

Dearly Beloved,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

November 23, Sunday 2025, Annunciation to Theotokos, Yaldo Season

Scriptural Readings:

- OT: Deuteronomy 26:16-27:10, Judges 13: 2-14, Zachariah 2:10-13, 4:1-17, 8:3, Isaiah 63:15-64:5
- NT: 1 John 3:2-17, Hebrews 6:13-20, 7:1-10, Holy Gospel St Luke 1:26-38

Holy Gospel: St Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"^[a] ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" ³⁵ And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^[b] will be called holy, the Son of God.

³⁶ And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Reflections:

Everything in the universe conveys certain messages or ideas. The universe itself conveys the message of existence and expansion. Everything in the universe is dialogical too. One speaks to the other, and the other responds to it. Galaxies, orbits, systems, nature, nations, communities, individuals all hold dialogues between each other. It began with the Creator when God commanded, "Let there be" and the response was everything coming together into existence: heaven (which also means space or sky, not necessarily the Heaven), earth, light, firmament, water, fish, animals, birds, plants. Then the Holy Trinity spoke among themselves, "Let us make man and woman in our Image and Likeness."

Creation happened when nonexistent things responded to the command, "Let there be" as pronounced by the Creator and Author. It is written that He made everything out of nothingness, void, chaos. The Word 'Amen', 'Let there be' thus created everything. It was the uttered word that transformed complex imaginations into conceivable realities. The culmination was the 'Word becoming Flesh' in Mary's womb as Christ Jesus when she found favour with God.

A message is to convey a note to the recipient. Regardless of knowing everyone inside out, God never said, 'you are darkness' to anyone. 'Let there be light' stands as the most joyful message conveyed by the Lord in the beginning. Later He told the disciples, "I am the light of the world." He also told them, "You are the light of the world." This refers to Himself as the Light Eternal that lightens everything and everyone. The process of receiving light from the 'Light Eternal', to become light in the world and towards the end with physical departing, to get transformed to eternal light, is what is called Deification, Theosis, 'Daiveekaranam' (ദൈവീകരണം), the very call and purpose of all humans originally created in the Image and Likeness of God the Light!

Among many messages we are often keen to convey, the only message we must feel enthused about is of light, joy and love. Several passages record moments when people's faces darkened: Cain after the sacrifice, Judas after consulting with the Sanhedrin for betrayal, Ananias and Saphira after selling their property and bringing a portion deceptively, King Saul after attempting to kill David, Daleela upon tempting Samson, Absalom with his scheming to seize power from his father, Jezebel after plotting to kill prophet Elijah. All of them got doomed by their plots of wickedness that kept them away from becoming light. There are many messages that bring light to hearts and minds such as : 'let there be light', 'God is with us', 'have no fear', 'peace be with you', 'come and see', 'God is love', 'I love you', 'we are here to help', 'we care', 'come and dine with us', 'don't worry', 'we manage', 'arise', 'you will be alright', 'I/we understand', 'I/we will be with you'.

Like the angel came to Zachariah, Mary, Joseph, we go to the weary and needy with messages that transform lives. We also expect resurrective messages from God or Godsent ones when we go through pain, suffering, depression and sadness. As we approach the Nativity, the greatest mystery of God is coming toward us. When He is with us, we all will be lightened by his presence and by His love. It is our prayer that as Mary found favour with God, we too find favour with Him. This means an indwelling of Him in us and us in Him. Being with God never meant absence of hardships. The joyful aspect of His presence would be this, 'we shall overcome'! We win!

Let us feel God walking with us closely and helping us in our daily needs. As the people in the Bible experienced God's presence, despite their limitations, non desirability, sinfulness, brokenness and weakness, we are here today to experience His presence. Nothing can keep Him away from us. He is WITH US!

FEASTS AND REMEMBRANCES:

- November 18, Rev Fr Dr V C Samuel, 27th anniversary, entombed at St Gregorios Orthodox Church, Hosur, Bangalore. Scholar in Church History, Theology, Christology, Author of books including Council of Chalcedon Re-examined, Professor at Serampore, Bangalore UTC, Holy Trinity Addis Ababa, Old Seminary Kottayam, Ecumenical leader, Speaker at various International Ecumenical Conferences, worked with Faith and Order Commission of WCC, leader of Kerala and National Council of Churches. May his memory be eternal.

- November 20, HG Job Mar Philoxenos Metropolitan, 14th anniversary, entombed at Mount Tabore Dayara, Pathanapuram.

Sri A M Alexander, an exemplary leader and member of the Malankara Orthodox Church, passed away at the age 86 on Nov 18 at Muthoot Hospital, India. Former Security Chief of the UN Secretary General, a true disciple of Christ, an advocate of unity in Christ's love, a devout member of the Malankara Orthodox Church. He was a leader of excellence and gentle in all dealings. His presence and words motivated and uplifted many. He earned deep knowledge in the Holy Scripture, sacraments, theology and practice of the church.

The funeral service was conducted at St George Orthodox Church, Mukkalumannu, Ranny on Thursday Nov 20. May his soul rest in peace.

From our previous update:

SGOCT Parish AGBM: The parish AGBM for election of office bearers for the year 2026 was held on Sunday Nov 16. We followed the agenda and conducted the election. We await the approval of decisions from the Diocesan Metropolitan. We thank all our members for their prayerful participation, responses and sharing of thoughts in the GBM. The dedication and commitment our faithful have towards the Lord, the Holy Gospel, the church, the parish, the wider world keeps us growing as an extended family of Christ. We thank everyone for joining the meeting. Let us continue this wonderful fellowship God has given to us graciously and always enjoy the togetherness for the Kingdom of God.

KCEF Christmas Carol Evening: The KCEF Christmas 2025 was held at Marthoma Church Stouffville on Saturday Nov 15. This year we had three distinguished guests, HG Dr Geevarghese Mar Coorilos Metropolitan of Mumbai Diocese, Bishop Mar Jose Kalluvelil of Eparchy Canada, and Pastor Peter Noteboom, the General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches. The messages they gave us through Holy Spirit enlightened everyone. The choirs from 13 parishes in the KCEF transformed the whole environment to a heavenly manger! Our parish choir sang wonderfully and melodiously, enjoyed and appreciated by all. Food was served after the event. We thank KCEF for promoting fraternal fellowship among various denominations through various events. Thanks to The Canadian Marthoma Church, Whitchurch- Stouffville for hosting the event. Sincere thanks to all our members and the SGOCT choir for their participation.

Sunday Morning Prayer Time Change: Starts at 09:00 am

To ease the struggles of our members of early waking up in the winter mornings, especially of our respected senior members, the GBM has decided to move the morning prayer time from 08:30 am to 09:00 am until further notice. This time change will be implemented from the coming Sunday (Nov 23) onwards. We request all our members to make use of this time change and join the service on time with no further lag. While keeping the time, we experience transcending of time and space through our Holy Sacraments.

Canadian Council of Churches AGBM Nov 19-21, 2025

The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) meets twice a year, in November and in May, for its

Annual Governing Board. All denominations come together to share the joy of ministering the Lord in various cultural and demographic settings.

Especially in Canada, where there are many challenges in serving the Gospel of the Lord, this platform offers a space for everyone to share their commitment to God and His Kingdom despite differences as communities. Officials and people in leadership roles participate in the CCC to discuss issues and share experiences. Different faith communities, secular governmental or non-governmental agencies or organizations also participate in the CCC with the belief that our collective efforts can transform the society and world at large. Youngsters talk about their commitment to the faith and how they have found new ways to serve the Lord in changing and challenging situations.

The Malankara Orthodox Church (MOSC) is a member church in the Governing Board. It is one among the founding members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and CCC is the national body corresponding to WCC. This year there were sessions on Military and Prison Ministries and Chaplaincy, Intergenerational Engagement, Challenges of Secularism, Religious extremism, Christian Citizenship, Ethical Reflections on the Extension of Medical Assistance in Dying (Euthanasia), updates on the recent Commemorative event on the 1700th year of the Council of Nicaea held in Wadi El Natrun, Egypt.

We pray as the Lord prayed, “O Heavenly Father, they may all be one. As You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, may also be in Us.” (Jn17:21).

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS: Please note in your calendar

1. St. Dionysius Orthodox Fellowship for members between age 41-60 will have the first meeting this Sunday (Nov 23) at church after refreshment. All are welcome.
2. Christmas House Caroling & Church Carol
3. *Sunday, Nov 30- St George's Prayer: Brampton, Area*
4. *. Sunday, Dec 07- St Paul's Prayer: Scarborough, Durham, New Market, Markham, Area*
5. *Sunday, Dec 14- St Mary's Prayer: Mississauga, Hamilton, Stony creek Area*

Saturday, Dec 20- Carol Evening at Church starting with evening prayer at 06:00 pm followed by Carol singing, skits and presentations by organisations.

3. Urava Volume 7
URAVA Volume 7, based on the theme ‘the Council of Nicaea’, was released on October 25, 2025. Updated version with cover design chosen from the contest, additional articles, pictures from the Council of Nicaea event and drawings submitted for contest shall be made available soon.
Two contests for the journal with the title: “Nicaea 325 AD”:
 1. Cover Page Icon Contest – open to all parish members ages 18+
 2. Inner Page Drawing Contest – open to children
3. Attention Please: Parking: Please be considerate while parking our vehicles, only park at designated space. Leave reserved lots for the intended and please park within lines

and markings leaving enough space for others to open their doors without scratching or hitting nearby parked vehicles.

Children at Parking Space: Please attend to children as it has been noticed that at times they play and run around within the parking lots, which may cause accidents and incidents. Please take care.

AREA PRAYER MEETINGS:

Prayer Meetings: The general body decided and agreed to have the meeting started in New Year 2026

Saturday, January 3, 2026: Prayer meeting at the residence of Sen and Loozy Mathew

Saturday, January 10, 2026: Prayer meeting at the residence of Manu and Elizabeth Abraham

Saturday, January 17, 2026: Prayer meeting at the residence of Alex George and Sosamma Alex.

FOR OUR ATTENTION & TO NOTE:

Children, please occupy front benches during our Liturgical Services

Kindly avoid crowding at the back of the church. A few concerns.

- Due to safety concerns and for assuring an undistracted worship space, we request all our members to proceed to the front rows except those that are reserved for children when we enter the temple. It would be a bit difficult for our volunteers to suggest moving to the front during the service as it would cause distraction and noise. We need to avoid crowding at the entrance and stair areas as this has raised safety concerns.
- Please be considerate to our senior members to help them find seats or while they try to access the washroom. A slip or a hit should be avoided in any circumstance.
- Please be watchful at the shoe rack area which is also the entrance to both washrooms.
- We request our parents to attend our children not to pull the alarm lever at the back wall.

Hand Waving Machine & Common Absolution Prayer for all communicants

The hand waving machine has been installed at the church entrance for taking count of the communicants. Whoever wishes to take Holy Communion, upon entering the temple, please wave your hand once at the machine. Please be aware that after the Nicene Creed, the machine shall be disabled. Absolution shall be done during the morning prayer.

WEEKLY IN-PERSON MEETINGS:

November 23, Sunday – in-person meetings

- MGOCSM monthly meeting after refreshments
- First meeting of St. Dionysius Orthodox Fellowship (members of age 41-60, please join)
- Practice of Choir for upcoming events

LIVE streaming has been reactivated: All services' Live Streaming is now available.

Holy Liturgical Text for this Sunday

We will be using the English Taksa of Holy Fathers this Sunday.

May the Gracious Lord keep us from all harm and heal the entire world.

Next Week

Nov 30, Sunday: Mary's visit to Elizabeth, Yaldo Season

Scriptural Readings:

- **OT: Genesis 27:22- 40, Exodus 19:1-13, Jeremiah 11:1-8, Isaiah 6:1-11**
- **NT: 1 Peter 2:6-10, Romans 1:1-15, Galatians 3:15-29,**

Holy Gospel St Luke 1:39 - 56

Yours in Christ

Thomas John Achen

Email ID: fr.thomasjohn@gmail.com

Mobile: (416) 570 5610

<https://www.sgoctoronto.org>