



The Stream

A monthly publication of the Diocese of South-West America

Oct - Nov 2013

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Combined October/November Fall Edition



DIOCESAN CENTER RELOCATION TO 'URSHLEM'

**INDIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CENTER
TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY NOVEMBER 30, 2013**



Looking Back at Edmonton : MMVS Conference 2013

Annie George, St. Mary's, Calgary

Early this year, when I heard about the MMVS Annual Conference being held at Edmonton, close to where I live, I did not have any second thoughts on whether I should attend it. It was perhaps an act of the Holy Spirit that made me sign up for the conference without even checking my husband's availability to take care of our little kids by himself for three days. This being the first conference I attended, I did have my own apprehensions on whether it would give me added benefits over the weekly teleconference studies that I attend.

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Remembering a Holy Man -

Kuruvilla G. Thamaravelil



I met Fr. K. K Mathews (later H.G. Mathews Mar Barnabas Metropolitan) in 1967 at Kottayam Old Seminary. I came to know him through my uncle Fr. T. V. Varghese, who was serving as the Manager at Old Seminary. On some Sundays, Fr. K. K. Mathews celebrated the Holy Qurbana at our parish, St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Mannar, and visited our home before returning to Seminary. Once he became Thirumeni, he visited and spoke at many conventions, including our own St. Gregorios Orthodox convention.

cont'd on p. 8



Nativity
(Yeldho)

Lent

Dec 1 - 25



**L.L. H.G. Mathews
Mar Barnabas**

**First Memorial
Feast
on
December 9, 2013**



Diocesan Center



MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH
DIOCESE OF SOUTH-WEST AMERICA
 3101 HOPKINS RD, BEASLEY, TEXAS 77417

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"LET YOUR DEEDS GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN" ST. MATTHEW 5:16



HIS GRACE DR. THOMAS MAR MAKARIOS
 METROPOLITAN AMERICAN DIOCESE
 (1979-1992)



HIS GRACE MATHEWS MAR BARNABAS
 METROPOLITAN AMERICAN DIOCESE
 (1992-2009)

DIOCESAN CENTER RELOCATION TO
'URSHLEM' INDIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CENTER
 (3101 HOPKINS RD, BEASLEY, TEXAS 77417)
ON SATURDAY NOVEMBER, 30TH, 2013

HOLY QURBANA STARTS AT 8.00AM, FOLLOWED BY HOUSE BLESSING, BENEDICTION & LUNCH



His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius
 Diocesan Metropolitan

By the grace of God, our diocese has completed the purchase of the property in Beasley, Texas, near Houston, which will now serve as the new diocesan center. The desire and labor put forth by many pioneer priests and laity to have a comprehensive diocesan center has now become a reality with this newly acquired property. As a first step, we are looking to relocate to the new property on Saturday, November 30th, 2013. On that day, the Morning Prayers and Divine Liturgy will be celebrated beginning at 8.00 AM followed by the house blessing ceremony, Benediction and Lunch.

We take this opportunity to extend a formal invite to all our respected Cor-Episcopoi, Priests, Deacons, Sabha Managing Committee and Association members, Diocesan Council and Assembly members, leaders of all the spiritual organizations, and all the faithful to come and join for this historic event. Most importantly, we are requesting your whole-hearted prayers and support as we embark on this new journey

Diocesan Council / Program Committee Conveners

Driving directions: Head Southwest on I-59, take the Exit onto TX-540, continue to drive 2.2 miles and then turn right onto Farm-To-Market Rd 1875, continue 2.75 miles; then take a slight left into Drachenberg Rd, turn right onto Hopkins Rd, destination will be on the left.

For more Information Please Contact : Very Rev. Gheevarghis Aroopala Cor-Episcopa (Finance Committee Convener 281.969.8799), Rev. Fr. Dr. C O Varghis /Rev. Fr. Jake Kurian (Food Committee Conveners 832.289.8027), Rev. Fr. Cheriyan Mathai (Liturgy Committee Convener 281.216.4347), Rev. Fr. Joshua George (Reception Committee Convener 214.642.4669), Rev. Fr. Joel Mathew (Decorations Committee Convener 214.232.5286) , Mr. S. K. Cherian (Publicity Committee Convener 281.513.5961), Mr. Elson Samuel (Program Coordinator from Diocesan Council 210.449.8556).

2013 Sunday School 12th Grade Diploma Exam

The 12th Grade Diploma Examination of the Sunday School of our diocese has been conducted in recent academic years to evaluate the understanding of students in relation to the faith, sacramental life and customs of the Church. A total of 76 students participated in the exam for the 2012-2013 academic year which was conducted on May 12th and June 9th. Out of the 76 students who wrote the exam, 62 passed with the minimum required score of 70 or above. The 82% overall pass rate was higher than the previous year. The following students ranked top three at the diocesan level for this year:

- 1st Place - Sherin Mathew (St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Los Angeles, CA)
- 2nd Place - Chris Mathew (St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst, IL)
- 3rd Place - Christina Varghese (St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Warren, MI)

Results like these demonstrate the hard work and team effort by the Sunday School administrators of the diocese, regional coordinators, students, teachers and parents.

Sooboro
 Wednesday Prayer

Let us unite to pray for others!

Tele-Prayer Meeting in Malayalam

From 10:20am to 11:30am (CST) every Wednesday.

Bible reading, hymns, devotional message, intercessory prayer for the needy & the sick.

Please send prayer requests to: sooboro@ds-wa.org

Phone #: (218) 632-0187

Access code: 3703#

Metropolitan's Column*Metropolitan's Column*

Beloved in Christ,

By the grace of God, we are moving forward with the plans to relocate to the newly acquired property in Beasley, Texas on Saturday, November 30th which will henceforth be known as 'Urshlem' (city of peace). The information about this Orthodox Christian Center and the event taking place on November 30th has already been communicated to you, and we seek your valuable prayers and presence for this event.

There are many dreams regarding the development of this new center and the desired projects associated with it. In considering the future, it is necessary to look at both the North American context in which we live in while focusing on the present and future needs of the Malankara Orthodox Church community. As the first task, we have initiated the building of a chapel and museum. It is our prayer that this will serve as the spiritual strength from where we can be empowered and guided by God's wisdom for future initiatives including a conference center, counseling center, retirement home, monastery, convent, theological seminary, youth center, etc. It is also absolutely essential that we seriously consider projects that will help strengthen the bond of family and community living. Many basic Christian morals and values have diminished in this modern era, and the Church has a responsibility to uphold Biblical teachings including its perspective on marriage and family life. It is our humble request that you join us in this venture with your full prayerful and financial support so that we can achieve the many goals and visions we have for our diocese in this part of the world.

As we have entered into the liturgical period in preparation for the Nativity of Christ, let us prepare ourselves to receive our Savior through 25 days of proper prayer and fasting centered around spiritual discipline. We must set apart time for meditation in the midst of the busy schedules we all have, truly spend time evaluating our spiritual journey and come back to His presence through repentance. The stars or lights we put in our homes during this season is not intended to simply illuminate our home, but they serve as a reminder of the Divine light, the Christ, who is born and ever-present among us. This light should lead us to the cave (manger) to bow down and worship our Lord and not the place where innocents were killed. Rather than being an avenue through which evil deeds such as alcoholism are fostered, let this Lenten season be such that all activities, including caroling, gatherings and celebrations bring glory to God. Let us pray for the peace of God to reign upon this earth and let us glorify His name with the angels in heaven.

**Your shepherd in Christ,
Alexios Mar Eusebius**

Faith and Religion

Looking Forward to a Year Centered in Christ - Fr. James Cheriyan



Plato sounds authentically Orthodox when he says, "An unexamined life is not worth living." We live our lives in a haze. A simple observation of our own lives and lives around us will underscore the reality of how unexamined our lives are. Our attitudes, lifestyle and everything about us bear witness to this. In such circumstances the beginning of the liturgical year of the Church, called 'Kudosh Idtho' becomes so relevant for our times and personal lives.

Sanctification of the Church is a very personal experience of every individual of the Church.

This can only become a personal experience only if there is a through examination of the depths of our very existence. It is precisely this lack of introspection that leads us into a comfortable oblivion of the true calling in our lives, as the members of the Body of Christ and as the sons and daughters of the God most High.

The true experience of the presence of Christ reveals the areas that requires catharsis or cleansing in our lives. This can never be a one time experience neither can it be a 'once in a while thing'. A continuous life in Christ not only separates the weeds of our souls but also sows and irrigates the virtues that leads one from glory to greater glory. The greatest curse of Christendom are Christians without an experience of Christ on a daily basis. The day we make pleasing God as the priority of our lives, we would truly be bears of His light and life. A lack of zeal for Christ and His Church is what drains us of many a great blessing and fills our lives with darkness.

Christ is always born in a sanctified and dedicated place. It does not matter even if it is a place of dumb animals surrounded by the most humble lives on earth. As we prepare to partake in the feast of the Incarnation of our Lord, let us sanctify and dedicate our lives and everything about it for Him to be born in us.



"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20 (NKJV)



From Around the Diocese

MGOCSM Annual Perunal Retreat at St. Gregorios Dallas

On November 2nd, 2013, the MGOCSM of St. Gregorios Dallas had their annual Area Perunal Retreat at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Garland, Texas. The guest speaker of the retreat was Rev. Fr. Timothy (Tenny) Thomas from New York and the theme of the retreat was "Battling Burnout", with the theme verse taken from the book of Philippians 4: 6-7, which says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."



Youth from all over the Dallas Area were in attendance, as well as Rev. Fr. Mat Alexander (Dallas/OK Area Youth Minister), Rev. Fr. Teji Abraham (Vicar, St. James Orthodox Mission Church), and Rev. Fr. C. G. Thomas (Vicar, St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Garland). Tenny Achen's message about battling stress with prayer and faith was a delight to hear for all who attended.

MGOCSM Chicago - 'Being Ambassadors for Christ'

MGOCSM Chicago presented the year's new theme and the area's new Core Team during Friday Night held at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst on Friday, October 18th at 6:30 PM. Rev. Fr. Christopher Mathew delivered a message on what it means to be an Ambassador for Christ. The theme of the new year was from 2 Corinthians 5: 18-21. The new Core Team was introduced at this event as well: Melvin Thomas from St. Mary's Orthodox Church, Oak



Lawn; Thomas Mamoottile from St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Bellwood; Jeslin Panicker from St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst; Melvin Thomas from St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst, and Susan Zacharia from St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Chicago. They seek to carry on the great work of Mathew Mani from St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Elmhurst and Subin Oommen from St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Chicago, the former Core Team members. Approximately 30 youth members were in attendance. MGOCSM Chicago looks forward to growing in God's faithfulness as we focus on how to become better Ambassadors of Christ.

MGOCSM DEVOTIONALS - <http://www.mgocsmamerica.com/devotionals>

MGOCSM North America releases weekly devotionals based on the Gospel readings for each week. These devotionals are written by the leaders of the Church - both clergy and lay leaders. This is a great way to revamp your week with self-reflection and in the word. Please subscribe and spread the word in your areas as well!

Slootho

Tuesday Prayer

Let us come together for
fellowship and intercession!

Tele-Prayer Meeting in English

From 9:05 pm to 9:35 pm (CST) every Tuesday.
Soothoro prayer, Devotional message,
Intercessory prayer for the needy & the sick.
Please send prayer requests to: slootho@ds-wa.org
Phone # (218) 632-0187
Access code: 3703#

From Around the Diocese

Perunal Celebrations at St. Gregorios, Houston - Rohith Cherian, St. Gregorios, Houston

The annual Perunal celebrations of St. Gregorios Orthodox Church, Houston was held between Sunday, October 27 and Sunday November 3, 2013. The program this year was led by H.G. Dr. Yuhanon Mar Diascoros Metropolitan of the Chennai Diocese and Rev. Dn. Daniel (Dennis) Mathai. We were blessed to have Rev. Fr. Dr. C.O. Varghis join us right from the start of this year's Perunal celebrations. The celebrations kicked off with flag hoisting flag on October 27 after Holy Qurbana. During the week, Holy Qurbana was conducted every evening followed by intercessory prayers. On Friday, the celebrations kicked into high gear with the arrival of Thirumeni, who was received by our Vicar Rev Fr. P.M. Cheriyan, C.O. Varghis Achen, Semassen and the acolytes and faithful of the church. After Evening Prayer, Semassen delivered a message. The church choir provided musical support throughout the weekend programs. Saturday began with Holy Qurbana by our own Cheriyan Achen assisted by Daniel Semassen, followed by a retreat. Thirumeni led a session for the parents and Semassen a parallel session for the younger generation. Thirumeni held the congregation spell bound for two hours.

His Grace delivered a thought provoking message laced with his characteristic sense of humor. Semassen spoke passionately about the meaning of the Perunal. Evening prayer was followed by a message from Thirumeni. Holy Qurbana on Sunday also marked the beginning of the new liturgical year - Kudosh Idtho celebrating the Sanctification of the Church. The church was packed even before Morning Prayer started. We were fortunate to have many members from our sister parishes in Houston attend.



At the beginning of Holy Qurbana, Thirumeni led the ceremony blessing two new entrants to serve at the altar. A well-organized "Pradakshinam" around the church took place after Holy Qurbana. The Liturgy concluded with a beautiful Apostolic Blessing from Thirumeni. Everyone joined for lunch at the Parish Hall afterwards. This year's Perunal was truly a divine experience for all.

Let me... by Christina Elson

*Let me stand at the edge of the rock but don't let me fall
 Let me fly into the sky but not too close to the sun
 Let me breathe in the world but not the impurities
 Let me fight my battles but not too violently
 Let me be proud but also humble
 Let me be thoughtful but not so much I forget who I am
 Let me swim into the depths of history but not to repeat its mistakes
 Let me walk with the blind, dumb and deaf and see the world through their heart and soul
 Let me be a worker who knows how to play
 Let me be the friend that can be your councilor
 Let me be the sun to show you the path but not elect your trail
 Let me be your stars but away from the turbulence of the world
 Let me be the nature that can show you pure beauty
 Let me be the wind to show you God and his ways
 Let me be the one you fall in love without any heartbreaks
 Let me be me and you will see the wonders of the world you never noticed before
 If only you let me be me....*

From Around the Diocese

Houston-Regional MGOCSM Women's Retreat - *Christina Cheriyan, St. Gregorios, Houston*

The MGOCSM of St. Gregorios Orthodox Church Houston held the first Women's retreat of the Houston-regional MGOCSM on October 12, 2013. The clergy present were: Rev. Fr. P.M Cheriyan (Vicar, St. Gregorios Houston), Rev. Fr. Joel Mathew (DSWA MGOCSM General Secretary and Asst. Vicar, St. Thomas Houston), and Rev. Fr. Jake Kurian (South Region MGOCSM Vice President & Asst. Vicar, St. Stephen's Houston). This retreat aimed to educate women about what they can do for the church since they do have specific roles that they are not aware of. Young men have privileges to serve the church by entering the altar or by influencing the decisions made by the church. After the retreat was over we hoped to encourage women to be more



active.

Our main speaker Mrs. Promila Eapen talked about her past experiences and what influenced her to be an active member of her church. Our workshop speaker Mrs. Jaimy Varghese talked about St. Mary of Egypt, who was so far from God, but came back in just an instant. We were told to use her life as an example because no matter how low we may seem or feel, we can always return to God. Along with the retreat being an educational event, it was also a social event. It gave the young women attendees from the local Houston parishes the chance to build stronger relationships with each other, in addition to with meeting new people and making friendships. It gave the young girls a chance to know that there are older "chechis" in the church who will always look out for them, and that they will be there to help and guide them, instead of having to turn to outside influences that might give them the wrong idea. The overall point to the retreat was to let women know that they do have a strong role in the church and their community. The theme of the retreat was taken from Proverbs 31:20: "She extends out her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hand to the needy." The reason for this theme was because the retreat was charity based. The surplus money, along with donations generated from the retreat will go to a young girl's education in India. She is a 19 year old, studying in the 12th grade at PTM Higher Secondary School in Pampady, Kerala. She was severely burned at the age of three, and her mother passed away when she was in 1st grade. She currently gets by on the funds

Oklahoma Liturgical Music Retreat - *Clara Thomson, OK MGOCSM -VP*



On October 25-27, a Liturgical Music Retreat was hosted by the Oklahoma MGOCSM, for the Dallas/OK MGCOSM area. This liturgical music retreat did not resemble a typical song camp, but spiritually made the participants aware of the importance of the eight liturgical tones (Ekkara) of our church. Rev. Fr Mathew T. Mathew (Shaun Achen) led this retreat and enlightened the attendees on the history and technique of mastering the precious melodies of our Church. Friday began with a unique history of our church's music and the explanation of West Syriac Liturgical Music and its characteristics. The retreat continued on Saturday with an entire day of intense practice of each of the eight tones that left everyone exhausted but proud to have covered in nine hours what is done in most seminaries over many months.

Everyone left with an appreciation of Ekkara (the eight tones) and with the hope that the new found knowledge can be taken to our own parishes and implemented gradually and practiced with patience. The tones are not to be mastered simply for the sake of singing but to strengthen our spiritual awareness so along with the unique and diverse tones or "colors", the words of our hymns may also be given attention equally. The retreat was a blessed opportunity and gratitude goes to Shaun Achen, the members who arranged and coordinated the event, as well as all of our brothers and sisters in Christ who joined us that weekend to learn more about the liturgical music of the Church.

From Around the Diocese

Remembering a Holy Mancont'd from p. 1

Although His Grace did not speak with the eloquence of a typical convention speaker, his meditative and devotional speeches came through to the audience and soon many were familiar with Thirumeni. As everybody knows, Thirumeni was of small stature but commanded attention and respect when he spoke.

My family and my brothers' families had the honor of hosting Thirumeni numerous times in our homes. Thirumeni had a strict regimen of prayer, discipline of a monk and was very loving. I accompanied him in his daily walks, which he never missed. I spoke to him about many subjects and Thirumeni always had direct and sensible answers that were well anchored in Christian thought. Thirumeni was never keen to discuss church politics, rumors or speculations. He avoided sarcasm and in a way he truly lived by the words of Christ – (St. Matthew 5:37: "All you need to say is Yes or No, anything beyond this comes from the evil one.") He also preferred simple meals and always insisted on having his meals with the whole family including women and children. Thirumeni stayed with us and comforted us during a very difficult time in our lives, when my mother was ailing due to old age. While her condition was critical, Thirumeni visited us and provided us with consolation, comfort and advice. I last met with Thirumeni on March 14th, 2012 at San Joe Hospital in Perumbavoor; He recognized us and recited a short prayer. The passing of Thirumeni saddened us deeply but we take solace in knowing that he rests with God and we pray that he receive the crown of Glory and Grace from God Almighty. I end this memoriam with prayers and memories of the late lamented His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas. Let us pray that His Grace's soul may rest in peace and seek His Grace's intercession for all of us.

Reflections from Edmonton.....Cont'd from p.1

However, this conference proved to me again that God's Spirit inevitably works among groups that gather to learn and meditate on His words regardless of where it is held or who attends it. The session started with Rev. Fr. Rajesh K John striking the keynote of the conference - having peace in our life is contingent on having a pure and holy mind. For the remaining two days we explored the ways of having a holy and pure heart through several study sessions offered throughout the conference. Most Respected Thirumeni instilled a new perspective on women's role in church, family and society. Considering our family as a miniature version of God's Kingdom and women being the chief celebrant of the Sacrament of Marriage bestows a whole new plethora of responsibilities with women. These responsibilities are not about having more authority in the family but are more of being embodiments of love, grace and care, setting ourselves as role models for our children and leading the family through the path God has laid before us. Rev. Fr. P. C. George's study sessions on the MMVS theme verse was inundated with knowledge nuggets from all over the Bible. Considering the magnificence of God's creations, it is pertinent to remember that human beings were created in the likeness of the Almighty and thereby we are obliged to maintain Holiness in our lives so that we can reflect His likeness in its entirety. Respected Achen correlated the theme verse with several sections of the Holy Bible and delved into the importance of sanctification thorough the Holy Sacraments. Peace can only be pursued by loving each other. If we don't love each other we are just being like dead bodies. The session on preparation for Holy Confession was perhaps an apt ending for the study sessions as it took advantage of our transformed minds thus adding more meaning to the core requirements of confession.

Apart from the study sessions, the health classes, choir sessions, cultural programs and talent competitions were also equally entertaining. Above all, the hospitality of Edmonton Church members was really applaudable. As a participant of the conference I have been deeply moved by the efficiency with which the conference was organized and conducted. Without doubt this was the Lord's doing and we were mere instruments used by the Almighty to make the conference a success. But as Rev. Fr. P. C. George reminded us, a speech is successful only to the extent which it is implemented in the lives of the listeners. I am earnestly praying to the Almighty that all attendees of the conference will continue to strive to make the conference a success by sharing our learnings with our fellow sisters and transforming our own lives to be holy and peaceful.

Know our Parish

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We're on the Web!
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St. Paul's Malankara Orthodox Church

3801 K Ave, Plano, TX 75074 www.stpaulsorthodoxchurch.com

St. Paul's Orthodox Church was formally established on May 6th 2006 with the unanimous approval of the diocesan council of North America, H.G. Mathews Mar Barnabas (Senior Metropolitan) and H.G. Zacharias Mar Nicholovos (Assistant Metropolitan), jointly granted consent to establish St. Paul's Orthodox Church with Kalpana # K 51/2006.

The inception of the parish was initiated under the spiritual guidance of Rev. Fr. Regi Mathews, in association with Mr. Thomas Rajan & family, Mr. Raju Philip & family and Mrs. Susan Kuruvilla, In spite of the complexity and immense scale of the undertaking, the parishioners diligently supported the proposal and committed themselves financially and spiritually to help bring it to fruition.

Even though Rev. Fr. John Vaidyan was appointed as the first vicar of the Church, Rev. Fr. Geevarghese John (subsequently vicar) was instrumental in giving us the encouragement and inspiration during the infancy stages of growth of this parish. We were immensely blessed to have liturgical services conducted every Sunday on a regular basis since its origin.

Although the church first commenced in Dallas, the need for an Orthodox Church in the Plano area was recognized (to encourage non church going believers, and to facilitate fellowship with new believers). Contemplation to relocate to the Plano area was incubating in the minds of the parishioners, who continued to look into various venues. Finally this impending need for an Orthodox church in the North East area of Dallas Ft Worth became a reality during Thanksgiving of 2009. We were blessed to acquire a building formerly under the name 'St. Sava Orthodox Church' in Plano.



In July of 2009, St. Paul's Church became a part of Diocese of South-West America under the leadership of H.G. Alexios Mar Eusebius. Rev. Fr. K.Y. Wilson was appointed as the new vicar of the church. A devoted priest and a talented speaker, coupled with his liturgical skills and vast knowledge of theology, he presented us with a new opportunity to deepen our spiritual relationship with God.

Mid 2010 saw Rev. Fr. Rege Mathews being appointed vicar and Rev. Fr. Binu Mathews assistant vicar. In 2013, H.G. Alexios Mar Eusebius appointed Rev. Fr. Binu Mathews as vicar and Rev. Fr. Mathews George as assistant vicar.

Spiritual organizations such as Sunday School, MGOCSM, Martha Mariam Samajam etc. are actively succeeding. Slowly but surely our church has been growing in faith and numbers. Today we have twenty five families as active members and few non-members.

We are a small church offering everyone a big Welcome. Come and experience a meaningful worship with us.

Presented by *Thomas Rajan*