



# THE MAR THOMA CHURCH OTTAWA

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2015

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The members of the Mar Thoma Church Ottawa are thankful to God for all the blessings that He had bestowed upon us over the reporting year.

### **WORSHIP SERVICES AND PRAYER MEETINGS:**

During the reporting year there were four Holy Communion services and two Prayer services held at the Church. Additionally there were two evening prayer meetings held at the residence of parish members. Rev. Mathew Baby conducted three of the Holy Communion services and the fourth service was offered by Rev. Shibu Samuel of the Canadian MarThoma Church, Markham. We extend our sincere gratitude to Rev. Samuel and family for visiting us on August 16, 2015 to offer his service to this parish.

Congregation would like to thank Mrs. Susmitha Pothan for delivering messages during the prayer meetings held at the Church. Also thanks to our lay-leaders Mr. John Kompithra & Mr. Mani P. Mani who lead us in the prayer services and for their continued dedication to assist in the Qurbana services. We also extend our gratitude to our refreshment coordinators Mrs. Susan Kuruvilla & Mrs. Bina Madhu as well as all the other church members who participate in arranging the after service receptions.

Our sincere thanks to the Vicar and President of the Parish Rev. Mathew M. Baby and his family for their service and commitment to this Parish.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING:**

Annual General Body meeting was held on February 22, 2015, at St. Mark's Anglican Church. Meeting was conducted in absentia of the Vicar and President Rev. Mathew Baby as he could not come to Ottawa on Sunday due to a kalpana from Diocesan Bishop dated Dec 11, 2014. Vice President Mrs. Aleyamma Samuel presided over the meeting.

Secretary Mr. Reji Alex presented the Annual Report. Treasurer Ms. Susan Thomas presented the annual accounts for the year 2014 and the budget for the year 2015. Report and accounts were unanimously approved.

A General body meeting held on October 18, 2015 elected the following members as the office bearers for the year 2016, with unanimous approval.

❖ Vice-President	: Mrs. Aleyamma Samuel
❖ Secretary	: Mr. Reji Alex
❖ Treasurer	: Mr. Mathew Thomas
❖ Accountant	: Dr. John Zachariah
❖ Lay-leader(s)	: Mr. John Kompithra, Mr. Thomas George
❖ Auditors	: Mr. K. Varghese, Mr. Mani P. Mani

Mrs. Susha Zachariah will continue as the Diocesan Assembly member. Mrs. Susan Kuruvilla & Mrs. Annie George Madhu offered their service as the Refreshment coordinators. Thanks to all those who serve the Church in various positions, for their continued commitment and service.

### **IN MEMORIAM**

This year we suffered the passing of four individuals who were close to the Parish and significant to the leadership of the Mar Thoma Church.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilos Suffragan Metropolita was called for eternal rest on December 27, 2015. Thirumeni started his service in the Ministry as a deacon of the MarThoma church 1966, consecrated as the Episcopa in 1980 and became the Suffragan Metropolita in 2004. Thirumeni was an outstanding visionary with genuine concern for the sick and suffering. Thirumeni initiated a number of service projects such as “Karuthal” which provides solace to thousands of cancer patients and their families. The ecofriendly “Tharangam Mission Action Center” on the shores of River Pampa with an amphitheatre facing the river speaks volumes about Thirumeni’s vision. As nationally and internationally renowned leader of various ecumenical movements, he had served as the President of National Missionary Society of India, Bible Society of India, World Mission of Ecumenical Movement Trust of all Episcopal Churches in Kerala, executive committee member of the Christian conference of Asia and Executive and Central Committee member of the World Council of Churches. Zacharias Thirumeni was the backbone in the establishment of the Diocese of North American & Europe with its Aramana in Philadelphia. We had the privilege to welcome Thirumeni to our parish several times while he was the Diocesan Bishop of North America and Europe.

With deep sadness the Mar Thoma Church Ottawa joins the multitude of MarThomites and believers all over the world in the mourning of Thirumeni’s passing.

On Feb 27, 2015 Mr. Mathai V. Avira (82), beloved father of Mr. Mathew Varghese passed away at Burlington. Mr. Avira, who was affectionately known as Appachen among the church members was a regular presence in all our parish events over the last few years that he lived in Ottawa. Appachen will always be remembered for his gentle smile and for his humble nature. A number of grieving friends attended the funeral that was held on March 04, 2015 at Brampton.

On June 29, 2015 Mr. K.V Thomas (83) beloved husband of Mrs. Chinnamma Thomas and loving father of Lilian and Daisy passed away in Ottawa. Mr. Thomas was a long term member of this Parish and the Ottawa community. Mr. Thomas was very active during the early stages of the formation of this parish in Ottawa. We express our sincere appreciation for the support that he had rendered in the formation of this parish.

On Oct 29, 2015, Rev. Dr. P.K Mathew (78), vicar of the St. Thomas Orthodox Church and a dear friend of the MarThoma Church members was called to eternal rest in Toronto. Achen served the Orthodox parishes in Toronto, Montreal, Kingston and Ottawa as a wonderful shepherd for more than 40 years. Mathew Achen always welcomed everyone to his worship services in a manner that transcended beyond his strong values as an Orthodox Priest. Mathew Achen will be sadly missed by all of the Parish members and the void that he left behind will be difficult to fill.

St. Thomas Orthodox church organized a memorial prayer service on November 01, 2015 at St. Bernard Parish, Ottawa. Secretary Mr. Reji Alex delivered words of condolence on behalf of the Mar Thoma Church Ottawa. Achen's funeral service was held on November 03, 2015 in Montreal. A number of MarThoma church members and community friends attended the funeral service.

On behalf of the Mar Thoma Church Ottawa, I wish to extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved family members of all the departed souls. A flower bouquet and/ or donations to charities were delivered for the funeral services, on behalf of the Parish.

#### **MEETING WITH THE EPISCOPA REGARDING QURBANA SERVICE ON SUNDAYS:**

During the General Body meeting held on Oct 19, 2014, our Vicar Rev. Mathew Baby informed the Parish that, as per direction from the Diocesan Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa, Achen will no longer be available on Sundays to conduct Qurbana service at Mar Thoma Church Ottawa, as he is required to provide pastoral service on all Sundays at St. Mathews Mar Thoma Church. Therefore we were requested to move our Qurbana services to Saturday afternoon. Our Parish did not receive any direct official Kalpanas or other communique regarding this matter, from the Diocesan office.

General Body discussed this matter during that meeting and as per direction from the general body, through email correspondence the Committee communicated the concerns raised by parish members to Thirumeni. However, despite the multiple ensuing email correspondences, Thirumeni did not offer any alternative options other than to move the services to Saturday.

Due to the unavailability of local Churches on Saturdays and due to various other reasons, Parish was left with no options but to cancel the following scheduled services

in the months of February and April of 2015. During that period the Executive Committee members held a teleconference meeting with parish Vicar to explain the concerns regarding this change in service schedule that had been in place for decades since the inception of the Parish. Achen advised the Committee to invite Thirumeni to Ottawa to discuss this matter in person.

An invitation was extended to the Diocesan Bishop to visit the Ottawa parish during one of Thirumeni's scheduled visit to St. Mathews Church in April 2015. However, Thirumeni declined the invitation due to prior commitment. Instead, as per Thirumeni's invitation, a parish delegation went to Milton on April 18, 2015 to meet Thirumeni in person. Mr. Mathew Thomas, Mr. Reji Alex, Ms. Susan Thomas from Ottawa and Dr. Anil Varghese from Hamilton met with Thirumeni and Rev. Mathew Baby at St. Mathews Mar Thoma Church, Milton.

The delegates were able to clearly express the dilemma that Mar Thoma Church Ottawa is facing in regards to the availability of a Church and other issues regarding Thirumeni's direction to move the services permanently to Saturdays. The details of the meeting were submitted as a report to the General Body.

In conclusion, Thirumeni reiterated the reasons for this change, but directed parish Vicar to make all arrangements possible to continue the Sunday services in Ottawa, by facilitating other Achens to conduct the service whenever Rev. Baby cannot come to Ottawa due to scheduling conflicts.

#### **ECUMENICAL CHRISTMAS CAROL PROGRAM:**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Ecumenical Christmas program was held on Saturday December 12, 2015. Over the years the Ecumenical Carol program has become a sought after event among the Ottawa Church families attracting crowds that exceeded the capacity of the St. Marks Anglican Church. Therefore, this year the program was held at St. Thomas The Apostle Anglican Church. With the enthusiastic support from members of the St. Thomas Orthodox Church and the Ottawa Malayali Catholic Community, an evening of harmony and enjoyment was presented to everyone. Our sincere thanks to Secretaries and the members of both churches for their continued support to make these events a success. Thanks to Mr. Regi Roy for capturing the video of the programs and to Mr. Wingson Karavally for the guidance with the audio service. Our special thanks to Mrs. Susmitha Pothan, Mr. Mathew Pothan and Mrs. Suja Mani for organizing the MarThoma adult choir and Children's choir.

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, Mr. Thomas George and the many volunteers who assisted in the Dinner arrangement.

**FINANCE:**

With an opening balance of \$10,847.15 and total revenue of \$24,699.09, we closed the accounts of the reporting year with a balance of \$13,966.53 carried forward to 2016.

On Dec 12, 2014 Parish send a letter to Diocese requesting clarification on the yearly contribution of \$900 made by the parish since 2008, that has not been accurately accounted for in the arrears statement issued by the Diocesan office on June 01, 2014. The letter included proof of payment such as Bank statements, copy of 2012 Diocesan report and void cheques. To date, parish has not received any clarification on that subject.

As a result, during the General Body meeting held on October 18, 2015, it was unanimously decided that the arrears issue be placed on hold with no further action to be taken until an updated statement is received from the Diocesan office. Furthermore, in response to the 2015 dues statement issued by the Diocesan office requesting an yearly contribution of \$2557 USD, general body conceded to sending \$1250 CDN for the year 2015.

**DONATIONS:**

This year a portion of the total revenue was distributed as charitable donations to two agencies. Agencies that received our assistance include Carmel Mandiram and United Way Ottawa.

**CONCLUSION:**

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to St. Mark's Anglican Church and the St. Thomas the Apostle Anglican church for allowing us to use their Sanctuary and other facilities for conducting Worship services and all of our other programs throughout the year.

2015 has been an eventful year in many ways all around the world. Hardships and suffering continues to plague many parts of the world. Meanwhile, technological and social advancement is improving the lives of many as well.

Let us be thankful to God for the comfort and peace that we enjoy. May God continue to keep us all in good health and enrich our Parish to be a shining lamp "Lighted to Lighten" in this beautiful city.

Reji Alex

*Sd/-*  
Secretary.

Feb 21, 2016