

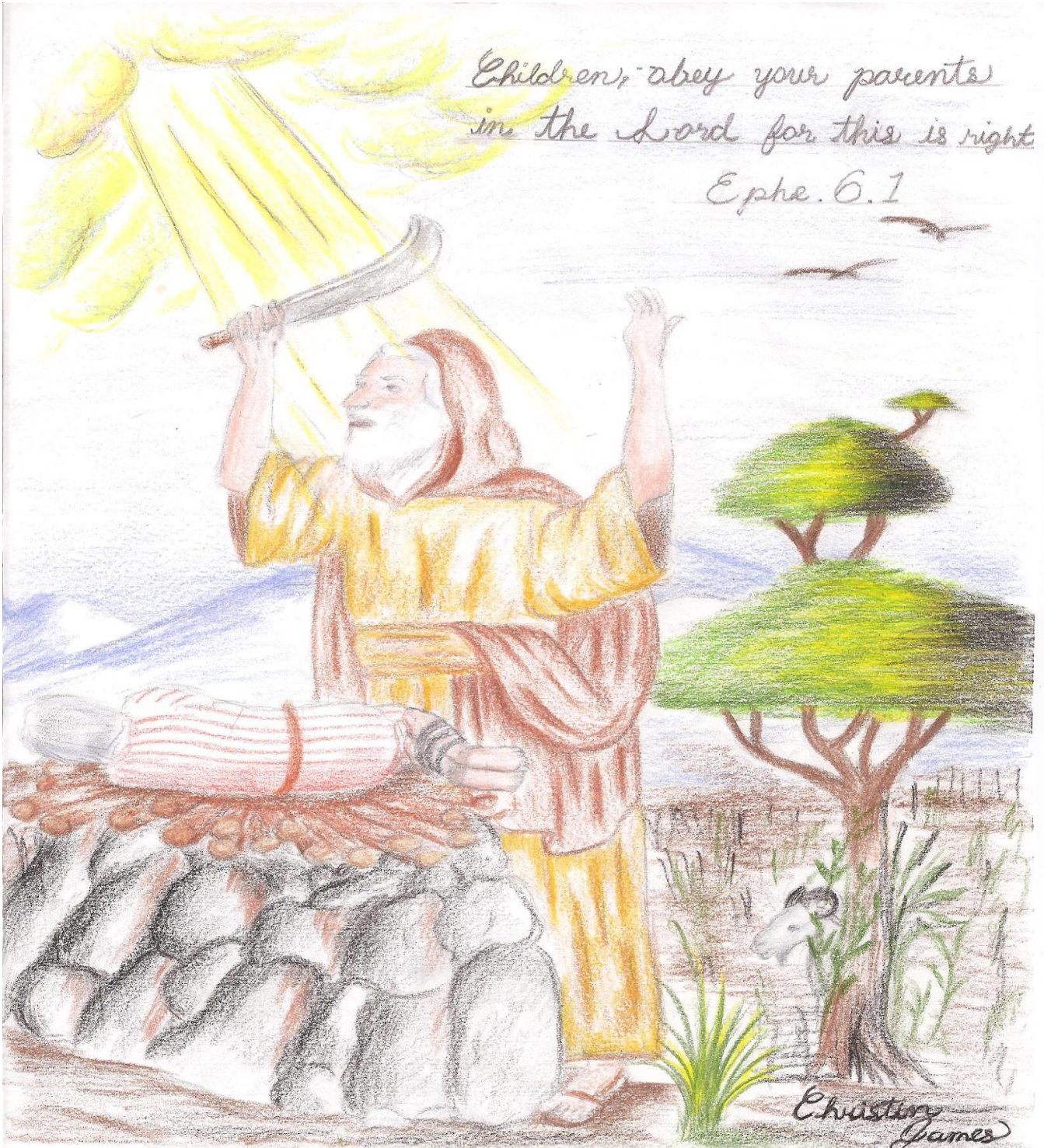
MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH
NORTH-EAST DIOCESE OF AMERICA

OVBS 2011

UNIT COORDINATORS GUIDE

*Children, obey your parents
in the Lord for this is right*

Ephe. 6.1



Christy James

OVBS SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

Congratulations on your commitment and dedication to organize this year's OVBS for your parish or a group of parishes! This is an important calling within the teaching ministry of our church, for we are shaping and molding the minds, hearts, and intellects of our children. God will bless you for your efforts!

The committee has prayerfully worked as a team to organize this year's OVBS. We hope that you will be able to make good use of the materials that were developed, to effectively present this year's theme. This guide contains recommendations and suggestions that may be used to organize and establish a local OVBS unit. Please provide feedback so that we may evaluate the OVBS Program and make changes as needed to improve and make the program more effective and useful for all. Our e-mail address is ovbs.america@gmail.com.

PURPOSE OF OVBS

Orthodox Vacation Bible School (OVBS) is a teaching ministry under the Sunday School Association of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Inc. The Diocesan Metropolitan appoints one person as OVBS Director. The primary responsibilities of the Director include:

- Responsibility for the development of theme-related OVBS materials (lessons, songs, arts/crafts, etc.) &
- Teacher training sessions to prepare instructors and volunteers to use the OVBS materials effectively.

OVBS SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

OVBS can be considered as the “summer school” of the Sunday school year. It is for a short period of time and intense in nature. It should be fun, exciting, and nurturing. In most cases, the students are on vacation from school and they try to stay away from all strenuous intellectual activities. Hence, the Bible studies should be conducted in a leisurely manner. Children prefer to sing songs, hear stories and engage in fun activities. Thus, the time they spend in OVBS should be carefully organized. The classes and activities should be utilized in such a manner that the children show continuous interest and the enthusiasm throughout the OVBS. They should be encouraged to play an active role in their groups, which will in turn make them more appreciative of the lessons they are taught. By and large, the children we teach are of Indian origin, and live and go to school in the United States. Thus, they receive information from various sources. Most of them enjoy going to Church and attending Sunday school. OVBS is a program that would be beneficial even to those who are not associated with a church or involved in Sunday school activities.

Many other Christian denominations also use our materials. We should always seek to foster good ecumenical relations with other churches.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OVBS PROGRAM

CLASS DISTRIBUTION: Students and classes are classified into the following age groups:

1. Beginner –Nursery/KG
2. Primary –Grades 1, 2 & 3
3. Junior –Grades 4, 5 & 6
4. Intermediate –Grades 7, 8 & 9
5. Senior –Grades 10, 11 & 12

****** Many units like to further divide the children into teams for games and activities.

STUDY MATERIALS: Many talented volunteers prayerfully developed the materials for this year. We attempted to have a good mix of exercises and activities that would sustain the student's interest. All materials are available on the Sunday School website (<http://www.indianorthodoxsundayschool.org/user/ovbs.aspx>)

SONGS: Songs (MP3 format) and Lyrics are uploaded to the website. Along with few new songs, this year we have decided to re-use some of the most popular songs from the past years as well.

****Our Diocesan Metropolitan, His Grace Zachariah Mar Nicholovos has approved the use of all materials.**

- **Hand Books and Work Books:** This year, the textbook and workbooks have been combined together to allow students to be able to read the lessons and answer the questions. All textbooks may be downloaded from the OVBS Webpage

website:

<http://www.indianorthodoxsundayschool.org/user/ovbs.aspx>
(Login required)

TEACHING TIPS

Teaching students is a very important calling and carries with it a number of responsibilities. Here are some things every teacher should consider:

- Spend time in prayer, asking God for wisdom, insight, and guidance.
- Sufficiently prepare to teach the lesson through creating a lesson plan and specific objectives before the class. It is best to start this process a few days before the class to be able to properly plan and account for the time.
- Invoke dialogue and seek the students' understanding and comprehension through the use of role-playing, question/answer, brainstorming, etc. Avoid lecturing as much as possible.
- Use interesting, fresh approaches in teaching methods. Where possible, try to use all the senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. The more senses used, the best chance the material will be understood and retained.
- Be truthful and pertinent. Do not lie or exaggerate. If you are unsure of the correct answer, offer to find out the answer and let them know. If you promise to find out and let them know, make sure you follow through.
- Assign exercises and small assignments to further enhance the learning experience and for self-assessment.
- Be practical. Show the students how the lesson can help them in their spiritual lives. Make sure the students understand the “take-home” message.

OVBS ADMINISTRATION

REQUIRED MATERIALS

We recommend that you maintain a list of registrants:

- A **Student's Register** to record the names, addresses, dates of birth, school grade, parents' names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, etc. Be sure to note down any allergies or medical issues.
- A **Teachers' Register** to record the names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and role during OVBS (teaching lessons or songs or arts/crafts), etc. Be sure to assign a backup for each teacher in the event of a last minute emergency.
- A **Visitor's Log** to record any one who comes and visits the unit.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A UNIT?

An OVBS unit is either a parish or group of parishes that host OVBS. The first step in organizing an OVBS is to coordinate a *planning meeting* with the coordinators, teachers, and Priest(s) from the parish(es) to be involved. Every Sunday school is free to determine if they prefer to conduct a joint OVBS or to conduct a unit for only their own parish. We do recommend, however, that where possible and convenient, joint OVBS be conducted. There are numerous advantages to holding a joint OVBS, as there will be cost savings, more number of children, and pooled resources. Children typically enjoy it when children from sister parishes come as well.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR ONE DAY

The proposed time for one OVBS session is 3 hours. (Good for one evening)

- **Time (mins) Activity:**

- 10 Marching / Slogans
- 30 Welcome, Prayer, and Singing
- 05 Housekeeping Announcements
- 15 Devotional Address
- 10 Break (Students returns to assigned locations for class)
- 30 Lesson study (Session I)
- 30 Other Activities (Arts/Crafts, Games, etc.)
- 30 Lesson Study (Session II)
- 20 Singing, Discussions, Announcements, Prayer & Closing

Opening Day!

Make the first day exciting for the children. When they arrive to register, have lots of balloons around the registration table. You may even ask one of the senior youth to dress up in some costume (for example, for 2008, you can create a character named “God Heals” that meets and greets the children as they enter each day). Offer a small giveaway or points to each child who arrives on time. Be sure to make each session fun. End the day with a fun activity.

Teachers’ Meetings during OVBS

Teachers’ meeting are very important. The teachers’ meeting should start with a prayer. One teacher should read a few verses from the Bible and the teachers should meditate for a few minutes in silence. This is the time for the teachers to pray for God’s grace in propagating the word of God. If it is possible, please invite the vicar(s) to lead this prayer. The meeting should be short. Any housekeeping issues or anything that may help the teachers and students should be discussed. We suggest this meeting be completed before the children arrive.

A short meeting with a prayer could be conducted at the end of the day before the teachers disperse. This way the teachers can communicate, share, and strengthen each other. Be sure to discuss what worked and did not work during the day. Look for strategies to improve the activities and sessions.

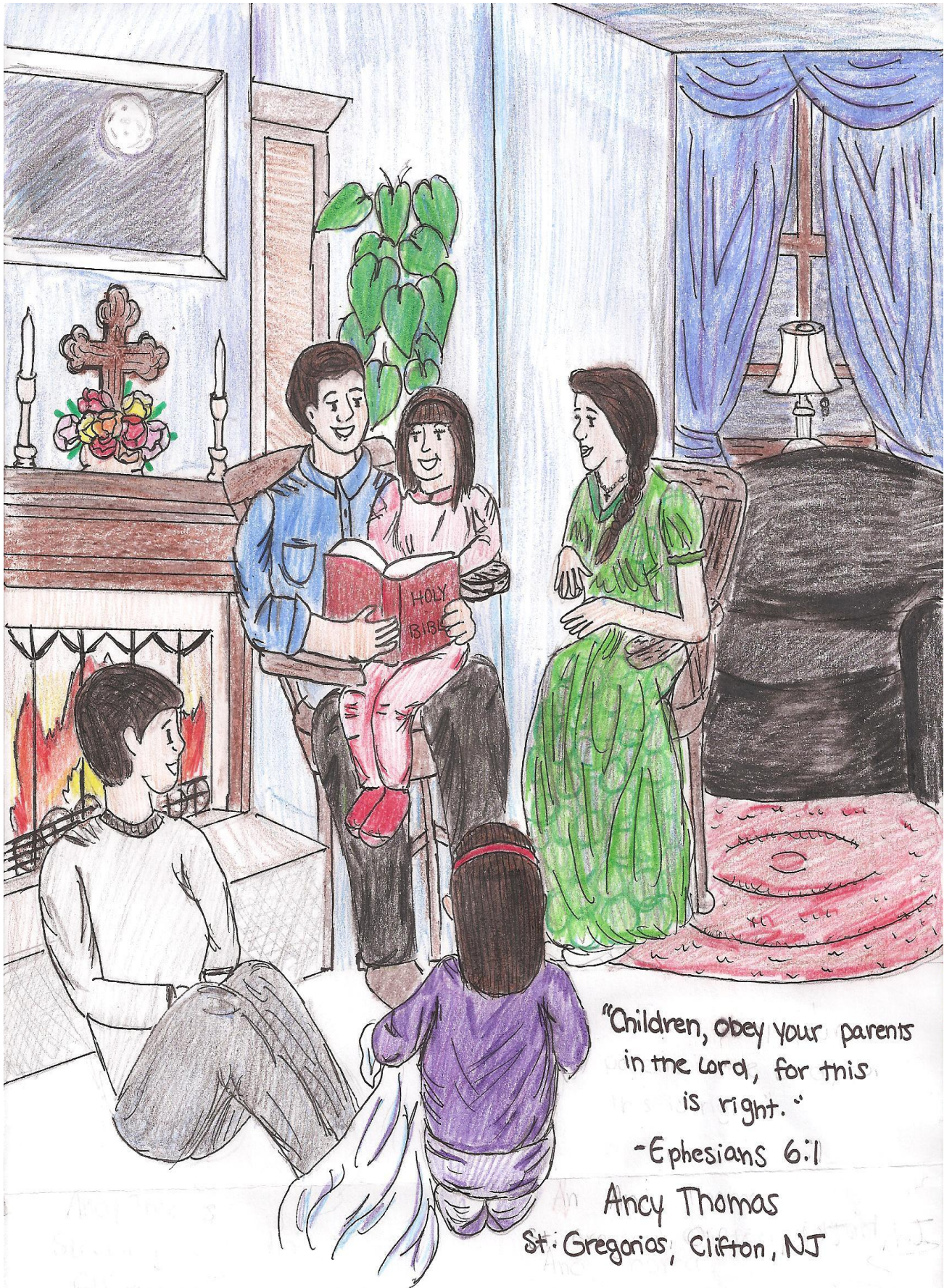
PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR ONE DAY

Closing Day!

The final day must be colorful and exciting both for the students as well as the teachers.

- All parents and well - wishers should participate.
- This function can be arranged with a variety of programs.
- The aim of the function is to give a chance for each student to present something on the stage. If you have a large number of students, we encourage you to organize group presentations.
- One teacher shall be responsible with organizing the function for the final day. Preparation may be started even before OVBS starts.
- This function can be conducted on a Sunday after the Sunday service. Please consult with the Vicar(s) and church officials before you plan anything. Practice the presentations and encourage children to present the best things they have learned in OVBS.
- Be sure the arts and crafts are available for the parents to view.

If you have any questions, concerns, recommendations, or comments with regards to the OVBS Program, please do not hesitate to contact the OVBS Director, Fr. Gregory Varghese (ovbs.america@gmail.com).



"Children, obey your parents
in the Lord, for this
is right."

-Ephesians 6:1

Ancy Thomas
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