

# THE MESSENGER

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

*"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 2018

### VISION:

Love God, Love your neighbor and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian community.

### MISSION:

The mission of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is to welcome and serve people with love, truth, joy and peace, and to create an environment that encourages all to seek salvation through Orthodox Christianity.

### CORE VALUES:

Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service

## Father Stavros' Message Engaged: Be a Light in the World

*Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

*Matthew 5:12-16*

In the entirety of the Gospels, Jesus uses the phrase "You are" two times. He tells His followers, us, "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world." We are supposed to be TWO things—salt, and light.

Salt, as we know, gives flavor to food. Add salt and "blah" food becomes tasty—think steak, French fries, etc. And wherever there is light, there cannot be darkness. Light always overtakes darkness. Darkness cannot overtake light.

The world is pretty "blah"—many lives are pretty "blah." We get up, get dressed, prepare for the day, fight traffic, work or go to school, do homework or housework, eat, clean, relax (if there is time and many times there isn't), go to bed and repeat. And on top of that we're bombarded with negativity in the news, challenges in relationships, and overall we're pretty stressed. That's pretty "blah."

What makes life not blah? The first answer that comes to mind is the Fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control—a life filled

with these things is not blah. Let's start with joy—when we have joy, there can't be blah—they can't co-exist. What brings joy? Being loved brings joy. Being complimented, being encouraged. So, a sense of kindness fosters love. Encouraging and complimenting people draws people together. It certainly doesn't push them apart. An intentional choice to be kind will bring joy and love in its wake. And this intentional choice is bolstered by self-control. When one has control of his thoughts and his words and chooses to make them thoughts of goodness and acts of kindness, then all the other stuff follows. So, when Jesus is telling us to be salt in a blah world, He is telling us to work on growing the Fruit in us and expressing it towards other people—if we are filled with His Spirit, and if we are guided by the Spirit, then we will be the salt of the earth—we will bring flavor and depth in to a world that is bland and blah.

There are lots of dark corners around us. People who have no joy, no hope, people who are stressed out. I recently asked our GOYAns at our first GOYA meeting, to submit a topic for us to prepare and discuss at our gatherings this year. These suggestions were written independently on note cards that were submitted anonymously. Everyone had a chance to write down anything they want to have discussed this year. Nearly half of them wrote "how to deal with stress." We all know that stress generally doesn't add "light" to our lives. It generally makes us feel heavy and burdened, which in turn can make us feel "dark." Jesus told us that we are to be lights in the world. How can we do that? Well, a good place to start would be to be a peacemaker, and not a peacetaker. Because peacetakers increase stress, which increases burdens of others, which brings more darkness. Peacemakers are stress reducers and therefore

bring more light wherever they go.

Jesus tells us to go and BE these things. He doesn't tell us "show up to church on Sunday, enjoy the service, soak up some knowledge and then we'll catch you next week." He tells us to go out and BE something. Our service on Sundays, among other things, is there to encourage and inspire us to go be the light and the salt the rest of the week.

## Stop "Going" to Church

Any teacher of public speaking will tell you to have an opening line that will grab people's attention and make them want to hear what is coming next. So, when I listened to a podcast (Craig Grieschel—Life.Church, Edmond Oklahoma: "Stop Going to Church") recently of a popular Protestant preacher, I was definitely grabbed when the first line of the sermon was:

### ***STOP GOING TO CHURCH***

Immediately I wondered, with a message like this, will he still be preaching at his church next Sunday? If no one goes to church, there is no church, since the church is the people, right?

It is true that in order to have a church, you have to have people. We can't celebrate a Liturgy without people present. We wouldn't be able to have our church building without people to clean it and financially support it. There can be no church community without people, as a community by definition, a community is a group of people.

As I listened to this preacher, I agreed with his premise that we have to stop GOING to church and start BEING the church. Think of places that you GO. I go to the barber shop for a haircut once a month, but that does not define who I am. I go to the market to get groceries, but that doesn't define who I am either. I go to the dentist twice a year and to the doctor occasionally when I get sick, but neither of those two things are pillars of my life. After all, I've changed barbers, dentists, doctors and grocery stores many times in my life.

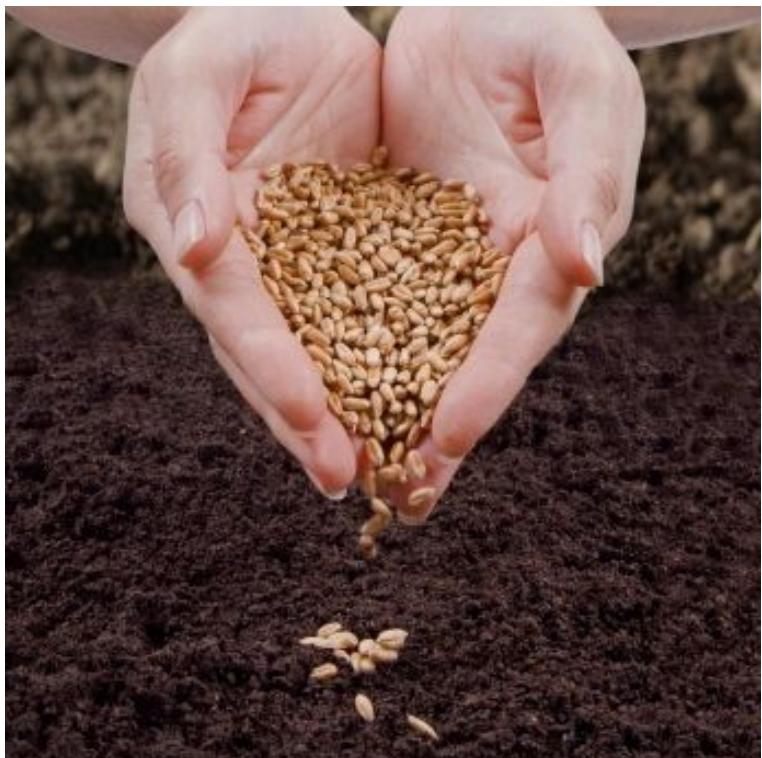
I go home after work every night—my home is definitely an integral part of my life. It's where I wake up, where I eat, where I sleep, where I spend time with family and where I relax. But even the home I go to isn't going to define me. I've lived in several homes. No one describes me based on the home I go to.

What defines us is not where we go but who we are. Christian, husband, father, son, priest, friend. These are the things that define me. These aren't places I go but things that I am.

The Church is not merely supposed to be a place that we GO, but rather it is supposed to be part of our identity. The preacher made a comment to his audience, "Will you eat today?" The answer for everyone is "of course." Eating is part of our identity. Without eating, we can't live. What we eat and when we eat (what time of day) and where we eat may vary from person to person. But, "eating" is something that each of us does each day. We need to eat in order to live. Eating is a defining part of who we are. We may eat at a different time each day, or we may enjoy different kinds of food, but the fact that we have to eat is something that defines us all.

In a similar way, being a Christian is supposed to define who we are. It's not just what we do, it's who we are. It's not a place to go but a way to be. Christians are supposed to BE lights in the world, not just faithful attendees of a place they go. Christians are supposed to be sharers of light, not just people who sit in the light.

## The New Ecclesiastical Year - Time for Planting Seeds



September 1 marks the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical (Church) Year. Until recent centuries, in many parts of the world, September 1 was the beginning of the calendar year. In some ways, this makes more sense than having the New Year on January 1. Up until recent years, school began in September. This was a natural time of new beginning—students moved to a new grade, there were new schedules, new activities, new routines. January 1 has always seemed like an odd time to me to celebrate "New Year." We are in the middle of the school year, the activities, the routine, seems like in January nothing is really in a change mode, which is perhaps why New Year's resolutions don't pan out for most of us—we try to introduce something new into our lives at a time they are already pretty set.

The biggest reason why September 1 marked the beginning of the New Year had to do with farming. September marked the time to plow the fields. The old crop, which had been harvested at the end of summer (let's say in August), was plowed or removed from the fields. The soil was then turned over. And new seeds were planted. During the fall, the seeds would take root so that they were gaining some stronghold before the cold of winter made them dormant. The seeds would grow in the spring, growth would continue in summer, and at the end of summer the crop would be harvested.

Staying on the planting theme for a minute, and reflecting on the sermon I mentioned above, Psalm 92:12-13 reads: "*The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of our God.*"

For those who don't know, a cedar tree is among the strongest trees in nature. It also enjoyed the longest lifespan. Many cedars grow to be thirty stories tall and three stories wide. Imagine a tree 300 feet tall and 30 feet in diameter. That's a pretty big tree! They also smell good. I keep cedar chips in the cabi-

net where my vestments are stored and in the drawers of my dresser at home.

Cedar trees grow roots into the ground sometimes up to 150 feet deep. The roots are deep and strong. The trees grow far enough away from one another that the sun can shine its light on each of them individually and uniquely. However, they are close enough that their root systems become intertwined, so that they support one another. The roots form a support system which sustains the growth above the ground.

This is what the Church is supposed to be. We are supposed to be planted, with deep roots. We are supposed to be supported in our Christian growth by being intertwined with one another.

There is a critical difference between a seed that is haphazardly thrown on the ground and one that is planted deeply into the soil. The one that is thrown on the ground is not very likely to take root. It is very likely to just be trodden under foot or blown away by the wind. The seed that is planted deep in good soil, and that is nurtured with water and sun is the seed that can grow into a strong tree.

Our Christian faith works in the same way. The person who gives Christianity a passing glance once in a while is never going to be deeply rooted in the faith, and is never going to be a light in the world or the salt of the earth, as Jesus has told us that we are to be.

There are those who argue that they are “Christians in their own way.” Again, look at the cedar tree—it gets its strength not from growing its own way, but from being intertwined with others.

There are those who argue that listening to a podcast or some Christian music is the same as going to church. It isn't. That's like saying that a text message is stronger than a face-to-face conversation. The Church is about gathering people together around God's table, the same way we would gather a family around the Thanksgiving table and worshipping God and strengthening our spiritual roots. We read in the Psalms that we are supposed to be planted in the house of God in order to be strong in our faith. That means that we are deeply rooted not only in church attendance, but in the life of the church (its ministries) and the work of the church (to be a light in the world, to be the salt of the earth).

## Engaged

Back in January of 2018, we unveiled ONE WORD that we wanted to have as our focus for our parish. That was the word ENGAGED. (Before I continue on that, I challenged each of you to come up with one word that would define your 2018. Do you remember your word? How has it defined your 2018? If you've forgotten your word, or if your word is not very present in your year, it's not too late. There are still four months left of the year. I encourage you to keep using your word if you are doing so, and if you've gotten out of the habit of checking in with your word, I encourage you to get back in the habit. Now back to engaged). The challenge for our church was to encourage people to move from "active" participation to being an "engaged" participant in the life of the church.

What is the difference between “active” and “engaged” when it comes to church participation? Active can be described as being present in body. One can come to church “actively”, meaning one can attend each Sunday, but still get nothing out of church. If you asked such a person, “Are you active in church life?” they’d correctly answer, “Yes, I go every Sunday.” Of course, there is a large segment of the Orthodox population

who is “inactive.” They do not attend each Sunday, but reserve attendance only for big holidays, weddings and funerals.

The “engaged” worshipper comes not to watch the service, but to worship. Worship is action. It is not passive. Remembering our recent summer camp experience (33 teens and ten adults participated), we had one night of singing Christian songs, like a concert of contemporary and classic camp fire songs which were all Christian-based. The kids “ate this up.” They were jumping up and down, singing, laughing, and enjoying the event, totally engaged in singing. Now, I grant you that this is singing, not worshipping. Our worship in the Orthodox Church is not supposed to take on the life of a pep rally. Rather it is more reverent, deliberate, and moves at a slower pace. However, just because we are not “jumping up and down for Jesus” doesn’t mean that our worship should be sterile. Far from it. Our worship is meant to be a sensory experience in which all the people engage—we are supposed to sing, bow, kneel, lift up hands, venerate icons, receive Communion, hear, see, smell, taste, and touch. We are supposed to set aside thoughts, open hearts, leave burdens, and be uplifted. This is the ideal when we worship. This is how we are supposed to be ENGAGED when it comes to worship.

We all can improve our ENGAGEMENT in worship. Some of us are still coming perpetually late. Some stand stoically. Some won't sing. Some are distracted. We can all stand to improve. As we begin a new church year, it is a good time to set some goals as far as our engagement in worship, starting with coming on time, participating, and minimizing distractions.

However, what about when the Divine Liturgy is over?

Let's look at a case study of two fictional people (this story borrowed from the Podcast mentioned above).

Person A—he goes to church, enjoys the message, kind of “watches” worship, and may even have moments when he feels really uplifted. But he doesn’t ever engage, or give or serve (and we’re not talking about serving on the Parish Council, we’re talking about serving the greater humanity, visiting someone who is sick, listening to someone who is down and



out). They may be on the right path but they are not flourishing in the faith.

Person B—He develops some relationships, prays for others, others pray for him. Instead of just going to church, he uses his gifts and the church isn't just a place he goes but part of his identity. The roots go deeper. When the storms of life come (marital strife, sickness, setback, financial difficulties), like the strong cedar tree, he is able to withstand the storms because his roots are deep.

As you can see, there is a big difference between going to a building and being planted in the house of God. There is a big difference between GOING to church and BEING the church. There is a big difference between being active and being ENGAGED.

## How Can I Get More Out of Worship?

As the saying goes, you only get out of something what you put into it. And the more you put into something, the more you'll get out of it. Worship is a challenge. It is a joy, but it is also a challenge. Why? Because not every worship experience is necessarily inspirational. Certainly not every moment of every worship experience. The challenge is to see worship not as something we do for a feeling or spiritual high, but rather a state of being in relation to God and to other people. Something happens when we are with God and with others who desire to be with God. Seeds are planted deeper, roots grow stronger. Just like when a tree grows, we can't pinpoint the minute growth happens, as it is gradual, in the Christian life it is very similar—growth happens over time, it is gradual, and not usually very dramatic (though sometimes it is). So, when we go to church and nothing dramatic happens, we become discouraged or we think missing or going late isn't that big of a deal. When we are engaged in worship (not merely attending, but doing the "work" of worship) over a long period of time, we will see marked spiritual growth. It will happen in a gradual way. The key, however, is to be ENGAGED in worship, to actually pray the words we are hearing the priest offer, that we actually sing the responses along with the choir, that we actually reflect on the things we hear, like mercy, peace and we reflect on our need for these things and the ability of the Lord to provide them for us.

Come on time. Imagine walking into a movie 30 minutes late. You'd never catch up to the story line because the characters and the plot have already been established. I'm not sure where many of us picked up the bad habit of being late to worship. It is, indeed, a bad habit. We all get to school on time, to work on time, to movies and sports games on time. Even people with small children, even people who are old, even people who live far away—we all manage to get to every place we go on time. Why is the church different? Why do we come to worship late? Why are we so cavalier about it? The climax of the Divine Liturgy is of course, receiving Communion. However, the foundation of that climax is laid out in the first line of the Liturgy—that the Kingdom of God is present in the here and now, and that we are invited to enter the kingdom, eventually partaking of God Himself.

The distribution of Holy Communion seems to take forever. How can I pass that time more productively? This is a great problem actually. A very long Communion line is the sign of a healthy parish. Lots of people who want to receive Christ is a great thing! Practically, however, it does take a long time to distribute Communion. Here are a few ways to make the most out of that time. First, after you receive, pray the post-

Communion Prayers that are in the back of the service books. Second, pray for the people who are receiving Communion. We all know people who are in the Communion line. We probably all know people in the Communion line. And we probably know people who are struggling with the various challenges that we all struggle with. None of us spends enough time silent and still in prayer, bringing the names and needs of others to God. During this time, it is a great time to pray for the people you see around you. That's what a church community does—it lifts up the others in the community, it makes sure everyone's roots are as strong as they can be. Third, we have Bibles in the pews. Feel free to sit and read one. None of us spends enough time in God's Word either.

Why am I talking about this at all? Because I know some people feel impatient when Communion lasts a long time and they are tempted either to leave and go home, or come over to the hall and start having fellowship. The work isn't done once Communion has started. There is still a bit of work and worship left to do. Which brings me to the next question:

What about the extra services and the sermon? Memorial services are opportunities to not only remember those who have passed away but to pray for the family left behind. We've all had the experience of losing someone we love. Maybe it didn't happen to you this month or this year but it's happened to all of us. When we have a memorial service, in addition to praying for the person who has passed away, pray also for their family. This week, THEY need the strength and encouragement. The sermon is God's Word proclaimed and interpreted. No, that doesn't mean that each priest gives his personal take on Scripture. It means that the priest has studied scripture and has taken the time to study the meaning of a passage, in order to articulate God's Word in a way that is both understandable and applicable to life.

Come on time. Worship. Work. Pray. Listen to the sermon. Engage in each of these things and you'll get a lot more out of worship.

## Being a Light in the World with Kindness and Encouragement—Things we can all do when we are not in church

We are supposed to be lights in the world, not only during the Divine Liturgy but especially once the Liturgy has ended and we've re-entered the world. I don't know how many of you have flown over Las Vegas in an airplane. I did several years ago. It was night-time and dark as I flew over the city. The skyline was pretty. There were lots of lights dotting the landscape of hotels and casinos. There was one hotel, however (I think it was the Luxor) that has a light beam coming from the top of the pyramid-shaped hotel, that supposedly can be seen from the moon it is so bright. I certainly could see it brightly from the airplane window. That beam shined in the darkness.

When I think of Christ telling us, "You are the Light of the world!" I think of the beam from this hotel, shining in the darkness. There is no mistaking which building that is coming from. We are supposed to be the same in our Christian lives. Like the beam of light from the hotel in Las Vegas, we are supposed to be beacons of light. There should be no mistaking by anyone that we are Christians.

I asked our GOYAns the other day, "How does being a Christian factor into your life at school, or does it at all?" Some of them were honest and said "It doesn't factor in at all. Some

said they could say a prayer before eating a meal. Some said they could watch their language. And then one person said "I could look for ways to be kind." Seizing that moment, I asked the group, what are some ways we can be kind to people at school? Here were some answers:

*Smile.*

*Compliment someone.*

*Hold a door open for someone.*

*Let someone go first.*

*Say something encouraging.*

*Say "Good morning."*

*Listen to someone.*

*Help someone carry something.*

*Sit with someone who is sitting alone.*

*Invite someone to sit with your group of friends.*

*Don't participate in gossip.*

*Stick up for someone.*

As you can see, most of the things on this list cost little time and none of them costs money. And yet, each small thing is an opportunity to shine as a beacon of Christ's light in the world. Think about how many times we do the exact opposite of what is on this list. We frown, we criticize, we cut in front of someone, we say something discouraging, we don't acknowledge someone, we talk instead of listening, we ignore someone who needs help, we ignore the person who has no one to sit with, we participate in gossip, we put others down.

If we want to be lights in the world, there is an opportunity to be one daily. We must ask ourselves:

***Does my behavior reveal me as a light in the world?***

And with that, is my prayer life helping to prepare me to be that light? Do I supplement a desire to be a light in the world by reading and reflecting on Holy Scripture? Do I forgive versus holding a grudge, and what does that say about my desire to be a light in the world? Do I work to repair things that are broken? Do I shine as a light in the world?

## **Remembering our Vision, Mission and Core Values**

And now, to bring this article full circle and to a close, let's look at the vision, mission and core values of our church. They are printed on page one of each issue of the *Messenger*. They are pretty simple to state.

Our vision is to *Love God, love your neighbor and spread the*

***Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian Community.***

Our mission is *to welcome and serve people with love, truth, joy and peace, and to create an environment that encourages all to seek salvation through Orthodox Christianity.*

Our core values are *love, worship, community, learning and service.*

We are working hard to hold everything we do in our community in agreement with these things. We want our church to not only be a nice place we gather on Sundays, or a place we meet our friends and enjoy ourselves. We don't even want it to only be a place where we worship and learn about God—yes, we want this of course. But we have to want it to be more. We want our church to be a beacon of light in the world. And because the church is US—you and me, our journey starts with an individual desire to be a light, to be the salt.

As we begin the Ecclesiastical Year, there will be some new things added to our program that will help us be lights—We are going to have a seminar about Special Needs children. We are again going to have a pre-teen retreat. There will be some other subtle changes in church—in the narthex, with the Communion line. It's time to shore up a few things that need improvement and add to things that are going well.

And it goes back to our word for 2018—ENGAGED. I invite you to ENGAGE not only in the life of the church but in the life of Christ. Going to church on Sundays is crucial. Coming on time is important. Receiving Communion is vital. But it doesn't end there. Because while there is one day a week where we GO to church, there are seven days a week to BE the church.

You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.

There is enough blah—let's be the salt. There is enough darkness. Let's be the light.

The starting point can be anywhere—kindness, joy, peace, self-control, being engaged. You pick the point and then don't do it, BE IT!!! Stop going and start being! Don't be active, be engaged!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

## **Want to be more ENGAGED and ENCOURAGED? Join the Prayer Team!**

Over 1280 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 3 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Charlie or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the "forward to a friend" option. Also, make sure frstav@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

# Liturgical Schedule for September 2018

**Friday, August 31**

**Evening Liturgy for the Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year**  
Orthros 5:00 p.m.      Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, September 2**

**14th Sunday of St. Matthew**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve

**Ushers:** Tammy Christou, George Mitseas, Florin Patrasciou

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde; Ambassador: Kalliope Chagaris;

Caller: Christene Worley; Getting Acquainted: Elaine Halkias, Donna Hambos

**Coffee Hour:** Bible Studies

**Bookstore:** Paulina Katsouli and Zhana Temelkova

**Friday, September 7**

**Evening Liturgy for the Nativity of the Virgin Mary**  
Orthros 5:00 p.m.      Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, September 9**

**Sunday Before the Holy Cross**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Luke

**Ushers:** Nick Kavouklis, George Trimikliniotis, Peter Theophanous

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Maria Karounos, Julie Palios; Ambassador: Marenca Patrascoiu ;

Caller: Betty Katsamakis

**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA

**Bookstore:** John and Anetta Alexander

**Tuesday, September 11** Paraklesis Service to Commemorate 9/11    6:00 p.m.

**Friday, September 14**

**Exaltation of the Holy Cross**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, September 16**

**Sunday After the Holy Cross**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. John

**Ushers:** Ron Myer, John Christ, John Alexander

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Michael Palios, Bessie Palios; Ambassador: Edie Kavouklis;

Caller: Vickie Peckham

**Coffee Hour:** Welcoming Ministry

**Bookstore:** Pam Irwin

**Sunday, September 23** **Conception of St. John the Baptist/1st Sunday of Luke**

Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Matthew

**Ushers:** Brett Mourer, Tom Georgas, Amin Hanhan

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Tanya Robinson, Katherine Sakkis; Ambassador: Despina Sibley; Caller: Julie Palios

**Coffee Hour:** Philoptochos

**Bookstore:** Rita Bedran and MaryAnn Rose

**Sunday, September 30**

**2nd Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.      Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains and St. Mark

**Ushers:** David Voykin, Ed Gerecke, Pete Trakas

**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Skip Higdon, Debbie Kavouklis; Ambassador: Julie Palios; Caller: Maria Karounos

**Coffee Hour:** Sunday School

**Bookstore:** Thom and Angie Bougas

# Liturgical Notes for September 2018

## Friday, August 31 - New Ecclesiastical Year - Day of the Environment

His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, declared many years ago that September 1, the day on which we begin the New Ecclesiastical (Church) Year, also be set aside to pray for our environment. Not only do we thank God for His blessings of the past church year, and ask for Him to bless us in the new year, but we also offer prayers for our environment, which are needed more and more in the world where our environment is threatened as time passes. We will celebrate the Divine Liturgy for the Feastday of the Environment as well as the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year on Friday evening, August 31, with Orthros 5:00 p.m. and Divine Liturgy at 6:00 p.m.



## September 8 - Nativity of the Virgin Mary - to be celebrated on Friday, September 7

Placed right after the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year, 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. We will celebrate Divine Liturgy for the Feastday of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary on Friday evening, September 7, with Orthros at 5:00 p.m. and Divine Liturgy at 6:00 p.m.



**Tuesday, September 11-Day of Remembrance** This year marks the 17th 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 cities in our own country. On September 11, we will hold a Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary at 6:00 p.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.

There is also something else to remember on September 11—One year ago, Hurricane Irma went over our state and did a lot of damage. Thankfully, we were spared a direct hit. We did not have services last year on 9/11 as many of us had evacuated. The storm hit in the early morning hours of that Monday last year. So, there is another reason to come to church—to thank God for His blessings on us and to pray also for those who suffered loss in the storm last year. This year's 9/11 Paraklesis is at 6:00 p.m., in the hopes that those who work will be able to attend.

## Friday, September 14 - Exaltation of the Holy Cross

This 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 16.

## Donations Needed for the Feast of the

**Holy Cross** We need Vasiliko (Basil) for the services of the Holy Cross. Please bring Vasiliko for Friday, September 14 and Sunday, September 16. Please bring to the kitchen by 10:00 a.m both days, so we will 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 16.

## Donations Needed for flowers for Feast of the Holy Cross

We need a donation 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 of the Holy Cross on September 16. Please call the office if you are interested.



# St. John the Baptist Community News

## Registry

**Wedding--Dr. Plato John Alexander and Tassa Louise Allegranza were married on Saturday, July 7. Chris Panagos was the Koumbaro. Congratulations!**

## Get Acquainted Sunday, September 2



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.



**By-laws Questions and Answer - Sunday, September 9** We will be revisiting our church by-laws and we will be offering a question and answer session in the Zaharias Room after the Divine Liturgy. For more information, please contact Dante Skourellos, Parish Council Legal Committee at [D\\_skourellos@yahoo.com](mailto:D_skourellos@yahoo.com). We will then host a Parish Assembly to vote on the new By-Laws on Sunday, September 30.



## GOYA Meeting - Sunday, September 9

The GOYA meeting for September will be Sunday, September 9. This meeting will involve water balloons and lots of messy games outdoors, so bring an extra set of clothes to change into afterwards. Our meeting will begin at 5:00 p.m. and last until 7:30 p.m.

**Youth Worker Training—September 22** - On Saturday, September 22, from 9:00-

2:30 p.m., we will be hosting a youth worker training seminar. This seminar will focus on how to lead icebreakers and discussions and overall how to work with teenagers. If you are interested in attending this event, please email Fr. Stavros by September 15. There is no cost.

## Community Outreach - Saturday, September 15

St. John the Baptist's Community Outreach will be serving breakfast to the Homeless at the First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Tampa from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. The church is located at 412 Zack Street. The entrance is on Polk Street. Grab a cup of coffee and come help us! **We love to see new and old faces!**



**Parish Assembly for By-laws - Sunday, September 30** As our community grows, we have been reviewing our local church by-laws. Please make an effort to come to this important meeting to place your vote.



## Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, September 30

The YAL fellowship dinner will be on Sunday, September 30, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Dates may change. Charlie will send an email.



**MOMS - Ministry of Mother's Sharing** The MOMP group will begin meeting once per month at church for a gathering of prayer and fellowship! Mothers of all ages and stages are welcome to join us. We will alternate morning and evening meeting times to accommodate diverse schedules. We hope you can join us! Here is the schedule:

September 5 - 7:00 p.m.

October 3 - 9:30 a.m.

November 14 - 7:00 p.m.

December 6 - Divine Liturgy for the feast of St. Nicholas 10 a.m. with MOMP fellowship to follow.

Please contact [mapkonstas@gmail.com](mailto:mapkonstas@gmail.com) with any questions and to be sure you are on the MOMP email list.

# Coming Soon: St. John Parish Nursing Ministry

With a blessing from Fr. Stavros and the approval of the parish council, we will be forming a Parish Nursing Ministry. We are looking for registered nurses in our community actively licensed in the State of Florida. LPN's and EMT's will be considered on a case by case basis.

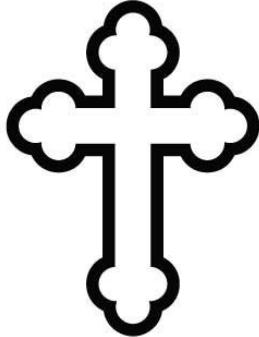
The parish nurse uses the nursing process to assess and address the spiritual, physical, mental and social health of the parishioner. With an intentional focus on spiritual health, the parish nurse primarily uses evidence-base practice interventions such as health education, counseling, prayer, presence, active listening, advocacy, referrals and a wide variety of other resource available to the faith community.

If you are interested in participating in this ministry or would like more information, contact Stavrula Crafa, RNC at 727-409-0686 or email at [Stavrula@crafa.com](mailto:Stavrula@crafa.com). For updates on this ministry, stay tuned to the weekly bulletin.



**Calling all Parish Council member, Sunday School teachers, GOYA and young adult advisors, Philoptochos members, church greeters, and all those who know and love someone with special needs:**

## Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Me Special Needs Inclusion Ministry



Please join us Saturday, October 6 in the Kourmoulos Center from 9:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m. for a workshop presented by Presvytera Toni Mihalopoulos of St. Demetrios in Chicago Illinois.

We will be learning new ways to be welcoming, supportive, and inclusive to children with special needs and their families. Lunch will be provided.

*Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for such is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14*

If you would like to attend or for more information please contact  
Dante Skourellos: [d\\_skourellos@yahoo.com](mailto:d_skourellos@yahoo.com) /813-765-9534

## Looking for ways to get Engaged??

Call or email the office. Often times we have requests from the community at large for various things and we would love to connect people. This can be anything from handy man repairs to babysitters.

**Thank you to Betty Katherine Katsamakis for leading our Community Outreach for so many years. Welcome Greg Melton, who is now going to lead this ministry of our church.**

## Extra Services for Sundays must be Scheduled through the Office

Extra services include Memorial Services, Artoklasies, Forty-Day blessing of babies and blessing of Fanouropita breads. Please do not just bring these things or arrive at church on Sundays or feast-days expecting these services to be done with no notice. Please schedule through the office. Thank you for your cooperation. We are more than willing to do these services. We try to plan each service accordingly so that there is a sense of order to our Liturgical and Sacramental Life.

*Matthew 5:14-16*

*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

## Choices: Let Your Light Shine! A workshop for pre-teens and their parents

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

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2018**  
**1:00 – 3:30**

*\*LUNCH SERVED AT 12:30*

St. John Greek Orthodox Church  
2418 Swann Avenue  
Tampa, FL 33609

*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@gmail.com](mailto:mpxenick@gmail.com), (813)765-3587

# September 2018 Stewardship Message

***“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”***  
***Hebrews 13:16***

We are deeply grateful to the faithful Stewards of St. John and your continued support of our Church Mission and Ministries. The dedication of our parishioner time, talent and treasure sustains our church for present and future generations!

If you haven't pledged to St. John this year it is not too late! Be a beacon of light in the world by giving back the gifts God has bestowed upon us. The gifts that help sustain our beautiful house of worship. As Stewards, we affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him.

**Yes – Stewardship Pledge Forms are critical.** They help keep us current on how much income the Church can expect to support our ministries and expenses. They also provide details on your family information and areas of interest so we can tap into much needed Talents and Interests! **And lastly, pledge forms and current contributions meet the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPR) of our Archdiocese as well as our local by-laws to enable participation at Parish Assembly Meetings, Voting and Nominations for Parish Council or other leadership positions.**

**Please feel free to share your thoughts to the office email** - officestjohnoctampa@gmail.com or speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas at spappas11@gmail.com or Pete Trakas at ptrakas@gmail.com **Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!**

- We remain with over 59 Families that pledged last year but not this year and encourage you to complete a pledge form TODAY!. The work of Christ truly depends on all of us and your pledge is a sign of a growing commitment to Christ.

Year to Year Comparison ~	2018*	2017*
Pledged Year to Date	\$429,142	\$398,236
Received Year to Date	\$308,381	\$283,801
Average Pledge	\$1,461	\$1,327
Median Pledge	\$900	\$700
# of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving	325	340

\*YTD as of 8/13/18 & 8/1/17

- We will print a list of Stewards in October Messenger and as a reminder you must submit a pledge form and be current in payment, according to our bylaws, to be a ‘Member in Good Standing’ and participate and/or vote at Parish Assembly meetings or run for Parish Council in the fall
- Our Online Pledge Forms are easy to complete. Hard Copy forms are also available in the Church Narthex or Bookstore. Stewardship Donations and General Donations may also be made online via PayPal as a one time or recurring commitment or setup with auto deductions from your bank account.

Visit <http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/2018-stewardship/> to complete your Stewardship Pledge Form and make your gift today.

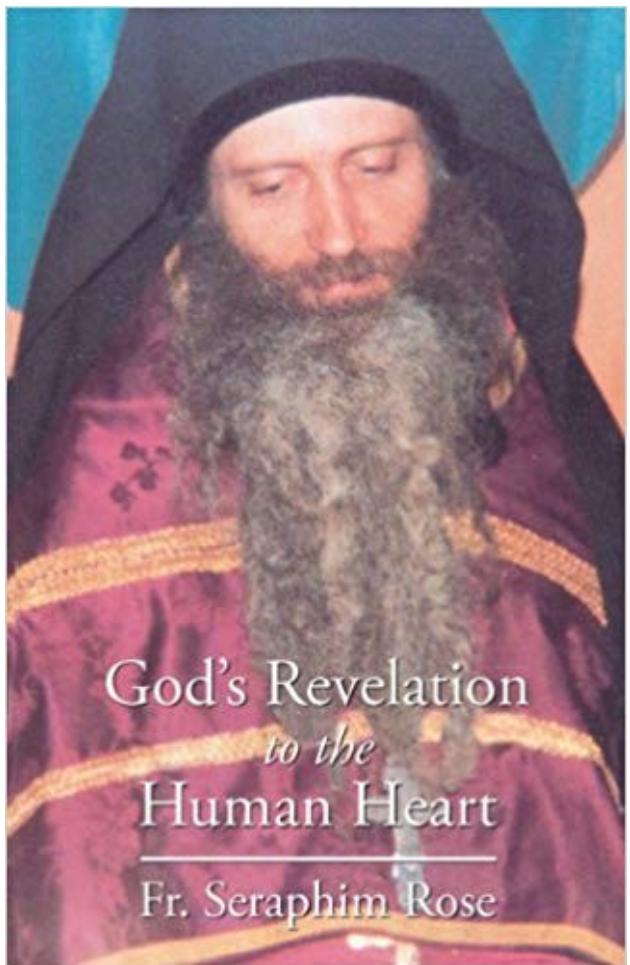
## More great Stewardship News....

Your Stewardship Dollars at Work Outside of our Community—we have made a commitment in our parish budget, supported largely by your stewardship, to support charities outside of our community. We are proud to announce that this year, we have donated \$600 to International Orthodox Christian Charities, \$800 to 1st Presbyterian Church for the Matthew 25 Program (feeding the hungry) and \$600 to Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry. Additionally, we sent \$500 to fire relief in Greece and another \$500 to fire relief in California.

Well done, good and faithful stewards—A big thank you to Carole Fotopoulos, Kathy McLaury, Skip Higdon and Sandra Pappas, who spent a lot of time in our kitchen over the summer deep cleaning and organizing it. Thank you ladies!

There are many ways we can be Stewards of our community and ultimately of our Salvation, so think about something you can do or offer make it happen!

## Featured Book of the St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Bookstore



"God's Revelation to the Human Heart"  
by Father Seraphim Rose

What does man seek in religion, and what should he seek in it? How does God reveal Himself in order to bring man to a knowledge of the Truth? How does suffering help this revelation to occur? These and other questions were discussed by Fr. Seraphim Rose, an Orthodox Christian priest-monk, during a lecture he gave at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1981. The contents of this lecture comprise the present book, which includes Fr. Seraphim's answers to questions asked by the university students. Drawing from a variety of sources—the Holy Scriptures, Patristic writings, the Lives of saints both ancient and modern, and accounts of persecuted Christians behind the iron curtain—Fr. Seraphim goes to the core of all Christian life—the conversion of the heart of man, which causes it to burn with love for Christ and transforms one into a new being.

Father Seraphim Rose (1934-1982) dedicated his life to reawakening modern Western man to forgotten spiritual truths. From his remote monastic cabin in the mountains of northern California, he produced writings that have reached millions throughout the world. Today he is one of the best-loved spiritual writers in Russian and Eastern Europe.

This book is available in the bookstore. We would love to hear from you, particularly what you think of the book after reading it.

P.S. If there is an Orthodox Christian religious item that you would like the bookstore to order, please contact us. We are often able to get a discount as a bookstore.

Brett and Ana Mourer

## Our Food Pantry is very active helping people near and far in the Tampa Community.

### Here are some special requests we have:

- Pasta
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Tomato sauce/chopped tomatoes etc.
- All kinds of white flour
- Canned Tuna
- Canned Chicken
- Canned fruits and vegetables
- Body Wash
- Gluten Free Foods and Flours
- Cereal
- Whole wheat rice and pasta
- Men's and Women's razors and shaving cream (travel size)
- Toothbrushes
- Gift cards in any amount for Publix, Walmart or Save-a-lot



All food items offered are accepted. Thank you for supporting those who need it the most. For more info and questions about our Food Pantry please contact Anetta Alexander at 813-758-2689 or exchange2861@yahoo.com.

# Small Group Bible Study

For a sixyth year, we will be having our small group Bible study ministry. These groups 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 are discussion based, 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.

## Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)

**Location:** St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the Administration Building meeting room

**Group Leader:** Charlie Hambos

Charlie.hambos@gmail.com, 813-843-8471

**Meeting time:** Monday evenings from 6:30–8:00 p.m.

**September Meeting Dates:** September 10, 17 and 24

## Women's Group (for adult women of any age)

**Location:** Meets at the home of Debbie Kavouklis, 3315 Jean Circle, Tampa, FL 33629

**Group Leader:** Debbie Kavouklis

dkavouklis1@verizon.net, 813-690-0155.

**Meeting time:** Tuesday mornings from 10:00-11:30 a.m. (9:30 a.m. for coffee and refreshments)

**September Meeting Dates:** September 18 and 25

## 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:** At the Church in the Library

**Group Leader:** Bessie Palios

**Meeting time:** Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

**September Meeting Dates:** September 18 and 25

## FAQ's About the Small Group Ministry

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

**How often do 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.

**Which group should I join?** The one that is easiest for you to attend. 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.

**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 may 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

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

- 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)
- Respect what other people have to say. In a discussion where people are sharing experiences, they need support and validation, not judgment.
- 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.
- 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.

# Parish Council - FOCUS CORNER

## FOCUS: Fellow Orthodox Christians United to Serve~

*The Parish Council has decided to use the word "Focus" as it's word for 2018. Every month a Parish Council member will write an article related to our word.*

## Inclusion of Special Needs Families

By Dante Skourellos

In this month's PC Corner, I want to take the opportunity to focus on the inclusion of special needs children and their families in our Parish. Last year, my daughter, Olivia, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and this journey over the past year has been the most challenging and rewarding of my life. Olivia's journey goes even further back, as since she was a year old, Olivia has been receiving a multitude of therapies, Occupational, Physical, Speech, Feeding, and Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) on weekly basis. Olivia and our family have been working so hard to ensure that Olivia has the opportunity to be fully integrated into society, to include here at St. John's.

With the rise in autism and other special needs diagnoses, the Greek Orthodox Church is recognizing the growing need to better include children with learning differences and disabilities. But as parishes are working to embrace families impacted by special needs, they are wading into new territory largely unfamiliar to a church staff. As a result, ministry leaders are facing new and sometimes unexpected decision points as they guide their staff and volunteers. Until recently, disability accommodation inside student ministries has largely occurred on an as-needed and responsive basis. While the reactive approach has arguably sufficed, it has not fully maximized the ministry opportunity and benefit the servants assisting with inclusion efforts. Going forward, proactively formulating and communicating a vision for special needs inclusion is crucial for our community.

Thus St. John's has organized a Special Needs Training Seminar for Saturday, October 6, 2018 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. led by Presvytera Toni Mihalopoulos from St. Demetrios in Chicago, Illinois. At the request of the Metropolitan of Chicago in 2009, Presvytera Toni created the Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Me Ministry. This ministry is for parishioners with special needs and their families. The goal of this ministry is to include all parishioners and their families, making them feel welcomed and keeping these families coming to church. Presvytera Toni has presented at numerous Orthodox Churches throughout the United States on this topic and we are honored to have her speak to our community. Lunch will be provided by the PC and we encourage anyone and everyone to take this opportunity to participate in growing the culture of inclusion for special needs children and their families at St. John's.

*Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for such is the kingdom of heaven."*  
*Matthew 19:14*

## Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Me Special Needs Inclusion Ministry

Please join us Saturday, October 6 in the Kourmoulos Center from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. for a workshop presented by Presvytera Toni Mihalopoulos of St. Demetrios in Chicago Illinois.

We will be learning new ways to be welcoming, supportive, and inclusive to children with special needs and their families. Lunch will be provided.

If you would like to attend or for more information please contact  
Dante Skourellos: [d\\_skourellos@yahoo.com](mailto:d_skourellos@yahoo.com) / 813-765-9534



The Annual St. John the Baptist Greek Festival is  
**November 9, 10 & 11, 2018**

This is our largest fundraiser and provides an opportunity to unite as a Parish to support our Festival. Look for communication soon from individual Festival Chairs as they set preparation dates and staff their areas.

### **Things We Know:**

- Admission Tickets and Raffle Tickets were mailed to our many loyal Stewards at the end of August to help promote and support our festival. The Raffle provides the best opportunity to increase our overall profitability! Everyone's help is
  - valued, needed and appreciated!
- Raffle Tickets are available on-line and in the office. Starting in October we will also have a Festival Table setup for volunteers and additional Raffle Donations.
- We have over 1,200 volunteer slots to fill over our 3 days weekend. It takes the effort of our entire Church Community to host a successful festival and highlight our Greek Culture/Heritage but more importantly OUR Orthodox Christian Faith!
- Promotion of our festival is key to increase attendance. Help us spread the word by sharing the Tampa Greek Festival posts, promoting via your Social Media and sharing flyers at your local stores.

**H XAPA ΜΑΣ and PAREA Dance Groups** Our Youth Dance Group will be practicing every Sunday in the Kourmolis Center immediately following Sunday School. H XAPA ΜΑΣ means Our Joy and this group is for school age children. If your children are interested dancing or if you have any questions please contact Marina Choundas at 813-877-6136 or Alex De Maio at 813-340-9668.

**PANAGYRI Dance Group** (for College Age students and older) Practices will be in the Kourmolis Center on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. starting on August 29. Please contact Alex DeMaio at 813-340-9668 or [Alexandra.demaio@yahoo.com](mailto:Alexandra.demaio@yahoo.com).

# Highlights on the Calendar 2018-2019

<b>Tuesday, September 11</b>	Paraklesis Service to commemorate 9/11
<b>Tuesday, September 17</b>	Women's & South Bible Studies Begin
<b>Saturday, September 22</b>	Youth Workers Leadership Training
<b>Thursday, September 27</b>	Adult Greek School Begins
<b>Sunday, September 30</b>	Parish Assembly By-laws Meeting
<b>Saturday, October 6</b>	Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Me Special Needs Seminar
<b>Sunday, October 7</b>	Pre-Teen Retreat
<b>Sunday, October 14</b>	Philoptochos' Bag of Love Packaging Event
<b>Sunday, October 21</b>	JOY/HOPE Fall Festival
<b>Monday, October 22</b>	Evening Divine Liturgy for St. James
<b>Sunday, October 28</b>	Parish Assembly
<b>November 9-11</b>	Greek Festival
<b>Wednesday, November 21</b>	Thanksgiving Eve Service
<b>Saturday, December 1</b>	Adult Advent Retreat
<b>Sunday, December 9</b>	Stewardship Sunday
<b>Sunday, December 9</b>	Parish Council Elections
<b>Saturday, December 15</b>	Sunday School Christmas Program Rehearsal
<b>Sunday, December 16</b>	Sunday School Christmas Program
<b>Monday, December 17</b>	Service of Preparation for the Nativity
<b>Monday, December 24</b>	Christmas Services
<b>Sunday, January 6</b>	Vespers for St. John the Baptist
<b>Monday, January 7</b>	Feast of St. John the Baptist
<b>Sunday, January 13</b>	Vasilopita Sunday
<b>Saturday, January 19</b>	Gasparilla Children's Parade Fundraiser
<b>Saturday, January 26</b>	Gasparilla Adult Parade Fundraiser
<b>Sunday, February 3</b>	Souper Bowl of Caring
<b>Sunday, February 3</b>	OCMC Missions Luncheon
<b>Monday, February 4</b>	Orthodoxy 101 spring class begins
<b>Monday, February 19</b>	Clean Monday - Beginning of Lent
<b>Friday, February 22</b>	Parish Movie Night
<b>Saturday, March 2</b>	Young at Heart Apokreatiko Glendi at St. John
<b>Saturday, March 9</b>	Liturgy at Garden of Memories for Saturday of Souls
<b>Sunday, March 10</b>	Sunday School Pre-Lenten Retreat
<b>Monday, March 11</b>	Clean Monday - Great and Holy Lent Begins
<b>Sunday, March 24</b>	Greek Independence Day Program
<b>April 5-7</b>	GOYA Lenten Retreat
<b>Sunday, April 21</b>	Palm Sunday—Palm Sunday Philoptochos Luncheon
<b>Friday, April 26</b>	Good Friday
<b>Sunday, April 28</b>	Pascha
<b>Sunday, May 5</b>	Parish Pascha Picnic
<b>Sunday, May 19</b>	Last Day of Sunday School
<b>Friday, June 7-9</b>	Junior Olympics

# Youth Calendar

September 2018 - July 2019

<b>Sunday, September 2</b>	No Sunday School Classes
<b>Sunday, September 9</b>	GOYA
<b>Saturday, September 22</b>	Youth Worker Training Seminar
<b>Sunday, September 23</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, October 7</b>	Pre-Teen Retreat
<b>Sunday, October 7</b>	GOYA Meeting
<b>October 12-14</b>	St. Pete GOYA Volleyball Tournament
<b>Sunday, October 14</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Saturday, October 20</b>	GOYA Service Project
<b>Sunday, October 21</b>	JOY/HOPE Fall Festival
<b>All November</b>	Boxes of Hope JOY/HOPE
<b>Sunday, November 4</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, November 11</b>	No Sunday School Classes - Greek Festival
<b>Sunday, November 18</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, November 26</b>	GOYA Christmas Card Fundraiser Begins
<b>Sunday, November 26</b>	No Sunday School Classes - Thanksgiving
<b>Sunday, December 9</b>	GOYA
<b>Saturday, December 15</b>	Sunday School Christmas Party, Christmas Program rehearsal
<b>Sunday, December 16</b>	Sunday School Christmas Program
<b>Sunday, December 23</b>	No Sunday School Classes
<b>Sunday, December 30</b>	No Sunday School Classes
<b>Saturday, January 12</b>	Sunday School Teacher Mid-Year Retreat
<b>Sunday, January 13</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, January 20</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Friday, January 25</b>	HOPE/JOY Movie Night
<b>January 25-27</b>	Clearwater Winter Event (GOYA)
<b>Saturday, February 9</b>	GOYA Lock-in
<b>Sunday, February 10</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, February 10</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, March 3</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, March 10</b>	Sunday School Pre-Lenten Retreat
<b>Sunday, March 24</b>	GOYA Meeting
<b>April 5-7</b>	GOYA Lenten Retreat
<b>Sunday, April 7</b>	GOYA Luminaries Fundraiser Begins
<b>Sunday, April 14</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, April 14</b>	GOYA
<b>Friday, April 26</b>	Sunday School Good Friday Retreat
<b>Sunday, May 12</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, May 19</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, May 19</b>	Last Day of Sunday School
<b>Sunday, June 2</b>	GOYA
<b>June 7-9</b>	Junior Olympics
<b>June 24-July 26</b>	St. Stephen's Summer Camp

# SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS - September 2018

What a great start to the 2018-2019 Sunday School year. We've had record attendance in August thanks to all the teachers, parents, and children who are committed to our program. The first day of Sunday School was on August 12 and on the August 11 the teachers had an inspiring retreat with Fr. Stavros and Charlie. Thank you Father Stavros and Charlie for dedicating so much time to our Sunday School and for supporting our effort. We would like to thank our returning teachers who serve the children of St. John's year after year and we would also like to welcome our newest members of our staff. Our new teachers in 1st Grade are Jenevieve Elly and Marquet Edquid. CLASS PICTURES WILL BE TAKEN ON SEPTEMBER 9. PLEASE TRY TO ATTEND. On September 30 the Sunday School is sponsoring COFFEE HOUR. PLEASE plan on bringing in a food item to share with our congregation.

Our YOUTH SUNDAY PROGRAM will continue this year. Our first one will take place on September 23. Our students in 1st - 5th grade will sing the Liturgical Hymns with the choir. As a result of the many years of our Music Program we now have many of our older students singing with the choir on a regular basis. We need to thank Maria Xenick for making this possible and inspiring our children's love for the hymns of our church. We would also like to thank our high school student who will read the Epistle on Youth Sundays.

Charlie Hambos will present a sermon on Youth Sundays to our 1st - 5th graders. This year he will also teach two lessons in each of the classrooms. Thank you Charlie for all you do in our Sunday School. Our students LOVE having you in their classrooms. Charlie does not only work with our children, but he is also instrumental in organizing our registration, creating attendance forms, and forwarding our weekly Sunday School correspondence through Constant Contact.

Melissa Krinos will continue to teach all of our students about Prosphora. On Sept. 16 the 4th and 5th grade students will make this special bread and it's significance. Thank you Melissa, for continuing this program for our children, as well as filling a need to supply Prosphora for our Liturgies.

For the 2018-2019 school year, we will acknowledge students with perfect attendance and award those students at our Graduation Ceremony. If you are out of town and attend church, we will count it, so please let us know. We understand that it is very difficult to attend church every week, but PARENTS, please make an effort. Your children's understanding of our faith is essential. It is also important to make it a "habit" of going to church on Sunday morning. When students come to church on a regular basis they feel CONNECTED to our church, to their teachers, and especially to their classmates. What better peers to have, than their Orthodox friends! These friendships could also last a lifetime. Students who do not come regularly may feel uncomfortable and miss so much of our valuable instruction.

Our HALL of FAITH program is a success and many children have been added. This program is to encourage our children to memorize and understand the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. Our Pre-K through 3rd Grade will be focusing on the Lord's Prayer and our 4th graders on up will do the Creed. Look for our HALL of FAITH poster on our Sunday School bulletin board. Will your child's name be on it?

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, suggestions, or comments regarding St. John's Sunday School Program. Parents: If you do not receive our weekly e-mails about our Sunday School Program, please contact Vickie Peckham at 406-5626 or e-mail her at [vickiepeckham@gmail.com](mailto:vickiepeckham@gmail.com).

## September 2018 Sunday School Calendar

**Sunday, September 2**  
No Sunday School classes

**Sunday, September 9**  
Topic: The Church Building / Sacred Vessels)  
CLASS PICTURE DAY  
Charlie: High School  
GOYA Meeting at 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday, September 16**  
Topic: Sign of the Cross  
No classes for 7-12th Grades  
(Procession of Holy Cross)  
Prosphora: 4th & 5th Grade

**Saturday, September 22**  
Youth Worker Training Seminar 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Sunday, September 23**  
Youth Sunday (6th - 8th Grade  
Music at 11:50 a.m.)  
Topic: Roles in the Church –  
The Great Commission  
Charlie: 2nd & 3rd Grade

**Sunday, September 30**  
Topic: The Lord's Prayer  
SUNDAY SCHOOL HOSTING  
COFFEE HOUR  
Charlie: 1st Grade

# Prayers for College Students, Professors and Sunday School Teachers

## A Great Start to our Academic Year

Photos by Olya Clifton



# 25 Random Pieces of Advice for Leaders in Their 20s, 30s or 40s

By Cary Nieuwhof

I may or may not have a big birthday this week. Okay...I may. Believe it or not, turning 50 has not been as traumatic as I thought it might be. Actually, it's been remarkably satisfying and gratitude-inducing. I have so much for which I'm thankful.

If you're a younger reader (which most of you are), I have some great news. At 50, I have as much or more energy than I did a decade or two ago, a much better sense of who God created me to be, and I'm surrounded by people I don't deserve. And I'm honestly more excited by the next 20 years than I've ever been about the future.

But maybe the best part of turning 50? You see things you just couldn't see at 20, 30, or 40. Okay, maybe you can see them. I couldn't. At least not as clearly.

In light of that, what follows are life and leadership tips I picked up in my 20s, 30s and 40s that I'm so thankful I did.

How you live your life up to age 50 likely matters more than you think.

## How You Live Your 20s, 30s or 40s Matters.

I was recently talking to a friend who had turned 50 a couple years ahead of me. He surprised me by saying that your 50s and are largely pre-determined by how well you lived your 30s and 40s.

Live your 30s and 40s well, and your 50s turn out great.

Live them poorly, and all the problems and issues you never resolved when you were younger sabotage your later years, even beyond your 50s.

When he said that, I gulped. Literally.

I'd seen that reality so many times in my life but never connected the dots.

So in an attempt to help you live your 20s, 30s and 40s well, here 25 random pieces of advice I hope can help.

### 1. Deal with your issues early

You have issues. Everyone does. As tempting as it is to believe otherwise, it's not your wife, husband, kids or job who are causing all the pain in your life. You are the common denominator in everything that's happened to you. So deal with you. Go see a trained Christian counsellor. Hire a coach. Read some books. Do what it takes to deal with your junk.

### 2. Invest in coaches and counsellors who make you better

On that note, most people who need counselling say they can't afford it. It's like couples who can't afford a date night but then spend thousands of dollars on divorce later because their relationship fell apart. If you need counselling to deal with issues, it's an investment. Ditto with coaches who can bring out the best in you. It's not just an investment in you. It's an investment in everyone you impact.

### 3. Get off the fence

Indecision plagues too many people. Make the best decision you can with the information you have, then humbly pursue it with everything you've got.

### 4. Study and practice faithfulness

Faithfulness is rare. Not just in marriage, but also in life. Culture teaches us to dispose of anything or anyone we don't like. So do the opposite. Learn how to be consistent, loyal, and steadfast, holding to what you know is right even when you feel like doing the opposite.

### 5. Live like God loves you and everything you read in the Bible is true

Most people wish someone loved them unconditionally. Someone does. So live like it. And while you're at it, live like everything you read in the Bible is true. Doubt your doubts. You won't regret it.

### 6. Be generous when you have no money

Don't fall for the lie that you will be generous one day when you have money. If you're not generous now, you won't be generous then. Practice generosity with every dollar you receive and everything you have. Then if you ever have money or possessions, they won't own you. You will have released their grip from your life long ago. And you will look behind you and already see you've been able to make more of a difference than you imagined.

### 7. Choose a few awesome friends and stick with them

Friendships can be confusing in your 20s, 30s and 40s. Friendship circles change when you leave school, get married and even change jobs. In the midst of all that change, find a few friends and stick with them for life. Most people can only handle 5 really close relationships in their life. Choose those 5 well and build into those relationships deeply.

### 8. Cultivate a circle of people around you who make you better

In the last 20 years, I've spent a lot of time trying to intentionally pursue friendships and relationships with people who are smarter, more skilled and simply 'better' than me. One of the best ways to become a better person and leader is to spend time with people who are better than you.

### 9. Get comfortable being around people who are smarter than you

Deal with your insecurities. Get comfortable being around people who are smarter than you. It will make you better, but it's also the key to creating an exceptional team. If you always have to be the smartest person in the room, you'll eventually end up in a pretty vacuous room.

### 10. Relentlessly pursue self-awareness

Self-aware people make the best leaders and frankly, are the easiest people to hang out with in life. Chances are your favorite people are people who are deeply self-aware. But self-awareness doesn't come naturally. I'm naturally blind to the impact I have on other people around me. So are you.

### 11. Make peace with your weaknesses

You'll never be great at everything. The sooner you get used to that, the better off you'll be. Eventually you'll stop trying to cover up and stop feeling so bad about yourself. That's progress.

### 12. Pour increasing amounts of energy into your strengths

Once you realize you're only great at a few things, you're free to become even greater at them.

Pour your time, energy and resources into what you do very best. That's the difference between being good at something and being best in the world.

### 13. Get comfortable with solitude

Solitude is a thoughtful leader's best friend. It also is a key to self-awareness. If you really want to grow as a person and as a leader, and grow in your relationship with God, get comfortable with solitude.

### 14. Wrestle down your pride

Pride is ugly. It gets you into trouble again and again. The only person to whom your pride looks appealing is you. Think about it...you don't like pride in anyone but yourself. So pray it out. Beat it out. Do what you need to do to wrestle it down.

### 15. Fight cynicism

The more you know, the harder it gets to stay hopeful (the Scripture points this out by the way). Cynics never change the world; they just tell you why the world doesn't change. Don't be one. Check the cynicism that's growing inside you.

### 16. Kill selfish ambition

Ambition isn't bad. In fact, it can change the world. Selfish ambition is bad. It can destroy the world. So be ambitious, but be ambitious for the sake of a cause that's far bigger than you are.

### 17. Don't give into stupid temptations that will come your way

You will be tempted to do stupid things. Don't. Don't have an affair, take short cuts or cheat to get ahead. It's so not worth it.

### 18. Find the high road and live on it

The high road is the hard road. But it's the best road. People will try to pull you off the high road again and again. Don't. Take it. Every time.

### 19. Don't wrestle with a pig

Conversely, the low road has virtually no reward. Years ago someone dropped this gem on me.

Don't wrestle with a pig. You both get dirty and the pig liked it. So so true.

### 20. Work twice as hard on your character as you do on your competency

Competency is not the main key to success. Character is. Your competency will take you only as far as your character can sustain you.

### 21. Persevere through the dry seasons

Your time with God will go flat. Sometimes you'll think what you believe is a farce. Even marriage, family and friends go through seasons where everything seems boring. Hang in there. Your emotions eventually catch up with your obedience. So be obedient.

### 22. Discover what refuels you and do more of it

Some things give you energy in life, some things drain you. Figure out what refuels you. Then do more of it. Your choice, over the long run, is self-care or self-medication. Choose self-care.

### 23. Book appointments with yourself

Your calendar will naturally fill up with urgent things other people believe are important. And you will watch a decade or more pass by without doing anything really significant. Book appointments with yourself to do what really matters, whether that's taking a day off, being with your family, writing an important talk, or taking time to think. Then when someone asks you if you're busy, you can truthfully say "I'd love to help, but I have a commitment."

### 24. Trust again

Your heart will get mangled and you'll be tempted to stop trusting people altogether. Don't. Trust again. Hope again. Believe again. You'll be so glad you did.

### 25. Be bold

Be bolder than you think you should be. Too many dreams die of timidity. Which leads me to #26 even though I know this post says 25...

### 26. Don't let fear win

Yep...you're afraid. Go for it anyway. Fear gets the best of far too many leaders. Don't let it get the best of you.

*Carey Nieuwhof is a former lawyer and now pastor of Connexus Church in Barrie, Ontario. He also writes and speaks about leadership, from both a religious perspective and a practical one.*

## Policy for Letters of Recommendation

Every year, Father Stavros gets many requests for letters of recommendation for students to get into college or for scholarships. Here are some guidelines to assist those who will be making these requests.

**The person for whom the letter is being written needs to contact Father Stavros, not their parents. Please give Father at least two weeks' notice to write a letter. Please send your information to Father in an email at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com).**

1. Your current school, year of study, major, and career objective
2. The name of the scholarship, who it is to be addressed to, and whether the letter is to be mailed, or given to the student in a sealed envelope.
3. The kind of scholarship that you are applying for - is it for sports, or writing, or business, etc.
4. The due date of the letter
5. Some information about yourself that will be helpful in writing the letter - i.e. if the letter is for leadership, please send leadership activities.

# Some say the greatest question in life is 'does God exist?' I say it's this one

By Dr. David Jeremiah

I found a place. It's east of San Diego, not far from my home in El Cajon. Forgive me for not being more specific, but that little desolate spot in East County is sacred to me and I treasure its privacy.

During trying moments of my life, I go there to be alone with God. During a difficult period some years ago, I spent a lot of time there, meditating and thinking, praying and sorting out my attitudes and decisions.

It was holy ground where I could be alone – yet not alone, for the Lord always met me there. As I walked the rugged trails, I sensed His footsteps beside me. When we talked together, He reminded me of His Word. I pondered Scriptures stored up in my mind, and I told Him what was on my heart and cast my burdens on Him.

I felt a kinship with the writer of Psalm 62, who said, "My soul finds rest in God alone."

*I've spent my life being overwhelmed with the wonder of the person of God. Some say the greatest question in life is: Does God exist? I say the greatest question is: Do I know the God who does exist? Do I know about Him, and do I know Him personally?*

You may not know God as well as you think, for He is as far above us as the heavens are above the earth. The Bible says His greatness is unsearchable (Psalm 145:3). His judgments are unsearchable (Romans 11:33). His riches are unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8).

Nevertheless He is knowable. In fact, God seeks to be known. He desires to be worshiped, and He has revealed aspects of Himself in both nature and in Scripture. We can know Him who is unsearchable.

Not only are we equipped to know God, our very purpose is to know God – to know about Him and to know Him personally, as a Father, as a Friend, and as our Creator and Sustainer. When we don't know God, we don't really know anything. Our lives are as incomplete without Him as a sky without a sun.

## St. John's to Partner with Love INC (in the Name of Christ)

Love INC (in the Name of Christ) networks local churches, church volunteers, and community organizations together to help people in need. Through Love INC, churches and individual Christians are mobilized to work together, across denominational lines, to provide coordinated help to struggling neighbors with basic needs such as food and clothing, to longer-term responses such as life skills training and transitional housing programs. For more information contact lhale@loveinctampa.org or www.loveinctampa.org. Plan to attend an upcoming free Lunch n Learn on 9/19 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at The Portico 1001 N. Florida Ave Tampa, 33602. Charlie Hambos is our church contact. For more information, please contact Charlie or contact Love INC directly. We look forward to being a strong partner both on an individual and community level.

Join us for a Lunch n Learn on  
September 19 from 11:30 a.m. to  
1:00 p.m. @ The Portico, 1001  
N. Florida Avenue,  
Tampa, 33602.

The most important thing in life is not what we do, where we go, who we're with, how high we rise, how long we live, or how influential we become. The most important thing in life is Him.

Nothing compares with getting to know the God who knows us. Though our finite minds can never comprehend all there is of God, our souls find rest in Him. When everything around us fails, He will never falter. When the foundations tremble, He is changeless, immovable – eternal in the heavens. When our hearts are overwhelmed, He is a rock that is higher than we.

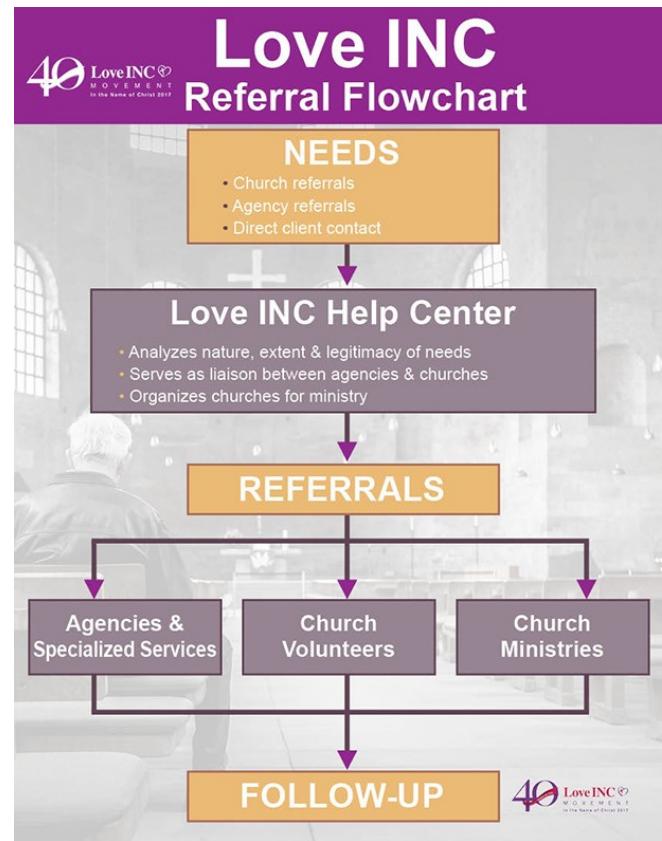
Knowing implies we are growing in knowledge. When the apostle Peter was nearing martyrdom, he wrote a final note to his friends and ended with these words: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

Peter's final letter consists of only three chapters, yet he used the word knowledge seven times. He began 2 Peter by saying, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God" (2 Peter 1:2).

To me, the study of the person of God is like plunging into a bottomless sea. I can never plumb its depths, but I cannot ignore its relevance. And, oh, how it refreshes the mind and restores the soul. We may not be able to fathom every aspect of God's character this side of eternity, but the Bible encourages us to try.

I can't go hiking in East County every single day. We can't always run to the backside of the desert, but I hope to never let a day pass without drawing nearer to Him and coming to know Him better.

*Dr. David Jeremiah is a pastor and writer, and host of the radio show "Turning Point."*



# THIS IS WHY OUR WELCOMING MINISTRY AND OUR CULTURE OF WELCOMING PEOPLE IS SO IMPORTANT AND CRITICAL AT ST. JOHN—thank you for doing your part to welcome people to our community!

## 10 reasons Americans go to church — and 9 reasons they don't

By Daniel Burke, Religious Editor at CNN

If American religion were traded at a stock exchange, your broker might be advising you to sell. The [trend lines](#) don't look great and haven't for quite some time.

Social scientists and religious leaders have lots of theories about the long, slow slide, blaming it on everything from [the internet](#) to the [politicization](#) of conservative Christianity.

A new Pew Research Center [study](#) offers something different: a survey of 4,729 Americans telling us precisely why they do (or don't) attend religious services.

Some of their answers are unsurprising. Americans who don't believe in religion don't often attend church. Because duh.

But the survey complicates other stereotypes about Americans who rarely, if ever, attend religious services. As it turns out, they're all not atheists, or even members of the "spiritual but not religious" crowd. Many say religion is important in their lives, and lean conservative, politically.

"The people who attend religious services less often are not a monolithic group," said Becka Alper, a research associate at Pew.

First, here are the top 10 reasons given by Americans who attend religious services at least once a month, according to Pew. Survey respondents were allowed to give more than one reason.

The percentage refers to people who said this was a "very important" reason for their decision:

1. To become closer to God. (81 percent)
2. So their children will have a moral foundation. (69 percent)
3. To become a better person. (68 percent)
4. For comfort in times of trouble or sorrow. (66 percent)
5. They find the sermons valuable. (59 percent)
6. To be part of a faith community. (57 percent)
7. To continue their family's religious traditions. (37 percent)
8. They feel obligated to go. (31 percent)
9. To meet new people or socialize. (19 percent)
10. To please their family, spouse or partner. (16 percent)
- 11.

African-Americans are more likely than whites or Latinos to say that becoming closer to God, being a better person and finding spiritual solace in tough times are top reasons for attending religious services. The weekly sermon is less a draw for Catholics than other Christians.

More women say there are a variety of reasons for going to religious services, while men more commonly say they sit in the pew to please their spouse.

A healthy slice of adults younger than 30 say they visit the sanctuary mainly to socialize. Perhaps coincidentally, they are also less likely than older churchgoers to say they feel God's presence at services.

Why are older people more likely to feel God at church? Is there something in our makeup that opens us to religious experiences as we age? Or maybe more Americans are searching outside of sanctuaries for the divine.

According to Pew, that was the top reason survey respondents gave for skipping regular religious services. Here's the whole list:

1. They practice their faith in "other ways." (37 percent)
2. They are not believers. (28 percent)
3. No reason is "very important." (26 percent)
4. They haven't found a house of worship they like. (23 percent)
5. They don't like the sermons. (18 percent)
6. They don't feel welcome. (14 percent)
7. They don't have the time. (12 percent)
8. Poor health or mobility. (9 percent)
9. No house of worship in their area. (7 percent)

When you read the phrase "practice their faith in other ways," it may be tempting to visualize dreadlocked [Jubus](#) and Thoreau wannabees wandering barefoot around Walden Pond. But that's not the picture Pew's data paints.

The believers most likely to say they practice their faith in "other ways" aren't spiritual freelancers with a disdain for discipline. They're Republican women in their 50s, and lot of them are Christians.

Of those who believe in religion but don't regularly attend religious services, nearly 7 in 10 still identify with a particular tradition, including 6 in 10 who say they are Christian.

More than half the people who believe but don't attend religious services regularly are women. Many say they haven't found a house of worship they like and have found other ways to put their faith into practice.

And why haven't these women found a house of worship they like? More than 6 in 10 said it's because they have poor health or difficulty getting around. More than half (54 percent) said it's because they haven't felt welcomed by congregations.

That's especially true of African-Americans who are more likely to say they don't go to church because they don't feel welcome or there is no worship space for their religion in their area.

American pastors, imams and rabbis have spent endless amounts of time trying to cater to millennials' religious tastes, or at least what they perceive to be millennials' tastes: Coffee bars. Hip young pastors. Mission trips to exotic locales.

But this study suggests that there is an under-served group of believers who seem like they'd actually like to go to religious services, if only someone could help get them there and welcome them when they arrive.

# Join the St. John Legacy Society Today!

## Make a Plan to Amplify Your Impact

Please consider including St. John Greek Orthodox Church estate plans.

Please consider becoming a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society by leaving what might be left over in your estate to St. John once you've provided for your family. For more information about this dimension to stewardship, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103 or email at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) to learn how you can have an impact on our church. Whatever you do, please be sure to consult your financial and legal advisors and let your family members know of your intentions.

## Arrival of Miraculous Icon at the Diakonia Retreat Center

On September 29, 2018, the Metropolis of Atlanta will be blessed with a special event in our spiritual lives as we receive the miraculous Panagia Vimatarissa icon from the Monastery of Vatopaidi on Mount Athos.

Beginning at 11:00 a.m., this rare and joyous occasion will take the form of a procession with the icon of the Theotokos into our new Panagia Chapel, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, along with the Monks of Vatopaidi, the clergy of the Metropolis of Atlanta, and a parade group created especially for the event!

Together, we will all have the opportunity to venerate the miraculous icon of our Lady, offer glory to our God and Creator, thanking those who made this day possible, and enjoying the fellowship of our Metropolis of Atlanta family.

His Eminence hopes to see as many parishioners there as possible, and to that end, asks that you please follow the link that will be sent out via email to RSVP. You will not want to miss out on what will surely be a momentous and spiritually joyous event! For questions and additional information, please call Ethel Gjerde, 404-634-9345.



Please Join Us, Saturday Sept. 29th 2018

For The Arrival Of The Miraculous Panagia Vimatarissa Icon



Services begin 11:00 am / 455 Quail Ridge Rd, Salem, SC 29676

## St. John the Baptist is on Social Media!



Do you Like our Facebook page?

Like our page and suggest it to your friends. Announcements are posted frequently so you are up to date with everything going on at St. John the Baptist. You can find our page at [StJohnGOCTampa](#).

Live Streaming

All of our services are being video recorded and are available on our Livestream page.

To access this page

1. Go to our Church's website: [greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com](http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com),
2. Scroll the mouse over the "Multimedia" tab on the menu bar,
3. Click "View Liturgy,"
4. Then click on the link where it says, "Check out our live stream of the Divine Liturgy here <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/2454446>.



All of the services are available to watch at anytime.

Pictures

Go to Flickr.com and search "St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church" or go to [www.flickr.com/photos/stjohnoctampa](http://www.flickr.com/photos/stjohnoctampa)



# *Want to Learn Modern Greek?*

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School



Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with over 20 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught @ St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609. Classes are held at 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings, starting on September 27, 2018. This will be the first of three sessions, with each session lasting three months.

- Speak Greek
- Read Greek
- Write Greek
- Basic Grammar & More.
- Some Greek History
- Book Included in Price!!

Price per session is \$100 for church members and \$125 for non-members.

Contact Ms. Magdalini Myer: at (813) 909-2327, [aspis69@aol.com](mailto:aspis69@aol.com) or the church office at (813) 876-8830.

## **Thank You to all of Our Friends!**

Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA  
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA  
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC  
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL  
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL  
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI  
Perry & Fay Stamatiaades - Asheville, NC  
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI  
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL  
Demetrius & Katherine Klimis - Boardman, OH  
Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL

Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL  
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL  
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL  
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL  
Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN  
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL  
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD  
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA  
Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL  
Gerald & Deborah Galovic - Tampa, FL

**Friends of St. John the Baptist** - 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 by being a "Friend of St. John the Baptist." 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 the Baptist 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.

**Thank you for your consideration of our parish.**

### **Friend of St. John the Baptist:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*I wish to become a Friend of St. John the Baptist. I am enclosing a contribution in the amount of:*

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50    \_\_\_\_\_ \$100    \_\_\_\_\_ \$200    \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Please mail this form and check to: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave Tampa, FL 33609.



## AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – September 2018



### AHEPA FAMILY “BOOTS ON THE GROUND”

Supreme President Loucas, after several phone calls to the Greek Government and US agencies, has announced a short-term program in response to the devastating wildfires in Greece. As we approach this task, we remind you that this is the worst fire in all of Europe since before 1900. AHEPA has the proven history and reputation of aiding in times of need. With over 30 AHEPA chapters in Greece alone, we are able to rely upon the structure of our organization to provide daily reports such as: current conditions; communications with U.S., Greek and local government officials; identifying the help needed most; prioritization of assistance; extent of injuries and ability of local hospitals to provide the necessary medical care and treatment.

In response to the immediate needs Supreme President Loucas announced the following AHEPA action plan:

1. Communicate to our *chapters the immediate needs*
2. **Project Boots on the Ground** 800+ member Ahepans mobilized from our 32 active chapters in Greece to investigate, report and offer assistance.
3. **Project UNITY FORUM** designed to invite all Greek American organizations to join AHEPA in providing humanitarian aid and relief efforts.
4. **Partner with NGO's** to seek involvement on programs to provide aid;
5. Reached out to our Partners in preparation to fly burn victims to the US for surgery with Emirates airlines & reached out to burn units in the U.S. to seek partnership in assisting burn victims.
6. Accelerate, Maintain and Support AHEPA's ongoing program of **training Hellenic Firefighters**.
7. Purchase needed parts for firetrucks for Hellenic Firefighters, which were depleted from austerity measures.
8. Continue to coordinate volunteer doctors to be available to go to Greece.
9. Release immediate funds to the IOCC for much needed resources for cleanup.
10. Reforestation assistance.

### Ahepa Family of Tampa NIGHT AT THE TAMPA MUSEUM Antiquities Circle Lecture: Contests, Combat, and Commemoration



#### JOIN THE AHEPA FAMILY IN LEARNING ABOUT OUR HERITAGE

Learn about the reimagined *Classical World in Focus* with Dr. Seth Pevnick, Chief Curator and Richard E. Perry Curator of Greek and Roman Art. Dr. Pevnick is an honorary member of Ahepa Lycurgus Chapter 12 Tampa

Wednesday, September 12, 2018 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Reception at 6:00pm, lecture at 6:30pm.

Tampa Museum of Art 120 Gasparilla Plaza Tampa, FL 33602

#### ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

**Contests, combat, and commemoration** played important and often interrelated roles in ancient art, life, and culture. This small exhibition, drawn primarily from the Museum’s permanent collection, explores a number of these connections within both mythological and historical contexts. Altogether, some eighty works of Greek, Roman, Etruscan, and Egyptian art are included, ranging from the sixth century BC to the fourth century AD, and from painted pottery to sculpture in terracotta, bronze, and stone.

Join today – Become a member of Ahepa or the Daughters of Penelope  
Or if you are 14- 18 years old become a member of the  
Sons of Pericles or the Maids of Athena

	~ September 2018 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
							1
<b>2</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>3</b> Labor Day Office closed  No Bible Study	<b>4</b> Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>5**</b>	<b>6</b> Young at Heart 11:30 a.m.	<b>7 **Evening Liturgy for Nativity of Virgin Mary</b> Orthros 5:00 p.m. Liturgy 6:00 p.m.	<b>8</b>	
<b>9</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. By Laws Q & A GOYA 5:00 p.m.	<b>10</b>  Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>11</b> Commemoration of 9/11 Paraklesis 6:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>12 **</b>  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m. Parish Council Meeting 7:00 p.m.	<b>13</b> Philoptochos Board Meeting	<b>14 **</b>  Holy Cross Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>15</b> Community Outreach 8 a.m. @ First Presbyterian Downtown Tampa	
<b>16</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. AHEPA/Daughters	<b>17</b>  Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>18</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>19 **</b>  Choir Practice 7:15 p.m.	<b>20</b>	<b>21 **</b>	<b>22</b> GOYA Leadership Training 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	
<b>23</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Philoptochos General Meeting/Love INC	<b>24</b>  Bible Study 6:30 p.m.	<b>25</b> WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m. Basketball 8:00 p.m.	<b>26**</b>	<b>27</b> Clergy Meetings 9/27-9/29	<b>28 **</b>	<b>29</b>  <b>Greek School Begins</b>	
<b>30</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. By-Laws Parish Assembly Parish Nursing Drug Drive YAL 5:00 p.m.							**Fast Day WBS - Woman's Bible Study SBS - South Tampa Bible Study Drive YAL 5:00 p.m.

# St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

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www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### *Timetable of Services*

**Sundays:** Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

**Weekdays:** Orthros 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.

#### Parish Priest

Rev. Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis  
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-394-1038 (Cell)  
frstav@gmail.com

#### Pastoral Assistant

Charlie Hambos  
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)

#### Parish Council

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867  
Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957  
Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352  
Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046  
Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525  
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

#### Office Staff

Debbie Bowe, Bookkeeper  
debstjohnpta@gmail.com fax:813-443-4899

#### Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

#### AHEPA

Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

#### Altar Angels

Engie Halkias 813-932-5859  
Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

#### Basketball

Perry Katsamakis 516-403-3118  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

#### Bible Study

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Bookstore

Brett Mourer 813-376-9315

#### Chanter

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Choir

Artie Palios, Director 813-831-1294  
Ruth Losovitz , Organist 727-688-2782

#### Community Outreach

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

#### Dance Group

H ΧΑΡΑ ΜΑΣ, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668  
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347  
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963  
Parea, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136  
Panigyri, Anna Maria Bavaro 732-239-9085  
Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668

#### Daughters of Penelope

Nicole Leontsinis, President 703-585-7490

#### Finance Committee

Gary Ward 813-846-3898

#### Food Pantry

Anetta Alexander 813-758-2689

#### Gasparilla Parking

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

#### GOYA

Maria Koutroumanis 813-245-3854

#### Hope/Joy

Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

#### Junior Olympics

Dwight Forde 727-685-9028

#### MOMS

Mary Ann Konstas 813-215-9862  
Lindsey Skourellos 813-503-7845

#### Parish Nurse

Stavrula Crafa 727-409-0686  
Edie Kavouklis 813-758-0305

#### OCF

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Oratorical Festival

Peggy Bradshaw 727-244-1374

#### Photography Ministry

Olya Clifton 661-243-9352

#### Philoptochos

Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

#### Small Group Bible Study

South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347  
Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

#### Strategic Planning

Marc Edquid 813-422-8940  
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

#### Stewardship

Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747  
Pete Trakas 813-505-2193

#### Sunday School

Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

#### Usher

Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

#### Visitation Committee

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Welcoming Ministry

Maria Xenick 813-765-3587

#### Young Adult

Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

#### Young at Heart

Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947  
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

#### Youth Protection

Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658

The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the first of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. You may send announcements to the church office through email.

“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.