



Mar Thoma Neighborhood Mission Newsletter

Purpose of the newsletter: To introduce neighborhood outreach activities of the parishes in different regions of our Diocese. Each issue of the newsletter will focus on one region's neighborhood mission activities. We have eight (8) regions in our Diocese.

DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE - FEBRUARY 2015

IN THIS ISSUE

Bishop's Message

by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa



"When Jesus saw the crowd in the wilderness, He had compassion on them, and asked the disciples to give them food. He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work" (John 4:34). We are called for this ministry." -

Mar Theodosius November 2014.

From the Convener's Desk

by Rev. Biju P. Simon



Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ!

I am happy to greet you through this second Neighborhood Mission newsletter. We have received a warm welcome by the readers

for publishing initial newsletter in December 2014. As part of our Diocesan mission activities, "Mar Thoma Neighborhood Mission" is also working to bring the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to our neighborhoods. Our church is entering into an important liturgical season this month. The Great Lent (Valiya Nombu) begins on February 15. The Great lent or the fifty days of lent is observed as a preparation for our Lord's death on the cross and His resurrection. It's a time of self-discipline, in which we deepen our union with our Lord Jesus while remembering His suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. During this Great Lent neighborhood mission is encouraging g our parishes to get involved through volunteerism in their local neighborhoods. We share in the suffering of Christ in this world by serving God's creation in need. When we serve the needy in our neighborhoods we identify

Jesus's life, ministry, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and promise of his second coming. Let us continue our dedicated journey with Christ.

With prayerful regards,
Rev. Biju P. Simon achen
Convener



Northeast Region

Brief summaries of some of the work the parishes in the northeast region are doing in their local neighborhoods.



Let's light our neighborhoods with the love of Christ.



Mar Thoma Urban Mission Trip 2015– San Francisco, August 16-21

The majority of the parishes in our diocese are situated near major urban city centers. So the Diocesan Neighborhood Mission Ministry is pioneering a new project, “Mar Thoma Urban Missions 2015”. For the first time, the diocese is organizing a one week long mission trip targeting an urban center of a city with a Mar Thoma presence. For this first Mar Thoma Urban Mission trip, we have chosen downtown San Francisco and are partnering with the non-profit Christian organization, City Impact. This mission trip is open to all active members of a parish, age 14 and above. It is our hope that a broad cross section of members of all ages will be able to support this mission project. We understand that there is a significant financial commitment associated with this week long project, so we encourage the parish or its organizations to plan ways to assist in whatever way it can to financially support a missionary from your parish that is willing to attend. There are also grant funds available as well for non-working students who register early. More information is available at www.mtcurbanmissions.org or you can contact your Diocesan Assembly Rep with any questions.

Great Days of Service

As time nears for Great Lent, the neighborhood mission subcommittee is encouraging each parish of the Diocese of North America and Europe by introducing an initiative called Great Days of Service. The great day of service is an effort to encourage all parishes to plan neighborhood mission projects in your particular communities to be implemented during the 50 days of lent. Our aim is to have each Parish collectively accumulate a minimum of 100 hours of voluntary service. As we enter into the season of fasting and repenting, we hope and pray that each parish will identify at least one suitable neighborhood mission activity in your area and work towards making the community we live-in a better place by

sharing the love of Christ. You can get more information from your diocesan assembly representative or any of the neighborhood mission subcommittee members listed in this newsletter.

Northeast Region

by Ron Jacob

Dear Members of the Diocese of North America and Europe,

Thank you to all the parishes in the North East Region who have faithfully served in our neighborhoods and provided valuable information for this newsletter.

Mission work is especially close to the hearts of our second generation members and I hope we use this newsletter to share our 'best practices' and to encourage our sister parishes to establish long term partnerships with local charities and missions.

I pray the Mar Thoma Churches in our Diocese can show the love of Christ to those in need.

Saved to Serve,
Ron Jacob



Northeast Region

North East Regional Youth Fellowship (NERYF):

Throughout the past 7 months, youths from the North East Regional Youth Fellowship, from Boston all the way down to Eastern Long Island, have taken one day a month out of their busy schedules, to come and help serve our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the New York City Area. This all began with the vision of our very own Youth Chaplain, Rev. V.M Mathew Achen. This led to the beginning of our partnership with NYC Rescue Mission; a facility for those individuals who need a helping hand. Residents of the 9 month program live within the facility and are guided through Christ and the help of full-time volunteers who assist in bringing them back on their feet. We have our Food Team who is responsible for buying, cooking and serving food for more than 300 individuals at a given meal. We have our Men's Hygiene Team who is in charge of cutting the hair of men who have signed up previously. Our third group is our Praise and Worship team which sings hymns, reads short bible stories and have opportunities for meditation for all residents and outsiders who are waiting to be served. NERYF also takes the responsibility of raising \$750-1000 monthly to cover the cost of each mission event. Recently, NERYF had created a Missions Committee to handle all the month responsibilities of organizing this event. This team is responsible for the progress and upcoming of the missions. We encourage everyone in our region to sign up, participate in and support the mission.

Bethany MTC, Orangeburg, NY:

1) The Sunday school participated in their 'It's In the Bag' program which provides a weekend's worth of food to a child in need. It's In The Bag provides at risk children with nutritious and easy to prepare foods for the weekend. It's In The Bag is making a significant

difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children.

2) Breast Cancer Awareness: Youth and Sunday school raised and donated money to Cancer Support Community of Central New Jersey.

3) Our Parish has also participated in a Salvation Army Food and Clothing drives.

Carmel MTC, Boston, MA

1) During the XVIII Diocesan Leadership Conference, the delegates participated in a Service Project where they sent letters, jewelry, and donated goods to shelters for women and children in Worcester, MA. The two shelters we worked with were Abby's House and Friendly's House. Carmel MTC Youth Group had been collecting new/used clothing items, books, school supplies, toys, shoes, etc. Delegates were split up into 5 groups and were assigned a section to clean, pack and sort toys and clothing. Another section made arts and crafts and another section wrote inspirational letters. We had a Praise and Worship Team that sang songs throughout the Service Project. 10 conference delegates were chosen to go to both shelters to drop off all the items. The delegates were able to meet families and learn more about the history of each shelter.

2) Cradles to Crayons is an organization that serves homeless and low-income children in Boston. Our Sunday school kids led a church-wide drive to provide essential items that these children need to thrive and progress in their home and school environment. A few of the Sunday school children, teachers, and parents were able to go on site and serve on the team that assembles the packages. We were in charge of shining and rebuffering gently used shoes!

3) Friendly House and Abby's House are two shelters located in Worcester that our church has worked with multiple times over the past few years. We host clothing, books, and needed goods drives in hopes of lessening their burden.

4) Rosie's House is a shelter in Boston that the youth group is involved with. Five members of our youth fellowship went to Rosie's house once every two months to prepare and share a meal and fellowship.

5) Love in Action is a program run by the Grace Baptist Church, our neighbors down the street. We have the opportunity to work with them on the second Saturday mission. On every second Saturday of the month, members of our church join members of the Hudson community in serving people in need. This may mean assisting older people in the community, being prayer warriors,



Northeast Regional Youth Fellowship(NERYF)serving at the NYC Rescue Mission.

assisting in renovating a run-down church, providing meals to the homeless, or caroling to residents in a nursing home. This has been a very consistent service project that has become a blessed experience for members old and young in our church.

Ebenezer MTC, Port Chester, NY

- 1) Our Parish has been actively participating in "Neighborhood Ministry". The Parish has been participating over the past few years in clothing drives. Plenty of people from the neighborhood came forward to take benefit of this mission project.

Long Island MTC, NY

- 1) In November 2014, LIMC Young Families Fellowship continued its community involvement and charity work by participating in Operation Christmas Child. Our YFF came out for an afternoon to pack and gift wrap shoeboxes filled with goodies to be sent to kids in need. We purchased a variety of gifts for boys and girls ages 2 through 14 including personal hygiene products, games and toys, educational items, candy, and clothing. We packed 65 boxes - which we considered a huge success for our first year and were able to track their arrival to deserving children in Colombia and Honduras! In addition to the shoe boxes we offered a \$200 donation to Samaritans Purse towards the shipping of these gift filled shoeboxes. It was a wonderful time of community and fellowship as an up and coming YFF organization. Please visit www.samaritanspurse.org for more information on Samaritan's Purse to get your church involved this upcoming holiday season!

- 2) Our YFF also participated in Run or Dye. Run or Dye is THE ultimate celebration of life, friendship, fitness, and fun...and you make memories that will last a lifetime. Proceeds benefit Big Brothers & Big Sisters Charity.

St. Thomas MTC, Yonkers, NY

- 1) Elevate - In April, our Youth Fellowship started our first ever ELEVATE service. Elevate is a new evening English worship service held every third and fourth Sunday in our church. This service is a new vision of the St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church as a whole. Our aim is to bring the love of community to church, and create a home for many. To date, we have had over 15 churches from different denominations and various community members, actively participate in this service. We thank our Youth Chaplain Rev. VM Mathew for his continued support in this effort.
- 2) Light the Night Walk - On October 18th, Youth and Young Families from our Church participated in the Light the Night Walk for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society held in Provident Bank Park, Pomona, NY. Our Youth Fellowship raised over \$5,000, and we were number 8 in the top ten teams to fund raise for this event. The highlight of the day was spending time in fellowship with other teams, and participating in a great cause that we will never forget. We would have not been able to do this event without the generous donations we received.
- 3) Operation Gobble - Every year the Youth Fellowship and Sunday School offered to provide a free

Thanksgiving Basket to anyone in the community who signed up. On November 23rd, every family that signed up received a basket with an entire turkey meal for their families. All 30 turkey baskets and associated costs were donated by Youth, Young Families, Sunday School and parish members.

- 4) Operation Toys for Kids - On Christmas Eve, our Youth Fellowship along with our friend from the North Pole, Santa, visited Leake & Watts in Yonkers, NY. Leake & Watts provides services to individuals and families dealing with poverty, disabilities, lack of access to education and basic welfare services. We created 40 gift boxes for the children at this facility. All toys were donated by our Sunday School classes and Youth Fellowship members. It was a blessing to be able to share the love of Christ to those in need.
- 5) Christmas Caroling - On December 24th, our Youth Fellowship along with our Youth Chaplain went Christmas caroling at St Joseph's Nursing home, followed by Richmond Children's Center in Yonkers, NY. This is an event that we participate in every year. We truly cherish the fellowship and love shared by the residents of both of these facilities.

St. James MTC, Spring Valley, NY

- 1) During the Christmas season, our Parish conducted a food drive and a toy drive under the leadership of our Sunday School. We collected and donated food along with the new toys to "People to People", an organization working among the less fortunate children. All

Sunday school students participated in it. For more than a year we have been supporting "People to People" through frequent food drives, donation of school supplies and toy drives.

members volunteered their time and energy at the mission.

Modern missionaries should
be **creative**
at finding ways to bring the
gospel to the lost that
do not necessarily include
church planting or
traveling to a foreign
field.

St. Andrews MTC, Yonkers, NY

- 1) The St. Andrews MTC partnered with The American Red Cross to host a Blood Drive in our parish basement on October 25th. This event saw a great turnout with participation from parish members and neighbors. Our blood donations was able to help save the lives of 63 patients in need.
- 2) We also held a clothing drive at our church which saw a large quantity of donations from parish members. Hundreds of clothing items were donated to The Sharing Community in Yonkers, which is an organization that provides services and care to the homeless people in our local community. Our donations were made in time for a harsh winter and were able to help numerous people who are less fortunate.

The next issue will highlight the neighborhood mission activities of the southern region. We encourage all churches to contact a subcommittee member from your region to include your mission work in our newsletter.



Epiphany MTC, Ozone Park, NY

- 1) The Parish arranged a Christmas get together for our neighborhood on Sunday, December 21, 2014. Our Youth Fellowship and Young Family Fellowship performed Carols and other programs for our neighbors.

Salem MTC, Eastern Long Island, NY

- 1) Salem Mar Thoma Church Sunday School and Youth Fellowship actively participated in the NY Rescue Mission on November 8th. Our teachers, students and other parish

The Northeast Region consists of the following churches:

- 1) **Bethany Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 2) **Carmel Mar Thoma Church, MA**
- 3) **Ebenezer Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 4) **Epiphany Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 5) **Long Island Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 6) **St. Andrews Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 7) **St. James Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 8) **St. Johns Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 9) **St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church, NY**
- 10) **Salem Mar Thoma Church, NY**

Pictures from around the region:



Bethany MTC participating in the "It's in the Bag" initiative.



Carmel MTC at Cradles to Crayons.



Carmel MTC volunteering at a nursing home through their Love in Action efforts.



XVIII Diocesan Leadership Conference delegates participated in a Service Project coordinated by the Carmel MTC Youth Fellowship



Ebenezer MTC handing out collected goods to individuals in their neighborhood.



Long Island MTC Young Family Fellowship's Operation Christmas Child project.



Long Island MTC Young Family Fellowship participating in Run or Dye.

Pictures from around the region:



St Thomas MTC Yonkers NY – Light the Night Walk



St Thomas MTC Yonkers NY – Operation Gobble



St Thomas MTC Yonkers NY - Operation Toys for Kids



North East Regional Youth Fellowship – NYC Rescue Mission

Neighborhood Mission Subcommittee Members:

- 1) **Convener :** Rev. Biju P. Simon San Francisco Mar Thoma Church, CA
- 2) **Northeast Region:** Dr. Ron Jacob, Long Island MTC, NY
- 3) **Southeast Region:** Mr. Benny Philip, Ascension MTC, Philadelphia (Lead coordinator) & Mr. Alex Mathew, The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey (Co- coordinator)
- 4) **Southern Region:** Mr. Sean George, Hermon MTC, Atlanta
- 5) **Southwest Region:** Mr. Prakash Abraham, Carrollton MTC, Dallas, TX
- 6) **Western Region:** Mr. Mathew Thomas, Horeb MTC, Los Angeles & Ms. Pushpa Samuel, San Francisco MTC, CA
- 7) **Europe Region:** Mr. Sherry Mathew, Hermon MTC, Midlands/Europe
- 8) **Midwest Region:** Mr. Shani Abraham, Chicago MTC, Illinois
- 9) **Canada Region:** Mr. Shibu P. John, St. Mathews, Toronto, Canada
- 10) **Council Member:** Mr. Jorge Wilson, Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco Bay Area

