



# MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

October 2011



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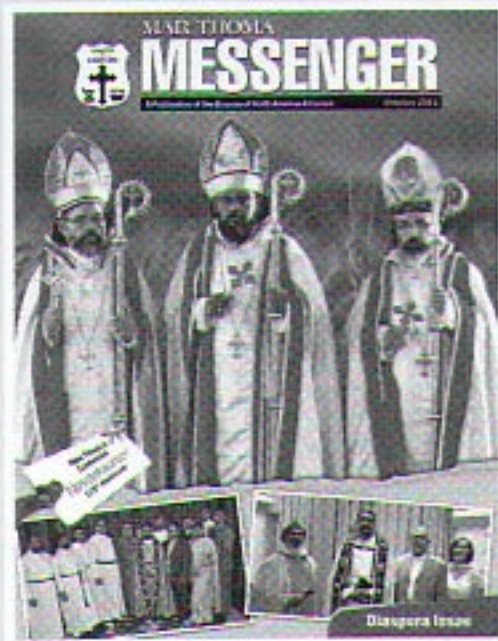


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Cover: Newly consecrated Bishops and newly ordained Kassessas from our Diocese.

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## Message from the Metropolitan

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Dearly beloved in the Lord,

We are remembering the grace and blessings showered upon us as a church in conducting the newly elected Mandalam meeting for the year 2011 - 2014. I praise God for the grace that has been hovered upon the meeting of the Mandalam. We have appointed the representatives for all committees for the next three years. Rev. P. T. Thomas (Sabha Secretary), Rev. V. T. John (Clergy Trustee) and Advocate Varghese Mammen (Lay Trustee) were also elected by the Mandalam. All the Dioceses have also elected the new Diocesan council and representatives for various committees for next three years. Thus we are in a changing phase during the past month.

We have completed six months in this financial year and I appreciate the services rendered by all individuals who have completed their duties with commitment and determination. The newly consecrated Bishops will be taking charge of the respective Dioceses as of October 1, 2011. I pray to God to enlighten their God-given talents to strengthen the Church and the Christian Community at large so that God's name will be glorified. I urge all Marthomites to provide their valuable support and prayers.

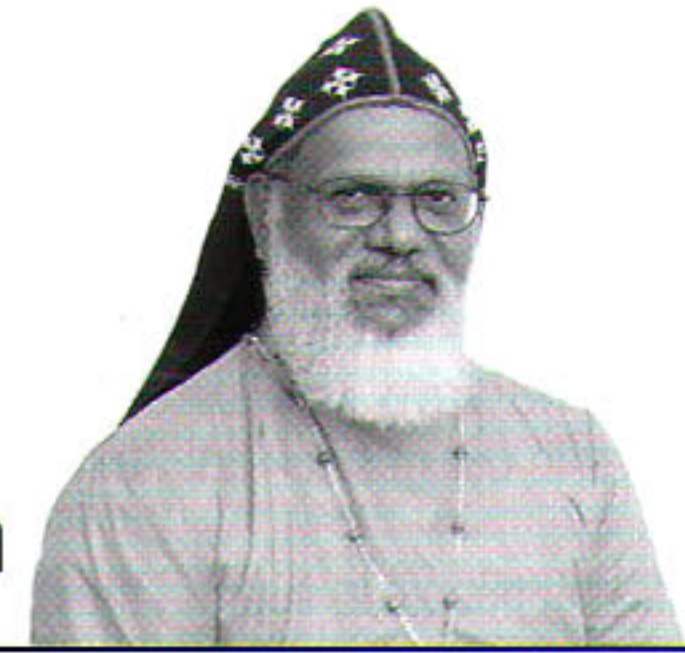
We are indebted to pray for those who are suffering from the earthquake that happened in the northern part of India. The people living at the eastern hilly areas of Kerala are also living in fear and we need to be vigilant about such natural calamities. There are allegations and counter allegations leveled against leaders of both ruling and opposition political parties. This will lead the country to turn back on progresses achieved and also will cause the people to lose trust in the democratic process. We are glad to hear that Sonia Gandhi has recovered from her health issues and came back and took charge of her responsibilities. I pray for her continued health and believe that her recovery is due to the prayers of so many.

The days ahead of us are meant for sharing valuable thoughts. Voluntary Evangelistic Association Day which reminds us the witnessing of Christ in a secular world, the opportunity to express our solidarity with those having different abilities but living in their own limitations, the commitment of the youths both in the community and Church, the meaningful spirituality in an age of technology, youth Sunday to remind the youths of their responsibilities to the community and church, Family Sunday as an opportunity to revitalize the families, which is the basic component of the community and church, and the year of beginning of the purification of the church (Kudos Etho) are all being celebrated in this month. The basic reason for all immoralities in the community is due to the deterioration of the value system within the family. Like cancer, the deterioration in the value system within the family is affecting the society at large and is becoming more and more visible.

If we do not find out ways to improve the value system within the families, the community will be forced in to more and more negativity and non-productive behaviors. The commitment to our elder generation, the caring approach to the small children, nurturing to the youth, the respect that should be given to the women both within the family and community, the ability to create opportunities for the betterment of the community are the responsibility of each family, which they need to undertake with the grace from God. Renewed and recommitted families will create positive impact within the community. If our families become the places where Christ abides, then we will be able to provide love and goodness to the community. Let the witnessing of Joshua be a model and an inspiration for all of us. Joshua 24:15 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.'

Grace be with you all!

**Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan**



## Message from the Diocesan Bishop

The summer of 2011 was quite eventful. The Mar Thoma Church has been gifted with three new Bishops, Rt. Rev. Dr. Mathews Mar Makarios, Rt. Rev. Gregorios Mar Stephanos, and Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Tithos. The Malankara Church celebrated its 175th Anniversary of the Reformation event of 1836. The Diocese of North America and Europe had a renewing and refreshing experience through various Conferences, Institutes and Convention gatherings. Natural disasters such as the recent earth quake along the east coast, hurricane Irene, tropical storm Lee and the consequences of Global warming reminded us how climatic changes can threaten the safety and comfort of our lives.

I had the opportunity to meet Rev. Dr. Tim Dakin, the General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) during the last week of August. The meeting lasted for more than an hour, giving time not only to recollect the strong bond between the Mar Thoma Church and CMS but also to explore the ways and means of working together for the spread of the Gospel and the furtherance of God's Kingdom. My visit to the St. Thomas Mar Thoma parish, Bristol, UK, presented an opportunity to meet with the representatives of the Pastorate committee of the St. Anne's Anglican Church, thus paving way to understand greater levels of unity whereby the ministry and mission of the Church can be made more meaningful in the neighborhood. In the light of the 2010 centennial ecumenical gathering (Edinburgh 1910) in New Orleans USA, it is apt to explore various levels of ecumenical engagements in the new era.

The visit to UK provided me an opportunity to visit the birthplace of David Livingston, the exhibition centre of John Bunyan, and the church where John Wesley preached. David Livingston grew up in an ordinary cotton mill environment and reached out to Africa with the Gospel. He had a clear vision and an unflinching commitment to submit his entire life to God to serve as a missionary. His mortal remains are kept in the Westminster Abbey. John Bunyan of Bedfordshire lived on daily income and was imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. The days he spent in prison became fruitful time for him to meditate and write on the life and goal of a Christian, later known as *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This book, which narrates the difficulties and dangers on one's journey of faith, is now translated into more than 200 languages. John Wesley in turn was challenged by the marginalization of the poor people and started a new avenue of evangelism by reaching out to the neglected in the society. This ministry grew up as a strong evangelical movement, giving shape to the formation of the Methodist Church with inspiring hymns, meaningful worships and great gospel messages. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we, the followers of Jesus are called to commit ourselves to love like Jesus, standing with those who are at the margins, loving even enemies and forgiving those offended us, so that the ministry of reconciliation becomes part of the evangelistic life of the Church.

We had a yearlong celebration of the Reformation. The Diocesan Assembly and the Diocesan clergy took time to study this topic during the annual Diocesan Assembly meeting at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church (MTC), New York. In August, two papers along with a relevant order of worship were circulated for study among all the parishes. The Sabha Mandalam that met on the second week of September studied the topic: "Relevance and Challenges of the Reformation in the Malankara Church". A DVD on Church History is now available and can be obtained through the Christian Literature Society of our Diocese.

One of the characteristics of the Malankara Reformation was the emphasis the Mar Thoma Church has given on mission activities. The Karnataka Mission Ashram movements and outreach like the Tibetan Border Mission all started because individuals and small prayer groups were challenged by the gospel. All our missionaries dedicated their lives in spite of financial constraints and reached out with absolute faith in God. The Church itself was not in a position to support them financially. After 175 years, we are at a point where we ought to evaluate and determine the goal of our mission for the next decade or for the next twenty-five years. For example, what are our mission goals when we speak about (i) Neighborhood Mission (ii) Native American Mission (iii) India Mission and (iv) Mexico Mission?

Our Mexico Mission activities are progressing well. I am glad to inform that more families are living in Colonia Mar Thoma where we have made drinking water available and where food materials are distributed. This summer, we have fenced two properties we have in Mexico. Construction is going on to provide kitchen and toilet facilities for each house. The challenges to our mission activities there are

1. Identifying people to support the education of the children of families in Colonia Mar Thoma. Some of these students are already in universities and professional colleges. We need well wishers to sponsor each child.
2. Identifying sponsors to support the food-distribution program called 'Manna'. We distribute food once a week regularly at a cost of \$40 per family.
3. Retrieving the arrears from our parishes to help meet the expenses of developing the infra structure facilities. These amounts are needed to provide kitchen and toilet facility to each house.
4. Identifying Spanish-speaking people to lead and guide the spiritual nourishment of the people living there. People interested in doing this ministry for short term and long term can contact the Diocese for details.

The World Council of Churches considers the Mar Thoma Church, not simply as a church confined to India, but as a Diaspora community, that has the concentration of members in the Gulf countries, Africa, Europe and North America. We are a global Church and a Diaspora community. As a thriving Diaspora community, it is high time that we embark on this needed vision of seeing our church beyond the confines of India or the boundaries of this diocese. We need a thorough and deeper understanding on this issue.

I am glad that the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam in September, requested our Metropolitan to recognize the senior fellowship units of each parish and to give them representation in the decision-making bodies. This is recognition to all our members who are above the age of sixty, who pioneered in forming worshipping communities in various geographical areas and contributed their money, time, and talents for the growth of various worshipping units. This is the story of a faith journey, which is to be continued through the generations of our children and grand children. Aging was a topic that was discussed in some areas of our Diocese this summer. The new generations are mostly citizens of the place they dwell and they do have a responsibility to care for the needs of our senior members. On the other hand we will have to ask ourselves if we have handed over the 'baton' to them and if they will continue the race. In a reformed and reforming church, change is important for continuity. Continuity and change must go hand-in-hand. We have to ask ourselves if the members of the newer generations are properly represented in shouldering the responsibilities of the church and if they have representation in the decision-making bodies.

Among the various conferences we have in the Diocese each year, we have a separate Family conference in North America and in Europe. This year the 29th session of the Family Conference was in Edmonton, Canada, and the one in UK was at the High Lee Conference Centre. A book titled True Marks of a Christian Family has been published by the St. John's Mar Thoma Parish, UK, and is available through our Christian Literature Society. Each family exists for maintaining love and building relationships, finding means for the well-being of the family, carrying out the divine duty (Dharma) in the world and to strive for salvation (growth in the Kingdom of God). Every family takes this world seriously and at the same time looks beyond. Ecumenism focuses on this view and points to the transcendent nature of our being. We are all called to stand with Jesus Christ who unites all things in heaven and on earth according to the divine and eternal plan of God (Eph. 1: 10).

The retreat for the Young Families will be held in NY by the end of October. The 30th session of our Diocesan Family Conference in 2012 will study the theme: 'Remembering the Covenant for a Reforming Church'. I urge all the parishes and different organizations of our diocese to study this topic at parish and regional levels for a very fruitful Christian living in our current circumstances.

May God bless us all!

**Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Episcopa**



The Mar Thoma liturgy and the order of worships have its origin in the rich Eastern culture. The rhythmic and repetitive chants were meaningfully written to help the souls to recoup and repair. It enabled our forefathers to practice heavenly softening of struggle filled life situations, and also to develop and maintain strong Godly faith in all aspects of life. Amazingly, this liturgy still appeals and applies to all who uses it meaningfully with heart and soul poured into it, and furthermore, it impacts on its entire listener too. As an individual who grew up in the Malankara tradition, I am well aware of the fact that the timing and mere repetitions within the Communion Service can disconnect those who do not understand the depth or the meaning of it. We may need to switch the language to meet the local need, but mere translation will not do justice, since it could lose situational appeal and life connection. The formation of a new worship order to accommodate second generations and western life style require diligent commitment, prayerful visions, and youth participation.

We have to realize the fact that an ordained priest is conducting the offering at the altar, on behalf of the congregation, and if the congregation is inattentive, the offering becomes less meaningful. It is meant to please God, and to spread heavenly peace and blessings in the minds of the congregation. The modern technology has tremendously impacted our worship services and communion, both positively and negatively. A simple ring sound of a cell phone, the howling of the sound system, the flashing lights, musical discords, and individuals walking through the aisles are all examples of disruptions that robs us of the divine glory, during our worship services. Some ancient churches did not allow children below 4 to 6 years of age to attend worship services and other churches provided special areas for mother/baby to stay during worship services. In traditional Monasteries, worshipping was clearly authenticated with well organized chanting and quietness intertwined. These steps were repeated up to three or four times a day, which kept the monks within a heavenly halo, away from worldly deeds and thoughts. These committed monk's pure minds sought Godly wisdom. I hope that as a Diocese, flourishing far from its land of origin, with its roots strongly attached to the mother land, we can creatively and prayerfully update our worship service orders and communion services to uphold the spiritual needs of our immigrant pioneers as well as the second generation. It's not a simple task, but faithful diligence will accomplish that need.

Messenger family wants to take this opportunity to extend our sincere and prayerful congratulations to the newly consecrated Bishops back in Kerala and also the newly ordained Achen from this Diocese. While the sheep are seeking answers for life situations in struggling economy, our shepherds have a lot to deal with. Growth of any church brings forth newer problems and newer opportunities and analyzing and utilizing the resources with heavenly wisdom will result in abundance of yield. While the western churches are closing church doors due to lack of attendance and financial support, we as a small community, are expanding our service areas, and it can only be expedited with the participation of every Marthomite. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God - all the while - was making it grow and He gave the increase".

1 Corinthians 3:6

I have deep concerns about the dependency of our younger generation on Media and Internet technology. Many parents do not realize the undercover dangers and possible life impacts involved with the technology dependency. This dependency can easily change the thought process and behaviors of any youngster if not controlled properly. It impacts negatively on personal relations, family communication, social involvement, and even married life at later stages. It's high time that our parishes arrange special informational sessions for parents of children ranging in age from 6 to 18, involving subject experts in Psychology and Internet – media dangers.

Messenger printing job is being shifted from New York to yet another location. The San Francisco Company "Printcall" is assigned to print the October issue, while final decisions are being made by the Diocesan council. Editorial board and the managing committee, once again like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who helped to make this publication grow.

**Dr. Eapen Daniel**

Editorial

# Through the Light of the Word into Reformation's Mobility



**Rt. Rev. Geevarghese  
Mar Athanasius Episcopa**

Our Church is a community that observes the 175th anniversary of the Malankara Reformation Movement. The purpose of any gathering we conduct is knowing the meaning of Reformation. Moreover, it must enable us to draw from the reformation spirit continuously. It is time now to look back to history and praise God, remembering the ways God led us. We must be able to understand how we received Lord's abundant graces. Have we given God occasion to regret His benevolent action of pouring His graces into our undeserving hands? This is our time for self-introspection. In the parable, the man who doubled his talents was addressed by his master, 'good and faithful servant'. Do we qualify for such an address? Church is not a community to be burned out with money matters, accounts, and programs alone. Churches and dioceses are not ends in themselves, but only God's instruments.

## **World's Transformation Through The Values Of God's Kingdom**

Our target is to transform the world according to the values of heavenly kingdom. If only this awareness burns in our souls, we are able to perform meaningful service. Or else our Church will become one that puffs up our ostentations and false pride. We must not forget the truth that the history of the Church is the history of dilapidation too. The architects of the Malankara Reformation waged a life-and-death battle in order to save the Church from destruction. When we observe the 175th anniversary of reformation, our memory must not be distracted from the truth that our forefathers stood firm upon the vision of the Word, no matter what material gains they had to forsake. They lost many things. Their sacrifice was beyond comparison. The success of Reformation is that those great persons faithfully and selflessly upheld the vision they derived from the Word and marched on without any complaint about the loss that was heavy. But we have to ask one question. Does the flame of Reformation still burn with the same vigor and resplendence today? Do we make earnest effort to maintain that flame? To those who called He said, "Go into the unknown and irresolute future leaving behind the present that is safer and pleasant." That adventurous trip proved the trustworthiness of the one who called.

## **Reformation: A Continuation Without Stumbling**

Reformation is not mere events in history. It was the beginning of a mode of action that is destined to be infinite and continuous. In the light of the vision, the Church is entrusted to baptize this world. The Church today has reached a stage in which she, with pride, thinks that everything is gained and the mission is complete. But we do not know that there is an element of testing involved in all blessings. It will be more correct to say that we do not give much attention to this fact. The history of those who failed the examination and the history of those who were able to withstand the examination and come out successful must have eye-opening lessons for us.

Where is the Church now? It is time for us to ask with apprehension whether the Church is facing a situation where she is trapped in the entanglement of examination, without learning the lessons. We wonder whether the establishmentarianism is successfully acting above the Church these days thwarting the values that keep it going.

## **The Existence Of The Church Through The Strength Of Righteousness**

When the Church remains the pillar of righteousness that transforms the surroundings that we live in, the existence of the Church becomes meaningful. Where are we today in this meaningful serving? Why is the Church not able to act as the defending force with moral courage against today's society which is aimlessly wandering not knowing its destination? Unfortunately, the Church also goes along with the trends. We are also party in the hurly burly of the marketing culture. The number of Christian families appearing in family courts for settlements and divorces is increasing day by day. When we examine the crime rate here, our share also is noted clearly. Every day we shudder as we read in the newspapers the stories of persecutions and murders. Sadists are in a festive mood when these atrocities are staged throughout the country. Experiments are busily going on. Many are involved in experiments and researches in information technology to find ways to manipulate them to suit their perverted ends. Where did we go wrong? Virgil, the Roman poet, wrote two thousand years ago: 'the sound and fury of the avaricious city.' This seems true about these modern days. Man is dashing recklessly to capture and own this world. He is running around madly. Nobody cares for the loss of values. They forget that they are losing their souls. Think of mobile phones and we know how man has degraded himself and fallen into the devious abysses of evil and crime, which has compelled the police department to form a special squad to investigate and bring into light crimes committed through cell phones and their misuse.

## **Through The Path Of Self-Abdication**

Anxiety and fear have become hallmarks of the world which we inhabit now. Honesty is lost from human mind. There was a golden past when men trusted each other. Gone are those days too. Love and kindness, it seems, are vanished for ever. The Holy Bible teaches us not to grab and own everything, but to give and pour. Even our life, we ought to share, wherein lies human identification.



This is what the reformatory Church must do urgently. The Church must essentially make earnest efforts to bring the modern world to the path of self-abdication. What we gain is not the issue, but what we gave is the criterion of life's success. May God help us escape the deadly trepidation and consternation for conquering all worlds, thereby losing the precious soul.

### Transformation Through The Word

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10, 11). These words of the prophet do proclaim the strength of the Word. Close attention to the Word of God, studying the Word, and meditative imbibitions enabled him to strengthen himself. Today it has become highly necessary. The believing community of the Reformation Church must be able to distribute the fruits of the Holy Spirit to the society in which we live. May God help us incessantly in our good and sincere effort. ●



**Shara Susan Thomas**, Grade 7, St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church Toronto, Canada, who scored the highest marks in the Diocesan examination, held on May 15, 2011

## 8th Edavaka Mission National Conference 2011



The 8th Edavaka Mission National Conference 2011 of the Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelists' Association of the Diocese of North America and Europe was held at the St. Paul of the Passionists Retreat & Conference Center, Detroit, Michigan from July 22 - 24, 2011. The conference center which was a Catholic monastery provided a blissful, peaceful and heavenly atmosphere. The Detroit Mar Thoma Church Edavaka Mission hosted the conference with months of planning and prayers.

Rev. Abraham Thomas, Vicar of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church welcomed the distinguished guests and all the delegates to the conference. 145 delegates participated in this conference representing 17 parishes of our Diocese from United States and Canada. The theme of this year's conference was based on Ephesians 5:1, "Be Imitators of Christ". The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa inaugurated the conference with lighting of the lamp. In his inaugural address, Thirumeni reminded all the delegates to renew their call and commitment to be a real Imitator of Christ by a deep rooted relationship with Him and His teachings.

Theodosius Thirumeni released the conference souvenir by receiving a copy from Mr. C. V. Samuel, Souvenir Committee Convener and handing over to Dr. Alex T. Thomas, the Diocesan Edavaka Mission Secretary. We published this souvenir to raise funds to construct a new church building in the village of KOZHIKUTTAI in Pollachi Mission Field, Tamil Nadu of South India. All the proceeds from this souvenir

(about \$18,700.00) will be donated to Pollachi Mission as a gift of this 8th Edavaka Mission National Conference 2011. The land and church building will cost about \$25,000.00. Please keep this project in your prayers, participate and share! Rev. Y.T. Vinayaraj, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago was the keynote speaker and delivered three theme presentations: Imitating Christ; Signifying Church and Transforming Lives.. Achen's power point theme presentation was very thoughtful towards a relevant Christology in the Diasporas context and witness of the Mar Thoma Church in the post 9/11 US context. Also, his presentation was humor-filled that caused ripples of laughter in the conference.

Bible study was led by Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Diocesan Secretary. We were blessed with the leadership of Rev. M.M. John, Vice President of the Diocesan Edavaka Mission, Rev. Benu John, Vicar of the Baltimore MTC, Rev. Sabu Thomas of Chicago St. Thomas MTC, Rev. Roy P. Thomas of Chicago MTC, Rev. P. Chacko of the Detroit MTC and Rev. Alex Peter, Student Chaplain of the Mid-West Center. The following delegates moderated different sessions: Mr. Jacob Chacko of the Staten Island MTC, Dr. Alex T. Thomas of the New Jersey MTC, Mr. Abraham K. Daniel of Epiphany MTC- NY, Mr. Thomas Koshy & Mrs. Mariamma Thomas of Trinity MTC, Houston.

Conference choir performance really elevated the delegates to heavily happiness and joy. Other activities included: Talk on health issues by Dr. Thomas Abraham of Henry Ford Hospital and Dr. Thomas Mathew of the Detroit MTC, Bible Quiz by Mrs. Sara Philip of Detroit MTC, games and recreation led by Physical therapists Mrs. Susan Chacko and Mr. Simon P. Simon of the Detroit MTC. Talent show presentation made the conference program colorful. Kerala style food was a plus! Mr. Georgey Mathews, the secretary of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church Edavaka Mission gave the vote of thanks. We, the members of the Detroit Mar Thoma Church Edavaka Mission thank God Almighty for having given us this opportunity to host this conference and remember: Be Imitators of Christ.

**C.V. Samuel / Georgey Mathews, Detroit MTC**

# Holy Land Tours 2012

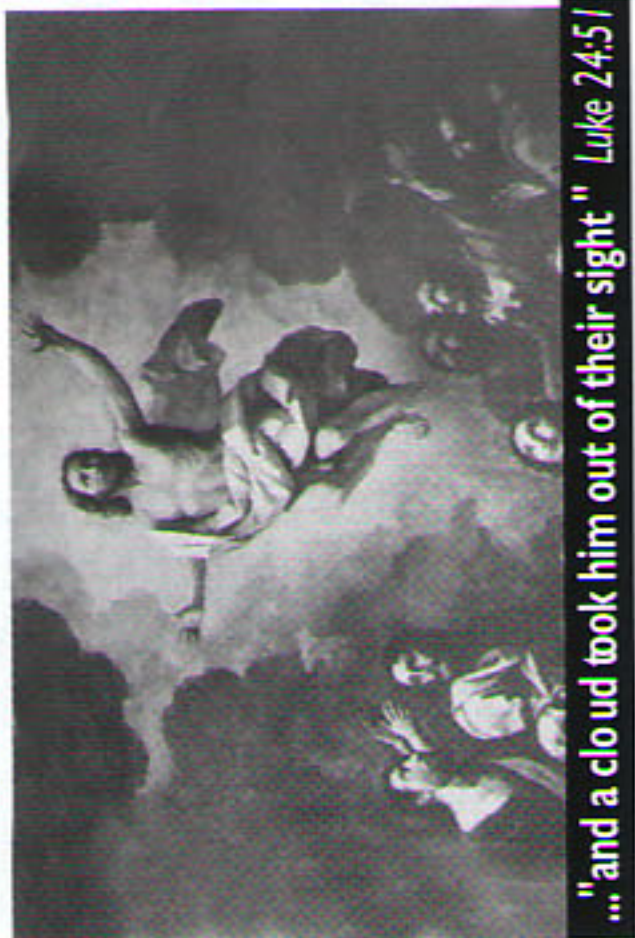
Feb 19 - 02 Mar, 2012 : Jordan/Israel & Egypt \*  
 Apr 15 - 28, 2012 : Jordan/Israel & Egypt \*  
 Sept 9 - 22, 2012 : Jordan/Israel & Egypt \*  
 Nov 18 - 01 Dec, 2012 : Jordan/Israel & Egypt \*

\* Nile Dinner Cruise

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# TURKEY, GREECE

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# Global Tolerance: Faith Community Engagement

Rev. Dr. P. L. John Panicker, Canadian MTC, Toronto



Religions are meant to establish peace on earth, the Christian greets his brother 'Peace be with you' and the very word 'Islam' means 'Peace' and they greet their brother 'salaam aleikum' which means 'peace be upon you.' In many countries major religions have always been a disintegrating factor by having the very seeds of disharmony. God's concern for the world is not merely the salvation of few souls, but the salvation of the entire world. Different religions offer different facets to the mystery of God. Religion is the way a human experience relates to sacred focus or foci; it is an experience transmitted through rituals, traditions, myths, symbols, artifacts and also through ethics and philosophy. Hence, it is basically a 'darsana' (vision) and 'dharma' (ethics or mission). There are different types of people like moderates and extremists, contemplatives, emotional enthusiasts and radicals engaged in religious experiences. The extremists always view the truth and claim exclusivity and have caused tragic ethical consequences in the community. The moderates show tolerance to other faith communities.

The twentieth century witnessed wars and terrorist acts, which caused destruction, global annihilation, occupation of other countries, genocide, suffering of innocent people, social and ethnic dominations that led to new forms of discrimination and oppression, the resurgence of new religious thoughts by fundamentalist groups, resulting in conflict between and within communities, and global media that promoted addictions of all kinds. The 20th century also witnessed the services of dedicated individuals, organizations and movements committed to non-violence, inspiring us to carry forward their remarkable contributions for the promotion of building, peace and co-operation among peoples, religions, sects, nations and churches. Though there is intolerance related to casteism, regionalism, linguism, etc., intolerance in the sphere of religion seems not only rampant but also aggressive. The roots of intolerance are partly the result of religious fundamentalism, which is a conservative attitude of religious leaders who interpreted religious scriptures to be a combination of religio-cultural exclusivism.

The word 'tolerance' derived from Latin, means to pick up, to carry some object, presumably under divine command doing what the truth demands, and should gladly 'bear the burden' of the human variety. It also means sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from ones own capacity for enduring or adapting. George W. Truett says, "Toleration is a matter of expediency; liberty is a matter of principle, toleration is a grant of man and liberty is a gift of God." A religious tradition in relation to other traditions normally has two kinds of responses: a certain degree of tolerance and a certain degree of intolerance. In order to enter into a fruitful religious encounter or

engagement one has to be aware of both dimensions of a religious tradition, both the extent of its flexibility as well as the extent of its inflexibility. In Semitic and non Semitic-religious literature, there are passages clearly depicting the very concept of tolerance to other faith communities. The Jewish law teaches "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19: 18) and Lev. 19:33 says, "Remember that Israelites were aliens in Egypt." If strangers wish to worship with Jews (Num 15: 14) they shall be accepted. Aboth de Rabbi Nathan B, says "God will uproot from the world everyone who hates his fellowmen." [J. Goldin, *The Living Talmud*, New York: NAL, 1957 p. 108].

Islam recognizes plurality as God-given reality. The Quran teaches respect towards other religions. In Quran 2: 62 whoever whether Jews or Christians, believes in Allah will be rewarded by Lord in the last day. The entire community is the creation of Allah, who gave them different scriptures, laws and ways of life. The task before mankind is to live in peace and harmony with each other, which is the will of God. As Fazlur Rahman has noted, in the earlier part of the Quran different prophets speaking to different people are recognized, 'but their messages are universal and identical.' Friedman identifies six Muslim thinkers living between 1000 A. D. and 1781 A. D, whose attitudes to Hinduism were positive in varying degrees. For example, Prince Dara Shikoh (1650), the great grandson of Emperor Ashoka, in order to bridge between Hinduism and Islam suggests 'that all Holy books including the Vedas stem from one source' [Harold Coward, *Pluralism in the world Religions*, One World Publications USA, 2000. p. 74.] The Moghul prince Dara Shikoh (1615-1619) was responsible for the translation of the Bhagavat Gita, the Yoga Vasishtah and the Upanishads. Dara was a Sufi of the Qadiriyyah order and in the translation he attempted to place Hindu ideas in the framework of Sufism in order to create a bridge between Hindu and Islamic metaphysics. Dara believed the Upanishads to be the 'Hidden Books' to which the Quran refers (56:78) and he argued that it is one of the sacred books Muslims should know, just as they know the Torah and the Gospels.

Of the new religious movements in the modern world, the Bahai Faith is sufficiently independent and widespread internationally with membership of about six million people. Although it originated in Iran, it quickly spread to North America and Europe and other developing countries like India. Bahai scripture proclaims that all religions are divine in origin and that no religion is superior to others. Bahauallah (1817-1892), the founder of the Bahai Faith, rose from Shia Islam. Relativism is the basis for Bahai theology to explain the differences between religions. When it comes to Hinduism, it is all-inclusive and accepts truth and revelation from all religions. According to the Veda, truth is "Ekam" (one) but people respond to this truth in many ways. All religions are different paths to attain the ultimate truth. Hence the spirit of Hinduism is tolerance and it is a great gift through human effort to attain 'shanti' (peace) in the community and in society. Peace is established through tolerance. Swami Vivekananda says "...our religion is one of inclusion of every one, exclusion of none". According to Gandhian interpretation of 'advaita', there is no exclusive teaching in advaita. He finds 'advaita' has unique qualities of tolerance and synthesis.



When it comes to Jainism and Buddhism, they not only tolerate other religions but give equal respect to other religions. Considering Jaina concept of 'anekantavada' and 'syadavada,' Mahatma Gandhi says: "I am an anekantavadi. This is the most important thing that I have learned from Jain Philosophy." It is implicit in the Vedanta Philosophy (C.W.M.G. vol. 23, pp 18-20). The theory of 'anekantavada' in Jainism provides axioms that truth is many sided and relative. It offers a relational view of reality and provides an epistemology for dialogue. It employs an anekanta drishti (perspective) for an integral approach to religious diversity. In Indian philosophy there are two main currents of thought: the atma doctrine of Upanishads (astika religion), and the anatma doctrine of Buddhism (nastika religion). Anekantavada could synthesize both these traditions and concepts.

The Buddhist attitude to other religions has been described as 'critical tolerance' [Harold Coward, *Pluralism in World Religions*. p. 126]. Buddhism has demonstrated a remarkable degree of tolerance and flexibility throughout the course of its expansion. Toynbee praises the Hindu-Buddhist tolerance as the prototype of a religious attitude necessary for peace in today's pluralistic world. (Arnold Toynbee, *America and the World Revolution*. 1962, p. 49). The concepts of tolerance, compassion and 'prajna' (wisdom) are very important in its function. The tolerant but critical attitude of the Buddha towards the plurality of religious views is shaped by Madhyamika Buddhists. The critical view is not aimed at rejecting that religion or demonstrating its inferiority in relation to other religious views, but for the removal of ego attachment to any religious philosophy or theology so that true spirituality can be experienced and lived [T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*. London 1960. p. 331]. The Madhyamika Buddhist's attitude towards other religions is one of openness to enter into dialogue.

The Dalai Lama, a Mahayana Buddhist, has said it is not necessary for followers of other religions to convert to Buddhism – rather they should become better Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, etc. He also said "The differences among religions should be understood within the context of the common goal of all religions." Thus mutual respect should develop between all religions. "Each system has its own value suited to persons of different disposition and mental outlook.... This does not mean that we should make all religions into one, but we should recognize the common purpose of the many religions and value the different techniques that they have developed for internal improvement." [Dalai Lama, *Spiritual contributions to social progress Tibetan Review* 16 November 1981. p. 18].

(To be continued in the next issue....)

# ECUMENICAL QUEST FOR THE UNITY OF MANKIND



**Rev. Joseph Daniel, Switzerland**

'Ecumenical Quest for the unity of humankind' is an ecumenical movement's agenda, which involves traditional ecumenical concerns like mission co-operation movements, church's unity efforts, unity engagements with other faiths as well as socio-political and economic concerns to alleviate human struggles, and in qualitative justice, peace and integrity of creation priorities. There is a reason to the ecumenical quest for the 'unity of human kind' especially during the second half of the twentieth century that most ecumenical thinkers and ecumenists have particular difficulty when addressing concerns pertaining to humanity in general of their researches and in their ecumenical praxis as most social concerns are inter religious in nature. Therefore insights into the new ecumenical efforts for the 'unity of humankind' in to the ecumenical movement's search would potentially be of considerable pedagogical, instructional and practical unity purposes. There are several qualitative and quantitative researches on the ecumenical quest for the 'unity of humankind', showed a tendency to increase its importance in the ecumenical movement over the forty three - year period (Since Uppsala 1968). Previous researches have largely concentrated on concerns such as: unity of churches; justice, peace, integrity of creation, science and technology, and human unity. The descriptions in the materials available of a generalized historical and theological developments in the ecumenical movement is the educative type having descriptions on the need to delve into the subject as human beings are vulnerable to majority human problems and therefore humanity needs to find its solution jointly. The aim of this paper is to describe relatively frequent historical concerns for the quest for the 'unity of humankind' derived from a corpus of ecumenical movement's resource materials.

## **Unit of Humankind: A Historical Overview**

The word 'ecumenical' comes from the Greek word *oikoumene*, which meant; 'the whole inhabited earth' is a common acknowledged meaning of the word 'ecumenism'. A number of articles on various ecumenical engagements in the ecumenical movement provided a space for homo sapiens to think of the ecumenism's as something confined to the church's unity efforts on inter-denominational levels within churches.

Choice of this generalization of the word 'ecumenism' was positively co-related with the basic affirmation of the church - unity, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church, which is formulated in the Nicene Creed of the undivided Church universal in A.D. 325. Prior to that, as we are aware, Jesus Christ is in favour of unity among apostles and the churches as it is evident in Jesus Christ's High Priestly Prayer in St. John 17. Efforts were made to reduce the division between the Antiochian School of thought and Alexandrian school of thought in the early Christian church. These efforts for unity among churches were repeated in the Church's history several times. However, the meaning of the term 'ecumenical' is slightly different as it used in the political terminology.

## **Ecumenism in the Roman Empire**

Politically the word 'ecumenical' refers to the Roman Empire's power and destiny to rule 'the whole inhabited earth'. Political efforts were made to create an idea that the Roman Empire was the benefactor of the political power in the 'whole inhabited earth' in the world History. The Roman Empire thus used this word 'ecumenical' to denote the geographical extent of its rule having its potential to exercise the Roman Empire's power and might. The Roman Empire's power, 'Pax - Romana' and geographical vastness made them to declare the area it controlled as the 'whole inhabited earth'. Therefore a great deal of understanding had developed within the Roman Empire that whatever is not under the Roman Empire's power and authority is devoid of its right to exist in the early years of Christian era.

## **Ecumenical Councils of the Church**

The relationship between the word 'ecumenical' and 'unity' had, therefore, its debt to Roman heritage. The Roman emperors maintained their territorial integrity from foreign invasions on one hand and they prevented any divisions or dissensions from within including religious skirmishes. However, the early undivided Church, being influenced by the Alexandrian and the Antiochine School of thought was the early religious or theological controversy that threatened the territorial integrity of the Roman Empire as the undivided church had substantial power and influence on the empire. Therefore efforts were made to reduce the theological differences between schools of thought by the Roman Emperors as we see in the convening of the Church's ecumenical councils such as: Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) by Emperor Constantine (271 - 337), Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) by Theodosius I (347 - 395), Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) by Theodosius II, (401 - 450) and Council of Chalcedon (A.D 451) by Emperor Marcion (392- 457).

Roman Emperors had found meaning in annihilating those who continued to uphold their theological positions over against the church's generally accepted theological position, which was sanctioned by the then Emperors. Those who continued to rebel against the ecumenical council's decisions were condemned as 'heretics' and were either executed or expelled from the Roman Empire. Following the same line of thought of unity to preserve the integrity of the Roman Empire, the Roman Emperors convened the church's subsequent five ecumenical councils, which were earlier attempts of the Roman Empire and the church to restore unity and to preserve the unity in the right faith in the Christendom.

Ecumenical efforts were made by the church to preserve its unity down through the centuries, although it could not be achieved, were seen in the Church's history. Since the Great Schism (A.D 1054), between the Eastern Church and the Western Church, similar unsuccessful attempts to restore unity have continued between the churches of the Eastern and the Western church traditions. A fresh schism initiated within the western church - Reformation of the sixteenth century was followed by a series of efforts to avert further divisions and ensure unity within churches. Subsequently efforts were made to reduce the schism within the church, although they turned to be unproductive in their results. Therefore the 'ecumenism' within the denominational category has thus been found in the church's history since the first century.

### **Ecumenical Mission Paradigms**

Two phases that bear upon the shift of emphasis of the nineteenth century ecumenical movement's paradigm can be distinguished: 'mission and church' unity phase; and the 'unity of humankind phase'.

#### **'Mission and Church' Unity Phase**

The 'mission and church' unity phase refers to the development of the institutional expression of the ecumenical movement to further the cause of missionary co-operation among mission societies in the Asian and African mission fields. The motive force behind this phase was the Christian mission's classical notion of missionary co-operation, which is grounded on 'North verses South', or 'East versus West' binary principle of mission. The classical notion of mission's ecumenism, which is basically a missionary co-operation paradigm that divides the church from mission, and granted license to operate the mission in mission fields to work independently of the church, to which those mission societies related with. Moreover, the classical view of the mission's ecumenism divided the world into those who are 'saved' and those who are 'in need of salvation' - the 'Christian West and the 'Heathen East'. Implied in this vision is that there can only be but one valid or fully valid expression of the universal faith - Christian faith.

Besides, this vision amplified the idea that other religious traditions are not valid expressions of faith, which can not direct those who believe in that tradition to salvation, and therefore that all human beings are in the need to hear the Gospel message, and respond to the challenge to become part of the 'saved' Christian community.

The latter part of the 'mission and church' unity phase had a visible change in the ecumenical movement's paradigm of missionary co-operation and the church during the nineteen thirties. It is partially due to the newfound emphasis of the church's centrality in mission as emphasized in the Faith and Order Movement's discussions. The Ecumenical movements' denominational unity efforts channeled through its institutional expression - Faith and Order movement (1927), has been in existence since the 1920s. So the number of documents including Hendrik Kraemer's book, "Christian Message in a Non-Christian world" helped the church to regain church's lost centrality in the church's mission when the International Missionary Council's Madras Conference (1938) declared church as the mission's locus. These ecumenical movement's

paradigm changes had a greater propensity to recognize the presence of other religious faiths in the mission fields. This paved the way for the second phase - the unity of humankind phase.

#### **'Unity of Humankind' Phase**

The ecumenical movement's 'unity of humankind' paradigm refers to a paradigm of diversity affirmation over against the complete negation of the other religious faith's existence than the Christian religious expression. The paradigm of the 'unity of humankind' seems to be a theological and hermeneutical response to the fact of the other faith's existence is to posit a 'multiplicity of particular expressions of that which is deemed to be universal', in opposition to the notion that there can only be but one valid faith's expression of the universal. This acknowledges that different faith expressions are expression of some universal 'religious reality'. Religions are not all the 'same' - their differences are important; yet religions speak of some expressions of the universal.

#### **Mission of God: Pacing of God's Mission in World Affairs**

Considerable progress has been made in the ecumenical movement in the following decades of the International missionary Council's Madras Conference in A.D.1938, allowing the reality of other religion's presence in the world. The discussions that began there, more precisely from the Edinburgh 1910, led eventually to the concept of the "Mission of God" (Missio Dei) at the International Missionary conferences at Willingen in A.D. 1952 and at the World Mission Conference in Mexico City in A.D. 1968. In analyzing ecumenical discourse during this period, many ecumenists operate on the unstated assumption that all humanity proceed along similar line of the interpretation of the ecumenical movement's vision and mission to solve the general human problems, so a particular example of ecumenical discussion can be taken to represent how discourse works for all the human being's well being. For some aspects to solve the human problems, this is true that 'homo-Sapiens's' concerted efforts are undoubtedly needed in the world, where God works. Implied in this vision is that there can only be participation of different expressions of faith to make the context prepared for God to do His mission. Overall mission discussions in relation to the ecumenical movement tended to feel more open to see the existence of other faiths in the world.

Subsequently the new ecumenical movement's paradigm - 'mission of God' (Missio Dei) got a greater propensity to recognize the presence of other religious faiths in God's mission field - world. This vision affirmed that God was at work in the whole world and

the church is only a servant in this mission of God. A series of ecumenical discourses in these line of thought demonstrated that from dividing the world into the 'saved' and the 'unsaved', is not a right assumption. According to several ecumenical and mission discourses, the traditional Christian missions' paradigm of the need to drag peoples from one community into another for their salvation, is however untenable. It further affirmed that God uses not only the church but also many other forces - political, economical, social, religious and cultural, in the world to bring about what God intends for the world.

New ecumenical paradigm - 'mission of God' significantly related to the socio - political unrest of the world during the middle of the twentieth century. The socio-political upheaval after the World War II (1939 - 1945), accelerated the process of decolonization in Asia and Africa. Thus in the past the sense of independence and nationalism of Asian African countries recede, the more nostalgia from them developed during the imperialistic regime of British colonists. The socio - religious movements and the World War II revived the colonies' cultural and religious dimensions and therefore, the colonies' socio - political and religious questions showed a tendency to regain its lost power on the society. This provided a new context for the church to rethink its mission in relation to the other cultures and faiths and more importantly, the position of the Church/Gospel to the claims of the other religions. The question that the ecumenical movement encountered was how to witness the message of the Gospel to the parts of the world, where other religions are entrenched.

Following the paradigm of 'mission of God' the world became the church's important place of the activity as this paradigm demands the church's solidarity with the world. The New Delhi Assembly (1961) has demonstrated that God's will for the unity in terms of fellowship of 'all God's people' 'in each place' is necessary for solving the human being's common problems and to reach 'unity of humankind'. The ecumenical movement's notion of the unity of humankind became the ecumenical movement's agenda.

### **Unity of Humankind: A Necessity**

The patterns of unity interactions with other faith communities to deal with the World's common concerns a step farther by stressing the ecumenical movement's importance of the unity of humankind. After much deliberations at various forums, a concrete conclusion was arrived at the Kandy Consultation on "Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths" in A.D. 1967 and where 'Dialogue' was defined as an authentic style of living in a pluralistic context and it is interpreted as a positive effort to arrive at a deeper understanding of the truth through mutual awareness of one another's conviction and witness. Hence, this concept of dialogue as a means to communicate the ecumenical movement's agenda of the 'unity of humankind' to the people of other faiths emerged in the ecumenical thinking. The Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1968 emphasized the cosmic dimension of unity in the WCC's agenda of the 'unity of humankind' and indeed it spoke of the possibility of Homo - sapiens's unity internationally. In order to operationalise ecumenical movement's agenda of the unity of humankind, a new model was required. The "Conciliar Fellowship Model" was prescribed as a model for the effective praxis of human being's unity by the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement in 1970's. Thus it was the WCC general assembly in Nairobi (1975) that set the goal of ecumenical movement - 'unity of humankind'.

Weslie Ariaraja, observes that the resistance to ecumenical goal arises from three distinctive concerns. The first concern towards the agenda of the 'unity of humankind' is that it would belittle the ecumenical movement's agenda and eventually replace the need for the unity of churches. The second fear arises from the feeling that the goal of the 'unity of humankind' calls for the notion of universalism - no distinction between religions. The implementation of 'unity of humankind' - oriented - ecumenical practice



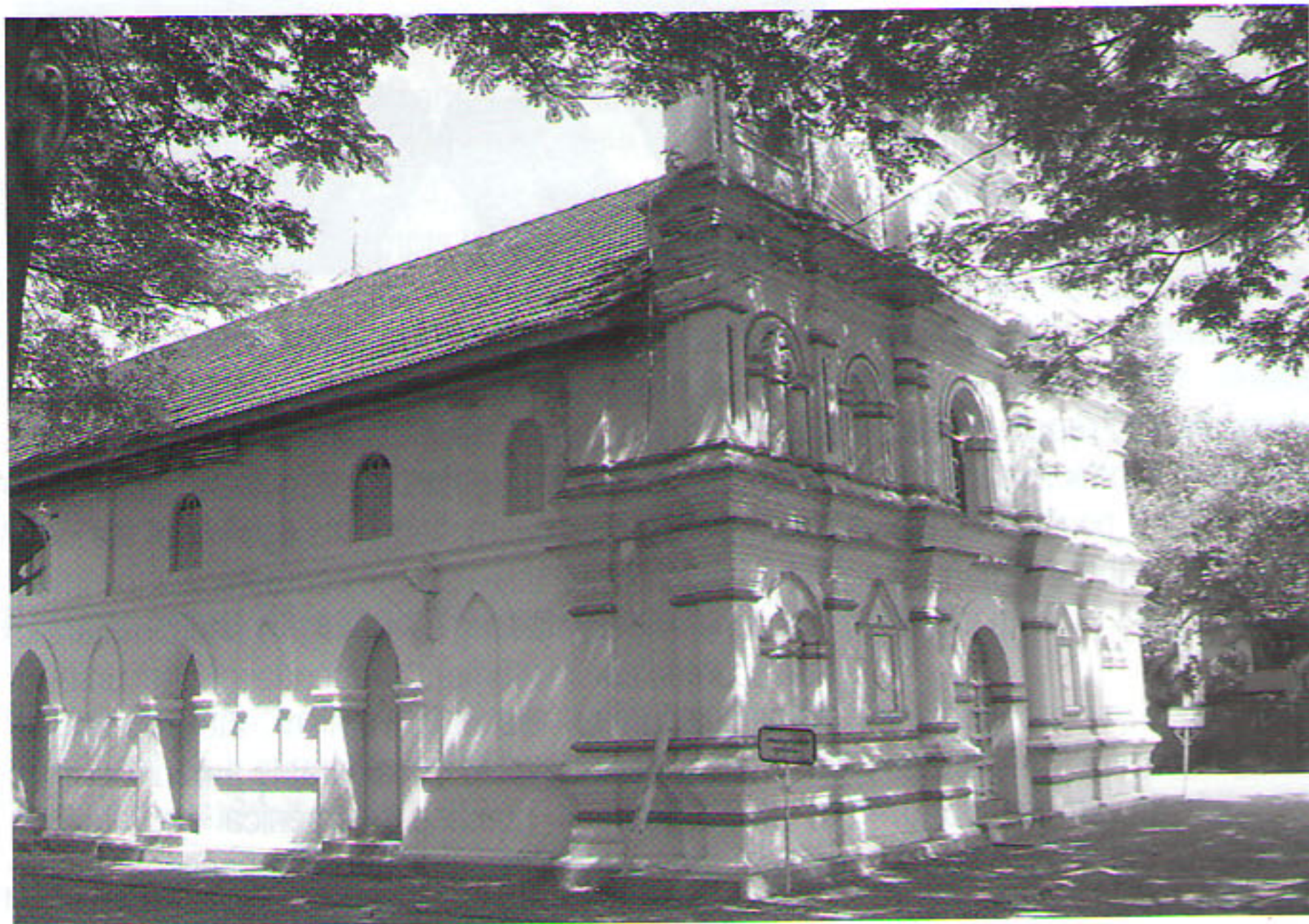
would create a threat to the classical notion of mission, which divides the world in to those who are 'saved' and those 'who are in need of salvation'. Nevertheless, these resistances suggest a significant ground to prove the ecumenical movement's agenda of the unity of humankind as a threat to the ecumenical movement in a coherent way. Owing to the highly useful nature of the ecumenical movement's agenda of the unity of humankind in an era of extremism, the ecumenical movement have devoted considerable amount of time to propagate and practice ecumenical movements; goal of the 'unity of humankind' as a panacea to cure common human predicaments.

### **Conclusion**

The ecumenical movement went through different vicissitudes of its voyage touching different ecumenical movement's paradigms such as: traditional 'mission co -operation', 'church and mission', 'mission of God', and reached finally at 'unity of humankind' paradigm, which condenses all previous ecumenical movement's paradigms. Thus, within the span of a century since the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement in Edinburgh, the mission paradigms constructed a pathway towards ecumenical movement's goal of 'unity of humankind' paradigm. Subsequently the ecumenical movement has opened a way towards visioning a world in which all religions would contribute to the well-being of God's creation, a world where religious and other ideologies become not yet another force of disunity but a source of healing and to celebrate unity in diversity, would work towards creating one human family under heaven in harmony and peace.

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# Reformation and Mar



**John Job M Sc., M S**

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## **Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan**

Geevarghese Malpan was born in 1788 to the Kaithayil family of Puthupally near Kottayam. Abraham Malpan and Geevarghese Malpan were professors in Old Seminary in Kottayam. They were concerned about the need for reformation in the Malankara church. Their study of the Word of God and association with Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries helped them realize fully the meaning of the gospel and the freedom of the children of God. Abraham Malpan and Geevarghese Malpan along with 10 other priests submitted a memorandum to the British Resident requesting him to make necessary changes in the church. This is called the Trumpet Call of Reformation in the church. Their memorandum did not have the desired effect and they both decided to take steps towards reformation while remaining within the church. Geevarghese Malpan celebrated Holy Communion in Malayalam for the first time in the Kolladu parish. Geevarghese Malpan had to face severe opposition from the people in his own parish and other parishes around Kottayam. Even some of the priests were against his ideas of reformation. Thus Geevarghese Malpan shifted his arena to Kunnamkulam. He was called to eternity on May 1855 and buried at Kottayam Seminary Chapel.

As the Mar Thoma Church is celebrating 175th anniversary of reformation, I would like to share my understanding about Reformation with the fellow readers of the Messenger. Those who were born as a Marthomite and studied the Sunday school senior class (Jeshta vakuppe) I believe must have some knowledge of the Reformation.

The Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church also known as the Mar Thoma Church is a Christian denomination, has an entirely different identity when compared with other Churches in India and is an Eastern Oriental Church. It adheres to the Syriac tradition and bases its teachings in accordance with Biblical teachings. It is one of the Saint Thomas Christian churches tracing its origins to the missionary activity of Thomas the Apostle.

The Mar Thoma Church defines itself as "Apostolic in origin, Catholic in nature, Biblical in faith, Evangelical in principle, Ecumenical in outlook, Oriental in worship, Democratic in function, Episcopal in character and is a Reformed Church.

## **Reformation - Cleansing of the Church**

From 1498 India was under the Colonial rule of three European powers (Portuguese, Dutch and the British). They all brought in their beliefs, practices and traditions into Malankara Church. Cleansing of the Church was an attempt to eliminate certain such practices and bring back those prevalent in the Church. The reformation was carried out after a prolonged study by a committee of 12 scholarly clergy, appointed at a meeting of representatives of the Malankara Church by Punnathara Mar Dionysius (Mar Thoma XI) at Mavelikkara on December 3, 1818. No foreigner was involved in this committee or in its deliberations. Cheppad Philipose Mar Dionysius (Mar Thoma XII) did not like the interference of the Anglican Missionaries. So he convened a Synod at Mavelikkara in 1836, in which the Synod declared that, "We, the Jacobite Syrians are under the rule of the Patriarch of Antioch." But it is historically untenable to assert that the Malankara Church had always been under the Patriarch of Antioch. Abraham Malpan leader of the Reformation did not attend this meeting.

## **Abraham Malpan**

Though Abraham Malpan was conservative in his temperament he never hesitated to introduce reforms in both teaching and practice. He also insisted on a high moral standard of conduct for laity and clergy alike. All this created ferment in the Malankara Church and its effects are still discernible in the Church as a whole.

## **Principal reforms**

"Changes carried out during reformation":

1. Icons, pictures, statues, and drawings of saints were removed from homes, churches, and places of worship.
2. All prayers for the dead and to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints were omitted.



# Thoma Church

3. Insisted that Sunday services are to be held in a very reverent and spiritual way. During that time reading and expounding Scriptures is to be done.
4. Conducted Worship services including Holy Communion in the mother tongue, Malayalam.
5. Holy Communion was not celebrated when there were none to receive.
6. Mandated that Communion under both kinds should be distributed separately, during Holy Communion
7. Considered the practice of praying for the dead and of doing obeisance at their graves with lighted candles as abhorrent.
8. Intercession of saints and prayers for the dead were discarded.
9. Auricular (Private) confession was discontinued.
10. Believed that those who come for confession should ask for forgiveness with fasting and prayer, instead of offering oil, incense and candles.
11. Insisted that Bishops should ordain only candidates who have been examined by them and the malpans (Syriac professors).
12. Repudiated (put away) the custom of smearing charcoal on the forehead on Ash Wednesday.

## **"Doctrines upheld":**

1. The Church unequivocally holds the doctrine of the Trinity as interpreted by the creed of Nice, Constantinople and Ephesus.
2. The Church is neither Nestorian (Nestorianism is a Christological doctrine advanced by Nestorius emphasizes the disunion between the human and divine natures of Jesus) nor Monophysite (Monophysite, in Christianity, one who believed that Jesus Christ's nature remains altogether divine and not human even though he has taken on an earthly and human body with its cycle of birth, life, and death.)

On September 5, 1836, the reformation was planned. Strategy was determined by a group of 12 senior clergy under the leadership of Abraham Malpan. They issued a letter describing what they believed were the wrong teachings and a statement listing twenty-four practices of the Church which they believed were "evil" and had crept in by its association with other Churches and religions.

Abraham Malpan conducted the Holy Communion service in the mother tongue Malayalam at his home parish at Maramon. Clergy, who supported him also, did the same thing in various other parishes on the same day. The use of the revised liturgy and the changes he brought about in practices offended Marthoma XII. So deacons trained under Abraham Malpan were refused priesthood. But Abraham Malpan was not disheartened. He continued with the reforms.

He returned to Maramon. Many of his students joined him to continue their studies. At this stage he had three choices in front of him. Repent and go back to the old beliefs under Antioch; join the Anglican Church with western beliefs; or go forward with the reformation restoring the Church to what he thought was its pristine position. He selected the third one. Abraham Malpan died in 1845.

Mathen, a nephew of Abraham Malpan also followed his uncle's steps. He went to Antioch and returned after two years. While there, he was consecrated by the Patriarch of Antioch with the title Mathews Mar Athanasius Metropolitan.

After Cheppattu Philipose Mar Dionysius abdicated due to ill health, to collect the interest of the Vattipanam (Fixed Deposit), Mar Athanasius was approved as Malankara Metropolitan by the governments of Kerala and Cochin on August 30, 1852. He consecrated Ouseph Mar Koorilos, Metropolitan (bishop) for Malabar Independent Church. These actions angered many clergy and Pulikkottil Ouseph Kathanar went to Antioch in 1864. He returned as Joseph Mar Dionysius in 1865

## **Independence of the Church**

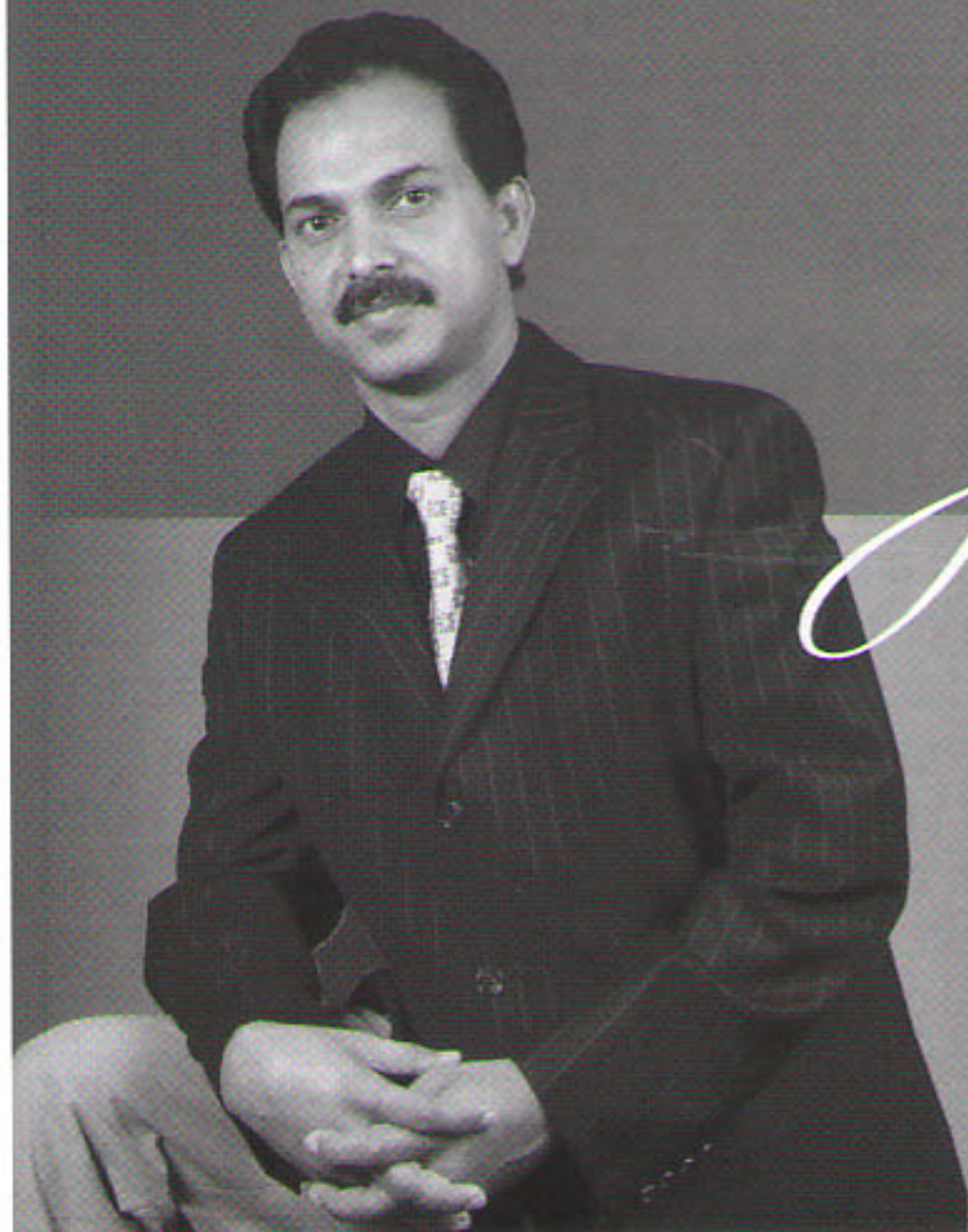
Joseph Mar Dionysius and his supporters filed a case on March 4, 1879 demanding the possession of the seminary and the control of assets of the Church. Thomas Mar Athanasius was then the Metropolitan. During the course of this litigation (1879-1889), answering a question Thomas Mar Athanasius Metropolitan said, "The Episcopal throne of Patriarch is the throne of St. Peter, while the throne of Malankara Church is that of St. Thomas. Malankara Church is as old as the Church in Antioch, equal in status, and both are independent." A meeting was convened by the Maharaja of Travancore, before the final verdict was given, Mar Athanasius testified that, Malankara Church was never under any foreign rule and that he was unwilling to move away from the teachings or give the authority and the Church possessions to a foreign Patriarch. The final verdict came on July 12, 1889, after ten years, was against the Metran Kakshi (supporters of Thomas Mar Athanasius). The Metran Kakshi decided to remain as an independent Malankara Church to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as it was before 1500 CE. (Common Era), and to give primary authority to the Holy Bible. In 1898 this group chose the name Malankara Mar Thoma Suryani Sabha.

## **Where are we standing now?**

When we are celebrating 175th anniversary of reformation, it is the time for us to analyze ourselves as an individual and as a church about our stand on these reformation teachings. Are we really following the teachings of Jesus. When we are coming together the church for worship, are we really worshiping God in true spirit? Or is it just a social get together with some hidden agendas in our minds? The words coming out of our mouth should please God and should not hurt and humiliate other fellow worshipper's feelings. So what we need now is a spiritual reformation in our mind that follows a spiritual reformation in the Church as a whole.

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# THE CROSS AS A SIGN OF REFORMATION AND UNITY

Keynote Address on the 175th Anniversary of the Reformation of the Mar Thoma Church

**Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC General Secretary**



Your Eminence the Valiaya Metropolitan, the Metropolitan, Honorable Bishops, Clergy, dear sisters and brothers in Christ, I bring greetings to you from the World Council of Churches. I greet you on behalf of the millions of Christian brothers and sisters who belong to the 349 member churches of the WCC in more than 100 countries across the world. I am truly delighted to be here with you this afternoon and it is a great joy to visit your country, especially this beautiful land Kerala which you call "God's own country". Moreover, it is a great joy and privilege for me to be at this historic event of the 175th anniversary celebrations of the Reformation in the Malankara Church. This is my first visit to India, and this is a marvelous occasion to come to India and to this particular part of the country.

As the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, I thank God for what you have done for the fellowship of churches of the WCC, and I thank you for the invitation to offer this valedictory address. By this invitation you have indicated that participation in the WCC common vision to work for Christian unity, and for the justice and peace for one humanity, is at the heart of how you understand the ongoing impact and challenges arising from the reformation 175 years ago. You also signal that you understand the common search for unity as your rich heritage of the ancient tradition of St Thomas. You also relate through your participation in the WCC to the reality of the world as it is today and might be tomorrow, as a church in India in partnership with churches in other places today. Connecting to the world fellowship of Christian on the occasion of your anniversary brings all this into focus at the centre of your identity.

The Mar Thoma Church is a founding member of the WCC and has been actively participating in the global ecumenical movement over many decades. I do recollect on this occasion the contributions of the Mar Thoma church to the global ecumenical movement over the past. Several of your church leaders have provided leadership to the WCC. Dr. Juhannon Mar Thoma Metropolitan was a President of the WCC in the 1950s and chaired sessions of the 3rd Assembly at New Delhi in 1961. Dr. M.M Thomas was Moderator of the Central Committee from 1968 to 1975. Your present-day leaders such as Dr Philipose Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan, Dr Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan and Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophilus

served on WCC committees in different times in the past and provided leadership at various levels. Currently, Bishop Isaac Mar Philaxinos serves on the Central Committee, and a lay member of the church, Dr Mathews George Chunakara, is serving as director of the Churches' Commission of International Affairs of the WCC.

The Mar Thoma Church traces its historic roots and tradition from A.D. 52. India had the great fortune of receiving the gospel of Christ in the first century through the Apostle Thomas himself. You belong to an ancient Christian church, and your rich tradition and heritage has very deep roots. I am delighted to find that this ancient tradition continues to be affirmed by you Christians in this area. The ancient roots of your church always remind us of how the church must go back to basics, to the gospel of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, for the sake of which St Thomas went to India to share and finally to die. All reformation and renewal in the church starts where we go back to basics, and from there make the changes required to fulfill our calling to be the disciples and witnesses of Jesus Christ in our time. I understand that this also guided the reformation of the Malankara Church.

Church reformation according to Scripture is a continuous process, going back to what unites the churches, a process needed from the very first days of the church. As we say: "Ecclesia reformata reformanda est" ("The church, having been reformed, is still to be reformed").



The gospel of Jesus Christ is the powerful message that can make a difference in a church where we as failing and imperfect human beings serve Christ, a necessary change even when we try to do our best and be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ. From what I understand, the main ethos and thrust of the reformation in the Malankara church was based on the principle of a return to the purity of the life and practice of the early church. The emphasis on preaching the word of God led to the reformation of thought and revival meetings, which were led both by the clergy and lay people.

These reformation efforts have been widely acknowledged in various levels in your ecclesial and ecumenical lives. This is evident in your church's unique manner of blending two characteristic traits of the eastern ecclesial tradition and ethos with your reformation ideals corresponding to much of the leading ideas of the Reformation movements in the Western Church in the 16th century. The relevance of this "Back-to-basics" in the minds of the reformers is now widely recognized, including in the Roman Catholic Church. However, the time of Reformation became a time ridden with severe conflicts that unfortunately led to splits in the church that have not yet been overcome. In your church, the reformation movement brought an added sense of responsibility for the spiritual and moral welfare of its people, as well as more involvement of the lay people in the life of the church. The blessed result of those efforts at reformation equipped your church, or rejuvenated it.

The spirit of ecumenism also found a place in your church's journey over all these years. Today, your church has become a global church. The members of your church are scattered in many parts of the world – North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and several Asian/Pacific countries including Australia and New Zealand.

In all these places your people are committed to nurturing ecumenism at the local and national levels.

The rich traditions of the Malankara Church based on the reformation's spirit equipped your church to see the wider horizons of ecumenism, wherever your people have been based and placed.

With this background, I would like to reflect further on how the reformation of the church is inseparable from the quest for the unity of the church – and how the unity of the church is inseparable from having the right perspective on ourselves, based on our faith in Jesus Christ, so that we promote the righteousness and the peace that are the core values and content of the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17). I would like to bring our reflections into line with your church's reformation and base them on the reading of an important text from Holy Scripture that shows the need for, the basis for and the character of all true reformation in the church: 1 Cor 1:18-2:5.

The cross is and will forever be the sign of the church. This is the symbol that we have together, the symbol of what we have together, the symbol of what the

churches have to give to the world – from the beginning to the end. Nothing except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Nothing except the cross. Nothing except ... It doesn't sound like very diplomatic language. It doesn't sound like an invitation to a dialogue. It does not even sound very ecumenical, open to the many perspectives on and of our faith to be considered in a space open to all. Nor does it sound very open to the many burning issues of the world today. Nevertheless, there is a deep meaning in these words, offering substance and direction to the ecumenical movement. Why these strong words of St Paul? The context he is referring to is not irrelevant to us. He is addressing divisions in the church of Corinth; divisions due to different opinions and different personal loyalties, due to the lack of willingness to share, due to ignorance of the gifts of others and their contribution, due to impatient critique of the Christian message and its ambassadors.

The temptation to think that we are in the church because we are something better than others, will always be there, as it was in Corinth. This attitude can always undermine the unity of the church. So the answer is clear: To be one, the church must go back to its common basis. Nothing except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Therefore, our basis is this: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The cross is the perspective that must not be missed out. The cross is the reality check of all our talk about God – and about life. With the perspective of the cross our talk about God cannot be just lofty words.

For God has through the cross bound himself to reality, to all aspects of reality: to both death and life, and even to the unjust, inhuman and incomprehensible suffering and death in this world. By becoming a human being, by facing and feeling everything that human life involves and implies, we can believe that God is with us. In the perspective of the cross we hear the songs and prayers of the people of Haiti; in the perspective of the cross we can believe that God can be with human beings in all things. Even in death. And therefore the tree of the cross can be a sign of life.

St Paul not only sees the cross as the sign of how God is with us, but also how God is for us. Seen in the perspective of resurrection, the cross is not the ultimate victory of evil over good or good intentions. The cross becomes the sign of God's victory over sin and evil, a victory won through death. It is in this perspective that St Paul can also speak of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice, of God who makes the sacrifice so as to break the link between sin and death forever. Sin can be forgiven, by God. The crucified God shows us that sin and death shall not have the last word in this world. Not even when it looks like that. The cross is the sign of God's unconditional love to all human beings, every one of us, even when we were sinners, as St Paul also writes. This is the revealed mystery of God given to us through Jesus Christ, and him crucified. This is why the cross is the symbol that all Christians have together. The cross is the first and ultimate sign of the gift of God's gracious being with us and for us. We are one as Christians because we receive the same gift. That is why there is nothing except the cross. The cross proves the power of giving. The cross proves the power of humility. The cross proves the faithfulness of God.

The cross is also the test, the proof of our faithfulness to God and to the cause of good. We just heard in the beautiful words of the Sermon on the Mount what the meaning of following Christ or carrying our cross is: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God." In a world of honor and shame, of love and sin, this call can lead to confrontation with the powers of evil. In Christ's way through human life there was no escape, only faithfulness to God's calling to show the meaning of righteousness. Jesus Christ himself experienced the deep meaning of what he said: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Reformation of the church can happen only when it leads to a deeper understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ. We must learn what it means to be identified by our relationship to Christ, to be shaped by the values of Christ, to be witnessing to the reality of the crucified and risen Christ in our world. Reformation of the church can happen only when it leads to a deeper understanding and promotion of what unites us a church, even when we might be living in different, structurally independent, local churches. Reformation of the church can happen only when it leads us back to the basic facts that we all are equal to God. We are all equal as we carry the image of God, created in the image of God. As baptized Christians, we also carry – visible or invisible – the sign of the cross. The church is not for one particular group of human beings; either we are divided ethnically, culturally, or divided by class, caste or whatever human beings might use to categorize other human beings. That the less privileged were those who first received the gospel in Corinth does not mean that it was only for them, but it was definitely a sign and a proof that nobody can claim privileges or prerogatives in relationship to Christ or claim privilege as members of the church. We struggle with this all the time.

The church should be in the forefront in struggles for equality, manifesting that we all are of equal value and dignity to God. We are challenged in all parts of the world, in some times places more than others. European Christianity is challenged by immigration today; how to find a proper way of living together, taking into account these challenges, and still not discriminate against anyone because they belong to a group or culture or religion different from yours? You, here in India, have the great challenge of the caste system in your history, and still live with it today. I have learned how some, particularly the Dalits, struggle to have a life based on equal dignity and rights in this part of the world. I am encouraged to hear how your church has become very aware of this discrimination and try to address it, and I would encourage you to do whatever you can to contribute to a more just peace in your region of the world.

Unity requires reformation, to avoid building great structures and powers out of our own ideas, but leave our churches open to receiving the gifts of ourselves and of others, particularly the gifts of those who have to follow Christ and witness with him against injustice and for peace, sometimes at the cost of their own lives. The unity of the church is something the world needs: A sign of the values of the kingdom, a sign of how God cares for each one of us, regardless what we are and how we seem on our own. May God continue to bless the Mar Thoma Church, your leaders, each one of you. May God bless you in this time and in the coming years, to remain a true witness of the gospel, witnesses of the unity, the justice and peace given in Christ. Thank you for all you give to the worldwide fellowship of churches; and thank you once again for this invitation, a sign of how you also receive from the others.

# Mar Thoma Church beyond A Diaspora Community

*A* good number of Marthomites live in almost all parts the world and Mar Thoma Church has become a global church, especially within the last 4 or 5 decades. How can we account for this remarkable spread of the Marthomites as a Diaspora community? Doubtless, the large number of individuals seeking out opportunities for employment in distant lands has much to do with it. But it would not have been possible for them without the education they received from schools and colleges in Kerala. For over a hundred years, the Mar Thoma Church took on the challenge of establishing schools, following the example shown by the Anglican missionaries. The unintended consequence of this effort to spread literacy was to empower young people to seek employment away from home in private and public enterprises. Thus Marthomites migrated to Malaysia and Singapore, East Africa and to Persian Gulf before the Second World War and later to other faraway places including North America and Europe, Australia and other places.

The decision by the Church leadership to set up Mar Thoma parishes in North America was not premeditated. The most important event, which aided this development, was the change in immigration laws of Canada and US in the mid sixties. This allowed those who came as students to remain in these countries and take up employment. Further it allowed many people to find new employment opportunities in Canada and US, particularly in healthcare services and migrate to Toronto, Edmonton, New York, and Philadelphia, Houston, Dallas and other cities. Many professionals took advantage of this opportunity and later, were able to sponsor their close blood relatives as dependents for migration. By the early 1970s the Diaspora Marthomites were strong enough to start prayer groups. Subsequently, following petitions and requests submitted to Thiruvalla –the then headquarters of Mar Thoma Church, the synod authorized establishment of congregations with student priests conducting communion services. The scale of immigration to Canada and the U.S.A. was not foreseen early by the Church. The initial thought was that our people would return; meanwhile they could attend Episcopal Church Services. But it was on the insistence of those in New York, Texas and Toronto that our parishes were established. Eventually the Diocese of North America and Europe came into existence.

What is remarkable about those of first generation Marthomites were and still are their extraordinary loyalty to the Church and its Mission. When the first generation was growing up in Kerala, the Church was a much smaller, geographically compact, entity. Its membership was only about a third of what it is today, with just one or two parishes outside Kerala. There were not many colleges in Kerala and most of the young people who became priests and even bishops, went to Union Christian College in Aluva or Madras Christian College in Tambaram. Growth in numbers and geographical sphere has cost the Church to lose the intimacy between clergy and laity. Personal knowledge of clergy alone does not produce loyalty; but a sense of belonging does. It gave a sense of pride to belong to the Mar Thoma Church which became a mark of identity.

For the first generation it is more than a sense of belonging to a particular denomination. It is also an understanding of the reformation, which took place 175 years ago, and the numerous difficulties the Church has overcome. Abraham Malpan's



**Dr. Titus Mathews,**  
Professor Emeritus,  
Calgary, Canada.

reformation was against the moribund status of Syrian Christian Church and various corruptions, which have crept into church practices. Today we can claim to have the least amount of superstitious beliefs and practices in our worship and daily lives. The Church Missionary Society propagated broad principles of Christian outlook with roots that stretch back to the Renaissance and Reformations in Europe. They preached the gospel to the whole man- ministering to physical, mental and spiritual needs. The Mar Thoma Church made a bold attempt to give lead to create a new dynamism for a social order with tenets of democracy. We have a socially conscious church 'lighted to lighten' and engaged in a range of missionary work. But the task of creating an ideal church, a worshipping, witnessing, and serving community that transforms the people and society around it remains mostly unfulfilled.

The Mar Thoma Church takes great pride in being able to claim it is a global church today. We used to be contented to say that we are part of the catholic (universal) Church. Can we claim to be a Catholic Church all by ourselves since our presence is worldwide? Can we claim to have preached the Gospel to the ends of earth and thus fulfill our commission? Lest we think of ourselves more highly than we really ought to, we need to remind ourselves that numerically we are not a large church – only about seven or eight hundred thousand strong, only one-tenth of the Syrian Christian community in Kerala and only one of many immigrant churches in America. At one time, its influence far exceeded its numerical strength. Yes, we have newfound wealth, our own church buildings and parsonages. But are we a true Christian presence in the countries new to us?

Those who have learned the history of Jewish religion would remember that the Judaism they know, was really formed in Babylonian Diaspora. Often our Church outside India is referred to as the Mar Thoma

# the Borders of India:

Diaspora. The entire spectrum of Church denominations is to be found in America and among them some very successful ones. There is good opportunity to learn from them. But there is not much effort made in this direction. There are those who feel that we are an ancient community and we have nothing to learn from others. Maintaining that attitude would mean giving up on further reformation of the Church. In spite of what one reads in newspapers that attendance in Sunday worship in mainline churches have fallen, the religious scene in North America is still vibrant. Perhaps some people are more concerned about issues of gays and female priesthood; but that should not prevent us from trying to find out what is good in Western churches. There are plenty of good things happening. The mega churches are flourishing and preachers like Rick Warren and Joel Osteen attract thousands of people to their churches.

It may sound like a cliché to say that the future of our Church is in its young people. The new generation should be brought to feel the pride in belonging to Mar Thoma Church. Each parish must have study sessions about the history and development of our Church. Our vision and mission, our governing and decision making process should be explained to the younger people. Priests, Mandalam and Diocesan Assembly representatives should take the initiative to educate them about our legislative and administrative procedures. The study topics taken up by the Mandalam should be made available in English to each parish outside Kerala. The youth should be involved in formation of our worship services that are attractive and meaningful to them. It is important to ask the question: "Has any non-marthomite, non-malayalee got attracted to our services and joined us willingly to worship with us?" (Zacharias Thirumeni, Ulkzhchakal, CSS, 2010).

The generation gap is a major issue facing the Mar Thoma Church in Western countries. The first generation immigrants had their education in their home country and their culture remains basically the same as when they left home. Authority figures are seldom questioned openly. But the generation which grows up in West have a totally different approach to authority. They are taught to question everything in school and they learn far more from their peers than from parents. This attitude is brought to Church setting as well. A usual complaint of young people in many parishes is that their opinions are not valued the same way as those of the elders in the Church. The elders who were instrumental in starting the parishes continue to think their voices should have priority over that of the new generation. The younger generation think differently. When asked why we can't make Communion services shorter, or lay leaders assist Aghens in administering communion as it is done in the Anglican Church, it is not enough to say our liturgy and practices were handed down by our forefathers and we should not change anything. The second generation is not satisfied by that answer. Our knowledge about how things are and how they work has changed so much during the last few years, but not our church practices.

Financial mismanagement, corruption, bribes, etc., are not a serious concern in Kerala, whereas it is a serious matter in the west. Sexual misbehaviour, on the other hand, is not a great concern in West. Young people have great peer pressure to engage in premarital sex. This is a problem faced by the generation which grows up here. Even in India many older ideas on many cultural issues are being replaced rapidly. Financial independence of young people, living away from home and international travel all are adding to pace of change and increasing the generation gap. Another problem we

have yet to face is the teaching of evolution in schools. The Genesis stories we teach in Sunday schools as literal truth is countered in theory of evolution and increasing use of biotechnology. Western theologians have accepted evolution as a scientifically established fact; but it is not clear what the position of our Church is. It may not be a problem for new immigrants; but it will be for a generation who is taught biology in high schools in Western countries. The answer lies in providing better adult education – theological education, starting with fundamentals of our faith.

The uniqueness of the Mar Thoma Church, and indeed that of the entire Syrian Christian community in Kerala is that their traditions arose from centuries of accommodating the culture of the society in which it was embedded. That culture was of the Hindus with whom they had a variety of interactions including intermarriages. Outside India, we are in a very different cultural setting and how we adopt will determine how successful we are in Western countries as a Diaspora community. How will we make changes in our worship services and other affairs to accommodate the interest of the younger generation and let them feel part of the Church and proud of its heritage? The Diaspora Mar Thoma Church will continue to grow as long as there is significant immigration into Western countries from Kerala or Gulf countries. But it faces new challenges in seeking justice and peace for all people in a world of conflicts, of globalized trade and uneven prosperity.

## Congratulations!!



**Mrs. Anni Abraham  
RN, MS**

w/o Mr. Thomas Abraham, Canton, Michigan has been awarded the HVSH 2011 nurse of the year. She has been a staff nurse with the

Detroit Medical Centre for 21 Years. She is a dedicated Rapid response nurse, a level 3PDL participant and is a Master's prepared nurse. She is a member of Detroit MarThoma Church and hails from Kolladu, Kottayam.

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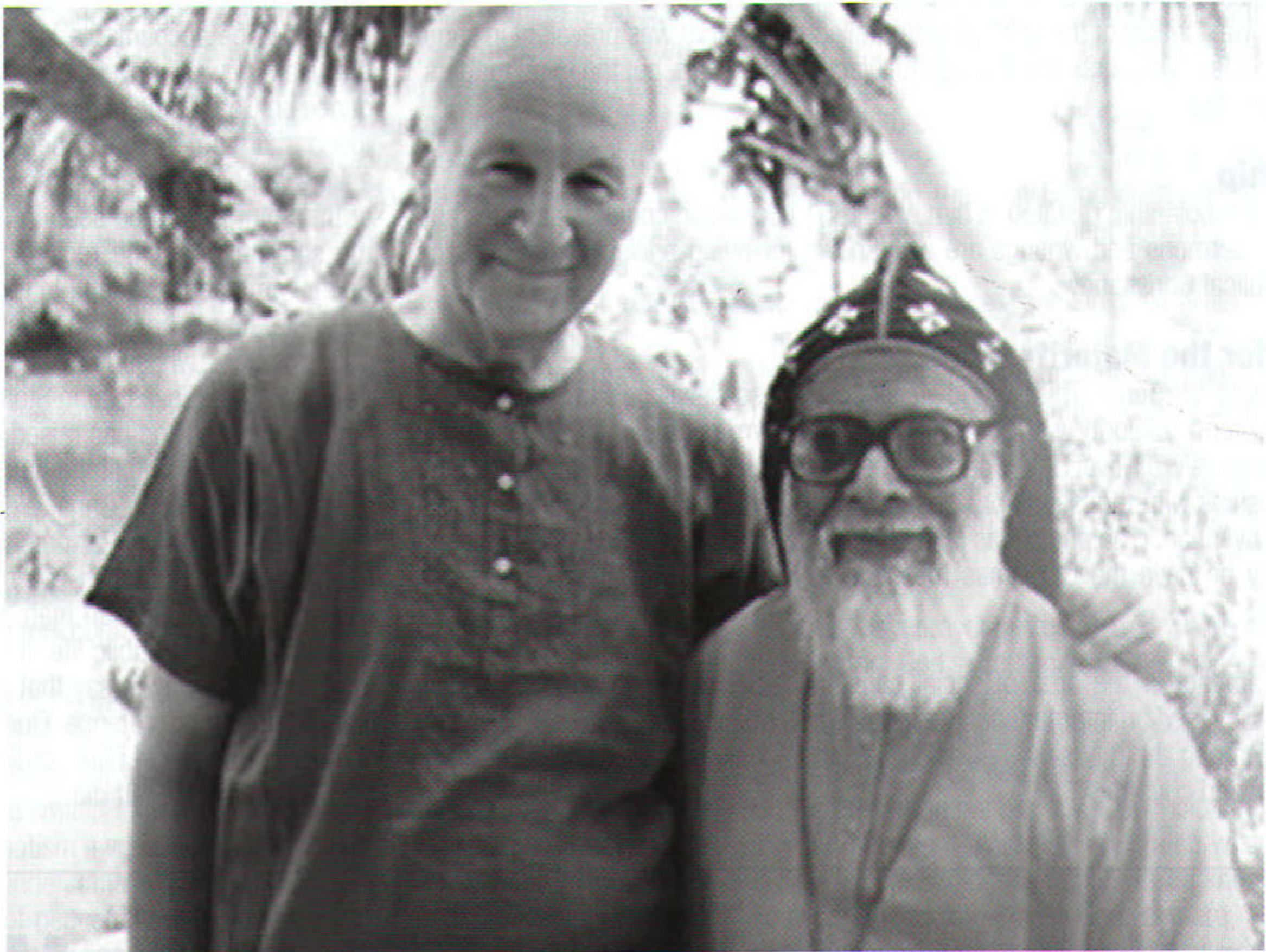
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# John Stott – A plain ordinary Christian

## John Thomas

Member of St John's Mar Thoma Church, UK,  
& Trustee of Langham Partnership UK & Ireland



It is impossible to write the history of the church in the 20th century without reference to John Stott. His remarkable ministry spanned the whole of the second half of the century and in his eighties he was even making an impact on the 21st. His leadership in the international evangelical movement was a major factor in moving it from the narrow-minded fundamentalism after the Second World War, to the fastest growing part of world Christianity that it is today.

## The Early Years

John Stott was born in London in 1921 to parents Sir Arnold and Lady Stott. Seeing signs of academic ability, he was sent to the famous Rugby school where he became the head boy. At the age of 17, during a summer camp in England, he heard the leader ask the question that Jesus asked his disciples – ‘who do you say I am?’. That evening, he knelt by his bedside and entrusted his life to Jesus. That was the beginning of an exciting and truly amazing journey. He went on to study French and Theology at Cambridge University, where he earned a double first at Trinity College, before starting theological training at Ridley Hall, Cambridge and was ordained in 1945 and became Assistant Curate and then Rector at an unusually young age of 29, following the sudden death of the then Rector. In 1975 he became the Rector Emeritus – a position he held until he died.

## Contributions

### Holistic Pastoral Ministry

As a Rector, John Stott started a number of initiatives at All Souls Church. He created opportunities for non-believers to come and ask any questions relating to faith and to explore the claims of Jesus in the Gospels. He firmly believed that the central message of the love of God must be expressed in both Word and Deed, so in his carefully prepared expository sermons he often encouraged his congregation to be concerned about the social needs of society. Out of this conviction came the ministry to the homeless in Central London. To fully understand their predicament, John Stott disguised himself as a homeless person for 3 nights during one winter! The Clubhouse was opened for young people (both church and un-church) for recreational activities and to hear the message of love and hope offered by Jesus.

### The place of the mind

Stott emphasised the importance of the mind in the pursuit of knowing and worshipping God. He was critical of the spirit of anti-intellectualism that was prevalent in some evangelical circles. 'Of course there is rightful place for the heart, but the mind matters' he would often say.

### Scholarship

The pursuit of scholarship resulted in him writing 51 books and countless articles and sermons. His sermons and writings are well known for being brilliant expositions on 'Balanced Biblical Christianity'.

### Concern for the Majority World.

Instead of using the term 'Third-World' to describe less developed countries, Stott preferred the term 'majority world'. After stepping down as Rector of All Souls, he travelled extensively all over the world to speak in churches and conferences and forged friendships with thousands of Christians of all denominations. He spoke at the Maramon Convention. (The photo was taken then with our late Alexander Metropolitan) More recently he gave the Christmas message at St John's Mar Thoma church in Hounslow, UK.

His greatest impact in the area of social concern came in 1974, when, with Billy Graham, he convened an International Congress on World Evangelisation at Lausanne, Switzerland. Among the thousands of delegates and speakers, about half came from the Majority World countries.

### Living Legacy

In his travels, Stott saw firsthand the significant numerical growth of the Church in the Majority World. He realised that in order for the growth to be effective, 'depth' was vital. How can the Church grow in depth? His contribution to this process led to the formation of Langham Partnership, which now runs 3 Programmes.

### Personal Reflections

I have had the privilege of working closely with 'Uncle John' since 1998, when he invited me to join the Board of Langham Partnership UK & Ireland and to be a member of a group of 6 trusted friends, whom he called Accountability Group of Elders. As a bachelor, after stepping down as Rector, he felt it was important for him to be accountable to a group of friends. Over the years, I was moved to see his child-like dependence on God. At the beginning of each day, he wished 'good morning' to each person of the Holy Trinity, asking when he addressed the Holy Spirit, that the fruit of the Spirit should be seen in his own life; in front of the shaving mirror he recited the 9 fold fruit of the Spirit. I am deeply grateful to God for being influenced by Uncle John - he was a much loved friend, brother and mentor, whose conversations and letters I treasure. 'Like Moses, John Stott was one of the greatest leaders that God has raised for His people and yet at the same time one of the humblest men on the face of the earth' wrote Chris Wright, the International director of Langham Partnership. He was known all over the world, but when you met him he was just a devout, humble Christian man. His private life was no different from his public life. It was the same person. That's another way to say that he had integrity. There was no posing or pretence. One would like to say that such is the nature of plain, ordinary Christians. Not all live up to it. John Stott did.

## B. Sc Nursing College at Hoskote Mission



The New B. Sc Nursing College at Hoskote Mission field was inaugurated by The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan on 16th September. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus Suffragan Metropolitan presided over the meeting. Mr. B. N. Bacche Gowda, the Hon. Minister of Labor, Govt. of Karnataka was the Chief Guest. Mr. P. C. Mohan (Member of Parliament from Bangalore Central), Mr. Anto Antony (Member of Parliament from Pathanamthitta), Rev. Dr. C. K. Mathew (General Secretary, MTEA), Rev. M. O. Oommen, all the Office bearers of MTEA, all the Achen from Bangalore City Parishes, All the Missionary Achen from Karnataka, and a large number of believers also participated. For more information please contact:

Rev. James M. Koshy Veeramala, Director, Hoskote Mission,  
Phone: 080- 27934696 (Off), 27931279 (Res), Mobile: 09986448784

# Finding Peace In The Midst Of Grief

*I* wanted to write this article after my husband passed away on January 8th 2010. But it took me this long to find the peace and presence of mind to do so. Sadly, your loved one has died. It is so unfair and it hurts so much. You weren't ready for this tragedy and you may scarcely know how to go on. It is hard to stop thinking of your loved one. The mixture of feelings that accompanies grief often has us thinking we are going crazy. We may be anxious, nervous, panic-stricken, confused and uncertain. Our thoughts may be jumbled and our life out of control. When a loved one dies, the havoc it reaps in our lives can hardly be described, irrespective of the age of the one who left us since it is your pain and yours alone. But the agony and despair one feels at the loss of a child can be the most excruciating and harrowing experience in one's life. We may feel we cannot stop the intense pain that encapsulates our body and soul. Our heart and mind may be in abysmal torture even though we may look calm or composed to the outside world. In the book "Remembering with Love" by Elizabeth Levang she writes about blaming God for our loved one's death. She says, "Many of us spend a great deal of time trying to understand why our loved one died. Finding fault is a common reaction and, sometimes, God becomes an object of our blame. We may feel that with His omnipotent power and ability to work miracles He could have prevented this death, but He did not. Yet we feel confused over His role in our loved one's death."

How do we find peace in the midst of this firestorm? Joseph B. Wirthlin writes in his book, "Peace Within" that "Peace is more than a lofty ideal. It is a practical principle that, with conscious effort, can become a normal part of our lives as we deal with matters both large and small." In essence he is saying peace is something attained on the basis of pragmatism if we set our heart and mind to deal with our problems on a daily basis, as I understand it. Often our desire to get on with life is intertwined with our own sense of peacefulness. For many, the extreme pain we once felt is diminishing, and we are feeling better about the world and our place in it. We can replace the anger, envy and rage that once overpowered us with acceptance and relief. Our sense of peacefulness comes slowly. We slowly learn we can't run away from life's burdens and problems. Instead of flying away from the storms, fly above the storms. Instead of asking God for wings like doves so you can escape ask Him for wings like the eagles. There is a purpose in trials, and even discouraging days can be excellent teachers of spiritual lessons that we could learn no other way.

Even though I am having a roller coaster ride amidst doubts and hope, one way I find peace remembering what Rev. Dr. Billy Graham said several years ago. "When our Father permits us to go into furnace of affliction, He always keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat." I think He knows how much you can take and how long the trial should be.

Finding peace within the midst of sorrow and anguish is a big struggle even to those who have submitted completely to the will of God. God never asks us to believe without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith,

His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason, and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. It is impossible for finite minds fully to comprehend the character or the works of the Infinite one. "To the keenest intellect, the most highly educated mind, that Holy Being must ever remain clothed in mystery" (Ref. Ellen G. White; Job 11:7. 8)

"Everyone experiences pain in their lives. But how we handle it and what we do with it makes all the difference. Peace can be easily forgotten in the midst of grief." It is peace that you need-money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain it, you can never hope, by your own efforts to secure it." (Ref. Ellen G. White). But God offers it to you as a gift without money and without price.

Psalm 31 is a prayer of trust in God where the psalmist is recognizing God's presence in the midst of grief. For those not going through these things now, it may be difficult to understand why it is so crucial to understand God's presence. Sometimes, we have this thought that if God is present in our life, it will be indicated by overflowing and abundant blessings. And, then when the bottom drops out, we begin to question if God knows or cares. It is important to know that God is there, He sees your affliction and He knows the troubles of your soul. He is not necessarily plucking you out of the darkness, but while you are there He is with you because He said "Peace is what I leave with you. Do not be worried and upset, do not be afraid" (Ref John 14:27)

This is what gives me comfort as I am treading through this earthly journey without my husband who was my constant companion and my best friend.

**Dr. Anna A. Panackal**

# Digital connect among churches- an Eye-Opener

Rev. Benu John, Baltimore



## Introduction

We live in strange times. We live in an era which we proudly call the digital age. Everything is at the tip of our fingers. A single push button can create or destroy reality around us. Digital technology rules our senses. At the same time we live in an isolated world where relationship is shrinking alarmingly and communities moving away from each other. Families and communities are feeling the strains of this individualistic and fragmented mindset. We live in a segregated independent world where it's almost impossible to physically reach people and network relations in the physical sense. Secondly we are community on wheels literally a moving community wherein we live outside our house most of our time. So the only means of personal communication is telephones and the internet. The trend is almost irreversible especially among the young communities.

We can easily denounce it as unnecessary and evil but the challenge is to channelize this technology for our purpose. So the challenge is now is how to maintain community relationship without denouncing digital technology and its valid communities. Or rather the search is to seek to form alternative communities using the power of digital technology. This article does not specifically deal with internet technology and its use but it explores on how to utilize it for fostering ecumenical relations among churches.

## The traditional methodology of communication among community

What defines a community? How did they communicated in the yester years? Communities are formed by the cohesiveness and the relatedness among the members of the community. So church communities like all communities is a social construct which is not exactly something physical like a church building. It is only in the post Jesus-era starting from Europe in the western world that huge church buildings and its powers tried to replace authentic spiritual and community relations in church witness. The printing press (15th century), microphone, radio (1930's) and then television were pioneers in the advent of modern technology which opened ways for mass communications in community. The early eighties saw the advent of computers on a large scale although computers were a reality even before the 1950s

The church, especially in the western world, is the biggest loser by this new trend. It's slowly moving to the verge of extinction. When we see a church coming together for worship we feel here is a community which witnesses together.

But after some hours on Sunday this community vanishes only to return next Sunday. Moreover there is little scope for different communities to come together on a single platform consistently due to constrain of time and space. The relationship between churches in the local community and also on the global level cannot be fostered in the new age by traditional means as done in earlier times. Therefore the inter-church and intra-church level of co-operation between churches for witnessing has fallen alarmingly. The young people have almost abandoned the traditional methodology for ecumenical relationship amongst them. Is it not true in our community too as Diaspora Mar Thoma Christians in this country? Our young people in the church community which is now fascinated by technology is avoiding traditional concept of community relation like prayer meetings and traditional Sunday services. They are forming new forms of communities. The modern digital communities not have the traditional constraints of time and space in their hours of need and to witness together. So our challenge now is how to maintain systematic and constant relationship with ourselves for relevant mission.

### **A paradigm shift in communication: digital societies**

In 1969 the internet was the bombshell in the communication technology. It opened new avenues of communication among communities. Even before that in the early 1960's e-mail came about. By 1979 internet entered human communities. By 1990 we had the World Wide Web which was precursor to formation of a global digital community. Web blogs came by 1997 which created a blogged world. By 2006 68% in USA were internet users. The world is now an inter-connected village. We need each other although we are unable to reach other in the traditional manner. About 80-85 % of the young people are now using online communities like social media for communicating. Now it's not just the young but the entire communities from all age groups that have exposure to internet and social media. Facebook is one such example. So now amazing power of communication is not just in the hands of political or religious offices but it is in common communities who can assert their opinions openly.

### **Digital societies in church space: its possibilities and implications**

So the church is now to be considered no more as a building. It's a community which can no more be understood in its traditional sense. Our members are scattered in far off places, they are working in homes and offices and most of our youths are miles off from church physically and psychologically. So they are not connected. So we need to reach out to people who are outside the traditional meaning of time and space. Therefore Digital societies can be used not only for communicating but for forming newer communities for vision and mission among the churches together. It can be used for collaborating with families, individuals and groups for social actions. It can be used for fostering Christian values and for creating discussion groups. Primarily it can be used to build inter church and intra-church community relations. It can be used to connect people, create new communities and networks, communicate the spiritual and inspirational messages need to uplift the community and network activities. Visibility for such activities is another thing which is served in modern social media. The church's vast spiritual resources can be used productively to foster ecumenical relationship and networking witness in social work. The primary need of ecumenical community is to engage meaningfully. Popular social media like Facebook and MySpace are doing a marvelous job in creating online communities for all sorts of purposes. Churches are now using these resources to share information and engage meaningfully. Many churches including the Mar Thoma Church have already started using this media by starting pages in popular social media like Facebook and Twitter. But we need to be aware of its implications and engage meaningfully by avoiding its pitfalls.

### **Facing the challenges of digital social networking- An alternative model**

However there are challenges in digital social networking in fostering relationship on the ecumenical levels. Some of the challenges of social media when applied to church space are its possibility of misuse. The digital social media has unprecedented powers

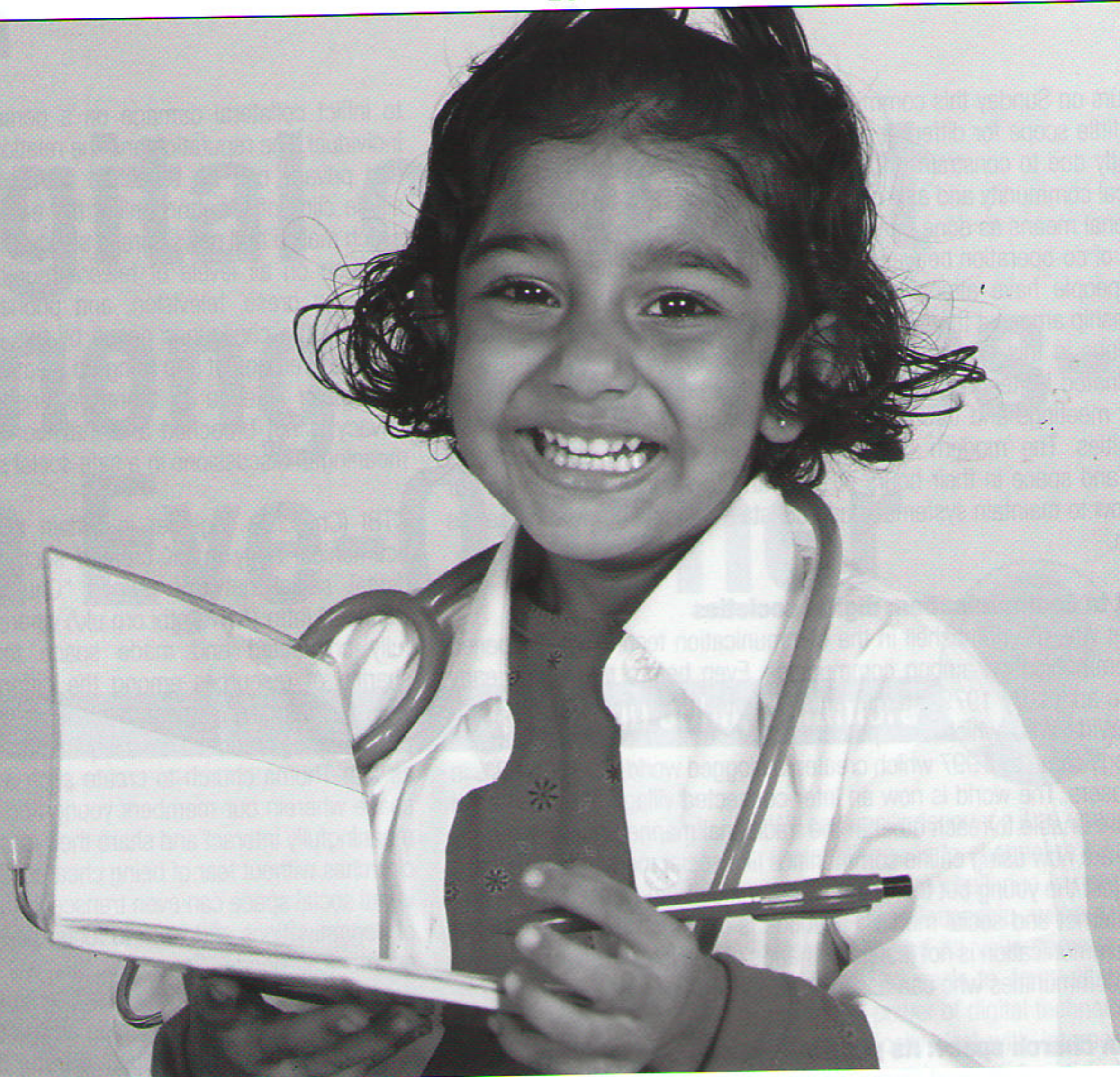
to inflict collateral damage on a personality by any individual. The reputation and the relationship, security and privacy can be breached within seconds by a single click of a button unlike the earlier decades in which malice and news spread slowly. But this risk can be seen on all levels of telecommunication starting from the press, television, and phone. It's hard to overlook the challenges posed by this media but we need to overcome it and bring up creative alternatives. The major agenda is therefore ensuring that our privacy is not breached and that we can engage in meaningful discussions in a safe social space.

CTBI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) an ecumenical body in UK created such an alternative digital social network named "Churches Together Connect" (<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/>) wherein it successfully connected and made space for meaningful sharing of resources among the different churches and its members without the risk of the member's privacy being breached. So it's quite possible for us too as Mar Thoma church to create such a digital social space wherein our members young and old alike can meaningfully interact and share their resources across churches without fear of being cheated. Such a meaningful social space can even transcend the boundaries of denominations and work to foster people to people ecumenical bonds. Especially this will rope in the younger generation who are not interested in the traditional methodology of sitting across the tables for ecumenical action. It can help to bring them back to the church for a common goal.

However there is also a risk of leadership in digital space. The traditional concept of hierarchal leadership is however unacceptable in digital space. Power relations are diffused in cyberspace and somehow they do not operate successfully. So there is a problem of who decides and who authenticates a discussion or a resource as valid. So a new methodology should be evolved for consolidating power relations in ecumenical relations in the evolving social networks of the church especially among churches.

### **Conclusion**

This article was simply an oversight into how we as the church can enter into cyberspace in order to foster our relations in the ecumenical community. We explored the possibilities of involving the "Mobile" community into the church arena and to create a space for engaging meaningfully to share resources and reach out as a church to the outside community. Now the task is to work practically on these lines on the inter and intra-church levels. We can be sure that the idea of creating a specifically dedicated digital social media for churches together will go a long way in transcending our boundaries in this nation and also to look beyond our immediate horizons.



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P.T. Thomas, New York

# The Mar Thoma Impact

During the year 2010, the Mar Thoma Church celebrated 175 years of reformation. Abraham Malpan and Kaithail Geevarghese Malpan, by leading the reformation movement, only hoped to cleanse the church and bring her faith and practices in line with the teachings of the Bible.

• From the beginning of Christianity in Kerala, Kerala Christians lived as a homogenous closed community. There were no substantial rivalries between Christians and other religions. Then the reformation took place within the church. However, with the reformation, not only was the church reformed from within, but it also created substantial impact outside the church. The church, which was a closed community so far, became an open community, as the evangelistic zeal created during the reformation brought a lot of "lower class" Hindus to the membership of the church, thereby changing its homogenous characteristics.

Though the Syrian Christians of this time were enjoying high privileges from the rulers, they still had an inferior status compared to upper caste Hindus. Many Christians were forced to do menial temple jobs such as husking the paddy and producing the expected measurement of rice, even if the paddy contained chaff. Failure to produce correct

measurement of rice often led to punishment. Reformation empowered the church under the leadership of Mathews Mar Athanasius Metropolitan to challenge such practices and bring an end to such practices. The reformation took into consideration, the situations of people that prevented the social advancement of a group of people. Also many Syrian Christians had to share their harvest with the temple and such practices were also brought to an end thereby enabling them to be economically independent.

In the temples, Syrian Christian women were forced to work without covering their breasts. These humiliating practices were also brought to an end by the efforts of Mathews Mar Athanasius Metropolitan.

The socially uplifted and economically independent Syrian Christians began to be more politically

conscious. They streamlined the church administration on democratic principles. From the administration of the church, their attention moved to the affairs of the state. Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan, even in the face of his arrest, resisted the "Independent Travancore" declaration of Sir C.P. Ramaswamy since it was against the concept of human liberty and democracy.

The reformation movement had its positive impact on the growth and development of Malayalam language. The liturgy of the church was translated into Malayalam which also became the language of the church replacing Syriac. The Malayalam Bible, Malayalam liturgy, Christian literature, hymns and sermons in Malayalam gave a real boost to the Malayalam language. More and more people began using Malayalam as the primary language of expression and worship. Other churches also followed suit. Prior to this, Hindus used Sanskrit, Jacobites used Syriac and Catholics used Latin or Syriac as their language of worship. As the result of the reformation, Malayalam language at least partially replaced these languages. Christians also contributed numerous new words to the Malayalam language. The more frequent use of the language of the people and the spirit of reformation inspired leaders like Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru to work for the uplift of the Nair and Ezhava communities respectively, thereby creating a revival in the whole land.

The more frequent use of Malayalam Bible gave a better understanding of the word of God to ordinary people which enabled them to study the Bible more. This led to a new social thought process where the society and church began thinking in terms of freedom, social uplift and individual and social responsibilities. People also began to realize that when Bible speaks about salvation, it not only meant about an experience in a world yet to come, but it also about a liberated life in this world, right here, right now.

With the independence of India and the establishment of democratic form of government, the church encouraged people to be active participants in politics and exercise their right to vote. However, the church did not forget its prophetic responsibilities. When former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered Emergency rule in India, Dr Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan voiced his opposition even at the risk of arrest, as he saw that the declaration of Emergency suppresses human rights and liberties protected by the Bible.

The Church also entered into various social uplift programs. Dowry was a serious problem in Kerala and there were a lot of young girls who were denied the opportunity of marriage due to lack of dowry. The Church established a "marriage aid fund" to help those in need. Lack of adequate housing was another major problem in Kerala. A lot of people lived in huts on the banks of streams and rivers and on public land without any amenities. The church established the 'Land and Home Project' for rehabilitating needy people irrespective of religion, caste or faith.

The Church also entered the field of education by establishing schools and colleges and providing excellent education. Mar Thoma educational institutions stood for its principles and admitted children based on their academic achievement and not on the ability to contribute financially. The church also entered the medical field by establishing hospitals and nursing homes and by providing quality medical care for those in need.

Gradually, the church began to grow outside the state of Kerala, primarily as many Mar Thomites went outside the state seeking jobs. Wherever Mar Thomites went and lived, they established the church and stood as witness. Outside the state of Kerala, the church also established Ashrams in places such as Sihora, Ankola and Satna.

The Ashram movement gave a new dimension to the mission of the church. It also empowered the local people to pursue education, to access healthcare and to learn about agriculture and farming and thereby becoming independent and self sufficient. Social and educational lives of many people were enhanced as the direct result of the Ashram movement. Parishes outside Kerala also provided a number of social service

programs to the local people. They established schools, helped villagers to find jobs by establishing programs such as cattle farming, cycle rickshaws and sewing machines.

The church also established Nursery Schools in various states in India. The church further worked amongst the people who were exploited economically, socially and violated personally. The Navjeevan Center in Bombay stands as a superb example of the dedicated work of the church offering new life to those who were denied it so far. The involvement of the church in areas where help was needed, especially during the earthquake in Gujarat, typhoons in Orissa and Maharashtra and during the Tsunami are truly in line with the master's words that "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in" (Matthew 25:35).

The growth of the church outside India, especially in the United States, gave a new dimension to its mission. I heard an American Church leader who said that the "Mar Thoma Church came to the United States at the right time"; the right time being a time when the other churches were falling behind their mission. The family oriented lifestyle of the Mar Thoma Christians stands as a major role model for the mainstream social life. The performance of our children in schools and colleges and our young people in various professional fields show the mainstream the teachings our children receive at home.

The efforts of our youth groups in conducting soup kitchens, collecting and donating clothes for the needy and carol singing for the institutionally infirmed, is a right step in the right direction, though much more has to be done in this field. Our involvement in the Native American Mission, our own Mexican mission and prison ministry stands as superb examples of our efforts to have a positive impact amongst our neighbors. During last year's Haitian earthquake disaster, the church stood with the mainstream in helping the devastated people of Haiti.

Our stand on the rights of the various minority groups and our identification with the needs of the less privileged and our standing with them in their hours of need shows the true Mar Thoma characteristics – that we not only preach an evangelical gospel, but practice a social gospel.

One hundred and seventy five years have passed after the reformation movement. Mar Thoma Church today is a global community spread all over the globe. We have a lot more work to do today in the community where we live, uplifting the community and continually standing against injustice and corruption and being witnesses in the community in which we live.



# Discipleship and Family



**Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa**

The term disciple comes to us in English from the Latin root which has the meaning learner or pupil. In the Greek world, the word disciple is used for a student of a particular teacher. Parents, Husband and wife are all disciples, planted by God in family context, to learn from God and to discipline life to grow in God-given relationships.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus Christ had 12 disciples whom he chose after much prayer (Mark 3: 13-19; Mt. 10: 1-4; Lk 6: 12-16). While Jesus had 3 disciples Peter, James and John as an inner circle, there were other followers of both men and women in large numbers. We read about Jesus sending out 70 disciples in Luke 10: 1-10. He had women disciples like Mary Magdalene, Joanna wife of Cuza, Susanna, Shalomi w/o Zebadi and Mary the mother. Women belong seemingly to the more intimate community of believers and were seen in the public ministry of Jesus (Lk 8: 3), at the foot of the cross and at the resurrection. In all these cases we see disciples as learners and leaders.

## Our Families and Discipleship

For parents, family is their first ministry. The discipleship in the families is not taught but caught. Jesus Christ chose his 12 disciples to be with him and to learn from him. Family members are called to be with God in their family life.

The present day families are nuclear families in contrast to the joint families of ancient days. In the Old Testament times each family had not only members of blood relations, but also servants who worked in the houses and in the fields, animals, birds and even the inhabited space. Now the number has come down to the level of 'Father – mother and children. The number has come down to the minimum. The most important question is what constitutes a family? The Holy Bible clearly says that God is the Creator and the source of all blessings. Eph. 3: 14 says "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name". In families our lives are disciplined by our experiences with God, our loved ones, our children, ourselves and our neighbors.

"Daddy don't leave me.... Please don't leave me". How do you understand these words? The examples one takes about families can be misleading. The language by which one expresses the feelings is always inadequate. Feelings speak louder than words. In the homes, members need to listen not only to the words but also to the mood and the language of the heart. Parents need to get into the habit of spending time with their kids. Parenting is hard work. Children are counting on their parents to teach, protect and look after their well being in this very big frightening and fragmented world. Marriage can be considered as a door to family life. The sacrament of marriage with its liturgy and practices are symbolic and fully embedded with meaning. Marriage is more than a contract or a covenant. Marriage implies commitment and permanence. The word of God says; "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mt. 10: 9). When two people get married they enter first into some sort of romance. But when romance dies out it has to lead the partners to mature and responsible love. This is to feel responsible for the other and an ability to see the need of the other person (Eph. 5 and I Peter 3). Being in love is different from falling in love. I Cor. 13 is a song of love. Love is giving ones best for the best of the other.

The partner finds how the other person is lovable and one risks himself or herself in loving. Being in love means rejoicing in the life of the other person. As Jesus says, they are no longer two but one.

Every person, after Marriage, has to experience pain, frustration and anguish. One will learn to accept them as they are. The issues of separation and connectedness stay with the married people throughout their lives. Our image of a Father or mother usually comes from our own experiences in families with our own mothers and fathers.

The family environment is a school for the man or woman to learn from God and from each other. This is where the lessons of discipleship are to be picked up. God revealed in Jesus Christ is the Guru. In John 15: 16 Jesus Christ makes it clear that "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain". In Christian family the choice of a partner is



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considered as God given blessing and therefore there is a need to accept the other as a gift of God. In John 13: 35 Jesus Christ says, 'By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another'. Family is the place where members are bound by love and where people love each other. Discipline in family comes by love and that reveals the discipleship of each person. Family is a divine plan. It has God's will and purpose. The members in the family are called and sanctified to yield results by co-operation and obedience. Speaking of the vine and branches Jesus Christ said that "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (Jn. 15: 8).

### Our Children and Discipleship

Children are born in love and into love. Children need our attention, love and care. Right from the time of conception the parents feel a sense of belonging. After the birth, every child needs protection of the parents and they are to be nursed and carried along. The umbilical chord relationship is something unique, which remains even when the chord is severed at birth. Children are born with a kind of vacuum that only God and parents can fill. They long for it. Our children are divine gifts and they teach us how to deal with the feelings of parenting.

Listening to the children takes time. Listening to the children takes patience. Children need both the father and the mother and the role of each is irreplaceable. Death of a partner or a divorce in the family will certainly affect the psyche of the children, particularly when they are young. Your children are not your children, said Khalil Gibran, the prophet of Lebanon. As the children grow up, they will start thinking independently. They have a God given personality of their own. Every step a child takes is a sort of loss for the parents. They will be slowly walking away. Every parent is keen to provide a safe environment for the child to grow. When they feel at home the children will start talking about their feelings without being reprimanded or told what to do. If the words of the children cause hurt to the parents, it is also an opportunity for the parents to liberate themselves from all sorts of anxiety and pain. When the child draws our attention it is important to listen to them. If for any reason the parents said 'we would listen to you later', the child will be expecting that and if the parents don't turn to them, they are in fact lying to their children. Hypocrisy, lies and half – truths build walls between parents and children, which are difficult to pull down. On the other hand, truthfulness and transparency build trust and bring the family together.

It is to be remembered that our children grow up in worlds that are different from ours. Their world is more connected and much more complex. They see the world initially through the eyes of the parents and later they develop eyes of their own. Naturally the children need the wisdom and experience of the parents. If the wisdom turns into advice, that becomes selfishness; but if the parents let their children know their hearts and minds, then it is a gift. It is not right to demand more intimacy from our children than they are willing to or able to give. Parents wake up each morning to find themselves changed by the growth of the children. The paths of the children differ from that of the parents with each step young people take on the path to adulthood; they become more and more independent of their mothers and fathers. What the parents can give to the children are roots and wings – roots to grow in the world in relation to God and neighbors and wings to leave to a better place and plane where they can fulfill the mission for which God has created them. Parenting is discipleship. Responsible parenthood comes only by obeying God. Jesus Christ who carried out his public ministry revealed how he honoured the heavenly father. In Mt. 12: 46-50 we read about Jesus Christ saying, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." He also defined discipleship in Mt. 16: 24, where he said, "whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me".

### Our Parents and Discipleship

Proverbs 23: 22 says, "listen to your father who gave your life, and do not despise your mother when she is old".

The book of special prayers, printed by the Diocese of North America and Europe, carries the following words regarding the Fathers, "... Gracious Lord, we thank you and praise you for giving us fathers who inspire and love us and who help us in molding our character, being models to us and providing comfort and support. Bless their efforts and grant them strength to fulfill their duties in this world, as you have given them". Similarly regarding mothers, "... Lord, with your own gift of life, she bore us in her womb and gave birth and brought us into this world... bless all mothers that their love may be deep and tender, and that they may lead their children to know our creator and do His will". "Blessed be all mothers who have come into our lives whose kindness, care and love remain with us to guide"

Once the parents are aged they are to be nurtured, their dignity and integrity are to be respected. It is the responsibility of the children to acknowledge them and their feelings. Parents may feel helpless, vulnerable, confused, out of control, angry and disappointed. They have their feelings. They may also feel that they cannot control some of their feelings. All children must learn first to listen to them carefully and then to accept them as they are. Nursing homes, medical care and even our own personal attention will not meet all their physical and psychological needs. When death is imminent there is a time when the person feels that he or she is left alone. They need support then. They need assurance and affirmation of life and life after. Let us learn to thank God for the vision, courage, wisdom and commitment of our parents, which we are privileged to understand by being their children. Let us support them in their old age, so that they will continue to live in grace.

The experience of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane followed by the trial before Pilate and others throw light on the feelings of parents who long for the presence of the dear ones intimately and affectionately at the time of their pain and struggle. The death of Jesus on the Cross gives lessons of discipleship on the process of dying and seeing life as a victorious one. Death is not the end. Let us realize that there are lessons of discipleship even in the art of dying. There is the promise of God as we read in Isaiah, "*Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am he; I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you*" (46: 4).

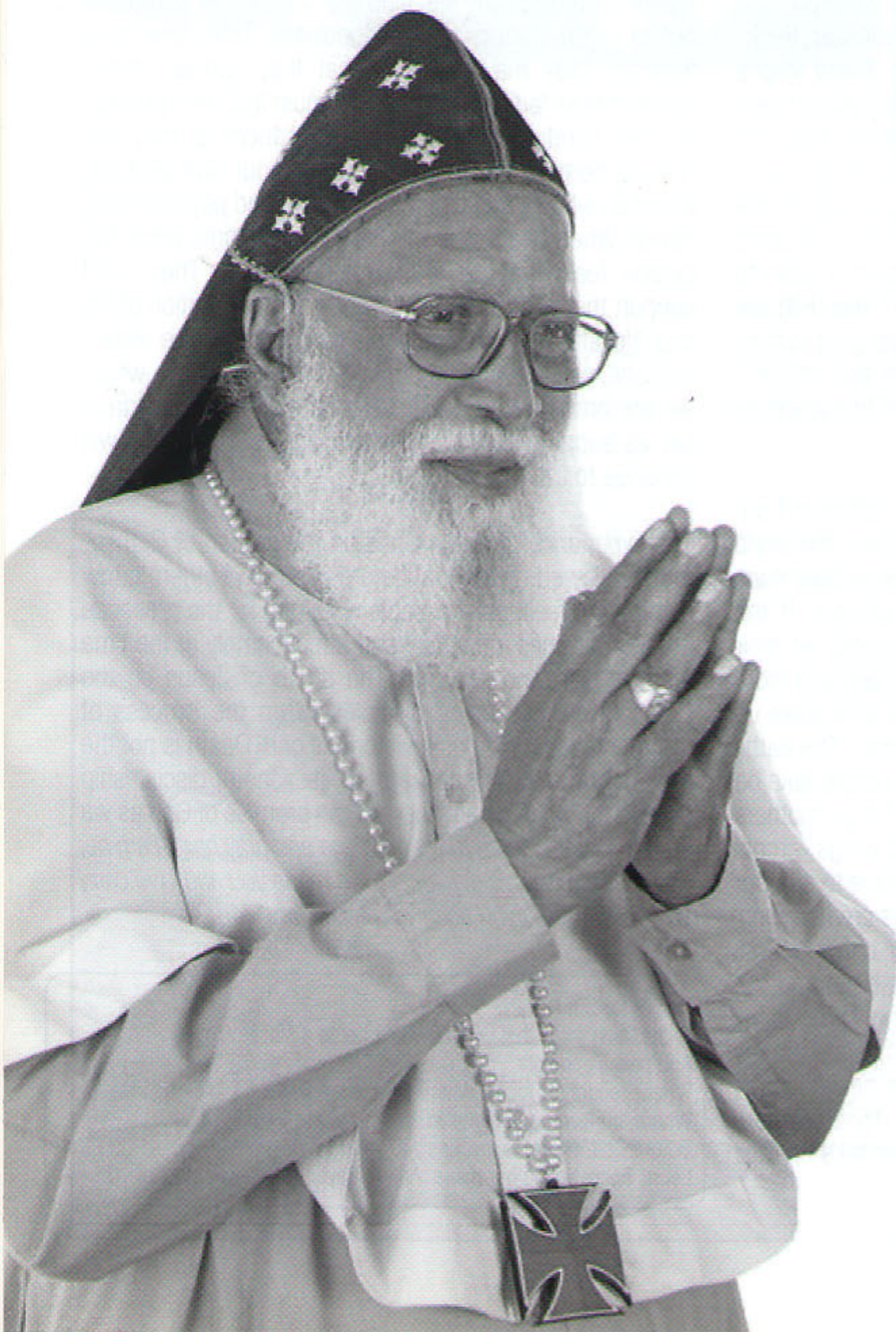
#### Prayer for the Family:

O Lord God, I ask that you make our home a place of love  
And peace and light  
Where security is found, where trust is taught  
Where forgiveness is modeled, Where faith is lived .....

O Lord God, I commit my family to you  
Let us honor you in our home. Amen (Payer of Douglas MacArthur)

# “Worship Should be in the Language of the people”

The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan



The following is an excerpt from an interview with His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan focusing on the issues of youth in the North American Diocese. This was conducted at the Maramon Aramana in August 2011.

Chrysostom Thirumeni turned 93 in April 2011. He was extremely healthy and active and talked freely when prompted about his vision of the Church, specifically about the Diocese of North America & Europe. He recalled several of his visits to parishes in United States. His conversations were fun-filled and extremely enthusiastic with stories and examples to substantiate his views. Thirumeni had a full schedule during the day of my visit, even though the doctors have advised him to limit outside programs to two per day. Even in his mid-nineties, we saw a person with full of energy, modern thoughts and a great vision.

We left the Aramana with a sense of great satisfaction having spent time with one of the legends of the century.



## Interview by: Georgy Varughese MSW, Florida

*In the North American Diocese, the younger generation is showing less interest in the Mar Thoma Church and its activities. Give us your thoughts about this matter.*

There are several aspects to be considered while analyzing this matter. The character formation of a child starts primarily at home. Parents have a major role in molding the character of their children. In olden days, the birth of a child took place at their own homes. Mothers directly took care of their children for at least the first five years of childhood. Now hospitals have taken over deliveries and nurses assume the role of the mothers; while they are at the hospital during the initial days after the birth, mothers only get limited time to directly interact with their children.

The early schooling and daycare facilities that are available presently will help with the intellectual and academic development of the children, but they lose family attachments. The present-day Mothers have become Mummies; Mummies are dead. The fast pace of our human life has taken away the living nature of the mother-child relationships. It has become merely mechanical. The roles of fathers also are not different at all. It is the responsibility of both parents to develop and maintain a smooth and cohesive relation and bond within the family. The home should be real homes for our children.

The Church has an explicit role in bringing up children in the right direction. The Mar Thoma Church is a reformed Church. We often forget the meaning of the reformation that took place within our church. "Worship should be in the language of the people." It is not Malayalam or English; but the language of the people. One of the major reasons that the youth are not attracted to the church is due to the fact that the current worship order is not fully understandable to them. If the attendees cannot understand and follow, they will stay away from there and will find other comfortable places. We still have Malayalam worship services most weeks in our American Diocese. By trying to satisfy a handful of people who cannot follow English, we are losing the entire crowd of the new generation who cannot follow Malayalam. In my opinion we need to cut the number of Malayalam services to once a month in all the parishes abroad where Malayalam is not the primary language.

I am also concerned about us using the translated version of the worship book. I am not in favor of that. You should use our children born in USA to prepare a new worship order while retaining the content and structure of the original one. A simple word for word translation is not enough for the new generation to understand and follow. We should also avoid unnecessary repetitions in the book.

It is our responsibility to cater the needs of the younger generation. I once asked a young man who attends an English Church for worship, "Why do you prefer to go to that Church?" He answered, "I am able to learn the Bible more intensely from there; and they have a very spiritual praise and worship service. I do not understand much from the Mar Thoma service."

This should be an eye opener for us. Don't we have facilities for Bible studies in our church? What happened to our singing sessions? Regular Bible study sessions and praise and worship services should be essential components of our services to carry on the new generation. Mar Thoma Church needs to provide these basic necessities to our members, especially to the younger generation.

A shorter version of the Worship Service is highly recommended. We need to create an atmosphere for the youth to come and enjoy the service. If they do not participate and enjoy, we cannot expect them to remain in the Mar Thoma Church. Let us make an atmosphere for our young generation to be involved in the worship service with a full understanding of the content of the service, rather than to come there and leave without getting anything. Their language constraints should be taken into consideration seriously.

*There is an increased tendency among our new generation to find their partners from outside the Malayalee community. Can you comment on the issues related to marriages in our community?*

Presently numerous parents are faced with difficulties related to the marriages of their children. We see several men and women marrying from different cultures and communities. Furthermore, several of our youth remain unmarried for extended periods of time.

In the olden days marriages were arranged entirely by parents and other elders in the family. Most women would see their husbands for the first time on the day of the marriage. It was an accepted norm and practice for marriages at that time. The institution of marriage and the interactions between men and women have undergone drastic changes during the course of time. Our young adults get opportunities to meet and interact freely with each other at schools, work places, etc. Social gatherings are very common among men and women and are well accepted by the present day society. These interactions among the youngsters have paved ways to alter the concept of marriages in our Malayalee community. The reason for increasing tensions between the adults and the younger generations is the inability to understand and accept each other. Children should be able to understand the culture, family heritage and the expectations of their parents while they are preparing to select life partners. Open communication is the key factor in recognizing each other.

In conclusion, Thirumeni emphasized that the Mission of the Church is 'to serve the people'. He referenced Mother Theresa who never sought appreciation from the world, but the world acknowledged her services and actions. Churches should act as strong pillars to build the Kingdom of God rather than nourishing the corrupted world. ■

# സഭ - കുട്ടായ്മകളുടെ കുട്ടായ്മ

ഡോ. ജോർജ്ജ് സഖറിയ

മലങ്കര സഭയിലെ നവീകരണത്തിന്റെ 175-ാം വർഷം ആഘോഷിക്കുന്ന ഈ വേളയിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യത്തെയും ശുശ്രൂഷയെയും കുറിച്ചുള്ള ചിന്തകളിൽ, പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളുടെ സങ്കീർണ്ണവും വ്യതിരക്തവുമായ പ്രശ്നങ്ങളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും ഗൗരവമായ പരിചിന്തനത്തിന് ഇനിയും വിഷയീഭവിച്ചിട്ടില്ല എന്നത് ഒരു ദുഃഖകരമായ യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമത്രേ. പമ്പയുടെ കരകളിൽ നിന്നും ലോകത്തിന്റെ എല്ലാ കോണുകളിലേക്കും ചിതറപ്പെട്ട ഒരു സമൂഹമെന്ന നിലയിൽ പ്രവാസി സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ വിശ്വാസ രൂപീകരണവും സ്വതന്ത്രതയും ദൈവശാസ്ത്ര ചിന്തയും, ഇടയ ശുശ്രൂഷയും സഭയുടെ പരിഗണന അർഹിക്കേണ്ടുന്ന ഒരു വിഷയമാണ്. ഇവിടെ പ്രവാസി സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങളും ആവശ്യങ്ങളും വ്യത്യസ്തമായി പ്രശ്നവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെടുകയും, പ്രവാസി കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ നിന്നും സഭയെ വ്യത്യസ്തമായി പുന:നിർവ്വചിക്കുകയും ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുക അനിവാര്യതയായി തീർന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. നിരന്തരം മാറിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ഈ ലോകത്തിലാണ് നമ്മുടെ ദൗത്യ നിർവ്വഹണത്തിന്റെ ഭൂമിക. ഈ മാറ്റങ്ങളെ തിരിച്ചറിയാതെ ഇന്നലെകളുടെ ശരികളിൽ വിശ്വസിച്ചുകൊണ്ട്, സംഹതമല്ലാത്ത വിശ്വാസപ്രമാണങ്ങൾ ഉരുവിട്ടു കൊണ്ട്, ഇറക്കുമതി ചെയ്ത സഭാശുശ്രൂഷ കളുമായാണ് സഭ ഇന്നും പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളിൽ വിശ്വാസജീവിതത്തിന്റെ പരിപാകതയല്ല; മറിച്ച് അവരുടെ സാമ്പത്തികസ്രോതസ്സിലാണ് സഭയ്ക്കും സഭാ ശുശ്രൂഷകർക്കും താല്പര്യമെന്ന വിമർശനം ഇനിയും സഭ ഗൗരവമായി എടുത്തിട്ടില്ല. ഇവിടെ ഒരു പുന:ചിന്ത അനിവാര്യമായിരിക്കുന്നു. പുത്തൻ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളും ദർശനങ്ങളും രൂപപ്പെടുത്തി അവയെ ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുന്നതിന് സമർപ്പിതമാകു വേണ്ടത് പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളിൽ സഭ പ്രസക്തമാകുന്നത്. ഇന്ന് നാം തിരിച്ചറിയേണ്ടുന്ന ചില മാറ്റങ്ങൾ ഈ പുന:ചിന്തയുടെ ദിശയെ നിർണ്ണയിക്കുന്നവയാകയാൽ അവിടെ നിന്നും നമുക്ക് ആരംഭിക്കാം.

ഏകശിലാ മാതൃകകളെ മൂല്യങ്ങളായി കണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു തലമുറയുടെ അവശേഷിപ്പു കളാണ് ഇന്ന് മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യത്തെ നിർണ്ണയിക്കുകയും ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന സമൂഹം. വൈവിധ്യങ്ങളെയെല്ലാം, ഒരു വലിയ, മെച്ചപ്പെട്ട, ഉദാത്തമായ ഒന്നിൽ സമന്വയിപ്പിക്കുക എന്നതാണ് നമ്മുടെ ആത്യന്തിക ലക്ഷ്യം. വ്യത്യസ്തതകൾക്ക് അതിൽ തന്നെ പ്രസക്തിയും അസ്തിത്വവുമില്ല. അതിനാൽ ഉദാത്തമായ ഒന്നിനോടുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ വ്യത്യസ്തതകൾ അവയുടെ സാക്ഷ്യം അനുഭവിക്കണം. ഇന്നലെകളുടെ ഈ ശരി ഇന്ന് ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. വ്യത്യസ്തതകൾ ഒരു വൈകല്യമല്ല; മറിച്ച് അതിൽ തന്നെ പൂർണ്ണത ആഘോഷിക്കപ്പെടേണ്ടുന്ന ഒരു യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ്. ഏകശിലാ മാതൃകകളിൽ നിന്നും ബഹുസ്വരതയിലേക്കുള്ള ഒരു മാറ്റമാണ് നാം ഇവിടെ കാണുന്നത്. ഇവിടെ മേധാവിത്തമുള്ളതിനോട് അനുരൂപപ്പെടുന്നതിലൂടെ തങ്ങളുടെ സ്വതന്ത്ര മനസ്സിലാക്കിയിരുന്ന സമൂഹങ്ങൾ പുത്തൻ സ്വതന്ത്രതയോടും ആർജ്ജിക്കുന്നു. പുത്തൻ സ്വതന്ത്രതയോടും പുതിയ കർത്തൃത്വ നിർമ്മിതിയുടെ ആദ്യപടിയാണ്. ഇന്നലെവരെ മാനദണ്ഡങ്ങളായി കരുതിയിരുന്ന സ്വതന്ത്രത, മൂല്യങ്ങൾ, സംസ്കാരങ്ങൾ, ആചാരങ്ങൾ ഇവയെല്ലാം സ്ഥാനഭ്രംശം സംഭവിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു.

ജനങ്ങൾ തങ്ങളുടെ സാമൂഹിക പരിസരങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും അനുഭവബന്ധമായ സ്വതന്ത്രതയും മൂല്യങ്ങളും ആചാരങ്ങളും നിർമ്മിക്കുമ്പോൾ, സനാതനമെന്ന അവകാശ ബോധത്തോടെ നാം നെഞ്ചേറ്റിയിരുന്ന, പ്രചരിക്കുന്ന വിശ്വാസ പ്രമാണങ്ങളും ആചാരാനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളും പള്ളി സംവിധാനങ്ങളും കാലഹരണപ്പെടുന്നു.

ബൃഹത് ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും ബഹു ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിലേക്കുള്ള മാറ്റം നമ്മുടെ കാലഘട്ടത്തിന്റെ മറ്റൊരു യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാണ്. ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യപ്പെടാതെ എല്ലാ കാലങ്ങളിലും എല്ലാ ദേശങ്ങളിലും സംഗതമായവയെന്ന കരുതിയിരുന്ന പ്രത്യയശാസ്ത്രങ്ങളും വിശകലനരീതികളും പാഠങ്ങളും കടപുഴകിപ്പിച്ചു ഒരു കാലഘട്ടമാണിത്. പാഠങ്ങളുടെ രൂപീകരണം, നിർമ്മാണം എന്നിവയെ വിമർശനാത്മകമായി മനസ്സിലാക്കണം. വ്യാഖ്യാന ശാസ്ത്രം. ദൈവശാസ്ത്ര മേഖലയിൽ സനാതന മെന്നു കരുതിയിരുന്ന പാഠങ്ങൾ, പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങൾ, സ്രോതസ്സുകൾ തുടങ്ങിയ വിചാരണ ചെയ്യപ്പെടുകയും, പ്രാദേശികമായ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ, വാമൊഴികൾ, കലാരൂപങ്ങൾ ദൈവശാസ്ത്ര നിർമ്മിതിയുടെ വിഭവങ്ങളായി തീരുകയും ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു.

മുകളിൽ സൂചിപ്പിച്ച നമ്മുടെ കാലഘട്ടത്തിന്റെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകളിലെ രൂപപരിണാമങ്ങളോടൊപ്പം മറ്റൊരു യാഥാർത്ഥ്യം കൂടി നാം ഗൗരവമായി പരിഗണിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. നാമിന്നൊരു സങ്കര ക്രൈസ്തവീകതയുടെ കാലഘട്ടത്തിലാണ് ജീവിക്കുന്നത്. ഒരു പ്രത്യേക സഭാവിഭാഗത്തോടുള്ള വൈകാരിക ബന്ധം ഒരു പഴങ്കഥയായി മാറുകയാണ്. നമ്മളൊക്കെ മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയിലേക്ക് ജനിച്ചു വീണവരാണ്. നാം മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയുടെ വിശ്വസ്ത സന്തതികളും അതിന്റെ വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ പ്രഘോഷകരും ആണ്. മാർത്തോമ്മ സഭയ്ക്ക് പുറത്ത് വിവാഹബന്ധത്തിൽ ഏർപ്പെടുന്നതിന് ചിന്തിക്കുവാൻ പോലും കഴിയാത്തവരാണ് നമ്മിൽ നല്ല പങ്കും. മധ്യതിരുവിതാംകൂറിന്റെ സാംസ്കാരിക പൈതൃകം പേറുന്ന നമ്മിൽ ഭൂരിപക്ഷത്തിനും മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭ ഒരു സംസ്കാരം നമ്മുടെ രക്തത്തിൽ അത് ഒഴുകുന്നു.

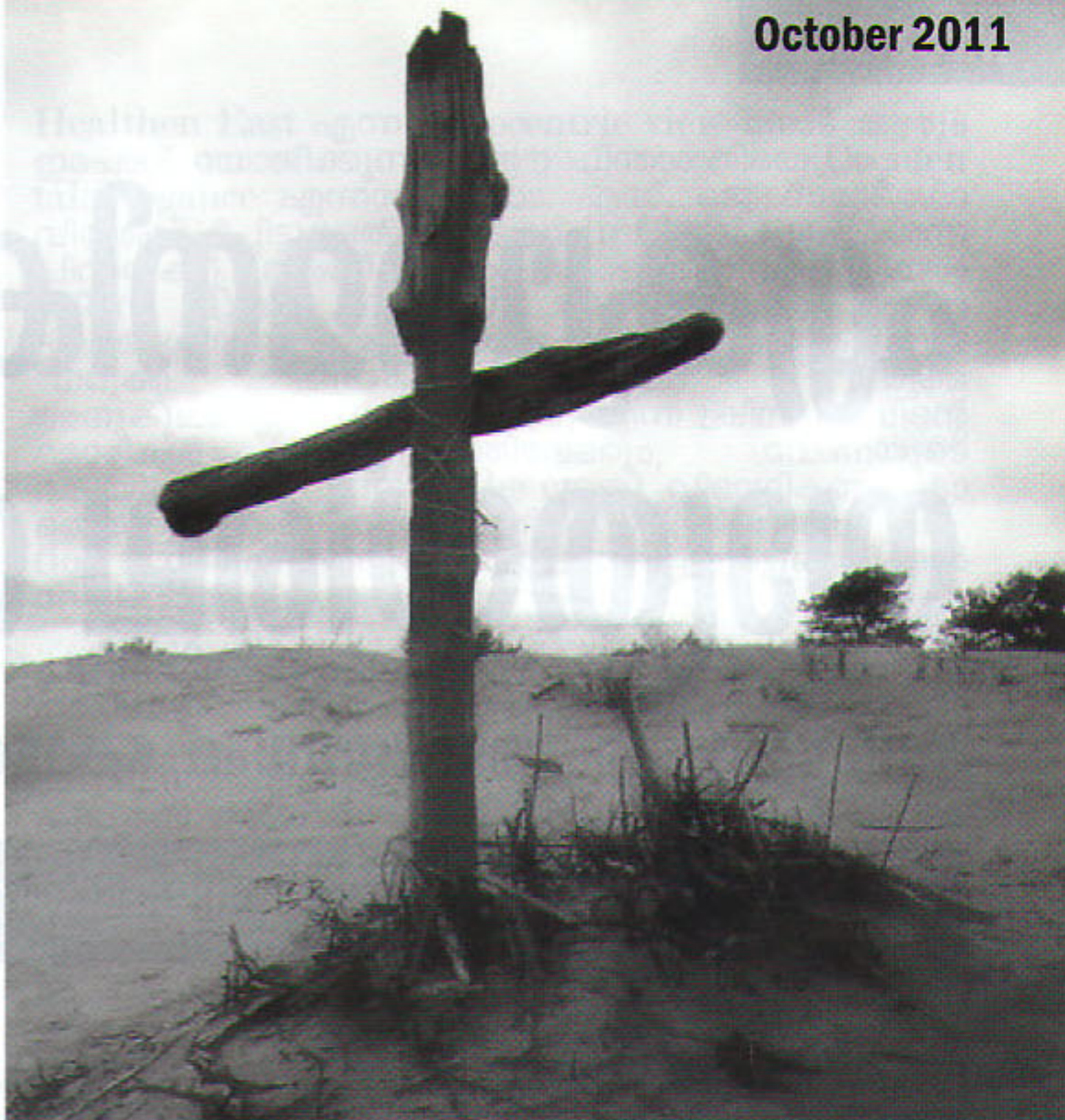
എന്നാൽ ഈ പറഞ്ഞത് ഒരു മുത്തശി കഥയായി മാറുകയാണ്. രണ്ട് കാര്യങ്ങൾ ഇവിടെ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ജനസംഖ്യാ പരമായി നോക്കൂ ബോൾ വളർച്ച മുരടിച്ച ഒരു സമൂഹമാണ് സുറിയാനി ക്രൈസ്തവ സമൂഹം. നിലനില്പിനും ജീവിത വിജയത്തിനുമായി കൂടിയേറുന്നതിന് ഏറ്റവും സജ്ജമായ സമൂഹവും സുറിയാനി ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി കളാണ്. ചുരുക്കത്തിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭ പ്രവാസികളുടെ സഭയായി അതിവേഗം മാറിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്. മലേഷ്യയിലും സിംഗപ്പൂരിലും വടക്കേ അമേരിക്കയിലും മൂന്നും നാലും തലമുറകൾ ആയി കഴിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നു. ഈ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രത തന്നെ പുന:നിർവ്വചിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. പന്ത്രണ്ടു തീരത്തെ മധ്യവർഗ്ഗ സുറിയാനി ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികളുടെ കൂടുതലായ ജാതിബോധത്തിന്റെയും ലിംഗപദവി കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിന്റെയും വീക്ഷണത്തിൽ നിർമ്മിക്കപ്പെട്ട മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭ, ബഹുസ്വരതയെ ആഘോഷിക്കുന്ന, വ്യത്യസ്തതകളെ അംഗീകരിക്കുന്ന പ്രവാസപശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ എത്രമാത്രം സംഗതമാണെന്ന ചോദ്യം ഗൗരവമായി നാം പരിഗണിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. സഭയെ നിർവ്വചിക്കുന്ന അതിന്റെ വിശ്വാസപ്രമാണങ്ങളും ആചാരാനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളും, ബിംബങ്ങളും, സാംസ്കാരിക പരിസരവും, ഭരണസംവിധാനവും, പാസ്റ്ററൽ ശുശ്രൂഷയും, ഏകശിലാ നിർമ്മിതമായ സുറിയാനി പാർമ്പര്യത്തെ പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളുടെ മേൽ അടിച്ചേൽപ്പിക്കുന്നവയാണെങ്കിൽ സഭയുടെ ഭാവി അപകടത്തിലാണ്.

വിശ്വാസസമൂഹത്തിന്റെ ജീവിത സമസ്ത കളുമായുള്ള ബന്ധത്തിൽ തിരുവചനത്തെയും സഭാജീവിതത്തെയും പുന:നിർണ്ണയം നടത്തുന്ന തിലൂടെയാണ് സഭ സംഗതമായി മാറുന്നത്. ഇവിടെ സനാതനമെന്ന പേരിൽ നാം കാത്തുസൂക്ഷിച്ചിരുന്ന പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങളും ആചാരങ്ങളും സംഗതമായ സഭാശുശ്രൂഷകളും ദൗത്യ നിർവ്വഹണത്തിനായി തള്ളിക്കളയേണ്ടിവന്നേക്കാം. നമ്മുടെ ആരാധനാ രൂപങ്ങളുടെ കാലികപ്രസക്തി പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളിലെത്തേന്ന് വളരെ ഗൗരവമായി നാം ചിന്തിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ഒരു ബഹുത് ആഖ്യാനമെന്ന നിലയിൽ അവയെ അടിച്ചേൽപ്പിക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ പ്രവാസിസമൂഹങ്ങളുടെ വിശ്വാസരൂപീകരണത്തെ നാം സഹായിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ?

സുറിയാനി ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ സ്ത്രീ-പുരുഷ ബന്ധത്തെ സമീപിക്കുന്നത് പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളിലെ പുതിയ തലമുറയ്ക്ക് വെറുപ്പുള്ളവാക്കുന്നതാണ്. നമ്മുടെ ജാതിബോധവും ആൺകോയ്മയും പുത്തൻ തലമുറയിലേക്ക് പകരുന്നതിനുള്ള ഉപാധിയായിട്ടാണ് സഭാസംസ്കൃതിയെയും യുവജനസഖ്യത്തെയും പലപ്പോഴും നാം ഉപയോഗിക്കാറുള്ളത്.

ഈ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയെ പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളുടെ സ്വതന്ത്രബോധത്തിൽ നിന്നും പുന:നിർവ്വചിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. മധ്യ തിരുവിതാംകൂറിന്റെ സാംസ്കാരിക പൈതൃകം പേറുന്ന ഒരു സഭയ്ക്ക് പ്രവാസി നാടുകളിൽ എന്താണ് പ്രസക്തി? വെളുത്ത വരും കറുത്തവരും ലത്തീൻ അമേരിക്കക്കാരുമെല്ലാം ഇന്ന് സഭയുടെ അംഗങ്ങളാണ്. അങ്ങനെയുള്ള ഒരു സഭ വ്യത്യസ്തതകളെ അംഗീകരിക്കുകയും ഒരു പുത്തൻ സഭാ അനുഭവമായി രൂപാന്തരപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നില്ലെങ്കിൽ കാലഹരണപ്പെട്ട വസ്തുവായി സഭ മാറും. മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭ അമേരിക്കൻ ഐക്യനാടുകളിൽ നേരിടുന്ന വെല്ലുവിളി ഇതു തന്നെയാണ്. ഈ വെല്ലുവിളിയെ നേരിടാൻ തുറന്ന മനസ്സും സമർപ്പണവും സഭയ്ക്ക് ആവശ്യമായിരിക്കുന്നു. മറ്റു പ്രവാസി സമൂഹങ്ങളുമായുള്ള ആഴമായ ബന്ധവും നമുക്കുണ്ടാവേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. മലങ്കര സഭയിലെ നവീകരണത്തിന്റെ അന്തസ്സത്തെ ഉൾക്കൊണ്ട് സംഗതമായ ഇടപെടലുകളിലൂടെ മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയെ ഒരു കൂട്ടായ്മകളുടെ കൂട്ടായ്മ ആക്കുന്നതിനായി നമുക്കു യത്നിക്കാം.

\*ലേഖകൻ ചെന്നൈ ഗുരുക്കൂൾ ലൂതറൻ തിയോളജിക്കൽ സെമിനാരിയിൽ "തിയോളജി & എതിക്സ്" വിഭാഗം മേധാവിയാണ്. യൂണിയൻ തിയോളജിക്കൽ സെമിനാരി, ന്യൂയോർക്ക് ലൂതറൻ സ്കൂൾ ഓഫ് തിയോളജി, ചിക്കാഗോ എന്നിവിടങ്ങളിലെ പൂർവ്വ വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയുമാണ്.



**Congratulations!!**

**Tom Abraham** from Orlando congregation has won a local election, for a second term - 2011 to 2015 to the City Council of Orange City, Volusia County, Florida. In the local government role, Abraham's platform was for less spending, less regulation, less taxing, and above all transparency. His campaign was a continuous interaction with the average people, especially senior citizens in retirement communities. They predicted his success three days before the real astounding landslide victory came in news defeating an experienced local politico on Sept. 13, 2011.

# എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ യാത്രയിലെ നവദർശനങ്ങൾ

റവ. ഡോ. എം. ജെ ജോസഫ്, കോട്ടയം

“ഞാൻ നല്ല ഇടയൻ ആകുന്നു, നല്ല ഇടയൻ ആടുകൾക്കുവേണ്ടി തന്റെ ജീവനെ കൊടുക്കുന്നു“

“സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലും ഭൂമിയിലുള്ളതും എല്ലാം ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ ഒന്നായിച്ചേർക്കുന്ന കാല സമ്പൂർണ്ണതയുടെ വ്യവസ്ഥയിൽ“, ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ശൈലിയിൽ, ദൈവത്തിന്റെ രക്ഷാകരമായ പദ്ധതിയിൽ പങ്കുചേരുവാനുള്ള ആഹ്വാനമാണ് സഭയിലെ പ്രേഷിതധർമ്മം എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ പ്രസ്ഥാനം ദേശീയവും, പ്രാദേശികവും ആയ തലങ്ങളിൽ ഈ നവദർശനം സാക്ഷാത്കരിക്കുന്നതിനാണ് ഉന്നം വെയ്ക്കുന്നത്.

അഖിലാഖ്യത്തിന്റെ നിഗൂഢ രഹസ്യങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഗവേഷണം, ജീവന്റെ മൂലകങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പഠനം, ജനസംഖ്യാ വർദ്ധനവുമൂലം ഉണ്ടാകാവുന്ന പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ, പ്രകൃതിയിലെ സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥയിൽ വരാവുന്ന ഗതിവിഗതികൾ എന്നിത്യാതി കാര്യങ്ങൾ സഭയുടെ പ്രേഷിതവൃത്തിയുടെ പരിധിയിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്താവുന്നതാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സൃഷ്ടിയായ പ്രപഞ്ചത്തിലെ സകലതും മാനവരാശിയുടെ ഐക്യം എന്ന നവദർശനത്തിൽ സ്ഥാനം ഉണ്ട്. പ്രതിഷേധിക്കുന്നതിനും (to protest), സംരക്ഷിക്കുന്നതിനും (to protect), വിവേചിക്കുന്നതിനും (to discern), സംയോജിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും (to integrate) വേണ്ടിയുള്ള ദർശനമാണിത്. ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിന്റെ പ്രവാചകപ്രതീകമായ സഭയുടെ കടമ രക്ഷാ പരിത്രത്തിലെ വേല പൂർത്തീകരിക്കുകയാണ്. ലോകചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ ഗതിവിഗതികൾക്കു വെറുമൊരു ദാർശനികഭാവം നൽകുകയല്ല വേണ്ടത്. ജീവൻ കേന്ദ്രീകൃതമായ ദർശനത്തിനു പുതിയ മാനങ്ങൾ മാനവസംസ്കാരത്തെ അവഗണിച്ചോ, ലോകത്തെ ശത്രുതയിൽ കണ്ടുകൊണ്ടോ ഭാവിതല മുറയുടെ ആവശ്യങ്ങൾ പരിത്യജിച്ചോ ഈ ദൗത്യം നിർവ്വഹിക്കാവുന്നതല്ല, എല്ലാ നൂറ്റാണ്ടുകളിലേയും ക്രൈസ്തവദർശനത്തിനു പൊതു സ്വഭാവമുണ്ടെങ്കിലും, പ്രതികരണശൈലിയിൽ പുതുതായും കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ തുറന്ന സമീപനവും, വിപ്ലവാത്മകമായ പ്രതികരണവും വച്ചു പുലർത്തേണ്ടതാണ്. സഭ ഉയർത്തിപ്പിടിക്കേണ്ട എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ ദർശനത്തിന്റെ ചിന്താധാരകളെ വിശാല എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ ദർശനം (Wider ecumenism) എന്നു വേണമെങ്കിൽ നാമകരണം ചെയ്യാം. അതിൽ സഭയുടെ ഐക്യവും, മറ്റു മത-മതേതര വിശ്വാസികളോടുള്ള ബന്ധവും മാനവരാശിയുടെ പുതുമുഖവും, പ്രകൃതിയുടെ സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥയും തുല്യപ്രാധാന്യം ഉള്ള ഘടകങ്ങളായി നിലകൊള്ളുന്നു.

മാനവരാശിയുടെ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികവും, ഭൗതികവും ആയ ജീവിത ദർശനത്തിന് ആക്കവും, തൂക്കവും വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്ന വിശ്വദർശനത്തിൽ അപ്പവും (food) ക്ഷമയും (forgiveness) എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ പ്രാർത്ഥനയായ കർത്തുപ്രാർത്ഥനയിൽ സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നതുപോലെ ഒരു നാണയത്തിന്റെ രണ്ടു വശങ്ങളായി നിലകൊള്ളുന്നു. ജീവന്റെ നിലനിൽപ്പിന് ആവശ്യമായ ആഹാരത്തെയും, ജീവന്റെ ഗുണമേന്മ വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഘടകമായ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മിക ബന്ധത്തെയും ആണ് അപ്പവും, ക്ഷമയും വിഭാവന ചെയ്യുന്നത്. സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തെ ഭൂമിയുമായി ബന്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്ന എല്ലാ സംരംഭങ്ങളിലും എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ വശദർശനം ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കും.

### എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ ദർശനത്തിലെ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മിക ഭാവം

ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ദാനമായ ജീവൻ നിലനിർത്തുന്നതിനും, പരിപോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും, മരണത്തിന്റെ ശക്തികൾക്കു എതിരായി നില ഉറപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും, ജാതിമത ഭേദമൊന്നെ എല്ലാവർക്കും ഉത്തരവാദിത്വം ഉണ്ട്.

നീതിയും സമാധാനവും തമ്മിൽ ചുംബിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഘടകം ആരെല്ലാം നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നുവോ അവർ എല്ലാവരും ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സഹപ്രവർത്തകരാണ്. ദൈവം നീതിമാനെന്ന് നാം അറിയുന്നുവെങ്കിൽ നീതി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നവർ ഏവരും അവനിൽ നിന്നു ജനിച്ചവരാണെന്ന് തീർച്ചയാക്കാം (1 യോഹ. 2:29). നീതി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന ഏവരും ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സഹപ്രവർത്തകരാണ്. ദൈവം എല്ലാവരിൽനിന്നും സ്നേഹം ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്നു. സ്നേഹം ഉത്പാദിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ മതാനുഷ്ഠാനമുറകളും, ദീർഘമായ പ്രാർത്ഥനകളും തെരുകോണുകളിലെ ഉച്ചത്തിലുള്ള പ്രഭാഷങ്ങളും എത്രമാത്രം ഉപകരിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് നാം വിലയിരുത്തേണ്ടതാണ്. ദേവാലയമില്ലാത്ത ഒരു സ്വർഗ്ഗീയ നഗരമാണല്ലോ വെളിപ്പാടുകൾക്കുതക്കത്തിന്റെ അന്തിമ ദർശനം. അവിടെ വേർപാടിന്റെ പ്രതീകമായ സമുദ്രവും ഇല്ല. അതിന്റെ കവാടങ്ങൾ സദാ തുറന്നു കിടക്കുന്നു. ഭൂമിയിലെ രാജാക്കന്മാർ തങ്ങളുടെ സകല പ്രതാപവും അതിലേക്കു കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നു. എല്ലാവരെയും എല്ലാറ്റിനെയും സ്നേഹാദര വോടു കൂടി കൈനീട്ടി സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു തുറന്ന സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ ചിത്രമാണിത്. ഈ ദിവ്യദർശനത്തിനു ഊടും പാവു മേയുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി സഭ ശ്രമിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. എല്ലാ സഭകളുടെയും, രാഷ്ട്രങ്ങളുടെയും, സംസ്കാരങ്ങളുടെയും, തദ്ദേശസമൂഹങ്ങളുടെയും സുന്ദരവും, ഘനമേറിയതും ആയ സകലതും സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹങ്ങളുടെ സമൂഹം (Community of Communities) ആകുകയാണ് ലക്ഷ്യം. ആ സമൂഹസൃഷ്ടിയിൽ അശുദ്ധമായ യാതൊന്നിനും പ്രവേശനമില്ല, അതുപോലെ മോശമതയോ, കാപട്യമോ ചെയ്യുന്നവർക്കും (വെളി. 21:22-27). ഇവിടെ ഒരു ചോദ്യം ഉദിക്കുന്നു. അശുദ്ധമായത് എന്താണെന്ന് എങ്ങനെയാണ് നിർണ്ണയിക്കുക? ക്രിസ്ത്യാനികൾക്കു ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഉപദേശവും, ക്രൂശമരണവും ഉയർത്തേഴുന്നേൽപ്പും ആണ് മാർഗ്ഗ ദർശനം നൽകുന്നത്. സഭാപിതാവായ സിപ്രിയന്റെ വാക്കുകൾ ഇവിടെ സ്മരണീയമാണ്. എല്ലാ നന്മയും ദൈവത്തിനുള്ളത്. അത് എവിടെയെല്ലാം ഉണ്ടോ അതെല്ലാം അന്വേഷിച്ചു കണ്ടെത്തുന്നതിനും, അവയെ ദൈവരാജ്യത്തിന്റെ മൂല്യങ്ങളാക്കി മാറ്റുന്നതിനും തീർത്ഥാടന സമൂഹമാകുന്ന സഭയുടെ യുഗാന്ത്യയാത്രയിൽ പങ്കു ചേരുന്നതിനും ഉള്ള അവസരങ്ങൾ സഭ പാഴാക്കരുത്.





“എല്ലാ ദിവ്യസത്യങ്ങളും നാനാദിക്കുകളിൽ നിന്നും നമ്മുടെ അടുക്കലേക്കു വരട്ടെ” എന്ന വേദത്തിലെ മൊഴികൾ അർത്ഥഗർഭമാണ്. സത്യം എവിടെയെല്ലാം ഉണ്ടോ അതെല്ലാം ക്രിസ്ത്യാനി എന്ന നിലയിൽ നമ്മുടെ അവകാശമാണ് എന്നുള്ളത് സഭാപിതാവ് ജസ്റ്റിൻ മാർട്ടിയറുടെ വാക്കുകൾ സഭയുടെ പ്രേക്ഷിത വൃത്തിയിൽ കാര്യമായി പരിഗണിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. വഴിയും സത്യവും ജീവനുമായ ക്രിസ്തു പ്രവേശിക്കാത്ത എന്തെങ്കിലും വഴിയോ അസ്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ പാതയോ, ഗുണമഹിമയേറിയ ജീവിതമോ ഇല്ലെന്നു ചുരുക്കം. ഈ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലാണ് സുവിശേഷവും സംസ്കാരവും സുവിശേഷസത്യവും മറ്റു മത വിശ്വാസികളും തമ്മിലുള്ള അതിർത്തി രേഖകളെക്കുറിച്ചുമുള്ള സംവാദം സംഗതമാവുന്നത് ഇവയെല്ലാം ഇന്നത്തെ എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ ചിന്താ ധാരയിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു.

**എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ വിരുന്നിലേക്കുള്ള ക്ഷണം**  
(Invitation to an ecumenical hospitality)

എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ മാനവരാശിക്കുവേണ്ടിയുള്ള ഒരു ദർശനമാണ് സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. “ക്രിസ്തു നിങ്ങളെ കൈകൊണ്ടുപോലെ നിങ്ങളും അന്യേന്യം ദൈവമഹത്വത്തിനായി കൈകൊള്ളുവീൻ (റോമ. 16:7-welcome one another) എന്ന പൗലോസിന്റെ മൊഴികളും, ഗിരിഗീതയിൽ യേശുക്രിസ്തു അനുശാസിക്കുന്ന പ്രകാരം നിങ്ങൾ ഇഷ്ടിക്കുന്നത് മറ്റുള്ളവർക്കും ചെയ്യുവീൻ എന്ന ഉദ്ഘോഷവും (ലൂക്കോ. 6:37) “ദൈവത്തിനു മുഖപക്ഷമില്ല എന്നും, ഏതു ജാതിയിലും അവനെ ഭയപ്പെട്ടു നീതി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നവനെ അവൻ അംഗീകരിക്കുന്നു” എന്നുള്ള പത്രോസിന്റെ പ്രബോധനവും (1 പത്രോ.3:15-16) മറ്റു മത വിശ്വാസികളോടുള്ള ക്രൈസ്തവ സമീപനത്തിന്റെ മാർഗ്ഗരേഖകളാണ്. Social Harmony ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള "Social Space" കണ്ടെത്തുവാൻ വേദഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളുടെ പുനർ വായനയും വ്യാഖ്യാനവും ആവശ്യം തന്നെ. Creed, Code, Cult എന്നീ മൂന്നു തൂണുകളിൽ താങ്ങി നിൽക്കുന്ന മതസംഹിതകളിലെ ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികതയാണ് ഇന്നിന്റെ ആവശ്യം. ആദ്ധ്യാത്മിക ബന്ധത്തിന്റെ പ്രകാശനത്തിനു മതാനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങൾ വേണ്ടതാണ്. ക്രൈസ്തവരെ സംബന്ധിച്ച്ത്തോളം Eucharistic Liturgy യോടൊപ്പം Eucharistic lifestyle ഉം ചേർത്തു വായിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. ഒരു കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ മതങ്ങൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള വ്യത്യാസം നിലനിറുത്തുവാൻ വേണ്ടി ഇഷ്ടികകൾ കൊണ്ടുള്ള ഭിത്തികൾ പണിതിരുന്നുവെങ്കിൽ, അതേ ഇഷ്ടികകൾ ഉപയോഗിച്ച് ഇന്നു നാം ഒരുമയ്ക്കു വേണ്ടിയുള്ള പാലങ്ങൾ പണിയേണ്ടതാണ്. സഭയുടെ പ്രേക്ഷിതവൃത്തിയിലെ പുതിയ മാനങ്ങൾ കണ്ടെത്തുമ്പോൾ പഴയ ചില ധാരണകളും, ഭാഷാപ്രയോഗങ്ങളും വർജ്ജിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. Learning ഉം unlearning ഉം ചേർത്തു വായിക്കണം. ലോക മിഷനറി സമ്മേളനം 1910-ൽ എഡിൻബറോയിൽ സമ്മേളിച്ചപ്പോൾ സ്വീകരിച്ച മിഷൻ നയം 1938-ലെ താമ്പരം കോൺഫ്രൻസ് വരെ നിലനിന്നിരുന്നെങ്കിലും, ഇപ്പോൾ അന്നത്തെ ശക്തീകരണങ്ങൾക്കു വലിയ വ്യത്യാസം വന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. From the Christian West to the

Healthen East എന്ന Eurocentric view-നോട് ആരും ഇപ്പോൾ യോജിക്കുന്നില്ല. ഈ ചിന്താഗതിയെ Occidental arrogance എന്നാണ് ഡോ. എസ്. ജെ. സമാർത്ഥാ വിശേഷിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്. Mission in Christ's way എന്ന ചിന്തയ്ക്ക് അംഗീകരണം കൊടുക്കുമ്പോൾ യേശുവിന്റെ Table fellowship ലെ (ലൂക്കോ. 15:1-3) ദിവ്യദർശനത്തെ ആർക്കു നിഷേധിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയും? “നമുക്ക് പ്രതികൂലമല്ലാത്തവർ നമുക്ക് അനുകൂലമല്ലോ” (ലൂക്കോ 9:50) എന്ന ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ മൊഴികൾ ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിലേക്കും, വേദനയുടെ വഴിയിലേക്കും (Way of the cross) വിഭാഗികത കൂടാതെയുള്ള ആഹ്വാനമല്ലേ നൽകുന്നത്. Christ in relation to others? എന്ന ചിന്തയ്ക്കാണ് എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ വേദികളിൽ പ്രസക്തി.

**പരിസ്ഥിതി അവബോധം**

പരിസ്ഥിതി ധർമ്മശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെ ആവീർഭാവത്തോടുകൂടി എല്ലാവരും എല്ലാ ചരാചരങ്ങളും തമ്മിൽ തമ്മിൽ ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന സംഗതിയ്ക്ക് ഇന്ന് കൂടുതൽ അംഗീകാരം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. “മനുഷ്യൻ ലോകത്തിനുവേണ്ടി, ലോകം മനുഷ്യനു വേണ്ടിയല്ല” എന്ന ചിന്തയാണ് ഇതിനു ഉപോൽബലകമായി നിൽക്കുന്നത്. മനുഷ്യനും മറ്റു ചരാചരങ്ങളും തമ്മിലുള്ള ബന്ധം ദൃശ്യമായി വെളിവാക്കേണ്ടതിന്റെ ആവശ്യകത 21-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ കൂടുതൽ ബോധ്യപ്പെടുമെന്നതിനു യാതൊരു സംശയവുമില്ല. ഈ രംഗത്ത് മതനേതാക്കളുടെയും, ശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞന്മാരുടെയും വികസനമേഖലകളിലെ ബുദ്ധിജീവികളുടെയും കൂട്ടായ പ്രവർത്തനം അനിവാര്യമാണ്. Ecology is a matter of faith എന്ന ചിന്തയ്ക്ക് സഭയുടെ പ്രേക്ഷിതവേലയിൽ ശക്തീകരണം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. പരിസ്ഥിതി അവബോധം (Eco awareness), പരിസ്ഥിതി നീതിബോധം (Eco-Justice), പരിസ്ഥിതി ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികത (Eco Spirituality) എന്നീ ചിന്തകൾ മതസൗഹാർദത്തിനും, നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ സമൂഹ നിർമ്മിതിക്കും അനിവാര്യമാണ്. “ലോകം മുഴുവൻ ഒരു കിളിക്കൂട്ടിലെ കിളികൾ” (Birds of the same nest) എന്ന വേദങ്ങളിലെ ഇക്കോളജി ദർശനത്തിൽ മാനവരാശി മുഴുവനും പങ്കുചേരുന്നു.

എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ, ഇക്കണോമിക്സ്, ഇക്കോളജി എന്നീ വാക്കുകളുടെയെല്ലാം മൂലപദം “ഓയിക്കോസ്” (ഭവനം) എന്ന യവനപദമാണ്. മൂന്നു ആശയങ്ങളും പരസ്പരബന്ധിതവും പരസ്പര പൂരകവും ആണെന്നർത്ഥം. പ്രപഞ്ചത്തിലെ വൈവിധ്യത്തിന്റെ മദ്ധ്യത്തിൽ ഐക്യത്തിന്റെ ദർശനം എങ്ങനെ ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഭവനമായ ലോകത്തിൽ കാത്തു സൂക്ഷിക്കാൻ കഴിയും എന്നതാണ് കാതലായ ചിന്ത. നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ ലോകം സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ മറ്റു വ്യവസ്ഥിതികളുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു മനുഷ്യരും മറ്റു ജീവ ജാലങ്ങളും തമ്മിലുള്ള ബന്ധം നാം അവഗണിക്കുന്ന പക്ഷം ഈ ഗ്രഹത്തിൽ ജീവിക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള നമ്മുടെ അവകാശം നാം തന്നെ നിഷേധിക്കുകയാണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്. Global Warming മൂലം ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന കാലാവസ്ഥ വ്യതിയാനം സൂര്യന്റെ താപത്തെ തടഞ്ഞു നിറുത്തുന്ന അന്തരീക്ഷ പാളികളിലെ സൂഷിരങ്ങളിൽകൂടി എത്തുന്ന രശ്മികളുടെ അതിപ്രസരണം മൂലം ഉണ്ടാകാവുന്ന രോഗങ്ങൾ പ്രകൃതിക്ഷോഭങ്ങൾ മുതലായവ ശാസ്ത്രലോകത്തെ ഭയപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. തന്മൂലം സഭയുടെ പ്രേക്ഷിതവൃത്തിയിൽ സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ സമഗ്രത കാര്യമായി പരിഗണിക്കേണ്ടിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഭൂമിയിൽ മരണത്തിന്റെ ശക്തികൾ നിലനിൽക്കുമ്പോൾ നിശബ്ദരായിരിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയുമോ? ദൈവപുത്രന്മാരുടെ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം പങ്കിടുവാൻ സൃഷ്ടി ഈറ്റു നോവോടുകൂടി കാത്തിരിയ്ക്കുന്നു എന്നാണ് ലോ റോമാ 8-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ വി. പൗലോസ് ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിക്കുന്നത്. “സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ ഞരക്കം” നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ സാമ്പത്തിക ഘടയ്ക്കു വേണ്ടിയുള്ള ഞരക്കം കൂടിയാണ്. സ്ഥായിയായ വികസനം (Sustainable development) എന്ന ചിന്തയ്ക്ക് അത് ആക്കം കൂട്ടുന്നു. ഭാവിയിലെ കാര്യമായി പരിഗണിച്ച് വരും തലമുറയുടെ അവകാശങ്ങളും പരിരക്ഷിച്ചുകൊണ്ടുള്ള വികസന മാതൃകയിൽ മനുഷ്യനും അവന്റെ അന്തസ്സും, സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ സമഗ്രതയും ഗൗരവപൂർവ്വം അംഗീകരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നു. ഇക്കോളജിയും, ഇക്കണോമിക്സും എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ വിശാല എക്യുമെനിക്കൽ സന്തിലെ മൂന്നു തൂണുകളായി

മൂന്നാം സഹസ്രാബ്ദത്തിൽ കരുതേണ്ടിവരും. എക്യൂ മെനിസം മാനവരാശിയിൽ ഒരു വിശ്വദർശനം നൽകുന്നു. ഇക്കണമിക്സ് നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ ഘടനകളിൽ കൂടി ദൈവം ദാനമായി നൽകിയ ജീവൻ കാത്തു സൂക്ഷിക്കേണ്ട ആവശ്യകത നമ്മെ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കും. ഇക്കോളജി മനുഷ്യനും മറ്റും ജീവജാലങ്ങളും പ്രകൃതിയും തമ്മിൽ ഒരു മാലയിലെ മുത്തുപോലെ ഏറെ ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു എന്നും ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിക്കുന്നു.

**ആധുനിക വെല്ലുവിളികൾ**

ആഗോളവൽക്കരണം (Globalisation), ഉദാരവൽക്കരണം (Liberalisation) എന്നിവ ഉയർത്തുന്ന വെല്ലുവിളികൾ ആധുനിക കമ്പോളവ്യവസ്ഥിതിയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തിയാണ് ആഗോളവൽക്കരണ പ്രക്രിയ അറിയപ്പെടുന്നത്. ആശയ വിനിമയ മാധ്യമങ്ങളിൽ കൂടിയും, മറ്റു ഗതാഗതമാർഗ്ഗങ്ങളിൽ കൂടിയും ഒരു അതിർത്തി രഹിതമായ ലോകം നിശ്ചയിക്കുന്ന തീൻ ആഗോളവൽക്കരണ പ്രക്രിയ ഉപകരിക്കുമെന്നു ചിന്തിക്കുന്നവരുണ്ട്. പക്ഷെ അതിന്റെ വ്യാപ്തി കമ്പോളവൽക്കരണത്തിൽ വേരുന്നി നിൽക്കുന്നതു കൊണ്ട് ലോകജനതയിൽ ഒരു വലിയ ഭാഗം ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ തെരുക്കോണുകളിലേക്കു തള്ളപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. ഒരു സംസ്കാരം, ഒരു രൂപി എന്നീ നിലകളിലേക്കു മാനവരാശിയെ ആഗോള വൽക്കരണത്തിന്റെ ശക്തി കരണം നയിക്കും. ഇത് 21-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ സഭയുടെ മുൻപിൽ ഇത് ഒരു വലിയ ചോദ്യമായി തീരുമെന്നതിൽ സംശയം ഇല്ല. ഈ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ ഒരു ബദൽ സംസ്കാരം പടുത്തുയർത്തുകയാണ് വേണ്ടത്. മാനവ സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ വൈവിധ്യത്തെ തകർക്കുന്ന എല്ലാ ശക്തികളോടും എതിർത്തു നിലക്കേണ്ടി വരും. ഒരു ജനതയുടെ ബുദ്ധികേന്ദ്രം അപഹരിക്കുന്നതിനോ, മാർക്കറ്റിനു ദൈവിക പരിവേഷം നൽകി പൂജിക്കുന്നതിനോ, സാംസ്കാരിക കോളോണി യലിസം ആഗോളവൽക്കരണത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി അടിച്ചേൽപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനോ ശ്രമിക്കുന്ന എല്ലാ കൃത്യങ്ങളെയും പ്രവാചക ദർശനത്തോടുകൂടി സഭ അഭിമുഖീകരിക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. മൂലധനത്തിന്റെയും സമ്പത്തിന്റെയും പേരിൽ ദരിദ്രരെ അവഹേളിക്കുന്നതും പീഡിപ്പിക്കുന്നതും തദ്ദേശീയ ജനത കളുടെ സംസ്കാരത്തെ ചവിട്ടിമെതിക്കുന്നതും സഹനശക്തിയോടുകൂടി വീക്ഷിക്കാവുന്നതല്ല. പ്രകൃതിയുടെ സമനില താറുമാറാക്കുന്ന കമ്പോള വ്യവസ്ഥിതിയെയും നിരുത്സാഹപ്പെടുത്തേണ്ടതാണ്. മാനവകൂടുംബത്തിലെ പ്രതിബദ്ധത തറപ്പിച്ചു പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്ന ദൈവരാജ്യദർശനമായിരിക്കണം ഉയർത്തിപ്പിടിക്കേണ്ടത്. ഇത് സഭകളുടെ എക്യൂമെനിക്കൽ ധർമ്മമാണ്.

**പ്രേഷിതവൃത്തി ബഹുലതയുടെ നടുവിൽ**

വംശീയത, ജാതി, മതം ഭാഷ, സംസ്കാരം എന്നിവ ആധുനിക ലോകത്തിൽ വൈവിധ്യങ്ങളെക്കൂ ആക്കവും, തൂക്കവും നൽകുന്നു. വിവിധ സഭാ വിഭാഗങ്ങളും മതബഹുലതയുടെ ഭാഗമായി കാണാം. ബഹുലത കളുടെ ലോകത്തിൽ സഭയുടെ ധർമ്മം എന്ത് എന്ന ചോദ്യം 21-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ കൂടുതൽ പ്രസക്തമായിരിക്കും. അസ്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി ബഹുലതയെ കാണാം. എന്നാൽ അതിന്റെ അളവുകോൽ സത്യവും നീതിബോധവും ആയിരിക്കണം. ലോകത്തിന്റെ ഐക്യവും പുതൂക്കവും ആണ് സഭയുടെ പ്രേക്ഷി തയർമ്മം എങ്കിൽ ബഹുലതയുള്ള ലോകത്തെയും പ്രപഞ്ചത്തിലുള്ള സകല ചരാചരങ്ങളെയും അവഗണിക്കുകയോ അപലപിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യേണ്ടതില്ല. ക്രിസ്തുവിൽ സകലതും ഒന്നാക്കുന്ന കാലസമ്പൂർണ്ണതയിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥയുടെ വിവിധ മാനങ്ങൾ അപീഷ്കരിക്കുകയത്ര വേണ്ടത്. വിവിധ സഭാ പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങളിൽ സ്ഥായിയായി നില നിൽക്കുന്ന സത്യങ്ങൾ ക്രൈസ്തവസഭയുടെ പൊതുസ്വത്തായി കരുതുകയും കാത്തു സൂക്ഷിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുവാ നുള്ള നവദർശനത്തിന് സഭൈക്യ സംഭാഷണങ്ങളിൽ ഇന്നു കൂടുതൽ അംഗീകാരം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഈ അംഗീകാരത്തിനു യോജ്യമായ സഭൈക്യമോഡലുകൾ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനും, പ്രേഷി തവേലയിൽ പ്രാദേശി സഭകൾ തദ്ദേശീയ സംസ്കാരി ത്തിനു കൂടുതൽ വില നൽകുന്നതിനും ലോകസഭാ കൗൺസിലും, വത്തിക്കാണിലെ പ്രേഷിതനിർവ്വാഹക സമിതികളും അടിവരയിട്ടു പ്രഖ്യാപിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. Towards a common understanding and vision of the World Council of Churches (1997) എന്ന പേരിൽ WCC പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച രേഖയും, ഓറിയന്റൽ ഓർത്തോ ഡോക്സ് സഭകളും, കത്തോലിക്കാ സഭയും ചേർന്ന് നടത്തിവരുന്ന വിയന്നാസഭാഷണ നിഗമനങ്ങളും Federaivn of Asian Bihops Conference (FABC) ഉം Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) ഉം തമ്മിൽ ആരംഭിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന സംഭാഷണങ്ങളും, 1998-ൽ റോമിൽ നടന്ന ഏഷ്യൻ സുന്നഹദോസും, സഭൈക്യ സംഭാഷണങ്ങളിലും, പ്രേഷിത വേലയിലും 21-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ വിപ്ലവകാത്മകമായ കാൽവെയ്പ്പുകൾ സംഭാവന ചെയ്യുമെന്നു പ്രത്യാശിക്കാം.

പരസ്പരാഭി മുഖീകരണത്തിൽ കൂടി സത്യത്തെ വിമോചന സത്യമായി മാറ്റുന്നതിനും, സ്നേഹത്തിന്റെ മറ്റു ജീവിതവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനും സഭകൾ എക്കാലത്തും യത്നിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ഈ ഉദ്യമത്തിൽ തള്ളേണ്ടതിനെ തള്ളുന്നതിനും കാലഹരണപ്പെട്ടതിനെ വിലകുറഞ്ഞ തായി പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്നതിനും ഇന്നലയെ തുറന്ന മനസ്സോടു കൂടി അഭിമുഖീകരിക്കുന്നതിനും ഉള്ള ധീരത പ്രദർശിപ്പിക്കണം.

**വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിനും അന്തസ്സിനും വേണ്ടിയുള്ള അന്വേഷണം**

വ്യക്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ അംഗീകാരത്തിനും, നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ ഒരു സമൂഹം നിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നതിനും ഉള്ള തള്ളപ്പെട്ട ജനതയുടെ പോരാട്ടം 21-ാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ കൂടുതൽ ശക്തിപ്പെടുവാൻ സാധ്യതയുണ്ട്. മാനവരാശിയുടെ ചതഞ്ഞുടഞ്ഞ ഭാഗങ്ങളെ ചികിത്സിച്ചു സുഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന വേലയിൽ ദൈവരാജ്യദർശനമാണ് സഭ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തേണ്ടത്. നീതിപൂർവ്വമായ ഘടനകളുടെ നിർമ്മാണത്തിനും, മനുഷ്യാവകാശങ്ങളുടെ സംരക്ഷണത്തിനും, സഭ നേതൃത്വം നൽകണം. നീതിയും സമാധാനവും തമ്മിൽ ചുംബിക്കുന്ന വേദിയാണ് സഭ ഒരുക്കേണ്ടത്. ഇച്ചാശക്തി നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട പുരുഷാരം, ജനാവികലാംഗർ, സിത്രീകൾ, ദളിതർ, വിവധരീതിയിൽ പീഡിപ്പിക്കപ്പെട്ടവർ, AIDS രോഗികൾ, പണിയെടുക്കുന്ന കുട്ടികൾ, കുഴിബോംബുപൊട്ടി അംഗഭംഗമേറ്റവർ, ജോലിതേടി നാടുചുറ്റി അലഞ്ഞുനടക്കുന്നവർ, അഭയാർത്ഥികൾ മുതലായ വരുടെ വ്യക്തിത്വവും, അന്തസ്സും നിലനിറുത്തുന്ന വേലയിൽ സഭ കൂടുതലായി പങ്കുചേരേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. 'ദൈവം ബലഹീനരുടെ പക്ഷത്ത്' എന്ന ദൈവശാസ്ത്രചിന്തയ്ക്ക് ഊടും പാവവും മെന്നയുന്ന പ്രേഷിത ശൈലിയാണ് ഈ വെല്ലുവിളികളുടെ മദ്ധ്യേ ആവശ്യം. സാമൂഹികരൂപാന്തർത്തിനു അനുയോജ്യമായ പ്രവർത്തനമേഖലയിൽ എല്ലായിപ്പോഴും തുറന്ന സമീപനം വച്ചു പുലർത്തുകയും വേണം. മുകളിൽ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിച്ച ചിന്തകൾക്കു ദൃശ്യരൂപം നൽകുന്നതിനു സഹായകരമായ വിവിധ കമ്മീഷനുകൾ WCC, CCA മുതലായ എക്യൂമെനിക്കൽ പ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ ഉണ്ട്.

മുകളിൽ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിച്ച ചിന്തകൾക്കു ദൃശ്യരൂപം നൽകുന്നതിനു സഹായകരമായ വിവിധ കമ്മീഷനുകൾ WCC, CCA മുതലായ എക്യൂമെനിക്കൽ പ്രസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ ഉണ്ട്. പരിസ്ഥിതി ധർമ്മികത സഭയുടെ ദൗത്യനിർവ്വഹണത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി കരുതി മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിൽ Ecological Commission - നും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. അത്തായ നേതൃത്വം എക്യൂമെനിക്കൽ വേദിയുടെ അഭിഭാജ്യ ഘടകമായി സഭ കരുതുകയും വേണം.

'സഭയുടെ ഹൃദയ സ്പന്ദനം' എന്ന നിലയിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്ന നിരവധി കോൺഫ്രൻസ് സെന്ററുകൾ ലോകത്ത് എല്ലായിടവും Oikonsnet എന്ന പേരിൽ വിവിധ ശുശ്രൂഷകൾ നിർവ്വഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. Y.M.C.A, Y.W.C.A. മുതലായ സംഘടനകളും അത്തായ നേതൃത്വത്തിന്റെ സംഭാവനകളാണ്. Oikonet ൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്ന ലേ സെന്റേർഡിനെ ACISCA- എന്ന നാമത്തിലാണ് അറിയപ്പെടുന്നത്. ബാഗ്ലൂരിലെ ECC യും ACISCA (Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia)

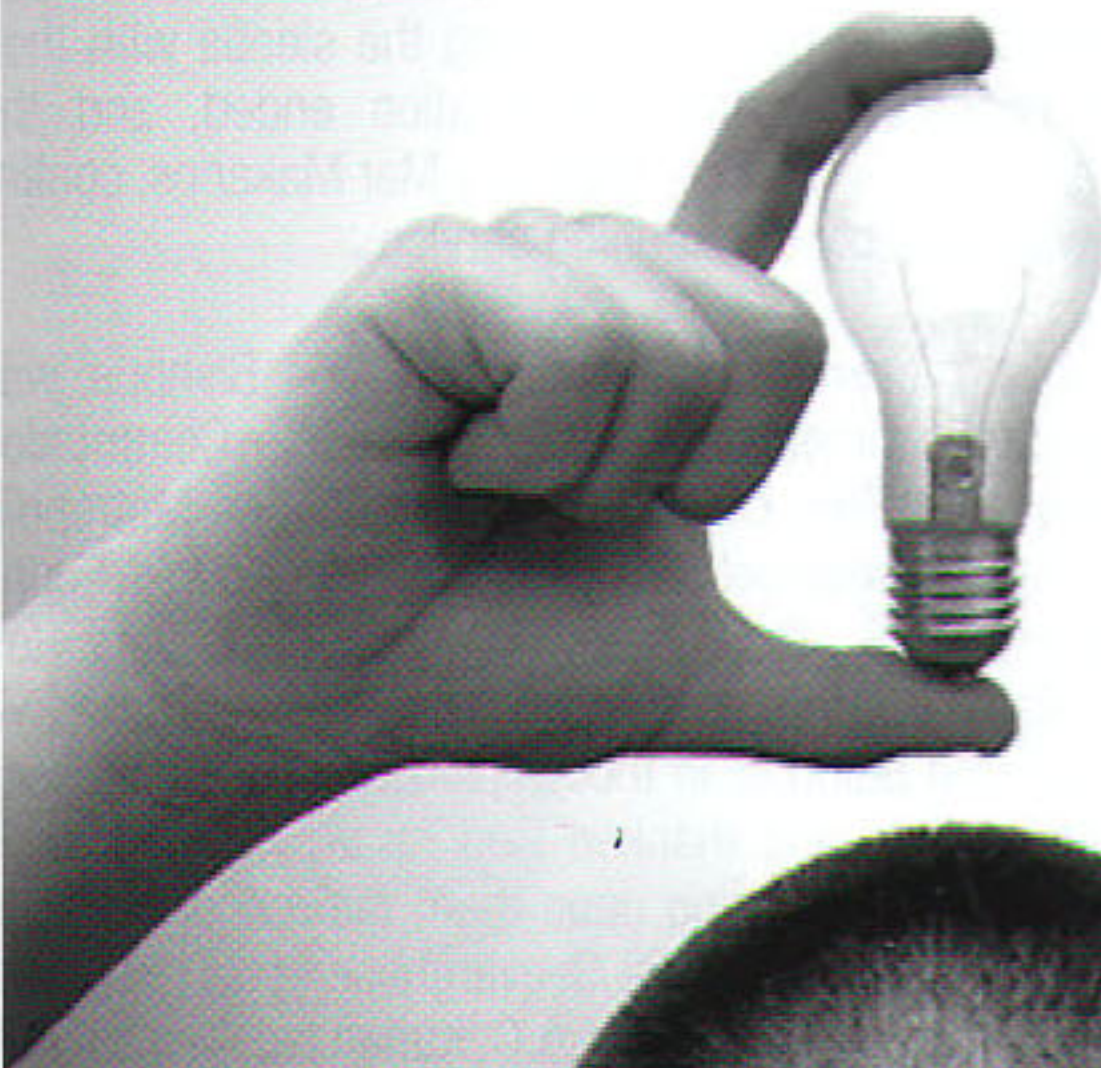
ഫാമിലിയിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു. മാർത്തോമ്മാ സഭയിലെ J.M.M. Study Centre (Thiruvananthapuram) ഉം കോട്ടയത്തെ റ്റി. എം. എ. റിസേർച്ച് ആൻഡ് ഓറിയന്റേഷൻ സെന്ററും ACISCA കൂട്ടുംബത്തിലെ അംഗങ്ങളാണ്. സഭയുടെ എക്യൂമെനിക്കൽ യാത്രയ്ക്ക് ഓരോ കാലഘട്ടത്തിലും ദൈവാത്മാവ് പുതിയ രൂപവും ഭാവവും നൽകി കൊണ്ടിരിക്കും.

\*റവ.ഡോ.എം.ജെ. ജോസഫ് (ലേഖകൻ) മാർത്തോമ്മാ തിയോളജിക്കൽ സെമിനാരി, മുൻപ്രിൻസിപ്പലും, ബാഗ്ലൂർ എക്യൂമെനിക്കൽ ക്രിസ്ത്യൻ സെന്റർ മുൻഡയറക്ടറും, WCC bnse Faith and order കമ്മീഷനിലെ ഒരു മുൻഅംഗവും ആണ്.

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# OXIOS...OXIOS...OXIOS...

## He Is Worthy

### Episcopal Consecration Of Three New Bishops



Compiled by Lal Varghese, Esq.

The Episcopal Consecration of the three Rambans of the Mar Thoma Church, Very Rev. Dr. Varghese Mathai, Very Rev. K.V. Varkey, and Very Rev. Dr. Oommen George, was held on Saturday, August 13, 2011. The consecration service was held at a specially prepared Madbaha on the Syrian Christian Seminary Compound (SCS Compound) in Thiruvalla, Kerala, India, at the headquarters of the Mar Thoma Church. The Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church, was the chief celebrant. A large number of people from different parts of the world witnessed the Episcopal consecration. The service began at 7:15 am with a procession from St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church at the SCS Compound, escorting the three Rambans to the specially consecrated Madbaha in the Pandal. A 101-member choir of the Department of Sacred Music and Communications ("DSMC"), the music wing of the Sabha, led the procession by singing "Senayin Yehoveye.....", joined by clergy, Bishops, and Sabha Council members.

When the procession reached the Madbaha, Very Rev. K.S. Mathew, Sabha Secretary, handed over the Rambans (Dayarakar), to the Metropolitan and requested the Metropolitan to consecrate them as the Bishops of the Church. The three Rambans knelt in front of the Thronos. The Metropolitan, holding the hands of each Ramban responded 'the Holy Spirit is calling the Ramban to be consecrated as the Bishop of Mar Thoma Church.' The three Rambans accepted the calling and agreed to be consecrated as Bishops of the Church by saying, 'I accept the calling.' Thereafter, the Metropolitan led the Holy Communion service assisted by other Bishops and Clergy. During the Holy Communion, Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Saffragan Metropolitan delivered the devotional speech. Metropolitan prayed for the blessings from God almighty by placing his both hands on the head of each Ramban. Thereafter the Metropolitan after reciting the prayers in the order of service placed his right hand on the head of each Ramban, announced their new Episcopal names: Mathews Mar Makarios for Very Rev. Dr. Varghese Mathai, Gregorios Mar Stephanos for Very Rev. K. V. Varkey, and Thomas Mar Theethos for Very Rev. Dr. Oommen George. Then Metropolitan holding their hands raised each of them from their kneeling position. Thereafter, they were given new Episcopal vestments and Episcopal rings, Sleebea and the Metropolitan placed the Episcopal head cover (Masnapsa) on the head of each of them. The curtain in front of the Madbaha was closed for the vesting of the Episcopal vestments upon the new Bishops, while the choir and believers were singing.

When the curtain was reopened, the Metropolitan asked the new Bishops wearing the Episcopal vestments to be seated on the Mar Thoma Throne, according to their seniority. While each new Bishop was seated on the Mar Thoma Throne, facing west, designated clergy lifted the Throne with the Bishops, and Metropolitan recited

that 'you are worthy and qualified for being consecrated as Bishops,' while the believers recited three times "Oxios," meaning "he is worthy." Following, the new Bishops were given the Episcopal staffs. The Metropolitan held the staff on the very top and each Bishop of the Church, according to their seniority, also held it from top to bottom.

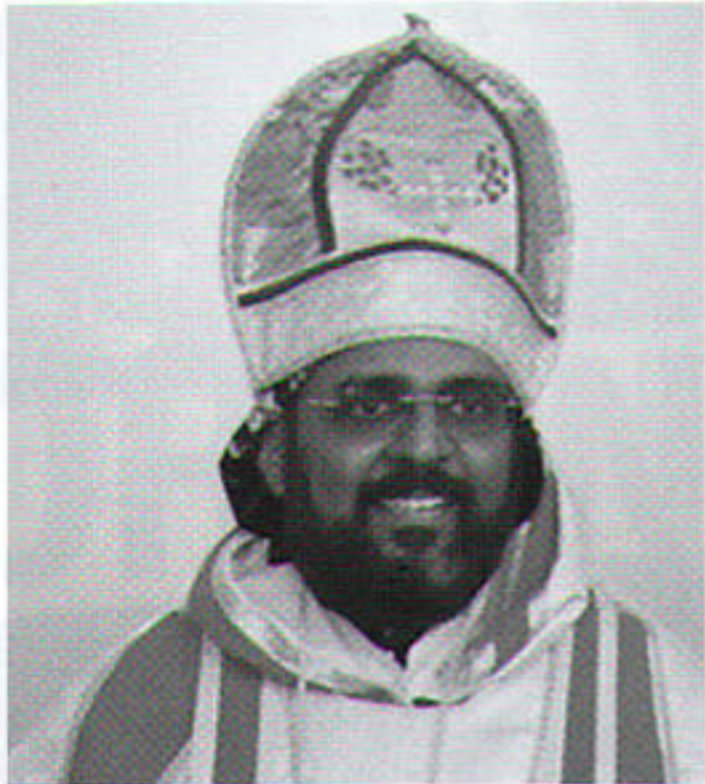
The new Bishop held at the very bottom of his Episcopal staff. After the prayers were recited, each of the current Bishops released their hands from the staff, starting from the junior-most Bishop from the bottom, and finally by the Metropolitan. Only the Bishop designate was holding the staff at this time, and thus the handing over of the Episcopal staff was completed. The new Bishops then received the Kaimuthu from the Metropolitan and other Bishops. The clergy Trustee, Sabha Secretary, Sabha Trustee, one man, one woman, and two children also received the kiss of peace from the new Bishops. The newly consecrated Bishops moved to the front of the Madbaha, faced west, and blessed the people by raising the sleebea with their right hands. Thus the consecration ended, and the senior-most new Bishop, Mathews Mar Makarios, continued with the Holy Communion service.

A public meeting to felicitate the new Bishops was conducted immediately after the Holy Communion service. Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Gregorios Metropolitan, Rev. Ammanuel B. Gareeb from Kuwait, John Varghese, I.P.S., Dr. Elizabeth Varghese, and Very Rev. K.S. Mathew delivered felicitation speeches. The newly consecrated Bishops, in their reply speeches, expressed gratitude to all and thanked God for His providence in selecting and conferring upon them the responsibility to lead His sheep. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius led the initial prayer and Rev. A.C. Kurian led the concluding prayer during the public meeting. A 'Mangala Pathram' on behalf of the members of the Mar Thoma Church was given to each new Bishop by Very Rev. P.V. Thomas, K. Varghese (Lay Trustee), and Rev. Varghese Thomas (Clergy Trustee) respectively.



**Rt. Rev. Dr. Mathews Mar Makarios Episcopa**  
Kottayam – Kochi Diocese

Makarios Thirumeni (Rev. Dr. Varghese Mathai) was born on February 25, 1953. He is the son of Mr. K.E. Mathew and Kunjamma of Kalayil Kannanpoikayil. Thirumeni's mother parish is Thumpamon Immanuel Mar Thoma Church in Pathanamthitta District. Thirumeni completed his bachelor's degree in Theology from Kottayam Vaideeka Seminary (1975–1978). Makarios Thirumeni was ordained as a Deacon on April 21, 1978 at Kozhencherry St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church by Joseph Mar Ireneus Episcopa and as a priest on May 22, 1978 at Thiruvalla St. Thomas Church by Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan. He was ordained as a Ramban on May 7, 2011 and consecrated as an Episcopa on August 13, 2011. Thirumeni obtained his M.Th. from FFRRRC, Kottayam (1983–1985) and his Ph.D. from SATHRI, Bangalore (1991–1994), based on the subject "The Revelation of Christ in John's Gospel of the New Testament." Achen taught for 18 years at various institutions including Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, Vaideeka Seminary, Kottayam, and FFRRRC. Thirumeni also served on the Research Committee of Serampore University, Calcutta and Dean of Doctoral Studies at FFRRRC. Thirumeni has written several books in Christian theology including "Paraclete: The Experience of the Holy Spirit," "Jesus the Good Shepherd," "Criticism on the Epistle to Hebrews," "1st Epistle to Corinthians," "Discipleship: Calling and Responsibility." Thirumeni served as a priest in parishes at Ranny Valiyakavu MTC, Karimpanamkuzhy MTC, Kumali MTC, Anakkara MTC, Vandenmedu MTC, Calcutta MTC, Nattaseri MTC, Sydney, Australia, New Zealand parishes, and Othara Ebenezer MTC. He also served as the student chaplain in the Kottayam-Ranni Diocese and as Bahya Kerala Eastern Zonal Secretary.



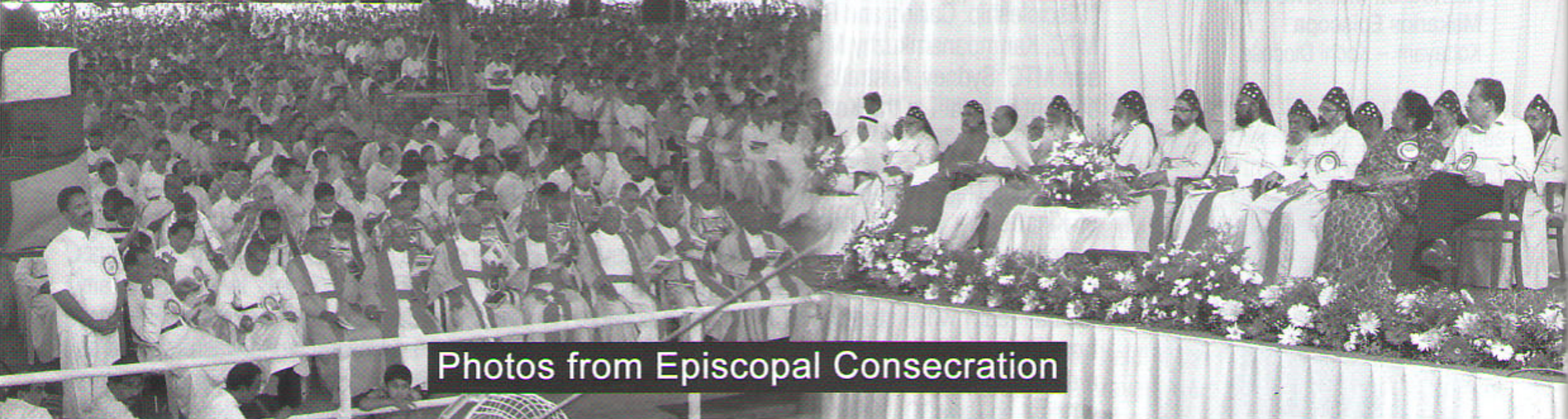
**Rt. Rev. Gregorios Mar Stephanos Episcopa**  
Malabar – Kunnamkulam Diocese

Stephanos Thirumeni (Rev. K. V. Varkey) was born on March 16, 1959. He is the son of Mr. K.P. Varkey of Kinattukara Parayil house and Kunjamma of Chengannur Plamoottil house. Thirumeni's mother parish is St. George MTC in Fort Kochi. He obtained B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy from Maharajas College, Ernakulam, and M. Phil from Madras Christian College. Thirumeni was in the University football team while studying at Maharaja's college. He completed his bachelor's degree in Theology from Bishop's College, Calcutta (1982–1986), affiliated to Serampore University. He was ordained as a deacon on June 27, 1986 at St. Thomas MTC, Thiruvalla by Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa and as a priest on July 30, 1986 at St. George MTC, Fort Cochi by Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa. He was ordained as a Ramban on May 7, 2011 and consecrated as an Episcopa on August 13, 2011. He served as a priest in parishes at Bilaspur, Corba, Ambikapur, Chetpet, Tambaram, St. Thomas Mount, Kolalampur, Ranchi, Mumbai Santacruz, Maramon, Venmony Sehion, and Kavum Bhagom Ebenezer. Thirumeni also served as the Principal and Manager of Ranchi St. Thomas School, Vice President of Ranchi Education Society, Missionary at Ranchi Navajeevan Kendram, manager at Maramon A.M.M. School, Vice President of Niranam-Maramon Voluntary Evangelistic Association, Vice President of Niranam-Maramon Development Board, and Secretary of Mar Thoma Medical Mission. For his administrative abilities, he has received several awards, including best principal award in 1997 from Prathibha Uthan Parishad, Bihar, Vijayasree award in 1999 from India International Friendship Society, New Delhi, and International Millennium Gold Star Award in 2000 from International Forum for NRS's New Delhi.



**Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Theethos Episcopa**  
Mumbai Diocese

Theethos Thirumeni (Rev. Dr. Oommen George) was born on May 10, 1959. He is the son of P. N. George of Kottakkad Puthenveetil, Kannankode, Adoor, and Aleyamma of Pinuvilayil Thengumthundiyl, Thevalakara. Thirumeni's mother parish is Adoor Kannamkode MTC. He obtained a B.Sc. from Catholicate College in Pathanamthitta. Thirumeni completed a B.D. from Kottayam Theological Seminary (1982–1985). He was ordained as a deacon on June 1, 1985 at Adoor Kannamkode MTC by Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa, and as a priest on June 14, 1985 at Kottarakara MTC by Easow Mar Timotheos Episcopa. He was ordained as a Ramban on May 7, 2011 and consecrated as an Episcopa on August 13, 2011. He received his Masters degree in Sociology from Indore University and M.Th. and Ph.D. from Bangalore Dharmaram Theological College, based on the subject "Holy Communion and Spirituality". He also had his higher education from Amsterdam University, Netherlands during his doctoral studies. Thirumeni served as priest in parishes at Chengaroth, Chempanoda, Anakulam, Gandhigram, Bhuj, Bhav Nagar, Mumbai Goregaon, Colaba, Thumkur, Kalamassery, Chengannur-Thittamel, Pularicadu, and Chirayirambu. He also served in the Diocese of North America & Europe at Long Island MTC, New York, St. James MTC, New York, and St. Andrew's MTC, New York. Thirumeni served as the principal of Indore Higher Secondary School and as secretary to Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom, Valiya Metropolitan.



Photos from Episcopal Consecration



Photos from Kassessa Ordinations (Rev. Alex George Kolath & Rev. Dennis Abraham)



# ORDINATION OF REV. DENNIS ABRAHAM

## St. Johns MTC, New York

**Rev. Jacob Varghese, Vicar, St. Johns MTC, New York**

*The* Holy Ordination ceremony took place on Friday, July 8, 2011 at Hofstra University in New York. This was in conjunction with the XXXII National Youth Conference hosted by the Long Island Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship. The service was led by our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, and the Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa.

The vicar of St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York, Rev. Jacob Verghese, spoke from 1 Peter 2: 1-10, where he exhorted all about the reality and responsibilities of ministry and the priesthood. He reflected on the idea that priesthood is a symbol of sacrifice, and as ministers we are responsible to be custodians of faith and are to be the image of incarnation. At the end of the service, Theodosius Thirumeni welcomed all who participated, and Rev. Jacob Verghese read the kalpana from the Metropolitan, announcing the Puthen Qurbana scheduled to take place on Sunday, July 10, 2011.

parish, St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York, was arranged for all. The service was well attended by many Vicars, Deacon Alex Kolath, friends and families from the home parish and neighboring parishes, well-wishers, along with the delegates and organizers of the 32nd National Youth Conference. The ordination was a blessing by the grace of God.

### **Puthen Qurbana**

Puthen Qurbana was held at the St. John's Mar Thoma Church, Queens Village, New York, on Sunday, July 10, 2011. The Holy Qurbana service was in Malayalam, led by Rev. Dennis Abraham. The vicar Rev. Jacob Verghese assisted and the members of the Church along with other relatives and friends from neighboring parishes attended the service. It was soon followed by a felicitation meeting and concluded with a fellowship lunch. We praise and thank Almighty God for all His blessings and mercies for the ordination of another servant, Rev. Dennis Abraham.

Following the ordination a fellowship breakfast hosted by the home



# ORDINATION OF REV. ALEX GEORGE KOLATH OF MTC, DALLAS, FARMERS BRANCH

**Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla, Vicar, MTC Dallas, FB**

*M*MTC Dallas, FB under the wings of the mighty Lord and the Savior, began yielding the fruits of her dependency. Rev. Dn. Alex G. Kolath is the first fruit of the parish who through Kassessa ordination service began his faithful journey to fulfill His purpose and establish the Kingdom of God. Rev. Alex G. Kolath is the son of Mr. George Kolath and Mrs. (Late) Mary Kolath, belonging to the Kolath family, Kozhencherry, Kerala. The Deacon ordination was held at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Thiruvalla on May 7, 2011 led by Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos, former Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of North America and Europe. The Kassessa ordination was held at MTC Dallas, FB on 30th July 2011 led by the Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius. Rev. Mathew Joseph, Rev. Varghese Mathew P., Rev. A. P. Noble, Rev. Shibi M. Abraham (Youth Chaplain, Houston), Rev. Dennis Abraham, Rev. K. P. Thomas, Rev. George Varghese, Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas (Youth Chaplain, Dallas), Rev. Dr. A. V. Thomas (C.S.I Church) and Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla were also present. Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla (Youth Chaplain, Philadelphia) represented the Kottayam Vaideeka Seminary, where Achen was a seminary professor and was the Malpan Achen for Rev. Alex G. Kolath. Believers from all four Mar Thoma parishes in Dallas, other sister parishes and from the Mar Thoma parishes in Houston, Austin, Oklahoma, Lubbock and other parts of United States and Canada were present for this ordination service. The service began with the procession at 7:25 am while singing the hymn "Senayin Yehove..." The new Cappa (Cassock) for the Deacon was handed over to the Vicar by Mr. George Kolath. During the Holy Communion service Rev. George Varghese, Vicar Sehion MTC, Dallas, gave the devotional talk and exhorted the qualities of a model minister.

Achen pointed to mainly four things: that the ministry should be a bold ministry generating evangelistic interest, there should be integrity in the ministry being undertaken qualified by sincerity and simplicity, the ministry should involve humility and finally ministry of hard work and encouragement. Paul's ministry was a blessed one because of the above attributes as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians. Achen reminded the Rev. Deacon Alex G. Kolath to continue an extraordinary model ministry so that it may be a blessing to all. At the beginning of the ordination service, Deacon Alex read the oath and handed over the same to the Bishop and knelt before the Thronos. The Bishop then began the ordination service by reminding Deacon about Thomas Sleeha and others who proclaimed the gospel in Kerala. The Deacon repeated the faith and submission pledge after the Bishop. The Deacon marked the sign of the cross on the register held by the Bishop. The Deacon knelt before the Thronos and his head was covered with the 'Sosappa', the white cloth with the cross that covers the Casa and Pilasa (paten and chalice) during the Holy Communion.



The Bishop covered the Deacon's head with the lower portion of the right side of his Cappa (Cassock) and continued exhortations from the order of the service of ordination. Then the Bishop removed the 'Sosappa' and the Cappa (Cassock) from the Deacon's head and announced that he is ordained into the Kassessa position of the Mar Thoma Church. The Bishop then cut the Deacon's hair from three sides of his head as symbolic representation of himself being entrusted to the Church and its ordained ministry. The first and second special lessons for the ordination service was read by Rev. Varghese Mathew P. and Rev. A. P. Noble respectively, while Deacon remained kneeling facing the Thronos. Thereafter the curtain was closed briefly while the congregation was singing. When the curtain was opened, Rev. Alex G. Kolath, wearing his Cappa (Cassock) for the first time and with the censor in his right hand bowed his head to the congregation respecting the royal priesthood of the congregation, while the Bishop continued with the Holy Communion service. Rev. Alex Kolath assisted the Bishop in serving Communion to family members and relatives who the Vicar Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla to the rest of the congregation. Around 350 members participated in the Holy Communion service, which ended by 11 am.

A public meeting was organized by the Parish to felicitate Rev. Alex G. Kolath. Dallas Farmers Branch City Mayor was the chief guest during this ceremony. A special song was sung by the Farmers Branch combined choir composed by Mr. M. J. Andrews. The choir leaders Mr. John R. Abraham and Ms. Ashlin Kolath deserve special appreciation. The parish secretary, Mr. Anwar Achenkunj did the felicitation and trustees, Mr. Abraham Mathew and Mr. Jacob Varghese, presented the new priest with the parish gift. Representing Sunday School, Mr. V. T. Abraham appreciated the newly ordained priest. The vicar Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla and the Vice President Mr. Eapen Thomas handed a plaque to Rev. Alex G. Kolath. Youth Fellowship members, Mr. Robin Abraham and

Ms. Julie Pannachakunnel presented a gift as a token of love to the newly ordained minister. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa gave a brief sermon encouraging and challenging the newly ordained minister. In his speech, Thirumeni reminded him that he is a minister not only of the Mar Thoma Church, but also to the whole world. Thirumeni said the MTC Dallas, FB received its first fruit through Alex G. Kolath and congratulated the parish for offering its first fruit to the ministry of the Mar Thoma Church and to the world. On behalf of the Kolath family Mr. Mathew Varghese presented a Cappa (Cassock) to Rev. Alex G. Kolath. Mayor of the City of Farmers Branch expressed his wishes to Rev. Alex Kolath and for his ministry and thanked the parish for being in the city as true witnesses of Jesus Christ. Rev. Alex Kolath responded by saying that he is humbled to hear all that was said about him. He thanked God for everything done to him, making and molding him. He acknowledged God's strength and grace in all that brought him here today as an Achen of the Mar Thoma Church. He thanked all the people who were with him during the last four years and for their prayerful support. He said that here we see the end of one story and the beginning of another and we do not know how that story will end, but God knows.

## True Mark of a Christian Family

Book review: **Dr. Daliya Alex George**,  
Senior Lecturer in Biotechnology, (University of Greenwich)

'True Mark of a Christian family' is a book which challenges its readers with the basic question 'is your household ready to serve the Lord?' It is a must read for today's families which often find themselves in new land, in the midst of a new and conflicting culture, bringing up their young children in a confused and rebelling environment, and above all striving to be a witnessing Christian to their families, their church and their society. The book has been published on the eve of the 29th UK and Europe Mar Thoma Family Conference and is basically a collection of 15 articles written by different authors varying from the theological viewpoints to personal testimonies to possible solutions or ways to deal with the problems that both the old and the young face in this day and age.

The book begins with an article written by our Bishop Dr Geevarghese Mar Theodosius who lays a strong emphasis on strengthening family values such as Justice, Love, reconciliation and Peace. It reminds us that a group of people living under the same roof will not comprise a family, but family setup becomes real only when members relate to each other and play different roles as it is determined and given to them by God. The author also brings to the forefront a bigger picture that the world is to be seen as an extension of the basic family unit and the family values are meant for the purpose of transforming the world into God's kingdom. Three other articles written by Rev Sajeev Thomas, Rev. Sabu Mathew and Rev Joseph Daniel also deepen our understanding of family as a divine institution and explain the importance of a theo-centric community. One of the highlights of this book is an article by Sam George, which will be an eye opener to many parents as it gives practical solutions for parenting the NET generation. The article recognizes the fact that every home is becoming increasingly vulnerable to external influences and real dangers are sneaking not through front doors or windows but through the internet cables and wireless communication. It is a must read article for parents as it advises them on how to be proactive and reactive in our parenting with regard to technology consumption by our kids. Another inspiring article has been written by Annie Koshy (Kochamma) who shares a very inspiring and encouraging testimony from her personal life which was shaped by the love of God. She emphasizes that a true mark of a Christian family is a family who knows beyond the shadow of doubt that whatever happens in their life is to express the love of God through it.

There are two interesting articles for the youth by Rev Merrin Mathew and Rev Biju P.Simon, where the former talks about the media influences and the concept of 'cool' and 'uncool' for youngsters. He challenges the youth that if the basis of any relationship is gratification, then that relationship sure comes with a manufacturing date along with the expiry date. Rev Biju Simon raises an important issue faced by our youths today which is honoring parents in selecting life partners and inter cultural marriages. I am sure it will be an eye opener for many youths and their parents.

Every article in this book is able to keep the discussion at a layman level without watering down the theology. Overall 'True Mark of a Christian Family' is an essential book in every house as it caters to the parents, husbands, wives and the youths.

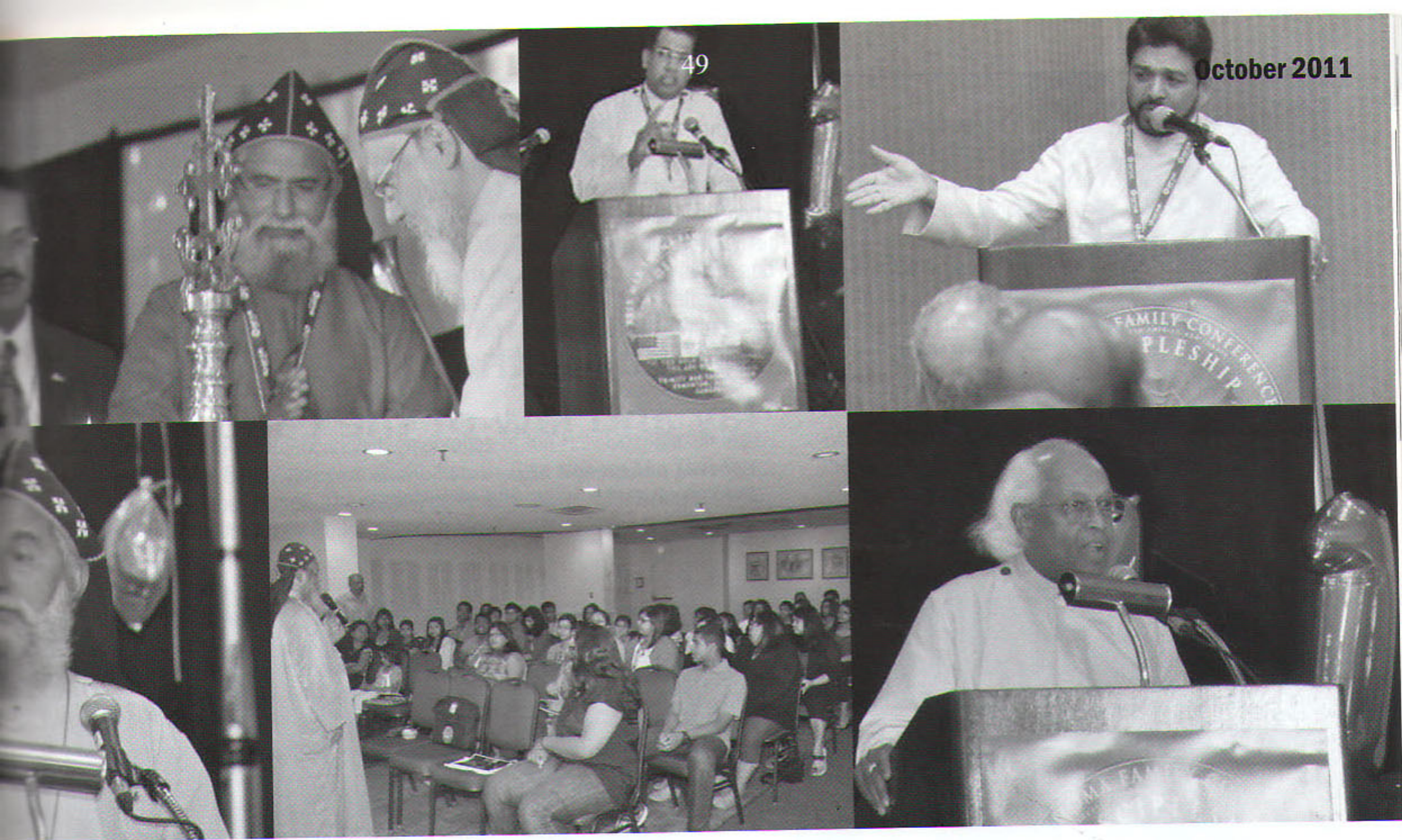


# The 2011 Mar Thoma Family Conference of

## The Diocese of North America & Europe

**Rev. Reji John** (Vicar / President)  
Trinity MTC, Edmonton

**Mr. Thomas Varughese,**  
Secretary, Family Conference Committee



The 2011 Mar Thoma Family Conference of the Diocese of North America & Europe, hosted by The Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada was held at the Radisson Hotel from June 30 – July 3, 2011. The theme of the conference was "Discipleship" based on John 8:31: "If you hold to my teachings, you are my disciples".

The inaugural session of the conference began at 6:00 pm, with a worship service led by the host parish, the Trinity MTC, Edmonton. The public meeting followed immediately with the introduction and seating of the panel.

This was followed by the presentation of the flags of the Diocese, Canada, India, the United States and Europe, and the National Anthems of Canada and India. The President, Rev. Reji John, welcomed the guests, leaders, clergy members, and all delegates. The conference choir blessed the occasion with songs that highlighted the theme of the conference.

Mar Theodosius, the Diocesan Bishop and Patron, delivered the Patron's address and introduced the theme of the conference. The Keynote Speaker Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas delivered the inaugural speech. The distinguished guests and main leaders offered their felicitations for the conference. A souvenir commemorating the 2011 Family Conference was released. The inaugural program concluded with the vote of thanks by the conference Secretary and an introduction of participating parishes by the Registration Convener.

The evening activities continued with an entertaining cultural program presented by the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton. The day's program ended with prayer by Rev. V.T. John and the benediction by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Episcopa.

The second day began with a worship service led by Rev. K.J. Mathew and the participants from St. Thomas MTC, Calgary. As July 1st is Canada Day, the conference celebrated the occasion by hoisting the Canadian flag and singing 'O Canada', Canadian National Anthem, which was led by the Conference Choir.

The Choir then led the congregation in a sing-along session. The main sessions were led by Mar Barnabas, Rev. Dr. Martin Alphonse, Mar Theodosius, Rev. M. M. John, Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla and Rev. V. T. John.

The evening worship service was led by Rev. Binu Varghese and the participants from the Seattle MTC. The day's events concluded with a display of talents by almost all participating parishes, with songs, dances, poetry, a Bible fashion show and a magic show. The evening program ended with prayer and benediction by Rev. Oommen V. Varkey.

The third day began with a worship service led by Rev. Varghese K. Abraham and the the participants from St. Mathews MTC, Toronto after which youth and children broke for their own separate tracks. The main track continued with a sing-along session led by the Conference Choir. Organisational meetings of Edavaka Mission, Sunday School and Young Families were jointly conducted by the Diocesan Bishop. Dr. T.K. Idicula gave a medical session about Type II Diabetes and Dr. Sanjay Sharma joined us to discuss Heart Disease among South Asians. The Family Conference Business Meeting that followed was presided by the Diocesan Bishop. The youth and children met in separate sessions with their leaders. A Praise and Worship team led the singing sessions in the youth meetings.

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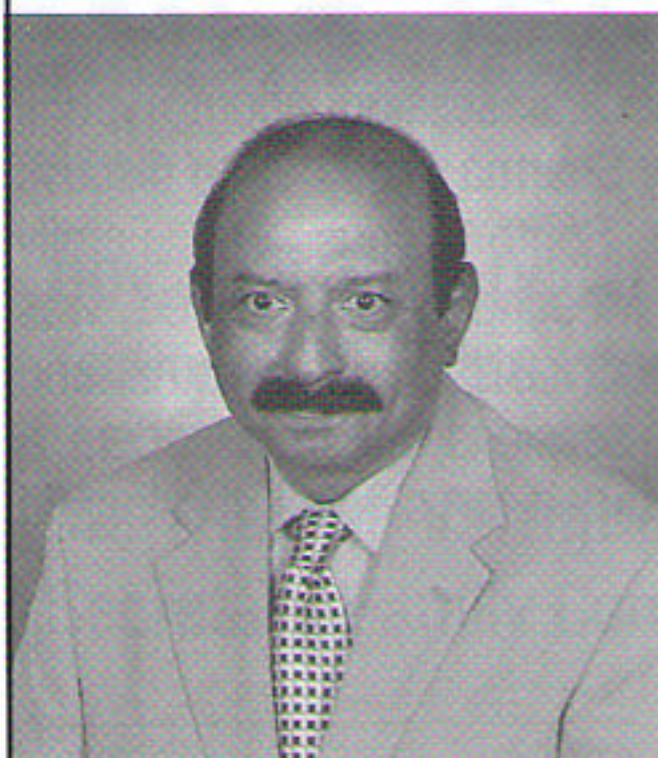


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The evening programs began with a worship service led by Rev. Jacob Verghese and the participants St. Johns MTC, New York followed by the Diocesan program. The Diocesan Secretary, Rev. K.E. Geevarghese, made a presentation about the various activities of the Diocese followed by presentations for the Mission Board, Planning Board, Mar Thoma Messenger, and the Mar Thoma Literature Society. An award presentation followed where various awards like the Valedictorian award and Best Parish award were presented to individuals and parishes. Soon afterwards, Rev. A.T. Thomas of the Immanuel MTC, Houston led the dedication and witnessing service. The youth had their dedication and witnessing service led by Rev. Biju P. Simon and Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas.

The Sunday program commenced with celebration of the Holy Communion led by Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa delivered the sermon. The closing ceremony started with a prayer by Rev. K.E. Geevarghese followed by Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas delivering his closing thoughts about the theme.

Then Rev. Reji John of the Trinity MTC, Edmonton passed on the conference torch to Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, the Diocesan Secretary, as the 2012 Family Conference will be hosted by the Diocese.

An introduction of the Edmonton Conference Committee members was followed by the formal vote of thanks by the Conference Secretary. The Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, thanked the delegates, leaders, organizers of the conference and the host parish and invited all delegates to attend the 2012 Family Conference. The 2011 Family Conference ended with a closing prayer and benediction by Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa.



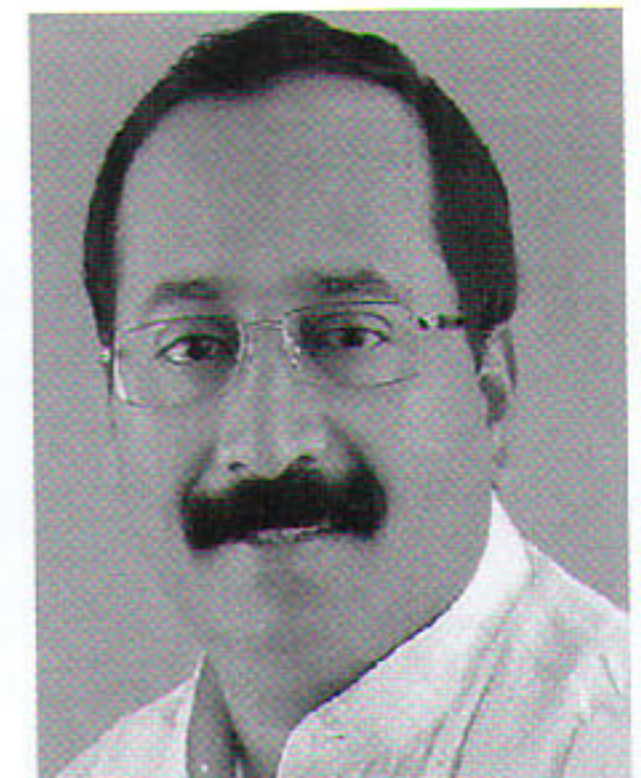
## OFFICE BEARERS OF MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH FOR 2011-2014



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CLERGY TRUSTEE:  
**REV JOHN V.T. (VALANJAVATTOM)**



LAY TRUSTEE / TREASURER:  
**ADV. VARGHESE MAMMEN**

# Visit by Church World Services to Diocesan Center



**Mr. Chacko Mathew**  
Diocesan Treasurer



Further discussions covered the expectations of the Mar Thoma Church with regards to the mission, witness, and life of CWS. Thirumeni gave a brief description on the history and background of the Mar Thoma Church. He emphasized the participation of the Mar Thoma church in global ecumenism and the ecumenical leadership. The need for wider grassroots communications in reference to the activities of CWS was also discussed. Thirumeni offered the use of Mar Thoma Messenger and the Diocesan website to convey the messages and activities of CWS to the local parishes

*B*ishop Rt. Rev. Johncy Itti, Chairman of CWS, Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director & CEO, and Ann Walle, Director of Innovation and Strategic Affairs, met with Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar-Theodosius at the Diocesan Center on July 28th, 2011 to discuss CWS Visions 2020. Also attending were Diocesan Secretary Rev. K.E. Geevarghese, Rev. A.B. Binu of Long Island MTC, and Diocesan Treasurer Mr. Chacko Mathew.

The meeting fostered productive discussions covering many cooperative ventures and opportunities. The highlights included the formulation of an agenda and goals for CWS 2020, discussion of identity concerns, a vision for growth, organizational excellence & leadership, governance & funding, a global summit, CWS program prioritization framework, and sustainable strategy.

The meeting was mutually beneficial and it found opportunities to serve hand in hand with CWS in India, US, and across the world. We are hopeful that this will lead to new opportunities, such as youth ministry, missions in Mexico, and the problem of hunger in areas of need. The CWS encouraged the Church to participate in the Crop Hunger walks and CWS Kits program. The delegation promised to support "Feed the Hungry program" in Mexico through 37 member communions. The meeting concluded with a lunch and exchange of gifts.





# 29<sup>th</sup> UK & Europe Family Conference 2011

The High Leigh Christian Conference Centre, and the 40 acres of lush serene lawns and woodlands that surround it, echoed over and over the divine purposes, the strengths, and the future of the Christian family at the three-day conference hosted by the St John's Mar Thoma Church, Hounslow, UK.

The challenges facing the new immigrant community was the focus as the conference dealt upon the theme 'True Mark of a Christian Family', and pledged to follow in Joshua's footsteps as the Israeli leader stood on the threshold of entering the Promised Land.

As the rolling countryside of Hoddesdon once again played host to the 29th UK and Europe Mar Thoma Family Conference, renowned speakers and leaders, under the blessed patronage of our Diocesan Thirumeni, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, called upon the participants to strengthen, renew, and to impart our traditional family values to future generations. And to guide us in the right direction and to strengthen us with God's word in our faith journey we were blessed to have Rev. Dr. T. J. Thomas, Rev. Dr. George Mathew and Rev. Biju P. Simon as our lead speakers.

On the opening day, Rev. Eapen Abraham of the host parish whole-heartedly welcomed the participants who had gathered from all over UK and Europe. A choreographed shadow play which followed was the highlight of the evening and was the most apt medium to help bring home the theme of the conference to all ages.

To engage a wider participation, the conference organisers had taken an unprecedented and unique initiative of publishing monthly newsletters with a crossword competition, articles were based on the Christian Family theme as a countdown to the August conference. These articles, along with other contributions by various writers, were compiled and edited by the St John's Mar Thoma Church and was published with the help of CSS Thiruvalla, thus resulting in a 125-page book "True Mark of Christian Family", which included well-researched family-based articles and personal testimonies. The book was inaugurated by our beloved Thirumeni on the opening day.

A hugely entertaining talent show by all the gathered churches brought the evening's proceedings to a close. The morning session on the second day saw T.J. Thomas achen regale the audience as he recalled incidents from his many years of family counselling to explain the mutual respect, love and special relationship the Christian couple should have for each other. Meanwhile, Biju P. Simon achen struck a chord with the youths at their own session, teaching them about modern-day challenges and the pressures that families face when children are exposed to foreign cultures. He recalled the strong and deep-rooted faith that our forefathers had which continues to help the present generation witness Christ in this new land.

An open forum under the banner of "Question Time" saw active participation by one and all, under the guidance of an expert panel which was committed to find solutions to the doubts and worries of the audience. Various challenges facing the Church today and avenues to include the young generation in various church worship and activities were explored in depth.

## Sam Daniel

Convener - 2011 UK & Europe Family Conference

Mrs. Susamma George Mathew through her personal witnessing led us into the Testimony session; time was the only barrier as participants one after the other witnessed their Saviour and His abiding presence in their lives. Rev. Joseph Daniel and Mr. Santosh Thomas led the Witness & Testimony for the youths who were touched by the shared experiences and individual challenges which eventually led many present to recommit their lives to Christ.

The final day dawned with the Holy Communion, celebrated by our Thirumeni. As youth and children joined their parents to sing and worship together on the Sabbath. Later, Rev. Dr. George Mathew's learned insights into our liturgy and the explanations of its various aspects were timely and enlightened the minds of the youth as well as the elders. Achen's deep knowledge and understanding of the Liturgy followed in our church and the beneficial role it plays in our order of worship was food for thought in our spiritual growth.

The closing ceremony started with a creative presentation by children put together by Scripture Union, followed by a presentation on Mission Hounslow – A Mission which was born from an initiative taken by St. John's Mar Thoma Church at the 2009 Family Conference, the work done at the centre cares for the homeless, especially during adverse weather conditions, serving the needy with hot meals and warm clothing.

The evening also saw St. James Mar Thoma Church, London being presented with a Championship Trophy for 2011 crossword competition; followed by a vote of thanks by the Conference Convener. The 2012 host parish invited all delegates to attend the 2012 Family Conference. Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, in his concluding remarks thanked the leaders, delegates and organizers of the Conference; the 2011 Family Conference was drawn to a close with a prayer and benediction.

# Mexico Mission



**Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, Convener, Mexico Mission**

*P*lanting seeds of Christian love and propagating the Gospel can clearly change people's lifestyles. It can give them a sense of freedom they never had and a sense of security that only God's love can provide. In 2001 Mar Thoma Church set its foot in the east coast of Mexico amongst the Spanish speaking low-income islanders and planted seeds of God's love. Many lives have been transformed. Thanks to the generous support of every parishioner in the Diocese and the passion expressed by our youth members. Let us thank God for using us to light a candle in this remote part of the dark world.

The work has to continue according to God's plan and it is our responsibility to ensure that no soul is lost. Let us continue to be part of this great Mission with a renewed Vision and move forward according to His will. The vision of the Diocese is to develop and make this project a sustainable community facility that will spread God's love for years to come.

## **Mexico Mission Today**

There are 64 houses that were built in 2008, to house the families. Many of these families live below the poverty line and the only income they have is from fishing for a maximum of 8 months in a year. Fishing is very adventurous during winter months. To ensure the overall growth of this community and the people, several new educational, nutritional and infrastructural programs need to be implemented.



'Manna', a program that started recently to ensure balanced nutrition for residents and to strengthen malnourished children is proving to be very successful. Mere Forty Dollars (\$ 40) a week, will provide a family of 4 members with their basic essential food, groceries and toiletries. On this poor island, uneducated girls are exploited and usually end up on the streets. Educating these girls will keep them off the streets. A community organized Government backed elementary school with 32 students is started and is in operation. Tuition support is being provided to High School and College students. It is a joy to share that one of our sponsored students obtained Medical School admission and two other students who are sponsored by us have been appointed back by the Government as teachers at Colonia Community School. Most of the students in our school are maintaining above average grades in their studies. The Community School started by our Mission and by the support of our members has brightened the future of many youngsters.



Several infrastructure projects are being implemented now: fencing around the property has been completed; drinking water distribution project is completed, basic Kitchen and bathroom construction is under progress for twenty houses and preventive flood control project is under progress. By the end of this year, power lines with electricity are expected to be completed.

### **Mexico Mission – Vision:**

To make our Mission activities fruitful we need to focus on our vision as stated above. Funds are needed on a regular basis to continue the 'Manna' and Educational Programs. It is our goal to make this community self sufficient by providing the residents with training in technical trades. Self sufficient farming should be promoted by starting small scale farms. To have successful farms, water supply is a must. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed. Plans are put in place to make use of the rain water from flood control project. It is our goal to ensure that the community residents are healthy by providing them with frequent Medical and Health screenings.

A full time resident evangelist who will also be a care taker for day to day administration is required. The school that is in progress needs to be developed.

### **Mexico Mission - and You!**

A mission that was started by the Diocese needs your further involvement, partnership, resources and prayers. There are many ways you and your family can be a part of this great project. You can visit these Mission fields with your children and volunteer your

time and talents in many different ways. Make a visit to know firsthand the needs and wants of these under-privileged people.

You may also choose sponsor any of these projects:

1. Feed and provide basic essentials for a family of four by contributing to the 'Manna' project
  - Feed and provide for One Week @ \$40.00
  - Feed and provide for One Month @ \$160.00
  - Feed and provide for One year @ \$2,000.00
2. Support a student for one year @ \$500.00 for a full year
3. Donate to 'Suvisesha Nidhi' Collection

# India Mission Trip

The India Mission Sub-committee, under the Mission Board of the Diocese of North America and Europe is arranging a mission trip to the Karnataka Mission fields in India in May, 2012. The trip is scheduled for two weeks. God willing, we will leave around mid May. It is a great opportunity and a memorable experience for our members especially the youths to visit these mission fields. It also gives us a chance to serve the Lord, and partake in the mission that our Lord has commissioned us as written in Matt.28:18-20. Please uphold this trip in your daily prayers. More details will be announced later.

Those who wish to join this Mission Trip please contact:

Mrs. Laila Anie Philip (Convener, India Mission)  
978-663-3203(H); 978-930-1578 (C)  
varampath23@msn.com (Carmel MTC, Boston)

or  
Mrs. Checha John 718-227-6684(H); 718-664-8307 (C) cjo405@aol.com (Staten Island MTC, NY.)



**Nirmala Abraham,**  
Native American Mission Board member

# Native American mission-Alabama

The Native American Mission of the Diocese of North America provided leadership to conduct a week-long Vacation Bible School program for the children under 14 and Youth Conference sessions for youths above 15 years old at Mount Vernon, Alabama for the Choctaw Native Indian tribe. For VBS, an average of 120 Native Indian children and for Youth Conference an average of 35 Native Indian youths participated. The programs were held from June 19th to 25th, 2011. The leadership of the camp was provided by the 35 mission volunteers from our Diocese. They came from the MT churches in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Washington DC, New York, New Jersey, Canada and Florida. We were blessed to have adult leaders from Atlanta, Alabama and Philadelphia. Special thanks to Ms. Alisha Thomas of MT church of Washington DC for coordinating the VBS programs- the curriculum, volunteers, music and activities, Dr. Suresh Mathews and Sean Koshy for hosting the volunteers in their homes on their way to Mount Vernon. We appreciate the tireless leadership of Mrs. Bindu Mathew and volunteers who helped to prepare the delicious meals for the volunteers for the entire week. We are also very grateful to the Vicar and the members of the Atlanta MT church raising funds for transportation, and providing many volunteers for this mission. We also want to recognize the valuable support and leadership provided by Jeoson, Jobcy and Jency John Thomas. Thanks to all those who gave donations to off set the costs

especially to Ajai and Anju Joy of Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church for providing travel assistance for the volunteers from Philadelphia to participate in the mission. 2012 will mark the 10th anniversary of the mission to Alabama and we are planning a big celebration to mark this event.

The Native American Mission extends thanks to all the wonderful volunteers for sharing their time, talents and treasures to enrich the life of each other and the Choctaw children in Mount Vernon.

The following article is a reflection of the Camp experience from one of our volunteers. Ms Priyanka Koshy, a member of the Canadian Mar Thoma Church. Priyanka has truly captured the essence of this mission experience.

# Yearly VBS makes a lasting impact on the Choctaw Native American community of Alabama

As we wind down the narrow country roads, I receive word that we are nearing our long awaited destination – the Aldersgate Methodist Church. Instead of being elated about the prospect of arriving, I find myself in a rather confused state of mind – one that is unsure of what to expect but at the same time, quite curious to find out if what they say is true, that it is like returning “home”. Sure enough, I find out.

As we approach the beginning of the street, I see kids - dozens of kids - lining up against the two sides of the street, waving and holding up “welcome home” banners; while still others ride their ATVs (all terrain vehicles) behind our vehicles up to the churchyard. As if that wasn't enough of an invigorating welcome, the minute we step out of our vehicles, more kids hurry over to us; wasting no time in individually welcoming us new volunteers like old friends and veteran volunteers, like family. Who was the first to greet me but baby Jacob; with his pale blonde hair, piercing blue eyes, and toothless grin – he made me feel right at ease. What was so striking about this little bundle of joy was his smile – his angelic smile – that graced his chubby face at every opportunity; to the extent that even when he was crying, he was smiling! He is such a happy baby, I thought. But that was before I learnt about his tragic past. This happy baby was pumped out of drugs upon his birth and his mother was left recuperating in a rehabilitation centre. I then realized that God places the most unexpected stories in the most unexpected of people. Here is baby Jacob looking like the very face of an angel when his past is anything but angelic.

Baby Jacob's remarkably touching story stayed with me throughout that first day and while retiring to bed that night, I realized the mountain of a task that was ahead of us all. How were we - mere youth - to minister to these kids, who were so wounded, bruised, and broken? I thought about the amount of planning, organization, and participation that went into making this event a reality - First inspired by the vision of Bishop Mar Coorilos, Mr. O.C. Abraham and Mrs. Nirmala Abraham founded the Choctaw Native American Missions nine years ago, as a VBS endeavour.

This year, it was headed by Alisha Thomas who commanded a team of volunteers, flying in from places as distant as Toronto to Florida to everywhere in between. The volunteers arrived in Atlanta on the eighteenth of June and drove to Alabama the next day. The VBS program ran throughout the week commencing at 9:00 AM and ending at noon. The classes were conducted by following a concise lesson plan that consisted of precisely a Bible story per day as well as the relevant activities: praise and worship, interactive sessions, craft sessions, games sessions, and the actual lesson sessions. By the end of the week, all classes covered the creation story, the story of Elijah and Baal, the story of Jonah the Prophet, and Jesus' death and resurrection. In addition to the kids VBS classes, Youth meetings were also held every evening to engage the youth in a deeper level by revealing the work of God in the real world, through the use of powerful testimonies.

As the week progressed, I received the answer to my question of how we, mere youth, were supposed to minister to such a hurting congregation. Brother Ron, pastor of the Aldersgate Methodist church, emphasized that our duty as VBS volunteers was to serve as role models to the kids, so that they might see us as their mentors because “the only consistency and connection these kids have in their spiritual lives is this VBS that is conducted every summer, without fail, by the Mar Thoma church.” To emphasize the importance of the consistency that the VBS brings every summer, Brother Ron adds, “it is only around this VBS time that this church is full of kids from this area and the surrounding areas. This is not the case year round.” While these VBS classes may seem microscopic in the larger scope of things, it makes a lasting impact on the kids who attend it. A.J. first attended VBS classes when she was two years old and ever since then, hasn't missed one VBS so far.

Now that she is a preteen, she not only attends her own VBS classes but also helps the volunteers conduct their classes smoothly. When asked about why she stuck around all these years, she said, “spending time with the volunteers and getting to know them made me look up to them like they were my brothers and sisters, especially since even after the VBS was over, we kept in touch through texts and phone calls.”

We may not be able to erase memories of pain, but we can heal those open wounds by acts of love, encouragement, and comradeship. The most rewarding sight to see was witnessing the growth of the kids throughout the week. The 11-13 class transformed from being the most boisterous group of kids in the VBS to a very productive bunch. They exhibited their talents by producing a play on Elijah and Baal that they wrote, directed, and performed all by themselves. It was similar to watching a miracle unfold because out of this large restless group, there emerged a leader – Leland – who was so effective in uniting his classmates and overseeing all aspects of the production, that his leadership skills were taken notice of by his fellow classmates; who for the first time looked at him in a whole new light. There emerged several other notably talented kids who took it upon themselves to compose the script, assume responsibility for the costumes and the props, while making sure to also memorize the lines.

These kids are not without ambition either. When asked what she would want to become once she grew up; Torrie, a talented athlete, immediately answered “I want to be a lawyer” and I could see why – she has a natural knack for defending those who are otherwise not capable of defending themselves like little kids who get picked on by older kids.

Finally as a Canadian-Nasarene (Nasrani), having the opportunity to attend an American-Marthomite venture gave me a new perspective on Marthomite culture across North America. In addition, this experience has impressed upon me the vital importance of mentorship. Before attending this mission trip, I never had much time for kids. It was not that I disliked kids, I just didn't know how I could be of any use to them. But after attending this mission trip, I now look at kids everywhere in a whole new light because kids, regardless of who they are or how stable or unstable their lives are, need mentors. After all, I want my baby Jacob to keep smiling throughout his life, never fearing for a minute that he is alone.

**Priyanka Mary Koshy**



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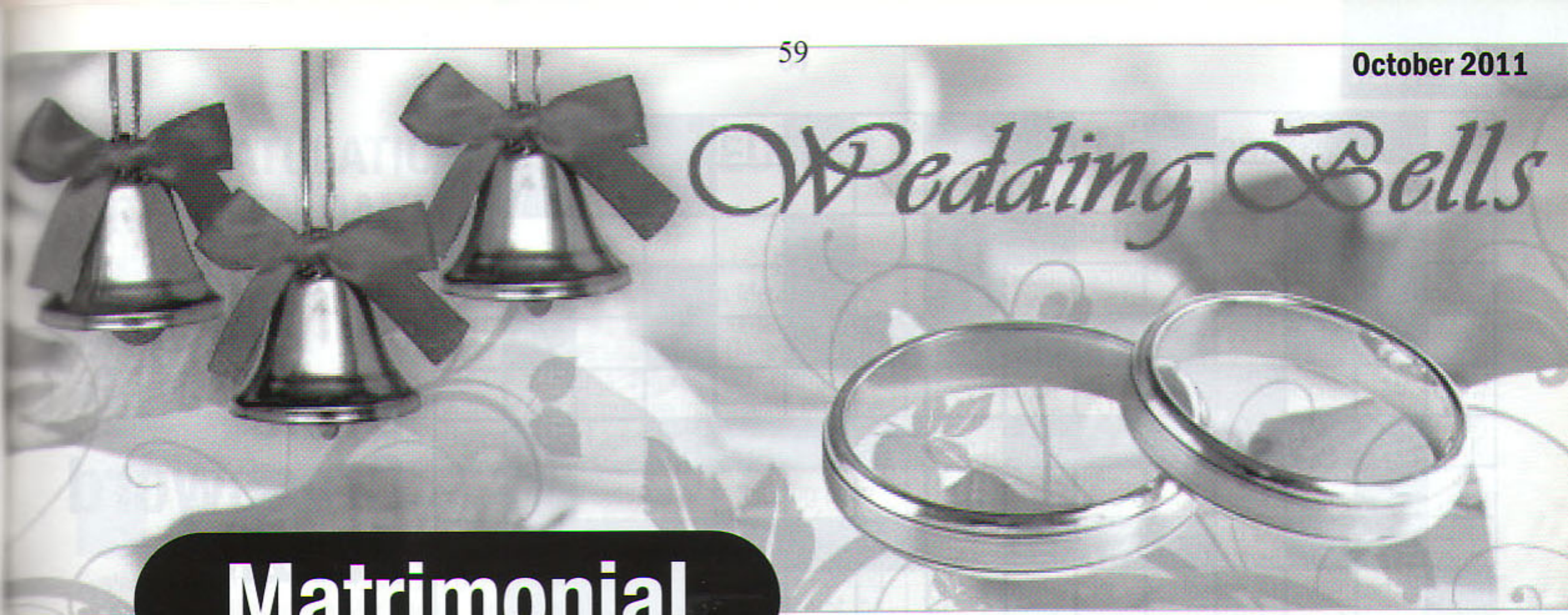
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 A decorative header image featuring three silver bells with dark ribbons hanging from the top left. To the right, the words "Wedding Bells" are written in a large, elegant, cursive script. Below the text, two silver wedding bands are shown, one slightly overlapping the other, resting on a light-colored surface with a subtle floral pattern.
 

# Wedding Bells

## Matrimonial

Marthomite parents settled in New Jersey, invite marriage proposals for their US born son, 28 years old, 5'6", family oriented with Christian values. He is a graduate in finance, currently working for an Asset Management firm in Connecticut. We invite proposals from the parents of Christ centered, family oriented Marthomite girls. Please respond with a recent photograph & bio-data by e-mail [njmatrimonial@yahoo.com](mailto:njmatrimonial@yahoo.com) or call 201-723-2786.

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their daughter 28 years, 5'3" born and brought up in USA. She has doctorate in Clinical Psychology and currently doing her fellowship. We welcome interested and compatible grooms between the ages of 29 to 32 years, professionally qualified, born and brought up in USA. Please respond with recent photograph and bio data to [jsam1812@yahoo.com](mailto:jsam1812@yahoo.com) or contact 630 985 1756

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their daughter 24 years old, 5'2" Pharmacist residing near Philadelphia, PA. We are looking for a Christ-oriented boy with similar or higher qualifications, who is also family oriented. Please respond with a recent photograph to: [merlin.chacko4@gmail.com](mailto:merlin.chacko4@gmail.com) or call 215-364-1690.

NRI-Marthomite parents from Central Travancore invite proposals for their 27 year old daughter, fair, slim, 5'3", B. Tech-MS, currently residing in Bangalore, India. We are looking for a God-fearing, committed boy who is highly qualified: Engineer/CPA/CA etc. Contact us at--Cell: 01197-1506317288 (Sharja) or 215-364-1690 (Philadelphia), Email: [mathery@yahoo.com](mailto:mathery@yahoo.com).

Want to know about a Christian, cool, classy, cultured, fun-loving smart girl (USA), age 22-24, from a loving family for a boy 26 in August 2011 (5'5" tall, 140 lbs), MD (Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, 2011), doing residency (pediatrics, San Antonio, TX). Background: A mature, handsome, Christian boy, HS valedictorian with above qualities. Kerala parents in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. Father (professor and scientist, Agri-business), mother (Agri-business), sister (Harvard economics) now enrolled in MD in San Antonio. Please contact: [am.skaria@gmail.com](mailto:am.skaria@gmail.com) phone (956) 212-9776.

Marthomite parents settled in the U.S. invite proposals for their son. He is 27 years old, 5'11 tall (180cms) and completed his Masters in Engineering from a very top ranked university in the U.S. and currently works as a Senior Manager at a major financial services company. He does not drink/smoke and is very active in the Marthoma church.

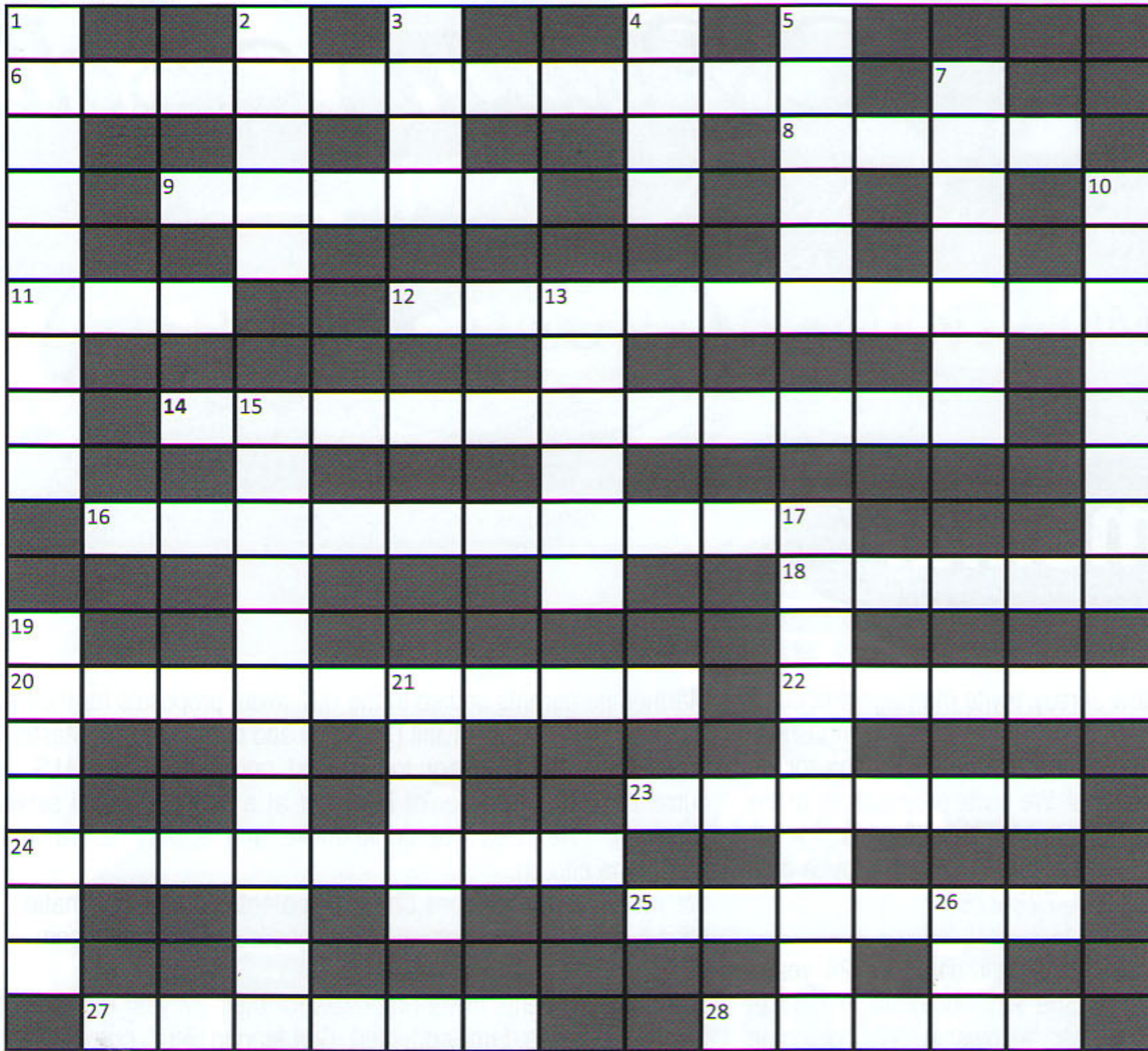
We invite proposals from Christian parents (any denomination) to send a photo and bio data to [weddingbells32451@gmail.com](mailto:weddingbells32451@gmail.com)

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their 27 year old daughter, fair, good looking, family oriented, God fearing, 5'6", currently doing MD residency in Pennsylvania State, from parents of doctors between ages 28 to 31 having good christian values. Interested parents please respond with recent photograph and bio data to [thomas6059@hotmail.com](mailto:thomas6059@hotmail.com).

Marthomite parents settled in USA, invites marriage proposal for their son, born and raised in Bombay, 27 years, 5.8, BS in Electrical Engineering (USA) and currently working as an engineer in MNC(NJ). He has been brought up in the faith and practices of the Mar Thoma church. We are looking for a God fearing girl with similar Christian upbringing and with a USA / Canadian professional education. If interested, please respond with details and recent photograph to the email id: - [jjthomasusa@gmail.com](mailto:jjthomasusa@gmail.com)

Christian parents invite proposal for their beautiful daughter. She is 28 years of age with B. A in both Accounting & Music Business. She has completed her M B A and is currently employed in Dallas Texas. Looking for born again Christian professionals raised in the USA. If interested, please send a recent photograph and details to [easoitty@yahoo.com](mailto:easoitty@yahoo.com) or call 615-483-7618





# Bible Crossword Puzzle

As in today's NIV Bible  
The Book of Leviticus

Numbers  
Chapters 1-18

Mr. Philip Manuel &  
Mrs. Laila Anie Philip  
(Carmel MTC, Boston)

## Across:

6. The Levites will be given all the tithes as their \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The leader of the families of the Gershonites was Eliasaph, son of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Joshua and Caleb said, " Only do not \_\_\_\_\_ against the Lord.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ was the father of Moses's aide since youth.
12. The \_\_\_\_\_ were responsible for the care of the Sanctuary.
14. The Levites had to carry the tabernacle and all its \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Anyone who \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord must be cut off from his people.
18. The Lord said, " I will bring your children in to \_\_\_\_\_ the land you have rejected.
20. The man who was found \_\_\_\_\_ wood on the Sabbath day was stoned to death.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ turned to her sister Miriam and saw that she had leprosy.
23. The men who spread a bad report about the land, died of a \_\_\_\_\_.
24. A \_\_\_\_\_ must abstain from wine and other fermented drink.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ son of Gideoni was over the division of the tribe of Benjamin.
27. Aaron's staff not only sprouted but had \_\_\_\_\_.
28. The Lord is slow to \_\_\_\_\_, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.

## Down:

1. Hobab was the son of Reuel, the \_\_\_\_\_, Moses father-in-law.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the father of Eliasaph, the leader of the people of Gad.
3. Moses said to Aaron, " Take your censer and put incense in it along with \_\_\_\_\_ from the altar
4. On the twelfth day, Ahira, son of \_\_\_\_\_, brought his offering.
5. On, the son of \_\_\_\_\_, became insolent and rose up against Moses.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ were not counted along with the other Israelites.
10. The Lord said to Moses to get away from the \_\_\_\_\_ which had rebelled.
13. Moses gave \_\_\_\_\_, son of Nun, the name Joshua.
15. Two of Aaron's sons died because they had made an offering with \_\_\_\_\_ fire.
17. During a Nazirite's vow of \_\_\_\_\_ no razor may be used on his head.
19. The Lord said to Moses, "how long will this wicked community grumble \_\_\_\_\_ me".
21. The Manna was like coriander seed and looked like \_\_\_\_\_.
26. The Levites must retire from their regular service at the \_\_\_\_\_ of fifty.

## July 2011 Crossword Puzzle Winners

- |                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Accamma Jacob        | Chicago MTC, IL                |
| 2 Achamma Chacko       | Trinity MTC, Houston           |
| 3 Aleyamma Mathews     | MTC Dallas Famers Br           |
| 4 Aleyamma Mathews     | MTC Los Angeles, CA            |
| 5 Aleyamma Ninan       | St.Thomas MTC, NY              |
| 6 Biju T Abraham       | MTC San Franscisco ,CA         |
| 7 Chinnamma John       | Trinity MTC, Houston           |
| 8 Dillin Prince Oommen | St.Thomas MTC, Delaware Valley |
| 9 Elizabeth George     | Canadian MTC, Toronto          |
| 10 George C G          | Ascension MTC, PA              |
| 11 Gracy P Vattakunnel | Trinity MTC, Houston           |
| 12 Jasmine S Yohannan  | St. Andrew's MTC, NY           |
| 13 Josh Jacob          | St. Andrew's MTC, NY           |
| 14 Jovy Jacob          | St. Andrew's MTC, NY           |
| 15 Kunjumma Thomas     | Trinity MTC, Houston           |
| 16 Maria Mathews       | Ascension MTC, PA              |
| 17 Mariamma John       | Sehion MTC, Dallas             |
| 18 Mariamma Thomas(K)  | Trinity MTC, Houston           |
| 19 Maya Mathews        | MTC San Franscisco ,CA         |
| 20 Omana Rajee         | MTC San Franscisco ,CA         |
| 21 Oshin Mathew        | Carmel MTC, Boston             |
| 22 Paul J Isaac        | Carmel MTC, Boston             |
| 23 Prince John         | St. Andrew's MTC, NY           |
| 24 Roy John            | St. Andrew's MTC, NY           |
| 25 Santha Varghese     | Ascension MTC, PA              |
| 26 Saramma Chacko      | Epiphany MTC NY                |
| 27 Saramma Koshy       | Salem MTC Long Island, NY      |
| 28 Shailla Mathew      | MTC Dallas Farmers Branch      |
| 29 Shaji David         | MTC Dallas Farmers Branch      |
| 30 Sicily Skariah      | MTC Dallas Farmers Branch      |
| 31 Sneha Mathew        | Detroit MTC                    |
| 32 Sobha Jacob         | St. Andrew's MTC, NY           |
| 33 Sosamma Varghese    | Immanuel MTC, Houston          |
| 34 Thomas GeeVarghese  | Bethel MTC, PA                 |
| 35 Tony Eappen         | Trinity MTC, Houston           |

Please mail your answers to:  
**Philip Manuel, 23 Lake Street, Billerica, Ma 01821**  
Deadline for Answers: **December 15**

## CONGRATULATIONS TO CHIEF EDITOR DR. EAPEN DANIEL



The Messenger family congratulates, Dr. Eapen Daniel, the Chief Editor of Mar Thoma Messenger for receiving his doctorate (Ph.D) with sponsorship from one of the top ten Universities in the United States – University of Pennsylvania. His research theme was focused on the effect of multiple information systems used in healthcare. Dr. Eapen is further pursuing his research in the field of 'Biological control of mosquitoes in rural and urban settings of developing countries' and is waiting for the Federal funding for the project. Currently, he is working as the Information

Systems Coordinator at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. He is serving as the Chief Editor of the Mar Thoma Messenger, the official publication of the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church, since 2002. He is also the former lecturer of Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla. Dr. Eapen is actively involved in the various activities of the Diocese, especially in the Youth Fellowship and Sunday School. He is the son of Mr. T. N. Daniel and Mrs. Annamma Daniel, Thiruvattamannil, Vennikulam, Kerala, India. He is a member of the Christos Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia. He is married to Mrs. Aleyamma Daniel of Chirackal, Kuttamperoor, and they have two children Angela and Benjamin. The Managing Committee, Editorial Committee, Readers, Promoters of the Mar Thoma Messenger express our congratulations on his achievement and pray that God may shower His abundant blessings upon him in continuing his research.  
**Lal Varghese, Esq.**

## The 2011 Mar Thoma Junior & Senior Conference, sponsored by the Southeast

Region Sunday schools, was held from July 14 – 17 at Ramapo College of New Jersey. The theme selected was "TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE" (John 8:32). Main leaders for this year's conference were Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, Mr. Tenny Thomas of The Malankara Orthodox Church, and Ms. Faith Dugan of Child Evangelism Fellowship. About 400 delegates, including teachers and chaperones, participated in this year's conference. Highlights included opening ceremonies, praise and worship sessions, talent night, witnessing and Holy Qurbana service. Our Youth Chaplains, Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla and Rev. Biju Simon provided excellent leadership in conducting Bible studies and devotions. Dr. Anita Daniel, from St. Peters MTC, got the youths engaged through a very interactive symposium. It was indeed a time of rededication, witnessing and renewal for all participants. Regional officers Mr. Thomas Koshy, Mr. Tom Philip, Mr. Samuel Abraham, Dr. John K. Thomas as well as center secretaries, Mr. Thomas Philip, and Dr. Sijo Abraham gave their valuable time and effort in organizing this blessed conference

Dr. John K. Thomas, Regional Coordinator, SE Region Sunday Schools

## Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston Pearland Manvel Mar Thoma 'Karshaka Shree' Award



**1st Prize - Mr. Baby Yohannan**



**2nd Prize - P. I. Varghese**

The Pearland Manvel prayer group of Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston conducted a 'Karshaka Shree Award' contest and the trophies were given to the winners. This contest was organized to choose the best vegetable garden (Adukkalathottam) in the back yard. This contest was also to boost our members' farming skills, remind them of life back in Kerala and also to promote physical activity and relaxation. Another important reason was to create more awareness on environmental protection and ecological concerns. The response from the members were tremendous and all worked hard to make their vegetable garden the very best. In spite of high temperature and scarcity of rain for weeks in Texas, the members did their best to make their garden lush and green and yielding. On Saturday, July 9th three judges visited a total of 12 backyard vegetable gardens and used their experience in farming and gardening to give a fair judgment in selecting the best gardens. The criteria for judging were in 4 areas namely: 1) Appearance of the Garden 2) Yield from the Garden 3) Variety of agricultural items 4) Arrangements of the garden.

The parish expresses sincere thanks to the judges M/s Easow T. Abraham, Thomas Varghese and Joseph T. George for their valuable time and effort to make this contest a grand success. We also thank Mr. Varghese Joseph who helped the judging team with his expertise in Photography. Vicar Rev. Zachariah John awarded the trophies to the winners of the contest at a special function organized after the Holy Communion Service on Sunday, August 14, 2011. The first prize was awarded to Mr. Baby Yohannan & family, second prize to Mr. P. I. Varghese & family and third prize to Mr. Thomas Kanneath & family. We express our sincere gratitude to Mr. T. A. Mathew & Valsa Mathew for sponsoring trophies for 1st and 2nd places and Mr. Shajimon Idiculla & Alice Shajimon for 3rd place.

**Rev. Zachariah John (Vicar) & Thomas Mathew (Jeemon),**  
Pearland Area Committee Member

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*A member of the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch*



## Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch

### Parish Convention (August 11- August 13) Parish Day Celebration on August 14th, 2011.



The annual parish convention of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas Farmers Branch started on Thursday, August 11 at 7 PM. Mr. Samuel T. Chacko from Bangalore, India was the main speaker of this years' convention. Many parish members and also members from the sister parishes attended this years' convention and it was a blessing to many. Our parish celebrated Parish Day on the closing day of annual convention on August 14th, 2011 to celebrate 35 years as a Dallas area Mar Thoma Parish and also 15 years of worshiping in the new facility in Farmers Branch. During the service, the convention speaker spoke from the Word of God. It was a pleasant coincidence that the last day of celebration of the 175th reformation Day of Mar Thoma Sabha happened to be on the same day as the parish day of the church. The parish day program started with the special order of service for 175th anniversary of the reformation of the Mar Thoma Church. The parish day celebrations began after the Holy Communion with song and lesson reading. Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla and Rev. P. V. Thomas led the special worship service to mark the parish day. Mr. Anwar Achenkunju, parish secretary presented a brief report which included a brief history of the parish since its inception. He expressed gratitude to all the pioneers of the parish for their vision, commitment and dedication, which resulted in making it the largest parish of the North America and Europe diocese. In his message, vicar Minoy N. Kuruvilla appreciated the sacrifice and the hard work of the founding members of the parish.

- During the parish day celebration, the parish honored five senior members who turned seventy years of age in a very special way by presenting them with a 'Ponnada'. Achen thanked these members for their contribution and sacrificial services towards the growth of the parish and asked them to pray and bless the new generation so that they may continue the faith journey of the Church in to the future. The celebrations ended with a fellowship lunch for all those who attended the Holy Communion and the parish day celebrations. The Choir sang the special song 'Alayam. Devalayam....', a song which was specially composed and sung for the dedication of the new parish facility 15 years ago. Let us all take a moment, reflect back, and give thanks to God for everything He has done for us and our parish.

Rev. Minoy N. Kuruvilla Vicar, MTC Dallas, FB

## North Carolina MTC



The North Carolina Mar Thoma Church was blessed by the visit of its Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa on 18th and 19th June, 2011. It was Thirumeni's first visit after the Episcopal Synod recognized the North Carolina Mar Thoma Congregation as a Parish of the Church.

After arriving from New York by air, Thirumeni met with the members at the cottage prayer meeting held at 7:30 p.m. in the parsonage (5117 Suda Road, Durham NC 27703). Thirumeni spoke about the apostolic ministry of the Church - a ministry that is continued after the earthly life of Jesus Christ. It is a continuation of Jesus' public ministry under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The best place to carry out this ministry is where we are placed. Thirumeni challenged the members to practice apostolic ministry.

The cottage prayer was followed by dinner arranged by the Sevika Sangham. Everybody, especially the Sunday school and Youth Fellowship members, got a chance to interact with Thirumeni during and after the dinner. The Holy Communion service, the Parish Day and Fathers' Day celebrations were held at the Chapel of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Cary, NC on Sunday June 19th. The Holy Communion started at 12:30 p.m. It was attended by almost all the families except those who were on vacation. Thirumeni spoke on the 'Righteousness of God' based on Mathew 3:15 and 6:33 after leading a special service on Fathers' Day and reminding the fathers about their responsibility.

The Youth Fellowship honored the fathers by giving a memento for each one. Special prayers for the Parish Day were also held. The Sunday School, Youth Fellowship and the Choir sang special songs. Theodosius Thirumeni congratulated the members and the committee for finding a parsonage for rent and buying a new car for the resident vicar. Thirumeni urged everyone to benefit from the availability/functions provided by a parish priest and a resident vicar. The Diocesan bishop also reminded the members to thank God for the blessings the parish has received to get a resident Achen of great caliber and

experience. The Parish expressed its gratitude to Thirumeni for his able leadership and guidance and also for spending two days in North Carolina. The meeting was followed by a fellowship over a community lunch in honor of the Fathers Day in the Parish Hall.

The North Carolina Mar Thoma Congregation was established in July 1, 2004 under the leadership of the then Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakkim Mar Coorilos Episcopa and our first Vicar Rev. George C. Mathew. On February 10, 2011, the Episcopal Synod met and accepted us to a status of a parish with effect from March 15, 2011. We thank our present Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa and our previous Vicar, Rev. Vinoy Daniel for the patience, perseverance and support that we have received. At present, there are 32 families in the Parish. Worship services are held at the chapel at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 221 Union Street, Cary, NC, 27511.

Rev. Dr. Philp Varghese (Vicar), Jeff Varghese (Secretary).

## Congratulations to Dr. Thomas Koshy



Our heartfelt congratulations, best wishes, and prayers to Mr. Thomas Koshy on his appointment as the Head of Nuclear Technology Development, Division of Nuclear Power, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna, Austria. Mr. Koshy will serve as an IAEA Diplomat to solve the current nuclear industry problems for all United Nations' member countries. The Diocese will greatly miss the services of Mr. Thomas Koshy who is the incumbent Sunday School Diocesan Assembly member, a member of the Sunday School Diocesan Council and secretary of the Sunday School Southeast

Region. Mr. Thomas Koshy leaves his current position as Engineer & Scientist, Chief of Electrical & Mechanical Engineering, Office of Research, United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission to take up this his new assignment, which will be for three years beginning at the end of August 2011.

## Trinity Yuvajana Sakhyam Dallas

The Trinity Mar Thoma Church Yuvajana Sakhyam, Houston upholds the aim of the organization, "To equip the youth to accept the lord Jesus Christ as Savior" by involving in the four mottos: Worship, Bible study,



Witness, and Service. This is reflected in the culmination of the Regional Conference and Kalamela held on September 17, 2011 at Farmer's Branch, Dallas where the Trinity Marthoma Church Yuvajana Sakhyam won the overall trophy for the regional competitions. We received first prize for Group Song and first prize for Bible Quiz. It is with great humble and happiness that we give gratitude to our lord Jesus Christ for helping us achieve this feat. Thanks to a talented Yuvajana Sakhyam team whose hard work and dedication has paid off. We will continue to work and dedicate for the glory of our lord Jesus Christ.

Secretary: Blesson Isaac, President: Rev. Zakariah John

## Back to School Program - Mar Thoma Church San Francisco, California



Continuing its rich tradition, San Francisco Mar Thoma church with the leadership of its Yuvajana-Sakhyam hosted a back to school aid event on August 16th 2011. The event is part of a holistic approach the church is taking to get more involved in the community that surrounds it and to help them in their needs, spiritual and material. YuvajanaSakhyam members volunteered their time and effort to make the list, purchase and pack 75 school bags with necessary supplies for all grades from KG to 12. Our Vicar, Rev. T. K. Viji inaugurated the bag distribution event with a word of prayer. Spanish and English Bibles were also distributed with the bags.

Anil Jacob, Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary



## Christos MTC, Philadelphia Graduates Recognition



Christos MTC honored its 2011 graduates in the blessed presence of our diocesan Bishop in July 2011. Twenty-two graduates who have successfully completed High School, College, and Professional Education were recognized by providing flowers and special gifts. A special lunch was served to the parish members in honor of the graduated, following the worship service.

## Episcopal Visits

### Long Island Mar Thoma Church :



We celebrated the Holy Communion Service and inaugurated the one year Silver jubilee programme of the church. Bishop Johncy Itty was the co-celebrant in the service. There were 14 first communicants. After the Holy Communion service the 24th parish day was celebrated and it was also an occasion for the inauguration of Silver Jubilee year. Theodosius Thirumeni inaugurated the jubilee celebration by lighting the lamps and encouraged the parish to celebrate a meaningful Jubilee. Bishop Johncy Itty delivered the felicitation message and inaugurated the silver jubilee charity fund and this fund is to be utilized for mission purposes in India and America. During the function the silver jubilee souvenir fund was also inaugurated and it was done by Rev. K. E. Geevarghese, the Diocesan Secretary. Mr. Reji Mathew, the vice president of the parish welcomed the guests, the parish secretary Mr. Mathew K. Thomas presented the parish report. Rev. A. B. Binu delivered the presidential address. Mr. K. V. Thomas, the general convener of jubilee celebration presented the one year jubilee program. Dr. Ronny Jacob gave the vote of thanks. The prayer was led by Mrs. Mariamma Mathew and Mr. Samuel Chacko. The meeting was concluded by a community lunch to all those who attended.

Rev. A. B. Binu, Vicar

### Christos Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia



The Christos MTC celebrated its 1st Parish Day on 16th July 2011.

Rev. M. John made the opening prayer. Rev. Roy Geevarghese, vicar gave the opening address and welcomed all. Theodosius Tirumeni delivered the main message on the parish day. The parish day celebration continued on 17th July 2011 with parish day worship service at 9 a. m. First communicants' service was also conducted along with the Holy Communion. After that Mr. P. T. Mathew and Mr. Thomas Varghese presented the coin collection boxes for collecting funds for the new church building. Sunday School teachers made arrangements for honoring the graduates of the year. Thirumeni felicitated them and presented gifts to them. During the first parish day celebration, Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Thirumeni dedicated the newly purchased parsonage of Christos MTC and appreciated the first resident vicar, Rev. Roy Geevarghese. Rev. M. John, Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvilla, Rev. P. A. Abraham

and Rev. Antony T. Varghese assisted the dedication service of the parsonage. The presence, prayers, messages and blessings of Theodosius Thirumeni enriched, encouraged and empowered the parish members to go forward as a faith community and witness the Lord in the neighborhood. We praise God for all the heavenly blessings received on all these days. God is with this worshipping community in their pilgrim journey.

Rev. Roy Geevarghese, Vicar

### Salem Mar Thoma Church, New York



Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Communion service along with the parish vicar Rev. Varghese Mathai. During the service, a special thanksgiving and recognition service was conducted by Thirumeni for the eleven graduates of our parish. This included the graduates from high school, college and other higher academic level programs. Thirumeni also attended the final day program of the VBS, which, was conducted immediately after the Holy Communion service.

Rev. Varghese Mathai, Vicar

### Vancouver Mar Thoma Parish



The Diocesan Episcopa, celebrated Holy Communion service at the Anglican Church in Vancouver on Sunday. Rev. K. J. Mathew and Rev. Binu Varghese assisted in the service. There were about 100 participants in the Holy Qurbana. There was a dinner fellowship and the youth of the parish made it an opportunity to raise funds for the Regional youth Conference scheduled at Calgary in July. The members of the Parish committee met the Bishop on Monday evening. Rev. K. J. Mathew, Vicar

## Calgary Mar Thoma Parish



An evening service (Sandhya Namaskaram) was arranged by the parish in a local Anglican Church which was attended by the members. Mar Theodosius spoke on the Neighbourhood Ministry. The meeting was followed by a time of fellowship. Rev. Binu Varghese, Vicar of Seattle Mar Thoma Church accompanied the Diocesan Episcopa during his visit to Calgary.  
Rev. K. J. Mathew, Vicar

## St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church, Toronto



St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church, Toronto was blessed and honoured by the Episcopal visit of Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghes Mar Theodosius on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Church, Parish Day and Dedication of the First Communicants on Sunday, July 24th, 2011. The dedication of the First Communicants was a blessed experience for the congregation – especially for the participants and their immediate families and Godparents. The Holy Eucharist is the sacred sacrament of Unity and Relationships. Thirumeni led the first communicant's service and a total of 36 children participated in this divine fellowship. As part of the collective festivity of the 10th Anniversary of the Church, we held our Parish Day Celebrations. We were able to conduct about 10 concise and interactive team related events based amongst the 11 prayer groups within the Church. Secretaries of various groups were also able to share with Thirumnei and the Congregation a brief summary of activities over the last year. Thirumeni planted a tree and highlighted the necessity in keeping the Earth green and encouraged the Parish members to ensure we protect our ecological surroundings. Thirumeni celebrated with all Parishioners in attendance by cutting a cake and distributed amongst all present.  
Rev. Varghese K. Abraham, Vicar / Mr. George Sam, Secretary

## 10th Mar Thoma Youth Conference - Southern Region



The tenth conference of the Southern Region Mar Thoma Youths was hosted by St. Luke's Mar Thoma Church, Margate, Florida at Camp Shalom in Ocala, Florida from August 4th through 7th 2011. The theme of this year's conference was the Amazing Race based on Hebrews 12:1. The Conference inaugurated by Rev. John Kuruvilla, Tampa. Mrs. Annie Koshy from India was the guest speaker at this conference. St. Luke's MTC Youth Group led the worship services under the leadership of Dr. Geni Abraham. Other participant churches include South Florida Mar Thoma Church, St. Mark's MTC Tampa, Hermon MTC Atlanta, Jacksonville MTC, Atlanta MTC, and for the first time North Carolina MTC. Achens from the entire Sothern region plus over 100 participants attended this blessed event. On Sunday Rev. Thomas Mathew led the Holy Communion service.  
Rev. Thomas Mathew, President

## Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Program Inauguration 2011-13



Inauguration of the Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam 2011-2013 programs was held on July 23rd, by President Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Thirumeni at New Jersey Mar Thoma Church in Randolph. Vice president Rev. Jose. T. Abraham presided over the meeting. Leaders and guests were welcomed by Sakhyam secretary John Varughese (Joji). Releasing of Yuvadharma was done by Thirumeni giving the first copy to Rev. M.S. Daniel. Felicitations were given by Rev. Baby John, Diocesan Assembly member Mr. Binu C Thomas, North east region Vice president Mr. Babu Varghese & Yuvadharma chief editor Mr. Santhosh Abraham. Rev. Benjamin George also attended the meeting. The meeting concluded with Vote of Thanks by Center- A secretary Mr. Reji Joseph. Mrs. Elizabeth George was for the program MC.

## L.E.A.D. (Layperson Education And Development Program)

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Matthew 9:37-38 The Lay Institute program of the Diocese 'LEAD' offers all members of the church an opportunity for ongoing learning and growth towards leadership roles within the Mar Thoma Church. This study program is currently divided into two phases. The courses covered in phase one include, Mar Thoma Church Doctrines, Church History, Liturgy/Worship, Preaching/Sermon Preparation and Introductions to the Old and New Testament. Phase two courses include, Prophetic Literature: Vision/Mission, Pauline Epistles, Missions, Polity of the Mar Thoma church, Understanding our Neighbors (diversity within Christian denominations), and Introduction to Christian Theology. This year's LEAD program will begin in November 2011 and last through April 2012. The program will run at parish level. Both phases of the program will be offered simultaneously. Each parish is encouraged to select a parish coordinator for the LEAD program. The registration cost is \$25.00 per participant. The registration costs covers syllabus, handouts, and learning materials. Engage in a great opportunity to learn and grow as a leader within the Mar Thoma Church. Come learn more about the church and your faith beliefs to become a more effective leader! For more information on the LEAD program, please contact Ms. Arlene Mathew, LEAD Program Convener, at [mtc.leadprogram@gmail.com](mailto:mtc.leadprogram@gmail.com) or 281.772.7429.

Ms. Arlene Mathew, Convener, LEAD Program

## National Clergy Family Conference, North America



The National Clergy Family conference of Achens in North America was held at the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton, Canada on 3rd and 4th July 2011. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, the Diocesan Episcopa; Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Episcopa, and all Achens and family from North America attended the Conference. The theme of the Conference "Relevant ministry in the Digital World" was introduced by the Diocesan Episcopa. Thirumeni examined the influence of digital media on our children, market culture pressure on media, and the impact on younger generation. He also proposed a new paradigm based on Jesus Christ and his ministry. Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas, Rev. Zachariah John (Houston), Rev. Dr. P. L. John Panicker (Toronto), Rev. K. E. Geevarghese (New York), Rev. Benu John (Baltimore) and Rev. Mathew Varghese (New York) presented papers and led discussions. Achens of various centers and Baskiamos led worship services. Rev. V. T. John, Rev. Varghese K. Abraham and Mrs. Rachel Oommen gave devotional messages. Rev. Varghese Mathai led intercessory prayer. Mrs. & Rev. M.S. Daniel, NJ; organized a talent evening. Achens and family members actively participated in the talent time. There was also a time for sharing parish and Diocesan concerns. The conference was jointly hosted by the Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Edmonton and Seattle Mar Thoma Church. Rev. Regi John & family and parishioners of Edmonton Trinity MT Church made all arrangements for the conference and extended hospitality for the delegates. Rev. K. E. Geevarghese expressed vote of thanks to the Thirumenis, leaders, delegates and host parishes. The conference was a great time of fellowship, study and reflections.

## Youth Fellowship of the North East Region



North East Region Youth Fellowship conducted its annual College Seminar for the students starting and preparing to make transition to their College life. As a new academic year is fast approaching, it is important for the faith community to provide help and guidance to our young people who are embarking their higher education journey. The seminar was conducted on July 31, 2011 at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers, NY. Seminar focused on various aspects of college life experiences. Prof. Shaun Rajan from Long Island Mar Thoma Church who teaches Mathematics at Westchester Community College led the seminar. His insights as a professor and a person born and brought up in the Mar Thoma Community in the US gave valuable insights to all those who attended this seminar. Prof. Shaun Rajan encouraged all the students to make Christ as their center when they encounter new environments in the college campuses. Rev. Joseph Johnny, Vicar of the host parish and President of the Center B Youth Fellowship, and North East Region Youth Chaplain Rev. Biju P. Simon attended the meeting. This seminar was a blessing to all those who participated.

Rev. Biju P. Simon (NERYP Chaplain)

## Boston Youth Fellowship hosted Spring One Day Conference



Boston Carmel Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship conducted the One-Day Spring conference of the North East Regional Youth Fellowship on April 23, 2011. Theme was, "Is Jesus the only way? A Christian response to religious pluralism." The main speaker Ms. Tina Teng-Henson, a Harvard University Chaplain, gave three main talks. Participants also engaged in thought-provoking discussions. Boston Youth Fellowship led the singing session which allowed all the participants to lift their voices in praise to God. Toward the end of the conference there was a service project, assembling Easter Baskets for distribution to children in a local homeless shelter in the Greater Boston Area, the youths put their hands and energy in service to the "least of our brothers." All the churches who came to this conference participated in the Jeopardy style competition testing their understanding of the Christian faith and the basic tenets of other religions. Prizes were distributed to the winners. During this One Day Spring conference, the annual North East Region Youth Fellowship General Body was held. North East Region Youth Fellowship president Rev. Jacob Varghese (St. John's MTC, NY) presided over the meeting. Rev. Biju P. Simon, Youth Chaplain, and Vicar of the Boston Carmel Mar Thoma Church Rev. K. C. Varughese participated in the meeting. Boston Mar Thoma Church Youth Fellowship members deserve a special appreciation for all their efforts to host and make this North East Region Spring One Day Conference a success.

*Rev. Biju P. Simon (NERYP Chaplain)*

## Los Angeles MTC Parish Day Celebration:



The 35th anniversary of the L A Parish was celebrated on Sunday Aug. 14th with Holy Communion and a public meeting afterwards. Rev. Dr. P. S. Daniel was the chief guest for the day. Twenty-seven members of the Parish who entered their

Sapthathy were honored with the presentation of special plaques. Mr. Abraham O. Mathew presented the anniversary report. Special music by Sunday school children and entertainment by the youth added color to the celebration. Mr. Jacob A. Mathew delivered the welcome speech and Mr. George Verghese proposed the vote of thanks.

## Western Regional Convention

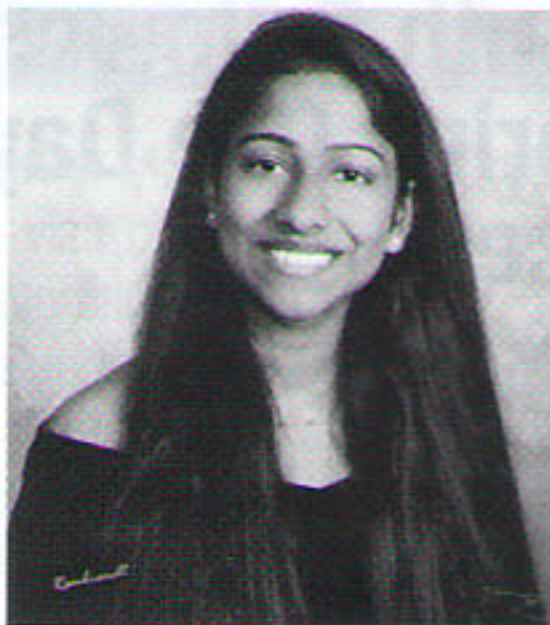
The Western Regional Convention of the Diocese of North America and Europe was held in Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church from August 19th to 21st 2011.



The main speaker for the convention was Rev. Dr. T.J. Thomas. With his many years of counseling experience, Achen talked about marriage, parenting and upholding family values in a time of declining social standards and generational gaps. Rev. P.S Daniel, former Principal of Mar Thoma Seminary, Rev. Thomas John, Vicar of Los Angeles MTC, Rev. Viji T. Kurikeshu, Vicar of San Francisco MTC and Rev. Binu Varghese, Vicar of Seattle MTC were present. The convention was well attended by members from the Los Angeles MTC, St. Andrews MTC and San Francisco MTC. A bus was rented to take 40 members from San Francisco MTC to Los Angeles and they were hosted by the Los Angeles Church members. The convention was a very blessed, enjoyable and memorable experience for all.

*Rev. Viji T. Kurikeshu- Vicar, SFO MTC*

## 2011 Valedictorian Award



Keerthy D Joseph  
D/o Mr. & Mrs. George Joseph and  
Jessy Joseph  
Mar Thoma Church of Philadelphia



Shawn Thomas  
S/o Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Sakariah &  
Sheela Thomas  
Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco

Nevin J Mathai  
S/o Mr. & Mrs. Johnson and Betsy Mathai  
St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago

Rajiv T Varghese  
S/o Mr. & Mrs. Thomas and Shanti Varghese  
Orlando Mar Thoma Congregation

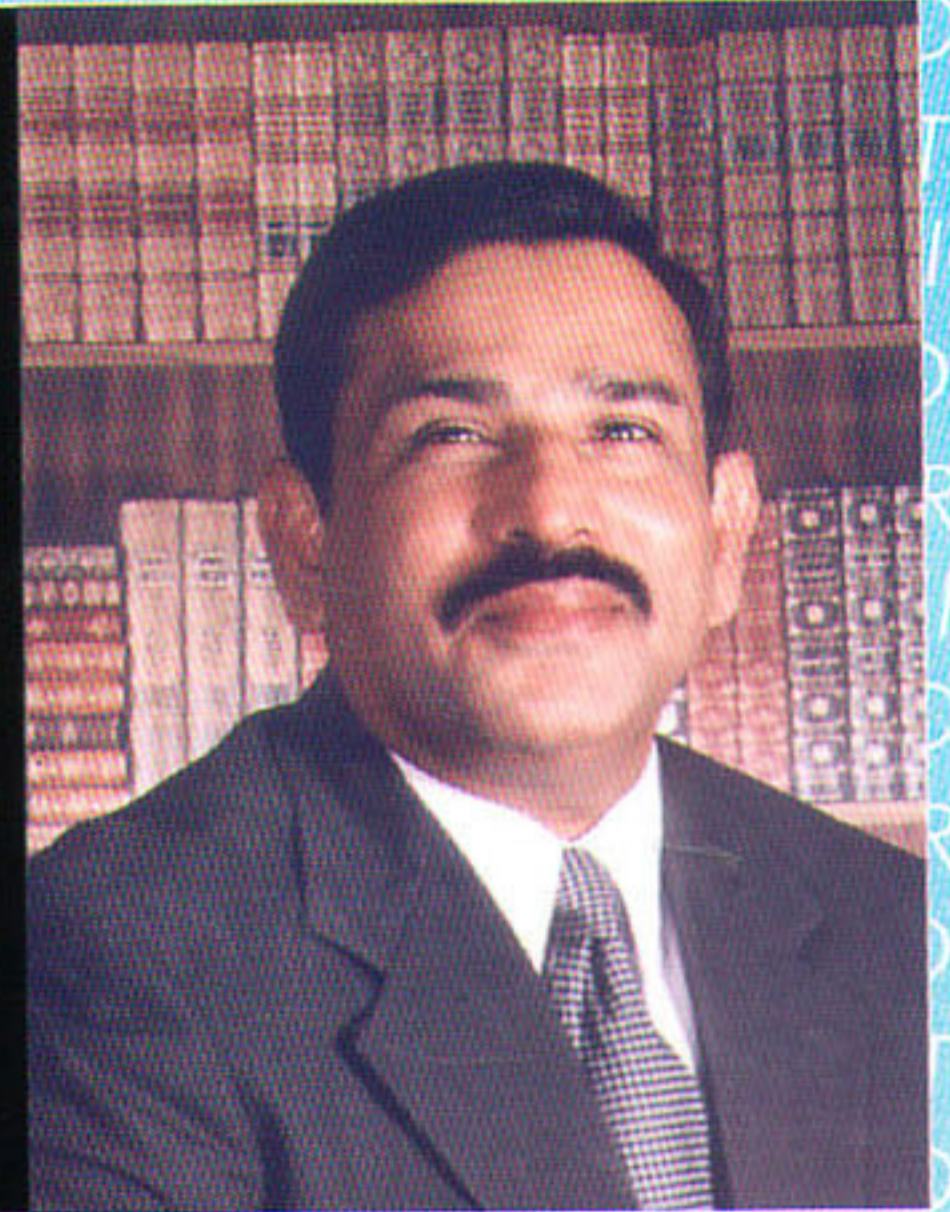
Anson T Angail  
S/o Thomas Angail and Gracy Angail  
St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church, Tampa, Florida

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 UK of the Marthoma Church (The)  
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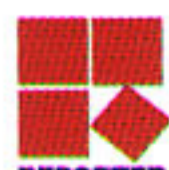
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