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**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 led 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 settle down 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 on regional and diocesan levels (share some of the activities that you have been involved in).

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 head of the churches. Aichens (ordained ministers) 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 of Churches in Christ in the United States along with 34 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. Ask students if they have worshipped in any American Church? How do they feel about their worship pattern?

### Materials:

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

### Conclusion:

The Mar Thoma Church, though small (population nearly 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 ecumenical 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.

## GRADE FIVE

### INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

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 worshipping 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 (*Cleanings, 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 practiced in the Roman Catholic Church. Many protestant Churches encourage 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 denomination (name and the difference)?
3. What are basic elements of worship?



## GRADE FIVE

### INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

Theme: Christian Sacraments

#### Lesson 3

### HOLY COMMUNION

#### Aim:

To become familiar with the spiritual truth inherent in Holy

#### Communion

**Bible Verse:** Matthew 26:27-28

Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them, "Drink it, all of you, "he said; "this is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

#### Main Ideas:

The Holy Communion is one of the Dominical Sacraments. 'Dominical' means 'having to do with Jesus Christ as Lord.' Because the two Sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion, are commanded by the Lord to be administered in the Church, they are called the Dominical Sacraments. As we learnt in Kindergarten, we become the official members of the Church by receiving Holy Baptism.

Who is eligible to receive Holy Communion? Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior and truly confesses his or her sins can receive it. Our Church accepts this spiritual truth as a mystery because nobody can fully define or declare its power. Each one accepting the Communion sincerely can experience

it personally. In what way, Holy Communion benefits the participants? 1. They feel a sense of unity, because everyone eats and drinks from the same cup. 2. It is a time of celebrating the joy of salvation. Every one witnesses the same Lord who offers salvation to all. 3. It is a time of thanksgiving because everyone is indebted to thank God for sending His only Son. 4. It is a time of dedication to share their resources because Jesus became their model by offering himself completely for the sake of sinners. He revealed the sacrificial love through his death.

In our Church youngsters above the age of 12 years are expected to receive the Holy Communion. The reason behind this age bar is to make sure that the communicants must take the communion with enough understanding. Our parishes offer classes for the first communicants. They should know the real meaning of the sacrament and participate in the liturgical act of Eucharist with enough preparation. For the same matter, St. Paul instructs like this, "For if he does not recognize the meaning of the Lord's body when he eats the bread and drinks from the cup, he brings judgment on himself as he eats and drinks"<sup>1</sup> Cor 11:29.

#### Teaching Strategies and Activities:

Children have studied about Holy Communion in Grade One, lesson 3. Recall this lesson and relate to other sacraments. Answer the following questions in two or three sentences: What are dominical sacraments? How does the parish arrange communion for those receiving it for the first time? What are the benefits of communion?

#### Conclusion:

The full communicant members of the Church should understand the real meaning and significance of Holy Communion. Only when they submit themselves to the heartfelt chanting of the prayers and the witnessing life, they can receive Divine grace.

## GRADE FIVE

### INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

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.

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. As members of this

reforming church, we are expected to read the Bible everyday and pray to God.

**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).



## GRADE FIVE

### INTRODUCTION OF THEMES

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 Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan.
2. Serving others and responding to human needs.

#### Bible Verse: John 14:18

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”.

#### Main Ideas:

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

The Mar Thoma Church built a new bishop’s house (Aramana) and celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> 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 by building 75 homes for the homeless. It was the beginning of a new movement in Kerala which was continued not only by our church, but by other Christian denominations and the government as well.

Thirumeni was disturbed by the sad condition of the poor and the destitute. He wanted to improve their social and economic conditions. So he associated himself with people and movements committed to work among these destitutes. He was influenced by people such as Sadhu Mathaichen (Manganam Ashram) and K.K.Kuruvilla, his teacher at Kortayam Mar Thoma Seminary. Thirumeni’s sensitivity to the needs of the poor as a young man did not lose 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 did not have anyone to take care of them. This was one his first achievements as the new metropolitan. Also, he organized the “Beggars Relief Committee” at the Maranon Convention. 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 and 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 pleased others or not. For example, he opposed the politics of an Indian Prime Minister when the government became undemocratic. He had not fear the possible arrest and other consequences. The first house that Thirumeni built for the homeless was given to a Hindu whose need was 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 contributors of each. This year, we study one person with more details, Juhanon Mar Thoma. He had 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.

**Teaching Materials:**

Pictures of Metropolitan Juhanon Thirumeni on different occasions.

**Conclusion:**

Thirumeni widened the scope of missionary work 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, alcoholics and others. He has strengthened the emphasis on the evangelical social gospel in our church.

**JUHANON MARTHOMA METROPOLITAN  
FROM 1947-1976**

