

# The Desert



# Messenger

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

Volume 21, Issue 8 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV September 2023

From  
Father  
John

Beloved in Christ:

With September, we Orthodox Christians embark on a New Ecclesiastical Year and additionally in our beloved Parish, this marks a season for new beginnings.

As we grieve the passing and loss of our dear “retired” Priest, concelebrant, brother and Confessor, Father Paul Eyler, we rejoice because he now reposes in a place without pain, sorrow and suffering, in the embrace of our Lord Jesus Christ together with his beloved Presvytera Ilean and other cherished departed family members. His presence is deeply missed: May the memory of this faithful Priest and humble servant of Christ and His Church be everlasting!

Our Lord Jesus Christ promised us, “*I will not leave you as orphans.*” (John 14:18) He spoke these words to strengthen His Disciples during His Passion and to assure them of His glorious Resurrection and the Coming of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, He never leaves us desolate, but continues to supply every need of His Holy Church! In our Parish, we

have also experienced the passing from this life of His Excellency Metropolitan Ilia, Father Constantine Raptis and many beloved Priests and lay leaders who served us with great love and distinction. Yet we have also been blessed by our Lord, Who keeps His promises, with many more faithful Priests and lay leaders: Most recently, in February we witnessed the Ordination of Father Florin Ristache and his assignment by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos as our second Priest; on Sunday, July 30, we witnessed the Ordination of Dr. John Nixon to the Holy Diaconate by the hand of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros.



We were blessed in the middle of our scorching summer with the pastoral visit to our city of three Hierarchs – His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and His Grace Bishop Ioannis – and it was an inspiring experience to connect with each personally and worship together with them in our beloved Church for the Holy Liturgy! I was humbled to receive the Offikion of Protopresbyter to the Ecumenical Throne, with the blessing of His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, through Archbishop Elpidophoros. Moreover, I was overwhelmed on that date to be presented with the Cross of Agia Sophia by His Eminence. As I felt quite unworthy of this honor, I was humbly mindful that, in so

many ways, all of us receive countless blessings, not that we deserve them, but because the Lord’s steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 136) Our beloved Church continues to be blessed by our Lord Christ, even during these challenging times, so that we may – until His Second Coming – celebrate the Holy Mysteries, preach, teach and minister to our people – allowing us to grow as He adds to our number those who are being saved. (Acts 2:47)

(Continued on Page 3)

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy  
Church School follows Holy Communion (Starting Sunday, September 10)*

*All our Sunday Divine Services are Available on Live-Stream!  
Access the Live-Stream on <http://youtube.com/vegasgreekorthodox>*

### New Ecclesiastical Year Begins September 1

Sunday, September 3/*Thirteenth Sunday of Matthew/Holy Hieromartyr Anthimos, Bishop of Nicomedeia/Holy Father Theoctistos and his fellow struggler Euthymios the Great/Holy Martyr Polydoros of New Ephesus/Translation of the Relics of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker*

Orthros: Fourth Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42

Memorial: Vasilii Ignatiev (6 months)

Fellowship: Kali Parea

Friday, September 8/*The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary*  
8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

Sunday, September 10/*Sunday before Holy Cross/Holy Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora, and Nymphodora/St. Poulcheria the Empress/Afterfeast of the Nativity of the Theotokos*

Orthros: First Plagal Tone

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

Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18

Gospel: John 3:13-17

*Blessing of New Church School Year*

Memorials: Constantine Moraitis (40 days); Joanne Monroe (3 months); and Mercy Daras (1 year)

Fellowship: The Philoptochos Society, benefitting the Holy Cross School of Theology

Wednesday, September 13/*The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross (Observed)*

4:30 pm Orthros

*Procession of Holy Cross at Doxology*

5:30 pm Divine Liturgy

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18-24

Gospel: John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30

Thursday, September 14/*The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross (Strict Fast) (Liturgy on the Preceding Evening)*

Sunday, September 17/*Sunday after Holy Cross/Holy Martyr Sophia and her three daughters, Faith, Hope and Love/Ss. Herakleides and Myron, Bishops of Cyprus/Afterfeast of the Holy Cross*  
*Festival Worship Hours:*

8:30 am Orthros

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Orthros: Second Plagal Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20

Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

Sunday, September 24/*First Sunday of Luke/Great Martyr Thekla, Equal to the Apostles/The Commemoration of the Miracle of the Theotokos Myrtidiotissis in Kythira/St. Silouan of Athos/Holy Martyr Stephen*

Orthros: Grave Tone

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

Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

Memorials: Michelle Spirtos (6 months); and Georgia Nichols

Fellowship: Pan Arcadians, for Maui Relief



*O Lord,  
save Your people and  
bless Your inheritance.  
Grant victory  
to the faithful  
over the enemies  
and protect  
Your nation  
with Your Cross.*

*From Father John (Continued from Page 1)*

It is fitting as we begin the New Ecclesiastical Year that the Holy and Life-Giving Cross will be processed and placed in our midst in the Church for us all to venerate: We will celebrate the services on the eve of the Great Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, September 13, so all our faithful volunteers have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion and the blessing of the Cross as we go into the weekend of the Greek Food Festival. While this glorious feast commemorates a historical event – the finding of the True Cross in Jerusalem by St. Helen in the year 325, and its elevation by the Patriarch Makarios before all the faithful – it also has a deeper spiritual significance, which is relevant still today: *“O Cross, you are the guardian of the whole world. O Cross, you are the height of the Church’s beauty. O Cross, you are what strengthened the leaders. O Cross, the believers’ firm support. O Cross, the glory of Angels and the defeat of demons.”* (Exaposteilarion, Orthros for the Holy Cross, translated by Father Seraphim Dedes)

By the power of Your Holy Cross, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, save us, and grant us a Blessed New Church Year for Your glory!

With Love in Christ,

*Father John*



**CHURCH 360**

*Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, if you have not yet done so, we respectfully request you take the time to fill out the questionnaire we have prepared. This will enable the Parish to better communicate with you. Click [HERE](#) to access the questionnaire. The information you provide will only be used by the Parish to better serve the members of our community.*



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
5300 EL CAMINO RD, LAS VEGAS, NV 89118

LAS VEGAS

# GREEK FEST

CELEBRATING OUR 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



ROASTED LAMB | LAMB CHOPS | SOUVLAKI | GYROS | GREEK FRIES | SALAD | GREEK STYLE SHRIMP  
DOLMADES | PASTITSIO | SPANAKOPITA | TIROPITA | SAGANAKI | LOUKANIKO | KAFENEION  
SPECIALTY PASTRIES | LOUKOUMADES | GREEK BEVERAGES & CRAFT COCKTAILS  
LIVE MUSIC | GREEK DANCING | KIDS' AREA | CHURCH TOURS



SEPTEMBER  
2023

15<sup>TH</sup> | 3PM - 11PM  
16<sup>TH</sup> | NOON - 11PM  
17<sup>TH</sup> | NOON - 10PM

LASVEGASGREEKFEST.COM





# Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith

**Wednesdays 6:30-8:00 pm  
beginning on September 20  
in Kokkos Hall**

**For inquirers, catechumens, and  
Orthodox Christians who want to know  
more about the ancient, Apostolic Faith**

We will cover...

- *Theology and Church History*
- *Sacraments and the Divine Liturgy*
- *Spirituality and Prayer*
- *and a “Show and Tell” in our magnificent Byzantine Church.*

**Parish  
Council  
Report**

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, Ministries and Parishioners,

We recently had the Funeral for our beloved elder Priest of many years, Father Paul Eyler. Father Paul served our community with devotion, humility and patience for more than two decades since his retirement. We know that he now joins his beloved Presvytera Ilean in Heaven. May his memory be eternal.

On July 30 we were blessed with the presence of Archbishop Elpidophoros, Metropolitan Gerasimos, Bishop Ioannis and Archdeacon Dionysios. Congratulations to Deacon John Nixon on his Ordination: AXIOS! This was a true blessing. Having spent a considerable amount of time with our spiritual leaders, I found them to be very humble and appreciative of the hospitality shown by Father John and Presvytera Maria, who graciously provided meals for our guests and fellowship with the Parish Council members who attended. Father John was bestowed with the title Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne: AXIOS! St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church has always shown respect to our leaders, and I know this memory will be instilled in our visitors' minds for a long time.

Preparations are on full blast with the Greek Food Festival around the corner. Need I remind everyone that your help and talents are needed! We have had a very good response from our parishioners, and I strongly encourage your support. We do not expect anyone to work all day. There are raffle tickets that need to be purchased along with coupon books. Invite friends, neighbors, and business associates to attend. This is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Festival. Let us please put aside other obligations and try to put our best foot forward in preparing for the event. Gus Flangas and Angelo Stamis, both with several years of Festival experience, have found ways to try and reduce expenses without compromising our ability to be successful. We should not have to depend on an overload of hired help when we have enormous talent within our own Parish.

I want to thank all the participants organizing the Ariston Award, celebrating Gus Flangas' tireless commitment to our community over many years of service and in every capacity. Please mark the date: This event will be *on Saturday, October 28* at the South Point Hotel and Casino. Invitations will be mailed to all our parishioners and friends. Please let us know if you do not receive one.

Finally, as a reminder, our New Ecclesiastical Year starts *on September 1*. Let us give thanks to the Mother of God and our Creator for bestowing every blessing our Church has received. With this my beloved, I pray that you remain safe; please let me know how I can help support each and every one of you.

May God continue to bless St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

With Much Love, John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President



Adult Study with  
Father John  
and Father Florin

*On The Holy Spirit  
by St. Basil the Great*

*Final Class on  
Wednesday, September 6*

*6:30 - 8:00 pm  
in Kokkos Hall*



*Make this Bread the precious Body of Your Christ.  
And that which is in this Cup, the precious Blood of  
Your Christ. Changing them by Your Holy Spirit.*

## Philoptochos News

Dear Father John, Father Florin, and all Members of St. John the Baptist,

Happy September! Your Ladies Philoptochos Society is rested and ready to jump into action for the next year with Faith, Fellowship and Philanthropy obligations, events, and projects.

The Ladies Philoptochos would like to congratulate Deacon John Nixon and Diakonissa Ellyn on his Ordination. Deacon John has been a wonderful addition to the Altar these past years, with insightful and spiritual sermons. Special blessings for Diakonissa Ellyn, who also serves as the Outreach Chair for LPS. AXIOS!

We are also saddened about the recent passing of Father Paul Eyler. Father Paul and Presvytera Ilean, also of blessed memory, were beloved and supportive to Philoptochos during their many years in our Parish. May their memory be everlasting.

This year with so many of these activities taking place either at the same time or in quick succession, the Board has decided that the chairs of each event and/or project will be holding planning meetings outside our General Meetings. Instead, we will use our General Meeting to offer a special speaker or program. Planning meeting times and places will be up to the chair, and we do have a Zoom option as well. This means we will be looking for you to step forward and volunteer for the event that speaks to you. Are you a hands-on person and want to help with Social Services? Do you like to entertain? Then the Fellowship Committee might be perfect. Are you a people person? What about helping with Membership? Computer person? Art skills? Or are you what we need most – helping hands to bake and pack? All are welcome; we are a friendly group and whether you can help all the time or just once and awhile, you are appreciated.

Look for the meeting announcements in the LPS *Weekly Word* which will be starting up again. We will also be sending the LPS 2023-2025 Calendar of Events with the next *Word*. Please save it to your computer and of course there are some dates that are firm; however, our calendar is flexible, and we do have room to add.

Due to the decision of the family of our beloved Metropolitan Ilia and Presvytera Helen, the Ladies Philoptochos Society will be granting a scholarship in their memory. At this time, we are looking for three individuals that have experience in creating the parameters and qualifications of the Scholarship who would be willing to serve on this brand new committee for our Chapter. Please let me know as soon as possible as we would like to be able to offer this Scholarship in the Spring of 2024.

Which brings me to communication. We find that we can reach a majority of members by email. If you are a member and receiving the *Weekly Word* and notices, please note we have only sent one email this summer. If you are member and NOT receiving the emails, please let Christina Snow know at [snowy4000@gmail.com](mailto:snowy4000@gmail.com).

If you are not a member and would like to learn more about the LPS Panagia Chapter events, please let me know at [bernadette.anthony@gmail.com](mailto:bernadette.anthony@gmail.com).

September is when we hit the ground running with Greek Food Festival, the beginning of Church School and all the Ministries. While we are being busy with all these activities, let us keep the reason why we work so hard – for our FAITH! *“God is the One Who makes all this possible. He has given us His Spirit to make us certain He will do it. So always be cheerful! As long as we are in these bodies, we are away from the Lord. But we live by Faith, not by what we see. We should be cheerful, because we would rather leave these bodies and be at home with the Lord. But whether we are at home with the Lord or away from Him, we still try our best to please Him. After all, Christ will judge each of us for the good or the bad that we do while living in these bodies.” (2 Corinthians 5:5-10)*

While we have activities to plan, please know that we still are here to have a chat and hear how you are as well. We are your Philoptochos! Faith, Fellowship and Philanthropy.

As always, I remain your Sister in Christ,  
Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President





GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA  
ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP  
Ο ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

August 1, 2023

The Rev. Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne John Hondros  
The Rev. Presbyter Florin Ristache  
Saint John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
5300 El Camino Road  
Las Vegas, NV 89118-1922

*Dear Fr. John,  
Dear Fr. Florin,*

I greet you warmly in the grace and peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is with much joy that I address this letter of heartfelt gratitude to you and the entire community in appreciation for your warm hospitality and loving kindness during my visit to your parish. It was spiritually uplifting to be joined in the common bond of prayer with the Christ-loving faithful of your community in Las Vegas. I encourage you to keep upbuilding the parish and its ministries in the same God-pleasing manner that you have exhibited over the years for the continued spiritual welfare of your parishioners. May you always strive to attain to the fullness of Christ, and may the entire community be showered in the rich and grace-filled streams of our Lord's loving compassion and infinite goodness.

Extending to you and all the devout faithful of Saint John the Baptist my archpastoral blessings and wholehearted prayers for a spiritually prosperous fifteen-day period of August, I remain

With paternal love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America



## *From Deacon John: Address at His Ordination*

Your Eminence,

For one who is known rarely to be without words, composing my thoughts for today found me struggling greatly. On prayerful reflection, three words echo in my mind for this moment: Mercy, Grace, and Gratitude. As we stand before God, as human beings regardless of our station in life, in knowing ourselves we realize that fundamentally the most important thing we can ask from the Lord is His mercy. We of course are reminded of this throughout our worship and traditions of spiritual life. Thus, I find myself at this place, knowing deeply that no position in the Church is a right or privilege, but rather a sacred calling and responsibility, and that without God's mercy we surely would fail in the duties belonging thereto. Therefore, the first and last thing I ask of God is His Mercy as I submit myself for Ordination to the Holy Diaconate.

A second word which echoes in my mind for this moment is that of Grace. We know we are saved by God's grace, and with His grace we work out our salvation, and that it is a particular and special grace of God which will fill the one being ordained to diakonia in the Lord's vineyard. Without the inward working of Divine Grace, the ministry of His Deacons and greater orders would suffer as the forces which seek the destruction of our souls would come after us with greater fury. My earnest prayer is that I be ever-responsive to allow God's Mercy and Grace to work in me, "For to serve [Him] is great and awesome even for the Heavenly powers."

The third word coming to mind today is that of Gratitude. The totality of my life's experiences has brought me to this point, and I can truly say at this moment that I give glory to God for all things. Thank you, Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, not only for approving my petition to Ordination, but for conducting it personally today. Thank you, Your Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, for your guidance and friendship over the years from the time I was in seminary, when you were the Archdeacon, and for your support which brings us to this moment. Thank you, Bishop Ioannis, schoolmate at Holy Cross, for your forthright personal style and encouragement. Thank you, Father John, seminary classmate, for your brotherly friendship and example of pastoral leadership. And thank you, Father Florin, for the example of your freshness of spirit and earnestness with which you are establishing your ministry.

As a child I loved the Church and longed to serve it. My spirit always found calm and comfort within the Church and its worship of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Being tonsured a reader when I was a teen was a great moment for me, and that first, formal entrance to a minor order of the Church was one that I took seriously to increase my dedication to Christ, having already been an altar boy for a few years. I am grateful to my parents, rooted in the faith of my grandparents, who found fellowship in the Church as touchstone of security and familiarity through which the Lord strengthened them as they came to the New World from rural Greece in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as so many others have, with their Orthodox Christian Faith and dreams of a better life that hard work, strong relationships, and God's help can bring.

As I came into adulthood, I came to experience Christ in relationship, in a personal way. Indeed, He is the "Author and Perfector of our Faith." In college I was enriched by the faith of friends who loved Christ. Following my call, I went on to complete the seminary program and theological school and am grateful for friendships and spiritual mentorships forged there; I entered the working world, serving the Church as a layman. God's timing is inscrutable, and it would be decades before a childhood dream of Ordination would come to fruition.

*(Continued on Page 10)*



*From Deacon John (Continued from Page 9)*

But there I was, wanting to serve as clergy, but not as a monastic. So I developed an alternate yet not unrelated career. I have become convinced over the past 30 years as a mental health professional and educator that psychology studies the soul but cannot save it. Salvation, and wholeness of personhood, is only in Christ, and fully realized in His Church. Thus it is only in Him where human needs find their ultimate fulfillment. I am so grateful for the Parish Priests, my Spiritual Fathers and Confessors from whom I have been blessed to receive guidance in the spiritual and practical aspects of life over the years and continuing today.



help and all of your prayers as I enter the ministry of the Holy Diaconate, that in His mercy, God will fill me with the grace to serve faithfully and honorably. I know I will not serve perfectly, but I promise to serve to the best of my ability.

*Deacon John*

As human beings, we are created for relationships. Apart from those who have a special gift of singular focus beyond a fundamental relationship with God, the life partnership of marriage did not come to fulfillment for me until seven years ago. Thus it is to Ellyn, my wife, whom I love very much, that I owe immeasurable thanks. As American Founder John Adams said of his Abigail, is certainly true for my Ellyn: “She is my ballast.”

And we are here now, in Las Vegas, rooted in our Parish of Saint John the Baptist, where my acceptance of God’s call comes to fruition. I ask for His



*Chrismation*

Seraphim (Rodney) McDaniel on August 13, 2023.  
Sponsor: Demetrious Asim.

*Marriage: Na Zisete*

Antonio DiGioia, Jr. and Michelle Hollar on August 19, 2023.  
Koumbaros: Alexander Soles.

*Fallen Asleep in the Lord*

- George Peter Agnos on July 4, 2023. Funeral on July 14.
- Kebrom Tesfamichael on July 22, 2023. Funeral on August 2.
- Constantine Moraitis on August 1, 2023. Funeral on August 9.
- Rev. Father Paul Eyler on August 16, 2023. Funeral on August 23.
- Louis George Stenos on August 9, 2023. Funeral on August 25.

## From Father Florin

The beginning of the *New Ecclesiastical Year on September 1* marks also the day in which we commemorate *St. Simeon the Stylite*. He was born around 390 to poor shepherds in northwestern Syria, at a time when the Roman Empire had been officially Christian for less than a century and most of its inhabitants had not yet converted to Christianity. By the time of his repose in 459, Simeon had been instrumental in the development of Christian doctrine and monastic practices as well as in the conversion of many pagans to the Christian faith.

Feeling called by God at an early age to a life of religious devotion and extreme austerity, Simeon entered the Monasteries of Eusebona and Telanissos, where he lived for 10 years, engaging in ascetic practices such as abstaining from all food during the 40 days of Lent. Eventually, his fervor and asceticism caused such resentment among his fellow monks – who were unable to equal his zeal – that he was asked to leave the monastery.

Thereafter, Simeon became a wandering solitary hermit, seeking always to suppress his physical desires and to liberate his spirit through impassioned ascetic practices. Being a holy man, he attracted the attention both of disciples who sought to follow his spiritual path and of faithful who were seeking for his advice and prayers.

Increasingly annoyed by their constant questions and requests, St. Simeon climbed onto the top of a column to pray and meditate and, of course, to escape his followers. Soon, he found his solitude so refreshing that he refused to come down. Descending from now on only briefly to mount a series of increasingly taller pillars, the Saint eventually settled on a huge column, around 60 feet tall and 6 feet in diameter, where he remained for the final 30 years of his life, chaining himself to it while he slept to avoid accidentally falling.

He lived there surrounded by devoted monks and admirers who brought him food, and increasingly visited by pilgrims or those who were simply curious. His unusual abode gave him his new name, Simeon the Stylite or Simeon “of the column.” His goal in living on the column was both to escape the throngs of believers seeking his advice and intercession, and to mystically “fly to heaven” by completely subduing all physical desires through fasting and prayer. Ironically, in the long term his choice of dwelling greatly multiplied the crowds that so irritated him.

Nonetheless, he was occasionally willing to converse with the pilgrims who came to him from all over the eastern Mediterranean. He offered advice, reconciled enemies, discoursed on theology, and preached to the pagans, many of whom were converted by his sermons. St. Simeon’s fame spread to the point that even Roman emperors sought his advice on major theological issues of the day. Leo I, for example, consulted him in Christological controversies – disputes concerning the Nature of Christ and the Son’s relationship to the Father.

When he fell asleep in the Lord, St. Simeon was held in awe throughout the entire Christian world. News of his holiness reached even Paris, as the Roman Empire in the West was crumbling under the attacks of Huns and Germans. Later “stylites” imitated St. Simeon’s, but none ever equaled his prominence.

Today, the magnificent ruins of the Monastery of Qal’at Sim’an (“fortress of Simeon”), near Aleppo in Syria, stand as a striking reminder of the power of St. Simeon’s holiness. The remains of Simeon’s pillar have been chiseled down to a stub about 8 feet high by the tens of thousands of pilgrims who visited the site after his death and carried off small pieces of the column as relics of the Saint.

For nearly two centuries, until the Arab conquests around 640, St. Simeon’s pillar remained one of the major pilgrimage sites. His holiness did not consist in his wonderful actions or in the miracles he performed, but in the perfection of his chastity, patience, and humility. These solid virtues shone so evidently in the life of St. Simeon.



Fr. F. J. Ristade.

## *Building and Maintenance Committee*

I pray you all had a beautiful summer and want to welcome everyone back for a New Ecclesiastical Year! Much was accomplished since my last message. Our parking lots were finally able to be repaved and striped as we had to delay the work due to our water main once again bursting. We can all finally park our cars safely in properly marked spots. The roofing over the administrative building, classrooms and Kokkos was also finished, and I am happy to say that with all the rain in August, we have had no new leaks. Thank God!

Both fountains were resurfaced, and the tile was glass beaded and all missing tiles were replaced. We are currently in the process of finding new lights and still need to replace the pump for the main fountain. New replacement entrance gates and fountain railing around the courtyard fountain are being fabricated and should be installed by the time of the Festival. We were able to also order and install all new bollard lighting for the front of our Church and courtyard. I want to thank an anonymous for the extremely generous donation toward this project as well as the Palivos Family. Finally, the marble in the Narthex was recently repolished, the kitchen hoods were cleaned, and the ice machine was repaired. Our new air conditioning units will hopefully also be here by the end of the month. All of this work could not be done without your donations to the Building Fund. I am extremely grateful and appreciative for all of you who have supported me in accomplishing these much needed repairs and improvements.

With Love, Eleni Filios, Building and Maintenance Chair

## *Prospora Baking*

Dear Parish Members,

We have been blessed to have a handful of committed members who prepare and bake Prospora, which through your prayers and the descent of the Holy Spirit becomes the Life-Giving Body of Christ that is distributed with His Blood to the faithful at each Divine Liturgy.

However, the number of people baking the Prospora has dwindled, and there is a great need in our community for others to assist in this vital offering of Stewardship. In our Parish, we make it our goal to have freshly baked Prospora for each Divine Liturgy.

Our current bakers are willing to teach others the process, and this is what is required:

- You must be a Baptized and Chrismated member of the Orthodox Church.
- You must be Sacramentally in good standing with the Church (if married, you are married in the Orthodox Church) and attending the Divine services faithfully.
- You must prepare the Prospora according to the traditional recipe and do so prayerfully. You will be given the customary prayers.
- You must use the Seal on each loaf. Our current bakers will direct you where to find this.
- You must deliver the Prospora in a timely manner (the day before or morning of the service, prior to the start of Orthros).

Although women often offer this service, men are also invited and encouraged to bake Prospora. If you are willing to assist us in this sacred work, please contact Father John at the Church Office (702) 221-8245. If you are unable to help now, but still interested, please save the date for a training class held by Marcie Karas and Para Pouridis *on Saturday, September 23.*



*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on Me, a Sinner!*

## Stewardship and Community Outreach

Here we are again in September – another Ecclesiastical Year come and gone. Time flies when you are having fun and, come to think of it, whether or not you are even particularly enjoying yourself. Despite such day-to-day vagaries, our Church helps to keep us anchored to our Faith within the ebb and flow of the good, bad, and ugly events which make up our individual and collective experiences each vanishing year. One primary way this stability is achieved occurs through the celebration of the major Feasts, and this month's reflection will focus on the first of those: *The Nativity of the Theotokos, celebrated on September 8.*



In the words of St. Andrew of Crete, “The present Feast forms a link between the New and the Old Testament. It shows that Truth succeeds symbols and figures and that the New Covenant replaces the Old. Hence, all creation sings with joy, exults, and participates in the joy of this day . . . This is, in fact, the day on which the Creator of the world constructed His temple; today is the day on which by a stupendous project a creature becomes the preferred dwelling of the Creator.”

Each September, we refresh our memories with the impact this new baby, Mary, will have during the course of her life. During her earthly life she helped create the path to our salvation through her willing participation in God's plan for an Incarnate Son. She served as the preeminent Christian role model by accepting God's will and trusting in His Word following the Visitation of Archangel Gabriel (*Luke 1:38*); by offering God praise for His abundant grace and mercy during her visit with Elizabeth (*Luke 1:46-55*); and by interceding at the wedding in Cana, thus prompting Jesus toward His first miracle of changing water into wine. (*John 2:1-11*) She also suffered for us just as Simeon foretold during the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. (*Luke 2:22-35*)

There can be little doubt a sword did “pierce through” Mary's soul that day at the foot of the Cross. And, just as Jesus spoke to John, “*Behold your mother!*” (*John 19:27*), He also speaks to us as Mary continues to fulfill her role as Mother of all faithful disciples in every generation. As Mother of the Church and first among the Saints, we can ask for no better Stewardship role model – and as a focal point of “the thoughts of many hearts” from countless disciples down through the ages (including our unworthy selves), her care, her affection, her protection, and her intercession continue to be a comfort and blessing.

In your Holy Birth, Immaculate One, Joachim and Anna were rid of the shame of childlessness; Adam and Eve of the corruption of death. And so your people, free of the guilt of their sins, celebrate crying: “*The barren one gives birth to the Theotokos, who nourishes our life.*” (*Kontakion for the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos*)

*Mike Beeler, Stewardship and Outreach Committee*



# Remembering the Church through Planned Giving

“...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...” Matthew 6:20 (RSV)

For most people, the greatest financial gift we are able to give is what we leave behind when we fall asleep in the Lord. Making a Planned Gift to the Church is an opportunity to leave a legacy that strengthens God’s ministry and expresses our thankfulness to Him. Through a charitable gift, you can help sustain our place of worship first and foremost, allowing the Church to continue to meet the spiritual needs of our current faithful as well as future generations; as well as have a significant positive effect on the ministries of the Church and the people whose lives are changed by them. A charitable gift may also give you substantial current tax benefits as well as estate tax benefits. As part of our Parish Stewardship Committee’s ongoing efforts, we are inquiring if parishioners would be interested in attending a Church hosted meeting/workshop, where estate planning attorneys would come and discuss how basic estate planning tools work such as wills, trusts, powers of attorney, and the probate process; as well as how Planned Giving can be incorporated into one’s estate plan.

Giving to the Church is an opportunity to examine our priorities and values. It is an opportunity to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in grace. Giving is not a substitute of our commitment – it is an expression of our commitment. Come And See what we can do together with your support.

**CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION**

If you are interested in attending a future meeting/workshop, please email [legacygiving@vegasgreekorthodox.com](mailto:legacygiving@vegasgreekorthodox.com) or call the Church at (702) 221-8245 to be placed on the invite notification list for any future events.

**SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

5300 El Camino Road, Las Vegas, NV 89118

**The Community of  
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
Cordially Invites You to  
“A Grand Event”**

**Honoring Gus W. Flangas**

**With the Ariston Award**

**Saturday, October 28, 2023  
6:00 pm Cocktails - 7:00 pm Dinner**

**South Point Casino and Hotel  
Sonoma Ballroom  
9777 Las Vegas Boulevard South  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89183**

Ariston means “excellence” in Greek and describes the purpose and intent of this prestigious award.

The Ariston Award was established by St. John the Baptist Parish to recognize persons who maintain a sustaining relationship with the Orthodox Christian Church and demonstrate a profound appreciation for Greek Culture.

Award recipients have exemplified qualities of noble character, compassion and charity. Having achieved a high level of distinction and honor, recipients reflect the ideals, teachings and traditions of the Greek Orthodox Faith.

For over four decades Gus has steadfastly served our community as a Parish Council member, ten terms as Parish Council President, nineteen times as Greek Food Festival Chairman, and in numerous other leadership positions.

Gus has devoted countless hours to serving his Church, Country, and the Las Vegas Community.

Please contact Chairman Mark Karris or Karen Rawlinson at the Church Office (702) 221-8245. A formal invitation will follow in mid-September.



Dear Father John, Father Florin and Beloved Fellow Parishioners:

With every good intention this letter is intended to refresh the memory of our community and/or familiarize those of us who may be unaware of the history of the *Hellenic Historical Society*.

In 2003, at the Parish Assembly of that year, the *Hellenic Historical Society* (HHS) was established. From that time through 2009 a concentrated effort was made by our archivists to systematically collect and preserve the first 50 years of history of our St. John the Baptist Church Community and the Greek Community at large in Las Vegas and Nevada. This monumental undertaking guaranteed that our history has not been lost.

In 2009 our community was able to enjoy the fruits of that labor at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. During the 3-day celebration of *Our Golden Heritage*, 740 chronologically ordered display boards with a program guide, presenting approximately 7,500 documents, letters, charters, books, photos, newspaper clippings, invitations, etc. were mounted on the walls of Panos Hall and on the walls of the foyer.

In 2019 at the 2-day 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of our community, *Our Diamond Jubilee*, we were able to further enjoy the fruits of that initial labor in addition to 50 new display boards. These displays were reproduced and those interested can find five large albums in the Church Library.

Please remember how valuable and interesting our story has been. Too many of us do not know of the events that led us to this magnificent Church where we are today. There are **many gaps in the history** which we would like to fill. To further preserve a more inclusive and detailed history we are asking the Parish Council, the Ministries and Pan Orthodox organizations to **select a member of their body to act as historian to gather past, present and future records and to share these documents with the Hellenic Historical Society.**

**We welcome any and all submissions from any member of the community who has material pertinent to the St. John the Baptist Church Community and the Greek Community at large in Las Vegas and Nevada.**

We look forward to receiving your historical materials. Please see the guidelines for your submissions.

We count on your continued support of this most important ministry.

Thank you kindly.

Your Sisters in Christ, for Hellenic Historical Society.

*Nitsa Filios*  
[nitsalv@aol.com](mailto:nitsalv@aol.com)  
702 595-6888

*Cheryl Pandelis*  
[cheryl.pandelis@outlook.com](mailto:cheryl.pandelis@outlook.com)  
702 338-1601

*Susan Stamis*  
[susanstamis@gmail.com](mailto:susanstamis@gmail.com)  
702 460-9954





**SPECIFICATIONS FOR SUBMISSIONS**

- a) actual materials to **Karen Rawlinson at St. John Church Office (702 221-8245)**  
*(a receipt will be issued for temporarily loaned or permanently donated items)*
- b) digital materials (**high resolution** scanned documents, captioned photos, PDF's, etc.).  
to **susanstamis@gmail.com**

**SUGGESTED MATERIALS** *(including but not limited to)*

- a) Documents
- b) Letters
- c) Charters
- d) Books
- e) Newspaper pages or clippings
- f) Invitations
- g) Photos (please include)
  - 1. name of event
  - 2. date of event
  - 3. names of people
    - a) labeled left to right
    - b) front row, second row, third row etc.

We count on your continued support of this most important ministry.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

*Nitsa Filios*  
[nitsalv@aol.com](mailto:nitsalv@aol.com)  
702 595-6888

*Cheryl Pandelis*  
[cheryl.pandelis@outlook.com](mailto:cheryl.pandelis@outlook.com)  
702 338-1601

*Susan Stamis*  
[susanstamis@gmail.com](mailto:susanstamis@gmail.com)  
702 460-9954

## Ministry News

### Church School



Hi everyone! I hope everyone had a nice summer with some great vacations.

We are ready to hit the ground running with Church School 2023-2024. The first day of class will be *on Sunday, September 10*. Following Holy Communion we will gather the students for the Blessing of the Water for the New School Year. After, we will proceed to our classes.

We have a few new guidelines that we are implementing this year.

1. Every student must have a registration on file.
2. The household of students must be a paid Steward of 2023 and commit to 2024.
3. Parents must be on the Church grounds during Church School, which starts following Holy Communion and ends at 12:15pm. Absolutely no drop-offs.
4. The last day to enroll in the 2023-2024 program will be November 5, 2023.
5. For students new to the area who wish to enroll after November 5, the parents must bring proof from the previous Parish that they were an active member in Church School.

As always, we follow the CCSD calendar for school age. To be in the Pre-K class, the student must be 4 years old by August 1, 2023. Basically, they will be starting Kindergarten in the next CCSD school year.

The classes will be in the following classrooms. Pre-K will be taught in Classroom 6 by Katie Kanis and Caroline Lekar. Kindergarten and First Grade will be taught in Classroom 2 and 3 by Eleni and Alexandra Demoleas. Second and Third Grade will be taught in Classroom 4 by Sharon Katsaros. Fourth and Fifth Grade will be taught in Classroom 1 by Sonia Merritt. Middle School will be taught in Classroom 5 by Eileen and Sam Koutsulis. High School will be taught in the Library by Yanni Tsandilas and Adam Porphyrios Prestage.

We are using the *Orthodox Journeys* program, and the curriculum this year focuses on *Lives of the Saints*. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns. We are looking forward to a great school year and teaching your students about our wonderful Orthodox Faith.

Please remember: No class *on Sunday, September 17* due to the Annual Greek Food Festival. All Hands on Deck Day to volunteer: You are never too young!

In Christ, Eileen Koutsulis, Church School Director (702) 521-6516 or [vivaleenie@cox.net](mailto:vivaleenie@cox.net)

### Greek Folk Dance

Welcome back to another year of Greek Folk Dance! Registration for our Folk Dance Ministry is now open, and practices started on August 20 for preparation for the Festival as well as FDF! Please see the form in this issue of *The Desert Messenger* or ask Karen in the Church Office. Registration fees are \$125 per dancer for our competitive groups and \$75 per dancer for our youngest, noncompetitive group. There will be a Parent informational meeting *on September 24, after Liturgy*, where we will take all questions and outline our plans for the year. Please mark your calendars! We look forward to a great year! Questions? Email [stjohngreekdance@gmail.com](mailto:stjohngreekdance@gmail.com).

In Christ, Sia Dalacas and the Folk Dance Board

### Orthodox Family Fellowship (OFF) - For Elementary School Children

After our first well-attended gathering in August, we will meet up again *on Sunday, September 10 at 5:00 pm in Panos Hall*. We will share a short prayer and potluck dinner with GOYA, and then break into our own age groups for spiritual discussion and to have fun together.

Please confirm your participation at [frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com](mailto:frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com).

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you and hope to see you there!

In Christ, Father Florin and April Rivera, OFF Advisors

## GOYA - Our Teen Ministry

The month of September marks the beginning of the New Church Year. After our enjoyable fellowship last month, we look forward to meeting you all again for our first GOYA Night *on Sunday, September 10 at 5:00 pm in Panos Hall*. We will share a short prayer and potluck dinner with OFF, and then break into our own age group for spiritual discussion and to enjoy other games and sports together. Be prepared for a wonderful evening of food and fellowship!

Equally important, we need ALL GOYANs to take a shift at our *Soda Booth at the Greek Food Festival on September 15, 16 and 17*. As last year, this booth will be completely run by our teenagers, so please, let's come together and serve our beloved Church! It will also be a great way to get to know each other better. Sign up and volunteer and smile as people come to purchase water and soda. Maha Habiba will be heading up our volunteer sheet!

Please RSVP for both events at [frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com](mailto:frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com). Hope to see you soon!

Love in Christ, Father Florin and Maha, GOYA Advisors

## Young Adults - 18 Years through Early 30s

I would like to thank each and every one of you for being present and helping during the Ordination Luncheon in July. I hope everyone took the opportunity of meeting and greeting Archbishop Elpidophoros, our beloved Metropolitan Gerasimos and Bishop Ioannis.

This month, please step up and volunteer at our *Greek Food Festival on September 15, 16 and 17*! Help is very much needed, as every year, so your presence will be very much appreciated.

Thank you again for your dedication and hope to see you there!

In Our Lord Christ, Father Florin

## Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings from the Bookstore!

New in store this month from Holy Trinity Publications and the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner of Mesa Potamos is *Glorified in America: Laborers in the New World from Saint Alexis to Elder Ephraim*.

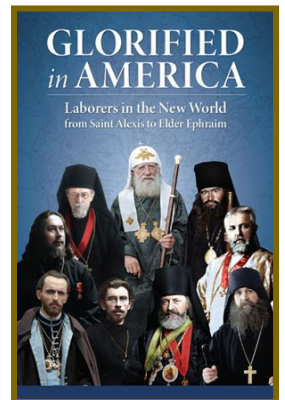
From the Publisher: *Through their life and labors, these saints who lived and worked in America proved that Christ and His Grace transcend any geographical limitation, and holiness can be achieved in any historical, sociopolitical, or geographic setting. (Introduction to the Greek Edition)*

Utilizing both words and images, this book animates the lives of a selection of holy men who labored on the North American continent in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to give birth to the Orthodox Church in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Some of these have been formally glorified as Saints and others may yet be. This book is much more than a simple historical account or retelling of their lives and particular service in North America: It is a spiritual manual, which strives to inspire and encourage its readers in their own struggle for the attainment of the holiness that adorns the lives of those recounted here.

Chronologically the lives described herein span the years from 1854 to 2019 and focus on the time each man spent laboring in North America. None of them spent all their life on this continent but they left a legacy on these shores that endures to this day and will surely continue. The text is interspersed by an extensive collection of both black and white photographs and pen and ink drawings that, together with a final section of rich color photography, contribute greatly to bringing the reality of their life and times to us.

Looking forward to seeing you soon for your copy or other Bookstore needs!

Serving you with Love in Christ, Paraskevi Santamaria, Bookstore Director



*Mr. & Mrs.*

We would like to thank want to thank Thomas and Catalina Magee for graciously hosting an amazing dinner at their beautiful home in August. We enjoyed great fellowship and a lively discussion.

We will not be having a gathering in September because, as every year, we need all hands on deck at the *Greek Food Festival on September 15, 16 and 17*. We will reconvene next month, and more information will follow in the October issue of *The Desert Messenger*. See you at the Festival!

Yours in Christ, Father John, Presvytera Maria, Father Florin and Presvytera Alexandra

*Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd*

Join us as we go see “My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3” at Red Rock Theaters *on Saturday, September 9 at 5:30 pm*. We will eat dinner at the Food Court together and then see the movie at 7:10 pm. Please purchase your tickets online prior or at the box office that day.

We will then come together and help at the Greek Food Festival *on September 15, 16 and 17!* We need all hands on deck: We have faith that our group will step up and meet the challenge.

God Bless! Demetrious Asim

*Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship*

I hope your summer was safe and enjoyable. A friendly reminder that we will not meet for our luncheons again until October. However, I am asking if you would like to donate bottles of wine for our raffles, please drop them off to Karen in the Church Office. We hope to have more involvement and cannot wait to see you.

If you can, please volunteer for the *Greek Food Festival on September 15, 16 and 17*.

Love in Christ, Paula Kelesis for the Forerunners



Photos by Curt Newton

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

5300 S. El Camino Road  
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Rev. Father John Hondros  
frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Father Florin Ristache  
frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Deacon John Nixon  
deaconjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Karen Rawlinson  
Administrative Assistant

Michelle Eugenio  
Bookkeeper

Bruce Royal  
Maintenance & Grounds

*Office Hours*

Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Telephone: (702) 221-8245  
www.vegasgreekorthodox.com

Parish Council: John Fotopoulos

Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship & Community Outreach:  
John Karas

Building & Maintenance:  
Eleni Filios

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:  
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

**GOYA:**

Fr. Florin Ristache & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:  
Fr. Florin Ristache & April Rivera

Young Adults: Fr. Florin Ristache

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

**Mr. & Mrs.:**

Fr. John & Presv. Maria,  
Fr. Florin & Presv. Alexandra

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore:  
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

Hellenic Historical Society:  
Nitsa Filios, Cheryl Pandelis &  
Susan Stamis

Photography & Live-Streaming:  
Bill & Erin Bruninga



# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH 2023-2024 CHURCH SCHOOL REGISTRATION

*Please Write Legibly - Use One Form Per Child*

Church School Classes begin on Sunday, September 10.  
Pre-Kindergarten (4 years by August 1) through High School.

*Let's show our children how to be committed to Christ by bringing them to  
the Divine Liturgy and Church School each week!*

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School Grade (2023-2024 school year): \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs, Allergies, Medications: \_\_\_\_\_  
(e.g. "Autism Spectrum," "Peanuts," "Insulin Dependent")

Patron Saint and Date of Commemoration: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN OR OTHER RELATIVE (Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_)

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

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

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City ZIP

Student Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Student E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
If you DO NOT want your child to be contacted by phone/text or by e-mail, please leave one or both of these blank.

I give my child permission to take part in all Church School activities and  
will support this ministry through my annual Stewardship to St. John the Baptist Church.

Signed, Parent or Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

**Many hands ease the load!** Please let us know in which way you would like to help our children:

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Cleanup                      \_\_\_\_\_ Crafts

*Please return this registration form to Karen at the Church Office before classes start.*

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
GREEK FOLK DANCE MINISTRY

2023-2024 REGISTRATION FORM

*One Registration Form Required for Each Dancer*  
*Registration Deadline: September 24, 2023*

Dancer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Minimum Age: 4 years old by September 24, 2023

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_, Nevada Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information (Please fill out completely and legibly):

Phone Numbers: Mother's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Father's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Dancer's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

If you DO NOT want your child to be contacted by text message, please check this box:

Email Addresses: Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Dancer (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

If you DO NOT want your child to be contacted by e-mail, please leave this blank.

I understand and accept the following requirements for participation in the Greek Folk Dance Ministry:

1. The dancer must be Baptized and Chrismated in the Orthodox Church. Proof of Baptism or Chrismation must be provided for each dancer (or previously verified by Father John).
2. The parent(s) must be Steward(s) of St. John Church for 2023 **before their child(ren) attend any dance practice** and Steward(s) for 2024 by January 13, 2024. **Please check one box:**
  - o I am already a 2023 Steward. (This will be verified with the Church Office.)
  - o I am attaching my Stewardship Commitment Card to this registration form.
3. The dancer must **on a regular basis participate** in Divine Liturgy on Sunday, throughout the year, and in Church School (if he or she is of age), **September through May**. Infrequent participation is a basis for removal from the program.
4. The dancer must arrive to practice **on time** and be **respectful**. The Greek Folk Dance Ministry has a strict **NO BULLYING** policy. This includes both verbal and physical bullying. Any dancer participating in bullying will be subject to removal from the program.

(Continued On Back)

5. The dancer and parent(s) are expected to participate in all fundraising activities of the Greek Folk Dance Ministry.
6. Dancers who have excessive absences may be subject to removal from the program.
7. All practices will be CLOSED. This means no parents, families, or friends may be in the practice room during practice times. This rule does not apply to Liondaria, the non-competitive group.
8. The Folk Dance Festival (FDF) will take place February 15-18, 2024. Both the location and format are unknown at this time. The dancer and parent(s) must determine by November 12, 2023 if they will attend FDF. Dancers who elect not to go to FDF may only participate in dance practices through the end of December.
9. The dancer and parent(s) agree to meet all financial responsibilities assigned to the participants by the St. John Greek Folk Dance Ministry and FDF.
10. Registration fees are:
  - a. Competitive Dance Groups: \$125 per dancer, or \$100 for each additional sibling, due by **September 24**. (No registrations will be accepted after this date.)
  - b. Liondaria (non-competitive) Dance Group: \$75. (Must be at least 4 years old by September 30.)
11. Registration can only be accepted when all of the following are turned in:
  - a. Registration form
  - b. Non-refundable registration fee
  - c. Proof of Baptism/Chrismation (unless verified by Father John)
  - d. Stewardship Commitment Card (unless verified by Church Office)
12. Dancers from previous years must re-register. **Dancers are prohibited from practice until their registration is complete and until their parent(s) become Steward(s) for 2023.**

*First Folk Dance Practice for ALL Dancers: Sunday, August 13, 2023*  
*Additional practice days/times TBA*

For information on the St. John Greek Folk Dance Ministry, please contact the Folk Dance Board at [stjohngreekdance@gmail.com](mailto:stjohngreekdance@gmail.com) or the Church at (702) 221-8245.

MAKE OUT CHECKS TO "ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH," WITH "FOLK DANCE GROUP" IN THE MEMO LINE.

Signature of Dancer

Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

FOR DANCE BOARD USE:

Payment Received On: \_\_\_\_\_ Check #: \_\_\_\_\_ OR Cash: \_\_\_\_\_

Stewardship Card Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of Baptism/Chrismation: \_\_\_\_\_

## *With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2023*

### *If you wish to become a Parish Steward, please call Karen for a Pledge Form*

Acovino, Richard and Angela	Christou, Toni	Fountas, Constantinos	Katre, Dhimitra and
Adamatopoulos, Alejandro and Lopez, Mariana	Coll, Patrick and Anita	Fountoulakis, Vasileios	Fry, Jesse
Adamy, Marina	Collins, David	Franco, Yolanda	Katre, Sotir Mark
Adondakis, George and Kim	Conger, William and Alexia	Frangakis, Christos and Anastasia	Katris, Nick and Theana
Alcala, Georgia	Costacos, John	Frudakis, George and Darlene	Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon
Alexander, Eleni	Costuros, George and Marsha	Gancheva, Hrist	Kelesis, John and Vicki
Alford, Cynthia "Mary"	Cotsilis, Jenny	Gauvin, Chad and Marissa	Kelesis, Paula
Allen, John and Denice	Crist, Adam and Kanistra	Geiger, Dan and	Kiflezgi, Rahel
Alvarez, Kelly	Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia	Hart, Dora	Kirchner, Gary "Barlaam"
Anastasakis, Mark and Elaine	Dalacas, Eleni	Gekakis, George	Kirollos, Michael and
Andrews, Catherine+	Dalacas, Georgia	Generales, John and Arlene	Molina, Adriana
Andrews, Chris and Pamela	Damascus, Peter	George, Pete and Georgia	Kokkinis, Peter and Jennifer
Andrews, George	Daskalos, George and Voula	Georgis, John	Koliambas, Eleni
Andrews, Vasiliki	Davis, Matthew and Christine	Georgis, Pete and Keshia	Kontos, Diana
Andricopulos, Margo	De Bree, Everett	Ghebreab, Daniel and	Koroni, Tara
Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette	Deep, Joseph and Alexi	Ghermay, Selam	Kostas, James
Antoniou, Elias and Glorielys	Demas, Spiro and Rita	Gialketsis, William and Rachele	Kostopoulos, George
Aristides, George and Diana	Demolas, Maria and	Giambi, Jason and Kristian	Kostopoulos, Georgia
Asim, Demetrious	Nour, Reza	Giouzelis, Sasa	Kountanis, Panagiota
Atkins, Sean and Christina	Demoleas, Alexandra	Goodman, Linda	Kouretas, Daniel
Balaouras, Panos and Helen	Demoleas, Eleni and	Gordon, Victor and Demetria	Kouretas, Spiro
Balason, Voula	Thomas, Kristian	Grabovoi, Daphne	Kouris, Demitris and Terry
Baldwin, Richard and Vivi	Demoleas, Spero and Grace	Granillo, Abrahan	Koutsulis, John and Eileen
Balodimas, James	Demoleas, Stephanie	Gutierrez, Connie	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie
Barbarino, Demetra	Demopoulos, Dimitrios and Selina	Gutierrez, Daniel	Krikie, Jonathan and Iryna
Barrett, Jeremiah	Demopoulos, Vasiliki	Hagos, Yohannes and Mebrat	Kypreos, George
Bartel, Robert and Ioanna	Dimitri, Janet and Martha	Hamilton, Mary	Kypreos, Lesley
Bartzos, Eugenia	Dominguez, Eric and Amalia	Hamilton, Paul and Brandi	Kypreos, Peter and Geri
Beeler, Mike and Carolyn	Doskas, Athanasios and Anastasia	Haralambakis, Demetre and	Kyriannis, Justin and Linda
Beeman, Benita	Doukakis, Panagiotis and Chri	Dimitra	Kyriazopoulos, Constantine, Jr.
Belch, George	Dounis, Georgia	Haramis, John and	Lakkis, Christina
Belojevic, Marija	Dounis, Kiki	Kitsios, Eugenia	Lamancusa, Lisa
Berendji, Jim and Vivian+	Dramitinos, Mary	Hastings, Teri	Landahl, Richard and Johana
Bieker, Adam and Cassie	Dudunakis, Michael	Haynes, Maria	Lavine, Frederick
Bieker, Georgeea	Earl, Christine	Hemmers, Oliver and	Lee, David and Alexandra
Birtas, Helen and Ann	Eliades, Aristotelis and Caroline	Pantelas, Anne	Lekar, Caroline
Bjorklund, Danielle and	Eliades, Eleni and	Himaegiosca Goldie Family	Lekar, Michael and Effie
Geronsin, Justin	Garza, Everardo	Hollar, Michelle and	Leong, Marissa and Elaine
Blume, Michael	Eliades, Gregory and Maria	DiGioia, Antonio	Leonis, Tishe
Bochanis, Aris and Savannah	Eliades, Harry and Agapi	Hondros, Christina	Leonis, Nick and Sophia
Bochanis, George	Eliades, Katerina	Hondros, Christopher and Darlene	Leventis, Nicholas and Christina
Booth, Alina	Eliades, Sia	Hondros, Fr. John and	Lexis, Annette
Britten, Ronald and Carol	Eliakis, Peter	Presv. Maria	Liaos, James and Tina
Brown, Faye	Eliakis, Varthie	Hondros, Marissa	Liaos, Steven and Francine
Brown, Mark and Alyssa	Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Howard, Eddie and Willie	Likourinou, Angie
Bruninga, William and Erin	Eyler, Fr. Paul+ and Nathan	Hristopoulou, Spiridoula	Likourinou, Steve and June
Bryant, Timothy and Janet	Failla, Jennifer	Iteen, Robert and Sophia	Litsos, Nicholas and Catherine
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Fenlason, Nathan and	Jandete, Johanna	Loughton, Dustin and Rena
Carabas, Sotiroulla	Zmina-Fenlason, Jennifer	Jaynes, Christine	Makris, Apostolos
Carahalıs, John and Constance	Feola, Richard	Jensen, Matthew and Michelle	Malamatos, Kindina+
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Filius, George and Nitsa	Kachikis, Ernestine	Manakides, Alexis and
Carrico, William and Alexandra	Filius, Spiridon and Eleni	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Varonos, Nicholas
Carter, Maria	Fischer, Cheryl	Kakavulias, John and Elizabeth	Mangafas, Kyriakos and Elefteria
Chachas, Bessie	Fischetti, George and Cassidy	Kalkas, John and Rena	Manolakos, Catherine
Chachas, James	Fitzgerald, Norman and	Kambouris, Litsa	Manos, Constantine and Michele
Chagares, Kiki	McCullen, Sandra	Kanis, Constantinos and Katie	Mansour, Muna
Chamie, Elie, Emil and Claudine	Flangas, Gary and Amanda	Karas, George	Markakis, Sandy Kiriaki
Chandrinis, Alexia	Flangas, Gus and Tamara	Karas, James	Markantonis, Demos and Kate
Chanos, Jennifer	Flangas, Marilyn	Karas, John and Marcie	Markantonis, George and Sarah
Chomakos, Dean and Tammy	Fleischer, Robert and Penny	Karas, Kevin and Elaine	Matsis, John and Rebecca
Chondrakis, Dimosthenis and	Foster, Kyle and	Karris, Mark and Suzanne	Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki
Kragerud, Kaaren	Pierro, Maria Elena	Kasiotis, Nicholas and Claudia	Mavros, Alex and Jen
	Fotopoulos, John and Barbara	Katopodis, Efstratios	Mavros, Debbie



*With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2023  
If you wish to become a Parish Steward, please call Karen for a Pledge Form*

Mavroudis, Frank  
Mazzorana, Vicki  
McKinney, Michael and Mersene  
McManus, Jeanette  
McPherson, Robert and Marie  
McSweeney, Farolyn  
Mehas, Andrew and Samantha  
Melake, Nayel and Euxana  
Menegatos, James  
Merritt, Devin and Sonia  
Meyers, Evon  
Mikelis, Nikolas and Angela  
Minas, Arthur and Ewa  
Monolakis, Anthony  
Monoyudis, Jim and Julie  
Moore, Brenda  
Murray, Christopher and  
George, Veneta  
Newell, Ronald and Maria  
Nicholas, Christina  
Nicholas, John and Estella  
Nichols, George and Tereza  
Nicolas, Samer and Christine  
Niforos, Helen  
Nikolopoulos, Nick and Dimitra  
Nikoloudakos, Georgia  
Nixon, Deacon John and  
Diakonissa Elyn  
Olmsted, Travis and Marilyn  
Orlando, Ritsa  
Osborn, Alexandra and  
Spotti, Peter  
Oustian, Juliette and Ararat  
Pahigiannis, Nikon  
Paikos, Tom and Elizabeth  
Pajak, Scott and Angela  
Palivos, Peter and Vicky  
Pallis, Paul  
Pandelis, Cheryl  
Panos, Jeanne  
Papalois, John and Maria  
Papas, Christian and Nicole

Papas, Louis and Magaly  
Papas, Peter and Rita  
Papas, Peter Nikko  
Pappas, Panagiotis and Andrea  
Paschalis, Evangelos and Maria  
Payan, Luis and Eleni  
Pendleton, Tricia  
Peratikos, Tony  
Peterson, Todd and Diane  
Petro, Aleko and Georgia  
Petrou, Jim and Penelopi  
Philoptochos Society  
Pierro, Joe and Rhonda  
Polimerou, Angelina  
Politis, Pantelis and Dimitra  
Poulis, Chris and Francine  
Poulos, Christine  
Pouridis, Kouli and Para  
Powell, Scott and Angela  
Powers, Russell and Rebecca  
Prestage, Adam and Courtney  
Raptis, Presvytera Evonne  
Rasmussen, Scott and Rebecca  
Reizakis, Yianna Albertson-  
Rigas, Anthony and Mary  
Rigas, Evie  
Rihani, Gary and Linda  
Ristache, Fr. Florin and  
Presv. Alexandra  
Rivera, Elias and April  
Robison, Diane and Patricia  
Rodis, Dimitri and Angeline  
Rodis, Sophia  
Rotas, Beatrice  
Sakkas, Georgios and  
Stavropoulos, Bessie  
Salon, Janelle  
Santamaria, Jennifer and Robert  
Savvas, Savva  
Sechrist, Carl and Christine  
Shremelis, Andy and Leslie  
Sellen, Jeffrey

Senior Forerunners  
Setian, Gary  
Simmons, John  
Simos, Eleni  
Simos, Tony and Lorie  
Simpson, Bryan and Julie  
Sirhan, Michael and  
Khuri, Imtisal  
Skalkotos, Nikolas and Georgia  
Skandros, Stephanie  
Snow, Clifford and Christina  
Sorkhabi, Arian and  
Habiba, Maha  
Soteropoulos, Gust and Rita  
Sotiropoulos, Christopher and  
Jessica  
Soursos, Helene  
Sparkuhl, Alex and Antoinette  
Sparkuhl, Andreas and Diana  
Spirtos, Nick  
Staub, Douglas and Anastasia  
Stavropoulos, Terry and Niki  
Stenos, Louis +  
Stransky, John and Rachel  
Stransky, Mark  
Szukiewicz, Joseph and Justina  
Tadich, Andrea  
Tadich, Katerina  
Tafoya, Steven and Irene  
Temple, Voula  
Thanos, Nicholas and Victoria  
Theros, James and Kathryn  
Thomas, Anastasia Palivos-  
Thompson, Maggy  
Thompson, Steven and Alik  
Tijiboy, Ana  
Tijiboy, Christine  
Tohme, Tony and May  
Tsiralidis, Kosmas and Katerina  
Tsobanakis, Chris  
Tsobanoglou, Niki and Paris  
Tsolis, Christos and Panagioula

Tsortanidis, Sophia  
Vervilos, James and Anna  
Villatoro, Luis and  
Prifti, Teuta  
Wadlow, Nicholas and  
Pamela  
Wagner, Sophye  
Wainscott, Betty  
Wallace, Robert and Katerina  
Walter, Vernon and Alice  
Ward, Angeliki  
Waterhouse, David and  
Aleighzja  
Webb, Taylor  
Wilkerson, Chuck and  
Kristina  
Williams, Anthony and Anna  
Williamson, Daniel and  
Stavroula Halatsis-  
Wilson, Clyde  
Wilson, Kelly and  
Egi, Junichiro  
Wilson, Cleo  
Wirtz, Aphrodite  
Womack, Karl  
Womack, Kimberly  
Xerogianes, Nick and Nikki  
Xikis, Victoria  
Yurkov, Andre and Kalina  
Zachariou, Sozos and Aspasia  
Zaferatos, Ted  
Zakis, Pope  
Zarkos, Nick and Dina  
Zaronis, Mary  
Zarras, Nick and Chery  
Zervas, Dionisios and Cacilda  
Zimmerman, Paul, Angela,  
Christopher and Vangeli  
Zimmerman, Paul and Julie  
Zmina, Stephen and Cynthia



**2023  
Stewardship  
Report  
(as of 8/29/23)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$544,293 (\$508,123 in 2022)  
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$399,505 (\$386,866 in 2022)  
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$144,788 (\$121,257 in 2022)  
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 388 (376 in 2022)  
 2023 Goal: \$600,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

**“WALK  
IN  
LOVE”  
(Ephesians 5:2)**

<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>
\$1 - \$500	168	\$ 44,568
\$501 - \$1,000	84	\$ 65,608
\$1,001 - \$2,500	91	\$142,669
\$2,501 - \$5,000	26	\$ 96,264
\$5,001 - \$9999	13	\$ 78,964
\$10,000 & Above	6	\$116,220
<b>Total Families</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>\$544,293</b>

**Church Account Summaries  
July 2023**

Nevada State Bank Accounts	June	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	July	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$48,269.80	\$55,341.04	\$14,574.82	29,453.56	\$70,623.32	\$18,108.78	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$61,559.50	\$2,920.26			\$13,000.00	\$51,479.76	Transferred to GOA
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$82,495.03	\$4,700.00		\$2,240.00	\$200.00	\$114,755.03	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$177,954.48	\$2,516.23	\$100.00	\$190.40	\$1,709.25	\$178,671.06	
Building & Maintenance (B&M)	\$269,466.37	\$3,130.00		\$43,855.65	\$138.28	\$228,602.44	
Folk Dance Group	\$19,256.82			\$10.00		\$19,246.82	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,250.47					\$3,250.47	
<b>Designated Funds</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>Deposits</b>	<b>Transfers In</b>	<b>Withdraws/ Checks</b>	<b>Transfers Out</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$42,384.41	\$1,458.00		\$190.40	\$1,359.25	\$42,292.76	
<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>Deposits</b>	<b>Transfers In</b>	<b>Withdraws/ Checks</b>	<b>Transfers Out</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$10,108.24	\$1,058.23	\$100.00			\$11,266.47	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$137,116.44					\$137,116.44	
GOYA	\$530.36					\$530.36	
Restricted Donation	\$5,654.00					\$5,654.00	
Emergency Fund	\$5,000.00					\$5,000.00	
Three Priests	\$51,268.06				\$350.00	\$50,918.06	Purchased Live Streaming equipment
Building Fund	-\$75,000.00					-\$75,000.00	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
Building Fund Balance	-\$4,162.60					-\$4,162.60	B&M funds paid out through CC during set up of B&M Acct.
<b>Designated, Restricted and Other Total</b>	<b>\$177,954.48</b>	<b>\$2,516.23</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>	<b>\$190.40</b>	<b>\$1,709.25</b>	<b>\$178,671.06</b>	
<b>Building and Maintenance Funds</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>Deposits</b>	<b>Transfers In</b>	<b>Withdraws/ Checks</b>	<b>Transfers Out</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Building Fund	\$173,218.95	\$1,630.00		\$37,355.65	\$138.28	\$137,355.02	
Panos Flooring Repair	\$23,722.83					\$23,722.83	
Roof Appeal	\$10,283.22					\$10,283.22	
HVAC	\$48,351.50					\$48,351.50	
Giving Tree	\$8,889.87					\$8,889.87	
Lighting	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00		\$6,500.00		\$0.00	
<b>Building &amp; Maintenance Funds Total</b>	<b>\$269,466.37</b>	<b>\$3,130.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$43,855.65</b>	<b>\$138.28</b>	<b>\$228,602.44</b>	
<b>Other Funds</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>Deposits</b>	<b>Transfers In</b>	<b>Withdraws/ Checks</b>	<b>Transfers Out</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$65,086.46		\$2,194.93			\$67,281.39	as of 06.30.23
Commonwealth Investments (Icon)	\$126,983.67		\$3,191.40			\$130,175.07	Change in Investment As of 07.31.23

July 2023 Candles **\$5,845.03**  
 July 2023 Trays **\$4,571.40**  
**Total July 2023 Candles & Trays \$10,416.43**



# SEPTEMBER 2023 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

						<b>1</b> Ecclesiastical New Year Begins	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 6:30 pm Adult Study: On the Holy Spirit	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>9</b> 5:30 pm Kali Parea "Big Fat 3" Movie and Dinner at Red Rock Theaters	
<b>10</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Blessing of New Church School Year 12:15 pm Folk Dance Practice 5:00 pm OFF and GOYA Night in Panos Hall	<b>11</b> 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 4:30 pm Orthros/ Procession of Holy Cross at Doxology 5:30 pm Divine Liturgy (Elevation of the Life Giving Cross Observed) 7:00 pm Festival Meeting	<b>14</b> Elevation of the Life Giving Cross (Celebrated Preceding Evening)	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Greek Food Festival ~ Sept. 15, 16 and 17</div>	
<b>17</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Greek Food Festival</div>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 6:30 pm Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith: Class #1	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 10:00 am Proshpora Training Class in the Kitchen	
<b>24</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:15 pm Dance Parent Meeting in Library	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 6:30 pm Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith: Class #2	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	

# *The Desert Messenger*

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
5300 South El Camino Road  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89118-1922*

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## THE DESERT MESSENGER

### *The Way of the Lord*

*Tree of the Cross, you are thrice-blessed,  
for Jesus Christ, Who is King and Lord,  
was Crucified on you.*

*Through you fallen is the one  
who by a tree deceived us,  
for he was lured by God Who in the flesh  
indeed was hung and nailed to you,  
and who grants to our souls His peace.*

*(Ode Five, Katavasias of the Cross,  
Translation by Father Seraphim Dedes)*

