



**2009 General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA and Church World Service  
November 10 – 12, 2009  
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

The annual General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA and Church World Service was conducted from November 10 - 12, 2009 at the Doubletree Hotel-Park Place in Minneapolis, Minnesota. As a member of these organizations, the Mar Thoma Church joined 27 other member communions for a wonderful time of ecumenical dialogue. Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Diocesan Bishop, Rev. Vinoy Daniel, Diocesan Secretary, Mr. Chacko Mathew, Diocesan Treasurer, Mr. Ashley George, Diocesan Council Member, and Dr. T.M. Thomas, member ecumenical relations committee represented the Mar Thoma Church during this year's meeting.



Member communions celebrated the biblical call to rejoice, pray, and give thanks, and also called upon churches and governments to take steps toward worldwide justice and peace while reflecting on the theme for this year's General Assembly which was based on 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances."

In the opening day of the General Assembly, Theodosius Thirumeni attended an NCC Governing Board meeting where Kathryn M. Lohre, assistant director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University and an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America representative to the WCC Central Committee, was elected the President Elect of the National Council of Churches. This year, Rev. Peg Chamberlin, a minister of the Moravian Church, was installed the new President of the NCCC.



Installation service. From left: NCC General Secretary Michael Kinnamon, former NCC President Michael Livingston, NCC President Peg Chamberlin, NCC President Elect Kathryn Lohre

During the three day General Assembly meeting, the Apostolic Catholic church was accepted as the 36<sup>th</sup> member communion of the NCCC-USA/CWS. In addition, the General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for nuclear disarmament, and issued messages regarding the tragedy at Ford Hood, citing the urgency of health care reform, urging that money saving by international reductions in military spending be used to reduce infant mortality and extreme poverty, and expressed appreciation regarding the recent visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the United States. The General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, also recognized the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the episcopal ministry of Theodosius Thirumeni during the General Assembly and expressed appreciation for his ecumenical vision and leadership.

Delegates heard a keynote address from the Rev. Margaret Aymer, Associate Professor of New Testament and Chair of Biblical Studies at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta and a Bible study by Dr. Charles Amjad-Ali, Martin Luther King Jr. Professor for Justice and Christian Community and Director of Islamic Studies at Luther Seminary in Minneapolis.



Dr. Charles Amjad-Ali

The delegates also heard from the Republican Governor Tim Pawlenty, who expressed his appreciation for the contribution of churches to society.



During the assembly, worship services were conducted in the Methodist, Orthodox, and Taize traditions. The young adult participants of the New Fire program also presented their activities and led a worship service. The New Fire program is designed to engage young adults in the ecumenical movement and we hope young adults from the Mar Thoma Church who have an interest in ecumenism will be able to participate in this program in the future.

During the assembly, open forums were conducted on the following topics: 1. The Book of Faith discussed the importance of promoting biblical literacy, 2. Building Community through Interfaith Relations discussed efforts of the Minnesota Council of Churches in interfaith dialogue and programs between the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities, 3. The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships provided an overview of President Obama's intention for the office, 4. Immigration and A Call for Action discussed the need for immigration reform.



In addition to these forums, a special screening of "A Walk to Beautiful" an Emmy Award winning feature documentary about the women in Ethiopia whose lives have been devastated by fistula and their journey to reclaim their lost dignity.

Besides the numerous opportunities for ecumenical dialogue thru in-person conversation, there was an exhibit area where member communions and other ecumenical bodies can display information about their ministries. This year, an exhibit was created that displayed information about the diocese, its organizations, subcommittees, associations, ecumenical relationships, and mission activities. Pictures from the 2009 activities of the Native American Mission in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Alabama were highlighted in this year's exhibit, along with brochures about the mission initiatives.



This year, the delegation from the Mar Thoma Church also participated in a dinner with members of all the other represented Orthodox churches, including the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Serbian Orthodox Church, Armenian Orthodox Church, Orthodox Church in America, and others. The dinner was hosted by a local Armenian Orthodox Church and was a wonderful time of fellowship, good food, and an exchange of ideas.



In order to promote the gospel, the Mar Thoma Church has to express Christian unity through its active participation in ecumenical bodies like the National Council of Church of Christ USA and Church World Service. We praise God for the opportunity to participate in this year's General Assembly.

On behalf of the Mar Thoma Church delegation,  
Ashley George