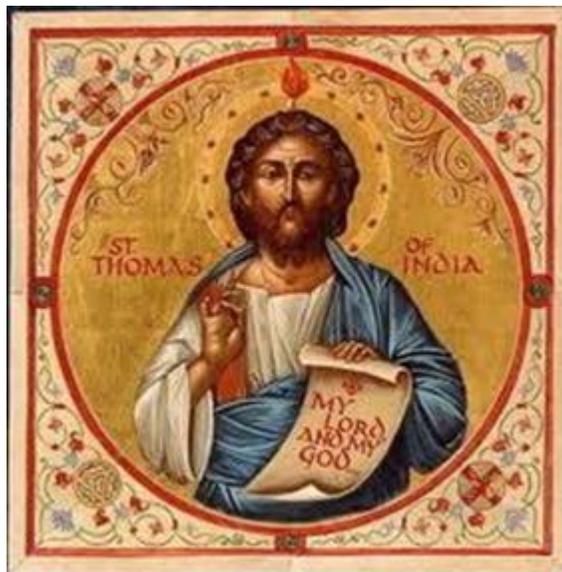




**St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church
Greater Washington
estd. 1965**



**47th Annual Report
2012**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2012

With thanks to Lord God Almighty, on behalf of the Managing Committee, I respectfully submit the 47th Annual Report 2012 of our Parish

We continued to meet the primary mission of the church, to meet the spiritual necessities of our community in the area. We continued pursuing our vision, notwithstanding the worldly challenges facing us, reflecting Faith, Hope and Charity at all times.

The most humble and valuable contribution of this forty seven year old parish was the blessing to provide our church facility for the Centenary Celebrations of the re-establishment of the Catholicate in India. For the first time in the history of the Washington DC and Baltimore metropolitan area, all the five parishes congregated together on Sunday September 9, 2012 at STIOC, GW to celebrate the Centenary Holy Qurbana .Over 600 people attended. This was followed by a Public Meeting grand luncheon, and cultural programs.

An important event in winter was, our Beloved Metropolitan H.G, Mathews Mar Barnabas of blessed memory entering into eternal sleep on December 5, 2012. Although Barnabas Thirumeni lived in India during his last days , it was sorrowing to hear that we wouldn't be able to see him here anymore. This parish is deeply indebted for his shepherding us and helping us during our times of need. Thirumeni's remains rest at Pampady dayara in Kerala. Our vicar who started his spiritual journey with Thirumeni left for India to participate in the burial and subsequent services.

One of the founder members of our parish Mr. Thomas Varghese entered his heavenly Abode on November 13, 2012. The parish deeply misses his vibrant presence and thank Almighty God for his life and contributions to our parish.

Through our spiritual organizations we organized spiritual activities such as Lenten retreats, Holy Confession and sermons by spiritual fathers and clergy. I particularly take this opportunity to thank our Vicar Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel for his sincere interests and efforts in providing the leadership and guidance and the managing committee team members in providing such services during the year.

The verse from Ephesians 2:21-22: *"In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."*, continues to inspire us.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the Secretary again for this parish.
George P. Thomas
Hon. Secretary

Vicar

Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel continued to serve as the Vicar of our parish, to almost 60 families. With his dedicated service, his teachings through the sermons on Sundays and obligatory days provided enlightenment for our Orthodox way of life. The congregation especially the youth, was able to understand it and found a guide in Fr. Andrew. The Spiritual organizations, through his able and proper guidance, reached higher levels in their spiritual understanding. Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel's leadership with spirituality and service continuous to inspire the members..

Acolytes

The members of the Church acknowledge the dedicated service of all the acolytes, namely T. P. Varghese, Isaac John, Eapen Varghese, Binu Abraham, Nithin George, Ajesh John, Keith Thomas, Ashwin John, Alex Johnson, Alex Johnny Steve Sam, and Stephen Sam during the past year.

Holy Qurbana & Prayers

Holy Qurbana was celebrated every Sunday and obligatory days in the church calendar. English Qurbana was offered on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, and Malayalam Qurbana on the remaining Sundays. This year we had visiting clergy. H G. Mathews Mar Timotheos, Metropolitan Europe and Africa, Rev, Fr. Joseph George, Pathanapuram, who conducted Shubkono service, Fr. Labby Panackamattam, Fr. P.C. Thomas , Very Rev. Yuhannan Ramban, ,

Special Church Events

Nineveh Lent:

The three day Nineveh Lenten Retreat was held in our Church from February 14th through the 16th. Rev. Fr. Laby George Panackamattom gave the devotional address on all three days. Rev. Fr. P.C. Thomas, who was present on the last day, offered evening prayers. The retreat nourished and renewed all spiritually and brought the members closer to the path of repentance.

Great Lent:

The great Lent began with the Shubkono Service. Pethrutha feast was conducted. Like in the past, we conducted Lenten prayers in the homes of members in different areas groups. Mid-Lent Holy Qurbana was conducted. Lenten retreat was conducted with time for Holy confession.. The Feast of Annunciation was celebrated on March 25th. The Feasts of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday were conducted. Services on Good Friday began early. This year the services were conducted both in English and Malayalam. Fr. Andrew conducted the Canonical hour prayers which were held during passion week from 4:30 am even with handful of individuals.

Church Perunal:

The Perunal of our Church was held on New Sunday. Fr. Andrew Daniel celebrated the Holy Qurbana with liturgical services for St. Thomas the Apostle of India. This date coincides with

the day St. Thomas declared his joy 'My Lord and My God'.

Obligatory Feasts of the Church:

Holy Qurbana was conducted for the following feasts:

(1)Denaha (Epiphany) – (2) Feast of Annunciation to St. Mary – (3) Feast of St. George – (4) Feast of Ascension) (5) Feast of Pentecost (6) Golden Friday (Swarna Velliyazhcha) (7) Feast of St. Thomas - July 3, 2011 (8) Feast of Nativity of St. Mary (9) Sleetbha Perunal – (9) St. Gregorios Day (10) Christmas

Catholicate Day:

The parish celebrated the 100th year of the re-establishment of the Catholicate Day . After the Holy Qurbana. Mr. Rajan Yohanam, Association representative spoke about the significance of Catholicate Day. The Catholicate Flag was hoisted by Fr. Andrew Daniel, followed by Catholicate Mangalam and recitation of the Catholicate Pledge led by Hon. Secretary George P. Thomas. Sweets were distributed after the ceremony.

Church Picnic:

The annual Church picnic was held on .August 25th 2012, at the Algonkian Regional Park, in Sterling, VA.

FOCUS Members -

Young members below 40 years of age led by Mr. Suresh Varghese met occasionally.

Thanksgiving:

Thanksgiving was celebrated with Holy Qurbana on November 22, 2012. The Morning Prayer began at 9.00 am. Followed by Holy Qurbana, Thanksgiving Lunch was served after Holy Qurbana,

Christmas Caroling:

Caroling started on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. We heralded the 'Good News;' by covering individual homes as well as to groups of members meeting at a common place in the Maryland and Virginia areas. However we had to shorten the carol service as a mark of respect to our departed Metropolitan on December 5, 2012. The parish thanks the efforts of Mr. Oommen Koshy for co-ordinating the Carol services.

Annual Padayatra (pilgrimage walk):

In co-operations with the parishors of St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Silver Spring about 30 individuals from our parish participated in the pilgrim walk from our church to St. Gregorios parish on occasion of the feast of St. Gregorios of Parumla on Saturday November 3, 2012. The walk was solemn with chanting of hymns and petitions. After reaching St. Gregorios church, concluding prayers were conducted, the pilgrims were blessed by Rev. Fr. Labby George. Members shared in the breakfast.

Ecumenical Christmas Program:

Our Church participated in the Ecumenical Council of Kerala Christians Christmas programs. For Easter, Sunday School children participated in the quiz competition. For Christmas MMVS members presented a chorus song. Thanks to Mrs Mini John for providing the training. The program was later televised on the Asianet USA news channel.

Christmas Program on Christmas Eve:

This year during the mourning season for the passing away of our Beloved Barnabas Thirumeni, and as a mark of respect to the departed father, we did not conduct any celebratory functions during the Christmas season.

Christmas Day:

Holy Qurbana was Celebrated as the feast of Eldo with great solemnity. The cold weather did not deter us to perform the traditional 'burning of the old' on December 25, 2012. The Christmas day service started at 7.45 a.m. with the remaining Kauma of the midnight prayer followed by Morning Prayer. Immediately after the Morning Prayer the "Theejwala Shushroosha" was held in the fellowship hall. Holy Qurbana was offered by Rev. Fr. Alexander Kurien. A traditional Christmas feast was served after the Service.

New Year:

New Year Holy Qurbana Service was held in the morning on January 1, 2012. Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel offered the Holy Qurbana and wished all members a very Happy New Year. Many members attended the Service despite the very cold weather that morning.

Church Finance Team:

Following up on the decision of the previous year, the Finance Committee recommended the refinance of our mortgage. We approached, M&T Bank, Eagle bank, and BB& T Bank. The summary of the offers were: from M&T Bank, Eagle Bank, BB&T Bank and Revere Bank, which was distributed to all members. The offers ranged from 4.378% amortized over 15 years to 5.29% amortized over 7/20 years, with varying conditions.

Principal Reduction Fund:

Many members continued to support the cause for reducing the principal loan amount of the Church. This year we contributed \$15,000 to the principal, through the MC food service and other donations. Our loan balance as of December 31, 2012 is \$968,000.

Hall Rental

The fellowship hall continued to be rented during the year on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings. There were single day rentals also based on our restrictions on rental timings. An fee based agreement was made to Mr. Mathew C. Paul for attending and managing rental activities. We attempted to have a long term Sunday rental arrangement with another Eastern Orthodox church which did not materialize due to the difficulty posed in sharing the parking lot on Sunday morning..

Church Maintenance and Cleaning:

Members continued their support to keep the sanctuary clean every Sunday. Fellowship Hall and closet cleaning activities were also done as scheduled. Apart from that the

building engineering and maintenance work was attended to regularly. Thanks to Thomas K. Varghese and Sam Mattammel.

Onam Celebration:

The Church celebrated Onam with a grand “Onamsadhya” on Sunday September 2, 2012. The Sadhya was served on banana leaves and all members participated in the rich vegetarian meal. Women, men and children wore the traditional Onam attire and made the occasion very colorful.

Church Spiritual Organizations

Sunday School:

Sunday School Annual Report

St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church has a very active Sunday school in which we have 42 students from Pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. We also have 14 very active and dedicated teachers. We thank God Almighty for his blessings and guidance for the children in the past year. The Sunday School classes are conducted for an hour in the main sanctuary. We begun our Sunday School program with e a 15 minutes of general session and Bible Quiz session on St. Mathew. The students .were then dispersed to their respective classes. We . were able to complete the syllabus for the year.

Events:

Sunday School Luncheon: the SS teachers had arranged lunch for fund raising and we were able to collect \$791.00 which was used to cover the cost of transportation for Sight and sounds theater.

Sight and Sounds PA Trip:

We arranged a trip to Sight and Sounds PA to watch “Jonah” on June 15th 2012. A 52 seater bus was arranged and as mentioned above the fund raised from the luncheon was used to cover the cost of transportation and the remaining cost was from generous donations from members of our church.

Assigned Competition:

Assigned competition was conducted for our church participants on June 30th. The first and second place winners from our church were sent to the Area coordinator for further evaluation to select area 6 winners from all the five churches.

OVBS:

OVBS was conducted in St Thomas Baltimore on August 15,16 and 17th and we had a good representation from our church. The Theme this year was “We are one in Christ” Galatians 3:28. Under the leadership of Ms. Shiney Sam .almost all of our Sunday School students participated. There were about 100 students from the five Orthodox Churches. in the Washington D.C. area during the three days. Children were able to learn new songs, attend Bible classes, play games, and perform arts and crafts. Several volunteers dedicated their time to teach and manage the many children who participated. Some members graciously sponsored food for the children, clergy, and parents for the three days. Special thanks go to our vicar, Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel, the coordinators, and all volunteers, who dedicated a lot of time to accomplish the 2012 OVBS.

Area 6 Centralized Exams:

Centralized exam for grades 5th, 8th, 10th, and TTC were conducted at our church on for Diocese level Area 6 on June 24th 2012. Our church was the center for Area 6. Anna Abraham grade 5, got third place at the diocesan level. Special thanks to Thomas Varghese (Gigi) and Anu Abraham for guiding our 5th and 10th grade students.

Talent Competitions:

We had a great participation from our church for the Area 6 talent competition held at St Thomas Damascus. Quiz team consisted of Annu Suresh, Nidhi Mathew and Stephen Sam . The Quiz team received second place at the area level competition. Hope James, Bennet Varghese received first and second place in English solo song and elocution and represented our church at the diocesan level competition which was held in Philadelphia. Annu Suresh also received second place for Solo song and elocution. Hope James received first place at the diocesan level for English solo song.

Sunday School Anniversary:

Sunday School anniversary was conducted on September 2nd, 2012 all the students and teachers were recognized for their hard work. The parish thanks the tireless services of Ms. Shiney Sam in providing leadership as Headmistress of the Sunday School and Amy Abraham as Asst. Headmistress.

Graduates:

The following students Nikita Thomas, Bijoy Thomas and Ashwin John graduated from High School. Anju Johnson achieved BS degree. The parish recognizes and congratulates their academic achievements, and prays that God Almighty guide them in their career in His way.

Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam

Orthodox is not the name you call yourself; Orthodox is a life you live, that was the

exemplary role model experienced by our Martha Mariam Vanitha Samajam (MMVS) members. Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit, as said by Christ many of our ladies were blessed to conduct bible study classes. It was a great year filled with many events for MMS members to show their involvement in every church activity. We helped in easing the financial burden of our parish by fundraising through food sales, auctions and annual subscription. We made the needed arrangements for visiting clergy regarding their stay and food.

We subscribed to the Diocese membership, Charity and Samajam day fees. Funds were collected worth \$250 by selling lottery tickets. The Diocesan

Young Women's Conference was held on April 21st at New York. A good number of our delegates travelled to New York attended in two vans. The 2012 MMVS Annual Conference on October 20th was attended by eight members at St. George Orthodox Church of Westchester, NY. Our Vicar Fr. Andrew Daniel was the main speaker for the conference. His thoughts on "Putting on the whole Armor of God" (Eph 6: 14-18) was very insightful and highly appreciated by all participants. He who kneels before God can stand before anyone is the greatest lesson learned by us throughout the journey. The parish thanks Shiji Jacob for her leadership to the Martha Vanitha Samajam.

Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Students Movement (MGOCSM):

Our Church's MGOCSM has grown in numbers and spiritually with Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel at the helm. In Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel's inaugural year as spiritual leader, Rev. Fr. Daniel challenged the group to affect the community through various activities and to branch out to other churches in the Northeast Diocese. Fr. Daniel's guidance and leadership helped many of MGOCSM's members to achieve a lot.

Monthly Prayer Meetings:

Prayer meetings were held regularly. In the meetings members got together at one member's house under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel. In the meetings there were Bible readings and interactive sessions, songs, and evening prayer. Thanks to Mr. Bixa Kurian who was the prayer meeting coordinator, for arranging the monthly prayer meetings.

Parish Administration

General Body Meetings:

There were five General Body Meetings held during the year. They were held Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel presided as the Chair in all the meetings. The procedure established last year's to have members who wanted to speak to raise their hands and when invited to come up to the microphone was followed. Half yearly accounts were presented and approved. The General Body meeting to elect new office bearers for 2013 was held on November 11, 2011.

Managing Committee Meetings:

There were 11 Managing Committee Meetings held during the year. Many important

decisions pertaining to Church matters including Church administration and spiritual activities were communicated and discussed and approved during these meetings. Rev. Fr. Andrew Daniel presided as the Chair in all the meetings.

Transparency:

The managing committee continued the practice of posting all approved minutes of all General Body and Managing Committee meetings as well as other documents necessary during the year in the secure website to provide transparency to all in the administration

Visiting Clergy:

The parish was blessed by the visit of the following clergy:

H.G. Thomas Mar Thimotheos ,Metropolitan of UK, Europe and Africa.
Very Rev. Yuhannon Ramban, former vicar and presently at Theological Seminary, Kottayam
Rev. Fr. O.Thomas, Malankara Orthodox Church Sunday School Director
Rev. Fr. Joseph George (Pathanapuram)
Rev. Fr. Labby George, Vicar St. Gregorios Indian Orthodox church, Silver Spring
Rev. Fr. P.C.Thomas, Prof. St. Thomas Orthodox Theological Seminary
Rev Fr. Shibu Daniel, Vicar, St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Dover.
Rev. Fr. Alexander Kurien
Rev. Dn. Abey George
Shinto David ,Seminarian
Philemon Abraham, Seminarian

Birth:

Sheetal to Tiju and Priya
Arman Mathew to John and SibyJoel Markose to Jaison and Ashley
Shanti Abraham to Binu and Anu Abraham

Baptism:

The following children became God's own through the Holy Sacrament of Baptism:
Shanthy Abraham , daughter of Binu and Anu Abraham

Obituary:

H.G. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios Senior Metropolitan, Niranam
H.G. Paulose Mar Pachomios of blessed memory, Metropolitan Mavelikara Diocese

Mr. Thomas Varghese, member of our parish
Mr. P.K.Mathew, father of Mathew C. Paul and Leelama Varghese
Mrs. Annakutty Mathew, mother of Gigi Mathew
Annamma Abraham, grandmother of Ansa Lukose
Mr. P.V.George , former member of the parish

Church Building Updates

Parking Lot Pavement:

Members approved a design to construct a 1000 sq. ft patio area at the fellowship hall entrance of the church building. It was voluntarily financed by several members. Many

young and older members including their family members labored day and night for about four months to raise the much appreciated pavestone structure. The landscape was redesigned, and members travelled daily to water the greens. Excess funds from this venture was donated to the parish. Special thanks to Mr. Sam Mattammel and James John for the magnificent work.

North East American Diocese Events

Family and Youth Conference:

Parish members supported the activities Family and Youth Conference which were held from July 11 to July 14, Honor's Haven Resort and Spa, 1195 Arrowhead Road , Ellenville, NY 12428. The theme of the family conference was Witnessing Orthodoxy In the 21st Century The keynote speakers were Mrs.Elizabeth Joy, past secretary of Council for World Missions and H.G. Zachariah Mar Nicholovos. The parish also supported the needs of the Diocese as was required.

Hurricane Recovery Support

Support to Sandy Hurricane victims. We joined with the NE American Diocese in prayer and petition to help alleviate the sufferings of the victims of hurricane Sandy. Our parish offered special prayers for strength to the victims especially the sister parish St. George Orthodox Church, Staten Island. Members collected \$2,000/- which was handed over to St. George parish

By the Grace of God Almighty and the communion of the Saints we passed another Church Year.



Approved by General Body, June 2013.