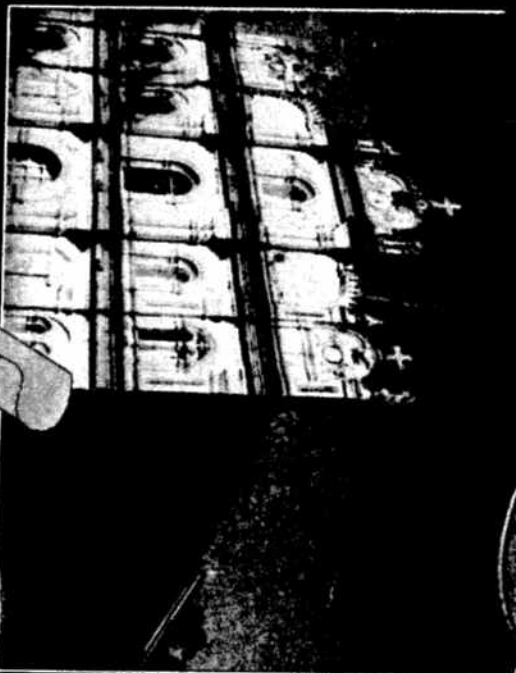


The Mar Thoma Church

Our Foundation and Vision



Sunday School Lessons

*The Mar Thoma Sunday Schools
Diocese of North America & Europe*

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History, Worship, Sacraments, Uniqueness,
Mission

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**THE MAR THOMA CHURCH
OUR FOUNDATION AND VISION
(Sunday School Lessons)**

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FOREWORD

TO THE FIRST EDITION

The Diocese of North America & Europe is a fast growing Diocese. The numerical growth compels a restructuring and a reconstituting of many facets of its life and work. The Sunday School is one of the earliest organizations with a firm foundation and an extensive network at the local and regional levels. Majority of our children attend the Sunday School and a good number of youngsters and seniors teach in the Sunday School. It is a vibrant organization with great potential and immense possibilities.

The curriculum, the syllabus, work materials, method of communication, the environment of teaching and learning, all count a lot in the process of Christian education. Great attention, care and caution need to be given in the realm of Sunday School teaching. I am glad that the Sunday School Committee has rightly understood the importance of the effect and scope of Sunday School teaching and produced a comprehensive and additional syllabus compensating the lacuna in the existing system.

At present the Sunday School classes are from Nursery to Grade 10. The Sunday School lessons are based on the Cokesbury curriculum. The Bible is the basic text. The Church is the milieu and the society is the context. Interpretation of the text to the challenges of the society in the milieu of the Church to the different levels of pupils is the contemporary task of the Sunday School. We need to go a long way to fulfil the envisioned task. The publication of *The Mar Thoma Church: What It is and What It Stands For* as an additional curriculum material serves to fulfil a long cherished goal.

Our second generation and the third generation are in our Sunday School. There are many among them who have never been to Kerala, the motherland or even capable of speaking Malayalam, the mother tongue. Though they have grown in the Mar Thoma Church, their roots have not been very deep and their shoots have not been fully assimilating the ethos of the parent Church. We cannot blame them, as we have not facilitated them to grow rooted in the history, tradition, faith, practice and the discipline of the Church in their impressionable age. The new curriculum material try to remedy the initial fault by providing information, knowledge and experience about the Church in all classes including nursery, kindergarten and Grades 1-10.

The curriculum framers deserve appreciation for their in-depth understanding and evaluation of the existing reality and requirements on the one side and preparing a well suited lesson plan for all classes in different levels drawing materials from the history, tradition, life and work of the modern Mar Thoma Church. A serious and regular study of the new materials would relate tightly any member of the Diaspora with the parent Church, whose tradition and history go back to the Apostolic times. Of course many books that throw light in these areas are available in the Church, this publication gives a comprehensive view of the present Church and its mission to students of various levels of learning.

The content of the book and its division into five topics and five units make it simple and comprehensible. Chapter 1 'A Glimpse of India and Kerala' provides the cultural context of the Church and its believers. It may not be easily understood by our youngsters who are born and brought up in the American cultural background. A visit India program, audio-video presentations, constant guidance through the visible and invisible aspects of culture and their proper interpretation by teachers and parents are inevitable demands of this curriculum.

The Mar Thoma Church has become very ecumenical to its core in recent times. As founding member of the W.C.C. and active participant of C.C.A., N.C.C., K.C.C., Nilackal Ecumenical Trust, Bible Society, N.M.S. and numerous other ecumenical organizations, our ecumenical history and contributions are worth studying. In every country we have held hands with other Churches and communions in giving expressions to visible unity. Our ecumenical vision drives us often to join action for mission. The nature and vision of our ecumenical leadership has to be properly imparted to the growing generation so that they may think and act ecumenically in the context of their living situations.

Worship is central to Church life. Liturgy means the work of the people, which in turn means believers are to follow a liturgical life all through. Sunday worship has to be followed by Monday witness - a liturgy after liturgy. Faith and practice of the Church are embedded and embodied in the worship and transmitted to generations through the continuation of worship. The liturgy keeps the Church alive and everlasting. A deeper understanding of what we believe and what we do is essential for the acceptance of a religion of heart, head and hand. The depth of worship is understood only by worshipping. Liturgical exercises in Sunday Schools are inseparable components of a study of worship.

Sacraments are means of grace and provision of Christian maturity towards the image of God. Sacraments bind us to the body of Christ, liberate us from the clutches of sin, and lead us to salvation. The Mystery behind every sacrament is not fully comprehensible. Grace experienced yet inexplicable is roaming around every sacrament. Reason and faith join to understand and accept the presence and power of God in the act of sacrament. We wholly hand over and God fully takes over in the celebration of any sacrament. The recipient becomes the abode of blessing and the imparter rejoice in his accomplishment in sacrament. God and man meet with each other, offer mutually, and enjoy together in sacrament. It is

an expression of an experience and has to be comprehended in that way.

Values have relevance only in relationships. Values are derived from our relationship with God and driven towards our relationship with humankind and other creation. Church upholds the value of life irrespective of its holder. Love, justice, equality, forgiveness, reverence, honesty, chastity etc., gain higher and noble place when importance is given to values. Values point toward quality rather than quantity. As upholder of higher values the Church has its uniqueness in the society. Study of qualitative persons and acts of values would be able to inspire the young generation to grow in those lines and levels.

Mission is the imperative for ministry. Continuation of the three fold ministry of Christ teaching, preaching and healing is entrusted with the Church. Diversified ministry is the need of the time. Mission to contexts of poverty, oppression, exploitation, homelessness, pain, sorrow, struggle and suffering may perhaps take Church to unpleasant and uncomfortable situations. But it is right there Christ appeared and fulfilled his ministry. So a right perspective of mission and ministry- is a prerequisite for a meaningful membership of the Church. Innovation from tradition, which we find in John the Baptist (Zachariah's son, instead of becoming a priest becomes a prophet) is what is to be seen in every growing child.

Sunday School learning should radically change a person to set his face towards God and the world, for the divine voice and the human action. I believe the new book *The Mar Thoma Church: What It is and what it Stands For* will enable and equip our younger generation to grow within the Church and to witness in the outside community.

Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophylus

FOREWORD

TO THE REVISED SECOND EDITION

The Mar Thoma Church: What It Is and What It Stands For (the title of the first edition published in 1998) has been an additional text for the Sunday School classes in the Diocese for the last three years. This book has served a dire need of our children by providing them the minimum basic information on the Mar Thoma Church. As members of a fast-growing church, our children need to know more about the church and update their knowledge. The revised edition, I hope, will serve that purpose.

The Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision, this revised edition, has made substantial modifications. There are more materials, clarity and coherence in the new book. Eastern Churches usually give emphasis for Patristic Studies. Somehow we lost this practice. I am glad that our Sunday School is introducing the life and work of many leaders who selflessly and sincerely labored with God to build His church and they include bishops, clergy, laity, women, evangelists and others. A study of their lives can touch other lives.

Methods of teaching must be changed. With the dawn of the new communication technology Sunday Schools should adapt audio-visual aids, video, cartoons, dramatization, games, modeling and other teaching strategies to communicate gospel truth to the children. Our teachers need to be well equipped.

Our Sunday Schools should have a program and provision to improve teaching with necessary resource materials. More than anything else we need teachers of quality who appeal

to the head and the heart. I congratulate the Diocesan Sunday School, especially Dr. T. M. Thomas, for updating the curriculum to meet the contemporary challenges

April 2001

With Blessings,
Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophilus

INTRODUCTION

It is gratifying to work for a second edition of the book, *THE MAR THOMA CHURCH: OUR FOUNDATION AND VISION* within three years after the publication of the first edition in Summer 1998. This is a "revised" edition, making some significant modifications in the previous one, incorporating the suggestions and ideas received from teachers, parents and others. The important changes are the following:

New Features of the Revised Edition: 1. The lessons to be taught in one class (grade) are brought together in one place as one chapter, with five lessons included in each chapter. In the previous edition materials for each class were placed under different chapters and topics. 2. In some classes the materials are completely replaced with new lessons and the best example is Grade Ten. In other classes some modifications are made. 3. Improvements are made in most lessons for "Teaching Strategies and Activities", one of the subheadings that appear in each lesson. 4. Several leaders of the Mar Thoma Church who contributed to its growth with evangelical emphasis, in the last nearly two hundred years, are discussed in different lessons. They include Metropolitan (Abraham Mar Thoma, Juhanon Mar Thoma, Alexander Mar Thoma), achen (Very Rev. K.E. Oommen, Very Rev. V.P. Mammen), Upadesis or evangelists (Sadhukochu Kunju), lay leaders (K. K. Kuruvilla, M. M. Thomas) Women leaders (Kandamma Varghese) and others. Also, missionaries to India (William Carey, Stanley Jones, Mother Teresa) are introduced. 5. Some teaching aids, charts, graphs, pictures and other

materials are also added. However, it is not sufficient and we should prepare "workbooks" for various classes. We encourage teachers to prepare their own teaching aids and share them with others. 6. Challenging, but appropriate materials are added in Grades Nine and Ten so that they would be more suitable for the Diocesan Examination. 7. The sub-title of the book is changed from "What It Is and What It Stands For" to "Our Foundation and Vision". 8. Chapter I (Cultural Context) is shifted to Appendix.

Features of the First Edition Retained: Several important characteristics of the previous edition are kept in tact in the new edition: 1. The materials on the Mar Thoma Church are taught as "lessons" in twelve years (12 classes) from Nursery to Grade Ten. 2. These materials are supplementary to the main curriculum which is Cokesbury now (David C. Cook in the past). Each year one or two months are kept apart to teach the lessons on the Mar Thoma Church. 3. The same five topics are continued and they are: a) History and Relationship with other Churches; b) Worship; Faith and Practices of an Eastern Church; c) Christian Sacraments; d) Uniqueness and Central Values; and e) Mission and Ministry of the Church. 4. These five topics are introduced in one year and repeated next year with more ideas. This approach will be continued for seven years from Nursery to Grade Five. The process is compared to drawing circles, one outside encircling the previous one (concentric circles). There is a different approach starting with Grade Six. One year is devoted to study one topic and each topic has five lessons. Thus from Grade Six to Grade Ten all these five topics are studied in detail. 6. Each lesson is organized under the lesson/topic with the following sub-headings as before and hence they are: a. Aim; b. Bible Verse; c. Main Ideas; d. Teaching Strategies and Activities; e. Materials; and f. Conclusion. In the upper classes this organization is made flexible as did before by using Discussion Questions. 7. There are some instructions to teachers. Also, resource materials to be used by teachers while preparing the lessons are mentioned,

adding more books.

Instructions to Teachers: The effective use of this book depends on the Sunday School teachers. Let me present a few suggestions to them. Please seek the cooperation of parents by requesting them to read the book and to discuss its ideas with their children. Also, seek the guidance and help of Aghens while preparing the lessons, especially those related to worship and sacraments. The lessons we teach in one class are related to lessons in other classes (higher and lower grades). A teacher will be more effective if he/she is familiar with related materials in all grades.

The method we use in our Sunday Schools for the most part, is a "read and talk" approach, reading the Bible and the text book, and then explaining ideas. This simultaneous read and talk approach of teachers fails to reach students. In that place, a teacher must come prepared with a series of questions to stimulate the thinking of students and to challenge them. These questions must be related to the life experiences, interests and level of understanding of students. In that case, they will respond, pay attention, and raise questions and doubts. Also, the teacher must be ready to initiate some simple projects or exercises related to the workbook or those devised by the teacher. However, the teacher must not be lost in these questions, discussions and projects, as it often happens in many Sunday Schools in North America. Instead, the teacher should move to the central message of the lesson, encouraging the students to respond and enabling them to grow in the Christian faith. In short, students are encouraged to use not only their head (knowledge) and hands (activities) but, also, their heart (values, attitudes, and commitments) which is at the center of all education. All the 3 H's are important, but we must give priority to the heart. An education that appeals to the heart reaches the whole being who becomes a new person growing in the Christian style of living.

Everywhere the Sunday School classes are small and hence we formulate methods of teaching suitable to this situation. More interactive learning has to take place in our

teaching. Teachers can tell stories, share their life experiences and ask questions related to our daily living, thus make learning more relevant and significant. A friendly approach in conversational style should be adopted and this will enable children to accept Jesus as their "best friend".

Resource Materials: Along with this text book, the teachers are encouraged to use the following books for preparing the lessons.

1. **Gleanings, The Mar Thoma Church : Its Faith, Practice and Mission** published by The Madras - Calcutta Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church, 1997. (A detailed discussion of all the topics in our text is given in this book. It is a valuable resource for teaching our lessons).
 2. **The Mar Thoma Church : Heritage and Mission** by Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan.
 3. **Christianity in India and A Brief History of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church**, by Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan.
 4. **Mar Thoma Sabha Directory**, 1999.
 5. **Thiru Nivasam Ethra Manoharam** (How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place)
 6. **Padapedathinkal** (At the Master's Feet).
 7. **Ormakalum Kurippukalum** (Memoirs and Notes) by Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan.
 8. **Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma: Jeevithavum Sandeshavum** (Life and Message) Mar Thoma Sabha publications, 1977.
- Bible Verses:** The Bible verses quoted in this Revised Edition are taken from the New International Version (NIV) of the Holy Bible (unless otherwise stated), published by the International Bible Society in U.S.A.

Our Foundation and Vision: This new sub-title of the revised edition brings together the five themes (major topics) of the book "The Mar Thoma Church". The "foundation" of

our church is discussed in the themes: History, Worship and Sacraments. In the same way the "vision" is explored in the themes: Uniqueness and Mission. The foundation enables us to reflect on the past while vision inspires us to look forward. The Mar Thoma Church, being an ancient church, has a strong foundation built over a long period of time, by its faith and practices. The 19th century Reformation was the result of a new vision which must be continued in the church. The centrality of the Bible, the missionary or evangelical emphasis and ecumenical orientation, and other aspects are explored as expressions of the new vision.

Diocesan Sunday School Committees: There are two diocesan committees that worked for this book. Mr. Thomas Jose was the diocesan Sunday School Secretary when the book was first published. Now this position is held by Mr. T.A. Mathew who has written the acknowledgments, thanking the large number of people who helped in various capacities. Also, there are others not mentioned here. It is the team effort of these committees that this and other important publications are made possible. Zacharias Thirumeni has been with us always giving direction and guidance.

Conclusion: The publication of a book on the Mar Thoma Church has fulfilled a great need of this diocese, expressed by parents and children. The future of the Mar Thoma Church is better assured in America when children take interest in knowing the foundations of their faith and practices. Teachers also learn more about our church while preparing to teach, a comment I heard from several of them. The learning about the church, understanding its faith and practices, will result in greater commitment and action expected of a loyal church member. Let us remember that this loyalty is not to the structures of a church, but to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord and Savior.

Dr. T. M. Thomas

Convener & Editor
Diocesan Sunday School Publications
Diocese of North America & Europe

New York
March 2001

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

By God's grace, we are able to publish the second edition of the book "*The Mar Thoma Church: Our Foundation and Vision*" for the use of our Sunday School students in our Diocese. The first edition of this book was initiated by the Northeast Region Sunday Schools in 1996. They prepared a manuscript for their use in the region. We thank the following members of the Northeast Region who drafted the manuscript.

Rev. K. G. Joseph & Mr. K. M. Lukose: Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, New York.

Rev. & Mrs. Thomas Easow: St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York.

Mr. Thomas K. Jose: Staten Island Mar Thoma Church, New York.

Rev. Oommen Philip: Former Diocesan Secretary.

Mr. Daniel Thomas: St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York.

Rev. Kurian George (Youth Chaplain) & Mrs. George: Northeast Region.

Mr. & Mrs. Mathew George: St. John's Mar Thoma Church, New York.

Dr. T. M. Thomas (Convener) & Mrs. Thomas: St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, New York.

The Diocesan Sunday School General Body Meeting held

in Toronto during the Family Conference in July, 1997 decided to publish the above manuscript as a book and the Advisory Board convener Dr. T. M. Thomas was entrusted with the task by forming a committee. Our long cherished dream of publishing a book on the Mar Thoma Church was fulfilled in June 1998 when the first edition was released by the late Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan at the Family Conference in Boston. We sincerely thank the following members who were instrumental in publishing the first edition of the book. Rev. Oommen Philip, Rev. Jacob Mathew, Thomas K. Jose, Thomas Koshy, P. T. Mathew, Daniel Thomas, John Philip, P. M. Jacob, Dr. Thomas Joseph and Dr. T. M. Thomas (Convener and Editor).

Since we have sold out all the copies, the Diocesan Sunday School Committee (met at Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Houston, in March 2000) decided to revise and publish a second edition by the time of the Family Conference in Philadelphia, July 2001. A committee was formed consisting of the following members.

Dr. T. M. Thomas (Convener & Editor) Sunday School Assembly Representative.

Rev. P. T. Jacob (Vice-President) Ascension Mar Thoma Church, Philadelphia.

Rev. Kurian Thomas: Mar Thoma Church, San Francisco.

Dr. Anna Panackal: Philadelphia Mar Thoma Church.

Dr. V. T. Samuel (Louisiana) Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Farmers Branch.

Mr. P. T. Mathew (Treasurer) Dallas Mar Thoma Church, Farmers Branch.

Mr. T. A. Mathew (Secretary) Trinity Mar Thoma Church, Houston.

We express our sincere thanks to our beloved Diocesan Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus

(President, Diocesan Sunday Schools) for his support, guidance and encouragement. We thank Thirumeni for writing the foreword to this edition also.

This publication was made possible by the hard work of Dr. T.M. Thomas. We are grateful to him and to Mrs. Leelamma Thomas who provided the necessary support at all stages of the Diocesan Sunday School publications. Specific chapters were modified by teachers: Mrs. Susan Varghese of St. John's, Mr. Daniel Thomas of St. Thomas, Lina Panackal of Chicago and several others. Dr. V.T. Samuel completely revised the materials for Grade Ten on the theme: "Mission and Ministry of the Church". Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Koshy of Washington helped in editing and proof reading the manuscript as well as designing the cover page. Sketches, pictures and teaching aids were prepared by Mr. E.V. Alexander, St. Thomas. Suitable Bible passages were suggested by Mrs. Elizabeth Zacharia, St. Thomas. We are grateful to them and to many others who gave suggestions for improving this second edition. We acknowledge the valuable contributions of the Diocesan Sunday School Committee, Advisory Board members, Achens, Sunday School Superintendents, teachers, parents and others for their support and cooperation. We are grateful to the Staff of the Christava Sahitya Samithy (CSS Books, Thiruvalla) the publisher for their contributions in improving the quality of both the first and the second editions of this book. We hope and pray that this book will help our Sunday School students to have a better understanding of their church and to fulfill their mission as its loyal members in this part of the world.

*Houston
March 2001*

T. A. Mathew
Secretary, Diocesan Sunday Schools
Diocese of North America & Europe

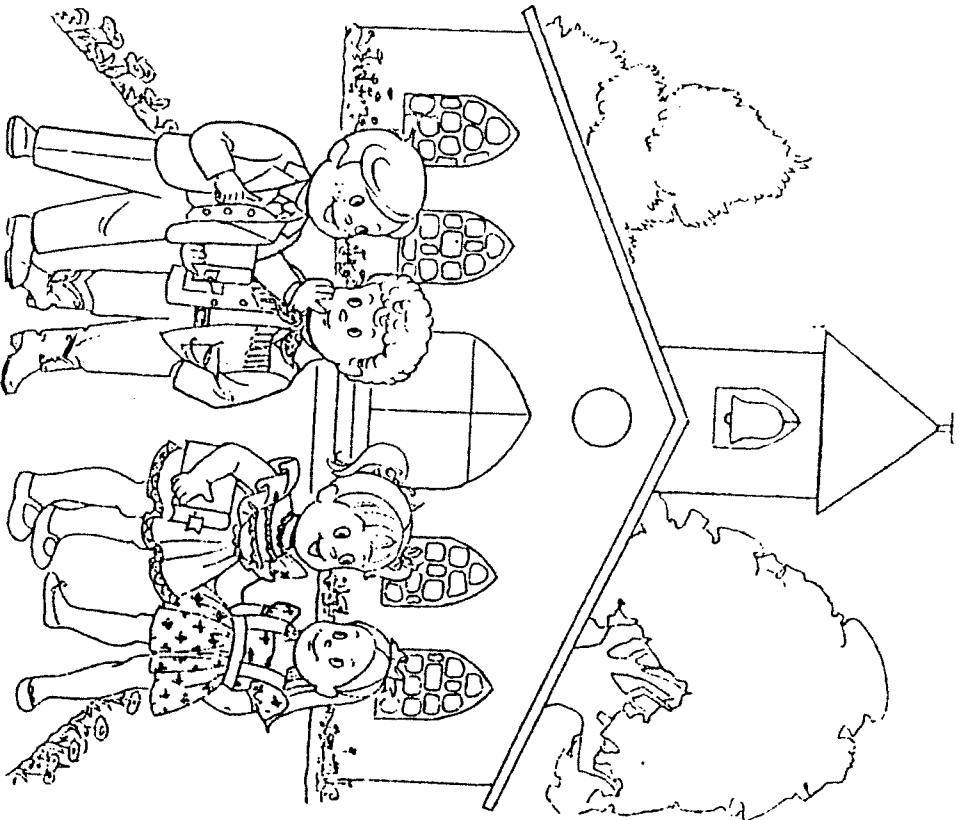
PART I INTRODUCING FIVE THEMES

1. History and Relationship with Other Churches
2. Worship: Faith and Practices of the Church
3. Christian Sacraments
4. Uniqueness and Central Values
5. Mission and Ministry of the Church

Notes to Teachers

All the above five themes are introduced in each class in seven classes, from Nursery to Grade Five. They are introduced by teaching five lessons, each focusing on a theme. The themes are repeated in each level up to grade five with increasing level of information appropriate to the grade level. This apparent repetitions are the result of expanding the theme from the lower to the upper grades. Some repetition is necessary because the next lesson on the same theme is taught after one year. This approach changes from Grade Six to Grade Ten. (see Notes to Teachers for Part II).

Church, S. School Children



Chapter 1 NURSERY

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: History and Relationship with
Other Churches

Lesson 1 OUR CHURCH AND OTHER CHURCHES THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

Aim: To become familiar with the concept of church and the building used for worship.

Bible Verse: Psalm 84: 1

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!

Main Ideas:

We worship in a church on Sundays. A church building is different from most other buildings in its shape. There is a cross on the church. The size (usually big), shape and arrangements in the church are suitable for worship.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher distributes picture of a church building (P.12), and explains its specific shape. Teach a hymn about church.

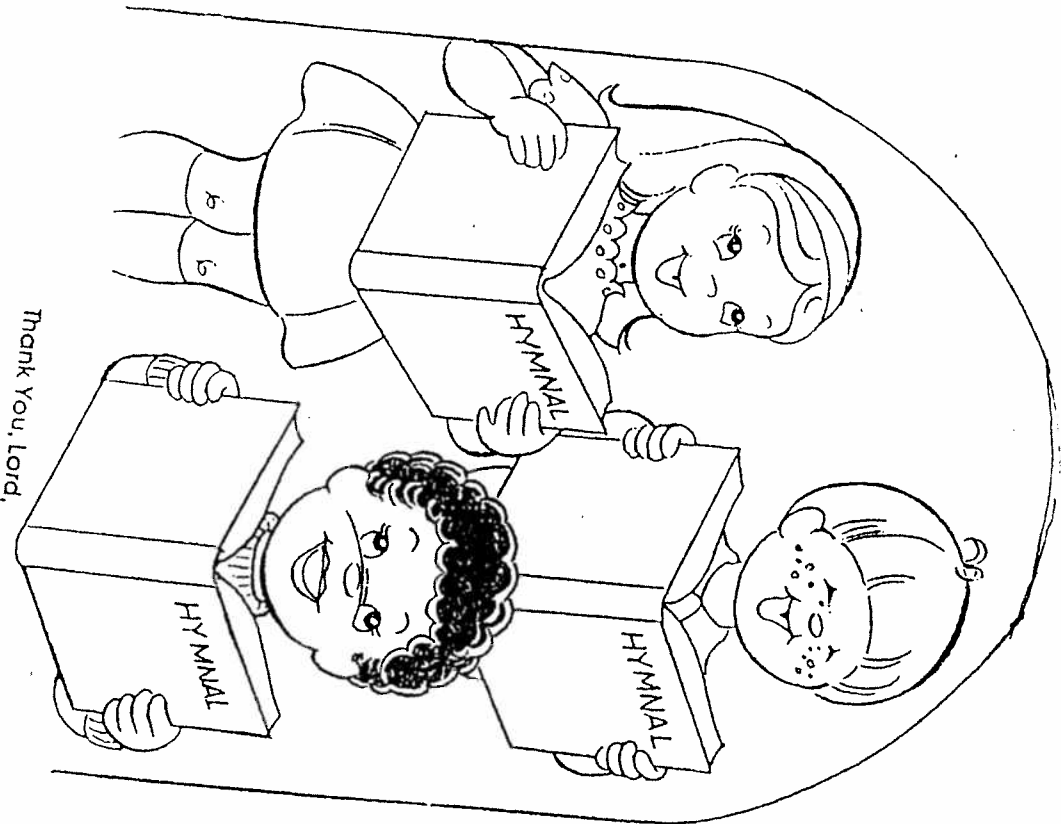
Materials:

A sheet of paper with the picture of a church building.

Conclusion:

Church has an important role in our lives. We worship in a church building.

Children Singing



Thank You, Lord,

NURSERY

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of the Church

Lesson 2

SINGING IN WORSHIP

Aim: To introduce singing as part of worship

Bible Verse: Psalm 33: 3

Main Ideas: Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

Importance of singing songs as part of worship. Singing with joy makes the worship beautiful. In Sunday School we learn songs. In the church the choir leads the singing.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Songs (chorus) used in Nursery class and hymns used in the Church for worship. Picture of children singing is distributed and they color it.

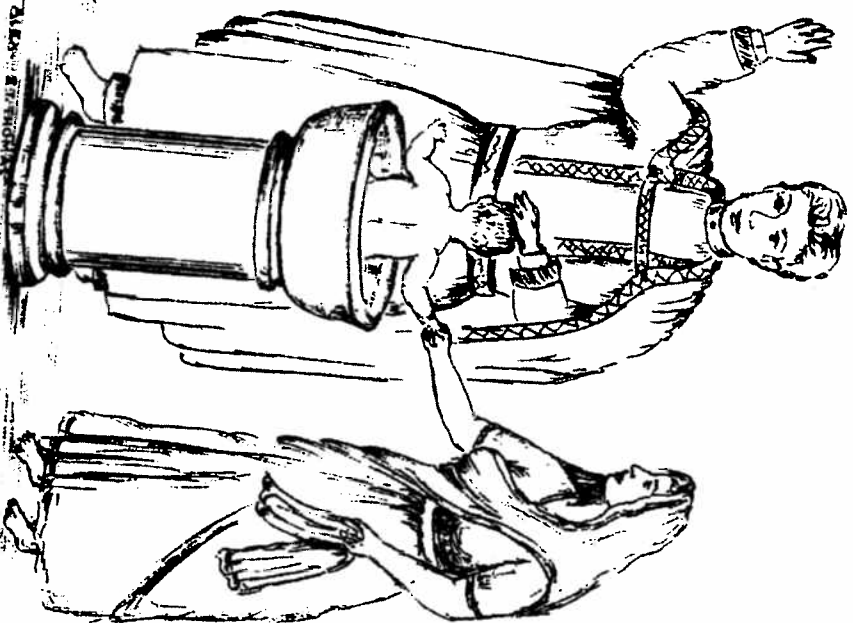
Materials:

Picture of children singing. (page 4).

Conclusion:

We sing songs to praise God.

Baptismal Font



*Achen is baptizing a child while the mother is looking on.
People in the church are not shown.*

NURSERY

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3

HOW BAPTISM IS PERFORMED?

Aim: To become familiar with the events related to Baptism (mamodisa).

Bible Verse: Matthew 3:6.

Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Main Ideas:

Recognize water as the "matter" used in Baptism. Achen performs it. People gather to celebrate this important event. After baptism a child becomes a member of the Mar Thoma Church and it is significant.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Ask children what they have noticed in baptizing a baby. Ask more specific questions such as who (Achen), where (in the Church), Baptismal Font (Mamodisa kallu P. 6), etc. People gathering for celebration, gifts, food - an important event. Color the Baptismal font and achen baptising.

Materials:

A sheet of paper with the picture of a Baptismal Font in the Church and crayon. Picture of Achen baptising a child.

Conclusion:

Baptism is very important in Christian life. We celebrate it as a Christian sacrament in our Church.

NURSERY

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4

OUR CHURCH AND OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL

Aim: To know about our Church and its Sunday School.

Bible Verse: Luke 18:16.

"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Main Ideas:

The name of our church is the Mar Thoma Church. It has a Sunday School. During the Sunday School, children learn songs, color pictures and listen to the teacher. The teacher tells stories about Jesus.

Teaching Strategies & Activities:

The teacher distributes a picture of a Sunday School class. Children color the pictures of the teacher as well as of the boys and girls listening (P.16). Also, they learn the song "Jesus Loves Me. *This I Know, For The Bible Tells Me So...*"

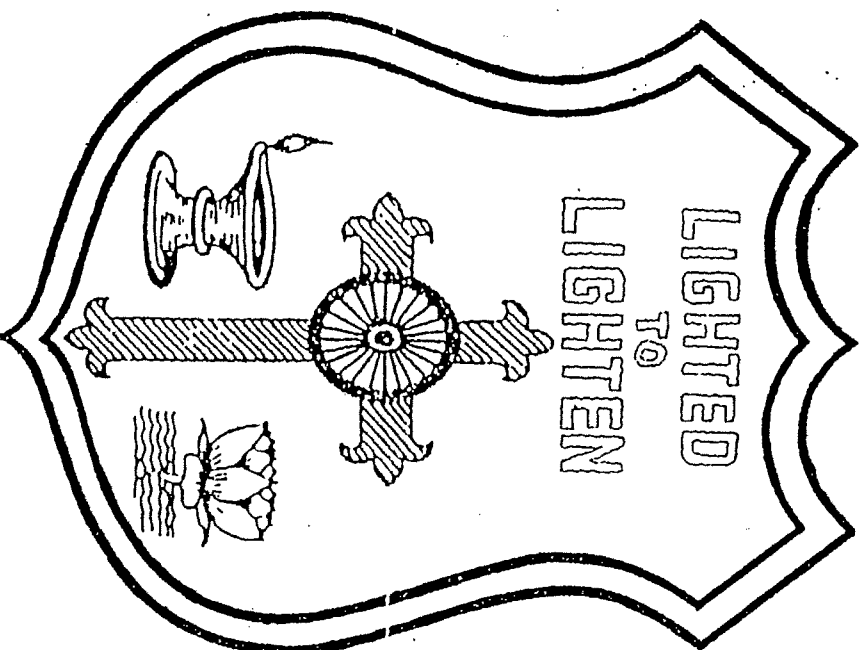
Materials:

Paper, pencil and crayons, picture of a Sunday School class.

Conclusion:

The Mar Thoma Church has a Sunday School for children to learn about Jesus.

The Church Logo



NURSERY

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Mission and Ministry of the Church

Lesson 5

COLORING THE LOGO OF OUR CHURCH

Aim: To become familiar with the church logo.

Bible verse: John 15:17.

"This is my command: Love one another."

Main ideas:

Color different parts in a picture. Recognize a cross. We see cross in our church. Jesus died on the cross and showed His love. During our worship, we place the cross at an important place in the church.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher distribute a paper with a big Mar Thoma Church logo (P.9). Take copies. Teacher shows various parts, especially the cross. Children are encouraged to find the cross kept in our church. Find out where the cross is placed in our church. Teacher explains what the cross stands for (love and sacrifice) and its place in our worship.

Materials:

One sheet of paper with church logo (P. 9). Crayons.

Conclusion:

Cross is very special for Christians. Jesus died on the cross and showed his love.

Chapter 2

KINDERGARTEN

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: History and Relationship with Other Churches

Lesson 1

CHURCH AND PEOPLE

Aim: To recognize the relationship between the church and people.

Bible Verse: Psalm 84: 4

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, they are ever praising you.

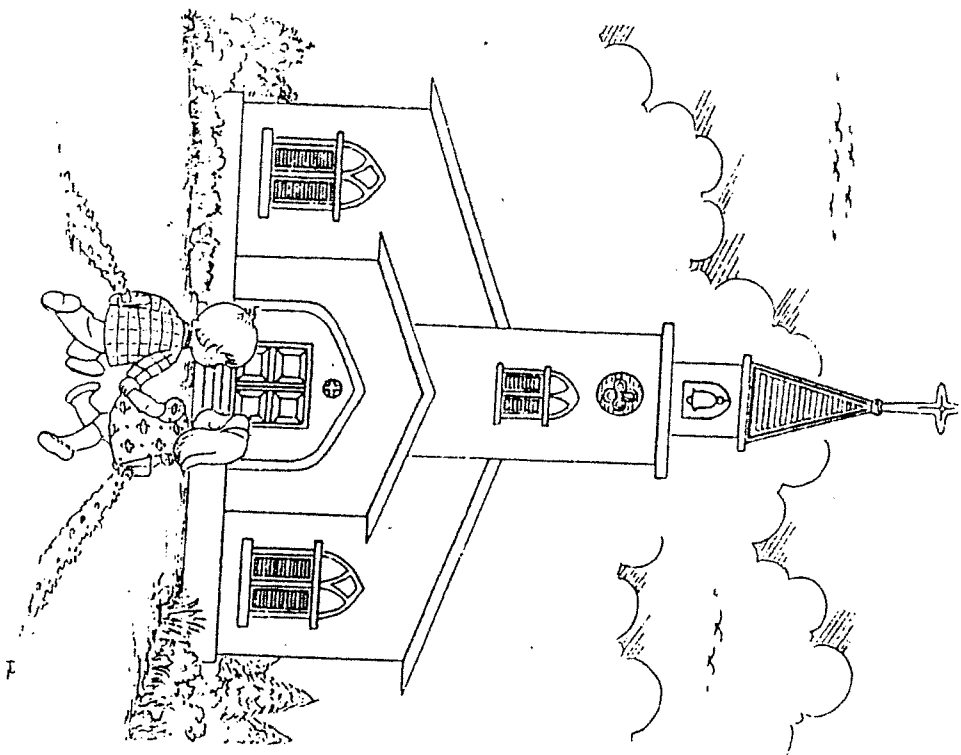
Main Ideas:

When we think about the church we have to remember that people are more important than buildings. People show respect to God when they gather for worship. Also, they learn to respect others. There are differences between churches; but we learn to respect all people. They are children of God, therefore brothers and sisters.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher distributes pictures of worship service in a church and explains the participation of people in the service. People gather to praise God. How do they do it? How do people show reverence to God? (They dress well, (mark of respect), sit quiet and follow a pattern). Children color the picture.

Church Building



Materials:

A sheet of paper with people worshipping in a church (page 23).

Conclusion:

People gather in a church to worship and gain spiritual strength. They learn to show respect to others.

KINDERGARTEN

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of the Church

Lesson 2

PRAYER IN WORSHIP

- Aim:** 1. To understand that there are prayers in worship.
2. To learn to pray (including Lord's prayer).

Bible Verse: Psalms 118: 1

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; His love endures forever.

Main Ideas:

There are many prayers in our worship. We praise God for his blessings and give thanks. We pray for our needs as well as for others. Children shall learn short personal prayers. Also, they learn the Lord's prayer.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher is asking students to say the prayer they have learned at home. Teacher explains what prayer is and how we pray. Talk about our prayer in the church. Show the worship book, *Order of Worship Prayers and Hymns*. Learn Lord's prayer.

Materials:

Our worship book: *Order of Worship Prayers and Hymns*.

Conclusion:

Prayer is important in our worship.

KINDERGARTEN

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP THROUGH BAPTISM (MAMODISA)

Aim: To recognize the importance of Baptism in the life of a Christian.

Bible Verse: Mark 1:8.

I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Main Ideas:

Baptism is the process of incorporating a person into the body of Christ. The baptized becomes a new person in Christ. Church consists of members who are baptized. In baptism Achen is the celebrant and god - parent along with the parents take responsibility to bring up the child in Christian faith.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teach the process of infant baptism. Use a picture to show the parties involved: Celebrant (Achen), parents and God-father/God-mother and religious community - responsibilities of all.

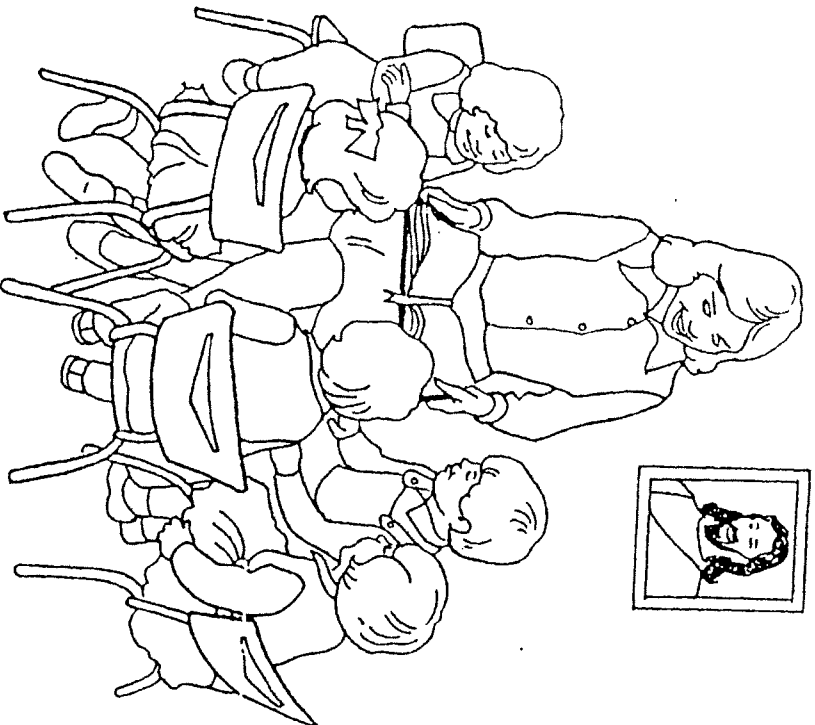
Materials:

A sheet with the picture of the parties involved with the administration and celebration of baptism (Page 6), and crayon.

Conclusion:

Infant baptism emphasizes the responsibilities of the parents, God-father/mother, and also the religious community to bring up the child in Christian faith.

Children in a Sunday School Class



These children are in a Sunday-school class. They are learning about Jesus. How many children are in the class? Count them and write the number on the picture. Can you name some of the children who are in your Sunday School class?

KINDERGARTEN

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL

Aim: To know the importance of the Church and Sunday School activities

Bible Verse: Mark 10:16

And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Main Ideas:

The Sunday School is important in our church because children learn songs and Bible stories in the class. They learn that Jesus is their friend who loves them.

Teaching Strategies & Activities:

Teacher asks questions about various things children learn in Sunday School. They color picture of a class listening to the teacher (P. 16). Special attention is given to the picture of Jesus, with sheet distributed. Repeat the song learned in Nursery or the teacher can select other songs.

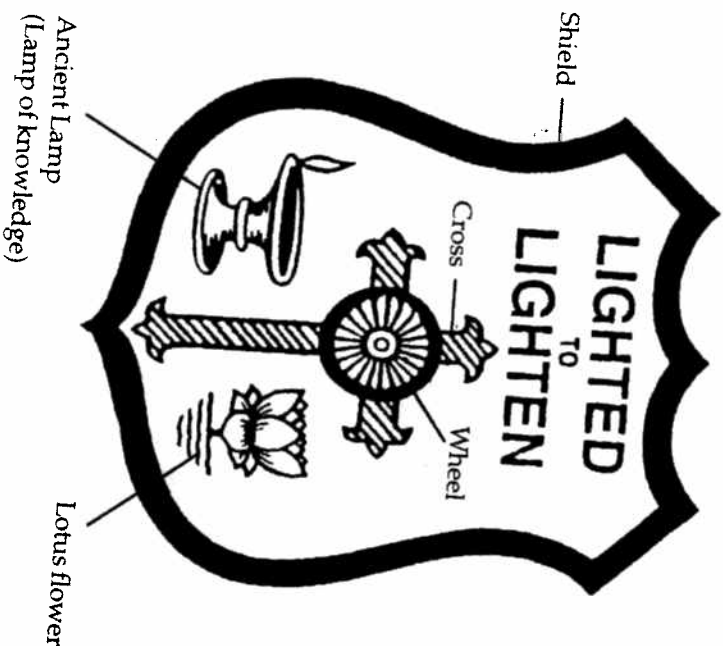
Materials:

Picture of a class. These children are in Sunday School class. They are learning about Jesus. How many children are in the class? Count them and write the number on the picture. Can you name some of the children who are in your Sunday school class? Photos of different activities in the church and Sunday School

Conclusion:

Sunday School is important because children learn about Jesus.

The Church Logo: Symbols



KINDERGARTEN

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Mission and Ministry of the Church

Lesson 5

COLORING AND IDENTIFYING THE PARTS OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH LOGO

Aim: To recognize the parts (specific symbols) in the Logo
The Cross, The Lamp and the Lotus

Bible Verse: Romans 6: 23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Main Ideas:

Identify the cross, the lamp and the lotus on the church logo. Cross represents God's love; light removes darkness. We fear darkness. The lotus flower rises above the dirt which represents the evil in the world.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Each child receives a sheet of paper with the Logo of the Mar Thoma Church printed on it. Use two different bright colors for the cross, the lamp, and the lotus, and the rest of the logo in a light color. Teacher also shows Church publications to recognize the logo of our church. Ask questions about cross and light as used in the church. Take copies of logo (page 9).

Materials:

A sheet of paper with the logo for each student (P.18).
Crayons, Church publications with the logo.

Conclusion:

The symbols in the logo conveys what our church stands for. We shall keep away from the bad things of this world.

A Picture of St. Thomas, the Apostle of India
carrying the Cross and the Bible



Chapter 3 GRADE ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: History and Relationship with Other Churches

Lesson 1.

OUR CHURCH: THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

Aim: To familiarize the students with our church, its name and founder.

Bible Verse: Mark 16: 15

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Main Ideas:

The name of our church is Malankara (Malabar) Mar Thoma Syrian Church or The Mar Thoma Church. There are many other churches everywhere. They all belong to the body of Christ who is the head of the Church. St. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus was the founder of our church. He came to India and preached the gospel in the first century.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher distributes a sheet of paper with the name of the Mar Thoma Church and the picture of St. Thomas. The board in front of our church with the name and other information may be used for discussion. Also, the teacher explains Apostle Thomas as the founder of our church in Kerala, India. Therefore our church is called the Mar Thoma Church,

meaning the Church of Saint (Mar) Thomas (Thoma). It is believed that the Apostle built seven churches in Kerala and Church.

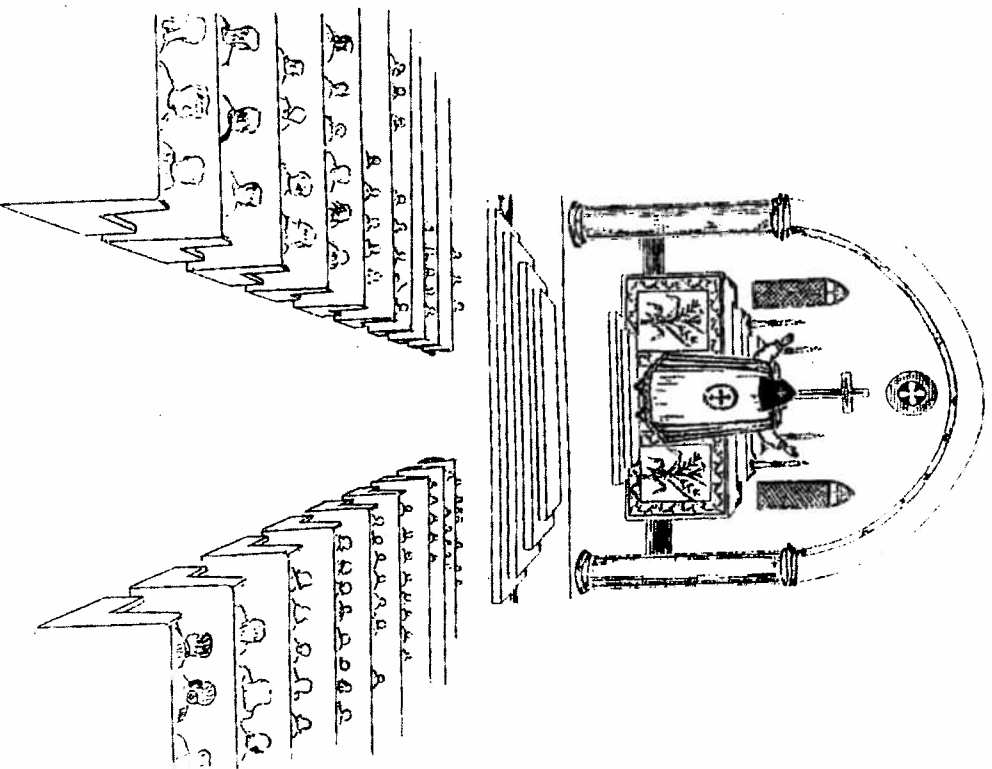
Materials:

Picture of St. Thomas, the Apostle (P. 20).

Conclusion:

The name of our church explains our long history.

Picture of a Sanctuary



GRADE ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of the Church

Lesson 2 WORSHIP, CHURCH BUILDING AND ITS USE FOR WORSHIP

Aim: To become familiar with the church building and its use for worship in specific ways.

Bible Verse: Psalm 150: 1

Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in his mighty heavens.

Main Ideas:

The inside space of a church building, known as sanctuary, is divided into Chancel (Madbaha) and Nave (Haikala). The Achen (priest) celebrates Holy Communion in the Chancel, which we keep as holy and people stand (or sit) in the Nave. Together these areas are called sanctuary where we worship God. The Church is a special place of worship where we recognize the presence of God.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Students mark the two main areas (chancel and nave) of the sanctuary with the help of teachers (P.23). They learn these terms and recognize the sanctity of this place. The teacher encourages the children to keep the sanctuary clean and beautiful.

Materials:

Picture of a Sanctuary (inside of the church) with two areas Chancel and Nave.

Conclusion:

A church building is a special place which has a unique style. It is for people to gather and worship. We must keep the sanctuary clean and beautiful because it is considered holy.

GRADE ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3 HOLY COMMUNION

Aim: To become knowledgeable about Holy Communion, one of the Dominical Sacraments practiced in the Mar Thoma Church.

Bible Verse: Luke 22: 19

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me".

Main Ideas:

We observe seven sacraments in our church. The sacrament is a means of grace with a visible sign. Holy Communion is such a sacrament. Holy Communion means an "offering". In Jesus, God offers himself to the believer who enters into communion with the Lord. We use bread and wine representing the body and blood of Jesus. There are special prayers and practices that we follow as a church. Holy Communion is one of the sacraments. Another one is Baptism. Both are known as Dominical Sacraments.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher asks questions on Holy Communion. Specific questions on bread (in paten) and wine (in chalice). Achen blesses them. Where are they kept? How are they distributed? How do people receive Holy Communion in our church? Teacher brings the Order of Worship in the class and explains selected portions.

Materials:

Picture of paten and chalice. *Order of Worship Prayers and Hymns* (P38-90).

Conclusion:

The sacrament is a means of grace, a visible sign used to signify and direct us to a spiritual truth. Holy Communion is such a means of grace.

GRADE ONE**INTRODUCTION OF THEMES**

Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4**MAR THOMA CHURCH'S EMPHASIS ON THE BIBLE**

Aim: To familiarize the students with the Bible and its importance in the Mar Thoma Church.

Bible Verse: Psalm 119:105.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Main Ideas:

We bring the Bible to the Church and Sunday School. What we learn in Sunday School (the lessons we study each Sunday) is based on the Bible. The Bible helps us to learn more about God known through Jesus. The Bible is the Word of God. We read it and understand what God wants from us.

Teaching Strategies & Activities:

In many Sunday Schools, children receive a copy of the Bible while entering Grade 1. Children are encouraged to bring their own Bible (with their names on it) to the class in order to become more familiar with it. The teacher explains the Sunday School lessons showing its relation to the Bible. Daily use of the Bible as part of personal and family prayer is encouraged by the teachers. Singing: "B-I-B-L-E, it's the book for me..."

Materials:

Bible, student book with Bible verse

Conclusion:

Our church is unique in the use of the Bible. Members are encouraged to use it even from early years, while in Sunday School.

GRADE ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: *Mission and Ministry of the Church*

Lesson 5

CHURCH AS LIGHT TO THE WORLD

Aim : To explain the motto "Lighted to Lighten" on the Logo.
Bible Verse: Matthew 5:16.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Main Ideas:
 Light is an important symbol used in various religions. It is an important symbol for Christians and hence we use it during our worship. The motto of the Mar Thoma Church is "Lighted to Lighten". The symbol light is on the logo.

In the Bible, Jesus is mentioned as light. People are considered as light. Jesus wants his followers to shine as light in the world. God created light on the first day of creation. God overcomes the evil forces in the world just as light removes darkness. As Christians we have to shine as light. We are lighted so that we can show light to others. We bring others to Christ so that they become His followers and shine as lights.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Children have learned a few things about the logo during the last two years in Nursery and KG. They must be in a position to recognize the specific symbols in the logo because they have colored them. Also they have some idea of what they represent. During this third and final year study of logo they recall what they have learned. This year they concentrate

on the light and the writing "Lighted to Lighten" for further learning. What does this statement mean? How does the Bible use the term light? Find answers to such questions.

Materials:

Picture of a candle (cut out). Children color the burning candle.

Conclusion:

God wants us to be light in our world by removing the darkness, the bad things or evil forces.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

The teacher explains the concept of church and its beginning. Teacher reads Acts chapter 2: 1-4 and explains how the Holy Spirit filled the believers. The church begins with this event.

Materials:

Picture of ancient churches

Conclusion:

Our daily life is guided by the Holy Spirit. So we pray to God.

Chapter 4

GRADE TWO

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: *History and Relationship with Other Churches*

Lesson 1

THE BEGINNING OF ALL CHURCHES

Aim: 1. To study the beginning of Christian Churches.
2. To learn how it is rooted in the Holy Spirit.

Bible Verse: Acts 1: 8a

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you:..."

Main Ideas:

"The Mar Thoma Church is part of the universal church which has its beginning in the new experience on the day of Pentecost. The disciples gathered for prayer as told by Jesus and received the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit transformed these ordinary people with new vision and commitments, they moved to various parts of the world with the good news of their Lord, the Savior of humankind. In this transforming experience for a new mission, we find the beginning of all churches which grew with specific names and practices that differ from one another.

GRADE TWO

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of the Church

Lesson 2

WORSHIP: DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYERS

Aim: To learn to pray at different occasions

Bible Verse: Philipians 4: 6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Main Ideas:

Prayers form an important part of our worship. We begin our prayer by praising God for all His mercy and blessings (adoration). Then we admit our mistakes and ask God for forgiveness (prayer of confession. Example, Psalms 51). We give thanks for all that he has given us (thanksgiving). Also, we pray for our needs and for others. We remember the poor, the sick, the suffering and other needs (supplication). When we pray we keep our eyes closed so that we will not be distracted by looking here and there. We need concentration when we pray which is our communication with God. God, the Father hears our prayers.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Encourage children to pray in class. Teach short prayers. Use the "*Order of Worship, Prayers and Hymns*" and select some prayers in it. When another person prays, we say "Amen" at the end and it means that we agree with the prayer.

Materials:

Picture of people praying in the church.

Conclusion:

In prayer we communicate with God, calling Him as our Father. He listens and answers our prayer.

GRADE TWO

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3

OPTIONAL SACRAMENTS

- Aim:** 1. To become familiar with the optional sacraments of the Mar Thoma Church.
2. To understand the difference between dominical and optional sacraments.

Bible Verse: Matthew 5:8

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Main Ideas:

The church exists not only for the purpose of worship but also for the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of sacraments. Let us study more about the sacraments. In previous classes we have studied Baptism and Holy Communion. They are called dominical sacraments because they are commanded by the Lord. Two other sacraments are related to them as administered by the Mar Thoma Church. Hence in our church Confirmation follows Baptism and Confession precedes Holy Communion. The two sacraments that are repeated are Holy Communion and Confession. Marriage, Ordination and Unction (anointing the sick) are optional sacraments.

During marriage function or wedding a large number of relatives and friends gather for a feast and it is a time of joy. During the celebration we should not forget the significance of marriage because it is a sacrament. Hence the priest (achen) conducts the service. We keep a few practices of the Kerala culture.

Ordination is for a small number of our members who are called for the Lord's service. They receive special preparation and education for a few years after which one of the bishops ordains them.

The anointing of a sick is not widely practiced. Since it is considered as the "last rite", a practice close to the time of death, usually it is postponed. The priest anoints the sick with oil after special prayers and Holy Communion.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Recall the two sacraments studied in previous classes, Baptism and Holy Communion. Then present two related sacraments: Confirmation and Confession. Finally, present the last three, considered optional. Ask questions on these three sacraments, especially Marriage and Ordination. Ask several specific questions to find out the observation of children on these sacraments. Make use of some pictures in the study.

Materials:

Pictures related to sacraments (ordination, marriage etc.).

Conclusion:

A sacrament is a means of grace, a visible sign used to signify and point to a spiritual truth.

GRADE TWO

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4

FORMS OF MINISTRY

Aim: To understand the different types of ministry in our church.

Bible Verse: Mark 1:17

Come, follow me, Jesus said, "I will make you fishers of men"

Main Ideas:

All Mar Thoma Church members are called for the Lord's ministry. Some are in the ordained ministry while others are in lay ministries. The former consists of deacon, priest and bishop. Metropolitan is the senior and head of the bishops as well as that of the church. The priest is the vicar of parishes. The deacon is the helper. Laity is also given a responsible position in the administration of the church.

Teaching Strategies & Activities:

Teacher shows a group photo of the Bishops, Achens and others. Children should differentiate them by their appearance. The teacher explains the role of each as they do their service in and for the church. Also, the teacher asks questions about the role that all people have during a worship service. Teacher concludes by saying that we are all "called" to continue in the Lord's ministry. The equal importance of ordained and lay ministry is a unique aspect of the Mar Thoma Church.

Materials:

Photos of Bishops, Achens and lay people.

Conclusion:

There are various types of ministry. The Mar Thoma Church is unique in giving due recognition to both ordained and lay ministry.

GRADE TWO

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Mission and Ministry of the Church

Lesson 5

HELPING OTHERS IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY

Aim: To Learn and be part of the community service programs in the Christian spirit.

Bible Verse: Matthew 22:39

"Love your neighbor as yourself".

Main Ideas:

Many students at various schools and parishes take part in community service projects. They sell tickets, coupon etc. to their friends, young and old, in order to raise money and support these projects. There are adults who devote their life for serving others. Several of them work within the church guided by the example of Jesus. Some people work as volunteers in hospitals and nursing homes (e.g. distribute books to patients who are healthy enough to read, as receptionist) in schools (read stories to children or assists the teachers) and in various community agencies.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Do you sell candies to raise money for your school? Is your church doing something to help others (e.g. Soup kitchen, food drive, cloth drive etc.). Did your Sunday School take part in the walk-a-thon organized by the diocese in 2000. Do you take part in any other fund-raising efforts (cancer, diabetes etc.). Moving on to the example of Jesus who sacrificed His life for others, teacher explains the motivating factor in

helping others. Other examples can be mentioned in our church context. Earthquakes in India and other places, floods and other natural disasters in different parts of the world and how our church is involved in these efforts can be explained.

Materials:

Students bring materials related to community service.

Conclusion:

Follow the example of Jesus in reaching out and helping others.

Chapter 5

GRADE THREE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: History and Relationship with Other Churches

Lesson 1

GROWTH OF OUR CHURCH IN 2000 YEARS

Aim: To provide an overview of the history of our Church.

Bible Verse : Matthew 28:19-20.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Main ideas:

We studied in Grade 1 that Apostle Thomas was the founder of our church in India. Some people in the Malabar coast of India (Kerala) accepted Christ and continued as a Christian Community. During the fourth century some Christians from Persia settled in Malabar under the leadership of Thomas of Cana, who was a Syrian merchant. The Malankara (Malabar) church was connected with the Persian church having ecclesiastical connection with the Church in West Asia. The time from the fourth to sixteenth century is known as the Persian period. During the first half of the 17th century the Roman Catholic Church which came along with

the Portuguese took control of the Malabar church. But in 1653 it broke away from the Papal authority with the "Coonan Cross" Oath. The Malankara Church came into contact with the Anglican Church during the 19th century. Consequently the spirit of the reformation and a new outlook took shape, resulting in the formation of the "Mar Thoma Church" with its new name. We celebrated the 150th anniversary of this event (reformation) in our church in 1986. The growth of the Mar Thoma Church in the last one century is remarkable.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Show the place Malabar coast, Persia and Syria in the map and explain history.

Materials:

Map of Asia. The Malabar coast, Persia (Iran) and Syria are marked in it.

Conclusion:

Our church has a long history of about 2000 years. We thank God for the enriching traditions of our church.

GRADE THREE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of the church

Lesson 2

WORSHIP: SCRIPTURE READING AND SERMON

- Aim:** 1. To recognize the set pattern in Bible reading.
2. To become better listeners of Sermon.

Bible Verse: Psalm 119:9

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

Main Ideas:

We read the Bible a few times during the worship each Sunday. They include two lessons (the first one from the Old Testament and the second from the New Testament), the epistle, and the gospel reading by achen. During the sermon the Bible verses are interpreted and made relevant to contemporary life situations. The preacher seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit in conveying the message of God.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher brings the assigned scripture portions for the day and explain each. The pattern followed by our Church is discussed in class. Our young members read the lessons as well as assist in the Holy communion.

Materials:

Bible, Order of Worship, Scripture portion for the Sunday.
(It is published in the lectionary and newsletter)

Conclusion:

Bible is "the Word of God" used in our worship.

GRADE THREE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3

CONFESSION: A CHRISTIAN SACRAMENT

- Aim:** To learn the importance of Confession as a Sacrament.
Bible Verse: Acts 2: 38

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit..."

Main Ideas:

Our church follows open (public) confession. We administer it during our worship service, before distributing the elements of bread and wine. The intention of confession is to receive forgiveness of sins. Among the sacraments, only Confession and Holy Communion are repeated. The Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches follow a different practice. Each person privately meets with the priest for confession and forgiveness.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher uses prayer of confession in class and explains the main ideas. Teacher may compare open confession which we follow in our Church with other forms of confessions.

Materials:

Prayer of Confession in the worship book: *Order of Worship Prayers and Hymns*, pages 53-55.

Conclusion:

When we repent our sins, God forgives us and we receive God's blessings.

OUR BISHOPS



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph
Mar Irenaeus Suffragan
Metropolitan



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias
Mar Theophilus Episcopa



The Rt. Rev. Geevaarghese
Mar Athanasius Episcopa



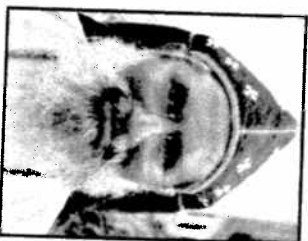
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevaarghese
Mar Theodosius Episcopa



Our Beloved Metropolitan
The Most Rev. Dr. Philopos
Mar Chrysostom Marthoma
Metropolitan



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Euyakim
Mar Coorilos Episcopa



The Rt. Rev. Joseph
Mar Barnabas Episcopa



The Rt. Rev. Thomas
Mar Timotheos Episcopa



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar
Philoxenos Episcopa

GRADE THREE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4

EPISCOPACY IN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN CHURCHES

Aim: To understand the episcopacy of the Mar Thoma Church in relation to other churches.

Bible Verse: 1 Peter 5:4.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Main Ideas:

In the Mar Thoma Church Bishops are selected from among the unmarried priests. Our episcopacy is a celibate episcopacy. Now we have nine bishops. Metropolitan is the head of the bishops. The present Mar Thoma Metropolitan is the Most Rev. Dr. Philopos Mar Chrysostom. Bishops in the Western churches follow different practices. Most churches allow them to marry. There is a difference in the clothes they wear.

Teaching Strategies & Activities:

Teacher shows photos or pictures of bishops and priests in different churches. Children notice the differences between them in appearance. The teacher explains the difference between Eastern and Western churches regarding the role of bishops and priests. Celibacy is compared between Mar Thoma clergy and clergy of churches in this country with its protestant practices. Also our clergy is compared to the clergy

of the Orthodox Church in India, and the Church of South India.

Materials:

Photos of bishops in our church (P.44). Pictures of bishops in other churches.

Conclusion:

Bishops are the spiritual leaders of the church. So we respect and love them. There are unique aspects in our clergy, being part of the Eastern Church.

GRADE THREE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Mission and Ministry of the Church

Lesson 5

HELPING OTHERS.

WHAT DOES THE MAR THOMA CHURCH DO IN INDIA?

Aim: To study the commitment of the Mar Thoma Church for Evangelism by helping others.

Bible Verse: Luke 10:2

The harvest is plentiful but workers are few.

Main ideas:

Our church has organized several types of activities to help the poor and the needy. There are orphanages, schools for the disabled, destitute homes, mission hospitals and others. The Special Sunday Offertory, covering over a dozen Sundays, raises money for this purpose. Our Ashrams take a leading role in starting them. Among the several leaders who initiated them in our church we have selected Juhanon Mar Thoma and Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan (please see a detailed account of them in Grade Five and Grade Ten respectively). They gave leadership for such work as part of their understanding of church's mission. The church which is the body of Christ is expected to continue the example of Jesus by reaching the marginalized in society out of compassion and love.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher showing the pictures of Ashrams or other centres engaged in various community services (food distribution,

medical care, village schools, model farms, weaving and other small industries) explain the work of the church. Make use of the resource people in the parish who have visited these Ashrams. Initiative of our church for Homes for the Homeless and the contributions of our bishops, especially Metropolitan Juhanon Mar Thoma and Alexander Mar Thoma may be explained. Children may talk with their parents on the outreach programs of our church. What can we do in America compared to what we do in India? Discuss.

Materials:

Pictures of an Ashram doing community service.

Conclusion:

We can help others in need through our church which is the body of Christ. We should do more in our diocese and in our community.

Chapter 6

GRADE FOUR

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: History and Relationship with Other Churches

Lesson 1

A REFORMING CHURCH

Aim : To understand the new ideas and outlook growing in our church.

Bible Verse: Psalm 119:105.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Main ideas:

The contact with the missionaries of the western culture resulted in reforming several practices of the Malankara church and in obtaining a new outlook on society. The leader of the reform movement was Abraham Malpan (Malpan means teacher or professor). Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan of Puthuppally and several others joined him.

The Syriac liturgy used for centuries in the Malankara church worship was translated into Malayalam by Abraham Malpan and our church began to use it for worship. Also, our church discarded the prayers for the dead, to the saints and to Virgin Mary. People were encouraged to read the Bible and live a life rooted in the Word of God. A new spirit for evangelism grew in our church, resulting in establishing

Ashtams for missionary work. There was also a new social consciousness with the sense of openness and a concern for all people including the poor. The church administration itself became more democratic and better organized for promoting its reforming spirit.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Contact with the West brought revival in Kerala Society and Church. What were the changes introduced by Abraham Malpan? Discuss.

Materials:

Pictures of Abraham Malpan and other reformation leaders.

Conclusion:

As a result of the reformation in the Malankara church, we are enriched with a new outlook and a vision for evangelism. We are proud to belong to such a church.

GRADE FOUR

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of an Eastern Church

Lesson 2

WORSHIP: PRACTICES FOLLOWED

Aim: To understand the practices and symbols used in worship and to make them more meaningful.

Bible Verse: Ephesians 6:14. (Good News Bible)

So stand ready, with truth as a belt tight around your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate.

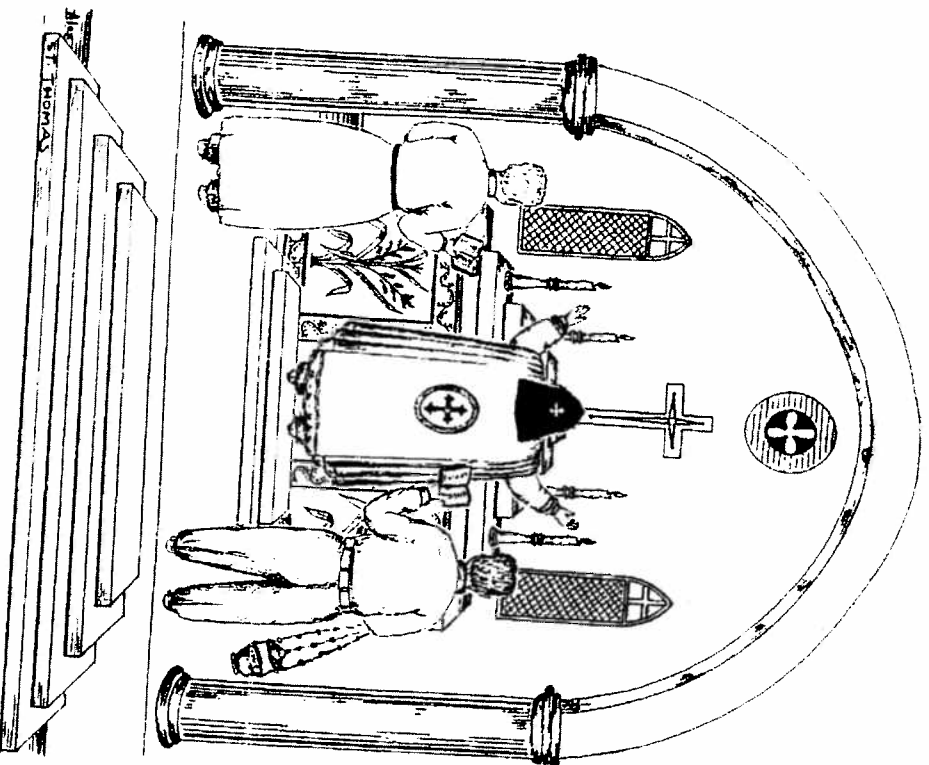
Main Ideas:

Some of the practices and rituals in our church worship are gestures of the priest and the laity- the kiss of peace, the bowing of heads, the reverence paid to the Eucharistic elements, the signing of the cross- all these are part of the liturgical act. In other words, worship is an activity of the congregation to glorify God.

As an Eastern practice, we worship standing, facing towards Madbaha (altar) in the east. This altar is used to celebrate Holy Qurbana placing the elements of the holy Eucharist and the offertory. Above all we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord, a response to the greatest offering, that God in Christ has made to humankind.

Why do we turn towards east in worship? We may find two reasons. God is metaphorically described as sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2). Secondly, Eden, the garden of God's presence, is believed to be in the east (Genesis 2:8). With these assumptions, the Church buildings are normally built

Bishop Celebrating H. Qurbana



east to west. This practice may not be followed in Western countries.

Madbaha (Chancel) is separated from the Haikala (Nave) by a curtain. The altar is in the Madbaha. Achen celebrates Holy Communion at the altar. The part of the church or sanctuary where people sit (pew or bench) is called Nave.

Light: We use light (candles) in our Holy Communion service. It is placed on the altar. Light is a powerful symbol. The candles lighted at the beginning of the Qurbana symbolize the presence of God, who is the source of light and who reminds us that we are called to be the light of the world. Incense: Frankincense is taken from a tree. It is kindled in a vessel called censer. The fragrance that comes out of the incense denotes the offering of a sweet smelling sacrifice rising to God.

The Kiss of Peace: This is a symbolic action of reconciliation. It has been adopted from Middle - Eastern cultural practice into our worship. The participants pass on peace with folded hands from one person to the next, as a symbolic gesture.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Show the symbols and explain its importance in worship. Select practices and rituals to be discussed in class.

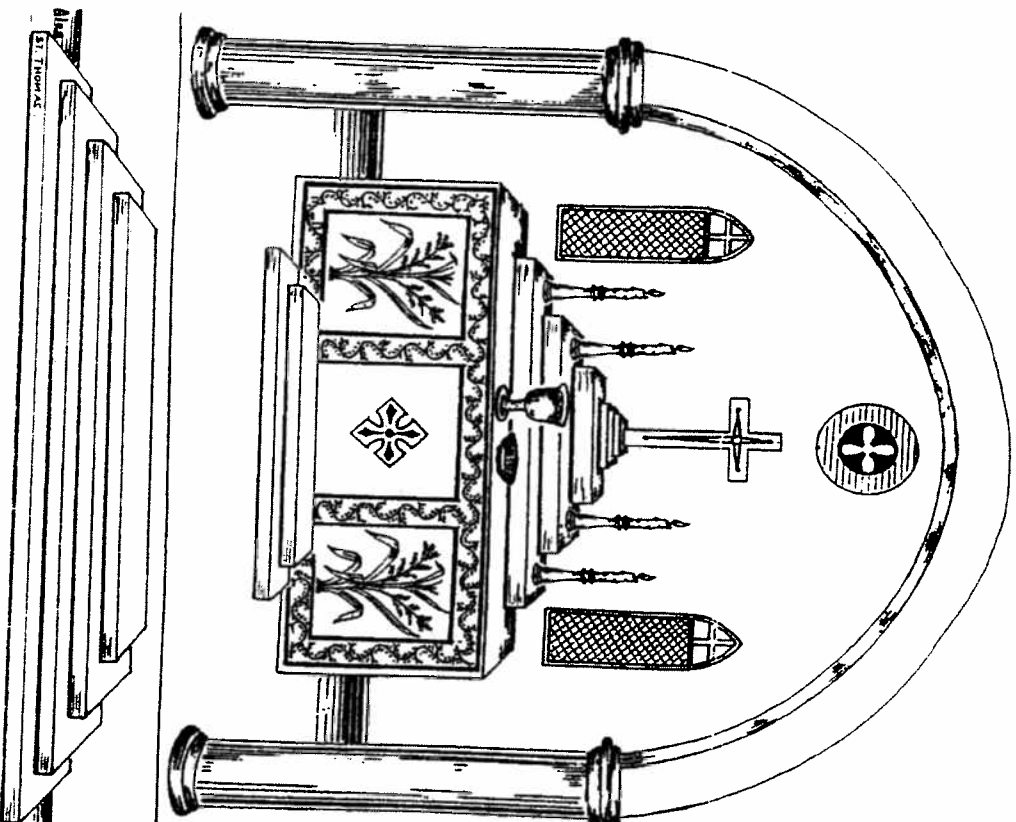
Materials:

Different symbols like candle, incense and censer.

Conclusion:

Practices with the use of symbols help people to worship more meaningfully and have the atmosphere of reverence to experience the presence of God.

Altar



See the cross, candles, paten and chalice on the altar

GRADE FOUR

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3

CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS:

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- Aim:**
1. To understand the importance of Sacraments in the life of a Christian.
 2. To become familiar with the spiritual truth and blessing.
 3. To become knowledgeable with the symbolic language and materials used in administering the Sacraments.

Bible Verse: 1 Peter 3: 21...

... were saved by the water, which was a symbol pointing to baptism, which now saves you. It is not the washing off of bodily dirt, but the promise made to God from a good conscience. It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Main Ideas:

The word "Sacrament" is derived from the Latin word *Sacramentum* which usually means an oath or surety. Sacrament assures God's blessings when the participants receive it in faith. In the Church, each sacrament is administered as a means of God's grace. Every faithful member of the Church needs God's grace to experience salvation.

Sacraments are special encounters with Christ that help us grow in grace and lead a holy life. Jesus gave his church sacraments to continue his saving work and to build up the

community of believers. Sacraments have some visible expressions. These visible, outward expressions point to inner grace that is given to us (spiritual truths). They carry meaning only out of the inward spiritual life experience of the participants. In other words, life of a believer must be a visible sign of the spiritual presence.

Each sacrament has five essential elements:-

1. Intention: The intention of Holy Confession is to receive forgiveness of sins.
2. Meaning: Baptism is one's identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus.
3. Words of Institution: Words of Institution in the Holy Communion are: "When the sinless one, of his own will, chose to suffer death for us sinners, he took bread in his holy hands. He gave thanks, blessed, sanctified and broke it and gave it to his Apostles saying - take, eat, this is my body given for you. This do in remembrance of me. In the same way, he took the cup. He gave thanks, blessed, sanctified and gave it to his Apostles saying drink this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for the many for the forgiveness of sin."
4. Matter: Water is the matter used in Baptism. Bread and wine are used as material means in the Holy Communion.
5. Celebrant: The celebrant is the ordained minister of the Church.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher explains the meaning of the word "Sacrament" and the five essential elements.

Discuss the spiritual significance of the Sacraments in Christian life. The faith of the participants is equally important. Emphasize that the spiritual truth carry meaning only out of the inward spiritual experience in real life situations.

FIVE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A SACRAMENT

Sacrament	Baptism	Confirmation	Confession	Communion
Intention	Testimony and allegiance to the discipleship of Christ	Ordination to the priesthood of believers	Receive forgiveness for sins	Become partakers of the atoning death of Christ
Meaning	Incorporating into the Body of Christ	Anointing of the Holy Spirit	Receiving forgiveness before approaching the Holy Table	Identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus
Words of Institution (Scriptural Bases)	Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Mat.28:19	Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so that they may serve me as priests. Exodus30:30	If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness 1John 1:9	"Do this in remembrance of me" Luke 22:19
Matter	Water	Mooron	The words of confession in the worship book	Bread and Wine
Celebrant	Priest / Bishop	Priest / Bishop	Priest / Bishop	Priest / Bishop
Type	Dominical	Part of baptism	Part of Communion	Dominical

Conclusion:

Sacraments become means to receive God's blessings and inspires the recipient to remain faithful and committed in Christian life. Our life must be a visible sign of the spiritual experience.

GRADE FOUR**INTRODUCTION OF THEMES**

Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4**EVANGELICAL COMMITMENT
OF OUR CHURCH**

Aim: To understand the centrality placed on evangelism in the Mar Thoma Church.

Bible Verse: Romans 10:15b

As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news".

Main Ideas:

The church is called for a mission. The mission is to make disciples for Christ. It is achieved through preaching, teaching and healing. Our church is involved in evangelical work through mission fields, ashrams, schools, hospitals and destitute homes. The Western contact and the 19th century reformation resulted in this new emphasis on evangelism in our church.

Strategies & Activities:

Read the reports of mission fields in the class. Show pictures to the students. Discuss our responsibilities to fulfil the mission.

Teacher shows the maps of India with mission centres (ashrams) marked in them and explains the evangelical work of our church. Does your parish support any particular mission field? What are the Social Service activities that your parish or Sunday School is doing to reach the community?

Who are some of the missionaries that you admire most?
Collect their pictures and bring them to the class.

Materials:

Maps, reports and photos of different mission fields in India.

Conclusion:

The Mar Thoma Church is unique in giving a central place for evangelism. We need outreach activities at our parish to reach the community.



GRADEFOUR

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Mission and Ministry of the Church

Lesson 5

SELECTED MISSIONARIES OF OUR CHURCH

Aim: To learn about the life and mission of some church leaders.

Bible Verse: Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Main Ideas:

A Christian missionary or an evangelist is one who is "sent" by God for the proclamation of the message of Jesus, the Good News conveyed in the Gospels, to all people of the world. Jesus, during his ministry, sent his followers and later, after receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples or Apostles went to various parts of the world. Many followed their examples and spread the Good News all these two thousand years. The Apostle who came to India was St. Thomas, the first missionary to India.

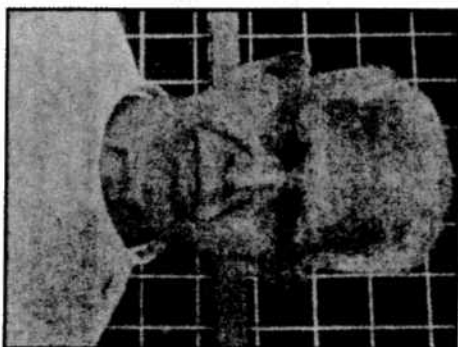
During modern times William Carey (1761 - 1834) came to India as a missionary from England. He translated the Bible into dozens of languages in India. Stanley Jones (1884 - 1973) who came from America was a friend of the Mar Thoma Church, a regular speaker of the Maramon Convention for several years.

We will select a few Marthomites who are known for their evangelistic commitments.

A few Clergy and Lay Leaders



Very Rev. V. P. Mammen



Very Rev. K. E. Oommen



Sadhu Kochukunju Upadasthi



Kandamma Varughese

1. Abraham Marthoma Metropolitan (1880 - 1947) was the first bishop of the Mar Thoma Church to reach North America (Canada) for higher studies. His enthusiasm for evangelism led to the formation of Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelists' Association. He inspired every member to be a missionary. He led the way in sending missionaries from Kerala to other parts of India to preach the gospel.
2. Very. Rev. K. E. Oommen achen (1881 - 1984) was one of the first college graduates who decided to serve the Mar Thoma Church and strengthened its evangelistic orientation. He was a scholar and a dedicated Christian holding on to life principles. He was rooted in Christ and encouraged others to deepen their faith by having a personal relationship with Christ, the Savior.
3. Sadhu Kochu Kunju (1883-1945), a topmost Upadesi (evangelist) of our church, was a supreme example of self sacrifice. He composed many spiritual songs which give consolation and encouragement as they are written out of deep spiritual experience. He regularly conducted revival meetings which led to spiritual awakening in the church.
4. Kandamma Varughese (1876-1964) was one of the founding members of the Sevika Sanghom (women's auxiliary) and travelled far and wide organizing women for evangelistic work. Her life principle was "pray without ceasing, give thanks in everything". She carried a Bible always and shared the good news in it whenever she had the opportunity.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Encourage students to learn more about at least one missionary whom they like most. Also, there are many others who are not listed in this lesson. But the teacher can mention some of them, even when they are not widely known. Try to

create an interest in the missionary work through the discussion of these names.

Materials:

Pictures of these church leaders.

Conclusion:

Missionaries are people who dedicated their life in the Lord's service in response to God's call. In obeying the call they were able to lead a fulfilling life useful to themselves and others.

Chapter 7

GRADE FIVE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: History and Relationship with Other Churches

Lesson 1

A GLOBAL CHURCH IN THE SPIRIT OF ECUMENISM

Aim : 1. To show how our church is expanding from Kerala to different parts of the world.

2. To learn how it works with other denominations belonging to the World Council of Churches.

Bible Verse: 1 Peter 2.9.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Main Ideas:

Among all states of India, Kerala always lead the way in education and literacy. Educated people moved out of the state, first within India and later to foreign countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Arabian Gulf countries and North America.

Marthomites who settled at one place gathered for

worship and formed a parish. Since worship started in North America in 1972 we had celebrated the Silver Jubilee of our growth in 1997. Parishes of North America and Europe were brought together in 1988 to form a Diocese. Now there are several activities of the church organizations at regional and diocesan levels. (Share some activities that you have been involved.)

The Mar Thoma Church is working closely with other churches in India, including Church of South India (CSI) and the church of North India (CNI), having intercommunion with both of them. In America we have inter-communion with the Episcopal church of the United States and the Anglican church of Canada. Inter-communion means allowing members of our church to receive Holy communion from the church which has a special relationship with our church as agreed by the church authorities. Achens (pastors) are allowed to celebrate communion in the other church having inter communion. We have membership with several world bodies, especially the World Council of Churches (WCC), (give examples of our participation in such organizations). Also, the Mar Thoma Church has become a member of the National Council for Churches of Christ in the United States along with 33 other "communions" in this country, (See Mar Thoma Messenger, October 1997). We live at a time when ecumenical outlook and cooperation of different denominations are on the rise.

Teaching strategies and Activities:

Explain terms such as Ecumenism and Inter communion. What are some of the other christian denominations in India and North America? Among them mention the churches which have inter-communion with our church. What are some of the other churches that we work closely by arranging special meetings and programs? How do these relationships influence the growth of our church? Discuss such questions and learn about the spirit of ecumenism of the Mar Thoma Church.

Materials:

Map of the World or a globe to locate the places mentioned above.

Conclusion:

The Mar Thoma Church, though small (population about one million) is a global church with the members living in all continents. It has a significant place among other churches and world organizations. We cherish the ecumenical outlook and work closely with other churches. From humble beginnings we have come a long way. In all humility, let us praise God for His Grace.

GRADE FIVE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of an Eastern Church

Lesson 2

WORSHIP: HIGHEST ACTIVITY FOR GOD

Aim: 1. To understand what worship is and why it is significant.

2. To develop a positive attitude for worship.

Bible Verse: John 4:24

God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Main Ideas:

Worship is the adoration of God. Worship is the highest activity of man whose ultimate aim is God's glory. In fact, it was through its existence as a worshipping community that Christianity could sustain itself in the world against hostile surroundings. It is through worship that the life and witness of the church are maintained, and the community is united and built up. The very nature of the Church constitutes the need for corporate worship and the Church gives primacy to worship. True and full worship is always an act of the whole body of Christ and not limited physically to those present at worship (*Gleanings, p.36*).

We worship in a standing posture because we believe the Lord is present in this service and as an eastern mark of respect, we adore him in standing. Kneeling is widely practised in the Roman Catholic Church. Southern Baptist Church encourages people to have spontaneous expressions during

worship, different from Eastern Churches.

There is a worship order for the Mar Thoma Church. We use the Word of God in our worship for our nurturing. Other basic elements of worship are Adoration, Confession, Thanks giving, Intercession, and Offering.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Discuss the importance of worship in Christian Life. See different worship orders used in our Church and Sunday Schools. Prepare and conduct small worship service by children with the help of teacher. Understand about other systems of worship. Encourage the cultivation of a positive attitude for worship.

Materials:

Order of Worship, prayers and Hymns. Materials related to the worship of other churches.

Conclusion:

By attending and involving in the worship, we grow in our spiritual life.

Ask the following questions:

1. What is worship? What do we accomplish as individuals and as a community through our worship?
2. Why do we stand most of the time when we worship? What are the differences with some other denominations (name and the difference).
3. What are the basic elements of worship?

GRADE FIVE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF SACRAMENTS

Aim: 1. To Understand the importance of Sacraments in Christian Life.

2. To meaningfully participate in Sacraments

Bible Verse: 1 John 4: 13

We know that we live in him and he in us because he has given us his spirit.

Main Ideas:

The Mar Thoma Church is part of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The faithful members of this religious community in an area is recognized as a parish. Each Parish exists for the purpose of worship, proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of sacraments.

Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it. Sacraments are special encounters with Christ that help us grow in grace, and lead a holy life. Jesus gave His church sacraments to continue His saving work and to build up the community of believers. Sacraments have visible expressions. That means, the sacraments bear fruit in those who receive them with the right attitudes. These visible, outward expressions point to inner grace that is given to us (spiritual truths). They carry meaning only in spiritual life experience of the participants. In other words, life of a true believer would be a visible expression of spiritual experience.

There are seven sacraments administered by the Mar Thoma Church. They are:

1. Baptism, 2. Confirmation, 3. Confession, 4. Holy Communion, 5. Marriage, 6. Ordination, 7. Unction (anointing of the sick).

Dominical sacraments:

Baptism and Holy Communion, instituted by and associated with our Lord, are called Dominical Sacraments. All members of the Church are morally bound to receive these sacraments, if they take the membership in the Church seriously and continue in the fellowship.

Confirmation is administered along with baptism, and Confession along with Holy Communion.

Optional Sacraments:

Marriage, Ordination, and Unction are optional sacraments which the members may receive as a result of personal choice

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher presents the meaning of the term sacrament and name them (seven).

Discuss the spiritual truth and the significance of the sacrament. Help the students understand that the faith of the participants is an essential element.

Conclusion:

Sacraments become means to receive God's blessings and inspires recipients to remain faithful and committed in Christian life. Our life must be a visible sign of the spiritual experience.

GRADE FIVE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4

REFORMATION IN THE MALANKARA CHURCH

Aim: To understand the reformation in our church during the 19th century, with its visionary leaders.

Bible Verse: Mark 6:2. (Good News Bible)

On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. Many people were there, and when they heard him, they were all amazed.

Main Ideas:

With the help of various Western missionary societies, especially the Church Missionary Society, Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan dedicated themselves to the cause of reform in the Malankara church. They translated the liturgy into Malayalam to bring about meaningful participation and gave emphasis to the personal study of the Word of God and initiated other reforms to remain well founded on the Word of God. That reformed group is now known as the Mar Thoma Church.

Teaching Strategies & Activities:

Teachers ask questions to recall students' learning on church heritage and Western contacts in the 19th century. Class should select some problem areas where changes are needed. Teacher explains the contribution of selected leaders, especially Abraham Malpan, in initiating new ideas and practices. Select a few of them and discuss in the class. Bible reading and worship in the mother tongue have emerged.

The spirit of evangelism has risen in great force. The church modified its administrative structure and became a reformed church.

Conclusion:

The uniqueness of the Mar Thoma Church is that it is a reformed church. The reformation must be a continuous process. Try to reform yourselves day by day in Christ. We need a devotional life (prayer and Bible reading) and outreach activities (evangelical work).

GRADE FIVE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Mission and Ministry of the Church

Lesson 5

THE LIFE AND MESSAGE OF A CHURCH LEADER:

JUHANON MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN

Aim: 1. Study the Life and Message of a church leader by selecting Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan

2. Serving others and responding to human needs.

Bible Verse: Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Main Ideas:

Among church leaders we select Juhanon Mar Thoma, the Metropolitan of our church from 1947-1976 and bishop from 1937 onwards. Thirumeni (Metropolitan) initiated new movements such as orphanages and destitute homes, home for the homeless, comparable to the "Habitat for Humanity" in America.

The Mar Thoma Church built a new bishop's house (Aramana) and celebrated the 75th birthday of Juhanon Mar Thoma in 1968. Thirumeni was reluctant to move to this new building because he thought that such a larger facility was not needed for one person. He opposed to the idea since that money could be given to the needy, especially those who did not have a home. The church responded to Thirumeni's challenge regarding social obligations and duties and built 75 homes for the homeless. It was the beginning of a new movement in Kerala, continued not only by our church, but

also by other Christian denominations and the government itself.

Thirumeni was disturbed by the sad condition of the poor and the destitutes. He wanted to improve their social and economic conditions. So he associated himself with people and movements committed to the work among these destitutes. He was influenced by people such as Sadhu Mathachen (Manganam Ashram) and K.K.Kuruvilla, his teacher at Kottayam Mar Thoma Seminary. Thirumeni's sensitivity to the needs of the poor as a young man did not loose when he assumed prestigious social and church positions. Hence he was able to initiate new programs when he became a bishop or metropolitan. Thirumeni took the initiative to start the first destitute home (1949) for people who do not have anyone to take care of. This was one of his first achievements as the new metropolitan. Also, he organized a "Beggar Relief Committee" at Maramon Convention in 1949. Volunteers were given boxes to collect money for distribution among beggars. This step discouraged begging at the convention site.

He believed that social service activities are not limited to charity programs but they are our Christian obligations. A follower of Jesus has the duty to reach others by helping them, sharing his/her wealth given by God. It was the love of God shown in Jesus that motivated Thirumeni to organize community outreach programs for the Mar Thoma Church.

People of various religions and beliefs admired the personal qualities of Thirumeni and they include the rich and the poor, the educated and the non-educated, along with political leaders and others. However, he had strong beliefs and he would express it whether it will please others or not. For example, he opposed the policies of an Indian Prime-Minister when the government become undemocratic. He did not fear the possible arrest and other consequences. The first house that Thirumeni built for the homeless was given to a

Hindu whose need being considered as the criteria.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

In Grade Four we have introduced the names of a few missionaries, selecting only one or two contributions of each. This year we study one person with more details, Juhanon Mar Thoma. He has some unique understanding of the church's relationship to the society and attempted to respond to the needs of people in the lowest socio-economic group. He recognized this task as his Christian obligation, comparable to the life of the Biblical prophets who stood for righteousness or justice. He led a very simple life with decent personal qualities which people admired. For children growing in an affluent society, his life provides a rare model.

Since Thirumeni published several books regarding his life and mission we have the resources for our study. They include *Ormakalum Kurippukalum* (CLS, 1971) *Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma: Jeevithavum Sandheshavum* (Mar Thoma Sabha Council, 1977), both in Malayalam, and *Christianity in India and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church*, 1968.

Teaching Materials:

Pictures of Metropolitan Juhanon Thirumeni on different occasions.

Conclusion:

Thirumeni widened the scope of mission by including areas beyond preaching. He showed that outreach activities are an integral part of mission. Today our church is known for its work among the poor and the needy. People rejected by others in society are being cared for by our church including the destitutes, the disabled, the mentally ill and the alcoholics and others. He has strengthened the emphasis on the evangelical social gospel in our church.

PART II DETAILED STUDY OF THEMES

8. **Grade Six**
History and Relationship with Other Churches
9. **Grade Seven**
Worship: Faith and Practices of an Eastern Church
10. **Grade eight**
Christian Sacraments
11. **Grade nine**
Uniqueness and Central Values
12. **Grade Ten**
Mission and Ministry of the Church

Notes to Teachers

The approach or the pattern of organization of materials for each class changes from Grade Six to Grade Ten. In these classes the themes are taught by devoting one year (one or two months during the year) for each theme. Hence each theme consists of five lessons for its detailed study. Being senior classes the organization of material for each year also changes with more space for main ideas and less on teaching strategy which is combined with conclusion or question for the lesson.

Chapter 8

GRADE SIX

HISTORY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Lesson 1

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES: A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Aim : 1. To learn about the beginning of Christian Churches.

2. To study what is common to all churches.

Bible Verse: Colossians 1: 18

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Main Ideas:

The beginning of Christian Church

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples and other believers gathered in Jerusalem for prayer. The Holy Spirit came upon them as Jesus had promised. These believers who are ordinary people became extraordinary when they received the power of the Holy Spirit. The first Christians were Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior expected by them (Acts, chapters 1 and 2).

In the early stage the church grew very rapidly even though it experienced very much oppression and persecution. Such persecutions lasted for about 300 years. The first group of opponents were some Jews. The reason for their opposition was that the early Christians believed and proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified on the cross. Later, the Roman Government also persecuted Christians severely. They compelled Christians to worship the Roman Emperor. But the Christians refused to do so. The Government considered Christians as anti-nationalists. However, this policy of persecution changed in the fourth century when the Roman Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity and granted freedom of Religion to the Christians through the Edict of Milan. The Church grew rapidly in various regions of the world in the following centuries.

The church exists for its mission. The mission of the church is the continuation of the mission started by Christ. As fire exists by its burning, the church exists by its mission.

Characteristics Common to all Churches:

The church is a body that maintains unity in Christ. This is the ideal nature, but we see today the church divided into many denominations. It is our task to strive for the unity of the church which is already a reality promised by our Lord.

The church is holy which means that people are set apart for the rule of God. They are in the process of sanctification and cleansing. In the world of sin and chaos, the church continually struggle to maintain her true character and holiness.

The church is catholic: The word catholic means universal or comprehensive. This term in relation to the church refers to all people of faith in Jesus Christ or the whole body of Christians.

The church is Apostolic: The word apostolic means one who is sent with a mission. The disciples of Christ were sent

by the Lord with a commission to bear witness to the gospel. The churches which are born as a result of the apostolic preaching are apostolic in character.

The church is a worshipping community: This is the most visible characteristic of the church. The community acknowledges the Lordship of God in Christ and adores God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, i.e. the God as the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sustainer.

The church is a pilgrim community: Through worship, the community is sustained, fed and strengthened for the journey. The goal of the church through its constant mission is to continue the offering for all people at the altar of the Lord (Romans 15:15).

Discussion questions:

1. Explain the beginning of the Christian Churches, after reading Acts. chapter 1 and 2.
2. a) How did the early Christians face persecutions?
b) What qualities do you find in these early Christians?
c) If you were a Christian during the time of persecution what would be your response?
3. a) What are the characteristics common to all churches? Explain each in a sentences or two.
b) Evaluate your church based on these characteristics.

GRADE SIX

HISTORY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Lesson 2

THE MALANKARA CHURCH THROUGH THE CENTURIES

Aim: To overview the growth of our church in Kerala from the 1st to the 19th century.

Bible Verse: Matthew 28:18-20.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I commanded you; And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Main Ideas:

Thomas was one of the disciples who was with Jesus Christ when the above commission was given to them by the Lord. Thus being sent as an Apostle, Thomas set out to India. According to the Indian tradition, he reached Cranganore at the Malabar coast in the year AD 52. We, St. Thomas Christians, believe that St. Thomas set out to India in search of the "lost sheep" in this great nation, India.

Tradition says that the Namboodiri Brahmains (upper caste) community in Kerala were attracted to the new teachings and several of them received baptism. We believe that Thomas established seven churches in the Malabar coast, and they are at (1) Cranganore (Malankara), (2) Chavakad (Palur), (3) Parur near Alwaye, (4) Gokamangalam, (5) Niranam, (6) Nilakkal (Chayal), (7) Quilon (Kalyan). A

few families among them were chosen to be responsible for the administration of the Christian Community. Tradition again says that St. Thomas then continued his mission and reached the east coast of India and died a martyr's death at a place now called "St. Thomas Mount", and was buried at Mylapore in Madras.

The seven churches St. Thomas founded in Kerala began to grow slowly. They made an impact around their surroundings. The neighbors of these Christians called them as "Nazarenes" (followers of the man of Nazareth). Very little is known about the detailed history of the early period of the church.

The Syrian/Persian contact:

In AD.345, a significant group of about 400 Christian families from East Syria migrated to Kerala under Thomas of Cana. The Nazarenes (local Christians) received the newly arrived Christians who later settled in the land and intermingled with the local people. It is also known that following Thomas of Cana, several priests and prelates visited India from Persia.

In the 6th century, the Persian influence began to make a big thrust through a great missionary movement. This was from the Nestorian church. The Malankara Christians were drawn to this movement and soon Nestorianism began to flourish in the church. The Nestorian Liturgy in Aramaic and their practices were accepted. The relationship continued till the 15th century.

The Roman Catholic Contact:

Vasco de Gama, a Portuguese sailor, discovered a sea route to India in 1498, and he landed at Calicut. Being a devoted Roman Catholic, he got the Roman Catholic Missionaries to work among the native Christians. By 1599 the Roman Catholic missionaries compelled the Malankara Christians to embrace the Latin version of Roman Catholicism. This was

done at the Diamper Synod (Udayamperoor near Cochin). Archdeacon Geevarghese signed on behalf of the Malankara churches in the Synod of Udayamperoor. Alexio-de-Menezes was the Roman Catholic Archbishop. An insignificant minority withdrew from signing the document and followed their original practice. Later they revived and now continue as the Church of the East (Chaldean Church) in Trichur.

Declaration of Independence:

In the year 1653, about 25000 devoted Christians under the leadership of Archdeacon Thomas and 633 clergy marched to Cochin fort. Confronted by the Portuguese cannons, they withdrew to the church at Mattancherry, where there was a cross. They wanted to take an oath declaring that they would have nothing to do with the Portuguese any more. So they tied ropes to the cross and touching the ropes they took the following pledge: "We and our children shall never be under Rome."

The granite cross was slightly leaning and so this oath is known as the "Coonen Cross Oath" (Coonen means bent). It was a declaration of independence against foreign control. People were determined to hold on to their faith as practiced over many centuries. Archdeacon Thomas was made a Bishop with the title Marthoma I, by the supporters. He was the first Indian Bishop of the church. He sought the support of sister churches in Antioch, Babylon, Jerusalem and Alexandria.

The Jacobite contact:

In the year 1665, Mar Gregorious arrived in India from Jerusalem as per the request of Malankara Christians and re-consecrated Marthoma I. The Church which declared freedom from Rome, was now gradually brought under the yoke of Jacobitism (followers of Jacob Bardeaus, a monk from Syria).

The Anglican Contact:

In the year 1806, a visitor from the Church of England

came to the Malabar coast. He was Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain attached to the British Army in Calcutta. He met the then Metropolitan, Mar Dionysius the Great. He got the gospels translated into Malayalam in 1811. In 1813 a seminary for the education of the Syrian Christian clergy was founded at Kottayam. In 1816 the first Anglican missionary, Thomas Norton, arrived in Malabar followed by the famous trio, Benjamin Bailey, Henry Baker and Joseph Fenn who arrived as a mission of help, not to build a new church but to rebuild the old dilapidated church. Even though the Malankara Christians encountered different influences and teachings, many people kept their original faith through centuries.

Discussion Questions

1. a) Discuss the tradition of the arrival of Apostle Thomas in India and the establishment of churches in Malankara (Malabar).
b) Who were the first converts to Christianity in Kerala during the 1st century?
c) Where did St. Thomas establish the seven churches? Mark these places in a map of Kerala?
2. a) Why do we give importance to the migration of Thomas of Cana during the 4th century?
b) Explain the belief and practices of the church in Malabar (Kerala) during the period from 4th to 16th century.
3. How did the Malankara church accept or reject a foreign church domination after the establishment of the Portuguese rule?
4. When strong powers and influences come to our faith, what is our response? (Am I keeping the original faith in Jesus Christ?)
5. What is Coonen Cross Oath? How was the church different after this event?
6. Discuss how the church in Malabar gained from the Anglican contact.

GRADE SIX

HISTORY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Lesson 3

MAR THOMA CHURCH & REFORMATION

- Aim:** 1. To learn what we gained from the Reformation which transformed the Malankara Church.
2. To continue the spirit of Reformation through the Mar Thoma Church.

Bible Verse: Psalm 119:105.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Main Ideas:

Through the influence of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), a group of clergy and laity had the opportunity to have English education in the Malabar church. When they studied the Bible they realised the low spiritual level of their own church. In those days public worship was conducted in the Syriac language. People understood very little of the meaning of the worship. The clergy did not have sufficient training. Even young boys were ordained as priests at the request of interested parties. Regarding the declining conditions of the Malabar church prior to reformation, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma writes, "some of the vestiges of the Roman connections remained even though independence was established". Celibacy of the priests was insisted upon, prayers to the saints and the Holy Qurbana for the departed (dead) continued. Compulsory fees were levied on the occasions of rites and ceremonies like baptism, marriages and masses for the departed. These fees were the main source of

income for the clergy. The Bible was a closed book. Religious life consisted of certain rituals, ceremonies and festivals. People were steeped in ignorance and superstition. Therefore the missionaries felt the need for purification of the church from within.

Abraham Malpan (Malpan means professor or teacher) was the pioneer in the Malankara church reformation. He was teaching in the Kottayam Seminary. He and eleven other priests submitted a memorandum to the British Resident in 1836 suggesting much needed changes in the church. This is called "The Trumpet Call of Reformation". He translated the Syriac liturgy which was used for centuries, into the Malayalam language and started celebrating the Holy Qurbana in Malayalam at his own native place, Maramon.

As a church we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Reformation in the Malankara Church in 1986. In North America we arranged a public meeting along with the Family Conference at Chicago. A special volume was published by the Sabha Council of our church. It consisted both Malayalam and English articles. (*Navekaranathinte Thrithheya Kanaka Jubilee*, Mar Thoma Sabha Council, 1986.)

Results of Reformation in the Malankara Church:

The following prayers and practices were discarded.

1. Mediation through the saints.
2. Prayer and adoration to Virgin Mary.
3. Prayer and mass for the dead.
4. Auricular confession (confession to the priest).
5. False teachings and practices such as associating concessions with payment of money to priests, seeking forgiveness of sins through offering oil, incense, candles and bodily penance.

Revival:

All these steps led the church into a revival in all spheres of church life. Moreover, the leaders of the reform exhorted the people:

- (a) return to the gospel message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- (b) Clean up wrong ways of life such as horoscope and other superstitions.

(c) Take up the responsibility to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. All these were based on the study of the Word of God. People were encouraged to study the Bible and live a life in accordance with it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the major practices of the church as well as that of the society that were challenged by the leaders of the Reformation.
2. Who was Abraham Malpan? What is "the Trumpet call of Reformation? When was it made?
3. What were the prayers and practices rejected by the Reformers?
4. Explain the revival brought in the Malankara Church as a result of Reformation?
5. Discuss how the Mar Thoma Church hold on to the Reformation principles and practices.

GRADE SIX

HISTORY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Lesson 4

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

- Aim:** 1. To learn how the Reformation has changed our outlook and values on church administration.
2. To understand the working of different organisations and representative bodies within the church.

Bible Verse: Psalm 119:15-16.

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees, I will not neglect your word.

Main ideas:

Abraham Malpan felt the need for reformation in the church on the basis of the Word of God. He never intended to form a new church. But he was excommunicated (explain ex-communication) by the Metropolitan Chepat Mar Dionysius because of the reformation principles that he upheld. He held firmly to his conviction that "salvation" is by faith in Jesus Christ alone, as revealed in the Scriptures. The reformed group was convinced that they continued in the Apostolic faith brought to India by St Thomas. Hence they accepted the name, "The Mar Thoma Syrian Church". They decided that the church should retain its Episcopal traditions, and therefore Abraham Malpan sent his nephew, who was a priest, to Syria to be consecrated as an Episcopa (Bishop) by the Patriarch of Antioch. It did not mean that the Church of Antioch had any special authority over the Malankara Church

and we always upheld the independence of the Malankara Church.

"Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam" (Representative Body):

With regard to administration, a constitution was adopted emphasising democratic values. The members of the decision making body, known as the "Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam" are elected for a term of three years. Each parish of the Mar Thomas Church is represented in the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam according to the size of their membership. Sixty-five percent of the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam members are elected from the Laity and thirty five percent form the Clergy including Bishops. All decisions affecting the church concerning faith and administration are made by the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam.

Episcopal Synod:

The Episcopal Synod consists of all the Bishops of the Mar Thoma Church and the Metropolitan (the twentieth Mar Thoma and the senior most Bishop) is the supreme authority. The Episcopal Synod has to approve all the decisions of the Sabha Manadalam, before they can be implemented. The Metropolitan has special power to send back the decisions for reconsideration by the Mandalam. Thus the church is following the combination of democratic values and Episcopal authority. The Bishops of the church are elected by the Sabha Mandalam. To be elected as Bishop the candidate has to get 75 percent of votes of both the clergy and laity, counted separately.

Sabha Council:

There is an executive committee called the Sabha Council elected by the Sabha Prathinidhi Mandalam, for a period of three years to assist the Metropolitan in implementing the decisions of the Mandalam and in general administration of the Church. Each Diocese will have at least three members in the Sabha Council. The Mandalam also elects two trustees,

one from the clergy and the other from the laity to handle the financial matters, along with the Metropolitan. The Sabha Secretary is also elected by and from the Sabha Mandalam.

The Diocesan Administration:

For administrative convenience, the Mar Thoma Church is divided into Dioceses, each headed by a Bishop. At present we have 11 (eleven) Dioceses and nine Bishops. While eight Bishops serve one diocese each, one Bishop handles two dioceses. The Diocesan Bishop functions subject to the constitution and the constitutional authority of the Metropolitan. Matters of policy are decided by the Diocesan Assembly which consists of clergy serving in that Diocese and elected representatives from all the parishes within the Diocese.

The Diocesan Assembly has an elected executive committee called the "Diocesan Council". Its chief officers are the Diocesan Secretary and the Treasurer and they assist the Diocesan Bishop.

Regional Administration:

Dioceses are divided into regional groups called Centers consisting of adjoining parishes. The organisations of the church such as, Youth fellowship, Sevika Sanghom, Voluntary Evangelist's Association (edavaka or parish mission) and Sunday School send representatives from the parishes to their regional body for common activities. All organisations have their own committees on the Diocesan and Regional levels which plan and execute the activities of the respective organisation.

Parish:

The Mar Thoma Church has at present over 1000 parishes spread throughout the world. The Vicar of the parish functions as the President of the parish administration. He is at the same time the representative of the Metropolitan in the local congregation. Matters of policy are decided by the

Administration of the Mar Thoma Church

Head of Our Church : The Mar Thoma Metropolitan

His Grace Dr. Philpouse Mar Chrysostom Mar Thoma Metropolitan

Synod: All Bishops
(nine in 2000)

Sabha Manadalam
(Large body, Representing all parishes, 3 year term)
(Both laity & Clergy)

Sabha Council
(elected by Manadalam)

Dioceses (eleven)
Diocesan bishop, Assembly, Dio. Council

Diocese of N. America and Europe
Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus,
Sinai Mar Thoma Center, N. Y.

Diocesan Assembly
(Representing all Parishes in this Diocese)

Diocesan Council
(elected by the assembly)

Parishes

Vicar (achens), General Body, Executive Committee

Organizations of the Parish
(Sunday School is one of them)

Members of the church

Parish members as Prayer Groups

General Body of the Parish which consists of all communicant members of 18 years and above. Policy is implemented by the Executive Committee, which is elected by the General Body. The basic mission entrusted upon each parish is to declare the good news of salvation to the community in which the parish exists.

Financial Matters:

The parishes and the church are supported by the voluntary contributions of the members. Before reformation, stipulated fees were levied, to be paid at the time of conducting special ceremonies like baptism, wedding or funeral. Subscriptions are now paid on voluntary basis. The members are exhorted to practice Christian stewardship of time, talents and money and to offer these in the service of God. The practice of "tithing" is also encouraged. Thus in every matter our church is self supported, self governed and self propagated.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the highest decision - making body of the church? Who approves these decisions?
2. Who are the members of the episcopal synod?
3. How is the diocesan assembly formed?
4. Mention the title and functions of people serving the parish in official capacity.
5. How do we meet the expenses of the parish and the church?

GRADE SIX

HISTORY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Lesson 5

GLOBAL OUTREACH OF THE MAR THOMA CHURCH

- Aim:** 1. To learn how the Mar Thoma Church has expanded from Kerala to different parts of India and to other countries.
2. To realize how the Mar Thoma community has grown in America, rooted in faith and loyal to the church.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 3: 7 & 9.

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. For we are God's fellow workers: you are God's field, God's building.

Main Ideas:

The Mar Thoma Church was mostly confined to the Travancore and Cochin states on the Malabar Coast (now Kerala State), in the southern most part of India, till the beginning of the 20th century. The introduction of English education opened the way for the members of the church to move to other parts of India for higher education and employment. They had the courage to leave their homes and dear ones and go to distant places to take up work among unknown people and circumstances. Thus the members of the church went to different cities to establish themselves where suitable jobs could be found. One remarkable feature is that young women also went for training in nursing and other professions and moved to other States in India.

Wherever the members of the church settled, they remained devoted to the faith received in their childhood. They joined in worship with fellow Kerala Christians where they had opportunities to do so. However, when the number increased and there was a small community of believers, they started to worship in Malayalam. Gradually congregations were developed in most of the large cities in India. Meanwhile, through the influence of the Evangelistic Association and Maramon Convention a few Ashrams were started in different parts of India, like Ankola on the west coast, Sihora in Madhya Pradesh and other places. All these Ashrams have undertaken valuable service to the community around by establishing hospitals, schools, and other social service activities, along with preaching the gospel.

Expansion of the Mar Thoma Church into Other Countries:

Along with the expansion to different parts of India, members of the Mar Thoma Church began to go to Malaysia and Singapore in the 1930s, seeking opportunities for work. They found work mostly in schools, hospitals and other offices. Small groups were formed in different places in Malaysia and Singapore for worship and fellowship. Rev. T.N. Koshy was sent to give them pastoral care. He did a wonderful job in forming the congregations. A Diocese consisting of about 30 parishes in Malaysia and one in Singapore was formed. The St. Thomas School in Singapore has presented the gospel to the students and has helped many each year to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Evangelistic work being done by the Malaysian Zone is also tremendous.

With the development of the oil industry within the Arabian Gulf countries, members of the Mar Thoma Church have gone to work there in large numbers in the past 40 years. They have established congregations and regular worship services, though direct evangelism is not permitted by law in Islamic countries.

From the late sixties and early seventies, Mar Thoma

families immigrated to North America and Europe for higher education and employment opportunities. The small immigrant communities began to gather together as prayer groups to maintain and foster their spiritual identity. In 1972, the first regular Mar Thoma services began in New York and laid the foundation for the formation of a number of parishes and later the establishment of "The Diocese of North America & Europe in 1988".

By 1980, the Mar Thoma Church entered into a "sister-church" relationship with the Episcopal Church of North America and this relationship enhanced our growth in this country. It was indeed the farsightedness of late Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Athanasius Sufragan Metropolitan, that made this agreement and this astonishing growth possible. The Diocese of North America and Europe will always be indebted to the late Thirumeni for his innumerable and invaluable contributions. A new chapter began in 1988 when a diocese was recognised with Rt. Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Chrysostom Sufragan Metropolitan as its first diocesan bishop.

Now we have a Diocesan headquarters with a resident Bishop since 1993. There are 39 clergy, serving 47 parishes and 20 congregations. Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus is the present Diocesan Bishop. Since the late eighties and early nineties the Mar Thoma Church has grown tremendously in USA and Canada. At present we have over 5000 families and about 20,000 members in this Diocese.

The Diocesan Assembly:

As explained in lesson 4, the Diocese of North America & Europe is one of the eleven dioceses of the Mar Thoma Church. All policy matters are decided by the Diocesan Assembly, which consists of all clergy of the diocese and elected representatives from each parish. The Diocesan Assembly has an elected executive committee called the "Diocesan Council".

Discussion Question:

1. Explain the pattern of growth of the Mar Thoma Church beyond Kerala.
2. Discuss with your parents their early struggle in forming a worshipping community in America.
3. Discuss the growth of the Mar Thomas Church in North America.
4. Write a short account of the formation of the Mar Thoma Parish in your area, after interviewing a few senior members.

Chapter 9

GRADE SEVEN

WORSHIP: FAITH AND PRACTICES OF AN EASTERN CHURCH

Lesson 1

THE MAR THOMA WORSHIP ORDER

- Aim:**
1. To recognize the importance of worship.
 2. To understand the Worship Order better and to make it more meaningful.

Bible Verse: Romans 12:1.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in views of God's, mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.

Main Ideas:

Importance of Worship: It is through worship that the life and witness of the church are maintained, and the community is united and built up. The very nature of Church constitutes the need for corporate worship and the church gives primacy to worship. Through worship, we offer ourselves to the Lord. Worship is the highest activity of people whose sole and ultimate gain is God's glory. It is in and through the faithful life and true worship of the members that a church retains its inner spiritual vitality which in turn gives expression to service and witness. (*Gleanings p. 36*). It is in worship that the local church finds its identity and unity. The cleansing and renewal initiated by Abraham Malpan made worship meaningful and