

XXII National Mar Thoma Youth Conference

Report By: Jerome Mammen, Convener



The XXII National Youth Conference, hosted by the Youth Fellowship of the Mar Thoma Church of Los Angeles, was held on August 9-12, 2001. The entire conference took place at the campus of Whittier College in the city of Whittier, California. There was a total of 264 Delegates from throughout the nation.

The inaugural session began on Thursday evening under the leadership of Rt. Rev. Dr. Zacharias Mar Theophilus, Rev. George, Rev. M.O. Oommen, Rev. David Daniel, Rev. Crabb, Jerome Mammen, and Mathew Thomas. After the time and welcome addresses, our Thirumeni officially inaugurated the conference followed by Rev. Kemper Crabb's introduction.

For the next two days we heard a series of four talks from Rev. Kemper Crabb revolving around the theme of Communion and Community, Intimacy with God and His people. After each of the talks the delegates had the opportunity to process the teaching in the context of small groups. Through the course of the four talks Rev. Crabb was effective in challenging our understanding of relating to God as Mar Thoma Christians. He further went on to define the biblical picture of community comparing that to our current situation. Finally Rev. Crabb spent a good deal of time challenging our notion of Mar Thoma community and understanding its influence as a bridge church here in America.



During the free times on Saturday and Sunday we were also able to conduct six different seminars addressing issues pertinent to the Mar Thoma Youth. Rev. Kurien George and Rev. M.O. Oommen led two seminars one on the doctrines of Baptism and Qurbana and another on the Foundations of the Mar Thoma Church. Joshi John led a seminar entitled, Why is Jesus Unique?, intended for those youth having questions about faith in Christ. Jerome Mammen led a seminar entitled The role of Bicultural Christians in the mission of the Church. And finally we had two gender specific seminars led by Saji Oommen, Bindu Oommen and Merry George. The seminars were overall effective in addressing specific needs and questions in the midst of the larger theme of the conference.

The Friday evening session included a short message from Ansen Thomas a missionary to the city Bombay. We watched two videos documenting the oppression of women in Bombay and the response of the Mar Thoma Church. The night was concluded with a time of commitment led by Rev. Kemper Crabb for those delegates who wanted to take a new step of faith in both relationship with God and with the community.



Sunday morning worship was led by our Thirumeni and was followed by the closing ceremony. During this time Matthew Thomas of the DYF and Jerome Mammen both gave their vote of thanks and Rev. David Daniel gave the closing prayer. Finally the conference ended with a send off time for Thirumeni and Kurien George Achen. Overall the XXII National Conference was a great success. It provided an opportunity for community and included a challenging and prophetic word for the youth of this nation.



(Here are a few youth from the St. John's MTC in New York, whose youth group will be hosting the XXIII National Conference in 2002. See you there.)