



# 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 - DECEMBER 2014

IN THIS ISSUE

## Bishop's Message

by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius Episcopa



I am glad that a group of members from the diocese headed by Rev Biju P Simon of San Francisco Mar Thoma Church, CA is bringing out a News Letter for better communication with the aim of lighting every neighborhood with the love of Christ. I congratulate the team and wish more of God's blessings in all their efforts. May God's blessings be with us all.

Bishop Mar Theodosius +

Neighborhood mission is one of the four mission activities that we have in the Mar Thoma Diocese of North America and Europe. The diocese is divided into regions, centre's and parishes to make the mission activities more contextual, effective and fruitful. It is also important for each member of the church feel his or her role in the leadership and participation in the mission in reaching out to the people in the neighborhood. This mission is an attempt to energize each parish to be the salt, leaven and light in the geographical space of the worshipping community. This is based on the love of God revealed in the incarnate Jesus to impart fullness of life to all the creation, with special preference to the least, last and the lost. Gospel of Mathew in Chapter 25 speaks of the hungry, thirsty, naked etc ...who form the group targeted in this mission.



## Southeast Region

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



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

## From the Convener's Desk

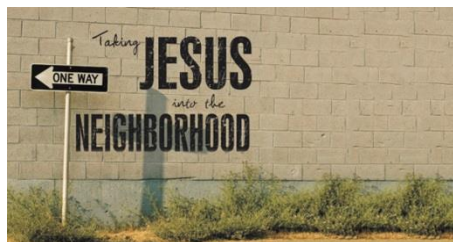
by Rev. Biju P. Simon



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

I am happy to greet you through this first Neighborhood Mission newsletter. As part of our Diocesan mission activities, "Neighborhood Mission" is also working to bring the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to our neighborhoods. Prophet Jeremiah reminds us "Seek the peace of the city... for in its peace you will find peace" (Jeremiah 29:7). However, our neighborhoods or cities are increasingly becoming places of violence, brokenness, and hopelessness. Our neighborhoods are facing multi-cultural, multi-religious, complex economic and political realities in today's globally connected neighborhoods. In the midst of all these realities, risen Christ is calling our parishes to partner with Him in God's reign. His mission statement "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of Jubilee" (cf. Luke 4:18-19) is descriptive of God's vision for the world. Through our parishes' involvement in the neighborhoods we can change lives, revitalize our congregations, and transform our neighborhoods. My prayer is that each parish in our Diocese will take up the task of reaching out to their neighborhoods.

*With prayerful regards,*  
**Rev. Biju P. Simon Achen**  
 Convener



### *Neighborhood Mission Outreach Ideas:*

1. Food and Clothing Ministry
2. School Supply Give Away
3. Free Car Wash
4. Transportation Service/Assistance
5. City-Wide Clean Up
6. City Park Clean Up
7. Involvement with Community Organizations
8. Neighborhood Block Party
9. Prayer Table at Outreach Events
10. Meals for Police, Fire Fighters and EMS Personnel
11. Health Fair
12. Thanksgiving Meal to the needy in the community
13. Christmas Toy Drives
14. Face Painting & Balloons Give Away
15. Thank You Letters/Cards (To Police, City Workers, Military Service Members etc)
16. Hospital (Provide Prayer, Bed Sheets, Service)
17. Home & Yard Clean Up & Window washing
18. Free Car Repair, oil changes
19. Free Hair Cuts



# Southeast Region

by Benny Philip

*Dear members in Christ,*

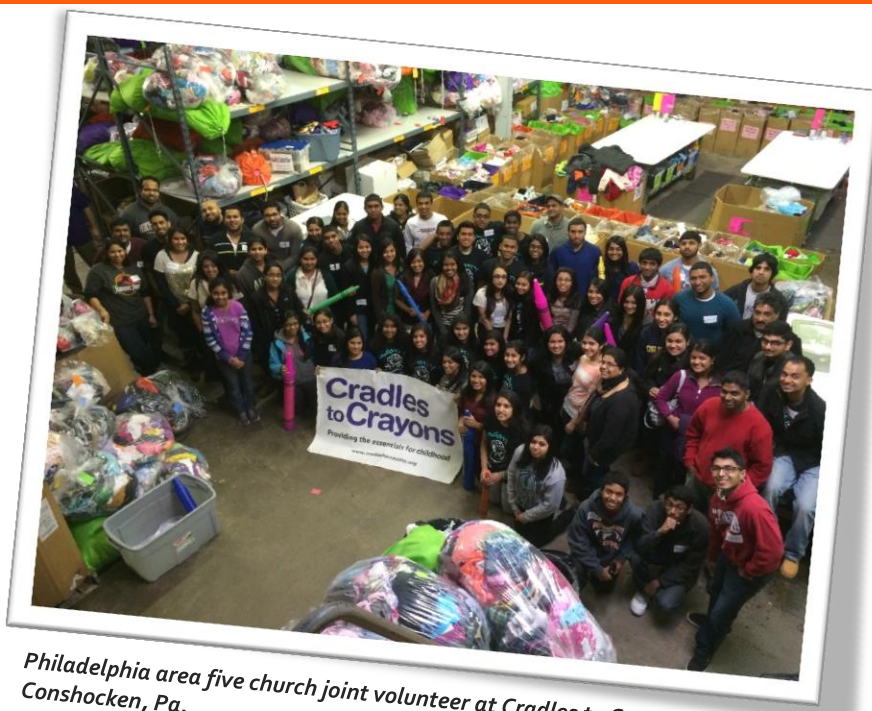
*It is my honor to briefly recap some of the neighborhood mission work that has been going on in the Southeast region of our diocese. Neighborhood mission is a vital ministry as we need to share the love of Christ where we are planted. There is much more work than what we can account for on paper but we wanted to highlight some work to encourage more local missions by our churches.*

*Prayerful regards,*

*Benny Philip*

## St Peters MTC:

- 1) NJ Food Bank- April 26, 2014 - we went to the Food Bank of New Jersey and helped them sort out foods that were donated to them for easy distribution when needed.
- 2) Teaneck Nursing Home- May 10, 2014 - we visited the local nursing home and sang songs and talked to the elderly people.
- 3) Hygiene Kits- May 17, 2014- During our joint bible study with New Jersey Mar Thoma Church, we put together 30 hygiene kits that were donated to the world church service.
- 4) Car wash & Soles4Souls drive- June 14, 2014 - we had a car wash in the month of June to raise money for the soles4souls drive, we raised about \$420 dollars and donated 4-5 big black bags full of shoes.
- 5) Teaneck National Night Out- August 5, 2014 - we volunteered with the Teaneck police department handing out items to the community.
- 6) Blood Drive/Free Health Fair- August 16, 2014 - we hosted a free health fair for the community at our church on August 16th, along with it we partnered up with the American Red Cross for a blood drive. We had 36 successful blood donations.



*Philadelphia area five church joint volunteer at Cradles to Crayons in Conshocken, Pa.*

- 7) Turkey Drive- We help the food bank of New Jersey raise money and donations of canned food and turkeys from the community for the thanksgivings of various shelters. (Participating on: November 22, 2014)
- 8) Can Drive- During the month of November we are collecting canned and non-perishable food, this is also part of the mission project during our southeast regional one-day fall conference on November 29th. All donations will be going to The food bank of New Jersey who distributes food to families in need during the holidays. (Participating during the month of November 2014)

## Philadelphia Region:

The 5 churches in Philadelphia joined together for two joint volunteer projects this year. The first one was at Cradles to Crayons in Conshocken, Pa. We were able to pack clothing care packets that will be distributed to low-income children in the Philadelphia area. Over 80 members participated in this event. The second one was at Philabundance Food bank in Philadelphia, pa. We packed donated food items into boxes that will be distributed numerous shelters in the Philadelphia area. The churches that participated include Ascension MTC, Bethel MTC, Christos MTC, Philadelphia MTC and St Thomas MTC Delaware Valley.

## Staten Island MTC

- 1) The YF is creating Troop Care Packages for needy troops. These include basic care needs like razors, toothbrushes, also nonperishable food items, etc. This is in conjunction with Star 99.1FM.
- 2) The Sunday School/YF during VBS is creating birthday cards for elderly nursing home residents in a long-term healthcare facility in Brooklyn, NY. One card will be given to each resident on their birthday.
- 3) The YF visited a pediatric unit at a local hospital in August. We will be putting on a puppet show, sing songs, arts & crafts, board games, and talk with the children.
- 4) The YF serves food to the needy at a local Catholic Church soup kitchen in November every year.
- 5) We hold canned foods drive/clothing drives in November, YF leads it but the whole church is involved. These items are donated to a local charity.

**Philadelphia MTC**

- 1) Yuvajana Sakhyam Blood Drive – Red Cross - May 11 2014
- 2) Turkey Drive – full meals & turkeys to Orthodox St. area families – November 23<sup>rd</sup>
- 3) Host A Christmas – providing gifts to needy Orthodox St. area families – Christmas time

(Orthodox St. is where our old parish building is located and we still like to give back to that community.)

**Bethel MTC**

- 1) We filled stockings for Stockings for Kids (Salvation Army and B101) and donated canned food, clothing and shoes to St. Francis Inn Ministry in Philadelphia which serves homeless and low income families in Phila.

**Ascension MTC**

- 1) The youth Fellowship and Sunday School held a food drive in April 2014 and donated it to Episcopal Community Services in Philadelphia.
- 2) The Sevika Sangham and Edavaka Mission will be hosting a clothing drive in December 2014.

- 3) Volunteered at Christ's home for children in August 2014.
- 4) Volunteered at Philabundance Food Shelter in August 2014.
- 5) Held a community car wash in June 2014 and donated proceeds to a local charity called Project Home.
- 6) Volunteered at Chosen 300 Homeless Ministries, which is an outreach ministry who bring the word of God to homeless and needy people in the Philadelphia area.
- 7) Organized a basketball tournament and the proceeds benefited Chosen 300.
- 8) Operation Christmas Child Drive – November 2014

**St Thomas MTC Delaware Valley**

- 1) Our youth fellowship typically visits patients at the Chester Valley Rehabilitation & Nursing Center every 3 months (5th Sundays). We usually spend about an hour with them singing songs, sharing testimonies, praying with them, and just spending time in conversation.
- 2) In the winter, the Sunday School (assisted by the youth)

participates in "Operation Christmas Child"

**The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey – Randolph**

1. Work with Market Street Mission (located at Morristown, NJ)
2. Provide support and help for the Dover, NJ homeless people

**Christos MTC**

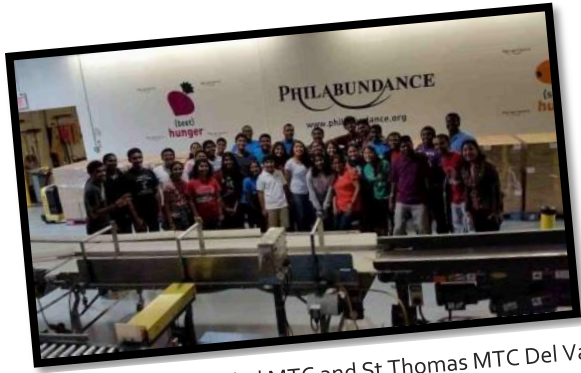
- 1) Volunteered our time cleaning and serving meals at the Missionaries of Charity shelter in Norristown throughout the year.

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.

***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, Randolph MTC, NJ (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*





Ascension MTC, Bethel MTC and St Thomas MTC Del Valley at Philabundance Food Bank in Philadelphia, Pa.



Ascension MTC Community Car wash to raise funds for Project Home in Phila, Pa.

**Pictures from around the region:**



St Peters MTC Youth Fellowship at the Food bank of NJ.



St Peters MTC Youth Fellowship at the Food bank of NJ.



Ascension MTC, Bethel MTC and St Thomas MTC Del Valley at Philabundance Food Bank in Philadelphia, Pa.

*The Southeast Region consists of the following churches:*

- 1) **Ascension Mar Thoma Church**
- 2) **Baltimore Mar Thoma Church**
- 3) **Bethel Mar Thoma Church**
- 4) **Christos Mar Thoma Church**
- 5) **Immanuel Mar Thoma Church, Virginia**
- 6) **Mar Thoma Church of Greater Washington**
- 7) **Mar Thoma Church of Philadelphia**
- 8) **New Jersey Mar Thoma Church, Randolph**
- 9) **Staten Island Mar Thoma Church**
- 10) **St Peters Mar Thoma Church**
- 11) **St Stephens Mar Thoma Church**
- 12) **St Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Delaware Valley**
- 13) **Tabore Mar Thoma Church, Staten Island**

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

