



Welcome to the New Deepam!

As you can tell, we have changed our layout for *Deepam*, our church newsletter. In response to the feedback from our fellow church members about what they would like to see from the newsletter, we have decided to make *Deepam* a monthly effort, and to keep you up to date as much as possible with the news of our church and its various organizations. We will include news of our Church from a diocesan and worldwide level as well, so that we can keep the reader better informed.

We hope you enjoy *Deepam*, and as always, let us know how you feel and what you would like to see in future issues.

Thank You,
The *Deepam* Editorial Board

St. Thomas General Church News

- ❖ His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Didimos I will be in Houston on July 1st and 2nd. Currently, all three churches in Houston are working together to have Bava Thirumeni conduct Holy Qurbana on the morning of Sunday, July 2nd, at St. Gregorios Church. Bava Thirumeni will also be at St. Stephens on Saturday evening and at St. Thomas on Sunday evening.
- ❖ The General Body has authorized the Managing Committee to provide exemptions to subscribing church members who are not able to pay the required minimum of \$5,000 to the Church Construction Fund. The Managing Committee shall grant such exemptions after the member submits a completed Exemption Form. All exemption requests must be submitted no later than Sunday June 25th.
- ❖ The General Body has granted a period of three years for all new subscribing members to completely pay the minimum amount of \$5,000 to the Church Construction Fund.
- ❖ The General Body did not approve project design options for the proposed Recreation Center. The Managing Committee shall be meeting soon to devise a means to understand the interests and priorities of the congregation, and a General Body will be scheduled afterwards for further discussion.
- ❖ A member of the church has donated a water cooler/refrigerator. It is located in the side room of the altar. The member wishes to remain anonymous.
- ❖ The 2006 Church Festival (Perunnal) will be held from Friday July 21st to Sunday July 23rd. The Perunnal has been postponed to late July to avoid conflict with the Southern Region Family Conference which is being held in Dallas from July 6th to July 9th.
- ❖ The 2006 Church Picnic will be held on Saturday August 5th. The location of the picnic is being finalized from a list of three beautiful parks in the Greater Houston area.

American Diocese News

- ❖ The General Assembly of the American Diocese met on April 29th at St. Mary's Church in Rockland, New York. 59 representatives (priests and laymen) from 39 parishes attended the meeting. In total, the American Diocese has 78 parishes and 86 priests.
- ❖ The 2006 Southern Region Family Conference will be held at St. Gregorios Church in Dallas from Thursday July 6th through Sunday July 9th. His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Didimos I, His Grace Mathews Mar Barnabas, His Grace Zacharias Mar Nicholovos and His Grace Zacharias Mar Theophilos will be attending the conference and Rev. Fr. Dr. George Pulikottil is a featured speaker. Rev. Fr. Raju Daniel is the convener of the conference. For more information or for registration, please contact Manoj Thomas (281-485-4543) or Alex Alexander (972-303-0745).
- ❖ The 2006 Central Family and Youth Conference will be held from Wednesday July 12th through Saturday July 15th at the Hudson Valley Conference Center in Kerhonkson, New York. Rev. Fr. Dr. George Koshy is the coordinator of this conference.
- ❖ The St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Oklahoma is celebrating their Silver Jubilee this year. The Jubilee Celebrations are from July 3rd through July 5th.

Organization News

Martha Mariam Samajam

The St. Thomas Orthodox Martha Mariam Samajam held their first ever picnic on May 13, 2006 in the church auditorium. The picnic encouraged and nurtured the spirit of women and their valued presence in the organization. With over 40 women participating, the picnic was a great success. It was an opportunity to see the sometimes forgotten members of the church expressing their carefree, fun-loving personalities. With the advent of Mother's day on May 14, 2006, it was perfect timing to celebrate the beauty, strength and resilience of the Church women. The picnic hosted group participation in games, raffle presents for everyone and of course, great food.

The Martha Mariam Samajam gets together for a prayer every month in the Church and is open to all women over the age of 15. The meetings include prayer, singing and a bible study session, lead by one of its members. The Martha Mariam Samajam is an organization of the women of the Church to unify in prayer, support, companionship and faith.

Sunday School

- ❖ The Sunday School Area Competition was held at St. Thomas Orthodox Church on April 29th, 2005. Participants included members from five sister churches.
- ❖ The last day for the Sunday School year 2005-2006 was on May 21st, 2006.
- ❖ The Houston Area Sunday School OVBS will be held on June 22nd, 23rd & 24th at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church. The theme is "Rejoice in the Lord" from Philippians 3:1. Celin Rajan, from St. Gregorios, is this year's coordinator. Please encourage all of your children to attend and participate. Also please contact Linsy Varughese if you would like to help with OVBS

OCYM

What's New in Youth Movement? Members of the Orthodox Christian Youth Movement and the new Diocesan-supported group FOCUS (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in the United States) are combining efforts to integrate to one organization. FOCUS is a new movement initiated by young adults in the MGOCSM of the American Diocese who felt a need for a spiritual ministry directed to people of their age and background. Additionally, FOCUS targets MGOCSM "graduates" between the ages of 23 – 35. After much discussion, the decision was made to merge FOCUS with OCYM since St. Thomas – Houston already has an active OCYM organization. Currently, the goal is to transform the organization into a well-rounded group addressing the spiritual needs of members as well as contributing back to the community under a common mission. Members of both organizations met for the first time at a monthly prayer meeting held in April and recently attended the OCYM picnic. We ask for your prayers and support as we continue to pave our way through this endeavor.

OCYM is an organization started by the Orthodox Church 70 years ago to cater to the spiritual and social needs of all Orthodox believers over 21 years of age. The organization is available to both men and women regardless of background or marital status.

OCYM conducted their picnic on Saturday, May 13 from 4-8pm. The picnic was a success with over 100 participants, enjoyable games and great food. Thanks to everyone who came out.

MGOCSM

MGOCSM has been very active in the first half of the year, making visits to our sister Orthodox churches (Coptic and Greek) as well as being active in the community – May 27th our members volunteered at the Ronald McDonald House, and are planning more service projects for the summer.

Upcoming events include a summertime one day retreat, the revival of our Young Women's Bible Study sessions in June, as well as our monthly Bible Studies with Very Rev. Fr. Aroopala.

Planning for our annual end-of-the-year retreat has begun, so if you would like to contribute any suggestions or ideas, please let any one of the officers know.

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