

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 2019

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

A "Blessed" "Ministry"

September 1 marks 15 years that I have served this parish. In some ways, it feels like just yesterday, and, in others, it feels like a lifetime ago. I have had the great privilege to officiate 160 weddings, 380 baptisms, 83 Chrismations and 109 funerals. I have celebrated the Divine Liturgy approximately 1,500 times in our parish and have stood at the altar for nearly 3,000 services. Most importantly, I've met countless numbers of people in this ministry—people with whom I have worked, laughed, cried, sometimes argued, and have watched grow in so many ways in these past 15 years. I am thankful to God for His call to the priesthood. I am thankful to His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios for assigning me here on September 1, 2004 and for allowing me to continue to serve here. I am thankful to Lisa and to Nicholas for their support and encouragement as I continue to serve here.

BLESSED

There are three themes to this month's message. The first one is a check in on our parish's word of the year: "BLESSED". At the beginning of the year, we discussed four aspects of this word, BLESSED.

The first aspect of BLESSED is counting ourselves blessed, having an attitude of gratitude. It means recognizing that everything that we have that is good has its origin from God. This means that we should be grateful to God. We should see the good things that come our way as blessings rather than as entitlements.

The second aspect of BLESSED is asking ourselves are we

doing things under the umbrella of God's blessings? In order to do this, we have to be people of prayer, who stand in God's presence often, seeking His blessings and guidance. This requires a great deal of focus. It also requires a mindset that says: "Don't just ask God to bless what you are doing, work to do the things that He is blessing!" This means that we focus our lives around God, rather than focusing God around our lives. He becomes the source and center, rather than just a compartment. He takes the wheel of our lives rather than being the spare tire.

The third aspect of BLESSED is generosity; sharing our blessings with others. When we recognize that everything good we have is from God, then we share what we have freely and joyfully with others. It is interesting that in the Bible, we will find the word "faith" 246 times, "hope" is used 185 times, "love" is used 733 times, but the word "Give" appears 2,285 times. The Bible says more about generosity than about faith, hope and love combined.

The fourth aspect of BLESSED is turning our blessings into praise of God. Our purpose in life is to glorify God. We are to glorify Him on our own, in our own private prayers, and personal lives. We are to glorify Him through service to other people.

So, how are you doing with our community word? How about with your own personal word? If you haven't done well with either, don't worry. The Orthodox Liturgical Year begins September 1. So if you are Orthodox, we have two chances for a new year—January 1 and September 1. Focus on BLESSED

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meet once a month on Sunday evenings from 5:00-7:30 p.m. It is open to all men of our parish. We will meet at 5:00 p.m., get food from some place local—either walk over or order in—enjoy dinner and fellowship, as well as relevant discussion. The September meeting will be Sunday, September 15. Fr. Stavros will lead this ministry.

I am thankful to all those who are stepping forward to lead ministries. Without leadership, there are no ministries. I encourage everyone to get involved in at least one ministry—in order for you to learn, to serve, to have fellowship, to give support to others and to receive support from others. It would be unrealistic in a community as large as ours to know everyone in the community or for everyone to know you. Getting involved in a ministry will give you a circle of people who can support you, who you can socialize with, who can encourage you and who you can encourage as we all make our journey to salvation. If you have an idea for a ministry we do not currently have, please talk to me or Charlie and we'd be happy to with you about establishing additional ministries.

THINK YOU CAN'T MAKE DIFFERENCE? WE ALL CAN

In the sermon on Sunday, August 11, we reflected on the miracle of how five loaves and two fish fed five thousand men, plus woman and children. In the sermon, we, as a congregation, came up with 30 small things we can do to reduce anger and infuse positivity into the world around us. I'm reprinting a portion of the sermon, as well as the 30 small things in the hopes that we will start doing some of these things, and make a difference in our little corner of the world.

If the average family has 3.24 people in it, that miracle might have fed as many as 16,000 people. Imagine five loaves and two fish feeding 16,000 people, that's 3,200 people eating off a loaf of bread and 8,000 people splitting up a fish. That's is ridiculous! How could that happen? And to top it all off, there were 12 "kofinas" (the Greek word for "coffin"—think expensive huge burial container from ancient Egypt) of left overs. That's a LOT of food left over.

Now imagine being one of the disciples when Jesus suggested feeding the large crowd. Imagine what it would have been like to canvas that crowd, asking for some food. Imagine what it must have been like in the crowd, if you had one of those precious loaves set aside for yourself or your family and now you were being asked to give some food for the masses. Give up what you have and risk going hungry. One miracle was that anyone chanced sharing their meager food with a large crowd. That was a miracle in itself!

As we look around the landscape of our country, at the daily violence that we read about in our newspapers, we might wonder "what can I possibly do to change any of this?" What if I suggested that we had the power to put a dent in the violence around us? You'd probably wonder if I'm either off my rocker or about to make a political statement. I'm assuring you, it's neither.

I strongly believe that a lot of the violence in society today is due to anger. Anger stems from isolation and discouragement. The more isolated and discouraged someone feels, the more angry they are likely to become. The more angry they become, the more likely they are to lash out in unhealthy and even dangerous ways. If everyone reading this message (a) did one of

the things listed below every day, (b) passed this message on to others, and (c) did these things under the umbrella of God and prayer, we actually could change the world. Just like five loaves fed 16,000, a few hundred people who committed to doing what is listed below could change a few hundred thousand people. It's actually possible.

Below are 30 suggestions that were given in church last Sunday as part of the sermon on what can we offer the world. Pick one suggestion a day, or even one a week and focus on that. Choose a different one tomorrow or next week. If everyone does even one of these to one person a day, you'll be amazed at what could happen. So here they are:

- Give someone a compliment
- Offer Christian forgiveness
- Smile to people you encounter
- Pray
- Give love
- Be kind to people
- Help someone in need
- Share a meal with someone
- Call/text someone at random to see how they are doing
- Thank people
- Lead by example
- Don't annoy people
- Be mindful of how you are feeling
- Be mindful of how others are feeling
- No road rage
- Send short texts of encouragement to people
- Adjust your own attitude
- Be there for people when they need it
- Share
- Volunteer
- Give someone a compliment
- Abstain from social media
- Have compassion
- Put others first
- Seek out someone who needs help
- Ask how someone is doing and actually listen to the answer
- Recognize that everyone is battling something
- Be patient
- Be encouraging
- Give positive feedback when you like something

Here is the amazing thing about everything on this list—most of them will cost you little time and no money. They are just about all easy things that we can do with a little bit of intentionality. So, go make a difference. What is stopping you?

Think you can't make a difference? Think again. We all can! Do one of the things on this list today.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Many of our children started a new school year in the last few weeks. Each year begins with the hope of new experiences and good things, tempered with the reality that there are challenges every day. The church is here to help us keep ourselves on track as we journey towards the Kingdom of God. The journey to salvation transcends time. It is part of our school years and our adult years. The Church is also here to help us with those day to day challenges, whatever they may be. As we begin a new Church year, with new ministries, as well as changes to

established ones, I hope that we will each embrace the things, the people and the opportunities with which God has BLESSED us, get involved in a MINISTRY, and do our part to MAKE A DIFFERENCE in the world.

People who are experts in church work say that a parish needs a “makeover” every 4-7 years. Sometimes that involves changing clergy, sometimes that involves changing ministries or other changes. Some years that I have served here, ministries stay relatively the same. In other years, we add or subtract, or change leadership. It seems that Fall of 2019 is shaping up to be one of those years where we have a good amount of change, and that’s a good thing for any organization. If an organization isn’t changing, it isn’t growing, and if it isn’t growing, it is dying. Our parish continues to grow, in numbers and in spirituality. So the changes coming this fall, in terms of new ministry and new leadership, are good things. They are a sign of a dynamic and evolving community. Like a child going to school on the first day, I am both excited and nervous, though mostly excited to see where this will all go, and where it is leading us.

I will end this message with a confession. I got so busy over the summer that when I thought about this message, and checking back in with our “community” word BLESSED, I had forgotten my own word for 2019. Someone with whom I had shared my word jogged my memory. My word is TODAY. I chose that word in order to keep my focus on TODAY, to not

get too far ahead in my thoughts or my worries. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:34, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day.” Many people live with one eye on the past and one eye on the future, and no eye on the present. Many people are living with one eye stuck in guilt or sadness over the past, with the other eye stuck on anxiety for the future, and they have no joy in the present. My word for this year was today, to live with more focus and purpose today, to be present today, to give my best TODAY. And even I lost track of that. Here’s the thing about TODAY. Every day we get a new TODAY. So if you’ve lost sight of Christ, are down on the faith, haven’t been to church in a while, or are wondering how to just jump back in to praying and living the Christian life, TODAY is a great day to start. Again, I encourage you to get involved in ministries, so that you can serve others and so that when you are in need, others can serve and encourage you.

This is the DAY the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24

Have a great day TODAY, a BLESSED remainder of 2019, and a purposeful new ecclesiastical (church) year. Thank you for 15 BLESSED years of MINISTRY at St. John!

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

Quotable Quotes

A word for those who are “concerned” about the noise children make in church services: Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-2003) was once asked,

“What shall we do with children in church? They interfere with our prayers.”

He replied, “When you begin to pray, they will stop bothering you.”

Successful People

Read every day
Compliment
Embrace change
Forgive others
Talk about ideas
Continuously learn
Accept responsibility for their failures
Have a sense of gratitude
Set goals and develop life plans

Unsuccessful People

Watch TV every day
Criticize
Fear Change
Hold a grudge
Talk about people
Think they know it all
Blame others for their failures
Have a sense of entitlement
Never set goals

Do not choose anything above God,
for that becomes your god.

~Anonymous

Liturgical Notes for September 2019

Sunday, September 1 - 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.

September 8 - Nativity of the Virgin Mary 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.



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 15.

Donations Needed for Vasiliko for the Feast of the Holy Cross

We need Vasiliko (Basil) for the services of the Holy Cross. Please bring Vasiliko for Saturday, September 14 and Sunday, September 15. 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 Saturday, September 14 and repeated on Sunday, September 15.

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 15. Please call the office if you are interested.

No Basketball on Sundays - Sunday coffee hour is for fellowship, not for sports. Basketballs flying in all directions makes it unsafe for people who are sitting and eating. We've tried to curtail this but to little avail. Please cooperate by refraining from playing basketball in the Kourmolis Center during coffee hour.

No passing of trays —As of January 1, 2019, there will no longer be a tray passed at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. It is our hope that everyone will increase their stewardship in order to bridge this gap. Increased stewardship and less nickel-and-diming (trays) are the mark of a strong parish. This new policy is in line with our desire to be a strong parish. There will be a tray in the narthex. You can deposit your stewardship checks in that tray, give additional donations in that tray or ignore the tray. There is no charge for the small candles. The large candles (the red 7-day ones) will still cost \$5.

NEW PROCEDURE FOR UNCLAIMED COFFEE HOURS - We are excited to present a NEW procedure for hosting our weekly parish coffee hour for the weeks where no ministry has signed up for coffee hour. Certain letters of the alphabet according to last name, have been assigned to each open date. We will be emailing a link to a Sign-Up Genius. Please sign up for those Sundays which correspond to your last name. You may sign up for one or more items which include, set-up, serving, bringing items, or clean up on any particular date. Please see the dates and suggested items below. We would like to see as many different people as possible sign up, so that the burden will not fall on anyone repeatedly. It is also important that our worship experience not be compromised by putting on the coffee hour. Finally, if a family would like to pool together to go a coffee hour, to honor a loved one who has passed, or mark another occasion, please let us know and we'll reserve that date for your family. If there are any questions, don't hesitate to call the church office at 813-876-8830. Thank you for helping us to create an environment that encourages fellowship and community.

Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks: The Bible Project

By Fr. Stavros

In January, we began the “Fifty-Two Verses in Fifty-Two Weeks” Bible Challenge, to memorize one Bible verse per week for fifty two weeks. I will provide a verse per week (four or five per month in *The Messenger* and then repeated weekly in the bulletin). I will choose verses that are meaningful to me. You are welcome to submit verses via email to me as well, as many of you have.

Most of us don’t spend enough time in the Bible. Sadly, some of us don’t spend any time. If you want a challenge, do the following:

- Memorize the verse of the week.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire chapter of the book that the verse comes from.
- For a greater challenge, read the entire book where the verse comes from.

Another challenge to consider is to keep a journal and contemplate the verse each week. Read it, memorize it, and then contemplate it. Allow the Holy Spirit to move your mind and your thoughts and then write down those thoughts and keep them in a journal. If you do one reflection on Scripture each week, you will have the best book that could be. A book written by you, for you, guided by the Holy Spirit, who will guide your thoughts as you read the Scriptures.

Below are verses for the month of September. There is one verse for each week. I have written a few comments below each verse to get your mind going. Don’t let my thoughts be your interpretation. Contemplate the Scripture each week and let it speak to you. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through your reflection on Scripture.

September 1-7

*For we walk by faith, not by sight.
II Corinthians 5:7*

Some people think that life would be easier if we just had a crystal ball and could see the future. I’m one of them. However, none of us has a crystal ball to see the future. Every day we actually wake up to an uncertain future. While we may have plans to go to school or work or a social outing or take in a baseball game, our “future” changes constantly with unforeseen joys and challenges. Because we can’t possibly know the future in every detail, and because many of us like to be in control, obsessing over the future will leave us stressed out and bewildered. Therefore, we can choose to walk by sight, trying to keep our eye on every detail, even though we know we can’t control or even see all the details. Or we can choose to walk by faith, trusting that God will be with us during the times we can see the details and especially during the times when we cannot. The Christian walk is a walk of faith, not sight. Because sight seeks control, while faith surrenders it. That doesn’t mean we walk around with our eyes closed to the world around us. It means that as we are walking and can’t see around the next corner, the next day or the next challenge, we trust that God will be there walking with us, helping us, encouraging us, and comforting us, every step of the way.

September 8-14

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from His birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.” John 9:1-3

This is more than our usual one verse of scripture but these three scripture verses are very important. Because we often confront the question of why do bad things happen to people, and specifically why do they happen to us? Christ tells us that our misfortunes are not necessarily caused by us or our sins. We know that some bad things that happen to us are indeed the result of bad decisions we’ve made or bad decisions that others have made. Other bad things are caused by “natural disasters” which is actually a misnomer. The natural world that God created had no disasters. The term should probably be “disasters that happen as a result of a fallen world” but that’s probably too big a mouthful. We know that our fallen world produces bad gene pools, as well as impure water and impure air. The impurities of the world affect each of us in a different way, but there is no mistake they affect each of us. The important thing to remember in these verses is that Christ said that the works of God would be made manifest because of the blind man—in this case, people would know that Christ healed the man. In other bad circumstances, the works of God can be manifest as well. God can bring good out of things that are bad.

September 15 - 21

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.
2 Timothy 1:7*

Where there is love, there cannot be fear. The two cannot co-exist. God’s spirit is not supposed to inspire fear in us, but rather a spirit of love, wisdom, and confidence in God’s power. Likewise, God does not wish for us to instill fear in others, but rather to love other people, to share wisdom with them (our own secular wisdom as well as sharing the wisdom of God) and to inspire confidence in others. This is yet another example of memorizing a short verse of the Bible which makes great application to life.

September 22-28

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:25

What we believe and how we live need to be in alignment. If we believe that God’s Holy Spirit lives in us, then we need to let that Spirit guide how we live, and how we walk. If we say we live by the Spirit, filled with His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control, then we should walk in these things, these

fruit should lead our behavior, and others should be able to recognize this fruit in us.

September 29 - October 5

Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." John 14:6

The "way", the "truth" and the "life" seem to be defined different by different people. Many people are obsessed with going "their own way." And any challenge to that is seen as a threat to freedom. The ultimate freedom ironically is

found in giving up one's own way and following after Christ, doing things His "way." "Truth" is something else that is becoming relative. There are absolute truths, but we are becoming very adept at skirting the truth. Words of truth are often twisted out of convenience or based on popular or contemporary sentiment. God's "truth" never changes. "Life" is a gift from God. The greatest gift we can hope to receive is eternal "life" in the Kingdom of Heaven. Eternal life is only possible when we focus our earthly life on Christ. If we are trying to plot a way to eternal life, it is by making Christ the "way" the "truth" and the focus of our "life."

Orthodoxy 101 Class will be held beginning September 23

Fr. Stavros offers this class two times per year, in the spring and in the fall. This will be a Four-week course of study on Monday nights to make people aware of the basics of being an Orthodox Christian. The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers.

Who should attend the Orthodoxy 101 class?

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

The four sessions will be done as follows:

Monday, September 23 A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means

Monday, September 30 Orthodox Spirituality—Introduction to the Sacraments

Monday, October 7 The Divine Liturgy—**This will actually be a "teaching" Liturgy on the solea of the church. If you have taken the class, or if you wish to only attend THIS session, please feel free to do so.**

Monday, October 14 Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from "yiyalogy"

Classes will be held on these four Mondays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and will be held in the CHURCH Sanctuary.

Please sign up with Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com, so he has enough materials for everyone. There is no charge for this class.

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.

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.

A Reflection on Serv-X-Treme Leadership and Service Conference

By Artemis Xenick



Orthodoxy: an exquisite faith that is beautifully and heavily focused on intellect, scripture, tradition, and sacred rituals. Millions devote their lives to Orthodox Christianity and its tenants but what this sect of Christianity is so sorely lacking is a strong branch of service. It wasn't until I attended the Serv-X-Treme leadership and service conference through the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) in Minneapolis this summer that I understood how much we can do to improve this aspect of our spiritual lives. Yes, many of us donate money and goods to different organizations and may volunteer at different programs, but how often do we as a collective Orthodox community truly surrender ourselves to helping others?

During my week in Minnesota, I was surrounded by 24 other Orthodox high school seniors. We had days full of presentations and service opportunities, such as working with Habitat for Humanity, volunteering at The Boys and Girls Club, learning how to assist a team during home builds and cleaning after natural disasters, and feeding the homeless. It was incredible to be so immersed in Orthodox service with 24 other teenagers who all shared the same hearts, goals, and motivations.

The most repeated sentiment of the week was that of toxic charity. You're probably looking at that phrase with confusion, as I did when I first encountered it; how can charity be toxic? Charity can be given in two ways, haphazardly or with intention. Giving haphazardly occurs when a person or organization gives without means of sustenance. For example, giving a loan to someone in need without teaching them how pay the loan back or spend this money carefully would be fruitless; the recipient would most likely spend all the money quickly and carelessly and eventually end up right where they started. This is toxic charity; giving the means to success without guidance. In this same situation, serving intentionally would be to give the loan and teach the recipient careful ways to spend this money and gain their own financial independence. In the latter situation, the recipient is not just accepting a hand-out but learning and therefore improving the quality of their life instead of being conditioned to be dependent on others. The recipient also feels more like a person worthy of help and even that can empower them to take the plunge to rectify their situations. We were all

given a book on this topic, called, Toxic Charity, by Robert D. Lupton, that I highly recommend reading. It presents some challenging ideas and thoughts but the things it says are extremely important to understanding how to serve intentionally.

One of the most dangerous misconceptions about service is that you must wait to be a certain age or at a specific station in your life to begin truly serving. The truth is, everyone has special gifts and every organization and person in need has some specific tribulation that matches your talent. We have no excuse not to serve. If you are unable to perform physical labor or if you are an older person, you can listen and give emotional and spiritual guidance to someone in distress; this is often the most desired form of help! If you don't have the financial means to give to an organization, you can donate your time; you are more likely to impact someone's life by giving up your time than your money. No act of service is too small; making an impact in just one life has monumental results.

As a young person, I have always felt like service was supposed to be a part of my later life. Before my time in Minnesota, I felt that my skills could not be truly applied until I was older, so I never participated in many meaningful service projects, thinking that I could do that strictly in the future. Although my intentions were noble, it was a toxic way to think. If someone never does any real service work due to supposed plans in the future, once that future arrives, it is likely that service will no longer be a priority! Youth are so commonly told that their skills are not as valuable as those of an adult, claiming that their inexperience in life cancels out any possibility of making a difference in people's lives. This is wrong. Young people are so often told that they are the future of the church. I would like to amend that claim; they are not just the future of the church but the present! The idea of there being a correct age and persona to be able serve is a false construct. You do not need to wait to serve. There are infinite opportunities for people of all ages and skill levels to serve in impactful ways. Both adults and youth of the church need to work to encourage each other to serve and focus on taking initiative in finding ways to do so. By building a foundation of service in those who are young, we are helping the message of the church grow and spread; it wouldn't just be nice to get the youth involved in service, it is integral to the growth of our church!

Serving altruistically is possibly the most difficult aspect of service, yet the most vital. Selfless service includes surrendering your ego and looking at the people you are serving without judgement. Many people in need abstain from asking for help, due to the feeling of being judged by those claiming to aid





them. Every night in Minnesota, we split into small groups to debrief about the day and talk about certain aspects of service. One night we were talking about how Jesus served those who were most tainted with sin: prostitutes, thieves, etc. and my group leader said something very profound: celebrities and homeless people are on the opposite side of the social spectrum. They are treated vastly different and looked at in completely opposite ways in all eyes but God's. Celebrities are treated like gods on earth and are continually showered with praise, success, and admiration. Homeless people are looked at with distaste, distrust, and hate. As wide of a social gap as they have on earth, people as different as celebrities and the homeless will be treated in the exact same way in heaven. Each of the seven billion people on the planet are equally loved and treasured by God, no matter who they are or what they have accomplished, and we should treat them no different than He would. Loving your neighbor is a facet of loving God; the two are inseparable. We were all created in God's image but to truly be in His likeness we must treat people as God would: with nothing but selfless love, abstaining from judgement and condescension.

Possibly the most rewarding moment of my week happened near the end. We were serving food to homeless people one night and after we finished serving, we got food ourselves and were encouraged by our counselors to go sit and eat with the homeless people. To be able to sit with these people and eat the same food as they were was extremely humbling. This small action showed the people that we did not think better of ourselves than them and allowed them to be more open and receptive to the help we were trying to give. I sat and ate with a young adult named Justin. He was incredibly kind, respectful, and very open to share about himself. We had a conversation about completely normal things: sports, music, college, family, and Orthodoxy. As he was leaving, I asked him if I could say a prayer with him. At first, he was reluctant. "I'm not Orthodox though...are you sure that's okay?", he asked me, fidgeting and slightly uncomfortable. I assured him that it was and so we

bowed our heads and I said a prayer. When I finished, he looked up at me, teary-eyed and overcome with emotion. He went on to tell me that my prayer was "the nicest thing anyone has done for me in a long time." His words moved me then and continue to move me every day.

In this moment with Justin, I had a lot of fear and anxiety about praying with him. I had a silent debate with God in my head as I questioned whether it was a good idea, and whether I had the spiritual strength to do something so daunting. I was extremely nervous to even go to Minnesota; I didn't know anyone, I had never traveled alone before, and I was about to be surrounded by these people that I didn't know for a whole week. When I was first asked to go to this event, my initial reaction was to turn down the invitation, simply due to my fear. Even though I was conflicted about going, I still felt a tug towards it. I repeatedly prayed about it and asked God to help clear my mind. One night I was reading the Bible and came across a verse that clarified my situation for me, "*As silver and gold are tested in a furnace, so are the chosen hearts of the Lord,*" (Proverbs 17:3).

Every one of us has been chosen for a specific mission and purpose and the journey to accomplish that will be littered with obstacles, temptations, and people who will try and persuade you to follow a different path. Although traveling a different path may be tempting and maybe even easier, staying true to yourself and to Christ is the most rewarding thing that you can do. I am exceedingly glad that I followed God's path to Minnesota because it led me to amazing friends who feel like family, rewarding service opportunities, a chance to learn about our beautiful faith in a new perspective, and the beginning of a life of being passionate about service. I hope we can work together as a church and strive to connect with our community and serve others selflessly, intentionally, passionately, and spiritually.

Artemis Xenick is in 12th grade. She is the daughter of Mike and Maria Xenick, and is active in Choir, Sunday School and GOYA

St. John the Baptist Community News

Parish Registry

Baptism—Zoe Marie Skourellos, daughter of Dante and Lindsey Skourellos, was baptized on Saturday, August 3. Jimmy and Mary Ann Konstas and Petros Skourellos were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Baptism—Ivelisse (Angeliki) Kennedy Freeman, daughter of Eugene Freeman and Jaqueline Ramirez, was baptized on Sunday, August 4. Katherine Freeman and John Ramirez were the Godparents. Na Sas Zisi!

Condolences to Brett Mourer, on the passing of his father, Ray, who passed on July 19. May his memory be eternal!

Condolences to Russell Sibley and family on the passing of his mother, Joan Little Sibley, on June 22. May her memory be eternal!

Condolences to Mike Trimis and family on the passing of his mother, Bessie “Vasiliki” Trimis, on August 16. May her memory be eternal!



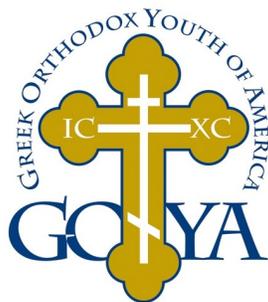
GriefShare Ministry Starting on Thursday, September 5

It may be hard for you to feel optimistic about the future right now. If you've lost a spouse, child, family member, or friend, you've probably found there are not many people who understand the deep hurt you feel. This can be a confusing time when you feel isolated and have many questions. “Going to GriefShare feels like having warm arms wrapped around you when you're shivering.” GriefShare groups meet weekly to help you face these challenges and move toward rebuilding your life. Each GriefShare session has three distinct elements: Video seminar with experts, support group discussion with focus and personal study and reflection. We will meet from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Administration Building Meeting Room on Thursdays, starting Sept. 5. For more information please contact Donna Hambos at 813-843-8412 or dhambos@msn.com. Books for the program will be provided. Donation for the book suggested but not required. Open to all family and friends.

Prayer for All Ministry Heads, Sunday, September 8

As we begin the New Ecclesiastical Year, we have decided it would be very appropriate to set aside a few minutes within our Liturgical life to pray for the leaders of all the ministries of our church. They play an active role in keeping our community a community and help us live out our Core Values which are Love, Worship, Community, Learning and Service. Thank you Mike Trimis for making this beautiful suggestion at the Ministry Head meeting on August 19.

Get Acquainted Sunday, September 8 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.



GOYA Meeting - Sunday, September 8

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 21 - On Saturday, September 21, from 9:00-3:00 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. It is open to GOYA parents, GOYAnS from 10th-12th grade, Sunday school teachers, as well as youth workers from other parishes in the Tampa Bay Area. If you are interested in attending this event, please email Fr. Stavros by September 15. There is no cost.

Adopt a college student Project

We are asking that ALL college students (or their parents) please send us their contact information (school address, email, and phone number). We are starting a new ministry called “adopt a college student.” We would like to match each of our college students up with at least one parishioner who will “adopt” them for this coming year, sending care packages and notes of encouragement throughout the year. If you would like to “adopt a college student”, please send your name in to Charlie and Father Stavros.

THANK YOU and WELCOME

A BIG THANK YOU to Maria Koutroumanis for her three years of work as our GOYA Advisor. Our GOYA is the largest it has ever been in the history of our parish, and this is due in large part to Maria's dedication and enthusiasm. She bonded with our GOYAns, supported and encouraged them constantly, and did a great job working with Father Stavros to offer a program that is Christ-centered, safe, edifying and fun.



A BIG THANK YOU to Debbie Nicklow for her years of work as our HOPE/JOY Advisor. This group has also continued to grow over the years. Debbie built on a solid foundation of HOPE/JOY that she took over, and then expanded this ministry with more and diverse activities for our children. HOPE/Joy has established relationships with Hope Children's Home, Metropolitan Ministries and many other community partners. Thank you Debbie!

Introducing some new faces

Pauline Spencer is our new choir director. Pauline has sung in the choir for many years, and before that, she was the choir director at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in New Port Richey. Pauline welcomes anyone interested in the choir to join. Our amazing choir is always looking for new talent.

Zackie and George Ameres are the new HOPE/JOY advisors. HOPE/JOY is a ministry for children from three years old through sixth grade. It focuses on learning, fellowship and service. Fun fact about George and Zackie—They were the first wedding celebrated by Fr. Stavros after he moved here in September 2004.

Michael and Bessie Palios are taking over as our GOYA Advisors. GOYA is the ministry for teenagers in 7th-12th grades. This dynamic group which has over fifty members balancing spirituality and fun in two extremes. When it is time to learn, we are very serious about the faith. And when it is time to have fun, we take that very "seriously" as well. Anyone in 7-12th grades who is not already in GOYA is welcome to join at any time.

Donna Hambos is starting a new ministry called "Grief Share." This ministry is a national program that combines video with discussion and is for anyone in any stage of grief. Grief share will meet on Thursdays beginning September 5. This will be a 13 week series that will take a break at Thanksgiving and will culminate at our Christmas Candlelight Service in December.

Bible Studies are Continuing and Starting

Bible Study - The Monday Night Bible study held by Charlie Hambos will meet on Mondays, September 9, 16, 23 and 30 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the Administration. We will be studying the Book of Revelation. New people are welcome to join at any time.

Women's Bible Study - Women's Bible Study will begin on Tuesday, September 17 at 10:00 a.m. and will meet every Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. Location is still being worked out, so please see the weekly bulletin for updates. This ministry is open to all women of our parish.

South Tampa Bible Study - Led by our new Pastoral Assistant, John Kokenis, will meet in the Media Center/Library of the BridgePrep Academy School Building on Tuesdays from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.



Philoptochos Society News and Updates

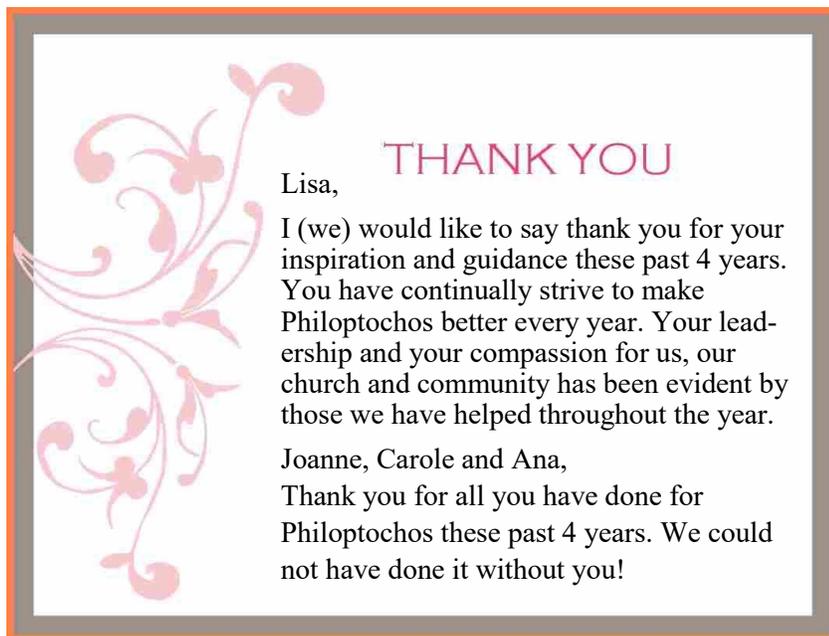
2019 Philoptochos Board

Jeanie Nenos, President
Katherine Sakkis, VP
Cindy Xenick Recording, Secretary
Kathy Maclaury, Corresponding Secretary
Lisa Alsina, Advisor

Myra Armstrong
Sia Blankenship
Elaine Halkias
Martha Kapetan
Melissa Krinos
Mary Voykin

SAVE THE DATE

September 22 - General Board
meeting after church



Honoring All Active, Retired Military & First Responders on October 20



Philoptochos is calling all Active, Retired Military and First Responders to be honored Oct 20 in church. If your family member is currently serving away from home, please let us know as you will represent them. Please feel free to wear your uniform. Please join us in thanking them during coffee hour. This is our way of saying thank you!

We will be collecting the following items and sending to our troops that need our thoughts and prayers . We will provide cards in the hall, please feel free to write them a note.

Food Items

Slim Jims and Beef Jerky
Single serving powdered drink mix
Canned tuna/chicken with crackers.
Individual bags of trail mix
Granola Bars, cookies or Rice Krispy treats
Instant Oatmeal (packets)
Fruit Snacks
Protein Bars
Pop Tarts or mini boxes of cereal
Cup-o-Noodles or Ramen in cups
(NO BLOCKS OF RAMEN)

MISCELLANEOUS

Colored Pencils + Pencil Sharpeners or Mechanical Pencils;
Pens
Puzzle Books, any kind
Decks of cards or travel games
Small pads of paper
Fun things like ear buds, **small** rubber balls or footballs

HYGIENE ITEMS

Travel size or full size Body Wash
Travel size or full size Shampoo and Conditioner
Deodorant, men's and women's or unscented: - either travel sized or full sized.
Lip Balm
Feminine Hygiene items
Razors & Shave Cream **NO AEROSOL CANS!**
Wet wipes
Travel Size Hand Sanitizer

PROHIBITED ITEMS

Pork or pork by-products (Slim Jims are OK)
Tobacco or alcohol products
Bars of Soap
Anything packed in glass
Pornography or other culturally sensitive material
Bagged potato chips: they are too easily crushed.
Unwrapped candies
No aerosol or sprays in cans
Nail polish
Perfume or Cologne...it is flammable and usually in glass containers.

Please contact Jeanie Nenos @ 813 451-9116 or Jeaniertt@aol.com to add you to our list.

Young Adult Ministry - Sunday, September 22 - The YAL will have our dinner and discussion. We'll meet at 5:00 p.m. in the Kourmolis Community Center, walk somewhere close by to have dinner, then walk back for some discussion. Please RSVP to Charlie if you are going to attend. Dates may change. Charlie will send an email.



We need AA batteries - if interested, please donate either Duracell or Energizer.



Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 1974 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 4 years! Over half of our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. 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 to add you.

MEN'S GROUP

Men's Group - We are going to start a men's group that will meet one Sunday evening a month for fellowship, food and discussion. We will meet at 5:00 p.m. at the church, get some food from one of the nearby restaurants, eat in the hall and have a relevant discussion. The dates for the fall are: Sunday, September 15; Sunday, October 13; November 3 and December 15.

Greek Dance Practices for the Festival are starting

H Xara Mas for Kindergarten through 2nd Grade will be taught by Alex DeMaio

H Xara Mas for 3rd through 5th Grades will be taught by Maraquet Edquid

Dance Practices for H Xara Mas will be held on Sunday throughout September

The Parea Dancers for grades 6th through 12th Grade will be taught by Marina Choundas and Anna Maria Bavaro and will also be held throughout.

The Panigyri Dance Group for College Students and older will have practices on Wednesdays in the Kourmolis Center at 7:00 p.m.

Fr. Stavros to Attend Clergy Meetings

Father Stavros will be attending required clergy meetings at the Diakonia Center in South Carolina from September 10-12.

Charlie will be out of the office from September 6 - 8.

Please call the office at 813-876-8830 for any questions.

St. John Greek Orthodox Church's Young-At-Heart Ministry

We want to thank Carole Fotopoulos for her many years of hard work and leadership. Our new president is Mike Trimis and we hope we can enrich our lives through "Community Fellowship".

MEETING DATE AND TIME: **First Thursday of Each Month at 11:30 AM (unless otherwise posted)**

LOCATION: **Zaharias Room in Peter and Sophia Kourmolis Hall** at St John Greek Orthodox Church.

Everyone is welcome. There are no age restrictions.

We will have either a pot-luck lunch or go visit one of our local parishioners' restaurants.

OUR ACTIVITIES INCLUDE

Welcome new members
Celebrating birthdays
Wellness committee visitations and calling
Sharing and giving thanks to recent happiness events
Humor and story reading sessions
Games and activities

For more information, contact
Michael Trimis, President, 813-784-4872 (vm/t)
TrimisM@gmail.com
Mary Nenos, Vice President 813-508-5553
MaryNenos@gmail.com

TRIPS IDEAS TO BE SCHEDULED INCLUDE

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) Visit neighboring Greek Orthodox Churches | 11) Sunken Gardens |
| 2) Visit St. George Coptic Orthodox Church | 12) Support parishioner businesses (ABC Pizza, Bavaro's Pizza & Pastaria, etc.) |
| 3) Visit St Philip the Apostle Orthodox Church | 13) Picnic Island Beach Dog Park (picnicking) |
| 4) Lowry Park Zoo (Zoo) | 14) Phillipe Park (picnicking) |
| 5) Big Cat Rescue (Animals) | 15) Rays Baseball (\$15) |
| 6) Phelps Farm Orchids (Flowers) | 16) Lakeland Black Swans |
| 7) Florida Bee Farm (Honey) | 17) open |
| 8) Florida Botanical Gardens | 18) open |
| 9) USF Botanical Gardens | 19) open |
| 10) Hard Rock Casino | |

YAH is planning to go to a Christmas Dinner Theater show on Saturday, December 7, 2019 - Open to everyone

Buffet Opens at 12:00 p.m.
Showtime 1:30 p.m.

Cost is \$45.79 each if we have 15 or more are paid.
Make checks payable to: St John GO Church
Please write on the check notes: "YAH Show Palace Theater"

Mail checks to 2418 Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609
or give checks to Mike Trimis at Church

Show Palace Dinner Theatre

Address: 16128 US-19, Hudson, FL 34667 it takes approximate one hour to drive there from the Church
We will try to car pool from the Church from 10:45 am sharp or you can drive there yourselves. Just let us know.

Elf - The Musical venue with American fare served buffet-style.
December 7, 2019 Noon Matinee

Join us for the hilarious tale of Buddy the Elf, a young orphan who mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and is transported to the North Pole. Buddy is raised unaware that he is actually a human, until his enormous size and poor toy-making abilities cause him to face the truth. With Santa's permission, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity. Faced with the harsh reality that his father is on the naughty list and his stepbrother doesn't even believe in Santa, Buddy is determined to win over his new family and help New York remember the true meaning of Christmas!

Contact Mike or Mary for more information and questions.



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

**“The Forgotten Medicine—The Mystery of Repentance”
by Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev**

Every Christian feels a natural yearning of the heart towards God, a true desire to taste the sweetness of communion, of being with Him as He created us to be, but the impurity of our hearts—full of passions, conflicts and fears—bars the way. Yet, there is a cure for the weight of sin which burdens the heart and soul of each one of us and afflicts the conscience, keeping us from that longed-for inner peace and from peace with our neighbors and loved ones. That cure is the Mystery of Repentance.

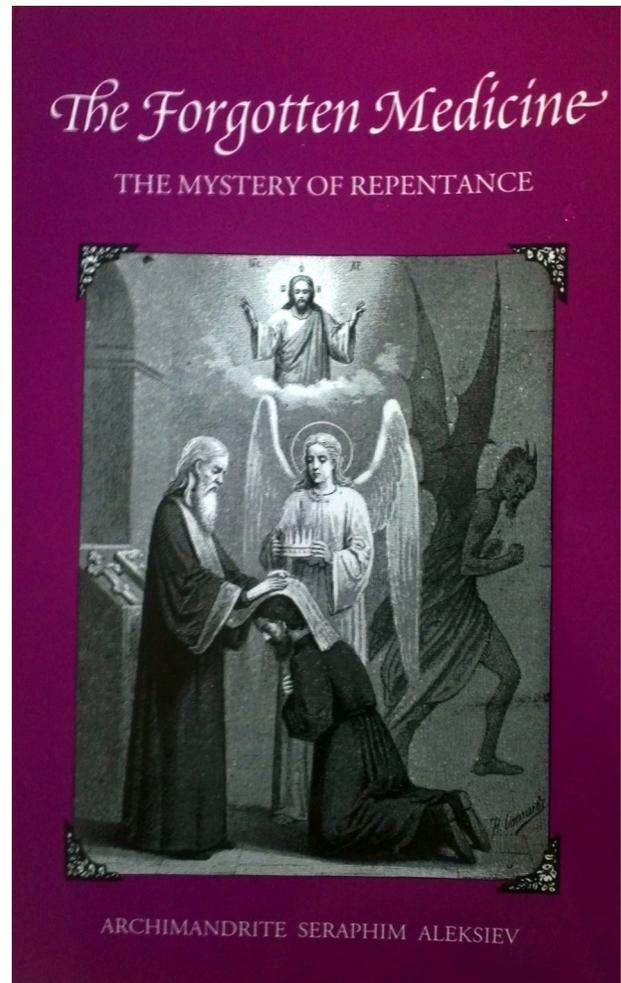
Archimandrite Seraphim, in “The Forgotten Medicine”, details the reasons many have for not coming to Confession, and for each of these he clearly brings forth the truth of the matter. For those who feel awkward because of not knowing how to approach confession, he explains in depth how to prepare before, what to do when we are with the confessor, and what to do afterwards. He then writes of the wondrous changes in the lives of those who enter into the Mystery of Repentance, illustrating with several true accounts.

Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev (1912-1993) was an outstanding pastor, spiritual writer and theologian in contemporary Bulgaria. Today, his books and pamphlets are pivotal in raising the level of spiritual life amidst the Bulgarian people, and reflect a depth of insight and experience which can touch the souls of all those in the world today who are hungry for God.

This book is available in the bookstore for only \$5. We would love to hear from you, particularly what you think of this 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



SEPTEMBER 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

What a great start to the 2019-2020 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 Aug. 18th and on the 17th the teachers had an inspiring retreat with Fr. Stavros, Charlie Hambos and John Kokenis. A thank you goes out to them for supporting our Sunday School. 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 back Heidi Borgeas to our Middle School.

Charlie Hambos is teaching the High School this year with Dory Passalaris. We are very thankful that he is committing to these students. Charlie does so many things for our Sunday School. Just to name a few, he is instrumental in organizing our registration, creating attendance forms, and forwarding our weekly Sunday School correspondence through Constant Contact. What would St. John's do without Charlie Hambos.

CLASS PICTURES WILL BE TAKEN ON SEPTEMBER 8TH. PLEASE TRY TO ATTEND so that your child will not be missing from their class picture that will be displayed on our Bulletin Board. On Sept. 15th the Sunday School is sponsoring COFFEE HOUR. PLEASE plan on bringing in a food item to share with our congregation.

We will continue our YOUTH SUNDAY PROGRAM once a month. Our first one will take place on September 22nd. Our students in 1st - 6th 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.

We would like to welcome John Kokenis, our new Pastorial Assistant. We look forward to his involvement with our Sunday School. John will present a sermon on Youth Sundays to our 1st - 5th graders. He will also teach two lessons in each of the classrooms. Our students will love having you in their classrooms.

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

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?

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. Without this, they may not develop a personal relationship with Christ. 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. And why not arrive to CHURCH ON TIME. If you can do it for your jobs and school, why can't you do it for Christ!

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.

September 2019 Sunday School Calendar

Sunday, September 1
No Sunday School classes

Sunday, September 8
Topic: The Theotokos
CLASS PICTURES WILL BE
TAKEN
John Kokenis: High School
(Vessels)
GOYA Meeting 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 15
Topic: Sign of the Cross
SUNDAY SCHOOL SPONSORED
COFFEE HOUR
No Sunday School for 7-12th
(Procession of Holy Cross)

Sunday, September 22:
Youth Sunday (6th-8th Grade Mu-
sic at 11:50 a.m.)
Topic: Roles in the Church –
Talents - Gifts
Prospora: 4th Grade
John Kokenis: Pre-K (Vessels)

Sunday, September 29:
Topic: The Lord's Prayer
SUNDAY SCHOOL IS
SPONSORING COFFEE HOUR
John Kokenis:
2nd and 3rd Grade (Vessels)

September Stewardship Message

*What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?
1 Corinthians 4:7*

We express sincere gratitude to the faithful Stewards of St. John and your continued support of our Church Mission and Ministries. Your giving is a testimony to the dedication of your own spiritual growth and also a commitment to help spread our beloved Orthodox Faith.

Stewardship provides an opportunity to examine our priorities and values, to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in grace. It allows us to participate in the work of God. Giving is not a substitute for commitment – it is an expression of your commitment. As St. John Chrysostom said, “A Rich Man is not one who has much but one who gives much. For what he gives away remains his forever.”

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 expenses and ministries. They also provide details on 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.**

Visit <http://greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com/2019-stewardship/> to complete your Stewardship Pledge Form and make your gift today.

- Individual/Family Stewardship Summary statements were mailed in August; please call the church office with any questions.
- **We will publish a list of 'Stewards' at St. John the Baptist in the October Messenger** as we prepare for Fall General Assembly and Parish Council Nominations and Elections. Specific dates will be announced soon.
- 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.

We love hearing from our parishioners. If you would like to share something regarding your calling to Stewardship, please contact Sandra Pappas at spappas11@gmail.com or Pete Trakas at ptrakas@gmail.com Stewardship Co-Chairs.

We are here for YOU!

Year to Year Comparison ~	2019*	2018*
Pledged Year to Date	\$495,571	\$429,142
Received Year to Date	\$316,955	\$308,381
Average Pledge	\$1,479	\$1,367*
Median Pledge	\$900	\$657*
# of Individual/Families Pledged/Giving	356	325

*YTD as of 8/5/19 & 8/13/18 - Average/Median for 2018 – based on Y/E Paid

\$1,000 Sent to American Friends of the Blind

The American Friends Of the Blind in Greece (a 5012(c)3 Charitable Organization) identifies, acquires, and delivers the best possible resources and opportunities available to organizations in Greece, dedicated to improving the lives of Greece's blind and severely sight-impaired people.

Provide funding for:

Braille printing and lending library
Audio book / magazine / periodicals recorded on: Tape, CD / disc
Streaming audio, Cassettes.

Employment for the blind in: Metal Workshop, Brush and Broom workshop; Textile work shops, Ceramics workshop

Also support:

- Tactical Museum where blind people can 'touch' objects
- Theater troupe of the blind
- Health and fitness for the blind

Since 1946, we have helped support services for the blind by funding such intuitions as FAROS - the Lighthouse For The Blind, and The Tactual Muse-

um for the Blind located in Greece.

We have created infrastructure and services that help meet the total needs of visually impaired individuals with goal of helping them live dignified, independent and activity-rich lives.

Thank you for your support and Stewardship which goes a long long way.

~Save the Date~



The Annual St. John the Baptist Greek Festival is Coming Soon!

November 8, 9 & 10, 2019

Things We Know

- 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!
- Our festival is a lot of fun but only happens as a result of many volunteers dedicating their time and talent!
- Planning meetings will be announced soon with Volunteer Sign-ups coming in September.
- Many opportunities will be available for participation; from planning, advertising, baking, decorating, dancing, raffle sales, donations needed for silent auction to the hundreds of opportunities over the festival weekend!
- This is our opportunity to showcase our faith, culture, and the beautiful place of worship of St. John the Baptist.
- **Our Kick-Off MEETING will be announced soon. Stay tuned to the bulletin and emails.**



We do it for our Church and We do it for the Greater Community of Tampa. Let's show Christ's Love through our food and hospitality.

Raffles Sales ARE STARTING!!!!

Save the Date – Our Annual Tampa Greek Festival is set for November 8-10, 2019

RAFFLE TICKET
Support the church! Win a BMW!

TAMPA GREEK FESTIVAL

Enter for a chance to win a new BMW or \$20,000 cash or other prizes!
See back for details.

Tampa Greek Festival Raffle Ticket
Suggested Donation \$100

Sponsored in part by
MORGAN
AUTO GROUP

Planning is underway for our 2019 Tampa Greek Festival and we are excited to get a jump start with Raffle sales beginning THIS MONTH! Last year, we set a record in raffle sales and it has a lot to do with us starting early. This year we hope to do even better. Tickets will be available online through the Tampa Greek Festival Website and the Church office very soon. Stay tuned to the bulletin and emails for further announcements. Remember, we limit sales to the first 1,000 tickets and really count on our parishioners promoting the Raffle to friends and family.

Imagine the relief, if we could begin the weekend with a solid start of pre-sales for the Raffle and not be so reliant on good weather or attendance to make the necessary profit our church currently needs. Our Festival is an opportunity to showcase not only our Greek culture but more importantly our Orthodox Faith! It requires a great deal of planning and effort BEFORE the weekend even kicks off.

The raffle is one of the easiest, most profitable methods to make this happen. With your support early in the season, we can make it the best sales year in history!

For 2018, our net festival profit was \$129,048!

This year, we will do even better.

For 2019, in addition to LifePath Hospice, a large portion of our proceeds will go to help LOVE Inc. of Tampa Bay.

Hope & Joy School Supply Drive

September 1-29, 2019

Benefiting Students at Hope Children's Home

Items we are collecting:

- #2 Pencils
- Pink Erasers
- Copy Paper
- Crayons
- Wide Ruled Notebook Paper
- Sharpies
- Glue Sticks
- Highlighters
- Construction Paper
- Spiral Notebooks
- Composition Notebooks
- Graph Paper
- Plastic Folders with Prongs
- Colored Pencils
- Pencil Sharpener
- Markers
- 1 in Binders
- Pencil Top Eraser



There will be a box or bin in the Kourmolis Center for collection on Sundays after the Divine Liturgy.

St. John's is proud to offer a new ministry for families with special needs:

Connect Through Christ

According to the US Census, 18.5% of American Children under age 18 are Special Needs Children. That doesn't mean that they aren't smart, talented, or capable. Just that they have specific challenges that a "typical" student would not face.

There are four major types of special needs children:

Physical – muscular dystrophy, chronic asthma, epilepsy, etc.

Developmental – down syndrome, autism, dyslexia, speech delays, processing disorders

Behavioral/Emotional – ADD, bi-polar, oppositional defiance disorder, etc.

Sensory Impaired – Blind, visually impaired, deaf, limited hearing

Our mission is to break down barriers that keep children with disabilities and their families from being able to participate in the Church community. By discretely identifying families that Connect Through Christ can serve we hope to assist in providing a life long relationship with Christ. For more information please contact Lindsey Skourellos at 813-503-7845 and lskourellos@yahoo.com or Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534 and dand_skourellos@yahoo.com

Youth Protection Update

Please be aware that the youth protection enrollment for ecclesiastical year 2019–2020 has begun and will continue this month. Prior to this starting date, you will receive email communication regarding what steps to take if you are volunteer who works with children or leads our Church. We ask that you keep an eye out for these emails and read the Messenger for updates as our methodology may change due to the new requirements. Thank you for serving so faithfully at St. John's.

Yours in Christ,

Catherine S. Mitseas, ministry head
Nick Katzaras, Parish Council Liaison



Community Outreach

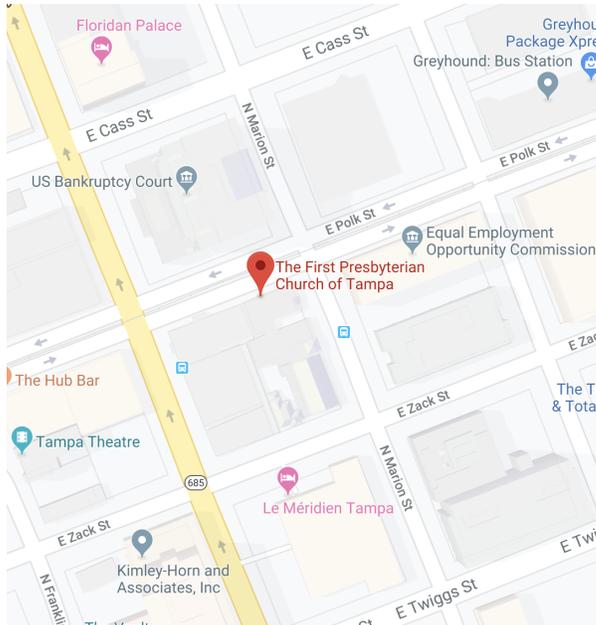
Saturday, September 21

We Want You to Serve with Us!

Hello and WELCOME! My name is Greg Melton and on behalf of our Community Outreach Ministry I want to thank you for your interest in participating with our group. **On the third Saturday of each month**, we volunteer our time to provide for those of our community in need in downtown Tampa. We partner with Matthew 25 local charity, USF Medical School, and Metropolitan Ministries to serve breakfast, provide clothing, and care for the medical needs for our guests.

To Volunteer: Go to our Sign Up Genius, see URL below or scan the QR CODE and sign up.

Place: First Presbyterian Church @ 412 Zack Street, downtown Tampa. The entrance for volunteers is on the Polk Street side of building.



Time: 8:00 AM to 10:30AM

Volunteer Check-In Process:

- 1) Sign in and choose the job you want on the Duty Sheet
- 2) Prepare and wear your name tag
- 3) Don't be shy...if not sure where to go or what to do to get started, ask someone who looks like they know what they're doing.
- 4) Set up and Preparation 8-9AM, Serving 9-10:15AM, Cleanup 10:15-10:30AM.

Matthew 25 founders Peggy & Mike Kanter, as well as Bill Stone from Metro Ministries, are Go To people if you have questions or need direction on where you may be needed when you arrive.

Here is the URL for the Sign Up Genius for every upcoming 3rd Saturday of Month. Find the dates that work for you and sign up.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0f48a5a62da3f49-community>



Scan with your Smartphone to Sign-Up Today

Please don't hesitate to ask any questions. Thank you and God Bless
Greg Melton 813-967-2074 gmelt12@gmail.com

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.

Immunizations are essential for infants and children, pre-teens and teens, and yes – *Adults Too!*

Immunizations aren't just for children. Some childhood vaccines wear off over time, and additional vaccination boosters are required. The purpose of this article is to focus on 5 specific immunizations recommended for people 50 years of age or older.

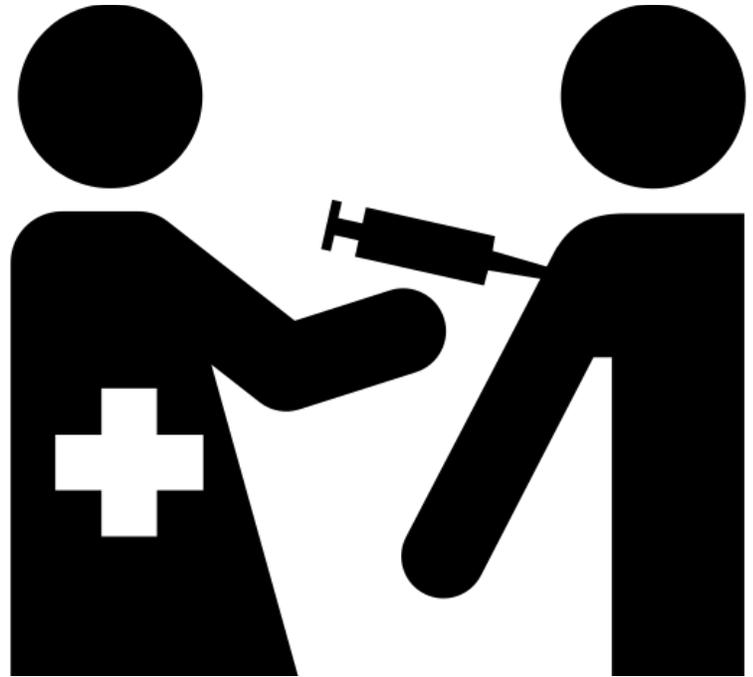
The immunizations include:

Pertussis - Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious respiratory tract infection. In many people, it's marked by a severe hacking cough followed by a high-pitched intake of breath that sounds like "whoop."

Flu- All adults need a seasonal flu (influenza) vaccine every year. Getting the flu vaccine every year is recommended by the CDC. Getting vaccinated can help protect you from contracting the flu. But it's not a guarantee you won't get sick. Flu vaccine is especially important for people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women, and older adults.

Tdap - ALL adults who did not get Tdap vaccine as an adolescent should get one dose of this vaccine. Once they have had this dose, a **Td booster should be given every 10 years**. A serious disease can result if you are not immunized called Tetanus. This disease is caused by a bacterial toxin that affects your nervous system, leading to painful muscle contractions, particularly of your jaw and neck muscles. Tetanus can interfere with your ability to breathe and can be life threatening. Tetanus is commonly known as "lockjaw." Thanks to the tetanus vaccine, cases of tetanus are rare in the United States

Zoster vaccination - Shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful rash. Although shingles can occur anywhere on your body, it most often appears as a single stripe of blisters that wraps around either the left or the right side of your torso. Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you've had chickenpox, the virus lies inactive in nerve tissue near your spinal cord and brain. Years later, the virus may reactivate as shingles. Shingles vaccine protects against shingles and complications of the disease.



Pneumonia immunizations: Age 65 years or older: Pneumococcal vaccines, which protect against pneumococcal disease, including infections in the lungs and bloodstream. The Pneumonia vaccine is recommended for all adults over 65 years old, and for adults younger than 65 years who have certain chronic health conditions

Because of age, health conditions, or other factors, some people should not get certain vaccines or should wait before getting them. Always check with your doctor before getting any vaccination.

Marcelle Triantafilou, RN-BC, BSN, Nursing Ministry of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, please contact Marcelle if you have any questions, or are interested in joining the Nursing Ministry.

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.

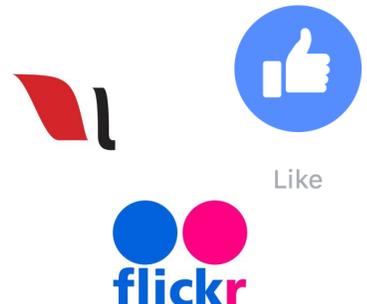
To access this page

1. Go to our Church's website: greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com,
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/stjohngoctampa



My One Word For 2019 - Surrender (Yourself to the Lord)

by Theodoros Panopoulos

As we make our way through 2019, anyone who has chosen a word for this year is welcome to submit a testimonial for the Messenger each month. If you'd like to share your word and how it's shaping your year, please email Fr. Stavros at frstav@gmail.com. This month's testimonial is from Theo Panopoulos.

According to 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." If God is love, and it is our goal as Christians to become more like God, then we need to first cast out fear to achieve this goal. If we must eliminate fear to achieve love, then we can even view them on opposite ends of a spectrum. If we have read Father Stavros' daily readings, we know that the word "saint" means set apart. If we carry this idea forward, we can deduce that these saints have set themselves apart by casting out fear as they ascend to love. For example, after being placed onto a grill of fire, Saint Lawrence said "My body is done on one side; turn me over on the other." In another instance, as Saint Athenogenes approached the fire, wherein he was to die a martyric death, he chanted the hymn O Joyous Light in praise of the Holy Trinity. Many of the saints who were martyred offered a prayer of forgiveness to those who were slaying them as it was happening. Instead of focusing on the fear of death, they were focusing on the love and concern of the salvation of their neighbor. These saints were able to act in this way be-

cause they spent their lives casting out fear (evil) in pursuit of love.

Recently, Father Stavros shared with us the following important message from his Spiritual Father: "God gives each of us a path to sainthood. We all have the potential to be saints." We all know that the shortest distance between two points (our lives today and salvation) is a straight line. When we pursue love on the path that God has set forth for us, the path is straight. When fear dictates our path, we are merely running away from something instead of running toward something. In other words, our direction of travel may be in any direction and often times in the wrong direction. Unless we stop running from fear and running toward love, we will always be on a perpetual hamster wheel.

So how do we stop running from fear and starting running toward love? According to Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Just as fear is the beginning of wisdom, wisdom is a catalyst for faith, and it is only with faith that we can surrender ourselves to the Lord. God has a unique plan for each and every one of us and it is guaranteed to lead to salvation. Once we trust the Lord and surrender to him, our path to sainthood and our path to salvation begins to straighten.

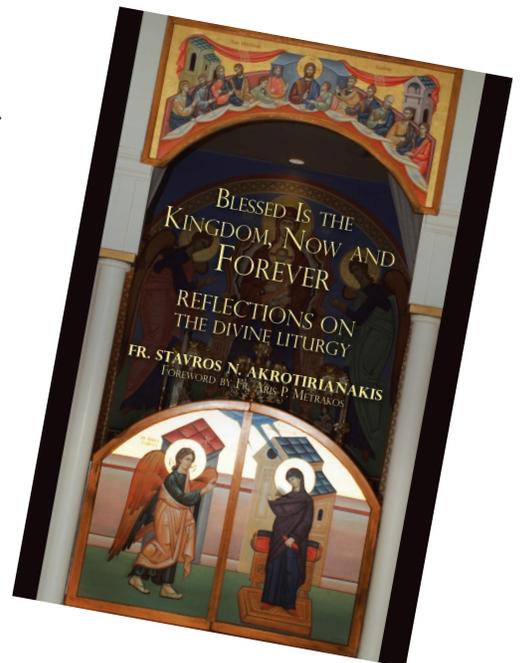
Theo Panopoulos is the husband of Marisa Panopoulos, and they have two children, Demetri and Isadora.

"Blessed is the Kingdom, Now and Forever" On Sale Now in the Bookstore

"Understanding" and "Application" are two of the challenges we face as Christians. First, we have to understand what it is we believe and what it is we are to do. And second, we have to go out and do what we've learned. We can't go do something if we don't know what we are doing or why we are doing it. This is one of the things that motivates me to write. Since February 2015, I've written a daily reflection, called "The Prayer Team".

From the Prayer Team, has come a third book, called "Blessed is the Kingdom, NOW and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy." It is now on sale in the bookstore. The purpose of this book is to give us something to think about during the Divine Liturgy. There are distinct thoughts we can and should have on each line of the Liturgy. While it would be virtually impossible to have big thoughts on every line every time (there are so many lines and we do not pause in between them to give us time to reflect), this book will give you plenty of things to think about and pray over during the Liturgy for a long time to come.

"Blessed is the Kingdom, NOW and Forever: Reflections on the Divine Liturgy" is now on sale! It is a series of reflections on the Divine Liturgy. Pick up your copy today! This book costs \$19.00 at the church bookstore.



Prayers for ALL Students, Teachers and Professors

On Sunday, August 11, we offered a special prayer for all students up to High School and teachers who were about start classes. Then, on Sunday, August 18, we offered a special prayer for College Students and Professors as well as our Sunday School Teachers.



St. Nicholas Cathedral Women's Retreat

The St Nicholas Cathedral's Women's Bookclub and Little Lambs have invited author and lecturer Sylvia Leontaritis to talk about her popular book "Songs of Praise."

If you want to make the Psalms a more integral part of your life - either on your own or as part of a Psalter group - Songs of Praise is the perfect aid. Join us as we learn from Orthodox Mom blogger and author Sylvia Leontaritis as she reads, reflects, and teaches us how to journal our way through the Psalter and let its holy words sink into our soul.

"A psalm is a city of refuge from the demons, a means of inducing help from the angels, a weapon in fears by night, a rest from toils by day, a safeguard for infants, an adornment for those at the height of their vigor, a consolation for the elders, a most fitting ornament for women." -St. Basil the Great

A copy of Song and Praise a (\$30 value), appetizers on Friday and lunch on Saturday are included with each ticket purchased.

Date and Time: Fri, Sep 27, 2019, 6:00 PM – Sat, Sep 28, 2019, 5:00 PM

Location: Saint Nicholas Cathedral Community Center
348 North Pinellas Avenue
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

Visit the EventBright link for more information on the Women's Retreat or email Presvytera Vassi Haros for more information at Bookstore@stnicholastarpon.org.



Want to Learn Modern Greek?

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School

- Speak Greek
- Read Greek
- Write Greek



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

Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with over 22 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 October 3, 2019. This will be the first of three sessions, with each session lasting three months.

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

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

Thank You to all of Our Friends!

George & Maria Andros - Birmingham, AL
Barbara Akrotirianakis - Whittier, CA
William J Camarinos - Alexandria, VA
Richard & Mickie Bass - Asheville, NC
Jason & Kelly Bangos - Clearwater, FL
Gabriel & Irene Hurst - Tampa, FL
Nicholas & Anna Karnavas - New Port Richey, FL
Michael Kapetan - Ann Arbor, MI
John & Cathie Koch - Tarpon Springs, FL
Perry & Fay Stamatiades - Asheville, NC
Melvin & Violet Tamashiro - Kaneohe, HI
Wesley & Melissa Thompson - Clearwater, FL
Demitrius & 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
Lillan Thomas - Highland, IN
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA
Nicholas & Vaso Anton - Dunedin, FL
Kay Nastopoulos - Atlanta, GA
Katherine Beasley - Vero Beach, 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.

Highlights on the Calendar 2019-2020

Thursday, September 5	Grief Share Series Begins
Saturday, September 21	Youth Workers Leadership Training Seminar
Monday, September 23	Orthodoxy 101 Fall class begins
Sunday, October 20	JOY/HOPE Fall Festival
Tuesday, October 22	Evening Divine Liturgy for St. James
Sunday, October 27	Fall Parish Assembly
November 8-10	Greek Festival
Tuesday, November 12	Parish Council Training Seminar
Friday, November 15	Holy Unction Service for Beginning of Advent
Tuesday, November 19	Come and See Dinner
Wednesday, November 27	Thanksgiving Eve Service
Sunday, December 8	Stewardship Sunday
Sunday, December 8	Parish Council Elections
Saturday, December 14	Sunday School Christmas Program Rehearsal
Sunday, December 15	Sunday School Christmas Program
Monday, December 16	Christmas Candlelight Service 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, December 17	College student night 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, December 24	Nativity Services
Monday, January 6	Great Vespers for Feast of St. John the Baptist
Tuesday, January 7	Feast of St. John the Baptist
Sunday, January 12	Vasilopita Sunday
Saturday, January 18	Gasparilla Children's Parade Fundraiser
Saturday, January 25	Gasparilla Adult Parade Fundraiser
Sunday, February 2	OCMC Missions Luncheon
Sunday, February 2	Souper Bowl of Caring
Monday, February 3	Orthodoxy 101 Spring Class begins
Friday, February 21	Parish Movie Night
TBA	Liturgy at Garden of Memories
Sunday, March 1	Sunday School Pre-Lent Retreat
Monday, March 2	Great Lent Begins
TBA	Greek Independence Day Program
March 27-29	GOYA Lenten Retreat
Sunday, April 12	Palm Sunday—Palm Sunday Philoptochos Luncheon
Friday, April 17	Good Friday
Sunday, April 19	Pascha
Sunday, April 26	Pascha Picnic
Sunday, May 3	Spring Parish Assembly Meeting
Sunday, May 17	Last Day of Sunday School
June 12-14	Junior Olympics

Youth Calendar

September 2019 - July 2020

Sunday, September 1	No Sunday School Classes
Sunday, September 8	GOYA Meeting
Sunday, September 22	Youth Sunday
Sunday, October 6	GOYA Meeting
October 11-13	GOYA St. Pete Volleyball Tournament
Saturday, October 19	GOYA Service Project Day
Sunday, October 20	Youth Sunday
Sunday, October 20	JOY/HOPE Fall Festival
Saturday, November 2	GOYA Lockin- (10-12 th Grade)
Sunday, November 3	Youth Sunday
Sunday, November 10	No Sunday School Classes
Sunday, November 17	GOYA Meeting
Sunday, November 24	No Sunday School Classes
Sunday, December 1	GOYA Christmas Card Fundraiser Begins
Sunday, December 8	GOYA Meeting
Saturday, December 14	Sunday School Christmas Retreat and Program Rehearsal
Sunday, December 15	Sunday School Christmas Program
Sunday, December 22	No Sunday School Classes
Sunday, December 29	No Sunday School Classes
Sunday, January 5	Sunday School Resumes
Saturday, January 11	Sunday School Teacher Retreat 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Sunday, January 19	GOYA Meeting
Friday, January 24	HOPE/JOY Movie Night
January 24-26	GOYA Clearwater Winter Event
Sunday, February 2	Youth Sunday
Saturday, February 8	GOYA Lock-in
Sunday, February 23	GOYA Meeting
Sunday, March 1	Youth Sunday
Sunday, March 1	Sunday School Pre-Lenten Retreat
Sunday, March 22	GOYA Meeting
March 27-29	GOYA Lenten Retreat
Sunday, March 29	GOYA Luminaries Fundraiser Begins
Sunday, April 5	Youth Sunday
Sunday, April 5	GOYA Meeting
Friday, April 17	Good Friday—Sunday School Retreat, GOYA hosts reception
Sunday, April 19	PASCHA—Easter Egg Hunt, No Sunday School
Sunday, May 3	Youth Sunday
Sunday, May 3	GOYA Meeting
Sunday, May 10	Sunday School Sacraments Presentation
Sunday, May 17	Last Day of Sunday School—End of the year party
Sunday, June 7	GOYA Meeting
June 12-14	GOYA Junior Olympics
Summer Sunday School Dates	June 14, 21 and 28; July 19 and 26; August 2
July	St. Stephen's Summer Camp



"ARE YOU LISTENING?"

Join the Metropolis of Atlanta Youth and Family Life Ministry for the opportunity to come together and experience the joy and spiritual closeness at St. Stephen's Camp as a family.

Unplug and connect with God and your family through a weekend of camp life.

Campers describe St. Stephen's by saying, "From the outside looking in, you can't understand it. And from the inside looking out, you can't explain it." This is the opportunity to experience it with your campers without them having to explain. Come and see.

Camp doesn't just have to be for kids.

WHEN: Friday, October 18 at 6:00 p.m. -
Sunday, October 20 at 1:00 p.m.

WHERE: 455 Quail Ridge Road, Salem, SC

DETAILS: Family Camp is a weekend retreat dedicated to strengthening our faith and our families. Experience the fun of camp as a family with professional counselors and experienced young adult volunteers.

COST PER PERSON: \$125 for adults, \$75 teens, and \$60 for youth aged 6-12. Children age 5 or younger are free. Price includes two nights of lodging, meals, snacks & activities.

REGISTER: Register online beginning July 8 at familylifeministry.atlanta.goarch.org.

QUESTIONS: Reach out to Paula Marchman, paulamarchman@yahoo.com.





AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – September 2019

AHEPA FAMILY HOLDS INSTALLATION AND AWARDS DINNER

On July 26, the AHEPA Family kicked-off a new term with the Installation of Officers and Awards Dinner. A large group of Ahepans, Daughters, Sons, Maids, family, and friends gathered to attend the Installation ceremonies. We celebrated and congratulated the newly elected officers and the District 2 Scholarship winners. After a delightful dinner, each of the chapters' officers were installed. Scholarships and awards were subsequently presented.

AHEPA OFFICERS INSTALLED

The new Ahepa officers of Lycurgus Chapter 12 were sworn-in and installed by newly elected District Governor of Ahepa Citrus District 2 Lodge, Mike Trimis.

DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE OFFICERS INSTALLED

The newly elected Daughters of Penelope officers of Alcmaeon Chapter 167 were sworn in and installed by Patty Didik, newly elected Governor of the Daughters of Penelope Citrus District 2 Lodge.

SONS OF PERICLES OFFICERS INSTALLED

The newly elected officers of the Sons of Pericles were installed by the Past Lt. Governor of the District Lodge Harry Koutroumanis.

DISTRICT 2 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDS

Sons of Pericles - Harry Koutroumanis, John Sibley, and Karter Lenardos (who is also a member of Ahepa Chapter 12)

Maids of Athena - Sophia Krinos

OTHER AWARDS

- Outstanding SOP Citrus District 2 Chapter – Tampa SOP Menelaos 154
- DOP Appreciation Awards – Ourania Stephanides Citrus District 2 Governor; Marina Paras Citrus District 2 Advisor; Debbie Ferekides Citrus District 2 Maids of Athena Advisor
- DOP 10 Years of Service Awards – Chris Frazier, Magda Myer, Diane Trimis, and Maria Zabetakis
- DOP 40 Years of Service Awards - Ourania Stephanides
- DOP 50 Years of Service – Marina Paras
- Ahepa Appreciation Awards – Ron Myer, Tom Sakaris and Tom Georgas
- Ahepa Special Recognition – The Paras Family Tampa/ Heraklion Sisters Cities Initiative



AHEPA OFFICERS INSTALLED



DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE OFFICERS INSTALLED



SONS OF PERICLES OFFICERS INSTALLED



DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE AWARDS PRESENTATION



SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTATIONS

This year, the Ahepa Family of Tampa will continue to offer its Scholarships awards. The purpose is to promote, encourage, and advance education at the college, university and graduate school levels. Eligibility is for students in their senior year of high school and those attending college/university (who have not previously received an Ahepa Family Scholarship). Please watch for future announcements regarding the deadline date in December.

**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 2019 ~

						**Strict Fasting Days							
Sun		Mon		Tue		Wed		Thu		Fri		Sat	
1 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Dance Practice		2		3		4** Panigyri Dance Practice 7 p.m.		5 Young at Heart 11:30 a.m. Philoptochos Board Meeting by phone Grief Share 6:30 p.m.		6**		7	
8 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Dance Practice No Pareia Practice GOYA 5:00 p.m.		9 Parish Council 6:30 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.		10 Fall clergy meetings September 9/10-9/12 at the DRC SBS 7:00 p.m.		11** Panigyri Dance Practice 7 p.m.		12 Grief Share 6:30 p.m.		13**		14** Holy Cross Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	
15 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Dance Practice AHEPA Family Meetings Men's Group 5:00 p.m.		16 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.		17 WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.		18** Panigyri Dance Practice 7 p.m.		19 Grief Share 6:30 p.m.		20**		21 Community Outreach 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Youth worker training seminar	
22 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Dance Practice Philoptochos General Meeting Young Adult Dinner & Discussion 5:00 p.m.		23 Orthodoxy 101 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.		24 WBS 10:00 a.m. SBS 7:00 p.m.		25** Panigyri Dance Practice 7 p.m.		26 Grief Share 6:30 p.m.		27** Women's Retreat at St. Nicholas-Tarpon Springs—9/27-9/29		28	
29 Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Dance Practice		30 Orthodoxy 101 Bible Study 6:30 p.m.		Hope/Joy School Supply Fund-raiser all month									

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

2418 W. Swann Avenue

Tampa, FL 33609-4712

Office: (813) 876-8830 Fax: (813) 443-4899

officestjohngoctampa@gmail.com

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)

firstav@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant Charlie Hambos

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

Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant John Kokenis

813-876-8830 (Office) 630-306-7716 (Cell)

johnkokenis@gmail.com

Parish Council

Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867
Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898
Ryan Rindone, Secretary 704-564-2046
Sandra Pappas 813-785-3747
Jim Armstrong 954-295-6665
George Chagaris 727-420-1920
Amin Hanhan 813-846-2957
Nick Katzaras 863-581-2430
Eddie Kavouklis 813-758-0305
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352

Office Staff

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

Adult Greek School

Magda Myer 813-909-2327

AHEPA

Thomas Sakaris, President 201-819-2319

Altar Angels

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

Basketball

Perry Katsamakias 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

Pauline Spencer, Director 813-390-1782
Ruth Losovitz, Organist 727-688-2782

Community Outreach

Greg Melton 813-967-2074

Connect Through Christ - Special Needs Ministry for Children

Dante and Lindsey Skourellos 813-765-9534

Dance Groups

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

GriefShare

Donna Hambos 813-843-8412

Gasparilla Parking

John Kokkas 727-992-4615

GOYA

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