

Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, Vicar

NORTH EAST REGION WORLD SUNDAY SCHOOL DAY CELEBRATION

The World Sunday School Day was celebrated by the North East Region Sunday Schools on November 6, 2005. The celebration was hosted by the Staten Island Mar Thoma Church. The program started with a rally in which Sunday School students, teachers, and parents strolled around the neighborhood, carrying placards with Bible verses and singing hymns. Sunday School students from all the churches displayed their willingness to participate in a spir-

it of fellowship with excellent behavior, thereby proving how proud they are to be members of the North East Region Sunday Schools of Mar Thoma Church. Many people from the community came to greet us, welcoming us with smiles and good wishes. Once the rally ended, we all gathered in the basement of the newly constructed Staten Island Church. Various Sunday Schools from sister parishes came forward to present the theme of this year's World



Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia Leading the World Sunday School Day Rally.



St. John's MT Sunday School at the World Sunday School Day Rally.

Sunday School Day, which was **"Faith That Has To**

Be Transmitted To The Generations". It was truly a

blessing to see the talents that God has bestowed upon our Sunday School children as they creatively presented the theme.



Rev. Mrs. Ivy Patel giving the message at the World Sunday School Day function.

Along with the talent show, a video presentation was used to show the past 100 years of the Sunday School in the Mar Thoma Church. The presentation made us realize that our Sunday School has a rich historical background, which involved people dedicating their lives for children to improve their literacy and knowledge of the Bible. With the help of the parish chaplain, Rev. Manoj M. Zacharia, and the president of the North East Regional Sunday School, Rev. Roy A. Thomas, we were able to make World Sunday School Day a joyous and blessed event. Staten Island Mar Thoma Sunday School deserves special commendation for the excellent arrangements made for the rally and the celebrations at the church.

Amy Thomas, Sunday School Teacher, St. John's MTC, NY

OBITUARY

SAM PHILIP PARACKAMANNIL: Mr. Sam P.

Philip (61), the youngest son of the late Mr. P. M. Philip and Aleyamma Philip, of Parakkamannil family, Ranny, passed on to be with the Lord on December 18, 2005. He is survived by his wife Thankamma and son Justin.



Mr. Philip had been an active presence in community and parish activities

in the Washington DC area for the past 32 years. He was a member of the Greater Washington Mar Thoma Church and served as treasurer.

The wake service conducted on December 21, 2005, was led by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa and attended by Rev. Sabu Koshy, Rev. George Mathew, Rev. I.V. Thomas, Rev. Isaac Johnson, Rev. Reji Chacko, and many relatives and friends. The burial service by Vicar Rev. Sabu Koshy took place on December 22, 2005, at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery.

Messenger expresses its heartfelt condolence and sympathy to the bereaved family.

“HOME . AUTO . LIFE . RETIREMENT . ME.”



**I CAN HELP YOU DETERMINE
THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS
TO MEET YOUR NEEDS.**

**ROY C. MATHEW
3303 FM 1960 WEST, SUITE 110
HOUSTON, TX 77068
PHONE: 281-537-8886
FAX: 281-537-5597**

**E-mail: roymathew@allstate.com
24 HOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE**



Allstate®

You're in good hands.

Home and Auto insurance is available from one or more of the following companies: Allstate Texas Lloyds and Allstate County Mutual Insurance Company, Home Office, Irving TX, Allstate Property and Casualty Insurance Company, Home Office, Northbrook, IL. Life Insurance and annuity products are available from Allstate Life Insurance Company, Home Office, Northbrook, IL. Subject to availability and qualifications. 2003 Allstate Insurance Company. Allstate.com.

HELP SAVE ASHISH

My name is Ajay Thomas, and we are members of the Immanuel MTC, Houston. Ashish Thomas was born on 8th March, 2005. He is 9 months old and is the youngest of our three children. Our baby Ashish was recently diagnosed with a rare blood disorder called Infantile Myelo-fibrosis. This particular disorder forms scarring in the bone marrow and it prevents the marrow from producing essential red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. This disorder is extremely rare and there is no treatment for such patients except for a Bone Marrow Transplant. This is the only medical option available to keep Ashish alive.



We are urging everyone in our community to please pray for Ashish and anyone willing to come to a bone marrow drive and see if you can save Ashish's life. We need a donor from the Indian subcontinent, since other races are not a match to Indians

There are no long-term side effects for the donor. For details, please visit the web site at: www.HelpSaveAshish.com or e-mail at helpsaveashish@yahoo.com.

If you would like to volunteer for a sample blood test, please contact:

Suji John (972) 742-6017 (Dallas) Dr. Reji John (972) 418-1818 (Dallas)
 Jojy John (832) 526-6200 (Houston) Jackson Jacob (832) 969-0438 (Houston)

MAR THOMA CHURCH OF LOS ANGELES, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



Coorilos Thirumeni administering the First Communicant Rites.

Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles celebrated Diaspora Sunday on the 27th of November 2005. A photo exhibition of the early settlers' activities as a Mar Thoma community from the early 1970's on was arranged at the Church which helped not only our early settlers but also our youngsters and newly arrived immigrants to look back into the past and reflect upon the trials and tribulations the early settlers had to go through. Our Vicar Rev. Noble Jacob gave out to every family who attended the special service, a specially designed book mark commemorating the Thanksgiving/Diaspora Sunday celebrations. Mr. Abraham Mattackal talked about the historical background and origin of the Mar Thoma Diaspora community and Thanksgiving Day celebrations. A sumptuous lunch, arranged by our early settlers, was served after the service. It was indeed a time to remember our past and reflect upon God's mercies and guidance to all of us!!

2005 Christmas program was celebrated on December 24th. Rev. Noble Jacob was the chief officiant who led the worship service. The Christmas message was given by Dr.



Coorilos Thirumeni administering the First Communicant Rites.

M. G. Wesley of C.S.I. Church in Florida. The service was highlighted by the Christmas hymns sung by both our English and Malayalam Choir. Our Sunday School children also presented songs and other items during the evening celebration.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Episcopa visited our parish from December 15 to 20. Thirumeni officiated our Holy Communion Service on December 18, 2005, where he also administered the First Communicant rites to eight communicants of our church.

The annual Ecumenical Christmas program of the Kerala Christian Fellowship of Los Angeles was held on December 17, 2005. Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos gave the keynote address at the evening celebration. In his address, Thirumeni reminded the audience that God's blessings in our lives are not measured by the riches we possess but by the amount of time we spend with God in enriching others and our own lives.

Rev. Noble Jacob, Vicar

ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH OF DELAWARE VALLEY IN HAVERTOWN



Coorilos Thirumeni celebrating Holy Communion Service at the New Parish

This new addition to our diocese has great potentials. The major News daily in the tri-state area 'Philadelphia Inquirer' wrote a special article on the origin and nature of this new Mar Thoma Parish in its Dec 18th edition. Inquirer stated that "On Sundays, women in flowing and vibrantly colored saris, men in suits and young people in shirts, khakis and sneakers gather for Sunday school, Bible study, choir practice, services and coffee hour. Like other denominations, the Mar Thoma church is working hard to strengthen the church among young people with whom the future of the church lies. Services are held in Kerala's native language and in English. The denomination has a new youth chaplaincy program, new Sunday school curriculum, leadership training workshops and youth fellowships".



Lighting of the lamp.



Members of the New Parish with the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos and Achens after the service.

NEW RESIDENCE FOR YOUTH CHAPLAIN OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN REGION

The Diocese was able to purchase a new residence for the youth chaplain serving the South-Eastern region. The residence is located in Philadelphia (9712 Laramie Rd, Philadelphia, PA

19115). The necessary funds for down-payment were collected from parishes in the region with initiatives of youth fellowship and the parish executive committees.



Photo of Diocesan Bishop, Achens and Youth Fellowship Members following the 'Koodasa' on Jan 01, 2006.

BETHEL MAR THOMA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

ANNUAL *KALAMELA*

Bethel Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia held its annual '*Kalamela*' on November 19th. This colorful event was inaugurated by Vicar Rev. Susieal Verghese. Members of the parish and its various organizations presented excellent talents through a variety of cultural programs with Christian taste.

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

Christmas Carol Service was held on December 24th evening. Rev. Fr. Geevarghese Vaidhyan gave the Christmas message. Inspirational music and colorful presentations filled this glorious event.



Rev. Susieal Verghese with members of the executive committee handing over the check to Mr. Don Bennan, Editor of 'News Gleaners'.

Rev. Susieal Verghese, Vicar

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Bethel extends its helping hands to the community in the city of 'Brotherly Love'.

During the year 2005, Bethel parish collected close to \$10,000 towards charity and mission work. Traditionally we donate 50% of the funds to Mar Thoma charities in Kerala and the other half to charitable organizations in the US. Major part of this year's fund was donated to the Mar Thoma School for the Deaf in Kasargod, Kerala and the other part was donated to News Gleaners in Philadelphia towards collections for the needy during Christmas time.

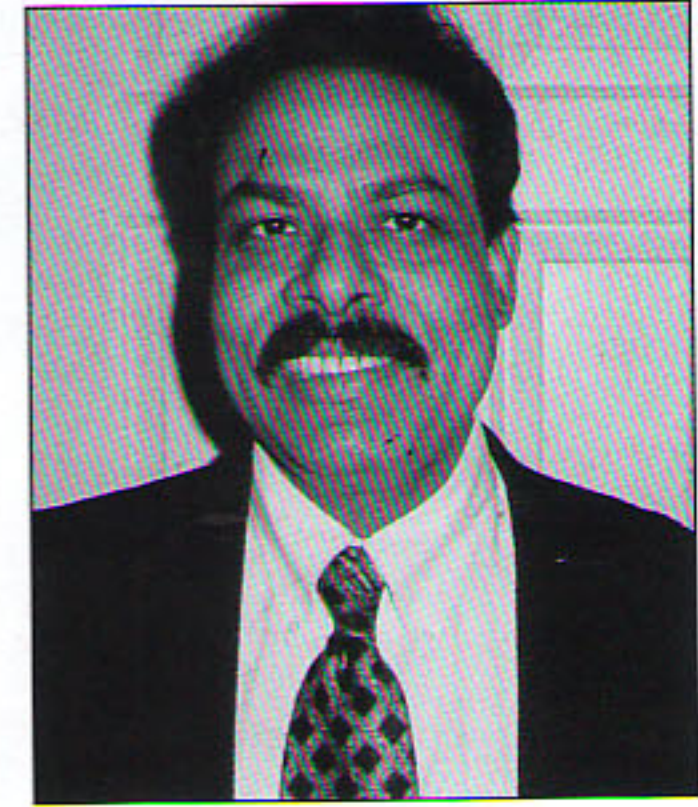


Youths performing Rajstani Dance at the "Kalamela".



Christmas Carol Service Program.

Another eventful year went by and people around the world are hoping for a brand new year of prosperity, peace and happiness. Natural calamities played a big role in shaping the events of 2005. Many lost lives, family, belongings and even their neighborhoods. To some, life became a constant struggle with too little support and limited to scarce resources. There are times when our faith is tested and we feel the forces that pull us in opposite directions. Frustrations, lack of commitment and lack of perseverance can prompt one to lose the grip on reality. Faith gets overpowered by agonizing thoughts and feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction. The author of 'Blue Like Jazz' wrote: "Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself". Many times our actions follow this route. Strong faith and courage in others may affirm our own faith.



We are good at implementing self-governing policies in our individual lives. A psychologist reported that one of his clients found satisfaction in visiting casinos and spending time and hard earned money. When it came to gambling, there were no limits or budgets. But the same client got much irritated when asked for small a donation towards charitable purposes. The psychologist went on to say that such individual reflections are part of self-governing rules and priorities implemented by the individual through circumstantial experiences. Desired changes in the basic understanding of human relations and social functioning need to be reinforced in such individuals to modify such set inner rules. When one feels left out from friendship, family, religious settings or even the larger community, he or she reverts to actions that may be self-destructive and anti-social. As Christians we are expected to keep our eyes and ears open for our fellow humans and to support them in their emotional and spiritual journey. The Gospels depict many such examples of Jesus responding to human needs on different occasions. An emotional touch from someone who cares can do wonders for many in times of distress.

In recent times the very existence of God is being questioned again. The "Da Vinci Code" and the upcoming movie based on this book are trying to prove that the Biblical depictions of Christ are not true. But Christian believers must know the facts; one should thoroughly understand the Bible to know fact from fiction. Current arguments between believers of evolution and believers of creation have sparked brand new ideologies relating to the interference of God in human lives. Knowing and tasting the presence of God in one's life is more than just an emotional uproar. It is a way of life with utmost trust, honest and humble behavior, and self-contentment. Seeking happiness in the midst of confusion and chaos can lead one to more frustrations and disappointment, unless the search is based in God's provisions. God in his mercy can transform the world through each individual. Only when we surrender to God with our full heart are we capable of initiating this transformation. God strengthens us through his abundant mercy, once you ask for it with full faith.

I am proud to see that our Diocese is growing. The recent addition of three new parishes and the purchase of a residence for the Youth Chaplain in the South-Eastern region (Philadelphia) add to this growth. As Marthomites, we are entrusted with missions that require our talents, time and efforts and I sincerely hope and pray that all will respond to the call with sincere Christian commitment.

Eapen Daniel

...in a changing world, innovations and
new ideas come as a matter of
routine. In the business world,
thinking out of the box is just how we
have done business...

...over our 10 years of excellence...
only by the Grace of God.

CompuSystems, Inc.

www.compusystemsnet.com

MVS CONSULTING, inc.

www.mvs.us



FRANK BENUCHI SHOES
ERIC SHOES
EXCLUSIVE AGENT FOR U.S.A.
 Free Shipping anywhere in the USA

Best Wishes From
Varkey Abraham & Family

Erick Shoes Inc.
 216-11 Jamaica Avenue
 Queens Village, New York
Tel. 718-465-2860
 Website: www.ericshoes.com

Abraham & Son Inc.
Shoe Tech U.S.A. Inc.
A&S Properties Inc.

Mar Thoma Messenger
 Sinai Mar Thoma Center
 2320 S. Merrick Avenue
 Merrick, NY 11566

NON-PROFIT
 ORGANIZATION
 US POSTAGE
PAID
 MERRICK, NY
 PERMIT NO. 198