

St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church of Greater Washington's

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- - Aakasha Dhoothu - -

**A monthly Newsletter published for the
St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church of Greater Washington, USA.**

President and Vicar:

Rev. Fr. Varghese (Santhosh) K. Joshua
301-519-9427

Editor:

Siby Koshy

editor@st-thomas-orthodox-dc.org

Advisory Board:

Fr. Varghese K. Joshua, and
Dn. George Mathew

Worship Schedule:

- Morning prayer starts at 8.30 AM

- The Holy Qurbana starts at 9.15 AM

at

810 University Blvd W
Silver Spring, MD – 20901

Visit our website: www.st-thomas-orthodox-dc.org for updates



Your Vicar Writes...

This is the world of information technology. We now have lot of information in front of us. The problem we are facing now is, choosing the right information. It is easy to misguide people who don't know anything or who have a partial knowledge. Proper information in the right time can save souls. As a guardian of souls, the Church has her own duty to provide the right information at the right time. We have many limitations in the world too. People are very busy in their day to day life. In a world of unlimited opportunities, the possibility to find time for learning divine things is very hard. At that time a church member came with an idea that can help the church with publishing an e-newsletter which is accessible to everyone. I whole heartedly approved the suggestion and presented it to the managing committee and later in the church where everyone appreciated the initiative of this member. By publishing the first volume of this newsletter we are very grateful and thankful to our Savior Jesus Christ.

I wish that this magazine will help not only our members but also hope that everyone can access the information published in this newsletter and can have the right information on religious, spiritual and secular matters.

I am very proud to announce the inauguration of this newsletter in days our Lord's resurrection's announcement. I wish everyone a happy Easter.

In Lord's Service,

Fr. Varghese (Santhosh) K. Joshua



Your Deacon Writes...

I am really excited that our parish newsletter is debuting this coming month, the month in which we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord. "Christ is Risen!" is the greatest message we can publish and share. Our lives - thoughts, words, and deeds - should be testaments to this great truth. St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Preach always; when possible, use words." Our lives can and should provide the same testament of faith that even Apostle Thomas gave when meeting our Lord after His Resurrection - "My Lord, and my God!" We are proud to be St. Thomas Christians and have to share the message with the world around us as part of our mission in this world.

The word 'newsletter' is composed of two words - 'news' and 'letter.' In the early church, letters were written by St. Paul and other apostles to relay news and provide encouragement and edification to the spiritual flock. Similarly, we undertake this small project to keep our esteemed members and well-wishers informed about our monthly activities and news, as well as providing meaningful and edifying articles. For the success of this newsletter, we need everyone's help. Please provide news you would like to share (birthdays, anniversaries, promotions, graduations, etc.) and/or short poems and articles for inclusion. As a parish, we are called to express joy when others rejoice and sorrow when they are sad. Through this newsletter, may we all grow closer as a parish and closer to Christ.

Our deep appreciation and thanks to Siby Koshy, who is coordinating this new venture. May God abundantly bless the producers, submitters, and readers of this parish newsletter. May it be for the glory and honor of God!

With love and prayers for a blessed Easter,

**Semassan
(Dn. George Mathew)**



Birthdays

- 1 Biju Mathew
- 2 Nikita Thomas
- 3 Davis Varghese
- 15 Leelamma Yohannan
- 16 Benjamin Thoma
- 22 Shirly Koshy
- 24 Mary Thomas
- 30 Joji Joy
- 30 Mercy Thomas



Anniversary Couples

- 20 Mr. T.P. Abraham and Chinnakkutty Abraham
- 22 Mr. Sam Thomas and Mrs. Reena Sam
- 26 Mr. Shibu Varghese and Mrs. Sinobiya Varghese

Bereavement

May the Lord comfort you and your family.

March

- Very Rev. Thomas P Mundukuzhy
Cor Episcopa (Sunday School
Director of American Diocese)



March

- Joshua Thomas (Thomas Varghese and Nitha)

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

Monthly Prayer Meeting:

Joy C. Thomas and Jessy
(Date will be announced in church at a later time)

Important Dates for this month:

- Sunday, April 1 (*Palm Sunday - Hosanna*): Special Worship & Holy Qurbana (8 AM - 12 PM at 810 University Blvd.)
Evening Worship (5 PM at Residence of Dn. George Mathew & Regina)
- Monday, April 2: Evening Worship (7 PM - 8:30 PM at Residence of George P. Thomas and Susan)
- Tuesday, April 3: Evening Worship (7 PM - 8:30 PM at Residence of Biju Mathew and Anila)
- Wednesday, April 4 (*Maundy Thursday - Pesaha*): Evening Worship & Holy Qurbana (6 PM – 9:30 PM at 810 University Blvd.)
- Thursday, April 5: Evening Worship (7 PM - 8:30 PM at Residence of Binu Abraham and Anu)
- Friday, April 6 (*Good Friday*): Good Friday worship (8:30 AM – 3 PM at 810 University Blvd.)
- Saturday, April 7 (*Great Saturday - Dhukha Sheniyazhcha*): Morning Worship & Holy Qurbana (10:30 AM - 1 PM at Colesville Local Park, 610 Hobbs Drive, Silver Spring MD, 20904)
- Sunday, April 8 (*Easter Sunday*): Special Worship & Holy Qurbana (8.30 AM - 12.00 PM at 810 University Blvd.)

**The annual general body meeting held on Dec. 3rd,
2006 unanimously elected the following members to
serve for the year 2007.**

1. **Honorary Secretary:** Mr. George P. Thomas
Honorary Treasurer: Mr. Biju Mathew
2. **Managing Committee:** Dn. George Mathew, Mr. George P. Thomas, Mr. Biju Mathew, Mr. T. M. Chacko, Mr. T.P. Varghese, Mr. Rajan Varghese, Mr. Binu Abraham, and Mrs. Sini Varghese. Ex Officio - Mathew Chacko.
3. **Board of Directors for 2007:** Mr. Joy C. Thomas, Mr. Thomas Varghese, Mrs. Amini Chacko, and Mrs. Regina Mathew.
4. **Martha Mariam Samaj Secretary:** Ms. Susan Thomas
Jt. Secretary: Nirmala Abraham
5. **Sunday School Headmaster:** Dn. George Mathew Jr.
Asst. Headmistress: Anu Mathew
6. **Building Construction Program:**

Building Committee: Dn. George Mathew, Mr. George P. Thomas, Mr. Biju Mathew, Mr. Thomas Varghese, Mr. T. M. Chacko, Mr. T.P. Varghese, Mr. Isaac John, Mr. Mathew Chacko, Mr. T.P. Johnny, Mr. Varghese Abraham, and Mr. Shine Jacob

Project Manager: Shine Jacob

Project Accountant: Biju Mathew

Legal Counsel: Mathew Chacko, Attorney

Souvenir Team: Bavan Varghese, John Koshy, Paul Mathew, Bovan Varghese

Fund Raising Committee: Fr. Santosh Joshua, T.M. Chacko, T.P. Varghese, Varghese Abraham, Isaac John, Mathew Chacko, Biju Mathew, T.P. Johnny

Project Financing: Bavan Varghese

7. **The following co-ordinators were appointed:**

Prayer Meeting: Mathew Chacko

Retreat: Dn George Mathew and Binu Abraham

Holy Week: T.M.Chacko

Food Co-ordinator: Rajan Varghese

Annual Picnic: T.M.Chacko

Christmas Carols: Mathew Chacko

Christmas Gift: Sini Varghese

Church Directory: Binu Abraham

Church Calendar: Sini Varghese

Ecumenical Council Representative: Ms. Sheeba Chacko

8. **Web Team:** John Koshy, Varghese Abraham, Bovan Varghese
9. **MGOCSM:** Ajesh John
10. **Auditor:** Isaac John



UPDATES

Church Building

Our Church construction process may be classified into various stages as given below.

1. Acquire land.
2. Identify, negotiate and choose civil engineers, Architects and Builders.
3. Design, develop and submit site plan, architecture and all other required drawings for Montgomery county approval.
4. Identify, negotiate and choose Site-worker and General Contractor
5. Raise fund for church construction
6. Co-ordinate with Montgomery county and civil engineers, architect, builder to get approval for the drawings.
7. Start construction - site work, excavation, steel frame and rest of the building.

We have completed items 1 – 4 above. We are in the process of raising fund for church construction. We are close to completion on getting the approval from county for all the submitted drawings. We have one more reviewer to complete the review to get an approved building permit.

We already had a pre-construction meeting with the county which can be considered as a kick-off meeting for getting started with the site work. At this time we expect to have the fund raised and building permit approved in 2 weeks. If this deadline is met, then the last stage - site work and excavation part of church construction can get started as early as mid-April.

We request your continued prayers and support to complete this noble cause. Please visit the church website for the latest information. Please appeal to your friends and families to contribute our building fund.

Ecumenical

Easter Program to be held on April 14, 2007. The program will be held at Marthoma Church on East-west Highway. Each church has a maximum of 7 minutes for their program. Our church is intending to perform a group song. All are invited for the program.

Martha Mariam Samajam

The womens' association is again planning to have the annual children's festival – last year Spring Fling was a success. Please assist the co-ordinator to make this event a successful one.

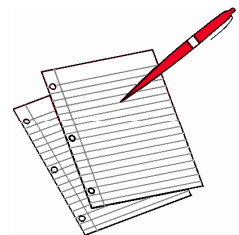
Sunday School

Classes cancelled on April 1, 8, and 15. Ecumenical program practice is on April 14. Sunday School students should continue to read the book of Isaiah for the team competitions that will resume on April 22. Team 2 is currently leading. Happy reading!

Contribute to your newsletter!

Send your creations to editor@st-thomas-orthodox-dc.org by April 22, 2007.

This is an opportunity for you to showcase your talent; whether it is writing, drawing, or bible knowledge. Please send in your poems, articles, drawings, or anything else that you want to share or inform your church family.



Overcoming the Passions

- Rev. Dn. George Mathew

In this month's debut of our parish newsletter, I would like to spend some time considering the concept of purification and the passions. The term "passion" comes from the Greek word *pathe*, which means "suffering." There are two main terms that are derived: *path* – words like pathology, pathetic, allopath, etc., and *pasch*, from which Pascha (a term for Feast of the Resurrection) comes. All of these words have to do with some aspect of suffering. In fact, we are preparing for Holy Week, otherwise known as Passion Week. Concerning spirituality, passion refers to the suffering of the human soul.

The eight passions can be broken into three groups: *Desires of the Eyes/Flesh*: gluttony, fornication, and love of money; *Loss of Soul*: anger, sorrow, and dejection; and *Pride of Life*: vanity and pride. There are two forms of passion that relate to spirituality: *natural passions* and *sinful passions*. Such a distinction indicates that not all passions are sinful, but can become sinful. For example, hunger is a natural passion. Our bodies need food in order to provide energy to the cells that permit basic human function. When there is a lust for food and imaginations of eating, and overeating occurs, the natural passion, gluttony, becomes sinful. In the case of gluttony, there is a problem with an unhealthy relationship between the body and soul. If ample attention is given to the passion, the negative effects can become both spiritual and physical. Spiritually, the lust for food becomes an idol and takes us away from God. Physically, gluttony can lead to obesity, which can have disastrous effects on the body, like hypertension and diabetes. The Holy Church seeks to help us in controlling gluttony while emphasizing periods of fasting. Fasting reminds us to control our own appetites and also makes us mindful of the needs of others. The time and money that is saved in fasting should be used for acts of kindness and charity.

Originally, in the Garden of Eden, man did not sin and was spiritually alive. Man could remain alive as long as he had a living relationship with God, for it is the spirit that yearns and seeks to know God and to rest in God. Satan has many means at his disposal to keep us from moving closer in our relationship with God, and our passions for worldly things is one of them. One who struggles with the passions deals with the "father of lies." Satan knows our areas of weakness and will easily approach us. Clement of Alexandria, one of the early church fathers, regards the passions as "diseases of the soul." Evagrius of Pontus likens the passions to "demons," and thus our goal in life should be *apatheia*, or dispelling the passions.

The pathology exists in the will. Man was created with the distinct privilege of free will; that is, he has the ability and freedom to choose. He can choose to submit himself to God and follow His commandments, or he can choose to ignore God and please himself. At times, the power of the passions can be so great and overwhelming that we fall prey to it. However, victory over the passions is possible by not allowing the initial thought or "pre-thought" to take shape. This pre-thought may be a fleeting image that engages our attention. It is at this point that we need to nip the pre-thought in the bud to avoid falling into the passion. For, if we allow the pre-thought to linger, the attack commences, and if allowed, it eventually can lead to a habit, enslavement, and passion (addiction). By focusing on it, it can grow in size and importance.

St. Paul reminds us in Romans 13:14, "*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.*" In other words, we are exhorted to not take that which is natural and change it to something that is sinful. There can be victory over the passions. The first step is realizing the struggle and understanding how destructive the pre-thought can become. We have to see how the passions lead us away from God and bury us deeper and deeper in sin. We have to make a sincere attempt and commitment to fight the passions with the grace and mercy of God.

Part of the great struggle in theosis is understanding what sinful passions are present in our lives and then working to overcome them through prayer, fasting, repentance, and confession. We have to rely on the grace and mercy of God. Through disobedience, man voluntarily chose to let the root of concupiscence grow in him and corrupt his human nature. Originally, human nature had a perfect relationship with God, but this disintegrated at the time of the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The goal then becomes removing the root and systems of growth of concupiscence that are not supposed to be present. The passions need to be cured and healed. If allowed to foster, they can cause great damage to the soul. Our goal should be an inner re-ordering and restructuring of the passions that eventually will lead to a mastery over the passions and to freedom.

(Overcoming the Passions) contd...

As we near the end of the Great Lent and prepare for the glorious Resurrection of Christ, we need to take notice of our spiritual lives. We need to seriously ponder and reflect on whether there are any sins that are lingering in our lives. God already knows our sins. Nevertheless, when we come to Him in Holy Confession, He embraces us and cries with us. True repentance leads to tears and a conscious decision to live for Christ on a daily basis by crucifying our passions. Holy Confession is an opportunity that should not be missed. For if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. For, it is better to confess our sins to the priest (one person) and have them forgiven, rather than waiting for the day of Judgment and having them exposed to all of creation. May the Holy Spirit convict us of our sins and draw us to Holy Confession, where we can make a new start with determination to give up serving our passions and living lives that are holy, pleasing, and acceptable.

Meditative Prayer to Jesus (Mor Isaiah the Hermit)

Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, show me your mercy.

Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, have compassion upon my misery by your mercy.

Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, forgive all my transgressions by your mercy.

Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, keep me away from all evil desires and foul thoughts.

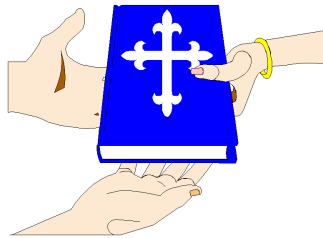
Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, make me a faithful servant of yours.

Oh my Lord Jesus Christ, lead me to the haven of life.

Oh Jesus my Beloved, increase my faith, confirm me in hope, and kindle in my heart the fire of love.

Oh Jesus my Beloved, adorn my soul with temperance, humility and patience, and my mind with knowledge, wisdom and perception.

Oh Jesus my Beloved, fill me with your love and the love of neighbor, for the sake of her whom you chose to be your holy Mother, and for the sake of all the holy fathers.



Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

- Proverbs 3: 5-8

Disclaimer:

Questions and concerns regarding the contents of the newsletter should be directed to editor@st-thomas-orthodox-dc.org. While reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this newsletter to ensure that the information contained in it is accurate, you may email the editor at any time if you find any inaccuracy so that appropriate steps can be taken to resolve it.

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EXHORTATION TO ENDURANCE OR TO THE NEWLY BAPTIZED

- (submitted by Fr. Varghese K. Joshua)

Clement of Alexandria (153-215) was a third century Greek father and was the second head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria. His main writings are Exhortation to the Greeks, Instructor, and Miscellanies. His words on practical Christian life and sociology are very impressive. Exhortation to Endurance shows how to live as Christian and I hope that these words will serve as a torch in our way of day to day life.

Cultivate quietness in words, quietness in deeds, likewise in speech and gait; and avoid impetuous eagerness. For then the mind will remain steady, and will not be agitated by your eagerness and so become weak and of narrow discernment and see darkly; nor will it be worsted by gluttony, worsted by boiling rage, worsted by the other passions, lying a ready prey to them. For the mind, seated on high on a quiet throne looking intently towards God, must control the passions. By no means be swept away by temper in bursts of anger, nor be sluggish in speaking, nor all nervousness in movement; so that your quietness may be adorned by good proportion and your bearing may appear something divine and sacred. Guard also against the signs of arrogance, a haughty bearing, a lofty head, a dainty and high-treading footstep.

Let your speech be gentle towards those who you meet, and your greetings kind; be modest towards women, and let your glance be turned to the ground. Be thoughtful in all your talk, and give back a useful answer, adapting the utterance to the hearer's need, just so loud that it may be distinctly audible, neither escaping the ears of the company by reason of feebleness nor going to excess with too much noise. Take care never to speak what you have not weighed and pondered beforehand; nor interject your own words on the spur of the moment and in the midst of another's; for you must listen and converse in turn, with set times for speech and for silence. Learn gladly, and teach ungrudgingly; never hide wisdom for others by reason of a grudging spirit, nor through false modesty stand aloof from instruction. Submit to elders just as to fathers. Honour God's servants. Be first to practice wisdom and virtue. Do not wrangle with your friends, nor mock at them and play the buffoon. Firmly renounce falsehood, guile and insolence. Endure in silence, as a gentle and high-minded man, the arrogant and insolent.

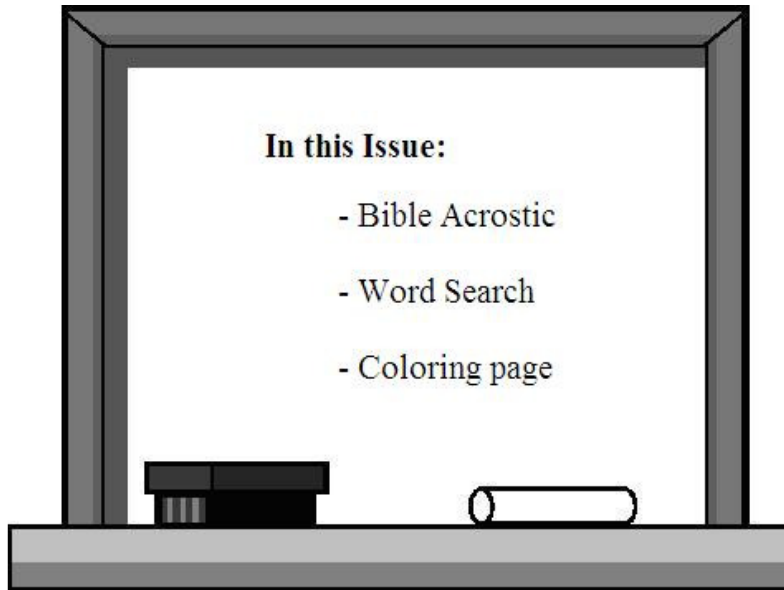
Let everything you do be done for God, both deeds and words; and refer all that is yours to Christ; and constantly turn your soul to God; and lean your thought on the power of Christ, as if in some harbor by the divine light of the Savior it were resting from all talk and action. And often by day communicate your thoughts to men, but most of all to God at night as well as by day; for let not much sleep prevail to keep you from your prayers and hymns to God, since long sleep is a rival of death. Show yourself always a partner of Christ who makes the divine ray shine from heaven; let Christ be to you continual and unceasing joy.

Relax not the tension of your soul with feasting and indulgence in drink, but consider what is needful to be enough for the body. And do not hasten early to meals before the time for dinner comes; but let your dinner be bread, and let earth's grasses and the ripe fruits of trees be set before you; and go to your meal with composure, showing no sign of raging gluttony. Be not a flesh-eater nor a lover of wine, when no sickness leads you to this as a cure. But in place of the pleasures that are in these, choose the joys that are in divine words and hymns, joys supplied to you by wisdom from God; and let heavenly meditation ever lead you upward to heaven.

And give up the many anxious cares about the body by taking comfort in hopes towards God; because for you He will provide all necessary things in sufficiency, food to support life, covering for the body, and protection against winter cold. For to your King belongs the whole earth and all that is produced from it; and God treats the bodily parts of His servants with exceeding care, as if they were His, like His own shrines and temples. On this account do not dread severe diseases, nor the approach of old age, which must be expected in time; for even disease will come to an end, when the whole-hearted purpose we do His commandments.

Knowing this, make your soul strong even in face of diseases; be of good courage, like a man in the arena, bravest to submit to his toils with strength unmoved. Be not utterly crushed in soul by grief, whether disease lies heavily upon you, or any other hardship befalls, but nobly confront toils with your understanding, even in the midst of your struggles rendering thanks to God; since His thoughts are wiser than men's, and such as it is not easy nor possible for men to find out. Pity those who are in distress, and ask for men the help that comes from God; for God will grant grace to His friend when he asks, and will provide succor for those in distress, wishing to make His power known to men, in the hope that, when they have come to full knowledge, they may return to God, and may enjoy eternal blessedness when the Son of God shall appear and restore good things to His own.

KIDZ SPACE



What to look forward to:

- **DRAWING COMPETITION**
- **BIBLE QUIZZES**
- **PUZZLES**



Bible Acrostic

The first letter of each answer forms the name of one of the great Jewish feasts.

1. That which we are to do without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
2. The man God knew would command his household after him (Genesis 18:19)
3. A bird God notices as it falls to the ground (Matthew 10:29)
4. A church mentioned in Revelation (Revelation 3:1)
5. The number of times Christ offered up Himself for sin (Hebrews 7:27)
6. That which Jesus calls Himself in John 15:1; "the true _____"
7. A man who kissed his brother who had wronged him (Genesis 33:4)
8. The last book in the New Testament.

(Solution in next month's issue)

Word Search - Books of the New Testament

V O S E L S E J S Q P C S Y L
 D B N T P K W N A H Z N G H O
 Q E A G U H A E I M A A T T B
 E M I L N M E L R I E H I O O
 D O P Z O S E S S B E S T M V
 U F P R W M O S I S E A U I B
 J R I O O W O K S A C H S T G
 W J L N Q L X A M T N N E F A
 X I I W O E L I S K V S C I L
 J D H C Q O P E T E R M W B A
 U I P S N A I H T N I R O C T
 N O R I R E V E L A T I O N I
 F H A W E H T T A M O O R P A
 P N O B L P K R A M D I K R N
 S D R J P P C Z N S L G D V S

ACTS
 EPHESIANS
 JAMES
 LUKE
 PETER

COLOSSIANS
 GALATIANS
 JOHN
 MARK
 PHILEMON

CORINTHIANS
 HEBREWS
 JUDE
 MATTHEW
 PHILIPPIANS

REVELATION
 TIMOTHY
 ROMANS
 TITUS
 THESSALONIANS



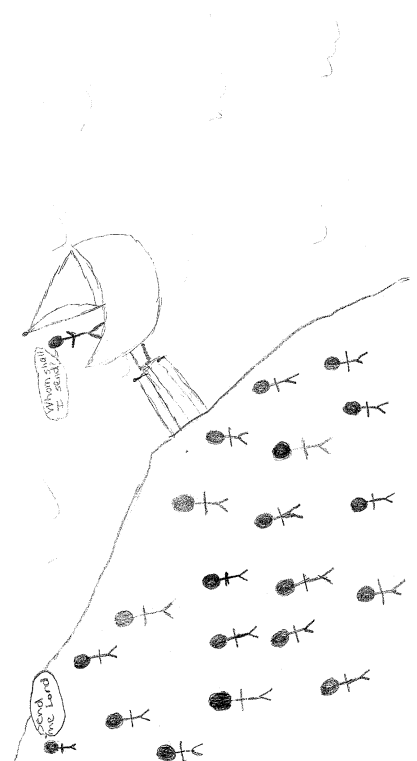
Want to see your coloring on the website? Submit your finished page to Siby Koshy or Anu Mathew.

The following are few entries from our Sunday School children for a recent drawing contest:



Alex Johnson

ISAIAH: 6:8



Mariam Abraham (Ammu)



Steve and Stephen Sam

