

FAITH

The Quarterly Newsletter of the St. Thomas Orthodox Congregation of Southern Africa

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Sharing a smile at Pretoria Sunnyside Orphanage

Several members of the Parish participated in a social outreach event held on 11th November 2017 at the Pretoria Sunnyside Orphanage. The Sunnyside Orphanage Home (SOH) is a non-profit organization that helps vulnerable children including orphans, abandoned babies and street children in and around Pretoria. The Organization provides a decent home for orphans whose extended families are unable or unwilling to take care of them.

Over 25 cheerful volunteers from the Parish visited the SOH which currently houses over 40 children and spent a whole day with them reading stories, engaging in art and activities and also playing games. Gifts were distributed to the children before members of the Parish shared lunch with them. Indeed it was a blessed day.

From the Vicar's Desk:

Glory be to the Blessed Trinity.

It has been a desire for a while now to relaunch FAITH, the quarterly newsletter of this Parish. Although this project was shelved years ago, it was the deliberations of several of our members that led us to consider brining FAITH back into circulation.

God has blessed us all with several talents. While some can sing or speak, others can draw or create. It is however only when we use our talents for the glorification of the Kingdom of Heaven that we fulfil our duties towards the Almighty who has so graciously given us these talents. I encourage all members to contribute to further editions with Christian-themed articles, stories, poems, drawings, riddles, puzzles etc.

Let us all fruitfully utilize one more opportunity to glorify God.

- Fr. Stanly David James

CREATION : THE EXTENSION OF GOD'S LOVE.

- Mr. Solly Thomas, Polokwane



The book of Genesis in the Bible narrates the creation of the universe, the earth and everything in it by *His* command. He 'loved' what He created and was pleased with it. The Gospel according to St. John proclaims that 'the Word' already existedand that 'the Word' was with God and was the same as God. So it is from this Word that the universe/world was created. We also read in John 3:16, 'For God loved the world so much that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.... Not to be its judge, but to be its saviour.'

Creation according to all religions originated from God. All creations – including its life forms (biodiversity) and non-life forms are all manifestations of God and His love. God sees these as extensions of God (Himself).

According to the Hindu Vedas, *Bramha* is the creator of the universe and everything in it. *Hinduism* perceives the whole creation and its cosmic activity as the work of three fundamental forces symbolized by three gods, which constitutes the Hindu Trinity or 'Trimurti': *Brahma* - the creator, *Vishnu* - the sustainer, and *Shiva* - the destroyer. All forms of living and inanimate objects are extension of *Brahma* and his life form.

The philosophy behind this is that as humans, we are extensions of God and we must see each other as extensions of God and therefore extensions of ourselves. When we see others as extensions of ourselves, the tendency to hate will be replaced by the tendency and desire to love others as ourselves.

The Story of the King and His Dog

The inspirational speaker and Hindu philosopher Prof. Angagan in 'Sadhana' – 'The Inward Path' narrates the story of a king and his dog. This good, benevolent, just and magnanimous king before holding his 'court' (Durbar), would dress himself up in his royal regalia in full crown and glory and would inspect himself in the royal ante-room (an inner small room before entering the court) . This small room had six mirrors on its walls in strategic positions so that anyone who enters the room can examine himself/herself very closely and thoroughly from all angles and correct anything in the appearance which is perceived to be not good.

As usual before holding his court, the king entered his ante-room and looked at himself and saw himself with all his reflected images in their glory and beauty as he cherished and he liked, admired and appreciated what he saw.

This activity, besides remind-

ing himself of his nobility, authority and power also helped him to spare a thought for his ministers, courtesans and all his subjects (people) and his country – all of which he could see as extensions of himself. This enabled him to rule them with fairness and justice.

One day, as the king was holding court, his pet dog sneaked into the ante- room. To his surprise, what did the dog see? It saw so many dogs and did not like so many dogs ready to pounce on him; it started growling, all the other dogs also started growling back, this made it more angry, it started barking, all the others started barking back even he heard that their barks were louder. This made the dog even angrier; it now started jumping towards the mirrors hitting them trying to bite the other dogs, the other dogs also did the same until one by one all mirrors broke and crumbled on the floor. The dog was left wounded and humiliated.

Very often, we get angry for the wrong reasons and fail to see the other's perspective. In our anger, we destroy what is good in us and damage our relationships with others. Once we try to see others also as extensions of ourselves and respect and care for them, love and friendship will prevail instead of rivalry and hate.



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LORD, MY CROSS IS TOO HEAVY

- Mr. Aaron J Koshy, Zeerust

Once upon a time there was a man who lived in a faraway kingdom. This man lived as a simple farmer whose house was outside the fortified city's walls. He enjoyed a very simplistic life most of the time and was very happy with his small family.

One day as he was working in his field he noticed a large army approaching the city. It was the adversary of their kingdom. As any responsible father and husband would do, he rushed his wife and children to the nearby forests in an attempt to keep them safe. Watching from a distance he sat still as he saw the destruction of his field and house. All his hard work was set on fire. Depressed as one could be he walked to the forest to see if his family was safe. His wife and children were reclining next to a large river. The children started playing next to the river and it was then that his youngest son fell into the river. The little boy cried for help as the current was very strong. The man ran as fast as he could, with much force as his body allowed but he was not fast enough.

In anguish and utter despair he knelt down, looked toward heaven and cried: "LORD, my cross is too heavy, my hardships are greater than myself. Please give me a lighter cross..." When he opened his eyes, there before him appeared an angel, he bowed down trembling with fear.

The angel said: "Fear not, for I am from the LORD. Come with

me." And the angel took him to another place, a room fully adorned with different kinds of crosses. The angel said: "Here, choose your new cross." Amazed by this the man spent a lot of time looking at all the crosses; there are big golden crosses and even small silver crosses. The man recognised a small silver cross on the floor. He picked it up and revealed that it was a sword. Not only was it a sword but it was the sword that belonged to the king.

The man said to the angel: "Yes I will take this as my new cross. I will then be king over the land and I can live a very luxurious life". The angel said: "So be it then, this is your new cross".

..... Cont.

SHUBKONO:

The Reconciliation

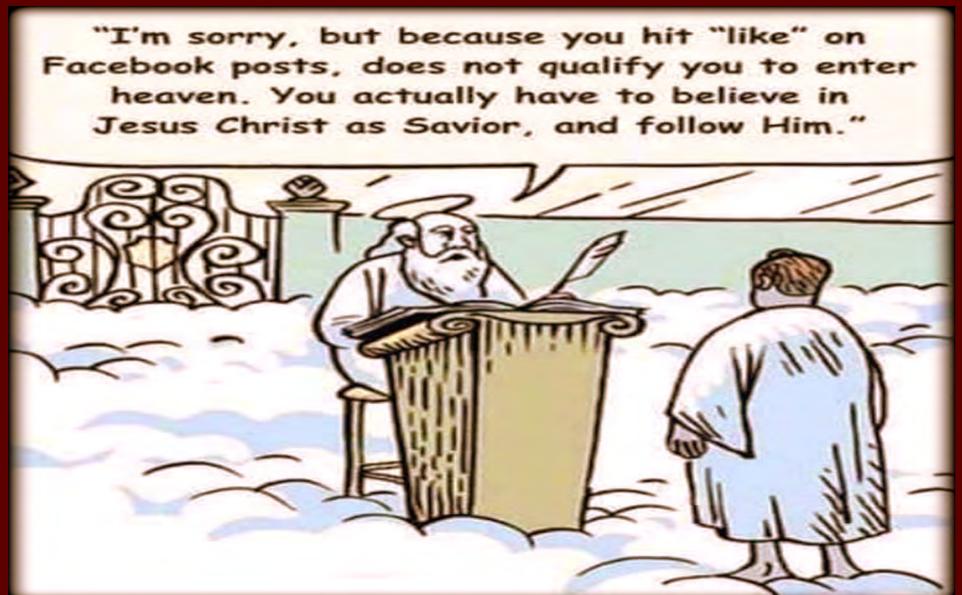
"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

- Mtt 5:23,24

In as much as we nowadays tend to focus our 'Lenten rituals' on abstinence from particular types or quantities of food, it is essential to be reminded that Lent is more about how we abstain our hearts and minds from hypocrisy, jealousy and hatred.

The Orthodox tradition mandates that every faithful reconcile with each other before entering into the Lenten period. It is futile to keep our stomachs empty, while our minds are filled with hard feelings against our own brother, sister, father, mother, friend or other.

Let us settle all accounts. Let us take the first step in our Christian duty of brotherhood and let us love another. Then, let us begin our journey towards a Blessed Pascha.



Cont.....

He was now king over the same kingdom in which he was a peasant of in his previous life. As king he enjoyed eating many types of food and best quality wine. He was incredibly wealthy. He had many sons and daughters and was very happy with his life. And then one day the neighbouring kingdom attacked their city. He called all his soldiers to arms and within his army were all five of his sons. They marched towards the enemy but they stood no chance against the enemy. One by one he watched as each of his strongest warriors were killed. And he watched each of his sons fall by the sword. Seeing that the army was defeated he ran into the forests as he watched the enemy invade the city. He watched as the enemies took the women captive, and included among them were his wife and daughters. In total despair he fell to his knees and cried: "LORD, this cross is too heavy for me"

Once again he found himself in the room full of crosses. This time he found a small wooden cross on the side. It was the cross monks and hermits put around their necks. The man told the angel: "Yes I will take this cross, I will

live life as a hermit that way my life will be very peaceful and I will not have to endure such hardships." The angel said: "So be it then. This is your new cross."

And so the man lived his life as a hermit who lived in the nearby caves. He would see or speak to no one. The only time he would open his mouth was when he prayed. And so he was in his cave facing towards the east reciting the Jesus Prayer complete with prostrations. This was his everyday routine, but things weren't as he thought. Every day when he would recite his prayers and perform his prostrations, demons would constantly trouble him to divert from his prayer. They would even do physical harm to his body so that he wouldn't prostrate to the LORD anymore. At last fed up with this extreme hardship he once again fell on his knees looked up towards heaven and cried: "LORD, I have made a mistake. This cross is also too heavy for me. Please allow me to have a lighter cross."

Once again he was in the room of crosses, and there stood the angel. He looked around and found a small cross made out small twigs which budded with small leaves. He turned towards the an-

gel and said: "Yes, I will take this as my new cross. It is small and seems very light." Amused, the angel looked at the man and said: "O my son, but this was your original cross. You just didn't realise how little your hardships were." Amazed at this the man fell toward the angel and said: "My lord, forgive my folly, and my blindness." And towards heaven he said: "LORD, forgive your servant's folly, and I thank You for showing me the way." The angel said: "Go return to your former life, and save your child, for the LORD almighty is with you"

He was in the forests once more. He ran to try to save his child, and the current slowed down. When he saw that the current slowed down, and immediately jumped into the river and saved the little boy. With his new-found insight and knowledge that God is with him, he rebuilt his house and started an even bigger field and produced even more food. He was happy once again.



QUIZ CORNER

Compiled by Mstr. Aeron Vaidyan, Mokopane

1. How old was David when he became the King of Judah?
2. Jesus said the days of His coming would be similar to the days of which Old Testament character?
3. How many chapters are there in the book of Genesis?
4. For how many days did it rain before the earth was flooded?
5. What is the name of Abraham's father?
6. What did God eventually change Jacob's name to?
7. The first five books of the Old Testament are attributed to whom?
8. Who celebrated Holy Qurbana for the first time after Jesus Christ?
9. How many 'Thubdhens' are there?
10. "*Nayavaan panapole thalirthidume*" is taken from which Psalm?

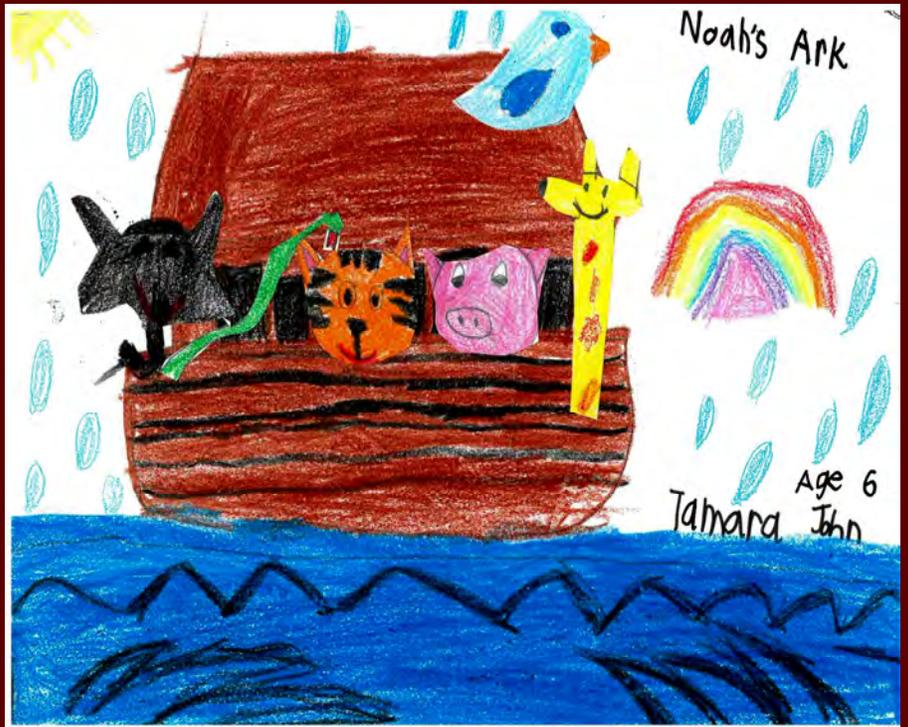
Answers to be submitted to stthomasorthodoxcongregation@gmail.com

Results will be published in the next edition.

KIDS ART CORNER



Kaitlyn Jacob (11 Years) - Johannesburg



Tamara John (6 Years) - Johannesburg

**St. Thomas Choir impresses at
Pretoria Ecumenical Christmas Eve**

The St. Thomas Choir presented two Christmas hymns at the Ecumenical Christmas Carol Evening hosted by the Emmanuel Marthoma Church of South Africa. The event was held on the 2nd of December 2017 at the Emmanuel Marthoma Church in Pretoria.

This is the first time that such an attempt has been made by the Orthodox Church. The Choir sang two songs — a Malayalam song from the Christmas Liturgy as well as a contemporary and popular English Christmas song. The acapella melody that the choir performed was received with a loud applause.

The Vicar has encouraged all units to make such attempts in future so as to utilize God-given talents for the glorification of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Feast of Nativity of Our Lord

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord was celebrated on the 24th of December 2017 at Midrand in Johannesburg (Sunset Boma, Midrand).

Several faithful from all over South Africa participated in the worship services which commenced with the evening prayers at 6pm. This was followed by the Holy Qurbana and the special service of the Feast of Nativity.

All the faithful wholeheartedly participated in the procession with lit candles. The *theejwaala sisroosha* (spiritual bonfire) was held outside in which all the faithful offered incense singing:

*Glory to God in the Highest
And on earth peace
and goodwill to all.*

The service by led by Vicar Fr. Stanly David James.

Be a DIAMOND!!! - Rejitha Jacob, Johannesburg

Life ! – Are we taking advantage of it? Are we making the most of it? Does it seem like we are always running after something which is so temporary in this world. But the good thing of life is that it teaches us a lot of things, good and bad. The paths we go through in life are the paths that we choose to go with in life. Life is like a bike ride, beginning with the ignition (our decisions) and then comes the journey of our lives. The path we ride on may not always be a straight road. More often than not, the paths may never have an end. We may hit a T-junction, but even then we are faced with the choice of either taking a left or right. On this road, we may even come across pot-holes every now and then. Unfortunately, these pot-holes come without any upfront warning.

In the grand scheme of things, more than attempting to answer the question of why we face such hardships, it may be better to remind ourselves that regardless of what kind of blockages we face in our paths, God gives us the strength and the presence of mind to face them.

I once read somewhere “A diamond is just a piece of charcoal that handled stress exceptionally well”. This got me thinking. Can I become a diamond one day? The Bible teaches us that we, God’s children, are more precious than diamonds. Every individual have their own beauty, it lies in the eyes of the beholder! A diamond is not only about the bling – it has a much more deeper meaning!

Life is a journey, not a destination – never think the world has ended when nothing has come as you wished. There are many other options out there, come out of that comfort zone, see life in a positive attitude, come across many obstacles and be bold enough to face each one of them, because you are just on the journey of becoming a diamond!

Bible Wordsearch 
 THE GOOD SAMARITAN Luke 10:30-37

N	W	O	A	R	T	X	E	R	J	R	D	O	C	C
Y	D	T	U	O	D	L	E	C	D	E	E	K	O	A
E	E	H	R	A	E	P	W	E	N	T	S	T	I	M
K	G	E	O	A	L	W	P	G	S	D	S	U	N	E
N	A	R	V	Y	V	P	O	D	N	E	A	J	S	J
O	D	I	A	W	I	E	N	U	I	I	P	E	E	T
D	N	W	A	R	I	A	L	R	N	O	R	R	D	X
G	A	S	T	F	H	N	P	E	R	D	I	U	K	E
R	B	S	S	I	L	V	E	R	D	C	S	S	O	N
E	S	R	E	B	B	O	R	S	H	E	F	A	O	P
T	H	G	Y	T	I	P	S	O	N	B	R	L	T	E
U	S	A	M	A	R	I	T	A	N	E	F	E	A	U
R	O	V	V	G	D	F	E	L	L	A	P	M	H	H
N	I	E	S	E	H	T	O	L	C	T	E	X	A	W
P	L	A	C	E	T	I	V	E	L	C	A	R	E	N

AWAY	MAN
BANDAGED	NEXT
BEAT	OIL
CAME	OTHER
CARE	OUT
CLOTHES	OWN
COINS	PASSED
DAY	PITY
DEAD	PLACE
DONKEY	POURING
DOWN	PRIEST
EXPENSE	PUT
EXTRA	REIMBURSE
FELL	REPLY
GAVE	RETURN
GOING	ROAD
HALF	ROBBERS
HANDS	SAMARITAN
HAPPENED	SAW
HAVE	SIDE
HIM	SILVER
INN	STRIPPED
INTO	TOOK
JERICOHO	TRAVELED
JERUSALEM	WENT
JESUS	WHERE
LEAVING	WINE
LEVITE	WOUNDS

After you find all the hidden words the left over letters spell out a Bible verse reading from the top left to the bottom right

PHOTO GALLERY



OVBS 2017 at Groblersdal — September 2017



GLOW 2017 at Johannesburg — July 2017

PHOTO GALLERY



Honouring elders who rendered meritorious services to the Parish at Mokopane — September 2017



Feast of St. Gregorios 2017 at Groblersdal



Feast of St. Gregorios of Parumala (Parumala Perunal) at Groblersdal — November 2017

PHOTO GALLERY



Social Outreach Event—Pretoria Sunnyside Orphanage Visit—November 2017

PHOTO GALLERY



Felicitating Fr. Dr. M.O. John
Priest Trustee of
Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church



Charity Fund Raiser Food Stall at Johannesburg
on the day of the Feast of St. Thomas—July 2017



Half Day Family Meet and Faith Study Class in Cape Town—October 2017



Premarital Counselling in Midrand— July 2017

PHOTO GALLERY



Door to Door Christmas Carols at Groblersdal, Pretoria and Johannesburg—November, December 2017



St. Thomas Choir at the Ecumenical Christmas Eve hosted by Emmanuel Marthoma Church Pretoria

2017 Christmas Door to Door Carols



Feast of Nativity of our Lord at Johannesburg — December 2017

St. Thomas Orthodox Congregation
of Southern Africa

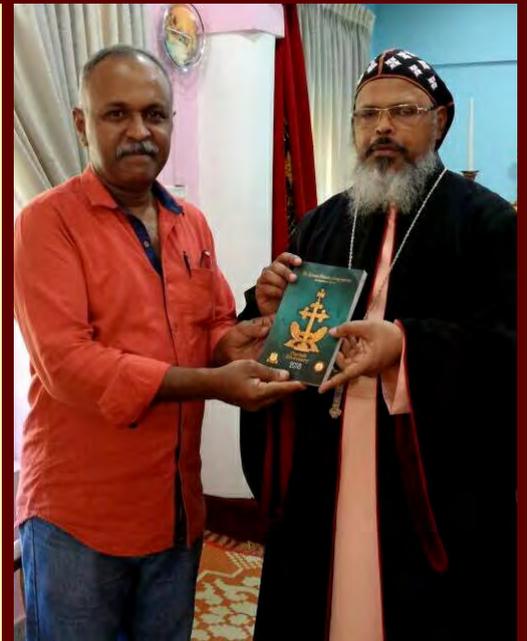


Parish
Directory
2018



Parish Directory Published and Released

By the grace of God, the updated Parish Directory was released in January 2018 by handing over the first copy to Diocesan Metropolitan HG Dr. Mathews Mar Thimothios. We thank all those who have labored behind the scenes to complete this project and pray that this directory may be a means for members of the Parish to keep up with their correspondences in this fast-moving day and age.



Upcoming Holy Qurbana and Events

- 04 February 2018: Holy Qurbana—Pretoria
- 11 February 2018: Holy Qurbana and Shubkono —Whiteriver, Nelspruit
- 18 February 2018: Holy Qurbana—Mokopane
- 24 February 2018: Premarital Counselling—Midrand
- 25 February 2018: Holy Qurbana—Johannesburg
- 04 March 2018: Holy Qurbana—Durban
- 10 March 2018: Holy Qurbana and Service of Mid-Lent—Mmabatho
- 11 March 2018: Holy Qurbana—Gabarone / East London
- 18 March 2018: Holy Qurbana—Cape Town
- 25 March 2018: Palm Sunday Service (Hosanna)—Groblersdal
- 28 March 2018: Maundy Thursday Service (Pesaha)—Zeerust
- 30 March 2018: Good Friday Service (Dukhavelli)- The Glen Venue, Pretoria
- 31 March 2018: Holy Saturday Service (Dukhasheni)- The Glen Venue, Pretoria
- 01 April 2018: Feast of Resurrection (Easter/Uyyarppu) - The Glen Venue, Pretoria

Our Church: Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Syrian Church

Catholicos and Malankara Metropolitan: HH Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Paulos II

Our Diocese: UK-Europe and Africa

Diocesan Metropolitan: HG Dr. Mathews Mar Thimothios

Our Parish: St. Thomas Orthodox Congregation of Southern Africa

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