

# THE MESSENGER

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

# September 2017

### 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

### There's a Path to Sainthood for Everyone—Will You Embrace Yours?

On our recent vacation, I had the opportunity to visit San Francisco and spend some time with my Spiritual Father. So, before continuing, let me define this term, Spiritual Father. In the Orthodox Church, there is the "tradition" of the Spiritual Father, someone who walks through life with you as a spiritual mentor, who hears your confessions, etc. In Orthodox countries, where virtually the whole populace is Orthodox, where there are Orthodox Churches on nearly every corner, and monasteries near every town, and where people aren't as mobile as they are in America and in contemporary times, this tradition worked well. In the village, where one would live his or her entire life, there would be several clergy at hand that could function in this role. So people would go to the same person year after year throughout their lives. The Spiritual Father would know all about them, and so when they would go seek spiritual advice, there wouldn't have to be a lot of background information given, they could just get down to the challenge at hand.

This is not the reality in the United States. We are not an Orthodox country, there are very few Orthodox churches, and even fewer places of Orthodox retreat. People move periodically and so do priests. Priests rarely serve the same parish for their whole ministry, but move periodically to new flocks. People also rarely live in the same city their whole life, so they move to different parishes. And because each parish generally has one priest, it is hard for everyone to feel a close relationship with their priest. Thus, these relationships are not as strong as they used to be, or should be.

That being said, there is no parish priest for me to go to for spiritual advice, and so years ago, I met Fr. Aris Metrakos, when he served the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in Columbia, South Carolina. When I lived in New England, during the four years I was at the Seminary and the two years I served in Connecticut, there was a priest I went to for confession, who still is a dear friend. The problem was, that when I moved down South, I couldn't see him anymore. So, when I needed confession, or a face to face conversation with someone, I couldn't call on him for that role. Enter Fr. Aris, who I met at summer camp in 2000. It was the year 2002, when we were again at summer camp, and sharing the same apartment for the camp season, that one day I asked him if I could go to confession with him, since I hadn't been in two years, which is a long time not to go. I was afraid he was going to lose respect for me because of the things I was going to confess. To the contrary, when we were done, he said he had gained respect for me, and we actually have ended up becoming good friends. He heard my confessions for six years, until he moved to the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in San Francisco. In the years he has served Holy Trinity, I have still relied on him as a spiritual guide and when I go visit California, I go to San Francisco, for the express purpose of going to confession. He knows me well. He knows my life well—the good parts and the not so good parts. He is the person I entrust most with the care of my soul. That is a very important and heavy thing for me, and he gives my soul the attention it deserves by being pastoral, loving, patient and non-judgmental. I pray that I give these qualities to the people whose confessions I hear.

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One more thing about the term Spiritual Father. It is not appropriate to ascribe this word to someone who doesn't hear your confessions. Several people whose confessions I've never heard, who have actually not ever come to me for any kind of advice, have referred to me as their Spiritual Father. That is not a correct use of the term. I am parish priest to everyone. I offer sermons and sacraments to everyone. The relationship of Spiritual Father—Spiritual Child is designated for those whose confessions I hear. The only person who carries the title "Spiritual Father" for the masses is our Metropolitan—HE is the Spiritual Father to all, and we are his spiritual children. This is why we pray for him by name in all of our services. He is our shepherd, we are his sheep.

So, after that long introduction—I went to confession with Fr. Aris. His style, which has become mine, is to listen to everything that the person confessing has to say without interruption, and then to make comments at the end. I try to model this as well, and as I'm hearing a confession, one thing or one theme usually sticks in my head which becomes the subject of our discussion. Many times people are surprised by what sticks out when I hear a confession, just like many times I'm surprised by what Fr. Aris will pick up on. I have always felt that the Holy Spirit guides these thoughts and so I just go with the thought He puts in my mind.

As I finished confessing my sins, Fr. Aris said something to me that was very simple, yet very profound. He said "God has laid out a path to sainthood for each person, and you need to do a better job of embracing yours." Now that I'm 45 years old, my life is fairly set. By this I mean, I know my strengths and weaknesses and those aren't likely to change. I have my "pathologies," the things I struggle with, and these things aren't as likely to change, especially the ones I have no control over. So he said, "When you embrace your path to sainthood, others will see that and it will inspire them to embrace their paths to sainthood. Everyone has a chance to be a saint, but a different path to get there. When you embrace yours, it inspires other people to embrace theirs, and in turn, puts YOU closer to salvation. When you don't embrace yours, it discourages other people from embracing theirs and puts YOU farther from your salvation." He also told me to focus more on praying, my diet and exercise habits, the things which I have absolute control over. He offered a prayer, I asked his blessing, and left feeling renewed. By the way, for those who have never done confession, I highly recommend it. Find a priest, it need not be me, but don't go through life without some spiritual guidance.

So simple, yet so profound. God has laid out a path to sainthood for each person. Embrace your path. Encourage others to embrace theirs.

It is easy to remember this advice, and as I have reflected on it, there are so many themes and ideas that come to my mind.

**It begins with the destination.** The destination is holiness, heaven, sainthood. The destination isn't riches, fortune and fame. When we die we can't take those with us. We can take our sense of holiness and sainthood with us. So why then do we obsess over the things that are temporary, and we don't pay mind to the thing that is permanent and eternal—our salvation. Why are we so obsessed with gain of material things that we cannot take with us, and we are not so concerned with gain of spiritual things that will affect us to eternity? And why are we

so obsessed with squirreling away as much money as possible for a tomorrow that is not guaranteed to any of us?

The destination is the Kingdom of God. The path, which I will speak more of in a minute, is to become Christ-like. Yet, when we speak of Christ too much, it seems that we are labeled as some kind of fanatic. I've even been told in our parish that it sounds too "Protestant" when I talk about Christ. I'm not sure what that means—we are Christians, I'm a priest, what else am I supposed to talk about. The festival is an important event in the life of our parish. So is the budget. But this is not why we have a church. The "business" of the church is not supposed to consistently trump the "BUSINESS" of the Church which is leading people to Christ and saving souls. And those who love Christ are not fanatics or freak shows—they are people who know the Lord and know that talking about Him is an essential element for people who desire to find holiness in their lives and salvation for eternal life.

**The destination can come at any time.** My first week back from vacation, we had two sudden deaths in our parish—one was a man who was 78, the other was a child who was 2. Both caught the respective families by surprise. Both families had been making plans that didn't involve funerals for their loved ones. Just goes to show us and teach us that the only thing that is guaranteed in your life is today. And this is why we should be looking for opportunities to grow in Christ and to serve one another TODAY, because tomorrow is not guaranteed to any of us. Yesterday is over. We can't live in its glory, or its failure. And tomorrow is not guaranteed to any of us. So that leaves us with today. What are we doing today? What are you doing today? Are you doing something on the path to sainthood today, or not? If we knew that today was going to be our last day, we'd certainly do things a lot different than we are planning to do. We'd certainly live with more purpose. We'd probably run to give our money away to help people, rather than hoarding something that we can't take with us. Right? Who wouldn't run to help someone so that they could tell the Lord that they gave away what they had to help others, rather than hoard it for themselves? I'd like to think we all would if we had this sense of immediacy, knowing life was going to end tomorrow. The challenge is to live our lives like this at all times, as if there is no tomorrow, taking advantage of the opportunities given TODAY to pray, to worship, to serve and to help.

**So, what then is the path?** The "path" to sainthood is different for each person. That is because each person that the Lord created is unique. The path for certain people is through the priesthood. The path of others goes through law, or medicine, or education, or architecture. The path for some is to be a garbage collector or the person who empties septic tanks. This path is equally as important as any other path, because without sanitation, we'd all die from toxins. Not every path earns a lot of money or comes with fame, or status or a large house or an expensive car. God didn't create a path to wealth for everyone, he created a path to sainthood. Some people's paths will include wealth. And in blessing someone with wealth, God I'm sure hopes that riches would be used to help those who don't have wealth, in the form of philanthropy. Not everyone is called to philanthropy. But there are far more people who have the means to this calling but just haven't answered it yet.

**The path to sainthood is painful.** Read the stories of the

saints of the church. The road for each of them to sainthood has some pain in it. Many of them were martyred. They were killed for their faith. Many suffered torture and imprisonment. Many lost reputation and were exiled or ostracized. The beautiful and dignified icons that depict them depict faces of peace, not faces of pain. But behind the peaceful countenance was pain suffered in order to glorify Christ. Their faces are shown at peace because they maintained peace in their souls even in the midst of their pain. That's why they are saints, because peace in the midst of suffering is hard to do. It's hard to radiate Christ's Light when you are surrounded by darkness.

Most of us are very familiar with the story of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple when He was forty days old. This is where we get the Tradition of bringing our children to the church on their fortieth day of life. When Simeon received the baby Jesus in his arms, he offered a beautiful prayer "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace according to your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light to revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32) Mary and Joseph must have been pleased to see their child blessed in this way. However, Simeon then turned to Mary, and said "Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoen against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." (2:34-35)

We know that when bad things happen, that it feels like a sword pierces through our souls. We've all felt that pain in some way large or small. What we do not know are the thoughts of our many hearts that are revealed. When we carry our crosses, when we suffer our setbacks, but when we stay faithful to the path God has called us to walk, the thoughts of other hearts are revealed. It goes back to what Fr. Aris said to me that I share with you. If we carry our cross and embrace our path to sainthood, something good will come out of our sufferings, not only for us, but for others who see our faith in the midst of difficult times. I mentioned in church last month, after the death of a young child, that "faith is when everything is going wrong and you still show up." See, when things are going wrong for you, and you still show up, others take inspiration from that. I take inspiration from that.

**The Role of the Church in the path to Sainthood**—Where is the church in all of this? The Church plays a critical role on the past to sainthood for everyone and that role is encouragement. The Divine Liturgy encourages us to pray and offers us an opportunity to commune with Christ through the Holy Eucharist. The sermon gives us words of encouragement to live by. Seeing the saints in the icons of the church building, we are reminded that we are supposed to emulate their lives. By sharing fellowship, we receive encouragement to carry our crosses whatever they may be. I'll tell you in a personal way, there is no way I can carry my crosses without the encouragement and prayers of others.

In building up one another, we build up the whole body of Christ. The church exists for this process of building up one another. It does not exist to have fundraisers or festivals. That is why these things cannot be the things that dominate the calendar of events here. Sadly, in many places, even sometimes in Tampa, these are the dominating events on the parish calendar. The most important thing we do as people, as Christians and as

members of the church is to worship together and commune together on Sundays, and encouraging one another to grow in faith. When everyone understands the goal of the church and embraces doing their part in its achievement, this is when we will make the greatest strides in building up the Body of Christ, by living out the Great Commission which commands us to make Disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all of Christ's commandments. We don't have to be like-talented people—we are not, we all have different talents. But we have to be like-minded people with diverse talents, so that in working together, we may grow the body of Christ, which again is not a suggestion from God but a "Commandment of God."

Everybody has a "pathology," something negative in them that they will battle with their whole life. Some people have poor self-esteem, or lack self-confidence. Others seek affirmation and emotional stability. Nobody learned everything as a child so many times our adult lives are spent compensating for things we should have learned but didn't. A church community is supposed to be a safe place where we can bring our pathologies so that we can be encouraged to "outgrow" them. Ultimately the church community is supposed to encourage us to be the best we can be, using the unique and special gifts that God has given to each of us.

Going back to where I began, there is a path to sainthood for everyone. Do you know what yours is? Have you embrace your path? Are you willing to help others embrace theirs?

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By the time you receive this message, it will be near September 1. I count it as a blessing to have completed 13 years of service to this parish. I arrived on September 1, 2004. Thank you for 13 (mostly) great years. May we worship and work together for many more.

With love in the Lord,

+Fr. Stavros

## Interested in Joining the Prayer Team?

Over 940 people have! The Prayer Team is a daily message that Father Stavros has been writing for more than 2 years! Over half of our parish receives it daily, as well as many people outside of our parish. Each day, a scripture verse, a reflection written by Father, and a prayer are emailed to the Prayer Team via Constant Contact. If you would like to join the Prayer Team, please email Charlie at [charlie.hambos@gmail.com](mailto:charlie.hambos@gmail.com) and ask to add you!

# Liturgical Schedule for September 2017

Friday, September 1

**Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year**

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

Sunday, September 3

**13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew**

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

**Altar Boys:** Anyone Attending may serve

**Ushers:** Brett Mourer, Josef Fenton, Amin Hanhan

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Edie Kavouklis, Julie Palios; Ambassador: Bessie Palios;

Caller: Peggy Bradshaw; Get Acquainted: Jenny Paloumpis Sandra Pappas

**Coffee Hour:** TBD



**We Live-Stream every service!**  
[www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com](http://www.greekorthodoxchurchtampa.com)

Friday, September 8

**Nativity of the Theotokos**

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

Sunday, September 10

**Sunday Before Holy Cross**

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

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

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

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Marenca Patrascoiu, Cindy Xenick; Ambassador: Katherine Sakkis; Caller: Vickie Peckham

**Coffee Hour:** AHEPA

Monday, September 11

**Paraklesis Service on the Occasion of the Anniversary of 9/11 10:00 a.m.**

Thursday, September 14

**Exaltation of the Holy Cross - Procession of the Holy Cross at the end of the Liturgy**

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

Sunday, September 17

**Sunday After the Holy Cross**

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

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

**Ushers:** John Christ, Byron Nenos, Chris Kavouklis

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Lisa Alsina, Kalliope Chagaris; Ambassador: Helen Cauthorn; Caller: Betty Katsamakis

**Coffee Hour:** Young at Heart

Sunday, September 24

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Luke**

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

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

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

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Dwight Forde, Ewana Forde; Ambassador: Carole Fotopoulos; Caller: Christene Worley

**Coffee Hour:** The Nicklow Family

Tuesday, September 26

**Ecumenical Service – w/ Christ the King at St. John the Baptist 6:30 p.m.**

Sunday, October 1

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Luke**

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

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

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

**Welcome Ministry:** Greeters: Elaine Halkias, Donna Hambos; Ambassador: Skip Higdon; Caller: Sandra Pappas

Get Acquainted: Maria Xenick Mike Xenick

**Coffee Hour:** Choir

# Liturgical Notes for September

## Friday, September 1 - New Ecclesiastical Year - Day of the Environment

His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, declared many years ago that September 1, the day on which we begin the New Ecclesiastical (Church) Year, also be set aside to pray for our environment. Not only do we thank God for His blessings of the past church year, and ask for Him to bless us in the new year, but we also offer prayers for our environment, which are needed more and more in the world where our environment is threatened as time passes.

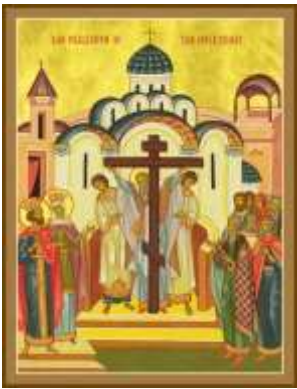
## Friday, September 8 - Nativity of the Virgin Mary

Placed right after the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year (September 1), this feastday commemorates the birth of the Virgin Mary to her parents, Joachim and Anna. It is one of the 12 Major Feast Days of the Church year.



## Monday, September 11-Day of Remembrance

This year marks the 16th year anniversary of the terrorist attack on America on 9/11/01. Despite the years that have passed since that awful day, feelings and emotions are still riding high. It is appropriate to stop and reflect not only on a tragic day in the life of our country, but to pray for peace in a world that is beset with hostility, not only overseas but on the streets of cities in our own country. On September 11, we will hold a Paraklesis Service of Supplication to the Virgin Mary at 10:00 a.m., with a Trisagion service at the conclusion of the service. If you have time, please stop by our church to worship and pray for peace in the world and for recovery and healing of those who suffered and still suffer because of that terrible day.



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

This Major Feast Day commemorates the finding of the Precious Cross of Christ by St. Helen in the year 325. This day is equal in solemnity to Good Friday, as it draws our attention to the supreme sacrifice made by the Lord for us. Connected with September 14 is the Tradition of the Vasiliko. St. Helen went in search of the Precious Cross. In Jerusalem, she found the hill of Golgotha. But she did not know where to search for the cross. Vasiliko (Basil), a sweet scented plant, was found growing on the hillside. She looked beneath the Basil and that's where the cross was found. It is the Tradition of the Church that a Procession is held on September 14, where Basil is placed on a tray along with a cross and it is carried above the heads of the faithful. We will hold this procession on September 14, and also repeat it on Sunday, September 17.

## Donations Needed for the Feast of the Holy Cross

We need Vasiliko (Basil) for the services of the Holy Cross. Please bring Vasiliko for Thursday, September 14 and Sunday, September 17. Please bring to the side door of the altar by 10:00 a.m both days, so we will have time to make up the tray. The Procession for the Holy Cross will be held on Thursday, September 14 and repeated on Sunday, September 17.

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

We need a donation of \$100 for flowers for the tray for the procession of the Holy Cross on September 14 and \$350 for flowers for the tray for the procession of the Holy Cross on September 18. Please call the office if you are interested.

## Policy for Letters of Recommendation

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

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

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

# The Hum of Orthodox Christianity: Can we hear it?

By Charlie Hambos

**S**top what you are doing right now. Sit in silence and just listen. Shut off the internal dialogue too. (Trust me, that's the hardest). Is it completely quiet? What do you hear? I hear the hum of my next door neighbor's window AC unit or perhaps the faint music being played by my upstairs neighbor or perhaps the hum of the fluorescent light ballast in my office. In most places, it is very difficult to be in complete silence.

Many people criticize the Orthodox Christian Church for not being more evangelical. Meaning, we aren't on the frontlines, knocking on people's doors, standing on the steps of Congress, having revivals, making our worship seeker-friendly and welcoming all to our services and especially welcoming all to receiving of the sacraments which represent the climaxes of our Divine services. Yet, somehow, we have survived more than 2,000 years almost completely unadulterated in many countries throughout the world despite political turmoil, direct persecution and apathy of the faithful.

Sure, I believe we should be more open. We keep on hearing that St. John the Baptist in Tampa is definitely one of the most friendly and welcoming Orthodox Christian Churches in the Tampa Bay area and this is something which calls for a lot of rejoicing. Very often, when making hospital visits, conversations are had concerning what our church was like many years ago and what it is like now. It is exclusively positive but it seems we have hurt some people along the way. Our prayers are that one day the Holy Spirit will bring them back, but this is going to require some outreach.

Surely, the Orthodox Christian Church believes that the Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways. In ways that we cannot explain, which is why we call it a mystery. However, we have to strike a balance between the mystery and the reason why God gave us a brain and intellect. Obviously, we cannot sit idly by and wait for people to come to us, we have to be active in how we speak about our faith outside the walls of the church itself. However, the hum, it works too. I don't hear many stories of people seeking the true faith and it leading them to any other church except the Orthodox Christian Church. It doesn't mean every single person who has heard the hum of the Orthodox Church has converted, but they are seeking something and they respond to hum of Orthodox Church, which has survived millennia despite the evil desires of those inside and outside of its walls. The good news is that we will continue. We will continue to be a light, in a dark world. Not a blinding light, but one that is lit enough to attract those who are seeking their way out of darkness and into the light.

We may not be the church protesting abortion, as an example, although we have many hierarchs who speak out against it. We aren't necessarily the church that has a stance on many of the social issues. We, in fact, do. However, we also understand the human condition. You can bet, that if someone has committed a sin and goes to a priest, who has a sound and sober mind, in the context of confession, will guide the faithful person in the best way they can for that person's individual salvation. Sure we have Canon Law, which prescribes a certain regiment based on certain sins. We call this application to be strict from the Greek, *akrivia*. But we also have, *economia*, which is the understanding and compassion shown based on the individual's path on salvation. We know how sin hurts people and how it

separates us from God, but our response should not be one which makes the person stray further away, but one that makes them understand the importance of clinging to God, to follow His commandments and to seek true repentance with the Light of Christ as our guide.

Back to the hum. There is a little 3-fold brochure, entitled "Welcome!" by Ancient Faith Publishing, which is now available in the foyer of the Kourmolis Center with more pamphlets on Orthodox Christianity. Inside the brochure is a section called, "America's Best-Kept Secret." This notion is both positive and negative. It's positive because we are a secret to much of mainstream America and maybe we like it that way. Like, mentioned above, we like to be this stable force in the background and not necessarily out in the open. According to this brochure, there are 225 million Orthodox Christians in the world and only 1 million in the United States. This notion is negative because we shouldn't be a secret. We should want people to know about us. We shouldn't stay a secret, if we truly believe that our Christianity is that of the embodiment of truth and the most complete expression of Christianity. The journey of faith is just that, a journey, and it is still really exciting to have people stumble across the Orthodox Christian faith. It is also exciting to see the light bulb finally go on, in the mind of the cradle Orthodox Christian.

Anyway, if someone, out in the world, asked an Orthodox Christian what they have as a Christian faith that is different than the other Christian denominations, the answer would be, The Divine Liturgy. Liturgy means, the "work of the people." It is "the common act of prayer, worship, teaching, and communion of all those who constitute the Church." Indeed, many other churches have Eucharistic services, but none claim, like the Orthodox Christians, that when the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, heaven and earth meet and the service itself becomes a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven. Time, as we know it, stops. We enter "heavenly time." The service itself is the participation of all those in attendance both on earth and in heaven, reminding us of the Incarnation, Suffering, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our worship involves both the soul and the body. "Accordingly, worship calls for the action not only of the mind, the emotions, and the will, but also of the body with its senses. So, as the Scriptures describe, in worship there are things to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Our whole being is to participate actively in worship."

Finally, the hum of the Orthodox Christian Church calls us to a state of being healed, based on its understanding of sin and salvation which is vastly different from the others. We believe that the sin of Adam created the separation between man and God. Those who came after Adam are not guilty of that sin, but are affected by the result of that sin. "Sin is not the breaking of a moral code but the breaking of relationship, missing the target of love, of likeness to God." Sin is an illness, a sickness. Salvation then is a process of becoming transformed, becoming healed. We don't say we are saved as if pardoned by a judge. We say we are in the process of "being saved."

Listen for the hum of Orthodox Christianity and come find it.

# Community News

## Parish Registry

**Baptism** - Maria Sofia Panagopoulos the daughter of George and Nirmalasari Panagopoulos was baptized on Sunday, July 23, by Fr. George Ioannou. Godparents were Dimitrios, Eleni, Labrini Panagopoulos. Na Sas Zisi!

**Double Baptism** - Nina Violet L'Hommedieu and Walter William L'Hommedieu, twin children of Tim and Tia L'Homme-dieu, were baptized on Saturday, August 12, by Fr. Stratton Dorozenski and Fr. Dean Hountalas. Godparents were Efthemi-os and Betty Raphtis. Na Sas Zisi!

**Funeral** - Nicholas Anton, two year old son of Dr. Alex and Kristen Anton, passed away on August 7. His funeral was held on Saturday, August 12. May his memory be eternal!

**Funeral** - John Laliotis passed away in Greece on August 9. His funeral was held at St. John on Monday, August 21. May his memory be eternal!

**Condolences** to Debbie Bowe, our book-keeper, on the passing of her mother, Pat Carlisle. May her memory be eternal!

## Get Acquainted Sunday, September 3



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



## Community Outreach - Saturday, September 16

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

**We love to see new and old faces!**



## GOYA

GOYA Meeting for September will be Sunday, September 17. This meeting will involve water balloons and lots of messy games outdoors, so bring an extra set of clothes to change into afterwards. Our meeting will begin at 5:00 p.m. and last until 7:30 p.m.

## H XAPA ΜΑΣ and PAREΑ Dance Groups

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

## Young Adults Dinner

We will have our monthly dinner/discussion on Sunday, September 24 from 5:00-7:30 p.m. in the Kourmolis Center. All young adults ages 18-40 are welcome to join our group. Please RSVP to Fr. Stavros by September 21 and also bring \$10 for dinner.

## Young at Heart

The first meeting for the Young at Heart will be **Thursday, September 7** at the home of Carole Fotopoulos 10507 Bermuda Isle Drive, Tampa. 33647 at 11:30 a.m.. It will be a luncheon and all are welcome. Please RSVP by Monday September 4 to 813-982-0947.

On **Saturday, September 16**, YAH is having their first outing after the summer. We will be going to Ed Fletcher's Early Bird Dinner Theatre for the matinee of the comedy "Mama Won't Fly" and a buffet luncheon at 11:00 a.m. The cost is \$36 (not including tip) and you will need to give the money to Anne Demas to make your reservation by September 2. We hope that you will come with us!

On **Saturday, December 2**, we are going to the Show Palace Dinner Theatre in Hudson for a matinee of their "Do Wop" Christmas Show. For that one the cost is \$44 and also includes a buffet luncheon. This will be our fifth year to go to this one and we would love for you to plan to go too! Again, the one to make your reservation with is Ann Demas (our social butterfly) and the deadline for this one is November 20.



# Ecumenical Prayer Service with Christ the King at St. John the Baptist on Tuesday, September 26

Let us join our Catholic brothers and sisters for an evening prayer service as we come to together to pray for our environment and also for peace in the world. Last February, a service was hosted by Christ the King and was well received by members of both churches. It is our goal to have each church host a service each year, with a service at Christ the King in February and one at St. John the Baptist in September. The service starts at 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Baptist with a reception will follow in the Kourmolis Center.

## Orthodoxy 101 Class to be held in September

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

### Who should attend the Orthodoxy 101 class?

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

The classes will be part lecture, part discussion, with lots of time for questions and answers.

The three sessions will be done as follows:

**Monday, September 18** A Tour of the Orthodox Church: What we see in the Church and what it means

**Monday, September 25** Orthodox Spirituality—The Seven Sacraments and the Divine Liturgy

**Monday, October 2** Orthodox Traditions—fasting, icons, prayer and separating Theology from “yiaiyalogy”

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

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

*Matthew 5:14-16*

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

## Choices: Let Your Light Shine!

### A workshop for pre-teens and their parents

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

**Sunday, October 8, 2017**

**1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

*\*lunch served at 12:30 p.m.*

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

*Proverbs 3:5-6*

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

For more information or to RSVP, please email or call Maria Xenick – [mpxenick@gmail.com](mailto:mpxenick@gmail.com), (813)765-3587

# ~ Sunday School News ~

What a great start to the 2017-2018 Sunday School year. We've had record attendance in August thanks to all the teachers, parents, and children who are committed to our program. The first day of Sunday School was on Sunday, August 13 and on the Saturday, August 19 the teachers had an inspiring retreat with Fr. Stavros. Thank you Father Stavros and Charlie for dedicating so much time to our Sunday School and for supporting our effort. We would like to thank our returning teachers who serve the children of St. John's year after year and we would also like to welcome our newest members of our staff. Our new Toddler Program for 2 yr. olds is co-taught by Mary Ann Konstas and Anastasia Stonestreet. Eleni Pessemier is assisting in our 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Classroom, Freda Manual is assisting in our 3rd Grade Classroom, and Stephanie Moran is our new 6th Grade teacher, which is also a new program.

The Sunday School sponsored the Coffee Hour on Sunday, August 20. Thank you to the many families who brought in food donations and to the parents who helped set up, serve, and clean up afterwards. We also had a couple of dad's who really stepped up to serve. The Sunday School is blessed to have such wonderful parents and students.

Our YOUTH SUNDAY PROGRAM will continue this year. Our first one will take place on Sunday, September 10. Our students in 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade will sing the Liturgical Hymns with the choir. As a result of the many years of our Music Program we now have eight of our older students singing with the choir on a regular basis. We need to thank Maria Xenick for making this possible and inspiring our children's love for the hymns of our church. We would also like to thank our high school student who will read the Epistle on Youth Sundays.

Charlie Hambos will present a sermon on Youth Sundays to our 1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> graders. This year he will also teach two lessons in each of the classrooms. Thank you Charlie for all you do in our Sunday School. Our students LOVE having you in their classrooms. Charlie does not only work with our children, but he is also instrumental in organizing our registration, creating attendance forms, and forwarding our weekly Sunday School correspondence through Constant Contact. We also need to thank Monica, our Office Manager, for all she does to help our Sunday School Program.

For the 2017-2018 school year, we will acknowledge students with perfect attendance and award those students at our Graduation Ceremony. If you are out of town and attend church, we will count it, so please let us know. Last year we had ten students accomplish this...Could we have more next year?

We understand that it is very difficult to attend church every week, but PARENTS, please make an effort. Your children's understanding of our faith is essential. It is also important to make it a "habit" of going to church on Sunday morning. When students come to church on a regular basis they feel CONNECTED to our church, to their teachers, and especially to their classmates. What better peers to have, than their Orthodox friends! These friendships could also last a lifetime. Students who do not come regularly may feel uncomfortable and miss so much of our valuable instruction.

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

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

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

### Sermons on Youtube Channel Each Sunday

Father's sermons each Sunday are available on our YouTube channel. Just go to YouTube and type in "St John GOC Tampa" and you'll find them. If you miss a sermon or wish to hear a sermon again, you'll find it there!



### 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](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnGOCtampa).



### Live Streaming

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

To access this page

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

All of the services are available to watch at anytime.



### Pictures

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





# THE PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETIES OF TAMPA BAY HUNGER PROJECT

*To help* the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the elderly, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the disabled victims of disaster whether they are in the United States or elsewhere in the world.

**Join us in the fight against hunger as we assemble**

## **20,000 healthy meals**

**for hungry children in the local community.**

For I was *hungry* and you gave me something to eat, I was *thirsty* and you gave me something to drink, I was a *stranger* and you invited me in. *Matthew 25:35.*

### **When:**

**Sunday, September 24, 2017**

### **Time:**

**1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

### **Where:**

**St. John the Baptist  
Greek Orthodox Church  
2418 W Swann Ave  
Tampa, FL 33609**

**Contact Jeanie Nenos at 813-451-9116 for any questions.**

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VISIT OUR PAGE TO VOLUNTEER AND TO DONATE:

[WWW.FEEDINGCHILDRENEVERYWHERE.COM/EVENTS/PHILOPTOCHOS-SOCIETIES-OF-TAMPA-BAY-HUNGER-PROJECT/](http://WWW.FEEDINGCHILDRENEVERYWHERE.COM/EVENTS/PHILOPTOCHOS-SOCIETIES-OF-TAMPA-BAY-HUNGER-PROJECT/)

# What Stewardship means to me...

*Longtime Loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist, Dwight & Ewana Forde, have provided a two part message sharing their perspective of 'What Stewardship Means to Me.' We have included Dwight's message this month and highlighted Ewana's thoughts in our August Messenger. Dwight & Ewana married in 2007 in our beautiful church. They are dedicated servants of Christ attending services on a regular basis with Ewana sharing her gifts in the Choir and Dwight helping without hesitation wherever needed. We sincerely thank Dwight & Ewana for their dedication to our church and their time to prepare this thoughtful message.*

I think about my life and where I spend my time, where do I use my talent, and where do I put my treasure.

People may not realize it, but when you think about it, the places that we spend our time, and treasure are usually the places that we hold in high regards, or we need something from them. For example, if you spend a lot of money on eating out you probably lead a busy life and feel that you don't have time to cook. Or maybe you do not like cooking. Either way, you are paying for a service that you feel you need.

What about time? Where do you spend your time? Some people spend a lot of time with friends and family. Some spend their time on social media. Others may spend their time at the gym. Again, we tend to spend our time doing things of value to us. Our friends and family give us a sense of community, as does social media for some. Others see the value in a good workout.

How do we use our talents? Most of us work a specific job with the talent that we have. Some people go through many years of education to be able to use their talents. We use these talents to earn treasure that gives us the opportunity to spend time doing things that we enjoy while appreciating the luxuries that we can afford with our treasure. Ultimately, we use our talent for gains in return.



*Dwight & Ewana Forde*

What does all of this have to do with stewardship? For me I think of stewardship as an investment into my faith. And the dividends are awesome! I invest my time, talent and treasure for everyday needs (family, work, food, housing etc.). These things are very important. At one point I had to ask myself, is my faith any less important? Is my soul any less important? I had to face the fact that I invest in the things that are important to me, as do most others. I had to come to the realization that my faith is an everyday thing, and I should invest in it joyfully.

The investment that is made is very gratifying. I try to be a good steward for my own spiritual growth and faith. I also, want to be a good steward because that investment is also for other people who share the Christian faith, those that are searching for the faith, and for future generations of the faith. I know that the treasure that is offered helps to maintain the church and keep it running. It will help to fix structural issues and replace broken items. It helps to ensure that a priest will be there to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and guide the community. It gives our youth a place to escape the persecution of this world and find strength with fellowship.

When I invest my time, I can see the immediate impact in most cases. Taking the time to listen to others that may need an ear. Or running errands for a project that needs to get done. Or something as simple as carrying a cooler full of ice and water from one place to another can relieve someone else of stress and put a smile someone else's face. Even if I'm not doing official "church" business, taking the time out to listen to someone that needs to express their frustration, anxiety, or disappointment is a valuable way to share my faith and be a good steward for Christianity.

Many people spend a lot of energy and resources preparing for the next stage of their lives. Going from grade school to college, from college into the work force or graduate school, to getting married and having a family, to retirement. Everything we earn and gain are great accomplishments worthy to be celebrated. Though we celebrate ourselves, we should look to God and thank him for everything that he has allowed us to accomplish. And we will realize that everything that we have is only on loan to us. We cannot take it with us when we leave this world behind us. Everything that I have I owe to God. It's His anyway. So I'm glad to give a portion my time, treasure, and talent back to Him.

## **St. John's Legacy Society**

### **Please consider including St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church estate plans.**

Please consider becoming a founding member of the St. John Legacy Society by leaving what might be left over in your estate to St. John once you've provided for your family. For more information about this new dimension to stewardship, please contact Fr. Stavros at 813-876-8830 ext. 103, or email at [frstav@gmail.com](mailto:frstav@gmail.com) or contact Debbie Gavalas at 813-505-8901 to learn how you can have an impact on our church. Whatever you do, please be sure to consult your financial and legal advisors and let your family members know of your intentions.

# Principles of Stewardship

By John G. Panagiotou, Greek Orthodox theologian, scholar and writer

If you want to know the spiritual state and strength of a church, just look at its stewardship report. Invariably, it tells it all because what people do with their money speaks volumes. We make disciples by giving people Jesus through preaching, teaching, the sacramental life, the liturgical life and outreach ministries. It is to this end that our giving should be focused. If the ekklesia (church) will do its job, Jesus has promised to be faithful and do His. Sacrificial giving for the Christian is not an option, but a joyful obligation. St. John Chrysostom in the 4th century speaks of this joyful obligation in his book *On Wealth and Poverty* when he writes that the Christian owns nothing because God owns everything.

The ecclesial ministry in its essence is not about buildings, budgets, and bodies. The model that we ought to follow is that the Church should be viewed first and foremost as the family of God, not just as another corporation or business. When that happens, the Bible tells us that inevitably God's presence and blessing can be seen manifest in the local Eucharistic community because its focus is on Jesus the Author of our salvation. It is then when we see the fullness of the Faith express itself, not only in the transformation of the elements into the Body and Blood of Christ, but when the celebrant and those worshipers present are transfigured into the Body of Christ as well.

With these things in mind, proper Christian stewardship for individuals and congregations should include the following four principles: 1) the glorification of God should be the focus; 2) giving should be sacrificial; 3) giving should be of the best of the first fruits of one's resources; and 4) debt has no place in this paradigm.

If you would incorporate these four principles of economics into your lives and the life of your congregation, the Lord has promised to do mighty, mighty works in your life and in the lives of all around you. A proper understanding of stewardship is not a luxury in our private life as a Christian and in our collective life as the ekklesia (Church). For us to be truly "called out from the world" as the word ekklesia connotes, is to take up the mantle and responsibility of stewardship and all that it entails.

*Excerpt from – Orthodox Christian Stewardship: What do Jesus, the Bible, and the Church Fathers Say about Tithing and Giving to God? Full article available at – <http://pemptousia.com/author/john-g-panagiotou/>*

## ~ Stewardship Update ~

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

With humble hearts we thank the loyal Stewards of St. John the Baptist. Your sacrificial giving will help move us closer to the ultimate goal of our Stewardship program - to fund 100% of our annual operating budget through stewardship and other donations. We strive to encourage and motivate purposeful 'giving from the heart' and acknowledge Stewardship is our ultimate calling as Christ followers.

We hope you enjoy a heartfelt message this month from Ewana & Dwight Forde on 'What Stewardship Means to Me'. We will continue this series and look forward to more personal messages as we move closer to the start of a new Stewardship Year – kicking off with Stewardship Sunday on December 3, 2017

## Little of This & That...

- It is not too late to pledge - we encourage you to do so today! It is the commitment of stewardship that allows our church to continue doing the good work of Christ.
- Please ensure you're on track for the year. Summary statements were mailed in July with another recap coming by year end. If your circumstances have changed and you're unable to fulfill your pledge, please contact the church office or Fr. Stavros directly and we will adjust our records.
- Coming soon~ Fall Parish Assembly in October and Parish Council Elections in November. In order to participate in these meetings and have your voice heard, please ensure you're up to date on your Stewardship commitment 30 days prior to the date of each meeting. Weekly, Monthly and Quarterly by end of selected term. Annual pledges are due by June 30 and Semi-Annual calls for half payment by this date with the remainder by the end of the year.

Please visit our website to complete your Stewardship Pledge Form and make your gift today. For any questions, please speak directly with Fr. Stavros, Sandra Pappas or Pete Trakas Stewardship Co-Chairs. We are here for YOU!

Year to Year Comparison ~	2017*	2016*
Pledged Year to Date	<b>\$401,336</b>	\$434,271
Received Year to Date	<b>\$298,815</b>	\$272,169
Average Pledge	<b>\$1,311</b>	\$1,325
Median Pledge	<b>\$700</b>	\$700
# of Individual/Families Pledged	<b>306</b>	334

\*YTD as of 8/15/17 & 8/9/16

# Small Group Bible Study

For a fifth year, we will be having our small group Bible study ministry. For those who participated, it was a great experience. These groups gather once a week to study the Bible, discuss how to apply scripture to daily life, pray together and become small spiritual support groups. These sessions are discussion based, not lecture based. This is an opportunity to work side by side with each other to learn more about the faith. As group members get to know one another on a deeper level and as groups become more committed, you'll see that the groups will not only become a resource to help learn and live the faith, but through these groups, we'll eventually help "*carry one another's burdens and so build up the body of Christ*," as we are told to do in Galatians 6:2. And this is what the church is all about - helping one another through this life, on the journey to everlasting life.

## **Monday Night Bible Study** (for everyone)

We will be studying the Book of Acts

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

**Group Leader:** Charlie Hambos

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

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

**September Meeting Dates:** September 11, 18 and 25

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

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

**Group Leader:** Debbie Kavouklis

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

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

**September Meeting Dates:** September 12, 19 and 26

## **Men's Group** (for adult men of any age)

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

**Group Leader:** Michael Palios

mpalios@gmail.com 813-523-0346

**Meeting time:** Wednesday mornings from 7:30-8:30 a.m.

For this early morning group, bring your own coffee or breakfast food if you wish.

**September Meeting Dates:** September 13, 20, and 27

## **South Tampa Mixed Group** (for any adults)

Anyone can attend this group but obviously this will be most convenient for those who live in South Tampa

**Location:** At the Church in the Library

**Group Leader:** TBA

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

**September Meeting Dates:** September 20 and 27

## **FAQ's About the Small Group Ministry**

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

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

**Which group should I join?** The one that is easiest for you to attend. There are groups in different parts of town. If you'd rather drive farther and go to a different group, by all means do so. Just pick ONE group and stick with it.

**Are we on "Greek time" or "American time" for these group meetings?** The answer is AMERICAN time—the groups will start and end on time. The morning meetings will last an hour—they will start ON TIME. Of course, if group members wish for the meeting to go longer, that will be up to each group, but they will end at the time advertised. The evening groups may last longer because they will involve eating—probably a pot luck each week, with each member bringing a small dish to share, again, this will be up to the group how this works.

**I don't know the group leader or host. Am I just supposed to show up at the house of someone I don't know, is that okay?** YES, the group leaders are expecting to have people they don't know come to their homes. You probably want to call or email the group leader if you need information or direc-

tions but yes, you are welcome to join any of the groups.

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

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

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

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

# *Want to Learn Modern Greek?*

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church Adult Greek School



Teacher born, raised, and educated in Greece with over 20 years of experience teaching the Greek language. Adult classes for beginners taught @ St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church 2418 W. Swann Ave, Tampa, FL 33609. Classes are held at 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. on Thursday evenings, starting on September 28, 2017. This will be the first of three sessions, with each session lasting three months.

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

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

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

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

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

Mary Spanos - St. Augustine, FL  
Bessie Bliziotes - Palm Cost, FL  
Suzanne Alvarez - Tampa, FL  
Lazarus & Maria Kavouklis - Tarpon Springs, FL  
William & Kane Chapman - Palmetto, FL  
Lillian Thomas - Highland, IN  
Kathleen Mendez - Ponte Vedra, FL  
Theodora Poletis - Baltimore, MD  
Basil & Dorothy Nosal - Fredericksburg, VA

**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.

# ~Save the Date~



The Annual St. John the Baptist Greek Festival is Coming Soon!  
**November 10, 11 & 12, 2017**

## Things We Know

- It takes the effort of our entire Church Community to host a successful festival and highlight our Greek Culture/Heritage but more importantly OUR Orthodox Christian Faith!
- Our festival is a lot of fun but only happens as a result of many volunteers dedicating their time and talent!
- Planning meetings will be announced soon with Volunteer Sign-ups coming in September.
- Many opportunities will be available for participation; from planning, advertising, baking, decorating, dancing, raffle sales, donations needed for silent auction to the hundreds of opportunities over the festival weekend!
- This is our opportunity to showcase our faith, culture and beautiful place of worship at St. John the Baptist.

## H XAPA ΜΑΣ and PAREA Dance Groups

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



# Highlights on the Calendar 2017-2018

<b>Monday, September 11</b>	Service to commemorate 9/11
<b>Monday, September 11</b>	Monday Night Bible Study Begins
<b>Tuesday, September 12</b>	Women's & South Bible Studies Begin
<b>Wednesday, September 13</b>	Men's Bible Study Begins
<b>Monday, September 18</b>	Orthodoxy 101 fall class begins
<b>Sunday, September 24</b>	Feeding Tampa Bay Philoptochos Project
<b>Tuesday, September 26</b>	Ecumenical Prayer Service with Christ the King RCC (at St. John)
<b>Sunday, October 8</b>	Pre-Teen Retreat
<b>Sunday, October 22</b>	JOY/HOPE Fall Festival
<b>Monday, October 23</b>	Evening Divine Liturgy for St. James
<b>Sunday, October 29</b>	Parish Assembly
<b>November 10 -12</b>	Greek Festival
<b>Wednesday, November 22</b>	Thanksgiving Eve Service
<b>TBA</b>	Adult Advent Retreat
<b>Sunday, December 3</b>	Stewardship Sunday
<b>Saturday, December 9</b>	Sunday School Christmas Program Rehearsal
<b>Sunday, December 10</b>	Sunday School Christmas Program
<b>Sunday, December 10</b>	Parish Council Elections
<b>Monday, December 18</b>	Service of Preparation for the Nativity
<b>Sunday, December 24</b>	Christmas Services
<b>Saturday, January 6</b>	Vespers for St. John the Baptist
<b>Sunday, January 7</b>	Feast of St. John the Baptist
<b>Sunday, January 14</b>	Vasilopita Sunday
<b>Saturday, January 20</b>	Gasparilla Children's Parade Fundraiser
<b>Monday, January 22</b>	Orthodoxy 101 spring class begins
<b>Saturday, January 27</b>	Gasparilla Adult Parade Fundraiser
<b>Saturday, February 3</b>	Apokreatiko Glendi at St. John
<b>Sunday, February 4</b>	Souper Bowl of Caring
<b>Sunday, February 4</b>	OCMC Missions Luncheon
<b>Saturday, February 17</b>	Liturgy at Garden of Memories for Saturday of Souls
<b>Sunday, February 18</b>	Sunday School Pre-Lenten Retreat
<b>Monday, February 19</b>	Clean Monday - Beginning of Lent
<b>March 2-4</b>	GOYA Lenten Retreat
<b>TBA</b>	Adult Lenten Retreat
<b>TBA</b>	Greek Independence Day Program
<b>Sunday, April 1</b>	Palm Sunday—Palm Sunday Philoptochos Luncheon
<b>Friday, April 6</b>	Good Friday
<b>Sunday, April 8</b>	Pascha
<b>Sunday, April 15</b>	Parish Pascha Picnic
<b>Sunday, May 20</b>	Last Day of Sunday School
<b>Friday, June 8-10</b>	Junior Olympics

# Youth Calendar

**September 2017 - July 2018**

<b>Sunday, September 10</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, September 17</b>	GOYA Meeting
<b>October 6-8</b>	St. Pete GOYA Volleyball Tournament
<b>Sunday, October 8</b>	Pre-Teen Retreat
<b>Sunday, October 15</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, October 15</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, October 22</b>	JOY/HOPE Fall Festival
<b>Saturday, October 28</b>	GOYA Service Project
<b>Sunday, November 5</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, November 12</b>	No Sunday School Classes
<b>Sunday, November 19</b>	Boxes of Hope JOY/HOPE
<b>Sunday, November 19</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, November 26</b>	GOYA Christmas Card Fundraiser Begins
<b>Sunday, November 26</b>	No Sunday School Classes
<b>Sunday, December 3</b>	GOYA
<b>Saturday, December 9</b>	Sunday School Christmas Party, Christmas Program rehearsal
<b>Sunday, December 10</b>	Sunday School Christmas Program
<b>Sunday, December 24</b>	No Sunday School Classes
<b>Sunday, December 31</b>	No Sunday School Classes
<b>Saturday, January 13</b>	Sunday School Teacher Mid-Year Retreat
<b>Friday, January 19</b>	HOPE/JOY Movie Night
<b>Sunday, January 21</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, January 21</b>	GOYA
<b>January 26-28</b>	Clearwater Winter Event (GOYA)
<b>Saturday, February 10</b>	GOYA Lock-in
<b>Sunday, February 11</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Saturday, February 17</b>	Talent Show—Palm Harbor
<b>Sunday, February 18</b>	Sunday School Pre-Lenten Retreat
<b>Sunday, February 25</b>	GOYA
<b>Wednesday, February 28</b>	Lenten Dinner - Sponsored by Sunday School
<b>Friday, March 2-4</b>	GOYA Lenten Retreat
<b>Sunday, March 4</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, March 25</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, March 18</b>	GOYA Luminaries Fundraiser Begins
<b>Sunday, April 22</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, April 22</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, May 6</b>	GOYA
<b>Sunday, May 13</b>	Youth Sunday
<b>Sunday, May 20</b>	Last Day of Sunday School
<b>Sunday, June 3</b>	GOYA
<b>June 8-10</b>	Junior Olympics
<b>June 24-July 28</b>	St. Stephen's Summer Camp

# Reflecting on St. Stephen's Summer Camp

**Frankie Giallourakis – 11<sup>th</sup> Grade**

## **Solidifying a relationship with God: The most significant service of St Stephens Summer Camp.**

As Orthodox Christians, we are constantly struggling with defeating sin. Every day a new battalion of sin and temptation tries to bring us to our knees. All of this is the work of Satan. However Satan is still afraid of one thing: A solidified relationship with our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. As young Orthodox Christians we have a chance to create or revive a relationship with Christ. And this chance can be fulfilled by attending a session at St. Stephens's Summer Camp. In its various ways, the camp instructs its campers various ways to reach God and portrays the benefits of a relationship with God. However there is another aspect of the camp that is essential to the foundation of a relationship with God. This essential aspect is the friends and people you meet. It is significant to meet so many people at camp because majority, if not all, of them are spiritually on the same journey as you. This journey, as mentioned before, is solidifying a relationship with God. However, one may ask, why are they so helpful to a relationship with god? As stated earlier, these people are on the same "spiritual journey" as you are. Since they are trying or already have made a relationship with god, they can offer you some of the best feedback or advice.

This is why St. Stephen's excels and is arguably one of the best camps to fit your spiritual needs. I myself have seen kids enter the camp not even knowing who Jesus Christ truly is and then leave the camp praying too him multiple times a day. In the real world we meet many people, but the people we meet there are typically not seeking a relationship with Christ. In fact some people even denounce the name of Christ and disrespect our belief in him. But that is why we have the friends and people we meet at camp to fall back on. Just when Satan thinks he has us beat, we turn to our friends from St. Stephen's to pick us up and motivate us to keep churning and perfecting our relationships with Christ.

## **Mike Palios - Camp Counselor**

This was my first experience at St. Stephen's Camp as a counselor (it didn't exist when I was younger). By design, I wanted to enter camp with no predetermined expectations. I was co-counselor for the St. Marks Cabin, 14-15 year old boys (there were 16 of them). The first couple of days, I think the boys were getting a feel for me, and I for them. And then, after a couple of days and some serious conversations (as a group), the boys began to relax and open up. Through the physical activities ("Gladiator Games," Ropes course, and the "Olympics") and more serious times (Orthodox Life and Hangtime), I saw the boys grow relationships with each other and in their relationship with God. My only regret is I was never able to be a camper at St. Stephen's. It was an experience I will never forget, and I hope to repeat it again next year.

## **John Palios - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

This was my first year at camp and I had tons of fun. I met a lot of new people from different churches that I would have never met without going to camp. One thing that I liked about camp was that we got to go in the lake, and we also got to go canoeing. I liked Alone Time with God because you got to say whatever you wanted to God and after you were done praying you could look at the pretty view of the lake. I liked confession because during confession you could take as long as you wanted when you were talking with Father. I got to talk to Father Stav-

ros for a lot longer than in Sunday School and it felt good to get everything off my chest. I can't wait to go back next summer!

## **Elizabeth Xenick – 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

This was my second year at St. Stephen's and it was an even better experience than last year. My favorite part is the ropes course because I got to build trust with my cabin mates during fun activities. I can't wait to go back next year for another great week! Thank you to Fr Stavros and all the other amazing people who make camp possible.

## **Artemis Xenick – 10<sup>th</sup> Grade**

This was my fourth year at St Stephens Camp and my second year going Week 2. I always love getting to make new friends and strengthening my bonds with old ones. The entire atmosphere at camp is so beautiful because we get to spend an entire week completely disconnected from our chaotic world and completely connected to our faith. It's so hard to find people that understand how special the Orthodox faith is and being surrounded by Orthodox people who understand and appreciate our faith is amazing. One of my favorite parts of camp this year was alone with God, where we take 15 minutes out of our morning to sit by out by the dock in silence and just being with God. I also loved getting to spend time with my cabin. We played a lot of volleyball, sang and danced in the rain, and went on nature hikes. Thank you so much to Father Stavros and all the DRC staff for making this week at camp absolutely amazing!!

## **Maria Xenick - Camp Counselor**

This was my fourth week of serving on the staff at St. Stephen's. I am so thankful for the opportunity to once again work with some incredible Orthodox Christians who are strong in their faith and values. The presence of the Holy Spirit is felt so strongly at St. Stephen's. There is a unique and beautiful atmosphere that is so very encouraging and uplifting. Our job is to keep the kids safe, make it fun, and to create an environment that helps others grow in their relationship to Christ. I am humbled and honored to have been a part of a group of people with such incredible responsibilities. I am so proud of our St. John kids and so hopeful for our Orthodox faith after a week of energized activities and discussions. Thank you to my husband Mike for encouraging me to go again this year. Thank you to Father Stavros for trusting me to serve and represent our parish and for all of the hard work that goes into making the camp so special.

## **Niko Gonatos 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

### **My Camp Experience**

This summer, I attended the St. Stephen's Summer Camp at the Diakonia Retreat Center in Salem, SC. In fact, it was my first year attending this camp. At first, I was very sad to leave my Mom, Dad, and sister as they went to vacation in Asheville, NC. But after the first day, the fun activities and worship made the pain go away very fast. Some of the activities were the ropes course, swimming, canoeing, the arts and crafts, and other team-building activities. From a spiritual perspective, I enjoyed attending the daily Orthros and Vespers services, listening to the priests about our religion, and receiving Holy Communion. The best part was meeting new people from our Metropolis and socializing during the activities and the Friday night dance. I was very sad to leave the camp on Saturday, but at the same time, I was very happy to see my family again. I totally recommend this camp to all kids in middle and high school! I hope and pray that God grants me another week at this wonderful camp.



# St. John the Baptist's Summer Projects

Dear Parishioners,

This spring we circulated a questionnaire to determine the highest priorities of St. John the Baptist's families as we develop an overall strategic plan for our church.

Overwhelmingly, you requested that we address the physical needs of our property, both from a practical and esthetic perspective. We want you to know we listened and made this a priority for Felix Ramirez, our maintenance person, and for our Parish Council.

As a result, there is an ongoing effort to improve lighting throughout the campus. We are steadily illuminating our beautiful property with state-of-the-art LED lighting. As well, through a coordinated effort between the PC Buildings & Grounds Team, Felix, and Charlie Hambos, we are repairing and replacing problem areas at a remarkable pace.

**Below, please see a list of our June/July accomplishments and their respective responsible parties.**

- Replaced Outside can lights of the Kourmolis Center with LED Cobb Lights (Felix)
- Replaced landscape lights illuminating the school building with LED lights (Felix)
- Timer configured for school building exterior lights (Charlie)
- Toilet seals were replaced in the Kourmolis Center bathrooms (Felix)
- Replaced door for Altar Angels storage room on the west side of the church (Felix)
- Removed toilet/sink from same storage room on the west side of the church (Felix)
- Painted storage room on the west side of the church (Felix)
- Fiber Optic Line reburied in soccer field (Frontier)
- Rotten wood replaced and painted behind Father's office on the roof (Felix)
- New Security light between church and Kourmolis Center installed (Brandon Electric)
- Timer installed for the Administration building walkway lights (Brandon Electric)
- Father's office was reorganized; walls were touched up with paint (Julie Palios/Felix)
- Kitchen was cleaned and organized (Kitchen Committee)
- Plumbing project circumventing old K-Center Pipe (Boyte Plumbing)
- Floors cleaned, waxed and buffed in the nursery and Pre-K Sunday School classrooms (Felix)
- 2-door freezer in kitchen repaired (Felix)
- 3 warmers in kitchen repaired (Felix)
- Replaced flourescent light ballasts in kitchen, women's restroom, Father's Vestry, Office (Felix)
- Fixed lock for Father's office (Benny's Lock and Key)
- Fixed push bar on water fountain in men's restroom in the K-Center (Felix)
- Replaced water fountain in the women's restroom in the K-Center (Felix)
- Fixed Church office AC by replacing capacitor (Felix)
- Replaced contactor and fuses on Choir Room AC Handler (Felix)
- Replaced contactor and fuses on East side K-Center main AC unit (Felix)
- Slowly replacing candeli light bulbs in the church with LED lights
- Back deck of Admin/School offices redone (Antonio Bavaro's Eagle Scout Project)
- Sealed two vents on west side of K-Center which caused leaking in the foyer (Felix)
- School also had interior floors cleaned, waxed and buffed (BridgePrep)
- New Outdoor water fountain installed on west side of school building (BridgePrep)
- Scheduling Panel Replacement (Brandon Electric)
- Scheduling a quote for carpet repair in church
- Site survey conducted for new TECO lighting on our property

# Welcome to the Parish Council

## The Structure of the Greek Orthodox Church

For the next several months, we will be printing excerpts from a pamphlet entitled “Welcome to the Parish Council”, which has been put out by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The material covered not only relates to the work of the Parish Council but how the church is set up to run in the United States, the relationship between clergy and laity, between parish and Metropolis and Archdiocese, and between ministries and parish. It is interesting and relevant information for all to read, whether you serve on the parish council or not.

### What Is the Greek Orthodox Church?

It is important to understand that the Church was established by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt hew 16:18), empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-40) and built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles (Ephesians 2:20). St. Paul preached the Gospel and established Churches in Athens, Corinth, Philippi, Berea, and Thessaloniki. Everything we do in the life of our Church is to be based upon the premise that we are the Church of the New Testament in the twenty-first century.

In his book *The Orthodox Church*, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware has written that Orthodox Christians have a palpable “sense of living continuity with the Church of ancient times” and that “this idea of living continuity is summed up for the Orthodox in the one word, Tradition.” To an Orthodox Christian, Tradition “is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church”—the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised would lead His disciples “into all truth” ( John 16:13) — and concretely this “means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers; it means the canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons — in fact, the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, spirituality and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages.”

#### The Relationship between Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition

**Holy Scripture** is comprised of the writings of both the New and the Old Testaments. The New Testament reveals the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ, and His sacred teachings that we are charged to follow. The Old Testament contains the prophecies and writings of the Prophets that foretold the coming of Christ, the Messiah. It therefore serves as an introduction to the revelation of Jesus Christ and the saving message of the New Testament.

**Holy Tradition**, of which Holy Scripture is a part, includes the writings, teachings, and witness of the Apostles, Saints, Confessors, Martyrs, and Fathers of the Church and her liturgical and sacramental traditions throughout the ages, the oral tradition of the early Church and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. All of this collective wisdom and experience through the centuries are ours to draw from as resources in exercising leadership within the Parish.

#### Other aspects of Holy Tradition are expressed by:

##### The Creed:

Formulated by the first two Ecumenical Councils in the fourth century, this brief statement of belief contains the Church’s doctrinal truths to which we adhere as Orthodox Christians. It

consists of the twelve articles of the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed, which is recited at each Divine Liturgy.

##### The Sacraments:

“There are special experiences in our corporate life as Orthodox Christians when the perception of God’s presence, grace, and actions is heightened and celebrated. We call these events of the Church Holy Sacraments. Traditionally, the Sacraments have been known as the Mysteries of the Orthodox Church. This description emphasizes that in these special events of the Church, God discloses Himself through the prayers and actions of His people by the power, operation and descent of the Holy Spirit.

Not only do the Sacraments disclose and reveal God to us, but they also serve to make us receptive to God. All the Sacraments affect our personal relationship to God and to one another. The Holy Spirit works through the Sacraments. He leads us to Christ who unites us with the Father. By participating in the sacraments, we grow closer to God as we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This process of deification — or theosis, as it is known in Orthodoxy — takes place not in isolation from others, but within the context of a believing Eucharistic community. Although the Sacraments are addressed to each of us by name, they are experiences which involve the entire Church.”

#### The Church’s Liturgical Calendar:

The Church Calendar begins on September 1<sup>st</sup> and ends August 31<sup>st</sup>. Each day is sacred for the Orthodox Christian. The Church commemorates at least one event in the life of Christ, the Theotokos, a Saint or sacred event each day of the year. There are, however, a number of major feast days observed annually. Of these, our Lord’s Resurrection or Holy Pascha is the most important festal celebration.

##### The Divine Liturgy:

The central worship service of the Church is the Divine Liturgy which is celebrated each Sunday morning and on Feast Days. During the Liturgy, we are united with Jesus Christ and with each other through the Sacrament of Holy Communion (the Eucharist).

##### The Holy Icons:

As Metropolitan Kallistos Ware has written, “The Tradition of the Church is expressed not only through words, not only through the actions and gestures used in worship, but also through art — through the line and color of the Holy Icons.”

##### Ecumenism:

Orthodoxy is a major force in the universal ecumenical movement as exemplified in the 1920 encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which called for dialogue of love and cooperation among the various Christian communities in programs of education, philanthropy, and social endeavors, insofar as this is consistent with Orthodox theology.

## How is the Church Governed?

The Orthodox Church is governed by procedures in which both clergy and laity have a voice in determining policies and programs. On the Metropolitan level, a Clergy-Laity Assembly comprised of clergy and lay delegates from all parishes in a given Metropolis, convenes at least once biennially for the purpose of developing programs and policies of common concern for the Metropolis (GOAA Regulations 11:1).

On the Archdiocesan level, the Clergy-Laity Congress is the highest administrative and legislative body of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese which is also convened biennially. The Congress is concerned with all matters outside of dogmatic and canonical issues which affect the life, mission, growth, and unity of the Archdiocese (GOAA Regulations 4:1).

Decisions of the Clergy-Laity Congress, upon approval by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, are implemented by the Archdiocese.

### The Archdiocese functions on four administrative levels:

#### I. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is an Eparchy (an ecclesiastical district or province) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Patriarchate is the source from which the Archdiocese receives its administrative authority, spiritual leadership and the supply of Holy Chrism. It is located in Constantinople (in what is now Istanbul, Turkey) and is governed by the Holy and Sacred Synod, headed by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch.

#### II. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

The Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese is comprised of the Archbishop who serves as its President and the Metropolitan bishops who are its members. The Holy Eparchial Synod is the ecclesiastical body which directs and governs the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese functions under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and coordinates the work and ministries of the Metropolises and the Direct Archdiocesan District. It is governed in accordance with the Faith, Tradition, and Holy Canons of the Church along with the provisions of the Charter, the Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (known as the GOAA), and the decisions of the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Clergy-Laity Congress. Through its various departments and offices, the Archdiocese serves both the needs of

the Metropolises and parishes. It functions under the leadership of the Archbishop, the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Archdiocesan Council (which is comprised of both clergy and lay representatives from each Metropolis).

#### III. The Metropolis

The Metropolis is an ecclesiastical district/area of the Archdiocese, headed by its respective Metropolitan, who is a member of the Holy Eparchial Synod. The Metropolitans in their Metropolises and the Archbishop in the Direct Archdiocesan District are assisted in their ministry by the Local Metropolis and District Councils. These Councils are advisory and consultative bodies to the Metropolitan and Archbishop and are concerned with the life and growth of the Metropolis, its ministries, institutions and finances (GOAA Regulations 12:1).

#### IV. The Parish

The Parish is the local Eucharistic community, in which faithful Orthodox Christians gather together to hear the Good News of the Resurrection of Christ and live the sacramental life of the Church. It is the place where God's People are spiritually nourished in order to live more fully as Christians and engage in the mission which Christ has given us: to share His Gospel with one and all and to serve those in need. The Parish functions administratively under the leadership of the Parish Priest who is assisted by the Parish Council, with the guidance and supervision of the Metropolitan or Archbishop.

Each Parish is governed in accordance with the teachings of Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition, the Holy Canons of the Church, the Regulations of the Archdiocese and the decisions of both the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese. The elected members of the Parish Council, together with the Parish Priest, are responsible for the welfare of the Parish in keeping it faithful to its mission. On the Parish level, the Parish Council is accountable to the General Assembly, which consists of all faithful stewards who are able to participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Ultimately, the Priest and Parish Council are accountable to their local Hierarchy.

(Below) His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with members of the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Archdiocesan Council at the organization's fall meeting in New York (November 2009).



~ September 2017 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					<b>1 **</b> <b>Beginning of Ecclesiastical Year</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>4</b> Labor Day Office Closed	<b>5</b> Parish Council 7:00 p.m. Basketball	<b>6 **</b>	<b>7</b> YAH at Carole Fotopoulos Home Philoptochos Board Mtg.	<b>8 **</b> <b>Nativity of Virgin Mary</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>9</b> Youth Workers Retreat Dance-New Port Richey
<b>10</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Youth Sunday Philoptochos General Meeting	<b>11</b> Commemoration of 9/11 <b>Paraklesis</b> 10:00 a.m. Bible Study	<b>12</b> WBS SBS Basketball	<b>13 **</b> MBS	<b>14 **</b> <b>Holy Cross</b> Orthros 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m.	<b>15 **</b>	<b>16</b> Community Outreach YAH – Dinner Theater
<b>17</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. GOYA AHEPA/Daughters	<b>18</b> Bible Study Orthodoxy 101	<b>19</b> WBS SBS Basketball	<b>20 **</b> MBS	<b>21</b>	<b>22 **</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> Orthros 8:45 a.m. Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Feeding Tampa Bay Philoptochos YAL	<b>25</b> Bible Study Orthodoxy 101	<b>26</b> WBS <b>Ecumenical Service – w/ Christ the King at St. John the Baptist</b> at 6:30 p.m. NO BASKETBALL	<b>27 **</b> MBS	<b>28</b> Adult Greek School	<b>29 **</b>	<b>30</b> Sons of Pericles Car Wash

## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

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## St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

### *Timetable of Services*

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

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

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

**Pastoral Assistant** Charlie Hambos  
813-876-8830 (Office) 813-843-8471 (Cell)  
Charlie.hambos@gmail.com

**Parish Council**  
Alkis Crassas, President 813-690-3867  
Mike Xenick, VP 813-340-8737  
Gary Ward, Treasurer 813-846-3898  
Sandra Pappas, Secretary 813-785-3747  
George Chagaris 727-420-1920  
Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947  
Jimmy Konstas 813-220-7352  
Catherine Mitseas 813-571-0658  
Ryan Rindone 704-564-2046  
Aris Rogers, II 813-309-5525  
Dante Skourellos 813-765-9534

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

**Adult Greek School**  
Magda Myer 813-909-2327

**AHEPA**  
Gus Paras, President 813-254-6980

**Altar Angels**  
Engie Halkias 813-932-5859  
Sia Blankenship 813-968-8855

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

**Bible Study**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

**Bookstore**  
Bill Manikas 813-960-3679

**Chanter**  
Nick Andreadakis 813-516-6081

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

**Community Outreach**  
Betty Katherine Katsamakis 813-468-1596

**Dance Group**  
H XAPA MAE, Alexandra De Maio 813-340-9668  
Bessie Palios, 813-523-0347  
Maraquet Edquid 813-422-8963  
Parea, Marina Choundas 813-877-6136  
Anna Maria Bavaro 732-239-9085  
Panigyri, Vanessa Aviles 813-221-2194

**Daughters of Penelope**  
Maria Zabetakis, President 813-748-7709

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

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

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

**GOYA**  
Maria Koutroumanis 813-245-3854  
Kara Katzaras 863-669-6739

**Hope/Joy**  
Debbie Nicklow 813-690-0671

**Junior Olympics**  
Dean Koutroumanis 813-624-4620

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

**OCF**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

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

**Philoptochos**  
Lisa Alsina 813-728-1094

**Small Group Bible Study**  
East, Donna Hambos 813-843-8412  
Men, Fr. Stavros 813-394-1038  
South, Bessie Palios 813-523-0347  
Women, Debbie Kavouklis 813-258-5571

**Strategic Planning**  
Marc Edquid 813-422-8940  
Gary Ward 813-846-3898

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

**Sunday School**  
Vickie Peckham 813-406-5626

**Usher**  
Tom Georgas 813-985-0236

**Visitation Committee**  
Charlie Hambos 813-843-8471

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

**Young at Heart**  
Carole Fotopoulos 813-982-0947  
Mary Nenos 813-935-2096

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

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