



MAR THOMA

MESSENGER

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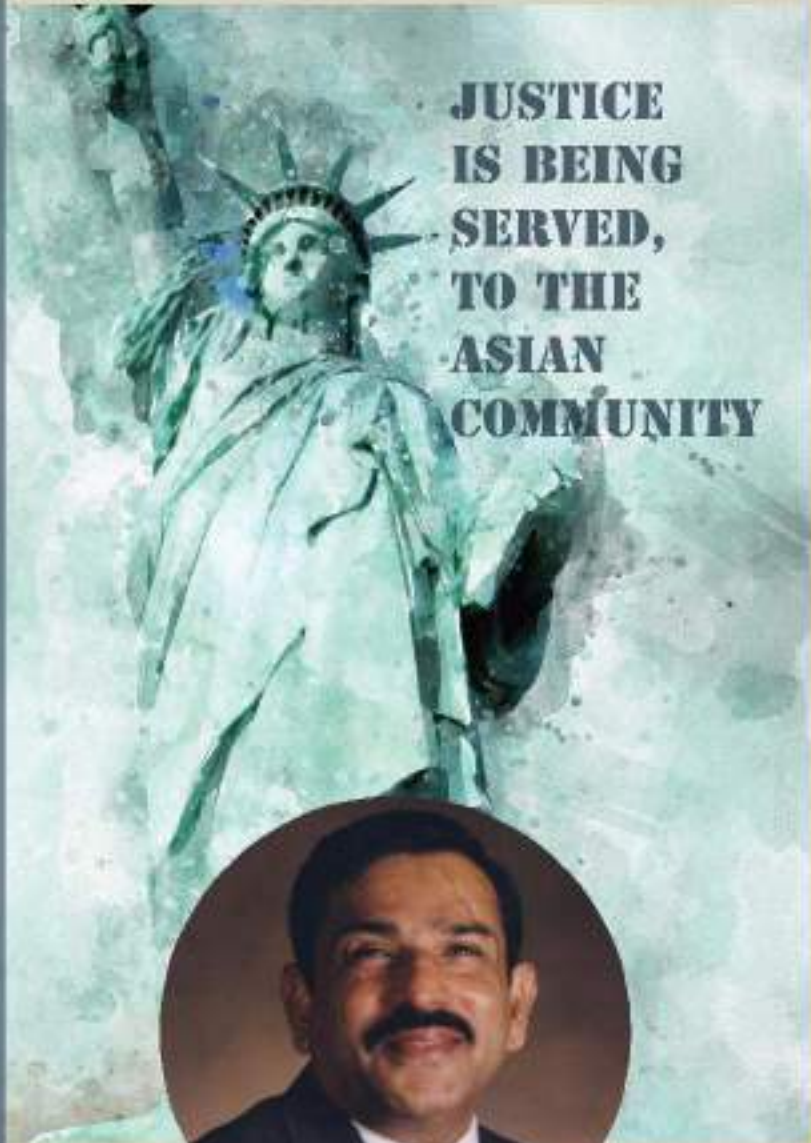


CLIMATE JUSTICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

July - 2022

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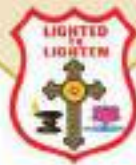


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MAR THOMA MESSENGER

A publication of the Diocese of North America & Europe



July · 2022



**MALANKARA
MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH**

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**MALANKARA
MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH**

MESSAGE

FROM THE METROPOLITAN



*D*early beloved in the Lord,

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

May 1st was celebrated as International Workers' Day. This day reminds us of the necessity of respecting the rights of workers. We should develop an attitude of love and care towards the common people. The workers must be vigilant to protect their rights which they gained through many fights and strikes. At the same time, the workers' organizations should not forget their responsibilities to society and people.

The transfers of the priests are in effect from May 1, 2022. Let us praise God for their services. We pray that the priests serve for the good of society by surrendering to the grace of God. Our newly ordained Achens were entrusted with duties from May 15th. As the cost of living has increased, the Episcopal Synod took a decision to increase the salary of the priests in accordance with the times. A circular will be sent with details. The cooperation of parishes and organizations is highly necessary in this matter.

Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Valiya Metropolitan Memorial Lecture was conducted on April 4th, at Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, Thrissur. Most Respected Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, was the chief guest. Cardinal Mar Alencherry delivered the Memorial Lecture. His Grace Dr. Aprem Metropolitan, and Padma Shri Dr. Sosamma Ipe were felicitated in that meeting.

I visited our Kuwait parishes from April 7 through 17, 2022, and led Passion Week services. As the priests have ongoing visa problems, I met with the relevant authorities and the office bearers of the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait (NECK), conveying the concerns of the Church regarding visa issues.

It is quite comforting to note that the spread of Covid has slowed down. Many changes have occurred during the pandemic. Online worship is one among them. Those who were unable to attend the worship in person got an opportunity to participate virtually from their homes. Many people are now going back to church to attend services.

But we should not stop the online arrangements. It will be useful for those who are sick and elderly.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which follows the Julian Calendar in worship order, celebrated Easter on Sunday April 24th. Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, asked Russia for a ceasefire during Easter. We may debate the importance of Easter while a war is going on. The ideology of war is hatred. War creates so many hurdles and problems that affect all countries. Life is based on interactive collaboration. We are called to be agents of peace. Understanding each other is especially important. The very existence of the world is grounded in the awareness of this truth.

It gives all of us immense joy that Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is being elected as President of the National Council of Churches in USA (NCCC USA). This is the first time an African-born woman is elected to the supreme position of NCCC USA. The Mar Thoma Church is an active member of the American NCCC USA. Our Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Thirumeni is a member of the NCCC USA Governing Board. We wish Bishop McKenzie the best when the world is going through a critical time in history. The General Assembly Meeting of the Communion of Churches in India (CCI) was conducted at Shanthigiri in Alwaye, Kerala. Our Church hosted the meeting. Dr. Prakash P. Thomas was elected Executive Secretary of CCI. Congratulations to Dr. Prakash P. Thomas.

We have a strong Constitution and systematic procedures for the well-ordered running of our Church. Theological matters and subjects related to worship are dealt by our Theological Commission and Liturgical Commission. They keep abreast of our worship orders and protect the theological visions of our Church. It has come to the notice of the Church that some people engage in teaching different views other than those accepted by our official commissions. This is not desirable. This is not acceptable. I advise that all, especially the clergy, should abstain from such wrong teachings and activities. Nobody is allowed to publish altered worship orders other than published by the official Publication Board of the Mar Thoma Church. Parishes, organizations, and congregations must not try to publish worship orders. It should be noted that if something has been published without the permission of the Metropolitan and the approval of the Synod, all such publications will be considered unofficial publications.

We take pride in being the largest democracy in the world. But it is a sorrowful fact that in India the tendency to divide people in the name of caste and religion for creating vote banks is increasing day by day. The minorities are being used as effective tools in this division process. Democracy

becomes meaningful in its practical realms only when the governments take the responsibility to protect the interests of the citizens irrespective of caste and religion. We congratulate the five state ministries newly formed, after the elections to the state assemblies (in India). Let us wish them all the best. We hope they will uphold the values of secularism and social justice, and act for the betterment of the people. Let us keep them in prayers too.

Our young people are relocating to the USA, Canada, U.K., New Zealand, Germany, and other countries for higher studies after their secondary school education. The rate of unemployment is increasing in Kerala day by day. Political violence, corruption, pollution and contamination, and lawlessness lead to disappointment among the young generation. The Church and society must try to understand the problems among young people whose talents must be tapped through various plans and schemes. The Church and society must treat them with dignity and accept their talents. Or else, the insecurity that will ensue will be detrimental to the future of our land.

During the month of March, I visited our parishes in Oman, and led Holy Communion Services at Ruwi, Sohar, and Ghala. I participated in the Parish Day Meeting of Ruwi Mar Thoma Church. Many of our people were compelled to return to Kerala, owing to the Pandemic. We have to hold them in prayers. Rev. M. Jacob, vicar of the Sohar Mar Thoma Church, had a heart attack which shocked everyone. I started my return travel from Oman, only after knowing that Achen had overcome his serious condition. God gave Achen amazing healing. He is getting better. Praise the Lord.

Dr. Soosa Pakiam, the Archbishop Emeritus of the Latin Rite Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram has retired. Dr. Soosa Pakiam is a Church Father with deep faith and social commitment. His contributions to his own Church and the state are beyond measure. He helped the destitute and the helpless. He is a faithful friend of the Mar Thoma Church. We wish him all the best in his retired life and pray for the grace of God to lead a peaceful life. Dr. Thomas J. Netto was ordained as the Archbishop of Latin Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram. He succeeds Dr. Soosa Pakiam Thirumeni. Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Suffragan Metropolitan represented the Mar Thoma Church during the consecration ceremony. Barnabas Thirumeni has conveyed our best wishes to the newly consecrated Archbishop, Dr. Thomas J. Netto.

The Maramon Convention of 2022 ended in a blessed manner. Let us praise God for His grace that enveloped the convention throughout. It is amazing that this convention has been going on for the last 127 years without break on the Pampa riverbed. Thousands have

come to know Jesus Christ through the Word that echoed in the convention. I pray that the word of God we listened during the convention brings in us repentance, renewal, and transformation. Let it guide us to a new spirituality. I express my gratitude to the office bearers of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association, members of the managing committee, others who helped in various ways, and especially the Government of Kerala for making the success of the convention a reality.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Suffragan Metropolitan gave blessed leadership in the past as the President of the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association. I convey my gratitude to Thirumeni. From March 1st, Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Suffragan Metropolitan is assigned to be the President of the Evangelistic Association. I pray that Thirumeni's assignment be a source of progress for the gospel and increase of the kingdom of God.

The annual conference of the clergy was conducted online on February 9 and 10, 2022. "Changing Times, Blooming Church" was the theme. Changes are constant. Our relevance is determined by our responses to the changes around us. The pandemic has increased economic and social inequality globally. We should not forget the fact that Jesus, who in the midst of the painful experiences of crucifixion showed the thief on the cross the possibility of salvation, is the basis of our faith. When we take up that mission, the Church not only blooms, but spreads fragrance and blossoms too. Dr. George Zachariah led the thematic discussion, and Rev. V. M. Mathew led the Bible study.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) will hold its meeting in Germany in August-September this year. The theme of the General Assembly is, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." This theme reminds us that Christ offered himself on the cross as an expression of his deep love to the world. In return for His love, we have gained the right to love Christ, and through Him the universe that God has created. In the epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul reminds us, "Christ's love compels us." Based on the Assembly's theme, it is desirable to arrange study programs in our parishes and other organizations. Let us pray that Christ's love guides the post-Covid world to reconciliation and unity.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim Mar Coorilos Suffragan Metropolitan took charge of the Delhi Diocese along with the Mumbai Diocese, and Rt. Rev. Joseph Mar Barnabas Suffragan Metropolitan took charge of the Kottarakkara-Punalur Diocese along with the Trivandrum-Kollam Diocese from March 1, 2022. Let us remember all our Bishops and their dioceses in our prayers. The Sabha Council that met on Feb. 11, 2022, discussed the necessity to elect

more Episcopas in our Church. Thereby the Council decided to present an official resolution for electing four new Episcopas in the forthcoming Sabha Mandalam Meeting to be held on September 13, 14, and 15, 2022, and if it gets passed, to present another official resolution to elect an Episcopal Nomination Board. I invoke all to give prayerful support and cooperation on this important need of the Church. After discussions in the Sabha Council and approval by the Episcopal Synod, it was decided to appoint Rev. Dr. Easow Mathew, Rev. K. Y. Jacob, and Rev. Mathew John as Vicars-General of the Mar Thoma Church. I pray that these appointments be a cause for the timely growth of the Church and the glorification of God's name. Let us wish them all the best.

Sayyid Hyder Ali Shihab Thangal, who was a well-respected person in Kerala passed away. He was a spiritual leader for many. He taught that unification is humanitarianism. He remained a mediator for unification and reconciliation. His death is a great loss to Kerala society. Dr. Thomas Mar Theethos Episcopa went to Panakkad and expressed the condolences of the Mar Thoma Church on the demise of Hyder Ali Shihab Thangal.

Rev. S. V. Cherian, one of our senior priests was called to the eternal abode. He was a role model in many ways. Rev. J. Chinnadorai was taken into eternal glory. He was the first Mar Thoma Priest from Karnataka. He worked in almost all the mission fields of Karnataka. He was always with the people. Another senior priest of our Church, Rev. Y. Mathai Achen went to be with the Lord. His blessed services in many parishes will ever be remembered. We praise God for the life of all our departed Achens and join in the sorrows of the bereaving families. We convey the deepest condolences of the Mar Thoma Church.

March was the month of Lent. The Bible readings for this period helped us to experience healing and coherence for our individuality, so as to renew the convictions of our missions. The theme for our reflection on March 6th was, "Healing that Comforts." When Jesus, moved by compassion, puts forth his hand and heals the leper, he was giving the leper the divine comfort. It was a restoring ministry that Jesus was doing. We meditated on the theme "Healing through Forgiveness of Sins" on March 13th, the second Sunday. Sin weakens man. The real gospel is Jesus who forgives sins. On March 20th, we meditated on the topic, "Universal Salvation in Christ." The woman who comes near Jesus from Tyre and Sidon is the symbol of helplessness and dejection. Her faith surpasses the boundaries of caste and race. To provide

the sublime experience of salvation for those who come near Jesus is the solution to the issues of today's world. The last Sunday of March we meditated on the theme, "Christ who gives perfection to personhood." By curing the crippled woman, Jesus proves that Sabbath Day is quite perfect for the healing ministry. She is now free. She can face life with boldness. Only Jesus Christ can give a person complete release from any kind of bondage.

The month of April comprised of days where we meditated the Passion, Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection of our blessed Lord. The aim of these meditations was the proclamation and witnessing of the great hope, the human race was given through Jesus Christ. The first Sunday of April, we meditated on the topic, "Christ who gives Hopeful Vision." Though Bartimaeus had lost his eyesight, he had his insight and with this insight he could strongly feel the presence and power of Jesus Christ. Jesus' presence ignited him. Every believer should experience and share this Christ presence so as to become beacons of hope. April 10th Sunday was Hosanna Festival Day. Our meditations on that Sunday were centered on the gospel section which describes the royal entry of Jesus into the royal city of Jerusalem. They sang, "Hosanna," which means, "Save us now." They greeted Jesus, Son of David. Here also the presence of Jesus made the people hopeful. We also must undergo this transformation and make Jesus our King of kings and Lord of lords. We celebrated Easter on April 17th. We meditated on the theme, "Celebration of Resurrection." The woman who brought spices to the sepulcher, found the stone rolled away. They were upset and brokenhearted. The angels announced the Resurrection of Jesus. The Resurrection of Jesus happens to be the most glorious and enriching vision of the human race. Resurrection, not death, is the last word of faith life. New Sunday (April 24) shares a new redesigned strength of blessed vision for us. This empowerment of the Bible portion is the faith declaration of Apostle Thomas, who brought the gospel to Malankara. The words, "My Lord and my God," of Apostle Thomas to Jesus remain the most inspiring proclamation and acceptance of Christian faith life. We must also accept our Lord as Thomas did if we want to be true followers of Christ.

The Church has arranged meditations and readings during the Sundays in May, giving importance to the necessity of leading the faith life based on the strength provided through resurrection. Work and worship are two sides of a coin. The first Sunday of May is May Day. This day proclaims the dignity of labor. Along with

that we celebrated this day as Land Housing Donation Movement Sunday. It is one's duty to see every work in the light of the relationship with God and to fulfill our life's calls in the most spirited manner. On May 8th, we reflected on the topic, "The Church that has to bear witness to the Resurrection." We love the Church because above all we love God. The insignia of the Church is the incessant and unfailing fight against the forces of darkness. On the third Sunday of May, we meditated on the subject, "Journey with the risen Christ." The resurrected Lord joined the two disciples who were walking toward Emmaus. Jesus at last clears their doubts. They are being revived from their ignorance, come back to the reality that was shown by their Master. They are ready to change their mentality. It was an evolution to perfection. Such perfect lives are what we need in the Church today. On May 22nd, we meditated on the theme, "Lord worthy of Praise." The gospel portion was the song of Virgin Mary. All the other readings of the day were adoration and thanksgiving. Those songs describe the redeeming acts of God. This awareness encourages us to sing even in the midst of adversities. The meditation of the last Sunday of May was, "The Church that has to be on Watch." We are bound to keep up God's commands. We have to live loving our God. Ever vigilant watchfulness from our part is essential for this. It is also necessary for us to defend the Church contradictions in the name of God and the Church. St. Paul also reminds us of this, "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5: 1)." May God help us for this.

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



Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan

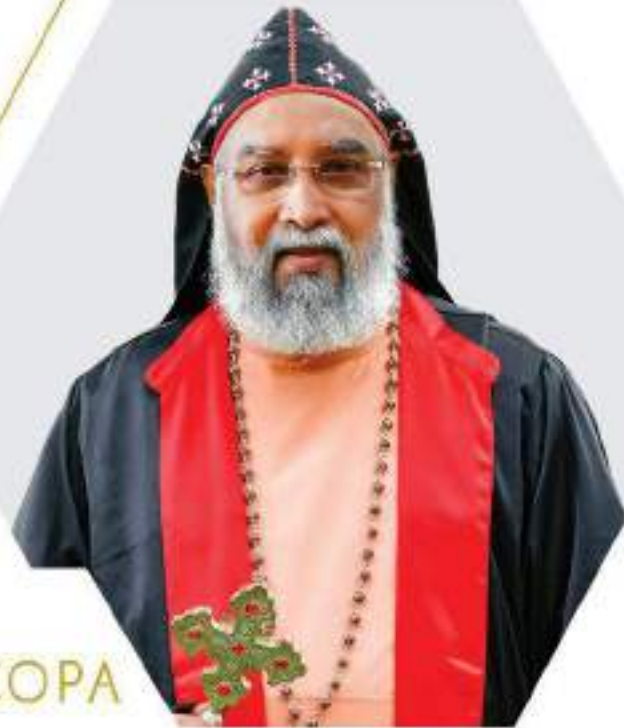
(Translated by Prof. Elias Abraham, Baltimore Mar Thoma Church, from the March, April, May 2022 issues of Sabha Tharaka)



MALANKARA
MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

MESSAGE

FROM
DIOCESAN EPISCOPA



*D*eary Beloved in Christ,

We give thanks to God for the beauty of His creation and the privilege given to human beings in enjoying the goodness in the world and to keep it as God has designed. For the last few years, humanity has been at the grip of the Covid pandemic which was a threat to life. Now it seems no one is serious about the disease. However, much more alarming is the environmental crisis that humanity faces today, where we are confronted with air pollution causing serious health risks, devastating storms as a result of climate change, water pollution and dry rivers and various disasters that harm future sustainable living on the planet earth.

This issue of the Mar Thoma Messenger focuses on **'Climate Justice and Environmental Stewardship.'** At this time of ecological imbalance and as the living habitat on earth continues to face destruction, the role

of the church is to respond to the call to sustain life as well as preserve that which has value. It also needs to cherish the experiences of the past and seek the divine guidance to take good care of God's creation and work for a better future. Often it has been cautioned that the unsustainable consumption to meet both human needs and greed has caused extreme environmental distress and is threatening the existence of all species on the planet earth.

The psalmist reminds that, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). As humans, we need to be aware that the natural resources created by God are not our personal possession and do not belong to us, but they are for the common good of humanity, given by the Creator to us as His guests for careful use and for future generations. Nature expresses a design of love and truth shared by God, which humans enjoy and use to glorify God. In this sense, it is quite obvious that the role of human beings in creation is to care and keep the created order as its stewards.

This stewardship involves better understanding of the present and proper planning for the future. We need to realize that it is difficult to grow as a species and enjoy a high quality of life without changing the way we do things. From a mere consumerist culture, there is a need to take a bold step of transforming the human psyche to participate with God towards a life-oriented culture. God's message to humankind is to be respectful to the creation. The words of Psalm 24 speak on ecological terms – "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). Humans have no right of disposal but are called to a right of use of the resources of the earth.

Now all over the world the threat of climate change and its impact is highly debated, especially its effects on health, environment, migration and economy. While considering its impact, the question that is being raised is on climate justice: 'who dies first?' and 'who pays how much?'. It has been noted that "Climate Justice means just and fair instruments, decisions, actions, burden sharing, and accountability for the prevention, mitigation, and adaptation related to climate change." In the creation narrative in Genesis, God promised to put the divine energy in supporting a life in dignity on earth for all beings, including human and non-human beings. Human beings are given the option to choose a lifestyle. And humanity has been given the role to

keep constant dialogue with God and participate in the change and transformation of the created world. Therefore, responsible stewardship is the basis for the responsible management of resources, and this is the key for caring for creation and sustainability.

I do appreciate all the parishes of the Diocese for the commitment shown to foster the spiritual life of the people by building up healthy communities and for actively being involved in making our environment and church premises more eco-friendly. The Diocesan Assembly that met on May 7th at New York gave new inspiration to the parishes and the members of the church to do their best as agents of transformation, taking care of the needs of people and nature. May God continue to guide us in making the world a just and peaceful place to live. Let God's name be glorified through our life and action.


With prayerful regards,



Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos

Diocesan Episcopa

FULL TIME MINISTRY



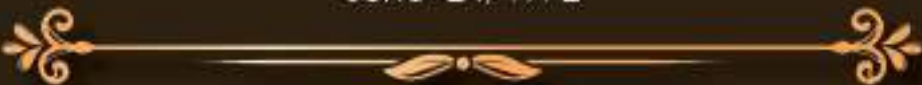
Those who are interested in serving in the full time ministry of the church and who are willing to pursue theological studies may contact the Diocesan Office. Candidates should be active members of their respective local parishes of the Mar Thoma Church and should demonstrate an eagerness to serve. The Diocese is planning to arrange an online prayer fellowship for all prospective candidates in the near future. Please send your name, parish name, and contact information to the following **email address: marthomadiocese@gmail.com**.

Our Congratulations to
The Most Reverend
DR. THEODOSIUS MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN
of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church



ORIDINATION

June 24, 1972



We pray that God will continue to grant Thirumeni His grace, guidance, and the Holy Spirit to lead the church in its journey to establish God's Kingdom as revealed to us through Jesus Christ.



Dr. Cherian Samuel

From the **EDITOR'S Desk**

*B*lessed Summer Greetings to All!

As we enter the third post-pandemic summer, we thank the Lord Almighty for the hopeful signs of abatement and recovery, notwithstanding the mutations of the virus. Life has steadily returned to normal, with the re-opening of schools and offices, bolstered by vaccines for all ages. Let us join the Psalmist and proclaim that the Lord is good, and His mercy everlasting (Psalm 100:5).

The theme for this July issue of the Messenger, "Climate Justice and Environmental Stewardship," is timely and appropriate since it focuses on the key aspects of climate change, an existential threat to humanity. The themes of climate justice and faith-based environmental stewardship have also been at the forefront of the discussions at the World Council of Churches (WCC). In particular, WCC has been organizing a biennial international conference on Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics (ECOTHEE), in collaboration with the Orthodox Academy of Crete, Greece. The latest conference (ECOTHEE-19) was held in September 2019 on the theme, "Ecological racism and prophetic voices for ecological crisis".

Scientific evidence suggests that climate change – long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns globally – has accelerated in the past 200 years, driven by unprecedented global warming that has led to global temperatures rising 1.1°C since the 1800s, with the last decade (2011-2020) being the warmest on record.

Human activity has been the main driver of climate change, primarily from burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas, which generates greenhouse gas emissions that trap the sun's heat and raises temperatures. The worst climate change impacts include the melting of the ice mass at the poles, which in turn causes rising sea level and ocean acidification, leading to flooding and damage to coastal environments. Climate change also increases the incidence of extreme weather, drought, and fires, resulting in the destruction of flora and fauna. Within the umbrella of climate change, climate justice relates to social aspects, emphasizing the varied social, economic, and health impacts on society. While the responsibility for climate change rests with the wealthy and the powerful, it disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable. Poor and developing countries – particularly the least developed countries and Small Island Developing States – are among those most adversely affected and least able to cope with climate related shocks to social, economic, and natural systems. A related and broader concept is Environmental Justice – the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, equitable treatment, and meaningful engagement with all people regardless of race, ethnicity, or income – focused on environmental issues such as air quality, hazardous waste and water, soil pollution, and ecosystem destruction. Environmental stewardship refers to diverse actions that aim to conserve, protect, and create a more sustainable environment, and enhance human well-being.

In the Biblical account of Creation, God granting humanity – created in God’s image on the sixth day – dominion over all created things has been a defining feature (Genesis 1:26). With the LORD God as the fountainhead of all things, the “dominion” role of humanity is best understood as a “stewardship” role; humans are taking care of God’s creation, as God’s custodians and loyal representatives, as the embodiment of God’s sovereignty on earth. In turn, humanity’s stewardship mandate provides the biblical basis for sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – which meets the needs of the present without jeopardizing the demands of the future. The stewardship mandate also entails accountability, wherein humanity can exercise dominion only under the delegated authority of God, in whom all authority rests (Romans 13: 1-5). As caretakers of the earth, created in God’s own image, humanity brings the material world into God’s service and for its own good, shepherding and caring for the governed (Titus 1:7).

The Mar Thoma Church has been observing the first Sunday after World Environment Day in June as Environment Sunday every year for creating awareness and commitment to ecological issues. Under the leadership of His Grace Philpote Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Vallya Metropolitan, the Mar Thoma Church stipulated “carbon” fasting during the Lenten season, a 50-point prescription for reducing the carbon footprint.

While climate change mitigation – actions to limit global warming and related effects – remains the solution to climate change, adaptation – ecological, social, and economic changes – is essential for increasing resilience and reducing impacts and risks. Following the 26th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow (UK) in November 2021, a global consensus has emerged for tackling climate change, through adaptation, mitigation, and finance.

A hopeful story in the global climate crisis has been Bangladesh, which celebrated its 50th year of independence in 2021. It has become a case study in successful economic development in the face of extreme vulnerability to climate change. Threatened by rising sea levels, storms and cyclones, floods have become commonplace in the country, with seawater encroaching both homes and agricultural farms. However, the people of Bangladesh have found an ingenious way of adapting to the rising sea level – building floating gardens to sustain farming.

There are also important parallels between the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. In both cases, it is broadly true that “We are all in this together.” However, the pandemic has shown that people can live in a bubble, though no one can be completely protected. Even so, tackling the pandemic as a united body remains vital for the vitality and welfare of society. Likewise, solidarity is essential for addressing the climate crisis. In both instances, the logic of collective action emanates from self-interest, rather than altruism, given the otherwise adverse consequences for all.

Given our collective carbon emissions, climate change and the underlying imperative for climate justice present a moral dilemma for Christians, impinging on Jesus’s foundational command to Love One Another. Humanity has been called to care for their neighbors of the future and the present. The reconciliation of the relationship between the ethical considerations of climate change, the knowledge that our actions cause harm to others, and the practice of the Christian faith has been challenging. May the Lord Almighty sustain us all. May we experience the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (Psalm 27:15).

Dr. Cherian Samuel
Associate Editor

COMING SOON!

Messenger 40th Anniversary Special Issue in October 2022

The Mar Thoma Messenger magazine was first published in 1981, and 2021 marked its 40th Anniversary. The October 2022 issue, which is typically marked the Diaspora Issue, will be a special issue to celebrate the Messenger’s 40th anniversary, and honor the immense contributions of the past and present leaders, editors, writers, advertisers, and everyone else who contributed to make the Messenger the distinguished publication of

the Diocese of North America and Europe. The issue will also include articles on the theme Practice of Non-Violence (which will include discussions on avoiding domestic, physical, and psychological violence, and the practice of non-violence to address social issues). Please send any articles, poems, or photographs to commemorate the 40th Anniversary to the Diocesan Office at marthomadiocese@gmail.com by August 30, 2022.



ECO- CANVAS AROUND US



CLIMATE JUSTICE AND
EARTH-CENTRIC STEWARDSHIP

Rev. Dr. M.J. Joseph, Kottayam

Ecology is a branch of science concerned with the inter-relationship of organisms and their environment. The word "relationship-" is significant as it speaks of the co-existence/dialogical existence of all the living and the non-living entities in God's created order. A tree in the courtyard is indeed a part of the web of life. We should not live with the myth that we always need Oxygen cylinders for protecting our lives. There should be earnest efforts on our part to protect the environment with trees. It is rightly said that "tree is the answer to global warming." One cannot pluck a flower without disturbing the overall ecology of the Universe. This is the universal spiritual law of ecology. In the Christian perspective, ecology is a matter of faith. To illustrate this let me quote from the convocation speech of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, at Putaparthi Satya Sai Baba University on Nov.22, 2002: "Look at a flower in your garden. How generously does it share its fragrance and its honey with us? It gives all its life force freely. When it finishes its mission, it falls silently down at the root of the plant. Try to become a flower in the pilgrimage of life." Learning from nature is the first step in enhancing the stewardship of life. "The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). The Psalmist is quite vocal when he shouts with joy: "All the earth worships thee; they sing praises to thee, sing praises to thy name." (Ps.66:4).

Therefore, let us thus heed to Ps.150:6: "All that breathe praise the Lord." Eco-justice is the celebration of right relationship with the creator (cf.Rev.4:11)

There is so much mystery in nature to be unraveled. Truly, the Ancients believed that "God sleeps in the minerals; awakens in the vegetables; walks in the animals and thinks in humans." In a friendly dialogue between the Creator Lord and Job, we find the most unanswerable questions like: "Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this" (Job.38:18). "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding" (Job.38:4). A quote from Thomas Aquinas will shed light on our understanding of God's creation: "Any misunderstanding about nature leads to a misunderstanding of God." According to Martin Luther, the great reformer, "the gospel of God is not only seen in the Bible, but it is also inscribed in trees, flowers, clouds and stars." Our attitudes to nature must have a three-fold direction for an effective action plan: co-awareness, co-spirituality and eco-justice. Our understanding of sin also should be broad-based ecologically. It is not simply embracing evils, but it is misusing and denying justice to what God has declared good. We have now started speaking about ecological sins and their remedial measures. Pope Benedict XVI had called upon the

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Deacon : 1973, May 29
Kassissa : 1973, June 12
Ramban : 1993, August 31
Episcopa : 1993, October 2

Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos
Episcopa



Parents : **S/o. K. C. Uthup & Sosamma**
Kanjirathara, Manganam, Kottayam
Date of Birth : 1953, August 16
Deacon : 1980, May 31
Kassissa : 1980, June 28
Ramban : 2005, February 11
Episcopa : 2005, May 14



Catholic churches to speak aloud about ecological sins such as water pollution and air pollution along with the 7 mortal sins for an integrated view of life. As pollution is sin against God and humans, we need to search for the crisis situations around the globe.

Climate Crisis

The issue of 'Climate Crisis' is indeed a topic related to "sustainable development," "sustainable mobility," and "integrity of creation." It has found a place in the UN Paris declaration (2015). As Earth is our home, the issue is interwoven with relationships in God's order of creation. The sages of the Vedic times had proverbially conceived the world as "one nest" and exhorted us to follow an earth-centric attitude to life.

The words of Dalai Lama are worth remembering: "We have the responsibility as well as the capability to protect the Earth and its habitats - animals, plants, insects and even microorganisms. If they are to be known by future generations, we must act now." Since the eco-challenge goes beyond our borders it requires no passport. The problem of climate crisis requires the co-operative effort of the global community.

It is indeed alarming to know that the six warmest years since the 15th C-2000 A.D. were all recorded in the 1990's. The earth is getting warmer. Since the middle of the 19th C, the average temperature of our planet has increased by about 0.5°C. As co-workers with God (1 Cor.3:9), we are accountable before God for what has been entrusted to us through divine wisdom. Bestowed with intelligence and awareness, *humans are only enabling participants as parents and stewards rather than domineering agents in the ongoing process of creation. It makes us humble when we realize that a man or a woman is only one among the 30 million and odd living species on this Earth.*

The awareness of the threats posed by 'Climate crisis' urges us to opt for a lifestyle, which is less egocentric. Dr. Konrad Raiser, former general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), has rightly said that global warming is a problem caused by the polluting lifestyle of the rich industrialized countries. The environmental deterioration will make the earth "uninhabitable" for all living beings. As there is a discernible human influence in Climate Change, we need to look for a change in thinking in mission as well as in our lifestyle. This is basically the challenge before us.

Cause and effect

1. The depletion of natural resources, pollution and population growth are placing an intolerable strain on the earth's resources. It is universally upheld that the world's future requires "a vision of development that can be sustained in the long run both environmentally and economically" (Wesley Granberg Michaelson). As the problem of climate change is an issue of global justice, it is imperative that we should develop strategies, actions, and show responsibility on environmental issues. The plundering of the Mother Earth as well as its rape to satisfy the greed of the present generation has made this planet uninhabitable. The emission of green house gases such as Carbon dioxide (CO₂) Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), Nitrous Oxide and Methane has contributed to global warming. The highly industrialized nations of the world are indeed guilty of this "ecological sin." The Kyoto-UN meeting (1997) did not succeed in convicting the developed nations of its eco-injustice against humanity. The Kyoto stalemate has resulted in a big brotherly advice to the developing nations of the world for a restraint on their style of consumption! The global scenario is moving towards "spiritual emptiness." What is required is an integrated ethical vision for a common future. We are accountable also for "the one yet to be born." We have heard about it in the UN conference of 2009 by a girl of 13 from Lucknow. The factors that contribute to Climate Justice in the world today is intrinsically related to human activity, as confirmed from the research of Nobel laureates like Al Gore and Dr. R. K. Pachauri.

2. The web of life in nature is being disturbed due to the jet speed mobility of the technological culture. The use of fossil fuels has resulted in the release of the ozone depleting substances in the stratosphere. Needless to say, that ozone depletion and subsequently ozone hole in the Antarctic Stratosphere have already given us alarm bells. The Climate chaos will thus become an issue of global justice as it would submerge low lying countries in the world. The green house effect is the disturbance of the energy balance. More energy is trapped near the Earth's surface and less at higher levels. It is scientifically affirmed that rapid global warming will be instrumental in changing ocean conditions. This might result in strong oceanic tides like Tsunami. The change of temperature and hurricane have profound impact on forests which is extremely sensitive. The melting of ice will result in the rising of sea level up as much as 4 ft.

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which would create havoc on coastal areas, wetlands, and lowlands. It is predicted that Marshall Islands, Bangladesh, part of Shanghai (China), the Mekong - Vietnam Delta etc., will have to live in threats of total extinction from the globe. The change of monsoon seasons has created havoc in the economic scenario of Kerala and other Southern states in India. The Ultraviolet rays (UV) penetrated through the Ozone hole might be detrimental to human health too. Vegetation on land is seriously affected by increased levels of UV. Moreover, the economic cost of climate change is quite serious as it brings about infrastructural damage and destruction of bio-wealth.

For a better world

1. There should be a constant search for a more equitable world order. For this, creation of environmentally sensitive religious communities should be a top priority as all religions of the world speak of the gift of life. The Climate fast initiated by the WCC is a bold step. Religious resources of the peoples of the world must be pooled together as an adequate basis for human survival.

2. Instead of fossil fuels, opt for alternative forms of energy.

The alternative form of development as advocated in the Rio+20 should be judiciously followed. Consumption of wood and wood derived paper must be reduced. Waste recycling and use of solar energy should be given wide range of publicity. Massive forestation should be encouraged. Tropical rainforests must be preserved. "Tree is the poetry written God in the sky" (Khalil Gibran), is an interreligious reminder.

3. Train Ecological prophets, preachers, and priests for eco-vision which is indeed a spirituality of combat.

An eco-spirituality will help us to regain the lost world of true eco values. Ps.104 provides a framework for invoking God-consciousness in the life of the faith communities. An inter-religious celebration of eco-sensitivity programs should be encouraged. There should be humility on the part of the humans to listen to nature and to the call of the flora and fauna for a holistic living. Eco-friendly worship orders should be widely used in the churches. Eco-spirituality is "God-consciousness" in the pilgrimage of life. The theology of the Eastern Liturgy speaks of an eco-vision in our search for the meaning of life. What matters in life is

truth and beauty whether in the secular realm or in the spiritual realm. The more we are nearer to beauty, the more humane we are! "Beauty is truth; Truth is Beauty" (John Keats).

The most relevant eco-centric question raised before us is to opt for a paradigm shift in mission from an anthropocentric attitude to a bio-centric (earth-centric) life concern. The 10th Assembly of the WCC (Busan) in 2013 calls upon the churches to undertake a pilgrimage towards justice and peace including water justice. The theme chosen for the 11th assembly of the WCC(2022): "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" also has an inclusive vision for the whole universe including meditations on water.

Stewardship of water

Since 2006 (Porto Alegre), WCC has taken up the topic, "Ecumenical Water Network" seriously for its theological reasons. It affirms that "water is the gift of God, a common good and a human right." The study urges the Churches to function as a Blue Community which must respect the three criteria of mission such as recognizing water as a human right issue, saying "no" to the sale and the use of bottled water"

In an ecological universe, every created entity has an intrinsic value "because all are subjects as well as objects" (John B. Cobb). Whatever has intrinsic value has some right to exist and to prosper. Ecological revolutions should start globally and locally in the temples, the churches, the mosques, and the pagodas! And of course, in our hearts!

Eco- Justice - a divine imperative

In the web of life, eco-justice is a celebration of relationship - being fair to all forms of life. In an eco-vision of the earth community "giving, what is due to each component of the whole," is a divine mandate to establish just relationship which is the *raison d'être* of just peace. This is well stated in Gen.2.1 where we read that Adam is created out of *adama* (the ground or soil). The relation between man and the ground is deep and intense. As human body is made of *panchaboothas* - earth, water, fire, air, and space - there exists a kinship in the wider spectrum of life. A harmonious existence of the symbols of life could be called prevalence of just peace in God's creation. Any kind of imbalance is a state

of alienation. The petition in the Lord's prayer, "your kingdom come on earth (*ten gen*) as it is in heaven" (Matt.6:10) urges us to make a meaningful relationship in God's order of creation. Anything that disrupts or disregards the bond of a uniting tie in Creation is to be considered as injustice to its core. Paulose Mar Gregorios writes, "We have so become accustomed to the scientific-technological stance that we have lost the faculty of addressing reality as a whole, of seeing in it the source and sustainer of life, of responding to it with reverence and receptivity, and of surrendering ourselves to it in all fulfilling love." (The Human presence: An Orthodox view of Nature, Geneva, WCC, 1978, P. 87)

In an anthropocentric attitude to life, ecological management is addressed to human beings. Humans, and nature could be conceived in terms of a functional relationship. Any disruption of relationship in the order of creation is to be considered as sinful, unjust and mismanagement of God's resources. All sinful situations carry a wave of injustice. Speaking about the spirituality of the Earth, Gabriele Dietrich writes, "You rape Mother Earth; She is money to you; You rip it off; you poison her; you make her bear three crops in a year; Can I bear three children in a year? Will she not die? Does she not need rest?" Yes, they are words of wisdom to open our eyes. The polluting lifestyle and attitude of humans make earth groaning for its redemption- (Rom.8:19-21). "Return to nature" is an urgent prophetic call of ecological ecumenism after the recent Fukushima Tragedy and the Covid Pandemic. The UN mandates to seek political will, practical steps and partnership are meant to remain relevant in finding answers to the ecological crisis of today. The UN-stands for sustainable development and its 17 declared Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be achieved by 2030. They have only one goal: Life for all. The churches all over the world should support 2015 UN message which carries several programs and projects dealing with the 5-Ps: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership.

Conclusion

Beauty, Truth, and Orderliness are the basic ingredients for human survival. The words of the Chief of Seattle (of the Native Americans, 1854) addressed to the Whites

are worth recalling, "How can you buy and sell the sky, the warmth of the land?... The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family.... Man does not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself." Let us affirm with one voice that defending the earth is not a project; defending the earth is a way of life.

The Covid lockdown period all over the world during the Pandemic has taught us several values for an authentic existence. Our needs are not to be made greeds. We have learned to live with the minimum and manifested the art of simplicity. Several of us have said good-bye to our old habit of "disposable syndrome." Wearing mask in the public place and keeping physical distance have taught us to care for others' health too. Friendship with nature has helped us to live with an eco-friendly attitude to life. We have also learned the importance of peace with nature. In many places the nature around us has helped us to keep the amount of CO2 below 350 ppm. The sky is clear with its glittering stars. So also, the waters in the seas, the rivers, and the lakes. The lockdown period was a blessing for all living organisms. The butterflies were seen all round the bushes. One could smell the fragrance of jasmine flowers during these days. Meditation under a tree or in the garden has become a meaningful spiritual exercise. We have learned to make use of alternative health care providers such as water, air, sunshine, exercise, and diet. The place of sunlight for our need of vitamin D and the role of Ultraviolet rays for the destruction of harmful bacteria have taught us immense health care possibilities.

"You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning" (Ps. 18:28).

** Rev. Dr. M.J. Joseph*

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Climate Justice and Environmental Stewardship



Dr. John K. Thomas
Tabor MTC, Staten Island, NY

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND EARTH-CENTRIC STEWARDSHIP

Introduction

"I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination." Jeremiah 2:7.

When God gave man dominion over His creation, he bestowed an important responsibility, to be his excellent steward over the earth and all its inhabitants. Unfortunately, this concept has been politicized and contorted. When does stewardship cross over to Christian activism? What does Climate Justice mean to a modern Christian?

Climate Justice means finding solutions to the climate crisis, which not only reduce carbon emissions and/or protect the natural world, but in this process, it will create a fairer, most just, and more equal world. Climate Justice is a term for the purpose of this article, can be described as a movement which is not passive, but has an active concept. It acknowledges that adverse climate change is not just an esoteric concept for debate, but has substantial social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on us, especially those who are less fortunate. It is a movement that ensures that both planet and its inhabitants are treated fairly in the process

of cutting down the amount of fossil fuels we burn to produce energy.

The Christian idea of justice is grounded in Lord Jesus's command, that we love our neighbor. From a scriptural point of view, justice means loving our neighbor as we love ourselves, rooted in the character and nature of God. Bible explicitly teaches everyone to think of the earth as God's world and everything in it as God's creation - including animals, plants, trees, and everything under His creation. It is good to note that at least some Christians are aware and committed to help reducing global warming through "Carbon fast" and making other sacrifices to live more environmentally friendly as part of their lifestyle. Carbon fast is practiced, where followers cut down high-emission lifestyle and become more mindful of the impact on the planet. Carbon fast is way for individuals and communities to engage in a conscientious and earth-honoring spiritual practice. In one of the Papal newsletters, Pope Francis has declared that the science of Climate Change is clear and that the Catholic church sees it as a moral issue, which should be addressed to protect the earth and everyone in it.

The Mar Thoma Church calls on its members to accept this calling as well, and not be just accountable stewards, but be justice warriors. Why must we heed the call? Because it is an existential threat to physical health, mental health, air, water, food, and shelter, especially to those who are socially and economically disadvantaged and may face greater risks. This is also because of their living conditions, health status, income, language barrier, and their limited access to resources. Climate justice helps us to put into context the significant impacts of Climate Change we experience today.

A 2020 report, dealing with environmental problems showed the following as the greatest issues affecting climate: (1) Pollution, (2) Global warming, (3) Over population, (4) Poor waste disposal system, (5) Ocean acidification - ongoing decrease in the PH value of the oceans caused by uptake of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, mainly caused by the burning of the fossil fuels, (6) Loss of biodiversity - includes world-wide extinction of different species as well as local reduction or loss of species in certain animal or plant habitat, (7) Deforestation - clearing of wide areas of trees, (8) Ozone layer depletion - ozone hole is formed in the atmosphere because of the manufacturing of halo carbon refrigerants, solvents, propellants, and chlorofluorocarbons.

How can we try to prevent the climate change from getting worse? (1) make your voice heard by those in power, (2) cut down air pollution, (3) cut back on flying, (4) use less car travel, (5) use more solar and wind energy, than other forms of energy, (6) respect and protect green spaces, and (7) proper disposal of waste. Climate advocacy groups should work towards introducing new policies that can invest in clean renewable and sustainable energy.

Clean environment is essential for healthy living. The more we do not care about the environment, the more it will become polluted with contaminants and toxins that have harmful effect on health. Air pollution can cause cancer and respiratory illnesses and diseases and it is important to prevent them. A warmer climate increases public health challenges like heat-aggravated illnesses, increase in vector-borne diseases like dengue fever, West Nile virus, Lyme disease, and malaria, which can affect safe living. Cutting down the pollutants can slow the rate of warming and public health risks. As ecosystems are compromised, the by-products they produce will affect the quality of clean air, water, and crop pollination.

If we do not take further action to stop climate impacts that we are already experiencing, the Earth's temperature

will likely rise 3-7degrees F by the end of the century. The state of cleanliness of a society represents the culture and mindset of the people. Maintaining a clean environment reduces pollution, preserves our biosphere, protects the endangered species, and preserves earth's natural resources.

How can one be a Good Steward on the Earth?

We are stewards of God's creation. We are bound to take care of the earth and act in ways that will restore and protect our environment. We need to ensure that the developmental activities are ecologically sound. In the book of Genesis, we read that God created humans to co-habit with the animals, plants, trees and all the living creatures in land, air, and water. Every person is called to exercise responsible stewardship in order to use our natural resources in a way that will preserve for future generations. It is good to also remember that our environment belongs to diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Here are few of the examples as to how we can be a good steward. (1) Try to learn about animals, plants, and ecosystems around us. (2) Choose to walk, use bicycle, carpool, or use public transportation as much as possible. (3) Buy and use local farm products. (4) Plant a small garden. (5) Recycle, reuse, and reduce waste products where possible. (6) Use less fossil energy. (7) Speak, vote, and support for the well-being of society.

Earth's stewardship is sustaining and enhancing earth's life support system; and it also involves shaping the pathways of social, and ecological changes at local areas to global standards. This will enhance ecosystem resilience and human wellbeing. Some of the examples are: (1) Installation of water saving fixtures, water recycling systems, reuse of wastewater, and rainwater harvesting systems. Thus, by protecting environment through recycling, conservation, restoration, and regeneration, we take responsibility of our choices. We can modify our choices like buying food from local farms. (2) Volunteer in local environmental projects. (3) Be dynamic in choosing the mode of transportation. (4) minimize the use of plastics. (5) minimize the carbon footprint in food production which is the amount of carbon dioxide and other carbon compounds emitted due to consumption of fossil fuels like gasoline and related products. (6) use of solar energy instead of conventional methods.

Conclusion

Cutting down carbon emission is the only long-term solution for avoiding climate impacts. In the short-term,

we need to adapt- which means to increase society's capability to cope up with the changes of climate by discouraging development in high-risk areas and building more resilient cities and communities. The most promising ways to mitigate Climate Change are - conservation, restoration, and improved management of soil as carbon storage house - a new weapon in climate fight. The degradation of soils from unsustainable agriculture released billions of tons of carbon into the atmosphere. Effective land restoration could play a major role in capturing carbon from atmosphere and slowing climate change.

Let each one of us, not losing sight of our maker's mandate and be an ideal model to live in solidarity with the principles of social justice to protect our planet earth from degradation, either because of our ignorance or the abuse of the environment we live in.

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INVITING ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT ISSUE...

We invite articles for the October 2022 (Messenger 40th Anniversary Special Issue in October 2022) related to the theme – **"Practice of Non-Violence"**.

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 August 30, 2022, via an email to marthomadiocese@gmail.com, if you intend to submit an article for the October 2022 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 August 30, 2022.

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 600 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

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TOWARDS ACTIVE CLIMATE STEWARDSHIP



Dr. Simi Thambi

Climate Economist, London

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND
EARTH-CENTRIC STEWARDSHIP

The pledges and goals to fight climate change are known to all. Every year promises are made to reduce carbon footprint, end deforestation, reduce methane emissions, etc. This all sounds good. But the sad truth is that even when we add all the commitments, the world is still on a path to a temperature rise well above 2 degrees Celsius. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, human-induced warming reached approximately 1 degree Celsius (°C) above pre-industrial levels in 2017, increasing at 0.2°C per decade¹. Scientists forecast that inability to limit warming to less than 1.5°C has disastrous consequences, heat extremes more than critical threshold level of agriculture & health, in addition to multiple negative effects on water cycle, rainfall patterns, sea level rise, etc., which can lead to erratic patterns of floods, droughts and other natural disasters. The science is clear: the next decade will be pivotal in the fight to avert the climate crisis and minimize the loss of nature and biodiversity. The clock is ticking, and the reality remains our actions are falling short despite us knowing the disastrous consequences of inaction or slow action. In such a situation, simple individual, and community actions of climate stewardship such as those below can play a huge role.

Choose organic or sustainable products: Decades of intensive agriculture practices have put immense

pressure on ecosystem services that sustain natural resources. The rate at which fertilizer use has increased agricultural production is astonishing, by over 12 times since 1960. Every year due to political voting agendas hundreds of billions of dollars are spent on supporting practices such as fertilizer subsidies which encourage the overuse of fertilizers and make our food systems unsustainable. Practices such as monocropping and factory farming have moved the farms further away from nature's regenerative systems amplifying the environmental and health crisis. We may think we are eating food, but it may be empty calories with little or no nutritional value. There is a growing movement in the farming community and scientists worldwide towards fewer fertilizers or growing organic. Why not support this movement by buying organic products? If you can afford these slightly overpriced products you see in supermarkets, why not buy them? You could consider the extra price paid for organic over conventional fruits and vegetables as your way of contributing to mitigating the impact of climate.

Reduce food loss and waste

According to some studies, food loss and waste account for up to ten percent of greenhouse gas emissions. They use up precious land and water resources for nothing. No doubt, it is impossible to eliminate food waste and loss. However, by reducing it, we can slow climate

1 <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

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change, protect nature, and increase food security – at a time when we desperately need these things to happen. Everyone could do more to reduce food waste.

Rethink plastics

Dolphins with plastic substances inside their body. Turtles entangled in plastic. Billions of plastic pellets are washing up on the coast of Sri Lanka. All of us have read worrying news like this from time to time. The way we use and manage our plastics is causing immense damage to our marine ecosystem. According to a study, plastic pollution reduces marine ecosystem services by up to USD 2,500 billion each year. This plastic waste often reaches the sea through rivers. A study in the journal, *Scientific Advances*, found that 80 percent of plastic waste comes to sea through 1,000 rivers (ref DOI: [10.1126/sciadv.aaz5](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aaz5)). The life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of plastics hit 1.7 gigatons of CO2 equivalent in 2015. If this rate continues, emissions from plastics will reach 17 percent of the global carbon budget by 2050. In our homes and churches, we should take a pledge to completely get rid of single-use plastics and avoid the use of plastics in general. If there is limited demand for hazardous single-use plastics, their supply will fall automatically, it is simple economics.

Work across faiths for nature

Climate action has no denomination or religion. Faith groups act to channel the collective strengths of individuals towards a purpose. Intra-Interfaith collaboration for climate action has the potential to bring out the best that each faith can offer and ensure peace and prosperity. This can take several forms, joint movements, activities for creating awareness, etc. This can enable us to solve two concerns, climate crisis and interfaith discord, with one solution, leading to both inter-inter faith harmony and climate change mitigation. It is important to ensure community-based nature-action is sustainable and not sporadic or one-time such as ending with planting a tree on the world environment day, only to forget about the tree when the event is over.

Empower youth for climate action

Youth are often the changemakers. The most beautiful thing about them is that they are not afraid to question the status quo and create new ways of doing things. The voices of the youth therefore must be made audible on every kind of platform, in our churches and communities. It is because of enterprising youths that the world has come up with innovative and out-of-the-box solutions to different problems; think of waste to energy start-ups, sustainable farm produce start-ups, electric mobility, and green business; the list is endless.

There is a need to have more bold, fearless young men and women that can hold the baton of mitigating climate change within our communities. We need such youth inside governments, inside corporates, and science as well as inside activism. Are we creating a culture of such youth within our communities who can challenge and upturn wrong status quos? Climate change is a long-term survival issue. It is an existential issue. The voices of youth and children are indispensable.

This article has just listed a few actions which could contribute to mitigating climate change. It is not an exhaustive list. The important thing to remember is to channel the power of faith toward nurturing active stewards passionate about protecting and upholding God's creations. The clergy, as well as churchgoers, have a duty in driving the power of the Church towards simple actions that can help in mitigating climate change. Actions initiated at the individual, community, or church level all add to multiply climate benefits. It is not a time for dormancy in climate stewardship but rather a time for alertness and activeness. So, let us use the transformative power of faith to create a greener, more sustainable world.

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ഭൂമിയുടെ ഹരിത പ്രാർത്ഥനകൾ



ഷാജി ജോർജ്ജ്

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND
EARTH-CENTRIC STEWARDSHIP

2 ലയാള ചെറുകഥയിൽ ഹരിതശോഭയുള്ള അനേകം ചെറു കഥകൾ സമ്മാനിച്ച പ്രമുഖനായ എഴുത്തുകാരനാണ് ടി.പത്മനാഭൻ. ഒരു മുരിങ്ങമരം കഥാപാത്രമായി വരുന്ന ടി. പത്മനാഭന്റെ ചെറുകഥയാണ് 'പുഴ കടന്നു മരങ്ങളുടെ ഇടയിലേക്ക്' എന്ന കഥാസമാഹരണത്തിലുള്ള 'ജീവന്റെ വഴി' എന്ന കഥ. കഥാകൃത്തിന്റെ വീടിനോട് ചേർന്നു നിൽക്കുന്ന മുരിങ്ങമരം തന്നെയാണ് 'ജീവന്റെ വഴി'യിൽ നിൽക്കുന്നത്. കഥാകൃത്ത് സൂഹൃത്തിന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ നിന്നും കൊണ്ടുവന്ന് നട്ടുനന്നിച്ചു വളർത്തിയ മുരിങ്ങമരമായിരുന്നു അത് - 'വളരെ അകലെനിന്ന് എന്റെ ചങ്ങാതിയുടെ വീട്ടിൽ നിന്നും നന്നായ ന്യൂസ് പേപ്പറിലും തുണിയിലും പൊതിഞ്ഞു കൊണ്ടുവന്ന്, സ്പ്രേഹപ്പൂർവ്വം ഞാൻ നട്ടുനന്നിച്ചു വളർത്തിയ എന്റെ മുരിങ്ങ' എന്നാണ് കഥയിൽ മുരിങ്ങയുമായുള്ള ആത്മ ബന്ധം കഥാകൃത്ത് സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. മുരിങ്ങമരം വളരെ വേഗം ഒടിഞ്ഞു വിഴുവാൻ സാധ്യതയുള്ള മരമാണെന്നു ഭാര്യ മുന്നറിയിപ്പ് നൽകിയിട്ടും ആ വാഗ്ദാനവും ചെവിക്കൊള്ളാതെ വീട്നടുത്തുതന്നെ മുരിങ്ങ നട്ടു വളർത്തിയപ്പോൾ ആ ആത്മ ബന്ധത്തിന്റെ തെളിവായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഭാര്യയുടെ വാക്കുകൾ പ്രവചനം പോലെ ഫലിച്ചു. മുരിങ്ങമരം പൊട്ടിപ്പോയി. മുരിങ്ങമരം ഒടിഞ്ഞ് വീടിന്റെ ടെറസിലേക്കാണ് വീണതെങ്കിലും കഥാകൃത്തിന് ഹൃദയത്തിലേക്ക്

പൊട്ടിപ്പോയ അനുഭവമായിട്ടാണ് തോന്നിയത്. കാരണം ആ മുരിങ്ങമരം അദ്ദേഹത്തിന് തെങ്ങിൻ ഓർമ്മകളുടെ മരമായിരുന്നു. ആ മരം അദ്ദേഹത്തിന് തെങ്ങിൻ ആത്മബന്ധങ്ങൾ സമ്മാനിച്ചിരുന്നു. കഥാകൃത്ത് ഇപ്രകാരം ഓർമ്മപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു "മനസ്സിൽ മരവും കിളികളുമൊക്കെയുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ഒരു കൊച്ചുകുട്ടിയെപ്പോലെ വളരെ അകലെ നിന്ന് ഒരു കസ്പ് ഇവിടെയെത്തിച്ചത്, വീട്ടുകാരിയുടെ എതിർപ്പിനെ അവതണിച്ച് വീടിനു വളരെ അരികിലായിത്തന്നെ അതു നട്ടത്, വളരെ വേഗം അത് ഒരു വലിയ മരമായി വളർന്നത്, അതിലെ കായ്കൾ പഠിച്ചു സഞ്ചിയിലാക്കി ഞാൻ അടുത്തും അകലെയും മുളള പരിചയക്കാർക്കും സ്പ്രേഹിതന്മാർക്കും സന്തോഷപൂർവ്വം എത്തിച്ചുകൊടുത്തത്, മരത്തിന്റെ മുകളിൽ വന്നിരുന്ന് എനിക്കു വേണ്ടി എന്നും പാടിയിരുന്ന കിളികളുമായി ദൃഢമായ ഒരു ചങ്ങാത്തം സ്ഥാപിച്ചത് എല്ലാം എന്റെ മനസ്സിലുണ്ടായിരുന്നു!" ബന്ധങ്ങളുടെ പാരമ്പര്യത്തിന്റെ സൗന്ദര്യമാണ് ഈ വാക്കുകളിൽ നിറയെ ഫലങ്ങളുമായി നിന്നിരുന്നത്. അനേകം കിളികളുമായി കൂട്ടുകൂടാനുള്ള ഒരുവേദിയായി ആ മരം അദ്ദേഹത്തിന് അനുഭവവേദ്യമായിരുന്നു. മരം ഇല്ലാതായാൽ കിളികൾ അന്റെ വീട്ടിലേക്ക് വരാതാകുമല്ലോ എന്നതിൽ അദ്ദേഹത്തിനു ദുഃഖമുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. അന്റെ മുരിങ്ങയുടെ ഫലങ്ങൾ തനിക്കു വേണ്ടി മാത്രമാ

യിട്ടല്ല അദ്ദേഹം ഉപയോഗിച്ചത് എന്ന വസ്തുതയും ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. മുരിങ്ങ ഇല്ലാതായാൽ, മുരിങ്ങയുടെ ഫലങ്ങൾ ഉറ്റുളളവരുമായി പങ്കുവെച്ചിരുന്ന ഒരു നല്ല കാലം അസ്മിത മിക്കുമല്ലോ എന്ന ചിന്തയും അദ്ദേഹത്തെ ഭാരപ്പെടുത്തിയിരുന്നു. ആ വീട്ടുമുറ്റത്തെ മുരിങ്ങമരം യഥാർത്ഥത്തിൽ കഥാകൃത്തിന്റെ പുഴയത്തിൽത്തന്നെ ഫലമണിഞ്ഞുനിന്ന ഒരു മരമായിരുന്നു. എന്നാൽ ഈ കഥ ഒരു ദുരന്തത്തിലല്ല അവസാനിക്കുന്നത് എന്നതാണ് ഏറ്റവും പ്രസക്തമായ ഒരു കാര്യം. പൊട്ടിയ മുരിങ്ങയുടെ അവസ്ഥ നേരിൽ കണ്ടു മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ വീടിന്റെ ചെരിഞ്ഞ മേൽക്കൂരയിലേക്ക് കഥാ നായകൻ കയറുന്ന ഒരു സന്ദർഭമുണ്ട് ഈ കഥയിൽ. ഒടിഞ്ഞു കിടക്കുന്ന കമ്പ് വെട്ടിമാറ്റുവാൻ രൊളെ കിട്ടാതെ വന്നതുകൊണ്ടാണ് മരത്തിന്റെ ഒടിഞ്ഞ ഭാഗത്തിന്റെ സ്ഥിതി എന്തെന്നറിയുവാൻ ചില ദിവസങ്ങൾക്കുശേഷം എണിവെച്ച് ടെറസി ലേക്ക് കയറിനോക്കിയത്. മുകളിൽ ചെന്ന കഥാകൃത്ത് കാണുന്ന കാഴ്ച 'ജീവന്റെ വഴി' താരും തളിമുദണിയുന്ന കാഴ്ചയാണ്. ആ കാഴ്ചയുടെ വർണ്ണന ഇങ്ങനെയാണ് - 'അന്വിലെ ചരിഞ്ഞുകിടക്കുകയായിരുന്നു പക്ഷേ, എനിക്കിന്റെ കണ്ണുകളെ വിശ്വസിക്കാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. മുരിങ്ങ ഉണങ്ങിയിരുന്നില്ല എന്നു തന്നെയല്ല കമ്പുകൾ നിറയെ പച്ചത്തഴപ്പുകളായിരുന്നു. ജീവന്റെ പ്രവാഹമുള്ള കുഞ്ഞിലകൾ! പൊട്ടാതെ ഇത്തിരിമാത്രം അവശേഷിക്കുന്ന തടിയിലൂടെ...' എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണ് ഒടിഞ്ഞുകമ്പ് വീണ്ടും തളിരിട്ടുവാൻ തുടങ്ങിയത് എന്ന ചോദ്യത്തിന് ഒറ്റ ഉത്തരമേയുള്ളൂ. - തായ് തടിയുമായുള്ള ബന്ധം മുരിങ്ങ ഒടിഞ്ഞു നിന്നപ്പോഴും പൂർണ്ണമായും അറ്റുപോയിരുന്നില്ല എന്നതു തന്നെയാണ് കാരണം. ഈ കഥയ്ക്ക് പരിസ്ഥിതിയുടെ മാത്രമല്ല ആത്മീയതയുടെയും വിശാലമായ മാനങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ഇന്നത്തെ പരിസ്ഥിതിയും ഇന്നത്തെ മനുഷ്യനും ഒടിഞ്ഞു വീണ് മുരിങ്ങപോലെയാണ്. ദൈവത്തിന്റെ സ്വപ്നത്തോടു ചേർന്നിരിക്കുമ്പോഴാണ് മനുഷ്യനായാലും പ്രകൃതിയായാലും താരും തളിമുദണിയുന്നത്. പ്രകൃതി ദൈവത്തോടു ചേർന്നുതന്നെയാണ് നിൽക്കുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ പ്രകൃതിയെ നശിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ മനുഷ്യൻ ഇറങ്ങിത്തിരിക്കുമ്പോൾ പ്രകൃതിയും മനുഷ്യനും നാശത്തിന്റെ വക്കിലേക്ക് കുതിക്കുകയാണ്. പരിസ്ഥിതിയുടെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പ് ആത്മീയതയുടെ വീണ്ടെടുപ്പു തന്നെയായി മാറുന്നത് അതുകൊണ്ടു തന്നെയാണ്. ടി. പത്മനാഭൻ എന്ന മഹാനായ കഥാകൃത്ത് വീട്ടുമുറ്റത്തെ മുരിങ്ങമരത്തെ തന്റെ പുഴയത്തോടു ചേർത്തുപിടിച്ചതുപോലെ പരിസ്ഥിതിയെ പുഴയത്തോടു ചേർത്തുനിർത്തുവാൻ നമുക്കു കഴിയുന്നുണ്ടോ? ഭൂമി ഇന്നു നേരിടുന്ന ഏറ്റവും കൊടിയ ദുരന്തമാണ് ആഗോളതാപനവും കാലാവസ്ഥാ വ്യതിയാനവും എന്ന യഥാർത്ഥ്യം ലോകമെമ്പാടും പരിസ്ഥിതിവാദികൾ ഇന്നു തുറന്നു കാട്ടുന്നുണ്ട്. വൃക്ഷവൽക്കരണമാണ് ആഗോളതാപനത്തിനുള്ള ഫലപ്രദമായ പ്രതിവിധി എന്ന് നാം തിരിച്ചറിയേണ്ടതായിട്ടുണ്ട്. ആഗോള

താപനം ഉയർത്തുന്ന പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ അനവധിയാണ്. ആഗോളതാപനം മൂലം ഗ്രാമ പ്രദേശങ്ങളിലും ഹിമാലയസാനുക്കളിലും വൻതോതിൽ മഞ്ഞുപാളികൾ ഉറുകുന്നതുമൂലം സമുദ്രതീരം ഉയരുന്നു. കാലാവസ്ഥയെ ആകെ മാറ്റി മറിക്കുന്നു. അതിവർഷവും അത്യുഷ്ണവും കൂടുന്നു. പ്രളയവും വരൾച്ചയും കൂടുന്നു. പരിസ്ഥിതിനാശം പല ജീവജാലങ്ങളുടെയും ഉന്മൂലനത്തിനു കാരണമാകുന്നു. മോശങ്ങളും പകർച്ചവ്യാധികളും പെരുകുന്നു. ദക്ഷേപല്പാദനം കുറയുന്നതുമൂലം ദക്ഷ്യസുരക്ഷ നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്നു. തീരപ്രദേശങ്ങളെയും പല ദ്വീപുകളെയും വിഴുങ്ങിക്കളയാൻ കടൽ കടന്നു വരുന്നു. പ്രകൃതി ദുരന്തങ്ങളുടെ ആഘാതം കൂട്ടുന്നു. മഴയുടെ അളവ് കുറയുകയും നദികൾ വറ്റി വരളുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ള അനവധിയായ ദുരന്തങ്ങളിലേക്കാണ് പരിസ്ഥിതിനാശം നമ്മെ കൊണ്ടു ചെന്നെത്തിക്കുന്നത്. വനനശീകരണം കുറയ്ക്കുകയും മരങ്ങൾ നട്ടു വളർത്തി പരിപോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഒരു പരിസ്ഥിതി മനഃസ്ഥിതി രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുകയുമാണ് ഏറെ അനിവാര്യമായിട്ടുള്ളത്.

ദൈവം സൃഷ്ടിച്ച് നല്ലതെന്നു കണ്ട ലോകമാണ് നമ്മുടെ ലോകം. എന്നാൽ ദൈവം എൽപ്പിച്ച കാര്യവിചാരകത്വം സ്വാർത്ഥപരമായി 'കാര്യസാധ്യ'മാക്കി മനുഷ്യൻ മാറ്റിയപ്പോഴാണ് മനുഷ്യനും പ്രകൃതിയുമായുള്ള ബന്ധം തകർന്നത്. 'യഹോവയായ ദൈവം മനുഷ്യനെ കൂട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടുപോയി എദൻ തോട്ടത്തിൽ വേല ചെയ്യുവാനും അതിനെ കാലാനുസരിച്ചെടുത്തു. (ഉൽപ്പത്തി 2-15) യതാണ്. എന്നാൽ സംരക്ഷിക്കേണ്ടവൻ തന്നെ സംഹാരകനായി മാറുകയും കാവൽക്കാരൻ തന്നെ കവർച്ചക്കാരനായി മാറുകയും ചെയ്തപ്പോൾ പ്രകൃതിക്കേറ്റ മുറിവുകളിലാണ് പരിസ്ഥിതി പ്രതിസന്ധി ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത്. പ്രശസ്തകവി ഒ.എൽ.വി. കുറുപ്പ് എഴുതിയ 'സൃഷ്ടാവിന്റെ ദുഃഖം' എന്ന കവിതയിൽ മനുഷ്യൻ പ്രകൃതിയിൽ സ്വാർത്ഥതയുടെ വിഷം കലർത്തുമ്പോൾ പ്രകൃതിയിലുള്ള ജീവജാലങ്ങൾക്കും ദൈവത്തിനുതന്നെയും ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന ദുഃഖത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുന്നുണ്ട്. ഒരു കൊച്ചു മീൻ തന്റെ സാക്ഷ്യം സൃഷ്ടാവിന്റെ അടുക്കൽ ചെന്ന് പങ്കു ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു രംഗം ഈ കവിതയിലുണ്ട്. ജലമലിനീകരണം മൂലം അനിക്കു ജീവിക്കാൻ പോലും പറ്റാതെ വന്നിരിക്കുന്ന അവസ്ഥയെക്കുറിച്ചാണ് ഈ കൊച്ചുമീൻ ദൈവത്തോട് തന്റെ പരിഭവങ്ങൾ പങ്കു വെച്ചത്.

"ഇന്നു സൃഷ്ടാവിന്റെ മുന്നിൽ, പ്രണങ്ങളും ചെന്നിരൊലിക്കും ചെകിളയുമായൊരു കുഞ്ഞു മൽസ്യം വന്നു നൊന്തുപിടിയുന്നു, ചുണ്ടു പിളർത്തുന്നു, സങ്കടം ചൊല്ലുന്നു.

"ആരുടെ പാപമാണിന്റെ മെയ്യിൽ 'ശവം-നാറീകളായ് പൂത്തു നിൽപതെന്നോതുമാ?

പണ്ടു പണ്ടെപ്പവും
 മൊരു മൽസ്യവും
 കൊണ്ടുവിടുന്നാർ -
 കല്ലെഴുത്തേന്ത് നൽകിയോ,
 അന്നവൻ ദക്ഷിച്ച മീനിൽ
 പമ്പെക്കണ്ണി ഞാൻ! - ഇന്നവ -
 നസ്പ്യശ്യാമയ് - ഇനി
 എന്തെ നീ തന്നെ
 തിരിച്ചു കൈക്കൊള്ളുമോ?
 മർത്യന്റെ പാപ -
 കറപുരളാത്തുളളൊ -
 റിപ്പു ജലം നീ
 കനിഞ്ഞനിക്കേകുമോ.”
 ഒരു കൊച്ചുമീനിന്റെ സങ്കടം കേൾക്കവേ,
 ദുഃഖവും ലജ്ജയും രോഷവുമുമാർന്നുടൽ
 സഷ്ടാവ് മർത്യനോടിനലെ ചോദിച്ചു -
 “സൃഷ്ടിച്ചതെന്തിനു നിന്നെ ഞാനിങ്ങനെ?”
 മർത്യനിരിക്കുന്നു, സഷ്ടാവിനുത്തരം
 കിട്ടാത്ത ചോദ്യമായി - സൃഷ്ടിതൻ ദുഃഖമായി.

ഒ.എൻ.വി വാക്കുകൾ കൊണ്ടു വരച്ചു കാട്ടുന്ന ഈ ചിത്രം ദയാനകവും വേദനാജനകവുമായ ഒരു ചിത്രമാണ്. ഒരു കൊച്ചുമീൻ സഷ്ടാവിനോട് ചോദിച്ച ചോദ്യം പ്രകൃതി എന്ന കുടുംബത്തിലെ ഓരോ അംഗവും ഇന്നും ചോദിച്ചു കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുകയാണ്. സൃഷ്ടിതൻ ദുഃഖമായിട്ടല്ല മനുഷ്യൻ ഇരിക്കേണ്ടത് സൃഷ്ടിയുടെ സന്തോഷമായിട്ടാണ് മർത്യൻ തീരേണ്ടത്. പരിസ്ഥിതി സംരക്ഷണത്തിലൂടെ മാത്രമാണ് ഈ രൂപാന്തരം സാധ്യമായിത്തീരുന്നത്.

ഓരോ മരവും ഒരു വരമാണ്. ഓരോ മരവും ഒരു അഴയ മാണ്. ഓരോ മരവും ഒരു സന്ദേശമാണ്. മലയാളത്തിലെ പ്രശസ്തനായ എഴുത്തുകാരൻ സി. ഓധാകൃഷ്ണൻ ഒരിക്കൽ ഒരു സ്കൂൾ, പരിസ്ഥിതി ദിനത്തിൽ സന്ദർശിച്ചപ്പോൾ “ഒരു മരം നടുന്നതിനെ എന്തിനോടാണ് ഉപമിക്കാൻ കഴിയുക?” എന്നു ചോദിച്ചു. അപ്പോൾ ഒരു കുട്ടി പെട്ടെന്ന് ഉത്തരം പറഞ്ഞു - “ഒരു പ്രാർത്ഥനയോട്”. എത്ര ശരിയായ ഉത്തരം! ഓരോ മരവും ഒരു പ്രാർത്ഥനയാണ്. സ്വർഗം തൊടുവാൽ കൊതിക്കുന്ന ഈ ഭൂമിയുടെ ഹരിത പ്രാർത്ഥനകളാൽ ഈ ഭൂമി കൂടുതൽ കൂടുതൽ ഹരിതാഭമാകട്ടെ, ധന്യമാകട്ടെ.



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Dr. Sarosh Koshy
New Jersey Mar Thoma Church

**CLIMATE CHANGE,
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION,
& ECOJUSTICE:
GOING THE
EXTRA MILE**

The creation account affirmed in a short span of thirty-five verses spread across the first two chapters of the book of Genesis (Gen 1:1-2:4) is a true marvel to behold. It swiftly and emphatically establishes the singular parentage of all things seen and unseen, the unquestionable equality of all human beings regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, social status, or anything else, the eternal basis for the human claim to be part of productive work, and the consequent need for and the right to rest. This section from Genesis could be considered as a basis for the discernment on how to live faithfully under the Divine by being mindful of these four precepts. The books of the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, and those within the Christian scriptures both testify and strive to follow upon these demands. The faithful and fervent quest to summon and sustain practices and modes of living that are informed by these solemn tenets could also be witnessed in the scriptures. Yet, the discussions and passions on these verses are most often on the textual apparatus – God creating the whole in six days – in which it is being rendered, rather than on their crucial meaning and imperatives.

For the purpose of this short discussion, let us focus on the affirmation of the common parentage of the whole of reality. Sallie McFague, a prominent feminist- and ec-theologian notes that when "God is [imagined] as a super-being, residing somewhere above and apart from the world,

who created and judges the world but otherwise is absent from it, then I will conduct my affairs largely without day-to-day concern about God.' And, if this "God I believe in is supernatural, transcendent, and only occasionally interested in the world, then this God is not a factor in my daily actions" (31). The understanding that God has given humans the dominion of this world enables them to do with the world as they please. And the understanding of salvation as a blissful state and a special status of being that could mostly be attained after the end of present life, and in another realm, causes a disregard for both the wellbeing of the earth and everything there is, and in ensuring just relationships among humans.

McFague points out that the affirmation of the church as one, holy, and catholic should be understood from the perspective of what constitutes the household or *oikos* of God in relation to the scriptural witness of a common creation. All concepts and words such as "ecology," "economics," "ecumenical," share this Greek word *oikos* as their root, and thus make all domains of common human conduct squarely a concern of the church. The household of God could only be "one" where "human beings [are] living in interdependent relations with all other life-forms and earth processes." And if "salvation means the well-being of all creation—and not just of some human beings who are saved for life in another world—then catholicity of the church demands that 'creation not be left out' and that 'Jesus be loved as a world'" (33). The holiness of God imbues the church when it along with the early church theologian Irenaeus confesses "the glory of God as every creature fully alive," and with Saint Paul that "For it is the God who said, 'Light will shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). When both are held in tandem, however imperfectly, flailingly, and fallingly, church happens under the canopy of Divine holiness.

Just as humans share a common creation account with the whole of creation as in our faith affirmation, scientific knowledge is not far behind in pointing out that we humans share much of our chemical elements, DNA, and biomes in different forms and degrees with so many of the other members of creation. Is there nothing special about humans? McFague nudges us to appreciate "our particular role not as the measure of all things, but as the measurer—[as] the ones who can admire, reflect on, [and] take care of all the rest" of the creation (47). In terms of a quest for salvation, it must be kept in mind that the whole creation is yearning and groaning for redemption (Rom. 8:22).

The vision of a common creation and humans as the measurer, the ones who can change the course of history and be the source of healing to both the social and ecological wounds is indispensable for the church in this age of climate change. However, it is not just technocratic solutions that would truly heal the wounds and set human history on a different trajectory that ensures equality, justice, and wellbeing to all humans and all creation. It requires that we account and address all aspects of our current human conduct across societies and envision alternatives. However, it is a long and multifaceted process, and individuals and their church congregational communities could find themselves at a loss on how to enter and remain in this wider process. Let us contemplate on a few possibilities around individual and congregational possibilities.

It is necessary and desirable to be conscious of our lifestyle choices and consumption patterns, and thereby being keen on alleviating climate change. Equally admirable are our efforts as both individuals and congregations in adopting renewable energy sources to power our buildings and transport, and in minimizing the use of single-use plastic and other nonbiodegradable materials. However, Christian communities, especially those situated in the developed countries, have an added responsibility to consider the issue of climate change as a justice issue, and as a unique instance of hearing the voice of God seeking righteousness on their part.

In the tradition of the Hebrew prophets and of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, a call to justice is a call to repentance, and toward a consequent rearrangement of priorities, practices, and social structures. In the wake of climate change, it could be a repentance for a development model that deems the whole of God's creation as mere resources that could be indiscriminately exploited and polluted for the sake of profit. It is equally to repent and be accountable for a societal organization that considers most humans who must work for a living as merely resources as well, and for the many levels of exclusions and exploitations that define societies across the world.

At a global level, climate change is mostly caused by those communities and people that consume most of the products of human labor, and control and hoard for themselves much of the basic constituents of life like land, air, and water. Yet, the effects of climate change are felt disproportionately across the world by those who have no direct contribution in causing this problem. It is not that some people will not at all be affected by climate change, but that the effects will be vastly devastating for the already disinherited and disenfranchised multitudes

of this world. If the current worldwide quest to secure enough lithium to produce batteries is any indication, even the much-touted mitigation strategies to address climate change could yet again prove disastrous to the Indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities in many countries.

The reality of climate change, with a band of major originators and a counterpart of mostly unrelated sufferers, has Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, an eminent Christian eco-theologian in the US, call for perceiving climate change as race debt, class debt, and climate colonialism. Even though race and class emerge as separate concepts and are usually employed differently, they often converge and are intersectional as the socially and economically disadvantaged are often people of color in most circumstances. Climate colonialism is a continuing combination of wealth appropriation that deprives nations not only of the resources required for their own security, wellbeing, and resilience, but also saddles them with grave environmental devastation due to the inconsiderate extraction practices. These three debts are not only operational in transnational contexts alone, but every nation and community is bursting with such expressions of injustices. It is not an accident that here in the US, almost all of the major polluting institutions – both private entities and the government – are situated in the vicinity of African American and other minority communities. The proposed power plant in the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark just happens to be a case close to a few of our own places of worship. There is no dearth of similar issues in all locales where our congregations are situated. It is a matter of connecting with local environmental organizations and entering into fellowships with parishes of other Christian denominations and of other religions around contemplations and common actions on ecojustice issues in a particular locality.

It is critical to consider climate change as “climate debt,” because an “inadequate analysis leads to an inadequate diagnosis and remedies.” For the Christian, this understanding is necessary as it is repentance that brings freedom from the bondage of sin, and where

the sin remains unacknowledged, both persons and their communities continue to remain in the bondage of sin. Along with the many instances of communal lament illustrated in Hebrew scriptures like the book of Joel, climate change is an occasion for a lament that “names problems, seek justice, and hopes for God’s deliverance,” so that a different kind of human existence on earth is made possible.

Jesus’s instruction to “go also the second mile,” is not at all an encouragement to do more than what is required, but a novel and radical approach to disrupt the power of those individuals and regimes that forces someone to go the first mile. Now that climate change is forcing us to change much of our individual lives and societal organization, we as Christians have a choice to be part of the efforts that make the bare minimum and make some changes that will enable the world to continue with the paradigm that caused the climate change that is raining death and devastation on a vast majority of God’s creation, or to “choose life” and to seek new ways “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly” with our God.

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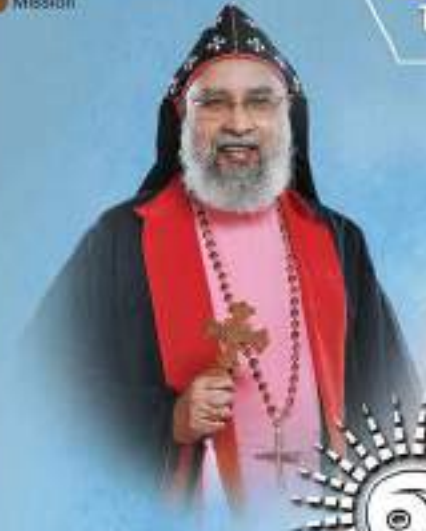
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"Let justice roll down as waters":

CHURCH'S ROLE IN CLIMATE JUSTICE



Dr. Anil Varghese

St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church
Milton, Ontario, Canada

We are used to seeing words like "climate change" and "climate crisis" fairly often. We are less familiar with the phrase: climate justice. What is climate justice and how can churches advance the work of climate justice?

Justice has many meanings in modern parlance – administration of laws, fairness and equity in rights, and access to equal opportunities and resources. Justice is a core teaching of the Bible. The Hebrew words for justice, *zedakah* and *mishpat*, carry as its root meaning, fairness, and equity, referring to distributive (fairness in who gets what) and restorative (restoring relationships) visions of justice. This notion of justice is encapsulated in Deuteronomy 10:17-18: "Yahweh your God defends the justice of the orphan and widow, and loves the immigrant, giving him food and clothing." Similarly, Psalm 146: 7-9 describes God as: "*He executes justice for the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. Yahweh sets prisoners free, Yahweh gives sight to the blind, he lifts up those who are bowed down, Yahweh loves those who live justly. Yahweh watches over the immigrant and sustains the orphan and widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.*" The God of the Bible is a just God, who cares for the vulnerable among His creation.

It is this quest for justice for the vulnerable, captured beautifully by prophet Amos, that endeared Martin Luther King Jr. to his most quoted verse from the Bible, "But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). Other Hebrew prophets also emphasized 'justice' as an essential attribute of godliness. "Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, and please the widow's cause" (Isaiah 1:17). "...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). In the New Testament, Jesus's entire ministry can be seen as justice-centred as evident in his inaugural address (Sermon on the Mount) where he invokes the language of justice (Greek word, *dikaiosisune*) repeatedly. Jesus often ministered to those on the margins of society: healing the sick, feeding the hungry, embracing the outcast and defending the weak. It is this intentional care for the vulnerable that constitutes justice in Jesus's eyes. Seeking justice therefore is a fundamental expression of Christian discipleship. In the contemporary world, the work of justice is the extension of God's love to protect and defend those seeking justice as well as those who cannot defend themselves from injustice.

What does doing justice mean in the climate realm? What does climate justice entail for churches and faith communities? As Christians, what is our role and duty in this effort?

Evidence from decades of scientific research now irrefutably point to the accelerating climate crisis. We are inching towards a catastrophe, an existential crisis. In its recently released sixth Assessment Report (AR6 - April 2022), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change – reported that average annual Green House Gas (GHG) emissions continue to be on the rise, despite heightened awareness and calls for remedial action. In fact, global GHG emissions saw the highest increase in average decadal emissions during the last decade (2010-2019). Emission increases from rising global fossil fuel and industrial activity have outpaced emission reductions resulting from improvements in energy efficiency. North America, the region of the world we inhabit, has historically contributed about a quarter of the global GHG emissions, far more than any other region of the world. The 10% of households with the highest per capita emissions contribute a disproportionately large share of the global household GHG emissions. Similarly, the world's wealthiest 20% population produce nearly 70% of GHG emissions. On the other end of the spectrum, poorer regions, and vulnerable peoples of the world (global south, indigenous peoples, women) are most susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate emergency – extreme weather events, hunger, depletion of drinking water, loss of biodiversity, displacement, and violent conflict.

'Climate justice' is thus fundamentally a recognition that the climate crisis is not only an environmental or technical problem but a social and political one. It acknowledges that the causes and consequences of the global climate crisis are not shared evenly around the world. It recognizes that advanced industrialized nations of the world have benefited disproportionately from industries and technologies that pollute the environment but are least impacted by its adverse consequences. Climate justice strives for a fairer distribution of the benefits and burdens of climate-impacting human activity, so that those who are least responsible for the crisis are not bearing its heaviest impact.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and national ecumenical bodies have long advocated for the need for just climate action that ensures accountability to the vulnerable. The most comprehensive articulation of this imperative came in Pope Francis's second encyclical entitled, *Laudato si'*. It frames care for

environment as part of restoring and repairing human relationship with God, other humans, and the earth. God placed humans in the Garden of Eden to work on it and care for it (Genesis 2:15). God envisioned a role of stewardship (not ownership) for humans. Earth and its bountiful resources were a sacred gift from which humans could draw sustenance. The close bond between the earth and its human inhabitants is explicit: humans were created out of the soil and were to express respect for the whole creation on the day of the Sabbath. This shows God's vision for all His creation to live in mutual interdependence and harmony with each other.

This 'stewardship of care' relationship has been vitiated by an alternative view of humans as the centre of the universe, with a right to control and dominate the earth and its resources. It has encouraged values of competition, domination, and consumerism. From this perspective, nature and fellow humans can be exploited and commodified to drive economic growth. Such a worldview has created a way of life that violates and degrades the wholeness of God's creation in pursuit of greed and unsustainable consumption. It has resulted in excessive extraction of earth's resources (e.g., water, forests, fossil fuels), often in complete disregard of the lives and traditional lands of indigenous peoples. It has led to the depletion of critical natural resources with life-threatening consequences for impoverished nations, low-lying regions of the world and vulnerable groups. Yet, these tendencies and underlying values have become so ingrained in our collective consciousness that we have lost the ability to recognize the resulting spiritual and ecological damages or imagine alternative ways of living.

Against this backdrop, churches are called upon to play a critical role in raising the consciousness of the community of believers. Climate action has never been fully understood as an imperative of faith. This needs to change. Caring for God's creation is a spiritual duty. The theological basis for climate justice must be firmly established by "reinforcing connections between ourselves and all of God's creation, between our faith and our action, between our theology and our spirituality, between what we say and what we do, between science and religion, between our beliefs and every discipline, between our sacramental communion and our social consciousness, between our generation and the generations to come" (Bartholomew 2022).

In order to seek climate justice, churches have come together in ecumenical bodies nationally and internationally and have partnered with civil society

organizations to demand legislation, concrete action, and accountability mechanisms from various levels of government and international organizations. The central committee of the WCC has recently called for the creation of a new Commission on Climate Change and Sustainable Development to bring appropriate focus to this issue. However, this has not translated into the consciousness of the everyday churchgoer. The efforts to mount a collective global response for "just transition" must continue with renewed resolve and must remain focussed on justice for low-income countries, but they also need to equip the faith community to engage with questions of climate justice. Climate action must receive the priority it requires in child, youth, and women auxiliaries of churches. These forums must be used to raise awareness and communicate the importance of climate action. Small but meaningful everyday actions, ideas and tools that reduce carbon footprint could be identified and promoted at the parish level. These efforts need to go beyond the once-a-year observance of Environment Sunday. Programming and resources to critically reflect on lifestyle choices and their impacts could be made available. Listening to and learning from indigenous knowledge-keepers on living gently with nature is an essential part of this reflection.

Our faith impels us to act in order to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and to protect the most vulnerable. Caring for creation is a core duty of Christians.

We must do our part to limit consumption, reduce waste and adopt greener lifestyles. As an expression of our faith, we need to walk the talk within our families, workspaces, communities, and churches, to take action in our local contexts because inaction puts those living in vulnerable countries and vulnerable communities at disproportionate risk. Climate inaction is a matter of grave injustice. Let us re-commit to advancing climate justice and living in harmony with all of God's creation.

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Introduction

The Psalmist says, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it..." (Psalm 24:1). God created the earth with much grandeur. In creating the earth, God made provisions for providing resources to satisfy all of creation's needs. Scriptures remind us, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (Genesis 2:15). This is the responsibility given to humanity. However, when looking at the present-day complexities, we cannot move without admitting that we are far from this divine expectation. Ecological consciousness and active engagement with the environment are part of our human and spiritual responsibility and way of living. Hence, the ecological crises we see today can be considered spiritual crises.

The destruction of natural resources, ozone depletion, climate change, land degradation, water pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, species extinction, use and misuse of biotechnology, and a wide array of other complexities have caused a disturbance in the order of creation. The relationship between humans and nature is based on God's vision and divine purpose. The

heavens and the earth are interdependent organizations of unity. Any disruption in this fragile unity, primarily by humanity, affects the created order as a whole and our spiritual life.

Scripture and Ecology

The concept of ecology is not directly expressed in the Old Testament, as there was no perceptible threat to ecology during this time. However, writers of the Old Testament have a message for those concerned with the environment. These concerns are found in relation to God, Creation, and Humanity. Creation is considered to be a special act of God. According to Krickwin C. Marak and Atul Y. Aghamkar, "Creation theology is God-centered, and focused on the content, nature, and relationship to other aspects of Israel's faith."

In the New Testament, ecology is found in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. Though there is no direct teaching about the natural world in Jesus' public ministry, the use of nature imagery in teachings and the miracles in nature demonstrate God's care for the created order. According to R.L. Sarkar, "The role of the Holy Spirit, that gives life, is vital in Jesus' teaching and Christian traditions have developed it concerning the

natural world." Ecology's focus in Pauline thought can be found in Romans 8, which is essential for the biblical doctrine concerning nature. Paul's notion of the creation includes the human, non-human, and angelic. All of God's creation longs for redemption. Our disobedience and sin prevent the created order from achieving this goal.

Role of Humanity in Creation

By virtue of being created by God, the earth was good. On the fifth and sixth days, these blessings are given to the birds, sea creatures, and humankind. Therefore, the biblical understanding of the Creator God establishes a relationship between the different types of created beings, which is mutual.

The relationship of human beings to creatures is denoted by the term *dominion* (Genesis 1:26, 28). Dominion is not domination; there is an inherent responsibility on the part of human beings. The biblical notion goes along the lines of stewardship. We are not owners of creation but rather stewards. Human beings are entrusted with the responsibility of managing the earth and sustaining nature, as observed through the act of naming by Adam. Thus, humans have a position of prominence but also guardianship.

The story of Noah and the flood narratives are significant as they establish an everlasting covenant between God and the ark's inhabitants. B.W. Anderson writes that "creation is for the purpose of God's covenant with Israel." Therefore, humanity has a covenant with nature, as nature is the arena for God's redemptive activity.

Role of Humanity as the Image of God

Humanity was created in God's image and likeness. Many theologians, including Karl Barth and Claus Westermann, maintain that this enables humans to be "counterparts of God." Human beings are set apart within the created order. Humans have a predominant position in all of creation. It is the human capacity to relate to God. The human being, as the image and likeness of God, is to represent the best interests of God, and they are a regent of God.

It is important to note that Adam's disobedience (Genesis 3) and its ecological consequences highlight the ambivalence of nature. According to R.L. Sarkar, Adam's disobedience "consisted in his rejection for the divine boundaries placed upon his dominion of the earth." It was a rebellion against God's creation that was created as 'good.' Any disturbance to the environment is a disturbance in humanity's relationship with God.

The flood stories indicate that when human beings abandon their responsibility to be stewards of creation, there is a temporary suspension of the order of creation. A virtual return to the initial 'waste and void' is brought forth by the "withdrawal of the active divine care implicit in Genesis 1." Humanity's disobedience brings about ecological consequences, and this is seen in reference to "groaning in the pains of childbirth."

The creation of the world is the first of the majestic and gracious acts of the triune God. The doctrine of God as the Creator and the world as God's good creation is challenged by today's ecological crises. Today's ecological crises have caused a rethinking in Christian scholars' exegesis of the creation account.

The Psalms and Ecology

An ecological reading of the books of Psalms reveals that humans and nature come under God's special care. The relationship between God and nature expresses a quality of personal care and attention for every creature. God knows the birds of the air (Psalm 50:1), animals and humans are in His care (Psalm 8 & 36:5), and He feeds them all (Psalm 145:14).

Most of the Psalms praise God as the Creator and sustainer of the world and thus make nature an arena and also a hymn of praise. Psalm 104 specifies the equality of human beings, animals, plants, and other creatures before the Creator. This Psalm describes the integrity of an ecosystem under God's care and concerns where God is the life-giver and the sustainer.

Psalm 8:6 does not mean that humans are the master of everything. Verse 5 is a warning against human center-ness, and the Psalmist recognizes that the authority of humans is in becoming the servant for the harmony of all creation.

Theological Response to Ecological Crises

The stress on God as Creator acknowledges certain important facts. This means that creation is not self-existent, not self-sustaining, but has only contingent status since every moment is dependent on the will of God. Almighty God is the source of all creation. All creatures have been created from the same substance from the earth and therefore share a common relationship. Thus, relationality and co-existence in their life and destiny are essential. Westermann observes, "the divine valuation appears to be cosmo-centric and bio-centric not simply or primarily anthropocentric."

Reorienting our Eco-Spirituality

The industrial revolution from the 18th century and technological advancements have enabled humanity to become more self-sufficient and to create easier ways to survive, thrive, and produce under mechanisms that may be automated or semi-automated, with or without the use of human labor. Many of these methods have resulted in a widening gap between humanity and the earth, which has disrupted the human-creation relationship. When we start to acknowledge our inter-relatedness to the other members of creation, we will learn to develop a relationship and take care of that which God has created. The experience of being interrelated leads to harmony with nature and does not allow humanity to be enslaved by nature nor to enslave nature.

Matthew Fox advocates a revolutionary approach to understanding the earth. The beauty of the creation is the impetus for Creation-centered spirituality. Since our understanding of God is connected to the Bible and its revelation, we seldom notice the revelation of nature (ecosystem). Man and woman take the role of protector and steward in the life of the earth and creation.

Eco-spirituality is a contemplative attitude that makes us open to God's presence in every human being, event, and creation. God is present in all things, events, and people. Eco-spirituality enables us to experience God increasingly in everything because everything comes into being out of His abundant love, belongs to Him, and depends on Him (Psalm 104:27). Humans, created in God's image, are called to love, and take care of everything. In contemporary society, Eco-spirituality that emerges from the awareness of God's immanent presence becomes profound and meaningful.

Ecology and Liturgy

Worship (including sacraments) is the highest form of spiritual engagement. Worship is not simply a human endeavor. As worshippers, we are worshipping and offering all of creation before God's throne of grace. Our worship is a heavenly experience taking place here on earth.

Our liturgy also affirms the importance of God's creation. The liturgy's use of embolisms and quasi-embolisms (direct and indirect derivations from scripture) demonstrates the relationship between humanity and creation and the role of humanity within the created order. This experience is essential in leading a meaningful liturgical life. Furthermore, we find the use of earthly sources within the liturgy and sacraments. Water, oil, bread, wine, incense, and other elements used within the scriptures,

liturgy, and sacraments are a reminder of the earth's produce and its divine qualities.

Our Holy Qurbana liturgy also attests to the created order in glorifying and proclaiming the holiness of God. (The Mar Thoma Church: Order of Worship for Divine Service, Holy Qurbana, and Other Sacraments & Rites, Page 62). Furthermore, during the Great Intercession, space is given to pray for the creation and confess the sin of greed and selfishness when taking care of creation. The prayer also highlights: "Help us, O Lord, to be good and faithful stewards for the fulfillment of Your will." (Order of Worship, Page 65). Though we have sinned, we ask God to enable us to preserve the true spirit of stewardship.

At this juncture, we are called to revisit and strengthen our liturgical life. The emphasis on stability in God's created order within the context of the liturgy reminds us of the need to live a sustainable life for the sake of all humanity and all of God's creation. This experience is redemptive and essential in our life with God.

Conclusion

Ecology affects every aspect of human life and all creation. The environmental crises affect us all. Thus, ecological awareness and concerns challenge us and call us to a more profound commitment to protecting and preserving nature. Maintaining the sanctity of life is our responsibility by being the crown of creation. Therefore, there is a need to be aware of what is happening worldwide and to respond creatively, positively, and appropriately to reduce the impact on upcoming generations. We need to change the standard of our relationship with nature and the earth, which will transform relationships among human beings and all of creation. We must have a new vision, attitude, and values that are beneficial for the environment, even if it means that we must adopt adept eco-theologies.

As a Christian community, we need to be more eco-conscious. Any small step in protecting Mother Nature will have its benefits on a large scale and for generations. We need to have the consciousness that we are related to the earth. The Church has a great responsibility to be a leader in protecting creation and promoting an ecological attitude in the society. It will also be a chance to witness the greatness of God through His creation and maintain the human responsibility of tilling the land and taking care of God's creation. This needs to continue to thrive from the grassroots level. When we act, we will not only be working towards the redemption of creation, but also fulfilling our role as stewards of God's creation in a more meaningful, profound, and impactful way. "This needs to continue to thrive from the grassroots level. When we take action, we will not only be working towards the redemption of creation, but also fulfilling our role as stewards of God's creation in a more meaningful, profound, and impactful way."



MRS. MARIAMMA PILLAI

Mrs. Mariamma Pillai, a member of the Chicago Mar Thoma Church, passed away on May 25, 2022. She has served as the Parish Vice President at Chicago MTC, and enthusiastically supported the development initiatives of The Diocese of North America and Europe, with unwavering faith and service. She is survived by her husband, Mr. Chandran Pillai, and children, Raj Mathew Pillai and Jessica Roshni Pillai, and their families. Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan conveyed his condolence to the family, and Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa led her funeral services at Chicago Mar Thoma Church.

Mrs. Mariamma Pillai was an office bearer with Illinois Malayalam Association and the FOKANA for many years. Her leadership abilities enabled her to become FOKANA board member, Treasurer, and the first woman President of FOKANA from 2014 to 2016. Professionally, Mrs. Mariamma Pillai climbed the corporate ladder to become the Director of Nursing and served in that capacity for many years in multiple healthcare facilities. She helped many needy healthcare job seekers specifically from the Indian and Hispanic community. She started her own Home Healthcare Facility, which grew to become a 200+ patient facility. Mrs. Mariamma Pillai was a hope for many who were struggling, and was at the forefront to support people who faced struggles in life. She helped many people personally by building homes, offering medical support, and helping girls from poor families to get married. As a resourceful community leader, she coordinated the flood relief activities in Kerala State.



MR. V. J. JOSEPH

Father of Rev. Joseph Chacko, NY.

Mr. V. J. Joseph (age 95), Vallyaparampil, Vallyakavu, Ranni, was taken to his heavenly abode on Wednesday, March 16, 2022. He was an active and founding member of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Vallyakavu, and served as a member of Sabha Pradhinidhi Mandalam and Diocesan Assembly of the Ranni-Nilackal Diocese. He is survived by his children Mr. John Joseph & Kunjumol (Kingston, Canada), Mr. Joseph Mathew & Ponnamma (Ranni), Rev. Joseph Chacko & Rose (NY), Mr. Thomaskutty Joseph & Sobhana (NY), Mr. Jose Joseph & Ashley (NJ), Mr. Babu Joseph & Suja (Toronto), Mrs. Solly & Sam Abraham (Philadelphia), Mr. Raju Joseph & Shyni (NY), Mr. Benny Joseph & Manju (Toronto). The funeral service was led by Rt. Rev. Thomas Mar Timotheos on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at Vallyakavu St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Ranni.

MRS. RAICHEL GEORGE

Mrs. Raichel George, age 77, member of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York, was called to eternity on March 19, 2022. Mrs. Raichel George lovingly known as Kunjamma was born at the Kattathara House in Mepral, Tiruvalla, to the Late Mr. K. E. Abraham and Thankamma Abraham. Her funeral service was held at the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York, on March 25th, and officiated by Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos. She is survived by her husband Mr. P. C. George, and her children Mrs. Sherly Thomas, NAE DSMC Secretary and Mr. Thomas Oommen (Saji, Diocese Office Manager), Mrs. Shyla Varghese and Mr. Shaji Varghese, Mrs. Shyni Joseph and Mr. Raju Joseph, Mr. Sherry George and Mrs. Sofi George, and her grandchildren, Karen, Kevin, Deepak, Justin, Vinay, Jayden and Jenna.



MRS. MARY KATTAPURAM

Mrs. Mary Kattapuram (née Mathai, 'Amminikutty'), passed away peacefully on June 2, 2022. She was born on January 9, 1939, in Kottenkudy, Kerala to M.C. and Mary Mathew. Shortly after her birth, her family moved to Munnar, where she spent her childhood. She married Mr. Mathai Kattapuram, and they had three children Shajan, Biju, and Mary. In 1974, they immigrated to Canada and lived in Calgary for many years, where they were active members of the Calgary Mar Thoma community, before moving to Toronto in 2008. Her life was celebrated on June 4th at Turner & Porter Yorke Chapel in Toronto, ON. She is survived by her brother (Jacob), sister (Leelamma), three children (Shajan (Alice), Biju (Anita), and Mary (Trevor)), and five grandchildren (Rachel (Dan), Kristina (Kevin), Meera, Nathan, and Eva).



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NEWS & EVENTS



EPISCOPAL *Visits*

Ebenezer MTC, New York

Ebenezer MTC, New York, was blessed to be visited by the Diocesan Episcopa of the Diocese of North America & Europe Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa on Sunday June 5, 2022 on the occasion of the 35th Parish Day. Thirumeni celebrated the Holy Qurbana Service on June 5th and shared the word of God. After the Holy Qurbana, Thirumeni attended the 35th Parish Day celebrations and joined the church members for the fellowship lunch arranged by the parish. The Episcopal visit to Ebenezer MTC was a blessed time for the parish to feel and experience the presence of a Great Shepherd leading and guiding the Church.

Vicar, Rev. George Abraham



St. Thomas MTC, New York



The Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, visited the St. Thomas MTC (Yonkers, NY) on Sunday, May 8, 2022. Thirumeni celebrated Holy Qurbana in Malayalam, and following the service the Valedictory Program of the parish's Ruby Jubilee celebration was conducted. A special welcome was given to the new Diocesan Secretary, Rev. George Abraham, and his family. The parish also celebrated Mother's Day and honored all mothers with a presentation of a gift and a slideshow prepared by the Youth Fellowship members. The parish is grateful for the prayerful and blessed leadership of our Diocesan Bishop.

Vicar, **Rev. Saju C. Pappachen**

Mar Thoma Institute on Mission and Culture

The first course offered by the Mar Thoma Institute on Mission and Culture (MIMC) was inaugurated on Thursday, January 27, 2022, at 7:00 PM (EST) via the Zoom platform by the Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa. The course, titled as *MIMC 110: Effective Ministry in North America*, was an online continuing education course that was conducted for eight weeks with sessions held every Tuesday and Thursday. The second batch will start on Thursday July 14, 2022. The Clergy who joined the Diocese in 2022 will participate in this course.

16th Diocesan Conference of Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelists' Association

From Aug 18 (4:30 PM EDT) to Aug 21 (1:00 PM EDT), 2022

At Bongiorno Conference Center, 430 Union Hall Rd, Carlisle, PA 17013

Leaders: Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, Rev. Eappen Varghese, Rev. Manu Varghese, Dr. Vino J. Daniel.

Diocesan Assembly Meeting 2022



A meeting of the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church was held on Saturday, May 7, 2022 at 10:00 AM at the Long Island Mar Thoma Church (NY). The Diocesan Bishop and President, Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos, presided over the meeting. The meeting began with worship and a devotional message by Rev. Thomas K. Mathew (Philadelphia Youth Chaplain). The Diocesan Bishop expressed condolences on the demise of all those in the Diocese who were called to eternity in the past one year, and Thirumeni also paid homage to the lives lost due to the war and conflict in Ukraine.

The Assembly unanimously approved the resolution to ratify the appointment of Rev. George Abraham as the Diocesan Secretary from May 1, 2022. The Diocesan Secretary welcomed the gathering and following the Presidential Address by the Diocesan Bishop, the Assembly considered the agenda for the meeting. The Diocesan Secretary presented the 2021 Annual Report and Audited Statement of Accounts, and the Diocesan Treasurer, Mr. George P. Babu, presented the 2022 Budget, all of which were all passed unanimously by the Assembly.

The Best Parish Awards for 2021, the Messenger Awards, and the certificates for the first course of the Mar Thoma Institute on Mission and Culture, MIMC 110: Effective Ministry in North America, were presented by the Diocesan Bishop. The Diocesan Bishop also released the book titled: *The Prayer of Illumination* authored by Rev. Abraham Kuruvilla. The Diocesan Treasurer proposed the Vote of Thanks, and the meeting came to a close with prayer offered by Rev. T. K. John and benediction by the Diocesan Bishop.



20th National Sevika Sanghom Conference, Mar Thoma Suvishesha Sevika Sanghom (Oct. 13 to 16, 2022)

Theme: Mentors of the New World (John 20:17)

Hosted by Mar Thoma Church of Dallas Farmers Branch Sevika Sanghom

Leaders: Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, Rev. Dr. Eappen Varghese, Dr. Elizabeth Jacob, Mrs. Shijy Alex

43rd Diocesan Youth Fellowship Conference

The 43rd Diocesan Youth Fellowship Conference will be held from July 29 to July 31, 2022, hosted by Mar Thoma Church Philadelphia Youth Fellowship. This conference is open to all Mar Thoma Youths (ages 18 to 35). Kindly keep this conference in your prayers. Also, please encourage our youth fellowship members to attend.

Holy Ordinations

Rev. Dn. Subin Mathew Parayil was ordained as a Kassesa (Priest) of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, by our Diocesan Bishop, H.G. Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, at the Tabore Mar Thoma Church, Manchester, UK, on June 11, 2022.

Rev. Dn. Jason Varghese was ordained as a Kassesa (Priest) of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, by our Diocesan Bishop, H.G. Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa, at the Houston Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston, on April 30, 2022.



Congratulations!



Mr. Dylan Mathew, a member of the Mar Thoma Church of Baltimore, graduated High School from Central York High School on May 19, 2022, as the Salutatorian of his graduating class of 2022. Dylan plans to pursue a degree in Neuroscience at the University of Pittsburgh on a pre-med track this fall.



Mr. Timothy Samuel Ninan, son of Simon Ninan and Reena Mary Ninan, members of St. Thomas MTC, New York is a National Merit Scholar from Kingsway Senior and East Greenwich. This is the first time in known history, Kingsway has a National Merit Scholar. This prestigious scholarship is awarded to 7,500 high school seniors who qualify with the highest PSAT scores in the nation. Students who qualify for the national status must first receive a score in the top 1% of their state. They then are placed in the national program with the top 50,000. 15,000 semi-finalists are then selected out of all the applicants, but very few ever get national status. In fact, less than 5% of all test-takers receive any commendation from the National Merit program.

Mar Thoma Messenger Awards for 2021

Best Promoters



Prof. Elias Abraham, Baltimore MTC



*Mr. Shawn Varghese, Trinity MTC, Houston
Mrs. Jooley Zachariah, Trinity MTC, Houston*

Most Messenger Subscriptions

Trinity MTC, Houston received the Mar Thoma Messenger Award in recognition of signing up most members as subscribers from a Parish in the year 2021. The Mar Thoma Messenger promoters, Mrs. Jooley Zachariah (Sevika Sanghom Secretary) and Mr. Shawn Varghese (Diocesan Council Member), obtained more than 200 subscriptions for the Mar Thoma Messenger in 2021. Mr. T. A. Mathew (Messenger Managing Committee Member since 2005) also received a special award in recognition of his support, commitment, and help for the promoters in reaching the goal. We congratulate them for this wonderful achievement.

Rev. Sam K. Easow, Vicar, Trinity MTC, Houston

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay was elected as the new General Secretary of the WCC



Dr. Pillay is the eighth general secretary in the WCC's history since the fellowship of churches was founded in 1948. Dr. Pillay is currently dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria. A member of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, he is from South Africa. Dr. Pillay will assume his office from January 1, 2023.



PARISH NEWS

Trinity Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam, Houston



Yuvajana sakhyam organized a Badminton Doubles tournament for the parishes in the Southwest Region on April 2 & April 3rd at the Trinity Center, Houston. Rev. Fr. Jeku Zachariah, President of ICECH (the ecumenical forum of Houston) inaugurated the tournament. Sixteen teams from six parishes participated, and included Oklahoma MTC, Dallas Farmers Branch MTC, Austin MTC, North Houston St. Thomas MTC, Houston Immanuel MTC & Houston Trinity MTC.

Dallas KBoys (Dennis Koshy & Abel Daniel Koshy) from Dallas Farmers branch MTC won the First Prize in the tournament. Team IMTC (Reggy Varghese & Praveen Philip) from Immanuel MTC, Houston was the Runner Up. Smash Brothers (Sanu Abraham & Sancho Thomas)

from Oklahoma MTC won third place and TMC Strikers (Anith George Philip & Reji Thomas) won fourth place.

Abel Daniel Koshy was selected as the Player of the Tournament. The semifinals & finals were live telecasted through Sabha Doothan: Zeraphim News Facebook Page.

Mr. Anith George Philip served as Coordinator along with Sakhyam President Rev. Roshen V. Mathews, Mr. Saji Varghese (Vice President), Mr. Viju Varghese (Secretary), Mr. Riju Rajan (Treasurer), and Ms. Anju Vijayan (Lady Secretary).

Rev. Roshen V. Mathews

Trinity MTC, Houston

CARD Light to Life Training Program

The Christian Agency for Rural Development (CARD), in collaboration with the Mar Thoma Mission Board of the Diocese of North America & Europe, arranged a special training program for the directors, managers, accountants, and social workers of various Light to Life projects throughout India in May 2022 at Tharangam Mission Action Centre, Arattupuzha. Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa (NAE Diocesan Bishop) was the chief guest. Mr. Thomas Rajkumar, Director of Holistic Child Development India (Pune), inaugurated the program, and Rev. Moncy Varghese, Director of CARD, served as the chairperson for the meeting. Mr. Y. Thankachan



(Finance Coordinator of HCDI), Rev. Dr. Sunni E. Mathew, Mr. Modi P. George (Treasurer of CARD), Rev. Shine N. Jacob (Assistant Director of CARD), Mr. Jaisemon Antony (CARD Light to Life Program Coordinator), Mr. Thomas Mathew, Sister Reji Augustine, and Mr. Suresh Babu provided leadership.



A TAX REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR SENIORS



(A DEDUCTION FOR NON – ITEMIZING TAXPAYERS)

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

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

- In 2022, an individual 72 years old or over can donate directly from their retirement accounts to charities up to \$100,000. This will help especially individuals who do not use itemized deduction on their federal tax return as standard deduction is greater than itemized deductions. Direct distribution from IRA account to an organization eligible to receive tax deductible contribution will be excluded from the adjusted gross income of the taxpayer which means taxpayer is availing a full deduction for such transfers from retirement accounts whether itemizing or not. In effect, for those who do not itemize, this deduction will be in addition to standard deduction. The \$100,000 is an annual limit. Therefore, a donor can do it **every year**.

For taxpayers filing joint return limit of \$100,000 apply to each spouse. This strategy makes more productive as many taxpayers may not have to itemize.

REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION (RMD), FEDERAL INCOME TAXES AND QCD

- Individuals are required to withdraw a minimum amount from their retirement accounts for the year they turn 72 years old and onward. RMD amount will be some percentage (depends on many factors) of the total balance in each retirement account. RMD results in increase in taxable income and the tax liability of many taxpayers.

RMD may result in increase in taxable portion of taxpayer's social security benefits which will result in higher taxable income and higher tax bill. For some taxpayers, RMD may cause modified adjusted gross income to rise over \$91,000 for single filers and \$182,000 for married filers resulting in higher monthly premium for Medicare B coverage.

- **One strategy to reduce RMD is charitable contribution directly from retirement account to favorite charity as mentioned above (QCD). (DONATE YOUR RMD TO YOUR FAVORITE CHARITY).**
- Another strategy to be considered by some individuals to reduce the RMD amount is buying Qualified Longevity Annuity Contract (**QLAC**). You may invest up to \$145,000 from your retirement account in QLAC. QLAC is a special version of deferred annuity contract. Money transferred to a QLAC is ignored when figuring RMD, which reduces the size of RMD resulting in lower taxes. Remember, you are deferring the taxes to a future year. When one starts payouts from QLAC later that will be included in income. A QLAC can **protect your savings from market fluctuations**.

Caveat: These are only general guidelines. Please consult your professional financial/tax advisor before making any financial decisions.

(Prof. Philip Thomas is retired professor of accounting and a tax practitioner for over 41 years in the United States. He is a member of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Texas Society of CPAs and Dallas Chapter of CPAs. He is also a Chartered Global Management Accountant.)



World Day of **PRAYER 2022**

Reports compiled and consolidated by
Mrs. Neethi Prasad (Vice-Chair, WDP USA Board)



Introduction

World Day of Prayer (WDP) is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women. The motto for WDP is "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action," and WDP is celebrated annually in over 170 countries on the first Friday in March. The movement aims to bring together people of various races, cultures, and traditions in a yearly common Day of Prayer, as well as in closer fellowship, understanding, and prayerful action throughout the year.

WDP 2022 Theme and Country of Focus

The WDP 2022 theme, "*I Know the Plans I Have for You,*" is based on the prophet Jeremiah's writing to the exiles in Babylonia, as found in Jeremiah 29:1-14. The country of focus was England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (EWNI), which are three parts of the United Kingdom (UK), within the group of islands known as

the British Isles. Scotland is also part of the United Kingdom. Although there is much that they share, they are also diverse, with different languages, cultures and governments.

Diocesan Sevika Sanghom

We congratulate all the faithful women who organized WDP celebrations, adding to the powerful legacy of women's work in faith. We acknowledge the committee members and staff who worked on the preparation of the WDP USA materials. A special thank you to our local team including Rev. George Abraham, Mrs. Nirmala Abraham, Mrs. Suma Chacko, and Mrs. Neethi Prasad who translated, edited and formatted the worship and modified it for use within our community. We also appreciate the efforts taken by Mrs. Nisha Sarah George (Austin MTC, Texas) for preparing a beautiful skit that was adapted by various churches in the Diocese.

WINDOWS OF HEAVEN

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

TIME AND TALENTS

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

BLESSINGS

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



Binu Jacob, MD, FACC, FHRS

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North East Region Sevika Sanghom

The North East Regional Sevika Sanghom observed the WDP on March 12th. Rev. Shaji Kochummen, President of NE Sevika Sanghom, presided over the meeting. Fourteen women from different parishes led the WDP worship service, and both English and Malayalam hymns were sung by the LIMTC youth choir. The main message was given by Evg. Kathy Hamilton-Thomas, Treasurer of WDP USA, from the African Methodist Episcopal Church, via Zoom. Mrs. Neethi Prasad, Vice-Chair WDP USA, gave the keynote address. A video presentation about the religious and socioeconomic conditions of the

British Isles, Wales, and Northern Ireland was presented. The theme based skit was presented by LIMTC Sevika Sanghom members. We were blessed with the presence and prayers of Rev. Saju C. Pappachan, Rev. Johnson P. Abraham, and Rev. Jess M. George. About 100 people from seven parishes of the region attended the service. The meeting was followed by a delicious lunch and a blessed time of fellowship.

– **Mrs. Mercy Thomas**
(NE Region Sevika Sanghom Secretary)



Carmel Mar Thoma Church – Boston (Ecumenical)

Under the leadership of our Vicar/President, Rev. Sujith Sam Mammen, women from 14 separate area churches of various denominations of Kerala origin in the Greater Boston area gathered to conduct WDP at Carmel MTC, Boston, on Saturday March 26th. Sixty-two women attended, decked in the flags colors of the day, red, white and blue. Along with a PowerPoint presentation on the British Isles, a skit illustrating God's plans at work, the prescribed readings, prayers, and singing was done by visiting church attendees. A themed lunch, fully prepared

by the women of Carmel MTC, was served. The message based on the theme was delivered by Ruthie Seiders, an Associate Pastor of Grace Chapel (Lexington, MA). Also, packets of flower seeds of an English Garden variety were distributed to the attendees to highlight the theme and that we're urged by the prophet to continue living our lives, sowing and cultivating, even in 'exile' and under disastrous circumstances, because God has a plan for us.

– **Mrs. Mercy Mariam Koshy** (Carmel MTC Secretary)



**South East Region Center A Sevika Sanghom/
Ecumenical Christian Fellowship of New Jersey**

WDP was celebrated ecumenically as a hybrid meeting on March 5th at St. Mary's Orthodox Church (Linden, NJ). Around 50 people gathered at the church, and women led the worship service both in person and through recorded portions. Rev. Thomas K. Thomas presided over the meeting and gave the presidential address. The Keynote Speaker was Rev. Dr. Anna Thomas, and the Bible study was conducted by Dr. Sherin Thomas, Baskiyomo of Rev. Jaisen A. Thomas. Along with that, the Ecumenical Choir sang 5 songs, kids performed a skit, and youths presented a narration on the country of focus.

Mrs. Noby Byju (SERSS Center A Secretary) and **Mr. George Thomas** (ECFNJ Secretary)

Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington

MTCGW Sevika Sanghom celebrated WDP on March 4th at 7 PM on Zoom. Forty participants including several non Sevika Sanghom members attended the event. The worship service was led prayerfully by the Vicar, Rev. Byju Thomas, and members who belonged to all ages. It was very encouraging to see young members participating in the service with great enthusiasm. Sini Kochamma from Seattle MTC was the key note speaker. The worship included a special prayer for the victims of the war in Ukraine. The WDP worship service was also blessed with melodious songs sung by our members. Offertory was collected with the hope that it will be used to enrich the kingdom of God through projects designed for the betterment of the women and children in the islands of England.

Dr. Elizabeth Thomas (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)



Mar Thoma Church, Atlanta

MTC Atlanta Sevika Sanghom conducted the WDP Meeting on March 4th at 7.30 PM via Zoom and was presided by Rev. Skariah Varughese. Edavaka Mission and Young Family Fellowship members also participated in this event. Lisa Elizabeth Mathew Kochamma, wife of Rev. Sunil Mathew, Vicar of St. Mathews MTC, Toronto, was the main speaker. Kochamma's inspiring message was on Hannah's involvement of maternity in God's plan. Many of our Sevika Sanghom members participated in leading songs and various prayers. Our Young Family Fellowship presented a thought provoking skit based on the theme. Over 50 members participated in the meeting.

Mrs. Anny Varghese (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)



**St. Luke's Mar Thoma Church and Jacksonville
Congregation - Florida**

WDP was organized by the Sevika Sanghom members of St. Luke's MTC and Jacksonville Congregation. A blessed devotional message was given by Dn. Melvin Mathal. There were 45 families who attended the worship service online. This worship service was made possible due to the faithful prayer and effective leadership of our Vicar, Rev. David Cherian. During the service, we prayed to God to relieve suffering and to bring healing and peace. We collected and sent the offering to WDP USA. The service concluded after prayer and benediction.

Mrs. Sarah Mathew (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)



St. John's Mar Thoma Church – Michigan

Online WDP was conducted on March 9th, presided by Rev. Jeswin John. All Sevika Sanghom members were given the opportunity to participate in various activities. Achen emphasized that there is hope through God's faithfulness and fulfillment of God's Words. He also mentioned that God has given us a great gift, we have hope, and it is our responsibility to tell others about Jesus Christ. 18 people attended the meeting.

Mrs. Annamma Scaria (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)



Minneapolis Mar Thoma Congregation – Minnesota

On March 20th, we celebrated the WDP through Zoom, and all women participated in the service. Neethi Prasad Kochamma gave a sermon based on the theme. Prior to the WDP service, the women of Minneapolis Mar Thoma Congregation gathered and practiced and recorded the skit based on the theme.

Mrs. Suja S. Thomas (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)



St. Louis Mar Thoma Church

St. Louis MTC celebrated this year's WDP in person on April 10th. WDP special order of worship was led by Sevika Sanghom members. Mrs. Mereen Grace George delivered the message. About 55 people participated.

Rev. Thomas Mathew (Vicar)



Austin Mar Thoma Church – Texas

Austin MTC celebrated WDP on Sunday, April 3rd. The Sunday service started with the WDP worship order led by Rev. George Abraham along with Rev. George Oommen. Sevika Sanghom members assisted the Achens by reading different portions of the WDP service. The stories of hope from the women of the British Isles had a remarkable impact on those who were listening. In addition to this, women took significant roles in assisting with the Holy Communion service on that day. The message was given by Mrs. Anita Mathew based on the theme. The WDP service was a reminder to all women of all the blessings they have in their lives along with a message of hope that our God has a wonderful plan for each and every one of us. The WDP service was a blessing to everyone who attended.

Mrs. Bala Jacob (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)

San Antonio Mar Thoma Congregation – Texas

WDP was observed on March 27th amidst the Holy Qurbana service along with our Vicar, Rev. George Abraham. Sevika Sanghom members Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas and Mrs. Julie Biju led the special order of worship. About 50 people were present.

Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas (Parish Secretary)



Emmanuel Mar Thoma Church – Lubbock, Texas

WDP was organized at Emmanuel MTC Lubbock on March 13th. The message was given by Dr. Annie Lincoln. Sunflower seeds were distributed to all the participants who were encouraged to plant them in their communities as a reminder of God's constant love and the hope for human kind. The service was well attended.

Rev. Abraham Kuruvilla (Vicar)



Rio Grande Valley Mar Thoma Congregation – Texas

Rio Grande Valley Mar Thoma Congregation celebrated WDP during the Holy Communion service on Sunday, March 20th. Under the leadership of Rev. Sonu Varghese, women of the parish assisted in the special order of worship. Ms. Kochurani Joseph was the guest speaker.

Rev. Sonu Varghese (Vicar)



St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church – Houston, Texas

WDP was celebrated at St. Thomas MTC, Houston, during the Holy Communion service on Sunday, March 13th. Under the leadership of Rev. Sonu Varghese, women of the parish assisted in the special order of worship. Dr. Anita Joy from Immanuel MTC, Houston, was the guest speaker; she delivered a powerful and inspiring message.

Rev. Sonu Varghese (Vicar)



Los Angeles Mar Thoma Church

Los Angeles MTC celebrated the WDP on Saturday, March 12th. The meeting was attended by 35 members including members from our sister parishes. Rev. Bijoy M. John, Vicar, together with Rev. Arun Samuel Varghese, Vicar of Horeb MTC, and the Sevika Sanghom led the congregation through the WDP liturgy.

Mrs. Annie Varghese gave a brief presentation on the country of focus. Mrs. Sharon Mathew Kochamma (wife of Rev. Arun Samuel Varghese) delivered the message based on the theme and emphasized that we should not doubt God's plans but walk in the presence, power, purpose, and plans of the creator. A special offertory was collected. An activity, "Pass the Gift", was organized by Mrs. Jenny Siby. The meeting concluded with prayer and benediction. All attendees then participated in the fellowship lunch after the meeting. It was a blessing for everyone who attended.

Ms. Vinu Mathew (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)



Mar Thoma Church of Greater Seattle – Washington

The MTC of Greater Seattle celebrated the WDP on March 6th. Sevika Sanghom assisted in the Sunday service with the reading of the liturgy under the leadership of Rev. Manu Varghese (Vicar). The sermon based on the theme was delivered by Ciny Kochamma (W/o Rev. Manu Varghese). The service was also attended by the Portland (Prayer Group) Congregation.



Staten Island – New York (Ecumenical)

WDP was celebrated ecumenically in Staten Island, NY, with six different neighbor parishes on March 19th at the Mar Thoma Church, Staten Island. The Key Note Speaker was Mrs. Zenit Ann Varghese Kochamma (w/o Rev. Bobby Varghese, St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Staten Island). It was a blessed and memorable day for all of us.

Mrs. Jessy Thomas (Sevika Sanghom Secretary, MTC, Staten Island)



North East Region Center B Sevika Sanghom (Ecumenical)

The NERSS Center B WDP celebration was held on Saturday, March 5th via Zoom. More than 136 participants with families, attending from various Mar Thoma parishes of NERSS Center B, as well as members from the Rochester Congregation, St. Mary's Orthodox Church (Maynard, MA), Catholic Church of Boston, and Joint Christian Churches of Rockland County, NY. The special invitees included the Dublin Mar Thoma Congregation, Ireland Sevika Sanghom along with Rev. Varghese Koshy. Rev. Sujith Sam Mammen, President of NERSS Center B, presided over the meeting. Ms. Eileen McStay from NY did a presentation, and the main message was done by Mrs. Merlin Mathew Kochamma from St. Mary's Cathedral, Puthencavu, Kerala. Mrs. Neethi Prasad, Vice-Chair of WDP USA, was also present. The skit presentation was done by Carmel MTC, Boston, and many young women participated in the prayer readings.

Mrs. Thankam Vinu George (NERSS Center B Secretary)



Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian Churches in Pennsylvania (EFICP)

EFICP hosted WDP on Saturday, March 5th as a hybrid meeting at St. Thomas Syro Malabar Catholic Forane Church (Philadelphia). The main speaker was Mrs. Neenu Mary Varghese, wife of Rev. Thomas K. Mathew.

There were 22 participant churches for this event. The event had two parts. The first part consisted of the following programs: lighting of the lamp representing the 7 regions of WDP and worship service along with choir. The second part included the public meeting with programs such as the metaphor of hope in light of the current issues in Ukraine, presentation on the host country, theme song by kids, message by key note speaker, monologue, and a dance by kids honoring the host country. Approximately 75 people attended this blessed event in person with 150 viewers online. The event also included offertory which will be donated to WDP ministries. The event concluded with a prayer and benediction followed by lunch for all the attendees.

Mrs. Varsha Bincy (EFICP – Women's Forum Coordinator)



Mar Thoma Church of Baltimore – Maryland

MTCB Sevika Sanghom celebrated WDP on March 5th. The meeting was attended virtually by 15 members and presided by the President, Rev. Shiju Thomas. Sevika Sanghom members actively participated in the WDP service. Programs included opening prayer and remarks, opening song, Bible reading, WDP program video, monologues, worship leading activities, message from the Vicar, and closing prayer. It was a humbling experience knowing about these women of EJNI and their struggles. It was a privilege that MTCB Sevika Sanghom was able to be part of this noble cause.

Mrs. Smitha Benson (Sevika Sanghom Secretary)

To be Continued..

World Day of PRAYER 2022





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Rev. Santhosh Thomas

Assistant Vicar, Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Wife: Teena Santhosh

Children:

Shreya Sara Santhosh

Sandra Sara Santhosh



Rev. John P. Varghese

Vicar, North Carolina Mar Thoma Church

Wife: Shiny Thankachan

Daughter: Jeslin John



Rev. T. S. Jose

Vicar, St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, Yonkers NY

Wife: Mini Thomas, Kizhakkanedathu

Children:

Sam T. Jose, Seena T. Jose



Rev. Joby John

Vicar, Sehion Mar Thoma Church, Dallas

Wife: Neethu Mariam Varghese

Children:

Daya Alma John, Nanma Elsa John,
Jeev John Joby



Rev. Shaiju C. Joy

Vicar, St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church, Dallas

Wife: Subi Uthup Eyadiyil

Children:

Daya Mariam Shaiju & Karun Joy Shaiju



Rev. Sam K. Easow

Vicar, Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston

Wife: Bincy Sam

Children:

Shaun Easow Sam
Juanah Serah Sam



Rev. Jinu John

Vicar, Mar Thoma Church of Silicon Valley and Sacramento Mar Thoma Congregation

Wife: Sunitha Jinu

Children:

Athulya Jaima Jinu & Anupam John Jinu



Rev. Ajith Varghese

Vicar, St. James Mar Thoma Church, New York

Wife: Diana K. Varghese

Children:

Evan Ajith & Hanan Ajith



Rev. V. T. Thomas

Vicar, Salem Mar Thoma Church, Eastern Long Island

Wife: Lovely Oommen

Children:

Rev. Asish Thomas, Asha Thomas

Daughter in Law - Jesmin Mathew

Son In Law - Dr. Manu M Abraham



Rev. Y. Alex

Vicar, Mar Thoma Church of Dallas, Farmers Branch

Wife: Leni Sarah Iype

Children: Jyotis John Alex &

Yobel Iype Alex



Rev. Roji Mathews Abraham
Vicar, Canadian Mar Thoma Church

Wife: Ancy Roji Mathews

Children:
Seirah Susan Mathews
Yehoshua Abraham Mathews
Abiyrael Varghese Mathews



Rev. Sanoj Babu Mathew
Vicar, Bristol St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church

Wife: Gincy S George

Children:
Juvana G Sanoj
Jesna G Sanoj



Rev. Johnson Samuel
Vicar, St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York

Wife: Binu soosan george

Children:
Sherin sam johnson
Irene sara johnson



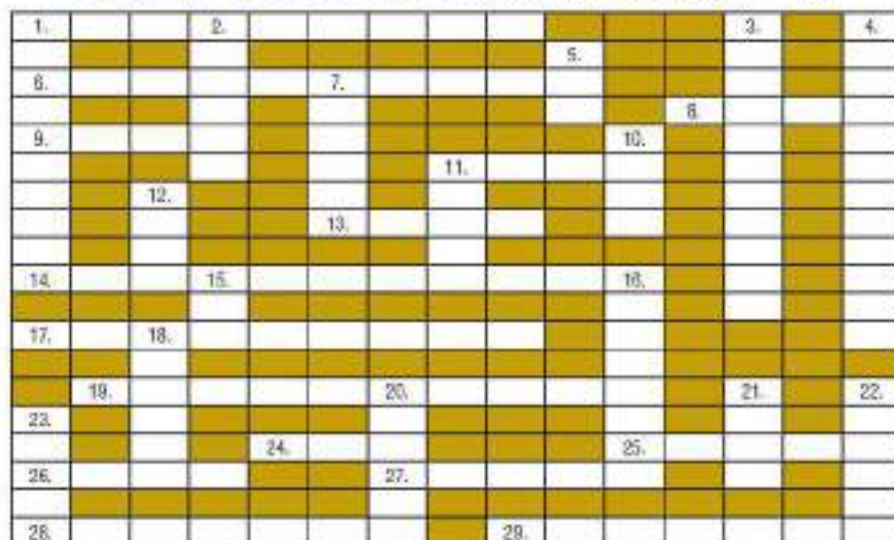
Rev Saji Thomas
Vicar, San Francisco Mar Thoma Church

Wife: Susan Saji

Children:
Yohan Thomas Saji
Nidhi Rachel saji

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Bible Crossword Puzzle as in NIV: Jeremiah 33-42



Across:

- The king of Babylon had _____ Godoliah, son of Ahikam as governor over the land.
- "I will show you _____ so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your land."
- "Do not be afraid of him (King of Babylon), declares the Lord, for I am with you and will _____ you and deliver you from his hands."
- Ebed-Melech said to Jeremiah, "Put these old _____ and worn-out clothes under your arms to pad the ropes."
- Our forefather, Jonadab gave us this command: "Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink _____."
- This is the name by which He will be called: The _____ Our Righteousness.
- This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and _____ it—the Lord is his name.
- Neither King Zedekiah nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid any _____ to the words the Lord had spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.
- Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah _____ and a present and let him go.
- "I will cleanse them from all the _____ they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me."
- Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah among the captives who were being carried into _____ to Babylon.
- "I am about to fulfill my words against this city—words concerning disaster, not prosperity. At that time they will be fulfilled before your _____."
- Therefore this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Jonadab son of Recab will _____ fail to have a man to serve me."
- When Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah, he said to him, "The Lord your God _____ this disaster for this place."
- "Give thanks to the Lord Almighty, _____ for the Lord is good; his love _____ forever."

Down:

- They said to Jeremiah, "May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in _____ with everything the Lord your God sends you to tell us."
- "He is in your hands," King Zedekiah answered. "The king can do nothing to _____ you."
- "Whether it is favorable or _____, we will obey the Lord our God, so that it will go well with us."
- "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and _____ things you do not know."
- "Yes," Baruch replied, "he (Jeremiah) dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them in _____ on the scroll."
- Even though Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to turn the _____, he would not listen to them.
- "Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it. I will _____ my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security."
- "Take a scroll and write on it all the _____ I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you."
- "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In this place, desolate and without people or animals—in all its towns there will again be pastures for shepherds to _____ their flocks.'
- "All nations will be in _____ and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it."
- If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I am grieved concerning the _____ I have inflicted on you."
- This is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the _____ of David.
- When Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah, he said to him, "All this happened because you people _____ against the Lord and did not obey him."
- Then the officials said to the king, "This man is not seeking the good of these people but their _____."
- Nebuzaradan gave vineyards and _____ to some of the poor people who owned nothing.
- But afterward they changed their minds and took back the slaves they had _____ and enslaved them."

Deadline for Answers : August 25, 2022

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

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

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

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