

The Desert



Messenger

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your Face, who shall prepare Your way...” (Matthew 11:10)

Volume 17, Issue 11 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

December 2019

**From
Father
John**

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He Who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him.’” (Matthew 2:1-2)

Beloved in Christ:

In the Gospel of Matthew we learn about the Magi – three scholarly foreigners – who traveled to visit our Lord Jesus Christ after His Nativity in the flesh, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. When the evil King Herod learned this he was troubled, and assembling the leading clerics of Jerusalem, he questioned them as to where the Christ was to be born. Then Herod summoned the Wise Men secretly and found out from them the precise time the star had emerged. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, *“Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” (Matthew 2:8)*

As directed by King Herod, the Magi went on their way, continuing to follow the star until it stopped over the area where the Christ-child laid. Upon arriving at the house, they knelt down and worshiped Him, and offered Him their treasures. Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, as he planned to kill Jesus in preserving his earthly kingship, the Wise Men returned to their home by an alternative route.

Our Lord teaches us: *“Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness.” (Luke 11:34)* Although the star – which St. John Chrysostom likens to a power highly endowed with reason, much like the pillar of the cloud that led the ancient Israelites in the desert – shone brightly before the Wise Men, it was obscured by the wicked king and religious leaders who feared losing their authority: Blinded by the lust for power and lack of faith, their eyes were kept from seeing the star – that during the day was even brighter than the beams of the sun – and thus they remained blinded by the darkness of their souls. Conversely, the gentile Magi, who had not been exposed to the prophecies foretelling of the star of Christ (*Malachi 4:2, Isaiah, 59:19*) were led to the Christ-child because the eyes of their souls were full of spiritual light: This is why they were not only driven to find and worship Him, but also to offer Him their finest treasures with gratitude.

A Monk of the Eastern Church offers a helpful observation for all of us, especially during this Holy Advent Season: “The Magi followed the light which was given to them faithfully: Being obedient to this light, they were led by it to the Child. If I try to be faithful to the full measure of light that God has given me, if I have the courage to leave all to follow the star, if I decide to be true and obedient to my conscience (whatever may happen), and ready to ‘bear witness to the Light’ (*John 1:7*) . . . the divine light will not fail, despite my ignorance, to lead me – not in any abstract way, but through all the concrete circumstances of life, and whenever it is needed – right up to the Child in Whom I have placed all my hope.” (*The Year of Grace of the Lord*)



(Continued on Page 3)

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros - 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion*

Sunday, December 1/*14th Sunday of Luke/
Prophet Nahum/St. Philaret the Merciful of
Amnia*

Orthros: Tone Seven (Grave Tone)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:1-8
Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22
Gospel: Luke 18:35-43

Friday, December 6/*St. Nicholas of Myra,
the Wonderworker*

8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21
Gospel: Luke 6:17-23

Sunday, December 8/*10th Sunday of Luke/
Forefeast of the Conception of the Theotokos by
St. Anna the Ancestor of God/St. Patapios of
Thebes*

Orthros: Tone Eight (Fourth Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:9-20
Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-7
Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Thursday, December 12/*St. Spyridon of
Trimythous, the Wonderworker*

8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19
Gospel: John 10:9-16

Sunday, December 15/*11th Sunday of Luke/
Holy Forefathers of Christ/St. Eleftherios and His
Mother, St. Anthia*

Orthros: Tone One
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12
Epistle: 2 Timothy 1:8-18
Gospel: Luke 14:16-24

*“A man once gave a great banquet,
and invited many . . .” (Luke 14:16)*

Sunday, December 22/*Sunday Before the Nativity
of Christ/Holy Ancestors and Prophets, Especially
Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths*

Orthros: Tone Two
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:13-35
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40
Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Tuesday, December 24/*Eve of the Nativity
of Christ*

6:00 pm Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Epistle: Hebrews 1:1-12
Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

Wednesday, December 25/*The Nativity in the
Flesh of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ*

9:00 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7
Gospel: Matthew 2:1-20

Friday, December 27/*St. Stephen the Archdeacon
and First Martyr*

8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Acts of the Apostles 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60
Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42

Sunday, December 29/*Sunday After the Nativity/
Holy and Righteous Joseph the Betrothed/David
the King/James (Iakovos), the Brother of the Lord*

Orthros: Tone Three
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53
Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19
Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

Wednesday, January 1/*Circumcision of Christ/
St. Basil the Great and His Mother St. Emelia*

9:00 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12
Gospel: Luke 2:21-20, 40-52

*“For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government will be upon
His shoulder, and His Name will be called ‘Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’” (Isaiah 9:6)*

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 1

Ushers: Demetrious Asim, John Matsis, Mark Karris, Stacy Mavrantonis, Justina Szukiewicz and John Koutsulis

Memorials: Anastasia Rentz (40 days); Violet Delibassis (40 days); and Evan Kolias (3 years)
Fellowship: Pan-Arcadian Federation

DECEMBER 8

Ushers: Justina Szukiewicz, John Koutsulis, Adam Bieker, Stacy Mavrantonis, Mark Karris and John Matsis

Memorial: Despina Mavroudis (40 days)
Fellowship: Folk Dance Groups - Fasolada

DECEMBER 15: PARISH ELECTIONS & STEWARDSHIP ALL-STARS LUNCHEON

Ushers: Gus Flangas, Skip Ruffner, Bessie Stavropoulos, Spiros Filios, Demetrious Asim and John Nicholas

Memorial: Aurelia Hoadrea (1 year)
Fellowship: Stewardship All-Stars Luncheon

DECEMBER 22

Ushers: Adam Bieker, Spiros Filios, Gus Flangas, Bessie Stavropoulos, John Nicholas and Skip Ruffner

Memorial: Mack Michael Malpee (40 days)
Fellowship: Young Adults

DECEMBER 29

Ushers: Demetrious Asim, John Matsis, Mark Karris, Stacy Mavrantonis, Justina Szukiewicz and John Koutsulis

Memorial: Kalliopi Georgis (6 months)
Fellowship: The Demoleas Family

*“At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you together.”
(Zephaniah 3:20)*

From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

Our faith in and love for our Lord Jesus, Who was Incarnate for our salvation, must be the driving force in our day-to-day life, and in every circumstance we face: When the eyes of our souls are focused on Christ, in Whose image we are made, He will always direct our paths – as He did with the Magi – and we will have an overwhelming desire to serve Him and His Church and one another as joyful Stewards. But when we are clouded by our selfish pursuits, our passions, our lack of repentance and our lack of love . . . how great will be the darkness of our souls and lives. May the Light of the Christ-child enlighten and imbue us with renewed faith, hope and love – and grant us a greater commitment as Stewards and Visionaries of our God-established Church – as we prepare to celebrate His Holy Nativity and embark on the New Year of the Lord 2020.

With love in Christ,





Parish Council Elections - 2020-21 Term
Sunday, December 15 ~ following Liturgy ~ Panos Hall Foyer

Six available positions ~ Our Nominees are:



Stephen Carabas



Gus Flangas



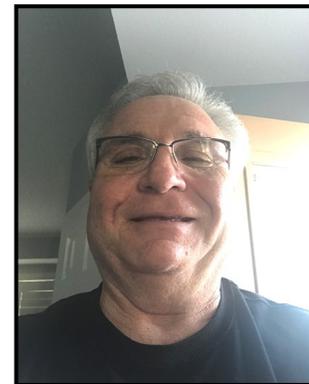
Aristotelis "Telly" Eliades



John Matsis



Alexander Mavros



Stacy Mavrantonis



Peter Papas



Robert Paisios Pursell



Joy Wolfenbarger

*All 2019 Parish Stewards are eligible to vote!
For current Stewards unable to be present on Election Day,
please call Karen for an Absentee Ballot. Absentee Ballots must be returned to the
Church Office by Friday, December 13 at 5:00 pm.*

**The Priests, Parish Council and the
Stewardship & Community Outreach Committee**

Invite You to Join Us for the Annual

Stewardship



Luncheon

Honoring Constantinos Fountas,

Sophia Konsolakis, and

Efstathios “Steve” Tzelalis

Sunday, December 15

Following Divine Liturgy

Panos Hall

Join us as we pay tribute to three MVPs . . .

Most Valuable Parishioners!

Free-Will Offering



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

“OUR DIAMOND JUBILEE”

Deepest, most heartfelt thanks to the generous contributors who supported the \$300,000 One Year Plan.
The mortgage of St. John Church HAS BEEN PAID OFF. We are MORTGAGE-FREE!



Thanks to the amazing committee:

Spiritual Advisors - *Father John Hondros and Father Seraphim Ramos*

Co-Chairwomen - *Geri Kypreos, Kiki Mavrantonis, Susan Stamis*

Committee Members - *Ladies Philoptochos Society*
Benita Beeman, President



Celebration Dinner - *Geri Kypreos*

Champagne Brunch - *Kiki Mavrantonis*

Pictorial Display - *Susan Stamis for Hellenic Historical Society*

Silent Auction - *Bernadette Anthony, Dora Hart, Vicky Paliwos*

Housing - *James Monoyudis*

Photography - *Bill Bruninga, Constantine Melos*

Music - *Steve Likourinou, Limelite Pro-Audio*



THANK YOU TO ALL WHO ATTENDED AND SUPPORTED THE EVENTS OF THE WEEKEND

THANKS BE TO GOD

YOUR SISTERS IN CHRIST

Benita Beeman, Philoptochos President

Nitsa Filios, 60th Chairwoman

Cheryl Pandelis, 60th Chairwoman

Parish Council Report

Happy Thanksgiving. We wish everyone a Blessed Holiday Season.

We just celebrated the 60th Anniversary of our Church, our Diamond Jubilee, over the weekend of November 9 and 10. Joining us in our celebration was His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, and our former priests, His Excellency, Metropolitan Ilia (who was recently elevated), and Father Matthew and Presvytera Annie Swehla. It was a great weekend with a lot of good feelings of togetherness and fellowship. People really came together to make it a truly blessed celebration. The Grand Gala Celebration on Saturday evening was absolutely fantastic, with great company, great food and great music. Also, the Silent Auction was a huge hit. During the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy the next day, there were a couple of tremendous surprises. Marilyn Flangas was awarded the Medal of St. Paul, the highest honor the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America bestows on a Parishioner. Marilyn and the entire congregation were completely unaware that she was going to receive the Medal. In another huge surprise, Father John was elevated to the rank of Offikion of Protopresbyter, which allows him to stand with the senior clergy of the Metropolis. It is the highest rank for married Clergy. Father John and the entire congregation were also completely unaware that he was going to be elevated. Congratulations to both. The Champagne Brunch after the Liturgy was fantastic, again with a lot of good feelings of togetherness and fellowship. We would like to thank the many people who gave of their time, talents and treasures to make the entire weekend a remarkable and memorable time. Specifically, we would like to thank Cheryl Pandelis, Nitsa Filios, Susan Stamis, Geri Kypreos, Kiki Mavrantonis, Benita Beeman and the Ladies Philoptochos Society.

In conjunction with the 60th Anniversary, two women put together a \$300,000 plan to retire the Mortgage on the Church. We are happy to announce that their efforts were successful and the Mortgage was paid off in full just prior to “Our Diamond Jubilee” weekend. It was a mammoth undertaking, and these two ladies through sheer determination and force of personality made it happen. We would like to thank Cheryl Pandelis and Nitsa Filios for their extraordinary efforts in making the payoff of the Mortgage a reality. We would also like to thank the many individuals who contributed their treasures to this worthy cause. This was a wonderful venture and shows what we can all do when we work together and put forth the energy.

In celebrating our 60th Anniversary, it is important to recognize that over sixty years ago, several Greek Orthodox families who were living here in Las Vegas wanted to make a life here, and knew well the importance of having a Church in making any type of life. Their vision to establish a Greek Orthodox Church gave us the foundation for where we are today. Over the years, the original vision of these founding Parishioners has grown and led to new visions. Through the generous contributions and visions of several families and many Parish members, we have progressed significantly over the years, and now enjoy the ability to worship together and join in fellowship in our beautiful Church, facilities and grounds. It is up to each of us to continue to grow the vision and realize new visions to ensure the future of our Church. As part of continuing and developing new visions, we are going to have a Town Hall Parish Vision Meeting in a couple months to get everyone’s input on where we want to be as we move toward the future. This will be an extremely important meeting, and allow us obtain valuable input from everyone who has a stake in the future of the Church to put together a clear and coherent vision harmonious with our Faith.

In addition to building on the vision, we cannot over emphasize the importance of Stewardship and we ask that everyone step up and contribute. It is so important to the future of our Church. Please pray and look into your hearts about Stewardship, understanding that it is our way of “giving back” to God with gratitude for the all the gifts he has given us. We are getting better with Stewardship, but we have a long way to go. We have a *Stewardship All-Stars Luncheon* scheduled for *Sunday, December 15, immediately following Liturgy*. We encourage everyone to attend and learn about Stewardship and honor some of our more outstanding Stewards who have given so much of their time, talents and treasures.

We also have *Elections for Parish Council on Sunday, December 15*. These elections are very important to the leadership and administration of our Church. There are six seats open for election and the candidates are: Stephen Carabas, Gus Flangas, Aristotelis (“Telly”) Eliades, John Matsis, Stacy Mavrantonis, Alexander Mavros, Peter Papas, Robert Paisios Pursell, and Joy Wolfenbarger. Please vote and ensure that your voice is heard.

(Continued on Page 8)

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services



Tuesday, December 24

Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

6:00 pm Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Wednesday, December 25

Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

9:00 am Orthros

10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Please be prepared to receive Holy Communion at both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Liturgies.

Join us as we worship the New-Born King!

Parish Council Report (Continued from Page 7)

In closing, we want to again thank the various Church ministries and organizations, and the many individuals for all the work they do and have done to help us secure the future of the Church. It clearly takes a lot of work from the entire community to maintain our Church. Please step forward whenever you can and pitch in. Thank you and may God Bless.

In Christ,
Gus Flangas, Parish
Council President



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun

Xristos Yanni, son of Christopher Sarantakos and Shaunyl Benson, on November 16. Godparent: Lynn Sarantakos.

Zoey, daughter of Jimmy and Monci Hoadrea, on November 23. Godparents: Thomas and Angeliki Fleetwood.

Marriage: Na Zisetel

Mario Koupais and Cheri Burchfield on November 5, 2019. Koumbaros: Timothy Zekichev.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!

Mack Michael Malpee on November 12, 2019. Funeral on November 19.

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD

2019 Christmas Card Submission Form

Name & Phone or Email:

Print Your Name as you wish it to appear on the card (names only - no greeting, please):

Donation: \$20 per family - Deadline: Sunday, December 8, 2019

Please submit form & payment to Philoptochos c/o St. John Church.

Philoptochos News

My Dearest Sisters of Philoptochos and our St. John the Baptist Community,

The Holy Nativity Season is upon us! As we prepare for Christmas, let us each remember to uplift those who are struggling, those who are forgotten and those who have less. We remember them with actions of giving and love in imitation of our God Who sent His Son as the greatest gift to the world to save each of us. This is the true meaning of Christmas.

The month of November was very busy for Philoptochos! On November 3, we celebrated the Patron Saints of Philoptochos, Ss. Cosmas and Damianos. We had a collection for the Ecumenical Patriarchate followed by a beautiful Fellowship hosted by Rahel Kiflezgi. Special thanks to Rahel, Jennifer Santamaria and all the wonderful Philoptochos ladies who assisted with serving.

On November 9 and 10 our Parish celebrated its 60th Anniversary – “The Diamond Jubilee.” Under the leadership of Chairwomen Cheryl Pandelis and Nitsa Filios, along with their talented team – Kiki Mavrantonis, Geri Kypreos, Susan Stamis and the Ladies Philoptochos – our community came together: The \$300,000 one-year plan was a success and, thank God, we are now mortgage free! Saturday evening was truly magnificent, with a beautiful dinner, music and dancing. The silent auction was not only a success but also quite enjoyable; many thanks to Bernadette Anthony, Vicky Palivos and Dora Hart for chairing. The Pictorial History of St. John the Baptist Church, put together by the Hellenic Historical Society, was phenomenal and helped parishioners become familiar with the decades-long history of our community. Sunday’s Champagne Brunch was beautifully prepared. We were blessed to have His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, His Excellency Metropolitan Iliia Katre, and Father Matthew and Presvytera Annie Swehla with us throughout the weekend. God truly blessed us and we are so grateful to Him first and foremost!

On November 16, we had our pastry baking day. Thank you to our incredible team that came out to bake our Christmas pastries! A special thank you to our lead bakers, Eleni Kakavulias, Kiki Mavrantonis and Marika Lamancusa. The pastries came out delicious! We cannot forget the wonderful men who were there to assist with baking, lifting and whatever else was asked of them. We had over 30 beautiful ladies that worked tirelessly with incredible enthusiasm. I am grateful to all of you! Now it’s time to sell all the pastries!

On November 23, we had our pastry packing day. Thank you to our wonderful Chairwomen, Amanda and Tamara Flangas, and for everyone that came out to help pack – especially the parents and dancers of our Folk Dance ministry. The packaged boxes look beautiful and very festive.

On November 24, we had our Autumn Bake sale which was a huge success. Thank you to our Chairwoman Rahel Kiflezgi and all those who baked for the special occasion. We also had our Christmas Tree sale on November 24 chaired by our lovely Christina and Adrienne Snow. The trees were decorated beautifully by our Philoptochos women.

Our Community Christmas Card is now on sale. Please see Andrea Takas or Tami Stefanatos on Sundays to participate, *or fill out the form on Page 8* and return with payment to the Church Office *before the deadline of Sunday, December 8.*

Following are our exciting and upcoming Philoptochos events:

Sunday, December 1 and 8 – Pastry Pick-up. Please pick up your Christmas pastries during Fellowship in Panos Hall. They make wonderful Christmas gifts for office staff, neighbors and everyone else on your list! *To order, please see Page 10.*

Sunday, December 8 – Philoptochos Christmas Party. Jelena Boskovic is our creative chairwoman for our holiday party, which will be held *at 5:30 pm at Bonefish Grill in Town Square.* The price is \$50 per person, which includes a three-course meal with soft drinks and wine. Spouses are welcome. Please make your reservation (*see Page 11*) with your payment early, as seating is limited to 60. Please contact **Jelena at (917) 684-1329** or email her at ellenabosk@gmail.com.

Sunday, December 15 – Last day for Christmas Pastry Pick-up. This will be a busy day for our Parish, with Parish Council Elections and the Stewardship All-Star Luncheon.

Wednesday, December 25 – Christmas Day! Look to the calendar for worship times.

I would like to wish everyone a wonderful Christmas Season and may the Nativity of our sweetest Lord and Savior Jesus Christ fill your hearts with love and joy!

With Love in the Newborn King, Benita Beeman, Philoptochos President



The 2019 Annual
Ladies Philoptochos Society
Christmas Pastry Sale

Delicious and traditional Greek Christmas Pastries lovingly baked and packaged in a decorated box for \$25.

Quantities are limited.

Guarantee your order by pre-ordering and pre-paying.
Complimentary logo for those who order 40 boxes or more, as well as 10% discount and free delivery.

Send your order and check made payable to:

Ladies Philoptochos Society, attention Christmas Pastry Sale
5300 El Camino Rd. Las Vegas, NV 89118

Name _____

Day _____ Cell or Evening Phone _____

Email _____

Number of boxes _____ x \$25 _____

Check enclosed _____

Or please call Karen at the Church Office (702) 221-8245 to pay by credit card

Orders will be ready for pickup at St. John Church on Sunday, December 1, 2019, following Divine Liturgy.

Your generous contribution is greatly appreciated. It benefits the many ministries we support at St. John Church, the Las Vegas community at large, and around the world.

Thank you!

*The Ladies Philoptochos Society Cordially invites you to the
Annual Christmas Party*

December 8, 2019; 5:30 p. m.

*Bonefish Grille
6527 S. Las Vegas Blvd., Las Vegas, Nevada 89119*

*Please R. S. V. P. by December 3rd to Jelena Boskovic at ellenabosh@gmail.com or
call (917) 684-1329.*

*Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____ Email _____
Please reserve _____ seats at \$50 each for the Philoptochos Christmas Party \$ _____*

*As we are grateful for all our blessings, we should not forget those less
fortunate. This Christmas, your donation will provide food for those in need in
our community. Please offer an additional donation in support of this worthy
cause \$ _____*

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Please mail your check make payable to:

*Ladies Philoptochos Society
Saint John Greek Orthodox Church
5300 El Camino Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89118.*

Questions, please call Jelena at 917-684-1329

60th Anniversary Celebration Memories

Photography by Bill Bruninga and Constantine Melos



“Our Diamond Jubilee”



Celebrating Six Decades as a Parish and . . .



Giving Thanks to God for Our Life in Him!



Youth and Family Ministries

Church School

Blessed Nativity Fast! I want to wish you a wonderful Advent and Christmas!

Congratulations on all who were involved in the 60th Anniversary Celebration of our Church. The events were lovely and so many came together to make it a weekend to remember.

I am sure all of us are excited about the many Parish activities going on. This is a perfect time to get involved and meet great people and make lifelong friends. We have so many ministries for all ages, so please get your kids involved: Along with Church School, OFF, GOYA, Youth Choir, Folk Dance and Greek Language are all different ministries that your children can join so they can learn more about our Faith and have fun while doing it.

We are still accepting registrations, so please get those in to me after Sunday Liturgy, or to Karen during the week. We are continuing our theme of "The Creed," and the students are learning to recite it, and are exploring its deep theological meaning. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is a cornerstone of our Orthodox Christian identity.

Next month there will be two Family Worship Sundays (no Church School):

Sunday, January 5: Eve of Theophany – Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water.

Sunday, January 12: Cutting of the Community Vasilopita (St. Basil Bread).

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns!

In Christ, Eileen Koutsulis, Church School Director (702) 521-6516 or vivaleenie@cox.net

Youth Choir News

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Thank you to all the members who chanted with us at the Hierarchical Liturgy for the 60th Anniversary Celebration. You sounded magnificent.

The Youth Choir will chant the Divine Liturgy on *Sunday, December 8*, so please be on the front right side *at 9:40 am*.

Wishing everyone a blessed Christmas and healthy New Year!

With Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria



Greek Folk Dance



Merry Christmas to all!

Our annual *Christmas Caroling* is scheduled to take place *on December 6 and 7*. We would like to invite all members of the community, both young and old, to participate in this annual event. We will be singing both Greek and English Christmas carols and traveling across the Las Vegas Valley spreading cheer. Please consider inviting us to your home or business to experience the carols. A sign-up sheet is in this issue of *The Desert Messenger* (see *Page 14*), or contact Karen at the Church Office.

Our *Soup Fellowship* is also scheduled for *Sunday, December 8*. It is the perfect time to warm up with some delicious Lenten soup! Please join us.

Finally, our dancers have been very busy practicing their dance suites in preparation for FDF! We look forward to sharing our hard work with everyone at our annual *Preview Luncheon*, to be held *on Sunday, February 9, 2020*. Also, mark your calendars for our *Glendi* with LIVE GREEK MUSIC on *Saturday, February 8, 2020*. This is always a fun event and gives us all the opportunity to dust our dancing shoes and celebrate our culture! Look for more information in next month's *Desert Messenger*.

With Much Gratitude, The Folk Dance Board

GOYA ~ For Teenagers

Dear GOYANs . . . Merry Christmas!

This month we will be gathering *on Thursday night, December 5 at 5:30 pm for our annual Christmas Tree Decorating Party!* We need your help assembling, decorating and lighting our beautiful Parish tree that will be on display in Panos Hall until our Parish Name Day Luncheon celebration *on Sunday, January 12.* We will have some refreshments and hot chocolate, along with Christmas Carols and a spiritual discussion.

Secondly, we will be having the opportunity to help those less fortunate than us. *On Friday, December 13 at 5:00 pm* we will go to the *Las Vegas Rescue Mission* and participate in the effort to wrap hundreds of donated toys for young children of those families suffering from the effects of homelessness. These gifts will be distributed the following day at a huge party for hundreds of youth coming from the streets of Las Vegas at the Rescue Mission. Our teens will be part of the final effort to prepare the gifts they will receive.

Finally, please mark down *Friday, December 27 at 6:00 pm* for our *annual GOYA Christmas Party* at the home of Steve, June, and Julianna Likourinou! Please bring your favorite Christmas dish to share and RSVP with Father Seraphim or June for directions.

Please come out for all of our wonderful events, and have a blessed Feast of our Lord's Birth!

With Love in Christ, June Likourinou and Kouli Pouridis, GOYA Advisors



Orthodox Family Fellowship

Dear Families of OFF: Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

This December we will continue our annual tradition of a potluck gift exchange at the home of Imtisal Amy Khury, our advisor! We will gather for a fast-appropriate dinner on *Saturday, December 14 at 3:00 pm* – everyone is encouraged to bring a side dish, salad, drinks or dessert to share. Every child is requested to bring one gift (no more than \$10) to exchange.

Please RSVP with Father Seraphim or Amy for directions. We hope to see you there! In Christ, Amy Khuri and Jelena Boskovic



Greek Language Program



The last day of the first semester of Greek School is *on Tuesday, December 17.* We will have a Christmas Party and our annual book exchange. We will enjoy the Christmas break and resume *on Tuesday, January 8.*

We have had a wonderful first semester. I am still in need of one more teacher, so please reach out to me if you are interested in teaching our youth the Greek Language.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas. Get ready for more learning in the second semester.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director (702) 249-4740

“An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us).
(Matthew 1:20-23)



Let's celebrate the spirit of Christmas!

All children and families of our community are welcome to participate in our annual event!

Please invite us into your home to spread some Christmas cheer!

Christmas Caroling

We will sing traditional Greek and English Christmas carols and the program will last approximately 15 minutes.

If you would like to have the carolers come to your home, please fill out the following and return to any Folk Dance Board Member or the Church office by December 2, 2019

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Friday, December 6, 2019

OR

Saturday, December 7, 2019

(Please circle one date)

You will be contacted 3 days prior in order to confirm the time we will arrive

Questions? Contact Sia Dalacas at aeconomy@hotmail.com or 951-285-4970

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE GREEK FOLK DANCE MINISTRY

YOUR SUPPORT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

From Father Seraphim

Every year on *December 12*, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast Day of St. Spyridon of Trymithous. This humble man and bishop of the Church was born toward the end of the third century on the island of Cyprus. It is recorded that he was a shepherd by trade, and that he had a wife and children. He used all his substance for the needs of his neighbors and the homeless and was exceptionally generous and kind. Because of this, the Lord rewarded him with the gift of working miracles. After the repose of his wife and during the reign of Constantine the Great, he was ordained as a bishop because of his exemplary life and great virtue. Even with the dignity of the Archpriesthood, the saint did not change his humble and unassuming manner of life as is evidenced by the simple shepherd's cap he had worn since his days of tending sheep, and continued to wear as a hierarch.

According to the witness of Church historians, St. Spyridon participated in the sessions of the First Ecumenical Council convened in Nicaea in the year 325. At the Council, the saint famously entered into a dispute with a Greek philosopher, who was defending the Arian heresy (that Jesus Christ was a creature, and not equal to God the Father). St. Spyridon showed everyone the impotence of human logic compared to Divine Wisdom: *"Listen philosopher, we believe that the Almighty God out of nothing created by His Word and His Spirit both heaven and earth, the world both visible and invisible. The Word is the Son of God, Who came down upon the earth on account of our sins; He was born of a Virgin, He lived among mankind, and suffered and died for our salvation, and then He arose, having redeemed by His sufferings our sins, and He resurrected with Himself the human race. We believe, that He is Equal-in-Dignity with the Father, and we believe this without any sly rationalizations, since it is impossible to grasp this mystery by human reason."* At this same council, St. Spyridon also explained the Oneness within the Holy Trinity: He took in his hand a brick and for an instant fire emerged from it upwards, water flowed downwards, and in his hand remained the dust, showing forth that although God is three in persons, He is one in nature.

St. Spyridon was also renowned for the great love he showed to his flock. Through his prayer, drought was replaced by abundant rains, and likewise incessant rains were replaced by fair weather. One time he went into Church for the Divine Liturgy, and having said *"Peace be unto all,"* both he and his deacon heard in reply from above a multitude of voices, proclaiming: *"And with your spirit."* To each petition of the litanies, this invisible choir sang *"Lord, have mercy."* Attracted by the Church singing, people from nearby came inside. When they entered into the Church, however, they saw no one besides the bishop and several altar servers.

Another historical detail is that the saint always left open the entrance to his supply-room, where each could take as much as was needed, and afterward make a return however they wished. Once, robbers planned to steal his sheep, and in the deep of night they broke into the sheepfold, but by some invisible power they found themselves tied up. In the morning the saint went to his pen, and seeing the tied-up robbers, he untied them and told them to leave their life of theft and earn a livelihood by respectable work. Then, he gave them each a sheep and sent them off. St. Spyridon lived his earthly life in righteousness and in prayer he gave up his soul to the Lord in 348. His incorrupt relics are treasured on the island of Corfu in a Church dedicated to him.

During this Holy Season of our Lord's Nativity, may we be inspired by the simple and loving example of St. Spyridon to be both generous and humble. May we be like those first shepherds (even more, the shepherd-bishop whose body has not decayed and slippers still wear out from use!), as we once again gather around the humble Lord in the manger, listening to the angels singing, *"Glory to God in the Highest and on earth, peace goodwill toward men!"*

With Love in Christ,

Father Seraphim



Adult and Young Adult Ministries

Young Adults



Merry Christmas! We will gather *on Saturday, December 28 at 6:00 pm* at the Koutsulis Home for our annual *Young Adult Nativity Season Party*. Please wear your favorite Christmas sweater and come enjoy some great food and fellowship! Please bring a side dish to share with others as well as a gift valued at no more than \$10 for our "Secret Santa" gift exchange.

Young Adults will also be hosting Fellowship Hour *on Sunday, December 22* after Liturgy. If everyone just brings a plate of cookies or a pie, it will be a piece of cake! Hope you have a great holiday season!

In Christ, Niko Asim and Melissa Fleetwood, YA Advisors

Mr. & Mrs. - A Couples Fellowship

We want to extend our deepest and heartfelt thanks to Mike and Effie Lekar for opening their home and hosting a beautiful gathering in November. This month we will take a break from Mr. and Mrs., but please stay posted for our January gathering to kick-off the New Year! See you all in Church for the holidays!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Father John, Father Seraphim, and their Presvyteres

Kali Parea - "Good Company" for the 40+ Crowd

Please mark your calendars for our *Kali Parea Holiday Luncheon on Sunday, December 29 at 1:00 pm at BJs Restaurant and Brewhouse (10840 West Charleston Blvd, Las Vegas)*. Everyone in the Parish is invited to join us, although seating is limited to 60 people. We need a minimum of 25 people to attend in order to have the catered luncheon in our own private room. Menu will include parmesan crusted chicken, mashed potatoes, Caesar salad, Italian vegetables, coffee, soda, and cake for \$23 per person.

Please RSVP with Demetri by December 22. I will pay for the party on my credit card, so please make checks payable to me. We wish you all a Merry Christmas!

Love in Christ, Demetrios Asim, Kali Parea Advisor

Forerunners - The Seniors of St. John the Baptist

Our November luncheon was well attended and we offer many thanks to our culinary crew as we enjoyed a tasty feast of Festival favorites.

NEWS FLASH!!! *Please note that our Christmas Party has been moved to Monday, December 16 in the Panos Hall Foyer.* Please remember a \$10 gift item for Santa's bag. There will be a short Christmas program, and our menu will certainly delight everyone.

Many of our seniors and handicapped persons may be eligible to join the RTC system of transportation. All you need to do is call RTC at (702) 228-4800, and direct your call to eligibility and verification information. RTC will pick you up to take you to your verification appointment and return you home free of charge afterwards. Once you have been verified, you can ride the RTC bus for \$3 each way door-to-door. Over 80,000 seniors in Las Vegas use this service, and I urge you to look into this so you can stay connected to our ministry and beloved Church.

As of January 1, 2020 our membership dues will increase from \$10 to \$20 per year. This becomes necessary due to increasing costs to support our ministry. Our luncheons will remain at \$8. We thank Cynthia Alford, who has stepped up to the plate and is taking charge of membership, together with Pamela Spence, who will be making phone calls as needed. We offer our deepest gratitude to all of you who attend, participate and help with our Monthly Luncheons and Sunday Fellowships . . . and our prayers for all seniors!

Wishing everyone a Blessed Nativity, with Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis, Forerunners Advisor



Notes from the Choir Loft



We will have a short rehearsal *on Sunday, December 22 following services* to practice for the Christmas Eve Vespers Liturgy and the following Sunday. Please plan to attend so we can ensure that the music is prepared for these important services.

If you are interested in joining the Choir, please come upstairs any time! Athena Mertes, Director



Adult Study with Father John

Sunday Epistle and Gospel Readings and Churchianity vs. Christianity

By Metropolitan Anthony Bloom

Join us every Wednesday
(except Christmas and New Year's Day),
7:00 - 8:30 pm, in Kokkos Hall.

All are Welcome.
Bibles and Metropolitan Bloom's book are available
in our Bookstore.

Church Photo Directory

Much has changed in the life of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the last 10 years. As our last Church Photo Directory was published in 2009, we have embarked on the effort to produce a more updated face of our Parish with the publication of a new Photo Directory in the coming year.

With the full support of this endeavor by our Priests and Parish Council, Bill and Erin Bruninga are taking family and individual photos of our Parish Stewards and Friends on Sundays after Divine Liturgy in Panos Hall. *Please look to the Weekly Bulletin and emails for more details on your scheduled photography sittings.* The sessions will only take five minutes of your time and there is no charge to have your photo taken for our Directory.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

5300 S. El Camino Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89118

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Constantin Petriuc & Ramona Tasios
Maintenance & Grounds

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Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

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Philoptochos: Benita Beeman

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
Justina Szukiewicz

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:
Kouli Pouridis & June Likourinou

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Jelena Boskovic & Amy Khuri

Young Adults:
Nicholas Asim & Melissa Fleetwood

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:
Fr. John, Fr. Seraphim & Presvyteres

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim &
Joy Wolfenbarger

Adult Basketball:
Nate Dallas

Forerunners: Vicki Xikis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Constantine Frangakis,
Paisios & Mary Pursell

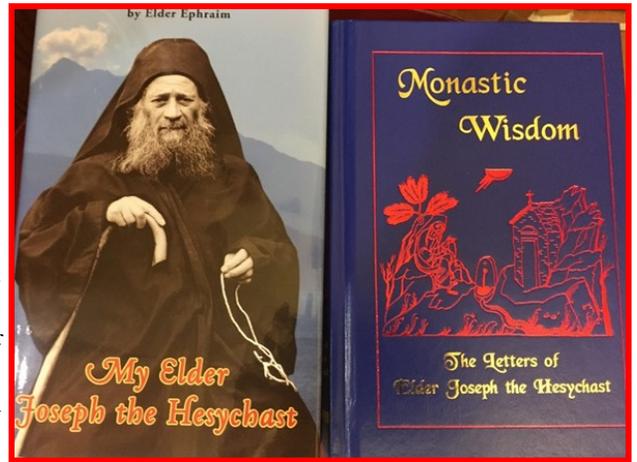
Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

Hellenic Historical Society:
Nitsa Filios, Cheryl Pandelis &
Susan Stamis

Photography: Bill Bruninga

Orthodox Bookstore

This month the Bookstore is celebrating the Orthodox Church's newest saint: Saint Joseph the Hesychast (1897-1959). We are featuring two books that will help us get to know him better! St. Joseph was an unsurpassed teacher of noetic prayer. This means that like his forbearers in monasticism – St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, St. Seraphim of Sarov, and St. Gregory Palamas – he said unceasingly the Jesus Prayer (“*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on me*”). He also taught others to do so, along with all the spiritual discipline needed to lead a life of solitude, vigil, and uninterrupted devotion to God. With his small brotherhood – Elder Ephraim of Philotheou, Elder Charalambos of Dionysiou, Elder Joseph of Vatopedi, Elder Arsenios Spileotis the Hesychast, and his disciple Elder Ephraim of Katunakia – he participated in the resurgence of the genuine ascetic and Orthodox spiritual life in many monasteries on the Holy Mountain in the 20th Century. His disciples took St. Joseph's legacy to the Holy Athos Monasteries of Philotheou, Dionysiou, Vatopaidi, Karakalou, Xeropotamou, Konstamonitou as well as many other monasteries under their guidance. Many sought the spiritual help and wisdom of St. Joseph while he was living on Mt. Athos, and after his repose, the saint's disciples helped repopulate many dilapidated or almost extinct monasteries in the past sixty years.



My Elder Joseph the Hesychast is written by one of the disciples of St. Joseph, Elder Ephraim of St. Anthony's Monastery in Arizona. This book is the biography of his physical life and his spiritual life. Joseph the Hesychast (one who lives in near absolute silence and prayer) was a monk and elder on Mount Athos. He was the spiritual father of Elder Ephraim, Gerondissa Makrina Vassopoulou of blessed memory, as well as many others. Here is a short excerpt where Elder Ephraim is speaking to his Geronda (St. Joseph):

Once when Geronda and I were outside with our prayer-ropes and he was telling me about prayer and his experiences of looking after monks in their old age. I could smell lilies and roses, even though we only had holly-oak trees there. I was sniffing intently, and he said to me, "Why are you doing that?" "Geronda, I smell lilies and roses." "Why don't you go over to my door?" So I went over to his door and smelled his cell. That heavenly fragrance was so strong that it stuck to my beard and my clothes. Then he explained to me, "It is from prayer. Don't you understand? The name of Christ is fragrance."

Monastic Wisdom, The Letters of Elder Joseph the Hesychast is a collection of letters that the saint wrote to his spiritual children, which included monks, nuns, priests and laypeople.

Here is a short excerpt from one of his letters:

"Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." In the beginning, with the lips and the nous (mind); later, with the nous and the heart. And they will quickly find the path of life, the door of paradise, or rather, the prayer itself, when said with desire, will become like a paradise within them . . . Therefore, whoever wants to, let him taste this honey, and it will become a fountain of joy and happiness within him . . .

Elder Ephraim came to America and has built eighteen monasteries in the United States and Canada. These monasteries are flourishing by the grace of God and the support of our Archdiocese and Patriarchate. Many pilgrims from around the world come to receive the elder's blessing.

Until next month, God willing, Mary Pursell and the Bookstore Team



Through our 2020 Stewardship Pledge, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God! Please return your 2020 Pledge Card to Church on Sundays, December 8 or 15. Thank You!

Stewardship and Community Outreach

Glory be to God for all things! By God's Grace our Parish celebrated its 60th Anniversary last month. This gala event exuded a great sense of love and unity in our Parish and showed what we can accomplish when we work together for His Glory.

For the celebration of our 60th Anniversary, we were blessed with the presence of our spiritual leader, Metropolitan Gerasimos, our former beloved Parish Priests, Metropolitan Ilia, and Father Matthew and Presvytera Annie. We were further blessed, that through the heartfelt efforts of Cheryl Pandelis and Nitsa Filios on the \$300K One Year Plan Campaign, and the generous donations of many Stewards, the mortgage debt was retired. Looking toward the future, be sure to watch for details regarding the 20/20 Vision Town Hall Meeting, which will take place in early Lent next year. The intent of the Parish-wide meeting is to create a vision for where we want to be in 10 years at the Platinum Jubilee in 2029.

The month of December marks an even greater blessing to our Parish members and Christians across the globe. That blessing was announced by the Archangel Gabriel *"to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. . . the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women.'" (Luke 1:26-28)* Why was Mary blessed among women? Because, as the Archangel Gabriel further told her, *"you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name Jesus." (Luke 1:30-31)* The coming of the Son of God in the flesh is a miraculous event for all of humanity and, moreover, provides us with a path back to the Father.

The Nativity Icon is a wondrous depiction of the Birth of Jesus and contains many theological truths. In the upper right corner we have the shepherds who were told by the angel of the *"good tidings of great joy." (Luke 2:10)* The Magi are shown to the left, being guided by the star, bringing Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. *(Matthew 2:11)* The significance of these gifts is: *"Gold for the King of ages. Frankincense is for the God of all. Myrrh is offered to the immortal One, Who shall be three days dead."* (Compline of the Nativity)

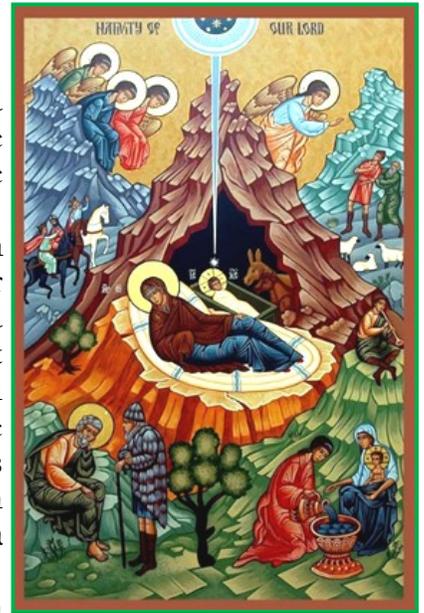
The yawning cave in the center of the icon symbolizes hades and many of the elements prefigure Our Lord's Passion. Jesus is wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger, which resembles a sepulcher. The swaddling clothes are depicted as burial wrappings, thus showing one purpose of His coming in the flesh was to endure death: By His Death he would trample down death, destroying the last stranglehold of the devil on humanity.

Inside the cave we see a donkey and an ox, which is a reference to *Isaiah 1:3: "The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not understand."* The ox represents the Jews and the donkey the pagans; both are depicted together to show Christ has come to save all people. The women in the lower right hand corner are midwives who display that the Son of God was truly born as a human, refuting the heresy that He merely appeared to be human.

In the bottom left corner we see a pondering St. Joseph next to a figure who tempts him to question whose Child this is. This figure represents the devil, who never rests from his efforts to destroy us. Although Joseph knew he was not the biological father, an angel revealed to him in a dream that he should *"take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." (Matt 1:20)* An interesting feature of this icon is that the Virgin Mary is not looking at the Christ-child, but rather toward St. Joseph: She is concerned about him and interceding for him.

This holy icon reveals to us that we must always be mindful of the incredible gift bestowed upon the world with our Lord's Nativity. We, in turn, must honor our Lord's gift of salvation by taking care of one another and using the blessings of our time, talents and treasures to His glory. Amen.

In Christ, The Stewardship and Community Outreach Committee





2020 VISION: CHRIST CHURCH COMMITMENT

*“Your eye is the lamp of your body;
when your eye is sound, your whole body
is full of light . . .” (Luke 11:34)*

2019 Stewardship Report (as of 11/25/19)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$480,378 (\$400,636 in 2018)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$433,946 (\$343,153 in 2018)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$46,432 (\$57,483 in 2018)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 420 (435 in 2018)
 Average Pledge to Date: \$1,144 (\$921 in 2018)
 Average Pledge Needed: \$2,297

Church Account Summaries - October 2019

Nevada State Bank Accounts	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$11,410.29	\$82,690.18	\$161,615.84	\$139,241.42	\$87,319.75	\$29,155.14	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$1,170.10	\$4,350.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,520.10	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$403,423.92	\$269,030.00	\$70,616.43	\$405,176.91	\$235,369.97	\$102,523.47	Transferred \$16,000 to GOA to cover payroll & bills
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$159,073.44	\$66,886.00	\$11,550.39	\$6,924.04	\$72,432.38	\$158,153.41	
Folk Dance Group	\$17,053.23	\$1,662.00		\$367.16		\$18,348.07	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,300.94					\$3,300.94	
Mortgage Account	\$110.54	\$62,443.68			\$62,554.22	\$0.00	Mortgage Balance \$0.00
Designated Funds	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$6,184.57	\$4,711.00	\$5,657.00	\$6,924.04	\$5,435.46	\$4,193.07	Transferred \$5000 to GOA to cover payroll & bills
Ornaments	\$1,087.41					\$1,087.41	
Restricted Funds	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$139,142.76	\$125.00				\$139,267.76	
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	Account owed \$21,000. Funds used to make payroll and pay bills in 2015
Miscellaneous	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Giving Tree	\$0.91					\$0.91	
Building Fund	\$0.00					\$0.00	Transferred to Line of Credit
\$300,000 One Year Plan	\$1,000.00	\$62,050.00	\$5,893.39		\$65,864.22	\$3,079.17	Funds collected and transferred to pay off mortgage balance; \$2000 paid to Line of Credit
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$1,306.37					\$1,306.37	
Three Priests	\$2,684.49					\$2,684.49	
Roof Appeal	\$2,555.38				\$1,132.70	\$1,422.68	Mold Ebatement/Renovations
Baptismal Water Heater	\$69.24					\$69.24	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$159,073.44	\$66,886.00	\$11,550.39	\$6,924.04	\$72,432.38	\$158,153.41	
Other Funds	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$67,990.45					\$67,990.45	

October 2019 Candles **\$8,663.00**
 October 2019 Trays **\$4,292.00**
Total October Candles & Trays \$12,955.00

STEWARDS OF THE FAITH ~ 2019

Adamy, Marina	Christian, Clair and Chloe	Generales, John and Arlene	Kelesis, Maritza
Alexander, Eleni	Christou, Andreas and Toni	George, Elias and Saladino, Maria	Kelesis, Paula
Alexandrakis, George	Ciulla, Anthony and Kleri	George, Peter and Georgia	Kiflezgi, Rahel
Alford, Cynthia "Mary"	Ciulla, Dina	George, Vassilios	Kleanthis, George and Zanetta
Anastasakis, Mark and Elaine	Cocores - Ely, Caron	Georgis, Pete	Kofinas, Maria
Anastasiou, Andrew and Kathleen	Cokotis, Julie	Georgoulakis, Mary Ellen	Kokkinis, Peter and Jennifer
Andary, Oscar	Collins, David	Geronikolaou, Constantine	Koliambas, Eleni
Andrews, Catherine	Cominos, Ted	Ghebreab, Daniel and Ghermay, Selam	Konsolakis, George and Sophia
Andrews, Chris and Pamela	Conger, William and Alexia	Gialketsis, Bill and Shelli	Konstantarakis, Michelle
Andrews, George	Costuros, George and Marsha	Gialketsis, Julie	Kontos, Diana
Andricopoulos, Margo	Cosulas, Fr. Basil and Presv. Samantha	Gialketsis, Steve	Koroni, Tara
Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette	Cotsilis, Jenny	Gialketsis, William	Kostopoulos, Georgia
Anton, Mike and Carol	Coutris, Angela	Gianakoulias, Nick and Magda	Kountanis, Panagiota
Antonopoulos, Angela	Crist, Adam and Kanistra	Gianoukakis, Andrew and Anna	Koupais, Mario and Cheri
Arbuiso, Elizabeth	Cromwell, Michael and Allison	Gideon, Jesse and Sara	Koupais, Pat
Aristides, George and Diana	Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia	Giouzelis, Anastasia	Koutsulis, John and Eileen
Asim, Demetrious	Dalacas, Eleni	Goltsos, Andreas and Sophia	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie
Asim, Niko	Dalacas, Georgia	Goodman, Robert and Linda	Kypreos, George and Lesley
Athens, Maria and Centers, Scott	Daskalos, George and Voula	Gott, C. Thomas and Kitty	Kypreos, Peter and Geri
Bacon, Ken and Dianne	Daughters of Penelope	Gousdovas, Nikos+	Kypreos, Sophia
Balaouras, Panos and Helen	Demolas, Maria and Nour, Reza	Grabovoi, Daphne	Kyprianou, Gilbert and Alexis
Balason, Anna+	Demoleas, Spero and Grace	Green, Todd and Susan	Lagomarsino, Victor and Sophia
Balason, Voula	Demoleas, Stephanie	Gruber, Ernest and Zoe	Lakkas, Christina
Baldwin, Richard and Vivi	Demopoulos, Vasiliki	Gutierrez, Connie	Lamancusa, Lisa
Balodimas, James	Diamantis, Filippos	Gutierrez, Daniel	Lambros, Kyriakos and Mary
Barbarino, Demetra	Dimitri, Janet	Hadzoglon, Christos	Latelle, Penny
Bartzos, Eugenia	Dimitri, Martha	Hamilton, Mary	Lavelle, Eleissa
Bauck, Jeremy and Amy	Dimitri, Patricia	Hamilton, Paul and Brandi	Lavine, Frederick
Beeler, Mike and Carolyn	Domiguez, Eric and Amalia	Hastings, Teri and Audra	Lazarakis, John and Panagiota
Beeman, Karl, Sr. and Benita	Doskas, Athanasios and Anastasia	Hayes, Tulla	Lekar, Caroline
Beeman, Karl Jr. and Ivana	Dudunakis, Michael	Hemmers, Oliver and Pantelas, Anne	Lekar, Michael and Effie
Berendji, Jim and Vivian	Earl, Christine Michaelides	Henderson, Jimmie Laverne	Leonis, Nick and Sophia
Bernier, Micah and Alissa	Eliades, Telly and Caroline	Henneforth, Rula	Leonis, Tishe
Berta, Irene	Eliades, Artemis	Herman, Martin and Diane	Leventis, Nicholas and Christina
Bieker, Adam and Cassie	Eliades, Gregory and Maria	Hertberg, Jennifer	Lewis, Foula
Bieker, Georgea	Eliades, Harry and Agapi	Hetzal, David and Joanne	Liaos, Jim and Tina
Birtas, Helen and Birtas, Ann	Eliades, Katerina	Hoadrea, Jimmy and Monci	Liaos, Steven and Francine
Bizani, Katia	Eliades, Peter	Hondros, Catherine	Liaos, William+ and Irene
Bledsoe, Lori	Eliades, Vaso	Hondros, Christina	Likourinou, Angie
Bochanis, George and Enid	Eliakis, Peter and Glenda	Hondros, Christopher and Darlene	Likourinou, Steve and June
Booth, Brian and Effi	Eliakis, Varthie and LeeAnn	Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria	Litsos, Nicholas and Catherine
Borzeka, Stephen	Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Hondros, Marissa	Loughton, Dustin and Rena
Boskovic, Jelena	Eyler, Fr. Paul and Presv. Ilean	Houlis, Ila and Debbie	Lovaas, Jason and Dokakis, Alis
Bougalis, Nickolaos	Filios, George and Nitsa	Howard, William and Willie	Makris, Apostolos
Brennan, Peter and Maria	Filios, Spiridon and Eleni	Howse, Paul and Kelly	Malamatos, Kindina
Britten, Ronald and Carol	Fischer, Bob and Cheryl	Hristopoulou, Spiridoula	Maland, Tim+ and Donna
Brown, Faye	Fitzgerald, Norman and McCullen, Sandra	Hunter, Zach and Krystle	Malpee, Mack+ and Kalliopi
Bruninga, Bill and Erin	Flangas, Marilyn	Hurley, Heather	Maniatakos, Ted and Maria
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Flangas, Gary and Amanda	Iteen, Robert and Sophia	Manolakis, Catherine
Campbell, Paul and Victoria	Flangas, Gus and Tamara	Justice, Flora	Manos, Constantine and Michele
Capre, Julio	Fleetwood, Thomas and Melissa	Kachikis, Ernestine	Mansour, Muna
Carabas, Stephen and Linda	Fotopoulos, John and Barbara	Kakavulias, Christina	Manteris, Arthur and Sue
Carahalios, John and Jillian	Foster, Kyle and Pierro, Maria	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Margaretis, John and Lucila
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Fountas, Constantinos	Kakavulias, John and Elizabeth	Markakis, Catherine
Carrico, William and Alexandra	Frangakis, Christos and Anastasia	Kaltcheva, Maria	Markakis, Sandy
Carter, Maria	Frangakis, Constantine	Kambouris, Litsa	Markantonis, George and Sarah
Chachas, Bessie	Frangakis, John	Kanis, Constantinos and Katie	Martin, Donald
Chachas, James	Frangakis, Sophocles and Tara	Kapla, Mary	Matsis, John and Rebecca
Chagares, Kiki	Frantzen, Robert	Karalias, Petros and Constance	Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki
Chandrinou, Alexia	Garanyants, Sergey and Bilali, Markella	Karas, James	Mavroidis, Demetrios and Debra
Chanos, George+	Garza, Everardo and Eliades, Eleni	Karas, John and Marcie	Mavros, Alex and Jen
Chanos, Jennifer	Gauvin, Chad and Marissa	Karris, Mark and Suzanne	Mavros, Debbie
Chio, Napoleon	Geiger, Dan and Hart-Geiger, Dora	Katopodis, Efstratios	Mavroudis, Frank
Chomakos, Dean and Tammy	Gekakis, George	Katris, Nick	McKinney, Michael and Mersene
Chomakos, Jeremy and Romina		Katris, Theana	McManus, Jeanette
Chondrakis, Dimosthenis and Kragerud, Kaaren		Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon	McSweeney, Farolyn
		Kelesis, George	Melton, Don and Susan
			Menegatos, James
			Merrin, Maria

STEWARDS OF THE FAITH - 2019

Minas, Arthur and Ewa Mitchell, Thomas	Paul, Janet	Salonikis, Valentinos and Sophia Santamaria, Jennifer and Robert	Thompson, Maggy
Moffett, Todd and Eliopulos, Tina	Payan, Luis and Eleni Pelletier, Michael	Sarantakos, Christopher and Shaunyl	Thompson, Steve and Alikei
Molina, Adriana and Elhamy, Kirollos	Pendleton, Trisha	Savvas, Christina	Tohme, Tony and May
Monoyudis, Jim and Julie	Peratikos, Tony	Savvas, Savva	Tsarouhas, Maria
Mulopulos, George and Jenny	Pertsinides, Irene	Schildmeyer, Christine	Tsiralidis, Kosmas and Katerina
Murray, Chris and George, Veneta	Petersen, Todd and Diane	Serafim, George and Tzeleki, Roxani	Tsolis, Christos and Panagioula
Myers, Stella	Petro, Aleko and Georgia	Serpentini, Athanasia	Tsolis, Panagiote
Nedelchev, Diyan	Petrou, James and Penelopi	Setian, Gary and Marie	Tsortanidis, Sophia
Nedelchev, Zhivko	Philippou, Demetrios and Luanne	Simos, Tony and Lorie	Turman, Maria
Neocleous, Plato	Philippou, Kyriacos and Christine	Simpson, Bryan and Julie	Tzelalis, Antonia
Nesheiwat, Peter and Ohan, Ida	Philippou, Philippos	Sirhan, Michael and Khuri, Imtisal	Tzelalis, Steve
Newell, Ronald and Maria	Pierro, Joe and Rhonda	Skalkotos, Nikolas and Georgia	Tzortzis, Maria
Nicholas, Christina	Pierro, Joseph and Christine	Skandros, Stephanie	Varinos, Nick and Kiki
Nicholas, John and Estella	Pitts, Anton and Athena	Snow, Adrienne	Wadlow, Nicholas and Pamela
Nichols, George and Tereza	Platis, Anna	Snow, Clifford and Christina	Wallace, Robert and Katerina
Nichols, Mary	Polimerou, Angeline	Snowden, Robert and Niki	Walter, Vernon and Alice
Nikolopoulos, Nick and Dimitra	Politis, Pantelis and Dimitra	Song, Adrienne	Ward, Curtis and Angeliki
Nixon, John and Ellyn	Poulos, Christine	Soursos, Helene	Waterhouse, David and Aleighzja
Olmsted, Travis and Marilyn	Pouridis, Kouli and Para	Sparkuhl, Alexander and Antoinette	Welles, Brigitte
Oustian, Ararat and Juliette	Powers, Russell and Rebecca	Spotti, Peter and Alexandra	Wilkerson, Chuck and Kristina
Pahigiannis, Nikon	Punsalan, Basil and Sophie	Stathopoulos, Anastasia	Williams, Anthony and Anna
Palivos, Peter and Vicky	Pursell, Robert and Mary	Staub, Douglas and Anastasia	Wilson, Steven and Cleo
Pallis, Paul	Pytikakis, Emmanouil and Elaine	Stefanatos, Michael and Tami	Womack, Karl
Pan-Arcadians	Radosta, Athena	Stenos, Louis	Womack, Kimberly
Pandelis, Cheryl	Ramos, Fr. Seraphim and Presv. Olenka	Stevens, Charles and Mary	Wood, Nadine
Panos, William and Jeanne	Raptis, Presvytera Evonne	Stransky, Mark	Wronski, Chuck
Papas, Peter and Rita	Rasmussen, Scott and Rebecca	Stransky, Jack and Gladys	Xerogianes, Nick and Nikki
Papas, Christian and Nicole	Rigas, Anthony and Mary	Szukiewicz, Alex	Xikis, Victoria
Pappas, Antonia+	Rigas, Evie	Szukiewicz, Joseph and Jennia	Yurkov, Nikolina and Daniela
Pappas, Libby	Rihani, Gary and Linda	Szukiewicz, Joe +	Zachariou, Sozos and Aspasia
Pappas, Panos and Katotakis, Andrea	Rodis, Dimitri	Tafoya, Steven and Irene	Zaferatos, Ted
Pappas, Rita	Rodis, Sophia	Takas, Andrea	Zamir, Talor and Michelle
Pappas, Spiro	Rosenthal, Joseph and Stephanie	Tasios, Ramona and Pete	Zarras, Nick and Chery
Pappas, Stella	Rotas, Beatrice	Taxopoulos, Bryan and Irene	Zekichev, Timothy
Paton, Mia	Ruffner, Skip and Kathy	Tesfasilase, Tiebe	Zervas, Dionisios
	Sakkas, Georgios and Stavropoulos, Bessie	Thanos, Nicholas and Victoria	Zimmerman, Paul and Angela
	Salon, Janelle		Zmina, Stephen and Cynthia



The AHEPA Las Vegas Chapter 341

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year! We will not be meeting this month, but look for a meeting notice for January 2020.

We are currently looking for Board Members to assist with the redevelopment of the Chapter. If you are interested in a Board Position or assisting with this very important organization, please contact me.

Thank you, Kouli Pouridis, Acting Chapter President

pouridis5@cox.net (702)604-0885



DECEMBER 2019 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

1 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	2	3 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:30 pm Folk Dance Practice	4 7:00 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall: Sunday Readings & Churhchianity vs. Christianity	5 5:30 pm GOYA Christmas Tree Decorating Party	6 St. Nicholas 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Folk Dancers Christmas Caroling	7
8 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Youth Choir Chants</i> 5:30 pm Philoptochos Christmas Party at Bonefish Grill	9	10 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in the Library 6:30 pm Folk Dance Practice	11 7:00 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	12 St. Spyridon 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	13 5:00 pm GOYA Gift Wrapping at Las Vegas Rescue Mission	14 3:00 pm OFF Christmas Party at Imtisal Khury's Home
15 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Parish Council Elections Stewardship All-Star Luncheon	16 11:30 am Forerunner Christmas Party Luncheon in Panos Hall Foyer	17 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:30 pm Folk Dance Practice	18 7:00 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	19	20	21
22 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Adult Choir Practice follows Liturgy	23	24 Eve of the Nativity 6:00 pm Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil	25 Nativity of Christ 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Church Office Closed 12/25-26	26	27 St. Stephen 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm GOYA Christmas Party at Likourinou's Home	28 6:00 pm Young Adults Nativity Party at Koutsulis' Home
29 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 1:00 pm Kali Pareia Christmas Party at BJs Restaurant	30	31	JAN 1 Circumcision of Christ/St. Basil 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil Church Office Closed			

The Desert Messenger

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
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*Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!*



THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord

When evil assaults you, you must be agile and turn at once to the good. Turn, transform and transfigure every evil into good. . . True transformation is made by divine grace. For this to happen, a person must have given himself to Christ *with all his soul and with all his heart.* (Mark 12:30)

Remember Stephen the first martyr. He was possessed by God and, even while he was being persecuted and stoned, he prayed for his persecutors, saying, *“Lord, do not count this sin against them.”* (Acts 7:60) Why did Saint Stephen behave in this way? Quite simply, because he could behave no differently. He was a captive of good. Do you think that it is easy to have a hailstorm of stones thrown at you? Try having one stone thrown at you! All very well, but when the stone hits you, you’ll start to shout and swear. That shows that we are overtaken by the evil spirit. And in this situation, how can Christ come and where can he find a place to remain within us? Every space within us is occupied. But as soon as we enter into Christ, everything changes. If you are a thief, you stop stealing; if you are a murderer, you stop murdering; if you are resentful, you cease to think with malice. . . Everything ceases. Sin ceases and Christ lives in you. It is what Saint Paul said: *“It is no longer I who live; Christ lives in me.”* (Galatians 2:20)

(St. Porphyrios, Wounded by Love)

