

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE MESSENGER

“Behold I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.” Mark 1:2-3



St. John the Baptist—January 7

Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis, Priest

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Timetable of Services

Sundays: Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.
Weekdays: Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

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St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is a parish under the spiritual and ecclesiastical oversight of His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of the Metropolis of Atlanta, of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

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“May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” From the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Father Stavros' Message

O Lord our God, who have placed times and seasons under your own authority; who, in Your infinite compassion and goodness, have counted us worthy to enter a New Year of Your loving kindness, bless it and keep us in peace. Loose, remit and forgive any sins that we have committed during the year that is past, and keep us free from sin in the New Year. . . Let Your kingdom come upon us, O Lord; the kingdom of love, goodness, peace and justice; and make us worthy to praise and glorify, with one mouth and one heart, your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

One of the most beautiful prayers in the Orthodox Church is a prayer that is offered every year on January 1, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. Traditionally, we offer a "doxology" after the Liturgy on January 1, to "give glory" (the literal translation of the word "doxology") and thanksgiving to God for bringing us safely to a New Year. In the prayer, we THANK God first for bringing us to a New Year. A daily reading of obituaries in the newspaper will tell us that there are many people who did not live to see the year 2013. So we thank God that we are alive to see a new year, and we thank God for our families, for our health, and for the good things we have in our lives.

With gratitude also comes reflection. As we look over 2012, I'm sure that all of us have some regrets, some things that come to mind that we wish we hadn't done, or that we have done differently. And so we must be thankful that God has placed times and seasons that call us and allow us to make new beginnings, beginnings which include contrition over past failings and resolve to do better. January 1 of each year is one of those wonderful opportunities. At the time the clock strikes midnight on January 1, none of us will have committed a sin in 2013—it will be a new year. None of us will have missed a day of prayer, or a Sunday of worship, or an opportunity to do a good deed. And so if you haven't been in the habit of praying, you can start January 1. If you haven't been in the habit of coming to church each Sunday, you can start January 6 (or you can start on January 1, in our church we begin the New Year with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy to not only celebrate the New Year but to commemorate the feast of St. Basil). And if you haven't been in the habit of doing good deeds, or giving joyfully in your stewardship, or exercising regularly, or spending time with your spouse or children, or whatever it is that needs improving in your life, the beginning of a new year is the perfect opportunity to do so.

As we end one year and begin another, it is an opportunity to both look back and look ahead. We look back not only at mistakes, but also at triumphs. Lots of good things happened in 2012 most certainly, in our lives and in our church.

In this issue of the Messenger, you'll find a lengthy report by our Parish Council President, Katherine Sakkis, detailing not only events of the past year but of the past five that she has served as our President. The list of accomplishments in long and put together, it is quite impressive. I thank Katherine, all the members of Parish Councils during the times these things were accomplished, as well as all the people who supported our many projects with their time, their talent and their financial resources. There are also some challenges in our community that are enumerated in that report—we've still got some major repairs to do, most notably our stained glass project is still not complete. And we need to continue to build our infrastructure—whether it

is stewardship, or more volunteers for more ministries.

I'm excited for the new year, because as a community, we enter the year with as close to a "level playing field" as we have had during my time here (and long before it). No longer is our ship sinking under the financial weight of the day school. We are paying on our mortgage rather than watching it grow as we have in years past. Our tenants at the school are doing well and are certainly making good on their "end of the deal" so to speak.

There is always room for improvement, but that goes with anything in life—whether it is eating better, being a better parent or a better spouse, making improvements around your house, etc. Hence, we have the concept of the "New Year's Resolution." People make many resolutions at New Years. Most, unfortunately, are not kept. And that is probably because most of these resolutions are not reasonable. For instance, if someone is not used to exercising, it is probably not realistic to expect to exercise every day, or to be able to run five miles if a person can't even run a block. The resolutions that are most easily kept are the ones that are reasonable—they are challenging without being overwhelming. They are also the ones that are eased into.

There are some resolutions I'd like to see us do as a parish:

1. Every ministry does at least one community service project a year that benefits the greater Tampa community, something totally outside our community.
2. Every parishioner makes it a goal to attend the Divine Liturgy at least 3 out of 4 Sundays a month. Some of us attend every Sunday, so if you are one of these don't cut back, but for those who are not in the habit of attending, it is time to change that.
3. It's time to take a different approach to stewardship, one that emphasizes that there is joy in giving. We want to see every parishioner turn in his or her stewardship card by the 10th of January! And we would love to see everyone have a modest increase in their giving. The Biblical statute for giving is the tithe, or 10% of what one earns. Since very few of us do this, set a goal of what you can give each week, make that your stewardship pledge (whether you pay it weekly or monthly, it doesn't matter, but set a weekly goal), and then next year, up that weekly goal, and over time, your pledge will grow and grow. And so will your spiritual joy.
4. We need to get more efficient in the way we are doing things—in this issue of the Messenger, you will find some new guidelines that I have encouraged the Parish Council to adopt that will make our operation here more efficient.

Father Stavros' Message (Continued)

5. We've got to keep our eyes on the prize, as well as the path to get there. We believe in God. We believe in heaven. We believe that the church is the vessel that helps us know God and helps us get to heaven. And so we need to hold the prize in front of ourselves at all times. I have said before that a goal without a plan in a fantasy—it doesn't come to pass. But a plan without a goal is pointless—you spin your wheels working, but you are not sure why you are working. So, we need to keep the goal of salvation at the forefront of our lives and the forefront of our church community. And we need to make goal-appropriate plans that will get us there, whether they are in our personal lives or in our church community.
6. To truly be a community, we must intertwine the "membership circle" and the "fellowship circle." By this I mean that we need to embrace all those who worship in our church into our circles of friendship and fellowship. There is a large segment of our community that only worships, and never enters into the fellowship hall for coffee hour. This is because it is intimidating to enter into a social setting when you don't know anyone. And the social settings are not only coffee hour or social events, they extend to our ministries as well. So, in the new year, resolve to meet at least one new person a month and encourage those outside your fellowship circle to get into your fellowship circle. In a church community, everyone holds up one another, in prayer and in support when support is needed. So, let's meet one another so we can hold up each other in prayer and in support. I have been asked two "practical" questions in the past month that I want to comment on. The first question had to do with stewardship:

I know that we are to give in secret but my question is, is it appropriate in your opinion to declare tithing for a tax break. I mean do you think it is Godly to declare charitable giving if it's only to the IRS?

Here is how I answered:

No one has ever asked me the question you pose, so I will answer it this way. I personally declare my contributions to the church on my IRS tax return, and I don't feel that this is ungodly. Should our tithe be taxed? I don't think so. If we give the first fruits to God, as we should, then you take your income, reduce it by the amount of your contribution to the church, and then pay your bills, including your taxes, on the rest. I.e. If you make \$50,000 a year and you tithe ten percent (which is the Biblical standard), then you take the FIRST \$5,000 away from your income and give it to the church, paying your taxes and your bills with the remaining \$45,000. Now the point of writing this is not to encourage you to find tax breaks for yourself, but to encourage you to see your contribution to God's church as the FIRST FRUITS of your income, not the leftovers. I remember when I was a child, my parents saying to me something to the effect of, "There are 168 hours in the week, less 3 that we always give to God on Sunday mornings, leaving you 165 to get your other things done." So we approached each week as if it had 165 hours instead of 168. We offered those hours to God, and never let homework or other activities interfere with those three hours. It is the same thing with our financial contribution to the church—We offer the first of our gifts to God and the church, and we plan the rest of our finances AFTER that. We don't know what

the new year will hold for us financially, but we have made our pledge with the confidence and trust in God that not only will we not be punished for our stewardship (we won't go hungry or homeless), but that we will be rewarded (treasure in heaven).

I've never been good at praying, especially in the morning. It is hard to start the day by stopping to pray. How can I incorporate some prayer in the morning?

Lots of people have this problem. In fact, many people I talk to say they pray only at night, when the day is over, as opposed to praying in the morning for God's blessings on a day that is about to begin. So, here is a practical way to approach this issue. Begin by making the sign of the cross as you rise from your bed. And offer a few thoughts in prayer as you begin to move around your room. As you reach for your glasses (first thing I do in the morning), thank God for the new day. As you go to do the next thing you do, bring to mind a few people and pray for them. And as you reach for clothes or keys, ask God for help with one thing. Another thing I do is that every time I drop something or reach for something on the floor, at least a dozen times a day, I say the Jesus prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner) as I make a metanoia (prostration)/reach for whatever is on the floor, thus accomplishing two things at the same time (can't say "killing two birds with one stone when you are referring to prayer"). Again, practical ways to bring God into your thoughts throughout the day.

I humbly ask your forgiveness for any of my wrongs of the past year. I want to begin the new year with a sense of purpose and an intention of personal spiritual renewal. I want to go about my ministry here at St. John in a more positive and grateful way. And I want you to help me by being positive and enthusiastic as well. I can't wait to greet the New Year and the opportunities it will bring for each of us and for our community. And when I write the New Year's Message for 2014, I hope and pray that we will look back at 2013 as a year we continued to make forward steps in our personal spiritual growth and the growth of our community. On behalf of Presbyteria Lisa and Nicholas, I wish each of you a Happy, Healthy, and Blessed New Year 2013!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

11/25/2012

It has been an honor and a privilege to have been your president for the last 5 years. Taking on the presidency of the Parish Council is a great task. I join the ranks of the many who have served before me, who can attest to the great amount of work, patience, fortitude and sacrifice that come with the job. I have been blessed by having a wonderful board to work with that has remained substantially the same over this time period. We have achieved great accomplishments as well as suffered much criticism due to the many changes that have taken place. We have attempted to provide long term solutions to problems; not temporary fixes. We have continued to move forward to further the progress of the church and community.

We have to thank Father Stavros for his spiritual guidance, support and vision. Father begins and ends our meetings with prayer and also prepares a Spiritual Enrichment for every meeting. He works tirelessly for our community and the fruits of his labor are evident in our growing church. In a few short years our membership has doubled, our ministries are thriving and our youth attendance & participation has skyrocketed. We are truly blessed to have him at the helm.

I would like to take this opportunity to review the many positive changes that have been made in this last five years. Each of these items is important in their own way; however a hallmark task accomplished was the development of our Mission and Vision Statement. Our church now has a clear road map to the future. All of our decisions as a community will be weighed against this statement. You will find it in the front of your Messenger, every month. Please become familiar with it. Be proud of what our community stands for and the direction it is going.

It is with this Mission and Vision Statement in mind, that our Board has moved forward to accomplish the following:

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL:

1. We drafted and approved By-Law changes in order for our By-Laws to conform to the current Archdiocese recommendations; added term limits and defined voting eligibility. By-Laws changes were passed by the General Assembly.
2. Appointed Thom Georgas as head usher and revamped ushering procedures.
3. We continued fine tuning of financial procedures and established the oversight of the Finance Committee. We thank Mike Xenick for his dedication and hard work as head of this committee.
4. Reduced costs significantly of major expenses, such as property insurance.
5. We made a careful assessment of our campus inventory and were able to add a Fine Arts rider on our insurance policy giving us for the first time, actual replacement coverage for our precious iconography and liturgical items.
6. We professionally revamped the church website which currently includes the option of downloading the Messenger. You can listen to Father's sermons online as well.
7. We revamped our Stewardship Campaign according to the Archdiocese recommendations and increased stewardship pledges to encompass all three facets of stewardship; Time, Talents and Treasure. Our Sunday School is involved and our children are being taught from an early age to contribute to the church. We now have a yearly Stewardship Sunday where we as a community pledge our support to our church and our Time, Talents and Treasure to God. We thank our Stewardship chair Diane Norcross for implementing these changes.
8. Lacking a festival chair for 2008; this Parish Council took over the leadership of the festival with Michael Evdemon as Festival Chair; along with the support of the Parish Council. Michael chaired the festival 2008-2010 and then I took over in 2011 and 2012. These festivals were some of the most profitable ever. I believe part of this success was the decision to give a portion of our profits to Hospice as thanks to God for our success. Many have criticized this and we hear regularly "charity begins at home". For those who don't know, that quote is NOT in the Bible; cheerful giving is.
9. We took the existing 1 million dollar plus, interest only note on the school and converted into a 20 year mortgage; assuring pay down of principal.
10. We entered into a long term lease; upon the recommendation of the Metropolitan and the vote of the General Assembly with Smart Starts Inc. Smart

Starts currently leases our facilities on a similar shared usage basis we had with our Day School. This way the day to day operations of the school are no longer our concern. The lease began this school year at 12k per month and escalates yearly thereafter. The lease is 5 years with (2) 5 year options and has a value of 1 million dollars to the church over 15 years.

11. E 21. The previous Parish Council of 2006- 2007 entered into a fund raiser for the church that involved life insurance called E-21. It turned out to be a scam and the church lost the 95k it invested. This board, took legal action, and reached a number of individual confidential cash settlements totaling \$107,500.

This lawsuit could not be discussed while ongoing and as already disclosed the settlements are confidential and binding by the courts. The litigation began in 2008 and the final settlements completed this year. In addition to the cash we received, we have also obtained a judgment against Richard Incandella (the person behind the scheme) for \$110,000. There is no assurance that we will ever collect on this judgment, but it has been court approved and recorded.

I would like to report that we have these excess funds to apply to much needed repairs, but the truth is that all the monies received from these settlements went into the school to keep it afloat prior to the lease. This board would like to thank Russ Sibley for his outstanding legal work and for his donation of severely reduced fees as well as countless hours not charged at all. This was a difficult and complex case, not easily won and we have Rusty to thank for his hard work and diligence.

FACILITIES:

This board inherited a 30 year old community center that had barely been maintained along with a church and admin building that is over 50 years old, both of which needed extensive repairs and maintenance upgrades. Previous boards patched and replaced a few things, but the majority of issues had not been addressed.

1. In 2009 we completely remodeled the Kourmolis Center bathrooms and they are now ADA compliant. The previous board had bids for this work between 190k-240k. We did both bathrooms for 50k; of which the day school promised to pay half; since it was the day school students who used the bathrooms daily and caused the wear and tear. We were pleased to be able to cut the costs to 50k, but never received reimbursement from the school. The church absorbed the entire cost.
2. Right after this major project we took on the flooring of the church. For years we suffered stained and rippled carpet. We discovered that the original flooring of the church was terrazzo. We removed all the old carpeting and pews and had the terrazzo repaired and polished. We discovered the reason we had carpet to begin with, is that years ago a chandelier fell on the terrazzo floor and instead of fixing the crack it created; it was carpeted over. Just another patch on a problem instead of a permanent fix.
3. Damaged wood on the solea was replaced and the solea, altar and baptismal areas were carpeted; along with custom made runners for the aisles. All were done with high quality carpet. In the future if any of these runners, becomes worn they can easily be replaced without having to do the entire project over again. We thank those who donated to this project.
4. Previous to this administration a new roof was put on the church. At the time, the incorrect gutters were put on leading to slow seepage of water during rain storms. This led to moisture in the walls and damage to iconography. We had a professional building inspector assess the situation and installed the proper gutters. The altar roof was to have been completed at the same time, but was left with a tar paper covering, incomplete. We completed the roof with a long life metal covering to protect our sacred altar.
5. Once the interior walls of the church were sufficiently dry from the long term water seepage we embarked on the restoration of the iconography and painting of the interior walls. Many thanks to those who donated generously towards the iconography restoration and even though we spent the summer of 2011 having services in the gym, I think all will agree it was well worth it.
6. We also purchased 300 new chairs for the K Center. The chairs were purchased at a liquidation auction. Purchasing the chairs this way saved in excess of \$30,000.
7. Our Baptismal font, well used for 50 plus years of baptisms with olive oil; had clogged the pipes beyond repair. We had to remove the font, replace the pipes and restore the baptismal area. This again was done with donations and thanks.
8. Most recently just a few short weeks before the festival the original hot water heater for the bathrooms, located in the west storage closet exploded, causing damage not only to the closet, but the adjoining areas which included the food pantry, single bathroom, money room and bookstore and foyer. The water damage was extensive. It was also apparent that a small leak was active for some time causing mildew. Remediation had to take place, drywall replaced, along with flooring and painting.

The hot water heater expense was ours, as it is considered a maintenance issue. The remainder of the work done was covered by insurance, after paying a \$5000 deductible. The insurance claim allowed for carpet replacement but was not enough money, that after diligent negotiation by our Building & Grounds chair, Despina Sibley, we were able to make a long term replacement of tile vs. carpet. Hence the money room, book store and foyer have been tiled

Many have asked why the choir room was not done at the same time. That flooring was not damaged due to this incident and reporting that it had been would have been committing insurance fraud. We did receive a bid for replacing the carpet in the choir room and asked if the choir would like to contribute to the tile replacement. They declined and we did not have the money to do that area in addition to already paying for the hot water heater and the \$5000 deductible.

We have been questioned as to why we did not replace the heater with a tankless heater. The facts are simple. The new hot water heater was \$2500 and commercial tankless runs close to \$10,000 and requires a piping retrofit. None of these charges were covered under insurance, and out of the question, money wise. It was a monumental task to get all of this done in less than a month.

This project has been met with much commentary and criticism. We have heard many opinions on the tile, the grout, the paint colors, the choir room not being done etc. We are grateful to the few that have made positive comments and who recognized what a difficult time frame we were up against.

9. Many ongoing, smaller, but significant areas were addressed such as replacement/repair of the handicap railing at the side of the church, upgraded electrical in the church, power surge protection on the church a/c, sprinkler repair in the front of the church, replacement of the walk in cooler motor, replacement of the kitchen a/c and hood fan and snaking out of all kitchen floor drains; ongoing sky light repairs, replacement of the stage roof, repair of the other center roofs and this summer, insurance required repairs of the admin building roof and day school roof.
10. Upon investigation, it turns out the reason we had these huge tanks in the ceiling, is that when the hall was originally built, there was a commercial dishwasher installed that flanked the entire south wall of the kitchen. It was almost never used and when we moved the festival from the convention center to our hall, this dishwasher was removed and additional refrigeration and warmers brought in. Nothing was done about the boilers in the ceiling at the time.

Turns out that again, prior to my term, one of the boilers leaked and the then board had it drained but left the other potentially harmful boiler up there. Again, a patch instead of a long term fix. We did not wait for this one to leak or burn someone with boiling water. It was rusted and old, so we drained it and replaced it with a more efficient 80 gallon tank on the floor; away from potentially harming someone.

The other interesting fact is; aside of the potential danger of scalding someone with a leaking tank, we have been paying to heat two 180 gallon boiler tanks; one for approx 20 years and this last one for approx 30 years. As you well know, at home, a substantial portion of your electric bill is your hot water heater. Imagine the thousands of dollars that have squandered over the years, just by not taking care of business at the time.

11. We also have for the first time a commercial maintenance contract on all of our a/c units by a certified commercial a/c company. Previous boards used a local residential a/c person who worked on the cheap and cheap is what we got. The commercial company coming on board spend two solid weeks just servicing the existing units and bringing them up to par. They now do routine maintenance and we receive a discount on all future purchases. This contract was bid out to three companies before we selected the best value.
12. This brings us to the stained glass window/capital campaign project. We first introduced the stained glass issue and fundraising two years ago. At the time we only had to restore 18 of the windows and replace the outer protective covering. We were planning to use a better quality Plexiglas than we had. The original bid was \$30,000. We started asking for donations based on that amount. We did not come close to receiving the funds needed. During the ensuing two years, the already damaged windows continued to deteriorate and the remainder of the windows sustained damage. We were now faced with having to fix all the windows. Upon further investigation, we also discovered a better long term fix than the Plexiglas, in a low E permeable glass protective covering. This was almost double the cost, but would be a long term fix vs. something that may have to be addressed in another 20 years. The glass also required a wood type mounting made of the hardest hardwood found on earth; making it termite and damage proof. The price increased to \$70,000; to include all the windows as well as the low E glass protective coverings. This insures our children and grandchildren will not inherit this problem. By time all of this was determined, it was also clear that the major systems in the hall were all on the brink of failing. In order to raise enough funds for both areas; this board embarked on a combination campaign for Stained Glass/ Capital improvements.

It was concluded, that we were facing replacements in the hall in the very near future of a/c systems, hot water tanks, skylights etc. We would need, at a minimum, \$85,000 additional monies; so we embarked on a campaign to raise \$155,000 total. We fully disclosed the intent of the campaign. The windows were priced according to the overall campaign costs; dividing the monies equitably by the size of the windows. The restoring donors would be recognized on a plaque at the bottom of the windows. Out of respect for the original donors of the windows, those families were given the first chance at restoration.

The intent of the campaign was to handle our immediate needs to restore the stained glass and look to the near future for the needs of the hall. It was well thought out, multiple bids taken and a course of action set. Again, not a band aid; but a thought out course of action to rectify neglected needs of the past.

This campaign, I am sorry to report, has been met with not just negativity, but downright hostility. Some of the original window donors think they should be cut a break in the cost since they donated the original windows. Someone also insisted on bringing in their "own" person to restore "their window". We keep hearing references to "my window". The seemingly obvious fact here is that once you donate a window or item to the church; it is no longer yours. It belongs to the church and to God. The simple courtesy of notifying the original donors in advance has created an unimagined backlash.

There is also much criticism of what has been called the "2 for 1" campaign. We have heard many people vocalize that they would only be interested in covering "cost" of restoration of a window; and that the remaining monies being raised are "extortion" or a "tax". My fellow parishioners, this campaign, is first and foremost a fundraiser for the church. Instead of picking it apart, just decide if you want to help the church or not with these vital needs. If you do, you will get your name in the church for eternity; should you choose. Taking a survey of the area churches, no where can you visibly get your name on a plaque inside the church for \$4500; so by local standards this is a bargain.

We have raised \$55,000 thus far. Our two biggest donors combined have donated \$35,000. Both have donated anonymously; in the true spirit of Christian giving. We recognize that for the first time we asking for funds for an immediate need, but planning for the future as well. Again a solution, instead of a band aid.

Thank God this board had the foresight to put this plan into play. We had already collected \$55,000 by time the hall hot water heater blew and the kitchen a/c went out. Had this fundraiser not been going, we would not have been able to pay for the hot water heaters and kitchen a/c. We would not have been able to put on the festival due to the condition of the kitchen and hall.

13. I would also like to thank the Smart Starts group for their contributions to our facilities. It was Smart Starts who paid to repave the parking lots and driveways of our campus. They also repaired the band aided a/c units in the big school building, tiled all the offices in the admin building and cleaned up and landscaped the grounds. Their contribution of these items to our campus is in excess of \$12,000. This is money we did not have to spend.

I would like to thank and commend our Building and Grounds chair, Despina Sibley at this time. Despina is unable to be with us today as she is in Greece celebrating a memorial for her father in his village. She is with us in spirit and surroundings as you look around and see the many improvements made and permanent solutions handled under her watch. She is the object of criticism by many who would rather complain than do; but has remained a diligent worker who has spend countless hours researching options and spearheading long term solutions. Next time you see her, please take the time to thank her.

MINISTRIES:

Our ministries continue to grow and thrive under the watchful eye of Father Stavros and the oversight of the Parish Council. We are proud to have been part of two new ministries:

1. Our Food Pantry – headed by Annetta Alexander; supplies, with community support, those in need of food items in our parish.
2. Community Outreach – directed by Betty Katherine Palios; this group of dedicated volunteers meets regularly to serve and distribute food the needy in our Tampa community.

Our youth ministries, Sunday School, Joy/Hope and GOYA are growing and thriving. Many thanks to their dedicated directors and the parents and children that make this possible. Our choir, Bible Study, Young at heart, Philoptochos as well as AHEPA/Daughters and our dance groups continue to grow and serve the community. Thanks to all of those volunteers who do such wonderful work supporting our ministries and to all of those ministries that sponsor our coffee hours as well.

FELLOWSHIP:

What would a church be without fellowship? Very often boards get lost in the vortex of the business problems of the community. Our board has made a valiant effort to promote fellowship as well. Our board, under the leadership of our Social Chair – Alex Demaio puts on the following events yearly:

1. St. John's Day Luncheon
2. Greek Independence Day Luncheon
3. Pascha Reception after the Resurrection service
4. Parish Picnic
5. Agape Luncheon – August
6. Christmas Reception after Christmas Eve services

I have been a member here for 30 years and do not recall any board that put on this many community events and did them consistently for years. There was always St. John Day and occasionally Greek Independence Day and sometimes a picnic; but not consistently done year after year. Our people enjoy the events, the fellowship and look forward to them throughout the year.

We introduced the Agape Luncheon in August to coincide with the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary (Aug 15). We have dedicated this luncheon in recent years to the support of our seminarian, Charlie Hambos. The proceeds from this luncheon go to Charlie to help support his efforts to become a priest.

We also established monthly "Get Acquainted" Sundays; encouraging our members to reach out to new people and each other. We have also been blessed with other groups coming forward to provide fellowship events; such as the Chrysanthemum Ball and Apokreatiko Glendi. All told there is a social event almost every month of the year. Something for everyone and lots of variety.

This brings us to the Festival. I would like to that those who participated; particularly the booth and area chairman. These are the people who take on the responsibility of a major area and put in the most work.

As festival chair, I begin meetings with individuals in the summer and the entire committee of 20 convenes in September. Many meetings and hours later we are open for business. I have listed these core people in the upcoming Messenger and hope you will find the time to recognize and thank them.

This year's festival was a great success. God blessed us with wonderful weather and good crowds. We had 2 very big competing area events, but managed to still bring in as much as we did last year. We are still paying our bills and tabulating the net proceeds. We will have a final number in another few weeks. Many of you are anxious to "know the numbers".

You may recall in years earlier to this board, it took until late Jan/Feb to get festival results. Due to revamping of the money room, budgeting and festival accounting procedures we have been giving you a net profit number by mid December.

Please be patient and please stop asking Christine (the bookkeeper) for numbers. There is no big secret, no money being hidden. We have found giving out numbers prematurely leads to speculation and misinformation. Know that the festival was a success and again will bring in about 1/3 of the operating money we need for 2013.

Many of you are misinformed, thinking after the festival we will have enough money to make all the repairs we need. REMEMBER – the festival money goes to the Operating Fund. It makes up for the difference between our Stewardship funds and our Expenses. Capital improvements remain outside the budget.

I apologize for the length of this message. This is not only to recap the work of this board under my leadership, but to put to rest the many rumors circulating about the various projects.

I have worked very hard as your president and had to make a lot of difficult and unpopular decisions that previous presidents and boards would not or could not do. I have been the target of much gossip and criticism. I find this on a personal level quite disturbing, but on a spiritual level know that the more you try to do good and do the right thing, the more the devil comes up against you in the form of spiritual warfare.

I have led this board and this community with honesty and faith asking for nothing more than the grace of the Holy Spirit and your cooperation. Thanks and accolades are unnecessary, but understanding is. I ask you to understand that I already work a very stressful job; 60 hours a week on average; spend about 20 hours on parish council and then the festival chairmanship takes every spare minute after that.

I apologize if I have offended anyone by being short or curt. Understand it is not intentional – I just don't have time for chit chat. Same goes for emails and voice messages.

What is intentional is the gossip, criticism and arm chair quarterbacking that myself and this board is constantly barraged with. I in turn, thank the few of you that take the time to come up and give messages and thanks and support to me and this board. We admittedly are not perfect, we may not always have done everything correctly; but our hearts are in the right place and our dedication is to this church.

This Mission and Vision Statement has charted our course for the future. My actions and the actions of this board have been in line with this mission and vision.

In closing, I thank again all the Parish Council members who have given of themselves so selflessly. I again thank Father Stavros for his leadership. I thank all of you have been supportive and kind throughout these last 5 years of change. For those who have been critical or non supportive, I hope I have answered your questions and concerns. None of us is perfect. We do the best we can and hope that God judges us favorably. Thank you for taking the time to attend this assembly and participating in the governance of your church.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Sakkis, Parish Council President

The Life of Jesus—Chapter Six

The Miracles of Jesus

Adapted from “The Life of Christ: Rediscovering How His Life, Death and Resurrection Changed the World”

By the American Bible Society, 2011

Jesus’ miracles may be the most beloved and best remembered aspects of his time on earth. Jesus was a great healer.

Many believe the Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold the miracles of the person whom Jews thought would be the Messiah: giving sight to the blind, enabling the deaf to hear and making the lame walk. He also healed the mute, the sick, victims of leprosy and even brought people back from the dead. Jesus’ followers read these words of Isaiah and reported that Jesus’ miraculous ministry was a testimony to his identity as Messiah and Son of God. Indeed, some witnesses to Jesus’ miracles took the good news to John the Baptist as the prophet languished in prison—the signs and wonders performed by Jesus were reassurance that he was, in fact, the Messiah whom they had been awaiting.

It is important to understand the miracles of Jesus in light of each individual Gospel account. Each of the Gospels was written with a different audience and purpose in mind.

Matthew: Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience to represent Jesus as the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. He includes the miracles of Jesus to help with that representation, and he emphasizes the responses of the people who witnessed the miracles.

Mark: Mark represents Jesus’ miracles not as those that lead to faith but that come from faith. Therefore, his account highlights the faith of those interacting with Jesus and receiving blessings from the miracles he performs.

Luke: Luke’s Gospel was written to provide a detailed account of Jesus’ life. He emphasizes Jesus’ compassion for the sick and the poor and he connects Jesus’ miracles more to the work of the Holy Spirit (See also Acts 10:38).

John: John’s Gospel was written so that the readers of that Gospel would believe in Jesus and thus receive true life. This Gospel includes seven miracles that function as signs that introduce the teachings of Jesus and emphasize his unique authority.

For the most part, Jesus healed those who demonstrated faith in his power. In several accounts, there seems to be a vital relationship between the miracle performed and the faith of its beneficiary. For example, in the story of the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (Matthew 9:20; Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43), Jesus declared that it was her faith that healed her. Later, before bringing Lazarus back from the dead, Jesus reminded the crowd that seeing God’s glory requires faith (John 11:40).

In one instance, a Gentile (non-Jewish) woman persistently followed Jesus, declaring her faith and asking him to heal her daughter, who was possessed by demons. The disciples were annoyed by the woman’s persistence, yet this did not stop her from crying out and begging Jesus to help. Jesus finally answered her: “Dear woman, you really do have a lot of faith, and you will be given what you want.” At that moment her daughter was healed (Matthew 15:28).

As Jesus’ reputation for miracles grew, more crowds approached him with their sick and disabled, begging just for a chance to touch his clothes (Matthew 14:34; 15:29-31; Mark 6:53-56). And as people witnessed Jesus’ miracles or heard of his great works, many put their faith in him.

The author of the Fourth Gospel, whom many identify with the unnamed beloved disciple (John 13:23; 19:26; 21:20), wrote that the miracles of Jesus exceeded the accounts provided in the Gospels. Indeed, the Gospels are not an exhaustive documentation of Jesus’ life; instead they introduce us to the service, sacrifice, and compassionate acts of healing that defined the reason for his coming in the world: to seek and save the lost.

The Gospels tell us that those who witnessed Jesus’ miracles but lacked faith received harsh words of impending judgment (Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 10:13-16). Jesus’ public ministry was defined not only by his healing miracles but also by his teaching and his continual invitation to those who would listen and find spiritual rest in him. While he offered people miraculous healing, for both their physical and spiritual infirmities, Jesus’ healing ministry served to announce the Kingdom of God and the restoration of a right relationship with God.

Quotes From The Bible

Isaiah 35:5-6

The blind will see, and the ears of the deaf will be healed. Those who were lame will leap around like deer; tongues once silent will shout for joy. Water will rush through the desert.

Matthew 11:4-6

Jesus answered, "Go and tell John what you have heard and seen. The blind are now able to see, and the lame can walk. People with leprosy are being healed, and the deaf can hear. The dead are raised to life, and the poor are hearing the good news. God will bless everyone who doesn't reject me because of what I do."

John 21:25

Jesus did many other things. If they were all written in books, I don't suppose there would be room enough in the whole world for all the books.

Healing a Chronic Illness

Sometimes the miraculous healing bestowed by Jesus hinged on the faith of the receiver

The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the story of a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. According to Old Testament law (Leviticus 15:25-27); such a condition rendered her "ceremonially unclean" and unfit to worship at the temple with her fellow Jews. No one would dare touch her, because doing so would make them unclean as well. The unnamed woman had spent the last of her savings on physicians, but none of them were able to heal her.

Yet instead of giving in to despair, the woman clung to her faith in Jesus' healing touch. So when she found herself in a crowd of people following Jesus, she seized her opportunity. Reaching out just enough to touch the edge of Jesus' clothing, she was immediately healed. Jesus, who felt the "power going out," asked who had touched him. The woman came forward and told her story. Impressed, Jesus declared that she had been healed because of her faith.

The power of this story is not in the miraculous healing alone, but in the decisive role the woman's faith played in the healing. It was because of her faith that she was healed. There is another lesson in this story: Jesus was not at all concerned at being touched by someone considered unclean; instead he focused on the woman's faith and blessed her with physical and spiritual peace.

A reading from Luke 8:43-48 (see also Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34)

In the crowd was a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent everything she had on doctors, but none of them could make her well. As soon as she came up behind Jesus and barely touched his clothes, her bleeding stopped.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

While everyone was denying it, Peter said, "Master, people are crowding all around and pushing you from every side." But Jesus answered, "Someone touched me, because I felt power going out from me." The woman knew that she could not hide, so she came trembling and knelt down in front of Jesus. She told everyone why she had touched him and that she had been healed at once.

Jesus said to the woman, "You are now well because of your faith. May God give you peace!"

Mastering the Storm

Shortly after Jesus multiplied the food, he sent his disciples in a boat onto Lake Galilee, while he stayed behind to pray. In the middle of the night the winds kicked up and the water grew choppy. Lake Galilee was known for its unpredictable weather, and now the disciples' boat was being tossed around by the wave. As morning dawned, Jesus approached – walking on the water as if it were dry land! At first his disciples did not recognize him, but he revealed his

identity, saying, "Don't worry! I am Jesus. Do not be afraid."

As Matthew tells the story, Peter responded, asking Jesus to call him out onto the water. Jesus obliged, and Peter stepped outside of the boat and began to walk across the waves toward Jesus. Quickly reminded of the fierce wind, Peter panicked and began to sink. In his desperation, Peter cried out to Jesus, who reached out and pulled him up. After Jesus brought Peter safely into the boat, the waters calmed.

This was a significant moment for the disciples. Though they had witnessed Jesus perform other amazing feats, this miracle caused them to worship him. While they had already demonstrated their faith in Jesus by following him, this terrifying event prompted them to commit themselves ever more fully to his ministry and his message.

A reading from Matthew 14:22-23 (see also Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21)

At once, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and start back across the lake. But he stayed until he had sent the crowds away. Then he went up on a mountain where he could be alone and pray. Later in the evening, he was still there. By this time the boat was a long way from the shore. It was going against the wind and was being tossed around by the waves. A little while before morning, Jesus came walking on the water toward his disciples. When they saw him, they thought he was a ghost. They were terrified and started screaming.

At once, Jesus said to them, "Don't worry! I am Jesus. Don't be afraid." Peter replied, "Lord, if it is really you, tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come on!" Jesus said. Peter then got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward him.

But when Peter saw how strong the wind was, he was afraid and started sinking. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

At once, Jesus reached out his hand. He helped Peter up and said, "You surely don't have much faith. Why do you doubt?"

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind died down. The men in the boat worshiped Jesus and said, "You really are the Son of God!"

While you can find the same miracle of Jesus listed in more than one Gospel, often the details of the accounts are a little different. This is because each of the Gospels was written with a different purpose and audience in mind.

This account of Jesus walking on water is recorded in three Gospels – Matthew, Mark and John (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21). Matthew and Mark's versions differ only in that Matthew records Simon Peter also walking on the water and Jesus rescuing him. And true to Matthew's mission – to assure his Jewish readers that Jesus was the Messiah – he records the disciples' declaration that they recognized Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 14:33).

John includes the detail that, after Jesus calmed the wave, the boat suddenly arrived at its destination (John 6:21). Since John wrote to encourage his readers to put their faith in Jesus, including this kind of detail supported his intent.

Touching the Untouchables

Imagine being required to live cut off from the rest of society because you were considered untouchable.

That was the fate of victims of leprosy in the ancient world: their disease not only ravaged their bodies; it severed their connection with their community. Lepers were required to tear their clothes, leave their hair uncombed, keep the lower part of their face covered, and go around shouting "I'm unclean! I'm unclean!" (Leviticus 13:45)

Despite his status as a low-class citizen, one leper approached Jesus with a mixture of confidence and humility, kneeling before him and declaring that he believed Jesus had the power to make him well. According to Mark's Gospel, Jesus took pity on the man. What is particularly amazing is that Jesus willingly stretched out his hand and touched the man, despite the contagious nature of leprosy and the reality that by touching the man, Jesus made himself unclean (unfit to worship with other Jews) according to the Law of Moses. In spite of these risks, however, Jesus touched the man, and the man was cured.

Jesus immediately instructed the man to do two things. First, he forbade the man to tell anyone about the miracle. Second, he told the man to present himself to the priest in order to prove that he had been made well. Jesus' second command was in keeping with the Law of Moses regarding the cleansing of lepers (see Leviticus 14:2-32). Far from keeping the healing private, this act constituted a very public testimony. This miracle provides yet another example of the connection between a person's faith and Jesus' healing touch.

A reading from Mark 1:40-45 (see also Matthew 8:1-4; Luke 5:12-16)

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and knelt down. He begged, "You have the power to make me well, if only you wanted to."

Jesus felt sorry for the man. So he put his hand on him and said, "I want to! Now you are well." At once the man's leprosy disappeared, and he was well.

After Jesus strictly warned the man, he sent him on his ways. He said, "Don't tell anyone about this. Just go and show the priest that you are well. Then take a gift to the temple as Moses commanded, and everyone will know that you have been healed."

The man talked about it so much and told so many people, that Jesus could no longer go openly into a town. He had to stay away from the towns, but people still came to him from everywhere.

Raising the Dead

Once Jesus was traveling with His disciples when news arrived that Lazarus, the brother of His close friends, Mary and Martha, was ill. Rather than rushing to his friend's side, however, Jesus delayed his departure. Eventually, Lazarus died. It was another four days before Jesus could make it to his friend's house in Bethany.

When Jesus arrived at last, some of the mourners wondered aloud why the noted healer – who was known to have given sight to the blind – had not prevented Lazarus's death. Overcome with emotion, Jesus approached the tomb where his friend was buried and made an unusual request; he asked the people to roll away the stone. This was the equivalent of digging up a grave! Martha warned Jesus that there would be an awful smell. After all, her brother had been dead for four days and his body would be decomposing.

Jesus' request was carried out, however. As soon as the stone was moved aside, Jesus began to pray. He thanked God for always answering his prayers, and then he did something quite perplexing to the onlookers: he called out to the dead man they had buried and for whom they were grieving.

According to John's Gospel, Lazarus responded by walking out of the tomb, still wrapped in his burial cloths. Jesus had given Lazarus new life. In this magnificent miracle, one of the most memorable of Jesus' ministry, we see not only Christ's triumph over the physical state of death, but the promise of a new life for all who heed his call.

A Reading from John 11:33-45 (Read the full account in John 11: 1-45).

When Jesus saw that Mary and the people with her were crying, he was terribly upset and asked, "Where have you put his body?" They replied, "Lord, come and you will see."

Jesus started crying, and the people said, "See how much he loved Lazarus." Some of them said, "He gives sight to the blind. Why couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

Jesus was still terribly upset. So he went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone rolled against the entrance. Then he told the people to roll the stone away. But Martha said, "Lord, you know that Lazarus has been dead four days, and there will be a bad smell."

Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?" After the stone had been rolled aside, Jesus looked up toward heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. I know that you always answer my prayers. But I said this, so the people here would believe you sent me."

When Jesus had finished praying, he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" The man who had been dead came out. His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth and a cloth covered his face. Jesus then told the people, "Untie him and let him go." Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw the things that Jesus did, and they put their faith in him.

Next month: Famous Sayings of Jesus

Liturgical Calendar for January

Tuesday, January 1 **Feast of St. Basil-New Years' Day**
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, January 4 Royal Hours of Epiphany 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Saturday, January 5 Eve of Epiphany
Great Vespers 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.
Blessing of the Waters 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, January 6 **Feast of Epiphany** (services to be held at St. John)
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:45 a.m.
The Blessing of the Waters will be held at the conclusion of the Liturgy
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Yonathan Alem, Christos Nenos, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras)
Ushers: Amin Hanhan, George Mitseas, Mike Trimis
Coffee Hour: Daughters of Penelope

Services for the Feast of St. John the Baptist, Patron Saint of our Parish

Sunday, January 6 Great Vespers 7:00 p.m.
Reception hosted by Philoptochos will follow the Vespers Service.

Monday, January 7 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.
Luncheon sponsored by the Parish Council will follow the Liturgy.

Sunday, January 13 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (Mihail Kaburis, Dean Mitseas, Dominic Garcia, Nicholas Alsina)
Ushers: Chris Kavouklis, George Fellios, Florin Patrasciou
Coffee Hour: Philoptochos Vasilopita Sunday

Thursday, January 17 **Feast of St. Anthony**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, January 18 **Feast of Sts. Athanasios and Cyril**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 20 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (Nicholas Kavouklis, Karter Lenardos, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Brigham Sibley)
Ushers: Pete Trakas, Ed Gerecke, David Voykin
Coffee Hour: Bible Study

Friday, January 25 **Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian**
Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, January 27 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, George Hambos, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Nicholas Yotis, Tyler Shanahan)
Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Gregory Tisdale, Demetrios Halkias
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

Wednesday, January 30 Feast of the Three Hierarchs
Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Friday, February 1

Evening Divine Liturgy for the Presentation of Christ

Orthros 5:00 p.m. Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 3

Orthros 8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Yonathan Alem, Christos Nenos, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras)

Ushers: Peter Theophanous, Ron Myer, John Alexander

Coffee Hour: Glendi Dancers

January 1-Feast of the Circumcision of Christ-St. Basil-New Year's Day-Three things are commemorated on the first day of each year. First, the circumcision of Christ, which occurred historically 8 days after His Nativity. He was circumcised according to the rites of the Jewish law and given the name Jesus. Secondly, we commemorate the feast of St. Basil the Great, one of the Great Hierarchs of our church. St. Basil authored one of the Divine Liturgies used in our church, which is celebrated on his feastday. He also helped found monasticism. St. Basil was a friend to the poor, often baking bread with money in it and throwing it through the windows of widows and the poor. Hence the tradition of the Vasilopita, the bread with the coin baked inside, that we cut on New Year's Day. Finally, we are supposed to pray every day and commemorate all of life's milestones with prayer. So, we open a new year, 2013, with prayer and the Divine Liturgy on January 1.

January 4-Royal Hours of Epiphany- Like Christmas and Easter, there is a service of the Royal Hours which is celebrated in anticipation of Epiphany. This service consists of prayers, Psalms, hymns and Gospel readings which both foretell and recount this Great Feast of the church year. The Royal Hours will last from 9:30-11:00 a.m. on January 4.

January 5-Eve of Epiphany-Also, like Christmas and Easter, the feast of Epiphany is commemorated with two celebrations of the Divine Liturgy, one of them on the forefeast (day before the feastday). Hymns of anticipation are sung at this service. Also, there is a service of Aghiasmos (blessing of the water) which is done at the conclusion of the Liturgy on January 5. On January 6, there is also a service of the "Blessings of the waters" at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. When January 6 falls on a Sunday, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is celebrated on January 5 with the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil being celebrated on January 6.

We will celebrate the Feast of Epiphany on Sunday, January 6, with services in Tampa. Services will also be held in Tarpon Springs with the yearly diving for the cross following around 12:30 p.m., should you wish to attend Liturgy in Tarpon Springs.

January 7-Feast of St. John the Baptist-The day after a major feastday often commemorates the secondary figure of the Feast. On January 6, we celebrate the Baptism/Epiphany of Christ, who is obviously the major figure. The secondary figure of that feast is St. John the Baptist, whose feastday we commemorate the next day, January 7. Being that this is the feastday of our parish, we will have a VESPER Service on January 6, along with Orthros and Liturgy on January 7. Clergy from the Tampa Bay area will participate.

January 17-Feast of St. Anthony-St. Anthony is recognized as one of the fathers of monasticism. He lived in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. He founded a monastery in Egypt which still exists to this day. He authored many of the monastic rules that are still in practice today. He also was a major contributor to the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea in 325, where the Nicene Creed was first authored. He was one of the leaders against the heresies of Arianism.

January 18-Feast of Sts. Athanasios-St. Athanasios was born in 297 and was ordained a priest in 319. At the tender age of 28, he was one of the leaders of the First Ecumenical Council in 325 in Nicea, and defended the Faith against the heresies of Arius. He contributed to the development of the Nicene Creed which was authored in 325 and edited in 381 at the second Ecumenical Council. St. Athanasios became a bishop and later Patriarch of Alexandria.

January 25-Feast of St. Gregory the Theologian-One of the Three Hierarchs, also lived in the fourth Century. Was a friend and contemporary of St. Basil and St. John the Theologian. He was an accomplished speaker and writer, was the Bishop of Nazianzos and was one of the Bishops who presided at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, which finalized the Nicene Creed that we recite to this day.

January 30-Feast of the Three Hierarchs-The Three Hierarchs are St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. Each had his own feastday and all are honored together on January 30. Each of them lived in the 4th Century, each was an accomplished writer and speaker, each was a Bishop, each authored a Liturgy and each is remembered prominently in the history of our church to this day. The Three Hierarchs are Patron Saints of Teachers and Education.

Registry Statistics for	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Weddings	8	11	12	7	15
Baptisms	25	17	29	35	13
Funerals	7	6	5	6	9
Chrismations	6	4	5	6	2

COMMUNITY NEWS

Parish Elections-On Sunday, December 9, the following individuals were voted onto the Parish Council: Byron Nenos, Diane Trimis, David Voykin, Skip Higdon, and Nicholas Antonakakis. Carole Fotopoulos and Dante Skourellos tied for the 6th and final spot. The Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America indicate that in the case of a tie, the incoming Parish Council will vote to break the tie. The Parish Council will receive the Oath of Office as soon as our election is ratified. George Chagaris, George Fellios and Michael Conner were elected to the auditing committee. A special thank you to Peter Theophanous, Dwight Forde and Effie Sorolis, who were this year's election committee. And a special thank you to Diane Norcross and Maria Zabetakis, who are coming off the Parish Council, for doing a great job for our community, while serving on the Parish Council.

Vasilopita Sunday will be on Sunday, January 13, following the Divine Liturgy in the church. A Vasilopita will be blessed and cut for the ministries of our parish. Also a special collection will be taken by the Philoptochos to benefit Saint Basil's Academy in New York, a school for orphaned or disadvantaged children run by our Archdiocese. Our Philoptochos will also sponsor the coffee hour with all proceeds going to St. Basil's as well.

Gasparilla Parking Fundraiser-On Saturday, January 19 and Saturday, January 26, we will be renting out the church parking lot for Gasparilla parking, for the children's parade on January 19, and for the main event on January 26. If you are interested in volunteering a few hours to help the church make some easy \$\$\$, and also have a good time socializing for a few hours while directing traffic, please contact John Kokkas at 727-992-4165 or johnkokkas@verizon.net. The primary hours needed are approximately 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. each Saturday. This is a very easy and fun way to generate income for our parish.

Charitable Giving by our Youth—Boxes of Hope—Our community collected 50 boxes of food to donate to Metropolitan Ministries. Thank you to the children and their parents who helped to sort the many items donated. Thank you to everyone who donated items, gift cards and their time.

Address Changes-If you change your address, please inform the office so we can make the appropriate changes. Recently, we found that several members that had moved months ago and were not getting our mailings. Kindly let us know if you have moved and are not getting our church mailings

Stewardship Update

2012 (through December 15, 2012)	2013 (through December 15, 2012)
\$300,000 Goal	\$300,000 Goal
321 Families who submitted forms	\$114,292 Pledged on December 15
\$256,647 Collected	82 Number of Pledges for 2013

Thank you to all those who pledged in 2012! If you still have a balance for 2012, please try to fulfill it as soon as possible. It is helpful for your tax purposes and our accounting to have each pledge paid for by December 31, 2012.

Thank you to all who have made a pledge for 2013! If you have not made a pledge for 2013, please do so today!
If you need a pledge form, please contact the church office and we'll be happy to send one.

Adult Greek School-The Adult Greek School program is set to resume at 6:00-8:30 p.m. on Thursday January 10, 2013. Since the teacher Mrs. Magda Myer, will start from the beginning of the text being used, it will be the best time to enroll now, for those interested in learning Greek. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Myer at (813) 909-2327 or at aspis69@aol.com

Apokriatiko Glendi-"Mardi Gras"-The Saint John's "Young at Heart" invites everyone young and old to join us in celebrating a traditional Greek

Meeting Schedule for January

Tuesday, January 15
Tuesday, January 15
Sunday, January 20
Sunday, January 27

Young at Heart 11:00 a.m.
Parish Council 6:15 p.m.
AHEPA/Daughters of Penelope
GOYA 5:00 p.m.

Kourmolis Center
Multi-Purpose Room
After Liturgy
Kourmolis Center

Apokries, which will be held on Saturday, February 23, 2012 in the Kourmolis Community Center, from 7:00-11:00 p.m. Dancing to Greek and American Music by John Demas and his orchestra. Dinner will be served. Cost is \$25.00 per person in advance, \$30.00 per person at the door. Children under 10 are free and 10-18 are \$15 per person. Make your reservations now by calling Marina Paras (813-254-6980/813-966-9527) or Ron "Kiriakos" Myer (813-909-2327/813-523-5583)

MINISTRIES

GOYA

GOYA Lock-In-There will be a lock-in for our GOYAnS and those of surrounding churches in Tampa on Saturday, January 12, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Please contact Elaine Halkias to RSVP at nybagel2@msn.com, or 813-629-1843.

The GOYA Meeting for January will be Sunday, January 26, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be served.

YOUNG AT HEART

Young At Heart-The Young At Heart meeting for January will be Tuesday, January 15 at 11:00 a.m. More details to follow. For more information on our group, contact Ron Myer at 909-2327.

BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study will resume on Monday, January 14 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the multi-purpose room. Newcomers are welcome to join us. Dr. Bill Manikas leads the Bible study, which meets every Monday night.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our Community Outreach ministry to serve the homeless and those in need. For those who don't know, we serve breakfast at First Presbyterian Church on the third Saturday of each month from 8:00-10:30 a.m. For more information or to sign up to serve one Saturday, please contact, please contact Betty Katherine Palios at bettypalios@gmail.com or 813-468-1596.

CHOIR NEWS

Happy New Year! The choir had a very busy Christmas season, singing the beautiful nativity hymns of our church and special Christmas carols during the passing of the trays for everyone to enjoy each Sunday. We went Christmas caroling to three nursing homes, where several loved ones in our parish reside. It was such a meaningful experience and the choir had a wonderful time being together in fellowship, touching the lives of all the residents who heard us and joined us in singing.

We are looking forward to a very exciting 2013! We will start off the new year singing for the Feast Day of St. John and then we will officially kick off the preparations for the 2013 Southeastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs and Musicians Annual CHOIR CONFERENCE, being hosted right here in Tampa the last weekend of July!! We all appreciate the support we have received from the various ministries of our church, as it truly takes the entire community to host the conference. The conference weekend is such a spiritual and uplifting weekend. The choir rehearses all weekend, learning new music to sing on Sunday for the Divine Liturgy. It is a weekend filled with friendship, fellowship, music and prayer for the choir members and the congregation who listens and prays during the beautiful service on Sunday will be uplifted as well. We will announce the dates of our organizational meetings soon for anyone who is interested in attending.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Donna Trakas and Maria Xenick! May the new year be filled with many blessings for our church family

GUIDELINES FOR THE NEW YEAR

to take effect January 1, 2013

It is said, "Without order, there is chaos." The Parish Council, upon the approval of Father Stavros, has agreed to adopt the following guidelines for the "good of the order" at our church. We ask that everyone cooperate in following these guidelines. Please read these over carefully, and if you have any questions, please address them to the Parish Council or Father Stavros.

OFFICE/ADMINISTRATION:

In order for our staff to do their jobs properly and have enough time to do so, we respectfully ask the following:

- The deadline for submitting information for the weekly bulletin shall be on Tuesdays. All submissions must be submitted electronically; via email. officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com
- The deadline for the Messenger shall be the 10th of the month. As a cost cutting measure we are reducing the size of the Messenger, so no full page flyers will be put in. All submissions must be electronically; via email. Simply send in your event information and the office will format it for the publication. officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com
- Events may be advertised a maximum of two months prior to the event date for the Messenger and four weeks prior for the bulletin.
- The office visitation hours shall be 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM. Please make sure if you are visiting the office or dropping something off, that you respect this time frame. We need to allow quiet time for our staff to do their work. Of course, you may still make appointments to see Father outside of these hours.

FUNDRAISERS/HALL USAGE:

- All fundraisers and events by ministries or church affiliated groups should be scheduled at the August calendar meeting. For those, not scheduled at this meeting; please submit your event request to the Parish Council; via the office email. officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com
- Please make every effort to clean up the kitchen after your event. No food, trays, utensils, etc., should be left on the counters. Please throw away all trash and at least rinse all dirty dishes, trays, etc. We don't want to attract critters!
- All sales of tickets and other fundraising items, shall take place at designated tables immediately outside of the foyer. These tables will be preset for your use. Our foyer has become increasingly crowded and we need to maintain clearance per fire code.
- All contracts for caterers, bands, etc., made in the church name that obligate the church for payment shall be submitted and signed by the Parish Council.



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January 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 New Years' Day St. Basil Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	2	3	4 Royal Hours of Epiphany 9:30-11:00 a.m.	5 Vespers 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Blessing of Waters 10:30 a.m. Fast Day
6 EPIPHANY Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:45 a.m. Blessing of Waters 11:15a Vespers 7:00 p.m.	7 St. John the Baptist Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 9:30 a.m. Feast Day Luncheon	8	9 Fast Day	10	11 Fast Day	12 GOYA Lock-In
13 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Vasilopita Sunday	14 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	15 Young at Heart 11:00 a.m. Parish Council 6:15 p.m.	16 Fast Day	17 St. Anthony Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	18 Sts. Athanasios and Cyril Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day	19 Community Outreach Gasparilla Children's Parade Fundraiser
20 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	21 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	22	23 Fast Day	24	25 St. Gregory the Theologian Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day	26 Gasparilla Adult Parade Fundraiser
27 Orthros 8:30 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA 5:00 p.m.	28 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	29	30 Three Hierarchs Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Fast Day	31		

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK
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MISSION STATEMENT:

St. John Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

VISION:

The church shall seek to fulfill its mission by:

1. Embracing the Spiritual Life of the Orthodox Church through regular prayer, worship, and frequent participation in the sacraments.
2. Supporting the Church through stewardship of time and talent and sacrificial giving.
3. Providing a welcoming, caring, loving environment.
4. Having its members exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Supporting ministries that facilitate the overall mission of the Church
6. Exemplifying commitment to community service and charitable outreach.
7. Creating an environment which encourages members to grow in their faith.