



THE MAR THOMA CHURCH OTTAWA

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2014

INTRODUCTION:

2014 started off peacefully, but the mysterious disappearance of the Malaysia airlines MH370 with 239 passengers including crew on March 8th, jolted the world in to a state of disbelief and sorrow. As the world grappled to understand the tragedy, other events that exposed racial divides among fellow human beings consumed our focus. The tensions and the barbaric decline of human behavior that emerged from the war-torn regions under the false pretense of religious values raised our fears of a future occupied with more violence and terrorism.

Then on October 22nd, the brutal murder of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo at the National War Memorial followed by an attack at our Parliament's Centre Block genuinely shook the nation and shuddered the very foundations of the peace that we so dearly enjoyed in this great city of Ottawa.

As a parish located in the capital region of this great nation, let us take a moment to remember the valor of the men and women of our armed forces and first responders who dedicate and sacrifice their lives to protect the freedom that we enjoy every day. Let us be thankful to God Almighty for keeping us in good health and good spirits throughout the year, even in the midst of all these difficulties.

WORSHIP SERVICES AND PRAYER MEETINGS:

During the reporting year there were six Holy Communion services including a special service held on Jan 12 officiated by our Diocesan Episcopa. There were two prayer meetings this year. This year Parish welcomed our new Vicar Rev. Mathew Baby who took responsibilities of the Parishes in Milton, Ottawa and Montreal in May 2014. Rev. Baby visited Ottawa with wife Mrs. Merilyn Mathew and their two children Daniel and Hanna. Achen celebrated Holy Communion service on Sunday August 17, 2014.

After the service, congregation extended a warm welcome to Achen and family to Ottawa Parish. We look forward to Achen's leadership and spiritual guidance in the coming years.

Congregation would like to thank our lay-leaders Dr. Anil Varghese & Mr. John Kompithra for their dedicated service during worship services & our refreshment coordinators Mrs. Leela Varki & Mrs. Susan Kuruvilla for organizing the after service receptions. Our thanks to St. Mark's Anglican Church for allowing us to use their Sanctuary and other facilities for conducting worship services and other programs throughout the year.

FAREWELL TO REV. VARGHESE K. ABRAHAM

Our vicar Rev. Varghese K. Abraham provided pastoral service to the Parish for three years until his final service in Ottawa on April 06, 2014. After the Holy Qurbana service, Parish held a farewell meeting to extend our sincere thanks to the Vicar and his family for their dedicated service to this parish over the last three years. Vice President Mrs. Aleyamma Samuel, Lay Leader Dr. Anil Varghese and Secretary Mr. Reji Alex delivered messages of gratitude to Achen and family for their service. Mrs. Susmitha Pothen and Mrs. Suja Mani conveyed their compliments through beautiful songs.

Treasurer Ms. Susan Thomas presented a monetary gift to Achen during the program. Congregation will always remember the extra efforts and the sacrifices Achen and family had made, even in the wake of personal sorrows, to accommodate the needs of this Parish on all scheduled events, as much as possible during his tenure. The event concluded with a catered dinner.

EPISCOPAL VISIT & FIRST COMMUNION:

Diocesan Episcopa Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius visited the Ottawa MarThoma Church on Jan 12, 2014. Thirumeni celebrated Holy Communion service assisted by Parish Vicar Rev. Varghese K. Abraham, and lay leaders Dr. Anil Varughese and Mr. John Kompithra. The service was held at St. Thomas the Apostle Anglican Church.

Three young members of our Church - Jacob Zachariah, Isaac Alex & Daniel Alex - received their First Communion from Thirumeni. After the communion service, Thirumeni greeted and welcomed the communicants to the Church by giving them a Holy Bible and a lighted candle, which represented that they are being spiritually lighted to lighten the world around them.

During the sermon Thirumeni highlighted the significance of first communion and emphasized the role of family members and extended church family members in providing a nourishing environment for the communicants in their spiritual growth.

After the service, Diocesan Assembly member Dr. John Zachariah and Secretary Mr. Reji Alex delivered speeches welcoming Thirumeni to the Church and thanking him for the visit. The service was attended by Rev. Patrick Stephens, the Assistant curate of St. Thomas The Apostle Anglican Church, members of the Ottawa MarThoma Church and members of the St. Thomas Orthodox Church Ottawa. Thirumeni and Achen also attended a fellowship dinner hosted by the first communicant's families.

DR. ANIL VARGHESE & FAMILY

Members of the parish extends our special thanks to Dr. Anil Varghese and family who moved to Hamilton on August 11, 2014. Anil, Chandrima and their children Ayush and Adarsh have been active members of our church ever since they moved to Ottawa. As

one of the Lay leaders Anil served the Church as a member of our Executive committee for many years and have been an integral part of our Christmas Choir group and in all other activities. On behalf of the Church, I like to take this opportunity to express our genuine appreciation for their dedication and service to this Parish. We pray that God's blessings and guidance continue to be always upon them.

ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING:

Annual General Body meeting was held on February 09, 2014, at St. Mark's Anglican Church. Rev. Varghese K. Abraham presided over the meeting. Secretary Mr. Reji Alex presented the Annual Report. Treasurer Ms. Susan Thomas presented the annual accounts for the year 2013 and the budget for the year 2014. Report and accounts were unanimously approved.

A General body meeting held on October 19, 2014 elected the following members as the office bearers for the year 2015, with unanimous approval.

❖ Vice-President	: Mrs. Aleyamma Samuel
❖ Secretary	: Mr. Reji Alex
❖ Treasurer	: Ms. Susan Thomas
❖ Accountant	: Dr. John Zachariah
❖ Lay-leader(s)	: Mr. John Kompithra & Mr. Jay Abraham
❖ Auditors	: Mr. Mani P. Mani & Mrs. Asha Alex

Mrs. Susha Zachariah remains as the Diocesan Assembly member. Mrs. Susan Kuruvilla & Mrs. Annie George Madhu volunteered to be the Refreshment coordinators. Congregation would like to extend their sincere thanks to all those who serve the Church in various positions, for their continued commitment and service.

HOUSE WARMING

There were two house warming prayer services this year. On August 16, 2014 the residence of Mr. John Kompithra and Mrs. Jothi John and on October 18, 2014 the residence of Mr. K. Varghese and Mrs. Annie Varghese were consecrated by Rev. Mathew Baby. We extend our congratulations to both families on the acquisition of their new homes and we pray that they continue to enjoy much blessings in their new abode.

ECUMENICAL CHRISTMAS CAROL PROGRAM:

The 12th Annual Ecumenical Christmas program was held on Saturday December 13, 2014, at St. Mark's Anglican Church. With the immense support from members of the St. Thomas Orthodox Church and the Ottawa Malayali Catholic Community, an audience of more than 230 people enjoyed an evening of fellowship & Carol songs. Our sincere thanks to, Mr. Aneesh John, Mr. Anto John and the members of both churches for their continued support to make these events a success. Mr. George Joseph and Mr. Beenu

Rajan provided exceptional support with the audio system and we sincerely appreciate their efforts. Thanks to Mr. Regi Roy for the videography of the programs as well.

Coconut Lagoon catered the Christmas Dinner after the program. The congregation appreciates the significant amount of effort that was provided by Mrs. Leela Varki, Mrs. Susan Kuruvilla, Mrs. Aleyamma Samuel and the many volunteers, to organize the Christmas Dinner. This year also Mrs. Susmitha Pothen, Mr. Mathew Pothen and Mrs. Suja Mani worked hard to organize the MarThoma adult and Children's choir. Thanks to Mr. Mathew Thomas and Mrs. Mary Thomas for opening their doors many times for the Adult choir practices.

FINANCE:

With an opening balance of \$10,706.33 and total revenue of \$27,929.41, we closed the accounts of the reporting year with a balance of \$10,847.15 carried over to 2015.

On Jun 01, 2014, Parish received a letter from Diocese showing a total of \$7698.58 in arrears owing to the Diocese for the years 2008-2014. In response, parish informed Thirumeni and the Diocese that the Ottawa Parish has been making regular payments of CDN \$900 every year including the years 2008 to 2014, but that amount was not shown in the arrears calculation except for an amount USD \$796.74. A response received from Diocese on Nov 03, 2014 did not offer any explanation on the accounting error highlighted by the Parish.

Furthermore, a follow up message was sent to Diocese on Dec 12, 2014 with proof of payment (Bank statements, copy of 2012 Diocesan report, void cheques) for the \$900 made each year. No follow up correspondence received on the matter, during the reporting year.

DONATIONS:

This year a portion of the total revenue was distributed as charitable donations to assist agencies and individuals in need. Agencies that received our assistance include Carmel Mandiram and a special financial assistance was extended to Rev. Joy N. George who is ailing in health and struggling to care for his disabled child. We extend our sincere gratitude to all those who supported these organizations and also for your generous cooperation during the special collections made this year.

QURBANA SERVICE SCHEDULE ON SUNDAYS:

During the first visit to Parish, Rev. Mathew Baby had informed the parish that as per a new direction issued by the Diocesan Bishop in favor of St. Mathews Church, Milton, there may be a requirement for the Ottawa Church to move the Qurbana services from Sundays to Saturdays.

The Annual General Body held on Oct 19, 2014, discussed this spontaneous decision taken by the Bishop without any consultation with Ottawa Parish and directed the

Committee to send a letter to Thirumeni detailing the difficulties that Ottawa parish will face if the services were moved to Saturdays. The letter was mailed to the Diocesan office on Nov 01, 2014. A reply email was received from Thirumeni on Nov 03, 2014 stating that Sunday services for Ottawa parish cannot be continued for now, by the Vicar.

On Dec 12, 2014, Parish received a kalpana from Diocesan Bishop further affirming the same, notwithstanding the concerns raised by the members of the Ottawa Parish. Ensuing discussions and further correspondence will be required in the following year.

CONCLUSION:

Let us thank God for granting us another peaceful year as a Parish to enjoy the few times that we gather together as a family to worship God and share fellowship in an atmosphere of nostalgic delight. As we look forward to the New Year, although we are faced with uncertainties that would disturb the tranquility of this arrangement that we have enjoyed for more than three decades, let us pray that God's guidance be upon everyone involved in the decisions about the future of this Parish.

May God grant us the opportunity to continue our worship in the New Year and remain as a beacon that is "Lighted to Lighten", in this beautiful city.

Mr. Reji Alex

Sd/-
Secretary.

Feb 22, 2015