

The Desert



Messenger

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your Face, who shall prepare Your way...” (Matthew 11:10)

Volume 6, Issue 11 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV December 2008

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

With Thanksgiving, we officially entered the holidays. The joyfulness usually associated with this season is admittedly overshadowed this year by the bleak economic situation we are experiencing, locally, nationally and globally. Realistically, the gift-giving that is tied to this season is furthest from the minds of most people, who are more concerned if they will have jobs tomorrow, lose their homes and reap anything from investments. Not only are retailers and those in the entertainment industries fearing the worst, non-profit charities and organizations and, yes, even our Church – that rely on the generosity of donors during the holidays – wonder how the recession will impact us.

For us Christians, this situation might be a much-needed blessing in disguise – that is, if the recession impels us to reexamine and revisit our core values, morals and faith. Just what is, after all, the meaning of the Nativity of Jesus Christ in the flesh, and why is giving so inherently connected to this feast? The great mystery of Christmas is wonderfully revealed in the Gospels, where truths are shown in even the smallest details. Consider, for example, the following verse: *“Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11)*

The offerings the Magi brought to the Christ-Child revealed their great wisdom and faith regarding the humble yet awesome Recipient of these gifts. From their treasures, the wise men offered their finest: First, the gift of gold, acknowledging Him as the King of Glory; then frankincense, showing that Christ alone is the Great High Priest; and finally, myrrh as a prophetic sign in preparation for His Burial – even at the time of His Nativity it was clear that Jesus came in the flesh to die, so that we might live.

It is significant that the evangelist records that the wise men offered the Incarnate God the best from their treasures as an expression of their genuine faith and love for Christ. God became Man at a time when the world sat willfully in spiritual darkness, including many of the ancestors of Abraham, and revealed Himself fully to those who previously worshipped stars: As their hearts were opened to the Knowledge of Him and their minds were illumined by His divine glory, the truly wise men followed God’s lead and not only encountered, but also responded wholeheartedly to the Christ-Child, and even risked their lives in doing so.

The eternal Son of God has delivered us from the darkness of sin and death through His life-giving Incarnation, Death and Resurrection. Regardless of how uncertain and unstable things might seem all around us, if we are truly followers of Christ, then Christmas should be the time when we celebrate the joy that is found in every circumstance because *God is with us!* Looking to the Magi, we discover then that the giving associated with this season must be nothing less than *our own wholehearted response* to Christ’s gift of Himself to the world – setting our minds above to the Kingdom of God, our hearts toward the Truth that is revealed in Christ alone in a world full of false promises, and our eyes to all that is good and pure that we may see Him in each person and situation we encounter, no matter how challenging.

I pray that each of us can follow the course of the wise men and offer our finest treasures, which are the gifts of faith, hope and love – most especially now in a world that still hungers for holy illumination and redemption.

With my prayers for a Blessed Christmas,

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion*

Saturday, December 6/*St. Nicholas of Myra*
8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21

Gospel: Luke 6:17-23

Sunday, December 7/*10th Sunday of Luke*

Orthros: Tone Eight (Fourth Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-7

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Parish Council Elections follow Liturgy

Friday, December 12/*St. Spyridon*

8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19

Gospel: John 10:9-16

Sunday, December 14/*11th Sunday of Luke/
Holy Forefathers*

Orthros: Tone One

Resurrection Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 14:16-24; Matthew 22:14

Christmas Pageant follows Liturgy

Sunday, December 21/*Sunday Before the Nativity*

Orthros: Tone Two

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Wednesday, December 24/*Eve of the Nativity of
Jesus Christ*

6:00 pm Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil

Epistle: Hebrews 1:1-12

Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

Thursday, December 25/*The Nativity of Jesus Christ*
9:00 am Orthros

Festal Gospel (Orthros): Matthew 1:18-25

10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-20

Sunday, December 28/*Sunday After the Nativity*

Orthros: Tone Three

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Christ comes from Heaven ~ Meet Him!



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Liturgies

Wednesday, December 24

Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

*6:00 pm Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
(Please fast from 1:00 pm)*

Thursday, December 25

Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

9:00 am Orthros

10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

*As these are distinct Liturgies, you may prepare to
receive Holy Communion at both.*

*Please be sure to attend at least one and hopefully
both Liturgies with your family and loved ones.*

**President's
Column**

I hope everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends; we all have so much to be thankful for.

Good luck to all who have been nominated and are running for the Parish Council; I commend you on your commitment to help your Church. I am confident that we will all benefit from your efforts.

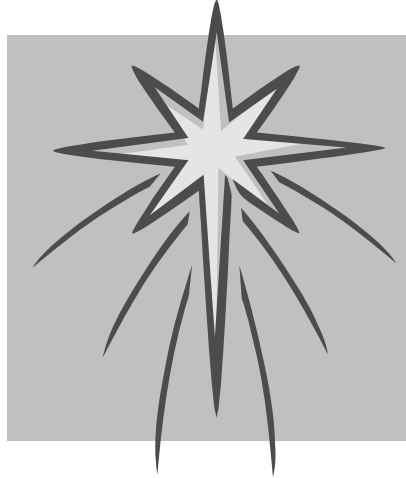
I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May the New Year be a safe and healthy time for us all.

George Nikols, Parish Council President

*The Entire Parish
Is Encouraged to Enjoy
The Annual Church School*

**Christmas Pageant
Sunday, December 14
After Liturgy,
in Panos Hall**

*Don't forget your cameras
and recorders!*



SUNDAY SCHEDULE

December 7

Ushers: George Kakavulias, Sam Koutsulis, John Karas, John Nicholas, William Carrico, George Nikols

Memorial: Elaine Mavrantonis (40 days); Barbara Chaltas (6 months); Nikolaos Avlonitis, Zaira Avlonitis.

Fellowship: Daughters of Penelope Bake Sale
Parish Council Elections follow Liturgy

December 14

Ushers: Alleck Orlando, Peter Papas, Marina Adamy, Stephen Carabas, Angelo Stamis, Gary Waters

Fellowship: Greek Folk Dance Bake Sale
Church School Christmas Pageant follows Liturgy

December 21

Ushers: John Karas, John Nicholas, William Carrico, Sam Koutsulis, George Kakavulias, George Nikols

Fellowship: Georgia Kourlos, for the Name Days of Christos and Eugenia

December 28

Ushers: William Carrico, Gary Waters, George Kakavulias, George Nikols, John Nicholas, Marina Adamy

Fellowship: Eleni Kakavulias - To Benefit Iconography

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

5300 S. El Camino Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Rev. Father John Hondros

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Philoptochos: Amalia Dominguez

Choir: Faye Brown

Chanters/Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School:
Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers:
Sam Koutsulis

Stewardship Committee:
John Karas

Hellenic Historical Society:
Nitsa Filios

Senior GOYA:
Effie Lekar and Eileen Koutsulis

Junior GOYA:
Tami Stefanatos
Tammy Chomakos

HOPE and JOY:
Jennifer Orlando
Sharon Katsaros

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Michael and Tami Stefanatos

Youth Ministries:
Eileen Koutsulis

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas:
Angela Coutris

Senior Forerunners:
Ruth Plentzas

Greek Folk Dance:
Tina Liaos, Chair
Bessie Stavropoulos and Carla Cole

Orthodox Bookstore:
Costa Frangakis

50th Anniversary Celebration:
Cathy Markakis

**Philoptochos
News**

For those of you who spent time “*In the Kitchen with Kiki*,” your collaborative efforts produced close to 8,000 Greek cookies (and many laughs) in less than eight hours! The following day we convened for the Autumn Bake Sale and enjoyed the opportunity to showcase some of our favorite recipes and ending with proceeds that funnel directly to our philanthropic activities. A warm hug and big THANKS goes out to all who participated, baked, sold, and directly or indirectly supported these endeavors!

In December we will be packing hundreds of pastry tins and coordinating the parish Christmas Card mailing. *Pastry packing is on Friday, December 5 at 9:00 am . . . be there!* The ladies take a night to celebrate the season and enjoy each other’s company at *The Golden Greek Restaurant on December 9 at 6:30 pm*. We are all looking forward to this event; space is limited so hopefully you have reserved yours! Oh, and don’t forget your Shoebox filled with personal items that could be used by a teenager.

Once again the gals will be making and serving *Vasilopitas on Sunday, January 4, 2009* to benefit Saint Basil’s Academy. Please contact Marcie Karas to volunteer your baking skills. Finally, a *General Meeting* is scheduled for *January 13 at 7:00 pm*. The work of Philoptochos is from the heart . . . may the warmth and blessings of the holiday season be with you and your family throughout the year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Amalia Dominguez and the Philoptochos Board

Senior Forerunners

Donations for the *Shoebox Project* are still being accepted. We are hoping to have 300 shoeboxes filled with personal items and delivered to the homeless teens’ drop-in center by the second week of December. If you or your family has not done so, please prepare a shoebox and drop it off after Sunday Liturgy or at the Church Office during the week, and we will handle it from there.

Our November meeting was a huge success; more than 40 members enjoyed a delicious pasta lunch prepared by Manny and a very informative presentation on the Holy Land by Vicki Xikis. The Senior Forerunners Christmas Party will be held *Tuesday, December 16 at 11:30 am*. Please look to the weekly bulletins for more information regarding the party, or contact Ruth Plentzas at (702) 221-0989.

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD

The Panagia Chapter of the Ladies Philoptochos Society invites you to extend Christmas Greetings to the entire St. John the Baptist Church Family. Your participation supports the many charitable works of Philoptochos.

2008 Christmas Card Subscription Form

Name: _____

Print your Name as you wish it to appear on the card:

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Donation: \$20 per family - Deadline: Tuesday, December 2, 2008

For assistance, please call Amalia Dominguez at (702) 510-5114.

Mail Form and Payment to Philoptochos c/o St. John the Baptist Church

The Ladies Philoptochos Society of
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
Proudly Presents the
26th Annual
Greek Christmas Pastry Tin Sale

TWO dozen delicious assorted Greek pastries lovingly HANDMADE
and packaged by the Ladies of St. John
in a beautifully decorated keepsake tin.
Wonderful for hostess gifts, holiday parties or corporate gifts.
Only \$27.00

Need something smaller?
Back by popular demand the mini box of Greek treats.
TEN pieces of assorted Greek Christmas pastries for \$12.00

Quantities are limited; pre - order today!

Pre-Sale starts November 1 and ends November 21.

Please make your checks payable to:
Ladies Philoptochos Society
5300 South El Camino Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Name: _____ Business Name _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Day Telephone: _____

Cell or Evening Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

Number of Tins: _____ @ \$27.00 = _____

Number of Mini boxes: _____ @ \$12.00 = _____

Delivery (optional): FREE on orders of \$400 or more, \$15 for all others _____

Check # _____ Total = _____

Your order will be ready for pick-up at St. John Church
on Sunday, December 7 after 1:00 pm.
Deliveries begin on Monday, December 8.

Thank you for your order!

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas

Our first activity for the month of December will consist of joining with Orthodox Family Fellowship (OFF) for its *4th Annual Homeless Outreach Project*. We are asking for all members of Orthodox Connection Las Vegas (OCLV) to contribute items such as *socks, gloves, scarves, caps, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, baby wipes (travel packets), and blankets*. Please bring your items to the decorated bin by the Church Office. If you would rather make a monetary donation, please feel free to do so. Our goal is to help OFF hand out 200 bags full of these items. *Please have your items to the Church no later than Saturday, December 13* (they will be delivered to the Salvation Army on that date).

Our second OCLV activity for the month will be a social at Alexia Chandrinos' home. She has again graciously offered to open up her home for the *2nd Annual OCLV Christmas Party*. Please join us on *Friday, December 19 at 6:00 pm* for a holiday potluck get-together that you won't want to miss. Please RSVP to Alexia or Angela at acourtris@hotmail.com.

We hope you are able to participate in both activities! OCLV is a ministry for singles in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. For more information, contact Angela Coutris (702) 497-2529.

Parish Council Elections
Sunday, December 7 after Liturgy 'til 2:00 pm

Orthodox Bookstore

On obedience to God: It seems that we are all Christians, until God asks us to change something in our lives or to give something up. Then we no longer rely on God, but somehow we think that we know better. The Kingdom of Heaven is not a democracy. God did not ask any of us before He created the universe. He does what He wills and it is our duty to change ourselves to conform to His perfect will. God will not change to become like us, but we have to change to become like Him. Actually, it is to our own benefit to change because this is the secret to happiness. We were created in such a way that true joy only comes from submitting ourselves to God's will. If we humble ourselves, God will reveal many wonderful things to us.

This month at the Bookstore: We have *Orthodox Christmas Cards* available for sale. Please come by and take a look. Also, copies of the *2009 Daily Lives of the Saints* are here – it is a great daily read.

Until next month, ICXC NIKA,
Costa Frangakis, Director

"Set your salvation . . . on Christ Jesus alone." ~St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Ziseil!

Panajo (Amy), daughter of Kristo and Helena Qeleshi on November 5, 2008.
Godparent: Mikel Zheku.

Krubel, son of Tesfu and Luam Hailemariam on November 8, 2008.
Godparent: Filmon Semere.

Demetrea, daughter of Jeremy and Amalea Bauck on November 15, 2008.
Godparents: John and Eileen Koutsulis

Chrismation:

Stavroula (April) Gulling on November 4, 2008. Sponsor: Gary Waters.

Gerasimos (Jeremy) Bauck on November 16, 2008. Sponsor: Nicholas Leventis

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory

Sam Skokos on October 28, 2008. Funeral on November 7.

Leigh Hein on November 1, 2008. Funeral on November 4.

50th Anniversary

'A Faith More Precious Than Gold' (1 Peter 1:7)

Thank you to everyone who joined us on November 16 for the 50th Anniversary Fundraiser Luncheon. The Committee would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Please join us *January 18, 2009* for another Fundraiser.

Cathy Markakis, Chair
50th Anniversary Committee

Greek Language Classes

We are seeking qualified teachers to teach Modern Greek for next spring semester's Greek School. There will be three levels for children and one for adults. Those interested in teaching one or more classes, please contact *Thymios Carabas* at (702) 889-9840 or via email at thymios.carabas@csn.edu.

The College of Southern Nevada is offering Modern Greek I (4 credits) next semester on its Charleston Campus (at Torrey Pines and Charleston). Classes will be held Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 pm to 7:50 pm. Credits are transferable to UNLV. Those interested, please contact Thymios.

Notes From the Loft



A surprise 80th birthday party for St. John Choir's organist, Stella Bakalas, was held on November 30 at the home of Sophia Leonis. Stella was honored for her 18 years of devotion, commitment, and faithfulness to the Choir. Along with members of Stella's family, the Choir and guests enjoyed a delicious potluck lunch. *Hronia polla! Na ta ekatostisis!*

Faye Brown, Choir Director

**All Parish Members
are Cordially Invited to**

**St. John the Baptist
Name Day Celebration**

Saturday, January 10, 2009

**6:00 pm Cocktails
7:00 pm Dinner in Panos Hall**

Daughters of Penelope

On *Sunday, December 7*, the Daughters of Penelope will be having their annual Christmas Bake Sale. Many favorite home-made Greek pastries as well as spinach and cheese pitas will be available for purchase.

Parish Directory

Please be sure to pick up your copy of the newly-published Parish Directory, available during Fellowship Hour on Sundays, or at the Church Office Monday – Friday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. Each member is given one directory free; each additional copy is \$10.

The directories would cost over \$4 each to mail, so we don't want to burden the parish with this expense. If you know parish members who are unable to come to Church, you can pick up a directory on their behalf and deliver it to them. Thank you!



**Adult Study Group with Father John Hondros:
Meets Every Wednesday (Unless Noted)
7:00-8:30 pm in Kokkos Hall.
Join us in "Learning Orthodoxy
through the Gospel of John."
Bibles available in our Orthodox Bookstore.**



ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
5300 SOUTH EL CAMINO ROAD
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89118
(702) 221-8245

May the New Born King be with you and yours during this holiday season.

Hronia Polla!

Youth Ministries

Church School

Hi Everyone! As we prepare for the celebration of the Birth of our Lord, let's remember people who are less fortunate than we are. We are involving the Church School in our collection for the Homeless Shelter, and are asking for the following items:

Pre-K and Kindergarten: Crew Socks,

1st Grade: Gloves (available at the 99 Cent Store)

2nd and 3rd Grade: Scarves and Hats (available at the 99 Cent Store)

4th and 5th Grade: Bars of Soap.

Middle School: Toothbrush and Toothpaste

High School: Baby Wipes (travel size/purse size).

You can drop these items off to your child's teacher *by December 7*.

We will be having our annual *Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 14*. We will start out with a *Rehearsal on Saturday, December 13 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm*. This is required if your child has a part in the program. We are having a different Pageant based on our beautiful Orthodox Hymns of the Church. Please have your child dress in their "Christmas Best" for the Pageant.

We will follow the rehearsal with our *Youth Ministry Christmas Party at 5:00 pm*. This is a potluck dinner: If your last name starts with A-F, please bring a main dish (no meat please) and drinks; G-M, a side dish/salad (no meat please) and main dish; N-S, a side dish/salad and dessert; and T-Z, dessert and drinks. This event will sure to be a lot of fun.

Please feel free to call me or e-mail me with any questions or concerns.

Eileen Koutsulis, Director (702) 521-6516 or vivaleenie@cox.net

Youth Choir News

Youth Choir will chant the Divine Liturgy on *Sunday, December 14*, be in our regular spot at 9:45 am. Hey everyone: PLEASE BE ON TIME for a change! Thanks!



We will also sing for the *Christmas Pageant after Liturgy that same day*. The FDF Choir has been working hard on their competition show. The group will chant selections from the Christmas Orthros. We are combining with Church School to present to the community various hymns that will be acted out by each class. We look forward to everyone enjoying our presentation.

For those who will be in town for Christmas, the *Youth Choir will chant the Divine Liturgy for Christmas Day*, just like we did last year. Please be at Church by 9:45 am, as Liturgy begins at 10:00 am. I wish all of the members of the Youth Choir a joyous and blessed Christmas.

Love, Presvytera Maria

HOPE and JOY

Merry Christmas! Youth Ministries will have its annual *Christmas Party on Saturday, December 13*. Since there is so much to do during the holidays, we will not have a get-together in December. Please keep *January 10* open as we will have a great HOPE & JOY activity planned early in the day; more details will be in the January *Desert Messenger*. See you at the Christmas party!

Your HOPE & JOY Advisors, Sharon Katsaros and Jennifer Orlando

"Avoid not only impure deeds, but even words . . ." ~St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

Junior and Senior GOYA

Congratulations to all newly-elected GOYA Officers: William Liaos, President; Aris Bochanis, Vice President; Recording Secretary, Caroline Lekar, Recording Secretary; Talia Orlando, Corresponding Secretary; Bobby Soper, Treasurer; Dino Chomakos and John Ross, Historians. We wish them a wonderful year of leadership.

Please join us at our *Youth Christmas Party on December 13 at 5:00 pm in Panos Hall*, which will be a meatless potluck. Please see the Church School column for details. In the spirit of Christmas, please help our Homeless Outreach Project: Sr. GOYANs, please bring travel-size baby wipes and Jr. GOYANs, bring toothbrush and toothpaste to your Church School Teachers. We will be joining with OFF to pack and deliver these items to the Salvation Army on *Saturday, December 13 at 9:00 am*.

Thank you for attending our pizza party on November 23, and for your help in our Outreach Project. Wishing you a blessed Nativity and a peaceful New Year.

In Christ, Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516 and Effie Lekar (702) 768-5500, Advisors

Greek Folk Dance

On behalf of the Greek Folk Dance Ministry, I want to thank everyone in the parish that supported our Dance Workshop/Glendi as well as our Rummage Sale, two of our biggest fundraisers for the year. Our work is not done yet! We are having a *Bake Sale* during Fellowship on *December 14*, so everyone get ready to prepare your home-baked goods (please, no store-bought items).

CHRISTMAS CAROLING: We will be caroling on Saturday and Sunday, *December 20 and 21*. If you are interested in having carolers come to your home, please complete the form on page 10 and return it to the Church Office. The kids have a great time singing and the people we visit enjoy it as well.

DANCE PRACTICE: We are getting closer and closer to FDF, so it is important that dancers not miss practices. New material is introduced weekly, and there is no reason to hold up the rest of the group while the directors do catch-up with a dancer who was absent. In addition to Tuesdays, dancers in Stavroforoi will have another practice on Sundays, 1:00-2:30 pm, in preparation for FDF.

FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL: An email was sent to everyone on our list regarding hotel booking through the FDF website www.yourfdf.org. Please book your room as soon as possible because they sell quickly. Although you are welcome to stay where you choose, our parish has stayed at one of the two Ayres locations because they are within yards of each other and we use those properties as a meeting place. This makes it easier in ensuring that everyone has their costumes on properly, and allowing for extra practices before heading over to the convention center. If you are not receiving emails, please let me know so we can add you, update or correct your email address.

ADULT GREEK DANCE CLASS: These adult classes have had a good response, and some have requested more classes per month as they are enjoying it so much! Classes are held on the third Tuesday in Kokkos Hall; next class is on *Tuesday, December 16*, 6:30-7:30 pm. For more information or to be added to our email list, contact *Jennifer Orlando at (702) 355-0260* or via email at FamilyOrlando@yahoo.com.

REMINDERS: Keep bringing your food items on Tuesdays for our *FDF Diakonia Project*. We have been taking the items collected to a local charity to feed people in our community that are less fortunate. We will also help OFF package items for its homeless project on *Saturday, December 13*.

Keep up the good work! Tina Liaos, Greek Folk Dance Board Chair

Grief Share ~ Philoptochos will be offering the Understanding Loss and Grief Program for four sessions, *starting Monday, December 1, 6:00 to 8:00 pm*, and continuing on Mondays through December 22. The four session series is specifically designed for persons who have recently experienced a loss of a family member or friend, anticipate a loss, and are having difficulty understanding or coping with its impact. The program is open to all and offers structured information on grief, followed by facilitated discussions. Please call *Rebecca Matsis at (702) 498-6981* or the Church Office for additional information.

From the Greek Folk Dance Director

What an exciting month for our Folk Dance Ministry! We hosted our 2nd Annual *Horepse* Dance Workshop, which was a great success! We had approximately 70 participants join us this year from all over – Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, New Jersey, Denver, Seattle, various places in California and, of course, individuals from our own community. Our instructors from Greece were amazing; we were very lucky to have them join us this year. And of course, the Glendi, well . . . if you weren't there, you really missed out! The music was outstanding and the dancing was something you really had to see and experience first hand! To have 100+ people linked arm-in-arm, singing along and stepping to the beat is something you only see at the village *Panygiria*. Thank you to all who attended!

An event this large only takes place with much help and support. My first thanks are to Fr. John and the Dance Board for allowing me to chair. An enormous thank you to Pete Kypreos, George Kypreos and Sam Koutsulis, who cooked for the entire weekend, including the delicious dinner at Sunday's Glendi. Thanks also to: George Andrews for helping at the Glendi; Joseph Stamis and Jerry's Nugget for providing dessert for our Glendi (not a morsel was left); and to Jim Monoyudis, who provided outstanding hotel accommodations for all our guests from Greece, and always supports our dance ministry.

A great thank you to Steve Likorinou, who donated a ton of his sound equipment as well as his time setting up for our Glendi. Only with his knowledge and expertise were we able to set up for seven musicians that night! He and his family attended our Glendi, and it was a life-saver to have "my sound guy" on-hand. A huge thank you to George Bochanis for generously underwriting the custom printed t-shirts for our participants. And thanks, Stephen Carabas, for photographing our event, and donating the proceeds from the Sunday Fellowship that you hosted; the photos are fantastic.

Finally, thanks to the mothers who provided transportation to our participants, helped with setting up, cleaning up, offered breakfast and pastries, and were on hand to help. And, of course, thanks to all our dancers that helped throughout the weekend.

We also hosted our annual Rummage Sale last month. Thank you to Effie Lekar and Tammy Chomakos for taking on this huge task, and for the many hours you devoted to this fund-raiser!

Now that this busy month is behind us, it's back to dance full speed ahead! Now is when the going get tough! Parents: With FDF peeking around the corner, please don't be surprised when additional practices are being added to the agenda. Thank you for your continued support of this great ministry.

Wishing you all a Blessed Christmas. Bessie Stavropoulos

**Mark your calendars! Friday, December 5, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm . . .
Pastry packing in Kokkos Hall. Your hands are needed!**

I would like to receive the *Greek Folk Dance Christmas Carolers* at my home on:

Check one: Saturday, December 20
 Sunday, December 21
 Either day



Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Please fill out and return this form to the Church Office by December 15. Thank You!

Stewardship Report: "Commit to Christ"

<u>2008 Stewardship Status (November 15, 2008):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2008	\$470,500
Stewardship Families Pledged	475	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$369,546
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$272,305	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$100,954
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$777.99	Percentage of Goal Achieved	78.33%

<u>Pledge Range</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>\$ & % of Gifts Pledged</u>
\$1-\$999	352	\$125,901 - 34.07%
\$1000-\$2499	99	\$128,465 - 34.76%
\$2500-\$4,999	15	\$ 48,700 - 13.16%
\$5,000-\$9,999	6	\$ 34,480 - 9.33%
\$10,000-\$14,999	3	\$ 32,000 - 8.66%

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Καλά Χριστούγεννα!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

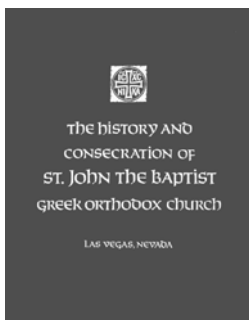
Our 2008 Stewardship Drive continues running behind last year's pace. As of November 15, we have 12 less families pledged as compared to last year and the total gifts pledged is running \$5,431 behind the previous year. Please be sure to fulfill your 2008 pledge by December 28, 2008. If you have not yet pledged for 2008, it is not too late. Please contact the Church office at (702) 221-8245 or feel free to contact me at **(702) 219-5057**.

Wow! What an incredible demonstration of Stewardship! What an unbelievable expression of Love! The simplicity of the story of the birth in the flesh of Jesus Christ clearly reveals the depth of God's love. This love is further demonstrated by His teaching us and showing us the true meaning of being good stewards and guiding us on a path back to the Father.

Did you know that the practice of Christian stewardship predates the establishment of the Christian Church on Earth? In fact, Christ taught us about stewardship in many of his parables and teachings, including the widow and the two mites, the parable of the talents, the parable of the lost sheep, the rich man and Lazarus, and the parable of the Good Samaritan, just to name a few. Our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated His stewardship when he fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish and the 4,000 with seven loaves of bread and a few fish. Additionally, Christ's stewardship of love was shown as He cured the sick and the blind, washed the feet of His disciples, raised Lazarus and Jarius' daughter from the dead, and when He became the Perfect Sacrifice in offering His Body and Blood for the salvation of mankind.

During this season of remembrance of the gift the Lord offered by His Incarnation, let us all use the examples He has shown us and, in turn, imitate His love for one of our brothers and sisters. Let us help feed the hungry, clothe the naked, offer alms to the needy, visit the infirm at home or in the hospital, visit those in prison and offer shelter to those in need. May this season of the love, joy and wonder of our Lord and Savior touch each and every one of us. And may everything we do be for His Glory – Δόξα Σοι ο Θεός.

With love in Christ, John G. Karas, Stewardship Chairman



*May we suggest the perfect Christmas Gift -
which will benefit the receiver as well as our parish . . .*
***The History and Consecration of
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church!***
*Purchase your Commemorative Album
at the Church Office or our Orthodox Bookstore.
A 'family treasure' for a donation of \$100!*

2008 Parish Stewards and Contributors: "Commit to Christ"

Adamy, Marina	Collins, James and Barbara	Fuson, Aglaia	Kokenes, Katherine
Agnos, Dimitrios and Angeline	Cominos, Ted and Emily	Gear, Darius and Bessie	Koliambas, Eleni
Alcala, Georgia	Conger, William and Alexia	George, Angela	Kolinas, Claire
Alex, Jim and Renee	Constantine, Bill	George, Elias	Konsolakis-Garcia, Eleni
Alexander, Eleni	Constantinou, Magdaline	George, Louis	Konsolakis, George
Alexis, Georgia	Coroneos, Marika	George, Pete and Georgia	Kostas, Maria
Andraktos, Manuel	Costuras, George and Marsha	Georgiou, Byron and Therese	Kostin, George and Mihaela
Andrews, Andrew	Cotsilis, Peter and Jenny	Georgis, John and Kaliopi	Kostopoulos, George † and Georgia
Andrews, Catherine	Coutris, Angela	Gialketsis, Babe and Terry	Kotonias, George and Patricia
Andrews, Presv. Helen	Dalacas, Anthony and Eugenia	Gialketsis, Barbara	Kountanis, Dennis and Pat
Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette	Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia	Gialketsis, Bill and Shelli	Kourafas, Chris and Trish
Apostolopoulos, Chris and Katia	Dalacas, Eleni	Gialketsis, Julie	Kouretas, Daniel
Arcamuzi, Georgia	Dalacas, Nick and Georgia	Gialketsis, Steve	Kouretas, Demetri and Amanda
Aristides, George and Diana	Davis, Jared	Gianakoulis, Nick and Magda	Kouretas, Nick † and Valdean
Arsoniadis, Juliana	DeCarlo, Frank and Nadine	Gianniosis, John and Amanda	Kourlos, Georgia
Asim, Demetrios	Delalis, Dina	Giouzelis, Anastasia	Koutsulis, John and Eileen
Athan, Sofia	Delalis, Pete and Alysondra	Goddard, Elizabeth	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie
Athens, Ann	Demangus, Peter and Ursula	Goldman, Love	Kover, Barbara
Attard, Constantine and Sofia	Demangus, Robert and Joanne	Gortsilas, Nikolas and Stefania	Kratky, Frank
Austin, Christopher and Athanasia	Demas-Goodin, Maria	Gorup, Anton and Sofia	Kypreos, George
Bakalas, Estella	Demolas, Ilias and Jodi	Gousdovas, Nikos	Kypreos, Peter and Geri
Balason, Anna	Demolas, Maria	Grillas, Vasilios and Roula	Kyprianou, Gilbert and Alexis
Balason, Voula	Demoleas, Grace and Spero	Gruber, Ernest and Zoe	Lakis, Antoinette
Baldwin, Richard and Vivi	Demoleas, Stephanie	Haddad, Zeyad and Alisar	Lakkis, Christina
Balodimas, Dr. James	Demopoulos, Tommy and Vasiliki	Hadzoglon, Christos and Barbara	Lambiris, Justin and Amy
Bariames, George and Athans, Eleni	Dennis, John	Hallis, Louis and Betty	Lambros, Argere and Mary
Barngrover, Andrew † and Kathleen	Depelchin, Serge and Melissa	Hamilton, Mary	Latelle, Penny
Bartzos, Sam and Eugenia	Dervis, Irene	Hamilton, Paul and Brandi	Lawrence, Vicki
Bauck, Jeremy and Amy	DeWindt, Dennis and Susan	Hardge, Dion and Zoe	Lazarakis, John and Panagiota
Bayiatis, Nick and Lorree	Diamantis, Filippos	Haritopoulos, Douglas	Lechner, Sofia
Berendji, Jim and Vivian	Disbrow, Dora	Harris, Melty and Angeline	Lekar, Michael and Effie
Berta, Irene	Dominguez, Eric and Amalia	Harrison, Angie	Leone, Stephen
Bicos, Adriana	Doppe, Victoria	Hart, Russell and Dora	Leonis, Nick and Sofia
Bieker-Grissom, Georgeea	Dornin, Christopher and Marcella	Hastings, Audra	Leonis, Tishe
Bigler III, Louis B.	Dougan, Linda	Hastings, Teri	Leventis, Nicholas and Christina
Bledsoe, Lori	Doukakis, Panagiotis and Chrisi	Hernquist, Jim † and Angela	Lewis, Foula
Bochanis, George	Dounis, Dina	Hetzal, David	Liaos, Jim and Tina
Borzekas, Stephen and Katharina	Dounis, Georgia	Hondros, Christina	Liaos, Steven and Francine
Bratta, Georgene	Dounis, Kiki	Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria	Liaos, William and Irene
Brilis, Christie	Dudanakis, Michael	Hondros, Paul	Likourinou, Angie
Brilis, George and Satoko	Economys, Peter	Hoover, Patrick and Pauline	Likourinou, Steve and June
Britten, Ronald and Carol	Eliades, Aristotelis	Howard, Willie B.	Luckey, Jason and Shawna
Brown, Andrew and Christina	Eliades, Artemis	Howe, Kiparissia	Lymberopoulos, Mary
Brown, Faye	Eliades, Eleni	Iracleanos, Sonia	Makris, Apostolos
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Eliades, Gregory and Maria	Jacobs, Joseph	Malamatos, Kindina
Cahill, Michael and Irene	Eliades, Harry and Agapi	Kachikis, Paul and Ernestine	Maland, Tim and Donna
Campbell, Ann	Eliades, Peter and Janet †	Kakavulias, Christine	Malpee, Mack and Kalliope
Campbell, Theodore and Cheryl	Eliakis, John and Atsuko	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Mamasis, Dena
Capadalis, Tim and Marling	Eliakis, Peter and Glenda	Kakavulias, John	Mamasis, Tessie
Captain, Nicholas and Maria	Eliakis, Varthie and Lee Ann	Kakavulias, Maria	Manakides, Tom and Ginger
Carabas, Stephen and Linda	Eliopoulos, Goldie	Kalkas, John and Rena	Manolakos, Catherine
Carabas, Thymios and Sotiroulla	Exarhos, Nick and Sharon	Kalmantis, George	Manolakos, John and Jennifer
Carabas, Yorghos	Eyler, Fr. Paul and Presv. Ilean	Kane, Irene	Manos, Patrica
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Eyler, Jesse and Dianna	Kanellis, Ann	Mansour, Rony
Carrico, William and Alexandra	Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Kanoles, Helene	Maragos, Constance
Carson, Michele	Falcone, Frank and Nancy	Kanoles, Konstantine	Markakis, Emmanuel and Catherine
Carter, Maria	Fanandakis, George and Helen	Karacostas, Alice	Marlas, Louis and Vivien
Cero, Dean	Filiios, George and Nitsa	Karagines, Peter and Linda	Martinek, Richard and Esther
Chachas, Bessie	Filiios, Spiridon and Eleni	Karalis, Gianni and April	Master, James
Chachas, James	Flangas, Bill and Marilyn	Karas, James	Matsis, John and Rebecca
Chaltas, Barbara †	Flangas, Gary and Amanda	Karas, John and Marcie	Matsukas, George
Chandrinos, Alexia	Flangas, Gus and Tamara	Karas, Vasiliki	Matsukas, John and Ariadne
Chandrinos, Ricki	Flangas, Peter and Wanda	Karris, Mark and Suzanne	Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki
Chanos, George	Fokas, Elene	Karvounidis, Nick and Alexandra	Mavroidis, Demetri and Debra
Chanos, Jennifer	Foskaris, Nicholas and Dana	Katris, Nick and Kathryn	Mavros, Michael and Debbie
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Chomakos, George and Nikki	Frangakis, Costa	Katsikakis, Evangelos	McPherson, Robert and Marie
Christou, Andreas and Toni	Frangakis, John	Kelly, Tess	Menegatos, Jim and Dana
Chumas, Russell and Stella	Frangopulu, Christina	Khoury, Ray and Nicole	Mezilson, Evangeline
Ciulla, Anthony and Klerie	Franklin, Phillip and Juliette	Khlgore, Richard and Eleni	Michelas, Michael
Cole, Darrick and Carla	Frantzen, Robert and Margery	Kleanthis, George and Zanetta	Mikelis, Peter
Collins, David	Franzi, Jack	Knoblock, Jamie and Laurie	Miller, Mary

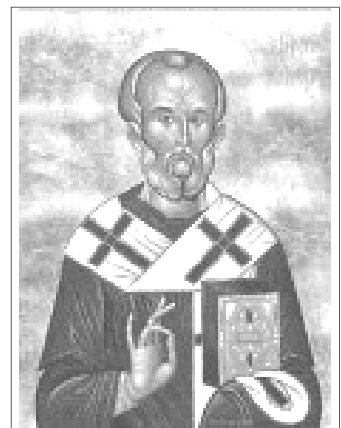
2008 Parish Stewards and Contributors: "Commit to Christ"

Millet, Jennie
 Milonas, George
 Milonas, Henry †
 Miralles, Jean
 Mirich, Kyle and Melissa
 Moffett, Todd and Eliopoulos, Tina
 Molina, Patricia †
 Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
 Montisano, Jon and Jennifer
 Morgan, Brian and Adrienne
 Moures, Michael and Maria
 Mulopulos, George
 Murnane, Sharon
 Murphy, Karen and Terry
 Myers, Stella
 Nadzan, Don and Athena
 Neocleous, Plato
 Newell, Eric and Devona
 Newell, Ronald and Maria
 Niarkos, Evgenia
 Nichlas, Arthur
 Nicholas, James and Myrna
 Nicholas, John and Estella
 Nickolson, Chloe
 Nikitas, Rigas and Aphrodite
 Nikolopoulos, Nick and Dimitra
 Nikolopoulos, Peter and Pelagia
 Nikols, George and Christine
 Nikols, Rita
 O'Brien, William and Chris
 Olmsted, Travis and Marilyn
 Orlando, Alleck and Jennifer
 Ostis, Sotirios
 Ozun, Michelle
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 Pandelis, Cheryl
 Pantelas, Anne and Hemmers,
 Oliver
 Pantos, James
 Papadakis, James and Georgia
 Papas, Christian
 Papas, Louis and Magaly
 Papas, Nick and Pauline
 Papas, Peter and Rita
 Pappas, Adrian and Diane
 Pappas, Antonia
 Pappas, Constantine and Karina
 Pappas, Peter and Libby
 Pappas, Rita
 Paschalis, Evangelos and Maria
 Payan, Luis and Eleni

Payne, Peter
 Pearson, Jeff and Adrienne
 Pelletier, Michael
 Pendelton, Patricia
 Pentogenis, Michael and Katherine
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 Peterson, Tessie †
 Peterson, Todd and Diane
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 Piña, Jose and Doris
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 Plentzas, Spiros and Ruth
 Polimerou, Angeline
 Poulos, Christine
 Poulsen, Nicholas and Brenda
 Pouridis, Kouli and Para
 Prather, Moses and Dina †
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 Prud'homme, Edwin and Penny
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 Ramadanis, Constantinos
 Raptis, Fr. Dean and Presv. Evonne
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 Stika, Arthur and Melinda
 Stock, Helen
 Struzas, Maria
 Ramadanis, Constantinos
 Szukiewicz, Joe
 Szukiewicz, Joseph and Jennia
 Tackley, Richard and Manteris,
 Stephanie
 Tafoya, Steven and Irene
 Tahiraj, Genci
 Takas, Andrea
 Taxiarchos, Andrew and Alexandra
 Taxopoulos, Bryan
 Taylor, Frederick and Katherine
 Teed, Charles
 Tesfamariam, Senait
 Theros, James
 Thomas, Angie
 Thompson, Maggy
 Tohme, Tony and May
 Touroutoglou, Nikolaos
 Triffon, Cathy
 Tsohis, Christos and Pangioula
 Tsohis, George
 Tsouras, Christopher and Diane
 Tsouras, George
 Tsouras, Helen
 Turman, Lucas and Maria
 Tzelalis, Steve
 Vasos, Maria
 Vassiliadis, Athena

Vassiliadis, Spiros and Shiona
 Vavoukakis, Gus and Penelope
 Vergos, Charles and Eve
 Vervilos, James and Anna
 Vinieratos, Aristotalis and Spiridoula
 Vino, Joseph and Christy
 Wallach, Rinaki
 Walter, Vernon and Alice
 Walters, Lane and Mary
 Waters, Gary and Susan
 Weisman, Phil and Diane
 White, William
 Wiedemann, John and Denise
 Wilkerson, Chuck and Kristina
 Willey, Anthony
 Wilson, Clyde
 Wilson, Kelly Caplanis
 Wilson, Steven and Cleopatra
 Wirtz, Aphrodite
 Wirtz, Athena
 Womack, Karl
 Womack, Kimberly
 Woods, Kevin and Deborah
 Wronski, Chuck
 Xikis, Victoria
 Zachariou, Sozos and Aspasia
 Zaferatos, Ted and Jackie
 Zafiroopoulos, John
 Zarras, Nick and Chery
 Zimmerman, Paul and Angela
 Zoitopoulos, Dimitros and Pam
 Zouboulis, James and Tina



St. Nicholas

The holiness of your life was set before your flock as a rule of faith, an example of meekness and a teaching of temperance; wherefore you acquired greatness through humility and spiritual wealth through poverty: Father and Hierarch Nicholas, pray to Christ God that He may save our souls.

Orthodox Family Fellowship

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all! I would like to invite everyone to participate in our *4th Annual Homeless Outreach Project*. We will gather in Kokkos Hall on *December 13* at 9:00 am to put the gift bags together and then deliver them to the Salvation Army Homeless Center. It's great for us and our children to see how grateful the homeless are to receive our modest gifts.

We need the following items: Socks, gloves, scarves, caps, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, baby wipes (travel packets) and blankets. Please put your items in the decorated bin in front of the Church Office. Our goal this year is to hand out 200 gift bags. Items can be purchased at the Dollar Store; if you would rather make a monetary donation, please look for me (Tami) in Panos Hall after Sunday Liturgy. **In Christ's Service, Mike and Tami Stefanatos**

**The Clark County Orthodox Clergy Association Invites
All Orthodox and Interested Seekers to a**

Nativity Fast Retreat

Saturday, December 6, 2008

***At St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church,
5400 Annie Oakley Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada***

Dr. Harry Boosalis, ThD, Retreat Speaker

**“From Mt. Athos to Las Vegas”
*Orthodox Spiritual Life According to
St. Silouan of Mt. Athos***



Agenda

8:00 AM	Divine Liturgy (St. Nicholas)
9:30 AM	Breakfast
10:30 AM	Session 1: St. Silouan on the Spiritual Struggle
Noon	Lunch
1:00 PM	Session 2: Love ~ Our Path to Holiness
2:30 PM	Break
3:00 PM	Session 3: Suffering and the Spiritual Life
4:30 PM	Break
5:00 PM	Vespers

Dr. Harry Boosalis was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota of Greek-American parents and grew up at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church. He received his Masters of Divinity from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology; he then went on to pursue his doctoral degree in Greece. Dr. Boosalis has been teaching dogmatic theology as a full-time faculty member at St. Tikhon's Seminary since Fall 1992; as Chairman of the Department of Theology and Spirituality he organized, developed and implemented a new curriculum. He is the author of two books and has also edited and directed three publications for St. Tikhon's Seminary Press. Since the Summer of 2002, Dr. Boosalis has been leading a group of seminarians on an annual pilgrimage to Iviron Monastery on Mount Athos, Greece.

For more information on the retreat, please contact Fr. John Dresko at St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church at (702) 898-4800. Information is also available online at www.vegasgreekorthodox.com (St. John the Baptist) or www.LasVegasOrthodox.com (St. Paul the Apostle). Please call to reserve a spot by December 1.

\$15 per person, includes meals

DECEMBER 2008 - IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
	1 6:00 pm Grief Share in Kokkos Hall	2 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondaria 6:00 pm Hrisi Thisavri 6:15 pm Stavroforoi	3 7:00 pm Adult Study with Fr. John	4	5 9:00 am Philoptochos Pastry Tin Packing in Kokkos Hall	6 St. Nicholas of Myra 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 8:00 am Nativity Fast Retreat at St. Paul
7 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Parish Council Elections	8 6:00 pm Grief Share in Kokkos Hall	9 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondaria 6:00 pm Hrisi Thisavri 6:15 pm Stavroforoi 6:30 pm Philop. Christmas Party at Golden Greek	10 7:00 pm Adult Study with Fr. John	11	12 St. Spyridon 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	13 9:00 am OFF Homeless Packaging and Delivery 3:00 pm Pageant Rehearsal 5:00 pm Youth Ministries Christmas Party
14 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Youth Choir Chants Church School Christmas Pageant	15 6:00 pm Grief Share in Kokkos Hall	16 11:30 am Senior Christmas Party 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondaria 6:00 pm Hrisi Thisavri 6:15 pm Stavroforoi 6:30 pm Parish Council	17 7:00 pm Adult Study with Fr. John	18	19 6:00 pm Orthodox Connection Pot Luck at Alexia Chandrinou's Home	20
21 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	22 6:00 pm Grief Share in Kokkos Hall	23 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondaria 6:00 pm Hrisi Thisavri 6:15 pm Stavroforoi	24 Eve of the Nativity 6:00 pm Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil (No Adult Study)	25 Nativity of Christ 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	26	27
28 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	29	30 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondaria 6:00 pm Hrisi Thisavri 6:15 pm Stavroforoi	31 (No Adult Study)	January 1 Our Lord's Circumcision St. Basil the Great 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil		

The Desert Messenger

*St. John Greek Orthodox Church
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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord

“At the meeting of the shepherds and the magi around the cave,
the revelation brought by Christ to the entire world is accomplished.

The shepherds represent Israel, the heir to the promise.

In continuity with the messages repeated through the Bible,
they receive the announcement from the angel.

The magi symbolize the call of the Gentiles.

They look for the truth on the basis of their scientific sources.

Israel and the nations meet before the manger:

this is, in anticipation, the image of the Church which Christ will found.”

~ Catherine Aslanoff, *The Incarnate God, Volume 1*

Καλά Χριστούγεννα! A Joyous Christmas!