



Mar Thoma Neighborhood Mission Newsletter

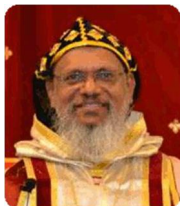
Purpose of the newsletter: To introduce neighborhood outreach activities of the parishes in different regions of our Diocese. Each issue of the newsletter will focus on one region's neighborhood mission activities. We have eight (8) regions in our Diocese.

DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE - SEPTEMBER 2015

IN THIS ISSUE

Bishop's Message

by Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius



"Can the church be the hope for humanity? We are called not to turn a deaf ear to the cry of our fellow beings, but to listen and learn. We are called not to be mute but to discern and communicate with a prophetic ministry." Mar Theodosius June 2015.

Elijah appeared before Jesus. Peter wanted to stay on the mountain. But Jesus came down to the valley to continue his mission, and he healed a boy with an evil spirit. The transfiguration experience on the mountain and the mission in the valley of disfiguration are two sides of Christianity. We as a faith community must be involved in the mission our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted us. As a Diocesan Neighborhood mission we were able to conduct our first Urban Mission Trip at San Francisco from August 16 to 21st, 2015 and it was blessing to all those who attended. 5 K Race for the cure for the cancer research is being organized in different parishes. May God continue to bless us to be His witnesses in this world.



Europe Region & Urban Mission Trip

Brief summaries of some of the work the parishes in the Canada region are doing in their local neighborhoods as well as the Neighborhood Mission Trip.

From the Convener's Desk

by Rev. Biju P. Simon



Greetings to you all in the name of Jesus Christ!

Mountain top experiences with Jesus Christ must enable us to see the realities of our present context. In the gospel of Mark 9:2-12 we see the transfiguration experience of Jesus. While Jesus was praying, he was transformed before his disciples. Moses and

With prayerful regards,

Rev. Biju P Simon



Let's light our neighborhoods with the love of Christ.



Europe Region

by Sherry Mathews

Neighborhood Mission of St John's MTC Hounslow, London, UK

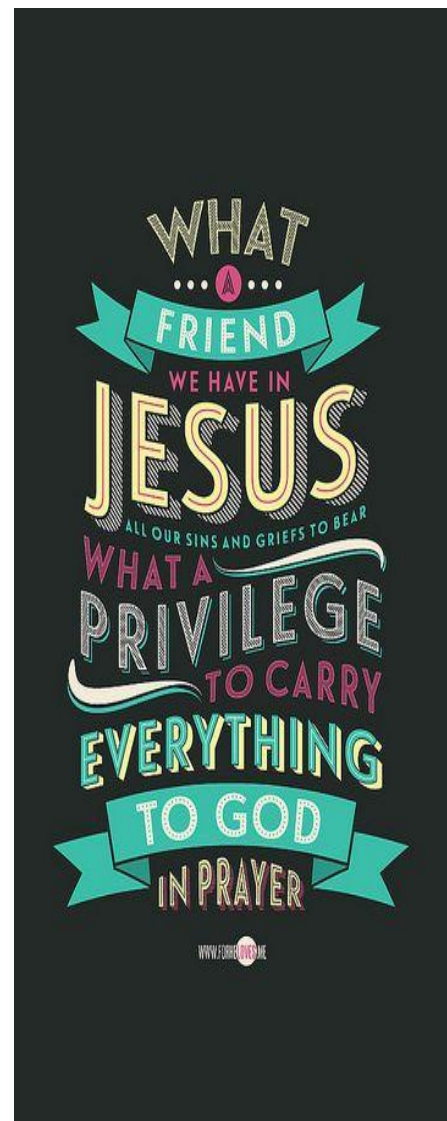
As part of its Neighborhood Mission, St. Johns MTC in partnership with Mission in Hounslow Trust, Holy Trinity Church Hounslow and Hounslow Evangelical Church are involved in the work with Homeless and destitute people in and around Hounslow in a project called Olive Branch. It is a drop in centre for the homeless people operating Saturday between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm. By Grace of God we have been able to run this project since October 2012.

Each Saturday we have around 25 to 30 guests. We cater to physical needs by providing them a hot meal, provisions for taking a bath, providing for fresh cloths and they can also drop in their clothes for cleaning.

The evening starts with a hymn, reading from the Bible and prayer. Around 10 to 15 guests regularly attend the prayer meeting. We try to make the atmosphere as homely as possible by organizing a traditional dinner during Christmas and Easter. Currently members of St Johns in groups of 6-8 take turns to volunteer for the activities at Olive Branch on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Saturday's of a month. St John's bears most of the expenses incurred on this project. A specialist social worker from St Mungo's charity visits the project and tries to place/refer the clients to appropriate agencies. Due to tough economic conditions we are seeing a rise in number of people who are availing our facilities. Keeping this in view we are exploring the possibility to expand the scope and reach of our Neighborhood mission activities in the coming financial year.



The next issue will highlight the neighborhood mission activities of the Western region. We encourage all churches to contact a subcommittee member from your region to include your mission work in our newsletter.



Neighborhood Mission Subcommittee Members:

- 1) **Convener :** Rev. Biju P. Simon San Francisco Mar Thoma Church, CA
- 2) **Northeast Region:** Dr. Ron Jacob, Long Island MT, NY
- 3) **Southeast Region:** Mr. Benny Philip, Ascension MTC, Philadelphia (Lead coordinator) & Mr. Alex Mathew, The Mar Thoma Church of New Jersey (Co- coordinator)
- 4) **Southern Region:** Mr. Sean George, Hermon MTC, Atlanta
- 5) **Southwest Region:** Mr. Prakash Abraham, Carrollton MTC, Dallas, TX
- 6) **Western Region:** Mr. Mathew Thomas, Horeb MTC, Los Angeles & Ms. Pushpa Samuel, San Francisco MTC, CA
- 7) **Europe Region:** Mr. Sherry Mathew, Hermon MTC, Midlands/Europe
- 8) **Midwest Region:** Mr. Shani Abraham, Chicago MTC, Illinois
- 9) **Canada Region:** Mr. Shibu P. John, St. Mathews, Toronto, Canada
- 10) **Council Member:** Mr. Jorge Wilson, Mar Thoma Church of San Francisco Bay Area



Europe Region

Neighborhood Mission of St John's MTC, Bristol, UK

Our mission activities are joint with St Anne's Church, the Anglican Church we are worshipping at. These are very small efforts to make our presence felt in our neighbourhood and to persuade local residents back to Church. We had few events back in March 2015 like a one-day ecumenical convention involving neighbourhood parishes, a table talk at a local pub and a dinner party for local residents which was led by Bishop Lee of Swindon.

This year we are planning to have an outdoor event in September called Mini-noise. This is in an open green space near our church whose neighbourhood is predominantly Muslims. So this is not a highly evangelical event but a low key fun-fair event. We knock the doors of neighbourhood residents offering to pray for them and inviting them to these events. We are also planning to have an ecumenical convention in April 2016.

Neighborhood Mission of St James MTC, London, UK.

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. We support various missionary activities and lend a helping hand to those in need. Through the generous support of our members we were able provide financial assistance to the following local Charities and Charitable projects and Institutions in India. Age UK, Demelza, Dragon Café, Widow's mite, Nepal Earthquake disaster fund, Sneha Karam, Prathiyasha Bhavan, Nava Jevan/Rag Pickers project Mumbai, Kottarakara Diocese charity fund.

The above are in addition to the regular support of various projects of the Mar Thoma Church and institutions. Parish auxiliary organisations also support various local charities. The Youth Fellowship of St James support Christian Aid and Samaritan's purse



Trinity MTC, Edmonton participating in one of their neighborhood mission projects.

through the funds raised at annual event "Youth Fest".

Neighborhood Mission of Hermon MTC, The Midlands, UK.

At Hermon there are many neighbourhood activities conducted at individual levels in partnership with local Anglican churches. These include Campus Ministry, Healing on the Street etc.

In addition Hermon have contributed to charitable projects in India viz. MCRD Navajyothi, Nava Jeevan etc. Our Sunday school children have collected their offering and donated to Acorns Children Hospice and also funded children in India who were otherwise unable to continue their studies.

The financial support was also extended by Savika Sangham by raising money through various activities. The money was then offered to fund people in India with special needs and emergency hospital treatment.

The Europe Region consists of the following churches:

- 1) *Belfast Congregation*
- 2) *Carmel Mar Thoma Church*
- 3) *Edinburgh, Scotland Congregation*
- 4) *Germany Congregation*
- 5) *Hermon Mar Thoma Church*
- 6) *Nazareth Mar Thoma Church*
- 7) *Sinai Mar Thoma Church*
- 8) *St. James Mar Thoma Church*
- 9) *St. Johns Mar Thoma Church*
- 10) *St. Peters East Area Mar Thoma Church*
- 11) *St Thomas Mar Thoma Church*
- 12) *Switzerland/Geneva Congregation*
- 13) *Tabore Mar Thoma Church*



NM Mission Trip

The Inaugural 2015 Mar Thoma Urban Missions Trip

The Mar Thoma Church-Diocese of North America & Europe held the first of its kind, week long Mar Thoma Urban Missions Trip 2015 in San Francisco, CA from August 16-21. This initiative was organized under the Neighborhood Mission wing of the Mission Board, led by the vision and leadership of Rev. Biju P. Simon, the convener. In addition to the Diocese's current Native American, Mexico, and India Missions Trips, the Urban Missions Trip will target impoverished urban neighborhoods within the diocese in need of both physical and spiritual support. The majority of the parishes in our Diocese of North America & Europe are situated near major urban city centers. The Neighborhood Mission's "Mar Thoma Urban Missions 2015" project is an effort to bring awareness to the members of our Diocese regarding the complex economic, political, and religious factors that influence poor urban communities that are devastated by crime, homelessness, and broken educational systems and how to respond to these challenges in Christ's love by developing best practices in serving the local neighborhoods of our churches.

This year Urban Missions partnered with City Impact, a Christian organization whose mission is to assist San Francisco's poorest populations. Situated right in the Tenderloin District, which encompasses only a few city blocks but has the highest density of poor and homeless in the city, City Impact's motto is "We exist to intervene;" through its multiple branches of ministry, including a primary school, thrift store, rescue mission, and wellness center, City Impact offers a holistic and integrative approach to meeting the needs of the Tenderloin.

The Mar Thoma Urban Missions Trip 2015 brought in participants from Baltimore, MD, Chicago, IL, Long Island, NY, San Jose, CA, and Los Angeles, CA. Each morning and afternoon, pairs from the team would rotate amongst City Impact's various programs. In the evenings, the team joined in the street ministry where we interacted with the community while walking down the neighboring city blocks handing out food to people living in the Tenderloin, many living on the street. One evening we visited a low-

income apartment building, knocking on doors offering prayer and food. These opportunities gave us a chance to engage directly, through conversations and offers of prayer, with people we normally avoid, people who suffer from spiritual and physical brokenness, struggling with addictions and illnesses the Mar Thoma community in this country rarely encounters on a daily basis. While the Rescue Mission arm of City Impact provides lunch and dinner every day, one night a week the Rescue Mission creatively stages the dinner setup similar to a restaurant—volunteers act as waiters serving meals at tables- in order to serve the clientele with a dignity they rarely experience on the outside. At the same time, the volunteers were encouraged by the staff to sit and talk with the homeless at the tables they were assigned to. Many shared openly their lives and beliefs, often welcoming prayer. One man, a recovering addict, revealed to a team member how he came to Christ, and while still working on getting off the streets, knew the reality of God's love.

Some of the most inspiring stories came from members of the City Impact staff who were products of the Tenderloin yet through the constant influence of the ministry have not only come to Christ but dedicated themselves to the people of the Tenderloin. The team worked with a former graffiti gang member, now City Impact's school kitchen chef and married to a City Impact schoolteacher. His story is a testimony to City Impact's faithful presence in the neighborhood over the last 30 years. Additionally, watching the children of the Tenderloin attend City Impact's school, which affirms faith throughout its curriculum, it was encouraging to see an early Christian influence on a child's life in the middle of such material and spiritual poverty.

As Mar Thomites in this country, we are often taught by family and society to dismiss the homeless as dangerous, mentally unstable, and hopeless addicts. Team members on the trip were able to break through these social boundaries to learn people's stories, to laugh and listen, to pray for and with homeless persons. The simple act of asking someone's name opened the door to conversations and relationships. As our Diocese continues to mature in the cultural context of North America and Europe, we are looking for more concrete ways to minister the love of Christ to those in need in our own backyards. The new Mar Thoma Urban Missions venture is a sign of us embracing the fact that we in this Diocese, as Americans, as well as Indians, are to be a light in this nation as well.

The lasting impact of the Mar Thoma Urban Missions Trip 2015 on its team members, as servants of Christ, is to no longer shy away from reaching out to others but to meet people as they are. The entire team was blessed by the experience, and both the Mar Thoma logo of "Lighted to Lighten" and City Impact's motto 'We exist to intervene' came alive in the week-long trip. Needless to say, the inaugural team hopes that this is the first of many Mar Thoma Urban Mission trips to come.

For details on future Urban Missions trips, contact Rev. Biju P. Simon at bsimonachen@gmail.com or visit <http://www.mtcurbanmissions.org/>. For more information on City Impact, visit <http://www.sfcityimpact.com/>.



Reflections by Mathew Thomas, Horeb Mar Thoma Church, Los Angeles

Growing up in the Mar Thoma Church, I was instilled with the value of service to others as an expression of faith. We were always encouraged to serve the Lord with our time as well as with our finances. I really took to heart the saying "Every Marthomite is a Missionary". I had partaken in some of the various mission trips previously offered, such as to India and to Mexico, but I always had a yearning to serve those in need closer to home but found it a challenge to find avenues outside the one-day weekend outreaches offered by our parishes. I saw other organizations offering short term mission trips to serve the suffering of our country, and wondered if our church only saw missions as something that was done in faraway places.

So it was with great excitement that I received the news in 2014 from Rev. Biju P. Simon, convener of the Neighborhood Missions Board of the Diocese, that the Diocese was planning its first ever Mission Trip to an American urban center for summer of 2015. It was an opportunity for me to get out of my comfort zone, and put into practice what we always preach to others. I think it is

a sign of the maturation of our Diocese that we are looking for concrete ways to minister the love of Christ to those in need in our own backyards, rather than only focusing on those in need back in our motherland or other distant locales. It's a sign of us embracing the fact that we in this Diocese, as Americans, as well as Indians, need to be a light in this nation as well.

So, with this excitement, I and my sister left home and made it to San Francisco where the church was partnering with City Impact, a Christian organization that is devoted to serving the people of the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, one of the densest and poorest neighborhoods in the country. The actual experience was a true blessing in my life. Partnering with five other passionate marthomites from all over the country, we met at Biju achen's parsonage near San Francisco on a Sunday night to break bread and meditate on what we were about to embark on the following week. Then from Monday morning to Friday, we were on our feet almost non-stop, not wasting even a minute during each day. We rotated between the different services/ministries offered by City Impact and helped in various capacities ranging from manual tasks like washing dishes, sorting donated clothes, carrying boxes of donated food, to more relational activities like engaging in long conversations with homeless persons to let them know that someone cares about them and offering prayers on street corners for anyone that wanted it. The experience of engaging with those that I would usually pass by on the street really forced me to see everyone the way that Christ sees them. It forced me to break down walls that our families and society has told us to build up around us which prevent us from interacting with anyone who is considered "other" than us. I thank God for this experience and hope that many others will take up this opportunity offered by our church in this Diocese to get our hands dirty for short term urban missions.

Urban Mission Reflection
Devin Abraham

St. Johns Mar Thoma Church, NY

The best way to find yourself, is through the service of others. A quote, that's been imprinted in my mind, for the longest time. To many, this quote won't unfold itself, until the action is displayed. Volunteering within the SF Tenderloin District, via the Mar Thoma Church, has been landmark within the journey of my life.

Getting off the plane, entering the SFO Airport, you could sense a different west coast vibe, portrayed through dozens of teslas, to the hundreds of ipad simulated restaurant menus. Take a cab 30 minutes into the tenderloin, and there's not a street corner where you won't see a populated group of homeless people. If you aren't proverbial with the Tenderloin, it's a tiny triangular neighborhood located downtown, just a few blocks from San Francisco's City Hall and about a five-minute walk from Twitter's HQ on Market St.

From day one, we immersed in volunteer service. The rescue mission was my first encounter on how we live in a world, where we are created equally but are labeled, put down, and divided into categories. The rescue mission, is a place where you can come and have breakfast or dinner, embark in bible studies, request clothing, get a regular checkup etc. We were able to interact with everyone during dinner, and sit down to hear their stories. Many of them were immigrants, who came here seeking work but fell into poverty. Their lack of communication and technology skills, put them at a disadvantage. The next majority were primarily drug addicts, who said they had no other choice, but in reality where using drugs as a gateway to escape the reality. It's not that these individuals weren't capable of accomplishing the same duties and tasks we do every day, it's that they were mentally beaten down by the world, telling them they were less than everyone else. San Francisco has a mental health problem, and there are 7,500 people, most with some degree of mental illness, wandering the streets. Not having shelter, for the most visible of city's homeless, is the least of their problems.

As we slowly began getting introduced to the many branches of City Impact, the elementary and middle school is what opened my eyes. The kids were innocent little children, whose only wrong doing was being born in the wrong part of town. Many of these kids come from low income families who are on welfare. Many of these kids also come from homes where abuse, drugs, and violence is a regular. Once little girl in particular, who was 5 years old, caught my eye in particular. She had come from a seven children home, where her father was actively involved in sexual abuse. This tore my heart, so see that a little innocent girl, who probably had no idea what was happened to her, was going through this. This made me look back at the blessings that God had showered upon myself, and my family. Then it made me think about the abuse that was going on throughout our community, yet were being hidden for it was taboo to mention it. What else is going on within our community which

we are keeping quiet? We also tell ourselves we have to travel away and far to take part in a missions trip, but we fail to understand that our own community is a mission.

If asked the question if I would be returning next year to this missions trip, without even looking at my calendar, I would say yes. The way we were able to connect and help these people out, and how they were able to open our eyes to a reality, is something that should be spread throughout the Mar Thoma Church. We were not here to cater simply to our own people, but all of God's people.



Mathew and Valerie

Reflection: Urban Mission Trip 2015
Moncy Mathews

Mar Thoma Church of Baltimore
"Lighted to Lighten", but will you step out
into the darkness?

"Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world, both low and high, rich and poor alike...For all can see that the wise die, that the foolish and the senseless also perish, leaving their wealth to others...People, despite their wealth, do not endure; they are like the beasts that perish. This is the fate of those who trust in themselves...Do not be overawed when others grow rich, when the splendor of their houses increases; for they will take nothing with them when they die, their splendor will not descend with them...People who have wealth but lack understanding are like the beasts that perish." -An excerpt from Psalm 49 NIV vs 1-20.

I am so blessed to have been born and raised within the Mar Thoma Church. My earliest memories consist of being in Sunday school, VBS, Conferences and Youth Fellowship much like most of my peers. However, the question I proposed as the title of this reflection was the very same one that convicted me the most during the course of this Urban Mission Trip.

I was excited to find out that our church was starting to move outside of the church walls and begin its impact on a local

level within an inner city, right here in America. I went for this mission trip without any expectations; simply with a blank slate and an open mind. This was something I had never done before so there was mystery, even fear some of the days leading up to the trip. The mystery stopped the moment we arrived in the Tenderloin District in San Francisco. It became crystal clear of our purpose, and the answer was simple- we were going to be involved with *people*.

You might be wondering it seems strange we involve ourselves with people on a daily basis. The level in which we were involved with the people of the Tenderloin District during the one week mission trip has profoundly changed my life forever. A society consists of a group of people living within close proximity making decisions that impact each other's lifestyle. However, the society which we live in has undoubtedly formed labels. Labels are created to distinguish and separate groups of people. For example, we would enjoy the positive labels such as family orientated, churchgoing, student, professional, wealthy etc. We would never find it appealing to be labeled as poor, drug addicted, prostitute, pimp or homeless. I found it appalling at the degree of hypocrisy in which we still live in today.

God created us male and female; there are no other labels in God's eyes. In fact the excerpt from Psalm 49 was a reminder that it doesn't matter what we accumulate in this lifetime. Death is an inevitable part of life and in God's eyes we are ALL his children. We believe that Jesus came and died for us sinners and by that grace we have the gift of salvation. However, we judge and condemn those that appear different from us. The people that live with negative labels are also God's children. In fact Jesus says he came to call the outcast and not the respectable. Jesus also died for these people, so how dare we the chosen people of God act in a manner that resembles the Pharisees of Biblical times.

Everything we have in life is a product of God's grace. When we believe this we will not judge another human being no matter what their appearance is. They too are a vessel carrying the fingerprint of God on their lives. During this mission trip I learned the only difference between the people of the Tenderloin district and myself where outwardly appearances. Inwardly, brokenness and sin united all of them including myself. I just have the better clothes and sweet luxuries of life to cover up my brokenness than them. Are we truly lighted to lighten?



Devin making hamburgers

Mr. Sanjay Philip -Mar Thoma Church of Silicon Valley, CA

Urban Mission Reflection

For a little bit of background on myself, my name is Sanjay, I am 19 years old, and I am about to start my 2nd year of college. Like many people, I have always desired to go on a mission trip but was stuck waiting for the perfect opportunity. Luckily for me this year, this inaugurating Urban Mission trip was the perfect opportunity as it was hosted only 30 miles north from my home in San Jose and I had a break from school.

To be completely honest, I was not as thrilled or motivated to go on this trip as I felt that I should have been. I believed that it was a responsibility of mine to serve God but that my enthusiasm for service was lacking. As a result, the first day of the trip was very hard for me. During the first day, my spirit was broken as I observed the suffering that the people of the Tenderloin had to undergo. Some of them were hungry, others cold, and some were visibly damaged from addictions to drugs and alcohol. As I watched this, I could not understand why the volunteers and staff at City Impact would elect themselves to be a part of this hopelessness.

The second day of the trip is when I became energized. I started the day off working in the kitchen. While in the kitchen is where I first saw the blessings of God onto this district. It seemed like there was an endless

supply of trucks dropping off deliveries of food like it was manna dropping from the sky. There was so much food that we ran out of space in both the freezer and kitchen area. For one I was shocked that this much food even exists in the world and I was even more shocked that God would effortlessly drop it off on our laps in order to serve the masses. At one point the main chef even blurted out, "Whoever is praying for food, please stop!" My time working really turned around my mood and revitalized my energy because I saw that although these were in a tough situation, God really was watching them and providing for them in their time of need. Witnessing God's willingness to provide gave me the energy that would sustain me for the rest of the trip as I felt that I was not just serving the Lord but that he was there serving alongside me.

After that point, I was much more energetic and effective in my work. The most memorable part of the trip was when we partook in street ministry in which we took a pack of chips and distributed little bags while trying to make conversation with people and tell them about the various social services that City Impact provided. I was able to make one such conversation with a man named James. He was an older man in his 60s sitting on the corner of the block near a liquor store with his friend. At first he and his friend looked like they did not want to be bothered but after persisting and with the coerciveness of the chips, we were able to get James to open up and he told me all about his family, his experiences as a college basketball player, his memories of fighting in the army, and of all the temptations and trials currently afflicting him. After speaking to him for a good half an hour James thanked me for speaking to him and told me that people usually do not care to hear what he has to say. I felt blessed that I was able to help this man through nothing more than my patience and desire to converse.

As a whole, this mission trip completely changed my preconceived notions of what it means to serve in a mission trip. I realized that there is more to serving than just partaking in manual labor. Instead, I found out that a mission trip has a large spiritual component. I was able to see God directly working to help his children and I was amazed by the love and support he provides to those that are needy. I would highly suggest to anyone who is able to participate in the next Urban Mission, as they will be able to see the power of God working for his children and to participate in something bigger than man's own ability.

Yasmine Karavattuveetil
St. Thomas MTC, Chicago, IL

"Why should we travel outside our country, state, let alone city to serve in underprivileged areas? There are plenty of opportunities in our region where we can make a difference!"

Having been exposed to urban missions through the organization, Mission Year, I always had a longing to participate in inner city missions. I considered applying for the Mission Year team, but I could not dedicate a full year to mission work. So when I heard that the Mar Thoma Church was going to conduct an urban mission with San Francisco City Impact, I definitely wanted to see what it was all about!

As I watched the promotional and testimonial videos on City Impact's website, I knew that this was God's way of telling me I must go! I thought this would be the perfect opportunity and the right time to finally participate in an urban mission. I have such a huge heart for service for anyone and anywhere, I was very open to moving out of my comfort zone to attend the needs of those in the Tenderloin. Although, I was a little scared at the thought of living and serving in one of the worst districts of San Francisco, I was excited to spread the word of God to those who may not know who He is!

Upon arriving to City Impact, I did recognize there were differences in the quality of the buildings in the Tenderloin and the number of people on the streets compared to those a couple blocks from SFCI's Headquarters. After becoming situated and touring all of the buildings we would be at during the week, we quickly realized there was a greater need for help than what we had thought! Katie, our team lead for the week, informed us that there are 37,000 people within the quarter mile radius of the Tenderloin!

Within the first hour of serving at the Rescue mission, on the first day, I came to realize how tightly knit the community was. Those who work, volunteer, and come for help all treat each other as equals and children of God. They give everyone the chance to be who God wants them to be. It was amazing to see those who were hungry came into the rescue mission with smiles and once we gave them food they just wanted to talk and enjoy your company! I had a very interesting conversation with one of the volunteers that morning, he had struggled with drug abuse/addiction and had just recently come to

know Christ. He did not think that I had been through at obstacles or struggles in my life, I tried my best to help him understand that we all have various situations and struggles of our own and they may not seem as major to others as they are to us. It was difficult to explain my point, but eventually he understood a little and wanted us all to pray together. I knew from that point on I had to approach the telling of my walk with Christ and how He has helped me with my struggles in a different manner.

Although the Rescue Mission was fun, my favorite aspect of SFCI is the San Francisco City Academy. This is SFCI's school for those children who grow up in the TL. I was able to assist in the choir class. I was absolutely amazed with the voices these kids had! We taught them two songs, songs they would later lead during chapel. The song that I saw the most emotion from the kids was called "Give Me Faith" by Elevation Worship. The words to the song just spoke to me about the hardships these kids may be going through but at the end of the day God will never give up on them. You could truly tell these students, from kindergarten to 7th grade, whole-heartedly believed God was watching over them and guiding them.

"I may be weak
Your spirit strong in me
My flesh may fail
My God you never will

Give me faith to trust what you say
That you're good and your
love is great"

I thought I would have hesitations and a hard time speaking with the homeless during street ministry. Much to my surprise, street ministry was so much easier than I thought and very rewarding! Most people just wanted to talk to someone because they do not normally get anyone that says "Hi" to them. One lady I spoke with had lost her husband last year and soon after found out she had cancer and has to go through serious chemotherapy. She took everything graciously and was in great spirits and kept saying "I will overcome this because I am a fighter! I am a fighter!" It's crazy to me that we complain about the smallest things that will not matter in the next hour or minute and these people are living on the streets or are

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."
Jeremiah 29:7

going hungry and yet their spirits and belief/faith in God is greater than ours. Really puts my thoughts and actions into perspective.

Being a part of the first Mar Thoma Urban Missions was an amazing experience! I loved every aspect of serving those in cities that our youth live in. I have such a strong desire to attend to the needs of others and participating in the Tenderloin, where the need is so great, was indescribable. I learned so much about the underprivileged, as well as myself and my own walk with Christ. I cannot wait to see what other Urban Mission Cities, we as a Mar Thoma Church can serve in our Dioceses.

In His Service
~Yasmine Karavattuveetil

"As you send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." – John 17:18



NM Mission Trip – City Impact



City impact schoolgirl