

CHURCH HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

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The Advent (Lent from 1 to 25 December). For Eastern Churches this is the season waiting upon the birth of Christ. During this time the church prepares herself through cleansing and renewal for the advent of her Lord. It serves as a time of spiritual discipline and renewal in preparation for Christmas. Christians observe lent with fasting, prayer and self-sacrifice.

First Sunday in December - Bible Sunday. The First Sunday of December is observed as Bible Society Day. It was the British and Foreign Bible Society established in London, in 1804 that first made a concerted effort for translating, printing and publishing Bibles in different languages. Its auxiliaries were formed in Calcutta in 1811, in Bombay in 1812 and in Madras in 1820 and in Kerala in 1956. Other auxiliaries were formed later. Even before the formation of the auxiliaries in India, the work of translation of the Bible to Indian Languages had been taken up by William Carey and his associates in Calcutta. In obedience to the commandment of the Lord "Go ye unto the uttermost corners of the earth and preach my gospel". The Bible Society aims at making available, copies of the Bible, New Testaments and portions of the Bible to

1. To Every Person in his / her own language.
2. At a price within his / her reach
3. In a style which is easily understood

It is in pursuance of this objective that it brings out special editions for students, members of the armed forces, in Braille type for the blind, etc.

3 December, 1552: Death of St. Francis Xavier. Jesuit Missionary St. Francis Xavier who came to India in May 1542 died on 3 December 1552 on his way to China. He is known as one of the greatest missionaries and converted 700,000 people in Portugal, India, Indonesia, Japan and elsewhere.

5 December, 1974: Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma lays foundation for the Callaway Memorial Library. Miss. Callaway, a Church Missionary Society Missionary from Australia, was the first principal of the Vanithamandiram (Tiruvalla) of our Sevika Sanghom. She served the Sevika Sanghom and Vanithamandiram from 1925 to 1946, and after that she returned to her native place in Australia.

6 December, (St. Nicholas's Day): Pray for the Mission to Seafarers. The Mission to Seafarers is a voluntary society of the Anglican Church. It is at work in some 300 ports around the world including Dubai and Cochin Port in Kerala. In over 100 of these ports it runs seafarers' centers, many of them in partnership with other Churches. Seafarers need our support through prayers. Over 90 percent of the world's trade is carried out in ships. They leave their homes and families to work at sea, one of the most dangerous and exacting working

environments. The Mission to Seafarers is committed to meeting the spiritual and practical needs of seafarers regardless of nationality and creed. Saint Nicholas is the Patron Saint of sailors and 6 December (St. Nicholas's Day) is set apart as a special day for prayer for the seafarers all around the world.

6 December, 2000: The Most Reverend Vinod A. R. Peter, Moderator of Church of North India (CNI) and President of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) died in a road accident on 6 December 2000 near Jodhpur in Rajasthan. Born on March 4, 1939, in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, he was a man who believed in simplicity and humble service, always inspired people to bring out the best in them. His humility was an example for all church leaders in India.

6 December, 345: (traditional date) Nicholas, bishop of Myra, one of the most popular saints in the Greek and Latin churches - and Santa Claus's namesake dies.

7 December, 430: Cyril of Alexandria condemns the Antiochene monk Nestorius, who claimed Christ was two persons (divine and human) rather than one person with two natures.

7 or 14 December, 1883 (Correct date doubtful): Birth of Sadhu Kochoonju Upadesi. Muthampakkal Kochoonju Upadesi, was one the prominent voluntary Evangelists/ Hymn writers of our Church. Many of his hymns are included in our Hymn books. He passed away on 30 Nov, 1945, and was buried in the Lakha (Edayarammala) St. Thomas Church cemetery on 1 Dec, 1945.

8 December 1843: First Christmas Cards Sold .The first Christmas cards – actually more like postcards – were created and sold for a shilling in England.

9 December, 1989: Mar Thoma Church consecrates three more bishops. Our bishops Rt. Rev. Geevarghese Mar Athanasius, Rt. Rev Geevarghese Mar Theodosius and Rt. Rev. Euyakim Mar Coorilos were consecrated on 09 Dec 1989 at Tiruvalla.

12 December, 1712: The colony of South Carolina requires "all persons whatsoever" to attend church each Sunday and refrain from skilled labor and travel. Violators of the "Sunday Law" could be fined 10 shillings or locked in the stocks for two hours.

12 December, 1912: Consecration of Bishop V. S. Azariah. Rev. Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah was consecrated as the first Indian Bishop of the Church in India (Anglican Church) on 12 Dec, 1912, in the St.Paul's Cathedral in Calcutta. Most Rev. Dr. Copleston, assisted by ten other bishops, conducted the consecration ceremony.

14 December, 1997: Dr. Miss. Annamma Mathew of Ankola Ashram passes away. Born (on 28 Dec, 1922) as a member of the Athinilkunnathil Family of Kuriannoor, she served our Ashram Hospital for 45 years without any salary. Even the property (income) she inherited from her parents was utilized for the Ashram expenses.

13 December, 37 A.D: Nero, the Roman emperor who was the scourge of early Christians, is born. After his suicide in A. D. 68, many believed he would return, and "false Neros" appeared throughout the eastern provinces.

13 December, 1835: Phillips Brooks, Episcopal prelate and author of "O Little Town of Bethlehem," is born in Boston.

18 December, 1707: Charles Wesley, who founded Methodism with his brother John, is born in England. A celebrated and prolific hymn writer, his "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "Lo, He Comes" are widely sung this time of year.

21 December, 1807: Anglican clergyman and hymn writer John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace," dies.

21 December: St. Thomas Day - Sabha Dinam. We believe that St. Thomas one of the disciples of Jesus Christ is the founder of our Church. According to tradition he reached the Malabar Coast at Cranganor (Kodungalloor) in 52 A.D. Kerala Christians observe St. Thomas Day on 21 December every year. Special thanks giving and remembrance services are held on this day in most of the churches. In the Mar Thoma Church we observe it as Sabha Dinam.

25 December, 1927: Birth of Rev M. M. Thomas Rev. M. M. Thomas a member of the Mundaparampil family of Poovathoor near Chengannur became a Deacon of our church on Dec 14, 1957 and Priest on Feb 12, 1958. He was the General Secretary of the Mar Thoma Yuvajana Sakhyam and it was during his term the Adoor Youth Centre was constructed. He was the first missionary of our church to the Andaman Islands. He was the vicar of the Dubai Mar Thoma Parish from May 1972 to May 1975. He was called to his eternal home while attending the New Year service at the Kuttapuzha (Tiruvalla) Mar Thoma Church on Jan 1, 1985.

25 December, 1905: Formation of the National Missionary Society of India. On Christmas Day 1905 a meeting of the church leaders held in the historic library of William Carey at Serampore decided to form a National Missionary Society. The following principles were adopted on that day **1.** The work of evangelization shall be done by Indians **2.** That its expenses should be met by Indian money. **3.** They must choose mission fields in areas where Western Missions were not working **4.** The society should not form a church or denomination but entrust the converts they gather to the care of the churches in that area.

28 December, 1922: Birth of Dr. Miss. Annamma Mathew. Born as the fifth child of Kuriannoor Athinilkunnathil Cheriya Mathai and Kumbanadu Puzhikkalayil Aleyamma, Annamma had her school education in Kumbanadu, Eraviperoor and Kottayam. She was a nursery school teacher in our S. C. Seminary School in Tiruvalla, from 1942-1945. After that she joined in the South India Bible Institute in Kolar for her theological education. In 1948, she became a member of our Christa Mitra Ashram in Ankola. She took her medical degree (LSMF) from the Ludhiana Medical College (1951-56) and till her death (14 Dec, 1997) she served our Ashram Hospital.

28 December, 1733: Ordination of the first Indian Pastor for the Church in India. In 1728 the Danish missionaries wrote to the King of Denmark for the permission to ordain Mr. Arumugam as the first Indian priest of the Church in India. Arumugam was ordained with the new name "Aaron" in a service conducted in the Lutheran Church pattern in the Tamil language in the city of Tranquebar in Tamil Nadu. Aaron passed away on 25 June, 1745, at the age of 47.

29 December, 1917: Consecration of Dr. Abraham Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Rev. M N. Abraham of Marettu, Kalloopara was consecrated as the bishop of Mar Thoma Church on 29 Th December 1917. Till 1943 he was the Suffragan Metropolitan and from 1943 to 1947 he was the Metropolitan. He was a fervent evangelist; his chief contribution lay in the promotion of evangelistic work and the encouragement of lay leadership in the church. He was a staunch nationalist who stood for the democratic rights of the people. He resisted the undemocratic and dictatorial actions of Dewan Sir. C P Ramaswamy Iyer of Travancore.

31 December, 1600: Formation of East India Company. On 31 December 1600 Queen Elizabeth gave permission to the East India Company to have trade relationship with India. In 1813 this authority was renewed by the British Parliament and official permission was given to Missionary Societies to do mission work in India

31 December, 1384: John Wycliffe passes away. John Wycliffe lived almost 200 years before the Reformation, but his beliefs and teachings closely match those of Luther, Calvin and other Reformers. As a man ahead of his time, historians have called Wycliffe the "Morning star of the Reformation". Born in the 1300s, Wycliffe criticized abuses and false teachings in the Church. In 1382, he translated an English Bible - the first European translation done in over 1,000 years.

