

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church

1009 Unruh Ave.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Vicar's Message:

I am indebted to Almighty God for all what we could achieve in our parish during the year 2018. I am always reminded of the words of St. Paul, "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift" (2 Cor. 9:15) seeing the great parish community's love, care and cooperation in all what we did during the report year. I thank all my parishioners who had been instrumental in 2018 to carry the burden of running the parish smoothly. There are several people who were on the run when needs arose. Whether it is for cooking, cleaning, decorating, or arranging the place for different events, it is those people who were the helping hands. A few of such people are very special as their selfless and generous contribution of time, money and energy made things happen.

The experience of harmoniously working with our people has been unique. It is in this aspect I see the divine providence for our parish. I realize my unworthiness and God's mercy every day while working with our people. But for God's grace and the affection of the people, nothing good would have happened.

Indeed, some people are not aware of what is going on! When they come to church for different events, the church is open, the lights are on, the heat/cool is on, food is ready, worship is going on etc. The Office-bearers, Managing Committee and Board of Trustees along with different sub-committees were working tirelessly to make others' life easy. At the same time, majority of our people understand that great service by the elected people and many volunteers. I hope they are all complimenting the hard-working fellow-parishioners for their hard work.

Specific duties carried out by the Treasurer, Secretary, Office Manager, Assistant Treasurers, Assistant Secretary, coordinators of all sub-committees, office-bearers of spiritual organizations and several volunteers are to be appreciated. None of these people are given any remuneration but they were able to render meticulous service to the community. All those officials had responsibly handled their job. I can imagine how many hours they spent in carrying out all their duties in a timely manner. Looking through the individual reports in the Annual Report, we can understand their input.

Charity is one of our activities that gives us satisfaction before God. I am glad that majority of us is willing to share a part of what God has given them. In the collection of Canned Food for MOCF, Kerala Flood, Housing charity, Karuna Cancer Charity, and other general charities we had done a great job.

It is with the assistance of the Asst. Vicar Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas that I could do much of my duties without any problem. Achen's expertise, talents and personal charism are assets to our growth as a spiritual community. It is a delight to work with Achen. He, along with his duties as the Diocesan Secretary was able to stand with me in all what we did. We both are trying our best for the parish. It is only through the parishioner's open dealing and communication that we can identify the needs and pitch in to the best of our ability.

In concluding, let me thank God Almighty for all His guidance in the past years. Let me also thank all officials and other volunteers in keeping the tempo, image and strength of the parish. We are a spiritual community with a clear vision to grow every day to the person of Christ whose unconditional love dominates our hearts. Let us keep it at that level enjoying peace and concord that the Holy Spirit offers. May the intercession of St. Mary the Theotokos, our patron St. Thomas and all other male and female saints be our solace.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

PARISH ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction:

I am extremely humbled and grateful to have served as the Parish Secretary for the year 2018. Our Parish is the largest in the Diocese and effective management of this body is a daunting task. I am supremely indebted to our Vicar, Rev. Fr. M.K. Kuriakose, our Assistant Vicar, Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas, the Treasurer, Mr. Elias Issac, as well as my other fellow committee members for their help and support.

All that being said, I would like to present this Annual Report for the year 2018 as a retrospective on all that has been accomplished this past year.

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church:

St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, went to India in AD 52, preached the teaching of Jesus Christ and converted Hindus to Christianity. St. Thomas was martyred in India on December 21st in the year AD 72. It is a matter of pride that our ancestors were Christians from the first century AD onwards.

The headquarters of the Holy Church is at Kottayam, in Kerala State, India. The supreme primate of the Church is the Catholicose of the East and the Malankara Metropolitan. The present Catholicose and the Malankara Metropolitan is His Holiness Moran Mar Baselios Mar Thoma Poulose 2nd, who was enthroned on November 1st, 2010. At present, there are 26 bishops and 30 dioceses including the Northeast American Diocese and the Southwest American Diocese.

Malankara Association: The Malankara Syrian Christian Association is the elected body of the representatives of all parishes of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Each parish is represented in the Association by a priest and lay people elected by the parish General Body, proportionate to the membership strength of each parish. The term of the Malankara Association is 5 years.

Our Diocese:

The Northeast American diocese was formed in 2011 by dividing the previous American Diocese to the Northeast American and Southwest American Dioceses. The headquarters of the Northeast American Diocese is in Muttontown, New York. The current diocesan bishop is His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos. I would like to specially mention that His Grace is a member of the Executive Committee of the World Christian Council of Churches and I urge everyone to pray for His Grace.

Our Parish:

St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Inc. Philadelphia was established in 1976 and incorporated as per the article of incorporation of non-profit organization of State of Pennsylvania in 1992.

The parish vicar is the president of the incorporation and the parish General Body is the General Body of the incorporation.

The present vicar of the parish is Rev. Fr. M.K Kuriakose, who is serving this parish since 1996. We have also been blessed with the service of our Assistant Vicar, Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas since 2017. Under their able leadership and vision, our parish continues to grow.

We have also been blessed with the following members of the Managing Committee and Board of Trustees.

Office Bearers:

Fr. M. K. Kuriakose-	Vicar
Fr. Sujit Thomas	- Asst. Vicar
Elias Issac-	Treasurer
Steve Kurian-	Secretary
Philip Varghese-	Asst. Treasurer, Program Committee
Reji Joshua Varghese-	Asst. Treasurer
Thomaskutty Varghese-	Asst. Secretary, Ecumenical
Jacob Zachariah-	Refreshment
Samkutty John-	Refreshment
John Panicker-	Building Upkeep, MOCF & Ecumenical
Sathees Easow-	Refreshment
Varghese P. Abraham-	Building Maintenance
Paul C. John-	Spiritual Enrichment
Philip Raju Markose-	Library
Mohan Samuel-	Legal Committee, Sports and Recreation
G. M. Panicker-	Picnic Committee

Important decisions of the General Body in 2018

The Parish General Body met on March 18th, July 22nd, and December 9th. The following major items were approved:

- 1) Approval of the Financial Accounts for 2018
- 2) Approval of Budget for 2019

- 3) Parish Award to Rev. Fr. K.M. George: The General Body has been advised of, and has given approval of awarding Rev. Fr. K.M. George Rupees 200,000 or \$3,150.00 out of the Rev. Fr. M.K. Kuriakose 40th Anniversary Fund for his outstanding visionary leadership and scholarship. The award was given at Easter 2018.
- 4) Formation of a Building Maintenance Committee under the supervision of the Managing Committee to manage the parish capital projects. The members will serve a 3 year term. The following members were appointed to serve: The Building Maintenance Coordinator (Mr. Varughese P. Abraham), the Trustee (Mr. Elias Issac), the Secretary (Mr. Steven Kurian), Mr. Regi Mathai, Mr. Philip Varghese, Mr. John Panicker, Mr. Rajan Padiyara, and Mr. Paul C. John.
- 5) The General Body was advised that there are two scheduled building projects for the years 2018-2019. The General Body approved that each member will be requested to donate \$1000 to the building fund within the next year: \$500 in 2018 and \$500 in 2019 prior to July 2019.

Worship and Liturgical Services:

The fundamental purpose of the church is the divine worship and enhancement of the spirituality of its members. The holy worship will lead our minds and thoughts to the citadel of the Almighty. When we practice what we pray, we will become true Christians.

Holy Qurbana: Holy Eucharist is the predominant worship of Orthodox Christians. On Sundays, the Morning Prayer starts at 8:30AM followed by Holy Qurbana.

After refreshments, all spiritual organizations meet from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM. Almost all members regularly participate in the Holy Qurbana and the majority of the believers regularly receive Holy Communion.

Holy Qurbana on Wednesdays: Wednesday evening Holy Qurbana is from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM. We also conduct intercession prayer to St. Mary on Wednesdays.

English Service: The Holy service is conducted in English and in Malayalam on alternate Sundays.

Prayer meetings: Normally the prayer meetings are conducted at the residences of our members on Saturday evenings. In the reporting year, twenty eight families conducted prayer meetings at their residences. A few other families hosted prayer meetings in the chapel.

Evening Prayer: On Saturdays, we have evening prayer at our chapel at 7:00 PM. Unless announced otherwise, there will be evening prayer at the chapel, even if there are prayer meetings at residences.

Church Choir: Many talented singers participate in our church choir. Our choir gets admiration from the guests who attend our Holy Qurbana. Please appreciate the choir leaders Mr. Nebu Daniel and Melisa Thomas and the choir members.

Altar Assistants: Mr. Daniel Varghese is the leader and mentor of the altar assistants. There are more than 25 altar assistants regularly participating in the Holy Qurbana.

Parish Initiatives:

Parish Building Projects: Our Parish initiated 2 building projects beginning in 2018: the expansion of the Church parking lot as well as the renovation of the roof. For this purpose, the Parish members have been requested to donate \$500 in 2018 and \$500 in 2019 to the building fund. The projects will be completed in 2019.

New Holy Qurbana Books- A new Holy Qurbana book has been published by the Ministry of Liturgical Resource Development. The Service Book of the Holy Qurbano features the updated English translations, in a four-column format: with commentary/explanations along with prayers and hymns in English, Malayalam Transliteration, and Malayalam in a side-by-side arrangement. This new book was rolled out in the Spring as led by our Vicar and Assistant Vicar for our parish's future use.

Newsletter- Jibu Vergis has taken over responsibilities for the compiling and publishing of the Parish Newsletter. The newsletter will continue with excellent articles and information monthly

Ente Palli App: Our parish has implemented a new Smartphone app available on both the I-phone and Android operating systems. The Ente Palli app allows for the parish directory to be accessed from one's phone, and, in the future will streamline parish communication. Thanks goes to Sumodh Abraham from St. Gregorios, Bensalem, for his help.

Digital Message Board: A new HDTV has been installed in the narthex of the Sanctuary which will broadcast announcements and showcase pictures of Parish events.

Parish Charitable Initiatives

Housing Charity Project 2018: February 11th- our parish initiated the project to sponsor the construction of 5 houses in India for 5 impoverished families in Kerala. A fundraising "thermometer" has been placed in the Church hallway to update the status of fundraising each week. The goal was set to raise \$25,000.00 for that cause. We were able to raise over \$33,000.00 towards this noble cause. In total, our Parish sponsored the construction of 6 homes.

Karuna Blood Drive & Bake Sale: June 10th- Our parish hosted a Red Cross Blood drive. The goal for our parish was for 26 donors however we almost doubled those expectations with 47 total donors! The Red Cross has advised that translates to 141 lives saved.

Kerala Flood Relief: Our Parish has collected over \$24,000.00 for the support of the victims of the Kerala floods. This money was given to the Diocese for distribution to the many victims under the care of the Mother Church.

Thanksgiving Turkey Drive: Our MGOCSM distributed 25 turkeys to the local community residents as well as to Living Waters Church.

New Members-

We are blessed with the addition of 5 new member families in 2018:

Dr. Prince and Geena Jacob (#355)

Mr. Samuel and Thankamma George (#356)

Mr. Thomas and Omana Abraham (#357)

Mr. Alex Mathew (#358).

Mr. Ponnachen and Mariamma Geevarghese (#359)

Weddings

Joel and Soushya Mathew

Libin and Elsa Jacob

Births

The following children were born into our Parish family in 2018:

Isabel Anish, d/o Anish Thomas & Sherin Anish

Ivannah Alexander, d/o Nisha Alexander

Mikayla Cherian, d/o Suresh and Sharon Cherian

Emma Vergis, d/o Jibu and Anu Vergis

Gemma Kurian, d/o Steve and Sherry Kurian

Julian Geevarghese, s/o Rajesh & Jenny Geevarghese

Adam Anu, d/o Anu Mathew and Teena Anu

Deaths

The following family members of our Parish reposed in the Lord in 2018:

Markose T. Vayapallil, Father of Reem Bivin

MG Abraham, Uncle of Mathew M. George & Joyce M. George

Saramma Thomas, Sister of Sosamma Juby

Rachel Philip (7/20), Mother of David Philip

Leelamma Elias (8/4), Mother of Jessy Zachariah

Mariamamma Thomas (8/9), Mother of Susha Reji

Thankamma Abraham (9/15), Mother of Sosamma Benny and Grandmother of Cicily Cherian

Achamma Markose (9/24), Mother of Dr. Raju Markose

Mercy Mammen, Mother of Varghese Mammen

Aleykutty Luke, Sister in Law of Isac P. George

Joshua Kurian, Uncle of Steven Kurian

Memorial of Mr. Alex Daniel: Mr. Alex Daniel, a senior member of our parish passed away on August 29th after a prolonged illness. Mr. Alex Daniel and family had relocated to Texas. His service to our parish was exemplary, as a member of the Managing Committee several times and serving the parish at different capacities. His wife Susan Alex (Kunjumol), son Diboo, daughter Priya and families are in our prayers. May the Lord give him eternal memory and solace.

Our Parish: Year in Review

New Year's Celebration: January 1st- Our parish celebrated Holy Qurbana followed by the handing over of responsibilities from the outgoing Managing Committee of 2017 to the incoming Committee of 2018. The outgoing Committee was congratulated by our Vicar for a job well done in the previous year and the new Secretary and Treasurer expressed their wishes for a Blessed 2018 at our parish.

Danaha Service: January 5th- Our parish celebrated the Feast of Danaha, or Epiphany, commemorating the Baptism of our Lord. Following the Service, the Blessed water was distributed to the Faithful for their nourishment throughout the year.

Nineveh Fast: January 21st- For the three days beginning the evening of January 21st, our Church observed the Nineveh Fast in remembrance of the three days the Prophet Jonah spent in the belly of the whale. Evening Prayer was conducted each night and Holy Qurbana was celebrated on Wednesday the 24th.

Great Lent: Observance of Great Lent began on February 12th.

Family Conference Committee Visit: February 4th- Our parish was visited by members of the Diocesan Family Conference Committee, including Rev. Fr. Eby Paulose, who conducted the Holy Qurbana that day. Also visiting committee members were Dr. Robin Mathew, Joby John, John Varghese, Sunny Varghese, Shiny Raju, Marina Mathew, and Philip Mathew as well as Rajan Padiyara, Renju Padiyara and Kripaya Varghese from our own parish. The visit inaugurated the fundraising raffle, as the first ticket from our parish was purchased by Philip Varghese. In addition, Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas submitted a check for Grand Sponsorship to the Souvenir Committee, and the Church purchased a full page ad as well. The visit was a great success as \$7,000.00 was raised by raffle tickets purchased from our parish.

MGOCSM/Hadootho Bake Sale: February 11th- The MGOCSM along with our volunteers conducted a bake sale in which porrota and beef curry were sold to raise money for the Hadootho Conference, scheduled for July 2018. The bake sale successfully raised \$2,000.00 through the efforts of the many parish volunteers who cooked and served food that day.

Diocesan Council Visit: February 18th- The members of the Diocesan Council visited our parish to announce and inaugurate ticket sales for our Diocesan Metropolitan's 25th Episcopal Jubilee celebrations. Visiting Council Members were Saji Pothen, Sajan Mathew, Santosh Mathai, and the Convener of the celebrations, Dr. Philip George. George Thumpayil, member of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Managing Committee was also in attendance.

World Day of Prayer: March 3rd- The World Day of Prayer was conducted by the Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian Churches of Philadelphia. The main speaker was Mrs. Anne Cherian of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church of Delaware Valley who spoke on the theme, "All God's Creation is Very Good" (Genesis 1:1-32).

Annual Retreat: March 17th- Our annual Lenten retreat was conducted on March 18th. The Malayalam Retreat was led by Rev. Fr. Eby Paulose, Vicar of the St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church of Syracuse, New York. Our Assistant Vicar, Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas, led the English Retreat. Both sessions were well attended and concluded with a kanji lunch. The opportunity to Confess was given to all those who wished to partake.

Holy Week 2018- Our Church observed the Holy Week Services, beginning with Palm Sunday on March 25th through to Easter on April 1st. The chief guest was Rev. Dr. KM George, former Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary. Achen led the Services of Palm Sunday, Pesaha, Good Friday, and Easter. Special felicitations were given to Achen after the Easter Service.

Easter Celebrations: April 1st- Our Parish celebrated the Easter Services with our Chief Guests, Rev. Dr. K. M. George, former Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, as well as Rev. Fr. P.K. Thomas. Over 700 worshippers were in attendance for the Holy Qurbana and Resurrection Liturgy. After Service, our Vicar, Rev. Fr. M.K. Kuriakose presented Rev. Dr. K. M. George with the "Orthodox Luminary" Award for his lifetime of service to the Church. After the Services, a delicious Easter lunch was served by our food coordinators.

Bishop's Visit: April 8th- Holy Qurbana was celebrated by His Grace Abraham Mar Epiphanius, Metropolitan of the Sultan's Battery Diocese.

Annual GROW Conference: April 14th- Our parish sent delegates to the Annual GROW Conference at St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Levittown, NY. The conference was led by Rev. Fr. Vijay Thomas as well as other leaders of the ministry.

HTRC Visit: April 21st- Our Sunday School students visited the Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center in Dalton, PA, led by our Assistant Vicar, Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas.

Mother's Day Celebration: May 19th- MGOCSM hosted a special Spa Day for all the mothers. There were massages, face masks, manicures and food. Advanced sign up is requested.

Father's Day Celebrations: June 2nd - The MGOCSM hosted a cookout and Badminton Tournament for the fathers of our Parish. The winners of the tournament were Mr. David Philip and Mr. Brown Varghese. All the participants shared in fresh-made Philadelphia Cheesesteaks for lunch.

Hadootho Phillies Game: June 9th - MGOCSM sponsored a trip to see the Philadelphia Phillies at Citizens Bank Park on Saturday, June 9th. Hadootho supporters had their own seating section and were recognized as a group on the stadium big screen.

St. Thomas Day and Perunnal Celebrations: June 30th- Our Church celebrated the Feast Day of our Patron Saint, St. Thomas. The Chief Guest was Metropolitan Mathews Mar Severios of the

Kandanad West Diocese. The traditional Rasa was conducted around the Church and food was provided for more than 600 attendees.

Graduate Felicitation: July 8th- Our Church will recognize all graduates from middle school, high school, college, as well as professional and advanced degree programs. Graduates were felicitated in front of the Church and were invited to lunch with the Vicar and Assistant Vicar.

OCYM Trip to Sight and Sound: July 10th- The OCYM is conducted a trip to see the show “Jesus, the Heart of the Story” at Sight and Sound in Lancaster, PA.

Men’s Forum Trip to Ocean City, Maryland: July 14th- The Men’s Forum had a fun trip to Ocean City, Maryland. It was an enjoyable time for all.

Karuna Yard Sale: August 5th- All proceeds will be donated to cancer patients in need

AGNI: Middle School Summer Camp: August 10th-14th- Our Diocese has taken a new initiative to shape the spiritual growth of children ages 10-14. This year the first AGNI Summer camp took place at the Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center with the theme “Ablaze for the Lord.”

Talmeedo Men's Retreat at Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center: August 15th-18th

Annual Church Picnic: August 18th- Our annual picnic was attended by over 250 people at Tamanend Park in Bucks County. Our very capable volunteers grilled a barbecue feast for all. Members of all ages participated in the sports and games. Special thanks goes out to Mr. GM Panicker for planning the events.

Parish Harvest Festival: October 6th - Our parish celebrated her annual Harvest Festival and Anniversary of Consecration on October 6th. Many vegetable and fruits were auctioned off and the spiritual organizations raised money through sales of clothes and baked goods. Breakfast and lunch were also sold by our food committee. The day culminated with the American auction of an Apple Watch.

Annual Marthamariam Samajam Conference: October 13th- hosted by our Parish

Diocesan Sunday School Talent Competition and Show: October 27th- hosted by our Parish

Episcopal Jubilee Banquet: The banquet was held at Greentree Country Club (538 Davenport Ave, New Rochelle, NY 10805). His Holiness Baselios Mar Thoma Paulose II, presided over the occasion. Over 25 of our parishioners attended.

MOCF Thanksgiving: November 22nd- The 8 Philadelphia Area Indian Orthodox Parishes jointly celebrated the Holy Qurbana with Very Rev. Fr. K.M. Mathai Cor Episcopa as the Chief

Celebrant. Our own Lisa Mariam John gave the Sermon. Traditional Thanksgiving lunch was then served to all the participants.

Christmas Caroling- Our OCYM has coordinated each weekend in December for Christmas Caroling.

Ecumenical Christmas Program- December 8th; The Philadelphia Area Malayalee Churches jointly celebrated Christmas festivities at George Washington High School in Northeast Philadelphia.

Parish Christmas Social- December 29th; Our parish conducted the annual Christmas talent program in our Parish Hall beginning at 3pm.

Sunday School Annual Report- 2018

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (St. Matthew 19:14)

A normal thought process would tell us that, those who are religious or those who know the scriptures thoroughly or at the point in time, those who listened to Jesus's teachings would have qualified for the Kingdom of God; however Jesus tells us clearly that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the children and to those who are like children. Have you wondered, why Jesus said this? Well, that is because, the kingdom of Heaven is Peace, Patience, Obedience, Love, Forgiveness, and many qualities such as these, and children are the ones, who usually possess these qualities them. As we grow older, the vices in this world cling on to us take control, on how we live our lives including our interaction with those around us. How then can we experience the Kingdom of Heaven? I would say, it is not only by listening to the word of God, or performing our duties as a Christian, rather by also knowing the will of God for our lives and living it, by being messengers of Christ in all that we do every day. Will this bring us trouble and pain, absolutely it will, but the reward is much greater than anything that has been promised to us and not just that - you will leave, your home, your work place, your school, your church or any place of your being, a little better than it was before. Spread the Love and Joy of Christ in all that you do. Challenge yourself to become a child, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Team Leads / Coordinators:

Assigned Competition: Liz Pothen

Talent Competition: Bishel Baby and Susan David

Talent Show: Milly Philip

Charity: Jessly Alex

Group Song: John P. Abraham (Binu) and Sheena Jose

Easter egg Hunt: Sheen Thomas and Team

Sunday School Office Manager: Simmy Robin

Bible Verses: Mercy Cherian

Volunteering (Ignite): Reena Susan Mathews

Bible Reading: Susan David

Website: Beena Paul

Resource Manager: Regi Mathai

OVBS: Bishel Baby

Sunday school Schedule:

Each Sunday after the Holy Qurbana and refreshments, students go to their respective general sessions. The primary grade students assemble in the Chapel, wherein the students are taught songs from the Holy liturgy by Mercy Cherian and Team. Middle school students meet in the Sunday school hall and are led by the awesome team comprising of Misha Mathai, Megha Varghese, Ebin Panicker and Daniel Thomas, into different activities that enrich the students and keep them grounded in Christian faith. High School general session is led by students in 12th grade for their MGOCCM meetings, guest speaker session, games and other knowledge sessions. The allotted time for all general sessions, is from 11.45 – 12.15 pm and classes usually end around 1.00 pm.

Sunday school Activities / Events / Exam Results:

Easter Egg Hunt (April 1st): Students from grades Lower Pre-K to Grade 4 took part in the Easter egg hunt after the Holy Qurbana on Easter Sunday. This event was led successfully by Sheen Thomas and Team. Prizes were given to kids who collected the maximum number of candy. Easter Bunny went around cheering the children and also stopping for those who wanted to take pictures with him. All the children had a very good time and as usual they now wait for the next year to enjoy the same.

Orthodox Vacation Bible School (July 26, 27, 28):

OVBS 2018 was held at our church with an attendance of approximately 250 students and included students from our church and area orthodox churches in the area. The theme was "God Molds Us" taken from Isaiah 64:8. Compared to the previous year the attendance was a

bit low, because many children had gone to India for vacation. Jinsy Matthew, Bishel Baby and Julie Cherian were the coordinators for the event this year. One of the main aspects of OVBS, apart from learning and fellowship, is collecting money for Charity. Children had raised approximately \$5,000 and the money has been donated to Thanal Veedu (A charity organization in Trivandrum, Kerala that provides food, boarding and transportation to cancer patients).

First Alphabet writing: (September 2nd):

This is one of the auspicious occasions wherein children who are beginning to learn to write are brought to the church and the first alphabet writing is initiated by our Vicars, submitting the child to God in prayer especially for all their future academic activities. I would like to thank Renu Samuel for coordinating this effort.

Diocesan Talent Competition and Show:

The talent competition and show were held on October 27st at our church, St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Unruh Avenue. Winners from Area level talent competitions including, Group song and Bible Quiz took part in this competition. Due to the efforts of Santosh Baby, our vice principal, we won the trophy for selling the maximum number of fund raising tickets. I would like to thank our managing committee including the Secretary, Steve Kurien and Treasurer, Elias Isaac for all the help and advice. A special note of Thanks to all our church volunteers and food committee, leads and their teams, including Samkutty John, Sathees Easo, Thomas Varghese, Varghese P. Abraham, Regi Mathai, Anooj Thomas, Tony Biju, Jeremy Mukadiyil and others, for all their hard work and dedication. Thanks to the Talent Program Coordinator Milly Philip and Group song coordinators, Binu and Sheena Jose for all their hard work and dedication. I would like to thank our Valiyachen and Kochachen for all their help and support in all the activities of the Sunday school.

Christmas Craft Fair (November 17th):

This is a fun time for all our Sunday school children to come together and is a pre-cursor for Christmas celebrations. Students from grades, Pre-K to 12 get an opportunity to create ornaments and have a fun time with their teachers and friends. This year, our students got to watch a movie after taking part in the activities. Thanks to Reena Mathews and her team for making this possible.

Sunday school anniversary and Christmas Program (December 29th):

The Christmas program and Sunday school anniversary were celebrated on the same day. Students are awarded prizes for the class exams and church level competitions. Students and

teachers took part in the Christmas program by singing carols and performing plays and dances. I would like to Thank Milly Philip for coordinating this event and making it a memorable one for all.

Prayer Meeting for the Graduating Class of 2018:

Parents of our 12th grade students coordinate with each other and sponsor a prayer meeting on one of the Saturdays at our church to honor the students for their participation in the Sunday school and thank God for all his mercies in their lives and also for his continued grace for the rest of their lives. A short message by our vicars reminded them that they will always be loved and remembered in our prayers and wished them the very best through all the hard work, and accomplishments that await them as they step into the world outside. I would like to thank their teachers and all the parents who made this possible.

8th Grade Charity:

Sunday school students in Grade 8 on the advice of their teacher, Reena Susan Mathews saved some money from their pocket money and bring it to their teacher at the end of the Great lent, to be given to the church charity fund. This gesture by the students instills one of the core Christian virtues of charity, especially during the time of lent.

10th Grade Charity:

Sunday school students from 10th grade collected money for charity and donated it for food to the homeless people, collected toys for tots and many other charitable deeds, they have done. I would like to appreciate their teachers, Oommen Kappil and Mohan Samuel for leading this effort.

Diocesan Talent Competition Winners:

Congratulations to the students and their class teachers.

Group #	Category / Position	Student's Name
2	English Solo Song - 3 rd	Ann Mary Sabu
4	Malayalam Elocution - 3 rd	Treena Jossy
5	Malayalam Solo Song - 1 st	Joshua Mathew

6	Malayalam Solo Song - 1 st	Steffin Manoj
7	English Solo Song - 3 rd	Shanya Alex
7	Malayalam Solo Song - 2 nd	Lisa Mariam John
7	Malayalam Elocution - 3 rd	Lisa Mariam John

Diocesan Centralized Exam Results:

Congratulations to the students and their class teachers.

Grade	Rank	Student's Name
5	4 th	Nived Philip
5	4 th	Anugraha John
10	1 st	Misha Mathai
10	10 th	Lambert Thomas
10	10 th	Megha Varghese
12	10 th	Ashish Abraham

Graduates Felicitation:

During this time our church members and/or their children in 8th Grade, High School, College, Professional courses, or have received any Professional Certification, are felicitated in the church by our Vicars who remind them of their journey ahead of them including the do's and don'ts that need to be followed as Christians. A copy of the Holy Bible is presented to them which is sponsored by the Men's forum. Since it is a special day, the graduates enjoy a special lunch with both the vicars on this day. I would like to thank the 11th grade students who helped out as MC's for this event.

Bible Verses Memorization:

This activity was added in order to ensure that our students pay attention while attending the Holy Qurbana especially the Gospel Reading. A large note pad that lists the gospel readings both incorrect and the correct one is placed in the Sunday school hallway. Students on their

way to the general sessions are asked to recollect the reading that was read during the Holy Qurbana on that day and place a check mark against it.

Volunteering (Ignite):

Students from all grades get an opportunity to pack a toiletries care packages containing, a tooth brush, soap, tooth paste, hand lotion and shampoo sachet that will be given to the homeless. Currently we are working the following organizations, Mother of Mercy which runs a soup kitchen for the homeless, and twelve baskets full, also catering to the similar category of people. Both are local to Philadelphia and the care packages are directly given to the needy. The coordinator for this activity is Reena Susan Matthews; we would like to thank her and her team for all their hard work and dedication.

Karuna:

This organization was founded by our Sunday school students in order to help cancer patients, both in India and the US. Bake sales, Dance show and Blood drives are conducted to raise money for the cause. The money collected is distributed to the needy after verification of the request. This organization is led by Bishel Baby, Jessly Alex and their team.

School supplies Project:

Our Sunday school students collected school supplies for underprivileged kids in the Philadelphia school district. The donations were initiated and delivered by Jessy Jacob. Activities such as these will help remind our children that there are kids who lack even the basic necessities in life. Usually these things are taken for granted, by our children, hopefully such activities will instill the sense of responsibility to serve the needy around them and appreciate the blessing in their lives too.

Bible Reading (Holy Qurbana):

This activity provides an opportunity for the senior grade students (from grades, 11 and 12) to read one of the Old Testament readings on a Sunday for the English Holy Qurbana. Susan David selects the students who are coached by Rev. Sujit Thomas before their reading takes place. Thank you Susan, for all your efforts.

Website Maintenance:

Beena Paul will work with the students and train them to get started on this activity.

Acknowledgements:

Sunday school cannot function smoothly without the efforts and dedication of our staff including teachers and volunteers and parents. There are many who help us throughout the year, during our activities and events. I would like to thank each and every one of you and would like to tell you that I pray for you every day. I would like to especially mention Thanks to, Robin, David, Alex and Anooj for all their help and cooperation.

Santosh, Susan and I would like to thank, each and every one of for your help, and pray that God uses your talents for him and his glory.

Our Achens, Rev. M K Kuriakose and Rev. Sujith Thomas are the wind beneath my wings. Thank you Achens !!!

Halleluiah

Binny Cherian, Santosh Baby and Susan Matthew.

MGOCSM Annual Report

Secretary: Reuben Sam

Treasurer: Carolyn Cherian

Public Relations: Shanya Alex

Community Service: Sheen Thomas

Advisor: Renju Padiyara

The Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement (MGOCSM) revolves around three major principles: Study, Worship, and Service. This year, our MGOCSM team had tried to implement these three principles through various means such as creating monthly bible studies, organizing a lenten retreat for the youth, and creating community service events.

To begin the 2018 year as usual we began with our opening meeting in January with an introduction to the changes in the way we communicate to our MGO members and how we have a structured calendar of events going forward. Our first study series event took place at the end of January with Rev Fr Sujit Achen giving us a lesson on the Sacrament of Baptism. In February our main event was a bake sale where we fundraised for one of the largest summer camps in the Philadelphia Area, Hadootho. In March, as a team we were in charge of organizing an English Lenten Retreat for the youth and it was an awesome day filled with praise and worship, a lesson given by Sujit Achen, followed by a fun skit performed by the kids. During Holy Week the MGOCSM had come together to help prepare the church for cleaning and decorating. Also during Holy Week, we had held our annual Good Friday Vigil after evening prayer which was a night filled with meditation and scripture readings led by Seminarian Predeep Chacko.

Some memorable events that MGOCSM had done together in appreciation of our parents was during Fathers' and Mothers' Day. For Mother's Day, we held a Spa Day for all the mothers and also prepared food for them. Similarly, for Father's Day, we held a Father's Day Badminton Competition where we had cooked cheesesteaks for all the fathers. A special thanks to our advisor Mr. Renju Padiyara for helping us to cook for the fathers.

As service is one aspect of MGOCSM it was important that as a team we give the youth opportunities to be active in the community. One service event that we took up was during the month of April when our MGOCSM had took part in the annual Cystic Fibrosis Walk at Citizens Bank Park. During the Thanksgiving season, the MGOCSM raised \$442 which helped us to

donate about 14 turkeys to the neighbors around the church, and 6 turkeys along with \$50 to the Living Waters United Church. Throughout the year, we had also worked closely with the Area MGOCSM in organizing small service events like a blanket drive and a clothing drive.

Our MGOCSM members were also very active when it came to setting up the church for any special events. Such events like the Christmas holiday where many of our members had come out to help decorate the sanctuary and the hallways, along with putting up the Christmas tree. For the church perunnal our MGOCSM members had also put in a great deal of effort in decorating the church for an auspicious occasion.

Along with the holidays, our MGOCSM team provided the youth with many events to allow us to come together in fellowship. We continued to have monthly bible studies, led by Fr. Sujit Thomas, also starting mid year we decided it would be best to put bible studies at the houses of our MGOCSM members. Our MGOCSM also helped to coordinate the games for the annual Church Picnic in August. In the month of October, we held our annual Harvest Festival Carnival where we had raised \$1189 for our MGOCSM. Getting closer to Thanksgiving and Christmas, we started collecting money for the Turkey Drive and asking the youth for participants for the MGO Christmas Dance.

The MGOCSM ended the year by performing a wonderful dance at the Christmas Social. A great deal of preparation and hard work went into this performance, led by Sheen Thomas, Messina Abraham, and Christina George. At the end of the year we introduced the new leadership team: Sheen Thomas, Carolyn Cherian, Shanya Alex, Neha Joseph, and Rachel Melavila. We wish the new team good luck and we pray that they be fruitful in their works for MGOCSM in the upcoming year.

MARTH MARIAM VANITHA SAMAJAM 2018

Bindu Samkutty, Secretary

“ARISE, PRAY AND SHINE”

Presenting 2018 Annual report of MMVS by thanking our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for leading us.

Regular meetings were held on every Sunday after the Holy Qurbana. Song, Bible Reading, Prayer and Bible study were included in every meeting. Around forty members from the parish attended the meetings regularly.

World Day of Prayer :

Many of our members participated in the World Day of Prayer conducted on March 3rd 2018 in St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church (STIOC) by Ecumenical Fellowship of Indian Churches in Philadelphia (EFICP).

1st Annual MMVS Retreat:

The first MMVS annual Retreat was held in HTRC from May 25th to May 27th, 2018. Five members from the parish attended the retreat.

Harvest Festival:

A stall was arranged by MMVS for Harvest Festival on October 6th 2018. Several members participated in the Harvest Festival by bringing and buying items such as sarees, salwars, and jewelry as a way to thank God.

Annual Conference:

2018 MMVS Annual Conference was held in St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Unruh Ave, Philadelphia on October 13th and was attended by 600 members from various churches. 85 members from STIOC participated in this one-day conference which was well organized. Thirty parishes participated in the Bible Quiz based on the book of Jeremiah. MMVS from St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church won second place in the Bible Quiz and won first place in the raffle ticket sale. Our special thanks are due to the quiz team and Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas who took extra effort to train our members for the Bible Quiz. MMVS members of our local area sang several songs for the Conference. They all took the pain to come for practices on several days. God Almighty showered his blessings throughout the conference.

Annual Christmas Social:

MMVS choir sang carol songs for the Annual Christmas social on December 29th, 2018. On behalf of the MMVS, I would like to thank all our members, our Vicar, Asst. Vicar and office-bearers for all their support throughout. May the Lord Almighty bless this ministry! With Prayers,
Bindu Samkutty

MENS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT -2018.

Jose Ninan, Secretary

PRAISE GOD!

“For the Word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are Being saved it is the power of God” .1 Corinthians 2;18.

Firstly, we thank God Almighty for our Wonderful Men’s Forum gathering every Sunday in the church at the Men’s Forum Hall after Holy Qurbana. On December 31, 2018 after the Holy Qurbana, Men’s Forum members gathered in the presence of our Vicar. Rev;Fr;M.K.Kuriakose and elected the following members as the office bearers for 2018.

Secretary: Mr. Jose Ninan.

Treasurer: Mr. Vakkayil Varghese Joseph.

Regular Program.

The first Men’s Forum meeting of 2018 took place on January 7, after Holy Qurbana Men’s Forum regularly meet every Sundays after Holy Qurbana to praise and worship and pray for sick and suffering. Members usually lead the Bible studies which is followed by group discussions and Q & A Sessions. As part of Men’s forum Spiritual ministry, we often visit the sick and sufferings members of our parish, either at their home or in the hospital, and prayed for their recovery. This year we visited Mr. Thomas Daniel’s son Mr. Bobin, in the Hospital and prayed for his speedy recovery. And also Mr. N. V. Thomas , at his residence to pray for his recovery.

Guest Speakers.

The following guest speakers visited our meetings and shared the Word of God, and motivated for the hopeful spiritual journey in this troubled world. We thank Rev. Fr. Alexander Kurian, Executive Director of Federal Real Property Council of the US Government. Rev. Dr. K. M. George , Former Principal, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. Dr. Philip George , Mr George Thumpayil, Diocesan Council Members for their visits to our meetings.

Annual Trip to Ocean City, Maryland.

Our One Day Annual Trip was on July 13 Saturday to Ocean City Maryland .53 Members of our parish participated in the Trip and enjoyed the fellowship, food, and sight-seeing.

One Day Retreat at Holy Transfiguration Centre.

15 of our Men’s forum Members participated in the one-day Retreat at the Holy Transfiguration Centre, Dalton, Pennsylvania. Rev. Fr. Shibu. V. Mathai was the Main Speaker for the Retreat. It was a blessed day for the participants, our Diocesan Metropolitan His Grace Zachariah Mar

Nicholovos also joined us for the Retreat. Thank you Mr. Binny Cherian for sponsoring the Travel Expenses of the Retreat.

Participation in Parish Activities.

Men's Forum participated in all of the parish events including Perunnal, Harvest Festival, Picnic, Christmas Carol etc. We presented a group song at the Christmas Social. At the parish graduation day celebrations, we handed over copies of the Holy Bible to the new graduates, thank you, Jose Ninan for sponsoring this.

Skit at the Diocesan Youth and Family Conference

We participated by presenting a skit about Christian love at the Diocesan Youth and Family Conference held at Kalahari Resorts, Poconos, PA. Thank you, Kochamma, Mrs. Bishel Baby Mrs .Liz Pothen, Dr. C. C. John , Mr. Alex Pothen , Mr. Jose. K. John , , Miss Reshma Padiyara and Master Jeremy for their participation.

Prizes to the Winners for the Complete Bible Reading within One year

Rev. Fr. Sujith Thomas, Mrs. .Mercy Panicker , Miss Cristia Shibu, and Christiana Shibu were given cash prizes for reading the Holy Bible completely within one year, Thank you Mr. Saju Paul for sponsoring the Project, this was a motivational event for the parish to read Holy Bible.

Office Bearers for 2019

We had a meeting on December 30, 2019 presided by our Vicar, Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose and elected the office bearers for 2019.

Secretary: Mr. Abraham .K. Varghese.

Treasurer: Mr. Vakkayil Varghese Joseph.

Acknowledgements:

Finally, we thank God Almighty for showering His blessings towards our ministry, for Enriching and sharing the Word of God. We thank Our Vicar, Rev. M. K. Kuriakose, Rev. Fr. Sujith Thomas, -Assistant Vicar, parish Secretary , Treasurer and Managing Committee for their whole hearted support for this year's activities . Thanks to. Dr. C. C. John , Mr. Ninan Mathai, Mr. Binny Cherian , Mr. Varghese Abraham, Mr. Shibu M. Baby, Mr. Thomaskutty Varghese, for their support and involvement, and also all our Men's Forum Members for their active participation.

May God Almighty continue to shower His power and grace abundantly on to strengthen us with Holy Spirit for completing a truthful Christian life in this world.

OCYM- 2018 Annual Report

A year has flown by for OCYM, we would like to express our humble respect and gratitude to both Rev. Fr. M.K. Kuriakose and Rev. Fr. Sujith Thomas for their support and guidance throughout this past year. Likewise, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of our new members, along with a note of appreciation towards our standing members for all their cooperation and support this past year.

In the summer we coordinated a trip to Sight and Sound theater in Lancaster to watch the Jesus show. We held our 2019 OCYM election under the supervision of Kuriakose Achen and the elected officials for the year 2019 are as follows: Sujith Thomas (Secretary), Christina Thomas (Treasure), John Abraham (VP), Joyel Manoj (Asst. Sec.) and Sandeep Thomson (Asst. Tres.).

Lastly, we would like to thank God for all the blessing he has given us and pray that he continues to bless this fellowship abundantly. We humbly request for everyone's support and participation to make these activities and our OCYM a success.

Thank you. - Sujith Thomas, (Secretary)