

# ST. THOMAS INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

1009 UNRUH AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19111

Phone: (215) 342 1500 Fax: (215) 342 2700 [www.stthomasphiladelphia.org](http://www.stthomasphiladelphia.org)

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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### Vicar's Message

#### THE ADVENT SEASON

Christmas season is generally known as the Advent Season. The word "advent" means arrival. This word can be attached to any other events to indicate the beginning or arrival of something. However, this word is generally or popularly used for the 'arrival of the Messiah' season or Christmas. Thus, we call the lent season prior to Christmas as advent lent. All Christian groups take this season seriously and have special observances and programs leading to Christmas. In the Orthodox, Catholic, or High Anglican traditions this observance coincides with special dietary restriction and spiritual discipline of prayer, meditation, and spiritual exercise. We, the Orthodox, try our best to observe this lent.

The advent season is truly a meaningful time for those who take Jesus seriously. Even though the birth of Jesus took place 2000 years ago, the birth of Jesus is a daily experience to the believer. Every day when we wake up, we can have that experience of



Jesus born into our life with divine power boiling in us. Or, before we go to bed the same experience of the immediate presence of the Lord we can invoke. During this lent people give special attention to all kinds of lent-related observances like prayer, meditation, and dietary restrictions with special songs that impart joy. Events like caroling, decorating, and sharing gifts adds to our joy and finally we attend the worship on Christmas Day with special songs that remind us the nostalgic experience of the Lord's coming. Thus, the advent season becomes a time of joyful tidings.

Christmas is indeed the greatest festival of the world crossing over to all religions and

cultures because of its business value. I am sometimes amused that the atheistic world, the non-Christian world, and the secular world are working so hard preparing materials for the celebration of the birth of Christ! If only they knew who this Jesus was! All that they know is that Jesus brings in money through this celebration. Without losing any money, without any effort to affirm faith in a God, one can earn something. The modern world has learned how to navigate through life without God in their life. The significance of Christmas does not go beyond the material realm.

In fact, what does Jesus do while looking at all these celebrations? Even though this world is full of evil, hatred, and violence, He stands next to us with a smile, pleading for love and care. Whether it is a grand or humble celebration, Jesus would like to come into it and accept it with a loving

smile and affectionate pat. He makes all our celebrations a highly potential opportunity to love. He doesn't need an invitation to our parties or celebrations if they are all done in love. He is there. He does not make conditions. If so, He would not have come down to us and become one like us. We don't have the qualification to host Him but He still comes to us out of His endless love. His promise is, "Lo I am with you to the end of the world." Thus, our Christmas becomes a real advent or arrival of Jesus into our own situations. Let us welcome Him into our life.

Lovingly,

Fr. M. K. Kuriakose, Vicar

### COVID-19 and Support System

#### **Financial Assistance to Members**

If any of our members need any assistance with food, medicine, transportation, shopping, or any other needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they may contact our Achens or the Secretary. They will coordinate help. Our MC members, along with other volunteers will be available to provide any possible help.

*We are all in this together.*

#### **Contact:**

- Rev. Fr. M. K. Kuriakose: 201.681.1078
- Rev. Fr. Sujit Thomas: 516.754.0743
- Binu Mathew: 267.893.9571



## Parish Highlights from November

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### Big Offertory Day and Thanksgiving

Our Big Offertory Day and church Thanksgiving was celebrated on Sunday, November 20. The parishioners came together to worship, and thanked the Lord for all His mercies and blessings. As part of our parish tradition, Thanksgiving Offertory was collected. Catered Thanksgiving Lunch was offered to all attendees.

### Parish Meeting on November 6

A Special General Body meeting of the Parish was held on Sunday, November 6 after Holy Qurbana.

### Agenda:

1. Long term planning for our present facility considering the age and condition.
2. How to improve the involvement of our younger generation in spiritual and administrative activities of the parish and how to effectively cater to their needs.

Many members shared their views. The discussion was lively. A survey was circulated amongst the attendees to get the opinions of members about the long-term plan of our parish and for ideas for improvement.

### Craft Fair on November 19

The Sunday School craft fair was held in person on Saturday, November 19, 2022, for students in Pre-K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Spiritual Organization Updates

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### Middle School Fellowship (CAYA)

The Come As You Are (CAYA) Middle School Fellowship focuses upon instilling its main values of kindness and compassion in the students through weekly general sessions during the school year and monthly meetings throughout the year.

### Men's Forum

Men's Forum meets every Sunday. The meetings will be held in person immediately after the HQ at our church. Christian songs, Bible reading, prayer, and preaching the word of God are included in the meeting. Our achen also share valuable messages at their convenient timings. For anyone who wants to join the meeting, please contact Lukose Mathew, Secretary (267-467-4993), Vakkayil Joseph, Treasurer (267-205-

7986), or Thomas Daniel, Prayer Coordinator (267-303-1898).

### OCYM

OCYM meets every Sunday after Holy Qurbana. Our achems answer various questions from our members regarding Faith, theology, and other general topics. Please contact Joel Manoj for more information.

### Prayer Meeting on 12/31/2022 (Saturday)

On December 31, 2022 (Saturday), our parish will be organizing a prayer meeting under the auspices of Men's Forum from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM. All are requested to attend the prayer meeting. Lunch will be provided for all the attendees.

As the dawn breaks on a new year, let us give thanks to God Almighty for all his blessings showered on us during the year 2022.

Let us join together to pray and give thanks to our Lord Christ.

## Upcoming Events

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### General Body Meeting/Annual Election

A General Body meeting will be held on December 11<sup>th</sup>. All eligible members are requested to attend.

#### Agenda:

- 1) Election for the office Bearers for the year 2023
- 2) Budget for 2023
- 3) Parish Meeting Survey Results

### Karuna Blood Donation Drive

Semi-Annual Blood drive in collaboration with American Red Cross is scheduled to be held on Sunday December 18, 2022 from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm. Your donation could help save one or

more lives. Please sign up using the following link.

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=St%20Thomas%20Indian%20Orthodox%20Church>

### MGOCSM Winter Summit

The MGOCSM of the Northeast American Diocese will be hosting its annual Winter Summit from December 19 to 22, 2022 at our Holy Transfiguration Retreat Center. The Winter Summit is an annual winter conference for the college and university students of our Diocese.

This year's theme is "Man in the Mirror", based on 1 Corinthians 13:12. Early bird registration ends December 4<sup>th</sup>!

### Christmas Caroling

Under the leadership of OCYM, we are planning for caroling this year. Caroling will be held on Saturday, December 10 and Saturday, December 17.

### Christmas Social on December 24<sup>th</sup>

Our Christmas social is scheduled for Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup> from 2pm to 6:30pm followed by evening prayer and dinner. More details will be provided in the following weeks.

## Charity News

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### Karuna Charity

Karuna Charities, through fundraising events and donations, raise money to support cancer patients in India and here in the US. If you know of patients that need support, please contact Karuna Coordinators.

### Family Welfare Fund

Our parish has a Family Welfare Fund, set up to support our parish members who might be going through tough times financially. Members are requested to contact our Vicar to discuss their financial needs confidentially.

## Fasts & Feasts

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
Dec 1	Nativity Fast Begins
Dec 4	Children's Day/Birth of John the Baptist
Dec 11	Memory of HG Mathews Mar Barnabas Metropolitan
Dec 25	Christmas/Nativity Fast ends

## Parish Calendar

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
Dec 3	Ecumenical Christmas
Dec 10, Dec 17	Christmas Caroling by OCYM
Dec 19-22	MGOCSM Winter Summit
Dec 24	Christmas Celebration

## Member Announcements

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### Life Events Announcements

Do you have a special day that you would like to announce, like a milestone wedding anniversary (25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> etc.) or a birthday (50<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup>, 80<sup>th</sup> etc.)? If you would like to, please inform the Secretary in advance. Please remember that even though our parish database includes birthday and wedding day, it doesn't include the year of birth or marriage. Unless you notify the Secretary or Clergy, they wouldn't know milestone events.

## Death Announcements

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- ❖ **Mr. Mr. Raju Varghese (79)**, a member of St. Mary's Orthodox (Devereaux) and brother of Mr. Thomaskutty Varghese (Membership # 306), passed away in Philadelphia on November 21. Funeral was held in Philadelphia on December 1. Please pray for the departed soul and bereaving family. On behalf of our Parish, I express our condolences and prayers.
- ❖ **Mr. P. A. Koshy (77)**, father of Mrs. Reny Sajan Varghese (Membership # 237), passed away in Kerala on November 25. Funeral took place at his home parish on November 27.

*On behalf of the parish, we express our deepest condolences to the bereaving families. Let us pray for the departed souls and for the bereaving families. May our heavenly Father grant peace and comfort that surpasses human wisdom and understanding.*

### Memorial Prayer List

As you know, members can submit names of departed loved ones that needs to be included on the Memorial Prayer List. You probably have given the names of your departed ones in the past. However, please note that our church doesn't have a system to save such names with dates or automatically track and decide on which Sunday the name should be included on the prayer list. You need to enter the name on the Memorial Prayer list kept in the church office. Note: We do have a master list of departed faithful that we keep for remembering them on the Sunday of the departed faithful, which is a week before the Holy Lent begins. This list has names only no dates.



## DECEMBER WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Roy Philip Chacko	7-Dec	Mr. & Mrs. Regi Mathai	27-Dec
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas P Oommen	8-Dec	Mr. & Mrs. Biju Mathews	28-Dec
Mr. & Mrs. Shibu M Baby	11-Dec	Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Zachariah	29-Dec
Mr. & Mrs. Saji George	12-Dec	Mr. & Mrs. Paul John	29-Dec
Mr. & Mrs. Philip T Varghese	25-Dec	Mr. & Mrs. Ashok Paulose	30-Dec
Mr. & Mrs. Sajan Thomas	26-Dec	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Daniel	31-Dec
Mr. & Mrs. John Panicker	27-Dec		



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Annamma Jacob	1-Dec	Matt P. Geevarghese	14-Dec	Litty John	23-Dec
Noel Cherian	1-Dec	N K Thomas	15-Dec	Aleyamma Chacko	23-Dec
Santhamma Mathew	1-Dec	Jovan P Shinu	16-Dec	Joel Jins	24-Dec
Anchu Raju	1-Dec	Hannah Mary Varghese	16-Dec	Allie Samuel	25-Dec
Ruby George	2-Dec	Geena Regi Jacob	17-Dec	Shiji Daji	25-Dec
Simy Lynnon	2-Dec	Lins John	17-Dec	Annamma Samuel	26-Dec
Evana Susan Joseph	3-Dec	Jolly Varughese	19-Dec	Deanah Jubee	27-Dec
Josiah Thomas	4-Dec	Noel Mathew	19-Dec	Bindu Abraham	27-Dec
Diya Mariam Saji	5-Dec	Shaji Abraham	19-Dec	Lesley T Reji	27-Dec
Praveen P. Geevarghese	6-Dec			Neha Ann Koshy	27-Dec
Arisha Kumar	7-Dec			Noah Philip Cherian	28-Dec
Samaira Binoy	7-Dec			Jose K John	28-Dec
Renu Susan Raju	7-Dec	Merin Rajan	20-Dec	Hannah Anto Panicker	29-Dec
Mini Philip	8-Dec	Joe Zachariah	20-Dec	Anaya Anna Bivin	30-Dec
Philip T Varghese	8-Dec	Susan Chacko	20-Dec	Mathew Jacob	30-Dec
Thomas Zachariah	8-Dec	Omana Varghese	20-Dec	Sam Jacob Kurisinmoottil	31-Dec
Elizabeth Chacko	10-Dec	Saly Thomas	20-Dec	Jobin Regi	31-Dec
Susan Paulose	10-Dec	Merlin Rajan	21-Dec	Rajesh Geevarghese	31-Dec
Sosamma Cherian	11-Dec	Riya Dony	22-Dec	Luke Matthew Cherian	31-Dec
Saju Paul	12-Dec	Thomas Varghese	22-Dec		
Sheeba P Anooj	12-Dec	Samantha Philip	22-Dec		
Rosamma George	14-Dec	Hannah Varghese	22-Dec		





# Sunday School News

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

## One Year Bible Reading Schedule - December

Date	I	II	III
<i>December 1</i>	Esther 9-10	Jonah 1	Hebrews 6-7
<i>December 2</i>	Job 1-2	Jonah 2-3	Hebrews 8-9
<i>December 3</i>	Job 3-4	Jonah 4	Hebrews 10
<i>December 4</i>	Job 5	Micah 1	Hebrews 11
<i>December 5</i>	Job 6-7	Micah 2	Hebrews 12
<i>December 6</i>	Job 8	Micah 3-4	Hebrews 13
<i>December 7</i>	Job 9	Micah 5	James 1
<i>December 8</i>	Job 10	Micah 6	James 2
<i>December 9</i>	Job 11	Micah 7	James 3-4
<i>December 10</i>	Job 12	Nahum 1-2	James 5
<i>December 11</i>	Job 13	Nahum 3	1 Peter 1
<i>December 12</i>	Job 14	Hab. 1	1 Peter 2
<i>December 13</i>	Job 15	Hab. 2	1 Peter 3-5
<i>December 14</i>	Job 16-17	Hab. 3	2 Peter 1-2
<i>December 15</i>	Job 18-19	Zeph. 1	2 Peter 3
<i>December 16</i>	Job 20	Zeph. 2	1 John 1-2
<i>December 17</i>	Job 21	Zeph. 3	1 John 3-4
<i>December 18</i>	Job 22	Haggai 1-2	1 John 5
<i>December 19</i>	Job 23-24	Zeph. 1	2 John-3 John
<i>December 20</i>	Job 25-27	Zeph. 2-3	Jude
<i>December 21</i>	Job 28	Zeph. 4-5	Rev. 1-2
<i>December 22</i>	Job 29-30	Zeph. 6-7	Rev. 3-4
<i>December 23</i>	Job 31-32	Zeph. 8	Rev. 5-6
<i>December 24</i>	Job 33	Zeph. 9	Rev. 7-9
<i>December 25</i>	Job 34	Zeph. 10	Rev. 10-11
<i>December 26</i>	Job 35-36	Zeph. 11	Rev. 12-13
<i>December 27</i>	Job 37	Zeph. 12	Rev. 14
<i>December 28</i>	Job 38	Zeph. 13	Rev. 15-16
<i>December 29</i>	Job 39	Mal. 1	Rev. 17-18
<i>December 30</i>	Job 40	Mal. 2	Rev. 19-20
<i>December 31</i>	Job 41-42	Mal. 3-4	Rev. 21-22

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