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MAR THOMA MESSENGER
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Vol. XLI, No: 1

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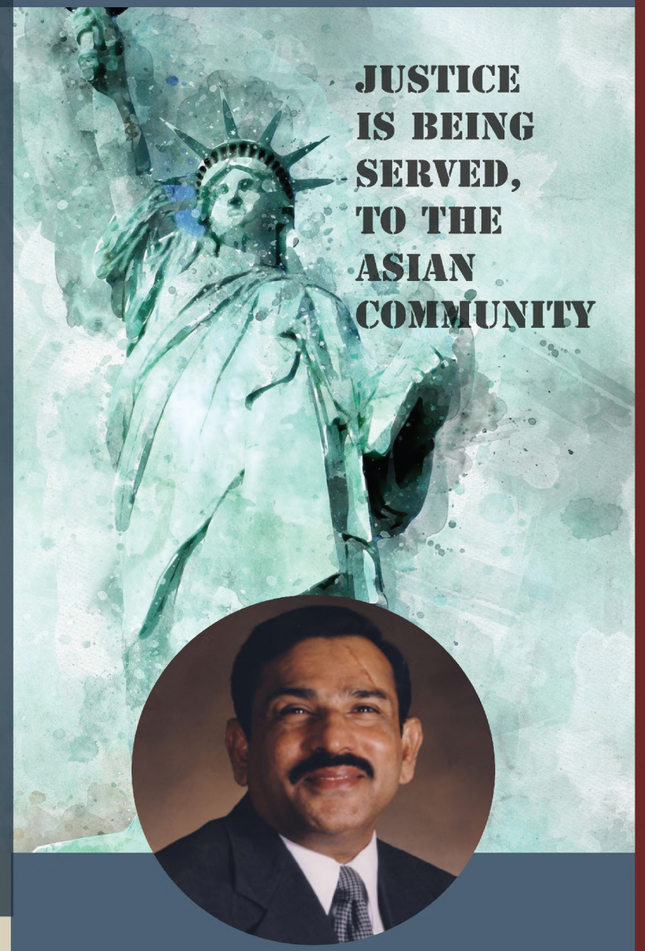

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MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe

Happy 2022 New Year

wish you a blessed new year filled with devotion, compassion, redemption.

January - 2022

MALANKARA
MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

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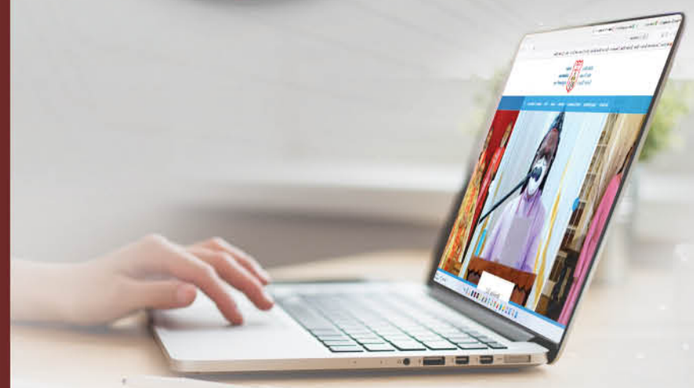

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MESSAGE

MALANKARA
MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

MESSAGE FROM THE METROPOLITAN

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

Greetings of love to all in the name of Jesus Christ!

I praise God being able to conduct the Sabha Pradhinidhi Mandalam for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 term periods through zoom meetings between October 13 and 15, 2021. God, through His amazing grace, blessed and enabled us to conduct the meetings without obstacles, and with more than 1400 Mandalam representatives participating. The meetings were significant because of the partnership and cooperation of more people. It was really a difficult task to provide opportunities to all who wanted to speak. We deployed electronic media for conducting the Mandalam meetings to avoid a constitutional crisis. In addition, the elections for the new office bearers and the clergy selection committee had to be conducted. Thanks to the prayers, counseling, hard work, and cooperation of many people, the meetings were successful. Let me convey my deepest gratitude to all.

I remember with sincere thanks the unique services rendered by Rev. K. G. Joseph, the Sabha Secretary, Rev. Thomas C. Alexander, the Clergy Trustee, Mr. P. P. Achenkunju, the Lay Trustee and Treasurer, the Sabha Council Members, and the Clergy Selection Committee for the last four years and express my deepest gratitude to those dear ones, who selflessly performed the ministry of the Church meaningfully during a very eventful period. I wish the very best to the newly elected Office Bearers, Rev. C. V. Simon, the Sabha Secretary, Rev. Moncey K. Philip, the Clergy Trustee, Mr. Rajan Jacob, the Lay Trustee and Treasurer, and the members of the Sabha Council, and the Clergy Selection Committee.

Though we recognize ourselves as a pilgrim community, it is vital for us to identify our systematic point of reference. These systematic points of reference must pave the way for creative changes in social interactions and the witnessing in the Church. Yet, we cannot evade and must not deviate from our point of reference. When we remember the lives of great leaders who contributed abundantly to the Church, it is our duty to strive and complete their magnificent visions. It has been a year since the passing of the blessed Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan. The first memorial lecture in memory of Joseph Mar Thoma was held on Sunday, October 17, 2021. Dr. Cyriac Thomas, a close friend of the Metropolitan, and a former Vice-chancellor of the Mahathma Gandhi University, Kottayam, delivered the main lecture. Dr. Thomas characterized Joseph Mar Thoma as a blessing to the world by God.

His Grace Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews III was consecrated as the new Catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Church. His Grace is a person who gives priority to peace and unity among Churches. His Grace Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Suffragan Metropolitan represented the Mar Thoma Church at the consecration ceremony and the felicitation meeting held on October 15 at Parumala. We arranged a friendly fellowship gathering to honor the new Catholicos at the Thiruvalla Poolatheen on October 29, 2021. Our bishops and bishops from other sister Churches in and around Thiruvalla participated in this pleasant gathering to felicitate the Catholicos. I convey the best wishes of the Malankara Mar Thoma Church to the new Catholicos.

Religious fundamentalism and extremism have become predominant now, leading the society into dangerous situations. Every citizen must recognize such trends as wrong and perilous in a pluralistic society. What the Karnataka State Government has been doing currently through surveys of Christian Churches and mission fields in the pretext of gathering information about forced conversions is a looming threat over us. India's great strength lies in its diversity. Recognizing this truth, every Indian must labor hard for a new India that encourages inclusive and diverse cultures with tolerance and patience.

We observed November 14th as the Festival of Unity of the Communion of Churches in India. Three denominations, namely CSI, CNI, and the Mar Thoma Church, represent the Communion of Churches in India. The objective of the Communion of Churches was the harmonization of responses to topics on justice and peace. We need to continue our explorations that are befitting to the times, and reach the goal of carrying out the mission mandated by the Lord for serving others.

Reminding us of a society without lies and deceits, Onam, Kerala's festival of joy and happiness, arrived and passed. Onam gives us the message of equality among all persons. When we reflect on the memories of such a glorious idea, I wish that we focus on the thousands of unemployed people in Kerala, the helpless returning migrants from foreign countries, and the guest workers who lost their jobs owing to the COVID pandemic.

The Taliban regained control of Afghanistan again. This militant group that believes in Islamic fundamentalism has now entered the arena wearing the mask of nationalism. People, especially women, who had bitter experiences of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan some years ago, were quite worried about their return to power. It is now known that the Taliban government will curtail the freedom of women and ban girls from attending schools and colleges. This news is very disheartening and discomforting. Let us pray for the Afghan people, who are experiencing the decadence of the new administration's dangerous mixing of extreme religious fanaticism and nationalism in the most ruthless manner.

It is a matter of grave concern that the reference to the term, "narcotic Jihad," recently led to acrimonious debates in Kerala. This is a good example that reminds us to use words with great caution. Mixing fundamentalists, communalists, terrorists, and revivalists in the name of religion is absurd and dangerous. It may be necessary for religious leaders to educate laity against the forces of vested and selfish interests. All of us are responsible for sustaining peace and friendships in the society. Christian gospel is the message of love, not of hate. Our words must help to defeat hostility, hatred, and division during these trying times, when secularism faces many serious challenges.

In the webinar on the topic, "Sree Narayana Guru: Imagination and vision," conducted under the auspices of Thunjath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, Malappuram, I delivered the keynote address. Sree Narayana Guru was a great spiritual leader who guided the entire Kerala society. His thoughts, words, and messages, are more relevant now, given the raging controversies on religious conversions.

The International Day of the Girl Child (or The International Girls Day) was observed on October 11th all over the world. The most serious challenge we face today is gender discrimination, beginning with feticide. We must oppose this evil vehemently, and stand firm based on spiritual

considerations. In Kerala, with the highest literacy in India, women are being attacked and harassed regularly. However, there has been some good news recently. The Indian Supreme Court has ruled that women can also compete in admission tests for the National Defense Academy, Pune.

From August 6 through 17, I visited the Delhi Diocese. My visit covered the schools in Gaziabad, Palmgarh, Korba, Delhi, Bharatpur, Jaisinghnagar, and Beohari, Dharma Jyoti Vidya Peeth Seminary, Faridabad, and the Sihora Ashram in Madhya Pradesh. Our schools in North India have become beacons of hope for many children. They get good education. The services rendered by the members and priests of the Sihora Ashram are praiseworthy. We need young men and women from Kerala to teach in these schools. This year, we have more students from the mission fields at the Easow Mar Timotheos Bible Institute, which functions under the Sihora Ashram. Let us pray for all our mission fields.

The Teachers Day was observed on September 5, 2021. We praise God for the unique services of teachers. The role of teachers in shaping the generations is important. Many of our students need phones, computers, and internet facilities. The Church also must extend a helping hand to meet their needs.

World Health Organization has set aside September 10th as the World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD). The founding day of the Church of South India was celebrated on September 27th. Let us remember the Church in our prayers, its leadership, and their ministries.

Towards the end of October, our Church entered a new Liturgical Year. The Liturgical Year is the arrangement made by the Church to unravel God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, equipping everyone to experience Christ and to journey with Christ through worship. Let us pray that the new Liturgical Year becomes the source of great spiritual understanding for each one of us, uniting ourselves with Jesus.

His Grace Jacob Mar Barnabas Metropolitan of Gurgaon-Delhi Diocese of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church passed away. His native place was Ranni. His Grace was very pious and provided leadership for the uplifting of the poor and helpless. Rev. Dr. M. V. Abraham, former principal of the Mar Thoma Seminary and a reputed theologian, was called to the presence of the Lord. Rev. T. C. George, one of the senior priests of our Church, was called to the eternal abode. Rev. T. A. John, another senior priest was called to be with the Lord. Let us praise God for the sacrificial services of these Achens. Let me express my deepest condolences for the demises of these dear ones.

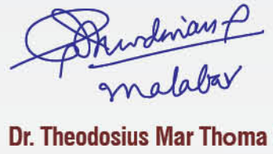
To support the family of the late Rev. Anup Mathew, we wished to collect money from well-wishers. We convey our thanks and love for the cooperation and support received from various dioceses, especially Mumbai Diocese, and North America and Europe Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church. Mrs. Blessy Mathew, Anup Achen's wife, through the arrangement made by the Mar Thoma Church, entered the service as a teacher at the Satna School in Madhya Pradesh. She now lives in the school campus along with her two children.

The Church observed September 5th as 'The Education Sunday.' The subject of meditation was, "Jesus, the great Teacher." The Passover Supper witnessed Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. He transformed the teacher-disciple relationship and its concepts. Jesus became the greatest teacher by sharing new visions, perspectives, and lifestyle. Our educational efforts must reconcile with our Lord's model that emphasizes justice and reciprocity. We celebrated September 12th as Sevika Sangham Sunday, the topic of our meditation being, "Woman: Participant in the Divine Salvific Plan of God." Jesus appreciated the woman who showed her reverence and love for Him by pouring the precious perfume in the alabaster jar on Him. Some of those present there showed displeasure. Our present-day world which has an anti-woman stance should be cleansed. The calling of Sevika Sangham is nothing other than this. We observed September 19th as the 'Senior Citizen Sunday.' Our meditation topic was, "Gray Head, the Crown of Glory." Jesus, as a tiny baby was brought to the Jerusalem Temple by His parents to be presented to the Lord. Simeon, and Anna, two old, saintly persons optimistically waiting there to see the Messiah, are examples of the blessed old age. On the Sunday of September 26, we meditated on the topic, "Holy Qurbana: Sacrament of Thanksgiving." Holy Communion is a celebration. It is the Sacrament of Sacraments. It is the victory over sin. Like Jesus, we are expected to be broken and given for this world. Only then the Holy Communion becomes the real Thanksgiving.

The Church observed the first Sunday of October as Voluntary Evangelists Day. As we meditated on the theme of "Evangelists, the Carriers of the Gospel," each believer is called to be an evangelist. He/she is challenged to take up that great and glorious task. The Gospel is Good News. Let us share the Good News through our words and lives. The theme for our reflection on October 10, the second Sunday, was, "Christian approach to the Differently Abled." The then Jewish community stamped the physically challenged as imperfect humans. Jesus mercifully accepted such persons and healed them. We must develop this Jesus attitude in our life. The Church must transform into a society filled with empathy. We celebrated October 17th as Youth Sunday, the theme being, "Youth, search for a meaningful life." Youthhood is a period of several types of inquisitive explorations. The young man who comes near Jesus in search of eternal life is one who always obeyed the laws and statutes. However, what Jesus needs is a person's deep commitment and submission before God. The Church observed the fourth Sunday of October as Christian Family Dedication Sunday. Our prayers were centered on the theme, "Family: Replica of the Kingdom of God." A Christian family is a gathering of those who search to know the will of God. It is there that a Christian family becomes a replica of the kingdom of God. The thought for the last Sunday of October was, "The Sanctification of the Church." After his royal entry in Jerusalem, Jesus comes to the Temple. He purifies the Temple by driving away the traders and other money-grubbers from the Holy Temple. He paves the way for the low and the marginalized to have a place there. The attitude of Jesus was aimed at the renewal of a wrong and authoritarian system that existed for centuries. The Church also must be purified by the Holy Spirit. Only then will the Church become the House of God. By submitting ourselves for this cleansing, the will of God, through the Church, gets fulfilled.

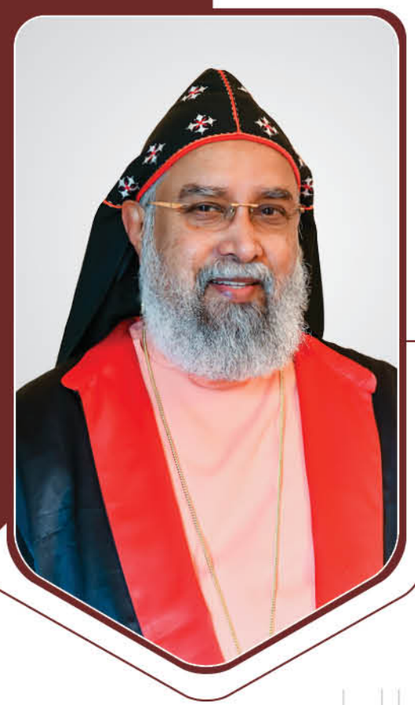
The first Sunday of November was observed as Hudos Eetho which indicates the renewal of the Church in the Church Year. We also celebrated World Sunday School Day. Our meditation centered on the topic, "Children, the inheritors of the Kingdom of God." Jesus with abundant love and kindness to them, advises the adults to live the life with the innocence of children. On the second Sunday, we prayerfully reflected on the Annunciation to Zachariah. This is an answer to the hopes and aspirations of the Jewish people. They were getting a golden opportunity to turn to God, with the birth of John the Baptist. "Annunciation to Virgin Mary" was the topic of our meditation on the third Sunday of November. God chooses Mary, an innocent village maiden, to be the bearer of the birth of the Messiah who was excitedly and anxiously anticipated by the Jewish community. It is wonderful to observe that through Mary, an ordinary woman, occurs the restoration of David's throne. Mary is the embodiment of complete surrender to the will of God. The last Sunday of November saw the believing community meditating the topic namely, "Visitation of Virgin Mary to Elizabeth--sharing the Good News." The resplendent moments of faith, love, and hope are celebrated when Mary and Elizabeth meet. One's calling need not be limited to individual experiences. The sublime and blissful callings must be shared and celebrated. We are not alone there. God's divine presence completely envelopes the atmosphere. The divine baby within Mary's womb is filled with godly happiness. It was in this context that Mary and Elizabeth meet. Just like that our coming together, too, must be, self-motivated and based on real calling. For this, let us offer ourselves in the mighty hands of God.

The grace of our Lord and Savior be with you all.



Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan.

(Translated by Prof. Elias Abraham, Baltimore Mar Thoma Church, from the September-October-November 2021 issues of Sabha Tharaka)



MESSAGE

MALANKARA
MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

MESSAGE FROM
DIOCESAN EPISCOPA

Dearly beloved in Christ!

Greetings to all in the name of Jesus Christ!

The dawn of the New Year brings new hope to humanity. The threat of the deadly virus - though it haunted us for a longtime - is to some extent tackled and brought under control with the availability of vaccines and necessary medicines. Let us thank God for the divine providence and the wisdom shared with the medical professionals and scientists. While we learned new lessons of Universal love as well as need for co-operation beyond borders, we need to develop avenues of keeping right relationships and renewed visions for the future of humanity relying on the presence of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This Messenger issue focuses on love of Christ that unites humanity, based on the theme of the next assembly of the World Council of Churches that will take place in Karlsruhe, Germany from August 31 to September 8, 2022. The theme of the assembly is "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." This theme looks like a statement; however, it proclaims a common accepted truth. The concerns often raised by many are about the contradictions we see in a divided church. How to realize the way and role God takes in this life? What are the signs of God's dealing in the affairs of the world? Also, how to manage the crisis and challenges that humanity faces, the disparities in society and ecological concerns like climate change?

We need to understand that faith integrates communities. When we pray, thy kingdom come, we pre-suppose God's divine presence and guidance. And this divine presence is manifested through the love that Jesus Christ shared in the world. In John's gospel it is made clear through the words, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn. 3.16). This love is seen as the closeness of the believer to God as well as to one another. It also needs to be understood that the more one becomes distanced from God the more distanced they are to their neighbor. The biblical assertion of life on earth is rooted in the unity of humanity which experiences the love of God. As mentioned, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God: everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1.Jn.4.7). Therefore, "love one another as Christ loved," becomes a Christian response to God's act to keep peace and harmony among humanity. While we say, "God is love," we assume that without love one cannot know God fully. This love that we see in Christ is participation in the mystery of God, and as Christ's sacrificial love on the cross for saving the human race. The words of Jesus Christ in Luke's Gospel "love your enemies," and "be merciful as the father is merciful," are radical responses through the act of love. He adds that by loving "Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High" (Luke. 6. 35), and "everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35).

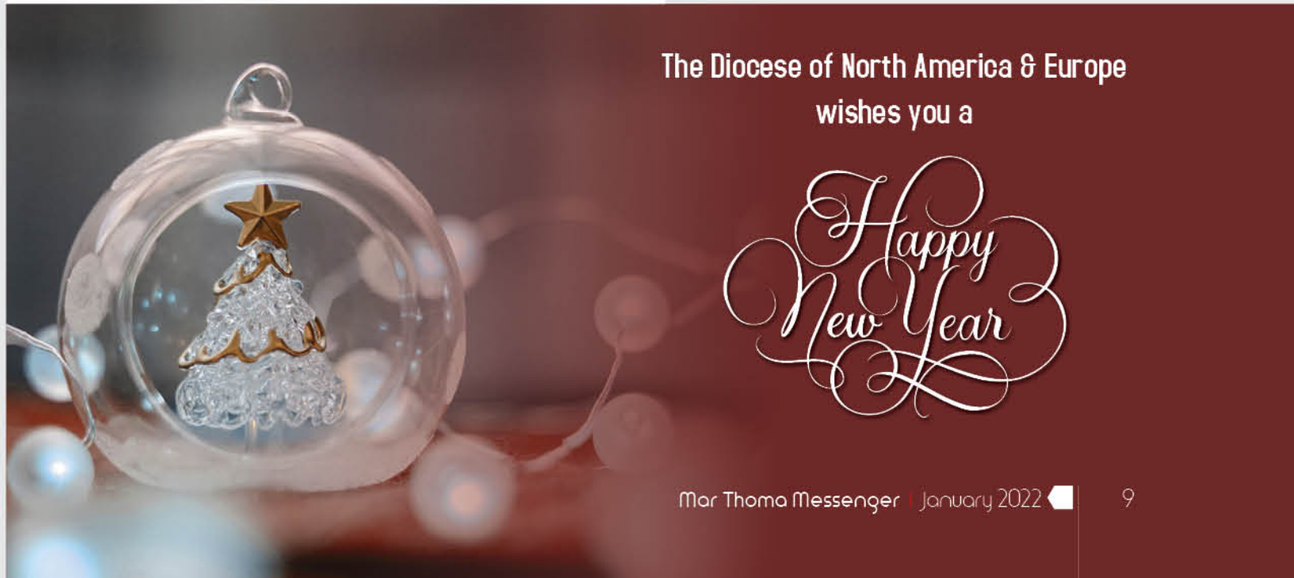
Christ's love is the foundation of Christian mission. The call to witness Christ implies the inseparable relation of the believer to Christ. In today's world the question that comes to our mind is, has Christianity become counter testimony to the love of God revealed in Christ. Often this has been pointed as the failure of the church in its witness in the world as well as in sharing the love that Christ has given to us. Let the love of Christ motivate the believers to love one another and to live in unity in the midst of diverse ways of living.

We are happy that the Diocesan family conference at Atlanta in October and Yuvajana Sakhyam conference at Houston in November went on well and were well-attended. It was a refreshing experience to all participants, especially at this time of the pandemic to gather for prayer and fellowship. I appreciate the conference committee in Atlanta for managing the family conference with utmost care, and the Yuvajana Sakhyam of Houston Immanuel parish for their committed service in hosting the conference. We look forward to the continued prayer and participation of all our members in Diocesan activities. The Diocesan leadership conference of the youth fellowship will be held at New Jersey from January 6 to 9, 2022, and hosted by the Redeemer Mar Thoma Church. I hope it will be an occasion for our youths to participate and get equipped to lead the church.

I am glad to see that the Institute on mission and culture is inaugurated at Atlanta Carmel Center, as per the decision of the Diocesan Assembly, and the first course on "Gospel and Culture" will start from February 2022. I thank God for enabling us to use our new facility at Atlanta for theological learning. I am sure it will go a long way in imparting theological knowledge and spiritual nurturing to our clergy and laity, especially our future generations in North America. Let us pray that God may continue to use us to be good instruments in the expansion of the kingdom of God, through our committed actions.

With love and prayers,
Sincerely,

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos



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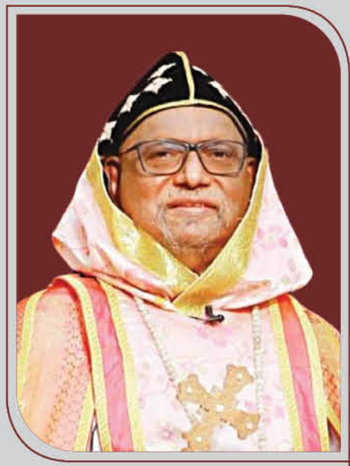

His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius
Mar Thoma Metropolitan

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Deacon	:	24 June 1972
Kassissa	:	24 February 1973
Ramban	:	04 November 1989
Episcopa	:	09 December 1989
Suffragan Metropolitan	:	12 July 2020
Mar Thoma Metropolitan	:	14 November 2020

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Episcopa	:	13 August 2011

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Deacon	:	27 June 1986
Kassissa	:	30 July 1986
Ramban	:	07 May 2011
Episcopa	:	13 August 2011

EDITORIAL

Dr. Cherian Samuel
Associate Editor

Blessed New Year Greetings to All!

As we welcome 2022, we thank the Lord Almighty for His goodness and mercies in our lives during 2021. Like the Psalmist, we thank the LORD for His lovingkindness and faithfulness every day (Psalm 92: 2). The year 2021 was eventful and memorable by all measures. The global economy showed signs of recovery and rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic – albeit uneven across countries – following the successful rollout of vaccines. We experienced the return to near-normal parish Church life, with the resumption of in-person Sunday worship services. The 33rd Mar Thoma Diocesan Family conference (Theme: "Living in Christ, Leaping in Faith") was a remarkable success in bringing families together and renewing relationships. During 2021, our Mar Thoma Church leadership was also fortified, following the elevation of Coorilos Thirumeni and Barnabas Thirumeni as Suffragan Metropolitans to support the Metropolitan, The Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma.

The theme of Messenger for January 2022, "Christ's Love that Unites", is based on the 2022 World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly theme, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity". The Assembly theme is set to provide a framework for member churches to renew their common call to: (i) seek the communion (koinonia) that is God's gift and promise; (ii) shape their service (diakonia) to the people of the world and to creation; (iii) commit themselves to God's mission of love to the world (missio Dei); and (iv) give words to their common prayer for each other and for the whole world (leiturgia). In the shadow of the COVID-19 experience, the WCC gathering in Karlsruhe, Germany, is expected to hold a light of hope and celebrate the love of God, a love that moves people to reconciliation and unity.

Reconciliation and Unity are closely related from a Christian perspective, in a symbiotic relationship. God's redemptive plan of salvation through Jesus Christ has provided the basis for Reconciliation between God and humanity. Likewise, the Unity in the Godhead between God the Father and God the Son presents a pattern for Unity of the Church, modeled, and manifested in the life of early Christians. The foundation for both Reconciliation and Unity may be drawn from Jesus's command to His disciples during the upper room discourse (John 13-17) to love each other, just as Jesus loved them (John 15:12).

Reconciliation between Holy God and sinful humanity through Jesus Christ is the "Gospel" message, the foundational tenet of Christianity. As Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, God has reconciled humanity to Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19). Jesus bore the guilt and punishment for the sin of humanity on the cross, thereby imputing righteousness to believers. Apostle Paul stresses the importance of Christ's death in several passages: Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6); Christ died for us, while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8); Christ was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25); we have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7). As deliberated in the Gospels, reconciliation was the very purpose of Jesus – God in human flesh – coming go earth: to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10); to save people from sin (Matthew 1:21).

An important outcome of God's act of reconciliation with sinners is the Ministry of Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), mandated to all believers as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), imploring humanity, "Be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:21)". Jesus himself gave the Great Commission to His disciples and All believers to make disciples of all nations, preaching the gospel, baptizing, and teaching (Mathew 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15-16). Likewise, the "Lighted to Lighten" logo of our Mar Thoma Church represents its mission to spread the gospel message of

Jesus Christ, with every member and believer of the Church given the light to enlighten others.

In His high priestly prayer, Jesus desires for all His followers to be in complete unity, just as He and the Father are in perfect unity (John 17:21). Jesus taught that when believers are united and abide in God, the world will know that God loves them and that He sent Jesus for them (John 17:23). Jesus shared the same truth with Nicodemus by stating that God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life (John 3:16).

Jesus' high priestly prayer for unity became a reality in the life of the early Church. The early Christians were gathered in one place; they shared their possessions and were of one heart and soul (Acts 2:44). When faced with challenges, the Holy Spirit enabled the believers to find solutions that maintained the unity in the Early Church (Acts 15: 6-35).

In his epistles, Apostle Paul refers to believers as "one body in Christ," transcending varieties of giftedness (Romans 12:5-8, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 1 Corinthians 12:27-30) and people groups (Galatians 3:28). Paul showed that the Unity of the Church reflects the Unity of the Godhead: one God (1 Corinthians 12:6), one Lord (Ephesians 4:5), and one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11). Apostle Paul has also catalogued the key elements of Christian Unity as: Christ as Lord (Ephesians 4:13); sense of mission (Philippians 2:2); concern for one another (1 Corinthians 12: 25); suffering for Jesus' sake (Philippians 1: 29-30).

Jesus' singular command to His followers to love each other marked out Love as the defining attribute of Christianity, also implying that it is only Christ's Love that unites. Apostle Paul expanded on the love theme in his first epistle to the Corinthians, delineating Love as the greatest gift, better than faith and hope (1 Corinthians 13: 13). The uniting nature of Christ's love is pivotal at this time when the Church of Christ is increasingly facing divisive forces within.

May the Lord Almighty sustain us all in 2022! May He lead us to lives that are abundant and praiseworthy. For His glory. And our good.

Dr. Cherian Samuel
Associate Editor

Christ's Love that Unites and Reconciles the World

Rev. Sunil Chacko
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"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3: 16)

Those who are in Christ living out of His love which is working on us, are called to do His work in this world and to be a faithful community or an eschatological community. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes the necessity of being transformed and being a new creation. God brings the new creation into existence by sending his Son to this world to transform or reconcile it. In Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself. So as followers of Christ, we are the agents bringing about that transformation and reconciliation.

Biblical and Theological Foundations of Reconciliation and Transformation

In the midst of profound division and brokenness, love and peace in the risen Christ will reconcile humanity to God, to one another, and the rest of creation. Reconciliation is the sign of God's presence in this world. As a community of the Kingdom of God, the church's ministry flows from a call to being a reconciled community. Christ prayed for the visible unity of the church: "I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John17: 21). Church's ministry should also be profoundly shaped by the truth that Jesus is fully human and fully divine. As a historical person, Jesus faced separation, refusal, and rejection. At the same time, He transformed the boundaries of separation. "For he is our peace who has made the two one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:14).

We must heed scriptural exhortation that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood." "It is crucial to recognize an unseen heavenly dimension to the quest for reconciliation in the world" (Lausanne Occasional Paper). This can be attained through a deeply prayerful, meditative life and discernment. Paul wrote that Jesus Christ is not simply a Galilean teacher but a person of great compassion and love in whom "the whole fullness of the deity dwells bodily"" Col 2:9. Out of compassion and love for us and the whole creation, God became flesh, assumed all the sufferings and passion of humankind and of the whole created order to heal us, restore us, save us and reconcile us with God. Our faith proclaims that "God is love" (1 John 4:16) and that in Jesus Christ, this very love of God is revealed to the world. The world needs this love of God for transformation and reconciliation.

The Church is the Agent of Reconciliation

The Church is the agent to bring reconciliation to all spheres of the human world. As members of the church, we are the ministers of reconciliation in our day-to-day life. Reconciliation includes reconciliation between people, reconciliation with nature, and reconciliation with God. In the Old Testament, we can see the reconciling act of God as explained in the Jubilee year. Reconciling with your brother, reconciling with the land, and reconciling with God are the

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key elements of Jubilee year. In the Gospel of Luke 4:18 & 19, Jesus in His Nazareth Manifesto says, "He has sent me to proclaim the freedom for the prisoners and recovery of the sight of the blind to release the oppressed to proclaim the year of Lord's favour." Jesus fulfilled the Lord's year through His ministry and church as the agent of reconciliation to continue this ministry. Our world is a fragmented world for many reasons. Poverty, gender inequality, climate change, and racial discrimination are some of the challenges that we are facing today. The love of Christ demands that we reconcile the world where there are wounds and pain through our mission initiatives. Paul says, "All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling to the world to himself in Christ not counting men's sin against them. And he has committed us to the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5: 18, 19). So, the love of God in Christ is the source of reconciliation.

The Church is the Agent of Transformation

The Church is the body of Christ and a called-out community to enliven Christ's presence in this world. The Church is present in this world with immense potential to reform and transform the world by living out the claims. As a covenant community, the church is the bodily presence of mutuality and relationality. Church has the prophetic, diaconal, and charismatic mandate entrusted by God. Church represents the authentic relationship and transcendence of life. It is the embodiment of prophetic assertion, the voice of the marginalized. So, the presence of the church and its mission itself is a change in the world. Church prompts the faith community to engage in a movement of transition, the process of diffusion across cultural, economic, and social boundaries. This aims at a positive and creative revolution that entails the restructuring of the consciousness of the society and working with God towards the transformation of all things in Christ's love.

Christianity began by preaching, teaching, and practicing the Gospel of love through healing the sick, and providing bread for the poor, and care for the widows and slaves. Christian communities emerged as something new in the Roman world because of their mission on the peripheries of society. The ministry of love and compassion is not a personal obligation but a corporate endeavor of the church to be carried out by the church itself. The various mission initiatives of the Mar Thoma Church and especially the Diocese of North America and Europe is our engagement in the transition process of various communities; especially, the Light To Life project, which is a mission among children. Around 3,500 children are beneficiaries of this project. That means the church is reaching out to around 3,500 families through this mission. This will make significant changes in the lives of these families and the societies in which they live. Paul in Galatians says, "A little yeast permeates the whole lump" (Gal 5: 9).

The Pandemic

All of humanity is suffering due to Covid 19. It has created profound anxiety and uncertainty in human life. The basic nature of the human being is relational, forging relationships with fellow human beings. But the pandemic has inserted "distancing" between people and communities. Fellowship, community spirit, and celebrations have been severely affected and curtailed by the pandemic. Churches are struggling to find ways to continue in worship and celebrate the sacraments. The world is still struggling to get a handle on this minuscule virus. The church has a greater role in this context to give hope and strength amid anxiety and death. It is our responsibility to extend our caring hands towards those who lost their livelihoods and businesses and are severely affected by the fear psychosis caused by the pandemic.

The World needs more Love and Care

The world needs more attention and care than in any other period in history. After the First and Second World Wars, this present time is the most uncertain time for humanity. There are so many reasons for that. Of course, Covid-19 is the most important threat to the human world right now. Economic inequalities and injustice, poverty, climate change, and gender inequalities are some of the other issues currently facing the world.

Economic Inequalities and Injustices

The global economy is concentrated in the hands of a few people. The government policies all around the globe are becoming more favorable to corporates rather than individual citizens. A good number of people are still lacking food, drinking water, and proper shelter. Human dignity is questioned in terms of color, gender, ethnicity, and religion. The church has a role in making the congregation aware of the structural inequalities and practicing true Christian values in its day-to-day life.

Conclusion

The Church should focus on the sacramental life of the people because the church and church life is sacramental. The church is the body of Christ, and our life is the bodily experience of the faith in this world as a child of God. Therefore, the church is not an organization; it is an experience of life in God's love. In the early church, "day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking the bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart" (Acts 2: 46). The table fellowship made them true Christians filled with joy and happiness and enriched by the spirit of fellowship and love. Holy Communion or the Lord's Table is a 'sacrament of love' because it ties with love for one another. God's love can only transform the boundaries and divisions among peoples and communities. ✠

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Back to Basics

Regaining Our Foothold In Establishing Self-sustaining Institutions

Mr. Abraham T. Ninan & Prof. Joshy Jacob
MTC Atlanta

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest" - Benjamin Franklin.

There was a time when the Mar Thoma community was at the forefront of establishing new institutions. We have done well in establishing kindergarten to 12th-grade schools primarily in Kerala and a few across India. Our schools have done well, and we produced outstanding students who have become exceedingly successful in life. In contrast to schools, we established only a limited number of institutions of higher learning.

The Mar Thoma College in Thiruvalla was established in 1952, and the St. Thomas College in Kozhencherry in 1953. Then we waited almost three decades to start the Mar Thoma College, Chungathara, in 1982. It is nearly four decades since 1982. As a community, we have much more resources now than in the early 1950s, yet we seem to have lost our zeal to establish institutions of higher learning somewhere along the way.

We operate nine medical missions, five in Kerala, two in Karnataka, and one in Gujarat and Madya Pradesh. The crown jewel undoubtedly is the St. Thomas Mission hospital in Kattanam which proudly houses a school of medical laboratory technology, a pharmacy school, and a nursing school. The students we have trained, or those who worked there, have moved on to different parts of the globe.

The time is upon us to reconnect with our mission of establishing institutions of higher education. This is the time to establish Mar Thoma Medical Colleges and Engineering Colleges to train the next generation of doctors and engineers. To make the dream even bigger, we should ask ourselves if the time has come for us to start thinking about establishing educational institutions in North America. Collectively, we have the resources to accomplish this dream, but perhaps what stops us is our risk-averseness. So, the question then is how to minimize risk, and we posit that this can be done as follows.

Adopt an institution-building model. Our Diocesan Bishop is an institution-builder. His ventures have been successful because his focus is on making institutions self-sufficient. We should ensure that new institutions generate sufficient revenue to sustain itself independently without further external capital infusion.

Waiting for the right time. One to two generations ago, our ancestors were primarily farmers in Kerala, and they understood farming. In 1952 and 1953, when we started the two Mar Thoma Colleges, was that the right time to create two Colleges in the span of one year? The truth is that there is no right time; now is the right time. Our ancestors understood this because they read in Ecclesiastes 11:4 that "Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap." The farmer who waits for perfect weather will never plant, and the farmer who watches every cloud and worries about impending rain will never harvest. We should follow the lead of our farmer forebears. So, waiting for the right time would be analogous to the protagonist in Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot." It would be futile. So, when is the right time to act? The right time is now.

Be courageous to dream big. The ability to dream and always dream big is a central tenet of greatness. Most of us ventured to leave India for the USA without ever having visited the USA. Christopher Reeve reminds us – "So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon seem inevitable." And when we dream, let our dreams be big like our forebears, for von Goethe reminds us – "Dream no small dreams, for they have no power to move the hearts of men."

Increase our visibility and public profile. In North America, we need to enhance our visibility in the counties, cities, and communities we reside in. We need to establish robust partnership arrangements with local nonprofit organizations and have solid connections/relationships to/with our local

elected representatives – City Councilor, Mayor, State Senator, Congress person, etc. As a church, we need to offer help and guidance during local and national emergencies and catastrophes. We need to engage fully with the local communities rather than stay isolated. For instance, when Afghan refugees currently arrive in the US, we should play a role in helping rehabilitate them.

Have a financial plan. We need to have a rock-solid financial plan managed by finance professionals who are familiar with modern day wealth management strategies, wherein we put away 10-20% of the church's annual incoming revenues and invest in the financial market under advisement of a Certified Financial Advisor as large American churches in other denominations do. This would give us access to capital when the need arises to establish mission projects or new institutions. Currently, we lack a financial well to draw from, and hence, we are constantly in fund-raising mode on an episodic basis. With such an approach, we under-utilize and under optimize the consolidated financial strength of all our parishes and our Diocese. We need to adopt a supply chain strategy to consolidate our purchasing power to create financial leverage for ourselves.

Increase our collective bargaining power. We live in an age where our ability to leverage our financial strengths and avail capital at low rates is paramount. We do not fully exercise this inherent power that we have. For instance, in our Diocese, there are approximately 75 parishes with significant ownership of real estate assets that will have a combined financial value and equity in the millions of dollars. Today, each parish has its bank accounts in banks of its local choice. If we all banked with the same bank that has a national footprint, the borrowing power that we, as a collective group together with our Diocese, would command would be impressive. This is because collectively, we would annually transact millions of dollars in business with one bank. Consequently, it would be hard for any bank to ignore us, and instead, we would get a preferred banking relationship if we were with just one bank. If each of the eight organizations in our 75 or so parishes would consolidate our banking relationship with one national bank across our Diocese, each parish could leverage the combined financial strength of all our parishes and the Diocese to get financing for parish and Diocese-level projects than if we were to apply for financing on our own individual organization or parish. This would also help us get favorable financing terms when a parish wants to avail of funds for a church improvement loan (somewhat comparable to a Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) or if a new church building needs to be built anywhere.

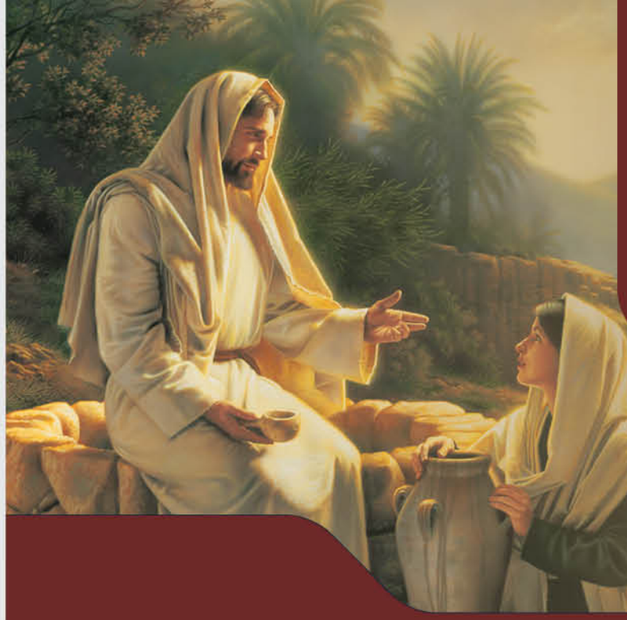
Have the courage to fail forward. Be brave, act with courage, and move forward. We can all learn from our mistakes. It is better to fail forward because it is always better to have tried at least. Let us not fail from not having ever tried to move forward. We can be faulted for our judgment. That at least is better than being faulted for not taking any action to seize emerging opportunities. If we do not grow organically or through acquisitions, we will only rot and become extinct.

The second and last issue that stops us from attempting great and mighty things is our fear of being criticized by our peers. We, as the Malayali community, seem to be experts at pointing out how the doer of things could have done it better. Those of us who dream to make things better, pause, and choose inaction as it is the path of least resistance. But we are reminded of the words of President Theodore Roosevelt. On April 23, 1910, he gave a speech in Sorbonne Paris titled "Citizenship in a Republic," and the following quote would go on to be known as "The man in the arena" and would become one of the most widely used quotes. Roosevelt said -

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Let us strive to be the doer-of-deeds and not the timid souls that live in the twilight of the sunset that knows neither victory nor defeat. Why is it that the Methodist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have established institutions of higher learning in N. America that are so successful, self-sufficient, and growing year on year? Pause and look at the Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX, and Brigham Young University in Provo, UT. Both should give us food for thought. We need to strive to be like them. Both institutions have added luster and blessings to the Methodist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Let us dream of starting new institutions of higher learning across India. Let us also dream that the day we launch a Mar Thoma International School in the continental US, catering to training students worldwide, is not too far. May the Lord's mighty hand be upon us and guide us. ✠



Christ's Love
That Unites Us and Moves Us Toward Reconciliation
A Biblical Study

Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel
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Introduction

When God created human beings, He created male and female in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-31). Although all people share His image and likeness, differences in gender, ethnicity, cultural background, and socio-economic distinctions directly impact the way we experience life and view others in the world. Our individual and cultural differences reflect God's creative diversity. Just as the Trinity is one God in three persons, we, as Christians, inherit a holy call to be of one mind and Spirit amid this diversity (Ephesians 4:1-6; 1st Corinthians 12). In the present time, Christians must intentionally pursue this calling as partakers in God's kingdom, empowered by Christ's love and being moved toward reconciliation, for the purpose that the world might know God and glorify Him.

In community, we move from selfish ambition and vain conceit to the humble and loving posture of Christ, considering the needs of others above our own (Philippians 2:1-11). The call to reconciliation means that we rejoice when our brothers and sisters rejoice, and weep when our brothers and sisters weep (Romans 12:15-16). As reconcilers, we are to be motivated by Christ's love. Therefore, we serve one another in love and adopt a counter-cultural perspective. We are called to build the kingdom of God by developing a diverse and unified community of believers to authentic love relationships with God and each other and by proclaiming the gospel of Christ and reflecting His character.

Reconciliation and the *Imago Dei* – The Image of God

Genesis 1:26-27 reminds us of the scriptural truth that God created humankind in His image and likeness, which highlights several important factors regarding the creation of humankind. First, humans, both males and females, were created to bear the image of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In recognizing that God exists as one God in three persons, we live as individuals created in His image to reflect the same harmony of common mission and purpose that God has within Himself in the Trinity. To bear a true image, one must always be connected to the image source, establishing our need for constant connectedness with the God.

Secondly, the creation account gives a framework for our relationships with other people. The only thing that displeased God in creation was that man was alone (Gen. 2:18). Eve was created so that Adam would not be alone on this earth. God designed humans to need each other and to live together with a collective purpose. Only after Adam and Eve were together, both understanding their responsibilities as imager bearers, does the creation story conclude that "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

In Genesis 3, we see the undermining of God's good creation. The first departure occurs when Adam and Eve partake of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). As a result of their sin, they no longer reflected the true image of God, and

their communion with God and one another was broken. The broken image and broken community led to enmity between Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:12). Because they insisted on their own way, instead of pursuing the will of God, the core component of an incredibly good creation began to crumble. Our need for reconciliation is rooted in the garden. Christ makes it possible for us to live as God originally intended before the Fall. Reconciliation is the hope of the gospel that affirms our human identity and the dignity of every person, restoring our broken relationships with God and with each other.

Reconciliation and the Cross

Due to the Fall, humans were all separated from God (Rom. 5:12-21). It is the cross of Jesus Christ that removes this separation. It is through the perfect sacrifice of Christ that we are justified before God and put back into a right relationship with our Heavenly Father (Rom. 3:21-26). Through His sacrifice, Christ not only released us from the bondage of sin into real freedom (Rom.6:15-23) but also brought forth reconciliation by tearing down the wall that separated us from God and each other (Eph. 2:14-21). With this reconciliation, Christ created one new reconciled people thereby fulfilling the purposes of the cross – reconciliation of God to humanity and humanity to one another.

The same is true for those in the church today. The diversity represented within the church serves to highlight the creativity, complexity, and fulfillment of God's covenant (Gal. 3:26-29). Where there was once division and hatred, Christ's death on the cross brought unity. Hope and peace are the outflow of Jesus' sacrifice that all people can claim through faith in Him. When we accept Christ, we all become members of God's holy kingdom and His holy family. Those who hope in Christ are uniquely positioned to embrace other believers and renounce division. We are one church, one body, and one family (Eph. 4:4-6).

Reconciliation and the Community

Through the work of the cross, God has called His people to be a part of a particular community (1st Peter 2:9). We see this new reality expressed in the church in Antioch, where the gospel was spoken not only to Jews but also to Gentiles, taking the message of Jesus across cultures (Acts 11:20-21). This community of Jews and Gentiles was so unusual that a new name was given to them. The disciples were first called "Christians" at Antioch (Acts 11:26).

For us to live as a reconciled community, we must cultivate humility in our relationships with one another. In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul calls believers to apply the love, encouragement, and comfort we have received from Christ in our relationships with others. This means that we set aside selfish preferences, consider others as having immense value, esteem them highly, and look to their interests over our own.

What does it look like to embody this virtue of humility? First, we must be willing to relinquish power and rights. Jesus did not consider His equality with His Father something to be used to His human advantage. In the same way, those in power must be willing to empower others, even at a cost to themselves. Secondly, our posture moves from that of being a consumer to being a servant, being willing to meet the needs of others before our own, just as Christ became a servant on our behalf. Thirdly, as we grow in relationship with those different from us, we begin to identify with their hurts, fears, and joys, just as Christ became a man to fully identify with us. And lastly, just as Christ was obedient to the point of death, we too must prioritize obedience to God and service to His mission over our own comforts, individual rights, and preferences. We must be willing to die to what is normal and comfortable to make room for others.

Reconciliation and the Holy Spirit

The Bible makes it clear that we cannot follow Jesus without the power of the Holy Spirit. When commissioning His disciples to take the gospel across geographical and cultural lines, Jesus tells them that they will receive power from the Holy Spirit to fulfill that calling (Acts 1:8).

After his teaching on the reconciliation of believers, Paul prays for the church in Ephesus that God might strengthen them with power through the Holy Spirit, that they will be rooted and grounded in love, and that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith (Eph. 3:14-20). He prays that they would have power to grasp the depth, height, and width of the Lord's love in order to see that this love included all people. Also, in Colossians 2:2-3, Paul makes it clear that the outward result of the power at work in the church in Colossae and the purpose of his pastoral and missionary calling is to encourage the church so they may be united in love. As we obey this call to love one another, God is glorified. We do not follow Jesus in the pattern of submission and humility or the holy standard of reconciliation to exalt ourselves but to bring glory to the Father.

Reconciliation and Kingdom Proclamation

As we live in humble, self-giving, reconciling relationships, God is glorified and the gospel advances. Therefore, the issue of reconciliation is of critical importance for the church. In John 17:20-26, Jesus prays to God the Father for oneness. His desire is that each believer is one with each other just as He is one with the Father. This prayer acknowledges God's original intent for creation and all human beings from the beginning in that it honors the unity, harmony, and the shared kingdom vision of Jesus. This prayer teaches us that the way believers interact with each other is a testament to the faith we proclaim and the God we serve. The interactions among believers should be so intimate and radically different that the watching world will take notice and marvel at the goodness of God.

Our unity and oneness make us credible witnesses of the gospel that transcends the divisive ways of this world. Our faith in God and commitment to Jesus leads to unity in the body of Christ, which draws others into this saving faith by acknowledging the transforming power of Jesus.

We are able to pursue this oneness because of our love for God and our desire for His glory and reign on earth and because of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. The unity and oneness that Jesus prays for reflects the unity and oneness that exists eternally between Him and His Father. It reflects what God originally intended when He gave the first woman to the first man as a companion. Because the work of Christ has reversed the curse of the Fall, we now can live together in oneness as a redeemed and reconciled people.

Reconciliation and Love

The foundation for love and reconciliation is steeped in St. John 3:16. It is an all-inclusive statement that enables those of every culture, ethnicity, and socio-economic status eligible to partake in the gift of new and everlasting life in Christ. Those who believe become a part of God's family. Therefore, Jesus commands us to love one another as He loves us because brotherly love is an indispensable mark of genuine Christianity (1st John 3:11-18).

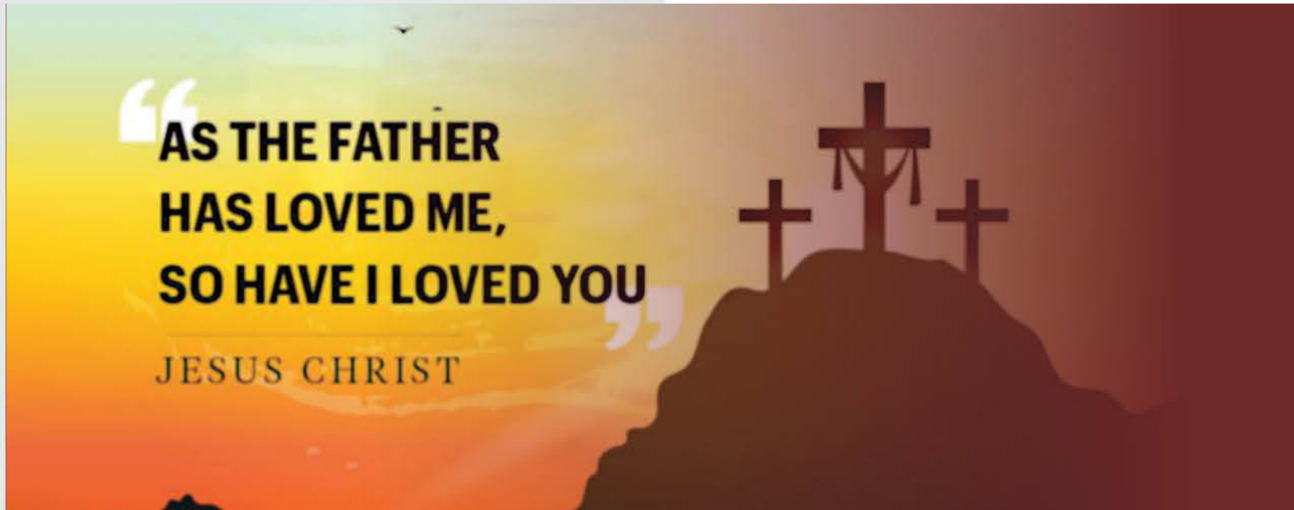
John shows us what brotherly love and relationships should look like in the body of Christ by first demonstrating what it should not look like. John uses the example of Cain, telling us not to be like him (1st John 3:12). In Genesis 4, we read that God looked favorably upon Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's. John is not focused on why Cain's sacrifice was not acceptable. Instead, he focuses on the larger issue as it relates to brotherly love is Cain's response. Cain is angry, indignant, sad, and depressed, opening the door to jealousy and envy which eventually unlocked hate. His openness to hate gave way to murder. Jesus said that murder is not only committed as a physical act, but our words, thoughts, and the motivation of our heart can be weaponized when hate is present. Cain took a life because he hated, whereas Christ gave His life because He loved.

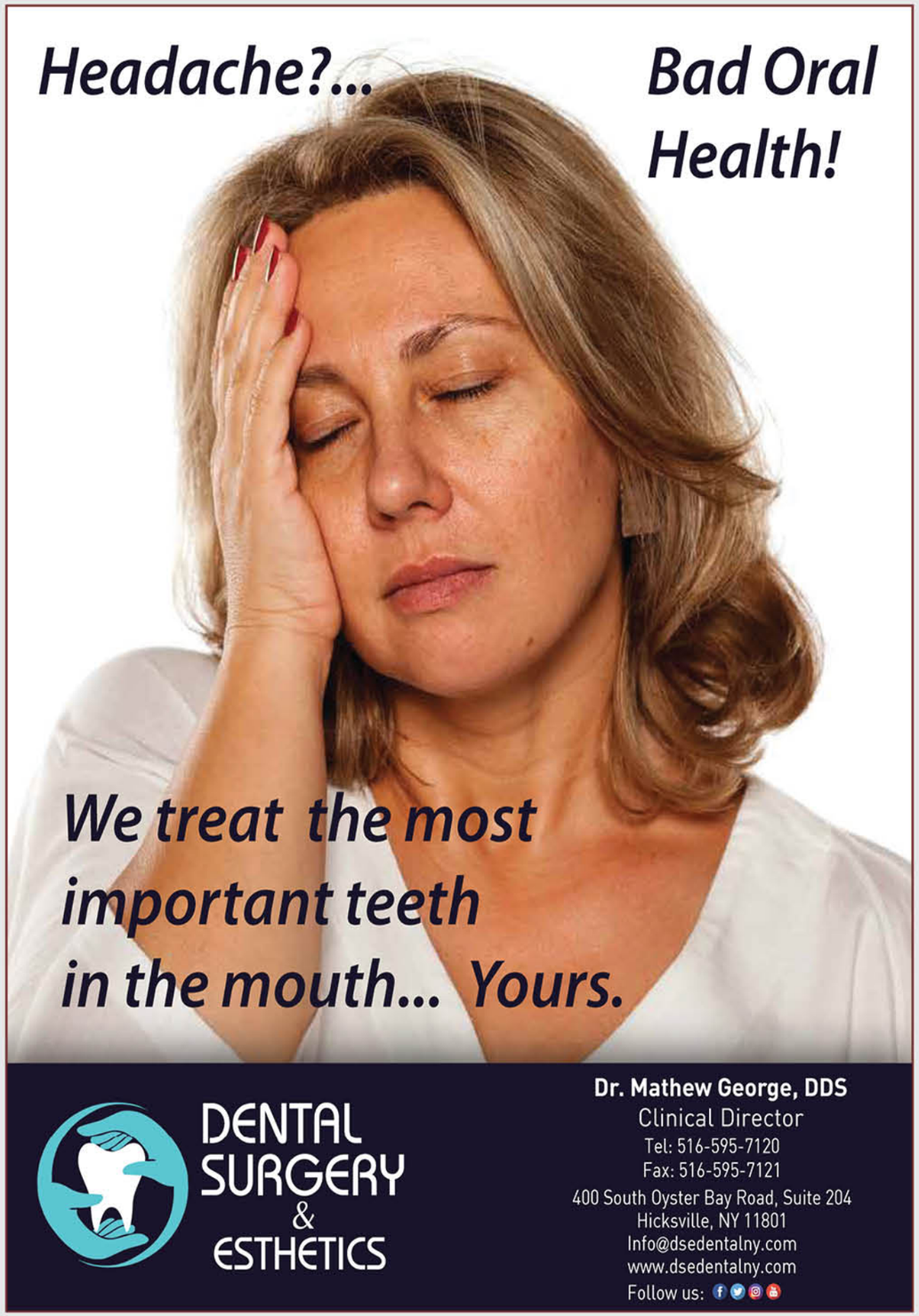
Cain represents the world. The world delights in what divides and finds comfort in separation. We as a body of believers must resist these areas of division and discord and be the salt and light in a world that is decaying and in darkness. The church must live in a radically different way from the world, bridging the divide between cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds with a Christ-centered purpose. The church must live righteously in love in the midst of the unrighteousness and hate perpetrated and perpetuated by the world.

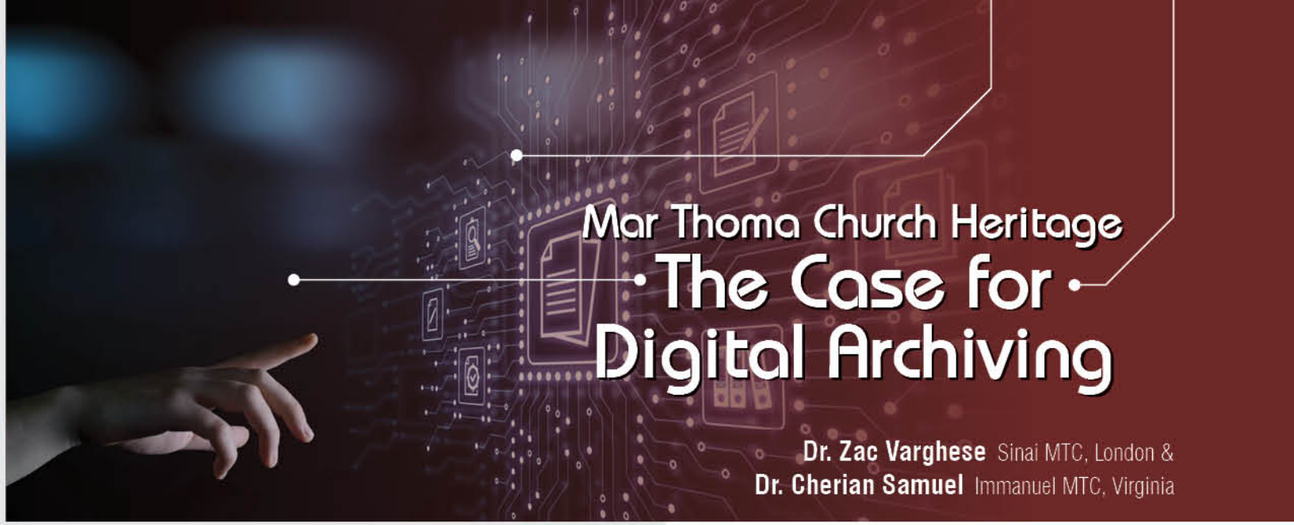
We should understand that love is the evidence of our life in Christ. It is by loving our brothers and sisters that our new life is displayed. Anyone that does not love remains in death. Love is the obligation of the believer. If Christ laid down His life for us, then we must die to our selfish desires and interests. Opportunities to lay down our lives may not occur on a routine basis, but the giving of our time, care, labors, and prayers can be daily occurrences of demonstrating Christ-like love.

Conclusion

In summary, our focus as the church is to make disciples who live out the gospel, crossing all boundaries. This focus is a biblical call to reconciliation. God calls us to both the ministry and the message of reconciliation as an essential part of our gospel witness. The two-fold purpose of the cross was to reconcile God to humankind and to reconcile people to one another by dealing with the sin that divides us. We commit to this call to rightly bear God's image, to embrace the purpose of the cross, to commit to community, to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim God's kingdom, and to love others as God loves us. As we live in the reality of the love and reconciliation manifested on the cross, we become a unified body where Christ dwells by His Spirit, enabling us to be witnesses to His power by bringing glory to God before a watching world. ✠







Mar Thoma Church Heritage

The Case for Digital Archiving

Dr. Zac Varghese Sinai MTC, London &
Dr. Cherian Samuel Immanuel MTC, Virginia

Introduction. We are living at a time of rapid change and progress. We prefer to define ourselves in terms of where we are going, not where we come from. However, where we are going is uncertain. Our ancestors hold no importance for some of us. They lived in times so different from our own that they are incapable of shedding light on our experience. Man is so much smarter now, anything from the past is outdated and irrelevant to us. Our current culture is a 'Throw-away' culture, where everything is dispensable. Therefore, the past, even the relatively recent past, is, in the minds of most of us, enshrouded by mist, only vaguely perceived. Some people think that faith in Christ is old-fashioned or outmoded, a relic of the distant past. They ask the question, what could a 2000-year-old faith have to say to us in our post-COVID-19 era, seeking a 'new normal'?

It has been said that he who controls the past controls the future. It has been attributed to both George Orwell and Winston Churchill that, 'History is written by the winners,' and therefore, history could have a built-in bias. As we confront scientific, technological, economic, and ecological challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic realities, and search for a 'new normal', true knowledge of of history allows us to learn from mistakes and avoid repeating them. It gives us a chance to understand where we came from and create a better God-centred tomorrow. If we are willing to listen to what history has to say, we can come to a sound understanding of the past that can tell us a lot about our current problems and how we got here. This is the requisite context for understanding the importance of digitizing and archiving historical records and documents of the Mar Thoma Church.

The existence of an ancient church on the Malabar coast of India has been known to the Western World since the time of Marcopolo (M. Geddes, "History of Church of Malabar," London, 1694). Brown (1956) provides a comprehensive history of Kerala Christians, noting that since the 1811 book by the Scottish missionary, Claudius Buchanan, titled "Christian Researches in Asia", no book has been really satisfactory, either because it depends entirely on previous writings, with no new facts to the present, or because it is polemical in tone, not really interested in the church for its own sake (L. W. Brown, "The Indian Christians of St. Thomas", Cambridge University Press, 1956). The Digital Archiving of selected original documents and records of the Mar Thoma Church is essential for preserving its heritage and contribute to the history of Kerala Christians.

Rationale for Digital Archiving. The Kerala Christian history loss resulting from the Diamper Synod decisions provides a unique motivation for Digital Archiving. More generally, digitization provides a broad range of benefits: (i) Information and content can be delivered directly to end-users and retrieved remotely; (ii) Ability to provide access to a large number of users, national and international; (iii) Creating digital versions reduces the handling of old or fragile material, potentially extending the life of the original. However, the costs of digitization should also be considered: (i) Requires staff expertise and additional resources; (ii) Users are completely reliant on computers and stable internet connections for accessing digital content, which may be challenging, given the varied computer models, platforms, software, and hardware globally; (iii) Ease of access to digital content may create high end-user expectations in terms of availability and low/no costs. Within the Kerala context, climate conditions may shorten the lifespan of documents, which makes Digital Archiving a priority for preserving Kerala's Christian heritage.

Digitization of Mar Thoma Church Documents. Following the extraordinary voluntary efforts by Shiju Alex and associates since 2009, more than three thousand documents have been digitized and placed in the public domain so far, with over 200,000 pages (https://shijualex.in/about/). From the perspective of Kerala Christian history, an exciting development has been the Digital Archiving of documents related to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the London Missionary Society (LMS), who led evangelical missions to India during the British colonial rule.

Among the 3000+ documents digitized and archived so far, only about twenty documents relate to the Mar Thoma Church (https://archive.org/search.php?query=subject%3

A%22Marthoma+Church+Documents%22). The collection includes the 1889 Royal Court Judgment that led to the formation of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church/ Mar Thoma Church (https://shijualex.in/travancore_royal_court_judgement_1889/). Though the Digital Archiving of the Royal Court Judgment was completed in August 2015, there seems to be limited awareness within the Mar Thoma Church. Given the low extent of Digital Archiving of Mar Thoma Church records and documents so far, a strong effort is needed from Church members to quicken the pace. An indicative list of useful documents for Digital Archiving includes: (i) Old Versions of the Qurbana Taksa; (ii) Old Versions of Kristheeya Keerthanangal; (iii) Old issues of the Sabha Tharaka, before 1930; (iv) Past editions of Maramon Convention song books; (v) Church souvenirs before the 1950s.

Diaspora Context. The Digital Archiving initiative is also relevant for the North American and European Mar Thoma Diaspora, given the Church's roots as a reformed Eastern Syrian Christian Orthodox Church from Kerala. The genesis and growth of the Diocese has been amazing and providential, from modest beginnings in 1972 as a prayer group in Queens, New York to the current cohort of seventy-one parishes and seven congregations, with a resident Bishop—currently Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa—in Merrick, New York. As the Diocese progresses, as future generations of American and European Marthomites emerge, digital archiving of key documents and records of the Diocese should be a priority.

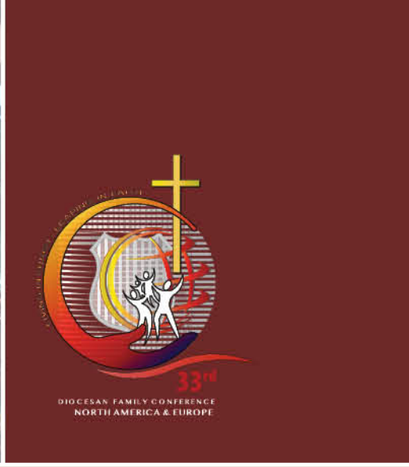
Way Forward. Creating awareness regarding the need for Digital Archiving of Mar Thoma Church documents and records among Church leadership, clergy and laity is an important first step, the purpose of this article. Another step will be to create a community of practice, which could learn from Shiju Alex and associates and share the responsibility for Digital Archiving. Given the limited capacity for digitization currently, documents will have to selected and sequenced, based on relative importance. Last, but not least, financial resources have to be set aside for meeting digitization costs. To begin with, the digitized documents can be archived in the Internet Archive (www.archive.org), similar to the current approach. In the future, different archiving options could be explored, funds permitting. The Church may also wish to establish an Archival Commission to study the Digital Archiving topic in detail, which could make recommendations for formulating a Digital Archiving policy. Given the shared heritage of Kerala Christians, the Digital Archiving project for the Mar Thoma Church could also follow an ecumenical approach, with separate portals for different denominations for storing documents unique to them.

Conclusions. The case for the Digital Archiving of Mar Thoma heritage is strong and sound. In particular, the loss of history experienced by Syrian Christians in the past provides a unique opportunity for Digital Archiving. Thanks to the extraordinary voluntary efforts of digitization pioneers during the last decade, significant progress has been made regarding the Digital Archiving of public domain documents related to Kerala and Malayalam, albeit on a relatively small scale for the Mar Thoma Church. Creating more awareness about and ownership of Digital Archiving among All Marthomites—including the American and European Mar Thoma Diaspora—is critical, which can also be an ecumenical initiative among different Kerala Christian Churches, given the shared Kerala Christian heritage, traditions, and histories. ✠

OBITUARY

Mrs.Sosamma Mathen (Kunjumol)

Sosamma Mathen (Kunjumol), member of the Trinity MTC, Houston, Texas, was called to eternity on October 23, 2021, at the age of 75. She was from the Illathu Parayathanathu family, Mallappally, Kerala, and was the wife of the late Mr. A.M. Mathen, Aekkalathil, Mallappally. She was an active member of the church and took part in the Sevika Sangham, Edavaka Mission, Senior Citizen Fellowship, VBS and other church events. She was a dedicated, nurturing, faith-instilling grandmother, and aunt, who took care of her five grandchildren (Neethu, Ryan, Nekha, Roshan and Ria), and many nieces and nephews. Kunjumol is survived by her children Reji Mathew and Sheela George, daughter-in-law Jessy Mathew and son-in-law Shajan George (Vice-President, Trinity MTC, Houston). She is also survived by her siblings P. I. Varghese, P. I. George, and Aleyamma Koshy.



33RD DIOCESAN FAMILY CONFERENCE

The 33rd Diocesan Family Conference was held from October 29-31, 2021 at the Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta, Georgia. The theme of the conference was "Living in Christ, Leaping in Faith" based on St. John 15:7. Over 425 delegates from various parishes and congregations of the Diocese attended the conference.

The Inaugural Session on Friday, October 29, began with a procession and opening worship led by the Clergy and members of the Southeast Region. Prayer was offered by Rev. Skariah Varughese and a welcome note by Dr. Joshy Jacob (Conference Convener). Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, provided the Presidential Address, and Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan inaugurated the conference through a video message. Rev. Aju Abraham (Diocesan Secretary) offered a felicitation, which was followed by the release of the Family Conference Souvenir by Mr. Roy Ellikkulathu (Souvenir Convener). Mr. George P. Babu proposed the Vote of Thanks, and Rev. Saju C. Samuel (Vicar, MTC Atlanta) offered the closing prayer. The youths and other members of the MTC Atlanta exhibited a multi-media theme presentation, and the Main Speaker, Rev. Eappen Varghese (Vicar, Immanuel MTC, Houston), provided an in-depth exposition on the conference theme. The night ended with a beautiful exposition of creative expressions and talents from many of the conference attendees including the children of the Clergy.

Saturday, October 30, began with a singing session and worship led by the Midwest and Western Regions. Here are the highlights of the day:

- Bible Study by Rev. Prince Varghese (Doctoral Student, Princeton Theological Seminary).
- Main Talk by Rev. Eappen Varghese.
- Special sessions for children and youth led by Rev. Prince Varghese and Mrs. Neethi Prasad.

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- Presentation on the Mission Initiatives of the Diocese led by Philoxenos Thirumeni and Rev. Christopher Daniel.
- Session on the "Role of Women in Enriching the Life of People" led by Rev. Dr. Anna Thomas (Beverly United Methodist Church, NJ).
- Health Seminar on the topic "The Role of the Church During Times of Crisis" led by Dr. George Abraham (Carmel MTC, Boston).
- Inauguration of the Library and extension of Mar Thoma Literature Society at Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta.
- Evening worship led by the Southwest Region.
- Motivational Talk by Rev. Sibu Pallichira (Vicar, Epiphany MTC, NY).

On Sunday, October 31, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa celebrated the Holy Qurbana service. The conference delegates and members of the MTC Atlanta participated in the service. Very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas (Vicar in Charge, MTC Dallas, Farmers Branch) spoke from the Word of God. The Closing Ceremony of the conference included the inauguration of the Institute on Mission and Culture. Rev. Eappen Varghese provided a concluding message, and closing remarks were offered by our Diocesan Bishop. Rev. Aju Abraham proposed the Vote of Thanks, which was followed by closing prayer by Rev. Dennis Abraham (Vicar, San Francisco MTC) and benediction by the Diocesan Bishop. Let us praise and thank God for this blessed gathering.

Rev. Aju Abraham,
Diocesan Secretary

33RD DIOCESAN FAMILY CONFERENCE

at Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta

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PILGRIMAGE TO THE KINGDOM

A United Journey in the Power of Christ's Love

Rev. Jeswin S. John
Youth Chaplain, Chicago

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Isa 40:3

Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms. Isaiah 60:4

Pilgrimages are marvelous scenes of human relationships. Whether it is the whirling mass of people around the Kaaba in Mecca, the perilous journey made by Europeans to the Holy Land in the 10th century, or the trek of South Indian Hindus to Sabarimala, pilgrimages show to us the true human spirit that develops from a sense of being and togetherness. The religious, social, and political aspects of pilgrimages profoundly depict the vibrant facets of human nature. Over the past century, the possibilities for pilgrimages were opened to people in all walks of life due to advances in technology and increased safety around the world. Pilgrimages, religious or otherwise, are still popular today, not just because of the sense of adventure but because it is a shared experience. The psyche of the pilgrim is connected with those who had gone before on that route, with those journeying in the present, and those yet to undertake the pilgrimage in the future. It is truly a magnificent showcase of human togetherness and human "being."

Pilgrimage and the Kingdom of God

Pilgrimage imagery is vastly powerful for human communities, in particular the religious communities. In a world where the ideal of individualism grows, the concept of unity found in pilgrimage imagery can help us envision new perspectives for communitarian living. For the Christian, the concept of pilgrimage and community draw upon the eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was the greatest ideal revealed by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. Scholars have often remarked that Jesus' presentation of the Kingdom was elitist, idealist, and utopian. In a sense, it is true that the ideals of the Kingdom of God could not be realized. What is often poorly understood is that the eschatological vision of the Kingdom must be actively engaged with the present worldly situation.

Christian communities have frequently understood the Kingdom within two extremes: at one extreme, the Kingdom of God (commonly known as heaven) becomes other-worldly and a future hope to be waited upon; at the other extreme, there is a humanist desire to establish the Kingdom into the present world solely by human will. The first extreme leads to a focus on inward and personal spirituality and neglect for the needs of the larger world. This was seen among the

ancient Christian monastic communities, which withdrew from society to seek God but died out as they failed to share and embody the Gospel of Christ to the larger society. At the other extreme, there is a great emphasis on social work and human upliftment but neglect for the Biblical mandate to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, i.e., the atonement and salvation through the crucified Christ. The social gospel movement in 19th century America with its emphasis on human rights, uplifted many communities, but its failure to preach the Gospel of Salvation may have caused the irrelevance of the faith in society today.

Jesus Christ and His Kingdom

A close inspection of the Kingdom of God brings us face to face with its Chief Architect. Not only is Jesus Christ the planner of the Kingdom, but he is also its chief cornerstone. Laying the cornerstone is now a symbolic event, almost non-existent in the West but still crucial in Eastern traditions. Among Kerala Christians, the laying of the foundation stone is an auspicious event in which the clergy, family, and community gather for an invocation of prayer and shared fellowship. The purpose of the cornerstone was originally to set the position of the entire structure; therefore, its placement was carefully calculated by the architect. Christ, as the cornerstone of the Kingdom of God, establishes the shape and direction of the Kingdom itself. The Kingdom of God is defined as the union of the people of God with God himself (but not appropriating the divine nature; rather participating in the life of God and being in God's presence). The cohesive element of this unity is the love of Christ.

Love is a complicated word in today's world, not least due to the fact that the word has lost much of its power through misuse. Christians understand the purest love as that which God has for His Creation. The Apostle John's depiction is beyond compare: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). The love is manifested in the "giving," but the mystery of the gift is that it contains loss as well as redemption, pain as well as peace, humiliation as well as glorification. Christ's love, as displayed on the cross, brought redemption; His resurrection from the dead brought the right of inheritance to the Kingdom, to those who place their faith and hope in Him. The Apostle Paul described this legal right when he wrote, "He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ..." (Eph 1:5). Therefore, Christ's love confirms the nature of our unity with God as well as with the fellow believer. The full expression of this unity is the Kingdom of God which gathers together a community of people united by their right to be children of God through the salvific blood of Jesus Christ.

The Living Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is not a static building. Rather than an impenetrable fortress or an imposing monument, it is a living community of human beings. Realizing the human component of the Kingdom of God founded on the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ makes the Kingdom an active force in the world today. Instead of relegating the Kingdom (or heaven) to something located in the future, the Kingdom of the living faithful imposes an urgent call to proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior (the preaching of the Gospel) as well as participate in "Kingdom building" in the wider society (the practice of social justice). This tension is evident in the Letter of St. James: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." (James 1:27). The practice of the Christian faith is both a spiritual growth in relationship to God as well as a practical effort to embody the new life in Christ.

Realizing that the Kingdom of God is a unity of the faithful through the blood of Christ must lead Christians to see the place of the Church within their lives. Christianity has always been a communal faith. The plurality of believers, house churches, sharing of resources as well as sharing of the Holy Mysteries of the Lord's Table all point to the emphasis on the community of the faithful. The tragic state of Christians today, divided across time and space by sociocultural, political, and doctrinal differences, is a failure to draw upon the unity in Christ and the Kingdom. The modern ecumenical movement attempted to correct this failure by bringing the global churches together to work together for a common witness and praxis. Yet, ecumenical organizations such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) opposed the formation of a "super-church." Even the Roman Catholic acceptance of Eastern Catholics in the 20th century was through the gracious use of sui juris (Latin, "of one's own right", referring to their autonomy within the Roman Catholic communion).

Churches as communities of isolation and exclusion do not live up to the vision of the Kingdom of God. A church needs a strong ecclesiology, i.e., a self-understanding of its community life that draws upon the unity and community of the Holy Trinity, the love of God the Father and Creator, the grace of the Son who sacrificed willingly, and the power of the renewing and sanctifying Holy Spirit. Such a church seriously considers the discipleship of its members and mission to the margins. The Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church strongly attempts these goals but it is struggling in a world that is rapidly being reshaped by globalization, commercialization, and rampant individualism. Churches around the world are feeling this pressure to conform to the economic restructuring and political manipulation dominant in modern society.

Conclusion

The idea of pilgrimage was evident in the teachings of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest pilgrimages in Jewish memory was that of the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus paradigm was central to the Jewish understanding of their community. They were an elect nation being led by God, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This imagery was carried by the people as they were forced into exile in the 8th and 6th centuries b.c.e. The prophecies of the prophet Isaiah imagined a second exodus, this time from the Eastern lands of Persia. There the prophet foretold of the return of the exiles to Zion on highways made smooth and with their hands overflowing with wealth. The narratives of Ezra and Nehemiah hint at the fulfillment of those prophecies. Jesus Christ inaugurated His ministry with the words of the prophet Isaiah in Luke 4:16–21. Known as the Nazareth Manifesto, the passage Jesus quoted belongs to a larger collection of texts related to the Jewish hope of redemption from Persian exile. It is an announcement of the pilgrimage out of the land of bondage and towards the land of Zion, God's beloved country. In Jesus' proclamation, the Kingdom of God becomes the Promised Land. It is Jesus Christ himself who will lead the people into it. The ancient, enslaved Israelites had Moses lead them out. Here Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us," leads the people and grants them entrance into the New Canaan through His own broken body. And he continues to lead the people as the exalted King of Zion.

The pilgrimage towards the Kingdom of God is a fascinating image of God at work in the world. It is a project of unity bringing the believers together on a path towards God and led by God. The Mystery of the Kingdom takes shape in the mass of believers moving towards the promise of a "city built not with human hands" where there is neither death nor crying nor pain. Its cornerstone is Jesus Christ. Salvation and unity intertwine within the living witness of the people of the Kingdom of God. United by the love of Christ and adopted as children of God through Christ's sacrifice, God's people are called to proclaim the Good News through words and deeds. Preach salvation through Christ and live as the missional embodiment of Christ's love for humanity. ✠

Ms. Ria John
Mar Thoma Church of Baltimore

CHRIST'S UNITING LOVE

I am from everywhere,
From the rivers and valleys, hills and lakes.
I sang to the flowers,
Enlightening them for unity

Lovely chrysanthemums, always ready to bloom,
Representing love and loyalty
Tell me silently that Jesus loves.

My Jesus is a great unifier, a great Master,
Who, with mercy, makes an end to clashes and conflicts.
When the world has problems,
He has solutions.

Cross is our example, our perennial hope.
He unties our burdens,
And with empathy unites us in Him.

Here, our dreams can flower,
When we allow our Lord to be our Lord
How many times, in olden days
Did we see the uniting love of the Master Great?

Accepting him, my joy doubles,
Surrendering, my happiness broadens.

I sing to the flowers, enlightening them for unity.
And singing to the flowers, I feel myself blessed.

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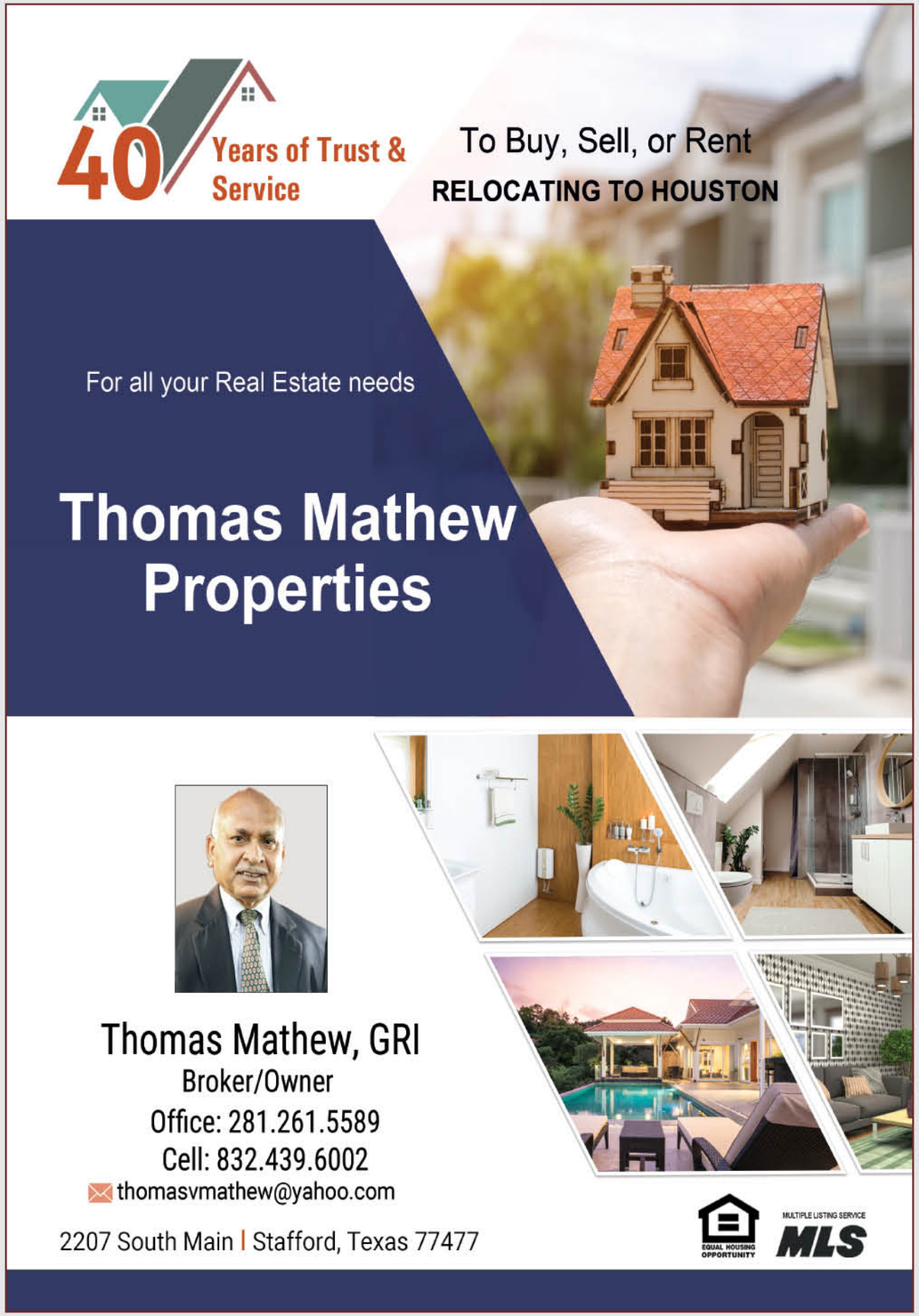
Pushpa Samuel
Lay Chaplain, California

At first glance, Jesus's instruction to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39) seems very straightforward, but the way that we are called to love others seems open to biblical interpretation, especially when our loved ones hold differing beliefs. It often feels much easier to love someone at a distance than in tangible ways like having conversations about interfaith marriage or how our faith informs our political views. I wonder if Paul's imperative to "be united in the same mind and the same purpose" (1 Corinthians 1:10) may have been referring to similar conversations when he appealed to the Corinthian church to avoid divisions among themselves. The early church is often praised for how they were "of one heart and mind" (Acts 4:32), but how can so many people with such diverse views about the world achieve such a lofty goal? It can be easy to cling to a perception of Jesus as someone who was always unifying, but he often acted in ways that were counter to the cultural norms of the time. We recall how he thwarted the religious ideology of Sabbath observance (Mark 2:23-28, John 5:1-18), chose to visit the house of a so-called sinner (Luke 19:1-10), initiated conversation with a woman who practiced a different worship ritual (John 4:1-42), and showed kindness to the outcasts of society (Matthew 8:1-3, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 17:11-19). Religious leaders of the time viewed all these actions as divisive rather than unifying, and yet, these are the loving examples that we are called to follow.

Nearly every conversational topic that feels relevant and necessary for discussion in today's society seems to have an opposing counterpoint, often to the point of divisiveness. I have heard debates on – the pros and cons of sending children to private Christian school or public school, on whether being pro-life while advocating for the death penalty concur, and if it is ethically prudent to encourage mass gatherings or even indoor dining when we are still grappling with a pandemic that is debilitating many parts of our country. I imagine that others have a host of similar examples.

My beliefs about right and wrong largely stem from how I was raised, and naturally leads to surrounding myself with like-minded individuals. However, my presuppositions about how the world should be ordered are grounded in my uniquely specific context as a US-born, Indian, Christian, woman. This fact is not surprising, but it is my personal blind spot, and it is an intrinsic part of me until someone either cares enough to shine a light on it, or I am forced into an environment where I am completely out of my neatly ordered bubble. Fortunately, I have discovered a vocation that removes me from my comfort zone multiple times a day and forces me to check my implicit biases at the door. As a hospital chaplain, a position which functions as an interfaith discipline, I intentionally engage in conversations with people about what supports them during their times of difficulty. These conversations take place regardless of age,



gender, language, sexual orientation, cultural background, religious background, mental status, criminal record, or any other potentially differing factor.

I regret to say that I initially thought embracing an interfaith perspective was the antithesis of Christianity. After all, how could I hold firmly to the tenet that Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6, Acts 16:31), while also verbally wholeheartedly affirming the faith of a devout Hindu woman who said that her baby was delivered safely because of her mother's prayers? Or how could I refrain from feeling attacked when providing spiritual guidance to a Zoroastrian patient who strongly believed that Christians were too narrow-minded in their assumption that God could only be accessed through Jesus? However, when I reflected on Jesus's interactions, I noticed that he never demanded that people follow him nor did he become offended if people chose not to follow him. This is starkly different from the centuries of Christian colonization that has impacted nearly the whole world, where subjugated people had to relinquish their cultural worshipping norms and were forced to accept Christianity at the peril of their lives. Spreading the Word in a way that overtly demeans the faith and dignity of others disregards how it would feel to receive the same kind of treatment and discounts the proverbial golden rule: So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you… (Matthew 7:12).

I met a deathly-ill COVID patient who spent weeks in the hospital due to medical complications. He told me that he was actively telling nurses about his faith so that he could gain extra jewels in his crown when he got to heaven. I believe he had good intentions, but I find this type of faith completely unbiblical, even primitive, as if exercising one's faith was equivalent to earning points at a video arcade to win a bigger prize. How can we reimagine what it means to live out our faith by exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-23) in a way that is uniting and gently invites others to share their beliefs instead of potentially creating barriers?

I truly believe that the ethos of chaplaincy provides a model where a person of faith seeks to provide spiritual and emotional support for those in need, with a primary focus on what is most helpful for the recipient. As such, this may entail sitting in silence with someone, similar to Job's friends who "sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights because they saw that his suffering was very great" (Job 2:13). Unlike Job's friends, we keep our opinions to ourselves. It could also mean having an awareness of prioritizing the provision of basic human necessities like food, water, and shelter without engaging in spiritual discourse. A familiar childhood chorus that still rings true today is, "and they'll know we are Christians by our love" (John 13:35). Sadly, I do not think that Christians are widely known for their love, especially when angrily protesting with hateful speech, demeaning certain ethnic groups as inferior to others, hoarding resources, and ignoring the responsibility to be good stewards of our environment. But just because this may have been the pattern thus far does not mean it is impossible for us to form new habits and ways of thinking that are based on Christ's example.

My core theology is a guiding compass for how I interact with others as a hospital chaplain. I believe that every person is made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), regardless of their faith tradition or how their faith impacts their daily life. I believe that I am commanded to love others in the way that God loves me (John 13:34), which is not based on reciprocity and does not discriminate against those with differing beliefs. My job is not to forcibly convert anyone to adhere to my beliefs or spiritually save a dying non-believer by stipulating that they profess belief in Jesus. My role is to "rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). I am not passing out tracts in a one-size-fits-all modality but taking time to listen to the individualized core need and respond accordingly. So, if a Muslim patient requests that I contact an imam to say a prayer for her before surgery, I am more than happy to accommodate as a way of respecting her wishes and providing a sense of peace in the midst of uncertainty. Or if a Buddhist family requests that I facilitate a monk to light incense over their deceased loved one's body so the spirit can be released, I do so with reverence to support those who are grieving.

I recognize that everyone is not called to this particular vocation and we are all meant to operate within our own God-given talents and spiritual gifts as many members who are part of a united body (1 Corinthians 12). Even so, I encourage a spirit of curiosity towards those who have made choices that are different from our own or have been raised differently than us, and refrain from creating or succumbing to stereotypes that can further alienate others and cause divisions. I also ask someone from a different religion about their faith in an attempt to learn about them instead of relying on assumptions. Perhaps we may notice some similarities or even be motivated to find answers for our own unanswered questions. We cannot exemplify Paul's exhortation to "live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18) if we are so preoccupied with differences that it overshadows Jesus's example of how we are to love others. This kind of unifying love is not limited to the holidays like participating in a Thanksgiving soup kitchen or purchasing gifts for Operation Christmas Child but should be the defining feature of how we conduct ourselves throughout the year. May the spirit of what it truly means to be united by Christ's love pervade our hearts and minds, now and always. ✠

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Mexico Mission

The Mexico Mission was first established in 2003 to support the fishermen community located in a small group of islands about sixty miles away from the city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, near the eastern coast of Mexico. The first initiative was to build houses in the Puntilla Norte and Fantasia Islands to replace the temporary shacks that the community members inhabited. Keys to the newly built houses were formally handed over to the residents in a public ceremony in 2004. However, in July 2005, Hurricane Emily destroyed many of the houses that were built through the support of the members of the Diocese of North America & Europe of the Mar Thoma Church. Eventually, the Diocese purchased two parcels of land further inland. A housing project was completed on the first parcel as part of Mar Chrysostom Valiya Metropolitan's Navathy celebrations and was inaugurated in May 2008. This housing development was named 'Colonia Mar Thoma,' meaning Mar Thoma Community.

Objectives of Mexico Mission

In 2010, several subcommittees were constituted to study and develop long term plans for enhancing the Diocese's mission work at Colonia Mar Thoma. The areas of focus for the mission work in Mexico include:

- Infrastructure and Housing
- Education
- Food Assistance
- Spiritual Development
- Medical Assistance
- Economic Development

Ongoing Programs of Mexico Mission

The COVID-19 pandemic posed many challenges to the work and programs of Mexico Mission. Regular visits were not possible due to the various travel and border restrictions that were in place. Medical Camps and Vacation Bible School were not conducted as in previous years; however, the residents were provided with food provisions and hygiene supplies as well as educational assistance.

Manna Program (Food Assistance)

The Manna Program continued to provide and distribute food and hygiene essentials to the families of Colonia Mar Thoma during the pandemic. Distributions occurred about once a month. The residents remained healthy overall during the pandemic, and their general well-being continues to improve due, in part, to this program.

Education Program

The education of the children of Colonia Mar Thoma is supported through our Mexico Mission. A lower level elementary school is run at the compound in conjunction with the local government. Tuition expenses are covered for students attending higher level elementary, middle school, and high school. Through the education program, a number of Colonia Mar Thoma children have completed their college education and post graduate education in the fields of engineering, nursing, information technology, and medicine. These individuals, after securing jobs in the local communities, continue to return to help their families and neighbors who remain at the Colonia Mar Thoma compound.

Recent Visit to Colonia Mar Thoma

On November 13, 2021, Mr. P. T. Abraham (Mexico Mission Coordinator) and Mr. Akash Daniel Mathew (practical student) were able to visit Mexico Mission after several months without being able to personally interact with the residents. During the visit, the residents gathered together in the chapel for a time of prayer and were also provided with food provisions. The residents were overjoyed to especially see Mr. P. T. Abraham who has been working tirelessly for Mexico Mission since its inception. At present, Rev. Sonu S. Varghese is currently serving as the Missionary. As the conditions improve, in regard to travel and border restrictions, regular visits to Mexico Mission will be resumed to better meet the spiritual and physical needs of the residents.

Ways to Support Mexico Mission

Enhancing the ongoing programs of Mexico Mission, such as education assistance, the Manna Program, infrastructure development, and medical assistance, as well as focusing on the spiritual growth of the residents, require the continued prayers, personal involvement, and financial support of the members of the Diocese. Please prayerfully consider ways that you can contribute and participate fruitfully in the growth of this mission field.

Native American Mission: Partnership in Navajoland

The Native American Mission of the Diocese has been actively functioning for more than eighteen years. This mission serves the Choctaw Native American community in Oklahoma and Alabama and also the members of the Navajo Tribe who reside in Navajoland, which is located in northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico, and the southern section of Utah.

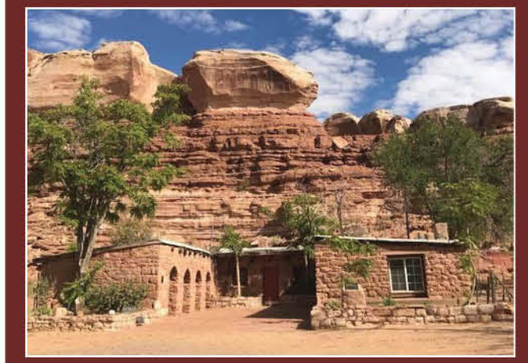
Native American communities, along with many other minority and low-income groups, have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. It was even difficult to maintain proper hygiene in these populations due to lack of resources. In certain areas, clean water for basic hand hygiene is scarce. Nearly one-third of Navajoland households do not have access to running water. In Oljato, Utah, a place that is rather dry and arid, the community is without a public well and lacks any type of water infrastructure.

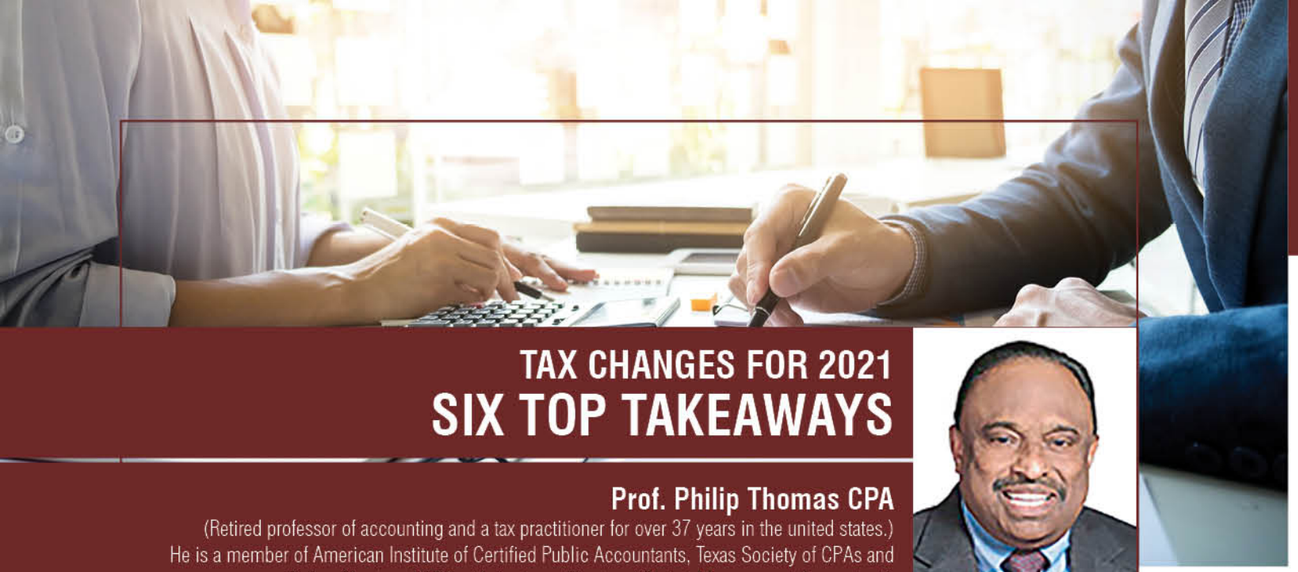
The Episcopal Church in Navajoland has been exploring the possibilities to make water available to the public in places such as Oljato and Monument Valley in Utah. The Mar Thoma Mission Board has partnered with the Episcopal Church in Navajoland to address this particular concern. In November 2021, the Mission Board provided a grant in the amount of $20,000.00 to support a water sustainability initiative of the St. Mary of the Moonlight Episcopal Church in Oljato, Utah. This initiative includes the repurposing of the parish's historic buildings and natural resources in order to provide the community with reliable access to clean water and a much needed public laundry facility. This project, which requires a great deal of work and thoughtful planning, is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

The funding for this grant was made available through a donation that was received by the Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston, on the occasion of the parish's Silver Jubilee celebration in 2019. Special appreciation is expressed to the Immanuel MTC for providing this support. The Mission Board is also grateful to Mr. O. C. Abraham and Mrs. Nirmala Abraham for brining such initiatives to the awareness of the Mar Thoma Mission Board and for serving so tirelessly as coordinators for Native American Mission since the very beginning.

May the Mar Thoma Mission Board's partnership with the Episcopal Church in Navajoland enable us to respond proactively to the needs of others, and may such efforts bring blessings and needed resources to deserving communities.

Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel
Program Manager





TAX CHANGES FOR 2021
SIX TOP TAKEAWAYS

Prof. Philip Thomas CPA

(Retired professor of accounting and a tax practitioner for over 37 years in the united states.)
He is a member of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Texas Society of CPAs and Dallas Chapter of CPAs. He is also a Chartered Global Management Accountant.)

1. INCREASED CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION DEDUCTION

Non- itemizers can deduct from adjusted gross income $600 by married filing joint status couples and $300 by single filing status taxpayers. Cash contributions to public charities are allowed up to 100% of AGI in 2021.

2. NCREASED CHILD TAX CREDIT AMOUNT AND INCREASED AGE LIMIT

Age limit for 2021 Child Tax Credit (CTC) is increased from 16 to 17 (16 and under to 17 and under). 2021 Child Tax Credit is increased from $2000 to $3,000 for families with children under the age of 18 and from $2000 to $3600 for those with children under 6. The increased credit amount phases out for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income over $150,000 for taxpayers married filing jointly, $112,500 for heads of household and $75,000 for others, reducing the expanded portion of the credit by $50 for each $1,000 of modified adjusted gross income over those limits. Once the excess amount is eliminated, the amount of the credit remains at $2,000 until the previous thresholds ($400,000 / $200,000) are reached. Those who received advance credit amounts need to reconcile and claim the balance on their 2021 tax returns.

3. INCREASED CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE CREDIT

2021 Child and Dependent care credit is increased from $3,000 to $4,000 for one qualifying dependent and from $6,000 to $8,000 for two or more. The credit is increased from 35% to 50% of dependent care expenses. The exclusion for employer – provided dependent care assistance is increased to $10,500 for 2021 ($5,250 in the case of a separate return by a married individual in 2021).

4. STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS IS NOW TAX FREE

Any student loan debt forgiveness that passes between December 31, 2020 and January 1, 2026 be considered tax-free. Previously, any forgiveness student loan debt was treated as taxable income.

5. EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

For individuals with no children, for 2021, the minimum age is decreased from 25 to 19 and the maximum age (65) is eliminated, except for students (24) and qualified former foster youth or homeless youth (18). The credit phase out percentages increase to 15.3% and the phase out amounts also increases. The threshold for disqualifying investment income increases from $2,200 to $10,000. The credit is allowed to certain separated spouses. Also, taxpayers may use 2019 earned income instead of 2021 earned income in figuring the credit if it results in higher credit amount.

6. INCREASED STANDARD DEDUCTION

Standard deduction for 2021 for Single = $12550, Married filing joint = $25,100 Head of household = $18,800 and Married filing separate = $12,550. Additional standard deduction for Elderly/ Blind – Single = $1,700 and Elderly/ Blind – Married = $1,350 for each.

World Day of Prayer 2022

World Day of Prayer (WDP) is a worldwide ecumenical movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer and action each year on the first Friday in March. The WDP motto is "Informed Prayer. Prayerful Action." Each year, a different country serves as the writer of the WDP worship service, interpreting the Bible in their own context, and lifting up issues of mission, justice and peace. Offerings collected during the services are granted by WDP national committees to non-profit organizations that deal with issues identified by the writer-country. World Day of Prayer USA promotes justice and equality for women through prayer, partnerships, service, and celebration.

About World Day of Prayer 2022

World Day of Prayer 2022 is brought to us by the women of England, Wales & Northern Ireland. They call us to worship with the words "I know the plans I have for you" inspired by Jeremiah 29:1-14. The program is based on the letter that the prophet Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylonia. The exiles were in a place of suffering, uncertainty, and opposing views on how to respond to the moment. Through the WDP service, we will be able to hear the stories of women who feel excluded, listen to the fear of a child refugee, and learn to see the context of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-faith society in England, Wales & Northern Ireland. For Jeremiah, God's plan was clear, and we share this assurance by celebrating hope through our worship and prayerful action which can bring to life the promises of God who cares for us all.

WDP 2022 Artwork

The artwork for WDP 2022 was created by Angie Fox using a combination of embroidery, appliqué, and metalwork. The artwork depicts key words such as, ***freedom***, represented as an open door to a pathway across an endless open vista; justice, represented by broken chains; ***God's peace and forgiveness***, represented by the dove and a peace lily breaking through the pavement; and the overreaching ***love of God***, represented by the rainbow.

WDP Services and Offertory

Our parishes in the Diocese are encouraged to arrange WDP services, which are ecumenical in nature, on Friday, March 4th, 2022, if possible. If this date is inconvenient, please make arrangements to observe WDP on any day of that weekend or month. The offertory collected during these services should be sent to the WDP USA Office in New York. Please make all checks payable to WDP USA, and mail to WDP USA, 475 Riverside Drive, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10115.

The coordinators of WDP services at various levels (parish, center, regional, ecumenical) are also requested to send a short report and a high quality group photo from your WDP celebrations to neethiprasad@gmail.com for the purpose of being published in the next issue of the Messenger.

Thank you to all the faithful women who organize World Day of Prayer celebrations, adding to the powerful legacy of women's work in faith. Through WDP, we are given a seed of hope and to ponder where it needs to be planted in our lives and in our communities. Let us use this opportunity to raise awareness of the needs of various communities and offer the gifts of prayers and commitment. A seed, nourished by prayers of intercession and actions of love, binds us together around the world.

Mrs. Neethi Prasad
Vice Chair - World Day of Prayer USA Board

WINDOWS OF HEAVEN

In Malachi 3:10, God tells us how we can receive the blessings of heaven. He teaches us about the importance of tithes, the 10% we give God from the earnings that He has given us. Offerings are above the tithe, and there is tithe of time and talents as well to His glory by the Holy Spirit.

TIME AND TALENTS

I challenge all of us to use, not only our financial blessings for the Mar Thoma Church and its edification, but also our youth talents and stewardship of our adults. God has blessed us with health and leadership abilities, and we have many ways we can share that with our world during these uncertain times. I have learned that we should have a generous spirit to God, because He is faithful.

BLESSINGS

We are blessed to worship Jesus freely in the United States. We are truly blessed with our Indian culture and traditions. We have wonderful friendships, families and church community. God has given us these things so that we can be a blessing to others, Lighted to Lighten. Through charity work and organizations, we can help the lost, homeless and the suffering, widows and orphans. And by doing these things, we can create a harvest of thirty, sixty or a hundredfold, Mark 4:20.

Binu Jacob, MD, FACC, FHRS

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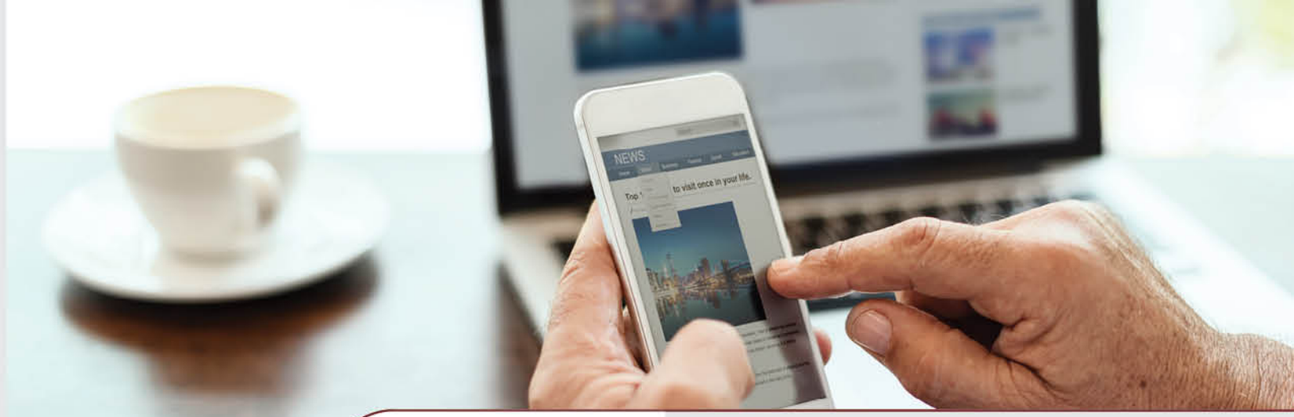


NEWS & EVENTS

Congratulations

Rev (Dr) Eappen Varghese Achen Vicar, Immanuel Mar Thoma Church Houston, is conferred with DTh from The Senate of Serampore College (University), Kolkatta, in History of Christianity Branch for the thesis, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Malabar Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Evangelistic Association and the Indigenous Missionary Initiatives in Colonial Travancore, 1888-1947."

Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey

The Mar Thoma church of New Jersey was blessed by the Episcopal visit of our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa on Sunday, July 25, 2021. His Grace celebrated the Holy Communion service, and ten children received their first Holy Communion. All the first communicants received a certificate and a Bible from Thirumeni. The 39th Parish Day anniversary was celebrated immediately after the worship service. Parish Secretary read the parish day report. The Mary and Easy Daniel Sunday School Endowment Scholarship and certificate was awarded to Ms. Michelle Joji. The Ruby Jubilee celebration of the parish was inaugurated by our Episcopa and in his remarks Thirumeni explained the importance of the 40-year celebration and the role and responsibilities the parish has to the community and Sabha. May the Good Lord continue to shower His Blessings upon our beloved Thirumeni to lead our diocese into new frontiers, and to lead the Mar Thoma Sabha to attract more people to serve God for the glory and extension of His Kingdom.

Rev. Sam T. Mathew
Vicar in Charge

Mr. Alex Mathew
Secretary

Church Dedication
Phoenix Mar Thoma Church

The members of the Phoenix MTC were privileged to have our Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos visit our parish from November 4 to 8, 2021. The highlight of the visit was the consecration of the new church building on November 6, 2021. It was a blessed milestone in the life of Phoenix MTC Parish. Thirumeni congratulated the parish

on this accomplishment during a pandemic period and on the growth of the parish in Arizona. Following the consecration service, a public meeting was held, which was

attended by members of local and out of State churches. A celebration lunch followed. Thirumeni celebrated Holy Qurbana on November 7th in the newly consecrated church. Fifteen children received First Communion. Thirumeni recognized the participation of Phoenix MTC youth in mission projects among Native Americans. Thirumeni

encouraged all to be participants in various Mission projects of the Diocese with an eye to serving the less privileged. While in Phoenix Thirumeni took time out to visit Grand Canyon in Arizona, to enjoy the beauty of this natural wonder. The Phoenix MTC extends its gratitude to Thirumeni for his visit to the parish and for his leadership to the Diocese.

Rev. Geevarghese Kochummen
Vicar, Phoenix MTC

Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Carrollton

Our diocesan bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos spent almost one week in our midst visiting our parish members and participating in various parish activities. Thirumeni met with the Parish Executive committee and shared updates on the activities of the Diocese. Thirumeni also took the time to listen to the committee's concerns and answered questions. Thirumeni conducted the Holy Communion service on Sunday, November 28, 2021. During the service, nine (9) of our children received Holy Communion for the first time. We praise God for these children, their parents, parishioners, and others that helped them to proclaim, "I accept Christ as my savior." After the service, Thirumeni briefed the congregation on different project initiatives of the Diocese. Thirumeni also appreciated the parish for the support and prayers our church is giving towards the activities of the Diocese. We also had the opportunity to celebrate Thirumeni's 71st birthday after the service. A few of the highlights from the Sunday service are: 1) Collection for the Carmel Mar Thoma Center in Atlanta. As a congregation, we were able to collect the requested amount from our parish. Thirumeni expressed and stressed the importance of the future of the Carmel Mar Thoma Center in Atlanta and encouraged all members to visit and be part of the center in the days to come. 2) Thirumeni recognized our vicar, Rev. Thomas Mathew P. for completing 30 years of ministry and 20 years as ordained minister. 3) Thirumeni inaugurated our parish mobile application and released our parish directory during the final program on Sunday. 4) Our Sunday School children presented portion of their collection to support Light to Life, two children for 5

years and an amount for Native American mission program. We were blessed to have Thirumeni's visit and thank God for giving us an opportunity to attend a blessed Holy Communion service with our Diocesan Bishop. We pray that God will continue to give him many more visions that will become a reality where we can work together and glorify His name.

Rev. Thomas Mathew P.
Vicar, MTC Dallas

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Thirumeni visited St. Thomas MTC, Houston from November 17 to-20, 2021. This marked the first Episcopal visit to our parish.

On Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m. Thirumeni celebrated Holy Communion service in Malayalam. After the service we had a public meeting to welcome Thirumeni along with his birthday celebration. Thirumeni addressed the parish and acknowledged its active involvement in the Diocesan activities. A lunch was provided for all those who attended. During the fellowship lunch, Thirumeni spent time with families and was very attentive to their thoughts and feelings. Thirumeni was gracious enough to meet the Parish Executive Committee members and gave them directives and advice on various parish related questions. As a parish it was a historic and blessed day to have our Diocesan Episcopa with us. We expressed our sincere gratitude to beloved Thirumeni for his love, care, guidance, and insightful leadership to the parish as well as the Diocese

Rev. Sonu Varughese
Vicar, St. Thomas MTC Houston

Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Rt. Rev. Dr. Issac Mar Philoxinos Episcopa Thirumeni visited Houston Immanuel Mar Thoma Church from 11th November 2021 to 18th November 2021. Thirumeni inaugurated the 23rd Diocesan Mar Thoma Yuvajanasakhyam conference held at Houston Immanuel Mar Thoma Church and Thirumeni was one of the leaders of the conference. The conference was attended by more than 200 members from around US and Canada. The theme of the Conference was Fruit Bearing Discipleship.

On 14th November 2021 Thirumeni celebrated Holy Qurbana in Houston Immanuel Mar Thoma Church. Thirumeni led the first communion service too. 18 first communicants participated in the Communion service.

On the following days Thirumeni visited some of the house of the parish. Thirumeni took keen interest to understand the functioning of the church, its various organizations and the mission engagements of the parish. Thirumeni left for Houston Trinity Mar Thoma Church on 18th November 2021.

Rev. Eappen Varghese
Vicar

Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Trinity MTC, Houston, was blessed by the visit of Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa from November 20 to 22, 2021. Thirumeni met the executive committee members on Nov 20th and discussed various matters with regards to the needs of the parish. He explained the Atlanta Project, its prospects and needs. He shared the idea of having a new parish in Houston. Thirumeni led the Holy Qurbana Service on Nov 21st at Trinity MTC. Around 600 members attended

the Holy Qurbana. Rev. Oommen Samuel & Rev. Roshen V Mathews also attended the Holy Qurbana. During the service Thirumeni conducted the first communion service, and 53 children attended the Holy Qurbana for the first time. After the Qurbana, Thirumeni attended the Public Meeting. He inaugurated the Trinity Church Campus Expansion Project's Room Sponsorship Campaign by receiving the cheque from Mr. Mathai Chacko and Milcah Chinnu Mathew. He released the E-book "Yes, He touched Me," published by the Healing Hearts Ministry of Trinity MTC. Thirumeni explained the need to support the Atlanta project and asked the members to contribute generously to the project. More than 20,000 dollars were collected during the meeting. He also recognized the members who completed 70 years this year and distributed certificates and mementos to the Valedictorian, and those who completed Ph.D. programs. Thirumeni inaugurated the new website and accounting software of the Trinity MTC. Vicar in Charge Rev. Roshen V. Mathews shared the Birthday wishes to Thirumeni and the church along with the Church Choir sang the birthday song. Achen also introduced "Prakasha Kiranangal," the book which was released to celebrate Thirumeni's 70th Birthday, to the congregation. After the Public Meeting Thirumeni attended the photo session with all the first communicants and each first communicant's family. Thirumeni talked with the families and took time to get to know more about them. After that, Thirumeni joined the church members to be part of the fellowship lunch arranged by the parents. After the fellowship lunch, Thirumeni inaugurated the new Cricket Cage bought by the Trinity Cricket team members for cricket practice. Thirumeni visited a few houses of the Trinity Mar Thoma Parish and spent time with those families. It was a blessed time for the families to get to know more about Thirumeni as he shared his visions about the future of NAE Diocese and the new projects to the families.

Meeting with Houston Clergy

Thirumeni spent time with Rev. Eappen Varghese, Rev. Roshen V. Mathews & Rev. Sonu Varghese and shared the

need of engaging more time for Campus Ministry. Thirumeni encouraged the Achens to collect a joint data base of the students studying in various campus in Houston and to visit them regularly on a rotation basis.

Meeting with English Divine Service team

Thirumeni took time to meet the English Divine Service team leaders on Nov 22nd. Thirumeni listened to their needs and expectations. As a generation born and brought up in USA, they shared their concerns and Thirumeni ensured that he will be taking steps to take care of the needs of the youth. He also explained to them about the Family Enrichment Program and Christian Education program that are expected to commence in Atlanta in the coming years. He also shared that God fearing, devoted and talented youth will be appointed as Lay Chaplains for making the students' ministry more effective.

Rev. Roshen V. Mathews
Assistant Vicar, Trinity MTC Houston

Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch

Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos blessed us, with his visit to the MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch,

from December 2 to 5, 2021. During his visit, Thirumeni met with the executive committee on Saturday December 4, 2021. He stressed the importance of the relationship of the church with the Diocese and Sabha. Thirumeni also met with Youth Fellowship. Thirumeni then met with the First Communicants and their parents on Saturday. December 4, 2021. Thirumeni re-iterated the meaning of Holy Communion and explained its importance to the first communicants. On Sunday, December 5, 2021, Thirumeni conducted the Holy Communion service and blessed 25 first communicants on the occasion. Thirumeni in his sermon emphasized the importance of learning the Word of God and told the first communicants to experience the presence of God as they participate in the Holy Communion. After the Holy Communion service, there was a special meeting to celebrate Thirumeni's 71st birthday, which was on December 5th. There was special song written by the choir leader Mr. M. J. Andrews in honor of Thirumeni's birthday. Vicar In-Charge Very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas and Secretary Aby George offered felicitations and appreciated Thirumeni's leadership to the Diocese and the Church and wished him the best in the years to come. The members of the MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch, appreciate Thirumeni's ministry for the kingdom of God.

Aby George
Secretary, MTC of Dallas, Farmers Branch

Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York

Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos

Episcopa, visited the Long Island MTC on Sunday, December 12, 2021. Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Communion, and during this service, 20 youngsters received Holy Communion for the first time. In addition to this, six committed youths took part in a special dedication service and took up the responsibility to serve as Altar Boys. After the service, the

parish celebrated Philoxenos Thirumeni's 71st birthday with a special cake cutting ceremony. A fellowship meal was served for all who attended. The parish was also blessed by the presence and leadership of our Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Aju Abraham. The parish is ever grateful to Thirumeni for his prayerful presence and blessed guidance.

Rev. Shaji Kochummen
Vicar, Long Island MTC, New York

Yuvajana Sakhyam National Conference

അജു വാരിക്കാട്. ഹൂസ്റ്റൺ : ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്നാമത് ഭദ്രാസന യുവജനസഖ്യം സമ്മേളനത്തിന് ആവേശോജ്വലമായ പരിസമാപ്തി കുറിക്കാനായതിൽ ദൈവത്തെ സ്തുതിക്കുന്നു. കോവിഡ് പകർച്ചവ്യാധിയുടെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ കോൺഫ്രൻസ് നടത്താനാകുമോ എന്ന് പോലും ചിന്തിച്ചിരുന്ന സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ നിന്നും വ്യത്യസ്തമായി, അചഞ്ചലമായ ദൈവാശ്രയ ബോധത്തിൽ നിന്നുകൊണ്ടായിരുന്നു ഇമ്മാനുവേൽ മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവജനസഖ്യം ഈ കോൺഫറൻസിന്റെ നടത്തിപ്പുമായി മുൻപോട്ടു പോയത്. ഭദ്രാസന അധ്യക്ഷൻ അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. ഐസക് മാർ ഫീലക്സിനോസ് എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പാ, ഫിലഡൽഫിയ യൂത്ത് ചാപ്ലിൻ റവ:തോമസ് കെ. മാത്യു, സിയാറ്റിൽ മാർത്തോമാ ഇടവക വികാരി റവ. മനു വർഗീസ് എന്നിവർ കോൺഫറൻസിനു മുഖ്യ നേതൃത്വം നൽകി. ശ്രീമതി നീനു മേരി വർഗ്ഗിസ് കുട്ടികളുടെ സെഷന് നേതൃത്വം നൽകി സഹായിച്ചു. ഭദ്രാസന സെക്രട്ടറി റവ: അജു എബ്രഹാം, യുവജനസഖ്യം ഭദ്രാസന വൈസ് പ്രസിഡന്റ് റവ: സാം റ്റി മാത്യു, ഇമ്മാനുവേൽ യുവജനസഖ്യം പ്രസിഡന്റും ഇടവക വികാരിയുമായ റവ: ഈഷൻ വർഗീസ്, ട്രിനിറ്റി ഇടവക വികാർ ഇൻ ചാർജ് റവ: റോഷൻ വി. മാത്യുസ് എന്നിവർ കോൺഫറൻസിൽ മറ്റു വിവിധ സെഷനുകൾക്ക് നേതൃത്വം നൽകുകയും ചെയ്തു.

നവംബർ 12-ന് വെള്ളിയാഴ്ച വൈകുന്നേരം അഞ്ച് മണിയോടെ ആരംഭിച്ച സമ്മേളനത്തിൽ, അമേരിക്കയിലെ വിവിധ സംസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും കാനഡയിലും ഉള്ള യുവജനസഖ്യം പ്രവർത്തകർ പങ്കെടുത്തു. കോൺഗ്രസിന്റെ ഉദ്ഘാടന സെഷനിൽ കോൺഫ്രൻസ് സുവനീർ, ഭദ്രാസന യുവജനസഖ്യത്തിന്റെ കോൺഫറൻസ് സ്പെഷ്യൽ എഡിഷൻ യുവധാര എന്നിവ പ്രകാശനം ചെയ്തു. യുവജന സഖ്യം ഭദ്രാസന കൗൺസിൽ അംഗങ്ങളായ സെക്രട്ടറി ബിജി ജോബി, ട്രസ്റ്റി ജിനേഷ് നൈനാൻ എന്നിവരുടെ എന്നിവരുടെ സാന്നിധ്യവും നേതൃത്വവും സമ്മേളനത്തിന് മികവ് നൽകി. 2020-21 ൽ ഓരോ റീജനുകളിൽ നിന്നും മികച്ച പ്രവർത്തനം കാഴ്ചവെച്ച ശാഖക്കുള്ള പുരസ്കാരങ്ങൾ തദവസരത്തിൽ കൗൺസിൽ അംഗങ്ങളുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ നൽകുകയുണ്ടായി. അറ്റ്ലാന്റാ മാർത്തോമാ യുവജനസഖ്യം, ഷിക്കാഗോ മാർത്തോമാ യുവജനസഖ്യം, ക്രിസ്തോസ് മാർത്തോമാ യുവജനസഖ്യം ഫിലഡൽഫിയ, സാൻഫ്രാൻസിസ്കോ മാർത്തോമാ യുവജനസഖ്യം, ഫാർമേഴ്സ് ബ്രാഞ്ച് മാർത്തോമാ യുവജനസഖ്യം ഡാലസ് , ലോങ്ങ് ഐലൻഡ് മാർത്തോമാ യുവജനസഖ്യം ന്യൂയോർക്ക്. സെന്റ് മാത്യൂസ് മാർത്തോമ്മാ യുവജനസഖ്യം ടൊറാന്റോ കാനഡ എന്നീ ശാഖകൾക്കാണ് അവാർഡ് ലഭിച്ചത്. കോൺഫറൻസിന്റെ ഉത്ഘാടന സമ്മേളനത്തിന് ശേഷം നടന്ന തീം പ്രസന്റേഷൻ ഒരു വേറിട്ട അനുഭവമായിരുന്നു. ഇമ്മാനുവേൽ യുവജനസഖ്യാഗമായ മെവിൻ ജോൺ എബ്രഹാം എഴുതി സംവിധാനം ചെയ്ത തീം പ്രസന്റേഷൻ സ്കിറ്റ് ഫല ദായക ശിഷ്യത്വത്തിന്റെ ആഴങ്ങളിലേക്ക് ഇറങ്ങി ചെന്ന് പ്രേക്ഷകരുടെ കണ്ണുകളെ ഈറനണിയിച്ചു.

നവംബർ 13 ശനിയാഴ്ച രാവിലെ നടന്ന ആരാധനയ്ക്ക് ഓസ്റ്റിൻ മാർത്തോമ യുവജന സഖ്യം നേതൃത്വം നൽകി. തുടർന്നുള്ള

മുഖ്യ പ്രഭാഷണം സിയാറ്റിൽ മാർത്തോമാ ഇടവക വികാരി റവ. മനു വർഗീസ് നയിച്ചു. യഥാർത്ഥമായ ക്രിസ്തു ശിഷ്യത്വം എപ്രകാരമായിരിക്കണം എന്ന് പഴയനിയമ പുസ്തകത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ നിന്നുകൊണ്ട് അച്ചൻ പഠിപ്പിച്ചു. തുടർന്നു നടന്ന വേദ പഠന ക്ലാസുകൾക്ക് ഫിലഡൽഫിയ യൂത്ത് ചാപ്ലിൻ റവ:തോമസ് കെ മാത്യു നേതൃത്വം നൽകി. ശനിയാഴ്ച വൈകുന്നേരം നടന്ന കൾച്ചറൽ പ്രോഗ്രാമിൽ റവ: റോഷൻ വി. മാത്യൂസ് എഴുതി സംവിധാനം ചെയ്ത ട്രിനിറ്റി മാർത്തോമാ യുവജന സഖ്യത്തിന്റെ നാടകവും ഡാലസ് ഫാർമേഴ്സ് ബ്രാഞ്ച് യുവജന സഖ്യവും അവതരിപ്പിച്ച നാടകവും മികച്ച നിലവാരം പുലർത്തി പ്രേക്ഷകപ്രശംസ നേടി. കോൺഫറൻസിന് ധനസമാഹരണത്തിന് ഭാഗമായി വിറ്റഴിച്ച റാഫിൾ ടിക്കറ്റുകളുടെ നറുക്കെടുപ്പ് ഇതോടൊപ്പം ഭദ്രാസന അധ്യക്ഷൻ അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. ഐസക് മാർ പീലക്സിനോസ് എപിസ്കോപ്പായുടെ സാന്നിധ്യത്തിൽ നടത്തുകയും ചെയ്തു. ഒന്നാം സമ്മാനമായ ആപ്പിൾ മാക് ബുക്ക് നേടിയത് ശ്രീമതി ആനി ജോർജ് മാമൻ കരസ്ഥമാക്കിയ റാഫിൾ ടിക്കറ്റ് നമ്പർ 1036 നാണ്. രണ്ടാം സമ്മാനമായ ഐഫോൺ ലഭിച്ചത് ട്രിനിറ്റി ഇടവകാംഗമായ ഫിലിപ്പ് കൊച്ചുമ്മന്റെ റാഫിൾ ടിക്കറ്റ് നമ്പർ 1625 നാണ്. റാഫിൾ ടിക്കറ്റ് നമ്പർ 1789 കരസ്ഥമാക്കിയ ന്യൂയോർക്കിൽ നിന്നുള്ള സൂജ നൈനാൻ മൂന്നാം സമ്മാനമായ ആപ്പിൾ വാച്ചിന് അർഹയായി. ശനിയാഴ്ച സന്ധ്യാനമസ്കാരത്തിന് കാനഡ ഗൊറാനാ മാർത്തോമാ യുവജനസഖ്യം നേതൃത്വം നൽകി.

കോൺഫറൻസിനോടനുബന്ധിച്ച് പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച സുവനീറിന്റെ കൺവീനർ ആയി പ്രവർത്തിച്ച സിജു ഫിലിപ്പ് ഏറ്റവും മികച്ച സംഘടനാ പ്രവർത്തകർക്കുള്ള മാതൃകാ പുരസ്കാരം അന്നേ ദിവസം ഭദ്രാസന എപ്പിസ്കോപ്പായിൽ നിന്ന് ഏറ്റു വാങ്ങി. കോൺഫറൻസിന് മെഗാ സ്പോൺസർ ഡാലസിൽ നിന്നുള്ള ഡി.എഫ്.ഡബ്ലിയു. ഇൻഷുറൻസ് ആൻഡ് ഫിനാൻഷ്യൽ സർവീസിന്റെ ജെയ് വർഗീസ് ആണ്. പ്ലാറ്റിനം സ്പോൺസർ ആയത് യുഎസ് ഹെൽത്ത് അഡ്വൈസേഴ്സിൽ നിന്നുള്ള ഡാരൽ നീഡ് ആണ്.

നവംബർ 14 ഞായറാഴ്ച രാവിലെ എട്ടരയ്ക്ക് വിശുദ്ധ കുർബാനക്ക് അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. ഐസക് മാർ പീലക്സിനോസ് എപിസ്കോപ്പാ നേതൃത്വം നൽകുകയും അതിനുശേഷം നടന്ന സമാപന സമ്മേളനത്തിൽ ഇരുപത്തിരണ്ടാമത് ഭദ്രാസന യുവജനസഖ്യം കോൺഫറൻസിന് ഡാലസ് ഫാർമേഴ്സ് ബ്രാഞ്ച് യുവജനസഖ്യം ആതിഥേയത്വം വഹിക്കുന്നതാണ് എന്ന് അഭിവന്ദ്യ ഡോ. ഐസക് മാർ പീലക്സിനോസ് എപിസ്കോപ്പാ അറിയിച്ചു. അതേ തുടർന്ന് ഫാർമേഴ്സ് ബ്രാഞ്ച് യുവജന സഖ്യ അംഗങ്ങൾ ഹ്യൂസ്റ്റൺ ഇമ്മാനുവേൽ മാർത്തോമ യുവജന സഖ്യത്തിൽ നിന്നും ദീപശിഖ ഏറ്റുവാങ്ങി. കോവിഡ് കാല ഘട്ടത്തിലും 250 പരം ആളുകളെ പങ്കെടുപ്പിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് വിജയകരമായി ഒരു കോൺഫറൻസ് നടത്താനായതിലുള്ള സന്തോഷം കോ കൺവീനർ അനി ജോജി പങ്കുവെച്ചു.

MATRIMONIAL

Marthomite parents invite proposals for their daughter, born in 09/1991, 5'5" Physician (MS Opthalmology, FICO) presently doing fellowship in Cornea & Refractive surgery in Bangalore, India. Seeking alliance from parents of professionally qualified god-fearing young men (Doctors, CPAs & Engineers) in US or Canada. If interested, please contact us at johngeorge1949@gmail.com or +91-9446751489.

Mar Thoma parents settled in the United States invite proposal for their 35 year old 5 Ft tall daughter born and brought up in USA. She is a Doctor with specialization and fellowship and currently working as an Associate Professor in a Medical School in USA. Seeking a suitable God-fearing boy in USA, who is family oriented with strong Christian faith. Interested parents please contact through email to: newproposal23@gmail.com

NEW CLERGY ASSIGNED TO THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

Rev. Manu Varghese
MTC of Greater Seattle

Wife : **Ciny Rachel Easow**
Children : Mahima Susan Manu, Mahath Varghese Manu & Miriya Linsa Manu

Rev. Bibi Mathew Chacko
Ascension MTC, Philadelphia

Wife : **Teena Thankachan Elizabeth**
Children : Nivedh Jacob Bibi & Nevin Jacob Bibi

Rev. Jaxon P.S.
Bethel MTC, Philadelphia

Wife : **Selin Mary Abraham Jaxon**
Children : Ankitha Elma Jaxon

Rev. Reji Yohannan
Christos MTC, Philadelphia

Wife : **Anjana Mathew**
Children : Aaron Reji, Anna Reji & Anugraha Reji

NEW CLERGY ASSIGNED TO THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

Rev. Saju C. Samuel
MTC Atlanta

Wife : **Linu Mary Samuel**
Children : Johaan C. Saju Samuel,
Jonathan C. Saju Samuel

Rev. Sujith Sam Mammen
Carmel MTC, Boston

Wife : **Sherin Mary Jacob**
Chirldren : Georgie Samuel Mammen,
Alexie Jacob Mammen

Rev. John Kunjappy
MTC of Oklahoma

Wife : **Gigi John**
Children : Anugraha T. John &
Arpitha T. John

Rev. Sherin Varghese Oommen
The Chicago MTC

Wife : **Jency Elizabeth John**
Children : Nessy Susan Oommen

PHILOXENOS THIRUMENI'S 71st BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Hosted by South West Regional Activity Committee

South West Regional Activity Committee (SWRAC) region A and Crossway MarThoma Church hosted a Birthday dinner to honor our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa at The MarThoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch – MTEC Hall. It was a privilege to be able to celebrate 71st Birthday of Thirumeni on the day of his birthday. The invitees for the program included office bearers from the South West Region Center-A MarThoma churches and other prominent members.

The program began with opening prayer and worship service by Crossway MTC led by Rev. Abraham Kuruvilla and Rev. Larry Varghese. The guests were welcomed by Mr. Jojy Koshy, Assembly Member Crossway MTC, who was one of the program coordinators, followed by felicitation speeches by Very. Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas and SWRAC secretary Mr. Aby George.

Rev. Thomas Mathew P., Vice President SWRAC launched a 'Bishop Dr Mar Philoxenos Sapthathi' endowment program to sponsor the higher education of two kids from the Oklahoma mission field as a birthday gift to Thirumeni. This program will be continued in the years to come. On this occasion, Rev. Abraham Kuruvilla launched a CARE program by the Crossway MTC through which they provide assistance to the Afghan refugees. There was also a presentation about the Atlanta Carmel Center, with a personal experience shared by Mrs. Elsy Abraham – Assembly Member of The MarThoma Church of Dallas, Carrollton.

Diocesan organization secretaries, Senior Fellowship – Mr. Easaw Maliakal, MTVEA – Mr. Sam Alex and Yuvajana Sakhyam – Mrs. Biji Joby conveyed their birthday wishes to Thirumeni.

Thirumeni in his address to the invitees, remembered all the important people who were involved in guiding him through his ministry. He thanked everyone who attended the event.

The invitees were served dinner and entertained with melodious songs from local artists – Mr. Alex Pappachan, Mrs. Sooja David and Mr. Selvin Stanley. The meeting ended with vote of thanks by Mr. Jibin Mathew – SWRAC Accountant.

The main coordinators of the program were Mr. Jojy Koshy, Mr. Shaji Ramapuram and Mr. Aby George

Diocesan Clergy Conference 2021

The Annual Diocesan Clergy Conference was held on October 28-29, 2021 at Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta. The Theme of the conference was Pastoral Care: Providing Hope and Healing. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Thirumeni, Rev. Larry Varughese, Dr. Raj Nadella were the main speakers of the conference. Rev. Biju P Simon and Rev. George Abraham led the Bible Study and Devotion respectively. Ms. Anita E. J. Ninan led the session of Visa Process in US. Rt. Rev. Oommen George the Bishop of Kollam-Kottarakkara Diocese of CSI Church also participated the meeting.

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Winners List for October / November / December 2021 Crossword Puzzle

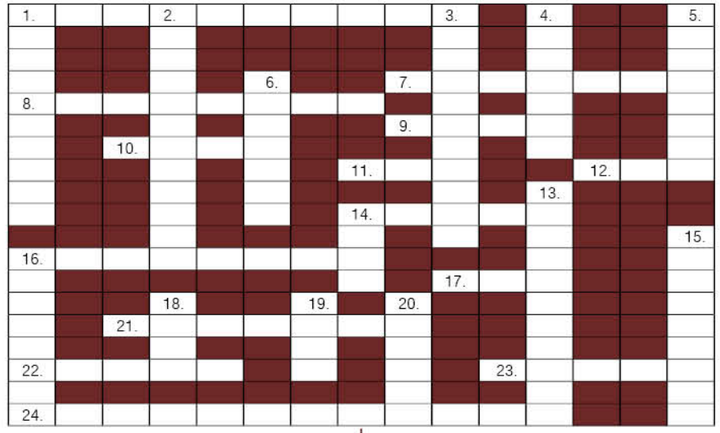
1	Manju Mathews	Ascension MTC,PA
2	Dr. Susan Alex	Atlanta MTC, JK,TN
3	Laly Elias	Baltimore MTC, MD
4	Gianna Sage Aguiar(Gr.3)	Carmel MTC, Boston
5	Landen Philip Aguiar(Gr.6)	Carmel MTC, Boston
6	Paul J Isaac	Carmel MTC, Boston
7	Nancy Varghese	Detroit MTC, MI
8	Usha Sara Thomas	Detroit MTC, MI
9	Ameya Abraham(Gr.3)	Ebenezer MTC , NY
10	Diya Abraham(Gr.8)	Ebenezer MTC , NY
11	Mathew T. Mathew	Epiphany MTC, NY
12	Sara Philip	Immanuel MTC, Houston
13	Neethi Prasad	Jerusalem MTC, CT
14	Achamma Jacob	Long Island MTC, NY
15	Sosamma Abraham	Long Island MTC, NY
16	Susan Abraham	Long Island MTC, NY
17	Saramma Mathew	MTC Dallas Farmers Br
18	Joanna Zachariah(Gr 11)	MTC Oklahoma
19	T.C. Zachariah	MTC Oklahoma
20	Rincy Mathew	MTCD, Carrolton
21	Annamma Abraham	Philadelphia MTC, PA
22	K.C. Jacob	Philadelphia MTC, PA
23	Kunjamma Jacob	Philadelphia MTC, PA
24	Sangeetha A Thomas(Gr 6)	Philadelphia MTC, PA
25	Susan Mathews	Philadelphia MTC, PA
26	Tharamel Alexander	Philadelphia MTC, PA
27	Mariamma John	Sehion MTC , Dallas
28	Liba T Philip	St Luke MTC, Florida
29	Dr. Prathik M Philip	St. Luke MTC, Florida
30	Sosamama Varghese	St. Peters MTC
31	Alice Thomas	St.James MTC NY
32	Philip Mathew	St.John's MTC MI
33	Checha John	Staten Island MTC, NY
34	Elsy Philip	Staten Island MTC, NY
35	Omana Rajee	Staten Island MTC, NY
36	Regi Mathew	Staten Island MTC, NY
37	Saramma Rajan	Staten Island MTC, NY
38	Lilly M Varghese	Trinity MTC Houston
39	Nikhil Mathew (Gr 8)	Trinity MTC Houston
40	Shawn Varghese	Trinity MTC Houston
41	Thomas Varghese	Trinity MTC Houston
42	Vishal Mathew (Gr 6)	Trinity MTC Houston
43	Achamma Chacko	Trinity MTC, Houston
44	T.A.Mathew	Trinity MTC, Houston

Answer Key for Bible Crossword Puzzle – April, May June 2021 Issue

1.A	C	2.C	E	3.P	T	A	B	L	E	■	4.I	■	■	5.F
C	■	I	■	R	■	■	■	■	■	■	N	■	■	O
K	■	T	■	O	■	■	6.C	■	■	■	H	■	■	U
N	■	Y	■	P	■	7.F	A	M	I	N	E	■	■	N
O	■	■	■	H	■	■	S	■	■	■	R	■	■	T
8.W	I	9.C	K	E	D	N	E	S	S	■	I	■	■	A
L	■	H	■	S	■	■	■	■	■	■	T	■	■	I
E	■	O	■	Y	■	■	10.F	O	R	S	A	K	E	N
D	■	O	■	■	■	■	I	■	■	■	N	■	■	■
G	■	S	■	■	11.L	■	R	■	■	■	C	■	■	12.U
13.E	X	E	R	C	I	S	E	14.S	■	15.L	E	A	R	N
■	■	■	■	■	P	■	■	H	■	■	■	■	■	D
16.L	O	17.A	T	H	S	O	M	E	■	18.P	E	A	C	E
■	■	S	■	■	■	■	■	P	■	■	■	■	■	R
■	■	H	■	■	■	■	■	19.H	O	U	20.S	E	■	S
21.H	E	A	R	T	S	■	■	E	■	■	T	■	■	T
■	■	M	■	■	■	■	■	22.R	I	S	E	■	■	A
■	■	E	■	■	■	■	■	D	■	■	A	■	■	N
23.E	N	D	U	R	E	■	■	24.S	K	I	L	L	E	D

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Bible Crossword Puzzle as in NIV: Jeremiah 13-22



Across:

1. Can the leopard change its spots? Neither can you do good who are ____ to doing evil.
7. " Give glory to the Lord your God before your feet_____".
8. " I will make their widows more _____ than the sand of the sea."
9. " In this place I will ____ the plans of Judah and Jerusalem."
10. " I have seen your detestable ____ . How long will you be unclean?"
11. The Lord says, " ..none will ____ on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah."
12. " A man who gains riches by unjust means, in the ____ will prove to be a fool."
14. " O Lord Almighty, you examine the righteous and _____ the heart and mind."
16. " Because they have forsaken the _____ of their God and have worshiped other gods."
17. "They will ____ of deadly diseases."
21. " for the sake of your name (the Lord's) do not _____ us.
22. The Lord brought the Israelites up out of the land of the ____.
23. "Let my eyes over flow with tears as my people has suffered a grievous _____."
24. "These wicked people, who refuse to listen to my(Lord's) words, who follow the _____of their hearts will be completely useless.

Down:

1. _____justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor, the one who has been robbed."
2. " I will kindle an _____ fire in the gates of Jerusalem, if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy.
3. " I will bring bereavement and _____ on my people for they have not changed their ways.
4. " I the Lord search the hearts and _____ the mind.
5. " He ----------the cause of the poor and needy and so all went well."
6. " It is because our fathers _____ the Lord and followed other gods."
13. ' The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior so my _____ will stumble and not prevail."
14. " I will allow no ____or mercy or compassion to keep me from destroying them."
15. "Keep the Sabbath day holy as I _____ your forefathers.
16. " For if you are careful to keep these _____, then kings will come through the gates of this palace"
18. " They greatly love to wander; they do not restrain their _____"
19. " My anger will kindle a _____ that will burn against you.
20. " I have bound the whole house of Israel and Judah to me, to be my people for my _____.

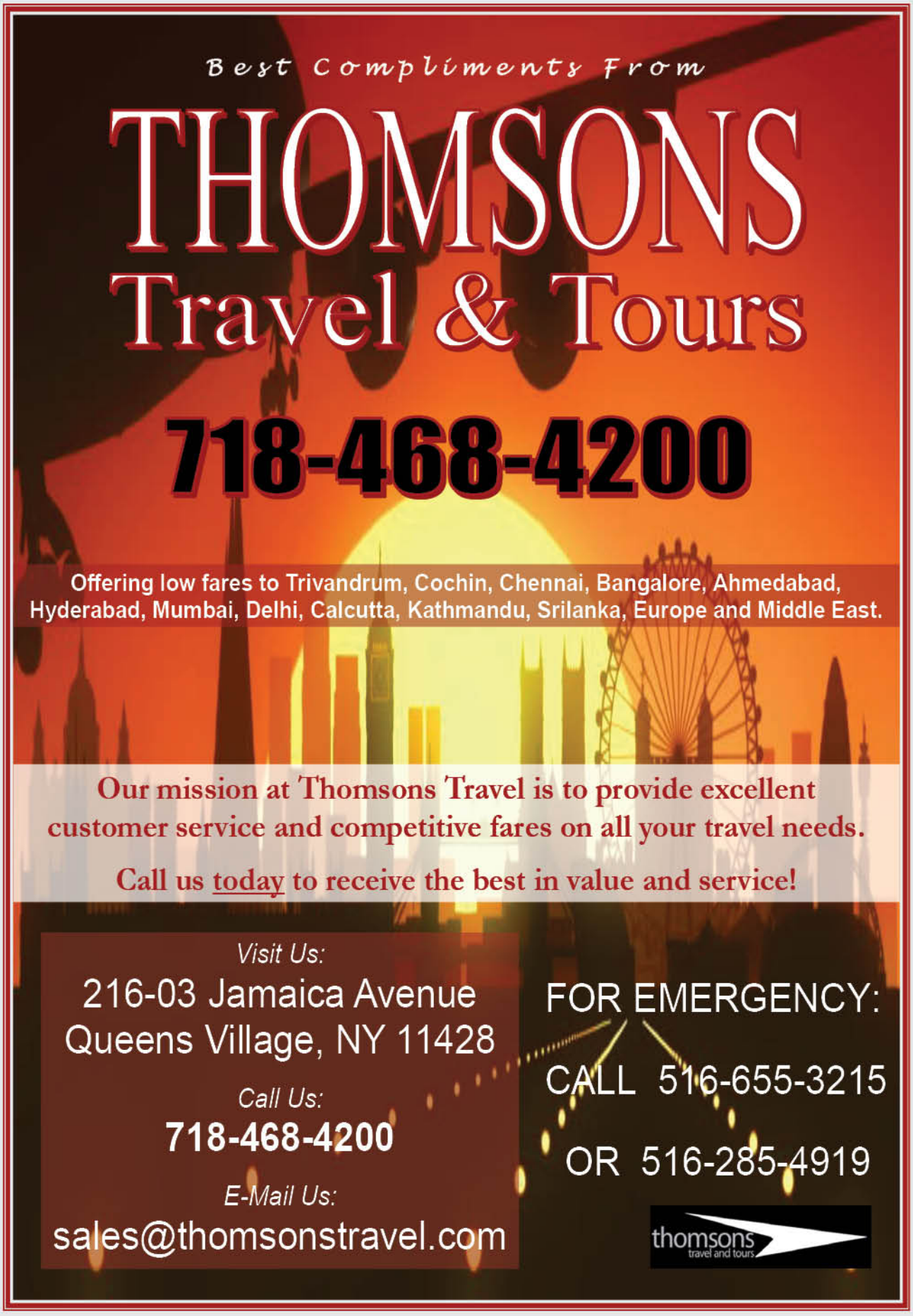
Deadline for Answers : February 25, 202

Please send by email only Email Id: varampath23@msn.com

Phone via Whatapp/Message : 978-930-1578(C)

Details to Include: Name, Church, State, Grade if children

Complied by : Philp Manuel & Laila Anie Philip, Carmel M.T.C., Boston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