

ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2019

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Vicar's Message

With You 23 Years!

Thanks be to God Almighty for allowing me to serve an amazing community of Orthodox believers in Philadelphia for the past 23 years, beginning from February, 1996. Towards the end of 1995 His Grace Mar Barnabas of blessed memory and I came to Philadelphia to meet the 28-strong parish named St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church. Two meetings were held discussing what should be the future of the parish. Already the St. Thomas Christian Center owned by its Board of Trustees had locked down the church building on Mascher Street for about three months following a dispute. Of the 40 families in the parish, 28 of them stayed with the parish and started worship on February 18, 1996 at Cardinal Dougherty High School. Negotiations were held with the Board of Trustees of St. Thomas Christian Center and the parish authorities to settle the matter by a simple formula: The parish will purchase the St. Thomas Christian Center so that the mortgage on the building owned by the Christian Center can be taken over by the parish and thus the building will belong to the parish. Due to various factors that I would not note here, the negotiations failed, and the



parish could not reoccupy the church building owned by the St. Thomas Christian Center again. Naturally, there was a lot of frustration in my mind and in the mind of the parishioners. On Sunday, February 18, 1996, in the General Body, I appealed to the people that we must continue as the St. Thomas Malankara Orthodox Church with a renewed attitude of love and unity with due respect for others who disagree with us. (Incidentally we changed our name to St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church in 2004 because of a parallel St. Thomas that functioned in the City; there was a lot of confusion in Harrisburg in keeping the records of two incorporations with the same name. I thank the parishioners who showed the courage to change the name

even though we kept our history back to 1976.)

Even though I was very disappointed, I trusted in the Lord who can guide us through disappointments. Now when I look back it was a great divine providence that we were not able to negotiate to reoccupy the St. Thomas Christian Center or purchase it. Because the parish members in unison agreed and stood with me in all parish activities prayerfully, God rewarded us greatly as we proceeded. I learned a spiritual lesson more clearly and firmly that adversities should not haggard us at all. Trust in the guiding power of the Holy Spirit, obey the Lord in all matters, and lead the people in the path of Christ: He will bring us to the right condition. Success is not the work of one person but that of a group of people who are willing to trust in the guidance of the Lord. Ultimately, glory belongs to the Lord. It was because of our willingness to take the adversity in a positive way and march forward with determination and trust in God's guidance that we became a blessed community. I don't use the word 'success' in any spiritual situation. Success is judged at the end of a race. Our race is continuing. It will continue until the Lord comes. We are successfully running but we have a long way to go. I hope that all of you will be one in mind in order to run this race that the Lord has entrusted.

His Grace Pathrose Mar Osthathios

On February 2nd I remember His Grace Pathrose Mar Osthathios, one of the few

bishops that made a lasting influence in me. Not because he is a bishop but because he was a great model. Many people want to speak about exemplary people but do not want to follow them. I tried to follow some ideals from some of the bishops of our Church, including Mar Osthathios. Being a friend of the poor and the needy, His Grace spent all of his life for them. There is nothing more satisfying than sharing our riches with the needy. Luxury is the mark of our times. His Grace was an ordinary human being who traveled on the public transport even when he was given a car to travel. He sold the car and gave the money to the poor. He never saved any money for himself. He did not have an expensive aramana or other luxurious lifestyles. He wanted to identify himself with the common people. He was not afraid to travel with the ordinary people. The Spirit of Christ was in him. Maybe when we compare the lifestyle of today's leadership, we hang our heads in shame as we see that luxury is their mark of image. Is there hardly anyone who has the Spirit of Christ? Maybe it is not the fashion of the times. But, I believe Jesus Christ is for yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Jesus's teaching will not die even when his so-called followers desert him and use His name for their existence, luxury, and authority. It is no wonder why we lost our witness today. May the life of Mar Osthathios inspire us and our posterity.

Lovingly, Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

From Treasurer's Desk:

Thank You for those who already gave the Annual Membership. Also Thank You for those who have signed up using the convenience of ACH monthly payments. For those who wish to sign up for ACH monthly payments, please contact Treasurer.

Our pride, Our Church, has been growing many thanks to God's for his blessing. This growth and also the aging of the building has needed us to immediately initiate many maintenance and improvement projects. Some of the work have already started (e.g. Parking Lot). We also need to work on fixing the Water Leakage and Seepage issues (mainly Roof Maintenance). We need help from the Church Member Donations to successfully complete the works. The Church requests you to give your contribution at the earliest. This could be done as a single installment or multiple. Also those who want to pay using ACH, please contact the treasurer.

Wishing you a very happy February.

With Best Regards,

Treasurer's Office

From Secretary's Desk:

Parking Lot Work in Progress



Dear All,

With utmost humility, I am thanking God for completing the month of January. God's grace allowed us to come together, worship Him, and partake in the Holy Qurbana during this past month.

Although we had extreme weather conditions, like snow, freezing rain, and a polar vortex, we initiated many major and minor projects in our

Parking Lot Work in Progress



parish, including new office space for the Assistant Vicar, parking lots, etc. Presently, we have more than 150 designated parking spots for our parish; by completing the new parking

lots (one in the back side of our parish and the other main one at the leased space from PECO) we will be adding 60 more parking spaces to our parish facility. This will significantly ease the burden of our members to find parking on Sundays. Many thanks to our Achens for their prayers and support, and a group of selfless volunteers who worked hard, and is still working hard for this project under the leadership of Mr. John Panicker. In addition to this, the vibrant team of the maintenance and upkeep committee, under the leadership of Mr. Paul John, Mr. Anooj Thomas, and Mr. John Panicker, is working tirelessly coordinating all the projects, including maintenance work, to bring our church facility up to par.

New Ice Machine: I would like to thank those few members, including an 8-year old child, who donated money for replacing our old and worn-out ice machine.

For Spiritual upliftment, we have initiated many activities this year.

Through **Sunday School** we have initiated the “Complete reading of the Holy Bible in one Year.” Thanking Sunday school ministry for taking this initiative. **OCYM** has initiated visiting our church families and

helping the needy. **MGOCSM, KARUNA,** and **GROW** kicked off their fundraising programs by selling t-shirts and sweat shirts. **MMS** and **Men's Forum** have already started their regular charity work and house visits this year.

Remembering our family members whose loved ones went on to be with Lord. **Very Rev. Aprem Ramban**, Mylapra Ashram and Younger brother of Mrs. Wincy Joseph's Father; **Mrs. Saramma Kuriakose**, Grandmother of Mrs. Sherin Anish; **Mrs. Thankamma David**, Mother of Mrs. Santhamma Yohannan Mathe; **Mrs. Sosamma Varghese**, grandmother of Mr. Anoop J. George; **Mrs. Aleyamma John**, mother of Beena Sabu Abraham. On behalf of

the parish, we extend our condolences and prayers to all bereaving family members.

Thanking our beloved Kuriakose Achen, Sujit Achen, and their families for their sacrificial service to our parish. Thanking all our family members for your prayers and support. Please continue to uphold our Achens and all members in your prayers.

With prayers,

Santhosh Baby
Parish Secretary, 2019

FEBRUARY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Paul C. John	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew A.P. George	Feb 15
Mr. & Mrs. Koshy Daniel	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Mathew N. K.	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Thankachan P Daniel	Feb 1	Mr. & Mrs. Ponnachen Geevarghese	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Nelson O. Panicker	Feb 3	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas M. Vaidyan	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Rajan C. Padiyara	Feb 3	Mr. & Mrs. Simon Cheeran Ittikuru	Feb 16
Mr. & Mrs. Jacob M Zachariah	Feb 4	Mr. & Mrs. Maliyil M Philip	Feb 19
Mr. & Mrs. Anto G Panicker	Feb 5	Mr. & Mrs. Bivin Varghese Pulivelil	Feb 22
Mr. & Mrs. George Varghese	Feb 5	Mr. & Mrs. Abraham Varghese	Feb 22
Mr. & Mrs. N. K. Thomas	Feb 6	Mr. & Mrs. George Joseph	Feb 25
Mr. & Mrs. Cherian V. V.	Feb 7		
Mr. & Mrs. Ron Philip	Feb 8		
Mr. & Mrs. Robin Philip	Feb 11		
Mr. & Mrs. Jiju Alex	Feb 12		
Mr. & Mrs. Anil George Panicker	Feb 12		
Mr. & Mrs. Oommen Geevarghese Panicker	Feb 12		
Mr. & Mrs. Aji P Abraham	Feb 15		



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Anil T. Babu	Feb 1	Rachel J. Jacob	Feb 12	Alia Ann Bivin	Feb 18
Sajan Benny	Feb 1	Tiby Raju	Feb 12	Teena Aliza Prince	Feb 18
Saramma Thomas	Feb 1	Aarianna John	Feb 13	Jayden Mathew	Feb 19
Jessly Alex	Feb 1	Alexander Mathew	Feb 13	Manju Abraham	Feb 20
Roy Philip	Feb 2	Paul C John	Feb 13	Jenny Raj	Feb 20
Varghese Baby	Feb 2	Alex P Symon	Feb 13	Robin P. Montharayil	Feb 20
Binu Thankachan	Feb 2	Shibu Thomas	Feb 14	Philip Melavila	Feb 20
Edwin Saji	Feb 3	Jibin K Alex	Feb 14	Nathania Susan George	Feb 20
Manu Varghese	Feb 3	Justin K Alex	Feb 14	Norah Mary Daniel	Feb 20
Simmy Aneena Jacob	Feb 4	Jiju Alex	Feb 14	Sophy Mathew	Feb 21
Reeja George	Feb 4			Mariamamma Cherian	Feb 21
Jeena Jacob	Feb 5			Jacob P Chacko	Feb 21
Joelyne Jacob	Feb 5			Leelamma Rajan	Feb 22
Sunil Raj Poovannal	Feb 6			Subi Mathew	Feb 22
Steffin Manoj	Feb 7			Zarah Mary Kurian	Feb 24
Reni Nelson	Feb 7	Saramma Varghese	Feb 14	Ashok Mathew Koshy	Feb 24
Sheena Vaidian	Feb 7	Ezekiel Raju	Feb 15	Binny Cherian	Feb 25
Noel Stephen	Feb 8	Raji Aji	Feb 15	Chinnamma Philip	Feb 25
Vinod Jacob	Feb 8	David Roy	Feb 16	Bindu Thomas	Feb 25
Jaime M George	Feb 9	Jimmy Thomas	Feb 16	Cherian Varghese	Feb 26
Grace John	Feb 9	George Varughese	Feb 17	Jaisy John	Feb 27
Gibson Thomas George	Feb 10	Mary Daniel	Feb 17	Joby George	Feb 27
Aleyamma Varghese	Feb 10	Omana Abraham	Feb 17	Sally Thomas	Feb 27
Melissa Alice Abraham	Feb 10	Abraham John	Feb 17	Leon Lynnson	Feb 27
Cristia Susan Shibu	Feb 10	Milly Philip	Feb 17	Susan Abraham George	Feb 28
Evana V John	Feb 10	Maya Kappil	Feb 18		



Sunday School News

*Submitted by Binny Cherian, Principal
(Tel.: 914.708.7981, Email: cbinny@gmail.com)*

St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church (STIOC) Sunday School Calendar for 2019					
S.No.	Event	Venue	Date and Time	Coordinator/s	Registration Fee / Deadline
1	SS Teachers Fellowship	Residence of Mrs. & Mr. Binny Cherian	Feb. 23rd (Sat.) 10.00 am – 1 pm	Binny Cherian	
2	Easter Egg Hunt	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	April 21 st (Sun.) @ 12.30 pm	TBD	
3	Training for Assigned Competition (Essay)	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	
3	Training for Quiz Competition	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	Deepa Thomas Kochamma	
4	Sunday School trip	TBD	TBD	TBD	
5	Church level Assigned Competitions	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	April 28 th (Sun.) @ 12.00 pm	Anu Lajy and Liz Pothen	
6	Church level preliminary Bible Quiz Competition	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	Deepa Thomas Kochamma	
7	Area Level Assigned Competitions	TBD	May 26 th (Sun.) 1.30 – 2.30 pm	TBD	May 13th (Sun.) \$5 per person. (fully subsidized by STIOC)
8	Diocesan SS General Assembly	St. Johns Orthodox Church Orangeburg, NY	June 8 th (Sun.) 9.00 am – 12.00 pm	Aju Tharian	
9	Centralized Exam (Grade 12)	TBD	June 2 nd (Sun.) 9.00 am – 12.00 pm		
10	Alternate Date for Centralized Exam (Grade 12)	TBD	TBD	TBD	
11	Prayer Meeting (SS students, Grade 12)	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	
12	Summer Blood Drive & Bake Sale (Karuna team)	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	Jessly and Bishel	
13	Centralized Exam (Grades, 5, 8, 10 & TTC)	TBD	June 30 th (Sun.) 9.00 am – 12.00 pm	TBD	
14	Sunday School Break		June 30 th – Aug 30 th		
15	School Supplies Project	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	
16	New Graduates Felicitation	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	

S.No.	Event	Venue	Date and Time	Coordinator/s	Registration Fee / Deadline
17	Summer class for Sunday school students	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	
18	OVBS	TBD	July 25,26,27 @9.00 am – 12.00 pm	TBD	Reg. Deadline is TBD
19	Agni Middle School Camp	HTRC			
20	Teachers Meeting	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	
21	Sunday School Re-opens after the summer break	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	Sep 1 st 2019	TBD	
22	First Alphabet Writing	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	
23	Alternate Date for Centralized Exam (Grades, 5.8.10 & TTC)	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	TBD	
24	Church Level Talent Competitions (incl. Bible Quiz)	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	Sep.08. @9.00 am – 12.00 pm		
25	Area level Talent Competitions	TBD	Sep.28 th @9.00 am – 12.00 pm		Sep. 16th, \$10 per participant (fully subsidized by STIOC)
26	Diocesan Talent Competitions (incl. Bible Quiz)	TBD	TBD		Reg. Deadline is Oct.13
27	Area Teachers Fellowship	TBD	Nov. 16		
28	Craft fair and Movie night	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	Nov. 16	Susan Mathews	
29	Ecumenical Christmas Program	George Washington HS	TBD	Milly Philip	
30	Church, Christmas Social	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD	Milly Philip	
31	Sunday school Anniversary	St. Thomas IOC, Unruh Ave.,	TBD		

Please remember to pray for the Sunday school Children and Staff in your daily prayer