“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

September 2013

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.

Father Stavros’ Message

On September 1, I will mark my 9 year anniversary as the priest of St. John. I am so thankful to God for this wonderful ministry that I enjoy here in Tampa. I am thankful to all the people who help and assist in my ministry and all the people who have shared the joys and sorrows of this journey over the years. I hope by His grace to be here for many years into the future. Once we pass September 1, it will mean it will be my TENTH go around with every event in the life of our parish—On September 14, I will celebrate my nameday for the 10th time in this parish, WOW! The number 10 in the Bible represents a tithe, the amount of something we are supposed to give to God. If I live to be 100, a tithe of my namedays will have been spent in this parish.

As we go through the next year, it will being the tenth go around with the festival, stewardship, parish council, as well as Christmas, Holy Week, etc. As I reflect on the nine years I’ve spent here, I am very pleased with many aspects of the ministry at St. John—we have so many beautiful and talented people in our congregation, people who were strangers 9 years ago that today I count as some of my closest friends. We have many children in our Sunday school, our ratio of baptisms to funerals is very favorable, we’ve got an awesome choir and chanter, and many other positive things. We also have some challenges—they are the same challenges that every church community faces—like keeping things new and fresh, getting people more committed, keeping the thinking positive, and of course, we have challenges with our finances. It is my hope this coming year to address some of these challenges, so that next year, when God-willing I enter the second decade of ministry in Tampa, we are more equipped to thrive, rather than survive. To that end, we are unveiling a few new programs for the new Church Year (yes, the church begins its new Ecclesiastical year on September 1, rather than on January 1. So, we have some new programs and we hope our members will make some “new church year resolutions.” The message is a little lengthy this month but please read through—this is a pretty complete outline on where I’d like to see our church community go this year. First we will address the “power of positive thinking”, by unveiling a new campaign for the fall called:

JUST SAY ‘YES’

At a recent gathering of our youth adult group, I was asked the following question: “At a time when most churches are not growing and it seems that the Christian faith is weakening, how do you get the church to grow and the faith to thrive?” A great question! Almost immediately, three words flew
out of my mouth: “JUST SAY YES!” Reflecting on the history of the church, the
church has always grown and the faith has spread because people have said “YES!” When Jesus Himself was in agony as He anticipated His impending
death on the Cross, He prayed for God to take away His cup of suffering.
Yet, ultimately, He said “Not my will, but THY will be done.” (Luke 22:42) In
other words, He said YES. When Jesus called the first disciples and said “Follow
me and I will make you fishers of men,”(Matthew 4:19) their response wasn’t “We’re too busy,” or “we’re too dumb,” or “we’re not sure we can make the
commitment,” it was YES, and they followed. Following Pentecost, each
Apostle said YES to taking the Christian message to a different part of the
world.

Most of us are familiar with the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes (Matthew 14:14-21) feeding the five thousand people (not counting women and
children). Jesus asked the crowds if there was anyone who had something to
eat. Imagine if you had one loaf of bread that you brought for yourself, and
here was someone asking if you had some food you could share. You’d have
to think you’d get a morsel of bread back at best if you offered the loaf to be
shared among so many people. But yet, someone (or a few people, we are not told) stepped forward and said “YES, here is some food.” And with that
small, but sacrificial offering, Jesus made a miracle that not only fed 5,000
men, AND fed women and children, but there were also TWELVE BASKETS
OF FOOD LEFT OVER. The leftovers exceeded the original offering. And this is
what happens when we say YES to the Lord. We get it all back, and more!!!
And that goes for when we spend time in prayer and worship, when we give
generously through our stewardship, when we go out of our way to help
someone. We get it all back and more! On the other hand, we learned in
elementary school math that zero times anything is still zero. So this mir-
acle that was made possible by the Lord’s blessing, was also made possible
through the courage and generosity of those who offered the loaves and the
fish. For, had nothing been offered, there could have been no miracle. Mir-
acles happen in our church every day. They happen, however, through the
blessing of the Lord, in tandem with our offering to Him through the Church.

Under threat of death, the early Christians still said “Yes, we believe” and
many lost their earthly lives and gained heaven because of it, at the same time inspiring other people to follow after Christ. The church grew by 40%
per decade when it was under persecution. That rate is astounding—how
could a church in secret grow? The only time the church was public was when
there was an execution of a Christian. This inspired many non-believers to
turn to Christ. Throughout such persecution, the church grew by 40% per
decade, which is 2% every decade when it was under persecution. That rate
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SO, we are starting a campaign this fall called “Just Say YES”—On Sunday, September 8, we’re going to kick off our Just Say YES campaign by handing our magnets to take home to display on your refrigerator, which will serve as a daily reminder to you to Just Say YES to the things of God (see quiz below). We will also be handing out car magnets—people put all kinds of political and athletic endorsements on their cars, why not something about our church. Both the fridge and car magnets are going to say “Just Say YES” and have the name of our church on them. They are sure to catch someone’s eye in your driveway, in the parking lot at work, or in the pick-up line at school, and this will be a great chance to witness for your faith by saying “I say YES” when it comes to things about Christ and His Church. And through a series of sermons over the upcoming months, we’ll work on transforming our community into a place where YES is one of the most-often heard words. It’s like that saying goes: “Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”

If we learn to say yes with our thoughts and our words, that will translate into actions, habits, and character and profoundly shape the destiny of our community.

So, here is a quiz—look it over and see how your do. Count up the YES answers and the NO answers. And for each NO, ask yourself why this is a NO answer and not a YES answer.

1. Can you commit to coming to church every Sunday? (or at least 80-90 percent of the time?) YES No
2. Can you commit to coming to church on time? YES No
3. Can you prepare to receive Holy Communion on a regular basis? YES No
4. Will you volunteer at the festival YES No
5. Will you be positive in working at the festival YES No
6. Will you commit to speaking positively about our faith to at least one person who is not Orthodox in your life? YES No
7. Will you commit to cutting down on gossiping about other people YES No
8. Can you commit to praying 5 minutes a day? YES No
9. Can you commit to reading the Bible, either through your own directed study or by getting the daily readings on your phone/email? YES No
10. Will you commit to increasing your financial pledge next year YES No
11. Do you believe that Christian giving should be “sacrificial” YES No

As we begin a new church year, and my tenth year of ministry, I am going to set forth some POSITIVE Goals for the year that I’d like to see our church do. These goals may seem lofty, though I don’t think they are. But I want to focus on achieving each of them, and being positive along the way. Here are some of the goals:

1. Continued Positive Growth in Attendance—we have a full church just about every Sunday. Of course, it is not full at ten o’clock when Liturgy starts. I want us each to make an effort the Just Say YES when it comes to arriving in church on time. We’re on time for everything else in life, why not for the worship of our Lord?! Goal number one: Just say YES to getting everyone here on time, and each Sunday.

2. Greater Participation in the Divine Liturgy—as you will read in this issue of the Messenger, we are placing a greater emphasis on the congregation singing the liturgy along with the choir this year. To this end, we have some new more “user-friendly” liturgy books in the pews and we will be having two Sundays in the fall where the choir will sing from the congregation and we will all sing with one voice. It is hoped that on any and every given Sunday and service, that the congregation will start singing more together, with the choir leading, rather than performing for us. This is the true spirit of Orthodox worship—a capable choir (and our choir is FANTASTIC) leading and enthusiastic congregation in singing the responses of the Divine Liturgy. Goal number two: Just Say YES to singing the liturgy all together.

3. A Positive Festival—There are going to be some changes in the festival this year, most notably a new chairperson. Katherine Sakkis did a fantastic job in chairing our festival for the past two years, and someone new will be at the helm this year. Organizational meetings will be held in September—remember the Festival is only two months away, November 8, 9 and 10. We’ve had good festivals in the past, specifically where money is concerned. However, we haven’t yet had a festival where there haven’t been petty arguments about things like olives and feta cheese. This is my tenth festival. It is time to change that. Goal number three—Just Say YES on being positive at the festival.

4. Positive growth in stewardship—The Greek Orthodox Church is the only church I know of where we rely on other people buying our food at a festival to keep the doors open to the church. While we have had some growth in our stewardship, we still rely on the festival to get us through the year. We still have to hold on during lean months, depleting accounts and hoping to replenish them with the festival. We wouldn’t run our homes or businesses like this, so why is it acceptable to us for our church to run like this? Stewardship, for everyone, is a work in progress. Every year, it is my family’s goal to have positive growth in our stewardship contribution to the church. We view our stewardship not as an obligation, but a joy. It is an act of thanksgiving to God, faith in God, and love of God’s church. We eagerly raise it each year. And with the example of the offering of the five loaves and two fish referenced above, it seems that the more we give, the more we receive from God in return. More stewardship information will follow in ensuing months, but one thing I want to see in this budget cycle is for us to budget according to what we want to see our church do, and then raise the money to do it. Most Orthodox churches skate by with the bare minimum of what they think they can afford. So they keep the bar low—if we think it is important for our church to budget to support national ministries like our Seminary, it should go in the budget. If we think it is important for our church to make gestures of support for natural disasters, we should put that in the budget. There shouldn’t be what seems like a constant nickel-and-diming through second trays and other such things. (In fact, the Parish Council passed a motion at...
our August meeting that effective January 1, 2014, we will only pass second trays for the emergency fund, all other second trays will be eliminated, and things we are asked to support during the year will be written in the budget going forward. Goal Number four—Just Say YES on increasing your stewardship.

5. Positive growth in personnel—It has been three years since we sent Charlie Hambos to the seminary to study for the priesthood. He’ll be graduating next spring, and since he won’t be getting ordained right away (he wants to get married first), I would like to see him come back as our pastoral assistant. What is a pastoral assistant? A pastoral assistant assists the “pastor” of the parish in creating and administering ADDITIONAL ministries. There are a finite amount of hours in the week, and a finite amount of work that can be done in those hours. A lot of the work that I do does not need to be done by a priest—there are a lot of administrative things, and even a lot of ministry things that don’t require a priest. The Archdiocese has come out with a new pre-marital counseling program. We are being encouraged, as priests, to implement this program which will require me to spend more than double the time I am now spending with each couple. The church feels, and I agree, that we need to put more emphasis in preparing people to get married. We also need to put more emphasis on the process of baptizing people, we need more time spent on catechism, more emphasis on Sunday school, more programs with youth, more visitations for the sick. I try (and hopefully succeed) to Just Say YES to requests that come my way. However, over time, there are more requests from more people but still the same amount of hours in the week. The solution to this is to work our way up to getting a pastoral assistant and ultimately a second priest. But small steps first. We need to increase our budget next year to include money for a pastoral assistant for half the year (starting in July 2014). Then in 2015 we budget for the whole year. Then in 2016, we work up to getting a second priest. I will continue, as best I can, to Just Say YES to your requests and to do so with joy, and as much as I can, to not look at my watch when ministering to you. I hope that you will Just Say YES when it comes to a pastoral assistant, so that the pastor, and his assistant, will have more hours (combined) to be better able to Just Say YES to you. Goal number five—Just Say YES to increasing our personnel.

So there you have it—five goals that are attainable—there is no mention of a million dollar capital campaign, or a new church complex. I’m challenging you to come every Sunday, come on time, sing, be positive at the festival, increase your stewardship, and bring in an assistant. These goals are VERY attainable. But the first step in the journey is your buy-in, your Just Say YES! I read in a book recently that being positive is a choice. We can’t keep all bad things away from us. But when challenges arise, we can CHOOSE to look at them in a positive way or in a negative way. This is a choice we each have to make. When you wake up in the morning, you can control whether your first thought is a positive one or a negative one. My first thought every day is positive—I’m training myself this way—My first thought is always, “Thank you God that I’m alive to see another day.” Many people’s first thought of the day is “Darn, the alarm already.” Again, the first thought of the day is your choice. Even if your baby wakes you up in the middle of the night, you have a choice—you can curse that the baby got you up again, or you can be thankful you have a baby.

As the saying goes, “Some see the glass half-full, some see the glass half-empty.” That’s a matter of choice as well. In the Just Say YES campaign, we are seeking to see good in ourselves, in those around us, in the opportunities we have every day, in our church and in our Lord. When we all Just Say YES, the possibilities are seemingly endless. When we do not say yes, the choices become limited.

So, as we kick off a new church year, a new Sunday school year, and the tenth year of my ministry in Tampa, there are three words I want you to remember, because they are going to make all the difference this year: JUST SAY YES!!!

With love in the Lord,
+Fr. Stavros

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Small Group Ministry Kicks off in September

For a couple of months now, you’ve been reading about the formation of small groups at St. John. These groups will gather once a week to study the Bible, discuss how to apply scripture to daily life, pray together and become small spiritual support groups. These sessions will last about an hour and will be discussion, not lecture, based. This is an opportunity to work side by side with each other to learn more about the faith. As group members get to know one another on a deeper level and as groups become more committed, you’ll see that the groups will not only become a resource to help learn and live the faith, but through these groups, we’ll eventually help “carry one another’s burdens and so build up the body of Christ”, as we are told to do in Galatians 6:2. And this is what the church is all about—helping one another through this life, on the journey to everlasting life.

Some FAQ’s about the small group ministry:

1. Who will lead these groups? The groups will be led by people of the community, with guidance from Fr. Stavros. Fr. Stavros is providing the curriculum as well as training for the leaders of each group. Fr. Stavros will also visit each group periodically and be available as a resource at all times to each group.

2. How often will the groups meet? The groups will meet once a week, running the same schedule as the school year. That means there will be a week off at Thanksgiving, a few weeks off at Christmas, a week off for spring break and one for Holy Week, and the groups will be in recess for summer.

3. Are we on “Greek time” or “American time” for these group meetings? The answer is AMERICAN time—the groups will start and end on time. The morning meetings will last an hour—they will start ON TIME. Of course, if group members wish for the meeting to go longer, that will be up to each group, but they will end at the time advertised. The evening groups will last longer because they will involve eating—probably a pot luck each week, with each member bringing a small dish to share, again, this will be up to the group how this works. The evening groups are set to meet and eat at 6:30, with Bible Study from 7:00-8:00 p.m.

4. I don’t know the group leader or host. Am I just supposed to show up at the house of someone I don’t know, is that okay? YES, the group leaders are expecting to have people they don’t know come to their homes. You probably want to call or email the group leader if you need information or directions but yes, you are welcome to join any of the groups.

5. Can I bring a non-Orthodox spouse or friend to these groups? ABSOLUTELY. One of the reasons we are starting these groups is because several members of our parish are attending Protestant Bible studies, because they have been invited by co-workers or friends. If you have a friend or co-worker who you think would benefit from small group ministry, please invite them.

6. I don’t know the Bible very well, is that a problem? NO, not at all. In the small group, you are going to study the Bible together, by reading short passages and answering questions about how the passage relates to life in general and to your life specifically.

7. What are the requirements to be in a group? There are some expectations of group members:

   a. Commit to participating every week (or nearly every week, obviously, we know people travel, kids get sick, etc., but the idea is that you will attend on a regular basis)
   b. Respect what other people have to say. In a discussion where people are sharing experiences, they need support and validation, not judgment.
   c. Everybody participates—when you go to small groups, it is expected that you are going to participate in the discussion. Again, this is not a lecture, or a traditional Bible study where the priest or professor gives a lecture. A group leader leads a discussion in which all group members participate.
   d. Everybody commits to praying for the group members. The best way to bear one another’s burdens is to do so through prayer. Group members will pray for one another.

8. Which group should I join? The one that is easiest for you to attend. I was talking to a mom the other day who is considering the women’s group, but realizes that one of the evening groups is closer to her home. She can attend whichever is easier to go to. There are groups in different parts of town. If you’d rather drive farther and go to a different group, by all means do so. Just pick ONE group and stick with it.

9. I want to host a group. Can I do so in the future? These are the groups for fall, as well as the times. At the end of the fall, we will re-evaluate each group to see if the day, the time and the location are good. It might be that someone else in the area wants to host for the spring, and we change the location. If this goes really well, we might establish another group or two in other parts of town or on other days. But if you want to host in the future, I’m sure that request can be made.

10. Do I RSVP or just show up? Please RSVP to the group leader (in the case of the South Tampa group, RSVP with the host as well since they are two different people) so they know how many to expect. When you send your RSVP, please CC Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. The reason for the RSVP is that there are printed materials each group member will receive each week. We want to prepare enough. I will be coordinating this with the group leader and office staff as we get going.

So, here are the six groups, locations and leaders, as well as contact information. I ask that you please email the group leader or call them and if you email them, please CC me as well. As we are in the organizing phase of this ministry, I want to help and assist in setting this up.

These small groups will begin the week of September 8 (except for the Young Adult Group that has been meeting since August).

The Women’s Group and the Tuesday evening groups will meet for the first time on Tuesday, September 10.

The Men’s Group will meet for the first time on Wednesday, September 11.

The Thursday evening group will meet for the first time on Thursday, September 12.
Women’s Group (for adult women of any age)
**Location:** Meets at the home of Debbie Kavouklis, 3315 Jean Circle, Tampa, FL 33629—Debbie lives in South Tampa, a mile or so from the church.
**Group Leader:** Debbie Kavouklis—you can email Debbie at dkavouklis1@verizon.net, or call her at 690-0155.
**Meeting time:** Tuesdays evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Men’s Group (for adult men of any age)
**Location:** St. John Greek Orthodox Church in the Administration Building in the meeting room—there will be signs the first week directing you where to go.
**Group Leader:** Father Stavros for the first one but we are going to rotate this among group members. Please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com or contact him at 813-394-1038.
**Meeting time:** Wednesday mornings from 7:00-8:00 a.m.
For this early morning group, bring your own coffee or breakfast food if you wish—we will not be providing these things.

South Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)
Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa.
**Location:** Home of Ellen Karaku, 4610 S. Ferdinand Avenue (South Tampa near Dale Mabry and Bay to Bay), Tampa, FL 33611. Ellen’s home number is 813-835-0691 and her cell number is 813-240-3687. Her email is ekaraku@verizon.net.
**Group Leader:** Bessie Palios—Her email is bmpp1126@yahoo.com, and her cell number is 813-523-0347. If you are going to attend this group, please RSVP to Ellen, Bessie and Fr. Stavros.
**Meeting time:** Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

North Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)
Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in North Tampa, Lutz, Land O’Lakes, Wesley Chapel and Carrollwood.
**Location:** Home of Michael and Artemis Conner. They live in Lutz near George Steinbrenner High School off of Van Dyke. Their address is 5524 Reflections Blvd, Lutz, FL 33558. Their number is 813-920-4404 and Michael’s cell is 813-784-0182. Michael’s email is conner.mike.01@gmail.com, and Artemis’ email is artemisia004@yahoo.com. Please contact them before you attend the first meeting to get the gate code to their community.
**Group Leader:** Michael Conner
**Meeting time:** Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

East Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)
Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live on the East side of town—Riverview, Brandon, Valrico, Seffner, Lakeland.
**Location:** Home of George and Donna Hambos—They live in Valrico at 2604 Herndon Street, Valrico, FL 33596. Their home number is 813-651-9226 and Donna’s cell number is 813-843-8412, and Donna’s email is dhambos@msn.com.
**Group Leader:** Donna Hambos
**Meeting Time:** Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Young Adult Group (for adults ages 18-40)
**Location:** Homes of group members, this one rotates, contact group leader for location each week.
**Group Leader:** Mary Ann Konstas, who can be reached at 813-215-9862 or at mapkonstas@gmail.com. Please contact Mary Ann if you are interested in joining this group so she can tell you where the next meeting will take place.
**Meeting time:** Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

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A Change of Scenery, Part 2: The Holy Mountain/Mt. Athos
By Charles Hambos

It was 4:30 a.m., and the air was borderline cool. The streets of Thessaloniki were quiet and only the faint orange glow from the city lights illuminated the obelisk statue and fountain in front of the ABC Hotel. Soon enough, a medium-sized bus pulled up. All you could see were the bold-faced letters spelling, ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΕΙΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ. This bus, owned by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, would be taking my class for the two-hour ride to Ouranoupolis, “City of Heaven,” where we would catch a boat to Mt. Athos.

We weren’t even in Greece for a week and we were already on our way to Mt. Athos. It rarely rains in Greece, but the day we left for Mt. Athos, it rained. The skies were still gray and the rain was still falling by the time we reached Ouranoupolis. There was a possibility that the boats would be cancelled. Our only choice was to hang out at a local café, drink some frappe and have a toast (my preference: cheese and ham). Plus, frappes and toasts would not be readily available on Mt. Athos. Ouranoupolis was full of cafes and shops catering to the Greek, Russian, Serbian, Romanian Orthodox pilgrims going to and from the Holy Mountain. Our visas were acquired since Mt. Athos is an independent entity not having anything to do with the government of Greece. We waited and found out that the boats would be running and we were to catch the 8:45 a.m. slow boat, “Axion Estin.” There are several fast boats, but for our group the slow boat option was cheaper.

It had taken about an hour or so to reach Xenophontos Monastery, one of twenty monasteries on Mt. Athos, where we would be spending two nights. At this point, the thought that I was actually going to Mt. Athos was still pretty surreal. I had studied the theology of the church as well as read and heard many stories of people’s experiences on the Holy Mountain. I remember being on the top deck where most of the pilgrims congregated. I was standing at the back with my arms crossed, leaning against railing. To my left was the Greek Flag of the “Axion Estin” waving proudly in the air and to the right, coming out of the water was Mt. Athos. Tears of expectation and joy ran down my face at the approaching opportunity. Am I really going? Am I going to want to leave? What am I going to see? What is the food going to be like? How about the chanting? Am I going to get any sleep at all? Are there showers? Are there toilets? These were just a few of the questions running through my mind.

The large gate at the front of the boat dropped down as the boat pulled up to a long concrete pier where at the end, a few monks were waiting to greet the visitors. Two or three stops later, it was our turn to get off. Xenophontos monastery looked pretty impressive from the shoreline. How could it not be? The monastery is over 1,000 years old. We entered the gates and were taken to
the Archontariki, the guest quarters. We were told to put our bags down and go into a sort of greeting room, where we would sign in. This is where the fun began. Soon enough, a large bowl of home-made loukoumi (chewy, sugary, tasty good ness) was placed on the table. Then small glasses of tsipouro that was made at the monastery were offered. Then glasses of fresh cold water and last but not least, cups of fresh Greek coffee. That was awesome! This kind of hospitality was the job of a few of the monks and something that would become my favorite experiences while in Greece.

We got our room assignments, four of us to a room. From what I heard, if you were to rank monasteries on a five-star scale, Xenophon to is a four-star monastery. Everything was beautiful and very comfortable, for me at least. Well, since we knew that we would be spending a lot of time at the monastery we decide to take a hike to the next closest monastery, Dochia rioi, about a 45-minute hike. It doesn’t do justice for me to explain the magnificence of the iconography that covers all kinds of surfaces in these monasteries. However, to walk into the gates of the monastery and look up to see a Pantokrator icon of Christ, which was painted/written more than 600 years ago, is breathtaking. It is just one icon after the other. Some of which are miracle working. The relics, which these monasteries also have, are quite incredible: whole arms, feet, skulls and vestments. To have the opportunity to venerate them is just unreal. Anyway, we looked around and soon enough we were kindly asked congre gate in a big room, where we were greeted in the same fashion as before: loukoumi, tsipouro, fresh cold water and Greek coffee. The love and hospitality that these monks showed were amazing. As a classmate, said to me. This is how we should be in life. (After these experiences, I was thinking that whenever I get an office and someone schedules an appointment, I will always have some water and coffee and maybe a sweet or two at my disposal. We shall see what happens.) After that, we were taken into the big church where there were several miraculous icons and a Constantine era cross on display. The iconography the chandeliers and the overall church were incredible. We decided to hike a little further along the coast where we ran into some horses and construction, all while enjoying the picturesque landscape and crystal clear blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Later we returned to the monastery for dinner and a short period of rest before the all-night vigil for the feast of Sts. Constantine and Helen would commence.

Meals are a timed series of events. Come in and sit down. The food is already on the table and the cups are flipped upside down. The abbot comes in. He gives the blessing, and then we start eating but not drinking and definitely not speaking. A monk is reading the scripture. A bell rings and the cups are flipped. Then small glasses of tsipouro that are waiting for us to be flipped. The abbot tells us to put the cups upside down and then we can start drinking. This is how the Monastery of Xenophontos celebrated dinner. Except for the fact that this was a penitential church, I was not surprised by this. After the meal, we were given a tour of the monastery. We were shown the main church, the sacristy, the guest quarters, and the modern museum of the monastery. We were also given a tour of the modern museum of the monastery, which holds many very old icons and manuscripts. This was where I learned that the Divine Liturgy had been celebrated at this monastery for over 1,000 years and the original church is still there. Today, the main church they use is from the 1800s. After we saw the museum we had dinner and vespers. In the morning we had Orthros and Liturgy at 4 a.m., followed by a meal and then we took the fast boats back to Ouranoupolis, in order to catch the bus and have Modern Greek class in Thessaloniki that afternoon.

Our time there was too short. I really didn’t feel that we were there long enough to get into the schedule of daily life. Regardless, it was a great blessing to be there at all. The landscape and life is beautiful there. For all the ladies that are feeling sad, that they cannot go to Mt. Athos, do not be weary. There are many great women monasteries and they are equally if not more hospitable than the men’s monasteries. One of the first monasteries I ever went to was St. Stephen’s in Meteora where I venerated the skull of St. Haralambos. I visited another one this summer and the abbeys was incredible. I would not trade my experiences there and in Mt. Athos for anything else.

As I begin my last year at Holy Cross, I would sincerely like to thank everyone at St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church for all of their support not only at the most recent Agape Luncheon, but at every single one and thank you also for every single interaction that we have had with one another. I have said it for many years now, you are my St. John’s family and I am very proud of it. If you would like to contact me, please e-mail me at Charlie.hambos@gmail.com or my address is 50 Goddard Avenue, Box 016, Brookline, MA 02445. My prayers are with all of you and thank you for keeping me in yours.

Charlie Hambos is beginning his fourth and final year at Holy Cross Seminary.
The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman
Reviewed by Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis

If you are married, or in a serious relationship, you have to read this book! I have never been good or fast reader. While I enjoy writing (as you can tell from The Messenger) and write quickly, I am a slow reader. So, when I get excited about a book, it's a big deal. I also take recommendations from parishioners on books to read. When someone is “jumping up and down excited” about a book, I do take notice. And if you’ve read The Messenger over the years, you know that it is very rare for a book review to be part of the content. SO, TAKE NOTICE AS TO WHAT HOLLOWS—THIS IS THE BEST BOOK I HAVE EVER READ ON IMPROVING YOUR MARRIAGE:

In his book The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman (a New York Times Bestseller), he identifies FIVE specific love languages—Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service and Physical Touch. His hypothesis is that everyone has a primary love language and usually a secondary love language. While we may have elements of all five languages in our vocabulary, there is one, and sometimes two that are dominant.

What is a love language? A language in which we feel comfortable receiving or expressing love. If one’s primary love languages is “Words of Affirmation," as opposed to let’s say “Giving Gifts" it means that when that person gives a loving gesture, he or she is more likely to write a letter expressing love than to buy a gift. It also means that when receiving love, he or she would rather receive a heart-felt letter than a material gift.

The second hypothesis is that, in a marriage, the primary and secondary love languages of the respective spouses are not necessarily the same. In fact often times, they are very different. And this can potentially cause conflict in the marriage. A simple example—let’s say that the husband’s primary love language is “Words of Affirmation” and the wife's primary love language is “Acts of Service.” Here's an example of a potential conflict—the husband is constantly telling his wife that he loves her. But she says “If you love me, pick up your socks off the floor.” And when the wife wants to express her love for her husband, she takes his car out and gets it detailed, but what he really wants is for her to tell him how proud she is of him.

Which leads to the third hypothesis—obviously, we are most comfortable speaking in our own language. But if we could learn to understand and speak to our spouse in his or her primary love language, imagine what that could do for a marriage. Everyone has an emotional “love tank” which is filled by receiving love in your primary language. When that tank is full, everything in the world looks better, including one's marriage. When that tank is empty, everything in the world looks worse, including one's marriage. So, if you can learn to speak your spouse's language and keep their tank full, it will vastly improve your marriage.

This book is not a hard read, nor is it very long, about 200 pages. It is funny and is filled with real-life stories which every marriage can relate to. It is positive and uplifting and not threatening in any way. It is a book which spouses can read together if they wish. At the end of the book there is a 30 question profile for husbands and a separate one for wives, so that each party can identify their primary and secondary love languages. Armed with knowledge of your primary language, and the primary language of your spouse, along with tools for learning how to speak a “foreign language”, i.e. not your primary love language, you are ready to take your marriage to another level.

There are other books in Gary Chapman’s anthology, including “Five Love Languages for Children,” and “Five Love Languages for Teenagers,” as well as several other titles.

You can buy “The Five Love Languages” for $14.99. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS BOOK TO ANYONE WHO IS MARRIED OR IN A SERIOUS RELATIONSHIP!!!
George Carlin’s Views on Aging

Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get old is when we’re kids? If you’re less than 10 years old, you’re so excited about aging that you think in fractions.

“How old are you?” “I’m four and a half!” You’re never thirty-six and a half. You’re four and a half, going on five! That’s the key.

You get into your teens, now they can’t hold you back. You jump to the next number, or even a few ahead.

“How old are you?” “I’m gonna be 16!” You could be 13, but hey, you’re gonna be 16! And then the greatest day of your life you become 21. Even the words sound like a ceremony. YOU BECOME 21. YESSSS!!!

But then you turn 30. Oooohh, what happened there? Makes you sound like bad milk! He TURNED; we had to throw him out. There’s no fun now, you’re Just a sour-dumpling. What’s wrong? What’s changed?

You BECOME 21, you TURN 30, then you’re PUSHING 40. Whoa! Put on the brakes, it’s all slipping away. Before you know it, you REACH 50 and your dreams are gone.

But wait!!! You MAKE it to 60. You didn’t think you would!

So you BECOME 21, TURN 30, PUSH 40, REACH 50 and MAKE it to 60.

You’ve built up so much speed that you HIT 70! After that it’s a day-by-day thing; you HIT Wednesday!

You get into your 80’s and every day is a complete cycle; you HIT lunch; you TURN 4:30; you REACH bedtime. And it doesn’t end there. Into the 90s, you start going backwards; “I Was JUST 92.”

Then a strange thing happens. If you make it over 100, you become a little kid again. “I’m 100 and a half!”

May you all make it to a healthy 100 and a half!!

HOW TO STAY YOUNG

1. **Throw out nonessential numbers.** This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctors worry about them. That is why you pay “them.”

2. **Keep only cheerful friends.** The grouches pull you down.

3. **Keep learning.** Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever. Never let the brain idle. “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” And the devil’s name is Alzheimer’s.

4. **Enjoy the simple things.**

5. **Laugh** often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath

6. **The tears happen.** Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person, who is with us our entire life, is ourselves. Be ALIVE while you are alive.

7. **Surround yourself with what you love,** whether it’s family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.

8. **Cherish your health:** If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.

9. **Don’t take guilt trips.** Take a trip to the mall, even to the next county; to a foreign country but NOT to where the guilt is.

10. **Tell the people you love that you love them, at every opportunity.**

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.
Liturgical Schedule for September

**Sunday, September 1**  
**Beginning of the Ecclesiastical (Church) Year—The Indiction**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Altar Boys: Anyone attending may serve  
Ushers: Brett Mourer, Christopher Kavouklis, Amin Hanhan  
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

**Sunday, September 8**  
**Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (Karter Lenardos, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Brigham Sibley, Benny Hidermichel, James Kavouklis)  
Ushers: David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas  
Coffee Hour: Young at Heart

**Wednesday, September 11**  
**12 Year Anniversary of 9/11**  
Paraklesis Service of Supplication/Memorial Service/Prayer for Peace 10:00-11:00 a.m.

**Saturday, September 14**  
**Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Liturgy

**Sunday, September 15**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Mark (John Karamitsanis, Lukas Karamitsanis, Andrew Mellon-Lynn, Dominic Garcia, Demetri Karounos, Grayson Borgeas)  
Ushers: Mike Trimis, George Mitseas, Chris Kavouklis  
Coffee Hour: Alexander Family to benefit the food pantry

**Sunday, September 22**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Altar Boys: Captains and St. Luke (Christos Nenos, Dean Mitseas, Nicholas Katzaras, James Katzaras, Nicholas Yotis)  
Ushers: Florin Patrasciou, Kevin Fentress, John Alexander  
Coffee Hour: Glendi Dancers Coffee Hour and Bake Sale

**Sunday, September 29**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Altar Boys: Captains and St. John (George Hambos, Alexios Diniaco, Nicholas Alsina, Matthew Demetriou, Thomas Shearer)  
Ushers: Nick Kavouklis, Perry Katsamakis, Peter Theophanous  
Coffee Hour: Young Adults

**Sunday, October 6**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  
Altar Boys: Altar Boys: Captains and St. Matthew (Karter Lenardos, Gregory Koutroumanis, Harry Koutroumanis, Brigham Sibley, Benny Hidermichel, James Kavouklis)  
Ushers: Greg Tisdale, Demetrios Halkias, George Trimikliniotis  
Coffee Hour: Choir

We need Vasiliko (Basil) for the services of the Holy Cross—Please bring Vasiliko for Friday, September 14 and Sunday, September 15. Please bring it to the side door of the altar by 10:00 a.m. on both days, so we have time to make up the tray. The Procession for the Holy Cross will be held on Friday, September 14 and repeated on Sunday, September 15.
Nativity of the Virgin Mary—September 8—Major Feast Day—Placed right after the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year (September 1), this feastday commemorates the birth of the Virgin Mary to her parents, Joachim and Anna. It is one of the 12 Major Feast Days of the Church year.

September 11—Day of Remembrance—This year marks the 12th year anniversary of the terrorist attack on America on 9/11/01. Despite the years that have passed since that awful day, feelings and emotions are still riding high. It is appropriate to stop and reflect not only on a tragic day in the life of our country, but to pray for peace in a world that is beset with hostility, not only overseas but on the streets of our own city. On September 11, we will hold a Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary at 10:00 a.m., with a Trisagion service at the conclusion of the service. If you have time, please stop by our church to worship and pray for peace in the world and for recovery and healing of those who suffered and still suffer because of that terrible day.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross—September 14—Major Feast Day—Commemorates the finding of the Precious Cross of Christ by St. Helen in the year 325. This day is equal in solemnity to Good Friday, as it draws our attention to the supreme sacrifice made by the Lord for us. Connected with September 14 is the Tradition of the Vasiliko. St. Helen went in search of the Precious Cross. In Jerusalem, she found the hill of Golgotha. But she did not know where to search for the cross. Vasiliko (Basil), a sweet scented plant, was found growing on the hillside. She looked beneath the Basil and that’s where the cross was found. It is the Tradition of the Church that a Procession is held on September 14, where Basil is placed on a tray along with a cross and it is carried above the heads of the faithful. We will hold this procession on September 14, and also repeat it on Sunday, September 15.
COMMUNITY NEWS

Get Acquainted Sunday—September 1—In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our “get acquainted Sundays” one Sunday of each month. We will have nametags and markers in the entry way of the Kourmolis Center and will ask that each person put one on during coffee hour and introduce yourself to at least one person that you do not know. This will serve to help us increase our fellowship and sense of community. Our “Get Acquainted Sunday” for September will be Sunday, September 1.

Ministry Fair—September 8—As we do each year on the first Sunday of Sunday school, we are going to have a Ministry Fair on Sunday, September 8. Each of our ministries will set up a table and display information about their ministries. This will be a great opportunity to see what is going on at St. John and sign up to be a part of it.

Just Say YES Sunday—September 8—In conjunction with the ministry fair on September 8, we are also going to pass out the Just Say YES materials described in Fathers’ Message. Families can pick up a magnet for their refrigerator and car magnet in the hall after church. Please display this in your home, for a daily reminder to Just Say YES when it comes to your spiritual life and your involvement in our community. Please display the magnet on your car as a way to witness for our faith, promote our church, and to spread the Just Say YES spirit! These materials will be available on a few other Sundays until we run out of them.

Coffee hour September 15 to benefit the food pantry—Anetta Alexander will be sponsoring a coffee hour on September 15—the proceeds of this coffee hour will go to stocking the food pantry and buying gift cards to local stores for those who are hungry. On September 15, we hope to have everyone bring one can of food/non-perishable item to stock the food pantry again.

Congregational Singing—September 29, October 20—On June 30, for those who were in church, our choir sang from among the congregation, encouraging us all to sing together in the true spirit of Orthodox worship. We have some new Liturgy books (see separate article on that) which are very “user-friendly” and will allow us to sing along with the choir on Sundays. To encourage this, we are going to have two additional congregational singing Sundays—September 29 and October 20. The choir will sing amidst the congregation, like a flash mob at the mall, and everyone will be encouraged to use the new books to sing along with them.

Recent High School Graduates now in College—Please email Fr. Stavros with the address of your college students. We send the Messenger electronically to our college students and want to make sure all are on the mailing list.

The YAL wants your JUNK!! The Young Adults of St. John’s are organizing a parish wide yard sale to take place on Saturday, October 12th in our church parking lot. All of the proceeds from this event will go towards restoring one of our beautiful stained glass windows. If you have items to donate for the sale, please contact Mary Ann Konstas at mapkonstas@gmail.com

A special thanks to Kalliope Chagaris for cleaning the church over the summer!

Condolences to Alexis Scarfogliero, on the passing away of her father, John Irving, on July 30. May his memory be eternal!

Congratulations to Mihail Kabouris, who was chosen to take part in a youth summit in Wesley Chapel to combat bullying, youth violence and other problems young people face. The event was called “Together We Stand—Pasco Youth and Community Summit.” This event, including quotes from Mihail, was documented in Tampa newspapers. Congratulations Mihail! Our young people are involved in some truly amazing things! He was mentioned as follows:

"Mihail Kaburis, 15, a Land O’ Lakes High sophomore in the IB program, said he thinks bullying is less of a problem than it once was, though it still needs to be addressed. After the opening session, the summit participants split into breakout groups. Kaburis said students seemed open to discussing their experiences, especially after they were allowed to ask adults to leave the room.

“I feel we are getting a full opinion from the whole student body,” Kaburis said.

Later, he said, the students would be able to share their ideas with the adults to work toward solutions “as an entire community.”"

Constant Contact and Email Updates—Our church is using “constant contact” for email blasts, especially notices about funerals and other time-sensitive information. We have sent out several email blasts over the summer. If you have NOT received one from the office, please call or email the office and
make sure that the email address we have on file for you is current. And when you change your address, please keep us up to date.

**Alarm System in the Church**—Effective immediately, the church is being alarmed when not in use. If you are someone who comes into the church on a regular basis, or need to enter during times when the church may be alarmed, please see Father about disarming the alarm. If you come during office hours and find the church locked, please ask the office staff and they will be happy to disarm the alarm and open it for you.

**Donation Needed for altar boy robes**—we have an ever-increasing amount of altar boys. When we ordered the altar boy robes seven years ago, we ordered 18 of various sizes, based on the boys we had at the time. For each size, we have one gold robe, one white robe, and six stoles (red, white, blue, green, gold and purple). We need to order an additional robe in the small size, one more in the medium and one more in the large. They are about $1,000 per set—that’s for the two robes and six stoles in each size. So we need a total of $3,000 for this project. The good news is that the robes we have, thanks to the donations for dry cleaning that we have received, look as good as new. The robes are excellently made and will last at least 20–25 years because we take such good care of them. We just need a few more for the additional boys and their additional sizes.

**Donations needed for flowers for Feast of the Holy Cross**—We need donations of $100 for flowers for the tray for the procession of the Holy Cross on September 14, and $350 for flowers for the tray for the procession that will be repeated on September 15. Please call the office if you are interested.

**Get Daily Bible Readings Sent to your Email or Phone**—One of the best ways to start each day is by reading from the Bible. There are prescribed readings for every day of the year in the Orthodox Church. You can go on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America website at www.goarch.org, go into the search box and type in “Receive Daily Readings,” follow the prompts and have this valuable resource sent right to your phone or email. Reading the Bible is so important and for those of us who don’t make the time or are lazy to reach for the Bible, have the readings sent in a way that is easy to remember. Spend some time this new ecclesiastical year in God’s Word, the sacred Scriptures!

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**Orthodoxy 101 Class to be held in September**—Fr. Stavros offers this class two times per year, in spring and in fall. This will be the SAME CLASS so no need to take it again if you already have. This will be a three-week course of study on Monday nights to make people aware of the basics of being an Orthodox Christian. Who should attend the Orthodoxy 101 class?

~Interfaith couples—this will help the non-Orthodox person understand more what is going on in our church when they attend.
~Anyone who is considering joining our h. Going forward, this class will be a requirement for those who wish to join our Orthodox faith.
~New converts to Orthodoxy—For those who recently joined our church and who want to know a little bit more about it.
~Anyone who wants to know more about the basics of our faith, or who wants a refresher course in the basics of Orthodoxy is encouraged to attend.

The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers. The three sessions will be done as follows:

- **Monday, September 16**
  - A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means
- **Monday, September 23**
  - Orthodox Spirituality—The Seven Sacraments and the Divine Liturgy
- **Monday, September 30**
  - Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiayialogy” (what our grandparents taught us wasn’t always right)

Classes will be held on these three Mondays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will be held in the CHURCH Sanctuary. Please sign up with Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com, so he has enough materials for everyone. There is no charge for this
Meeting Schedule for September

Tuesday, September 3  Young at Heart  11:00 a.m.  Museum visit/Restaurant, see article
Sunday, September 8  GOYA   5:00 p.m.  Kourmolis Center
Tuesday, September 10  Parish Council  6:15 p.m.  Multi-Purpose Rom
Sunday, September 15  AHEPA   After Liturgy  Zaharias Room
Sunday, September 15  Daughters/Penelope  After Liturgy  Meeting Room-Administration Building

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE (AS OF AUGUST 15)

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For those who have pledged this year, thank you for your generous support of St. John Greek Orthodox Church. For those who have not pledged, please send in your pledge form today. Extra forms are available in the church office. Remember, the church relies on your generosity to not only keep it's doors open, but to offer it's many ministries. We all benefit from the church. We all must do our part in support of our church! **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN TAMPA**

Leave the Church in Your Will

Part of our life's legacy is the inheritance we leave our children. By leaving an inheritance, a part of us lives on through them. When preparing your will, you should consider leaving money to our church—this is the church of your children and part of their future can be positively impacted by leaving some of your inheritance to the church. The ability of the church to spread the Word of God is facilitated by everyone's stewardship. By leaving a portion of your inheritance to the church in your will, you remain a steward in perpetuity, but more importantly, you help cement a solid financial future for the church for your children and your grandchildren. If you are interested in leaving the church in your will, please contact Russell Sibley (church member) at rsibleylaw@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Friends of St. John—Some of you who receive The Messenger do not live in the Tampa Bay area or are members of other Greek Orthodox parishes. We would like to ask for your support of our parish as a “Friend of St. John”. Your contribution as a “Friend” will help offset the cost of mailing The Messenger, among other things. Being a “friend” does not make one a steward of St. John or afford membership rights and responsibilities, but gives one who is a member elsewhere, an opportunity to make a gesture of financial support to our parish. If you are interested in being a “Friend of St. John”, please fill out and return the form below. Thank you for your consideration of our parish.

**FRIENDS OF ST. JOHN**

Name__________________________________________________________

Address_______________________________________________________

Phone_____________________________  Email_______________________

I wish to be a “Friend of St. John”. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:_________$50  ___________$100  ___________$200  ________Other

Please mail this form and check to: St. John Greek Orthodox Church 2418 Swann Avenue, Tampa, FL 33609
**MINISTRIES**

**JOY PRE-TEEN RETREAT—SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29**

Our St. John JOY is hosting a workshop for all pre-teens grades 3-7 on Sunday September 29, beginning after church from 12:30-3:00 p.m.. All children and their parents are invited to attend. We will have activities and games, guest speakers on a variety of topics including self-esteem, bullying, prayer and making Godly choices. Please contact Maria Xenick (813) 839-9897, mpxenick@tampabay.rr.com if you and your children will be attending. See enclosed flyer for more details.

**YOUNG AT HEART**

The Young At Heart monthly meeting was held on August 6, 2013 at Mary Nenos home. There were about 16 persons present. Mary prepared food for everyone, that included meals for those that were fasting and for those that were not. Dessert was also served. Everything was homemade and just wonderful!

The future events were discussed as follows:

1- September 3 - the next meeting will combine a visit to the University of Tampa for the Language of Jewelry exhibit and lunch will follow at a nearby restaurant.
2- October will include an evening of “Hello Dolly” at the Show Palace dinner theatre in Hudson - specific date will be announced in the near future.
3- We are planning a Mystery Train overnight trip in Manatee county and waiting to confirm the date.

If you are interested in the joining the St John’s Y.A.H. ministry, please feel free to contact Mary Nenos 813 935 2096 or Nick Antonakakis 813 477 6639.

**GOYA**

**GOYA Meeting for September—September 8**—Our regular GOYA meeting for September will be Sunday, September 8, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

**Lock-In on September 14**—we will be having a lock-in for our GOYAns as well as GOYAns from neighboring parishes on Saturday, September 14, beginning at 6:00 p.m.. We will have games, sessions, discussions and food. We will be spending the night in the Kourmolis Center and then attending church on Sunday, September 15. Please RSVP to Elaine Halkias by September 8 if you are interested in attending.

**ADULT GREEK SCHOOL**

The Adult Greek School program will start at 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 10, 2013. The teacher Mrs. Magda Myer will use the same text book for beginners. Those interested in learning Greek, please contact Mrs. Myer at (813) 909-2327, aspis69@aol.com or contact the church office at (813) 876-8830.

**YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY (YAL)**

The Young Adults resumed Bible study/small group on Wednesday August 21st. Bible study will be held every Wednesday at 6:30pm and dinner will be provided. The meeting place will vary each week. Even if you have not been able to make prior meetings, join us if you can! To be added to the email list for this and other YAL events, please contact Mary Ann Konstas at mapkonstas@gmail.com or 813-215-9862. Most announcements regarding this group go out through email, so please contact Mary Ann to be added to the email list.

**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. Upcoming dates are Saturday, September 21 and Saturday, October 19. 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.
SUNDAY SCHOOL

September Service Project—Our Sunday School is holding a single item drive for the entire month of September! Please help us collect any travel sized personal care product—one soap, deodorant, toothpaste, lotions, shaving items, mouthwash, etc. These can be for men or women. We will have a collection box in the foyer of the Kourmolis Center. We will donate these items to First Presbyterian Church. As part of our Outreach Ministry, we partner with this downtown church and help serve breakfast on a monthly basis to the homeless community. They can use these personal care items to distribute to those in need. Thank you for your generosity and support of this worthwhile cause!

Sunday School Classes will begin on September 8—Sunday School Registration will take place on August 25 and September 1 following the Divine Liturgy each Sunday.

First Youth Sunday—September 22—Every month, from September through May (see enclosed calendar), we are going to have one Sunday designated as Youth Sunday. On Youth Sunday each month, all Sunday school students are requested to be in church no later than 9:50 a.m., and to sit near the choir in the small section on the right side of the church (or in the front pews on the right side if there are too many to fit in the small section). We will sing along with the choir and there will be several hymns where the children will sing on their own. This is a great way for them to learn the hymns of our church and to inspire our congregation with their angelic voices. The first youth Sunday will be September 22.

News and Notes:

The Sunday School Staff is looking forward to serving the children of St. John’s for the 2013-2014 school year. Our first day of Sunday School is September 8th. Please make sure to register your children on Sept. 1st or on the first day of school, if you haven’t already done so. We need this information for our records and for communication.

We would like thank everyone for a successful Sunday School Graduation Ceremony and Peggy & Harold Bradshaw for hosting our end of the year party. Everyone had such a great time. Congratulations to our High School Graduates. We wish Thanasi Halkas, Matthew Peckham, Andy Paloumpis, Sam Alem, Maggie Kavouklis, Christina Gerecke, and Alexandra Gerecke the best of luck in college.

At this Graduation we kicked off our Sunday School Stained Glass Window Project. We raised $604 from a tray that was passed and now we have a total of $1204 towards our goal of $4500. We are hosting a Luncheon on Sept. 8th catered by EVO’s and 50% of the proceeds will go towards this project. We will also have other fundraisers with the hopes of achieving this goal by Christmas. Thank you again for your support of this project.

Before we introduce our new staff, we would like to thank the following people for their service and dedication to the Sunday School. They are: Kara Katzaras, Victoria Garos, and Jenna Mingledorff.

WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE OUR OUTSTANDING STAFF FOR THE 2013-2014 SCHOOL YEAR.THEY ARE:

Director of Sunday School: Vickie Peckham
Assistant Director of Administration: Tammy Christou
Assistant Director of Music/Special Programs: Maria Xenick
Pam Irwin - Music Assistant
Nursery Coordinator: Donna Trakas
Pre-K (3 and 4 year olds): Alexis Scarfogliero – Teacher and Debbie Nicklow - Assistant
Kindergarten: Irene Kostaris - Teacher and Bessie Palios - Assistant
Grade 1: Heidi Borgeas and Amy Kafantaris - Co-Teachers
Grade 2: Marina Choundas - Teacher and Lora Williams - Assistant
Grade 3: Stamie Garcia - Teacher and Melissa Krinos - Assistant
Grade 4 and 5: Debbie Ferekides
Grade 6: Vickie Peckham
Grade 7 and 8: Betty Palios
High School: Peggy Bradshaw and Isidoros Passalaris – Co-Teachers

The teachers met with Father Stavros for a Sunday School Teachers Retreat on Aug. 24th. The focus of our retreat was to bond as a team and work on our group identity: religious educators. Of course a good portion of this retreat was discussing our faith. Father Stavros is an inspirational teacher and this was a wonderful way to start the new Sunday School year.
SUNDAY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

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

Sunday School Vision:

The Sunday School Program shall seek to fulfill its mission by:

1. Embracing the Spiritual Life and Joy of our Orthodox faith through regular prayer, worship, and frequent participation in the sacraments.
2. Support the Church through stewardship of time, talent, and sacrificial giving.
3. Providing our students with a welcoming, caring, and loving educational environment.
4. Having the Sunday School Staff and Students exemplify Orthodox Christian character and morals.
5. Providing strategies for our children to rely on their faith and values, when confronted with challenging circumstances and temptations, as they travel through their teens and into adulthood.
6. Teaching our students why this vision is important—why it is important to embrace the Spiritual Life by defining and teaching what is the Spiritual and Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church; what is stewardship and why it is important; and teaching Orthodox Christian character and morals.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John’s Sunday School Program. Vickie Peckham - 406-5626
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, September 5</td>
<td>Festival Organizational Meeting</td>
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<td>Sunday, September 8</td>
<td>First day of Sunday School</td>
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<td>Week of September 9</td>
<td>Small Group Bible Studies begin</td>
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<td>Women's Group—Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Mixed Group Adults—South Tampa—Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Mixed Group Adults—East Tampa—Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Men's Group—Wednesday mornings at 7:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>Young Adults (began August 21)—Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Monday, September 16</td>
<td>Orthodoxy 101 series begins</td>
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<td>Sunday, September 29</td>
<td>JOY Pre-Teen Retreat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 22</td>
<td>Evening Liturgy of St. Jams</td>
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<td>Sunday, October 27</td>
<td>JOY/HOPE Fall Festival</td>
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<td>Friday, November 8-Sunday, November 10</td>
<td>Greek Festival</td>
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<td>Saturday, November 23</td>
<td>Adult Advent Retreat at St. John</td>
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<td>Sunday, November 24</td>
<td>Fall Parish Assembly Meeting</td>
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<td>Wednesday, November 27</td>
<td>Evening Divine Liturgy for Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 8</td>
<td>Stewardship Sunday</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 8</td>
<td>Parish Council Elections</td>
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<td>Saturday, December 14</td>
<td>Sunday School Christmas Program Rehearsal/Christmas Party</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 15</td>
<td>Sunday School Christmas Program</td>
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<td>Monday, December 16</td>
<td>Christmas College Event</td>
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<td>Tuesday, December 24</td>
<td>Christmas Eve Services</td>
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<td>Monday, January 6-Tuesday, January 7—St. John's Feastday Vespers and Liturgy</td>
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<td>Sunday, January 12</td>
<td>Vasilopita Sunday</td>
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<td>Saturday, January 19</td>
<td>Gasparilla Children's Parade Fundraiser</td>
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<td>Saturday, January 26</td>
<td>Gasparilla Adult Parade Fundraiser</td>
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<td>Saturday, February 1</td>
<td>GOYA Lock-in</td>
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<td>Sunday, February 2</td>
<td>Philoptochos Missions' Luncheon</td>
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<td>Saturday, February 22</td>
<td>Young at Heart Apokreatiko Dance</td>
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<td>Saturday, March 1</td>
<td>Saturday of Souls—Liturgy at Garden of Memories Memorial Park</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 2</td>
<td>Sunday School Pre-Lenten Retreat</td>
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<td>Monday, March 3</td>
<td>Beginning of Great Lent</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 9</td>
<td>Sunday of Orthodoxy</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 16</td>
<td>Greek Independence Day Luncheon</td>
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<td>Saturday, March 22</td>
<td>Adult Lenten Retreat</td>
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<td>Friday, March 28-Sunday, March 30</td>
<td>GOYA Lenten Retreat</td>
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<td>Monday, March 18</td>
<td>Beginning of Great Lent</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 24</td>
<td>Sunday of Orthodoxy</td>
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<td>Sunday, April 13</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
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<td>Friday, April 18</td>
<td>Sunday School Good Friday Retreat</td>
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<td>Sunday, April 20</td>
<td>PASCHA</td>
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<td>Sunday, April 27</td>
<td>Parish Picnic</td>
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<td>Sunday, May 19</td>
<td>Last Day of Sunday School Classes</td>
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<td>Sunday, June 8</td>
<td>Pentecost</td>
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<td>Friday, June 13-Sunday, June 15</td>
<td>Junior Olympics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, September 8</td>
<td>First day of Sunday school classes</td>
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<td>Sunday, September 8</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Saturday, September 14</td>
<td>GOYA Lock-in 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, September 22</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, September 29</td>
<td>JOY Pre-Teen Retreat</td>
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<td>Sunday, October 6</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, October 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>October 18-20</td>
<td>GOYA Volleyball Tournament-St. Petersburg</td>
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<td>Sunday, October 27</td>
<td>JOY/HOPE Fall Festival</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, November 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, November 10</td>
<td>Festival-No Sunday School</td>
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<td>Sunday, November 17</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 1</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday—No Sunday School</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 1</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, December 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Saturday, December 14</td>
<td>Christmas Program Rehearsal-Christmas Party</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 15</td>
<td>Christmas Program</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 22</td>
<td>No Sunday School</td>
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<td>Sunday, December 29</td>
<td>No Sunday School</td>
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<td>January 2014</td>
<td>Sunday School classes Resume</td>
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<td>Sunday, January 5</td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, January 12</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sunday, February 9</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, February 16</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, March 2</td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, March 2</td>
<td>Sunday School Pre-Lenten Retreat</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 9</td>
<td>Sunday of Orthodoxy—Icon Procession</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 16</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Friday, March 28-March 30</td>
<td>GOYA Lenten Retreat</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, April 6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, April 6</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sunday, April 13</td>
<td>Palm Sunday—Procession with Palms</td>
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<td>Friday, April 18</td>
<td>Good Friday Retreat</td>
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<td>Sunday, April 20</td>
<td>Pascha-No Sunday School Classes</td>
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<td>Sunday, April 27</td>
<td>Parish Picnic</td>
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<td>Sunday, May 4</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>Sunday, May 18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, May 18</td>
<td>Last Day of Sunday School Classes—Awards—Pool Party</td>
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<td>Sunday, June 8</td>
<td>GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Friday, June 13-Sunday, June 15</td>
<td>Junior Olympics</td>
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**Youth Sunday means youth choir sings, and we’ll try to get young people to read the Epistle, etc.**
A GUIDE TO USING THE NEW LITURGY BOOK

The word “Liturgy,” from the words “Leitos” and “Ergon,” literally means, “the work of the people.” The Liturgy is an act of worship of all of the people. It is not merely a priest and a choir or chanter performing a play in the presence of spectators, but rather a “work” of all the people. The celebrant priest, or priests, offer petitions and prayers, and the “people” offer responses and chant hymns. Throughout church history, a choir of chanters has led the people in offering the responses. In addition to leading the people in the “common” responses of the Liturgy, those elements of the service that appear each time the service is celebrated, the choir also chanted the hymns that are specific to each service - the hymn of the day (Apolytikon), the hymn of the season (Kontakion), etc.

While the content of the Liturgy is the same in every Orthodox Church, there are differences in which parts of the service are offered in Greek and English, and which translation of certain hymns are used. The purpose of this book, in particular, is to assist you, the worshipper, in participating in the service as it is done at St. John, specifically in regards to the translation of the hymns and petitions, as well as denoting which sections are done in Greek and in English in our particular church.

As you go through this book, we hope that you will find that it is easy to follow along with the service. The elements that are done only in English appear only in English. The parts of the service done in Greek appear in phonetics with the translation in parentheses. The parts that are repeated in both languages have the languages one after the other with no parentheses.

In the pages following the Liturgy in this book, there is an Appendix which shows the substitutions that are made to the Liturgy during Feast Days. Reference notes appear in the text and weekly notes on the correct hymns of the day and the scripture readings will appear in the weekly bulletin. Also, if you prefer to follow the service in Greek, as opposed to phonetics, please use the red Liturgy book that is in the pews.

It is our hope that having this more “user friendly” version of the Liturgy book in the pews will serve to increase congregational participation in the service. Contrary to how many of us were raised, to worship in silence, listening to the choir and watching the actions of the priest, we encourage you to sing along in joy, opening your mouths so that the praise of God may come forth from you with enthusiasm and joy. We hope that this book will add to your participation in the service and will heighten our collective participation in the Divine Services of the church. It is a blessing to have you join us in worship today. We invite you to join in our work, our praise, and our worship of God through the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Katherine Sakkis, CRS
Fine Homes Specialist
Sakkis & Sanders Real Estate Consultants
Premier Sotheby’s International Realty
202 S. Moody Ave Tampa, FL 33609
Tel: 813-309-1073
E-mail: KSakkis@gmail.com
www.BestTampaRealEstate.com
Isaiah 30:21
Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

Choices:
How to make Godly decisions.
A workshop for pre-teens and their parents

St. John Greek Orthodox JOY invites all pre-teens and their parents to join us for an afternoon of discussion, activities, and prayer.

Sunday, September 29, 2013
12:30 – 3:00

St. John Greek Orthodox Church
2418 Swann Ave

Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

For more information or to RSVP, please email or call
Maria Xenick – mpxenick@tampabay.rr.com, (813)839-9897
List of Pledged Stewards for 2013—as of August 15, 2013


**If your name doesn’t appear on this list and you have filled out a pledge form for 2013, please contact the office.**
## September 2013

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<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m.&lt;br&gt;Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Labor Day&lt;br&gt;Office Closed</td>
<td>Young at Heart&lt;br&gt;11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Fast Day</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m.&lt;br&gt;Liturgy 10:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;First Day of Sunday School&lt;br&gt;Ministry Fair--Just Say YES&lt;br&gt;GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Women's Group&lt;br&gt;10:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;Parish Council 6:15 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Small Group East Tampa 6:30p&lt;br&gt;Small Group South Tampa 6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Men's Club 7:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;Paraklesis/Prayer for Peace on 9/11 10:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Fast Day</td>
<td>Small Group North Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Holy Cross&lt;br&gt;Orthros 8:45 a.m.&lt;br&gt;Liturgy 10:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;GOYA Lock-in 6:00 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Fast Day</td>
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<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m.&lt;br&gt;Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Women's Group 10 am&lt;br&gt;Small Group East Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Small Group South Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Men's Group 7:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Fast Day</td>
<td>Small Group North Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Community Outreach&lt;br&gt;Youth Worker Training Seminar 9:00 am-3:00 pm</td>
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<td>Women's Group 10 am&lt;br&gt;Small Group East Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Small Group South Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Men's Group 7:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Fast Day</td>
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<td>Men's Group 7:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Fast Day</td>
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<td>Orthodoxy 101&lt;br&gt;6:30-8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Women's Group 10 am&lt;br&gt;Small Group East Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Small Group South Tampa&lt;br&gt;6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Men's Group 7:00 a.m.&lt;br&gt;YAL Bible Study 6:30 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Fast Day</td>
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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

2418 W. Swann Avenue
Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Timetable of Services

Sundays:
Orhros 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Weekdays:
Orhros 9:00 a.m.
Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

Parish Priest: Rev.Fr.Stavros Akrotirianakis
813-876-8830 (office) 394-1038 (cell)
frstav@gmail.com

Parish Council:
Katherine Sakkis, President 813-309-1073
Bill Manikas V. President 813-716-8185
Diane Trimiis, Secretary 813-968-9038
Skip Higdon, Treasurer 813-831-9021
Nick Antonakakis 813-477-6639
Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668
Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947
Byron Nenos 813-789-0729
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534
Despina Sibley 813-251-5384
David Vojkin 727-415-5603

Stewardship Chairperson:
Bill Manikas 813-716-8185

Office Staff:
Christine Bostrom, Operations Coordinator 813-876-8830
Michele DeLally, Administrative Assistant 813-876-8830

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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