

Hermon Marthoma Church

MIDLANDS

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Next Service: (4-6pm)

11 Oct 08 -Holy Communion

25 Oct 08 -Holy Communion

At

**St. James Hill Church
Mere Green Road
Four Oaks, West Midlands
B75 5DD**

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From Achen's desk

This year, October 28 is celebrated as Diwali, a major Indian festival. This festival is also known as the 'Festival of Lights,' because of the large number of lights or lamps that are used. The lights or lamps signify victory of good over the evil within every human being, and the uplifting of spiritual darkness.

The Jewish people have their own 'Festival of Lights,' which is called Hanukkah. The story of Hanukkah begins in the reign of Alexander the Great. Alexander conquered most of the world including Syria, Egypt and Judea. He allowed the people under his control to continue observing their own religions and retain a certain degree of independence. Under this relatively benevolent rule, many Jews adopted parts of the Greek culture, including the language, customs, dress, etc.

More than a century later, a successor of Alexander, Antiochus IV was in control of the region. He began to oppress the Jews severely, placing a Greek priest in the Temple, massacring Jews, prohibiting the practice of the Jewish religion, and desecrating the Temple by requiring the sacrifice of pigs (a non-kosher animal) on the altar. Two groups opposed Antiochus: one led by Mattathias the Hasmonean and his son Judah Maccabee, and the other, a religious traditionalist group known as the Chasidim, the forerunners of the Pharisees. They joined forces in a revolt against the Greek government.

Following their victory in 165 BC, the Jews entered the Holy Temple in Jerusalem defiled by the Greek invaders, cleansed it and dedicated it anew to the service of God. Then, in memory of their victory, the Maccabees celebrated the first Hanukkah. (Hanukkah is the Hebrew term for dedication).

According to tradition as recorded in the Talmud, at the time of the rededication, there was very little oil left that had not been defiled by the Greeks. Oil was needed for the menorah in the Temple, which was supposed to burn throughout the night. There was only enough oil to burn for one day, yet miraculously, it burned for eight days. An eight day festival was declared to commemorate this miracle. Today this festival is celebrated for eight days, commencing on the 25th day of the month of Kislev (November/December).

The most important observance associated with Hanukkah is the kindling of the Hanukkah lights on the Menorah or Hanukkiya, a seven- or nine-branch candelabrum. On each night

one more light is kindled, beginning with one candle on the first night of Hanukkah and ending with eight on the final evening. The lighting is accompanied by the chanting of appropriate blessings and the singing of songs. The ninth branch is reserved for the shamash, the servant light, which is lit first and used to kindle the other lights of the Menorah.

The Hanukkah light symbolizes the light of religious, national and cultural freedom won by the Maccabees for their people. It gave new life to the faith that had suffered under the influence of the Greek culture. It was a struggle by the Jewish people for their spiritual life. Their religion and culture, the very essence of Jewish existence, was threatened by a dominating civilization. They resisted both personal and spiritual annihilation and were able to continue in the faith of their parents.

Throughout the Bible, we find stores of God's people suffering under the rule of some foreign power. But it is the faith and dedication of the people and the Grace of God that enables them to go forward in their faith and prosper despite the odds. They realize the importance of their culture and their family as well as their responsibility to the community around them.

In the month of October, the Mar Thoma Church will celebrate many events:

October 5th is Voluntary Evangelist Day
October 12th is when we as a church remember our solidarity with the physically and mentally differently abled
October 19th is Youth Sunday
October 26th is Christian Family Sunday

As we enter the month of October let us reflect on the fact that like the most of Jewish people, we are in a foreign land. But like most of the Jewish people who maintain their faith and customs, we too should maintain our faith and customs. It is difficult and many times very challenging, especially for the younger members of our community. But with God's Grace, and our own efforts we can dedicate ourselves to be true Christians and maintain our faith despite the influences of the community around us. Further, we can be the lights that show others the importance of family, of worship, and of God. For we are "Lighted To Lighten."

Rev. Shibi Abraham

Church Turmoil & Challenges

– A study by Anon

Today across the country, we are witnessing struggles, splits, and turmoil within the church at unprecedented levels. We are not alone in suffering from disillusionment and searching for God's truth and direction in the midst of it.

What has happened to the "local church"? Why are so many becoming disillusioned and leaving it.

Let us consider the impact – emotionally, spiritually and physically and see what God's word tells us.

What would you identify as the biggest single reason a believer would become disillusioned in their local church?

- ❖ Betrayal, either by someone respected in the church who does something completely out of Christian character or says something hurtful and completely unexpected.
- ❖ Church leadership – either non existent or a change in direction completely counter to the expected.
- ❖ Behavior of membership following a traumatic church event.

What are some of the reasons you could point to that are causing so many church splits, families leaving the organized church altogether, and declining overall church attendance in many parts of the world?

- ❖ Post modern world, no absolutes – I can have my "religion" you can have yours.
- ❖ No real sense of community – we're all doing our own thing.
- ❖ Politics within the church are as bad as those found in the secular world.
- ❖ No real difference between Christians and everyone else.

Thinking in reverse, what elements are present in a successful church that is growing both spiritually and in membership? (Acts 2:40-47)

- ❖ Christ is central, not a person or people or other body or activity. See also other attributes listed in Acts 2: 40-47.

What happens to us individually when we leave a troubled church – why is that?

- ❖ We suffer physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- ❖ We are a family; a breakup of the family unit is like a death; we mourn, are depressed, and experience a real sense of loss.

What does James tell us about these times – how can we know when it's time to stay and time to go? (James 1:1-18)

- ❖ We are always going encounter "various trials", but just because there's a trial in our life doesn't mean we should run from it.
- ❖ We are expected to endure trials because they build our faith.
- ❖ When we are unsure what His direction for us is, we are to turn to him and Ask – not asking is not good.
- ❖ Don't get all caught up in your position within the church, who you are or what role you play; this will bind you to God's will
- ❖ As we persevere, we will be "deceived" by what's going on around us, or by our own wisdom. Every good thing comes from God – if you discern something is from God then follow it, accept it, etc.; if you discern it is not, then discard it, ignore it, run from it.
- ❖ God wants us to succeed – He wants us to glorify him...make sure that whatever you think or do glorifies him, no matter your circumstance.

In Galatians 5:7, Paul asked the church at Galatia who had stepped between them and God. During times of struggle, challenge and uncertainty, we need to guard ourselves that we don't allow those times to step between us and God. What does Galatians 5:14-15 warn us about during these times?

- ❖ Don't be caught up in the turmoil. Don't react to negative things by being vengeful, biting and devouring one another.
- ❖ If you do get caught up with these things, you will be consumed as well and will be blinded to God's will and direction for you.

It occurs to me that during times like these when you are searching for direction and are uncertain of the truth, that Paul's teachings to the Galatians are especially relevant. What does he tell them to do in Galatians 5:16-26?

- ❖ He exhorts them to live in the Spirit and to use their gifts, their fruits of the Spirit.

When we become a part of Christ's kingdom he leads us to join a local congregation, and that congregation becomes our spiritual family. When turmoil, uncertainty, gossip, envy, and so on, enter into that family it has both spiritual and physical affects on us. We lose our sense of security, our sense of belonging, and quite often we become disillusioned as we see those we respect within that family doing and saying things which disappoint or reflect a character or behavioral trait that runs counter to being a Christian.

Once that trust has been broken, once disillusionment and uncertainty beset us, it becomes increasingly difficult to see and know God's will. In fact, if we're not careful, it becomes easier and easier to either be caught up in the difficulty or to drift away from the church as a way of avoiding the challenges.

James and Paul teach us that it's during these times that we should draw closer to God, grow more deeply in our faith, and focus each day on living by the Spirit. It is only in this way that we can know the truth. It is only in this way that we can know whether God is calling us to stay and grow as He builds a new local church, or if He is calling to us to become involved in a new work somewhere else.

For all of us who struggle at times working in His Kingdom there is much hope. He is with us each step; we are not struggling any more than Christ did when he began building the Church; and if we "live by the Spirit", the fruits of the Spirit will sustain us and help us to grow.

May God comfort all of you who struggle, either with work, or health, or with your walk with Him. Continue to pray for His presence in your life – may he richly bless each of you.

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



Church Body in Turmoil
I Corinthians 12:12-26

The wealthy man & his son

A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art.

When the Vietnam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son.

About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands.

He said, 'Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart and he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for art.' The young man held out this package. 'I know this isn't much. I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this.'

The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the picture. 'Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift.'

The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected.

The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection.

On the platform sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. 'We will start the bidding with this picture of the son. Who will bid for this picture?'

There was silence.

Then a voice in the back of the room shouted, 'We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one.' But the auctioneer persisted. 'Will somebody bid for this painting. Who will start the bidding? £100, £200?'

Another voice said angrily. 'We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Gogh's, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids!'

But still the auctioneer continued. 'The son! The son! Who'll take the son?'

Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the long time gardener of the man and his son. 'I'll give \$10 for the painting.' Being a poor man, it was all he could afford.

'We have £10, who will bid £20?'

'Give it to him for £10. Let's see the masters.'

'£10 is the bid, won't someone bid £20?'

The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son.

They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections.

The auctioneer pounded the gavel. 'Going once, twice, SOLD for \$10!'

A man sitting on the second row shouted, 'Now let's get on with the collection!'

The auctioneer laid down his gavel. 'I'm sorry, the auction is over.'

'What about the paintings?'

I am sorry. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned and whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings.

The man who took the son gets everything!
God gave His son 2,000 years ago to die on the cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is: 'The son, the son, who'll take the son?'





Useful contacts

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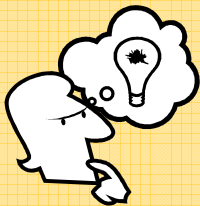
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Special Greetings this month

Birthday greetings to

Nahum P Issac , Syma Sunny, Indu Issac, Elizabeth Patteril, Benjamin Thomas, Shweta Rachel Abraham, Elizabeth M Varghese

Congratulations on the Wedding Anniversaries of

Giboy George & Annamma Giboy, Sam and Boby Thomas, Mathew and Reggina

Sunday school

At 3:30pm every 2nd and 4th Saturdays at the Church.

Kids

MELANIE (age 5) asked her Granny how old she was. Granny replied she was so old she didn't remember any more. Melanie said, "If you don't remember you must look in the back of your panties. Mine say five to six."

Other announcements

Forthcoming Events:

Harvest Festival	:	25 th Oct 08
Sunday school Dedication Day	:	NOVEMBER
Christmas Carol Service	:	13 th Dec 08

Changes to the above will be made based on availability of the Church Hall & holidays

Harvest Festival

Sevika Sangam is conducting the Harvest Festival.

All proceeds go to the church Fund. Please attend and contribute generously.

There will be lots to eat & to buy, games for the kids, tambola, etc....

Our Rep is Marykutty Thomas Tel: 0121 772 8697 for details



"ONCE AGAIN YOU BOUGHT MORE AT THE CHURCH BAZAAR, THAN YOU BROUGHT IN TO SELL."