November 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

The Greek Festival, The Divine Liturgy, Thanksgiving, Stress and Your GPA

The Greek Festival
As we begin the month of November, there are lots of things going on in our COMMUNITY. Let’s begin with our annual Greek Festival.

The Greek Festival is November 8-10. We all know that the Greek Festival is a major source of income for our parish. We are still at a place where we rely on the festival financially in order to meet our budget. We rely on it less than we used to, but we still need it in order to make ends meet financially. I hope that in the next year or so, we will raise our stewardship to the point where we can do the festival for fun, without the pressure of bringing in a certain amount in order to meet the budget. In order for our festival to be successful, it has taken the work of many people for the last few months, and it will take the efforts of many more in the first two weeks of November. If you haven’t signed up yet to work, it’s not too late. Please do so today.

The festival is also an opportunity to showcase our community to the greater Tampa Bay area. I encourage you to invite your friends and co-workers to our festival. And when they are here, I encourage everyone to smile and welcome our guests. They may be “customers” but they are guests of our community, and we want to show them Christian hospitality. Please invite all of our guests to see our beautiful church sanctuary and take a tour and LEARN about our faith.

There will be volunteers from LifePath Hospice and Love Inc, two organizations with whom we partner, with whom we will offer a portion of our proceeds, and who send volunteers to help out with the work. Please welcome them warmly. It is very important in our community that we reach out into the city in which we live, to support local charities, to help them serve others, and I’m so proud of our community that we’ve made SERVICE to our greater community a cornerstone of the festival now for 15 years.

Come and See Dinner
As we grow in spiritual maturity, our community is finding better ways to share our faith. At our Greek Festival, we now have a welcoming table outside of the church sanctuary, where we not only welcome guests to our festival, but we intentionally welcome and invite them into our church. In addition to our church tours and choir presentations, there is someone in the church at all times to answer questions and offer prayers. We accept prayer request cards that we will pray over in the weeks following the festival. And we have added a dinner called the “Come and See Dinner” which this year will be held on Tuesday, November 19, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The ”Come and See Dinner” is a chance to invite people to “come and see” our church and enjoy an evening of fellowship with us. Some people who attend will be people who took a tour at the festival and would like to know more about Orthodoxy. And some people who attend are
people who didn’t come to the festival, but whom we would like to invite to see our church. Invite a co-worker, a neighbor, a friend and come with them. If you have people who know you go to church, it’s a chance to invite them to the place you worship. If there are people who don’t have a church, this is a chance to invite them to see one. If you know people who would like to see another church, or just enjoy an evening of Christian fellowship, invite them too. Christ invited the disciples to join Him with the words “Come and See.” (John 1:39) He didn’t tell them come and commit, just to come and see. When we invite people to come and see, we are fulfilling a mandate to spread the Gospel. If they want to come back, or to come and stay, the Holy Spirit will dictate that. We play a role in this. We make the invitation, and the Holy Spirit does the rest.  *I challenge each of us to invite one person to the “Come and See” dinner on November 19.*

The Divine Liturgy

There is a Tradition in the Orthodox Church that the Divine Liturgy is celebrated every Sunday, in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, and then on certain feastdays of major saints. The number of these “weekday” Divine Liturgies varies from month to month, according to liturgical calendar. The months of November, December and January have the most feastdays commemorated with a Divine Liturgy during the calendar year. (Of course, the cycle of Lent and Holy Week has more services, but not many of them are Divine Liturgies.) In total, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy twelve times in November. There will be twelve opportunities to receive Holy Communion. There will be twelve gatherings of our community to WORSHIP and pray for ourselves, our city and our world. Before each day of the Festival, we will call the Holy Spirit down “upon us and upon these gifts here presented.” Before we sell one item of food, we will ask for the Holy Spirit to descend upon this community.

The Divine Liturgy affords us an opportunity to receive Christ in the Eucharist, it affords us an opportunity to gather as community to pray for our community. The Divine Liturgy and the Eucharist are tools to sustain us through the ups and downs of life. There are times when I’m really into the Liturgy and others times that maybe I’m not, but the discipline of coming and standing in the presence of God often has a positive effect on my life and my spiritual journey. If heaven is, as the Fathers write, like a continual celebration of the Divine Liturgy, then “practicing” a lot in this life will help prepare us for everlasting life.

Thanksgiving

Lots of us will be scurrying around at the end of November, getting ready for Thanksgiving! We will be obsessing about food, laughing with our families and looking forward to some needed time off. The last thing that many of us will be thinking of will be another trip to St. John for another Liturgy. Most of us do not worship the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving. This year of all years, there are many people who can’t celebrate. A devastating hurricane destroyed much of the Bahamas and inflicted damage in coastal areas of the southeast. Many areas are still affected by the hurricanes of 2018, especially in the panhandle of Florida. It’s been another year of mass shootings, forest fires, and unspeakable tragedy for some. We really have so much for which to be thankful. If we have food, a home, a family, and our health, this is a lot more than many people have.

Thanksgiving is not just a day to celebrate with family and eat, it is a day to bow our head to our Creator and to thank Him for all that we have. It is also a day to ask Him to fill the gaps for the things we don’t have—and when I say we, it is a collective “we.” The gaps that we as a society have. There are gaps in places that have suffered from disaster, and people who have suffered loss.

The original Thanksgiving was an occasion where people thanked God for merely being able to survive. In 2019, the prayer of thanksgiving for many is just that, that they survived fire, flood, violence, etc. We have two roles in this—first, to pray. Second, to act. You will decide on action when you fill out your stewardship form in a couple of weeks and decide whether we are going to be a church of action or one that just survives.

On the first role though, there is an opportunity to pray, as a community, at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday evening, November 27, a special Divine Liturgy we hold every year the night before Thanksgiving. Please come and pray, to thank God for all that you have, and to ask for His help for those who don’t have a family to sit with, or who don’t have a home to go to. *I want to encourage you, especially for those who have never been, please considering making the Divine Liturgy a part of your Thanksgiving celebration. Put God first in worship by coming on the Eve of Thanksgiving to worship. And then enjoy Thanksgiving...*
**Combating the Stress of Every Day**

It’s funny that at the end of summer, parents can’t wait for school to start, so the kids will have stuff to do, and so that the days will have structure. After a few months, we begin to wish for vacation, time to relax, and less structure. And then comes Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

While the school year affords students an opportunity to learn, to grow and to have fun, and while it fills our calendars with homework, athletics and extracurricular activities, it also fills our lives with stress if we’re not careful. Let me share a few thoughts with you about school and stress:

All a person can do is his or her best. We can’t all be gifted in every subject, or ace every test. There will be days when we give our best and the results will not be what we’d hoped for. This is as true in school as it is in adult life, family life, and career. I’ve written many times that God rewards effort, not success. If we’ve put in the effort, which is the thing we can control, if we’ve given our best, then there is nothing to feel bad or guilty about if the results are not the top. I remember from my high school years, no matter how hard I tried, I just wasn’t going to master chemistry. I had aptitude in just about every subject, but not chemistry. I did not grow up to be a chemist, and thankfully, the priesthood doesn’t require my knowledge of the periodic table. Give your best, and when you’ve done that, put your mind at rest.

Develop a sense of discipline. Distraction makes discipline more challenging. Back when I was a student 30 years ago, there were no cell phones. If I was studying and had a thought “What is playing at the movies this weekend?” I couldn’t act on that thought. I had no phone or Google or Siri to ask, so my thought would stop and I would continue studying. Now, with all our technology, the second we have a thought, we have a way to act on that thought, so we check our phone or text a friend or find a webpage and very quickly a momentary distraction has lasted more than an hour. It takes most people much longer to do tasks than it should because we are constantly distracted. The antidote is discipline. Be disciplined not to look at the phone constantly. Turn the phone over, or use checking the phone as a reward for completing an assignment or working for a specific period of time, like after working for an hour.

Put every day under the umbrella of God. The school week means waking up to an alarm. Some people put the alarm away for the weekend or holidays, they wake up whenever. On school days, however, there is a discipline of getting up, preparing, and leaving the house by a certain time in order to get to school on time. Our rituals—brushing teeth, shaving, showering, dressing, eating—become more focused because they are now time-sensitive. Set the alarm five minutes earlier and begin your day with five minutes alone with God. While it may seem counterintuitive to some that in the midst of rushing in the morning, to stop to pray, setting the day under God’s blessing makes me more efficient as well as more confident. There is something very powerful about praying to God “Please help me be efficient and confident today”. Just saying those words out loud builds confidence.

One last thought on this—in football (something else many of us will be enjoying in November, particularly on Thanksgiving), I’ve often heard running backs described as “patient” runners. That seems kind of ridiculous, when a football play involves 22 people moving quickly and generally is over in a few seconds. How can there be any patience involved there? The answer is that the “patient” runners are not anxious, they manage to “slow down” enough to see holes and know where to run. When I begin the day with prayer, it helps me slow down. Slowing down makes me more patient. And in the chaos of life, like the “patient runner” in a football game, I have the eyes to see the possibilities, the wisdom to make better decisions, and the stamina to touch all the basis.


Which leads me to the final subject of this month’s message:

**What’s Your GPA? (God, Prayer, Attention to Others)**

Nearly thirty years ago, I graduated high school with a 3.99 Grade Point Average. There was just one blemish on my grades, but we won’t get into that. For those of us who are “old” like me, there was a four-point scale. They
didn’t have “weighted” GPA’s. I always shake my head when I hear people have a 7.30 GPA. They probably think that my 3.99 made me a pretty mediocre student.

Many students are obsessed with their GPA. I suppose rightfully so, as college are obsessed with them too. Everyone knows his or her own GPA, they monitor it constantly. If it is good, they are proud to share it with others. And if it isn’t, they shy away, or even exaggerate it. They weight it to make it the best possible score.

Today we are going to talk about another kind of GPA—the God, Prayer, Attention average. And we will all grade ourselves according to this scale, using the system they had when I was in high school. So read, and grade yourself.

4.0 Would be an A-grade, and would reflect excellence
3.0 Would be a B-grade and would indicate one performs well, but has room for improvement
2.0 Would be a C-grade and would indicate one is average, gets by, but has significant room for improvement.
1.0 Would be a D-grade and would indicate one is on the verge of failing and better improve quickly.

GOD—The idea here is that God is the source and center of life. Salvation is the main goal and our relationship with God is our main focus. Our decisions are based on His commandments. We let Him lead. We trust in Him, especially when life is difficult. Relationships, money, hobbies, power, fame, fortune—none of these are more important than Him. And not only our thoughts reflect this, but our actions do as well. What grade do you give yourself on this? (Honestly, I’d give myself a 2)

PRAYER—Christ told us that there were two great commandments, to love God and to love one another. One of the best ways to show love for God is to spend time with Him. This means daily prayer, (at least) weekly worship, and daily reading of Scripture. Why are these things so important? The same reason that it is important to spend time with your spouse or children or close friends. Bonds of love and caring are built with frequent interaction. It will be hard to have a strong bond with God if we do not interact with Him frequently. All three can be challenging. It is a challenge for many to get to church on Sunday, a day when we could choose to rest and relax. It is a challenge to pray. We’ve discussed that many times. It is so easy to forget, or just not slow down. In a world where we are bombarded with sensory stimulation, it is a challenge to shut it all off and sit in silence. The Bible intimidates people, and they give up without ever really having started. Praying and reading Scripture in small bursts works best if you’re not used to doing it. And worship, well, that’s just a commitment one needs to put on the calendar every week. What grade do you give yourself on this? (Honestly, I’d give myself a 3—worship is excellent, prayer and scripture could stand some improvement)

ATTENTION TO OTHERS—This reflects the second great commandment, to love our neighbors by serving them. This means putting others before us, it means intentionally going out of our way to help others, to listen, to be kind, to include the person who has no one to talk to,
THANKSGIVING

Our power is shut off,
and suddenly we become thankful for electricity.
Our garbage is not picked up,
and suddenly we become thankful for the garbage collectors’
weekly stop.
A good friend dies,
and suddenly we discover how much he meant to us.
Our water becomes too polluted to drink,
and suddenly we appreciate pure water.

Why is it, Lord, that we take for granted the uncounted
blessings of life until they are removed from us?
We take for granted,
the mind you have given us,
the beauty of the earth around us,
the rain and soil combining to produce our food,
the love of family and friends surrounding us.
Today we thank you
For being patient with us
For not forgetting us when we forget You,
For loving and forgiving us,
For music and singing,

For rest and leisure,
For those who understand us,
For laughter and joy,
For being with us now,
Most of all we thank You for not withholding all the
blessings of life from us even though we take them for
granted.
Take us from worship into the world where we turn words
of thanksgiving into deeds of service.
Amen
### Liturgical Schedule for November 2019

**Friday, November 1**  
**Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenary Healers**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, November 3**  
**5th Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.  (DAYLIGHT SAVINGS: Set clocks back 1 hour)

**Altar Boys:** Captains & St. Luke  
**Ushers:** Brett Mourer, John Alexander, & Amin Hanhan  
**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Axl David, Carole Fotopoulos; Ambassador: Elaine Halkias; Caller: Julie Palios  
Getting Acquainted: Ewana Forde, Dwight Forde  
**Coffee Hour:** CD Families  
**Bookstore:** Zhana Temelkova

*The Divine Liturgy on November 8-9-10 will begin at 9:00 a.m. each day because of the Greek Festival.*  
**Friday, November 8**  
**Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel**  
Orthros 8:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

**Saturday, November 9**  
**St. Nektarios the Wonder-worker and Hierarch**  
Orthros 8:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

*Fr. Stavros will anoint those in attendance with oil from the tomb of St. Nektarios in Aegina at the end of the Divine Liturgy.*

**Sunday, November 10**  
**8th Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 7:45 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 9:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Anyone attending may serve  
**Ushers:** John Christ; George Mitseas; Tom Georgas

**Wednesday, November 13**  
**St. John Chrysostom**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Friday, November 15**  
**Beginning of Advent Fast**  
Holy Unction 10:00 a.m.

**Saturday, November 16**  
**St. Matthew the Evangelist**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, November 17**  
**9th Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains & St. John  
**Ushers:** Skip Higdon; George Trimikliniotis; Peter Theophanous  
**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Elaine Daniels; Donna Hambos  
Ambassador: Skip Higdon  
Caller: Maria Karounos  
**Coffee Hour:** Festival Appreciation Luncheon  
**Bookstore:** David Voykin and Elaine Daniels

**Thursday, November 21**  
**Entrance of the Virgin Mary in the Temple**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, November 24**  
**13th Sunday of Luke**  
Orthros 8:45 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Altar Boys:** Captains & St. Matthew  
**Ushers:** David Voykin; Ed Gerecke; Pete Trakas  
**Welcoming Ministry:** Greeters: Louis Stratigakos; Georgia Stratigakos  
Ambassador: Julie Palios  
Caller: Maria Xenick  
Getting Acquainted: Ewana Forde, Dwight Forde  
**Coffee Hour:** EFG Families  
**Bookstore:** Bill Manikas

**Monday, November 25**  
**St. Katherine the Great Martyr**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Wednesday, November 27**  
**Eve of Thanksgiving Divine Liturgy**  
Orthros 5:15 p.m.  Divine Liturgy 6:00 p.m.

**Saturday, November 30**  
**St. Andrew the First-Called of the Apostles**  
Orthros 9:00 a.m.  Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

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**Wakes to be held temporarily at St. John** - Many parishioners choose to use Blount Curry Funeral home on MacDill/Swann for their funeral needs. The chapel at that location is being renovated and currently unavailable for use. During this time, anyone utilizing Blount/ Curry on MacDill is welcome to hold the wake for their loved ones in our church sanctuary. Once the chapel is completed, the wakes will once again be held in the funeral home chapel. A reminder that it is the policy of the Metropolis of Atlanta that laypersons are not allowed to speak in the church without written permission from the Metropolitan. This policy will remain in effect for wakes held at the church.
Liturgical Notes for November 2019

**Friday, November 1** - Feast of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenary Healers
Sts. Cosmas and Damian are the Patron Saints of the Philoptochos, as they went from place to place healing people and not taking any money for their services. Sts. Cosmas and Damian (called the Agii Anargyri) are also saints we pray to for intercession when we are sick, and are also patron saints of doctors (in addition to St. Luke).

**Friday, November 8** - Feast of the Archangels
This feast commemorates the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all of the “bodiless powers” of heaven, all of the angels. There are nine orders of angels—Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Authorities, Cherubim and Seraphim.

**Saturday, November 9** - Feast of St. Nectarios
St. Nectarios is a “modern day” saint, a saint of the 20th Century, (Died in 1920, Canonized as a Saint in 1960), who was a bishop in Greece. St. Nectarios is the patron saint of cancer patients and is considered one of our “healing” saints, meaning that we invoke his intercessions when we are praying for those who are sick. Cancer sufferers and survivors are urged to attend this Divine Liturgy in order to pray for continued healing through the Intercessions of St. Nectarios. Father Stavros has oil from the tomb of St. Nectarios in Aegina, Greece, with which he will anoint the faithful in attendance at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on November 9.

**Friday, November 8 & Saturday, November 9** - Divine Liturgy on ALL DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL
The Divine Liturgy can be celebrated any day of the year except Good Friday. As we have done in the past six years, which also coincides with the six best festivals we have ever had, we will be celebrating the Liturgy all three days of the Greek Festival, to ask the Holy Spirit to come down upon us and upon the Holy Gifts on what is an important weekend in the life of our parish. The Divine Liturgy on November 8, 9 and 10 and will begin at 9:00 a.m., preceded each day by Orthros at 8:00 a.m.

**Wednesday, November 13** - Feast of St. John Chrysostom
St. John Chrysostom lived in the 4th Century. He was a Bishop of the Church and is recognized as one of the Three Hierarchs (together with St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian). He received the title “Chrysostomos,” meaning “the Golden Mouth,” for his great ability to speak. St. John Chrysostom authored the Divine Liturgy that we celebrate on most Sundays. Therefore, we offer the Divine Liturgy on this day in honor of St. John Chrysostom.

**Friday, November 15** - Holy UNCTION for the beginning of Advent at 10:00 a.m.
The forty-day period of Advent begins on November 15. It is a period of fasting and reflective preparation. In America, Advent is marked by a period of shopping, decorating and parties, none of which really help us prepare spiritually to celebrate the great feast of the Nativity. As we have done in past years, we will hold a Holy Unction Service as we begin the period of Advent—it will be on Friday, November 15 beginning at 10:00 a.m. Please bring your Holy Week book as the service will follow the service of Holy Wednesday evening.

**Thursday, November 21** - Feast of the Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple
The Entrance of the Virgin Mary (Ta Eisodia) commemorates when the Virgin Mary entered into the Temple at age two to begin a life of service to God, in preparation for the awesome role she would play in the history of humanity as the Theotokos. This is one of the 12 Major Festivals of the Orthodox Liturgical Year.

**Monday, November 25** - Feast of St. Katherine the Great Martyr
St. Katherine was born in Alexandria, Egypt in the third century. She was very wise and eloquent, successfully arguing for Christianity in the face of tyrannical rulers and philosophers. She was martyred in the year 305 and her relics were taken by Angels to Mount Sinai where they were discovered many years later. St. Katherine has the title “Pansophou” the “All-Wise.”

**Wednesday, November 27** - Evening Liturgy for Thanksgiving
In Greek the word for Thanksgiving is “Eucharistia,” so the Holy Eucharist is the “Holy Thanksgiving.” As we celebrate Thanksgiving with turkey and the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday, set aside Wednesday to receive the Holy Thanksgiving. As is our custom at St. John, we will celebrate Divine Liturgy for Thanksgiving on Wednesday, November 27 at 6:00 p.m.

**Saturday, November 30** - Feast of St. Andrew
St. Andrew is the first-called of the Apostles. He is also the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.
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 November. 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.

November 3-9

_Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares._  
Hebrews 13:2

This is the verse that defines our welcome ministry at St. John. With the Greek Festival happening this week, it is a reminder to us to show hospitality and greet our guests. It actually refers to a story in the Old Testament where three men visited Abraham and Sarah, told in Genesis 18. Abraham and Sarah showed them hospitality, and the men told them they would have a child in their old age. The men were actually angels, God’s messengers, sent to Abraham and Sarah. This encounter has been depicted as an icon, entitled the Hospitality of Abraham, which is also the icon that most correctly depicts the Holy Trinity. Now, we are not necessarily going to meet three angels when we welcome guests. But we will make a positive impression on people when we are welcoming, and who knows how kindness plays out to a stranger. Jesus tells us that when we are kind to the least of our brethren, it is as if we are kind to Him. (Matthew 25:31-46) So treat and greet all the people at our festival and in your life, as if you were talking to an angel or to Jesus Himself.

November 10-16

_Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him._  
2 Timothy 2:3-4

On November 11, we celebrate Veterans’ Day and pay tribute to all the men and women who have served in our armed forces. While most of us will not serve as soldiers in the military, everyone who has ever been baptized has enlisted as a soldier in the army of God. As soldiers for Christ, we are called to serve Him. Some soldiers in the military will die in the service of our country. And some soldiers in the army of Christ will die as a witness to Him. Soldiers in the military must understand the mission and be obedient to orders. Soldiers of Christ must also under the mission, which is to spread the Gospel and serve others, and be obedient to orders, following the commandments of God. Military soldiers to not get entangled in civilian pursuits, but rather focus on obeying the orders of those under whom they serve. Similarly, Christians should not engage in un-Christian behaviors but instead should focus on following the orders of Christ, under Whom we all serve.

November 17-23

_Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” John 1:45-46_

Our “Come and See” Dinner is this week. Have you ever invited anyone to “come and see” what Orthodoxy is? As Christians, we are supposed to invite others to Christ. Whether they accept the invitation or not is not critical. We actually can’t control that. What we can control is making the invitation. If someone accepts an invitation to come and see our church, what will they see? Will they see a Christ-centered church that is active, alive, and enthusiastic about the faith? Or will they see a church of apathy, indifference and laziness? Each of us plays a role in the church that people come and see. Some of us come perpetually late, or don’t come much at all, or we come and don’t really contribute much to the effort of advancing the Gospel. Some of us come with joy, come often and come ready to advance the mission of the church, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only do we need to invite people to come and see our church, we need to each to our part so that when people come and see our church, they see something worth coming back to. Many people in today’s world have the cynicism of Nathanael, they ask...
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.

November 24-30

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

As we celebrate Thanksgiving this week, we should meditate on all that we have to be thankful for. The verses from Philippians are packed with meaning. It is unreasonable to thing we won’t have anxiety about anything, but if we keep Christ as our focus, and our destination, many of the things that we are anxious about will not soak up as much of our attention. It is important that thanksgiving be part of our prayer life. We shouldn’t just come to God with supplications (requests) but should come to Him with a sense of gratitude, as well as our offering to serve Him in some way every day. We certainly can bring requests to God but we should frame them in gratitude and thanksgiving. God’s peace is a peace that passes all understanding. It is the only kind of peace that can bring calm in the midst of conflict. Usually we think of peace as the absence of conflict. God’s peace is peace in the midst of conflict. If conflict confuses our minds and takes them off of Christ, then God’s peace that can come in the midst of conflict will allow us to stay focused on Christ even when we are in the midst of conflict and stress.

Let all Creation Rejoice: Reflections for Advent the Nativity and Epiphany

This book is a series of short daily reflections on the scripture readings of Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany, to be read between November 15 and January 7. Order your book today at www.xulonpress.com/

Interested in Joining the Prayer Team? Over 2030 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 4 years! Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at charlie.hambos@gmail.com and ask him to add you. If you receive the daily emails already and want to add a friend, please email Charlie or follow the link at the bottom of the daily emails to do so. If you want to forward to a friend, please use the “forward to a friend” option. Also, make sure frstav@gmail.com has been added to your contacts so that these emails stay in your Inbox rather than going to the Junk or Spam folders.

We need AA batteries - if interested, please donate either Duracell or Energizer.
Double Baptism - Maria Konstas, daughter of Demetrios and Mary Ann Konstas; and Cliff (George) Katsamakis, son of Perry and Betty Katherine Katsamakis, were baptized on Saturday, October 5. Chris and Katherine Kyrus are the Godparents for Maria. John and Anastasia Stonestreet, George Xenick, Maria Palios and Toula Trakas were the Godparents for Cliff. Na Sas Zisi!

GOYA - The GOYA Meeting for November will be Sunday, November 17, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. Dinner, as always, will be provided.

Congratulations to our GOYA—At the annual GOYA Volleyball Tournament in St. Petersburg on October 11-13, our 2nd Senior GOYA team won FIRST place and our junior GOYAns won THIRD place. All three of our teams did an amazing job! A special thank you to Mike and Bessie Palios, our GOYA advisors, for organizing our large contingent, and special thanks to our parents and coaches for all of their help. Congratulations to our GOYA!

Senior GOYA Lock-in November 2 - GOYAns in 10th-12th grade will have a lock-in beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Get Acquainted Sunday, November 3

In an effort to get to know one another better, we are going to continue our “Get Acquainted Sun-days” 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.

College Student Sunday, November 17

If you are a college student, join us for some food and fellowship right after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, November 17. Contact Charlie or John and let us know if you can come. Bring a friend too.

Men’s Group - Our men’s group meeting for November will be Sunday, November 3, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. We will meet at church at 5:00 p.m., walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner and fellowship and then return to the church for discussion. All men of our parish are welcome and you can bring your non-Orthodox friends as well. Our December meeting will be Sunday, December 15.

Special Christmas Services in December

Monday, December 16

Candlelight Service in Preparation for the Nativity 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Please join us for an evening of prayer to recharge, reflect and refresh for the Christmas season.

This special candlelight service includes hymns and scripture readings about the Nativity. It also includes the opportunity to pray for people, by name so bring any names of people that could use some extra prayer. At the end of the service a Trisagion service will be chanted for all those who have passed away this year. If you know someone who can use some prayer this Nativity, or someone who has lost a loved one, or someone who is sad, please invite them to this service. Allow us to pray for them and their loved ones. The service will be done entirely in English. It will last an hour. It will be done only by candlelight. This is a wonderful opportunity there is in the year to invite non-Orthodox friends to pray with us.

Christmas Eve Services—There will be two Divine Liturgies on Christmas Eve. On December 24, we will celebrate the Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, including prophecy readings foretelling of the Nativity, from 8:45 - 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 24. Our Nativity Liturgy will be at 7:00 p.m. (Orthros at 5:30 p.m., Doxology at 6:45 p.m.) on Tuesday, December 24.
Welcoming Ministry - Come and See Dinner

Over the three days of our Annual Greek Festival, approximately 9000 people come to our church property. If 10% take a look at our church, attend a tour or choir presentation, that’s 900 people. If 10% of those are searching for a church home, that’s 90 people who may come back for more.

Imagine the Greek Festival is a first date, and we are really excited to invite our visitors to come back to meet our family and get to know us better! It is really difficult to invite people to our Divine Liturgy. For those who don’t have a church home or any experience of attending church, there is no context for understanding what is happening and there is really no chance for them to participate.

For the Greek Festival, our Welcoming Ministry is once again hosting a Greeter Table at the front doors of our church throughout the weekend. This way, people who are curious about our church building and our faith will be welcomed with a personal greeting, will be given the chance to ask questions, and take some materials – pamphlets, welcome folders - home with them. We will also have a couple of “docents” inside the church to answer questions for anyone visiting during a time other than our scheduled tours. We will have a sign up for anyone wanting follow up materials emailed to them: the prayer team, the messenger, the weekly constant contact messages from our parish. We will have sample materials from our bookstore as well.

We are also going to offer a chance for them to return to learn more about our faith in several different ways: We will host a “Come and See” event for anyone who wants to get to know us better. This will be held on Tuesday, November 19. This will be a free dinner, followed by comments and greeting by Father Stavros, and prayer time in our church. We want our most hospitable parishioners on board to welcome this group of people to our campus for fellowship and learn a little bit further about our faith. We want to emphasize this year that this event is not just limited to guests who want to learn more about us after meeting us at the Greek Festival. This is a great opportunity for you to invite your friends, coworkers, neighbors, and your family members to enjoy a meal with us and have fellowship in a casual and comfortable church setting.

We will then send an invitation to our beautiful candlelight Christmas prayer service on Monday, December 16. If you haven’t been to this service, this is an opportunity during the hustle and bustle of the season to pause for some peace and quiet prayer time.

Lastly, in February (February 3, 10, 17 and 24), Father will host another installment of Orthodoxy 101 and these same people will be invited to experience a deeper understanding of our faith.

What do can YOU do?

INVITE your friends, co-workers, neighbors! This is a great opportunity to show them what our faith is all about in a way they can easily participate and ask questions.

For Tuesday November 19 we need:

Your support!
Your presence!

♥ Welcoming our guests at a table,
♥ Serving food,
♥ Sitting and eating with our guests,
♥ Answering their questions,
♥ Introducing them to others.

If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact Maria Xenick at mpxenick@gmail.com or 813-765-3587.
Bible Studies are Continuing

Monday Night Bible Study (for everyone)
Location: Administration Building meeting room
Studying: The Book of Revelation
Group Leader: Charlie Hambos
Charlie.hambos@gmail.com, 813-843-8471
Meeting time: Monday evenings from 6:30–8:00 p.m.
Meeting Dates: November 4 and 18.

Women’s Group (for adult women of any age)
Location: At the church
Group Leader: Rotates between members and Father Stavros
Meeting time: Tuesday mornings from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Meeting Dates: November 5, 12, and 19.

South Tampa Mixed Group (for any adults)
Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa
Location: At the Church in the Library
Studying: Ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church
Group Leader: John Kokenis
jkokenis@stjohntpa.org; 630-306-7716
Meeting time: Tuesday evenings from 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Meeting Dates: November 5, 12, and 19.

GriefShare Ministry Continues on Thursdays
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. 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. November meetings will be held the 14, and 21. GriefShare remains open enrollment with support towards healing and hope.

Philoptochos News
Christmas Brunch Sunday, December 1 at Maggiano’s
Season of Necessities Luncheon on December 8 and Donation Drive to Benefit The Spring Of Tampa Bay
On December 8 the Philoptochos will host a luncheon to benefit The Spring Of Tampa Bay. All proceeds from the luncheon will go to benefit The Spring Of Tampa Bay whose mission is to prevent domestic violence, protect victims and promote change in lives, families and communities. We will also be collecting the items below for our Seasons of Necessities donation drive for The Spring.

- Bath towels
- Deodorant
- Sippy Cups
- Washcloths
- Bar Soap & body wash
- Diapers (sizes 4, 5 & 6) & Pull Ups
- Twin Blankets, flat & fitted sheets
- Toothbrushes & Toothpaste
- Diaper rash ointment
- Pillows & Pillow cases (standard)
- Baby Powder
- Baby Food
- Laundry Detergent
- Baby Shampoo
- Formula
- Sanitary Pads & tampons
- Baby Wipes
- Pedialyte
- Hair care products
- Baby Bottles
- Gift Cards (Walmart, Target, Etc.)

No Basketball on Sundays - Sunday coffee hour is for fellowship, not for sports. Basketball 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-dimeing (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.
Why Is High Blood Pressure a Silent Killer?

High blood pressure is often called the silent killer because it typically has no symptoms until after it has done significant damage to the heart and arteries. About 1 in 3 Americans has high blood pressure and don’t even know it. When blood pushes with too much force through the cardiovascular system, it can damage the walls of the arteries as well as the heart muscle, eventually contributing to a heart attack. Additionally, damage to the arteries that supply the brain with blood can contribute to a stroke, and damage to the renal arteries that provide the kidneys with blood can lead to kidney disease.

- A normal blood pressure reading is under 120/80 millimeters of mercury (mmHg).
- Prehypertension refers to blood pressure that is raised enough to be a warning sign for developing hypertension, is anything above normal up to 139/89 mmHg.
- Hypertension is 140/90 mmHg and above.

How Will I Know I have High Blood Pressure?

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked. Your healthcare provider will not diagnose you with high blood pressure based on one reading. Typically, three elevated readings are needed to confirm the diagnosis. This is one reason you may be asked to use a blood pressure cuff at home or a machine at a pharmacy and keep a log of your blood pressure readings over several days.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Your Blood Pressure

- Is my blood pressure too high?
- If I have borderline high blood pressure, what can we do to prevent or slow its progression to hypertension?
- What can we do to manage my high blood pressure?
- Should I be monitoring my blood pressure at home?
- Should I be taking medication to treat my high blood pressure?
- What lifestyle changes may help lower my blood pressure?
- How often should I see you to make sure my blood pressure is in a healthy range?

Community Outreach - Holiday Tent

Metropolitan Ministries is looking forward to having St. John Greek Orthodox Church volunteer on the following day and time at 2609 N. Rome Avenue, Tampa, FL 33607.

**Tuesday, November 26 (2 shifts), 1:15 p.m. - 4 p.m. (30 volunteers needed)**
3:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m. (15 volunteers needed)

**Sunday, December 22, 4 p.m - 6:15 p.m.**
(50 volunteers needed)

Below is the link that each person should use to register for this volunteer opportunity:
https://metromin.volunteerhub.com/lp/stjohnsgreekorthodox/

It is imperative that each person pre-registers for this opportunity as unfilled slots will be filled 1 week before your scheduled date.

Thank you for being HOPE this holiday season!
On Saturday October 5 the YAH visited the Ybor City Museum State Park

The Ybor City Museum and Ybor City Museum State Park is one of only two National Historic Landmark Districts in Florida. Kevin, our Florida State Park Ranger took our group through the museum and explained the history, the different cultures and how these ethnic groups worked together to help each other. We were shown a video of the history of Ybor, we walked through the tiny houses that were first developed for the cigar workers to live in before they were available through Sears mail order catalogues and then toured the museum. This is how Tampa became the “Cigar Capital of America”. This is a great example how many immigrants came to this country and what they had to endure. There was so much to learn.

Fifteen 15 YAH members were so impressed that many said they lived in Tampa for many years and didn’t know the museum with so much history even existed so nearby.

We later enjoyed lunch at a local Ybor Restaurant, the Stone Soup Company Grill.

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.

You can still confirm if you will be attending the 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

Deadline has past so respond ASAP. We have filled two tables and hope to fill a third.
You must let us know if you plan to attend. Reservations can only be made with your payment.

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 a.m. 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!

November Meeting will be on Thursday, November 14 at 11:30 a.m. in the Zaharias Room. Bring a Pot Luck Dish for Meeting and Bingo.
St. Moses the Ethiopian (also known as St. Moses the Black) was a slave who became a slave for Christ.

By the end of his life, St. Moses had made the remarkable transition from leading a band of seventy thieves to serving as the spiritual father of seventy monks. He was well advanced in spiritual warfare and, by the grace of God, excelled in virtue and sanctity, as evidenced by his great hospitality and love. The former hater and afflicter of men became known for his love and kindness.

He was a man of great faith. He once said, “Bear disgrace and affliction in the Name of Jesus with humility and a troubled heart, and show before Him feebleness, and He will become unto thee might.”

Near his earthly life’s conclusion, he was still a slave, a man of strength and a man of great appetites. However, after his conversion, he was the slave of Christ and thus truly free, his strength was the might of Christ made perfect in weakness, and his appetite was for things divine that never perish.

This book is available in the bookstore. 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
November 2019 SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Thank you for supporting our 2019-2020 Sunday School year. All our Sunday School Teachers are dedicated to providing great lessons about our faith to your children.

The Sunday School Topics for the month of October were: READING THE BIBLE, THE CREED, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND HOLY COMMUNION-DIVINE LITURGY-WORSHIP. We would like to thank Fr. Stavros for supporting our Sunday School and John Kokenis for his visits to our classrooms. This month he conducted lessons about our Church Vessels and the Holy Bread in our Kindergarten, First Grade, 5th and 6th Grade classrooms.

On October 6, Cindy Xenick taught our 1st and 2nd Grade students all about Memorial Services in our Orthodox Faith. How we always remember our family members who have fallen asleep with Our Lord. We pray for the soul of our loved ones during the Memorial Service, 40 days after their death. The Kolyva/Wheat in the Memorial Tray symbolizes New Life, The Resurrection! Jesus said in John 12:24: "Verily, verily I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the Earth, it remains alone, but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit”. The students helped mix and prepare a Memorial Tray. They tasted the Kolyva and designed their own memorial tray on paper. We can’t thank Cindy Xenick enough for offering to do this important lesson for all of our 1st-6th Graders.

Our second YOUTH SUNDAY of the year took place on October 20. We would like to thank our Sunday School students for singing our church hymns so beautifully and our high school students for reading The Epistle for our Youth Sundays.

Our HALL of FAITH program is to encourage our children to memorize and understand the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed. Our Pre-K through 3rd Graders should be focusing on the Lord’s Prayer and our 4th graders through seniors will focus on the Creed. Here are our Hall of Famers as of Oct. 11.

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.

I HAVE MEMORIZED THE LORD’S PRAYER

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Constantine Ameres</td>
<td>Theo Edquid</td>
<td>Yanni Lambrou</td>
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<td>Franky Austin</td>
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<td>Gryphon Borgeas-Beach</td>
<td>Lucas Elly</td>
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<td>Remy Boomgarden</td>
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<td>Natalie Henderson</td>
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<td>Charlie Katsaros</td>
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<td>Bill Conner</td>
<td>Julie Konstas</td>
<td>Vasilios Panos</td>
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<td>Elaina Edquid</td>
<td>Gaeta Koutouzi</td>
<td>Aiden Ricks</td>
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I HAVE MEMORIZED THE LORD’S PRAYER & THE CREED

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<tr>
<td>Nicholas Akrotirianakis</td>
<td>Calliope Kafantaris</td>
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<td>Eleni Katzaras</td>
<td>Sofia Stonestreet</td>
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<td>Kris Christopher</td>
<td>Aaron Martinez</td>
<td>Artemis Xenick</td>
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<td>Abby Moran</td>
<td>Elizabeth Xenick</td>
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<td>Alex Findlay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benny Hidremichael</td>
<td>Gennaro Scarffoglieri</td>
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November 2019 Sunday School Calendar

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, November 3</td>
<td>Saints Cosmas &amp; Damian – Serving with Love</td>
<td>Sunday, November 10</td>
<td>No Sunday School Classes</td>
<td>Sunday, November 17</td>
<td>Youth Sunday (7th -8th Grade Music at 11:50 a.m.) Topic: Charity/Thankfulness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Kokenis: 4th Grade (Vessels) Prophoria: 5th and 6th Grade</td>
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<td>Memorials/Kolyva: 3rd and 4th Grade GOYA Meeting 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sunday, November 24</td>
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Memorials/Kolyva: 3rd and 4th Grade GOYA Meeting 5:00 p.m.
~ November 2019 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? I Corinthians 4:7

With grateful hearts, we thank the entire St. John Community for your gifts of Time, Talent and Treasures to the glory of God! Your giving provides the foundation of support for our present and future generations. It enables us to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ as an Orthodox Christian Community AND support our core values—Love, Worship, Community, Learning, Service. We are making a difference and with God’s strength will carry this forward for years to come!

This month we highlight a heartfelt message of giving and sacrifice from the Kyrus Family. We thank Chris and Katherine for the light and love they bring to our church community along with this beautiful message that makes us take pause and think about our giving and the meaning of stewardship!

We begin a new Stewardship Year very soon with Stewardship Sunday set for December 8, 2019. This is our opportunity to come together as a community to reaffirm our commitment to God.

We lovingly remind everyone to review & fulfill your Stewardship Commitment for 2019, as we approach year-end.

With our new By-laws going into effect next year a pledge form and fulfilled pledge for the prior year (exception New Stewards) will be required to be considered a Steward ‘in good standing’. We have pledge forms available online and in the Church Narthex and Office. When you give to God, you discover what God gives to you.

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<tr>
<th>Year to Year Comparison ~</th>
<th>2019*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pledged Year to Date</td>
<td>$515,752</td>
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<td>Received Year to Date</td>
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<td># of Individual/Families Pledged/ Giving</td>
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*YTD as of 10/9/18 & 10/18/18

Parish By-Laws Update

On September 30, 2018, the Parish approved the following definition of “Steward”: a “Parishioner” who participates in all the religious and moral duties as described in Section A, above and fulfills his or her financial obligation to the Parish. Generally, in order to be designated a Steward of St. John Greek Orthodox Church, the individual must: (1) be eighteen years of age or over; and (2) submitted a properly completed pledge form for the prior year and is current in their financial obligations at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of a Parish Assembly or election; and (3) abide by all the regulations as stated in the UPR and the By-Laws. “Current in their financial obligation” is defined as a Steward paying up to or above 50% of their pledge amount at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the Parish Assembly or election.

The Metropolis of Atlanta advised the definition of “Steward” must be revised to the following: A Steward is a “Parishioner” who participates in all the religious and moral duties as described in Section A, above and fulfills his or her financial obligation to the Parish. Generally, in order to be designated a Steward of St. John Greek Orthodox Church, the individual must: (1) be eighteen years of age or over; and (2) submitted a properly completed pledge form for the present year; (3) abide by all the regulations as stated in the UPR and the By-Laws; and (4) pledged and paid an amount certain for the prior year.

The difference between the two are as follows: The Metropolis does not want us to require that a Steward be current in their financial obligation for the calendar year. The Metropolis does not want us to require that a Steward have submitted a properly completed pledge form for the prior year and paid before being eligible to vote in Parish Assembly or election.

The lookback to the prior year will begin in our 2020 Stewardship Year when 2019 pledges will be reviewed, since the By-Laws were approved in 2018. If you are concerned because you were unable to pay your entire pledge for the prior year, the By-Laws permit any Steward, because of indigence, neglect, or other special circumstance to no later than two (2) weeks prior to a general or special Parish Assembly or election, request the Priest verify the Steward has committed spiritually, morally, and financially in the past to the Greek Orthodox Faith and St. John’s. If the Priest verifies the Steward has satisfied the above conditions, then he or she will be considered to have fulfilled his or her financial obligation and be eligible to vote.

Please remember this rule does not apply to new Stewards to St. John’s, who may vote at a Parish assembly or election if the new Steward has been a member in good standing for at least three months prior to the vote.

Lastly, we wanted to leave with these words from Metropolitan Alexios:

I wish to commend you [St. John’s Parish] for taking the time to discuss these issues and formulate ideas and methods to better organize your Church. The Metropolis of Atlanta wishes to thank you for your efforts to improve the life of the Parish.

As we continue toward the Lenten Fast, may you be blessed with His peace now and always.

Sincerely,
Parish Council Legal Committee
Save the Date!
Stewardship Sunday, December 8
Start praying today about how your family will support our growing community and help us share the Love of Christ with our neighbors.

“Buy a Book, to Give a Book!”
Benefiting the Parents and Children Advance Together Literacy Ministries

The Alcmaeon Chapter #167 of The Daughters of Penelope of Tampa is taking pre-orders (October and November for delivery in December) for purchasing the book, The Icon Hunter, authored by Tasoula Hadjitofi. This Literacy Project is a community outreach effort to help children succeed in schools and prepare for a better future.

Why should you buy this book?

The author, Tasoula Hadjitofi, has written a beautiful memoir of combatting the looting of the world’s cultural heritage and the repatriation of stolen religious artifacts and the need for responsibility to protect this heritage. The book will enrich you, a loved one, or make a nice gift!

Why should you purchase this book through The Daughters of Penelope, Chapter #167 (Literacy Project) instead of somewhere else?

The paperback book, The Icon Hunter, is being offered at a discount to you and is an initiative at the grassroots level to **BENEFIT CHILDREN** through the Parents and Children Advance Together (PCAT) Literacy Ministries. PCAT is a non-profit after-school literacy tutoring program for underserved children and families living in severely distressed neighborhoods in Hillsborough County. The Daughters of Penelope Chapter #167 will make a donation from your purchase to help benefit this program, which provides each child with 4 books per week for 30 weeks per school year and also provides training and interactive opportunities for parents. Please, help Buy a Book, to Give a Book! What can be better than helping a child learn to read through a great literacy program?

Please detach here and return the below portion with your payment

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
| Your Name | Address |
| City | State | Zip |
| Phone | Email |

**How many copies of THE ICON HUNTER are you purchasing at $20 per copy?***

**Total amount of Check enclosed $________ Check #:__________**

***If you would like to make a donation without purchase of a book, please indicate here:___

Thank you for supporting children in need of tutoring and reading materials!

**Please write a check made payable to: Daughters of Penelope #167**

Mail form & Payment to:
Ourania Stephanides, PDG2
9906 Lone Tree Ln
Tampa, FL 33618-4431

Contact Stephanides.Ourania@gmail.com with any questions. Your book order will be ready for pickup at The Daughters of Penelope table in the Church Hall of St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, Sundays in December after the Divine Liturgy and gift wrapped for free!
Hope/Joy Fall Food Drive

"HOPE starts with a MEAL. HOPE starts with YOU!"

"During the Holiday Season, a box of food turns into a Box of Hope. Your family can be part of that hope by providing a family of four with food for the holidays. One family reaching out to another."

Please join St. John's Hope/Joy children’s ministry in providing a meal to families in need through Metropolitan Ministries. Make this your family project for the month of November and help us put together 60 Boxes of Hope filled with the items needed for a Christmas holiday dinner. There are many ways you can help provide a Box of Hope:

- Shop for the items below and bring to church Nov 1 - Dec 14
- Donate $25 (cash or gift card) for a Box of Hope.

**BOX OF HOPE contains:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gift certificate for a turkey or ham</th>
<th>2 cans of black beans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 box of cereal (hot or cold)</td>
<td>2 cans of cranberry sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cans of fruit</td>
<td>1 bag of dried beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 jar of peanut butter</td>
<td>1 box or bag of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cans of vegetables</td>
<td>1 can or packet of gravy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cans of yams</td>
<td>1 box dessert mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bag or box of stuffing</td>
<td>1 package cookies or pastries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 box of potatoes</td>
<td>1 family box of Jell-O/Pudding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There will be a collection bin in the hall for the food *November through Saturday, December 15*th. Please only non-perishable food donations. Assembly of boxes will be Sat, Dec 14th during our Christmas Party.

"He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will reward him for what he has done." Proverbs 19:17
Kourmolis Center AC Overhaul Update

On October 1, Caldeco Heating and Cooling began the work on replacing all of the 10 units in the Kourmolis Center. The project is a major undertaking as the air handlers are in a very difficult place, so getting the units in place was a task in itself. In addition to the original project, we will also be replacing the 15 ton unit which conditions the actual kitchen. This was not originally a part of the original scope of work but we have already spent too much on repairs for that unit and it would be more cost effective to replace. All of the new units will be controlled by WIFI Thermostats, allowing us to schedule and monitor the energy usage as needed in the building. We are also happy to report that the days of manually vacuuming the water pans for each unit are over. Thanks to your Stewardship, we are being proactive in this replacement rather than waiting for all the unites to break down. Many thanks to the Parish Council for approving this project and for Felix Ramirez, who has kept all of the ACs alive by performing routine maintenance and even repairing them, saving us thousands of dollars.

AHEPA FAMILY NEWS – NOVEMBER 2019

ANNOUNCING THE AHEPA FAMILY 2019 SCHOLARSHIPS

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The AHEPA FAMILY Scholarship is intended to promote, encourage, and advance education at the high school, college, university and graduate school level. Scholarships in the amount of $500 or higher each will be awarded, based on the funds available in the AHEPA/DOP Scholarship funds in the current year.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must demonstrate that:

1. They are currently seniors in high school and have been accepted at an accredited college or university as degree seeking students for an associates or bachelors degree. Those not accepted at an institution may be eligible to receive an award by providing evidence of acceptance prior to the award being granted.
2. They are currently enrolled in an accredited college or university seeking a associates, bachelors, masters or doctoral degree.
3. They are in good academic standing
4. They have no criminal record
5. The applicant OR his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) are stewards in good standing at St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church (Tampa, Florida) and are current members in good standing of the AHEPA/DOP Tampa chapters.
6. The applicant must also be a current paid up member of the Maids of Athena or Sons of Pericles

APPLICATIONS

Applications are available via email from the AHEPA scholarship committee at AHEPA President, Thomas Sakaris at tomsak1234@gmail.com, DOP President, Nicole Leontsinis at nicola713@gmail.com, the Scholarship Chairperson, Edie Kavouklis at edie.kavouklis@gmail.com.

FILING THE APPLICATION

All applications must be filed by mail and postmarked not later than November 30, 2018. Please get a copy of the Application for more information.

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

Kourmolis Center AC Overhaul Update

On October 1, Caldeco Heating and Cooling began the work on replacing all of the 10 units in the Kourmolis Center. The project is a major undertaking as the air handlers are in a very difficult place, so getting the units in place was a task in itself. In addition to the original project, we will also be replacing the 15 ton unit which conditions the actual kitchen. This was not originally a part of the original scope of work but we have already spent too much on repairs for that unit and it would be more cost effective to replace. All of the new units will be controlled by WIFI Thermostats, allowing us to schedule and monitor the energy usage as needed in the building. We are also happy to report that the days of manually vacuuming the water pans for each unit are over. Thanks to your Stewardship, we are being proactive in this replacement rather than waiting for all the unites to break down. Many thanks to the Parish Council for approving this project and for Felix Ramirez, who has kept all of the ACs alive by performing routine maintenance and even repairing them, saving us thousands of dollars.
The Annual St. John the Baptist Greek Festival is Coming Soon!

November 8, 9 & 10, 2019

How can YOU help?

- Promote – Posters, Flyers, Yard Signs, Your Social Media Accounts, Next Door Place a poster or yard sign at local business places you frequent (with permission of course)!

- Share/promote on your Instagram Account - especially if you have a big following :) or post our flyer on FB Page or Neighborhood Next Door Site.

- Publix Supports the Festival! Please put a poster up at your local Publix. We have permission to put up our 11x17 posters for the next several weeks in all Publix’s throughout Hillsborough County. Stop by the Festival table today to pick up two large posters, a copy of the letter sent to managers, and basic instructions. If everyone tackles their neighborhood Publix, we will have spread the word throughout the entire region!

- This is our opportunity to showcase our faith, culture, and the beautiful place of worship of St. John the Baptist.

- We have over 1,200 shifts to fill in support of our festival weekend! Please volunteer for at least 2 or more shifts. The Signup Genius is available at TampaGreekFestival.com. For more info contact Sandra Pappas at tpagreekfestival@gmail.com or 813-785-3747.

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

The 2019 Tampa Greek Festival is 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.

Come by the table in the Kourmolis Center on Sundays
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 d_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

Website & Email Update

Our new web domain is STJOHNTPA.ORG

New email addresses:
- **Debbie:** debbie@stjohntpa.org
- **Charlie:** chambos@stjohntpa.org
- **John:** jkokenis@stjohntpa.org

Confidential Request for Counselors from Fr. Stavros

We’ve all asked for and been asked for references for different kinds of people. I.e. Do you know a good plumber or a reliable lawn care service? I would like to put together a resource manual of mental health professionals in this area to help people from our parish who need certain kinds of services. I’m looking specifically for the following:

1. Therapists/counselors who can counsel
   a. People in grief
   b. Teenagers
   c. Marriage counseling
   d. Other general counselors/therapists who you’ve had a good experience with.
2. Anyone good programs for people who are struggling with addictions (Drugs, alcohol, etc.)

While I do a lot of pastoral work that involves counseling, there are certain areas that either I’m not qualified to offer assistance in, or more likely, unable to engage in long term counseling/therapy. However, without first-hand knowledge of these kinds of counselors in our area, I am at a loss as for where to direct people to go. If you some recommendations, please know they will be kept in confidence. If you are really concerned about anonymity, please send an unsigned note to my attention (this is the only time I will read an anonymous note). I really want to put together a list of resources to be able to recommend to our parishioners. Thank you.

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

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, November 16
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 can the QR CODE and sign up.

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

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

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 8-9 a.m., Serving 9-10:15 a.m., Cleanup 10:15-10:30 a.m.

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

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.
Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate. One thing that seems obvious to me, as I am getting older and a sign of the times, is that people are no longer friendly or considerate to strangers and sometimes not even to people they know. This is clear to me as I daily drive to and from work, watching the interactions of students and faculty on campus.

Because people simply don’t trust friendliness from people they don’t know, many people avoid making eye contact, saying, “Good morning”, giving a friendly smile or offering a compliment. It is disappointing when your kindness is met with indifference, skepticism or even hostility. We sometimes hesitate to be kind, fearing we will be manipulated or others will want something in return.

Or perhaps we are reluctant in giving a compliment for fear our intentions will be misinterpreted causing people to avoid us.

When I was growing up people said, “Good morning,” men tipped their hats to ladies, gave a hitch hiker a ride and stopped to help others when their car broke down on the side of the road. It was the right thing to do and there was a real sense of community.

Being kind to others is a daily practice. Opportunities usually happen on the spot and are not always convenient. We must look out for the unplanned needs of others. Being kind costs you nothing, takes very little time and can make someone’s bad day better.

Sometimes we learn kindness from the examples of others. I grew up watching my father’s example of practicing kindness. He taught me that you will “always get further with honey than vinegar.”

It is sad when you try to be friendly with a stranger because most people do not know how to respond to people being nice to them. When I have a problem with a bank, a credit card company or some type of home service the first thing I say to the customer service representative after they tell me their name is, “How are you doing today?”

This is usually followed by a long silence because most people just start screaming at them and they don’t know what to say because no one ever asks them that question.

Sometimes we learn kindness through our life experiences. Because I worked in a restaurant and never appreciated being treated like the hired help, I always treat my server at a restaurant with kindness and call them by name, not “hey you” or “waiter.”

So remember to open your eyes, put a smile on your face, lend a hand to a person struggling, open a door, offer compassion and thereby make a difference in someone’s day. Be kind to everyone like we all hope God will be kind to us because kindness comes to us through His mercy. “For his merciful kindness is great toward us.” Psalm 117:2a

***World Kindness day is November 13

John Demas sings in the choir, plays the Bouzouki in the band, “The Omega Project” which stars in our Greek Festival every year, and is the father to three children—Andrew, Nicholas and Alexandra.

My One Word for 2019: Kindness

By John Demas
The word stewardship finds its origin in the German words “stig” and “weard” which mean “house” and “guardian.” Simply, it means “guardian of the home.”

Our stewardship is both literally and figuratively protecting our house of worship, our church. For many of us, the church is and has been much more than a place of worship on Sunday mornings. It is the place where we come for spiritual guidance when things are at their worst, the place where we may have met our spouses, raised our children, prayed for our grandchildren, and made life-long bonds. It is the place that many of you or your family members built from the ground up. It is the place we should hold sacred and forever protect. It is a place that we are blessed to have in our lives.

While others are looking for a place in the world where they belong, we are fortunate enough to come here at least weekly, and to know that we are welcomed and loved and that someone is praying for us. We are truly blessed to have a home such as this, and we need to make sure to do everything we can to maintain it.

We need stewardship to protect our home. Without stewardship, the church and our church community not only falls in disrepair but is hindered in achieving its vision of loving thy neighbor and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our home, our church, relies on stewardship for upkeep of church buildings and grounds, paying salaries of people that are critical in the day-to-day operations and who are serving the people of our church and community.

Now that we’ve defined what stewardship does - protect our church - and why it’s important to the survival and advancement of the church, how do we determine what we can give? What kind of time, talents, and treasures will we offer?

Just as none of us are identical to another, no one’s stewardship will be the same as another’s. It is through our stewardship that we express thanks to God and help spread His word.

Without the people who bake the antithero weekly, clean the church after each service, keep the pantry for our community stocked, participate in choir, educate our children (who are our future), plan our festival, keep our church organized and running, and support Father in his many responsibilities, our home would not function as it does. We commend those people that give of their time on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis.

Others may not have time, and their stewardship looks different. It may be supporting a fellow parishioner or smiling and introducing themselves to church guests. It may be volunteering once a year; it is whatever they have to give. Equally as important, it is necessary to have the financial resources to maintain our church. Without the financial resources, we cannot pay for our building mortgage, electricity, water, and repairs. Currently, we need the festival to survive. Can you imagine if stewardship covered our costs and the rest could be used to donate to the community, give to parishioners when they are in need, and perhaps hire a second priest?

So, when filling out your stewardship card this year, take a pause. Think about the impact the church has on your life and countless others. Think about the hours in the week that you, or your children, or your grandchildren spend at church. And make the commitment to protect your home by giving as much as you can. We promise to do the same.

Hope & Joy School Supply Drive

Thank you for your generous donations filling our big yellow box with school supplies the students at Hope Children’s Home can use all year!
**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,”

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

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**“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.
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 Stamatides - 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.
6 Things Children Learn When You Skip Divine Liturgy On Sundays
Adapted with permission from an article by Becky Roach

It doesn’t take long for us parents to realize that our children absorb everything we do and say. I remember the first time I heard my two year old let out a long sigh and say “Oh, my gosh. I can’t even.” Her tone and expression were exactly like mine.

Sometimes you come face to face with your own sinful ways through the words and actions of your children.

I was recently at a Baptism in which the priest reminded each person present that it would be through his or her actions that the child being baptized would come to know about God and how to respond to Him. If the child witnessed us praying, she would learn prayer was important, but that if the child never saw any communication with God from the people in her life, the child would learn that it wasn’t necessary.

Though none of us is perfect, we do have the responsibility to try to model behaviors that we want our child to emulate. As much as kids learn from what we do, they also learn from what we do not do.

When we don’t make going to Church a priority each Sunday, it speaks volumes about faith and life to the hearts of our children.

6 Things Kids Learn When You Skip the Divine Liturgy On Sundays.

1) God is important, but not that important.
If I can fit God in, great, but only if it is convenient for me. Football games, sleeping in, and _____ (insert activity of choice) are more important than making an effort to be with God one hour a week.

2) God doesn’t really mean what He says.
Yes, it is a commandment to keep the Lord’s Day Holy, but God doesn’t understand how busy I am or how many kids I have or how tired I’ve been so I can just decide based on my life’s circumstances what He really means by this commandment and all of His other commandments. It’s up to us to pick and choose which of God’s laws we want to follow.

3) The Church doesn’t really expect us to adhere to Her teachings.
Yes, it is a precept of the Church to attend Divine Liturgy on Sundays, but the Church doesn’t understand how busy I am or how many kids I have or how tired I’ve been so I can just decide based on my life’s circumstances what the Church really means by this precept.

4) Divine Liturgy is all about me and what I get out of it.
When we come and go to Divine Liturgy as we please, we seem to forget that going to Divine Liturgy builds the Church community. Your parish may need you to be a lector, sing in the choir, or take up the gifts. Seeing your family in Church might be just the thing an elderly person needs to bring joy to a lonely Sunday. There are many reasons that we are a community of faith and that we come together in Worship.

5) When things are difficult/boring, I don’t have to do them.
If we don’t go to Divine Liturgy and we tell our kids it’s because Divine Liturgy is “boring” or we “don’t get anything out of it,” our children learn that we only have to do things that are fun and exciting. This is simply not true regarding both our faith and everyday life. Most people don’t find doing their taxes fun and exciting, but we still have to do them.

6) To doubt the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and the Graces that come from receiving Him.
If you truly believe that Jesus is present in the Eucharist and that He comes to us each Sunday at Divine Liturgy, what would keep you from Him? Why would you not want to receive the graces He bestows through this incredible gift?

Our Catechism teaches us “The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church’s life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church.”

Parents, I know and fully understand how difficult it is to bring children to Church. Often when I leave Divine Liturgy, I feel as if I have just competed in a wrestling match. No matter how much I plan and prepare, we have plenty of days when the kids are less than angelic.

It is a battle. But, it is a battle worth fighting. There is no better place to bring our children than to the feet of Jesus. There is no better lesson to teach them than to put God first ALWAYS, no matter what else is going on in our lives or how difficult it is to be at Divine Liturgy.

Guess what will happen if you wait to bring children to Divine Liturgy until they can behave better or your life isn’t as busy? It won’t happen.

Satan will always give us an excuse to miss out on the celebration of the highest form of prayer we have here on earth, but God will always give us the graces to respond with a “yes” when we ask Him to help us.

Make Sunday Divine Liturgy the one thing that your family consistently does together. Trust me, the blessings and graces that will come from this discipline will transform your family life in a powerful way.
Hope for Hurting Hearts: The Ministry of Encouragement
By Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth

In a world where terrorism, war, violence, and divorce are everyday topics, one of the most vital ministries we can have as women is the ministry of encouragement.

We’ve all felt the energy-draining effects of the discourager. Discouraging people drag us down instead of inspiring us to hope and take heart in God.

Do you know that a man was once court-martialed and sentenced to a year’s imprisonment for being a discourager?

It happened during the Boer War, 1899–1902 in South Africa, at the siege of Ladysmith. The fortunes of the town and garrison were hanging in the balance. This civilian would go along the lines and speak discouraging words to the men on duty. He struck no blow for the enemy, not one. He was just a discourager, and that at a critical time.

The court-martial judged it a crime to speak disheartening words in an hour like that. It may not be illegal to be a discourager today, but it surely is a sin.

One of the most needed ministries in the church today is the ministry of encouragement. We all know people who are in great need of encouragement. Every week I hear about people who are battling hopelessness and despair. They desperately need the gift of encouragement—someone to give them hope, confidence, and comfort.

Being an encourager doesn’t come naturally for most of us, but, for a believer, it’s not an option. It’s a command based in the love of God.

Thirty-two times in the New Testament we are reminded of things we are to do for one another. One of these commands is to encourage “one another” (Heb. 3:13). When we encourage others, we are reflecting the heart of God, who is “the God of . . . encouragement” (Rom. 15:5).

Who Needs It?

Do you need encouragement? Everyone does! But how often do we take the time to ask God to show us people in our lives who need our encouragement? The wonderful blessing is you will reap what you sow; you will be encouraged as you set out to encourage others.

Start with your own family. It’s hypocritical for us to try to encourage everyone else in the world while failing to encourage those within the four walls of our own homes.

If you are married, your husband needs you to be his number one cheerleader. Your home should be a refuge for your husband, the one place where he knows he can turn for consistent encouragement.

Moms, your children, no matter how young or old, need your encouragement. When people speak encouraging words to us, we are motivated to live up to their words. Everyone blooms under encouragement, and so will your children.

Others who need our encouragement include:

- Pastors and church staff members, and their spouses
- Other mothers, including expectant moms and single moms
- Those who are lonely, such as single or elderly people
- People who are sick and hospitalized
- New believers
- Those who are struggling with a sin habit
- Those who are grieving

The best way to experience the encouragement that you long for is to be an encourager to others. So ask God to help you see people with His eyes, to love them with His heart, to encourage them with His helping hands. As you do, God will encourage and strengthen your own heart.

Ways to Encourage

I don’t know of anything more encouraging that you can do for others than to pray. Pray for them. If someone says, “I’m struggling” or “I have a need,” stop and pray with that person right then and there, if possible.

I can’t tell you how much it means to me when someone says, “Let me pray for you”—and then does it on the spot! I have one friend who virtually never ends a conversation—whether in person or on the phone—without praying for the person he is talking to. That friend has been a huge source of encouragement to me and to countless others.

Another important way we can encourage one another is with our words. Proverbs 12:25 tells us that “anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.” Your encouraging words can be a tonic in someone else’s life. I can’t emphasize enough the importance of this to the people we’re closest to. Think of those times when your husband is really discouraged. Do your words further tear him down, or do they strengthen him? Your words, whether spoken or written, can breathe courage and strength into hearts of people who feel hopelessly overwhelmed.

We can encourage one another through giving gifts—and those gifts don’t have to be expensive. I recently received several meaningful gifts—including a Scripture plaque, flowers, notecards, and a CD of praise music—from people who just wanted me to know they were thinking of me. What an encouragement those special reminders have been to my heart!

Acts of service are another way to encourage others: take a meal to someone; offer to babysit so a couple can get out for a date together; visit an elderly person; or clean the house for a sick friend or a mom with several small children.

In a world where so many people are sad, lonely, and hurting, how we need to encourage one another. As we do, God will use our hands, hearts, and words to communicate His heart and minister grace to those around us.

Adapted from the series “Encouraging One Another” by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth. © Revive Our Hearts
Choose to love each other even in those moments when you struggle to like each other. Love is a commitment, not a feeling.

Always answer the phone when your husband/wife is calling and when possible, try to keep your phone off when you’re together with your spouse.

Make time together a priority. Budget for a consistent date night. Time is the “currency of relationships” so consistently invest time into your marriage.

Surround yourself with friends who will strengthen your marriage and remove yourself from people who may tempt you to compromise your character.

Make laughter the soundtrack of your marriage. Share moments of joy, and even in the hard times, find reasons to laugh.

In every argument, remember that there won’t be a “winner” and a “loser.” You are partners in everything so you’ll either win together or lose together. Work together to find a solution.

Remember that a strong marriage rarely has two strong people at the same time. It’s usually a husband and wife taking turns being strong for each other in the moments when the other feels weak. Prioritize what happens in the bedroom. It takes more than sex to build a strong marriage, but it’s nearly impossible to build a strong marriage without it!

Remember that marriage isn’t 50-50, divorce is 50-50. Marriage has to be 100-100. It’s not splitting everything in half, but both partners giving everything they’ve got!

Give your best to each other, not your leftovers after you’ve given your best to everyone else.

Learn from other people, but don’t feel the need to compare your life or your marriage to anyone else. God’s plan for your life is masterfully unique!

Never talk badly about your spouse to other people or vent about them online. Protect your spouse at all times and in all places.

Always wear your wedding ring. It will remind you that you’re always connected to your spouse and it will remind the rest of the world that you’re off limits!

Connect into a community of faith. A good church can make a world of difference in your marriage and family.

Never consider divorce as an option. Remember that a “perfect marriage” is just two imperfect people who refuse to give up on each.

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Church Gifted with $32,261 from Charles and Stella Misoyianis’ Trust

A portion of The Charles K and Stella C. Misoyianis Trust was allocated to our community in the amount of $32,261.46 on August 28. Each church community in the Tampa Bay Area was given a portion of the trust based on the disbursement proceedings. This means that the Greek Orthodox Faith was very important to the Misoyianis Family. We thank them for remembering our community and for this very generous gift. The terms of the trust ductate that this gift be used “for general church purposes other than salaries and debt service and for the erection of a plaque or other suitable monument in memory of Irene & Gus Caravas, Stella & Charles K. Misoyianis and Virginia & Lambros Misoyianis.” Thank you Misoyianis Family. May their memory be eternal!
COMMUNITY LIFE

Sunday school Kolyva making (above right); Sunday school chalice decoration (below)
METROPOLIS JANUARY EVENTS

Diver Applications for Epiphany

All young men of our parish who will be age 16-18 on January 6, 2020, are welcome to apply to dive for the cross at the Epiphany celebration in Tarpon Springs. Applications are available on the website of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Tarpon Springs. Applications are due by 4:00 p.m. on Monday, December 9, no exceptions. They need to be signed by Fr. Stavros so please plan accordingly.

To view more or our Parish’s community life through the lens of a camera, be sure to visit our website, stjohntpa.org.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1**</td>
<td>Sts. Cosmas and Damian &lt;br&gt; Orthros 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SR. GOYA Lock-in &lt;br&gt; 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Dance Practices &lt;br&gt; Men’s group 5:00</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Festival preparation week &lt;br&gt; Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>WBS 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; SBS 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6**</td>
<td>Panagyri Dance Practice 7 p.m.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>8**</td>
<td>Archangels &lt;br&gt; Orthros 8:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Greek Festival 12:00 p.m.-Midnight</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>St. Nektarios &lt;br&gt; Orthros 8:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Greek Festival 11:00 a.m.-Midnight</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Orthros 7:45 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Greek Festival 11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Parish Council Training Seminar</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>WBS 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; SBS 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>13**</td>
<td>St. John Chrysostom &lt;br&gt; Orthros 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Vespers 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>YAH 11:30 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Philoptochos Board Meeting via phone &lt;br&gt; Grief Share 6:30 p.m. &lt;br&gt; Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>15 **</td>
<td>Beginning of Advent Holy Unction &lt;br&gt; 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>16**</td>
<td>Community Outreach</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Festival Appreciation College Student Sunday Youth Sunday GOYA 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18**</td>
<td>Bible Study 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>19**</td>
<td>Come and See Dinner 6:30 p.m. &lt;br&gt; WBS 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; SBS 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>20 **</td>
<td>Entrance of Virgin Mary &lt;br&gt; Orthros 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Grief Share 6:30 p.m. &lt;br&gt; Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>21 **</td>
<td>Entrance of Virgin Mary &lt;br&gt; Orthros 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Grief Share 6:30 p.m. &lt;br&gt; Greek School 6 – 8:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>22 **</td>
<td>Office Closed</td>
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<td>23**</td>
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<td>24**</td>
<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Boxes of Hope AHEPA Family Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>25**</td>
<td>St. Katherine &lt;br&gt; Orthros 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td>26**</td>
<td>Metropolitan Ministries Holiday Tent Volunteering 1:15 - 4 p.m. 3:30 - 6:15 p.m. (see page 13 for details)</td>
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<td>27**</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Eve &lt;br&gt; Orthros 5:00 p.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 6:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>28**</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Day Office Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 **</td>
<td>Office Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>30**</td>
<td>St. Andrew &lt;br&gt; Orthros 9:00 a.m. &lt;br&gt; Liturgy 10:00 a.m.</td>
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### St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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**Office:** (813) 876-8830  
**Fax:** (813) 443-4899  
**office@stjohntpa.org**  
www.stjohntpa.org

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

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jokenis@stjohntpa.org

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Ryan Rindone, Secretary  
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Sandra Pappas  
813-785-3747  
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Edie Kavouklis  
813-758-3035  
Jimmy Konstas  
813-220-7352

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813-909-2327  
Thomas Sakaris, President  
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Engie Haltkas  
813-932-5859  
Sia Blankenship  
813-968-8855  
Perry Katsamakis  
516-403-3118  
Jimmy Konstas  
813-220-7352  
Charlie Hambos  
813-843-8471  
Brett Mower  
813-376-9315  
Charlie Hambos  
813-843-8471

**Timetable of Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sundays</th>
<th>Weekdays</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orthros 8:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orthros 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Divine Liturgy: 10:00 a.m.</td>
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**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  
Maroua Edmoid  
813-422-8963  
Parea, Marina Chandras  
813-877-6136  
Anna Maria Bavaro  
732-239-9085  
Panigyria, Alexandra De Maio  
813-340-9668  

**Daughters of Penelope**  
Nicole Leontsinis, President  
703-585-7490  

**Finance Committee**  
Gary Ward  
813-846-3898  

**Food Pantry**  
Aneta Alexander  
813-758-2689  

**GriefShare**  
Donna Hambos  
813-843-8412  

**Gasparilla Parking**  
John Kokkas  
727-992-4615  

**GOYA**  
Michael & Bessie Palios  
goya@stjohntpa.org  
813-523-0346  

**Hope/Joy**  
George & Zackie Ameres  
813-245-3813  

**Junior Olympics**  
Dwight Ford  
727-685-9028  

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

**Parish Nursing Ministry**  
Marcelle Triantafilou  
612-396-5026  

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**Orthodox Christian Fellowship**  
Charlie Hambos  
813-843-8471

**Oratorio Festival**  
Peggy Bradshaw  
727-244-1374

**Photography Ministry**  
Karina Findlay  
813-476-9632

**Philoptochos**  
Jeanie Nenos  
813-451-9116

**Small Group Bible Study**  
South, John Kokenis  
630-306-7716  
Women, Fr. Stavros  
813-394-1038

**Strategic Planning**  
Gary Ward  
813-846-3898

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

**Sunday School**  
Vickie Peckham  
813-758-3102

**Usher**  
Toni Georgas  
813-985-0236

**Welcoming Ministry**  
Maria Xenick  
813-765-3587

**Young Adult**  
Charlie Hambos  
813-843-8471

**Young at Heart**  
Mike Trimm  
813-784-4872

**Youth Protection**  
Catherine Mitseas  
813-571-0658

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The Messenger of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is published on a monthly basis. Publication is the 10th of each month. Deadline for notices and announcements for The Messenger is the 1st of each month. You may send announcements to the church office through email.

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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.