



Major Feast Days

On the **first Fridays of every month** and annual feast days devotees in large number make pilgrimage to this church.

September 14: Feast of Laying the Stone of the Church

December 31, January 1: Feast of Naming of Jesus (Main Feast)



Holy Qurbana: Time Schedule			
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Mon-Thursday & Saturday	5.45, 6.30, 7.30		
2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th , 5 th Fridays	5.30, 6.30, 7.30, 8.45		5.00
First Friday	4.15, 5.15, 6.30, 7.30, 8.45, 9.30, 11.00	12.15, 2.15, 3.30	5.00, 7.00
Sundays	5.30, 7.00, 8.15, 9.45		4.00

Route Map

The church is beside the Kottayam-Pala highway (7 k.m. from Pala and 22 k.m. from Kottayam) around 500 meters away from the Cherpunkal junction.

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Mar Sleeva Church, Cherpunkal
Diocese of Palai

Mar Sleeva Forane Church, one of the ancient churches in Kerala, belongs to Pala diocese of the Syro Malabar Church. The present church situates on the southern banks of the Meenachil River. It is the destination of pilgrims who seek the blessings of Infant Jesus. The Christian community of Cherpunkal dates back to the first century.



The Entwined History and Tradition

The ancient palm leaves inscription (*thaliyola*) refers to a cross that was kept in the church at Moonnupeedika, a place on the banks of river Meenachil where merchants from Pandya Dynasty had some shops. Literally the word "Moonnupeedika" means "Three shops". Tradition connects the arrival of St. Thomas Apostle and the establishment of this cross.



St. Thomas the Apostle, Cherippunkal and Cherpunkal

The St. Thomas Christians of India are the only community all over the world which is named after an Apostle of Jesus Christ. The Apostle reached the port of Kondungalloor (Muziris) in A.D 52. Later he moved through the river way to his other destinations. Cherpunkal was a renowned trade centre for spices. All these places were familiar to the Jewish merchants of the past. St. Thomas the Apostle landed at the moonnupeedika ferry and preached the gospel. Certain families were baptized by the Apostle, and a cross was set up



The Monument at Moonnupeedika. Though it was inscribed on the monument that the church was shifted in the 12th century to the southern banks of Meenachil River, the new findings prove that it happened in the 11th century.

at the spot marked by Apostle with his sandal. The place thus came to be called as "Cherippunkal". The word "cherippu" literally means "sandal". Later Cherippunkal became Cherpunkal. People assembled at this cross and prayed, and numerous miracles occurred. This became the first church for the people. Later by the order of the King of Poonjar the church on the northern bank of the Meenachil River was shifted to the southern bank. According to the palm leaves records this cross was later shifted to the new church.

The land for the construction of the church was donated by Kallampally Namboothiri. In 1096 the construction of the church was completed. Later this church was demolished.

The Small Church (Cheriyapalli)

There are no documents that clarify the history of the building of the small church. Fr. Vattamattathil Philipose (Snr) is regarded as the man behind this church. Since the main church was burnt by bandits he



constructed this small one. The date is supposed to be c.1780-1790. The church is still there in the campus and is known as the Cheriyapalli (Small Church). The influence of Portuguese style is evident in its structure.

The Present Church at Cherpunkal

The construction of the present church was completed in the year 1912. It situates in the same site of the church of 1096. The church is built in the gothic style with laterite stone and lime mortar. Biblical events are painted on the wooden ceiled roof of the *Madbaha* (altar). A crucifix embossed on a huge single piece of wood brought from Persia adorns the altar of the church. People gather around the statue of Infant Jesus in the narthex of the church. Pilgrims pour oil as an offering on the cross erected on the lamp stand (*Kurisuvilakku*). Pouring oil as an act of adoration has biblical background (Gen 28,18; 35,15).

