“And they were struck with great fear.”

This is the way the Gospel of Luke describes the reaction of the shepherds in the field when they encountered the angelic powers shining forth the glory of God and declaring to them the “good news of great joy” that a Savior, Christ the Lord, was born that very night in Bethlehem.

If you really stop and reflect upon the entire Christmas story, there are quite a few moments when fear and confusion engulfed the key characters.

First there’s Mary, the young 14 year old virgin maiden, who one day unexpectedly meets the Archangel Gabriel. And not only is it a shock to come face to face with an angel from heaven, but the news he shares is no less upsetting! “You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son… and He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest… and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:30-33)

We can only try and imagine the fear and confusion (and doubt?) that Mary must have wrestled with. How can someone meet an angel? How can a virgin give birth to a child? How can this child be the Son of God? What does this all mean? How is this possible? What is happening to me?

Then we have Joseph, the righteous old man who has agreed to betroth Mary and care for her. His world is turned upside down when he discovers that this virgin maiden is pregnant. And she has the audacity to tell him that it is from the Holy...
Sts. Constantine and Helen
Greek Orthodox Church
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Facebook: St Constantine Helens (Church)
Church Office Hours: Monday, Fridays 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

The mission of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church is to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are a community of believers who journey towards our Lord Jesus Christ and one another through our WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WITNESS, and SERVICE. We invite all people to join us on this journey in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are under the jurisdiction of
His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of America
His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

Father Luke A. Veronis
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THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS

Continued from Front Cover

Spirit? Again, confusion. Fear. Doubt. Even anger?

And then we have the nativity scene. Joseph and the pregnant Mary travel to Bethlehem on a long, dangerous journey only to reach their destination and have Mary’s time of delivery arrive. Yet there is no where to go. No inn or home to stay in. No hospitality to welcome and care for them. The only place they can go is inside a dark cave full of animals. Imagine the scene. Imagine the smell!

To give birth to a child in such unsanitary conditions is hard to imagine. And then to realize that this is not only a birth, but the birth of the Son of God? Totally incomprehensible!

In fact, the entire Christmas story seems so unbelievable. When we reflect on its essence and meaning, we can sum it up only by saying that this is truly a deep, unfathomable mystery! How could Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe, come down on earth as a helpless, little baby child? The omnipotent God now a defenseless babe? What utter humility. Truly an unexplainable mystery.

One of the hymns of our Church succinctly summed it up: “Behold a mystery, a strange and wonderful mystery!”

I offer my reflection on this “strange and wonderful mystery” precisely because I want us to realize the radical nature of Christmas. In the midst of all the tinsel and decorations and rampant commercialism of our contemporary celebration of Christmas, serious Christians need to realize that what we truly are celebrating has little to do with the superficiality of the world’s merriment. To the contrary, our focus has everything to do with the radical coming of God into the world! Christmas is about God becoming human, about the eternal Word of God becoming one of us!

The Romanian philosopher, Peter Sutea, noted after the fall of communism in 1990, “The fall of communism is no great revolution. There has been only one revolution in the history of humanity – the coming of God as a man, the incarnation of Divine Love in Jesus Christ!” Through this revolution, love has conquered hate, good has conquered evil, life has conquered death!

The Incarnation uniquely separates Christianity from every other world religion. The fact that the Almighty God of the Universe, the One who “is and who was and who is to come”, the Eternal One, has become one of us and has experienced life as we experience it is something no other religion can accept. Yet it is precisely here that we see most clearly the divine love of God. Christ totally shared in our human experience - including becoming a defenseless child, being a refugee in Egypt, experiencing rejection, persecution, and cruel suffering - in order to relate with us, and then to lead us from our brokenness to a place of healing, renewal and divine love. Ultimately, the Incarnation is the first step which leads us into the Kingdom of Heaven!

So when we all hear the Christmas story once again this year, let us not quaintly think of Santa Clause and Christmas trees and presents and superficial cheer, but let us meditate on the radical mystery, this new reality that has come into the world and has forever changed the world in which we live!

I pray we all have a most blessed, joyous and meaningful Christmas celebration!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

+Luke
The simplicity of the story of Christ’s birth reveals the depth of God’s love and the mystery of His actions in our life. As we celebrate Christmas anew this year, once again Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and wise men, the angels and animals direct our attention to the Lord Jesus. He who is truly the ‘way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14:1) who reveals Himself in the humble circumstances of a cave in Bethlehem. All of time is centered upon his coming. All of creation surrounds Him who fashioned the creation!

THE EXPRESSION OF DIVINE LOVE
The story of the birth of Christ is a vivid reminder of the depth of God’s love for us. He loves us so much that he has entered into life in this world in the person of Christ. The infinite God mysteriously accepted the limitations of our humanity. It was not enough for God to act through signs and wonders of the physical world. It was not enough for God to guide us through the prophets and teachers of old. No, this was not enough for our God. To express his boundless love for us, the Living God appeared among us in the person of Christ Our Lord. By fully identifying himself with us, Christ has come to teach us, to heal us and to lead us back to the Father. He has come to remind us that we are the Father’s precious daughters and sons. As St. John the Evangelist says: “God so loved the world that he sent His Only begotten Son so that all who believe in him will not be lost but will have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16).

Many years before the Beatitudes were taught and many years before His glorious Resurrection, Christ revealed God’s love for us through the simple events of his birth. The Lord of Glory demonstrated his love for us simply be entering into our life and by sharing in all that is truly human. St. Basil the great reminds us of this saying: “Every act and every word of our Savior is a guide for holiness and virtue. For this reason he became human, so that in images he may depict both holiness and virtue for us…For this reason he bears a body so that we may imitate His life” (Ascetical Principles, 1)

Through His birth in Bethlehem, Our Lord reveals to us the breath and depth of God’s love for us. Whether we see him as the child in Bethlehem, the teacher in Galilee, or the Risen Lord in Jerusalem; Christ is truly the greatest gift of the Father ‘for us and for our salvation.’

A SENSE OF WONDER
The story of Christ’s birth speaks to us about the mysterious ways of God. The Triune God acts in ways that we do not always expect! His ways are truly wonder-filled. For centuries, the Ancient Israelites had expected the Messiah. The prophets, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah, called the people to readiness and openness to God’s actions. Their message provided the people with indications about the coming Messiah.

Yet, when ‘the fullness of time had come’ (Gal. 4:4), the Messiah did not arrive as a conquering hero in a golden chariot with pomp and splendor. He was not robed in expensive clothing. He did not appear in the capital city. Throngs of adoring followers did not accompany him.

When the Messiah finally arrived, he came first as a baby. He was born to a young girl who was not formally married. The event occurred in the simple village of Bethlehem. He was sheltered in a place reserved for animals because the inn was full. There, in such simple circumstances, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth…” (Jn.1: 14). This is the mysterious way of God!
Through the Christmas story, Our Lord reveals that God acts in ways that we do not always expect. We cannot shape the mighty acts of God to our limited understanding. The Triune God is greater than our limited perceptions of Him. He acts in mysterious and wondrous ways to draw us to Him and to one another in love.

**AN OPEN HEART**

The persons who are involved in the story of Christ’s birth were all quite different. Mary and Joseph were humble travelers seeking a place of shelter. The shepherds were simple men of the land tending their flocks. The wise men were wealthy and aristocratic foreigners wandering in a strange land.

Yet, each of them shared a common characteristic. They opened their hearts to the actions of the Lord who mysteriously led them to the village of Bethlehem. Each of them permitted God to act in their lives. Mary and Joseph were willing to change their whole life to nurture and protect the child Jesus. The shepherds were willing to hear the words of the angels. The wise men were willing to follow the star. We remember them to this day because they opened their hearts and trusted in the Lord.

Through His birth in Bethlehem, Jesus reveals that we too must open our hearts to his presence and actions. God wants us to share in His work of reconciliation. Like the participants in the first Christmas, we too are called to be people whose hearts are open to the divine presence and actions.

**CENTERING THE SEASON ON CHRIST**

The story of the birth of Christ and its true significance is often clouded by the commercialism of the season. There is a very frenzied pace to these days which can so easily depersonalize us and dampen the true joy of the season. The stores tempt us for weeks on end to buy this thing or by that thing. Some of us prefer to speak of the ‘Holiday Season’ rather than of Christmas. Many schools have forbidden the remembrance of Christ’s birth in the classroom. Yes, throughout our society, many fail to remember that the coming of Christ is truly at the heart of the Christmas celebrations.

What can we do? Let us remember that the season celebrates the love of God revealed in the coming of Christ. For those with faith, the colored lights, the green trees, the wreaths and the flowers are the symbols of the joy of Christmas. Let us celebrate the joy of Christ’s coming!

Let us share the love of God with others. Christ has come to bear witness to the Father’s love for us. We too can share this love with others, especially with the poor and less fortunate among us. We can be sensitive to those who cannot easily celebrate because of a loss in their lives. Let us be the ambassadors of God who share His care and philanthropy.

> “What shall we offer you, O Christ? Who for our sake appeared on earth as a human?
Every creature made by you offers you thanksgiving.
The angels offer you a hymn,
The heavens, a star,
The magi, gifts,
The shepherds, their wonder,
The earth, its cave,
The wilderness, a manger,
And we offer to you, a Virgin Mother.”

*Vesper Hymn*

Let us seek the Lord with an open heart as the shepherds and wise men did. This means that we find opportunities for prayer and meditation, for reading the Scriptures related to Christ’s coming. This means that we can make Christmas a special day by participating in the Divine Liturgy and by receiving Holy Communion with reverence for God, with faith and with love.
On Christ’s Incarnation

There were two things which the Savior did for us by becoming Man. He banished death from us and made us anew; and, invisible and imperceptible as in Himself He is, He became visible through His works and revealed Himself as the Word of the Father, the Ruler and King of the whole creation.

Athanasius, On the Incarnation

It was our sorry case that caused the Word to come down, our transgression that called out His love for us, so that He made haste to help us and to appear among us. It is we who were the cause of His taking human form, and for our salvation that in His great love He was both born and manifested in a human body.

Athanasius, On the Incarnation

All of our lives can be transfigured in a joyous feast, if the truth that “God with us” becomes the atmosphere in which we breathe and move.

Archbishop Anastasios of Albania

The rational soul and flesh are united in one human nature; therefore, God and man are joined in the one nature of Christ. None of the philosophers before the coming of Christ could, by bending all effort to the task, know as much about God and things necessary for eternal life, as after the coming of Christ a little old woman knows through her faith.

Thomas Aquinas

This is Christmas joy. To know that I am a thought in God’s mind, no matter how insignificant I may be, even if I am the most abandoned of beings, someone no one thinks of.

Today, when we think of Christmas gifts, let all those who feel abandoned and alone, all those who are outcasts, all those who feel they are nothing, let them say “I know that I am a thought in God’s mind.”

Would that my voice reach the imprisoned like a ray of light, of Christmas hope. May the sick, the elderly in the home for the aged, the hospital patients, you that live in poverty and suffer injustice, remember God’s eternal purpose has thought of all of you. He loves you, and like Mary, He incarnates that thought in His womb.

Oscar Romero
Martyred Archbishop of El Salvador
If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator;
If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist;
If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

Why did God choose to come to us in person? What were the reasons that compelled Him to visit us? They must have been awfully important reasons to make God empty Himself and take the form of a servant. Couldn’t He have sent someone else? Couldn’t He have ordered an angel or an archangel to come? Why did the Lord of the Universe Himself have to come?

We see an indication of why God would ultimately come to earth in the Old Testament, when we hear God say, “I have seen the affliction of my people and heard their cry… for I know their sorrows and sufferings and trials. And I have come down to deliver them” (Ex 3:7-8)

God came because He cared. He came in order to deliver us from the slavery of sin and death. He came because He loved us! We can summarize this best by quoting the Evangelist John “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

We do not believe in an absent God, an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive God. We believe in a God who, when humanity fell into the ocean of sin and was drowning, did not just stay in heaven and shout directions on lifesaving, but who jumped into the ocean to save us. We believe in a God who intervenes in our lives.

We believe in a God who came to seek and save the lost; who came not to be served but to serve; who came to give us the abundant life; who came as light that whoever believes in Him may not remain in darkness, who came not to judge the world but to save it!

Jesus Christ came at Christmas. He comes again this Christmas. He comes each day, waiting to enter into our lives!

Heaven and earth are united today, for Christ is born! Today God has come upon earth and we have gone up to heaven. Today all can see the One is who by nature invisible. Let us give glory and praise Him.

From the Great Vespers of Christmas
THE REAL SANTA CLAUS

Who was the real Santa Claus? St. Nicholas lived in Asia Minor around 300 AD. He was born in Lycia on the southwest coast of modern Turkey. His wealthy, pious parents, Theophanes and Nonna, read to him the Holy Scriptures and faithfully taught him his prayers, but apparently died while he was still young. His uncle, Bishop Nicholas of Patara, ordained young Nicholas and made him his personal assistant. The zealous youth proved to be an inspiring catechist in the Christian community and an obedient servant to his uncle. He showed great kind-heartedness and generosity by distributing his inheritance to the poor.

During this time, the three grown daughters of a formerly rich inhabitant were in danger of being sold into slavery because of their father’s penilessness. The young Nicholas secretly visited the man’s house at night and threw gold in at the window to provide a dowry for one of the girls. After the eldest daughter married, Nicholas again made clandestine donations for the other two daughters, with similar results.

The young Nicholas was blessed with a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. During the voyage, a storm came up that terribly frightened the crew but, through the prayers of the saint, the waves of the sea were becalmed and the passengers saved. According to Palestinian Christians, St. Nicholas lived in a cave as a hermit for three years after visiting the holy places. Years later an Orthodox Church was built over the hermit’s abandoned cave at Beit Jala.

Not long after his return to Asia Minor, Nicholas was made archbishop of Myra. Difficult years followed for the archbishop and his flock, who were forced underground by the Roman Emperor Diocletian’s brutal, expansive persecution of Christians. During this time the good archbishop, who had the gift of bi-location, often appeared to imprisoned members of his flock as a model of gentleness, kindness, and love, until the day he too was discovered in hiding. In jail Nicholas continued to sustain and exhort his fellow believers to endure torture and death for the love of Christ. After Diocletian’s death, Nicholas was released and returned to his sacramental duties as a “confessor of the faith”—a titled given to Christians who were imprisoned and tortured for their faith during this period, but not executed.

Archbishop Nicholas attended the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (325), where he allegedly assailed the heretic Arius. St Nicholas was so enraged by Arius’ denial that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, he strode quickly over to Arius and hit him! The scandalized council fathers sprang upon Nicholas and placed him in prison for his brutish behavior. That night Nicholas was visited by the Virgin Mary who loosed his bonds and vested him again in his apostolic garb. The bishops were astonished by this miracle and realized that Nicholas’ anger was righteous. He was honorably restored to his chair—where the aged prelate slept through part of the proceedings.

During one of these naps, the holy confessor of orthodoxy bi-located again, this time to save more sailors at sea. When he awoke in Nicaea he was resentfully charged with sleeping through the council, whereupon the venerable Nicholas is said to have answered, “While you were talking, I was busy rescuing a disaster-driven ship at sea.” Some of the pious brethren took the ship to be an analogy of the Church. Others dismissed his words as the babblings of an old man. But not long after the council, the rescued sailors returned safe home and, traveling through Myra, recognized Nicholas as their deliverer.

Archbishop Nicholas peacefully fell asleep in the Lord on December 6, 343, after which he was immediately recognized as a saint.
PUTTING CHRISTMAS BACK INTO CHRIST
by Fr. Hector Firoglanis

During the Christmas season, we’re bound to hear the popularized slogans from certain Christian circles increasingly concerned about the secularization of Christmas: “Put Christ back into Christmas” and “Jesus is the Reason for the Season.” These are catchy phrases, but instead of trying to force Christ on the rest of society by engaging in a holy crusade against the secularization of Christmas, maybe we’d be better served by simply directing our time and energy towards celebrating Christmas the way it’s given to us by our Orthodox Church.

To use a phrase coined by Fr. Alexander Schmemman, instead of fighting to “Put Christ back into Christmas,” we should strive to “Put Christmas back into Christ.” In other words, we may not be able to change the way society celebrates Christmas in its secularized and corrupted form, so we should concentrate more on celebrating Christmas as given to us by the Church.

From an Orthodox perspective, the purpose of Christmas, like all feast days, is not simply the external observance or remembrance of past events, but to experience spiritually the events of the divine incarnation in our hearts and to be transformed and deified by Christ’s presence within us.

If the purpose of Christmas is to experience from within the transforming presence of the incarnate Lord within our hearts and souls, we certainly will not achieve this by superficially inserting Christ into a secularized observance of Christmas as practiced in the world. That would be a waste of our valuable time and effort.

Instead, we need to reclaim Christmas in our personal lives by putting it back into Christ. We need to truly experience the deep transformation that takes place within our souls through participating in the services, singing the hymns, obeying the fast, subduing our passions, and giving generously to charities. All in all, we need to return to celebrating Christmas the way it was given to us by the Church.

Putting Christ into Christmas (outward focus)

1. Fighting against secular forces trying to deny us our constitutional right to display nativity scenes in public places
2. Doing away with “Happy Holidays” and proclaiming instead “Merry Christmas”
3. Remember that Santa Clause and commercialism are not the “reason for the season.”

Putting Christmas into Christ (inner focus)

1. Fighting against our sins and passions during the 40-day Christmas Fast in order to prepare our hearts as a suitable dwelling place for Christ’s nativity.
2. Doing away with all idle chatter and gossip, and proclaiming instead “Christ is Born! Glorify Him!”
3. Remember that the true Santa Claus was a real saint—St. Nicholas—and by striving to emulate his virtue, simplicity, generosity, and asceticism, we can learn to transcend the commercialism and materialism all around us.
REFLECTING on 10 YEARS

December 5th marks TEN YEARS since the first Divine Liturgy Pres. Faith and I celebrated in this beautiful Sts. Constantine and Helen Church. We have seen this community develop as a warm, loving Church Family. Over these 10 years we have said goodbye to many dear, life-long members who have gone on to glory with our Lord, while we have also had the joy to welcome many new families. We have grown from a church of 90 stewardship units (either families or individuals who support our church) to 180. I recently looked at the 100 most active families who come to church regularly, and I noted that 45 of those families were not even a part of this church in 2004! What a blessed 10 years we have had!

We could mention many highlights. I have loved the small group Bible Studies we have had weekly throughout each of these years. For the first five years we had a Wednesday evening Bible study in our Parish House, where we would get a regular of 15 people coming. What I remember from those studies is that a number of the people coming were reading the Bible for the first time! They were discovering the rich treasure of God’s Holy Word! That Bible Study expanded to our present Wednesday and Saturday morning (6:30am!!) Bible Studies. For several years, we were getting 10-12 men coming every Saturday at 6:30am to share in fellowship and study. I mention these Bible Studies because it is in these small groups where I have seen people really grow spiritually, and have seen how the Gospel has changed their lives!

Along with our Bible Studies, we have had numerous Book Study groups, Orthodoxy 101 classes, and other opportunities to learn and grow. Every year we have had a Lenten Spring and Fall retreat, and have brought memorable speakers. These speakers have included:
- Fr. Maximos of Simonopetra (Mt. Athos)
- Fr. Iakovos of Simonopetra (Mt Athos)
- Fr. Themi Adamopoulos (Missionary Sierra Leone)
- Fr. Christodoulos Papadeas (Monk)
- Fr. Peter Gillquist
- Fr. Alexander and Pearl Veronis
- Dr. Maria Khoury (Palestine)
- Fr. Peter Chamberas (Chaplain at HC)
- Fr. Nick Apostola
- Dr. James Skedros (Dean of HC)
- Dr. Philip Mamalakis (Professor of HC)
- Dr. Louis Patsavos (Professor of HC)
- Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff (Natural Church Development)
- Nathan & Gabriela Hoppe (Missionary to Albania)
- Pamela Barksdale (Missionary to Albania)
- Fr. Hector Fioglanis
- Mr. Anthony Callos
- The Boston Byzantine Choir
- St Vladimir’s Seminary Choir

Not too many churches can say they have had such quality speakers come to their churches!

Of course, many of our most memorable highlights have included the growing number of children in this church. I remember the first month we were here in December 2004, there were some Sundays when there was literally no more than two or three people under the age of 40, including children! Pres. Faith bought 12 puppets to begin a puppet ministry, and we offered our first puppet show at the first ever Godparents/Grandparents Sunday in February 2005. I often teased Pres. Faith during our first six months here that we had more puppets in this church than children!!! But that changed!

Our first Vacation Church Camp in the summer of 2005 we had 11 children. Well, we’ve done a Vacation Church Camp each summer since, and some summers we had 55 children attend! This past summer we had 40 children, 10 teen helpers and a total of 75 people coming to our VCC! And we fondly remember all our Puppet Shows, Youth Lock-In and Retreats, Metropolis Summer Camps, Fall Activities, St Nicholas Celebrations, Christmas Pag-
eants, Missions Sundays, Bible Bowls, and more! Thank God we’ve had wonderful parent support and participation, and every year we’ve had three or four students from Hellenic College and Holy Cross helping out!

I thank God for the way this Church has reached out to others locally, nationally, and globally. Just this past month, our church gave out 25 beautiful Thanksgiving Baskets and 30 Turkeys to help families in need celebrate. This is just one example of how our community reaches out. Four times we’ve gone to Project Mexico to build a home for the needy. Twice we’ve participated in building a home with Habitat for Humanity. We’ve volunteered numerous times at Grace House for the Homeless, supported the Webster/Dudley Food Share, and participated in other charitable events. I’m proud every year when I see our individual budgeted line items for local, national and global missions and outreach. Last year we raised $20,000 for Project Mexico, while giving another $12,000 to various charities!

Another of the highlights during this past decade has been our annual Church Festival. Every first weekend of September has been a wonderful time of Fellowship, Fun, and Wonderful Witness to the larger community. This past September, we had our most successful festival ever, profiting $32,000! It is always beautiful to see how so many people come out to help, even those members of our Church who we don’t see so often throughout the year!

For Pres. Faith and me, the most beautiful and meaningful aspect of the past 10 years has simply been all the blessed friendships we have developed, and the opportunity to be a part of a worshipping Church Family that loves Jesus Christ, loves our Orthodox Faith, loves one another, and loves the world around us! We’ve been quite blessed by all of you, and thank God and pray for each of you regularly.

There’s so much more that could be said about the past 10 years, but I want to now turn towards the future, and especially thank God for the new plans we have for our Church Family and Community. We have such a beautiful sanctuary, and a complex that has served us for the past 50 years. It’s exciting, however, to be at a stage where we are updating and renewing our entire Church complex. We have beautified our church and upkept the complex with various projects over the past 10 years. Now, however, we are going to make our sanctuary even look more magnificent, and modernize our kitchen and hall, while also adding more space for our children with the classrooms.

Ten years ago, who would have ever dreamed that this is where we would have been today? This community has gone through its ups and downs throughout its history, but thank God we have seen Him work in special ways over these past 10 years! May we continue to grow closer to Him, closer to one another, and closer to the world around us!

SERVING ON THE PARISH COUNCIL

One special way to act as a good steward of your time and talents is by serving on the Parish Council. This two year commitment is a way you can serve in the leadership of our Church Family, working together with Fr. Luke in fulfilling the mission of our Church.

Every candidate must:

- Live his/her life in accordance with the Faith and canons of the Church
- Attend a PARISH COUNCIL SEMINAR on Dec 8 at 7:30pm
- Be an UP TO DATE FINANCIAL STEWARD of the parish

If elected, a Parish Council member should:

- Attend Divine Liturgy regularly
- Participate in the sacramental life of the Church
- Work together with Fr. Luke in fulfillment of the Church’s ministries.

Deadline to submit name: December 7th
Mandatory Seminar: December 8th
Elections: December 14th
A VISION FOR THE FUTURE
OFFERING A VIBRANT HOUSE OF FAITH AND WORSHIP FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Our Saints Constantine and Helen BUILDING AND RENOVATION PROJECT

Our Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church has been the home of Orthodox Christians throughout Webster and Central MA/Northeastern CT for 95 years. We have also been a Family of Faith that has proclaimed the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ to the community at large.

Over the past ten years, we have seen a revival of faith as our church attendance has increased three-fold, our membership has doubled to 180 stewardship units, and our budget has more than tripled. Most importantly, many parishioners have nourished and even discovered a vibrant, living faith with our Lord Jesus!

Every generation of believers must constantly evaluate how we can continue to fulfill and live out the vision of being the Church. We are called not only to maintain the status quo, but to strengthen our own Orthodox faithful and help our community become a brighter beacon shining forth Christ’s light of love and mercy to the community and world at large. Thus, we should ask ourselves what must we do to make our Church a more vibrant, dynamic, faithful and Christ-centered community.

One aspect of planning for a promising future is caring for the needs of our Church facilities. It has been 50 years since the visionary leaders of this community built a new Church sanctuary with an accompanying hall. That decision has served our Church well for five decades. Now, however, we need to address the needs of the next generation of our community.

We are embarking on a major three phase project where we hope to renovate our outdated kitchen and hall, build a 1000sf addition of three classrooms and storage space, beautify the interior of our Church, while we also put a new façade to the entrance of our hallway, clean our bell tower and update and add more parking space.

We are hoping to raise $700,000 over the next three years to cover these visionary plans! We have already collected in cash and pledges $502,000, which means we have almost reached 70% of our goal.

Our goal and hope is to have every family in our Church Community contribute to this project. We have various levels of participation, which you can see on the following page.

Would you please consider how you can participate in our capital campaign with a three year pledge, and help us realize this major renovation project?

Come to our Special Question and Answer Meeting with our Architect/General Contractor at 6:30pm on Tuesday, December 16th.
THREE PHASE PROJECT

Phase 1 will begin on January 12, 2015.
Parts of Phase 2 will begin in March, 2015.
Remainder of Phase 2 and 3 will begin when we have the money available.

PHASE 1
Hall Renovation
Kitchen Renovation
Furnishings/Sound System (Two Naming Opportunities at $25,000 each)

PHASE 2
1000 sf Expansion: Three Classrooms/Storage Room/Handicap Bathroom
Three Remaining naming opportunities at $45,000 each
Front Hallway Entrance
Drywall and Paint Church Interior Walls (Two Naming Opportunities at $25,000 each)
Five Stain Glass Windows in Church: (Naming at $20,000 each)
Church Sound System (Naming at $20,000)

PHASE 3
Parking Lot Resurfacing: Naming Opportunity at $30,000
Additional 20 parking space on right side of Church: $25,000
Bell Tower Restoration - Naming Opportunity at $25,000
Church Brick Sealing

FUNDRAISING GOAL: $700,000
Cash Donations Received as of Dec 1, 2014: $131,000
Additional Pledges as of Dec 1, 2014: $371,000
TOTAL CASH AND PLEDGED: $502,000

WE ARE SEEKING THREE YEAR DONATIONS & PLEDGES
In addition to one’s annual stewardship offering, which supports our operational budget, we are hoping that EVERY MEMBER of our Church Family will participate in this renovation/building project at whatever level they feel comfortable:

ARCHANGELS ($100,000)
- Charlie and Helen Pappas

ANGELS ($50,000)
- In Honor of their parents Despina and Bill from the Condos Children (George, Lisa, Maria, Ann)
- Emmanuel James Pappas
- Olga Pappas
- Sam and Evelyn Pappas

PRINCIPALITIES ($45,000)
- Sandi and Gerry Kunkel
- Stavros and Evangelia Pappas
- Mary Fatsi, Eleanor Teguis, Dina Teguis

GOOD SHEPHERDS: ($25,000-30,000)
- Michael and Titi Chito
- Van Thomas

TORCH BEARERS: ($11,000 - $15,000)
- Fr Luke and Pres. Faith Veronis

BENEFACTORS: ($6000 – $10,000)

PATRONS: ($3000 - $6000)

SUPPORTS: ($1000-$2900)

FRIENDS: (Up to $1000)
- Susan Emerson Hill
Scenes from our Dinner Dance

The Light - December 2014
PARISH COUNCIL
PRESIDENT’S CORNER

Greetings! I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving!

I must say, November was a very exciting month! The dinner dance was a fantastic time enjoyed by all. The spaghetti dinner sponsored by the Philoptochos was a great success. Thanks to all who donated for both of those events and also for the Thanksgiving day baskets. Our fall General Assembly meeting introduced the renovation project which will begin on January 12, 2015. I am overwhelmed by the generosity of our Church family. I look forward to seeing our Church progress into something even more beautiful physically and spiritually.

I'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a healthy, happy 2015.

Congratulations to anytime celebrating a special time!

On a final note, please take a moment during this busy time of year to do something special for someone. Remember the true meaning of the Christmas holidays and how blessed we all are!

With love,
Lisa Healy
Parish Council President

Philoptochos News

I would like to thank everything who helped, donated, worked, and attended the spaghetti supper. It was a huge success. It gets bigger and better each year. Everything was donated, and a special thanks to John Sgouritsas for the delicious meatballs and sauce.

A few reminders: Don’t forget the Bakeless Bake Sale. Please see Thomai Gatsogiannis or Leah Didonato. We will continue this until the end of December.

Please give $15 to Debbie Raymond to add your name on our Community Christmas Card.

See Olga Pappas to sign up for our annual Christmas Party at Point Breeze immediately after church on December 14th. The cost is $20.00. Anyone who would like to exchange gifts may do so. Let’s celebrate together!

We are making Christmas baskets for the needy. Please bring in any canned goods or foods. We will be collecting them in the hall.

Father Luke will be delivering poinsettias to the shut-ins. Please give the names of anyone you can think of in our community so he won’t miss them.

Good news! We will be starting the church kitchen and hall in January. The ladies of the Philoptochos have been waiting for this day for a long time. We are very excited. Many thanks to all who are making this possible. We hope everyone in our Church community will participate!

Overall, I want to thank everyone for all your love and support throughout the year! May we all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

With much love,
Evelyn Pappas
Philoptochos President
THE GIVING TREE

We are collecting gifts for 35 children for families in need. Please see Jaime Ross to receive slips on the “Giving Tree.” Return the suggested gifts (less than $25) to the Church by December 14th. We also are gathering 10 gifts for the residents of Holy Trinity Nursing Home.

We also welcome anyone else who may want to donate $25 or $30 gift cards or super market cards. We have numerous families that ask for help during this season!

VISIT THE ELDERLY DURING THE HOLIDAYS

IN ELDERLY HOMES

Helen Theodores – Webster Manor
Lorraine Vesho - Webster Manor
Doris Maniatis - Lanessa
John Nicholopoulos - West Side House, Worcester
Bertha Constantine - Life Care Center, Auburn
Dina Teguis - Westview, CT

HOMEBOUND

Jennie Manthos
Stavros Pappas
Sophie Talbot

CHRISTMAS YOUTH EVENTS

Dec 7 - ST. NICHOLAS CELEBRATION in Church, with a visit from St. Nicholas, followed by activities, pancake luncheon, and Christmas Caroling in the nursing homes and among the elderly.

TBA - Christmas Pageant Practices. See Pres. Faith or Nike Beaudry

Dec 21 - CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

HOLY CHRISMATION

Please welcome KIKU ANDERSEN into full membership in our Church Family when she receives the Mystery of Holy Chrismation on Sunday, December 21st.
2014 Annual Church Family Christmas Card

Put your name in our annual CHURCH FAMILY CHRISTMAS CARD. The Christmas Card goes to the homes of all our parishioners wishing them blessings during the upcoming holiday season. A minimum donation of $15 per family is greatly appreciated. All donations will support the various philanthropic ministries of the Philoptochos.

Please give donation and names to Donna Cooney or Debby Raymond by Dec. 7th, or mail them to the Church Office, noting Church Family Christmas Card.

PHILOPTOCHOS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Sunday Dec 14
At Point Breeze
Please see Olga Pappas to buy tickets. Cost is $20.

THANK YOU to everyone who helped us offer 25 Thanksgiving Baskets & 30 Turkeys to Families in Need!

Christmas Poinsettia

If you would like to donate a Christmas Poinsettia in memory or in honor of a loved one, or for the Glory of God, please send in $50 to the Church Office. We will purchase the poinsettia and list the names of those honored or commemorated in our Monthly Bulletin.

We are also looking for donors for our outdoor Christmas Wreaths at $75 each and the small outdoor Christmas Trees at $50 each.

WEEKDAY SERVICES

WEEKDAY DIVINE LITURGY (9:30 am)
Dec 6 - St Nicholas
Dec 12 - St Spyridon

PARACLESIS SERVICE & HOLY OIL for HEALING
6:30pm Wednesday Dec 3, 10, 17

SATURDAY VESPERS (5:30pm)
Every Saturday

CHRISTMAS SERVICES
Royal Hours of Christmas -9am Dec 24
Christmas Eve Matins 4:30pm
Christmas Eve Divine Liturgy 5:30pm
Christmas Morning Liturgy 10:00am

The Light—December 2014
### USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE

**Dec 7**  
Neal Neslusan, Betty Vriga, Leah Didonato, Gus Koulax, Cindy Johnson, Jared Quill

**Dec 14**  
Chris Constantine, Barbara Gianaris, Deb Raymond, Dan Rivelli, Alex Seferi

**Dec 21**  
Arthur Bilis, Del Monroe, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatzogianis, Trish Laurea

**Dec 24 (Christmas Eve)**  
Marie McNally, Eric Beland, Matt Benoit, Zach Gianaris, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi

**Dec 28**  
Neal Neslusan, Betty Vriga, Leah Didonato, Gus Koulax, Cindy Johnson, Jared Quill

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### YOUTH EPISTLE READERS

**Dec 7** - Olivia Neslusan  
(Ephesians 5:8-19 )

**Dec 14** - Smaranda Cojocaru  
(Colossians 3:4-11 )

**Dec 21** - Maia Beaudry  
(Hebrews 11:9-10 )

**Dec 24** – Panayiota Veronis  
(Hebrews 1:1-12 )

**Dec 25** - Lily Mueller  
(Galatians 4:4-7 )

**Dec 28** - Hanna Kunkel  
(Galatians 1:11-19 )

**Jan 4** - Theodora Veronis  
(2 Corinthians 9:6-11 - page 93 )

**Jan 11** - Maria Mironidis  
(2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9 - page 95 )

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### EARLY RISERS BIBLE STUDY

6:30 am - 7:30 am  
Every Saturday  
Come and Join Us.  
Dec 6, 13, 20

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### WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

10:30-11:45  
Every Wednesday  
Dec 3, 10, 17  
All Are Welcome!

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### COFFEE FELLOWSHIP:

**Dec 7** - Thomai Gatsogiannis, Stephanie Quill, Betty Tonna, Kiku Andersen

**Dec 14** - Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi

**Dec 21**– Donna Cooney, Athena Cooney, Leah DiDonato, BillAnthopoulos, Jaime Ross

**Dec 28** - Kathy Bilis, Marie Monroe, Carolyn Niemeck, Deb Raymond, Charlotte Neslusan
Remembering Our Church Family

**Important Dates in DECEMBER:**

Try to make a visit, give a call, or express your congratulations to members of our Church family who celebrate special days this month.

**BIRTHDAYS:**

- Dec 1: Nicholas Angelo
- Dec 7: Evis Jordanoglou
- Dec 8: Maria Mironidis
- Dec 12: Helen Tsitaridas
- Dec 15: Donna Mandelenakis
- Dec 22: Vasil Condos
- Dec 23: Kenneth Peterson
- Dec 24: Sophie Talbot
- Dec 25: Christie Geotis
- Dec 26: Paul Geotis
- Dec 29: Anestis Jordanoglou
- Dec 31: Eric Beland
- Dec 31: Emmanuel Pappas

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:**

- Dec 11: Arthur & Sara Darligianis
- Dec 14: Charles & Helen Pappas
- Dec 26: Vasil & Despina Condos
- Dec 31: Chuck & Misty Pappas

**NAMEDAYS:**

- Dec 4: St. Barbara
  - Barbara Constantine
  - Barbara Desrosiers
  - Barbara Gianaris
  - Barbara Pappas
- Dec 6: St Nicholas
  - Nicholas Adamopoulos
  - Nicholas Angelo
  - Nike Avlas
  - Nike Beaudry
  - Nicoleta Cojocaru
  - Nicholas Constantine
  - Nicholas Karapanos
  - Nick Kiritsis
  - Niko Milios
  - Nick Rivelli
  - Nick Totolos
  - Niko Totolos
  - Nicholas Veronis
- Dec 11: St. Spyridon
  - Spiro Pappas
- Dec 14: St Eleftherios
  - Eleftheria Moutoudis
- Dec 17: St Daniel the Prophet
  - Dan Rivelli
- Dec 25: Christmas
  - Christy Atsales
  - Christa Benoit
  - Christie Constantine
  - Christie Geotis
  - Christopher Grzyb
  - Chris Milios
  - Emmanuel Pappas
- Dec 26: St Joseph the Betrothed
  - Joseph Gliniecki
- Dec 26: St David the King
  - David Bilis
- Dec 27: St. Stephen
  - Stephen Angelo
  - Stephen Foisy
  - Stephanie Quill
THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI

As you enter our Church, take note of our beautiful “The Gifts of the Magi” icon. This icon shows the wise men offering their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child. These wealthy priest and kings of the East probably endured numerous dangers, and traveled a great distance in order to offer their treasures to Christ, the newborn king.

What a beautiful and meaningful example they set for all future generations, helping us to understand the blessing of giving. Connected with this icon are the words of St. John Chrysostom which highlight their message – “The rich man is not the one who has much, but the one who gives much. For what one gives away, he keeps for all eternity.”

During this Christmas Season when we enter our Church, and see this beautiful icon, let us reflect on Our Lord’s words that “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Let us remember to look at all of life as a precious gift from God, and reflect on how we are simply the stewards of these gifts. Will we act as good and faithful stewards, or will we foolishly accept the world’s egocentric perspective of focusing on ourselves, amassing greater wealth, building bigger homes, and finding more and more ways to enjoy a life of ease and comfort.

Look for our convenient

Online Giving

in the bottom left corner of our Church webpage

www.schwebster.org

We’ve collected $92,896 in Stewardship donations as of Nov 30th. Please help us reach our 2014 goal of $106,000 in stewardship.

Please Send in Your 2014 Stewardship Donations before the end of the year.
We are still waiting for 35 members to make their offering for the year!

Also fill out your 2015 Pledge Cards and put them in the box in the narthex!
HOLY SCRIPTURE ON CHRISTMAS

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you this sign: The Virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and shall name Him Emmanuel.”

Isaiah 7:14

For a Child is born to us, a Son is given us; upon His shoulder dominion rests. They shall name Him messenger of great counsel, wonderful counselor, mighty one, sovereign Master, Prince of Peace, Father of the age to come. His dominion is vast and of His peace there shall be no end.

Isaiah 9:6-7

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you GOOD NEWS of GREAT JOY that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a SAVIOR has been born for you who is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:13-14

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December

Dec 2 Tim 1:8-14, Luke 19:45-48
Dec 4 Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5 Mark 5:24-34
Dec 12 John 10:1-9 Ephesians 5:8-19 John 10:9-16
Dec 16 Tim 3:16-17; 4:1-4 Mark 8:22-26
Dec 17 Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2 Mark 8:30-34
Dec 18 Titus 1:5-14 Mark 9:10-15
Dec 19 Titus 1:15-16; 2:1-10 Mark 9:33-41
Dec 22 Hebrews 3:5-11, 17-19 Mark 9:42-50; 10:1
Dec 23 Hebrews 4:1-13 Mark 10:2-12
**Dec 25 Matt 1:18-25 Galatians 4:4-7 Matt 2:1-12
Dec 26 Hebrews 2:11-18 Matt 2:13-23
Dec 27 Tim 6:11-16 Matt 12:15-21
Dec 29 Hebrews 2:11-18 Matt 2:13-23
Dec 30 Hebrews 9:8-23 Mark 11:11-23
Dec 31 Hebrews 10:1-18 Mark 11:22-26
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| 1         | 2         | 3 10:00 Bible Study  
6:30 Paraclesis Service and Anointing with Holy Oil for Healing | 4         | 5         | 6:30 Vespers at St Nicholas Shrewsbury | 5:30 Vespers |
| 7 8:30 Matins  
9:30 Divine Liturgy  
St Nicholas Celebration in Sunday School | 8 6:30 Parish Council Meeting  
7:30 Seminar for Parish Council Candidates | 9 10 10:00 Bible Study  
6:30 Paraclesis Service and Anointing with Holy Oil for Healing | 10 10:00 Bible Study  
6:30 Paraclesis Service and Anointing with Holy Oil for Healing | 11 6:30 Vespers at St Spyridon in Worcester | 12 St Spyridon  
8:45 Matins  
9:30 Liturgy | 13 6:30am Bible Study  
Christmas Pageant Practice | 14 6:30am Bible Study  
Christmas Pageant Practice | 15 6:30 General Meeting about Renovation Project. All are welcome!!! | 16 6:30 Vespers at St Spyridon in Worcester | 17 6:30am Bible Study  
Christmas Pageant Practice | 18 5:30 Vespers |
| 20 6:30am Bible Study  
Christmas Pageant Practice | 21 6:30am Bible Study  
Christmas Pageant Practice | 22 6:30am Bible Study  
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Christmas Pageant Practice |
| 28 8:30 Matins  
9:30 Divine Liturgy | 29 8:30 Matins  
9:30 Divine Liturgy | 30 8:30 Matins  
9:30 Divine Liturgy | 31 8:30 Matins  
9:30 Divine Liturgy | 31 | 31 | 31 |
A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have come so many times to us and found no resting place.
Forgive us for our overcrowded lives,
our vain haste and our preoccupation with self.

Come again, O Lord,
And though our hearts are a jumble of voices,
and our minds overlaid with many fears,
find a place however humble,
where You can begin to work Your wonder
as you create peace and joy within us.

If in some hidden corner, in some out-of-the-way spot,
we can clear away the clutter, and shut out the noise and darkness,
come be born again in us, and we shall kneel in perfect peace
with the wisest and humblest of people.

Help us enter into this Christmas celebration with humility,
with joy, and most of all with a desire to discover You anew!
Yes Lord, give us a Christmas from within, that we may share it from without, on all sides, all around us, wherever there is a need.

God help us, every one, to share the blessings of Jesus Christ
with others, in whose name we keep Christmas holy.