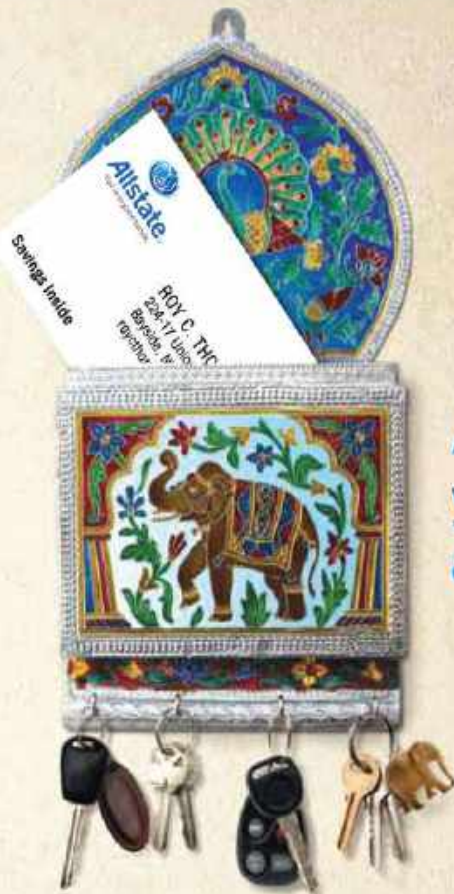


  
**CHURCH**  
**HOPE, AND MISSION**

**JANUARY - FEBRUARY - MARCH 2021** Vol. XXXX. No: 1



An **Allstate Agent** is  
**your key** to quality **protection**  
and **savings** on car insurance.

Insurance



**Call me and see how much you can save.**

I can help you get the protection that's personalized for you and your family's needs along with the savings you deserve. Safe drivers can save 45% or more on car insurance. And our multiple-policy discount lets you save even more.

Dollar for dollar, nobody protects you like Allstate.

**ROY C. THOMAS, LUTCF**

**Tel: (718) 464-8500**

**Fax: (718) 464-4230**

224-17 Union Turnpike  
Bayside, NY 11364  
roycthomas@allstate.com

**Call me today for a free quote.**



**Allstate**

You're in good hands.

Auto Home Life Retirement

Insurance and discounts subject to terms, qualifications and availability. Actual savings will vary. Allstate Indemnity Company, Northbrook, IL. ©2012 Allstate Insurance Company.



# MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe



**JANUARY - FEBRUARY - MARCH 2021**

A Publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe  
(For private circulation only)  
Vol. XXXX, No: 1

#### EDITORIAL BOARD AND MANAGING COMMITTEE

*Diocesan Episcopa*  
**Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos**

*Diocesan Secretary:*  
**Rev. Aju Abraham**

#### EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS:

*Chief Editor: Dr. Mathew T. Thomas*  
301-526-8723  
**Dr. Nancy George Malilacal, Canada**  
905-799-2123 nancygmal@rogers.com

**Rev. Manoj Idiculla**  
978-618-9604 marthomadiocese@gmail.com

**Rev. Jacob P. Thomas**  
832-295-0103 shajilachen@yahoo.com

**Prof. Dr. Joshy Jacob, Atlanta**  
jjacob3@emary.edu

**Prof. Elias Abraham, Baltimore**  
elias.abraham49@gmail.com

#### MANAGING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Rev. Aju Abraham (Manager)**  
516-377-3311 marthomadiocese@gmail.com

**Mr. George Babu (Diocesan Treasurer)**  
718-690-0230 georgepbabu@gmail.com

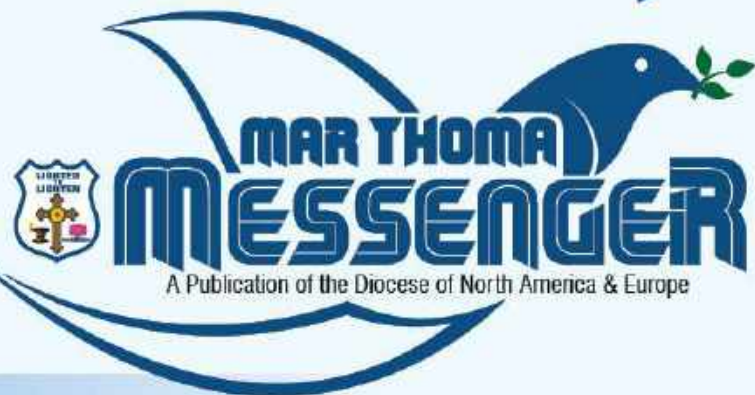
**Mr. Alexander P. Alexander**  
647-525-2539

**Mr. T.A. Mathew, Houston (Advertisement)**  
713-436-2207 tamathew@hotmail.com

**Mr. Samuel K. Samuel (Subscriptions)**  
914-498-9990 samsamuel@optonline.net

**Diocese of North America & Europe**  
[www.marthomanae.org](http://www.marthomanae.org)

**Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church**  
[www.marthoma.in](http://www.marthoma.in)



#### Subscription Rates

	3 Years	6 Years	Life
USA	\$ 35.00	\$ 70.00	\$ 300.00
Canada	\$ 35.00	\$ 70.00	\$ 300.00
UK	€ 25.00	€ 50.00	€ 180.00

#### Advertisement Rates

	Four Issues	One Issue
Back Cover / Color	\$ 2000.00	\$ 525.00
Front / Back Inside / Color	\$ 1500.00	\$ 400.00
Inside Full page / Color	\$ 750.00	\$ 200.00

Mailing Address : Mar Thoma Messenger - Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 Merrick Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566

Disclaimer : Views Published in the Mar Thoma Messenger are solely the views of the authors.

Messenger or the Diocese of North America & Europe / Vettathu Digital Printers do not endorse the contents or views expressed in the articles and is not responsible or liable for the contents or views in any form, nor shall endorse any advertisement or the products or services offered or involved.

Acknowledgements: The Messenger committees thank all those who assisted in assembling the January-February-March 2021 issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger.

Design, Print & Direct Mailing:



#### Vettathu Digital Printers

MTC Buildings, S.C.S. Jn., Thiruvalla  
Mob : 9495905475, : 9446912720  
E-Mail : vettathudigital@gmail.com



## INDEX...

Message from the <b>Metropolitan</b> -----	4
Message from the <b>Diocesan Bishop</b> -----	7
Editorial – <b>Dr. Matehw T. Thomas</b> -----	9
Birthday Greetings -----	11
New Diocesan Council Members -----	13
To Love Thy Neighbor - The Mission Ministry of the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco <b>Shweta Sujit</b> -----	15
Christ, Hope, and Mission in a Pandemic World <b>Timothy Varghese</b> , Los Angeles -----	17
Christ, Hope and Mission <b>Rev. Jess M. George</b> , Youth Chaplain - North East Region -----	21
A prayer in times of struggle <b>Suresh Mathews</b> , Mar Thoma Church, Atlanta -----	24
Church and God's Mission <b>Dr. V. T. Samuel</b> , Sehion MTC, Plano, Texas -----	25
Christ, Hope and Mission <b>Tom Lathara</b> , St. Thomas MTC, Chicago -----	29
Church's Mission as Interceding in Hope for a New World <b>Rev. Jacob P. Thomas</b> , Trinity MTC, Houston, TX -----	32
The Challenge of the Cross: rekindling hope in a broken world. <b>Anita Joy-Thomas</b> , Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX. -----	36
Native American Mission Amidst the Pandemic <b>Julianne Cherian</b> , MTC, Atlanta -----	42
Book Review - <b>Rev. Dr. Mothy Varkey</b> -----	44
Diocesan Leadership Conference – report -----	45
Best Parish Award – -----	47
Best Yuvajanaskhyam Award -----	47
Clergy Transfer List -----	48
Matrimonial -----	50
Bible Crossword Puzzle Winners List for October 2020 -----	51
Bible Crossword Puzzle -----	52
Prayer for our Nation Midwest Regional Youth - Jan 2021 -----	53
News and Events -----	54
34 <sup>th</sup> Midwest Regional Youth Conference - Dec 2020 --	57
Condolence -----	58



## Message from The Metropolitan

*D*eary beloved in the Lord,

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

God Almighty, by His abundant grace, helps us to enter the New Year of 2021. Praise Him for all His amazing involvement in guiding us in the innumerable and diverse experiences we had in the bygone year. "The eyes of the Lord your God are continually on the land from the beginning of the year to its end" (Dt. 11:12). I wish all of you a blessed New Year, empowered by God's grace and mercy.

The great news that the vaccine for the pandemic, namely COVID-19, has been developed by scientists, is quite comforting and soothing. We were all anxiously waiting for this great news. This is the victory of science. We hope this will give new inspiration for society in areas of Public Health and economics. Along with other nations, India also is able to produce its own vaccine. We are proud of it. Let us hope that this will yield good results in the days to come. We want to appreciate all those who worked tirelessly behind this great mission. The number of persons affected has come down in India. But in Kerala, the spread has more severity. The appearance of the variants of Coronavirus poses serious threats. We need to make the vaccine available to as many people as possible within a short time.

We saw the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. It reflected the political insecurity that we have today. This reminds us of today's democracy, which very cleverly hides the fascist values that ought to be

overcome through democratic means. In this way, we can regain and preserve the great values of democracy. Any fascist leadership can spark the fire of hatred in people's minds by constant rhetoric, ultimately winning a section of people to make them act according to their evil designs. People must be alert and very vigilant, so they can effectively defend such threats to democracy at the proper time. Congratulations to the newly elected president, Joseph Biden, and the vice president, Kamala Harris. They come to power when the nation is facing a crisis. There is the COVID pandemic. Along with that, the nation is undergoing a disturbing time of race-clan polarization, which is a serious concern. Not only the USA, but the whole world looks on Biden with hope and optimism. We hope that the relationship between the USA and India becomes stronger in the days to come because of Kamala Harris, who has an Indian origin.

Election to the local self-government bodies of Kerala is over. I congratulate those who won the elections. All, including those who did not win, should strive hard for the betterment of our society. Progress must occur in different areas such as public health, road development, waste management, and green aid programs. It is a matter of pride that more than half of the elected are women. The Election to the Legislative Assembly of Kerala is not far away. The tendency to polarize people by invoking their thinking through religion and caste is not a good approach in modern and cultured society. Political parties must refrain from such ideas. Instead, they should present before voters plans and programs for progress and seek votes.

It is a matter of pride and happiness for everyone that the documentary, "Hundred years of Mar Chrysostom" prepared and directed by Blessy, the famous director of films, was exhibited in the non-feature section during the 51<sup>st</sup> international film festival in Goa. Let us praise God for the life and ministry of our Valiya Metropolitan. We appreciate Blessy, who is also a Guinness World Records winner.

Some dear persons who contributed their valuable services to the Church and society were called to eternity recently. Most Rev. Dr. D. K. Mohanty, Moderator of CNI and the Diocesan Bishop of Cuttack of Odisha State in India, passed away. He was a friend of the Mar Thoma Church. His leadership in ecumenical forums was truly relevant. Rt. Rev. Dr. P. G. Kuruvilla, who was the Bishop of CSI, North Kerala, also passed away. Let us praise God for the life of these fathers of the Church. We express our heartfelt condolences in their demise. Prof. Dr. George K. Zachariah, one of founding members of The Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington, and

one of the founding lay leaders of the North America-Europe Diocese, was called to the eternal abode. His contributions to the Church and the Diaspora community were valuable. His leadership in the ecumenical areas was unique. Let us glorify God for the life and legacy of Dr. George Zachariah. We are thankful for his services and express our heartfelt condolences at his death.

I congratulate Rt. Rev. Dr. Sabu K. Cherian, the newly consecrated 13<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Central Kerala Diocese of the CSI. It was a matter of joy for me to be a celebrant along with the CSI Moderator in the consecration ceremony held at Kottayam Holy Trinity Cathedral on January 18, 2021.

The Mar Thoma Church, along with other Churches and Ecumenical Organizations, observed the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Octave of Christian Unity) from January 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>. Christian witnessing is relevant only with unity, not division.

Women's empowerment is one of the goals of the Mar Thoma Church also. We, from early days, have included women in our Sabha Mandalam, Sabha Council, and other Church Bodies. Pope Francis has officially given permission to women to administer the Holy Eucharist and to assist in the Altar. All these must make us think, too.

In these days, 49 persons of our Church, who completed theology and practical training, will become deacons and priests. Some of them are from other states and speak other languages. These developments are indicative of the new sense of purpose that our Church has in the areas of mission activities. Let us all pray for the blessings of the Holy Spirit on them so that their future ministry may be pleasing to God and fruitful to the Church.

The Maramon Convention is fast approaching. We are making all preparations for the effective proclamation of the gospel on the sandy bed of the Pampa river. We are committed to observing all the rules and regulations stipulated by the authorities in these days of COVID-19. Everyone must pray for God's abundant mercy so that the convention will turn out to be a blessing for all.

New Year's Day (January 1) is the feast of the circumcision of Jesus Christ. Circumcision is the symbol of the covenant God made with Abraham and Israel. The continuation of the covenant happens in the New Testament through baptism. The first Sunday of the New Year is observed as the Outside Kerala Mission Sunday. The most critical and primary responsibility of the Church is to proclaim the gospel throughout the

world. On January 6th, we observe Epiphany, and on 8<sup>th</sup>, we remember the life, witnessing, and death of St. Stephen, the first martyr of the Church. Temperance Sunday happens to be January 10<sup>th</sup>. We meditate on the topic, "Worthy Life." On the third Sunday of the month, we spend our time prayerfully on the subject, "The Body of Christ." We should have the courage and conviction of Peter, who, without hesitation, declared Christ as the son of the living God. And the Church is built on the Rock that is Peter. Ultimately, we realize that the Church happens every day. We meditate on the topic of "the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" on 24<sup>th</sup> January. It is Ecumenical Sunday, too. Then we have the three-day lent from January 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>. This is an occasion to understand the relevance of repentance and God's kindness to the repenting sinner. On the last Sunday of the month, we meditate on the theme of "Christian Participation in Nation Building."

The first Sunday of February we observe as Medical Mission Sunday. The topic we pursue is "The Holistic Healing that Christ gives." Jesus heals a person who had been sick for 38 years, waiting to be healed at a lakeside in Bethesda. He was helpless. He represents the helpless and disregarded individual of modern times. Jesus challenges the past and the future and acts on the necessities of the present. The Great Lent begins on the second Sunday of February. "Lent: Transformation of Creation" is the subject of our meditation. Lenten season is creation's journey to the fullness of glory. The Church

that moves with Jesus in the construction of the kingdom of God becomes partakers of transformation. This is the message that we get from the event of Cana in Galilee. On the third Sunday, we meditate, "Christian approach to the untouchables." We realize that the Church that is the body of Christ, has the moral responsibility to accept the marginalized and the discarded in society, relinquishing all the subhuman tendencies that the evil world professes. On the third Sunday of Lent, the Church meditates on the theme, "Faith that leads to Healing." The great faith exhibited by some persons leads to the healing of a person with paralysis. Jesus is extremely impressed by their faith. Their love for the paralyzed person is inimitable. The Church also has this responsibility. The Church should stand for justice and fight against evil. For the attainment of this great aim, let us submit ourselves in the hands of God.

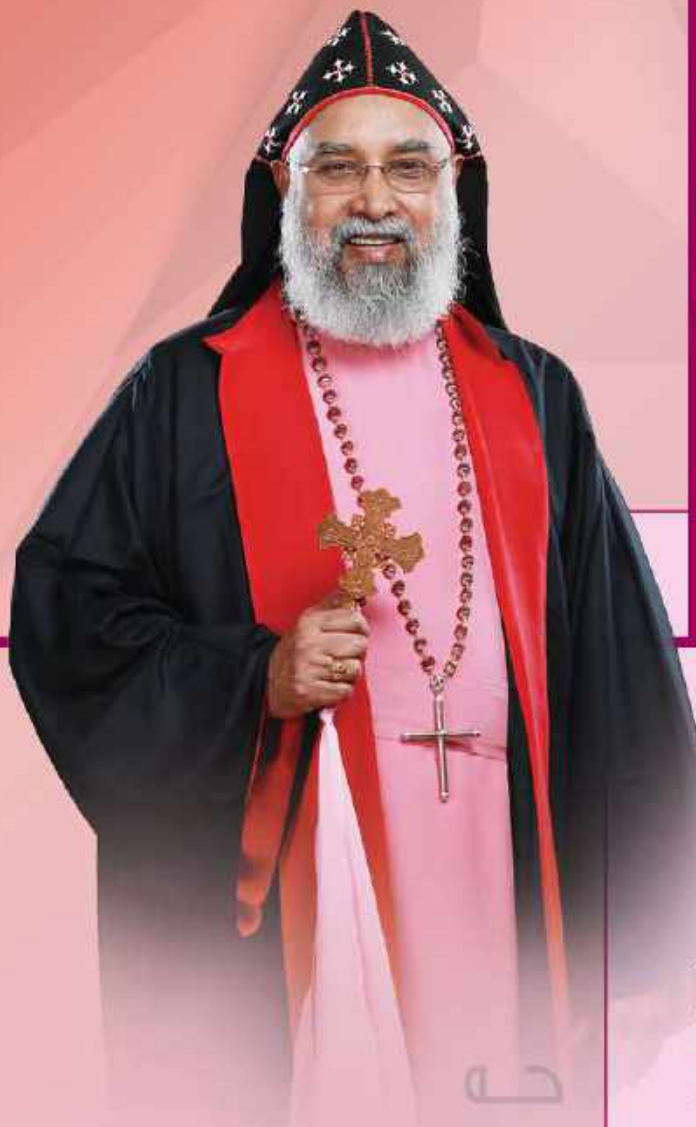
The grace of our Lord and Savior be with you all.



**Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma  
Metropolitan**

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





## Message from The Diocesan Episcopa

*D*eary beloved in Christ,

Greetings to you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We are continuing the journey with confidence in the midst of uncertainty due to the pandemic that struck the foundation of social life. The church is called to witness Jesus Christ, who is always present at times of need to share the joy and pain. We thank God; in many places we can have normal worship services, while in some places we carry on with online worship. It is the hope in the Lord that gives courage to the faithful to face the odds in the faith journey. As we are in the Great Lent season the prayers and meditations will help in facing the crisis situations in life and change our mindset to adhere to the faith and share the agony of Christ on the cross. The church reflects the universality of the redemption that was made available through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that brings new hope to humanity.

Often we ask what will be our ultimate commitment to Jesus Christ as the revelation of God. The Christ event becomes more relevant in today's context. In the recent encyclical of Pope Francis, he offers a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ is an expression of God revealing His divine nature and sharing closeness through love and friendship.

The mission of the church is in the world. Of course, it is not a perfect place to share the richness that one

MESSAGE

experiences, rather a distorted world with many evils. Our Yaliya Metropolitan Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom speaks about the sacramental life and the need of mission outside the four walls of the church. He says in the book *Mission in the Market place*, "the sacraments are celebrated not in the church alone. The original cross was not between the two candles but between two thieves; not on the high altar, but where people were gambling. What we see on the cross is evil at its worst, but that is where God is at his best. Christ was crucified outside the city, in the midst of murderers and thieves; that is where the reality of the cross is experienced. Sacrament is where you experience the reality of the cross." The realization of Jesus Christ, the one broken for the world in the sacrament, helps us to see the Christ in the marketplace. Yes, the real mission is not inside the walls of the church; rather it is outside.

How to do mission in the present context? It is a question that worries many. It is essential to live Christ in the life situation and present Christ through the witness of a Christian. Jesus Christ, the hope of the world should become real through the life and witness of the Christian community. If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation. One can experience the newness in life through the "in Christ" relationship that is being kept through devotion and commitment to the divine.

The spiritual gathering at Maramon and the listening of the devotional messages by the faithful through the live media was an expression of learning the Word of God, and the longing for spiritual renewal. We thank God for the favorable conditions provided, though there were challenges and limitations for the conduct of the convention. God's intervention in the church and among the people in all walks of life is to be seen as new hope for a better world. Therefore it is necessary to realize the wider perspective of the mission of the church in a secular society. The decision of the Diocesan Assembly

to start an "Institute on Mission and Culture" aims at providing avenues to have in-depth knowledge of the cultural context and the right approach to mission. We pray that God may guide the Diocese of North America and Europe to take up the challenge in bringing the mission imperative as the core of its being in this land.

About half of the clergy in the Diocese will be on transfer and will leave their present workplace. I appreciate all for their commitment and their earnest efforts in guiding the members of the parishes, especially at a time of greater need. Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese, who served as the program manager in the Diocesan office had moved to Kerala. We appreciate his quiet yet profound service to the Diocese. The commendable services of Rev. Manoj Idiculla as the Diocesan Secretary and Mr. Philip Thomas as the Diocesan Treasurer also need to be appreciated. A word of welcome to Rev. Aju Abraham, the new Diocesan Secretary and Mr. George Babu, the Diocesan Treasurer. The new Diocesan Council will meet this quarter and plan for the future initiatives of the Diocese. All organizations in the Diocese rose to the occasion for facilitating all members to get engaged in various activities and provided necessary fellowship during the pandemic. I thank God for the support of all parish members for the smooth functioning of the Diocese and look forward to their continued commitment and dedication for the glory of God.

Let God be our strength and hope in the days to come.

With prayerful regards,



Mar Philoxenos



# Editorial



Dr. T. (Dr. Mathew T. Thomas)

*A* New Year brings new and renewed hope; hope for a better year for us as individuals and for everyone around us; hope for the end of the pandemic; and hope that God will remain with us and will continue to lead us in accordance with His will. We gratefully remember the contributions and services of many church members and pioneers who passed away in 2020. After everything that the world witnessed in 2020, we all aspire and hope for a better year in 2021. With the advent of vaccines for containing the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic), and the drive to vaccinate the entire world population, there is tremendous hope that this deadly disease may soon be behind us. There are also many other political, environmental, scientific, and social changes that offer hope for a relatively stable present and a promising future. However, life is always full of surprises. Only God knows what is in store for us. It is important to remember that God is the Master of the universe, and that we are called to align our hopes with His will.

The Christian church is in transition. Many significant changes are taking place even within the once rigid, conservative and traditional churches. One such change appears to be that the church is more than ever before open to investigating reported incidents and seeking

justice for the vulnerable “sheep” that were exploited by “shepherds.” Women are gaining greater roles in leading and managing church matters. Electronic, computer-related, and science-based, technological advances and their utilization necessitated by the COVID pandemic and governmental restrictions have led to wider acceptance of modifications to age-old sacraments and religious traditions. Owing to the COVID-related travel concerns and governmental restrictions, the Diocese of North America and Europe (DNA&E) held its Diocesan Assembly meeting on December 12, 2020, through online attendance and some in-person attendance. It is noteworthy that DNA&E was the first to do so. The Diocesan Council elections were also conducted through mail-in and in-person ballots. In February 2021, the Mar Thoma Church hosted the 126th Maramon Convention, with adherence to the local government’s COVID protocols. The once largest gathering of the Christian community for a convention in South Asia dwindled to a smaller physical gathering. However, thanks to technology, this year’s convention had the potential to become a widely attended online virtual gathering accessible to people all over the world. Where do we as individuals stand on such changes? Our individual stances and ability to foster forward-thinking mindsets will collectively impact where the church positions itself on such matters.

The Mar Thoma Church entered 2021 under the leadership of His Grace The Most Reverend Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan. We gratefully remember the faithful and wise leadership of all our past church leaders. We trust that God puts people in places of authority, at specific moments in history, to fulfil His purpose. As a result, changes are happening as one would expect under any new administration. The church continues to face challenges both internally and externally. It is imperative for every church member, including our clergy, to continually reassess our faith in God, our rich traditions, our carefully thought-out conservative and progressive agendas to serve Christ, and our commitment to abide by our allegiances to our elected church leaders and duly constituted church assembly and councils. It would be apt to recall the words of Joshua, "And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

How do we intend to serve the Lord? What is the church's mission? The Mar Thoma Church has many mission fields and mission projects that offer services to those in need. The DNA&E has a Mission Board that is responsible for running the mission operations. The most notable projects are: the Mexico Mission, the Native American Mission, the Neighborhood Mission, and the India Mission which includes the Light to Life project. The Mexico Mission strives to enhance the lives and livelihoods of native Mexican fishermen communities living in the region of Matamoros. The Native American mission strives to offer Vacation Bible School training for Native American communities living in Alabama, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. The Neighborhood Mission includes community service projects taken up by the various parishes and congregations within DNA&E. The India Mission continues to support the activities of mission fields in India, but has expanded its role to

support the Light to Life Project which provides for the education of nearly 3,400 middle-school children in India. The success of our mission activities depends on our commitment to assist the needy. The COVID environment presents greater challenges that may impact our ability to serve those who are hurting. Rather than fold inwards during such challenging times, the church should find ways to reach out and adapt, ensuring that we continue our commitment to serve others. It is important to remember that Jesus points out, "...the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'." (Matthew 25:40). May God enable us to serve Him in honesty and truth.

This issue of the Messenger is based on the theme, "Church, Hope, and Mission." It includes thought provoking articles from many individuals. The Messenger Editorial Board welcomes the newly elected Diocesan Assembly Members and Diocesan Council Members for the period 2020-2023. We offer our best wishes and extend a warm welcome to our new Diocesan and Bishop's Secretary, Rev. Aju Abraham, who also takes charge as the Manager of the Mar Thoma Messenger. We are grateful to Rev. Manoj Idiculla for his tremendous service as the Diocesan Secretary and Manager of the Messenger and for his immense efforts for the publication of the Messenger. We wish him well as he returns to India later this year. We also express our grateful thanks to Rev. Philip Varghese, who recently returned to India, for his incredible assistance and editorial guidance for the Messenger. As we journey on, let us remain hopeful and stay focused on serving our church with purpose.

With prayerful regards,

**Dr. T. (Dr. Mathew T. Thomas)**

Chief Editor, Messenger.

DIocese OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE  
WISHES OUR BELOVED BISHOPS  
A HAPPY & BLESSED BIRTHDAY

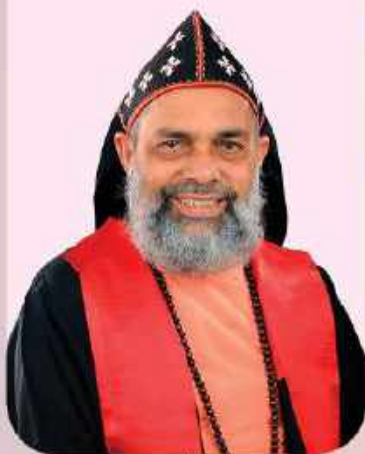


**His Grace, The Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius  
Mar Thoma Metropolitan**

S/o. Dr. K J Chacko & Simoni (Mariamma) Chacko  
Ashtamudi Kizhakkechakkalayi

Date of Birth	-	1949, February 19
Deacon	-	1972, June 24
Kassissa	-	1973, February 24
Ramban	-	1989, November 04
Episcopa	-	1989, December 9
Suffragan Metropolitan	-	2020, July 12
Metropolitan	-	2020, November 14

*Happy  
Birthday*



**Rt. Rev. Dr. Mathews Mar Makarios Episcopa**

S/o. Late. Mr. K.E. Mathew & Late. Mrs. Kunjamma Mathai  
Thumpamon North, Kalayil Kannam Poikayil

Date of Birth	-	1953, February 25
Deacon	-	1978, April 22
Kassissa	-	1978, May 22
Ramban	-	2011, May 07
Episcopa	-	2011, August 13



**Rt. Rev. Gregorios Mar Stephanos Episcopa**

S/o. Mr. K.P. Varkey and Late. Kunjamma  
Kochi Panayapally Parayil

Date of Birth	-	1959, March 03
Deacon	-	1986, June 27
Kassissa	-	1986, July 30
Ramban	-	2011, May 07
Episcopa	-	2011, August 13

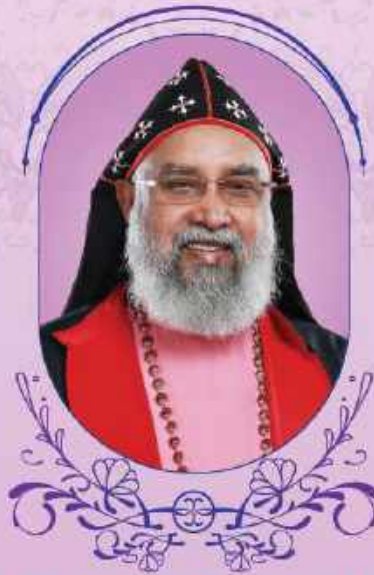


*W*e thank our outgoing Diocesan Secretary Rev. Manoj Idiculla, Manju Kochamma, Ruben, and Rebecca for all their services to the Diocese of North America and Europe. We wish you the very best and pray that God's grace be with you all as you journey on in His Ministry.



*H*earty welcome to Rev. Aju Abraham, Nini Kochamma, Diya and Ameya to the ministry of the Diocese. May God strengthen you to carry out the new responsibilities.

# DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEMBERS 2020-2023



**Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa**  
Diocesan Bishop



**Rev. Aju Abraham**  
Diocesan Secretary



**Mr. George P. Babu**  
Diocesan Treasurer



**Rev. Jacob P Thomas**



**Rev. Siby Palliechira**



**Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel**



**Dr. Aleyamma Mathew**



**Dr. Varghese Manalloor**



**Mr. Oommachen Mathew**



**Mr. Shan Mathew**



**Mrs. Jolly Babu**



**Mr. Jason Thomas George**



**Ms. Sincie Chacko**



**Mr. Aju Daniel**



**Mr. Rinu Varughese**



**Mr. George Samuel**



**Mr. Shawn Varghese**



**Ms. Lexine Varughis**



DENTAL  
SURGERY  
&  
ESTHETICS, PC

MODERN  
NEW FACILITY  
OPENING  
SEPTEMBER, 2020

**Dr. Mathew George, DDS**

Clinical Director

Tel: 516-595-7120

Fax: 516-595-7121

400 South Oyster Bay Road, Suite 204

Hicksville, NY 11801

[Info@dsedentalny.com](mailto:Info@dsedentalny.com)

[www.dsedentalny.com](http://www.dsedentalny.com)

Follow us:

***JOURNEY***  
**OF DENTISTRY**  
**& BEYOND...**



# To Love Thy Neighbor

The Mission Ministry of the  
Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco

Dr. Shweta Sujit  
MTC San Francisco



A few years ago, the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco created the Mission Board to meet the needs in the local neighborhood, the national community and in India. To emulate the verses in Matthew 25, the parish wanted to make a concerted effort to help the “least of these brothers and sisters.” The Mar Thoma Mission Board of the Diocese of North America and Europe have set the precedent by placing emphasis on neighborhood, India, and indigenous community mission. In following those footsteps, the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco “respond[ed] to the divine calling to bring light to the lives of people” (as stated on the Diocesan Mission Board website) through its mission work. As we see in the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), Jesus asks us to love our neighbor as ourselves and to embody God’s love by showing it and sharing it with others.

## “Do you have eyes but fail to see?”

A few years ago, I went on a mission trip to South Travancore and Pollachi with other youth in the diocese. We spent the day with the youth in Trivandrum and the discussion at hand was about the social, civic and economic injustices we see in our communities. While the youth of the hosting parish said they saw poverty on a daily basis and felt a duty and calling to ease the struggles of their neighbors, I could not respond with similar experiences.

I grew up in an upper-middle class community, where it was safe to walk to school without supervision. I did not

see people struggling to make ends meet; either they did not live in my neighborhood or they concealed their challenges. In many ways, I was in awe of these youth members who were moved by the afflictions of others in their neighborhood and I felt a sense of failure because I could not even identify the people and communities in my life who needed a helping hand. Who was my neighbor?

In the story of the Good Samaritan, he saw his neighbor, the dying traveler as he made his trek from Jerusalem to Jericho. The Samaritan did not pay attention to the man’s caste nor his creed; he did not know his name. But he saw the man in his wounded state and crossed the road to approach him. One can only wonder what went on in his mind, but we do know the first thing the Good Samaritan did – he saw his neighbor (v.33). An initial glance led to the next series of events.

The Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco saw the need in its community. A decision was made by the collective to place a central importance on mission work by creating a Mission Board to act on behalf of the parish. The idea was simple; to have a dedicated group that found, researched and presented organizations that require aid of some sort on a local, national and international basis with interests given to Mar Thoma projects and natural disasters. Representatives were elected from each organization including the Yuvajana Sakhyam, Youth Fellowship, Sunday School, Sevika Sanghom, Edavaka Mission, and Choir. Because this was a new venture for the church, guidelines were created that outlined the responsibilities of the Board with oversight

from the Executive Committee. This decision made by the general body was also supported financially for a few years with Harvest Festival funds. It was quite fitting that the church, in its "harvest", shared the bounty with those who were not as fortunate.

### **"Come, and Let Us Draw Near"**

It is interesting that Jesus presents two other characters in his parable of loving one's neighbor. The story of the Good Samaritan would have still been an effective one if He spoke only of the main character and the wounded traveler. But the actions of the priest and the Levite are introduced first to contrast with those of the Samaritan (v.31-32). The priest and the Levite saw the recently robbed man in his state of near death, but they continued on their journeys. But the Samaritan did not fear the possibility of being attacked in the rocky desert that was riddled with robbers; he went close to the injured man. Jesus is clear in his parable; 'seeing' is not enough. It is not sufficient to only be aware of the injustices faced in our country, our homeland, among our brothers and sisters of other races and among people who are different from us; it is only the first step.

One of the Mission Board's first events was a toiletry packaging event. Travel sized toothbrushes, toothpastes, soap and mouthwash were packed on tables usually used for after service refreshments in the social hall in the church. During our half-day event, we also learned about the increasing homelessness crisis in the Bay Area and that in certain cities ten people per every thousand were experiencing homelessness. The event was intentionally made kid-friendly so people of all ages would learn more about the community beyond their school and workplaces.

Our church takes a special interest in supporting the needs of women and children who are facing trials. The Mission Board partnered with a local center in the collection of feminine hygiene products and diapers. For low-income communities, the purchase of these one-time use products was expensive and often times a luxury. Through this drive the church was able to donate hundreds of diapers to families in need. The church also partnered with a local non-profit that focused on the needs of women and children who were trying to escape from abuse and homelessness. As a Christmas endeavor, toiletries, baby wipes, cereals and snack foods were donated during the season. Again, to involve people of all age groups, another volunteer event was held to package dried foods to be sent to malnourished children in rural Vietnam. It was one of



# Christ, Hope, and Mission in a Pandemic World



**Timothy Varghese,**  
Horeb Mar Thoma Church, Los Angeles.

**C**hrist. This word is known by many due to its connection with Christianity and Jesus. What does this word really mean, though? According to the Bible (John 20:31 NIV), Christ means Messiah. The Messiah, the Hebrew Moshiah, functions as a savior and liberator in Jewish eschatology. Moreover, in Judaism, the Messiah is a ruler who will rule the Jewish people in both the Messianic age and in the future world (Blidstein, "Messiah in Rabbinic Thought." *MESSIAH*. Encyclopedia Judaica 2008.) The term messiah is filled with connotations of hope.

## Christ and Hope

If Jesus is the Messiah, then what specific hope does He offer? There is much hope that Christ provides for individuals who believe in Him. First, Christ provides the light of life (John 8:12). Jesus promises that those who follow Him will not walk in darkness but will instead have the light of life. Second, Jesus provides the hope of forgiveness of sins through belief in Him (Acts 16:31). Third, Jesus promises a unique peace to his own. Jesus says that his people may have peace in Him (John 16:33) despite the troubles of a world, which they have overcome (1 John 5:4). Fourth, Jesus provides believers hope in conquering their problems. Believers are more than conquerors through Jesus (Rom 8:37). Fifth, Jesus provides hope of life after death in claiming that He is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). Now let us examine each of these points in depth.

**Light.** What is light? Light, physically, is defined as something that makes things visible or affords illumination. Light is essential for individuals who are, for example, taking a journey in the darkness. If individuals traveling in darkness had no light, they would not be able to take a journey successfully. All humans live in a world dark with sin. Yet, for believers, though they live in a dark world, they can walk in the light because they know and have The Light, Jesus.

What must I do to be forgiven of my sins? This question and its answer are important to many. Many people believe that they will be forgiven of their sins and enter heaven by doing many good works. Jesus provides a different hope for salvation. According to Scripture, those who believe in Jesus (those who repent of their sins, believe in Christ, his death and resurrection, and commit their lives to Him) will be saved from their sins (Acts 16:31).

Next, peace is an aspiration of most human beings. A state of peace is often sought but far more often found to be elusive. Peace is defined as freedom from disturbance, tranquility (Online dictionary). Jesus promises a different peace than the peace defined above for his followers (John 14:27). This peace is different because Jesus's followers will experience problems on earth and can't experience the tranquility spoken of above. However, Jesus states that his followers can have peace in Him (John 16:33). The peace that Jesus offers, the peace of God, surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7). Christians can have peace which enables them to say even in the darkest times, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

Trouble is one of the most poignant reminders that the world we live in is fallen due to sin. Trouble is a universal experience shared by people of all races, religions, educational backgrounds, etc. The commonality of trouble is spoken of in the Bible, which says that man is born to trouble as sparks fly upward (Job 5:7). Jesus tells his disciples specifically that in this world, they will have trouble (John 16:33). However, Jesus also tells his disciples to take heart because He has overcome the world (John 16:33). Romans 8:37 says that believers are more than conquerors through Him who loved them. With Jesus, believers can overcome the problems they face.

Finally, what happens after we die? This is one of the biggest questions in life that arouses everyone's curiosity - from philosophers and scientists to those who live in



# CLAIM SATISFACTION GUARANTEE

SM



## Only Allstate has the Claim Satisfaction Guarantee.

I hope you never have a car accident. But if you do, it's good to know you'll be happy with your claim experience. In fact, Allstate guarantees your claim will be fast, fair and hassle-free. Or your money back. No questions asked. It's another way Allstate is changing car insurance for good.

## **AUTO, HOME, LIFE, ANNUITY**

**JOSEPH MATHEW, LUTCF, CMFC, CLTC, CLF**

**215-708-9444**

8001 Roosevelt Blvd Suite 210  
6449 Market St, PHONE 610 713 0111  
PHILADELPHIA, UPPER DARBY PA

Chartered Leadership Fellow (American College)

Call or stop by to see how much you can save.



**Allstate**®

You're in good hands.

Auto Home Life Retirement

Subject to terms, conditions and availability. Premium credit based on vehicle involved. Allstate Fire and Casualty Insurance Co., Allstate Indemnity Co. © 2013 Allstate Insurance Co.

138317

slums. This question has no answer scientifically as one can't experiment to determine individuals' location after they are declared biologically dead. Neither can this question be answered through mathematics or logic, as the axioms of mathematics and logic can't allow an individual to form a conclusion to this question.

By contrast, Jesus provides an answer to this question. Jesus makes the striking claim that He is the Resurrection and The Life (John 11:25). Through belief in Jesus, one will never die. That is to say, the one who dies biologically will be resurrected one day when there will be no trouble, pain, etc. After death, the reality of life is monumental as, without it, nothing good in the world (whether friendship and various other non-sinful pleasures) will endure past an individual's death. Likewise, there may never be an alleviation of suffering for many, even after their death.

We have seen the hope of Jesus in terms of light, forgiveness, peace, the ability to be conquerors in the face of trouble, and the promise of life after death. This hope is not just for our benefit but to lead us to our mission.

## Christ, Hope and Mission

What is mission? In a general sense, the mission can be defined as an important assignment for political, religious, or commercial purposes, typically involving travel. In a Christian context, the assignment is that of spreading the Gospel of Christ and being carried out to build God's kingdom on earth. The task of mission is given to all believers as per The Great Commission.

The mission is not limited in scope to the proclamation of the Gospel. God's people's mission is also comprised of activities such as practicing hospitality, blessing those who persecute them, rejoicing with those who rejoice, mourning with those who mourn, being able to associate with people of low position, etc. (Rom 12:13-16). In fact, by performing actions such as those described above, people can see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

People worldwide are sick and tired of people who talk the religious talk but fail to walk the spiritual walk. If we walk the good walk of our faith, then it is more likely that people will grant credibility to the words of our testimony when we have the opportunity to share it. Thus, we must be careful never to divorce the mission of proclaiming the Gospel from the ministry of love. This is a mistake because the same love of Jesus that leads us to share the Good News should be the same love that leads us to love not with our words and speech, but with our actions, and in the truth (1 John 3:18).

The mission is closely related to the hope we spoke about earlier. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter writes that Christians are always to be prepared to give a reason for their hope. In fact, the mission can be defined as Christians giving the hope that they have to others who don't have that hope. This hope consists mainly of the hope of forgiveness of sins but can also include hope for facing life troubles and the hope of the resurrection.

## Practical Application

So just what exactly does Christian hope that results in mission look like in this present situation? We are all currently living in truly tumultuous and unprecedented times globally, primarily due to the pandemic and other factors, including political unrest, in the United States and even in India with the farmer's strike.

I believe that Christians alive today in this Pandemic world are placed by God specially for "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). The world is feeling more hopeless than it has in some time due to the pandemic and other challenges. Many are without hope as they see these various challenges upend their lives and disrupt their rhythms. Christians, amidst this backdrop, can have and be full of hope.

This hope can and should be seen by others. It is well possible that others will ask them why and how they can have hope amidst the present situations upon seeing Christians with hope. This can lead Christ-followers to tell those around them about the reason for their hope, Jesus. Thus, the Christian can account for their hope to introduce those around them to Jesus, the Savior. This is the definition of mission.

The mission encompasses more than evangelistic efforts. Mission, in a more general sense, can be activities that individuals engage in to serve others. While most "normal" forms of service are not possible in this time of the pandemic, there are still many ways individuals can serve others. Some examples include tutoring struggling students for those in school, sending money virtually to those in need, and feeding the homeless.

It is also possible to engage in creative means to proclaim the name of Jesus in the middle of the Pandemic. Consider posting videos related to the Bible or church doctrine. While the Mar Thoma Church already has a substantial presence on YouTube, creating short, lively videos for TikTok may engage the younger generation in new ways. Perhaps we could create a virtual game night in which our church community members can be invited as a platform to share about Jesus. We can stir one another towards love and good deeds (Heb 10:24).

the more successful projects of the Mission Board because kids and adults were equally engaged, learned about a community in need, and under the roof of our church, came together to share in the venture of a giving 10,000 children a meal. As a child rang the gong for every 1,000 meals packaged, the seventy volunteers knew they were closer to the goal.

The parish also has a special interest in the development and success of children in the Mar Thoma mission fields. Over the course of several years, members of the parish, in conjunction with the Mission Board, have been able to support children through the Diocese led Light to Life. The Mission Board also has an affiliation with the Narasapuram Mission in Andhra Pradesh and has been able to support over 150 children. Last year, the parish was given the opportunity to support teachers at the Tibetan Border who are educating the children of the mission field.

Through these efforts, directed by the Mission Board but undertaken by all members, the parish saw the challenges faced by local and international neighborhoods and drew closer to each cause through volunteer work and financial aid and prayer.

### **“Moved by Compassion”**

Last December, Rev. Jacob P. Thomas of the Houston Trinity Mar Thoma Church shared his experiences as a missionary Achen in India. He spoke about how the Orissa mission field was in need of financial assistance and in an attempt to garner support, the team decided to take pictures of each child. But they immediately faced an issue when they realized these children did not own even one piece of clothing. After much scrummaging, they found a single shirt, and each child took a turn wearing it for the picture. The congregation was moved by his story as Achen described the lowest level of poverty imaginable. It was impossible not to be compassionate for these children and their families.

The Good Samaritan felt pity (v.33) for the man on the side of the road. Jesus makes it a point to describe the Samaritan's emotion. The Samaritan bandaged him carefully and poured oil and wine (v.34); he bloodied and dirtied his own clothes in his efforts. In doing so, the Samaritan showed his compassion for the traveler.

In 2020, the Youth Fellowship of the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco faced a challenging situation. Although they initially planned to host the Diocesan Youth Fellowship Conference in the summer - with the new rules of social distancing, masking, and travel

restrictions in place, the youth decided to pivot their efforts. The youth saw people lose their lives due to the virus and the California fires, lose their jobs which lead to economic hardship, children who did not have access to daily meals, and saw the injustices towards the African American community; they felt a duty to their society. They donated the money that was fundraised for the conference to multiple charities that addressed these issues and brought awareness to them on social media. The parish is so proud of this generation for their research and thoughtfulness during a time that might otherwise seem hopeless.

### **“Act Justly”**

The Samaritan did not leave the dying man on the side of the road after showing compassion by tending to his wounds. He brought him to safety and cared for his needs and expenses (v.34-35). Through his actions, one can see how the Samaritan loved his neighbor.

Mission is the external expression of love, mercy, and compassion. During the pandemic, the Mission Board of the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco felt a strong calling to help its community. Though previously, aid was provided through volunteer efforts, the Mission Board was at its busiest this past year, corresponding with various food banks, organizing virtual food drives and creating opportunities for the parish to share in giving, while maintaining everyone's safety. The parish recognized Giving Tuesday in May; the Mission Board provided a list of food and supply banks to the parish for personal donations, and the Board prayerfully donated funds to a local non-profit for the purchase of a walk-in freezer, which stored thousands of meals for hungry families. The parish also had the opportunity to participate in a virtual food drive and raise funds to feed 3,000 people over the Christmas season.

The need for mission work is always around us. And God uses those who are willing to see and acknowledge their neighbor. He asks us to draw near, to be moved by compassion and to act justly. It is a privilege to serve on the Mission Board of the Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco. It is the great responsibility of the Board to work collectively and deliberate on behalf on the parish, especially during this relevant time. The church is a beacon of God's love and it has been a blessing to be a part of a parish that places an importance on its ministry. There are many other Mar Thoma churches in this diocese that also have flourishing mission ministries and it is encouraging to see that the Diocese of North America and Europe is making a positive impact among its neighbors.

# Christ, Hope and Mission



**Rev. Jess M. George**  
Youth Chaplain, North East Region

*I*t is with great joy that I learn that this edition of the Messenger is titled Christ, Hope and Mission. It is a theme in which we are called as individuals as well as the community of faithful to imbibe and apply to our daily lives to be the agents of mission and hope. Everything Christ is to us should be shared as our mission and it should bring hope to those who feel hopeless. Let us meditate on what we are called for by instilling hope through our mission in this world.

## **Mission:**

This world is driven through mission. The definition of mission is significantly broad. Looking up the word 'mission' in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, we see definitions such as (1) a specific task with which a person or a group is charged, (2) a pre-established and often self-imposed objective or purpose, (3) a body of persons sent to perform a service or carry on an activity. In the secular world, especially looking at grand corporations such as McDonalds, Amazon, Google, and the like, we find mission statements that broadcast the specific purpose of their company and defines their business and corporate practices. It is their focal point indicating how the company functions and where it should be headed.

Likewise, Christians are also defined not just by words, but also by our understanding of who we are and where

we are headed. When Adam and Eve sinned and heard God's voice, they hid themselves because of their shame. In Genesis 3:9, God asked "Where are you?" This is also a question we should meditate on daily. We should understand where we are and where we should be. It guides us to understand the reality in which we are living and guides us towards a God-given purpose to move forward.

Mission focusing on a Christian perspective helps us understand that it belongs to God and not to us. Therefore, it is important to realize that our existence here in this world also belongs to God, that is *Missio Dei* (Mission of God); our life is not our own and we should never treat it as such. We are timed in this world for a purpose: to use our unique talents to be agents of building Kingdom of God values. Christian mission therefore is a calling for each of us to love, build up communities and peoples especially the poor and the vulnerable, develop relationships, and share the Gospel. In the Bible, we can see there are four well known Gospels that we read. However, many people who do not read the Bible or have access to the scriptures would see those who live by it. We are the fifth Gospel; we are a text that others read, the ways we communicate through words, body language and love show others who Christ is to us. Being a Christian is an experience where we need to continue to sharpen ourselves. Fr. Henry J. M.



PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOUNTING & TAX CONSULTING, INC.

NAEA  ENROLLED NATP  
AGENT

## Professional, Personal, Full-service Accounting & Tax Consulting

If you are looking for a firm that will focus on your individual needs, and always treat you like a client who matters, look no further. Our firm is large enough to offer a full range of professional services, but small enough to give you the individual attention that you deserve.



Tax Preparation Services



Sales Tax & Payroll Tax Services



Formation of Business Entities



FBAR & FATCA Compliance Reporting  
and Filings



IRS & State Audit Representation



We serve

- Individuals
- Corporations
- Partnerships
- Limited Liability Companies
- Non-profit Organizations

**SHELVIN SAM**, EA, MS (Taxation)  
Federally Licensed Tax Practitioner  
☎ 516 424 5161  
✉ shelvinsam.ea@gmail.com



**SHAJU SAM**, EA, MS (Taxation)  
Federally Licensed Tax Practitioner  
☎ 718 347 0607  
✉ shajusam.ea@gmail.com

PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOUNTING & TAX CONSULTING, INC.

📍 247-05 Union Turnpike, Bellerose, NY 11426  
☎ 718 347 0608 / 815 301 2757 🌐 profaccountingandtax.com



Nouwen once said "We are the living reminders of Christ in this world."

## Hope

Just like mission, hope also is seen in different perspectives from the secular point of view and a Christian perspective. There is a great difference between worldly hope and Godly hope. In the world, we hold on to the hope on tangible things and it is more of a desire. For instance, we would hope for a good grade on an exam, hope for a raise, hope for a promotion, hope it would not rain. Of all these things that are mentioned, hope is seen as a desire that we want to see come true and happen. Godly hope does have the attribute to desire, but it is to desire for God's will and at the same time it is not just a desire by itself, but it is an expected trust that we have with God. It is not just wishful thinking, but a relationship-guiding indwelling fact in our lives. To grow in godly hope, we must grow in our relationship with God. God is personal and relational, and He can instill in us the hope from above that is not blinded by the worldly hope. The well-defined Christian hope is that God promises and will deliver.

Our existence should also through mission be the agents of hope for those who lost hope overall in life. Life situations takes a huge toll on our spiritual, mental, and physical well-being; especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us lost our jobs, our financial security, or were already sick or diagnosed with various illnesses such as cancers, muscular sclerosis, ALS, etc., not related COVID-19. Some even face life struggles and are going through brokenness whether personal or in the family. Questions will arise such as "where is God in my situation?"

Our life's journey involves suffering and suffering is part of life; we cannot avoid it, nor should we aim to run from it. Our mindset should welcome it with joy because although the reason for suffering may be unknown to us, God can enable it to be a useful testimony that focuses not on this world but more on the things above. Our reception of the suffering and focusing on eternal things remind us and enable others to know that God has something better in store for us and our suffering sharpens us to be more useful to God in things we cannot even comprehend. God is working in us; we must grow in relationship with Him to understand it more. James 1:2-4 reminds us that we should thank God for promising that He is with us through the rough times. God promises that He will never let us go through our suffering alone. He is with us every step of the way. God is full of compassion. When we look at the term compassion, it is Latin based, and it means "to suffer with." Psalm 46:1 says: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble".

## Christ

Christ through His earthly ministry was and is the perfect example of mission and hope. Christ's journey to the cross was a journey not focused on what was to come, but rather to humanize and love the people He encountered daily. Christ was not focusing on comfort but on giving His whole self for humanity. He was willing to be uncomfortable and suffer for all of humanity and gave much care to the marginalized. We now live in a world in which we would love to associate ourselves with the popular, the elite, and the respected people so that we can prove to others "who we are." Christ on the other hand spent more time instilling love, forgiveness and hope for the hated and the forgotten of the community.

St. John 5:1-9 speaks of Jesus healing a lame man by the pool. The man was lame for 38 years and was ignored. He felt hopeless. Christ asked him in verse 6 "Do you want to get well?" He expressed what he sees as a hopeless situation. Christ gave instant healing instilling newfound hope that only Christ can give. Here, Christ showed that no matter how trapped we may feel God will give deliverance in His time and in His way. In Matthew 8:1-4, we see the healing of a leper. The leper asked Christ if He was willing to make him clean. Christ answered that He was willing and immediately stretched out His hand and touched the leper. Not only was there physical healing, but the sense of love through the touch brought forth emotional and spiritual healing as well. Christ's willing mindset crossed social and political boundaries focusing on humanization and caring for what we consider "the other" but what Christ considers as His own child.

## Conclusion

There is significant brokenness in this world, and it is blinded from the goodness of God because as humans, we only comprehend from human perspectives that would at times focus on the pain. As Christians we are called to be a little different. We are children of God which means we are children of hope and we have a mission to instill the hope of God in those who feel hopeless. God incarnate in Christ modelled mission by giving His whole life for others. The journey to the cross was a journey spent living not for Himself, but for all humans. We should be challenged by this and have the mindset of Christ Jesus. The Holy Bible has four Gospels, but those who do not read the Bible or have access to it see us – we are the fifth Gospel that produces peace, unity, love, and hope. The famous words of late Most Rev. Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan that all Marthomites have heard of frequently should remind us that "every Marthomite is a missionary." We should challenge ourselves with this question: can others see God through the way we live?

# A prayer in times of struggle



**Suresh Mathews,**  
Mar Thoma Church, Atlanta

*This is a prayer for difficult times, when we feel our faith is being tested. The first part is a 3-verse prayer of praise (II Cor. 1:3, Eph 1:3, and I Peter 1:3), followed by a conversational prayer with God, based on I Peter 1:5-9. Through this prayer, let us tell God, that our faith is genuine; that we love Him, and believe in Him. Let us open our arms and pray to God, that we may find joy, even in the midst of our struggles. I have found comfort praying this repeatedly.*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and comfort

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by His abundant mercy, has given us a new birth and a living hope through the risen Christ

O Lord, I know that I am kept by the power of God through faith for salvation

O Lord, I will greatly rejoice, though for a little while now, I am grieved by various trials

O Lord, though my faith is being tested, You know that it is genuine and more precious than gold

Lord, I praise You  
Lord, I honor You  
Lord, I give You all glory

Lord, I love You even though I do not see You  
Lord, I believe in You even though I do not see You  
Lord, I rejoice in You with unspeakable joy, that I may receive the end of my faith, the salvation of my soul

Thank You, Jesus

Amen



# Church and God's Mission

The concept of Mission has been defined, debated, discussed, and researched from the teachings of Jesus although the beginning of the idea has been ever present in the Old Testament. The green light of the "mission" concept was ingrained in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. There are several mission concepts, stories, and events mainly revealed through the Jewish migrants from the time of Abraham through the Babylonian captivity, the redemption messages through the prophets, the intertestamental literature, and finally through Jesus Christ and subsequently through his disciples and the missionary work of Apostle Paul in the New-Testament.

## I. God's mission exemplified through Jesus Christ.

Over two thousand years, the message of hope and redemption has been conveyed through the life and services of thousands of God's servants in many nations and continents. The most frequently quoted and underlined scriptures in this regard are found in Mathew 28: 19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age", Acts 1:8 "But You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth", and Acts 2:47 "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." The pioneer mission travels and tasks have been accomplished by the disciples. St. Paul, the greatest missionary fulfilled missionary tasks in Judaea, Samaria, nearby Mediterranean countries, Asia Minor, and Europe while the disciple St. Thomas fulfilled his mission in India. Later, the Church emphasized the "go mission" during the early centuries to the middle-ages. During the Reformation, and Colonial periods, various missionaries and missionary movements spread the "gospel mission" so that today we have the Universal Church consisting of one third of the world population.

## II. Mission Models in the 21st Century

The latter part of the 20th century has been identified as the beginning and growth of the high-tech society. Twenty-first century has been ushered in by the high-tech explosion in all geographical areas and cultures of the world.



**Dr. V. T. Samuel**  
Sehion MTC, Plano, Texas



**www.ShijuFinancial.com**  
**Off : 972-455-4371**  
**sabraham@financialguide.com**

## **Achieve Your Goals**

**Saving & Investment  
Strategies**

**College Saving  
Strategies**

**Tax Reduction  
Strategies**

**Retirement Plans  
& Mutual Funds**

**Life Insurance  
& Annuities**

**Disability & Long Term  
Care Insurance**

**IRA, Roth IRA  
& SEP IRA**

**401(k) Set Up  
& Rollovers**

**13455 Noel Rd, 20th Floor, Dallas, TX 75240**

Securities offered through qualified registered representatives of MML Investors Services, LLC. Member [www.sipc.org](http://www.sipc.org).  
Shiju Abraham Financial Services is not a subsidiary or affiliate of MML Investors Services, LLC, or its affiliated companies.  
CRN202110-255789

This “explosion” has affected several areas of human life, particularly in the communication areas through television, iPhones, air travels and the “social media.” Thus, we have already seen and experienced the changes in several aspects of life including the way we worship, preach, and continue the mission activities.

The latter part of the twentieth century, churches, and nonprofit and for-profit organizations and educational institutions began to display the “Vision and Mission” statements to define the purpose, objectives and activities and time related outcomes in the American Society. Long before this, the Mar Thoma Church had already begun to display “Lighted to Lighten” mission logo in the Church’s official publications literature. Now that we are in the first quarter of this 21st century of fast-changing communication technology and resultant cultural changes, we could access a flurry of information materials, whether good or not so good by the touch of the fingertip or through the voicemails. The Bible has been available in almost every language through print media, iPhones and Tablets. The younger generations have access to all type of materials day and night through “social media.” They also have access to the materials that are interesting and entertaining to their age groups. Access to worship and prayer meeting via the Zoom platform and “YouTube” technology has become easily accessible during this Covid19 Pandemic period. Thus “visual and sound technology” has become a blessing to millions of people to pray, worship, and even to listen to the Maramon-type Convention messages in our own residences during this Pandemic period. Church attendance in the sanctuaries has been declining over the last several decades (Pew Research Studies), while Inter-denominational, non-denominational and “Store Front” churches have been attracting large number of worshippers. Immigrant churches of various cultures and languages including the Mar Thoma Church and other transplanted Kerala Churches in North America and Europe have been maintaining their worship patterns mostly in ethnic languages. Many of these churches have been continuing the traditional patterns of ministering to the members already in the fold and through the pattern of preaching and making disciples based on the last commandment of Jesus Christ before His ascension (Matthew 28:20).

## **II (a) The concept of the “Comity” modal mission.**

Beginning with the middle ages, Catholic missionaries began their mission efforts in South America, Mexico, India, and several other countries. In the Protestant Era, following the reformation of Martin Luther, the enthusiasm of engaging in the global mission in the same local area created tensions among the missionaries. World Council of Churches (WCC) have,

in the latter part of the 20th century, encouraged the concept of “Comity,” meaning, instead of competition in mission work in the same locality, different emphasis should be practiced to reduce competition in the same mission field. This will reduce the “competition mentality” and confusion among prospective believers. As a member of the World Council of Church, the Mar Thoma Church has cooperated “Comity concept” along with cooperating denominations in India. In this context, missionary evangelists and priests are engaged in educational, medical, and other means to uplift the people in the selected mission fields.

## **II (b) Mission and Inter-religious Dialogue.**

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) or the ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church has initiated dialogue with other religious groups as a new way to understand the faith and practice of other religious groups at the higher levels of meeting scholars of different religious groups. The World Council of Churches has also encouraged this dialogue initiative as a new approach to contact with people of other “Faiths.” Eventually, this new approach has found a place in the study of other religions in the curriculum of the theological schools or seminaries in India. While this new interest was alive among scholars and leaders of several religious groups, it became rather difficult to have interreligious conversation with the average lay persons with firm foots in their religious roots. Still, this approach has become another style of communicating the gospel mission since the second Vatican Council. However, the late Mother Theresa’s approach to people of other “faiths” tell us that the loving service to people of all faiths who are in different need, the language of “love and care” is an appropriate way for God’s Mission in the world.

## **II (c). “Glocal” Mission.**

This mission refers to another 21st century new mission effort with the label “Glocal” mission, a fusion of two words “global” and “local”. It suggests that “Glocal” mission can be done together or simultaneously in every part of the world. It is not a farfetched definition of God’s Mission. In this “Social media” age, we may still think that mission work could be done outside of our own residential geographical areas or countries, whether it be in Kerala, outside of Kerala or outside of the boundaries of USA. “Glocal” mission also means that one’s faith in God and His mission can be shared with the local church members and distant community members. Thus, sharing our faith in God and Jesus Christ compels us to share with others in our communities as part of the “Glocal Mission”.

Most of us who had spent our early years in Kerala or any other part of India or abroad have a good idea of



the local culture, our Church, and some aspects of faith in other religions. By God's grace, we are fortunate to have a family and children who are raised here and have access to the Mar Thoma Church parish with access to all the different organizations such as Parish Mission, Sevika Sangham, Sunday School, Youth league, Youth fellowship and annual conventions or meetings of each organization. Besides these, our Diocese also has domestic mission fields (Alabama and Oklahoma), Urban Mission, and international Mission in Mexico. We give contribution to the mission work, some of us visit the above field(s) and get engaged in few mission activities. We could be proud of the mission activities undergirded by our Church Logo of "Lighted to Lighten."

### III. Mission Possible.

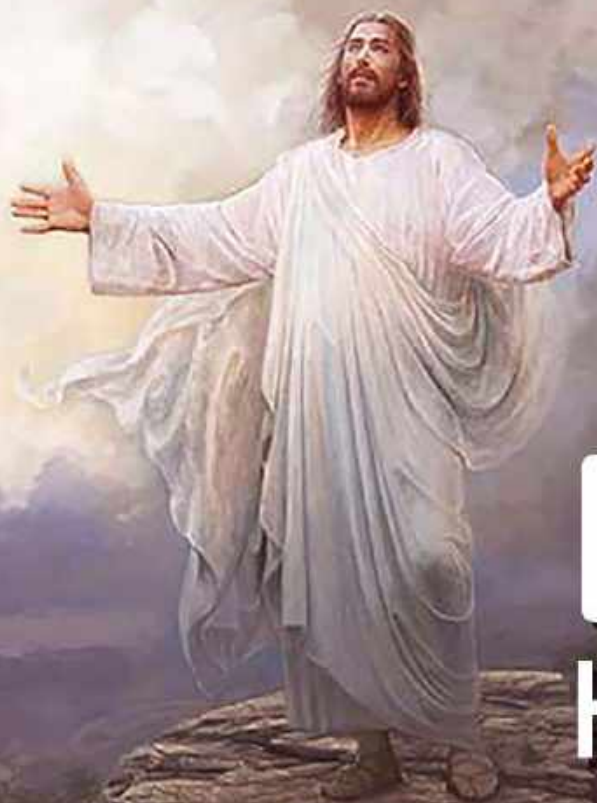
During the latter quarter of the 20th century, there was a TV Serial namely "Mission Impossible." After a few years, this serial ended due to decrease in viewers. Our mission is the mission of God exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the global missionary, and He works through millions of his followers today. The late Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan emphasized the imperative of mission by saying: "Every Mar Thomite" is a missionary. It is our task today to continue God's mission. As Christians, each one of us must be accountable for the life-long mission God has entrusted with us. In spite of the current Indian Government's opposition to Christian Mission activities for conversion purposes in India, there are several Christian missionary fields run by native Christian Churches and various mission educational and

medical services. Mission activities are not allowed in Islamic and certain communist countries.

### Conclusion.

Most of us are familiar with the mission activities of the late Mother Theresa. She had her own style of communicating the gospel to the down-trodden in India. She loved whole heartedly everyone in her care and she provided loving care in the name of Jesus. Her life-long service has become a "model" for 21st century mission work. The number of people of other faiths who attended her funeral service had only respect and "praise for her" missionary work in India. Sometimes communicating our faith to others through casual conversation would turn out to be part of our mission task and thus witnessing for Christ. As Christians, each one of us have the faith, time, talent, resources, and skills to fulfil the mission of God. The "will" to do is all what we need to make the mission possible. We are part of the Church Universal while keeping the membership in our denominational Church. The Lord will never ask us the amount we paid for mission work or other monetary contribution to the Church, but He would ask us to read the questions listed in Mathew 25:35-40. Verse 40 reads: Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of these least of these my brethren, you did to me (RSV). Fulfilling God's mission in our lifetime may not be that difficult, if we would take the initiative in sharing the Gospel Message through our lives, words, and actions.

Dr. V. T. Samuel has served as a visiting Professor at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Faith Theological Seminary, and Vice Principal and visiting Professor at Serampore College, India.



# Christ, Hope and Mission



Tom Lathara

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Chicago

*T*he book of Isaiah, also known as a Bible within the Bible is loved for its elegance, soaring eloquence and most of all, its prescient narration of Christ, the redeemer and hope of the world. Hope is the indispensable nourishment for the soul just as oxygen is for the body. Human life will be well-nigh impossible without hope. The author of the book of Isaiah strengthens the idea that Christ and hope are inherently inseparable. In the New Testament, St. Paul marvelously reinforces and elaborates on this theme in his various missives to the churches. A Christian does not have hope apart from Christ and vice versa.

Taking a deeper dive into the etymology of words, we notice that they often tend to lose their original meaning

and even spelling, sometimes drastically so, with the passage of time. The classical word for hope in Greek, *elpis*, not only alluded to the expectation of a good, favorable outcome in the future but also to a trepidation of the unknown. St. Paul's letter to the Romans (8:24) makes it clear: "For we are saved by hope: but **hope** that is seen is not **hope**: for what a man sees, why does he yet **hope** for?" He further clarifies what hope he was referring to when he writes to Timothy: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, who is our **hope**" (1 Timothy 1:1).

In a similar vein, the word for hope in Hebrew, *tikvah*, is a topic for rewarding meditation. The rather mundane



To Buy, Sell, or Rent  
**RELOCATING TO HOUSTON**

For all your Real Estate needs

# Thomas Mathew Properties



**Thomas Mathew, GRI**  
Broker/Owner

Office: 281.261.5589

Cell: 832.439.6002

✉ [thomasvmathew@yahoo.com](mailto:thomasvmathew@yahoo.com)

2207 South Main | Stafford, Texas 77477



MULTIPLE LISTING SERVICE  
**MLS**



meaning of the English word “hope” conveyed a conspicuously more intense expression in original Hebrew. Melissa Briggs, a Hebrew scholar with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, recently wrote “Tikvah is an expectant waiting for a desired outcome. It means to gather, wait for, hope for, or bind (by twisting) together.” While the idea of hope in English is abstract, this Hebrew root word offers a more concrete expression of hope as an ever-strengthening rope as its strands are collected and then twisted together. As we hope and wait upon the Lord for his direction, his timing, and his action, our faith and character can be built up: “But those who hope/ wait expectantly [the verb form of Tikvah] in the Lord will renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31).

Ideologies and empires over the centuries had specific reasons for their flourishing and fading away. Empires required wealth and military might for survival and growth. Ideologies required true adherents. As for Christianity, mission is the secret of its survival and even the reason for its very existence. Every Christian is inherently responsible to proclaim the creed in every way possible. The mission to proclaim the good news, bear witness to His love, redemption from sin, has never been more urgently or acutely felt the world over.

There are questions in the Bible that each believer in every generation needs to respond. The Lord’s intense question “Whom shall I send?” still reverberates across the ages in every believer’s ear. The only appropriate response nevertheless remains the same as that of the prophet, “Here am I, send me.” Christ’s mission to bear witness to God’s everlasting love and salvation is unrestrained by time and place, but its fulfillment may take different forms and formats based on the seasons, societies, and location of its proclamation.

We cannot read the story of Fr. Damien with dry eyes – a man of privilege, who voluntarily devoted his life in the service of the lepers in Molokai. This college educated, strapping young Dutch man, in the prime of his youth chose a path of unmistakable impending death for the hapless, hopeless, discarded human beings. These folks were brought from Europe by ship and forced to jump overboard and swim to this island since the crew of the ship did not want to touch this accursed island. Fr. Damien served as both pastor and physician to the colony of the unfortunate souls afflicted by leprosy, a debilitating and incurable disease at that time. Fr. Damien’s response to the Lord’s ardent call “Whom shall I send?” was unique in its form.

Literature of past pandemics is littered with people – ordained or laity – answering the call in ways we normally do not associate with the mission. This period in history forces us to reconsider our notions of Mission and proclamation of the good news. History is the

recounting of the events past. But there are times when history unfurls like a mammoth roller of exceptional proportions right before our eyes crushing everything in its path. The year that went by brought calamities of biblical proportion: a pandemic that unleashed unbridled carnage, social unrest, political upheaval, and an abject feeling of helplessness in human hearts across the globe. In addition, this is also the period of prolific social media which is instantly accessible to create and propagate myths or mangled messaging of real events that convince vast swathes of the population to take blood oaths on unhealthy ideologies.

The pandemic has pried open many myths perpetuated by political, social, and religious bodies and exposed the powerlessness of those who boasted total control of people’s destinies. This tiny virus found the Achilles heel of everything mankind boasted of – wealth, political power, military might and even scientific ingenuity. Forced isolation, loss of livelihood, loneliness, illness, poverty, forsaken final moments, solitary death, unceremonial mass burials... the list of unparalleled human conditions the world is encountering in a short span of nine months is far from over. Such unprecedented conditions call for an equally matchless response. The pandemic has shoved aside the old order of human experience in personal relationships, spiritual practices and even the ways we worship. Rituals and practices built up over the ages fell by the wayside. However, in all the gloom and doom, we have also witnessed the exemplary mission of health workers who waded in to battle the virus at the cost of their lives. They are true imitators of Christ who willingly walked to the cross for an anguished death to fulfill His mission. We too must find new ways to support, serve, love, and connect with our fellow beings.

The challenge before us is to find ways to faithfully respond to the call to take up the mission amidst the menacing realities around us and the incessant white noise that surrounds us. Traditionally, the diaspora community tended to be content with extending financial help to charities and evangelical efforts back home in India. The pandemic has opened dire needs all around us, not just financial but for people willing to spend time to comfort and support those undergoing severe loneliness and sickness. Are we willing to personally involve ourselves with others, spend our time and resources? That may be the mission the Lord wants us to take up these days.

Like Prophet Isaiah, if we are wholeheartedly willing to heed the Lord’s call with “Here am I, send me,” each one of us will find a way to bring joy to the broken-hearted, love to the forlorn, peace to the restless, serenity to the shaken, harmony to discord and hope in despair. That is a mission to live by and die for.

# Church's Mission as Interceding in Hope for a New World

Exodus 32:11-14, 31-32;33:12-17; 34:9-10



Rev. Jacob P. Thomas  
Trinity MTC, Houston, TX

Exodus chapter 32 is an important snapshot from the wilderness journey of the liberated slaves from Egypt. They were “no people” as the term “Hebrew” (which derives from the Egyptian root word *hapiu* means no people) literally suggests. But it is the initiative of God to liberate this people from their age-old slavery that leads them to a new identity of God’s own people. Chapters 18 to 23 of Exodus tells us about the blue map God Almighty lays out for this people to become what they were called for. The Ten Commandments that God writes with God’s own hands become the very heart of that covenant formula. The book of Exodus calls it the covenant. Thus, they have become a people of the covenant. Now the future of these liberated slaves depend on a symmetry that they may forge between command and obedience. Chapter 32 paints a picture of their failure even before they receive the commandments in stone tablets.

## The Sin of the People

1. **Violation of the Commandment:** The scripture tells us they had failed in three different dimensions in their relationship with the Lord their God. The first thing is that they had violated the command of their Lord God. We come to know by the reading of first 25 chapters of Exodus that Moses is the sole medium through whom people had any access to God and God’s will in their life. Moses is a representative of a God who is invisible in mystery. Now, Moses is not with the people as he is at the peak of Mount Sinai communing

with God. The biblical narrator of this text tells us that Moses was with God for 40 days and 40 nights. This narrative beautifully and profoundly deals with the perennial problem of the tension between the realities of presence and absence of God. Humanity, as individuals and communities, goes through this crisis of absence and presence throughout history (The Eastern Churches resolve this tension by suggesting the theological notion of mystery of God). The Hebrews too had to deal with this tension throughout their life. It is nothing but the fear of God's absence that makes the people cry out to God for help; when they face the red sea, see the chasing Egyptian army, feel the scarcity of food and water in the wilderness, and many more occasions they had to face and play with this tension. Now the people turn to Aaron the interim leader in the absence of Moses. Spiritual leaders are called by God to help people to have their trust anchored in God even when the people go through crisis in their faith. But Aaron is seen miserably failing in discharging this great responsibility. Aaron yields to the people's pressure and takes the initiative to make a golden calf out of the ornaments available among the people. It is the violation of the first three commandments (You shall have no other God's, you shall not make for yourself an idol, you shall not make wrongful use of my name). These three commandments together secure the invisibility and mystery of God and revering this mystery is crucial for the life in obedience to the commands of God. The people with Aaron not only made a different God but they had a different confession too, where they proclaimed that this new god is the one who brought them out from Egypt. The Command-Obedience symmetry which would be the mark of wellness for these people is lost and their future in the presence of God is in jeopardy.

2. ***They are a stiff-necked people:*** Secondly, the fault that God finds is they are a stiff-necked people. The term stiff-necked means their reluctance to bow down to the presence of God. Bowing is an expression of acceptance of Lordship of the deity in their life. The intention of the liberation is to equip the people to live in the presence of God. In all his exchanges with the pharaoh, their Lord in the past, what Moses demands is to let this people go to worship Yahweh. Pharaoh cannot claim the obedience of these people because they have a different Lord who is the maker and Lord of the entire universe. The feeling of the glory and majesty of this God makes a worshipper to bow in simple awe. When people lose this awe in life in their relationship with God, the act of worship

becomes a stale experience. They will be a treasured possession of Yahweh their God if they obey (Ex. 19:5). By creating the image of the calf, they have compromised the invisibility, mystery, and awe that defined their relationship with their Lord. God hates a stiff-necked people.

3. ***They are a Loose people:*** Thirdly, the accusation against the people from the vantage point of Yahweh is that they have gone loose (Ex. 32:25). They were expected to be a people who are bound firmly around the covenant. People who are expected to be a covenant people, but now, they are found as a loose people who eat, drink, and rise to frivolity. Aaron is specifically accused as the one who let the people run wild (v.25). In Exodus 24:10 we see a communion of the people with God. The text says that "they saw God" and in v. 11 "they beheld God, and they ate and drank." Initially, the experience of meeting with God and eating and drinking in the presence of God were experiences that bound the people in covenant with God. But here In Ex. 32:6 what we see when the people eat and drink in the golden calf's presence is that they do it for frivolous intentions. The Hebrew term (חֲבֵרָה *ḥabēq*) translated as frivolity may indicate "self-indulgence." A communion where the gaze of the people had been on God has turned to be an experience where self-indulgence is the focus, and the people turn their back to God in sin. They rise from the communion meal to frivolity.

### **Moses' great intercession, a model for the church today**

Now, it is clear to Moses that people sinned against God and enraged God's consuming anger. God speaks for himself in Ex. 32:7-10. God asks Moses not to interfere with His decision to consume the people in God's wrath. One important note here is that Moses is exempted from the consequence of that wrath. "Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation" (Ex. 32:10). Moses finds favor with God as Noah found it in his time amidst the abounding human wickedness. It is important to see how Moses is going to make use of this favor of God. It is not manipulated for self-aggrandizement but to mend the people's relationship with God. His great intercession for the people is a model for the church to emulate. Let us reflect on the character of this great intercession that Moses is attempting for his people's restoration as God's people.

#### **1. Intercession with passion (Ex. 32:11-14)**

Moses' role as the mediator between God and the people is very evidently demanding and he passionately

# TGS TOP

## Granites & Stones Inc.

Contact: George 832-969-0157

topgranite1@yahoo.com , www.tgslaminate.com

610 Murphy Rd. #208, Stafford, TX 77477



Fabrication & installation of Granite Counter Tops  
Tubs around, Tiles, Ceramic, Travertine, Marble & etc.

Laminate Flooring

Starts **\$2<sup>99</sup>** /sqft.

Wood Flooring

Starts **\$5<sup>99</sup>** /sqft.



**Commercial & Residential  
Remodeling and New Construction**

WE SERVED  
THOUSANDS OF  
HAPPY CUSTOMERS  
IN HOUSTON AREA

*Buy Today & Have Installed Tomorrow !!!*

lives up to that. He is seen ascending and descending the Mount Sinai many times to know God's will and then to reveal it to the people. The act of intercession is not only about the verbal prayers that we utter for others in God's presence, but it includes the deep and passionate involvement to build bridges between people and God and to maintain it. He passionately involves in removing things that are blocking true worship in the community. He breaks the tablet in angst of seeing the frivolity of the people, he burned the golden calf with fire, ground it to dust and made the people drink it. All these acts are meant to bring a repentance in the hearts of the people for their sinful estrangement from God. It has some correspondence to Jesus clearing the Jerusalem temple of all activities which were hindrances to true worship of God. But his passionate intercession takes him back again to the top of the mountain (Ex. 32:31). He knows that God can forgive the people; He only can forgive them. As Jesus prays, it is a prayer in which the whole person and all the power and glory of the mediatory role are involved and furthermore sacrificed; "The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one (John 17:22-23).

## **2. Intercession in identification with the people (Ex. 32:31-32)**

Even amid obvious failure and brokenness of the people Moses prefers to stand with the failed people. We need to note the fact that he had the favor of God and God promises to make him a great nation (Ex.32:10). But Moses prefers to represent people before God rather than presenting himself as a justified person. Worship and intercession are community experiences. We stand in the presence of God as a people who share our brokenness, and not as justified individuals. Moses' prayer is so beautiful and heart touching; "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written" (Ex. 32:31-32). This reminds us of the prayer of the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14. Luke begins this story by telling us that there is this category of people who consider themselves as righteous and view others with contempt (Lk. 18:9). An intercession will not become effective when we intercede with a sense of self-righteousness. The church in today's world is not to proclaim itself as community of saints, who stand apart from the rest of the creation, but as a fellowship of repenting sinners who seek the grace of God in intercession to perfect all the brokenness of this world.

## **3. Intercession in Knowledge of God's Compassion (Ex. 32:31-32)**

The consequence of the people's sin is the threat of absence of Yahweh in their life's journey (Ex. 33:3). God tells Moses that "but I will not go up among you."

Moses uses his favor in a way that is going to benefit the whole community of Israelites. Moses talks to God face to face and as one speaks to his friend (33:11). Moses implores to God (Ex. 32:11), argues with God (33:12-16), pacifies God, reminds God of his promises to His people (32:13) and finally makes God repent of God's decision to destroy His own people (32:12). Moses had a deep knowledge of God as God's character was revealed to him through his interactions with this God at the peak of the mountain. The long forgiveness of God is revealed to Moses on many occasions. It is important to note the following speeches by God; "for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:5-6). Moses tells God that it is Yahweh who initiated this liberation and He assured His presence in this journey to the promised land. He prays to not let the Egyptians condemn God's act of liberating the slaves by His annihilation of them in the wilderness. In this part of the Bible intercession is presented as a manipulation of God's forgiveness and goodness for the blessing and redemption of the people. This long and passionate intercession ends with this beautiful prayer; "although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance" (34:9).

Moses' intercession seems to make a great impact on God's relationship with the people and vice versa. God changes His decision to destroy the people. The people are again restored as God's very own. The threat of God's absence is cleared, and God declares his continuing presence in their journey (33:14). The church is called to intercede for God's creation. The responsibility the church has before God and the world is to reconcile all of God's creation. Romans 8:23-24 says, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." Church is a community that has the first fruits of the spirit. The church's intercession mixes with the groaning of the spirit to strengthen the world with the hope of redemption. Where communities discriminate each other based on language, ethnicity, nationality and so on, the church is expected to make the bridges that connect peoples and communities in respect and love for each other. Many around us who go through different crises in life, whether it be sickness, poverty or anxiety needs the assurance of God's presence. The church needs to step into situations to represent God's compassionate presence to the broken and fallen humanity as Moses did in shaping the Hebrew slaves as the people of God.

# The Challenge of the CROSS: rekindling hope in a broken world.



Dr. Anita Joy Thomas  
Immanuel MTC, Houston, TX.

## The Incarnation of Christ

*I*n his book, *Miracles*, C. S. Lewis wrote, “*In the Christian story God descends to reascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb ancient and pre-human phases of life; down to the very roots and seabed of the Nature He has created. But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him*”. Throughout the pages of the Bible, we see again and again, the Creator descending to meet the created. In the garden of Eden, God walked with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3: 8), He came down to save Noah (Genesis 6: 9-14), He chose Abraham and swore a covenant with him (Genesis 12: 1-3), and He came down to meet Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3: 1-2). Throughout the time of the judges and then the kings of Israel, God was present for His people. When they rebelled, He punished, and when they obeyed, He blessed. This cyclical descent of God to commune with His creation reached a pinnacle of divine intervention with the incarnation of Christ, when the Godhead took flesh and became man. The incarnation of Christ was not the beginning of God’s descent to commune with man, nor was it the end. The very reason God became man was to continue to commune with man but at a deeper level than mere communication. God willed His only begotten Son as a sacrifice for mankind’s sin as part of His planned redemption story. God chose to send His only begotten son because He loves us so (John 3:16).

He loves us with a love beyond our comprehension, beyond our measure, and beyond our merit. When John talks about the incarnation of Christ, He describes the Son as the Word indwelling with the Godhead before time (John 1: 1), he describes how the Word descended to dwell with man (John 1: 9), and how the Word was left unrecognized and unacknowledged by the very world He created in union with God the Father (John 1: 10-11). However, for those who believed, they were adopted as God’s own (John 1: 12). The relationship between the Creator and His creation that was broken in the garden of Eden now had a chance to be restored through the incarnation of Christ, by transforming the crown of creation into His children.

In our lives today, the incarnation of Christ serves as a model of sacrificial love. When faced with the routines of daily life it is easy to be distracted by selfish needs, but Christ’s example should remind us to be a source of love, compassion, and kindness to those around us. We are adopted as His children and as heirs of His kingdom, our responsibility lies in trying to “make His kingdom come..... on earth as it is in heaven.” The first step towards this is to acknowledge that just as Christ was sent into this world, we are also sent out into this world. When we acknowledge this truth, it becomes easy to revel in the JOY of the incarnation, namely putting Jesus first, Others next, and Yourself last.

## The Cross of Christ

The Word as flesh, Christ the Son, second person of the trinity is often considered as the fulfillment of God’s redemption plan. However, our adoption through



the incarnation of Christ was just the beginning. The chapter in God's redemption story that begins with the incarnation of Christ picks up its pace as we approach the glory of the resurrection. Human sin not only broke the God-ordained relationship between the Creator and His creation, but it also filled the world with despair and hopelessness. Christ's resurrection is what renewed mankind's hope and restored the broken relationship. In addition to adopting us through the incarnation of Christ, we were also given living hope through the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1: 3)! Peter most likely penned this from his personal experience of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Like Peter, we know that there is no resurrection without the cross. The cross was painful, but the resurrection was glorious; the cross was cloaked in deceit, but the resurrection shines truth; the cross was a symbol of shame, but the resurrection was a symbol of victory. Peter and the other disciples remind us that when they saw the cross, what they saw was only pain, deceit, and shame. The cross left them hopeless, frightened, and completely lost. They fled, hid in fear and shame, and deserted their Master (Matthew 26: 56, Mark 14: 50, John 20: 19). However, the resurrection changed these men. The cross no longer remained a symbol of shame, rather it had transformed into a symbol of victory – no ordinary victory, but a victory over death itself! The resurrection of Christ thus became a lifeline for a world devoid of life. The resurrection of Christ thus became the promise of healing for a world throbbing in pain. The resurrection of Christ thus became the confidence of a world beyond the present. The resurrection of Christ thus became a

clarion call to 'kenosis' (an emptying of self) for a world swaddled in selfishness. The resurrection of Christ thus became the hope for a world devoid of hope.

### The Hope of Christ

This past year, 2020, has made the hopelessness of the world immensely clear to all of us. As during the building of the Tower of Babel, the world was comfortably poised to scale the heights of human achievement even at the cost of eliminating God. However, a submicroscopic particle called the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) taught the world that humanity's prowess is nothing. A world running forward at breakneck speed to make a mark was brought to a screeching halt by a tiny virus. The COVID-19 pandemic shook the world and laid bare the deep rifts in society – economic, social, physical, and ethical. People across the world were affected. It did not matter if you were rich or poor, educated, or illiterate, healthy, or sick, black, or white – the pandemic took its toll on humanity as a whole and continues to do so even today. When faced with the kind of suffering and pain that the pandemic has unleashed on us, either directly or indirectly, what does the cross offer to the believer? When we stay huddled at home fearing exposure, but our loved ones must face the frontlines of the battle against the virus, what does the cross offer to the believer? When faced with loneliness and despair, uncertain if we will have a tomorrow, what does the cross offer to the believer? When faced with mounting bills and dwindling finances, what does the cross offer to the believer? When you see tears on a patient's face that you cannot wipe away,

# Profile

## MassMutual



### Sajimon Antony

**Financial Service Representative  
Registered Representative**

30 Two Bridges Rd, Suite 320

Fairfield, NJ 07004

Office (973)439-6038

Cell: (862)438-2361

Fax: (973)882-7565

E-mail:

[santony@financialguide.com](mailto:santony@financialguide.com)

### **PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

#### **Financial Planning**

- *Fixed and variable Annuities*
- *IRA Consolidation/Rollovers*
- *Charitable Giving Strategies*
- *Disability income insurance*
- *Estate Conservation Strategies*
- *Education Funding Strategies*
- *Long-Term Care Insurance*
- *Mortgage Protection (through life insurance and disability income insurance)*
- *Medicare Supplement Coverage*
- *Pension Payout Alternatives*
- *Pension Transfer/Rollovers*
- *Mutual Funds*
- *Tax Sheltered Annuities. 403(b) Plans*
- *Life insurance*

#### **Business Solutions**

- *Buy/Sell Agreement Funding*
- *Key Person Insurance*
- *Business Continuation Strategy*
- *Pension and Profit Sharing*
- *Qualified Retirement Plans*
- *Group Health and Life Insurance*





what does the cross offer to the believer? When you yearn for a hug, but social distancing and quarantine rules prevent you from receiving the most basic need of human touch, what does the cross offer to the believer?

The answer to all these questions and more, is hope. The cross of Christ because of the resurrection, offers hope! Because Christ chose to suffer death for us sinners, the cross is transformed from an emblem of suffering and shame to a symbol of victory and hope. God's story of redemption recast the sacrificial lamb as the Lion of Judah. Leading up to the cross, we see the fulfillment of prophet Isaiah's words – *"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth"* (Isaiah 53:7). Leading up to the cross, Christ was silent. He truly was led like a silent lamb to the slaughter. However, He broke His silence while hanging on the very cross that mankind had condemned Him to die on. He uttered seven statements from the cross – the light of hope to a world wrapped in the darkness of hopelessness.

1. *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34). Christ offers for us the hope of forgiveness, undeserved forgiveness despite the weight and horror of our sin.
2. *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). Christ offers us the hope of eternal life. He offers us this hope today, not tomorrow or another far off day in the future, but today!
3. *"Woman, here is your Son"* (John 19:26). Christ offers the world the hope of belonging, not just belonging to a fellowship of believers on this earth, bound by a common faith, but also the hope of belonging to Him.
4. *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?"* (Mark 15:34). Christ offers us the hope that even amid suffering, pain, and despair, God the Father is waiting, right where He was when His Son was on the cross, ready to receive us with wide open arms.
5. *"I am thirsty"* (John 19:28). Christ offers us the hope that He partakes in every one of our imaginable earthly anguishes.
6. *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). Christ offers us the hope that it really was just the beginning. The world believed that He was finished, but Christ knew that through the cross, the story of mankind's redemption was finished.
7. *"Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit"* (Luke 23:46). Christ offers us the hope that God the Father wants us as His own.

With Christ on the cross, the long-held symbol of disgrace and hopelessness became a beacon of hope and salvation for a broken world. When faced with all the questions that life throws at us – be it the pandemic, be it an arctic storm or any other natural disaster, be it loneliness, be it shame, be it failure, be it sickness, be it poverty, be it death – the cross of Christ gives us strength. We may be tempted to focus on the silence leading up to the cross and the silence of death that followed, but we cannot forget that the silence of the cross was not the end, nor was it permanent. Jesus rose from the dead, He defeated death itself, and He defeated the very fear of death! *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"* (1 Corinthians 15: 55). The cross of Christ gives us hope because it reminds us that Christ is no longer hanging on that cross. The cross of Christ gives us hope because Jesus' resurrection wiped away fear – the fear of the unknown, the fear of uncertainty, the fear of failure, the fear of loneliness, the fear of death. The reality of the hopelessness that is around us today cannot be ignored but through Christ's victory on the cross, this fear of hopelessness is wiped away. And when we hope in the power of the cross, then fear is no more.

## The Mission of Christ

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, the message of Christ's victory on the cross is salvation to all who believe. However, it is nothing more than mere foolishness to those who do not (1 Corinthians 1: 18). It is therefore no surprise then that the power of Christ's cross becomes real only through the foundation of our faith. The power of the cross of Christ turns the world and its beliefs upside down – what is deemed foolish by the world is established as wise by God; what is deemed low by the world is secured as high by God; what is deemed first by the world is relegated as last by God; what is deemed significant by the world is recognized as insignificant by God. Christ crucified is God's power and wisdom manifested and is the opposite of the world's understanding of knowledge and power. This incredible power and wisdom of the cross should not be restricted to a few, rather God intended that the power of Christ crucified be available for all of humanity. This was the intent behind Christ's great commission – *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28: 19-20). Christ's commission to the apostles was a command but enfolded in this command was also a promise, a promise of empowerment by His presence and power through the Holy Spirit. Through this empowerment, it is God's divine intent that the message of the cross amplifies throughout all nations.

The power of the cross as intended by God does not exist only in a single dimension, namely the restoration of the vertical relationship between God and man. Rather, the cross of Christ also represents the reconciliatory horizontal relationship between all men. When we take on the great commission of preaching Christ crucified, we also share in Christ's co-mission of building, repairing, and maintaining the horizontal relationships in the world, in addition to restoring our own personal relationship with God. To fulfill the great commission, it requires us to fix our own relationship with God. We cannot be partners in God's commission if we are not first reconciled with Him through His will – *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ"* (1 Corinthians 5:17-18a). Once we are reconciled with God, we are then invited to be part of His ministry of reconciliation, the great commission – *"and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us"* (1 Corinthians 5: 18b-20). As members of the ministry of reconciliation, we have a responsibility to make the great commission our personal life mission, which then requires us to (1) give Christ to others and to also (2) give of ourselves to others. Paul describes this beautifully in his letter to the Philippians in which he says, *"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"* (Philippians 2: 5-8). The great commission can become a reality in our own lives, and we can become partners in Christ's commission when we take on the 'same mindset as Christ Jesus'.

Having the same mindset as Christ is not an easy task. It goes beyond preaching Christ crucified or giving Christ to others and extends to living Christ crucified or giving of ourselves to others. It requires that we strive to empty our will of the self and fill it with the will of God (kenosis). It mandates that we put others before our own selves. It directs us to serve as the hands and feet of Christ to those around us. In heeding this call to Christ's mission, we have a responsibility to extend Christ's message of hope through our actions, especially our actions directed towards the least among

us (Matthew 25: 45). Our world favors the strong while oppressing the weak. The cross of Christ should inspire us to stand up for the weak. As Paul encouraged Philemon to welcome Onesimus as a brother and no longer a slave, do we have the courage to welcome the oppressed as a brother (Philemon 1: 15-16)? As Jesus refrained from heaping judgement on the sinful woman, do we have the courage to acknowledge sin while loving the sinner (John 8: 1-11)? As Abraham was shown kindness when he was a sojourner in a foreign land (Genesis 23) and as the Jew was shown kindness by the outcast Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), do we have the courage to be a friend and demonstrate fraternal love to the foreigner? The cross of Christ is the only source of this courage and the cross of Christ is what can help us develop the mindset of Christ. Mission in its truest form is not just what we can "do" for each other, but it is what we can "be" for each other. Jesus' earthly mission saw Him as He walked with His community, broke bread with His community, and was present for His community, and now He asks us to do the same.

We might have all read the story of the Kenyan long-distance runner, Abel Kiprop Mutai, who was running a race in Navarra, Spain. Only a few meters from the finish line, Abel stopped thinking he had finished the race since he could not understand the signs that were written in Spanish. His competitor, a Spaniard named Ivan Fernandez Anaya, was right behind him and realizing what was going on and could have easily sped past the confused Abel to win the race. However, Ivan paused too and pointed Abel towards the finish line. Ivan purposely came in second because he recognized that the race rightfully belonged to Abel. Later, a news reporter asked Ivan, "Why did you do this?" Ivan replied, "My dream is that one day we can have some sort of community life where we push ourselves and also others to win". Do we as the Church have this mentality – of pushing not just ourselves, but also others toward salvation and success? During the COVID-19 crisis, we saw first-hand as hundreds of our own friends and family members put their own lives at risk to save the lives of strangers. When parts of Texas were severely affected by hurricane Harvey, we saw people in our communities open their homes to and share resources with strangers. During the pandemic, people reached out to assist others in unimaginable ways – emotionally, financially, spiritually, and physically. We have people being the hands and feet of Jesus, serving to move forward the great commission as best as they can. Sadly, we have become reliant on a few, depending on others to live out the mission that Christ intended for each of us. Instead of stepping out to serve, we hide behind the safety of our computers, the security of our resources, and the refuge of our homes,



making excuses and pretending to be warriors for God's kingdom. We wait for the church to act to move Christ's mission forward, forgetting that we are the Church.

As a community, we have at our fingertips access to resources that were not available even five years ago. Social media and the power of the internet have shrunk the globe into a village, yet a crisis resulted in our senior citizens forced into lonely living due to social distancing, our children have been reduced to interacting with digital avatars instead of flesh-and-blood friends, and we see the fellowship of the church often reduced to a facade of friendships. We have more financial buying power today than ever before, yet we see need in every part of our communities, we see homelessness on the rise, and we see the rich getting richer. We have had more scientific and technological breakthroughs in the past five years than in an entire century, yet a virus brought humanity to its knees. In today's world that is faced with the immediate concerns of a global pandemic and local unrests, what can the Church "be" for the community and what can we "be" for each other? Can our hope in the cross of Christ empower us to "be" Christ in our own communities? As Christ-followers, the hope of the cross should enable us to channel the power of the cross so the Church can be Christ to our communities. In a practical sense this could include creation of digital and in-person platforms to maintain community connections; creative usages of social media to connect with senior citizens; financial support where it is truly needed; emotional support groups to enrich stressed families/teenagers/young children; career and professional support groups for teenagers and college-age students; women-centered resources for single women, battered women, single parents; volunteer groups to cater to the various needs of our communities; healthcare support teams to aid the sick and ailing in our communities; tutoring support groups for school and college age children; leadership groups to empower and grow community leaders; continued and consistent prayer support for individual needs; and many more avenues through which the church, that is you and I, can be the hands and feet of Christ Himself.

The mission of the Church and a believer's own personal mission are intertwined with the redeeming cross of Christ. They cannot and should not be separated. The crucified Christ leads us to live a hope-filled cruciform life (cross-focused life), that then empowers us with the courage to serve as co-missionaries for the cause of the Cross. Let us take this challenge on – to rekindle hope in our broken world through the power of the cross of Christ.



Julianne Cherian,  
MTC Atlanta



## Native American Mission Amidst the Pandemic

*L*ighted to Lighten. The motto of the Mar Thoma Church is something we all know, but often forget. It is easy to grow too comfortable in our own homes and our own communities, but God has given us all a particularly important task. We are given the Light of the Gospel so that we can also share that Light with those around us. The Gospel is not only something we should come to church to hear; it is something that we should go from church to tell. Christians are called by God to take part in the church's mission in the world. Jesus urges us to make disciples of all nations. So, the question is this: how can we lead our church to take the Gospel to the nations when we can barely leave our homes? Is the Great Commission in quarantine?

People all over the world are severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our very own Native American brothers and sisters, along with many other minority groups and low-income communities, have been disproportionately affected by this virus. According to The Indian Health Service, there have been over 70,000 confirmed coronavirus cases. Many underlying health issues and pre-existing conditions increase the COVID-19 mortality rates in this population. Basic CDC recommendations about social distancing and hand hygiene to help prevent spread of the virus are difficult to achieve in this population. In certain areas, clean water for basic hand hygiene is scarce. Nearly one-third of Navajoland households do not have access to running water. Housing shortages on reservations make social distancing exceedingly difficult. The elders play a key role in Native American societies for preserving culture. Some perform healing practices to help people with COVID-19, which increases their exposure to the virus and puts them at high risk. Many Native Americans that

rely on their small business and tourism are financially suffering greatly. The Native American Missions of our church can be stepped-up to better help those in need.

Despite not being able to travel and have in-person Native American Mission this past year, as a church, we have been able to carry out the mission in small ways. In Alabama, we were able to host a Virtual Zoom Youth Retreat for the first time this October. Alabama youth and Mar Thoma youth from all over the diocese were able to spend time with one another in praise and worship, prayer, group discussion, and meditation on the Word of God. We pray that we can do many more joint virtual meetings in the future so that we can connect with one another and share God's love.

In Navajoland, we were able to provide 100 Siphon Drum Pumps to the area. People were retrieving water from communal water barrels by using shared straws which was very unhygienic, especially in the setting of COVID-19. The pumps can help people retrieve water in a more sanitary and safe way. We also continued our annual Native American Scholarship Program. The scholarship program is in place to provide financial assistance to motivated and eager students, as well as to overall encourage the community to pursue higher education. Youth filled out applications with their qualifications and goals. This year, we awarded Higher Education Scholarships to a total of 13 youth living in Oklahoma, Alabama, or Navajoland.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be challenging; however, the mission of the church must continue despite the pandemic. The Great Commission is NOT in quarantine because Jesus Christ cannot and should not be in quarantine. As a church, it is important that we re-evaluate our role in local and global missions especially during this time of crisis. We must learn to participate in God's mission in new ways and new methods and

continue to prioritize missions. With fast developing technology, we can reach more people than we ever have before. Jesus is everywhere and working in the hearts of people all over the world. He comes to us in ways that defy our expectations.

So, what can we do for the future? Mission starts in our own homes and communities. We do not always need to wait to share Jesus across the ocean when we can share Jesus across the street. Keep missions in prayer. Help local and global missions by getting involved as much as possible. Reach out to mission teams and find out needs of the communities we work with. Offer time, resources, and monetary support. Show people who Jesus is by sharing your faith and demonstrating Christ's love through your actions. Please continue to keep the missions of the church in your prayers.

## Higher Education Scholarship Recipients:

### Alabama

*Cheyenne Byrd*

"My goal is to complete nursing school and get my RN, BSN and then go to work as an ICU nurse. I also want to eventually go back to school to become a CRNA."

*Danielle Lankford*

"My objective is to further my knowledge and skills through this opportunity so that I may become a Dentist. I want to encourage students to be the best for themselves for their communities."

*Jenna Lankford*

"I am currently studying biomedical sciences while also participating in my school's ROTC program. My goal is to become an anesthesiology assistant for the U.S. army. I am hoping that this scholarship will help relieve some of the stress from my parents for paying for the college tuition of my sister and I."

*Isabella Landrum*

"I hope to finish my degree and go back to school for my Doctorate degree. My career goal is to become a Sports Medicine Physician and one day open my own doctor's office to treat athletes."

*Ricky Lofton*

"My main goal in life is to be the best person I can be by being a role model for the younger generation. I want to graduate college and begin my life as an electrical engineer. This scholarship is a blessing to me and my family."

*Sydney Brasier*

"I always admired my late aunt, Roxie Brewer, and her ambitions in life. My goal is to one day own/operate a

successful accounting firm, just like my aunt. I want to keep her legacy going."

*Victoria Grimes*

"I am pursuing my degree in psychology to become a marriage and family psychologist or social worker. I hope to one day work to serve the people of my community and give back to my tribe as well as others. I would counsel with my Christian values."

### Navajoland

*Chaylene Grandson*

My educational goal is to obtain an Associate degree and eventually work on a bachelor's degree. At this point, I am undecided on my future goals, but being in college will help me determine which direction I should go."

*Kiedis Begaye*

"I want to become an actor for the big screen. I want to maybe make a movie about indigenous people. I hope to one day represent my people in a positive way."

*Shenay Atene*

"I am going back to school after taking some time off because I realize how important getting a degree is. I hope to one day get my law degree and specialize in Indian Law so that I can help my people in any way I can. I want to be an example to my community by leading through action and showing them that these dreams that God has given us are not impossible."

### Oklahoma

*Faithlyn Seawright*

"I am pursuing my BFA in Museum Studies at the Institute of American Indian Arts. I hope to one-day work at the Smithsonian American Indian Museum in Washington D.C. I want to eventually come back to Oklahoma and serve the Chickasaw Nation. I want to give back to my tribe and Native American people in general."

*Khayean Byington*

"I want to become a restaurant owner. When I am finished with my culinary classes, I want to go back to school to learn business. I want to introduce other people to my heritage by selling my people's food."

*Shyla Jackson*

"I am working on my Bachelor of Science with emphasis in Health and Human Performance. My dream goal is to become a pediatric physical therapist for my native tribe. I had a lot of physical therapy when I was in high school and I hope to pass my knowledge down to others."

# Book Review

*A*ttorney Lal Varghese, Dallas, *Continuing the Faith Journey* (Published by Diaspora FOCUS, Dallas, Texas 2020), Edited by Dr. Zac Varghese, London

What does it mean to continue the journey of faith? This is the fundamental question that Attorney Lal Varghese, Dallas, unpacks in his book, *Continuing the Faith Journey*. It is an essential contribution to the repertoire of re/sources of Christian life and spirituality. The book addresses a critical vision and version of Christian faith that is at once contemplative and critical – public and foundational. It seeks to answer the pertinent question of the fullness of life. Lal Varghese, Esq., offers a glimpse of ecclesial and prophetic hope amid despair, illusion, and confusion. At the same time, his theological explanations have essential bearings on the Christian faith's current theories and practices, such as the question of intersubjective communion as a human vocation. This is deeply rooted in Lal's church life and faith journey with Christ, which might serve as a model for all who engage in similar work today. Even so, this book's audience is not just a religious one. Still, it is also inclusive of all interested in the role of Christian discipleship in a society increasingly dictated by trendy ideologies and enslaved by religiosity.

*Continuing the Faith Journey* is a compendium of 30 evocative articles, divided into three sections, based on a wide variety of complementary and contradictory themes, and published over more than three decades. The first part of the book locates the historicity of Jesus (pp.31–33) and radical Christianity (p.35) in relation to service, justice, and culture (pp.53–65). Lal is not romanticizing the ruggedness of the cross (pp.46–48); instead, he positions it as a subversive response to the culturalization of Christianity (pp.62–63). In part two, he defines the church's identity as missional (p.81), not cultural (pp.112–13). To be so, the church needs to transcend the confines of cultural homogeneity and ethnicity (p. 99, 104, 107) and thereby become an inclusive community rooted in equality and justice (p.97). For Lal, referring to Prema Kurian's book, *Ethnic Church Meets Mega-Church*, the decoupling of religion and ethnicity is an important trait of early Christianity (p.112–13). The last section deals with pluralism (p.117) and postmodernism (p.129). Lal's elucidations of nonsingularity of Christianity (p.129), the relation between religion and violence (p.135), and "religionless Christianity" (p.137–41) deserve wider discussions. I hope this book will elicit more interventions, interrogations, and intercessions in the coming future in the church's life. This, I envisage, would be our perfect and fitting tribute to Lal's decades of committed service to the Lord.

\*The entire proceeds from the book's sale will be donated to the *Light to Life* project of the Diocese of North America and Europe to help the needy children studying in Grama Jyothi schools in North India.



**Rev. Dr. Mothy Varkey**  
New Testament Lecturer,

Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam &  
Visiting Fellow, Murdoch University, Australia



# XXIV DIOCESAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

## JANUARY 2021

### RESTORED TO RESTORE

The twenty-fourth session of the Diocesan Leadership Conference was hosted by the Diocesan Youth Fellowship (DYF) Council on January 8 and 9, 2021. The conference was held virtually via the Zoom platform and was attended by approximately 85 delegates representing over thirty parishes and congregations across the Diocese. The theme of the conference was "Restored to Restore" based on Jeremiah 15:19a. Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, along with our Youth Chaplains, Clergy, and lay leaders led various sessions throughout the conference.

The conference began on Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup> with worship led by Rev. Aju Abraham (Diocesan Secretary) which was followed by the official inauguration of the conference by our Diocesan Bishop. Rev. Dennis Abraham (Vicar, MTC of San Francisco) led two Bible studies related to the conference theme which were based on the life of the prophet Jonah. The Tracks for the conference included topics such as Christianity and Culture, Neighborhood Missions, Human Sexuality, and Hermeneutics & Homiletics which were respectively led by Rev. Thomas K. Mathew (Philadelphia Youth Chaplain), Rev. Jess M. George (Northeast Youth Chaplain), Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas (New Jersey Youth Chaplain), and Rev. Christopher P. Daniel (Midwest Youth Chaplain). Mr. Tom Philip (Redeemer MTC, New Jersey) led an insightful workshop on Modern Evangelism while Mr. Jeevan Varghese (DYF Secretary) provided great leadership for a workshop on Race and the South Asian Church. Mr. Devin Abraham (DYF Assembly Representative) moderated the Q&A session which was followed by a session titled "Your MTC" which provided the delegates an opportunity to meet in small groups to share their experiences, their initiatives, and their

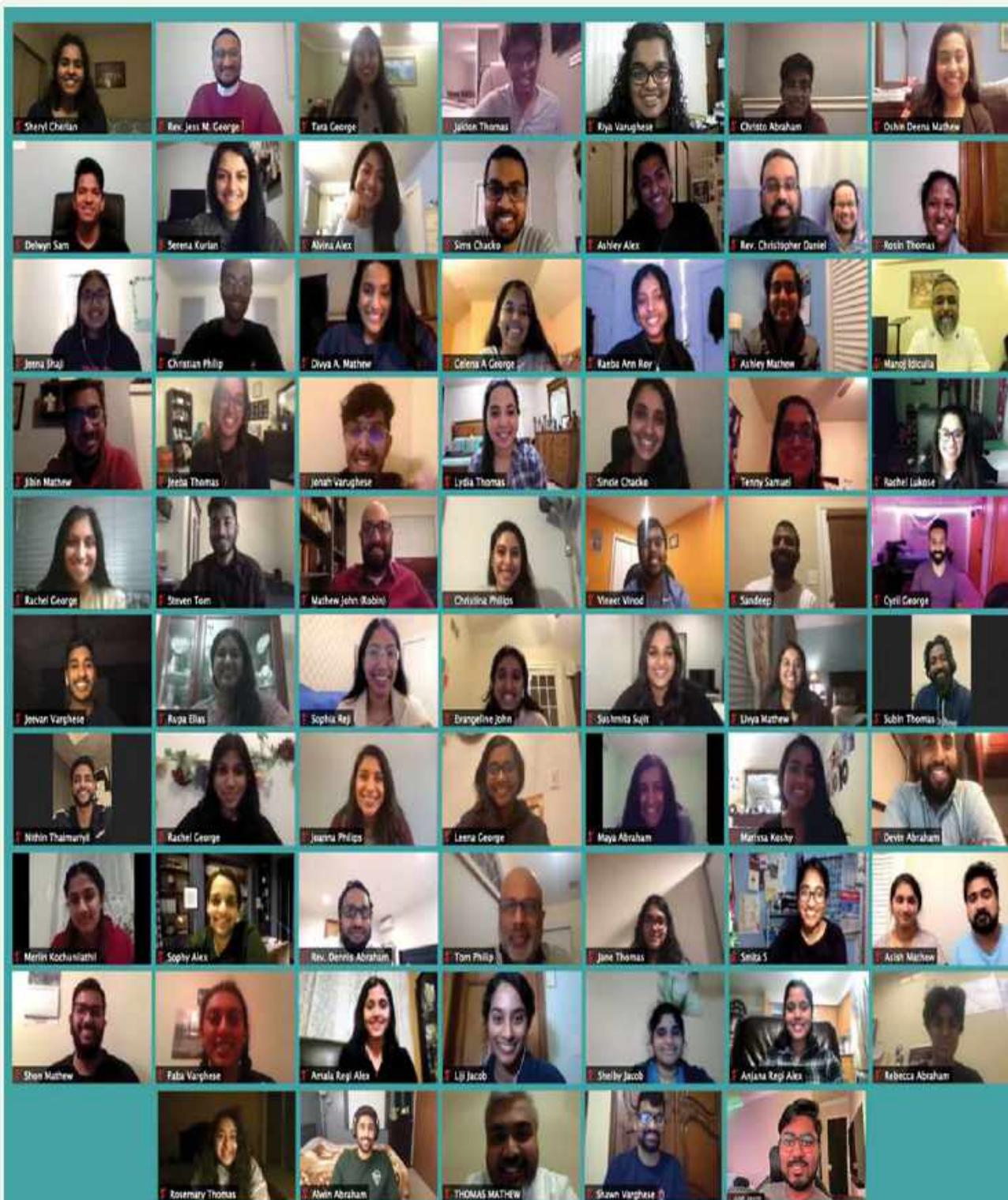
goals for youth ministry in their respective parishes and regions.

On the concluding night of the conference, Rev. Manoj Idiculla (Vicar, MTC Atlanta and former Diocesan Secretary) led the worship service which was followed by a devotional message by Rev. Christopher Daniel. Rev. Jess M. George then led the delegates in a time of dedication and offered prayer. Mr. Jeevan Varghese proposed the Vote of Thanks, and after concluding remarks, Rev. Manoj Idiculla led the closing prayer and benediction.

Although the 2021 Diocesan Leadership Conference was different than past conferences, it was indeed a unique experience and a great blessing for all those who attended. The DYF Council would like to thank all those who provided leadership including our Diocesan Bishop, our Clergy and Youth Chaplains, lay leaders, and youth members from the MTC of Dallas-Farmers Branch and Christos MTC-Philadelphia who helped to lead Praise and Worship. Wholehearted appreciation is expressed to all those who provided technical support and assistance throughout the conference, especially Mr. Josh Jacob (St. Luke's MTC), Ms. Sheryl Cherian (MTC of San Francisco), Ms. Joanna Phillips (Jerusalem MTC, CT), Ms. Sushmita Sujit (MTC of San Francisco), and Mr. Adam Mathew (DYF Treasurer). May the God Almighty continue to edify and equip the youths of the Diocese to be faithful and fruitful leaders for His glory.

**Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel**  
DYF Vice President

**Mr. Jeevan Varghese**  
DYF Secretary



## 2021 Diocesan Leadership Conference January 8 - 9, 2021



## BEST PARISH AWARD- 2019

Epiphany Mar Thoma Church - New York	Sehion Mar Thoma Church - Dallas
Bethany Mar Thoma Church - New York	St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church - Dallas
St. John's Mar Thoma Church - New York	Austin Mar Thoma Church
Staten Island Mar Thoma Church - NY	Emmanuel Mar Thoma Church - Lubbock
Redeemer Mar Thoma Church - NJ	San Antonio Congregation
St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church - NJ	Oklahoma Mar Thoma Church
Christos Mar Thoma Church - Philadelphia	Immanuel Mar Thoma Church - Houston
Mar Thoma Church of Washington	Rio Grande Valley Congregation
North Carolina Mar Thoma Church, NC	Trinity Mar Thoma Church - Houston
Mar Thoma Church of Atlanta	Horeb Mar Thoma Church - Colorado
Orlando Mar Thoma Church - Florida	San Francisco Mar Thoma Church
St. Mark's Mar Thoma Church - Tampa	Horeb Mar Thoma Church - Los Angeles
St. John's Mar Thoma Church - Detroit	Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church
Chicago Mar Thoma Church - Chicago	St. Andrew's Mar Thoma Church - LA
St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church - Indianapolis	Mar Thoma Church Seattle
Crossway Mar Thoma Church - Dallas	Mar Thoma Church Silicon Valley
Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Carrollton	St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church - Toronto
Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, FB	Trinity Mar Thoma Church - Edmonton

## YUVAJANA SAKHYAM AWARDS

The Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam, Diocese of North America and Europe, is proud to announce the best Yuvajana Sakhyam (YS) Sakhas of 2020. The following 7 best Sakhas will be awarded commemorative plaques:

1. **Atlanta MTC YS**
2. **Chicago MTC YS**
3. **Christos MTC YS**
4. **San Francisco MTC YS**
5. **MTC Dallas Farmers Branch YS**
6. **Long Island MTC YS**
7. **St. Matthews MTC YS Toronto Canada**

The Diocesan YS extends its hearty congratulations to all the award winning Sakhas and offers special mention and thanks to all Sakhas that submitted their activity report for 2020! We request all Sakhas for their prayerful support to our Diocesan YS.

**Biji Joby**  
Diocesan Yuvajana Sakhyam Secretary

## CLERGY TRANSFER - 2021

No.	CHURCH	PRESENT CLERGY	PROPOSED CLERGY
1.	Bishop Secretary	Rev. Manoj Idiculla	Rev. Aju Abraham
2.	Program Manager	Rev. Philip Varghese	Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel
3.	Long Island MTC, New York	Rev. Sajith Thomas John	Rev. Shaji K.
4.	Philadelphia Ascension MTC	Rev. Jinson K. Mathew	Rev. Bibi Mathew Chacko
5.	Philadelphia Bethel MTC	Rev. Saju Chacko	Rev. P. S. Jaxon
6.	Philadelphia MTC	Rev. Jinu Abraham	Rev. Biju Simon
7.	Philadelphia Christos MTC	Rev Anish Thomas Thomas	Rev. Reji Yohannan
8.	Delaware Valley St. Thomas, PA	Rev. Abraham Kuruvilla	Rev. George Varghese (Pattamala)
9.	Washington MTC	Rev. Anu Oommen	Rev. Byju Thomas
10.	Orlando & Tampa St. Marks	Rev. Skariah Mathew	Rev. Sam Lukose
11.	Houston Immanuel MTC	Rev. Abraham Varghese	Rev. Eappen Varghese
12.	Chicago MTC Assistant	Rev. George Varghese	Rev. Sherin Varghese Oommen
13.	Lubbock Immanuel & Crossway	Rev. Sonu Varghese	Rev. Abraham Kuruvilla (Mumbai)
14.	Austin & San Antonio	Rev. Biju P. Simon	Rev. George Abraham (Kallopara)
15.	Jerusalem MTC CT	Rev. Biji Mathew	Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel
16.	Ebenezer MTC	Rev. Biji Mathew	Rev. Aju Abraham
17.	Los Angeles & LA St.Andrews MTC	Rev. Liju John	Rev. Bijoy M. John
18.	St. John's Detroit/Minneapolis Congregation	Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel	Rev. Ajith K. Thomas
19.	Immanuel MTC Virginia	Rev. Alex Kolath	Rev. Renny Varghese Philip
20.	Toronto St.Mathews	Rev. Moncy Varghese	Rev. Sunil Chacko
21.	St. Mathews Assistant/Montreal, Ottawa	New Posting	Rev. John T. Thomas
22.	St. Louis & Kansas, Bethel	New Posting	Rev. Thomas Mathew (Kozhcherry)
23.	St. Thomas Houston & Rio Grande Valley	New Posting	Rev. Sonu Varghese
24.	MTC Atlanta	Rev. Aju Abraham	Rev. Saju C. Samuel

25.	Manchester Tabore	Rev.Aji John	Rev. Thomas Baby T.
26.	St. Andrews, New York	Rev. K.A. Varghese	Rev. Jose T.S.
27.	St. James, New York	Rev. Santhosh Joseph	Rev. Ajith Varghese
28.	St. John's, New York	Rev. Mathew Varghese (Chunkathara)	Rev. Johnson Samuel
29.	Eastern Long Island, New York	Rev. K.I. Jose	Rev. Thomas V.T.
30.	New Jersey MTC Randolph	Rev. Simon Kurian	Rev. Mathew Varghese
31.	North Carolina MTC	Rev. Sam Oommen Mathews	Rev. John P. Varghese
32.	Chicago MTC	Rev. Shiby Varghese P.	Rev. Aby Thomas Tharakan
33.	Chicago St. Thomas	Rev. Suneeth Mathew	Rev. Ajith K. Thomas
34.	Dallas Farmers Branch	Rev. Dr. Abraham Mathew	Rev. Alex Y.
35.	Dallas Farmers Branch Asst.	Rev. Blezin K. Mon	No Achen assigned
36.	Dallas St. Paul's MTC	Rev. Mathew Joseph	Rev. Shaiju C. Joy
37.	Dallas Sehion MTC	Rev. Mathew Mathews	Rev. Larry P. Varghese
38.	Oklahoma MTC	Rev. Thomas Joseph (Anakara)	Rev. John K.
39.	Houston Immanuel Asst.	Rev. Saji A.	No Achen assigned
40.	Houston Trinity MTC	Rev. Jacob P. Thomas	Rev. Sam K. Easow
41.	Indianapolis/ Bethel MTC Frankfort	Rev. Saju John	Rev. Joymon S.K.
42.	Seattle MTC	Rev. Sam Philip	Rev. Manu Varghese
43.	Carmel MTC, Boston	Rev. Thomas John	Rev. Sujith Sam Mammen
44.	MTC SV/MT Cong Sacramento	Rev. Larry P. Varghese	Rev. Jinu John
45.	Vancouver, Calgary	Rev. Santhosh Mathew	Rev. Sujith K.M.
46.	Edmonton Trinity	Rev. Thomas Yesudasan	Rev. Robin K. George
47.	Canadian MTC Toronto	Rev. Sunil Mathew	Rev. Roji Mathews Abraham



# MATRIMONIAL

1. Proposals invited for a Christian Mar Thoma girl, 30 years old, 164 centimeters tall, fair, Juris Doctor (Lawyer) working in New York, presently as a Medical Malpractice Lawyer, from God-fearing, good looking Medical Doctors or IT Masters professionals (Age Between 31 - 34) studying or working in the U.S.A. Please contact (845) 400 6340 or (845) 290 1652 (H).

2. Mar Thoma parents are inviting proposals for their daughter (30 years old, 5ft 5in), working as an Immigration Lawyer in Manhattan. She was born and brought up in USA. She is family oriented and has high moral values. She received her bachelor's degree from CUNY Baruch college in Business Law. She received her Juris Doctorate in 2015 from Chicago Kent Law. Inviting proposals from parents of boys (ages 31-36). Please respond with photograph and detailed profile to [gjoseph@jtthvac.com](mailto:gjoseph@jtthvac.com)

# Bible Crossword Puzzle

## Winners List for Oct/Nov/Dec 2020 - Isaiah 31 to 40

1	Manju Mathews	Ascension MTC, PA	40	Mariamamma K. John	Sehion MTC Dallas
2	C. G. George	Ascension MTC, PA	41	Saramma Varkey	Sehion MTC Dallas
3	Dr. Susan Alex	Atlanta MTC, JK-TN	42	Alice Thomas	St James MTC NY
4	Krista George (Gr12)	Austin MTC, Texas	43	Mariamamma Ninan	St James MTC NY
5	Isaac George (Gr10)	Austin MTC, Texas	44	Sheela Thomas	St Luke's MTC FL
6	Laly Elias	Baltimore MTC, MD	45	Dr. Prathik M Philip	St Luke's MTC Florida
7	Paul J. Isaac	Carmel MTC, Boston	46	Liba Thomas Philip	St Luke's MTC Florida
8	Landen Philip Aguiar(Gr5)	Carmel MTC, Boston	47	Philip Mathew	St. Johns MTC, MI
9	Ethan Abraham (Gr1)	Carmel MTC, Boston	48	Philip Mathews	St. Mathews, Canada
10	Mercy Simon	Carmel MTC, Boston	49	Saramma Alexander	St. Mathews, Canada
11	Abraham Varghese	Carmel MTC, Boston	50	Sosamma Varghese	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
12	Nancy Varghese	Detroit MTC, MI	51	Thomas George	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
13	Usha Sara Thomas	Detroit MTC, MI	52	Annamma I Varughese	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
14	Jessy Philip	Detroit MTC, MI	53	Mary Simon	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
15	Saramma Chacko	Epiphany MTC, NY	54	Annamma P. John	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
16	Mathew T. Mathew	Epiphany MTC, NY	55	Sally George	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
17	Annamma John	Immanuel MTC, Houston	56	Jibi P. George	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
18	Sara Philip	Immanuel MTC, Houston	57	Elsie George	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
19	Sosamma Abraham	Long Island MTC, NY	58	Jeena Mary Mathai	St. Thomas Delaware
20	Saramma Mathew	MTC Dallas Farmers Br	59	Omana Rajee	Staten Island MTC
21	T.C. Zachariah	MTC Oklahoma	60	Saramma Rajan	Staten Island MTC
22	Joanna Zachariah	MTC Oklahoma	61	Elsy Philip	Staten Island MTC
23	Sara Mathew	MTC Oklahoma	62	Regi Mathew	Staten Island MTC
24	Mathews George	MTC San Francisco	63	Mary Varghese (555)	Staten Island MTC
25	Mary George	MTC San Francisco	64	Thomas Varghese	Trinity MTC Houston
26	Mini Abraham	MTC Dallas, Carrollton, TX	65	Lilly Varghese	Trinity MTC Houston
27	Tharamel E. Alexander	Philadelphia MTC	66	Luke Mathew (Gr5)	Trinity MTC Houston
28	Prabha Thomas	Philadelphia MTC	67	Kunjamma Thomas	Trinity MTC, Houston
29	K. C. Jacob	Philadelphia MTC	68	Gracy P. Vattakunnel	Trinity MTC, Houston
30	Sangeetha Thomas (Gr5)	Philadelphia MTC	69	Jommin C. George(Gr10)	Trinity MTC, Houston
31	Susan Mathews	Philadelphia MTC	70	Reni George	Trinity MTC, Houston
32	Annamma Abraham	Philadelphia MTC	71	Shawn Varghese	Trinity MTC, Houston
33	Susilamma Joy	Philadelphia MTC	72	Liby Saji Varghese	Trinity MTC, Houston
34	Kunjamma Jacob	Philadelphia MTC	73	Valsa Mathew	Trinity MTC, Houston
35	Reny Mary Joseph	Philadelphia MTC	74	T.A. Mathew	Trinity MTC, Houston
36	Shabu Abraham	Salem MTC, NY	75	Nikhil Mathew (Gr7)	Trinity MTC, Houston
37	Hannah P. Daniel	Salem MTC, NY	76	Vishal Mathew (Gr5)	Trinity MTC, Houston
38	Lissha A. Varghese (Gr7)	Salem MTC, NY	77	Achamma Chacko	Trinity MTC, Houston
39	Sharly Thomas	Salem MTC, NY	78	Jessy Baboo	Trinity MTC, Houston

1.C	O	N	T	E	2.M	P	L	3.A	T	I	N	4.G		5.W
					E			I				R		A
M		6.G	L	D	R	Y		D		7.W	E	A	R	Y
P					R							S		
L			8.V	O	I	C	9.E		10.R	A	I	S	E	11.D
A					M		M							E
12.C	A	13.R	E		E		P		14.S		15.K			L
E		E		16.U	N	S	T	O	P	P	E	D		I
N		N			T		Y		R		Y			V
T		E							E			17.J		E
		18.W	O	E			19.F	E	A	R		U		R
					20.T		A		D			D		
		21.F	A	T	H	E	R	S				G		
		E			A		H		22.D	E	E	23.D		S
		R		24.F	R	U	I	T						E
		T			S		O		25.P			F		
26.W	I	S	E				27.N	O	B	L	E			E
	L						E				E			N
28.R	E	D	E	E	M	E	D		29.A	B	O	D		E

Answers to  
Bible Crossword Puzzle  
December 2020

Issue: Isaiah 31-40

# ERIC Comfort SHOES Since 1942

426 Hillside Ave. Williston Park (Few Blocks west of Willis Ave.) NY 11596 (516) 877-2002

216-11 Jamaica Ave. Queens Village (Few Blocks west of Springfield Blvd.) NY 11428 (718) 465-2860

Thank you for Shopping Locally! (516) 877-2002 | [WWW.ERICSHOES.COM](http://WWW.ERICSHOES.COM)

**Life is a journey, wear comfortable shoes**

**In-Store / Online / Phone Order / Curbside Pickup**

**100's of Styles Just Arrived**

**SAS**



NARROW - MEDIUM - WIDE - EX WIDE - EX EX WIDE 4-16 AVAILABLE



MEN'S

JOURNEY MESH



BOUT TIME



TIME OUT



DECKSIDER



WOMEN'S

SPORTY LUX



TMV



TOUR MESH

Walk With Us™ in the most comfortable sneakers you've ever worn! Our handcrafted sneakers will carry you through your day with ease – whatever life brings your way.

**Mon. to Sat. 9:30 AM - 6:30 PM**

**Closed Sunday**

**We are following strict CDC guidelines & disinfecting surface frequently**

↓ COUPON ↓

**\$40 OFF**

**EACH PAIR BOOTS**  
(\$130 & Over) Promo Code: COUPON40

**\$20 OFF**

**EACH PAIR SHOES OR SNEAKERS**  
(\$125 & Over) Promo Code: COUPON20

Please use promo code for discount coupon when you are ordering shoes from our website. Excludes sale items & certain brands.

[www.ericshoes.com](http://www.ericshoes.com)

ERIC COMFORT SHOES

516-877-2002

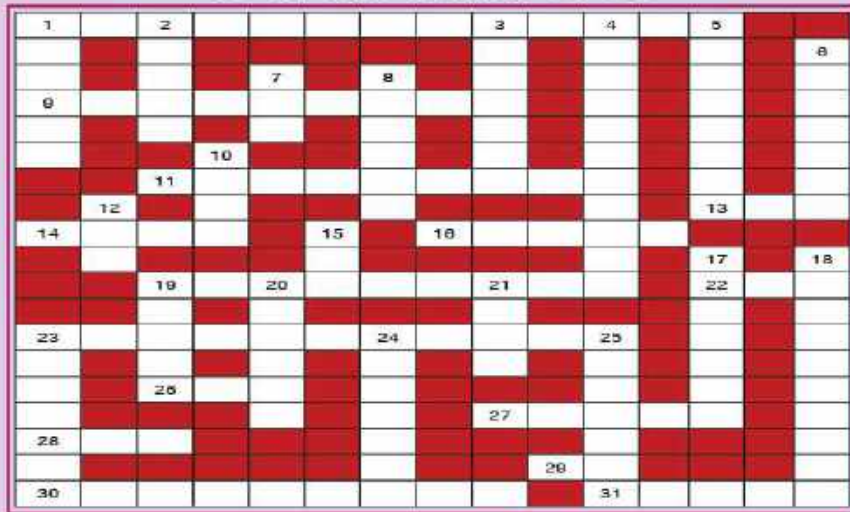
Cannot be combined with any other offer or sale item.  
Excludes Sanibel, Hubbard, Hava One One, Aris, Driftnoteck, Whitehouse, Vionic, SAS & certain other brands.

Offer valid 4/15/21



# Bible Crossword Puzzle

## as in NIV Isaiah 41-50



### ACROSS:

1. In the Lord alone are \_\_\_\_\_ and strength. All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.
9. He pursues them and moves on \_\_\_\_\_ by a path his feet have not traveled before.
11. "You are my \_\_\_\_\_," declares the Lord, "that I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am he."
13. I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing, yet what is \_\_\_\_\_ me is in the Lord's hand and my reward is with my God.
14. The Lord says, "I summon you by \_\_\_\_\_ and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me."
16. This is what the Lord says to Cyrus to subdue nations before him and to \_\_\_\_\_ kings of their armor.
19. The Lord says, "Do not be afraid. I will pour out my Spirit on your \_\_\_\_\_ and my blessings on your descendants."
22. "Even to your old \_\_\_\_\_ and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you and rescue you," says the Lord.
23. The Lord says, "I am the Lord who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the \_\_\_\_\_ of his messengers."
26. The Lord says, "I will strengthen you so that from the rising of the \_\_\_\_\_ to the place of its setting man may know there is none besides the Lord."
27. The Lord asks, "How can I let myself be defamed? I will not \_\_\_\_\_ my glory to another."
28. The Lord says, "If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the \_\_\_\_\_."
29. "So do not fear, for I \_\_\_\_\_ with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand", says the Lord.
30. The Lord commands, "Bring my sons from afar and my \_\_\_\_\_ from the ends of the earth— everyone who is called by my name."
31. Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced, I know I will not be put to \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN:

1. The Lord asks, "Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere \_\_\_\_\_ I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert."
2. The Lord says, "Your offspring will spring up like \_\_\_\_\_ in a meadow, like polar trees by flowing streams."
3. He hands nations over to him and \_\_\_\_\_ kings before him. He turns them to dust.
4. Israel will be saved by the Lord with an \_\_\_\_\_ salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.
5. "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have \_\_\_\_\_ you by name; you are mine," says the Lord.
6. "I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring \_\_\_\_\_ to the nations," says the Lord.
7. The Lord handed Israel to the plunderers because they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The Lord said, "You are my servant; I have \_\_\_\_\_ you and have not rejected you."
10. The Lord says, "I am the Lord who foils the signs of false prophets and overthrows the learning of the \_\_\_\_\_ and turns it into nonsense."
12. Those who wage \_\_\_\_\_ against you will be as nothing at all.
15. Sing to the Lord a new song, \_\_\_\_\_ praise from the ends of the earth.
17. The Lord says, "It is I who made the earth and created \_\_\_\_\_ upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens."
18. Shall I make a \_\_\_\_\_ thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?
19. Who among you fears the Lord and \_\_\_\_\_ the word of his servant? Let him who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.
20. The Lord said, "You descendants of Abraham my \_\_\_\_\_, I took you from the ends of the earth."
21. The Lord asks, "Who shapes a god and casts an \_\_\_\_\_ which can profit him nothing?"
23. It \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.
24. The Lord says, "Do not \_\_\_\_\_, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago?"
25. "I provide water in the desert and \_\_\_\_\_ in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise," says the Lord.

**Deadline for Answers: April 25, 2021**

Mail to: Philip Manuel, 23 Lake Street, Billerica MA 01821

Contact Phone: 978-663-3203

Scanned - via Email: [Varampath23@msn.com](mailto:Varampath23@msn.com)

Please include your name, phone number, email address, name of your Parish and State of residence. (Children - Grade in School)

Prepared by: Mr. Philip Manuel and Mrs. Laila Anie Philip, Carmel MTC Boston, MA

# NEWS & EVENTS



## World Day of Prayer 2021

Theme: Build on a Strong Foundation  
Matthew 7:24-27



## World Day of Prayer 2021 Introductory Remarks

## World Day of Prayer

The World Day of Prayer (WDP) is being observed on March 20, 2021 as a diocesan Sevika Sanghom program. WDP is a global ecumenical movement of Christian women with a focus to promote justice and equality for women through prayer, partnerships, service, and celebration. The country of focus in 2021 is Vanuatu, a small island country located in the South Pacific Ocean.

The programs include worship, devotional messages, choirs, narrative choreography, monologues, & presentations about Vanuatu.

The offertory collected for this purpose may be sent to WDP USA office @ WDP USA, 475 Riverside Drive, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10115 or to the Sevika Sanghom Diocesan Treasurer.



## 126<sup>th</sup> Maramon Convention

The 126<sup>th</sup> Maramon Convention was held from February 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Tirumeni delivered the message on February 19, 2021 Evening Session.

## MTVEA – Monthly Online Prayer meeting

The Diocese of North America and Europe Voluntary Evangelist's Association conducts online prayer meeting on the first Monday of every month at 8:30 p.m. (EST).

**Mr. Sam Alex**  
Secretary, Diocesan MTVEA



## Canadian Mar Thoma Regional Committee

The annual meeting of the Canadian Mar Thoma Regional Committee was held on Saturday, February 6, 2021, at 10 am (EST) via the Zoom online platform. Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos presided the meeting.



## Diocesan Assembly Meeting

A meeting of the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church was held on Saturday, December 12, 2020, at 10:00 AM, as per the notice dated November 6, 2020, at the Carmel Mar Thoma Center, 6015 Old Stone Mountain Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30087. This meeting was held in-person and via the Zoom video conferencing platform. The Diocesan Bishop and President, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, presided over the meeting.



## "Mar Thoma Institute on Mission and Culture"

'A project in honor of Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos' 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday'

An institute emphasizing various mission initiatives in the context of North America and understanding the cultural diversities for promoting harmonious living. This program will be in collaboration with nearby Seminaries and Universities for benefiting the wider community including international students. Inauguration and commencement of courses will begin in June 2021.





## Orientation Program for the Clergy

An Orientation Program for the Clergy on transfer to the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church from May 2021 was held at the Thomas Mar Athanasius Memorial Research and Orientation Center, Manganam, Kottayam on February 12, 13, 2021. The Most Rev. Dr. Theodosios Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Sabha Secretary Rev. K.G. Joseph, Rev. Denny Philip, Rev. Bobby Mathew led the sessions.



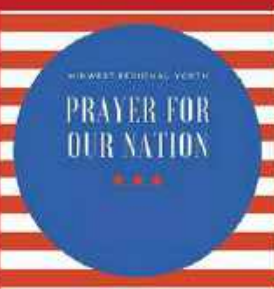
## Farewell to Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese

Rev. Dr. Philip Varghese served in this diocese as Vicar of various parishes and youth chaplain of South East region. He served the Diocese as the Program Manager for the past 7 years from 2013 to 2020. A genuine personality who is gentle, soft and humble. A silent observer, a patient listener. A farewell meeting was organized on December 25, 2020 at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church, New York. The Diocese of North America and Europe sincerely thank achen for his leadership and service to the diocese.



## Light to Life India

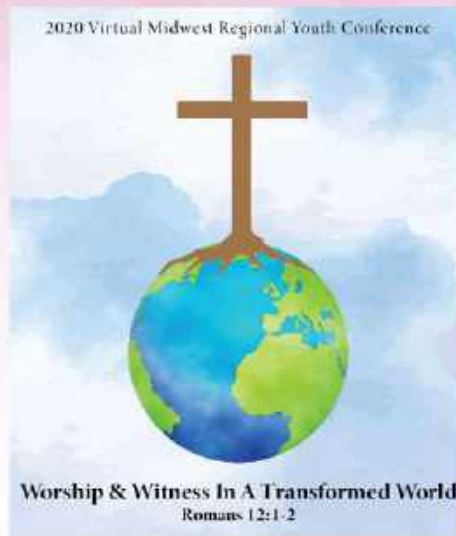
Light to life project was registered in India and Inauguration was held on February 27, 2021 at Thiruvalla by Dr. Theodosios Mar Thoma Metropolitan.



## Prayer for Our Nation Midwest Regional Youth Fellowship

The Midwest Regional Youth Fellowship organized a virtual prayer call, "Prayer for Our Nation," on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 8 PM. Many of the youths of the Midwest Region gathered via the Zoom platform to spend time in prayer as the nation prepared for the transition to a new administration of the federal government. In the wake of the violent attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, it felt necessary that as citizens and residents of this nation we come together and pray for a peaceful transfer of power. The youths dedicated this prayer call to earnestly pray to God for healing and reconciliation to be experienced throughout the nation and to pray for a peaceful transfer of power as the next president and his administration assume their responsibilities. Prayers were also offered for the new administration that it be bestowed with godly wisdom and discernment in addressing the many issues that the nation and the world are facing. The Midwest Regional Youth Fellowship Committee would like to express its gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Joel Varghese for leading Praise and Worship and to Ms. Zenia George for providing overall leadership for the prayer call.

**Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel**, Midwest Youth Chaplain



# 34<sup>th</sup> Midwest Regional Youth Conference

The 34<sup>th</sup> Midwest Regional Youth Conference was held virtually via the Zoom platform on December 26 and 27, 2020. The conference was jointly hosted and organized by the Youth Fellowship members of Detroit Mar Thoma Church and St. John's Mar Thoma Church, Michigan. The theme of the conference was, "Worship and Witness in a Transformed World," based on Romans 12:1-2. Approximately 100 youths from various parishes of the Midwest Region attended. Ms. Jocelyn George (member of Detroit MTC) was the main speaker. In her main talk, Jocelyn George spoke from the Epistle to the Romans and challenged the conference attendees to truly reflect upon the lens by which they view their lives and to meaningfully reflect upon whether the pattern and standard of their lives was aligned to the will of God.

A Panel Discussion consisting of topics such as the End Times (Eschatology), Gender Roles, and Racism was

led by Dr. Shaun Rajan, Ms. Tibi Mathew, Ms. Rosin Thomas, Mr. Cyril George, Mrs. Neethi Prasad, and Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel. Both contemporary worship and traditional liturgical worship were included each day, and the conference attendees also took part in small group discussions and enjoyed the creative presentation that was prepared.

Special thanks to the Vicars of Detroit MTC and St. John's MTC, Michigan, the Conference Conveners: Mr. Benjamin Abraham, Mr. Shobi Mathew, and Mr. Shermie Jacob, the Youth Fellowship members of Detroit MTC and St. John's MTC, the Clergy and youths of the Midwest Region, and the Midwest Regional Youth Fellowship Committee for organizing a blessed conference.

**Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel**  
Midwest Youth Chaplain



# OBITUARIES

**Dr. George K. Zachariah** was called to eternal rest on Thursday, December 31, 2020, lovingly surrounded by his wife, children, and grandchildren at his home in Vienna, Virginia. He was a gentle giant who celebrated his 90th birthday on November 23, 2020 with his family and friends. He is survived by his wife, Susan, son, George Abe Zachariah (wife Bindhu, and sons Noah and Jayan), daughter, Elizabeth Zachariah Varghese (husband John, and daughters Eva and Maya), and son, Varghese Mohan Zachariah (wife Susan, and children Josiah, Nathan, and Alisha). We thank God for this humble servant of God.

Professor George Zachariah is a well-known and distinguished figure who made significant contributions to the mission of the Mar Thoma Church and building ecumenical relationships of the Mar Thoma Church with other churches. His academic contributions in the fields of education, philosophy, psychology, theology and statistics in India and the United States are extensive and outstanding. People frequently turned to him for wise counsel and help, and he was a mentor to many.

He hails from the Kuzhikkalakannimel family of Karthikappally in Kerala. After his university education from the UC College, Alwaye, and the Madras Christian College, he started his teaching career at the UC College. While in Kerala he gave leadership for a host of Christian undertakings including the Student Christian Movement, the Mar Thoma Youth League, the Mar Thoma student conferences, and speaking at the Maramon Convention.

He came to the United States in 1958 to study at the Princeton Theological Seminary, thereafter earning a master's degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a doctoral degree in education from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He was a professor for sixty years. He was elected to three terms as President of the Faculty Association at the University of the District of Columbia and served on the Board of the National Education Association. He also participated in prison education programs and ministries and taught for a summer at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary at Kottayam.

He lived in the Greater Washington DC area from 1972 until his death. He is one of the founding members of the Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington. The founding and nurturing of this parish were his most cherished accomplishment. He was dedicated to the development of the diaspora Mar Thoma communities in the United States and the ecumenical movement. He provided leadership to help establish the annual family conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe and for publishing the Mar Thoma Messenger including serving as one of its early editors. It is on the foundation he helped to lay and build that we now have a cohesive and vibrant Mar Thoma community in the United States. He contributed much to the lives of Christians in the Mar Thoma and other denominations.

His unwavering submission to the will of God, good humor, warm heart, and tireless dedication to serve others and community participation were the guiding principles of Dr. George K. Zachariah.





# Do Not Forget 5 Things When Filing Your 2020 FEDERAL INCOME TAX RETURN



**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. CHARITABLE GIVING

When you file your 2020 federal income tax return, you can claim a brand new "above the line" deduction of up to \$300 for donations to charity you made in 2020. This deduction is in addition to standard deduction for those who do not use itemized deductions. Also, the CARES ACT allows qualified cash contributions up to 100% of adjusted gross income (up from 60%) for the year 2020.

## 2. STIMULUS PAYMENTS – PHASE 1 & PHASE 2 (\$1200 & \$600)

Those who are eligible and still did not receive the stimulus payment will be able to claim it on their 2020 income tax return. Stimulus payments are considered advance tax credits against the 2020 income tax and are not taxable income and are not to be paid back. If you received stimulus payment, but not the correct amount you are eligible, the remaining amount may be claimed on your 2020 tax return. This is termed "Recovery Rebate Credit" on Line 30 of 2020 form 1040. The amount of your actual stimulus phase 1 and phase 2 payments you received is reflected on Notice 1444 and Notice 1444-B sent to you by the IRS. If your income for 2020 is less than 2019 you may be eligible for additional stimulus if full amount was not already received. This is the main reason the IRS moved the filing start date to February 12.

## 3. INCREASED STANDARD DEDUCTION

For single taxpayers and married individuals filing separately, the standard deduction rises

to \$12,400, up \$200 from 2019. For married filing jointly the standard deduction rises to \$24,800, up \$400 from 2019. For Head of households, the standard deduction rises to \$18,650, up \$300 from 2019.

## 4. INCREASED TAXABLE INCOME LEVELS FOR MARGINAL TAX RATES

10% - for taxable income up to \$9,875 for single filers (\$19,750 for married filing jointly)

12% - for taxable incomes \$9,876 to \$40,125 for single filers (\$19,751- \$80,250 for filing jointly)

22% - for incomes \$40,126 to \$85,525 for single filers (\$80,251-\$171,050 for filing jointly)

24% - for incomes \$85,526- \$163,300 for single filers (\$171,051 - \$326,600 for filing jointly)

32% - for incomes \$163,301- \$207,350 for single filers (\$326,601 - \$414,700 for filing jointly)

35% - for incomes \$207,351- 518,400 for single filers (\$414,701- \$622,050 for filing jointly)

37% - for incomes over \$518,400 for single filers (for incomes over \$622,050 for filing jointly)

## 5. EXPENSE DEDUCTION FOR TEACHERS

Teachers have another "above the line deduction" of \$250 for unreimbursed educational expenses. This could be books, classroom materials and computer supplies. Educators may be able to include costs of hand sanitizers, masks, and other personal protective equipment in 2020 as they are supplies the teacher deems "ordinary and necessary" for the conduct of the profession.



*Best Compliments From*

# THOMSONS Travel & Tours

## 718-468-4200

Offering low fares to Trivandrum, Cochin, Chennai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Kathmandu, Srilanka, Europe and Middle East.

Our mission at Thomsons Travel is to provide excellent customer service and competitive fares on all your travel needs.

Call us today to receive the best in value and service!

*Visit Us:*

216-03 Jamaica Avenue  
Queens Village, NY 11428

*Call Us:*

**718-468-4200**

*E-Mail Us:*

[sales@thomsonstravel.com](mailto:sales@thomsonstravel.com)



**Justice  
is being  
served,  
to the  
Asian  
Community**

**Lal Varghese**

.....  
**Attorney at Law**

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

Not Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization



**Tel (972) 788-0777 Fax (972) 788-2202**

**Direct Line: (972) 788-1555**

**E-mail: attylal@aol.com**

**<http://www.indiaimmigrationusa.com>**

**LAW OFFICES OF LAL VARGHESE PLLC,  
5050 QUORUM DR., SUITE 241, DALLAS 75254-7054**

Diocese of North America & UK  
2320 Merrick Ave  
Merrick, NY - 11566

Non - Profit Organization  
US Postage Paid Merrick, NY  
Permit No: 198

# YOU<sup>n</sup>iverse

Because your business  
means the world to us.

Of course you can expect competitive rates, commercial mortgages, business lines of credit, and everything else your business needs - but you can expect more from Hanover. Faster turnarounds on loans, bankers that get your business and actually know YOU, and a bank that shares your values and values you more. Bottom line: YOU are the center of all we do.



the bank of you<sup>®</sup>

Garden City Park	516.248.4868
Mineola	516.548.8600
Chinatown (The Bowery)	212.334.9191
Chinatown (Canal Street)	212.301.6863
Flushing	646.828.8650
Forest Hills	646.569.3600
Sunset Park	718.633.4528

hanoverbank.com

©2020 Hanover Community Bank. All rights reserved. NMLS ID #764648

