

**ST. THOMAS
INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111**



HAPPY
New Year

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE.

PHIL 4:4

NEWSLETTER

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VICAR'S MESSAGE

"BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE IN ME TOO"

JOHN 14:1

Jesus Christ instructed his disciples who were troubled at heart with these encouraging words, "Let your hearts be not troubled, believe in God and believe in me". In a world of turmoil we need these words. Jesus assured us, "lo, I am with you to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). However very few Christians feel that presence of the Lord with them. Jesus also said on another occasion, "when two or three gather in my name I will be in their midst" (Matt 18:20). No matter wherever we are the presence of the Lord follows us. We can remember several occasions in which we narrowly escaped accidents, sickness, quarrel, dangers and so on. Did we remember then that it was the Lord who delivered us from those? The secular man interprets those as incidental occurrence than divine providence. But a believer takes it as God's deliverance. This is the difference between those who believe in God and those who do not.

Jesus clearly instructed the disciples who were troubled when they heard that He is going to suffer and die. Therefore, He gave them His presence by trusting in Him. The world had to know that Jesus is the answer to all kinds of troubles in the world. While writing this note I am listening to the news that in many cities in this country there were mob violence in malls. This is not a happy thing. Innocent people who go for shopping are faced with unexpected disturbance injuring several people. There were 61 shootings in Chicago area alone during Christmas weekend. For the entire year 753 people were killed in gun violence there. The present world is strewn with violence of all kinds. The common people are so afraid and troubled at all these. The religious fanaticism in Syria and Iraq killed almost 19,000 and wounded 35,000 in 2014 and 2015 according to UN statistics.

According to one calculation the prediction of alcoholic beverages sold in Kerala will be 4.5 billion worth during this Christmas season. The total sale for the entire year of 2016 was projected as 45 billion



Rupees. For a small decent house that can be built with one million Rupees gives us the idea that 4500 houses can be built for the needy with the money that was simply drank away. In addition, the sickness, violence, abuse, accidents and fights that results from drinking will double the expense. We can see where the world is moving. No wonder people cannot live in peace. It is in this situation the Lord gives us the option to believe in God and in Jesus to alleviate the world from all these troubles. Unfortunately Christians are finding it impossible to witness to the faith to inspire the rest of the world.

We who live in America are enjoying the greatest comfort in the world. God has blessed us so much that we sometimes even don't feel grateful to God. Our faith is so shallow that we are unable to even say our routine prayers and church attendance! We are so busy working hard to make our houses bigger and comfort greater. We cannot see the need of the poor around us. When the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan, the Lord asked them to be thankful to God and follow His commands all the time. The Israelites received the assurance of this divine presence all through their life especially when they traveled 40 years to the land of Canaan. Thus the Lord asked them, "It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end (Deuteronomy 11:12). This assurance is available for us too while we live in this land.

In our tribulations we should be able to see the presence of God. In the uttermost suffering our Lord Himself fell on His knees asking for help from His Father. Even though the help was denied, God sent His angel and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43). God is watching over us all the time. In spite of our frailties

He is around us to offer assistance. Can we pass on that love to others who need it? If we can do that we will fulfil the commandment of Jesus, “love thy neighbor like thyself.” All that we need is the faith in Him. Jesus said, believe in God and believe in me”!

I wish you all God’s blessings in all that you do. May the New Year be a year of success in our spiritual life than our material life. “Seek ye first the

Kingdom of God, everything will be added onto you” Matthew 6:33. With God everything is possible. Let us have that faith as the foremost matter in our life.

Wishing You All A Happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year!

Lovingly,
Fr. M. K Kuriakose

Parish News

Guest Priest. Rev Fr Shinoj Thomas on 12/4/2016

Events

General Body on December 4, 2016:

The Annual General Body of our parish met on Sunday, December 4th at 12:30 p.m. The following important decisions were taken.

1. School side of our building complex can be rented out without affecting the Sunday School. The facility will be fully available for the Sunday School on Saturday and Sunday.
2. Increase in Subscription: The annual subscription is raised from \$900 to \$1000. Ever since His Holiness the Catholicos-cum-Malankara Metropolitan requested each family to donate \$100.00 to the Catholicate Day Fund, our parish has been giving that amount to His Holiness from the parish funds without any collection from the people. Therefore, there was shortage in our funds that we needed for various projects of our parish. In addition, our expenses are also increasing. Considering these facts the General Body decided to increase the subscription to \$1000.00.
3. Managing Committee Members: The General Body decided to reduce the total Managing Committee member from 18 to 15 including Board of Trustees and Office-bearers, considering lack of quorum for Managing Committee meetings.

Christmas Caroling: This year we successfully completed our caroling even though one day we had to cancel due to inclement weather. I take this opportunity to thank each one participated in the caroling and members who provided Breakfast and Lunch to the caroling party.

Ecumenical Christmas Program: The Ecumenical Christmas Celebration was held on Saturday, December 10th at George Washington High School with the cooperation of 21 Malayalee parishes. Our children presented a beautiful dance and played Chenda Melam for the procession. In addition our parish members arranged a snack sale at the site under the leadership of Mr. Rajan Padiyara, Mrs. Jessley Alex and Dr. Santhosh Baby and a big team of men and women. The funds raised were for cancer patients in India.

Christmas Social: Parish Christmas Social was held on December 24. Many of our members participated. The Christmas message was given by Rev .Binu Samuel, Vicar of Ascension Mar Thoma Church. The entertainment program presented by our spiritual organizations, Sunday school teachers and students were remarkable. A Special thanks to the program coordinator Mr. Alex P. Symon and team, Mr. Anooj Thomas for providing sound and lights, and food coordinator Mr. Samkutty John and team for arranging delicious dinner.

Christmas Service: The Christmas Service and Holy Qurbana were celebrated by Vicar and Asst. Vicar followed by Christmas lunch. Thanks to the food coordinator Mr Samkutty john and team for the arrangements and those who worked behind the curtain to make all events a great success.

Forthcoming Events

GROW Conference: The venue for the GROW conference on January 28th 2017 will be our parish. All Young women are welcome to this conference that will be from 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m.

Vicar's India Trip: Our Vicar Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose and Kochamma will be on vacation from January 25 to February 9, 2017. Please pray for their safe travel.

Election of Managing Committee Members: Our parish will be hosting the election of the Managing Committee members of the Syrian Christian Association on Saturday, February 11, 2017. All Malankara Syrian Christian Association representatives from all parishes in our Diocese will attend the election meeting.

Nineveh Lent: The Three-day lent will be from February 6th to 8th. There will be evening prayer from Sunday, February 5 onwards daily and Holy Qurbana on February 8th evening when the lent will end.

Great Lent: Great Lent will begin on Monday, February 27th. February 26th will be the Pethurtho Sunday and from that evening there will be regular evening prayer at our Church. There won't be Holy Qurbana on Wednesdays during Great Lent.

From the Outgoing Parish Secretary

Let me thank the Almighty for giving another year to serve you as your Parish Secretary. I take this opportunity to thank our Respected Vicar Rev. Fr. M K Kuriakose and Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Gheevarghese John for their guidance and leadership in making this great parish number one in the Northeast American Diocese.

This time I remember the support I received from the Treasurer Mr Paul C John, Office Manager Mr. Varghese P. Abraham, Asst Secretary Gheevarghese John and all coordinators and other officials.

Also wishing all the best for the Incoming 2017 officials.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Sincerely,

Sam Kurisinmoottil, Parish Secretary 2016

From the Incoming Parish Secretary

My Dear Parish Members

Thank you for your confidence in me to entrust the responsibilities of the Secretary of this great parish. Any position in the parish is an opportunity to work in the vineyard of the Lord. Whatever we do in the parish and for the parish, are doing for Him and will be credited in His Kingdom.

If we believe that the help is coming from the Lord who made the heaven and earth, we can handle any difficult situation.

I have a team of young and energetic Managing Committee members and Board of Trustees to work with. Our Treasurer is very capable and dedicated to handle the accounts perfectly and punctually. It is a pleasure to work with Kuriakosachan. We can approach him at any time for guidance. He is a great teacher, guide and friend. I am sure that Kochachen's advises will also be very helpful.

On behalf of the Managing Committee, I take this opportunity to assure that there will be only one motto behind our words and deeds - the progress of this Parish.

Please pray for us to get the divine strength and mercy to discharge our responsibilities with faithfulness, fairness and humbleness.

Wish you all a blessed New Year !!!!

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me". Philippians 4:13

John Panicker, Parish Secretary 2017

January Wedding Anniversaries

Mr. & Mrs. Shibu Varghese	Jan 1	Mr. & Mrs. Prasad George	Jan 10
Mr. & Mrs. Rajan T Samuel	Jan 1	Mr. & Mrs. Oommen George	Jan 11
Mr. & Mrs. Finney M Philip	Jan 2	Mr. & Mrs. Rinu John	Jan 11
Mr. & Mrs. Eapen V Kalathil	Jan 3	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Koshy	Jan 12
Mr. & Mrs. Lynnson Mathews Rajan	Jan 3	Mr. & Mrs. Elias K Issac	Jan 12
Mr. & Mrs. Sam Jacob Kurisinmoottil	Jan 4	Mr. & Mrs. Moni Thomas	Jan 13
Mr. & Mrs. Mathew Samuel	Jan 5	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew Varghese	Jan 13
Mr. & Mrs. Jaison Daniel	Jan 5	Mr. & Mrs. George G Mampallil	Jan 14
Mr. & Mrs. Varghese Jacob	Jan 5	Mr. & Mrs. Varghese K Issac	Jan 16
Mr. & Mrs. Mathew V Thomas	Jan 6	Mr. & Mrs. James C Peter	Jan 17
Mr. & Mrs. Mathew Thankachan	Jan 6	Mr. & Mrs. Philip Varghese	Jan 18
Mr. & Mrs. Sunil Raj Poovannal	Jan 7	Mr. & Mrs. Abraham Thomas	Jan 19
Mr. & Mrs. Anu Mathew	Jan 9	Mr. & Mrs. Rebu Roy	Jan 26
Mr. & Mrs. Ninan Mathai	Jan 9	Mr. & Mrs. Babu Varghese	Jan 29
Mr. & Mrs. Geevarghese K John	Jan 9	Mr. & Mrs. James Jacob	Jan 31

January Birthdays

Jestin K. Abraham	Jan 1	Mathew Varghese	Jan 8	Binsy E Mathew	Jan 17
Aleena Robin	Jan 2	Anila Thomas	Jan 8	Maliyil M Philip	Jan 18
Abraham Thomas	Jan 2	Mini Ninan	Jan 9	Sanju John	Jan 19
Ruth John	Jan 2	Andrew Cherian	Jan 9	Deepthy Panicker	Jan 19
Suja Abraham	Jan 3	Marshel Varghese	Jan 9	Wincy B Joseph	Jan 20
Roy Philip Chacko	Jan 4	Sosamma Antony	Jan 9	Anu Lajy	Jan 21
Taina I Daniel	Jan 5	Sandeep K Thomson	Jan 10	John Polayil Abraham	Jan 21
Jobin Varghese	Jan 5	Nivitha Wilson	Jan 10	Sunil Thomas	Jan 23
Smitha Robin	Jan 5	Divya Mary Thomas	Jan 12	Anu Mathew	Jan 23
Renju Ann Joy	Jan 5	Andrew J Mathew	Jan 12	Alwin T Raju	Jan 23
Deepu Mathew Daji	Jan 5	Harshall Thomas	Jan 12	Shannon Ann George	Jan 23
Chrislin H Thomas	Jan 5	Joshua M George	Jan 13	Jelitta James	Jan 24
Ron Philip	Jan 5	Shawn George Philip	Jan 13	Linju Jacob John	Jan 25
Jijo Jacob	Jan 6	Carolyn Thomas	Jan 13	Saramma Thomas	Jan 27
Lydiya Elsa Jaison	Jan 6	Shelby K Renji	Jan 14	Kasen Samuel Lajy	Jan 27
Diya Sara Thomas	Jan 6	Rijon C Simon	Jan 14	Mathew Thankachan	Jan 28
Wilson Panicker	Jan 7	Ramany George	Jan 15	Susan Mathew	Jan 28
Amelia J Mathew	Jan 7	Ian Thomas	Jan 15	Mathew Philip	Jan 30
Joyel Manoj	Jan 8	Sajan Varughese	Jan 16	Christin Thomas	Jan 31
Fiji C Philip	Jan 8	Allen Abraham	Jan 16		

Parish Officials 2017

Treasurer:	Mr. Paul C. John
Assist. Treasurers:	Mr. Prince J. Puliprathu (Receivable), Mr. Reji Jousha Varghese (Payable)
Secretary:	Mr. John Panicker
Assist. Secretary:	Mr. Anoop George
Office Manager:	Mr. Varghese P. Abraham
Board of Trustees:	Mr. Alex Pothan (2015-17), Mr. Mohan Samuel (2016-18), Mr. Geevarghese M. Panicker (2017-19)

Managing Committee Members: Mr. Alex Symon, Mr. Anoop George, Mr. Binny Cherian, Mr. Jiju Alex, Mr. Paul Mavelly, Mr. Philip John, Mr. Prince J. Puliprathu, Mr. Reji Jousha Varghese, Mr. Samkutty John
 Auditors: Mr. Philip Varghese, Dr. Santhosh Baby
 Prayer Meeting Coordinator: Mr. Thomas Daniel
 Sunday School Principal: Mr. Oommen Kappil

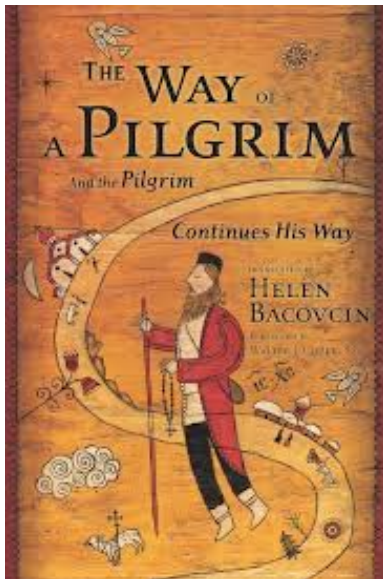
Parish Committee Coordonators (Elected by the Managing Committee)

Building Maintenance committee: Mr. Geevarghese M. Panicker
 Refreshment Coordinator: Mr. Samkutty John & Mr. Paul Mavelly
 Building Upkeep Committee: Mr. Alex Pothen
 Program Committee: Mr. Philip John
 Spiritual Enrichment Committee: Mr. Binny Cherian
 Picnic Committee: Mr. Jiju Alex
 Sports activity Committee: Mr. Paul Mavelly
 Library Committee: Mr. Binny Cherian
 Liturgy and Choir Committee: Vicar and Assistant Vicar
 Finance Committee: Treasurer
 Charity Committee: Asst. Treasurer (Payable)
 Public Relation & Legal Committee: Secretary
 Newsletter Editor: Mr. Jerin Jubey

Ecumenical Fellowship Representatives: Mr. Alex Symon, Mr. Prince J. Puliprathu, MMS Secretary, MMS Treasurer, MGOCSM/ Youth League representative
 MOCF Representatives: Mr. Alex Symon, Mr. John Panicker

Books to Read

Living in the midst of multiple sophisticated technologies at our fingertips, a major impact has happened on our reading habits. Readings has been minimized to social media and minimal news. In this section, you can share books that inspired you that you would like to share with others. Reading has indeed changed from paper to screens, and many of the titles are available at our fingertips.



The Way of a Pilgrim And the Pilgrim Continues His Way

This book is originally written in Russian and translated in to multiple languages. Known as a Russian classic in spirituality, the main theme is on unceasing prayer. “Pray without ceasing” (1. Thes. 5:17). The pilgrim starts his journey after reading this Bible verse, and continues to explore more. He finds ‘The Jesus Prayer’ during the way, and the journey continues.

The book is available in various formats at different online bookstores like Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Sunday School News

Submitted by Oommen Kappil, Principal
(Tel.: 267.902.8500, email: kappil@yahoo.com)

Principal's Message

Beginning of a New Year is a time to reflect on the past year and resolve to do better in the New Year. Sunday School children need to think how they can study better, participate more in the classroom, show a little bit more love and compassion to their peers, or help their mom and dad without being asked to. Teachers shall ask themselves whether they are preparing better for their class, whether they ensure that the students participate and contribute meaningfully to the classroom discussions, whether they make the students to feel confident, feel respected and loved. If our students resolve to be better students, if our teachers resolve to be better teachers, if parents resolve to be better parents, we can collectively perform better and achieve more. Even when we work hard, let's remind ourselves that it's God who rewards us and multiplies us. Let God Almighty bless each one of us to pray better, treat others better, and teach our children better. Glory be to Him!

Changes/Improvements

New Year is a ripe time to think about changes in our personal lives as well as at the organizational level. What changes would you like to see in Sunday School? Think about our curriculum, examinations, competitions, events, schedule etc. If you have suggestions for improvements, please send it to the Principal.

Event Reports

Christmas Craft fair: Third Annual Christmas Craft Fair was held December 17th in the Parish Hall. There were Christmas themed fun activities, story time, sing along, appearance by Santa and Mrs. Clause etc, and refreshments. They also collected non-perishable canned food items as part of our continuing efforts to teach our children the importance of sharing their blessings with the less privileged during this season. Canned food collected during this event was donated to Aid For Friends organization along with our parish level collection. Children also prepared Christmas cards for those who serve in the military. We thank all the Coordinators of Middle School Fellowship for coordinating such a great event that was enjoyed by over 80 children and their family members. Special appreciation to Reena Susan Mathews for her commendable leadership.

Ecumenical Christmas Program: Our Sunday school students performed a musical program including nativity show at the Ecumenical Christmas program held on December 10th at the George Washington High School. Over 50 students participated in this well received event. Several teachers and parents worked diligently to present such a beautiful performance. Thank you Milly and team for the exceptional teamwork.

Christmas Eve Program: Our parish level Christmas program held on Christmas eve was a memorable one. Children from Kindergarten to 12th Grade were involved in several performances that was a feast to the eyes and music to the ears of all attendees. A Christian Oppana, a musical dance was the highlight of the evening. It was the first time such an event was performed in our parish. We thank all the Sunday School staff members for working together as a great team. Special thanks to Milly Philip, Program Coordinator for her outstanding leadership in creating such great memories.

Winter Sweater/Jacket Drive: Under the leadership of 9th grade students and teachers, Sunday school collected lightly used sweaters and jackets to distribute to the homeless in the city of Philadelphia. This was another great lesson in practical application of what is being taught within the classrooms. Thank you Suja Abraham, Sunitha Anish and the children for your sincere efforts to help the needy.

Upcoming Events

Mid-term exam is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, January 15th for all Grades. As in the past, Centralized Exam is being conducted by the Diocese in June, for Grades 5, 8, 10 and 12. Sample questions from previous years are available at the Sunday School web site. Please visit <http://nesundayschool.org/>