

2023
HAPPY NEW YEAR



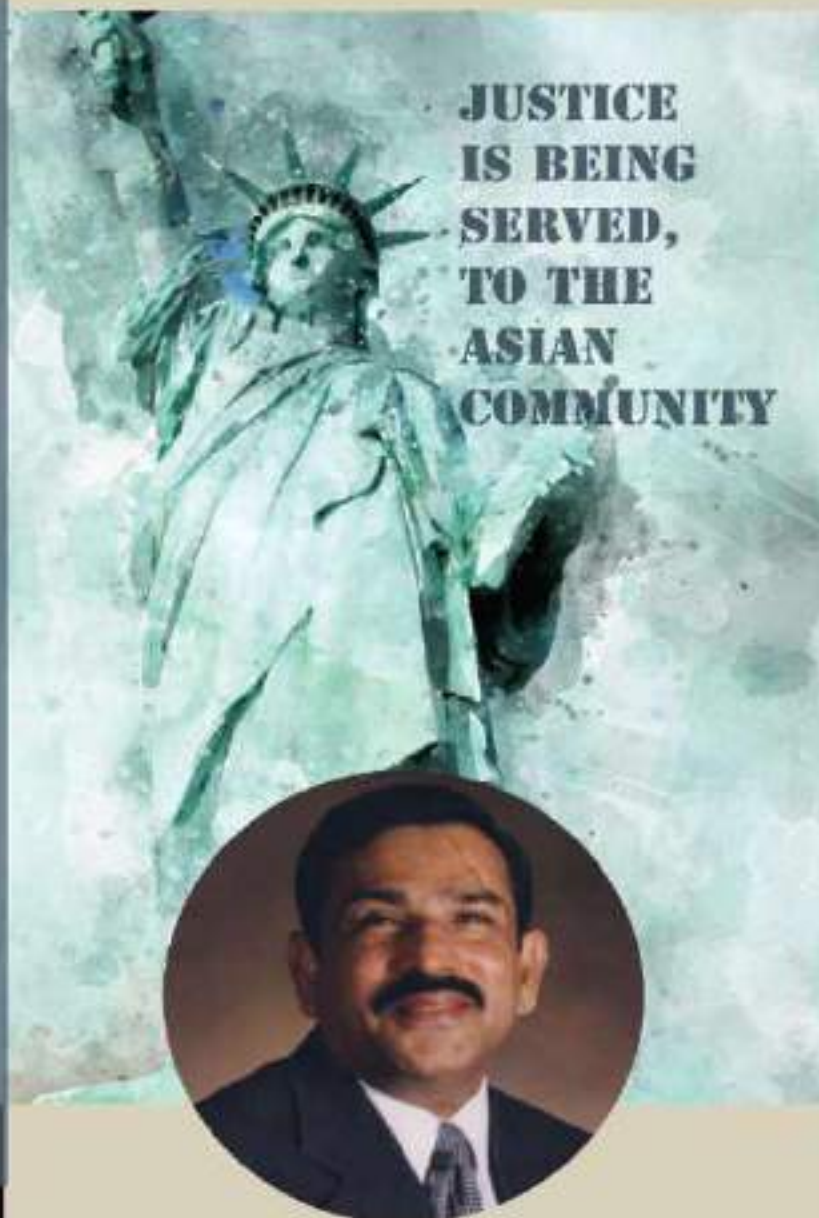
KINGDOM VALUES
In a Changing World



January - February - March - 2023

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MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe

2023

HAPPY
NEW YEAR



January - February - March - 2023



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MESSAGE | THE FROM | METROPOLITAN



*D*eearly beloved,

Greetings to you all in the name of Christ Jesus!

We celebrated India's 76th Independence Day on 15th August 2022. It was not liberation from foreign domination alone that the people of India aspired for during the freedom struggle, but liberation from all kinds of superstition, hunger, and caste discrimination. Under the auspices of the Niranam-Maramon Diocese, we celebrated this year's Independence Day on 15 August in a public meeting organized at Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Auditorium. Global citizen Dr. Shashi Tharoor MP attended the program as the chief guest. It was an occasion for reminiscing about India's progress and struggles as well as the pain and suffering that she is experiencing today. The event also helped to bring back to memory the history of India's Christian minority in connection with the freedom struggle and the contributions of the Christian community towards the development of Indian villages.

Some pertinent questions at this time are: How many in the country are experiencing political and social satisfaction? How many out of over 130 crores people have been able to attain an average standard of living and enjoy natural justice offered by the constitution? India today is experiencing the highest unemployment in the last 45 years (Center for Monitoring Indian Economy). During last July alone, 1.30 crore persons became unemployed. The super-rich are becoming richer day by day. Prices of essential articles have also been increasing continuously.

Another serious threat to our freedom is the official Language Committee report of the Parliament submitted before the President. It includes the controversial recommendation to disqualify candidates who are non-proficient in Hindi while applying for vacancies in the Central Government. If this is approved into law, doors will be shut to candidates from those states that do not use Hindi. The report also says that action will be taken against those officials in the Central Government who show reluctance in using Hindi. This is a direct attack on the multilingual heritage of India and is against equal consideration of all 32 languages included in Schedule 8 of our Constitution. India has different languages, cultures, and faiths. Linguistic diversity is equally necessary as biodiversity

for the stability of the nation. If the freedom we achieved politically must spread into the various levels of society, linguistic freedom is quintessential.

Praise be to God for the blessing in being able to conduct the Sabha Pradhinidhi Mandalam in Thiruvalla at the Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Hall from the 13th to the 15th of September. A word of appreciation and thanks to the Mandalam members for their valuable presence and meaningful participation in all the proceedings at the meeting. The topic of study for this year's Sabha Mandalam was: "The Witness of the Church: In the Changing World." This topic should be used as a subject for further studies at the diocese and center levels and parish levels and after understanding its different meanings, attempts should be made to implement it at the practical level. As per the decision of the Sabha Mandalam, the procedures for selecting four new Bishops in our Church have started. Everyone should pray fervently for the election procedures to be smooth and transparent. The last Sabha Mandalam meeting has recognized Senior Citizens' Fellowship and the Development Department as official institutions of the Church. Everyone should be diligent in organizing local units of the above organizations in parishes. The Episcopal Synod that met on the 16th and 17th of September have ratified the decisions taken by the Mandalam. The resolutions of the Mandalam and the Synod have been conveyed to all through Circular Kalpanas. Let me exhort everyone to abide by the spirit of these decisions, and to continue in prayer, so that the activities of the Church would always be for the glory of God.

Onam has been a festival celebrated by the people of Kerala, cutting across caste and community. People have viewed Onam as a festival of unity transcending all the religious connotations inherently attached to it. All Malayalees celebrated Onam in the month of September.

Teachers Day was on September 5th. How noble is the dedicated services of teachers. It is not an exaggeration to say that the responsibility of the building up of society and the nation is with the teaching community. I praise the Lord for all our teachers. We observed September 10 as World Suicide Prevention Day. It is painful that the number of those who commit suicide have been growing. Let us pray for a healthy society. It is only appropriate that we create awareness about suicides and against drug use in our parishes.

The service of consecration of Holy Mooron was held at St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Thiruvalla, on 16th September at 7 am. The Bishops of the Church, along

with the clergy-laity representatives, and other office bearers of the Church attended the sacred service. The Holy Mooron is prepared prayerfully by suitably blending a variety of spices. In the early Church, it was the apostles who inducted believers to the Church through baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:4, 38, 41; 4:31). Later, as the number of candidates increased, the apostles found it difficult to reach everywhere. Thus, they consecrated the oil for anointing and entrusted it with the elders of the regional Churches. Every time the Holy Mooron is consecrated a small portion from the old oil is added to the new one, to symbolize apostolic succession.

I am happy to inform you that Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa has been elected to the executive committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Smt. Aleyamma Thomas (Leena) was elected as president of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), and Dr. Aswathy John (Vice Principal, Serampore College) was elected as the Dean of Research at SATHRI, a Research Department of Serampore College. With joy I convey to them the greetings and best wishes of the Mar Thoma Church family.

The Episcopal Synod has decided to bring about the following changes in the order of worship ('Aaradhanakramam') and Christian Hymns ('Kristiya Keerthanangal') as per the recommendations of the Church's Publication Board and Liturgical Commission. In the Holy Qurbana order, in the first 'Thubden' prayer, instead of "Innu Njangale Bhari kkunna," to use "Innu Njangale Nayikkunna;" instead of "madikoodathe" to use "visvastharayi" and to additionally mention "suvisheshakar" and "sanyasthar" in it. Considering those people who use other languages and those who have come to faith because of the Church's mission work, it was also decided to republish 'Kristiya Keerthanangal' after including two songs each from five languages, which is Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Marathi.

"Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity" was the theme of the eleventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) held from 31st August to 8th September in the German city of Karlsruhe. Christ, the head of the Church, who gave Himself over to death was the revelation of His deep love for the world. Today, we are living in a world which is being continuously distorted. God, who loved

this world by giving His own son, exhorts us to join His plan to restore this disorderly world. May we pray that the deliberations in the Assembly and in the related meetings enable us to reveal new layers of the love of Christ.

The Church of South India (CSI) celebrated its Jubilee on 27 September 2022. It has been 75 years since the CSI was formed. Let us praise God for its inception, growth till date, and its mission trails. The Mar Thoma Church has been maintaining a special relationship with the CSI. May we also particularly remember all the ecumenical works made possible through the Communion of Churches in India.

Salem Bhavan, an institution established in 1923, was born out of the vision, mission, and social commitment of the Sevika Sanghom which was started in 1919. While Salem was started with just 6 children, today there are 331 persons from the institution living in India and abroad with their families giving blessed witness. The centenary celebration of the Salem Bhavan was inaugurated by the President of the Sevika Sanghom, Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa on 6 August 2022. What is needed today is the commitment of the members of the Sevika Sanghom for its further progress. While wishing the best for the centenary celebrations, praying that the different projects envisaged for the Salem family members would be a blessing.

In October, I visited our churches in America and Canada which belong to our North America-Europe Diocese and gave leadership to the annual diocesan clergy fellowship, and the 20th annual diocesan Sevika Sanghom conference. Dr. Anne Mathews Younes, granddaughter of Dr. E. Stanley Jones, the famed Maramon preacher of yesteryears, was one of the speakers at the Sevika Sanghom conference, which merits special mention. I also visited the Mar Thoma Center at Atlanta, where the diocese has been blessed with a full-fledged school and ample space and equipments for conducting conferences and camps. It is commendable that two parishes in Atlanta merged into one to participate in this great endeavor, upholding the spirit of unity. The welcome meetings arranged by the diocese and by the regional activity committees were very cordial. That the city of Coppel in Texas declared October 11 as Bishop Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Day can be considered as an act of honor towards the Mar Thoma Church and its bishops. Let us praise God for the overall development of the diocese. It is heartening to see that things are getting back to normal after the Covid pandemic. Special congratulations to Dr. Isaac

Mar Philoxenos Episcopa Thirumeni and all the leaders of the diocese. The number of young people emigrating to North America for studies and better job opportunities is increasing, and we should take special effort to find such people and offer them care and fellowship. This is to be executed by the church leaders and members of the Youth Fellowship.

India can be proud of the fact that Sri. Rishi Sunak, a man of Indian origin, has assumed office as the British Prime Minister. When such a person from a former British colony, such as India, is elevated to the role of a prime leader in the administrative machinery of Britain, it is both a historical moment and a tribute to its polyphonic community. Sri. Sunak assumed leadership during a time when the Ukraine War, escalation of prices, and inflation are raising dire challenges. May his administration lead to unity and stability in these troubled times.

The second memorial lecture of Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan was held on October 29 at Kottarakkara Jubilee Mandiram. Let us praise God for Thirumeni's vision and leadership. The meeting was led by Dr. Abraham Mar Stefanos of the Orthodox Church, and Dr. N. S. Madhavan IAS. Honorary Doctorates have been conferred to Dr. Joseph Mar Barnabas Suffragan Metropolitan by the Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, Chennai, and to Dr. Gregorios Mar Stephanos Episcopa by Sam Higginbottom Agricultural University, Allahabad. Congratulations to both Thirumenis.

His Grace Pathrose Mar Osthathos Metropolitan, who was the former President of the Delhi and Bangalore dioceses of the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church passed away. We join the Jacobite Syrian Church in their grief and express the condolences of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Five senior priests of our Church, Vicar General, Very Rev. Dr. P. P. Abraham (Adoor), Rev. George Mathew (Nellikala), Rev. K. M. Varghese (Ayroor), Rev. E. John Kasseessa (Kattanam), and Rev. V. M. Mathew (Senior) (Maramon) were taken to the Lord's presence. We praise God for the blessed leadership given by them, with their families, to the Church, society, parishes, and organizations for many years. We, as a Church, extend our deepest sympathies to the families in this time of grief. We express our sorrow and condolences. Adv. P. A. Cyrus has gone to glory. He was a member of the Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, Peroorkada, Thiruvananthapuram. He had dedicated his life, through a distinct model of discipleship, to the service of the poor and the liberation of the marginalized. The Church had honored him with

the Manava Seva Award at the recently concluded Pradhinidhi Mandalam. We praise God for the selfless and relentless pursuit of the Gospel mission that his life exemplified. We extend our heartfelt condolences as a Church.

The Church has entered the Advent season. The readings of these days share the revelations of hope. At the dark crossroads of human history, Jesus was born as the Light of the world. Let the Lent season help us actualize His holy birth in our hearts. We celebrated Sunday, November 6 as World Sunday School Day, and Church Renewal Day. The young generation is the real wealth of the Church. Parents should be able to keep themselves holy for the sake of the coming generations. The theme of the Sunday School Day is 'Children to be Nurtured in Christ'. Instead of simply letting your children grow, it is essential to nurture them.

On Sunday, November 13, we were meditating on the Annunciation to Zachariah. It was the birth of John the Baptist that ended the protracted prophetic silence of Zachariah. John's parents were upright, just, and willing to wait for the special involvement of God in history. John prescribed new criteria for judging 'glory' and 'greatness'. Jesus himself justified that of those born of women, there is none greater than John. Let us be vessels of holiness in these times when the contrary is the rule of the day.

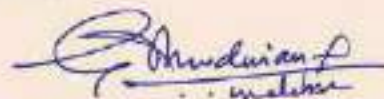
On Sunday, November 20, we were meditating on the Annunciation to the holy Virgin Mary. She was self-sacrifice personified. Virgin Mary who declared, "Here I

am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to Your word," is a perennial example to the children of God. Let us pray for this Advent season to lead us to dedication and sacrifice in our lives.

On Sunday, November 27, the subject of our thought was the journey Virgin Mary undertakes to visit Elizabeth and their meeting. Elizabeth, who was the relative of Mary, had been branded as barren. Her conception was a sign from God to Mary. Elizabeth fully understood the mysteries behind the Immaculate Conception, and they were able to encourage each other in God's divine plan. During this Advent season, may we be able to encourage each other in the advancement of God's Kingdom.

I praise God for enabling me to complete two years as the Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Equipping the Church for significant witnessing, while accepting the challenges of the times, is the need of the day. This requires prayerful support of all, and for that let us commit ourselves into God's hands.

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



Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan

(Compiled and consolidated by Prof. Elias Abraham, Baltimore Mar Thoma Church, from the September, October, November 2022 issues of Sabha Tharaka)



Luke 17:20-21

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."



MESSAGE FROM | DIOCESAN EPISCOPA



*D*early beloved,

Greetings to all in the name of Jesus Christ!

We enter into the New Year with hope and great expectation. The world is changing and everyone tries to face the challenges and find ways to live with it. The caution that is raised by nations relates much to the climate change and the scarcity of fossil fuel. The humanity also longs for clean air, clean water and fresh food to every individual. Added to it is the alarming situation in many parts of the world, where people aspires for peace and justice that grants human rights regardless of race, gender or color. The world also is in dire need of 'people of good will' who will affirm the dignity of every human being.

This Messenger issue focuses on the theme 'Kingdom values in a changing world'. Jesus Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of God in the world, whereby making the whole created order under the domain of God. In other words it is the process of the restoration of the created universe, bringing back to God. Jesus has shown us what the kingdom of God is like and also demonstrated what the kingdom of God is in the life of humanity. Jesus has shown us the way, the truth and the life while becoming part of God's kingdom. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, the specific mention 'thy kingdom come' shows the continuity in the realization of the rule of God.

Church is called to be an instrument to carry out the kingdom values. The Church is placed in the world with all challenges and potentials, yet it is given the responsibility to transform the world. The words of Jesus, "Be ye perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect" demands the qualitative aspect of the life of the church. While speaking about the values to be followed, St. Paul exhorts the church as we find in the book of Romans, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". (Rom: 14, 17) Dr. E. Stanley Jones makes it clear in his book, *A working philosophy of life*, "If perfection and not pleasure be the goal, then this universe had to be a universe of discipline, of pain and even of hardness". While the world admires genius and gives star value on the basis of performance, one may find a vacuum in life especially for sharing the love and mutual relationship that is considered as core value to keep life moving. One need to know that, 'Genius is developed in solitude, but character is made in the stream of life' amid buffetings and blessings. Life of Christ is the model that can be followed in bringing kingdom values to the life of

the people. He opted not the ruling of a king with iron rod showing the power, but demonstrated the love and mercy that was expressed through his humility even at the point of taking up the cross. Let the mind of Christ be with us in our journey as kingdom people.

We are very happy that the Diocesan Edavaka Mission Conference was held at Philadelphia and the Diocesan Sevika Sangham Conference was hosted by the Farmers Branch parish, Dallas. It was well attended and well organized. Appreciate all for the hard work. The young family retreat and the Diocesan Convention were occasions to renew and recommit as faith community for the service of the Lord. The leadership conference for youths will be held in first week of January at Dallas Sehion Mar Thoma church. Happy that the theological education programs through Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta has become useful for clergy and laity. Two courses on 'effective ministry in North American context' were conducted last year. Another course on 'Introduction to Mission and Culture' will start in February, 2023. Many spare their time and talents serving as instructors to various courses. The availability of resources and facilities from Colombia Seminary and Samford University is an added advantage.

By God's grace we are able to continue the ministry and mission of the Diocese through the participation

of all our members. The new program initiated for the wellness of the families and special care for the individuals has taken momentum. Meetings on regional level and Diocesan level are arranged for the benefit of our community. The facility at Atlanta is being used for various purposes for the spiritual and social development of the wider community. I am sure the programs initiated through Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta will go a long way in imparting theological knowledge and spiritual nurturing to our clergy and laity, especially for our future generations in North America. The 'Light to Life' program that we started in 2017 is in its fifth year supporting thousands of children for their overall development in India and other places. Pray that God may continue to use us to be good instruments in the expansion of the kingdom of God, through our committed actions.

With love and prayers,

Sincerely,



Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos

Psalm 145:12-13

To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.

DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

WISHES OUR BELOVED BISHOPS

A Happy & Blessed Birthday

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



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Ordained as Ramban	: 11/04/1989
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Ordained as Ramban	: 05/07/2011
Consecrated as Episcopa	: 08/13/2011

FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Dr. Cherian Samuel

*B*lessed New Year Greetings to All!

As we begin 2023, we thank the Lord Almighty for His goodness and mercies in our lives during 2022. Let us join the Psalmist and boldly proclaim, "Taste and see that the LORD is good," taking refuge in Him (Psalm 34:8). During 2022, our lives gradually returned to the pre-COVID pandemic normal, bolstered by vaccines and updated boosters, leading to the re-opening of schools and offices, and in-person family gatherings and Church worships. However, we are also dealing with significant uncertainties globally as we enter 2023, given the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine and the threat of multiple and compounding crises, including climate change, inflation, and recession. In addition, democratic foundations are being challenged all over the world, together with the rise of authoritarian regimes and extreme nationalistic agendas. We are also in the midst of rapid transmission of misinformation and disinformation, thanks to the democratization of opinions and perspectives through the proliferation

of social media, with truths and facts often becoming unintended casualties.

Given these challenges, the theme for the 2023 first Quarter (January-February-March) Messenger, "Kingdom Values in a Changing World", is salient and appropriate. At its core, Kingdom Values are about the rule and reign of God and His Word in our lives. During the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:19-23), Jesus instructed His disciples to pray for the Kingdom to come, so that His will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Unfortunately, we know from the Bible that creation has been marked by rebellion and sin against the creator God from the very beginning: Lucifer and fellow angels first (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:16-17), followed by the Fall of man (Genesis 1-3). The reconciliation between holy God and sinful humanity has been made possible only through the death of Jesus on the cross, bearing the guilt and punishment for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The teachings of Jesus through the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as well as the other writings in the New Testament provide clarity and

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elaboration regarding Kingdom Values. While Jesus spoke about the "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" interchangeably in His discussions with the disciples and religious leaders, the Kingdom of Heaven references are only found in Matthew's Gospel, with the parable of the Rich Young Ruler a good example (Matthew 19: 16-26). However, Bible scholars have noted that the parallel accounts of the same parable in Mark and Luke—which use "Kingdom of God"—and Matthew, which uses "Kingdom of heaven," (e.g., Matthew 13:11 Vs. Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10), also confirm the synonymous nature of Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven.

In all instances, the Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven refers to the rule and reign of an eternal, sovereign God over all the universe and our lives, based on our repentance and humble submission. Jesus explained the Kingdom and its inestimable value in three pairs of parables in Matthew 13: (i) the seed and the sower (v. 3-23) and the weeds in the field (v. 24-30); (ii) the mustard seed (v. 31-32) and the leaven (v. 33); (iii) the hidden treasure (v. 44) and the pearl of great price (v. 45-46). Through these six parables, Jesus taught that the purpose of the Christian life is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), and to live a life of goodness, peace, and joy (Romans 14: 17).

Bible teachers and faith leaders are unified in their view that Jesus's principal mandate to His Ekklesia—the Church—is to Love One Another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11). We are never more like Jesus than when we love others. The Early Church has modeled this well, with a deep sense of unity and care for one another, sharing possessions, being of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32). In his thirteen epistles to the various churches, Apostle Paul—used by God to proclaim the Gospel and establish churches in the first century that laid the foundation for Christianity—has also invited believers to Kingdom living, with numerous "One Another" commands, anchored in Love.

In particular, Paul provides a magnificent treatise on Love—Agape, God's unconditional love—in 1 Corinthians 13, teaching us that Love should be prioritized over all other spiritual gifts. The key attributes of Love are outlined in terms of what love does, and what love does not do. Love is patient and kind (v.4a); rejoices in the truth (v.6b); bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (v.7). However, love does not envy or boast (v.4b); does not behave rudely, not seek its own, not provoked, thinks no evil (v.5); does not rejoice in iniquity (v.6a). Apostle Paul concludes that while Faith, Hope, and Love are abiding spiritual gifts, the greatest is Love.

As we reflect Love as the Kingdom Value in a Changing World, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit should also lead to regeneration and a heart for the Gospel—for sharing the good news of salvation through Christ—compelled by Love (1 Corinthians 5:14a) and commanded by Jesus through the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16-20). As detailed in the Gospels, the purpose of the Incarnation of Jesus—God in human flesh—was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and save people from sins (Matthew 1:21). God has reached out, initiated, and has saved fallen humanity, the enemies of God following the Fall (Romans 5:10).

May the Lord Almighty help us to live victoriously in 2023, with fortitude and confidence. May the LORD help us experience the abundant life (John 10:10), rooted in His Sovereignty and Faithfulness. May the LORD God be truly Immanuel to us, allowing us to wait patiently for God's timing in all matters, without striving and disenchantment. The good news is that the God of the Bible is living and active, able to help us in our time of need, as we grapple with the uncertainties and unknowns of 2023.

With prayerful regards,

Dr. Cherian Samuel
Associate Editor

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“God’s Kingdom Values in a Changing World”

Dr. Zac Varghese

Sinai Mar Thoma Church, London

“Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Lk 6:31)



The Bible traces the stories of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, killing of Abel, flood, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, election of Israel, exodus, the fall of mankind and God’s rescue plans in several stages over various periods of human history. The beautiful world, the paradise, that God has created and gifted to mankind for stewardship, has changed and has been changing from its inception because of man’s disobedience to God. But God has been continually involved in ‘healing this fractured world.’ It is in this context that we read in St. John’s Gospel, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). In this passage, God who was ‘out there’ became “God with us,” our Immanuel. In the New Testament, we see the message and the mission of Jesus Christ; this message and God’s mission (*Missio Dei*) is about establishing God’s kingdom values in the world. Jesus Christ lived the values of the kingdom and taught us to pray: “... your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus was crucified for our sins and has risen to be on His Father’s side. He sent the Holy Spirit to help us to live and spread the good news of the kingdom of God and its values. ***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb 13:1).***

Therefore, the values of the kingdom with which Jesus lived and propagated during His Galilean ministry do not change; they are with us forever. Jesus described the values of God’s kingdom at the beginning of His ministry through the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ (Mt Chapters 5, 6, & 7), and a shorter version of it on His ‘sermon on the Plain’ (Lk Ch. 6). The values of the kingdom are the mandate for establishing justice and peace, caring for the poor and the needy, building relationships, removing boundaries, establishing truth, and leading a spiritual life. It is about tirelessly working under the grace of God to bring on the earth the values of heaven, as followers of Jesus; it is about heaven and earth coming together. These sermons, with a list of beatitudes (blessedness or happiness) in the beginning, are prescriptions for ‘healing a fractured world.’

Changes are inevitable, but the unacceptable tragic changes that are happening in the world are due to the failure of mankind to live by the values of the kingdom of God. From this perspective, we need to admit with total humility and gratitude that values of this kingdom are every bit relevant today as it was when it was declared during Jesus’ Galilean ministry. However, the kingdom of God is an ‘already—but-not-yet’ reality. We have a certain hope in Christ that it has a glorious

future waiting for all people of faith. It is a future of heaven and earth coming together.

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, eloquently summarised at COP27 on 7th November, 2022, "We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator." More than 100 heads of states and 30,000 people met at Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022 under the shadow of COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, a worldwide energy and cost of living crisis, inflation, and rising global tensions. Rich and poor countries of Global North and South are at loggerheads as big economies have failed to cut greenhouse gas emissions quickly enough, and the poorer countries, which are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis are receiving little of the financial assistance they need, which has been promised at previous COP meetings. Poor countries suffering loss and damage want a financial mechanism that will give them access to funding when disasters such as hurricanes, floods, droughts, and pandemic hit them; such disasters destroy their infrastructure and tear apart their social fabric. Therefore, there can be no doubt that the world is changing in an unimaginable way because of man's inhumanity to man, uncaring attitude toward environment and abandoning the responsibility for stewardship for God's beautiful creation.

However, all the changes that are taking place are not negative and bad for the progress of humanity, as there are many positive changes. The Beveridge report of 1942 has brought forth many changes during Clement Atlee's Labour government administration in the UK after the Second World war, which laid the foundations for a welfare state. Beveridge made wide ranging suggestions aimed at eradicating what he called the five "giant evils": want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness. He had a sense of the kingdom values in approaching the problem. These changes did not happen in a vacuum, but under Christian influence and ethics. Many scientific and technological advancements are for the good of the world. Caring for the socially deprived, providing for the elderly and establishing human rights are positive and beneficial changes. There are also many simple people around the world who do great things everyday for others by welcoming strangers and building relationships with those who are different from themselves. They value God-given 'gift of the other.' We have experienced this in the work of Mother Teresa. There are many such silent Mother Teresas with us today who follow the values of the kingdom of God without putting a label around their necks. As 'the

kingdom of God' is everlasting, its values are ever living too. From this perspective, we need to admit with total humility and gratitude that values of the kingdom are every bit relevant today as it was when it was declared during Jesus' Galilean ministry. However, the kingdom of God is an 'already-but-not yet' reality. Unfortunately, the present realities do not match with our expectations for a New Jerusalem—a city without a Temple, a new creation, as we read in Revelation (Rev 21); however, we have a certain hope in Christ that there is a glorious future waiting for all people of faith. It is a future of heaven and earth coming together.

One of the ways of understanding the kingdom of God is by seeing it as God's way of putting the world right with His salvation plan or rescue mission for humanity. Our self-centred rebellion has separated us from God. Our attempt to 'go it alone' has been a cataclysmic blunder, because instead of gaining freedom we have found ourselves enslaved to evil and utter selfishness. Jesus inaugurated God's kingdom by paying a very costly price and therefore, His kingdom and its values are very valuable and priceless, as illustrated in the parable of 'the hidden treasure and the pearl' (Mt 13: 44-46); it has its own unique value system and it is the gold standard on which other worldviews are compared.

Kingdom Values are very much relevant to us now. As 'the parable of the mustard seed' (Mt 13: 31-32) taught, the kingdom is at present hidden and easy to overlook. But it is, in fact, a powerful and active force for change in all situations of life. Like yeast in dough, it works slowly and silently (Mt 13:33). Despite its apparent insignificance to many today, the kingdom values are unstoppable because it is God's. The kingdom of God knows neither geographic boundaries nor ethnic or racial restrictions; its reach is universal and people from all nations have an invitation to become citizens of this kingdom. We need to look at these values in the context of 'Human Rights' and 'Human Dignity.' Late Justice V. K. Krishna Iyer's comment in the Hindu Newspaper on 24th Dec 2008, under the title 'Remembering a Glorious Rebel,' is worth noting. "Was not the kingdom of God that Jesus held up but the forerunner to socialism, social justice, secularism, and democracy? He was a raging egalitarian and an invisible socialist and an economic democrat." Jesus is at the heart of the kingdom and its values. Today, as in the past, people will only enter the kingdom through Jesus, because He is the way to the kingdom and its 'narrow gates,' "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14: 6).



Kingdom Values - Challenges in the Changing World

**Seek First His Kingdom and His
Righteousness**

Mrs. Jolly Abraham

St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Calgary

It was a cool snowy evening. On finishing the family prayer, Dany asked his father, "Dad, why do we repeat every day, Thy Kingdom come! What is that? Why should the Kingdom come?" Daddy was dumbfounded for a second. He had never thought anything more about the Kingdom when reciting the Lord's prayer daily. He hugged his loving son and appeased him with the answer. "Yes, we are waiting for a beautiful period when Jesus establishes His Kingdom in this world when the whole world will be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and God's will would become the discipline of

the world." Dany started loading Daddy with more questions, landing him in a fix.

Many of us are like Dany's dad, reciting the Lord's prayer every day without delving deep into its meaning. The prayer is inscribed in our minds. But as children of God, is it our dream to become true citizens of God's Kingdom?

The Kingdom of God implies the dominion of God the King, where God will be at work, exercising His redemptive and restorative powers on His children.

Christian hope is related to the consummation of God's purpose to bring all His creations in heaven and earth together under Him as Lord and liberate humanity from sin and death. Paul says to the Romans, "The creation is waiting for the sons of God to be revealed in Glory." The day or hour in which the eschatological happening will come to its fulfillment has yet to be determined.

But 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ submitted Himself to God's will and revealed the Kingdom's power among his followers. He preached, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel," and "Behold, the Kingdom of God is in your midst." The messages of Jesus, in corroboration with the signs revealed through His divine miracles, proclaim that the Kingdom has become a reality. He called His disciples to leave everything and follow Him. How sweet he was when he lovingly appraised them, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father had chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." The exact sense in which the Kingdom of God has come can be seen when unfolding Jesus' works. It is in Him and through Him that the Kingdom has become the present reality. Jesus explains through the parable of the tiny mustard seed how the Kingdom of God grows from a tiny origin to a strong force enveloping the universe.

Jesus said that one must be born again in spirit to enter the Kingdom of heaven. To enjoy the glory and power of the Kingdom, one must be alert with an awakened spirit and prayers.

Let us glance at some of the values of the Kingdom from the preaching and teachings of Jesus. Jesus taught everything through parables and simple illustrations. His teachings were all centered around the Magical word 'Love.' In the farewell discourse to His disciples, He gave the new commandment, "You love one another as I have loved you." Jesus taught us to Love our enemies, to be selfless, and to be compassionate. He preached to them by word of mouth and manifested these by embracing the cross for us sinners. Loving those who love us is not the challenge for a Christian. Anybody can do that. To love an enemy could be one of the controversial and radical demands of Jesus Christ. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, by selecting a Samaritan as the hero, Jesus was explicitly revealing how a Samaritan, a staunch enemy of the Jews, could do such a compassionate act of applying wine and oil on the wounds of a bleeding Jew and thereby provide him with care and protection.

Mother Theresa, who was the synonym of love and compassion and an inspiration to countless millions for her lifelong devotion to the most vulnerable, said, "It is not how much we do, how much love we put into doing that matters."

When the unfailing love of Christ fills our hearts and overflows, it leads to forgiveness, joy, and peace of mind. We can never forget Gladys Staines, who forgave the fanatics who burnt her husband and two minor children alive. She was filled with the love of Christ. In an interview, she highlighted the significance of forgiveness, "In forgiveness, there is no bitterness, and when there is no bitterness, there is hope."

Jesus loved the humble, the meek, the righteous, and the obedient. But He disdained proud hearts. Even the spiritually proud cannot find any place in the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit calls upon us to become true citizens of the Kingdom of God, producing the fruit of the spirit and making a difference in this world that is undergoing multifarious challenges.

The greatest challenge we face today is the unstinted influence of 'Money, the Market, and Media,' which are the superpowers controlling the world. According to Cardoso Pereira, the Brazilian theologian, money is considered the controlling deity in the present capitalistic world. Seated on her divine throne at the heart of the world, she cries out, "My kingdom comes." Money is trying to give a different face to God.

Pope Francis remarked, "Money is the central idol in the present global economic system." Many people put their trust in this transient idol and worship it with their hearts and soul instead of merely using it.

The surge in the growth of science and technology has led the new generation to excessive addiction to life-pleasures, materialism, and consumerism, changing the priorities in their lives. The fantasies and fleeting joys of the world are mesmerizing many youths, carrying them away from reality without differentiating between the truth and the fake.

The increased freedom of life due to the rampant influence of the 'Permissive society' is also eroding the Kingdom values. Alarming, many are becoming Humanists, who accept the ethical theory and practice that emphasizes scientific reasoning and human happiness, while rejecting God.

What is referred above is only the tip of the iceberg inside the vast ocean of challenges to Kingdom's values. But millions of people are still in poverty and distress. They

remind us of the graveness of the situation and alert us to rise from slumber and translate our deep beliefs into action. We cannot simply cut ourselves off from the modern world or appease the world by conforming to the values of the world, but we must use our discernment to steer into the right direction given by the Holy Spirit.

Parents and Churches have significant roles in the faith formation of children. Parents must spend quality time with children and instill in the young minds the values of God's Kingdom not only through oral teachings but also through their good deeds and expressions. Fill the children with the redeeming love of Christ and deepen their relationship with Christ so that they can find solace in Him on their journey through the valleys of life. Instead of inspiring them to amass wealth and laurels, nurture in them the values of compassion, empathy, and humility.

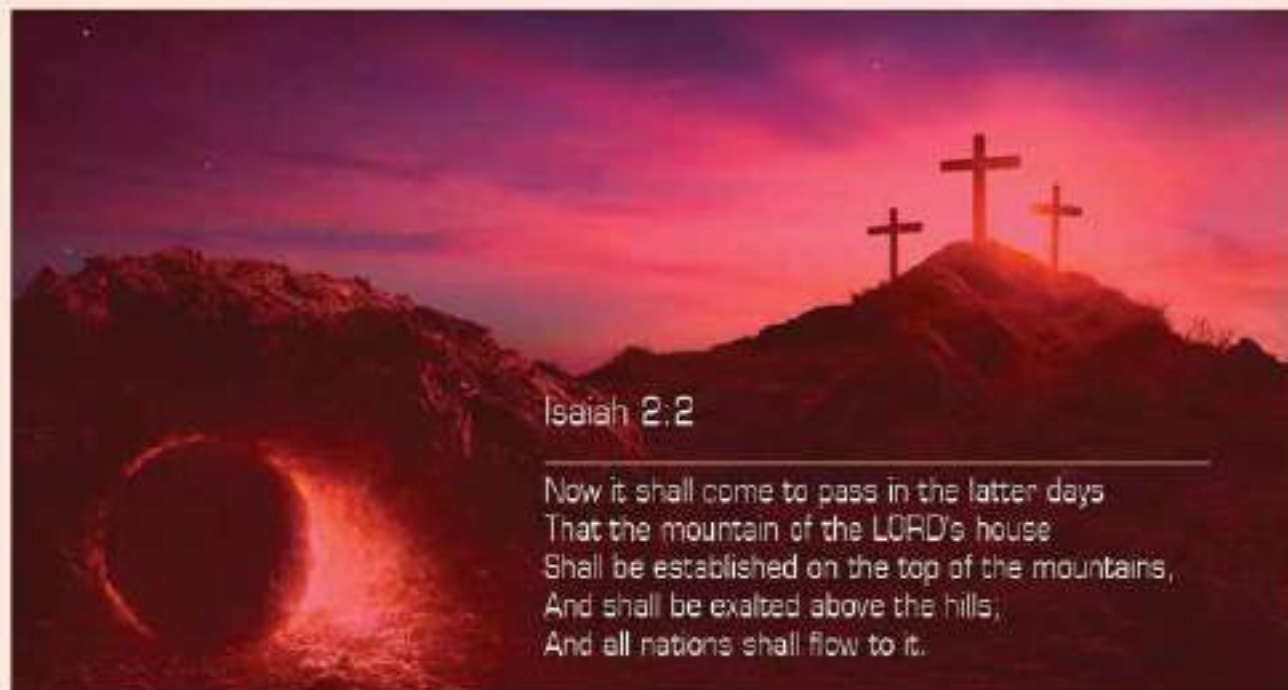
While talking to a young Christian friend, he revealed that several youths were moving away from his church. He pointed out that youths are not recognized, their voices are not heard, and their needs are not addressed at their church. It is high time for our parishes to start 'Reach out programs' including young friends, so that they get opportunities to strengthen kinship with the church community and enjoy the warmth of caring and sharing. Churches may also conduct lay training to enhance the

youths on faith, practices, and values that help them to stand firm against storms and tempests.

Jesus inspired us to strive first for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. In our quest for the Kingdom of God, there will be obstacles and sufferings. There may be voices persuading us to quit. But God has amazing solutions for all our trials and troubles. We must submit ourselves to Him. As faith warriors of Christ, we can bind together in the love of Christ, like the roots of the Redwood trees in the Muir Forest and by our ardent prayers and meditation of the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, spread the message of love and hope to the lonely and marginalized in the society. Let us reach out with outstretched arms to the needy, and the suffering, and translate our faith into action as the flag bearers of Christ so that the world will witness the transformative power of the gospels. May the Kingdom of God open the eyes of all to experience the Divine presence of God, in all human hearts as visioned by Radical Orthodoxy. (The true spirit of God's Kingdom is depicted in the following Taizé song.)

'The Kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

Come Lord, and open in us the gates of your Kingdom.'



Isaiah 2:2

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.



IMPORTANT TAX CHANGES FOR 2022 & 2023



(Prof. Philip Thomas, MBA, CPA, CGMA)

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION (QCD) - A STRATEGY TO REDUCE AGI AND FEDERAL INCOME TAXES

	2022	2021
STANDARD DEDUCTION		
Single	\$12,950	\$12,550
Married filing joint	\$25,900	\$25,100
Married filing separate	\$12,950	\$12,550
Head of household	\$19,400	\$18,800
Additional deduction for elderly/blind- single	\$1,750	\$1,700
For married filing joint (each)	\$1,400	\$1,350
CHILD TAX CREDIT		
Age limit	Under 17 years	Under 18 years
Maximum credit amount per child	\$2,000	\$3,600/\$3,000
Refundable	No	Yes
CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE CREDIT		
Qualifying expenses per child	\$3,000	\$8,000
Maximum Credit per child	\$1,050	\$4,000
CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS DEDUCTION FOR NON-ITEMIZING TAXPAYERS		
	None	\$300/\$600
CHANGES IN 2023		
	2023	2022
GIFT TAX ANNUAL EXCLUSION	\$17,000	\$16,000
IRA CONTRIBUTION	\$6,500	\$6,000
AGE 50 OR OVER, ADDITIONAL	\$1,000	\$1,000
401 (K) CONTRIBUTION	\$22,500	\$20,500
HSA CONTRIBUTION – SINGLE / FAMILY	\$3,850/ \$7,750	\$3,650/ \$7,300
FOREIGN EARNED INCOME EXCLUSION	\$120,000	\$112,000



Mrs. Subha Kuriakose

Baltimore Mar Thoma Church

Ours is an age of advancement. The world in which we live is constantly changing. There is a saying 'The only constant thing in life is change.' Amidst this changing world, we have a God who is unchanging. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" [Hebrews 13:8].

His Word will never change. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" [Matthew 24:35]. It is the absolute truth. It is the authoritative truth. 2 Timothy 3:16 says "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work"

As a believing community let us get back to the Word and hold on to God's kingdom values. His Kingdom values are revealed through His Word. We should be equipped for every good work. For that we need to receive teaching, reproof, correction, and training from the infallible word of God. As per the Word, there are only two ways, a narrow way that leads to life and a broader way that leads to destruction. We have a free will to choose which way we want to go. It is our choice that leads us either to eternal life or eternal punishment.

Unchanging Word of **GOD** in a Changing World

Psalm 1 is a Psalm of wisdom. There we see two different people, a blessed man, and a wicked man. They take two different paths that lead to two different destinies. This Psalm has been used throughout history to point the way to a blessed life and to warn people of impending dangers of divine judgment to the wicked. We are living in a day where people are not sure about what is right or wrong and God is providing us a clear indication through His Word. Psalm 1 is still speaking to us today. We are called to separate ourselves from worldly influences, and to set our hearts in the divine Word of God. The result will be blessing and fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. We are all invited to walk through that narrow way. Jesus is the way. There is no other way to eternal life. What are we doing with the Word of God? Let us find our encouragement from the Word of God, not from the opinions of others. If we allow God to implement His Word in our lives, we can encourage others as well during challenging times. We know the story of two men in Luke 24, they walked along the road to Emmaus. They were talking about confusing events that happened in Jerusalem. Their hearts were troubled after Jesus's death. They hoped that Jesus was the Messiah, though His death left them discouraged. They were looking for answers. The resurrected Jesus knew their heart and was willing to draw near to them.

Jesus walked with them and opened their hearts to the scriptures about Him. As they started listening to Jesus, their hearts burned within them. Through the scriptures Jesus revealed to them what was really happening. Their doubts completely vanished as they were touched by the Truth, Jesus Christ. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Today if we are perplexed by confusing events in our lives, society and nation, Jesus can reorient us through the Word of God just as He did for the two men on the road to Emmaus. He will help us vanish all our doubts and can give us peace that surpasses all our understanding. From our perspective what we are encountering can be difficult, challenging, confusing, and discouraging. It takes Jesus's presence to open our eyes to the truth of the Word of God.

Let us pray to God as Apostle Paul prayed in [Ephesians 1:8] - "Enlighten the eyes of our heart God so that we may know what is the hope to which you have called us." Let us walk worthy of that call. Let us walk through that narrow way. It is important to hold ourselves accountable to God's word. He requires our obedience. "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" [Matthew 7:13-14].



Revelation 11:15

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'



RE-IMAGINING ECCLESIA WITH KINGDOM VALUES IN THE AGE OF CHANGE

Rev. Renny Varghese

Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Virginia

"Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you, yet be sure of this, that the Kingdom of God has come near." (Luke 10:11)

Martin Luther King Jr., an American Baptist minister and one of the prominent leaders in the American civil rights movement, said, *"One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. Every society has its protectors of the status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent, who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. Today, our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, adjust to new ideas, remain vigilant, and face the challenge of change."* The above-quoted words of Martin Luther King Jr. are relevant when the January 2023 issue of Mar Thoma Messenger explores the theme "Kingdom Values in a Changing World."

In this age of change, where COVID-19 has forced the church to become "The Distanced Church" physically, the fundamental call and duties of the kingdom community are being forgotten, and the faith community should awaken from our attitude of indifference. The time has come to act with integrity. There is a saying that "nothing is consistent but change." In this ever-changing world, change is

evident in all areas of the world, from advancements in knowledge to changes in the ecosystem. Humans are also changing mentally and physically. Sometimes this change is not very noticeable to us, but when we look back on world history, we realize the depth and extent of the changes. Change is the law of life, but the values of the Kingdom of God stand eternally in the midst of change. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matthew 24:35). In this article, we are continuing our constant search for how it is possible to imagine and develop a profound ecclesiology by upholding the Kingdom's values in this changing world.

Preliminaries

In our discussion, when we consider the theme of "Re-imagining the Kingdom Values in the Age of Change," it is important to explain some basic terms and connections that must be clarified. Reimagination does not mean expressing our theological intellectual expertise; it is a theological revelation and call for the well-being of human beings founded on the Bible. It is not a call to enter an imaginative world or a dream world but refers to what Alister McGrath called the Latin word "imaginarium" in the Christian tradition. *"It refers to a transformed capacity to see reality on a deeper*

level that might allow people to appreciate the creation better."

Reimagining Ecclesia

Theological reimagination is an important task for the church; there will be no Christian hope if we lose the ability to imagine a new heaven and a new earth. The word "Church" (Ecclesia - the Greek word that means gathering or summoned) in its real sense of the word, we define the church as the universal gathering of people whom God has called out, set apart, and sent forth as the Body of Christ and the continuation of his incarnational presence in the world. The church is known as the first fruit of the Kingdom, the sign of the Kingdom, and the instrument of a manifestation of the kingdom's values in society. In the midst of rapid change, the faith community is called to reimagine the church (Ecclesia) based on the Kingdom values with a prophetic mission and through covenantal social practices of being and becoming the salt and the light of the earth.

Kingdom Values

Kingdom is translated from the Greek term *basileia*, which is recurrently used in the New Testament. In the Hebrew language, it means "Malkuth" to indicate the Kingdom of God. It is known as the sovereign rule of God; in other words, the state of salvation that is inaugurated by Jesus Christ through His saving, life-giving, and renewing work is both a present reality and a future hope. William Barclay says, "It is not a domain but the dominion of God. We see then that the Kingdom of God does not mean a territory in which God is King; it means a condition of the heart, mind, and will where God is Lord of all." The only option before today's church is to reimagine Ecclesia in this changing world with the kingdom values initiated by Christ, our Lord.

The Age of Change

In this twenty-first century, humanity is experiencing a puzzling array of changes that we could never have imagined before. Technological advancements in this age of change confirmed humanity's cleverness; on the other hand, in this age of change and devaluation, human beings are addressed as consumers rather than as responsible people in a material world. "Today's world has placed a premium on material development, sacrificing many moral and spiritual values on the altar of material progress."

St. Luke chapter 10 speaks about the community of disciples commissioned to manifest God's saving presence in a world that is dominated by fake religious and Roman imperial promises. This mission signifies the community of disciples' relation to its given space and time. The Kingdom of God is not about escaping from Earth; it is about radically reimagining and manifesting the Kingdom of God to counter and confront the world of injustice, power, greed, false commitments, and

death with God's mercy and justice. Let us continue our search to shape and reimagine the identity and lifestyle of the Church (Ecclesia) in this post-pandemic world based on Kingdom values.

Kingdom Values for Reimagining the Church as an Alternative Community

Jesus commissioned the seventy disciples for divine delegation as an alternative community with kingdom values, which is totally different from the Roman imperial delegation. It is Warren Carter, in his book *Matthew and the Margins*, that defines the called-out community as an "alternative community." It is a community of de-imperialized subjectivities, and it is an anti-imperial imagination. The Roman Empire also commissions delegates to propagate Pax Romana (Roman peace) and imperial promises with Roman authority. In this context, Jesus commissions his disciples as an alternate community with heavenly authority. "Go, behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves" (Lk. 10:3). The disciples are called to imitate and parallel Jesus' mission to proclaim eternal peace and to follow Jesus by practicing and proclaiming God's empire, which is marked by "itinerancy, simplicity, vulnerability, defenselessness, and divine love." In this fast-changing world, it is easy and comfortable to swim with the flow of change, but Kingdom values always help the church to reimagine its messianic vocation that revokes all other worldly callings in the context of change.

Kingdom Values for Reimagining the Church as the Messianic Community

Giorgio Agamben, the Italian theologian, and philosopher, in his book *The Coming Community*, states that "the church is a messianic community that lives in a messianic time." The messianic age, which was inaugurated by Jesus Christ, should be materialized on earth through the messianic community that is the church. "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes, and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace, be to this house'" (Lk. 10:4-5). In this age of materialism, the logic of materialism intrudes into every aspect of human life. As the world sinks into the depths of materialism and individualism, where kingdom values are ignored, misused, and manipulated, this is the right time where the church must present itself as a messianic community to redeem this world. The messianic community that manifests God's reign is life-giving and is concerned with holistic healing, not death-bringing, and is committed to justice and not the exploitation and domination of the poor and needy. By reimagining the church as a messianic community, it embodies the messianic governance that signifies the church in the contemporary context of change.

Kingdom Values for Reimagining the Church as the Church of the Crucified Community

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The Church is the Church only when it exists for others—not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live for Christ, to exist for others."

In this changing world, kingdom values invite us to reimagine an ecclesiology where discipleship comes to the community in corporate expression. "Sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come" (Lk. 10:1). Jesus sent his disciples to practice corporate discipleship to identify themselves as a corporate discipleship entity rather than an individual entity. In the Kingdom of God, there is no space for individualism and a self-centered life. In this changing world, the challenge before us is to become the Church of the Crucified People in its corporate expression. Rev. Y. T. Vinayaraj, in his book *Church and Empire*, says, "Radical ecclesiology is a call within the call of the Church to become the 'weak church' of the crucified God by becoming the body of the crucified people."

"Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, the kingdom of God has come near to you" (Lk. 10:8-9). This is a call to show solidarity with the people who are facing extraordinary confusion, uncertainty, fear, and loss of control caused by the change in this post-pandemic world. The imagination of the Church as the Church of the Crucified Community, the present post-pandemic world, and our Lord expect it.

Kingdom Values for Reimagining the Church as the Eschatological Community

The calling of the ecclesia is primarily to manifest and reflect Christ's inaugurated reign in the world as a present reality as well as a future hope. "Jesus replied, the coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, here it is, or there it is because the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Lk. 17:20b-21). In the age of change, I strongly say that, whether the world accepts us or not, the church must regain the conviction that the Kingdom of God is a present reality and the hope of the age to come. "Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you, yet be sure of this, that the Kingdom of God has come near" (Lk. 10:11).

When we consider this point in the context of a post-covid world, the majority believed that at the surge of Covid-19 religious worship, gatherings, and its teachings no longer had any relevance. In this post-pandemic world where people are disenchanted and reluctant to go and attend church worship, coping with this situation is possible only through Christian eschatological hope. We should believe and act on the conviction that God will restore the church in the post-pandemic age. Reimagining the church as an eschatological community, the Church is called to believe in Christ's restorative work. Because eschatological hope extends to the restoration of the whole creation, we should believe in and participate in God's mission of restoration. When we study the history of the early church, we learn that in the midst of

the persecution, hope in Christ helped the early church to develop a spirituality of hope and an ecclesiology of the eschatological community. They envisioned the kingdom of God in their present context and the end-time vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

To conclude this discussion, let me quote the Dalai Lama: "Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values." I believe in this age of change; it is the right time and high time for the church to develop a profound ecclesiology by giving importance to Kingdom values. The greatest impulse behind the 19th century Malankara Church Reformation was to reimagine and bring back the church to the values and vision of the Kingdom of God. Without Kingdom values, we cannot imagine a church; they are the lifeblood of the church as well as the Christian family. No matter how much the world we live in is subject to change, Christ and his teachings transform and transcend all cultures and the age of change. H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book *Christ and Culture*, discusses the tension between Christ and culture or context that continues to play itself out over time in new and transforming ways. According to Niebuhr Christ is the transformer of culture in which Christ simultaneously stands above or beyond human cultural changes. In this post-pandemic world, may God help us to imagine and advance the church as an Alternative, Messianic, Crucified, and Eschatological community grounded on Kingdom values.

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KINGDOM VALUES IN A CHANGING WORLD

Very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas

We are living in a pluralistic society. The American community is more plural than any other community in the world. In America, we have people from India, China, Korea, Japan, Israel, Philippines, Africa, and people from other parts of the world. When the first generation migrated to the U.S., they brought their culture (lifestyle / way of living) to this country.

Changes are happening all over. Along with other communities of the world, our community is also changing every day. The development we see in the present world, is the result of many changes that happened over the last one hundred years. The advancement of science and technology in the last ten years is amazing. The scientific technology and artificial intelligence play a key role in our daily life in an unpresidential way, which is magnificent. On the other side of this innovative advancement lingers the fear of nuclear warfare that shadows over humankind. This fear causes anxiety and distress among communities. How do we respond to changes in a rapidly changing environment? However, we remain the same filled with selfishness, hypocrisy, arrogance, lust, adamancy, jealousy, enmity, hardness, hatred, pride, and idolatry. Even in this changing environment, do we need

repentance and sanctification? What is the relevance of Kingdom Values in this changing context? Does it hold any importance in our daily lives? Do these values have a far-reaching impact that sustains human society. Let us look at it from Jesus's point of view.

Kingdom of God and its Value System

The New Testament portrays that Jesus began his public ministry by announcing the arrival of the Kingdom of God. "The time has come; the Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news (Mk.1:15)." Jesus himself taught the values of the kingdom of God in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7), and in parables about the Kingdom. The kingdom of God is a synonym for salvation and seeking the wellbeing of all people. It is accepting God's rule in personal and societal life. Seeking of the Kingdom of God is the chief business of the Christian life" (Jonathan Edwards). "The only significance of life consists in helping to establish the Kingdom of God" (Leo Tolstoy). The Kingdom of God is the announcement by word and deed, that God is acting and manifesting dynamically His redemptive will in history. God is seeking out sinners; he is inviting them to enter the messianic blessing; he is demanding of them a favorable response to his gracious offer" (George E. Ladd)."

It is not that God's kingdom of love did not exist before Jesus, or that it had been postponed somehow - No, but before the incarnation its availability had been restricted and mediated through a special people and a special religious class. In the person of Jesus all that has changed. In Jesus, the doors were thrown wide open: "whoever will, may come." The kingdom of God's love has been made available to all. Whenever, wherever, whoever, in Jesus' person" (Richard Foster). "In what sense, then, did Jesus declare that the Kingdom of God was present? Our answer must at least begin with His own answer to John: "The blind sees, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the Gospel preached to them." In the ministry of Jesus Himself the divine power is released in effective conflict with evil (C.H. Dodd). Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven, healing people from every kind of disease and sickness. Jesus in his sermon on the mount depicted that the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, and the pure in heart will inherit the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:1-10). Then Jesus goes on to say that the disciples of Jesus are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. The light leads the world from darkness to light, it guides the world from unrighteousness to righteousness, from falsehood to truth, from slavery to freedom. The salt gives taste to everything, and everyone associated with it; it preserves, protects, and percolates into the substance associated with it. Jesus taught them to enrich life instead of killing life, not only physical killing but also mental torturing. They have to highlight and uphold human dignity in all situations of life. Family values are to be upheld despite family situations. Divorce is not allowed except in the case of unchastity (Matthew 5:13-32). There is no place for lies, robbery, stealing, and revenge in the Kingdom of God. The disciples are asked to love their enemies. This commandment of Jesus in the Kingdom of God is quite distinctive. Transformation of the mind is needed to love our enemies.

The permanent values of the Kingdom are justice, peace, love, sacrificial life for others, forgiveness, care, longsuffering, and self-control. These are the fruit of the Spirit. These values are the values of a secular society on which society is built; all people irrespective of caste, color, religion, or gender accept this value system as their foundation. In other words, the Kingdom of God is a secular concept, and its value system is accepted by all people irrespective of religions and ideologies. The principles of the Kingdom of God can be summarized

as follows based on Christ's teaching as delineated in the New Testament.

All people, irrespective of caste, color, creed, and gender, are important and equal in status, independent and interdependent but functional differences are there. It is like five fingers on our hands which are all important and mutually dependent.

There is justice, peace and heavenly joy which prevail everywhere.

Sharing of resources is based on one's need.

Equality, fraternity, and freedom belong to all people; and are the rights of all.

It is a classless society. Human dignity and human rights are valued, respected, and maintained.

It is a secular society where there is no disparity or division among people; all are loved and live for one another. Everyone lives for others too. (The "secular" I mean here, is not a materialistic godless society, rather a society that gives equal importance to all religions, and gives freedom to all religions to profess it, the state has no religion).

All people accept the rule of God directly or indirectly.

Called out to bring about the fulfillment of the Kingdom on earth

Jesus taught us to pray, "thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6: 10). If God's will be done on earth, the earth will become heaven. This is the mission of the church. "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). The prophet Amos was saying like any other Hebrew prophet that what God wants is justice and right living rather than righteous ceremonies. In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "thy will be done." It is important to realize God's will in each life situation and dare to do it with conviction. Obedience to God is the key concept here. Jesus' dynamic obedience to God led him to the cross. The consequence of obedience is cross. "Greatness in the kingdom of God is measured in terms of obedience" (John Stott). The first Adam disobeyed God and thwarted God's purpose and plan about humans and the world; and Jesus being the second Adam through His dynamic obedience to the Father, fulfilled God's plan of salvation for the world and

humans. Thomas À Kempis says, "Jesus has many who love the kingdom of God, but few who bear the cross. He has many who desire His comfort, but few who desire His suffering. All want to rejoice with Him, but few are willing to suffer for Him."

In the parables Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom of God is organic, not organizational. In the parable of the mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32), and the leaven (Matthew 13:33-34), the likeness is to the growth and branching out of the mustard seed, and the likeness of the leaven working secretly, invisibly, surprisingly, and irresistibly. This likeness is available to us here and now - the question is whether we are available to face the challenges of the Kingdom. Martin Luther Jr. says, when we see social relationships controlled everywhere by the principles which Jesus illustrated in life-trust, love, mercy, and altruism - then we shall know that the kingdom of God is here. John Wesley says, "Give me one hundred men who love only God with all their heart and hate only sin with all their heart and we will shake the gates of hell and bring in the kingdom of God in one generation." We are in the Kingdom of God; however, we are looking forward for its fulfilment. What we enjoy at present is the foretaste of the Kingdom. God will bring its fulfilment or plenitude as His gift without human participation.

Build up Secular unity and fellowship, across the communities

Justice, Peace Joy, Love, Freedom, and Unity do not belong to any community, but it belongs to all people irrespective of religions and ideologies. All people uphold these values and are hesitant to accept situations when these values are broken. We, Christians, are reminded that these are the values of the kingdom of God. As Christians we are obliged to have fellowship with anyone upholding these values. St. Peter, while he

was in Cornelius' house and realized a revelation given to him, says, "I now realize, how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts from every nation, the one who fears him and does what is Justice" (Acts 10:34-35). Till that time the Jews thought that they were the only people loved by God. Now, St. Peter has come to a new understanding that Cornelius, a gentile, who does justice, is also accepted by God. The triune God in Christ invites the members of the Church to accept all people who are outside the boundaries of the church, who do justice. The late lamented Dr. Yuhannon Marthoma Metropolitan, of blessed memory, kept a sincere relationship with Late Mr. Achutha Menon, former chief minister of Kerala and Late Mr. M.N. Govindan Nayar, who were communist leaders in India. Their friendship yielded reliable positive results, and the people of Kerala enjoyed it. The Government of Kerala assumed the "House for Houseless Project" for the Kerala society, which was initiated Valiya Thirumeni. The relationship between Gandhiji and C. F. Andrews was greatly appreciated and applauded by all. The dynamicity of the presence of Christ between them, enriched and strengthened them and all people associated with them. C. F. Andrews never kept any money with him, if he had anything he used to give it to the poor and needy. Once, C. F. Andrews visited Gandhiji, and Gandhiji gave him just enough money for a ticket back home. At the railway station C. F. Andrews gave away that money to a needy person, and he remained there without a railway ticket. When someone from Gandhiji's ashram met C. F. Andrews at the Railway station, and informed Gandhiji about it, Gandhiji realized what Andrews had done. Gandhiji sent the person again with money to purchase a ticket for Andrews and insisted that he should not hand over the money to C. F. Andrews but purchase a ticket and give it to him. This type of care, concern, and unity of a secular life is the fellowship of the Kingdom of God. We the members of the church are invited to form secular fellowships wherever it is possible across communities.



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The Values of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth

Rev. Larry Philip Varghese



I have heard people say they want to go to heaven when they die, but I have yet to hear anyone say they want to go to the Kingdom of God when they die. Is that because we think they are separate things? Is heaven what awaits us after death while the kingdom of God is something now? Or is the kingdom still on its way? For many Christians, the goal is to go to heaven. However, the goal of Christ and His church has never been to go to heaven, but to bring heaven to earth. If we realized that the Kingdom of Heaven is the same as the Kingdom of God, then it becomes clear why the Kingdom of God and its values matters so much.

To see this connection between heaven and God's reign on earth, let us start at the beginning. The Garden of Eden used to be the place on earth where God and humans were together. They would commune with each other and there was no death. But due to sin, humans were cut off from God. Flaming cherubim were placed at the entrance of the garden to guard the way back. After the Garden of Eden, the whole story of the Bible testifies of how God would take His place as King over a renewed people. God in His mercy would find a way to be with His people and His very presence would transform their lives. This is the story of the Gospel. But there is another clear story in the Bible about a people who want to go up to heaven on their own. The Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11, narrates humanity's attempt

to get up to heaven. They tried to make a tower with its top in the heaven. God quickly puts a stop to it. God's restoration plan is to renew the world, not to steal people away from earth (John 17:15).

Jacob's Ladder

In Genesis 28:12, as Jacob dreamed, he saw a stairway that God established - with its top reaching to heaven! It is possible to reach heaven, but the stairway is revealed by God and Jacob does not go up on it. Jacob awakes to a great truth, "Surely God is in this place," and named the place the house of God: Beth-el. Jacob saw a connection between heaven and earth and experienced God's presence not far away, but there in that place. He glimpsed the beautiful reality, that God was coming back to make His home among us.

Tabernacle

Later in the story of the exodus, Moses goes up a high mountain (Mt. Sinai but also called Mt. Horeb) and there he meets God. God gives instructions on building the tabernacle. And in Exodus 25:8, God had the people make a tabernacle (tent) for God, and God would dwell among them. Read carefully and you will notice the instructions to embroider cherubim on the curtain and note the cherubim that sit atop the Ark of the Covenant. The tabernacle was marked as a kind of Eden; a place



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where God dwells. The tabernacle was the overlap of heaven and earth. It represented the space where God dwells among His people.

Temple

The temple was also viewed in a similar way. In 1 Kings 8:13, Solomon declares that the Lord would dwell in the temple forever. Even though he knew that God is too great to be contained in a building, yet he and all Israel believed that God was in their midst and that the temple was their proof. The temple had carvings of the cherubim in many places, again reminding those who came near that the Lord was close. Isaiah had a vision and saw God enthroned over the temple and His glory and robe filled the temple space. God was dwelling in their midst and by being so close to His people, God was bringing heaven to earth. God bridged the gap, journeyed with His people, and dwelt in their midst.

Jesus as the ladder, tabernacle, and temple

For Christians, Jesus is the fulfillment of God dwelling with us. Jesus is Jacob's ladder, the tabernacle, and the temple of God. In John 1:51, Jesus tells Nathaniel, "Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." This is the fulfillment of Jacob's dream. Jesus was the connecting point of heaven and earth. Through Jesus, the gap between heaven and earth was bridged. Jesus is the tabernacle, the one who tents in our midst. When Jesus was born, John said in John 1:14, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The word for "dwelt" is literally "to pitch a tent." God, through Jesus, came down from the high place and lived among His people, just like in the wilderness. Jesus would be the one who journeyed with people as they went through the struggles of the wilderness experiences of their lives. And in John 2:19, Jesus affirms that he is the true temple! Jesus is the one through whom we can meet and be with God. John masterfully weaves all these truths together as he tells us in Revelation 21, the new heaven Jerusalem comes down to earth, and God dwells with His people forever on earth!

Message and prayer of Jesus

Jesus in the New Testament becomes the meeting point of heaven and earth. Wherever Jesus went, people experienced the nearness of the Kingdom of Heaven which is the Kingdom of God! This coincides with His most preached sermon point: The kingdom of heaven has come near! - Matthew 4:17. Jesus lived and died to bring the kingdom of God. When Jesus taught the

disciples to pray, he brought heaven and earth together. "Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven! Wherever God's will was being done on earth, there also God's heavenly presence was understood. This is what Jesus' life exemplified. He announced the kingdom and proved it by His actions. In Matthew 4:23, Jesus preaches the Good News of the Kingdom and then healed many people and cast out demons. Through His life, and through His commissioning of the disciples, the Kingdom of God was no longer a distant hope but a present reality. The task of the church is to go out and preach the good news that heaven has come down! In Matthew 10:7-8, he sends the disciples to proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' They were to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons – and they did (Mark 6:12-13)! The values of the kingdom were being expressed not as a way of earning access into heaven but as proof of their current heavenly citizenship.

Choosing the right kingdom

The values of the Kingdom of God matter because we are all citizens of a kingdom and we all will reflect the values of that kingdom. Many serve the kingdoms of this world: its politics, its economics, its education, status, and power. Few serve the kingdom of God. When we imbibe more and more the fruit of the Spirit, we reveal to the world that we belong to God and that we belong to His kingdom. Each day we must awaken to the reality of what Jesus has done in inaugurating the kingdom and choose this day whom we will serve. In love, we must push back the darkness of the kingdoms of this age. This task may feel like a futile effort, it may seem like there is little to no progress, but the kingdom of God is truly like a little bit of heaven. Indeed, it is like a mustard seed. The kingdom is here, and it is advancing. Yet still some will think that we are to wait for the kingdom. In Zechariah, the people ask how long they should mourn as they wait for the kingdom of God. The word of the Lord comes to Zechariah and indicts them all: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another (Zec 7:9-10). While many question where is heaven or when will the kingdom of God finally be here, the real question is: When will we be a people who participate in His Kingdom? The kingdom is now, and we shall diligently labor in the field until the Lord of the harvest comes again to dwell among us forever.

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Kingdom Values in a Changing World

"Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will never pass away"

St. Matthew 24:35

**LIVING WITH THE GOOD NEWS OF
THE KINGDOM**



Dr. Thomas Mathew

Horeb Mar Thoma Church, Los Angeles



Introduction

We are living in a fast-paced world. Scientific and technological advancements mark swift transformations in every arena. These transformations are occurring at a greater rate as we head to the future. The latest among such scientific breakthroughs is the miniature replication of the nuclear fusion process that happens in the sun and stars. While we embrace and appreciate our past traditions and values, questions arise about their pertinence for the present and the future. A transformation seems inevitable. We witness an ever-changing world with ever-changing traditions and even some values! We face various trials that test our faith and values. Are these changes and challenges perilous or for the refinement of our soul?

King and Kingdoms

Much of humanity has always been adherent to temporal kings and kingdoms, emperors, and empires, either voluntarily or imperatively. Throughout the Scripture we see verses referring to God and His reign as "King," "King of Glory," "Kingdom of God (Lord)," and "Kingdom of Heaven."¹

God created humankind as man and woman with His breath in His image to live with Him in His Kingdom under His care forever. God gave man the kingship over His creation in His dominion (God's Kingdom) where God is the supreme King. In Genesis 1:27-30, we see a prelim picture of God's kingdom and territory in His dominion. When He blew the breath of life, He endowed humankind with the unique gift of self-determination known as "free will" so that humankind would be able to make their "choices" freely. God has His "FREE WILL" infinitely stronger by which He planned and created the Universe and everything in it. We can use our "free will" wisely or irrationally. It can turn human history to goodness or suffering depending on how the human beings of the world act. Therefore, the argument which may arise 'God the Almighty had known what was about to happen and God should have controlled it' is irrelevant.

Since God has authored and authorized "free will," He has great regard and respect for it. God, our King wants his children to live in freedom using their "free will" for the Glory of His Kingdom forever. God's kingship is not a dictatorship but His divine providence in eternal love (the agape love)! But sin entered the history of humankind through disobedience to God when the "free will" of Adam and Eve chose obedience to Satan. This led to man's subsequent fall from God's Kingdom, but God through our Savior Jesus (God as man, the Immanuel) had the remedy in place.

1. Our King and the Kingdom

For God's children, Kingdom refers to only one eternal King and Kingdom, not any temporal king and kingdom. When God's will and man's free will are in harmony, God's kingdom becomes real and prevails! Since creation, God wants human beings to live with Him forever (Immanuel: Immanu- with us, El- God). When humankind fell into sin in Eden, God in His eternal love came down as His son and our savior Jesus (Isaiah 7:14; St. Matthew 1:23) from His throne of heaven to earth, His footstool (Isaiah 66:1). This is to bring us back to our living with God forever. In the temporal kingdom, we are the subjects of the king. In God's Kingdom, we are His children, the heirs of His Kingdom (Romans 8:17; James 2:5) with no end (Isaiah 9:7; St. Luke 1:33). That is why the angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people" (St. Luke 2:10).

St. John the Baptist urged the multitude, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near" (St. Matthew 3:2). Soon

after, Jesus started His public ministry preaching the good news of the Kingdom (St. Matthew 4:23). Jesus is God the Immanuel, who came as man, dwelled among humans, and He is the founder of the Kingdom. Jesus, the King of Heaven on Earth, brought the Kingdom of Heaven experience in us and reinstated our citizenship of God's Kingdom. The simplest criterion to become a citizen of God's Kingdom is trusting and obeying our Lord (Romans 10:10). By fixing our eyes on Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith, He liberates us back into the freedom of the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:1). So, when we open our heart to Jesus, Kingdom of God is born in our hearts. Albert Schweitzer said, "There can be no Kingdom of God in the world without Kingdom of God in our hearts."

2. Kingdom Values and the Good News

Freedom in temporal kingdom values is variable and amendable by human perception at each moment in time, whereas freedom in God's kingdom is based on "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you" (Psalms 89:14). Kingdom dominion extends from our hearts to Heaven. Glory to God our King, righteousness (justice), heavenly peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit are the notable features (values) in God's Kingdom. That is why the heavenly host praised God at the time of His birth saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (St. Luke 2:14).

Values of the Kingdom of God are everlasting because they are God's words (St. Matthew 24:35; St. Luke 21:33). Jesus said I am the life, the truth, and the way. Citizens of God's Kingdom love everyone without judgment and discrimination because we know that God's love supersedes everything and that God is our ultimate judge. Our Savior lived out in this world as the perfect example for us.

3. Living with Good News in a Permissive Society

As Christians, our duty is to share the good news to ensure that the Kingdom of God and its values reign wherever we are. This is the substance of our Lord's great commission (St. Matthew 28:16-20; St. Mark 16:15-18; St. Luke 24:46-49; St. John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8). "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (St. Matthew 6:33). Jesus starts His sermon on the mount with the prerequisite for the Kingdom of Heaven- to be

humble (poor in spirit) and urges us to live for justice (persecuted for righteousness). Jesus taught us to pray always for the advent of God's Kingdom. The universalist theologian Professor William Barclay in his book *Ethics in a Permissive Society* warns that any move "to align the church to the world, in the name of aligning it to reality, is the quickest way to suicide for the church. Only the skeleton of the Church will remain as our Lord will not live in that body. It is true, and we witness it today. The values of the worldly Kingdom need not be specified here as we all are aware of them. The Holy Spirit, the Counselor, and the Steward will guide us to live as God's children in this world. Let our life be the testimony of our faith by sharing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). We cannot keep away from our social responsibility to our brethren. "God did not send His son to condemn the world but to save the world through him" (St. John 3:17). Hence, let us...

(a) Stand firm in the faith

"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong," 1 Corinthians 16:13

(b) Do everything in love and understanding

"Do everything in love," 1 Corinthians 16:14

(c) Not judge anyone

"Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister," Romans 14:13.


(d) Esteem others better than ourselves.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." * Philippians 2:3.

Summary

The Kingdom of God extends from our hearts to Heaven, where "Christocracy" prevails. Christ is the King and God's grace reign over people's "fairness." In the present democracies (another version of the temporal kingdom), often the majority rules the minority but in God's Kingdom, all are equal; truth and justice are the cornerstones. The Kingdom of God is right here when we Love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves (The Greatest Commandment- St. Mark 12:30, 31).

May our Almighty Lord strengthen us to never compromise God's Kingdom values for ever-changing world values. May He help us to continue our faith journey in His grace for His glory and eternal life with Him. Amen.



John 3:3-5

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

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DR. BINU JACOB, MD, FACC, FHRIS
CARDIAC ELECTROPHYSIOLOGIST
& ADVANCED HEART FAILURE



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Dr. Jacob completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida under a full academic scholarship, completing the six-year Honors Program in Medicine. He trained at the University of Southern California, University of Florida and the University of Miami. He specializes in advanced heart failure and arrhythmia ablations such as atrial fibrillation. Dr. Jacob also performs device therapies such as leadless pacemakers (MICRA) and biventricular defibrillators. He is the past Chief of Cardiology and current Director of Cardiac Rehabilitation at AdventHealth. Please contact Dr. Binu Jacob for all your cardiac conditions and primary prevention lifestyle concerns.

A member of the South Florida Mar Thoma Church.

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The Kingdom of God in a Changing World

Plammoottil V. Cherian, M.Div., Ph.D.
Chicago Mar Thoma Church

"For I am the Lord, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6)

We are living in a world that is constantly changing. We see changes everywhere, from the personal relationship of people, culture, world leaders, nations, economy, climate, and even cosmic changes are taking place. Many of these changes affect our body, mind and spirit, social behavior, beliefs, habits, character, and strength. While we see changes everywhere, only God is unchanging and immutable. God has given humanity the moral code for righteous living. Still, history reveals that humankind deviated from God's ways drastically, beginning in the Garden of Eden, where Satan introduced doubt about God and his plan for the human race. The general trend of the culture has been "everyone did as they saw fit" (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).

Yet, throughout generations from Adam to the present, people believe they have been living righteously unmindful of these changes. Today, the culture is similar; leaders and people put their interests first. Time has not changed human nature. But in God's

eyes, there is none who does good, not even one (Ps. 14:3). Most people still reject God's guidance and the kingdom values and opt to follow their instinct creating confusion, chaos, and distress for the nations. Ancient Israel experienced desolation when Assyria destroyed the nation in 722 BC and by Babylon in 586 BC. Apart from God, people will do whatever seems right to them with severe consequences.

Announcement of the Kingdom of God

As humanity has fallen from grace, the image of God in us has tarnished and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Thus, at the appointed time, God sent a messenger, John the Baptist, to prepare the way for Messiah, the King to rule the world righteously and to redeem us. (Mal. 3:1). It was the darkest period of 430 years in human history after the prophet Malachi that Jesus was born, bringing the *Kingdom of God on earth*. Both John the Baptist and Jesus started their ministry with the same message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"



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(Matt. 3:1-2, 4:17; Mark 1:1-8). Long before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah foresaw this darkness over the nations, with a promise of God's shining glory to dispel the darkness: "See, darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you, and his glory appears over you" (Isa. 60:2). That shining glory is of Jesus Christ, the light of the world (John 8:12). Penance and transformation are essential to be partakers of the kingdom of God.

The Character of the Kingdom of God

Jesus taught the kingdom values in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), a collection of spiritual and moral principles that Jesus expects of those who want to be part of the kingdom. They are innately counter to world culture, and many consider it impossible to follow. But many accepted the call to change their way of life, thoughts, and actions. But the leaders and the nation did not change; they followed their own ways, rejecting Jesus as King. "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him" (John 1:11). The result is the Kingdom of God on earth was delayed. The Messiah was cut off according to the prophecy of Daniel (9:26), yet Christ's death paid for the forgiveness of sins so that those who believe can be part of the kingdom of God. "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds, we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

Partakers of the Kingdom of God

Those who believe in Jesus Christ are partakers of the kingdom, preparing for eternity with God. Until Christ returns, believers are expected to create an everlasting realm where God is sovereign and Christ rules in every sphere of human activity. Biblical prophecies and Christ himself revealed in Revelation 19-22 that he would return to earth as king and reign over the world. Afterward, Christ fulfills his role as Judge, and his Kingdom shall continue as a new earth under a new heaven. The assurance is, "He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13). Therefore, Paul warns, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).

Cultural Shift and Christ's Final Message

Prophet Isaiah foresaw a devastating condition of the social and political order of the present times. "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20). When people blur the distinction between good and evil, devastating consequences are sure to follow. Today,

truth is not only relative but also masked, redacted, and rejected; violence and bloodshed are rampant everywhere. Thus, in preparation for Christ's return to establish the everlasting kingdom of GOD, Christ himself sends a strong message to the Universal Church, represented by the seven churches, to prepare people for the kingdom. Christ's message has commendations for faithfulness, rebuke, and warning for those who are not upright in their mission. Church members must repent for forsaking our first love and tolerate and compromise on faith, salvation, and eternal life. We should not be like the church in Laodicea, where Christ was outside knocking to come in for fellowship.

Preserve Kingdom Values in Shifting Culture

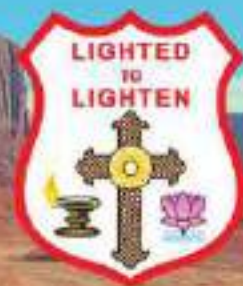
First, we must build our faith on the unshakable foundation of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 7, Jesus taught about building a house on rock or sand. We all face severe storms in life, but when we build our lives on Christ and on His ways, we will be on a solid foundation. We need to move from the shifting and sinking sands of the world's opinions, attitudes, and ways, but instead anchor our lives on Christ, who "is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Second, the foremost value of the kingdom of God is the peace that was announced at the birth of Jesus, which is lacking everywhere today. What we see is the distress of the nations and perplexed humanity. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). Only children of God can be partakers of the kingdom of God. Strive to make peace under all circumstances, at home, church, society, and nation. Third, know that we are in the world, but not of the world" (John 17:15-16). We cannot be taken out of the world, but we must live in the world, fulfilling our mission in the changing world as Lord Jesus overcame the world.

Christ, during his ministry on earth, lived in a culture of good and evil. We cannot deny and take ourselves away from the culture but live above the culture, transforming the culture and combating bias and hatred with love and compassion, holding on to God's truth. How Jesus overcame the Pharisees' attitude, his mission with Samaritans (John 4), and his interaction with the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21-28) are examples of how to transform the world in a changing culture and still be part of the Kingdom of God. We must be able to carry out our social responsibilities and work for the kingdom of God, standing firm on the Rock of our Salvation. Amen!

(Dr. P.V. Cherian is a retired professor and former Associate Secretary of the Diocese of North America and Europe.)

MAR THOMA MISSION BOARD
DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

NATIVE AMERICAN MISSION



Reaching Out in Love to the Native American Community

The Native American Mission began as a part of our efforts to reach out to our neighbors in North America. For the past twenty years, we have been working among various Native American communities, including the Choctaw in Alabama and Oklahoma, the Houma in Louisiana, and the Navajo in Utah and New Mexico. The primary goal of the mission program is to reach out to the community with Christian love, especially to the children and youths who are in need of understanding and discovering their identity in Christ. The Mar Thoma Mission Board desires to collaboratively foster fellowship with our Native American brothers and sisters and to deepen Christian faith, to provide mentorship, to empower parents and youths, and to encourage local leadership.



Mission Trips and VBS Camps for 2023

LOVE IN ACTION MINISTRY

Dulac United Methodist Church, Louisiana

February 17 - 20

Helping with renovation of the church damaged severely due to Hurricane Ida in August 2021.



VBS MINISTRY DATES

Choctaw Oklahoma Mission
June 4 - 7

Choctaw Alabama Mission
June 15 - 17

Houma Louisiana Mission (Dulac)
June 29 - July 1

Navajo Utah Mission
July 20 - 23

Navajo New Mexico Mission
July 12 - 16



Pray and Participate

For More Information, Please Contact:

Mar Thoma Mission Board

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Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel (Convener)
cpdachen@gmail.com | 732-754-8131

Mr. O. C. Abraham (Coordinator)
ocnirmala@aol.com | 302-239-7119



**Kingdom values -
Challenges in the changing world**

Dr. Elsy Mathew
Los Angeles MTC, CA

Reflections on the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Conference 2022

What a magnificent and glorious occasion! October 13th to 16th in beautiful, sunshiny Dallas, Texas for the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Conference 2022.

A big salute to the Farmers Branch Mar Thoma Church. Ephesians 4:1 says, "Live a life, worthy of the calling you have received." As the Father, son and Holy Spirit are in unity, so should the church family. The Dallas Farmers Branch family demonstrated the unity of the Holy Spirit, in word, deed, and action. I was overjoyed at the wholehearted participation of the entire church family in this celebration. I witnessed the joy of the children, youth, adults, and seniors, transforming this event into a heavenly feast. A joyful event. A week of spiritual, physical, and emotional nourishment—a divine feast. Godly women from all over the world, like beautiful

rivers dancing with joy, in colorful outfits like a rainbow. A beautiful divine painting of our ladies witnessing to the world that 'We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do the good works, which God has prepared in advance before our creation.'

Our children did a fabulous job at the inauguration, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom. Rev. Cherian Achen, who coordinated the event, said "The hand of the Lord is with us." What a profound statement. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news" (Isaiah 52:7).

This conference was unique in many ways. The women of Farmers Branch, Dallas, Texas were the chosen vessels of God in the year 2000 to initiate and organize

UPCOMING events

INDIA MISSION TRIP - 2023

The Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church has decided to organize the India Mission trip from July 11, 2023 to July 20, 2023 (excluding travel).

The mission fields to visit are Devanahalli Mission/ Hoskote Mission near Bangalore in Karnataka, India and Navjeevan Centre, Mumbai.

Participants will be responsible for purchasing their airfare. For the youth participants, the Diocese upon completion of the trip and submission of the receipts, will reimburse one third of the airfare. The transportation, food and accommodation in India will be arranged and cost per person will be approximately \$400.

This will be a good opportunity for the youths to better understand the mission work of the Church and to learn how to be involved in such mission initiatives.

Registration form and the guidelines for the mission trip are available. Youths who are interested in participating are requested to give their names to Diocesan Council Member Dr. Aleyamma Mathew (Convener) at +1 909-964-7829 or dreismathew@gmail.com or to India Mission Sub Committee members Dr. Mariamma Abraham at +1 215-917-2920 or dr.mabraham.abraham@gmail.com and Mr. Jibin Mathew at +1 682-552-6853 or jibinamathew@yahoo.com.

The last date of registration will be April 15th, 2023 and the total number of participants will be ten on first come basis.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FORUM

A Project of The Mar Thoma Church of North America and Europe Diocese North-East Region RAC



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the first Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Conference. What a coincidence that the same leaders who organized the first conference, were chosen again by God to fulfill his divine purpose. Is it a coincidence or a Divine plan?

I witnessed the renewal of Kingdom relationships, Kingdom values, Kingdom culture and Kingdom connections during this celebration. I personally experienced divine love, respect, and compassion from the leaders. A sumptuous and heavenly feast. I saw the special anointing God has bestowed upon the leaders of this conference. I personally experienced the divine joy and peace that surpasses all understanding. God equipped the leaders with divinity to lead us to supernatural heights.

Another unique feature of this conference was the participation of youth and young women. They were rejoicing after every session. They were amazed when they experienced the power and the presence of Holy Spirit. They had a "Wow!" experience at this conference. They had no words to express their joy and thankfulness. Young women were speakers and it was very encouraging and inspiring to all the women of our parishes. The speakers were role models for the future generation. The leaders spoke with serenity and calmness when they spoke about God's Kingdom. What a great invitation to be "Mentors of the new world." I was so glad to see that, as a Diocese, we have started recognizing the value of women in Kingdom building. Just like Mary and Martha, Aquila and Priscilla, and Mary Magdalene, God is choosing the young women of our diocese as future mentors. As a diocese, it is high time for us to recognize the Deborahs and Ruths of this millennium as mentors of the new world.

Big kudos to the men of Farmers Branch, Dallas. Their hospitality was remarkable and we had sumptuous and delicious food and drinks throughout the day. Great teamwork, a friendly atmosphere, and a welcoming spirit! The caring team created a great ambience.

This conference was like a 'mini' Maramon convention. The Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan, and our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos were present and spoke during various sessions. We were also blessed by the presence and witnessing of Honorable Judge Tammy Kemp from the

Dallas County, Texas. Our program coordinator was so impressed by her Godly nature, and through Judge Tammy Kemp's witnessing we experienced divine love, and compassion, and her witnessing was a real revelation. Thanks to God Almighty for the kingdom connection Judge Tammy Kemp bestowed upon us.

During the day of Pentecost there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Peter addressed the crowd and three thousand became Christians that day. From 60 delegates at our first Diocesan Sevika Sanghom conference in 2000 at the same church, God added 600+ delegates in 2022 (including clergy and their families) – a 10-fold increase! What a blessing! What a divine journey! Rev. Cherian Achen proclaimed on the first day "The hand of the Lord is with us." Everyone enjoyed the Kingdom culture, Kingdom relationships and made Kingdom connections.

We were all blessed. Some are chosen by God to be a blessing to others. Some of us were brought to receive the blessings. No matter who we were, God dealt with everyone personally. Thank you, Lord for the encounter we had experienced with you, on a timely basis. We each had an invitation from God to prepare ourselves as a Bride of Christ, to meet him when He call us.

We are on a journey. A journey of Faith. Our destination is Heaven. Let us clothe ourselves with that white Robe of righteousness and purity of heart, so we will rule and reign with him.

I am thankful to Dr. Molly Zechariah who asked me to first write a reflection on this conference in the Messenger in 2000 and chose me again in 2022 – a demonstration of love. A big thanks to Cherian Achen, Mrs. Elizabeth John, the Conference Coordinator, Dr. Anju Bijili, the Secretary, and Mrs. Annamma Mathew, Treasurer, for a job well done. Thank you, Lord Almighty, for making all things possible. May the Lord bless you all with his divine grace and those who are wise will shine like stars in Heaven. May you be a shining star for God and his kingdom.

(Dr. Eisy Mathew is a Diocesan Council Member for 2020-2023).

ഉന്മാദംവിട്ട് ഉണ്മയിലേക്ക്

Mrs. Bincy Sam

Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston



വേദാന്ത മൂലമുള്ള ഈ കൈമാറ്റം യുവത്വത്തിൽ മുഖ്യങ്ങൾക്ക് സ്ഥാനം ഇല്ലാതായിരിക്കുന്നു. ബിരുദങ്ങൾ സ്ഥാപിച്ച് മെച്ചപ്പെട്ട തൊഴിൽ നേടുന്നതിനുള്ള ഉപാധി മാത്രമായിരിക്കുകയാണ് ഇന്നത്തെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം. ചില വ്യക്തികളുടെ സ്വാർത്ഥതയാകുന്ന തത്ത്വചിന്തകൾ വളർത്തുന്നതിന് മൂല്യങ്ങൾ വിലഞ്ഞു തടിയായി മാറുന്നതിനാൽ മൂല്യാധിഷ്ഠിത വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം പിന്തുടർച്ചപ്പെട്ടു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. അതുകൊണ്ട് ഒരുപറ്റം അക്രമണ സ്വഭാവമുള്ള തലമുറ വളർന്നു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. നീതിപൂർവ്വമായി പണം ശമ്പളം എന്ന മൂല്യബോധം മറന്ന് ജീവിതമുടനീളം വെട്ടിപ്പിഴയുടെയും പണം നേടാനിറങ്ങുന്ന രേഖാക്കുറി, പണത്തിന്റെയും അധികാരത്തിന്റെയും മറവിൽ എന്ത് നേടിക്കൊടുക്കേണ്ടതെന്ന് ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യാൻ മടിക്കാത്ത സാമൂഹിക പ്രവർത്തകർ, നന്നല്ല അറിഞ്ഞിട്ട് കഴുകൻ കണ്ണുകൾ പതിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന പലരും മാധ്യമകർ. അങ്ങനെ നീളുകയാണ് മനോഹരികളുടെ പട്ടിക.

ഒരുകാലത്ത് സമൂഹം അസൂയ എന്ന് കണ്ടതെല്ലാം ഇന്ന് നല്ല മാതിരി മാറിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഒരുകാലത്ത് പ്രാകൃതം എന്ന് കണ്ടവ പരിഷ്കൃതമായിരിക്കുന്നു. നമ്മുടെ കയ്യിൽ പറ്റി അറിയുന്നതിനുള്ള ബോധത്തിനും മാറ്റം വന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. അതിനൊപ്പം സാമൂഹിക ബോധം മൂലം അലഞ്ഞു വന്നിരുന്നവർ വളർത്താൻ മാതാപിതാക്കൾ അപ്രാപ്തമാകുന്നു. ഒരു വിദ്യാലയം ആരംഭിക്കു

മ്പോൾ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു കാലത്തും അടച്ചു പൂട്ടാം എന്ന് മഹാനായ വികിറ്റർ പറഞ്ഞു എഴുതി. എന്നാൽ ഇന്ന് വിദ്യാലയങ്ങളെ കയ്യടക്കാനും ആരെ മാറ്റുകയാണ് ചെറിയ മാധ്യമകർ.

മന സുഖത്തിന് പിറകെ പോകുന്നവർക്ക് ആത്മീയ കാര്യങ്ങൾക്ക് സമയവും സൗകര്യവും ഉണ്ടാവുകയില്ല. വിത്തും മണ്ണും ആഹാരങ്ങളും പാർട്ടികളും കൊണ്ട് പണിയപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ് അവരുടെ ജീവിതം. അവിടെ ദൈവബലത്തിനും ദൈവത്തിനും ഒരു സ്ഥാനവുമില്ല.

സത്യവാചകന്റെ ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്നിന്റെ 29 മുതലുള്ള വാക്യങ്ങളിൽ മനം, അഹിംസയ്ക്കും, പരസ്പരം തുടങ്ങിയവകളെ അംഗീകൃതം എന്നു പോകുന്നവരെ പറ്റി ദൈവം മോൻ പറയുന്നത് വളരെ അർത്ഥമുള്ളതായ ഉപദേശങ്ങളിലൂടെയാണ്.

"ആർക്കും കഷ്ടം ആർക്കും സങ്കടം ആർക്ക് കലഹം ആർക്ക് ആവലാതി ആർക്ക് അനാവശ്യ മുറിവുകൾ ആർക്ക് കൺപുറം വീഞ്ഞ് കുടിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് നേരെ വൈകിക്കുന്നവർക്കും മറ്റും ഭയപ്പെടുന്നത് പോകുന്നവർക്കും തന്നെ വീഞ്ഞ് ചുവന്ന പാത്രത്തിൽ തിളങ്ങുന്നതും ദൈവത്തിൽ ഉറപ്പുള്ളതും നീ സോഫ്റ്റ് കട്ടുകൾ അത് വർദ്ധം പോലെ നിന്നെ കടിക്കും പരസ്പരം കൈകൾ നോക്കും നിന്റെ പുറം വൃക്ക പരയും നീ നടുക്കടിയിൽ തെ

കുറവുകൾ പോലെയും പാലത്തിന്റെ മുകളിൽ ഉറങ്ങുന്ന വനെ പോലെയും ആകും."

"തന്റെ സമ്പത്തിൽ ആശ്രയിക്കുന്നവൻ വീഴും നീതിയാധാരപര്യയില പോലെ തഴയ്ക്കും."

സമ്പത്തിനു വേണ്ടിയുള്ള ആർത്തിയാൽ ദ്രാഹ്യ പിടിച്ച എല്ലാ മനുഷ്യരുടെയും കഥ ആണ് ലീയോ കോർസ്റ്റയി എഴുതിയ "രൊൽക്ക് എൻ മൂർ" വേണം എന്ന കഥ.

ഒരിക്കൽ റൊൽ തനിക്ക് കൃഷി ചെയ്യാൻ കുറച്ചു ഭൂമി വേണം എന്ന് ഒരു പ്രാവീനോട് അപേക്ഷിച്ചു ഒരു ദിവസം കൊണ്ടു നടന്ന് എത്താൻ കഴിയുന്നതിനേക്കാളും ഭൂമി സൗജന്യമായി എടുത്തോളൂ. സൂര്യൻ അസ്തമിക്കുന്നതിന് മുമ്പ് തുടങ്ങിയിട്ടേറെ തന്നെ മടങ്ങി എത്തണം. പ്രഭു നിർത്തിച്ചു. ഫലപൂജയായ കനകം വിളമ്പിക്കൊടുത്തു ഭൂമി. അയാൾ ഓടി, നിൽക്കാൻ സമയമില്ല. നിന്നാൽ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നത് ഒന്നാകും. ഭൂമിയാണ് മണിക്കൂറുകൾ കഴിഞ്ഞു ഇനി സൂര്യൻ അസ്തമിക്കാൻ അവക നേരില്ല. സൂര്യൻ അസ്തമിക്കുന്നതിനു മുമ്പ് മടങ്ങി എത്തിയില്ലെങ്കിൽ ഈ പാട്ടുപെട്ടെല്ലാം വെറുതെയായും കാലുകൾ കൂഴങ്ങിയെങ്കിലും ബ്രഹ്മവേദം കൊണ്ട് നെഞ്ചു പൊട്ടി കോലും എന്ന് തോന്നിയെങ്കിലും ഒട്ടും വിശ്വസിക്കാതെ അയാൾ ഓടിക്കൊണ്ടിരുന്നു. ഒടുവിൽ സൂര്യൻ അസ്തമിക്കുന്നതിന് തൊട്ടുമുമ്പ് അയാൾ പ്രാവീനന്റെ പാറങ്ങളിൽ വന്നു വീണു. ആ വിസ്ഫുരമായ സുവിദാനം മുഴുവൻ തന്റെ നൂതനമായി കഴിഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന വിശ്വാസത്തിന്റെ ലഹരിയിൽ അയാൾ പ്രഭുവിന്റെ പാപിയാത്തിൽ കിടന്നു. ഏതെന്നോ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടും അയാൾ എഴുന്നേറ്റില്ല. നോക്കിയപ്പോൾ അയാൾ അന്ത്യശ്വാസം വലിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞിരുന്നു ആടി മണ്ണിൽ ആ ധനികന്റെ ശരീരം ഉറപ്പ് ചെയ്തു.

സമ്പത്തിലും ആശോക്തത്തിലും ആശ്രയിക്കുന്നവനാണ് മനുഷ്യൻ. എന്നാൽ ദൈവത്തിൽ ആശ്രയിക്കുന്നവൻ ഒരിക്കലും കൂലുത്താരയെ ശിരോമുഖ് പർവതം പോലെ നിലനിൽക്കും എന്ന് വചനം പറിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. ബാക്കിയെല്ലാം താൽക്കാലികമാണ്. എത്ര സുന്ദരങ്ങളും യുഗങ്ങളും പിന്നിട്ടിട്ടും പല മോശക്കാരും സാമ്രാജ്യങ്ങളും വന്നു പോയിട്ടും മാറ്റമില്ലാത്ത തുടരുന്നത് ദൈവവചനം മാത്രമാണ്. ഓരോ പ്രകൃതിഭേദങ്ങളും ഭാരത ചൈത്യ ദൈവസത്യം ഇത് നമ്മെ പഠിപ്പിച്ചു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

മനോഹരമായ വേനങ്ങൾ, ആഡംബര വാഹനങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങി വിജയനിയമങ്ങളും ധനം നേടിയെടുക്കും എങ്കിലും അസംഖ്യ പീടിക്കും അനന്തരപ്പിടിക്കും ഒട്ടും കുറവില്ല കെട്ടുറപ്പില്ലാത്ത കൂടുംബബന്ധങ്ങൾ, വഴിതെറ്റിക്കോകുന്ന കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ, വിഷാദം, നിരാശ, എകാന്തത തുടങ്ങിയവ ഇന്ന് വർദ്ധിച്ചുവരുന്നു. സ്നേഹ വാത്സല്യങ്ങൾ മുതൽ മാതൃത്വവും പിതൃത്വവും വരെ ഇന്ന് ഇല്ലാതായിക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

മാതൃത്വത്തിന്റെ മാഹാത്മ്യം മനസ്സിലാക്കാതെ ജീവിച്ച ഒരു സ്ത്രീക്ക് വാർദ്ധക്യത്തിൽ ഉണ്ടായ എകാന്തതയും തിരിച്ചറിവും മനോഹര

മായി ചിത്രീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു കഥയാണ് ജൂലിയാണിക അന്തർജനനത്തിന്റെ വിശ്വരൂപം എന്ന കഥ. അറിഞ്ഞോ അറിയാതെയോ നമ്മിൽ പലരുടെയും കഥയായി ഇത് മാറുന്നു. സൂര്യൻ എന്ന ചെറുപ്പക്കാരൻ വളരെ വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു അച്ഛന്റെ യജമാനത്തിനെ കണ്ടുമുട്ടുകയാണ്. രൂപം കൊണ്ട് ഒരു വ്യവസ്ഥാസിതിയെ പോലെ തോന്നിയ അവരെ രണ്ടും കൊണ്ടു മാത്രമാണ് സൂര്യൻ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞത്. യാത്രവേളയിൽ ഒർത്താവിന്റെ നിഴലായി ലത്തീലും ന്യൂയോർക്കിലും സൂര്യൻ ജീവിക്കുന്നു. നയിച്ച ഒരു വനിത ആയിരുന്നു അവർ. അന്ത്യവും അലങ്കാരവും സൽക്കാരവും സാക്ഷാത്കാരം മനിക്കുകയും തല ഉയർത്തി കിടപ്പുള്ള നടപ്പും ഇന്ത്യൻ സ്ത്രീത്വത്തിന്റെ മാതൃകയാക്കി ആളുകൾ അവളെ വാഴ്ത്തി. എന്നാൽ അമ്മ എന്ന നിലയിൽ മിസീസ് തലത്ത് പരാജയമായിരുന്നു. സ്വന്തം മക്കളെ പ്രണവിയ്ക്കുന്നതല്ലാതെ മറ്റുകൊടുത്തു വളർത്തിയിട്ടില്ല. താനാട്ടുപാടി ഉറക്കിയിട്ടില്ല. അലകുരിച്ച മത്സാരകളെ പോലെ ട്രാഫിക് ഉമ്മ വയ്ക്കുക മാത്രമാണ് അവർ ചെയ്തിരുന്നത്. കുട്ടികൾ ബോൾ വീങ്ങിൽ വളർന്നു. മുതിർന്നപ്പോൾ മക്കൾ അകലങ്ങളിൽ ചേക്കേറി. മിസ്റ്റർ തലത്തിന്റെ മേണഅച്ഛം മിസ്റ്റിസ് തലത്ത് ഒരു നെട്ടു കടലിൻപിടിക്കാത്ത ഒരു അമ്മയായിരുന്നു അന്നെന്ന് അവർ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞു. അതിനാൽ മക്കളെ ആശ്രയിക്കാൻ മനസ്സ് അനുവദിച്ചില്ല.

തന്റെ ജീവനായിന്റെ സൈക്സറ്റിയായിരുന്നു സൂര്യന്റെ വർഷങ്ങൾക്കുശേഷം കണ്ടപ്പോൾ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാൻ കഴിയാതെ പോയ മാതൃത്വം. യാഥാർത്ഥ്യമാക്കാൻ അവർ ശ്രമിക്കുകയാണ്. ഇന്ത്യയിലേക്ക് മടങ്ങി വന്നഅച്ഛം അവരുടെ ഭാഗവും ഭാവവും മാറി. മൗനത്തു കുഞ്ഞിക്കുട്ടിയായ എന്ന പോലെയാണ് ഇന്നാൾ അറിയപ്പെടുന്നത്. ഭാരത സ്ത്രീകൾ എത്ര ഓരോരുത്തരാണ് അവർ കൊടുക്കാൻ മാത്രമേ പഠിച്ചിരുന്നുള്ളൂ കൊടുക്കുന്നതിൽ നിന്നും മാറ്റം എല്ലാം നേടി. അമ്മകൊണ്ടാണ് അവർ എപ്പോഴും സംഖ്യ പിക്കായിരിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന് മിസ്റ്റർ തലത്ത് പണ്ട് പറഞ്ഞ കാലം സൂര്യന്റെ തലക്കെട്ടിലാണ് അവർക്ക് അനുഭവിക്കാൻ സാധിച്ചത്. അച്ചനായാലോ വേണ്ടവിധം പഠിപ്പിക്കാൻ സാധിക്കാതെ പോയതിന്റെ കുറ്റബോധവും ഇന്ന് അവരെ അലട്ടുന്നുണ്ട്. "താൻ ഇന്ത്യയിൽ ജനിക്കാൻ ആശ്രയിക്കുന്നു മാധം ഇന്ത്യ എത്ര നല്ല സ്ഥലമാണ് അവിടെ മക്കൾ മാതാപിതാക്കളെ ദൈവത്തെ പോലെയൊന്ന് കരുതാനുള്ളതാണ് അന്ന് കേട്ടത്" ബ്രഹ്മകാരം ഒരു അനാഥനായ വൃദ്ധൻ പറഞ്ഞത് മിസ്റ്റിസ് തലത്തോട്ത്തു. എന്നാൽ മിസീസ് തലത്ത് തന്റെ അച്ചനായാലോ കരുതിയിരുന്നില്ല അമ്മത്തോടൊപ്പം കുറച്ചു നാൾ നാട്ടിൽ വന്ന് നിൽക്കാൻ അവരുടെ അമ്മ ആവശ്യപ്പെട്ടിട്ടും ഒന്നു പോയി കാനാൻ പോലും അവർ കൂട്ടാക്കിയില്ല. ഇന്ന് എല്ലാം ഓർത്ത് നെടുവീർപ്പിക്കുകയാണ് അവർ. അനുഭവങ്ങളുടെ സത്തയിലൂടെ സൂര്യന്റെ കുറെ ഉപദേശങ്ങൾ അവർ നൽകുകയാണ് സൂര്യൻ നീ നിന്റെ വരാൻ പോകുന്ന ഭാര്യയോട് പറയണം കുട്ടികളെ അമ്മ തന്നെ വളർത്തണം ശാസ്താക്കളെയും ലാളിക്കുകയും കൂട്ടുകൂടുകയും വേണം എങ്കിലേ അമ്മ എന്നത് കുട്ടികളുടെ ഒരു നാമവും കുട്ടികൾ അമ്മയുടെ ഒരു നാമവുമായി തീരുകയുള്ളൂ ഒരു സ്ത്രീ എന്നതിന്റെ വിശ്വരൂപം അമ്മ എന്നതാ

നന്നും അമ്മയുടെ ഏറ്റവും നല്ല നുണയിലേക്കും ഭാര്യയ്ക്കും ആണനും ഈ കഥ നമ്മെ പഠിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

സർവ്വസ്വകൃഷ്ണൻ പതിനാലിന്റെ ഒന്നാം വാക്യത്തിൽ സിന്ദീ കളിൽ ജ്ഞാനം ഉള്ളവൻ തന്റെ വീട് പണിയുന്നു. ഹോഷ് ബുള്ളവളോ അത് സ്വന്തം കൈകളാൽ പൊളിച്ചു കളയുന്നു. എന്ന് അലോമോൻ പറയുമ്പോൾ അമൃതമായ മാതൃത്വത്തിന്റെ മഹത്വം വ്യക്തമാകുന്നു. ഒരു ഭവനത്തിലെ നവോത്ഭത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാന ഘടകം മക്കളാണ്. ദൈവത്തിൽ നിന്നും ദൈവലയത്തിൽ നിന്നും നല്ല മൂല്യങ്ങൾ ലഭിക്കാനുള്ള അവസരം കൂട്ടിൽ ലഭിക്കണം. മനുഷ്യരെ സ്നേഹിക്കാനും സുഖാവസ്ഥയിൽ പങ്കുചേരാനും കഴിയുന്നവരാണ് നമ്മുടെ തലമുറ. തന്റെയെല്ലാ മൂല്യങ്ങൾക്കും അടിസ്ഥാനം ഇല്ലാത്ത കളനികമായ സഞ്ചാരികൾ മാത്രം നൽകുന്ന യന്ത്രങ്ങളാണ് നമ്മുടെ ജീവനും നമ്മുടെ കുഞ്ഞുങ്ങൾ. അവയിൽ നിന്ന് അവരെ വിടർത്തി ആരാധന

യിലും സമർത്ഥത നീക്കലിലും മറ്റ് ആത്മീയ സംഘടനകളിലും ചേർന്നു പ്രവർത്തിക്കാൻ അവരെ പ്രാപ്തരാക്കേണ്ട കടമ നമ്മൾക്കുണ്ട്. അഭിയാലംഭിക്കുന്നവയും അനുഭവിക്കാവുന്നവയായ കകളും ഭവനങ്ങളിൽ ഉജ്ജ്വലനം വൈഭവത്തിന് വേണ്ടി ഒരുക്കുന്ന ഇടം ആകണം കൂട്ടുംബം. ദൈവിക ജ്ഞാനം ഉള്ള മാതാപിതാക്കൾക്ക് അതിനു സാധിക്കട്ടെ.

“നവോദയ ഭക്തി ജ്ഞാനത്തിന്റെ ആരംഭവും പരിമുഖരത കൂറിയുള്ള പരിജ്ഞാനം വിജയകരവും ആകുന്നു”

“മകനെ എന്റെ ഉപദേശം മറക്കരുത്. നിന്റെ പുനരും എന്റെ കൽപ്പനകളെ കാത്തുക്കൊള്ളട്ടെ. അവ ദീർഘായുസ്സും ജീവകാരുണ്യവും സമാധാനവും നിനക്ക് വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കട്ടെ.” ഈ വിഭവകം പ്രാപിക്കാൻ ഈ ദീർഘായുസ്സും സമാധാനവും നേടുവാൻ നമ്മുടെ തലമുറയ്ക്ക് സാധിക്കട്ടെ.

Metropolitan Felicitation & Welcome Programme CMRC



Annual Diocesan Convention 2022

The Annual Diocesan Convention was held on December 29th and 30th, 2022 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM each day at the Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta. Rev. Dr. Anna Carter Florence, Professor of Preaching at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA, was the main speaker. The theme for the convention was

Rekindle: Restoring Hope to Our World. The convention was also live-streamed through the Mar Thoma Media online platform. Rev. Dr. Anna Carter Florence provided two eloquent and encouraging messages that rekindled the hearts and minds of all participants to live with hope and faith in the New Year.



Mar Thoma Institute of Mission and Culture (MIMC)

The Mar Thoma Institute of Mission and Culture (MIMC) aims to provide theological education and leadership training for the clergy and lay members of the church. The institute is offering a new course, MIMC 210: Introduction to Mission and Culture, for the youths of the church between the ages of 18 to 30. The course will include various topics related to meaningfully interpreting the Gospel within the cultural context of the present day with the aim of remaining faithful as witnesses of Jesus Christ.

MIMC 210 will be a six week course that meets online once a week on Wednesday from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM (Eastern Time) on the Zoom platform and will be held from February 25 to April 12, 2023. Course participants are expected to attend all online class sessions and complete the required assignments. Kindly note that registration will be considered on a first come basis and will be limited to the first 30 registrants. For further details and to register, please contact marthomamimc@gmail.com.

Very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas (Dean of Studies)

Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel (Coordinator/Registrar)

Mar Thoma Mission Board - Diocese of North America & Europe

Mar Thoma Institute of Mission and Culture

MIMC 210: Introduction to Mission and Culture

A Six-Week Online Course

FEBRUARY 25, 2023 - APRIL 12, 2023



Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos
Diocesan Bishop-President MIMC



Instructors/Faculty Members of MIMC 210:

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa

Very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas

Dr. Raj Nadella (Columbia Theological Seminary)

Dr. Martha L. Moore-Kolsh (Columbia Theological Seminary)

Dr. Andrew Jacob (Emory University)

Dr. Suresh Mathew (Stanford University)

Registration Information

Registration will be limited to the first 30 participants.

Early Registration: \$60.00

(from January 1 - 31, 2023)

Late Registration: \$75.00

(from February 1 - 10, 2023)



For More Information, Please Contact:

Very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas
(Dean of Studies)

Email: ctthomas2315@gmail.com

Rev. Christopher Phil Daniel

(Coordinator/Registrar)

Email: marthomamimc@gmail.com

Wellness Young Families Retreat Fellowship (YFF)



The First Diocesan Young Families Fellowship Wellness Retreat was held on December 29th to 30th, 2022 at Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta. The theme for this year's retreat was **Rekindle: Restoring Hope to Our World**. The sessions were focused on the physical, mental, and spiritual wellness of young families. Many young families came together to share their spiritual experiences and to spend time understanding the value of Christian fellowship. This initiative is the vision of our beloved Diocesan Episcopa, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Thirumeni, and this program will continue

in the coming years. Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Dr. Raj Nadella, Rev. Biju P. Simon, Rev. Jaisan A. Thomas, Mr. Tom Philip, Dr. Binu Chacko, and Mrs. Betsy Chacko led different sessions on various topics. Rev. Sonu Varughese serves as the Diocesan Young Family Fellowship Vice President, and Rev. Jaisan A. Thomas and Mr. Tom Philip served as the Conveners for the retreat. Rev. Saju Samuel C., Mr. Shyno Thomas, and Mr. Chris Thomas made necessary arrangements in Atlanta. The talks were very meaningful, and it was a blessed experience for all the attendees.



INVITING ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT ISSUE...

We invite articles for the April-May-June – 2023 issue related to the theme
"Sharing Christ, the Gospel".

The Messenger publishes articles that express the diversity of our community to stimulate healthy discussions while remaining faithfully rooted in the values of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. The Managing and Editorial Board committees remain committed to producing a high-quality publication.

If you wish to submit an article that was published elsewhere, you will be solely responsible for obtaining permission to reprint and provide the details of the original publication.

Kindly let us know by February 28, 2023, via an email to marthomadiocese@gmail.com, if you intend to submit an article for the April 2023 Messenger.

Your article should

- **focus on a topic that treats the theme from a Christian perspective**
- **be about 1500 to 2000 words in English/ Malayalam**
- **accurately identify the sources of referenced material**
- **be typed in MS Word format, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman 12-point font.**

Please submit your article by February 28, 2023.

The editors reserve the right to edit the article, making appropriate deletions and/or additions that they consider best reflect the author's intent. The Editors will contact and collaborate with the author for substantial edits, if required.

Please include a digital photograph of the author(s). Digital photographs are recommended, with the image in GIF/JPEG format at a minimum of 300 dpi. The inclusion of images in other formats will depend on the image quality and the printer's ability to process them.

The Editorial Board does not guarantee the publication of your submission. Please be aware that an acceptance for publication does not mean that the Mar Thoma Messenger and the Mar Thoma Church endorse the contents or views expressed in the articles. The views expressed in your article are considered to be solely your individual opinion. The Messenger will not be responsible or liable for the contents or views expressed therein.

With prayerful regards

Diocesan/Bishop's Secretary

Manager, The Mar Thoma Messenger
Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church
Sinai Mar Thoma Center, 2320 Merrick Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566.
Tel: (516) 377-3311, Email: marthomadiocese@gmail.com

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EVENTS

METROPOLITAN RECEPTION

**Warm Welcome accorded to His Lordship
Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan**



Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos and the Diocese of North America and Europe welcomed the visit of Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan who visited the Diocese, between September 21 and October 20, 2022. This was the Metropolitan's first visit after his installation as the XXII Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. After his arrival in New York on September 21st, the Metropolitan proceeded to Canada where he visited the St. Mathew's MTC on September 24th and Canadian MTC on September 25th. Then the Metropolitan proceeded to Atlanta where he visited the Carmel Mar Thoma Center for the first time on September 28th. From Atlanta, Mar Theodosius went on to visit the St. John's Mar Thoma Church on

October 1st, and the Detroit MTC on October 2nd, Carmel MTC Boston on Friday October 7th and Christos MTC, Philadelphia on, Saturday October 8th before returning to New York. The Southeast Region RAC be held a Felicitation meeting for Thirumeni at Christos MTC, Philadelphia. On October 9th, the Metropolitan conducted the Holy Communion service at The Long Island MTC. From New York, Mar Theodosius proceeded to Dallas, Texas, where he attended the Clergy Conference on October 12th and 13th, and the Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Conference from October 13th to 16th. After celebrating the Holy Communion Service at Dallas FB MTC on October 16th, the Metropolitan proceeded to San Francisco on October 17th from where he returned

to Kochi on October 20, 2022. The Metropolitan conducted Holy Communion services in most of the churches that he visited.

Receptions to honor XXII Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church

The Diocese and several regions in the diocese afforded receptions to Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan to honor and celebrate his installation as the Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church.



The Diocesan Reception was held on October 9, 2022, at the Long Island MTC. Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos presided and addressed the gathering. Rev. George Abraham, Diocesan Secretary, welcomed the attendees. Felicitation speeches honoring and congratulating the Metropolitan were offered by His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos Metropolitan of the Malankara Orthodox Church, Northeast American Diocese, His Grace Most Rev. Philipos Mar Stephanos of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Eparchy in USA and Canada, Bishop Rt. Rev. Johnny Itty of the Episcopal Church, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, NY State Senator Kevin Thomas, and Mr. Randhir Jaiswal, NY Consul General of India, and members of the Mar Thoma Church that included Dr. Mathew T. Thomas, Dr. Ron Jacob, Mrs. Suma Chacko, Mrs. Biji Joby, and Master Robin Varughese. The event was graced by wonderful songs rendered by the NE RAC Choir coached by Rev. Sibu Pallichira, prayers by Rev. P. M. Thomas (opening), and Rev. Sibu Pallichira (closing), presentation of

memento by Rev. Christopher Daniel, and vote of thanks by Mr. George Babu the Diocesan Treasurer. Many clergy and faithful members from the NE region participated in the event, and the Metropolitan thanked everyone for their participation and sought their prayers to continue serving the Church in accordance with God's will.

Receptions were also held by the Canadian Mar Thoma Regional Committee (CMRC) and the Canadian MTC organized a reception for Mar Theodosius Metropolitan on September 25th, the Carmel Mar Thoma Center, Atlanta on September 28th, the Detroit MTC on October 2nd, the Southeast RAC on Friday October 8th, the Southwest RAC on October 12th, and the San Francisco MTC on October 18th.

The Diocese is thankful to the Metropolitan for his visit and prays for his continued leadership and divinely inspired guidance as he continues to minister to the Church and all God's people.



ANNUAL CLERGY CONFERENCE - 2022

The Annual Diocesan Clergy & Family Conference of the Diocese of North America and Europe was held from October 12-13, 2022 at the Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. The theme of the conference was 'Pastoral Integrity: Aligning Word, Work and Witness'.

Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan inaugurated the session and gave a challenging address, encouraging the clergy to understand the dynamics of ministry within the diaspora context and make the ministry more meaningful. Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa delivered Presidential Remarks and gave graceful leadership throughout the conference. Thirumeni shared various concerns and programs in the diocese and encouraged clergy to do their part by leading, involving, and sharing the programs. Rev. Thomas K. Mathew, Rev. Aby M. Thomas Tharakan and Dr. Anne Mathews-Younes led the main talks. Their presentations were well-prepared, challenging, thought-provoking, and instructive. Both presentations very much exposed the theme. After the talks, there was a time for responses, utilized for discussion and reflection.



SEVIKA SANGHAM CONFERENCE

20th Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Conference Oct 13-16th 2022

The 20th Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Conference was hosted by Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch from Oct 13-16, 2022. The theme of the conference was "Women: Mentors of the New World (John 20:17). Almost 410 women representing 40 churches, and the clergy and their family of our Diocese attended the conference. The conference began in the evening of Oct 13, with the procession and the opening worship by the Sevika Sanghom members of the host parish. Conference General Convenor, Mrs. Elizabeth John welcome all the leaders, speakers and the delegates to the conference. After the presidential address by our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Phillexenos Episcopa, conference was officially inaugurated by His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Dr. Anne Mathews-Younes, Grand daughter of famous Maramon Convention Speaker, Late Dr Stanley Jones was the keynote speaker, and Rev. Dr. Eapen Varghese, Dr. Elizabeth Jacob and Mrs. Shiji Alex was the main speakers of the conference. There was a video presentation of the CWU leadership seminar attended by 8 women of our diocese in Puerto Rico and the first conference started in Dallas in the year 2000. Video felicitations by Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulose Episcopa and Rev. Gigi Mathew also shown during the inaugural meeting. Following the inauguration, the host parish presented the theme, including media, videos, slideshows, dance and skit.

On Oct 14th and 15th, morning and evening worship services were led by various Regional Units. The main speakers lead inspiring session based on the theme and on both days time was set apart for intercessory prayer. A special program "Memoir" was lead by very Rev. Dr. Cherian Thomas and Mariamma Kochamma from Newyork shared her 50 years life experience in this country. The conference Program committee acknowledged all the senior women, above 80 years and also those women who are in this country more than 50 years by giving them Ponnada. There was a Business meeting of the Diocesan sevika sanghom chaired by our Diocesan Bishop and also Diocesan Mission outreaching program by Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, special talk by Honorable Judge Mrs. Tammy Kemp, Dallas, Health and preventive care talk for women by Mrs. Liffy Cherian, devotional talk by Dr. Elsy Mathew, and a special interactive session with our Metropolitan. On Oct 14th evening, sevika sanghom members from



their respective parishes participated cheerfully in the talent night program. The Diocesan Sevika Sanghom Vice President Rev. Thomas Mathew P, lead the witnessing and dedication service on 15th evening.

Our Metropolitan celebrated the Holy Gurbana on sunday, Oct 16th at Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch. Following the service, Conference closing session was held and Conference Secretary, Dr. Anju Bijili did the vote of thanks. Conference end with Metropolitan prayer and benediction. Even in the midst of uncertainty and fear of Covid 19 pandemic, all who attended thank and praise God Almighty for a blessed Conference.

Mrs. Elizabeth John

Conference General Convenor

EPISCOPAL VISITS

53rd Annual Diocese of South Florida Episcopal Convention



Philoxenos Thirumeni with Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and other Bishops at the 53rd Annual Diocese of South Florida Episcopal Convention

Mar Thoma Church of South Florida



Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos visited the Mar Thoma Church of South Florida on October 30, 2022. His Grace conducted the Holy Communion Service and the First Communion Service for 15 youths. After the service, there was a felicitation program to celebrate His Grace's 30th anniversary as a bishop of the Mar Thoma Church.

St. Luke's Mar Thoma Church Florida

Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Thirumeni visited the ST. Luke's Mar Thoma Church, Florida on October 29, 2022. During the Holy Communion Service, Thirumeni offered First Holy Communion Service to 15 children in the parish. The children were presented with a Bible from the parish and Certificate from the Diocese. After holy communion service thirumeni exhorted the parish



members to participate in the all mission activities of the Diocese. The presence and prayer of Rev. Abraham Sudeep Commen (Columbia Theological Seminary) was a blessing for this service. It was a blessed day for to St. Luke's Mar Thoma Church, Florida.

Rev. David Cherian (Vicar)

Mr. Basil Thomas (Secretary)

Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Silver Jubilee Celebration



The Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia celebrated its Silver Jubilee on November 4th, 2022. Our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa was the chief guest. Rev. George Abraham (Diocesan Secretary), Rev. Bibi Mathew Chacko (Vicar), Rev. Thomas K. Mathew (Youth Chaplain), Rev. Fr. M.K. Kuriakose (President, EFICP) Rev. Jeswin Simon John (Member of Ascension MTC), Mr. Derek Green (Council Member), Mr. Binu C. Thomas (General Convenor) Mr. Ebby Varughese

(Souvenir Convenor), and Mr. Sathesh Mathew (Vice President) spoke at the meeting in various capacities and the meeting was well attended by eminent luminaries from various realms of the society. Marking the 25 years of God's gracious providence and guidance, on behalf of the parish, the Trustees Mr. Subin V. Abraham, and Mr. Anaj Mathew V. George handed over the checks for the 25 lakhs INR which was allocated for mission and charity activities. Mr. George R. Mathai served as the convener of the Mission and Charity committee. The two silver jubilee projects that the parish undertook was the renovation of the church building at the Hoskote Mission Field, Karnataka, India, and the construction of the dormitory at the new project Aashanilayam proposed at Parackathanam,



Kerala, India. The Silver Jubilee Souvenir was released. The founding members of the parish were honored by adorning the traditional ponnaada. The choir sang the specially composed Jubilee song, and a Christian classical dance performance made the evening more graceful. As a part of commemorating the silver Jubilee year, a 25-hour long chain prayer was conducted, and a Talent Show was also organized to provide a platform to showcase the talents of the parishioners. Many committees were convened and collaborated for the celebration to be a blessed one.

Rev. Bibi Mathew Chacko
Vicar

Calgary St Thomas MTC



Christos Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia



Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos visited the Christos Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia and His Grace conducted the Holy Communion Service and the First Communion Service.

Canadian Mar Thoma Church - Toronto



Our Diocesan Episcopa The Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa visited the Canadian Mar Thoma Church - Toronto on 19th & 20th November 2022. Thirumeni celebrated Holy Communion at CMTCC - Toronto on 20th November 2022 Thirumeni also blessed the Kerala Christian Ecumenical Fellowship Carol Fest with his presence and felicitations on 19th November 2022.

Rev Roji Mathews Abraham.
Vicar

Nazareth Mar Thoma church Dublin, Ireland

First Holy Communion held on July 2, 2022, at Nazareth marthoma church Dublin, Ireland



St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church, New Jersey



Our Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos visited our parish, St. Stephen's Mar Thoma Church on Nov 6, Sunday, 2022. Thirumeni conducted the first

Holy Communion service and we can proudly state that 19 individuals from our church received their first Holy Communion. It was indeed a blessing for all the church members and first Holy Communion participants.

Rev. Thomas K Thomas
Vicar

Mar Thoma Church Staten Island



His grace Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, Diocesan Bishop visited Mar Thoma Church Staten Island parish on Sunday October 9th, 2022. Thirumeni led us during the Holy Communion service. It was also a great blessing to have the presence of Rev. George Abraham Diocesan/ Bishop Secretary. Eight children received their first communion and became the full communicant member of the church. After Holy Communion service parish honored those who were celebrated their milestone birthday's with the "Ponnada" as a sign of respect and their valuable contributions to the church and our community. Thirumeni inaugurated Diocese coupons – 2022 project and our Parish took 114 coupons. As thirumeni has entered the 30th year as a Bishop of Mar thoma Syrian church, MTCIS presented a memento to Philoxenos thirumeni. Let us praise God for the ministry and leadership we receive from our Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos and thank God for the manifold blessings being showered upon throughout his life and ministry for the last 29 years as a Bishop of Mar Thoma Syrian church.

St. Thomas Marthoma Church, Vancouver



Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa dedicating the Parish Parsonage of St. Thomas Marthoma Church, Vancouver on July 22, 2022

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa with the First Holy Communicant Participants

Toronto St. Mathew's MTC



Senior Fellowship Meeting



The senior fellowship actively meets once a month in our church. Approximately 35 people meet regularly and indulge in discussions on topics on common interest, express individual talents as singing, memorizing bible verses, narrate short stories, bible quizzes and other talks on inquisitive bible topics. Fellowship always ends with a fellowship lunch. As it has become an official organization of the church election was done in November and the following were selected to different positions. Vice president - Mr. James T. Philip, Secretary - Mrs. Molly Mathews and Treasurer Mr. Mathew Rajan.

Molly Mathews
Secretary.

Young Family Fellowship(YFF) , South Florida Marthoma Church



Under the auspices of the Young Family Fellowship(YFF) of the South Florida Marthoma Church, a PICTORIAL QUIZ(Marthoma Heritage— Tradition, Practices, Personalities) was held on November 19, 2022. The Quiz was conducted by Prof. Philip Koshi and was ably assisted by Dr. Bobby Varghese(YFF Secretary).

The team, 'Disciple' comprising of Mr. Aby Kurian, Mrs. Archana John, Mr. Jaison Philip, Mr. Derek Attapallil, Miss Jia Varghese, Miss Isabel Simon, Mr. Ryan Jaison won the Marthoma Ever Rolling Trophy, instituted by the Quizmaster. The trophy was presented by the Vicar, Rev. Shibi Abraham.

*Congratulations to the 2022 Mar Thoma
Merit Award Winners!*



PAUL V. BIJILI

Member of Mar Thoma Church of Dallas Farmers Branch. Graduated as Valedictorian from Harmony School of Science Academy, Carrollton. Son of Mr. Bijili George and Dr. Anju Bijili.



SARAH GEORGIE

Member of St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, Los Angeles. Graduated as Valedictorian from John F. Kennedy High School. Daughter of Mr. Georgie Sam and Mrs. Rajee Joseph.



ANNLY S. JOHN

Member of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers, New York. Graduated as Valedictorian from Lincoln High School, New York. Daughter of Mr. John Jacob and Mrs. Mini John.



AKHILA S. BIJU

Member of St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, Los Angeles. Graduated as Valedictorian from Granada Hills Charter High School. Daughter of Mr. Biju Varghese and Mrs. Anitha Varghese.



**REBECCA S.
MAMMARAPPALLIL**

Member of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Lombard. Graduated from Victor J. Andrew High School, Tinley Park, IL. Daughter of Mr. Jibu and Mrs. Ajie Mammarrappallil.



AMY A. CHERIAN

Member of North Carolina Mar Thoma Church. Graduated from Green Level High School, NC. Daughter of Mr. Cherian Kadavil and Mrs. Susan Cherian.



SAVANNAH GEORGE

Member of Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston. Graduated from Stafford High School, Stafford, TX. Daughter of Mr. George and Mrs. Aldrin.



REBECCA S. VARGHESE

Member of Detroit Mar Thoma Church. Graduated from Troy High School, MI. Daughter of Mr. Philip and Mrs. Mini Varghese.

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Winners List for Oct/Nov/Dec 2022 Bible Crossword Puzzle – NIV– Jeremiah 43 – 52

1	Manja Mathews	Assenon MTC, PA	35	Glenn Sage Aguilar (Gr 4)	Carmel MTC, Boston
2	Dr. Susan Kees	Atlanta MTC, JK, TN	36	Landen Philip Aguilar (Gr 7)	Carmel MTC, Boston
3	Lily Elias	Baltimore MTC, MD	37	Lincoln Antonio Aguilar (Gr 2)	Carmel MTC, Boston
4	Smita Binkly	CMTC, Ontario, Canada	38	Paul J. Isaac	Carmel MTC, Boston
5	Jessy Philip	Detroit MTC, MI	39	Annamma John	Immanuel MTC, Houston
6	Jini Ann Abraham	Detroit MTC, MI	40	Sara Philip	Immanuel MTC, Houston
7	Usha Sara Thomas	Detroit MTC, MI	41	Alice Thomas	St. James MTC NY
8	Mary Varughese Cavil	Detroit MTC, MI	42	Marlanna Niran	St. James MTC NY
9	Marlanna John	Epiphany MTC, NY	43	Mariyam Mathew	St. John's MTC NY
10	Mathew T. Mathew	Epiphany MTC, NY	44	Chacko Varughese (vjp)	St. John's MTC, MI
11	Saramma Chacko	Epiphany MTC, NY	45	Philip Mathew	St. John's MTC, MI
12	Saramma Mathew	MTC Dallas Farmers Br	46	Dr. Prathik M Philip	St. Luke's MTC, Florida
13	T.C. Zachariah	MTC Oklahoma	47	Liba Thomas Philip	St. Luke's MTC, Florida
14	Alina Thomas (Gr 9)	MTCO, Carrollton, TX	48	Sheela Thomas	St. Luke's MTC, Florida
15	Asha Thomas	MTCO, Carrollton, TX	49	Saramma Alexander	St. Matthews MTC, Canada
16	Mini Abraham	MTCO, Carrollton, TX	50	Annamma I Varughese	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
17	Nibu K Thomas	MTCO, Carrollton, TX	51	Sally George	St. Peter's MTC, NJ
18	Nancy Regi Philip	North Carolina MTC, NC	52	Chacha John	Staten Island MTC, NY
19	Annamma Abraham	Philadelphia MTC, PA	53	Billy Philip	Staten Island MTC, NY
20	Amos David (Gr 12)	Philadelphia MTC, PA	54	Raji Mathew	Staten Island MTC, NY
21	Chinnamma V. Thomas	Philadelphia MTC, PA	55	Saramma Rajan	Staten Island MTC, NY
22	Elizabeth John	Philadelphia MTC, PA	56	Lily Varughese	Trinity MTC Houston
23	K.G. Jacob	Philadelphia MTC, PA	57	Nishi Mathew (Gr 9)	Trinity MTC Houston
24	Kunjamma Jacob	Philadelphia MTC, PA	58	Shawn Varughese	Trinity MTC Houston
25	Remy Mary Joseph	Philadelphia MTC, PA	59	Thomas Varughese	Trinity MTC Houston
26	Georg Thomas	Philadelphia MTC, PA	60	Vishal Mathew (Gr 7)	Trinity MTC Houston
27	Susan Mathews	Philadelphia MTC, PA	61	Achamma Chacko	Trinity MTC, Houston
28	Suolamma Joy	Philadelphia MTC, PA	62	Daniel Jacob (Gr 6)	Trinity MTC, Houston
29	Tharamel Alexander	Philadelphia MTC, PA	63	Gracy P Vattakunnel	Trinity MTC, Houston
30	Hannah Daniel	Salem MTC, NY	64	Jessy Babon	Trinity MTC, Houston
31	Sharly Thomas	Salem MTC, NY	65	Kunjamma Thomas	Trinity MTC, Houston
32	Sosamma Varughese	Zion MTC Cong, NJ	66	Luke Mathew (Gr 7)	Trinity MTC, Houston
33	Marlanna John	Sehion MTC, Dallas	67	Saramma Gieeba	Trinity MTC, Houston
34	Saramma Varkey	Sehion MTC, Dallas	68	Neethi Prasad (Kochamma)	Jerusalem MTC, CT

Answer Sheet for Oct/Nov/Dec 2022 Bible Crossword Puzzle – NIV–Jeremiah 43 – 52

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

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Bible Crossword Puzzle as in NIV: Lamentations 1-5 and Ezekiel 1-5



Across:

1. "Though He (the Lord) brings _____, He will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love."
3. "It is good to wait quietly for the _____ of the Lord."
6. "Young and _____ lie together in the dust of the streets. You have slain them in the day of your anger."
8. And he said to me, "Son of man, _____ what is before you, eat this scroll, then go and speak to the people of Israel."
9. He has poured out his _____ like fire on the tent of the Daughter of Zion.
10. "All our enemies have opened their mouths wide against us. We have suffered terror and pitfalls, _____ and destruction."
11. The oracles they (the prophets of Jerusalem) gave you were _____ and misleading.
13. "My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are _____."
15. I came to the _____ who lived at Tel-Abib and I sat among them for seven days—overwhelmed.
16. After affliction and hardship _____ Judah has gone into exile.
17. Streams of _____ flow from my eyes because my people are destroyed.
18. He (the Lord) has driven me away and made me walk in _____ rather than light.
22. Why should any living man _____ when punished for his sins?
26. Her foes have become her masters, her enemies are at _____. The Lord has brought her grief because of her many sins.
27. "Son of man, I have made you a _____ for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me."
28. "Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have done before and will never do again."
29. The Lord has rejected his altar and _____ his sanctuary.

Down:

1. The _____ of the Lord was standing there, like the glory I had seen by the Kidder River, and I fell face down.
2. They are new every morning; great is your _____.
3. The Lord is like an enemy; he has _____ up Israel. He has swallowed up all his palaces and destroyed her strongholds.
4. I became the _____ of all my people; they mock me in song all day long.
5. The Lord said to Ezekiel, "The people to whom I am sending you are _____ and stubborn."
7. "Let all their wickedness come before you; _____ with them as you have dealt with me because of all my sins."
9. The visions of your prophets did not expose your sin to _____ of your captivity.
12. The enemies of Jerusalem looked at her and laughed at her _____.
14. My eyes will flow unceasingly, without _____, until the Lord looks down from heaven and save.
19. Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; _____ our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.
20. The punishment of my people is greater than that of _____, which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her.
21. The Lord has made Zion forget her appointed festivals and her Sabbaths; in his fierce anger he has _____ both king and priest.
23. I have been deprived of _____, I have forgotten what prosperity is.
24. So I _____ the scroll, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.
25. Then Ezekiel said, "Not so, Sovereign Lord! I have never defiled myself. From my youth until now I have never _____ anything found dead or torn by wild animals."

Deadline for Answers : February 25, 2023

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

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

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

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

MATRIMONIAL



Parents are inviting proposals for their daughter 26 Years old, 5'6". She has Masters in Occupational therapy and currently working as Occupational therapist. She is family oriented, God fearing and has high moral values. We are seeking a God fearing clean habits, family oriented boy with moral values from Christian denominations (Marthoma) with professionally qualified (post graduate degree), medical field, IT or Engineering field working in USA/Canada. Interested parties, may please contact:

(224) 392-8930 or Kurien8868@gmail.com



34TH DIOCESAN FAMILY CONFERENCE

July 6 to 9, 2023 at Philadelphia, USA

The 34th Diocesan Family Conference will be held from July 6 to 9, 2023, hosted by the Southeast Regional Activity Committee (SERAC) at the Radisson Hotel Northeast Philadelphia, Trevose, PA. The theme for the conference is "Witnessing Community for Transforming the World". The conference sessions will be led by main speakers namely Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Barnabas Suffragan Metropolitan, Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Rev. Dr. Prakash K George, Rev. Dr. Gordon S. Miokoski (Princeton Theological Seminary), Rev. Merin Mathew. There will

be special sessions for youth, children and adults. Let us pray that main talks, worship, songs, group discussion, Q&A, games, and testimony will be a time of fellowship and learning about meaningful witnessing of Christ in our world. We invite you to pray, register, and attend this blessed conference. Conference website: <https://marthomafc2023.org/> further details contact: Rev. Biju P. Simon (Conf. Vice President), Rev. Thomas K. Mathew (SERAC President), Mr. Thomas Abraham (Secretary), Mr. Shan Mathew (Treasurer), Mr. Bincy John (Accountant)



World Day of PRAYER 2023

World Day of PRAYER

World Day of Prayer (WDP) is a worldwide ecumenical movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer and action each year on the first Friday in March. The WDP motto is "Informed Prayer. Prayerful Action."

Country of Focus & Theme

The country of focus for 2023 is Taiwan, and the theme of the worship service is "I Have Heard About Your Faith" based on Ephesians 1:15-19.

WDP Services and Offertory

WDP services can be arranged on Friday, March 3rd, 2023, or on any other convenient day in the month of March. The offertory collected during WDP services should be sent to the WDP USA Office. Kindly make checks payable to WDP USA and send to WDP USA, 475 Riverside Drive, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10115.

WDP Reports and Pictures

The coordinators of WDP services held at the center, regional, and ecumenical levels are requested to send a short report and a high quality group photo to neethiprasad@gmail.com.



MISSION BOARD UPDATES *Light to Life*



Light to Life is a mission initiative of the Mar Thoma Mission Board of the Diocese of North America and Europe that began in October 2017. It was the compassionate and determined vision of Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos that brought this project to life. The aim of Light to Life is to encourage social transformation by supporting the

education and holistic development of less privileged children in different parts of India. Children supported through Light to Life are provided with educational resources, nutritious food, sufficient clothing, and opportunities for emotional, social, and spiritual growth.

CARD Kshipra Project Center, Madhya Pradesh



MTEA Jangamakota Project Center, Karnataka



The Mar Thoma Mission Board works in partnership with church-related agencies to implement the Light to Life program. At present, there are approximately 4,500 children being supported through the Mar Thoma Mission Board, the Canadian Mar Thoma Regional Committee (CMRC), and the UK-Europe Zone of the Mar Thoma Church.

Tharayilkadavu Project Center, Adoor Diocese, Kerala



Our mission partners affiliated to the Mar Thoma Church include: Christian Agency for Rural Development (CARD), South Travancore Agency for Rural Development (STARD), Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association (MTEA), Chennai-Bangalore Diocese, Ranni-Nilackal Diocese, Kottayam-Kochi Diocese, and Adoor Diocese. In April 2022, we began our first ecumenical venture by partnering

with Nagaland Development Outreach (NDO) which is associated with the Nagaland Baptist Church Council. Holistic Child Development India (HCDI), based in Pune, is our monitoring agency and ensures that each project center is functioning effectively and that all funds are used appropriately.

NDO Project Center, Dimapur, Nagaland



Those who are interested in sponsoring a child may contact the Mar Thoma Mission Board (marthomamissionboard@gmail.com) for more information. The sponsorship amount is \$20 a month (\$240 a year) and provides the following support for each child.



EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

35%

- ✓ TUITION & FEES
- ✓ TEXTBOOKS
- ✓ UNIFORMS
- ✓ SCHOOL SUPPLIES
- ✓ STUDY EQUIPMENT
- ✓ SPECIAL CLASSES



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

35%

- ✓ FOOD & NUTRITION
- ✓ HEALTH & HYGIENE
- ✓ MEDICAL CAMPS
- ✓ SPORTS & EXERCISE



VALUE BASED EDUCATION

5%

- ✓ CAMPS & RETREATS
- ✓ CULTURAL EDUCATION



SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

5%

- ✓ COUNSELING
- ✓ DEVELOPMENTAL CLASSES
- ✓ EMOTIONAL AWARENESS
- ✓ EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE

20%

- ✓ TEACHERS SALARY
- ✓ STAFF ALLOWANCE
- ✓ OFFICE SUPPLIES
- ✓ UTILITIES
- ✓ MAINTENANCE
- ✓ TRANSPORTATION

The Mission Board is grateful to all those who have pledged their sponsorship and who continue to renew their sponsorship each year. Once again, thank you for supporting the Light to Life mission program.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

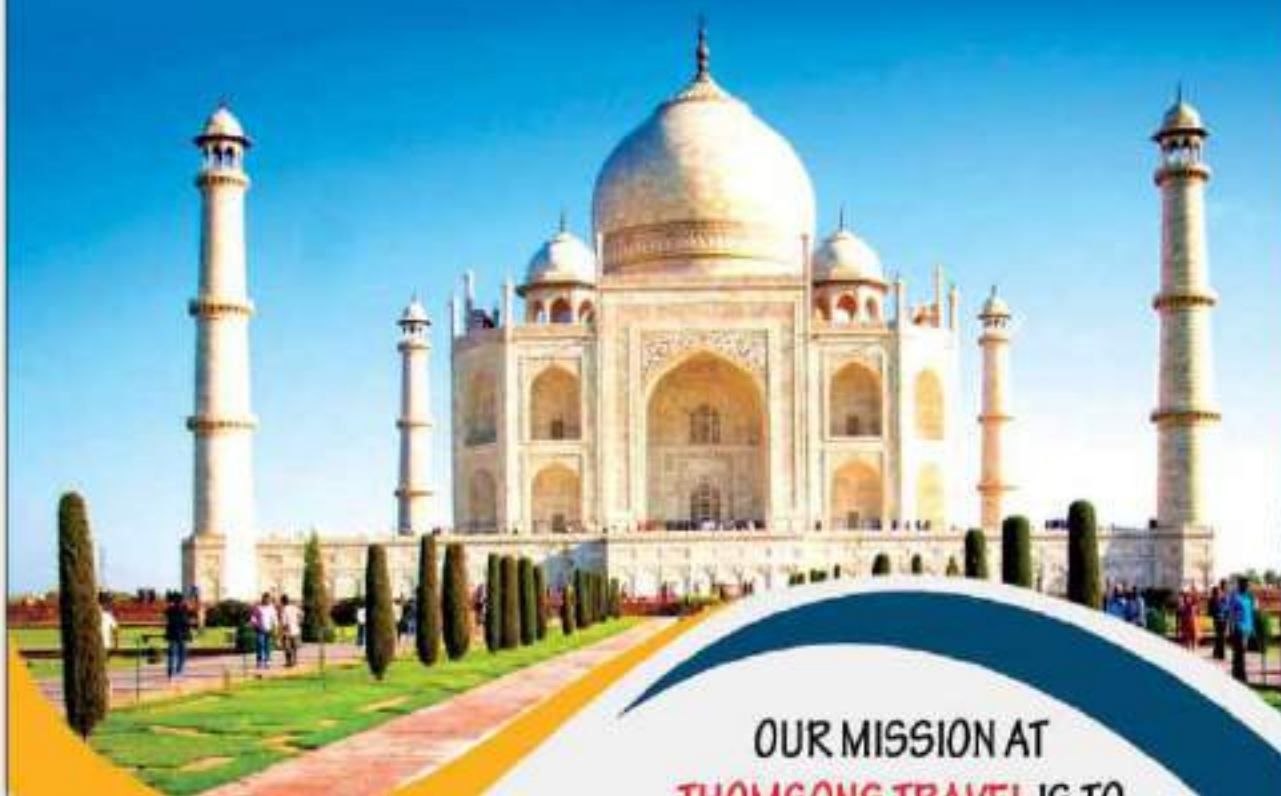
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