

Chapter 7

GRADE FIVE

INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: History and Relationship with Other Churches

Lesson 1

A GLOBAL CHURCH IN THE SPIRIT OF ECUMENISM

Aim : 1. To show how our church is expanding from Kerala to different parts of the world.

2. To learn how it works with other denominations belonging to the World Council of Churches.

Bible Verse: 1 Peter 2.9.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Main Ideas:

Among all states of India, Kerala always lead the way in education and literacy. Educated people moved out of the state, first within India and later to foreign countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Arabian Gulf countries and North America.

Marthomites who settled at one place gathered for

worship and formed a parish. Since worship started in North America in 1972 we had celebrated the Silver Jubilee of our growth in 1997. Parishes of North America and Europe were brought together in 1988 to form a Diocese. Now there are several activities of the church organizations at regional and diocesan levels. (Share some activities that you have been involved.)

The Mar Thoma Church is working closely with other churches in India, including Church of South India (CSI) and the church of North India (CNI), having intercommunion with both of them. In America we have inter-communion with the Episcopal church of the United States and the Anglican church of Canada. Inter-communion means allowing members of our church to receive Holy communion from the church which has a special relationship with our church as agreed by the church authorities. Achens (pastors) are allowed to celebrate communion in the other church having inter communion. We have membership with several world bodies, especially the World Council of Churches (WCC), (give examples of our participation in such organizations). Also, the Mar Thoma Church has become a member of the National Council for Churches of Christ in the United States along with 33 other "communions" in this country, (See Mar Thoma Messenger, October 1997). We live at a time when ecumenical outlook and cooperation of different denominations are on the rise.

Teaching strategies and Activities:

Explain terms such as Ecumenism and Inter communion. What are some of the other christian denominations in India and North America? Among them mention the churches which have inter-communion with our church. What are some of the other churches that we work closely by arranging special meetings and programs? How do these relationships influence the growth of our church? Discuss such questions and learn about the spirit of ecumenism of the Mar Thoma Church.

Materials:

Map of the World or a globe to locate the places mentioned above.

Conclusion:

The Mar Thoma Church, though small (population about one million) is a global church with the members living in all continents. It has a significant place among other churches and world organizations. We cherish the ecumencial outlook and work closely with other churches. From humble beginnings we have come a long way. In all humility, let us praise God for His Grace.

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Theme: Worship: Faith and Practices of an Eastern Church

Lesson 2

WORSHIP: HIGHEST ACTIVITY FOR GOD

- Aim:**
1. To understand what worship is and why it is significant.
 2. To develop a positive attitude for worship.

Bible Verse: John 4:24

God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Main Ideas:

Worship is the adoration of God. Worship is the highest activity of man whose ultimate aim is God's glory. In fact, it was through its existence as a worshiping community that Christianity could sustain itself in the world against hostile surroundings. It is through worship that the life and witness of the church are maintained, and the community is united and built up. The very nature of the Church constitutes the need for corporate worship and the Church gives primacy to worship. True and full worship is always an act of the whole body of Christ and not limited physically to those present at worship (*Gleanings*, p.36).

We worship in a standing posture because we believe the Lord is present in this service and as an eastern mark of respect, we adore him in standing. Kneeling is widely practised in the Roman Catholic Church. Southern Baptist Church encourages people to have spontaneous expressions during

worship, different from Eastern Churches.

There is a worship order for the Mar Thoma Church. We use the Word of God in our worship for our nurturing. Other basic elements of worship are Adoration, Confession, Thanks giving, Intercession, and Offering.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Discuss the importance of worship in Christian Life. See different worship orders used in our Church and Sunday Schools. Prepare and conduct small worship service by children with the help of teacher. Understand about other systems of worship. Encourage the cultivation of a positive attitude for worship.

Materials:

Order of Worship, prayers and Hymns. Materials related to the worship of other churches.

Conclusion:

By attending and involving in the worship, we grow in our spiritual life.

Ask the following questions:

1. What is worship? What do we accomplish as individuals and as a community through our worship?
2. Why do we stand most of the time when we worship? What are the differences with some other denominations (name and the difference).
3. What are the basic elements of worship?

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INTRODUCTION OF THEMES Theme: Christian Sacraments

Lesson 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF SACRAMENTS

Aim: 1. To Understand the importance of Sacraments in Christian Life.

2. To meaningfully participate in Sacraments

Bible Verse: 1 John 4: 13

We know that we live in him and he in us because he has given us his spirit.

Main Ideas:

The Mar Thoma Church is part of One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The faithful members of this religious community in an area is recognized as a parish. Each Parish exists for the purpose of worship, proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of sacraments.

Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it. Sacraments are special encounters with Christ that help us grow in grace, and lead a holy life. Jesus gave His church sacraments to continue His saving work and to build up the community of believers. Sacraments have visible expressions. That means, the sacraments bear fruit in those who receive them with the right attitudes. These visible, outward expressions point to inner grace that is given to us (spiritual truths). They carry meaning only in spiritual life experience of the participants. In other words, life of a true believer would be a visible expression of spiritual experience.

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There are seven sacraments administered by the Mar Thoma Church. They are:

1. Baptism, 2. Confirmation, 3. Confession, 4. Holy Communion, 5. Marriage, 6. Ordination, 7. Unction (anointing of the sick).

Dominical sacraments:

Baptism and Holy Communion, instituted by and associated with our Lord, are called Dominical Sacraments. All members of the Church are morally bound to receive these sacraments, if they take the membership in the Church seriously and continue in the fellowship.

Confirmation is administered along with baptism, and Confession along with Holy Communion.

Optional Sacraments:

Marriage, Ordination, and Unction are optional sacraments which the members may receive as a result of personal choice

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Teacher presents the meaning of the term sacrament and name them (seven).

Discuss the spiritual truth and the significance of the sacrament. Help the students understand that the faith of the participants is an essential element.

Conclusion:

Sacraments become means to receive God's blessings and inspires recipients to remain faithful and committed in Christian life. Our life must be a visible sign of the spiritual experience.

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Theme: Uniqueness and Central Values

Lesson 4

REFORMATION IN THE MALANKARA CHURCH

Aim: To understand the reformation in our church during the 19th century, with its visionary leaders.

Bible Verse: Mark 6:2. (Good News Bible)

On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. Many people were there, and when they heard him, they were all amazed.

Main Ideas:

With the help of various Western missionary societies, especially the Church Missionary Society, Palakunnathu Abraham Malpan and Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan dedicated themselves to the cause of reform in the Malankara church. They translated the liturgy into Malayalam to bring about meaningful participation and gave emphasis to the personal study of the Word of God and initiated other reforms to remain well founded on the Word of God. That reformed group is now known as the Mar Thoma Church.

Teaching Strategies & Activities:

Teachers ask questions to recall students' learning on church heritage and Western contacts in the 19th century. Class should select some problem areas where changes are needed. Teacher explains the contribution of selected leaders, especially Abraham Malpan, in initiating new ideas and practices. Select a few of them and discuss in the class. Bible reading and worship in the mother tongue have emerged.

The spirit of evangelism has risen in great force. The church modified its administrative structure and became a reformed church.

Conclusion:

The uniqueness of the Mar Thoma Church is that it is a reformed church. The reformation must be a continuous process. Try to reform yourselves day by day in Christ. We need a devotional life (prayer and Bible reading) and outreach activities (evangelical work).

also by other Christian denominations and the government itself.

Thirumeni was disturbed by the sad condition of the poor and the destitutes. He wanted to improve their social and economic conditions. So he associated himself with people and movements committed to the work among these destitutes. He was influenced by people such as Sadhu Mathaichen (Manganam Ashram) and K.K.Kuruvilla, his teacher at Kottayam Mar Thoma Seminary. Thirumeni's sensitivity to the needs of the poor as a young man did not loose when he assumed prestigious social and church positions. Hence he was able to initiate new programs when he became a bishop or metropolitan. Thirumeni took the initiative to start the first destitute home (1949) for people who do not have anyone to take care of. This was one of his first achievements as the new metropolitan. Also, he organized a "Beggar Relief Committee" at Maramon Convention in 1949. Volunteers were given boxes to collect money for distribution among beggars. This step discouraged begging at the convention site.

He believed that social service activities are not limited to charity programs but they are our Christian obligations. A follower of Jesus has the duty to reach others by helping them, sharing his/her wealth given by God. It was the love of God shown in Jesus that motivated Thirumeni to organize community outreach programs for the Mar Thoma Church.

People of various religions and beliefs admired the personal qualities of Thirumeni and they include the rich and the poor, the educated and the non-educated, along with political leaders and others. However, he had strong beliefs and he would express it whether it will please others or not. For example, he opposed the policies of an Indian Prime-Minister when the government become undemocratic. He did not fear the possible arrest and other consequences. The first house that Thirumeni built for the homeless was given to a

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Theme: Mission and Ministry of the Church

Lesson 5

THE LIFE AND MESSAGE OF A CHURCH LEADER: JUHANON MAR THOMA METROPOLITAN

- Aim:**
1. Study the Life and Message of a church leader by selecting Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan
 2. Serving others and responding to human needs.

Bible Verse: Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Main Ideas:

Among church leaders we select Juhanon Mar Thoma, the Metropolitan of our church from 1947- 1976 and bishop from 1937 onwards. Thirumeni (Metropolitan) initiated new movements such as orphanages and destitute homes, home for the homeless, comparable to the "Habitat for Humanity" in America.

The Mar Thoma Church built a new bishop's house (Aramana) and celebrated the 75th birthday of Juhanon Mar Thoma in 1968. Thirumeni was reluctant to move to this new building because he thought that such a larger facility was not needed for one person. He opposed to the idea since that money could be given to the needy, especially those who did not have a home. The church responded to Thirumeni's challenge regarding social obligations and duties and built 75 homes for the homeless. It was the beginning of a new movement in Kerala, continued not only by our church, but

Hindu whose need being considered as the criteria.

Teaching Strategies and Activities:

In Grade Four we have introduced the names of a few missionaries, selecting only one or two contributions of each. This year we study one person with more details, Juhanon Mar Thoma. He has some unique understanding of the church's relationship to the society and attempted to respond to the needs of people in the lowest socio-economic group. He recognized this task as his Christian obligation, comparable to the life of the Biblical prophets who stood for righteousness or justice. He led a very simple life with decent personal qualities which people admired. For children growing in an affluent society, his life provides a rare model.

Since Thirumeni published several books regarding his life and mission we have the resources for our study. They include *Ormakalum Kurippukalum* (CLS, 1971) *Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma: Jeevithavum Sandheshavum* (Mar Thoma Sabha Council, 1977), both in Malayalam, and *Christianity in India and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church*, 1968.

Teaching Materials:

Pictures of Metropolitan Juhanon Thirumeni on different occasions.

Conclusion:

Thirumeni widened the scope of mission by including areas beyond preaching. He showed that outreach activities are an integral part of mission. Today our church is known for its work among the poor and the needy. People rejected by others in society are being cared for by our church including the destitutes, the disabled, the mentally ill and the alcoholics and others. He has strengthened the emphasis on the evangelical social gospel in our church.