Christmas highlights the season of giving. From the national holiday of Thanksgiving through the Christmas celebration, Americans are typically more generous and compassionate, more ready to give to others than at any other time of the year. Of course, we give special gifts to our family and loved ones for Christmas, but we also see many people giving spontaneously and randomly to others they may not know. There is something special about the spirit of Christmas that inspires people to be more generous and more giving! Love is in the air during this holy season!

Of course, this is no surprise for Christians who truly understand what Christmas is all about. It is not the spirit of Christmas that inspires people to give, but it is the One whom we celebrate at Christmas who inspires us to not only give, but inspires us to show love and kindness, mercy and goodness to all people. Let us never forget that our Lord Jesus Christ is “the reason for the season!” He is the One who inspires us with His own example.

Christmas is all about giving precisely because God was the first one to give to the world His greatest treasure - He gave Himself to the world by becoming a human being, becoming one of us. He gave Himself by offering His Son - who is “Light of Light and true God of true God”, the second person of the Holy Trinity - to not only enter into the darkness of this world and into fallen humanity itself, but to actually lift up fallen humanity to the divine heights of our unlimited potential.

St. Athanasios the Great summarized God’s gift to the world in the most succinct manner - “God became human so that humans could become one with God.”

Can there be any greater gift than this? God offers us His divine, perfect love to the world. He reveals to us that no matter how far we fall short of our divine potential, we are still truly His beloved children, an integral part of His eternal family. And in Christ, we always have a new opportunity, another chance for a new beginning!

Christmas is the beginning of Jesus Christ entering into the world and radically changing world history - He revealed Love Incarnate, the perfect human being; He taught the world perfect wisdom; He lived in this fallen world, experienced all the darkness and evil of the world, tasted even death itself, and then overcame it all; He conquered death and showed that He is the ultimate Victor, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End; and all who allow Christ to be born in their hearts, Christ promises that
Sts. Constantine and Helen
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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 Elpidophoros of America
His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

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THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

we will make each of us into a new creation!

God is the greatest Giver of Gifts! And we are called to and inspired to imitate Him!

It seems most appropriate that we kicked off our year-long celebration of our Church’s 100th Anniversary with a special event highlighting the spirit of giving, right in the midst of this Christmas season! For those in Church on November 24th, you heard about the “Good and Faithful Steward Challenge” where we are giving a gift to every steward of our Church. The first 50 families of our community received an envelope with a gift of either $300/$200/$100 cash. We gave out the first $12,000 of what will eventually be a give away of $30,000. The rest of the Church families will receive their gift at the beginning of February, or around Easter time. We are spreading out this giving over a six month period.

We are giving away this gift to all our parishioners, asking them to share God’s blessings with others, to glorify God through some act of kindness. The whole purpose of this “Good and Faithful Steward Challenge” is to help our community better understand WHO WE ARE as Orthodox Christians and WHO WE ARE as a Church. We want all our Church Family to understand that:

♦ We are ambassadors of God’s love to the world around us
♦ We are faithful and good stewards of not only this gift we receive from the church, but of every blessing that God gives us in our lives. We realize we are blessed so that we share these blessings with others
♦ We are followers of Jesus Christ who understand the JOY of giving and sharing God’s love with others
♦ We are Christians who understand Christ’s words, when He taught, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
♦ We are people who have eyes to see those in need all around us, and we are people who will respond to these needs in a concrete way

We believe that this unique challenge - how many of you have ever heard about a church giving its parishioners $30,000 to help others?!? - can become a powerful learning experience for us and for others who hear about it! And we hope that this experience will touch the lives of many people outside our Church. We are excited to start getting back the stories of what everyone did with their gift, of how they glorified God with their gift, and of how they felt when they did this, and how the recipients of the gift responded!

The day after we kicked off this event, someone came to my church office to let me know how inspired they were by what they heard in church the day before. They gave me $250 in gift cards and asked me to give them to people in need. They said that this was not the money they received from the church, but was the money that they would have spent on their Thanksgiving meal. This year, however, they were having Thanksgiving meal at another home, so they wanted to use the $250 they would have spent and bless other people with it. They realize how blessed they are, and want to start sharing these blessings with others. So they told me that they would be doing some good deed like this each month to help others! They were inspired by what they heard in church the day before!!!

This is the spirit that we are trying to cultivate in our Church through the “Good and Faithful Steward Challenge!” We want everyone to realize how blessed we are, and then to understand that we have a responsibility to share our blessings with those who are less fortunate!!! We glorify God by becoming instruments in His hands, by bringing His love in concrete ways to other people!

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, may we always remember who the first great Gift-Giver is. God has given us the greatest gift! And He continues to bless us with countless other gifts in our lives. May we always live lives of deep gratitude where we strive to share God’s blessings with other people. Christmas shouldn’t be the only time when we are filled with the spirit of giving. For a Christians, this spirit of giving should be our spirit each and every day of our lives!

With deep gratitude for the eternal gift of God,

+Luke
ON THE INCARNATION

By Archbishop Anastasios of Albania

“And his name shall be called Emmanuel, means God with us”

(Matthew 1:23)

The feast of Christmas proclaims something that is inconceivable to the human mind: God came to dwell among us. He came to be united with the human race, to share their pain, to answer their desire for redemption. All religions may point to people searching for God, but what makes Christianity completely different and unique is that Almighty God became one of us “to deify each one of us”. Christmas is about this shocking reality.

Jesus did not come as an angel or a prophet in order to reveal the will of God through some written Law. God become one of us, “and dwelt among us.” He entered into humanity with a real birth from the Virgin Mary in order to remain eternally “one of us” - like us in every way except for sin; He is one who truly belongs to our human family.

The Good News of our faith begins with the assurance that Jesus is Emmanuel, “God with us.” And the Risen Lord leaves this earth with the comforting promise that “I am with you always, even to the close of the age.” Thus Christmas, the incarnation of God, can be summarized in this name – Emmanuel.

St Basil the Great explains this feast by saying that “our Lord raises all humanity to Himself,” in order to bring the human race in the right direction which it had lost, and to relate humanity once again with its root, with God. Christ proclaimed: “I am the way, the truth and the life.” The wisdom, the righteousness, the peace, the salvation, that people desire, are summoned in His person. St. Paul assures us that “In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”. The personal union of the divine and the human nature in Christ gave humanity a new dynamism. With His coming on earth, Christ brings back to the Trinitarian God “all humanity”, the entire human race, all human creativity in order to recreate and to lift up in the light of the uncreated divine energies, which His love radiates.

The Feast of Christmas comes to revive within our conscience the assurance that God is “with us.” The Church, with her hymnology, challenges us to feel these events as happening today. In one hymn, we heard: “Today is born from the Virgin He who has the world in the palm of His hands.” In another one, we heard: “The universe is filled today with joy; Christ is born from the Virgin.”

Usually many people think of Jesus as a person of the past and not as Emmanuel, the living Christ who remains with us. Many believe more in an absent than in the eternally present Lord. Many, even among us, rest and feel greater security in the thought that “money is with us, power is with us, the protection of the powerful is with us,” than in the belief that He who is with us is God. That is why bitterness, fear, and sorrow so often remain with us and we drown in loneliness.

His Church firmly proclaims to us the assurance that Christ remains perpetually with us. This living feeling of His presence and the organic union with Him is made sure through the celebration of the holy Mysteries, which starts with Baptism and culminates
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in the Divine Eucharist. The Church reminds us and stabilizes within our conscience the promise of the Lord after His Passion and Resurrection “And I will be with you all the days of your life.” Christ is not with us only during the hours of prayer and peace, but also in the turbulent days of doubt and weakness, even in the hour of fear or unconscious betrayal. The awareness of the presence of the Lord Jesus strengthens and inspires us.

“And His name shall be called Emmanuel, which means God with us.” The feast of Christmas invites us to strengthen this feeling of the continuous presence of Emmanuel, in order to move with His vision, criteria and power, with His honesty, chastity and love, so that we can be free of fear and agony, looking at His Face and supported by His hand. It helps us to be bearers of peace, justice, reconciliation and optimism in our closed and wider environments, so that we can show ourselves as durable and creative even in the hardest and most unsure social conditions. The characteristic of the Orthodox believer remains, first of all, the living feeling of the presence of Emmanuel, and secondly, the consistent effort to make tangible the presence of Christ even to the others with our word, our work, our silence and all our being.

In a time when violence, injustice and poverty plague humanity and fill our hearts with anxieties and turbulence, the Christmas feast comes again to turn on the light of faith and hope in our souls. In our era, when human knowledge drowns our thought in the infinite – from the breathtaking greatness of space to the smallness of matter – our heart leaps to the eternal message of the Christian faith that the Infinite God, without beginning and without end, comes to take on our human nature and to guide us in the majesty of development: the deification of grace.

The Word of God came to “lift up all humanity to Himself” – i.e. to the real life and love. Let us accept Him with more dedication, completely opening the doors of our mind and our heart. Let us work so that more of our brothers and sisters near and far, can meet Him. 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.

SANTA CLAUS VS. ST. NICHOLAS

Everybody loves Santa Claus. He embodies holiday cheer, happiness, fun, and gifts - warm happy aspects of the Christmas season. But Santa came from Saint Nicholas. How do Santa Claus and St. Nicholas now differ?

Santa Claus belongs to childhood fantasy; St. Nicholas models a holy life for all.

Santa Claus, as we know him, developed to boost Christmas sales - the commercial Christmas message;
St. Nicholas was a Christian Bishop who proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ and lived a life of generosity, compassion, kindness, peace, goodwill toward all - the ultimate meaning of Christmas.

Santa Claus encourages consumption; St. Nicholas encourages compassion.

Santa Claus appears each year to be seen and heard for a short time;
St. Nicholas is part of the communion of saints who live among us and surround us every day with prayer and their holy example.

Santa Claus Claus flies through the air, from the North Pole;
St. Nicholas walked the earth, living among poor people and taking caring of those in need.

Santa Claus, for some, replaces the Babe of Bethlehem;
St. Nicholas, for all, points to the Savior born in Bethlehem.

Santa Claus isn't bad;
St. Nicholas is just better.

— J. Rosenthal & C. Myers
THE RADICAL REVOLUTION OF CHRISTMAS

What do we believe, as Orthodox Christians? It may seem like a simple question, and yet, especially at this time of year when we celebrate the birth of the One we proclaim is the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it is important to reflect upon what we truly believe.

We live in a society that can be quite seductive and deceptive. Our secular spirit subtly, and not so subtly, influences our understanding of faith in many ways; the pluralistic and relativistic worldview that our schools and the media promote try to portray all faiths as similar or even equal paths towards God; while our rugged, individualistic, anti-authority, self-centered American mentality often tempts us to create a faith and understanding of religion that fits our own needs.

With these many worldly influences inundating our lives, what then do we believe as Orthodox Christians?

In an article entitled “Mixing Their Religions,” this article summarized a survey released by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life which detailed how Americans’ religious beliefs and spirituality are drastically changing from past generations. The survey, in fact, reveals how many Americans seem to be creating their own, new spirituality, mixing up traditional Christian beliefs with elements of Eastern Faiths, New Age thinking, and simply self-centered desires.

The survey shows how sizeable numbers of Roman Catholics, Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, and yes, even Orthodox Christians, hold on to certain beliefs that stand in total contradiction to traditional Christian beliefs. For example, one out of four Americans believe in reincarnation – that when we die and will be reborn in this world again and again. The influence of Eastern religions like Buddhism or Hinduism are having a serious impact on Americans’ worldview, and now, many people, even those who call themselves Christians, believe that “karma” determines their path in life, and that we will be reincarnated after death in another form of life.

Another finding says that again, 25% of American believe in astrology. They don’t just read their horoscopes in the newspapers, but they actually say they believe that the position of stars and planets can directly affect our lives.

Americans seem to be very non-dogmatic in their approach to faith issues, with 67% saying that there is more than one true way to interpret the teachings of their faith. What this often implies is that people feel comfortable creating their own religion - mixing and matching various beliefs, traditions and rituals, often to suit their personal lifestyles.

In other words, many people don’t seem to go to Church to humbly learn what God is saying to them and strive to follow His commands, as in past generations, but instead, people are creating belief systems where they can interpret the traditions and teachings of their faith to suit their own desires or needs. Americans are creating their American religion.

To offer one small example, one can call themselves an Christian and yet unabashedly deny the fundamental principle that all life is sacred, and that life itself begins from the moment of conception until the moment when God takes our lives. Such so-called believers therefore find no contradiction in being a Christian, yet wholeheartedly supporting abortion, or euthanasia, or capital punishment.

Another example is how we live in a society where living together outside of marriage has become so common, that many people simply adjust their religious beliefs to accommodate this reality. One doesn’t ask, “How can I live a Christ-centered life of love and sacrifice and discipline?” Instead, they simply say, “This is how I want to live and how I’m going to live. Now how can I adjust my faith principles to accommodate my life style?” These are only two small examples, but I could highlight many others.

What does this all have to do with Christmas?

Well, sometimes we need to hear the “feel-good” sto-
ries related to Christmas, yet at other times we need to focus on the fundamentals of our faith. The feast of Christmas is not simply about a little baby being born in a manger surrounded by animals and visited by shepherds and wise men. Sometimes in the retelling of this story we forget, or lose, the absolute radical and earth-shattering nature of this event!

Imagine, the Creator of the world and the Ultimate Source of Love Himself decided at a particular moment in the world’s billion years of history, to enter into His creation and become a human being. It’s unthinkable that God became a man! The Creator became a part of creation!

Orthodox Christianity is not simply a religion, like some other religions, that offers good advice on how to live, or is not a tradition that simply teaches certain wise and beautiful sayings. Our pluralistic society tries to portray all religions – Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and others – as something similar or equal to Christianity. Some say that “they all teach us to love, to be kind, and to do good to one another.”

Of course, there may be similarities in certain teachings, and there are surely sincere and good people in all religions. We can also surely find common causes for the good of humanity that different religions can support. We must never, however, forget that there lies a fundamental and basic difference between Christianity and all other religions and faiths.

We Christians celebrate on this day a radical and unbelievable revolution – a revolution that changed world history and the fate of humanity! On this day of Christmas God entered the world and opened up a completely new way of life that didn’t exist before His coming. The Almighty Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, the one “who is and was and is to come”, the “alpha and omega” of all creation, entered into the world and became a human being.

Although some Pew Survey says that a quarter of our population understands God as an impersonal force, our Church reminds us that Almighty God is not simply an impersonal, spiritual force, but He is the Almighty One who became one of us! God became one of us so that He could totally identify with human frailty; so that he could experience life as we know it; so that he could experience and confront the deepest evils, pains, and hurts of this world, including the ultimate evil of death itself; and so that he could prevail over all. The radical and unbelievable revolution that this personal God began 2000 years ago was a revolution over fallen humanity and death itself.

God became a human being – the perfect human being – so that He could show each one of us what it truly means to be human; to show us how to live; to show us how to overcome the temptations and corruption and evil in this world; and to show us how we can live under His reign and enter into the kingdom of God here and now!

God becoming a human is the deepest mystery of history – a mystery that no other religion or religious belief tells us about. Jesus Christ is unique – there is no comparison in any other faith - not Moses, or Mohammed, or Buddha - because He was not simply a great teacher, an important philosopher, a miracle worker, and the founder of a new religion. He is God Himself who became a human being!

This Feast of Christmas reminds us how unique Christianity is, and therefore should challenge us to re-evaluate how we understand our beliefs, and how we practice our faith. We all have free choice, and every person is free to believe as they choose. Yet, if one wants to be a part of the Church, and call themselves Orthodox Christians, then this implies not picking and choosing what we want to believe so that it fits our desires and preferred lifestyle.

Instead it means each of us must struggle to understand what God teaches and what His will is, and then struggle to make a great effort to conform our lives to His teachings, not to conform His teachings to our lifestyle!

Christmas and the Pew Survey should act as reminders to each of us to look anew at our own beliefs, and take care about how our values and lives are sometimes not in line with God. The radical event of Christmas has radically changed human history, and whenever we celebrate Christmas it should make us reflect on our own lives and, in fact, radically change our lives!

Christ is Born! Let us glorify Him!

Merry Christmas to all!
Why Did God Become Man?

by Fr. Anthony Coniaris

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!

Our Greatest Need

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.

A New Standard

No matter how good any of us may think we are, and no matter how generous and loving we see ourselves, from the time that Jesus entered the world 2000 years ago at the first Christmas, we now have a new standard by which we judge ourselves – Jesus Christ. We can never be too proud, or think too highly of ourselves, because compared to the life of Christ, we all fall far short. Yet, we never give up in despair because of our failings. Instead we learn that it is only in Christ, that we can find the inspiration and power, guidance and hope to grow more and more in His likeness. He will help and guide us to become more like Him! He sets the standard, and then shows us the path and gives us the power so that we can fulfill our divine potential!
ONE SOLITARY LIFE

There is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another small village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...

While still a young man of 30, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His clothing. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty long centuries have come and gone, and today Jesus Christ is still the centerpiece of the human race.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected life on this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

Christ is Born! Let us glorify Him!

(Adapted from a sermon by Dr. James Allan Frances)
As I write this, it is the day after Fr. Luke announced our exciting GOOD AND FAITHFUL STEWARD CHALLENGE at church this weekend. As you can assume, I knew about this for some time now and was excited about it as soon as Fr. Luke and Jared Quill told the Parish Council about it. As I’ve been thinking about the Challenge I’ve been wondering what is the most important and meaningful part about it.

Of course, first we need to thank our brother, the late Manny Pappas who through the generosity of his will, and the wise stewardship of his nephew Dan as the executor, is funding this adventure (and an adventure it can be!) Manny was truly a very nice man, always smiling and excited to participate in whatever we had going on at church. I daresay his investment in our expanded parking lot was definitely needed for church yesterday, even though we not only filled all the parking spots, but we still had a few folks who parked on the grass. When I would speak with him, Manny always remembered that I, like he, graduated from his beloved alma mater Worcester Polytechnic Institute, another organization that has benefited from his great generosity.

I’m sure Manny is looking down on us now and is no doubt as excited for us as we should be about the Challenge. The Challenge can truly be an adventure for us if we treat it as such. Manny adopted the spirit of Christ through his generosity, and thus, through Manny’s generosity we each have the ability to imitate Christ and reach out and interact with someone or some organization and bring God’s message to them.

As I listened to Fr. Luke’s sermon yesterday, the feeling that I took away from it is that this gift from Manny should perhaps be used to not only help those in need, but also should be used as a vehicle to allow us individually to assist, help, interact and bless a person or organization that perhaps is new to us personally.

Perhaps who we choose should be some other entity rather than the ones we normally contribute to? Perhaps this Challenge can expose us individually to other worthy and needful causes? Perhaps the Challenge can be the start of a new support effort to a new organization by us on an individual basis? That is one of the beauties of this program, it allows us to “think outside the box” (an overused expression) in how we as individual family units decide on where we invest our charitable contributions.

My wife Charlotte and I spoke about it this morning and we both agreed that when we decide to contribute the money to a charitable cause that we make it one that we have not yet contributed to. That’s not to say that we won’t support the causes we currently support, indeed we feel the Challenge will only reinforce our desires to support our favorite charities, but we think that this allows us to consider new needs that perhaps we had not considered before. It allows us to learn more about new organizations and efforts that are worthy of our support, and to learn about them means we can also be active advocates for them and not just support them financially.

In that sense, the Challenge truly has the opportunity to be an adventure. And you don’t have to look that far to find worthy causes that perhaps you have not considered supporting. As you all are aware, since Fr. Luke and Presbytera Faith have blessed us with their personal stewardship of our parish we have consistently been visited by missionaries from around the world. From Albania, to Africa, to Central America and beyond, many worthy individuals have visited us, and some have stayed in our midst for extended periods while they completed their studies at Holy Cross. Perhaps you have not had the chance to support theses missionaries in the past or the OCMC effort in general? Perhaps you want to learn more about the OCMC and how they are changing the lives of people around the world?
Perhaps this is an organization that is worthy of your attention and should be considered as part of the Challenge?

Or perhaps you want to look more local? Perhaps you’d like to contribute to those organizations that work to end homelessness in this country? I recently listened to a radio program that interviewed Mayor Walsh in Boston on various topics and the topic of the homelessness in Boston came up. We don’t have a massive homeless problem in Boston as compared to other large cities, only approximately a few thousand people. That’s far less than other cities, especially those in warmer climates, but a few thousand people starving and freezing on the streets of Boston should be unacceptable to us as Christians.

There are many organizations who help these unfortunate souls but one that I have known about for some time and does very good work is the Pine Street Inn, an organization who’s goal is to work with homeless individuals in Boston to move them to a home. Their vision on their website (www.pinestreetin.org) is, “A permanent home and community for everyone.” I think that’s a vision we can all support! In addition to working to find permanent housing for Boston’s homeless folk, they also operate 650 emergency shelter beds throughout the city. Those beds are critical in the cold months when our homeless brethren cannot survive a cold night on the streets of Boston.

Do you want to get closer to home? Perhaps you’d like to find an organization where you can also occasionally or regularly volunteer? As you all know, we do a monthly meal called the Living Bread Luncheon where we invite in whoever would like to come to share a meal with us and to share in fellowship with us. It’s an absolutely wonderful event and those who serve take as much from the event as those who are our guests. We only do it once a month and perhaps we’ll do it twice a month in the future, but there is a place that does this meal every day not too far away. In Worcester there is an organization called The Mustard Seed (www.mustarseed.org) right at 93 Piedmont Street, and they run a soup kitchen that serves dinner daily. The Mustard Seed has been assisting the most needy of Worcester’s populace since the mid-1980’s, and as they say on their website, “We are always in need of volunteers, financial contributions, new community members, and your prayers.”

The need is great and constant. There are so many organizations that could make great use of your share of Manny’s generosity, and perhaps more importantly your attention and continued support. Let us all embark on this great adventure and find a worthy outlet for the Challenge funds that will be personal for us, for the money we contribute is important but our continued commitment is crucial to helping these organizations.

The feast of Christmas proclaims to us that God has acted decisively in the world, and if we choose – it’s up to us – if WE CHOOSE to allow Him to be born in our hearts once again and live under His reign, than we will have the certainty that “God is with us” and He will help us face whatever challenges the world may offer.
THANK YOU to everyone who helped with our Thanksgiving Baskets and Turkeys. We gave out 30 beautiful baskets and turkeys, and also gave 15 more turkeys and $50 gift cards!

Celebrating Despina Condos’ birthday with our Bible Study group. We also had Mary Baxter there, so the two longest active members of our church were present.
THANKSGIVING GRATITUDE
to all who prepared the dinner and served 75 meals on Thanksgiving Day. This special Living Bread Luncheon was offered for the Glory of God by an anonymous donor.
THANK YOU TO THE 2019 STEWARDS

To all the faithful Church Family members who have given a financial donation towards their 2019 Stewardship Offering as of Nov 24, 2019

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Constatine/Ethel Anifantis
Sophie Apostol
Ted Avlas
Nike Avlas
Earl/Lorraine Bahl
John/Olga Barakilis
Eric Beland/Rina Sgouritsas
Frederika Beno
Rich/Sophia Bethune
Athena Bilis
Liberty Brassard
Brenda Robillard
George/Debby Carabina
Rita Carabina
Ann Chito
Charlie Chito
Mike/Titi Chito
Anton/Nicoleta Cojocaru
Gary/Christina Colello
Despina Condos
George/Laurie Condos
Barbara Constantine
Chris/Helen Constantine
Arthur/Sara Darlagiannis
Nick/Athanasia Darlagiannis
Norman/Barbara Desrosiers
Leah Didonato
Maria Dionis
George/Annalisa Dunning
Mary Fatsi
Stephen/Sophia Foisy
Vasili/Thomai Gatsogiannis
Chris Geotis
Paul/Mona Geotis
Zach Gianaris
Zach/Barbara Gianaris
Denise Gritzner
Robert/Sharon Hayes
Helen Hazatones
Lisa Healy
Anestis/Evis Jordanoglou
Harry/Tina Jordanoglou
Angeliki Karapanos
John/Maria Karastogiannis
George/Helen Kerbici
Said/Bozhena Khozami
Arthur/Samantha Kiritsis
James Kiritsis
Rena/Thomas Klebart
Mike Kokoszka
Gulapka/Ilija Kostovski
Alexandra Koula
Gus Koula
Sandy Kunkel
Scott/Kathy Kunkel
Trish Lareau
Helen Lepine
Garin/Anna Livingstone
Elena Mackenzie
Laurie Manthos
Leslie Manthos
Chris/Alex Massie
Lorna McWilliam
Diana/Alex Megas
Helen Metropoulos
Demetrios/Hariklia Milios
John Milios
Vasilios/Grace Milios
Bob Mirandola/Lea Koveas
Yanni/Katie Mironidis
Del/Marie Monroe
Pauline/Carl Mueller
Neal/Charlotte Neslusan
John Nikopoulos
Victor/Linda Nizamoff
Sara Roy
Ron/Sandy Sanderson
Loucia/Michael Scafidi
Nick/Mary Seferi
John/Eleni Sgouritsas
Dimitri/Efkarpia Sidopoulos
Christine Bilis Porazzo
Jared/Stephanie Quill
Deb Raymond
Dan/Sue Rivelli
Stephanie Robillard
Sandra Roy
Ron/Sandy Sanderson
Loucia/Michael Scafidi
Nick/Mary Seferi
John/Eleni Sgouritsas
Dimitri/Efkarpia Sidopoulos
Eleanor Teguis
Ted Theodores
Marion Thomas
John/Ana Thomas
Phil/Barbara Thomas
Bill Thompson
Steliane/David Thompson
George/Lynn Tonna
Ted/Betty Tonna
Nick/Lois /Totolos
Fr Luke/Faith Veronis
Edna Vogel
Steve/Kelly Vosnakis
Tasi Vriga
Ted Vriga
Danielle/David Weiss
Evangline Wilson
Vasiliki Zahariadis
Bill/Helen Zenon
Yuri/Tatyana Zhuk

As of Nov 24, only 124 out of our 160 Families have offered something towards their Stewardship Offering to support our beloved Church ministries.

Thus far the average offering is $912/year.

Please Fulfill Your Pledge and Send in your Offering before end of the Year!!!

We have collected $113,089 out of our budgeted $121,000.

Help us surpass our goal by year end!
24 HOUR ADVENT PRAYER CHAIN

During the second week of December, we will have a “24 Hour a Day Christmas Prayer Chain.” We are looking for 24 parishioners who will each commit to pray in their homes for one hour a day during the first seven days of December. Each parishioner will commit to pray at a different hour of the day and night. This means that at every moment from December 8-14, someone from our Church Family will be lifting up their voice in prayer, supplication, thanksgiving and praise to God.

The purpose of our Prayer Chain is twofold: First, to help the participants get into the real “spirit” of Christmas - one that helps us prepare to receive our Lord Jesus Christ into our lives anew. Second, to get our Church Family to pray for one another and all those who have any special needs. If you know someone who needs extra prayers, please give their names to Fr. Luke before December 8.

If you are interested in participating in this Prayer Chain by committing to pray for one hour a day in your home during each of the first seven days of December, please contact Fr. Luke. He will provide for you the prayers and the structure of how to pray for one hour.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

We have 115 stewards out of our 160 stewardship members who have given to support our church in the year 2019

PACESTETERS ($1000-$2000) - 22 Stewards

TORCHBEARERS ($2001-$4000) - 7 Stewards

GOOD SHEPHERDS (over $4000) - 5 Stewards

THANK YOU

To everyone who helped donate to the St Innocent Orphanage and Project Mexico Pantry. We collected 50 boxes of supplies and aid which we sent to them!
VISIT OR SEND A NOTE TO THE HOMEBOUND OR ELDERLY OF OUR CHURCH FAMILY THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON

Despina Condos - Overlook Masonic Home
Mary Baxter - Overlook Masonic Home
Vasilios Siozopoulos - Webster Manor
Petros Adamopoulos - Webster Manor
Evelyn Aperges
Nike Avlas
Liberty Brassard
Zach/Barbara Gianaris
Stergios Giantsios
Harry Jordanoglou
Carolyn Niemeck
Hariklia Milios
Olga Pappas
Evangelia Panagiotou
Glykeria Partsalis
George Papageorge
Vassy Tanko
Edna Vogel
Christine Yakovleva

100th Anniversary Dates to Remember

Jan 12 - Vasilopita Luncheon and Talent Show
March 13-15 - Eikona Music Weekend and Concert & Visit from the miraculous Kardiotisa Tender Hearted Icon
June - Getting to Know our Neighbor Dinner
July - Indian Princess Greek Night
Nov 14, 2020 - 100th Anniversary Gala Dinner at the Mansion at Bald Hill in Woodstock, CT

ST. NICHOLAS CELEBRATION

9:30am-12:30pm SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8TH

- A Visit By St. Nicholas during the Children’s Sermon (don’t be late!!!)
- Photo Shoot with St. Nicholas
  - Pancake Breakfast
- Make a Christmas ornament
- Decorate Christmas Cookies
- Make and Take Cookie Mix
- Play St Nicholas Jeopardy Game
- Followed by Christmas Caroling to Homebound Parishioners

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT
Dec 22

CHOIR CHRISTMAS CAROLS WITH CONGREGATION
Dec 24
2019 Annual Church Family Christmas Card

Our Philoptochos Society will offer an opportunity for all our Church Family members to be a part of 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.

If you would like to be included, please give your donation and the names to Donna Cooney or Debby Raymond by Dec. 1st, or mail them to the Church Office, noting Church Family Christmas Card.

CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

See Leah DiDonato or Mary Seferi to help purchase one of 35 Christmas gifts for children from needy families, or one of 30 Christmas gifts for the elderly residents at Holy Trinity Nursing Home.

THANK YOU!!!

To Evangelos and Eleftheria Moutoudis for donating 35 Turkeys!

To Sandi Kunkel for donating 10 Turkeys!

And To Everyone Who Put Together Baskets and Offered Gift Cards!

We gave out 30 Thanksgiving Baskets and Turkeys plus an additional 15 Turkeys and $50 gift cards so that 45 families could have a beautiful thanksgiving celebration.

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 $60 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.
Our December 2nd Christmas Party has been postponed until December 30th due to the snow. We will have it at Point Breeze at 6:00 on that day. The cost is $20.00. See Leah DiDonato to sign up. If you want to exchange gifts please bring a $10 gift. And also that night we will collect monies to donate to a charity of our choice for Christmas. Hope to see you then! And don't forget bingo!

Donna Cooney and Debbie Raymond will be collecting names for our Christmas card again this year. The cost is $15.00.

Sandi Kunkel is passing out Christmas baskets this year for the needy. Please take one and fill it. Father Luke has a long list of names to distribute to for Christmas.

On Thursday December 5 Eleni and some of the ladies will be making koulourakia for our shut ins. We will put them in Christmas tins and Fr Luke will give them to our shut ins when he visits them for Christmas. Eleni will be making a couple of recipes so if there are any extra we will sell them to those who might want them to add to their Christmas table!

We would like to extend our deepest sympathies to Leslie and Laurie Manthos for the loss of their beloved mother Jennie. Jennie was an active member of the Philoptochos before she got sick. We will remember her sewing items she donated at our bazaars and the various pastries she also baked. She will be greatly missed by all especially her 2 daughters that cared for her with utmost love and devotion!

Also we would like to thank Sara Darlagiannis who donated the chair covers for our chairs in the church hall. They add a beautiful touch to our chairs and dress up the hall. Thank you Sara!

I would like to wish our ladies and their families a very Merry Christmas!

**Evelyn Pappas**

---

**A Poem for the Church**

by Mike Kokozska

In the Greek Orthodox Church, with Fr. Luke, Pres. Faith & our Church Family.

We all represent the Lord our God and we discover a way of life where we care for and love one another. When we live our lives in a spiritual way, our lives are worth living.

Together we get to know each other and together we become One.

We have functions that create happiness within our souls.

In our Church Family we develop the greatest gift of all - how to live with Jesus Christ our Savior by our side.

In love and humility we search for tenderness and hope that keeps us moving further along on the path of faith, joy, peace and harmony.

Thank You, Lord, for our Church!

---

**LIVING BREAD LUNCHEON**

12:30-1:30pm, Saturday, Dec 7

The December Luncheon is offered

In loving memory of Bessie Koulax from her family

You can honor a special person or offer the meal in loving memory of a beloved one for a $400 donation (which will feed 120 people)
**USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE**

Dec 1 - Neal Neslusan, Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Rombillard, Tatyana Zhuk, Mike Chito

Dec 8 - Nicoleta Cojocaru, Chris Dillon, Jared Quill, Bill Thompson

Dec 15 - Arthur Bilis, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau

Dec 22 - Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi

Dec 24 Christmas Eve - Neal Neslusan, Jimmy Karapanos, Brenda Rombillard, Tatyana Zhuk, Mike Chito

Dec 29 - Nicoleta Cojocaru, Chris Dillon, Jared Quill, Bill Thompson

**COFFEE FELLOWSHIP SERVING GROUPS**

Dec 1 - Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi, Chris Dillon

Dec 8 - Sara Darlagiannis, Christine Kiritsis, Charlotte Neslusan, Stephanie Quill, Brenda Rombillard

Dec 15 - Donna Cooney, Leah Didonato, Rena Klebart, Betty Tonna

Dec 22 - Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Deb Raymond, Vange Wilson, Alexandra Koulax

Dec 29 - Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi, Chris Dillon

**Coffee Fellowship Supply Pastries/Donuts Groups**

*These groups will bake or bring in pastries/donuts and/or fruit and veggies for our coffee fellowship. We are looking for more volunteers to help!!!*

Dec 1 - Titi Chito, Rina Sgouritsas, Pres. Faith Veronis

Dec 8 – Sandi Kunkel, Evelyn Pappas, Gulapka Kostovski, Betty Tonna

Dec 15 – Kathy Bilis, Marie Monroe, Eleni Sgouritsas, Tina Collelo

Dec 22 - Leah Didonato, Mary Seferi, Olga Poulokhine, Vasiliki Zahariadis

Dec 29 - Sara Darlagiannis, Sissy Darligiannis, Helen Constantine, Alexandra Koulax

Jan 5 – Lisa Healy, Marie McNally, Despina Condos, Trish Lareau

Jan 12 Charlotte Neslusan, Evis Jordanoglou, Dolly Sosnowski, Annalisa Dunning

Jan 19 – Lynn Purcell, Rayne Purcell, Sophia Foisy, Kelly Vosnakis

**YOUTH EPISTLE READERS**

Dec 1 - Kiera MacKenzie

Dec 8 - Lily Mueller

Dec 15—Kara Bilis

Dec 22 - Helen Dunning

Dec 24 - Zach Beaudry

Dec 29 - Panayiota Veronis

Jan 5 - Maia Beaudry
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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>Nikita Zagoras</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>Nicole Apostola</td>
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<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>Evis Jordanoglou</td>
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<td>Dec 8</td>
<td>Maria Mironidis</td>
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<td>Dec 22</td>
<td>Elise Purcell</td>
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<td>Dec 23</td>
<td>Kenneth Peterson</td>
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<td>Dec 25</td>
<td>Chris Geotis</td>
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<td>Dec 26</td>
<td>Paul Geotis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 29</td>
<td>Anestis Jordanoglou</td>
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<td>Dec 31</td>
<td>Eric Beland</td>
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**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Names</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 5</td>
<td>George/Helen Kerbici</td>
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<td>Dec 11</td>
<td>Arthur &amp; Sara Darligiannis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 18</td>
<td>Dan/Katie Neeland</td>
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<td>Dec 31</td>
<td>Chuck &amp; Misty Pappas</td>
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**NAMEDAYS:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>St. Barbara</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barbara Constantine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Barbara Desrosiers</td>
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<td>Barbara Gianaris</td>
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<td>Barbara Pappas</td>
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<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>St Nicholas</td>
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<td>Nick Adamopoulos</td>
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<td>Nike Avlas</td>
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<td>Nike Beaudry</td>
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<td>Nicoleta Cojocaru</td>
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<td>Nick Kiritsis</td>
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<td>Niko Milios</td>
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<td>Nick Rivelli</td>
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<td>Nick Seferi</td>
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<td>Nicholas Thompson</td>
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<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>St. Spyridon</td>
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<td>Spiro Pappas</td>
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<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>St Eleftherios</td>
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<td>Eleftheria Moutoudis</td>
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<td>Dec 17</td>
<td>St Daniel the Prophet</td>
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<td>Dan Rivelli</td>
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<td>Dec 20</td>
<td>St Anastasia</td>
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<td>Madison Anastasia McWilliams</td>
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<td>Dec 25</td>
<td>Christmas</td>
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<td>Christy Atsales</td>
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<td>Christa Benoit</td>
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<td>Chris Constantine</td>
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<td>Chris Geotis</td>
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<td>Chris Grzyb</td>
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<td>Chris Milios</td>
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<td>Dec 26</td>
<td>St Joseph the Betrothed</td>
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<td>Joseph Gliniecki</td>
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<td>Dec 26</td>
<td>St David the King</td>
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<td>David Bilis</td>
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<td>David Thompson</td>
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<td>Dec. 27</td>
<td>St. Stephen</td>
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<td>Stephen Foisy</td>
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<td>Stephanie Quill</td>
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<td>Steve Vosnakis</td>
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SIGN UP FOR PROJECT MEXICO

Our Church reserved 25 SPOTS for next summer’s trip! Only 10 spots still open

**July 16-23, 2020**

Give a $100 deposit and talk with Fr. Luke to reserve your spot.
IS OUR CHURCH IN YOUR WILL?

Remember Christ’s Beloved Church in your Estate Planning and Legacy Giving!

What a beautiful way to remember the Church that has blessed you and nourished you throughout your life, or at different stages in your life.

Even after you have gone to be with the Lord and join the Church Triumphant in the company of the saints, you can still help the Church here on earth continue her sacred ministry of love and hope to the world!

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

“All things are filled with joy today, for Christ is born of a Virgin… All the angels in heaven greatly rejoice today, the whole creation leaps with joy, for the Savior and Lord is born in Bethlehem.”

Hymns from the Christmas Service

Look for our safe and convenient Online Giving at bottom left of Church webpage at www.schwebster.org

Learn your Orthodox Faith from Orthodox podcasts, music, teachings at

www.myocn.net

www.AncientFaith.com
Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!

Dudley - Auburn - Blackstone

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Danielson, Conn. 06239
(860) 774-5395

Sari Elston

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Because We Care
Richard D. Majersik, Director
www.shaw-majersik.com

Point Breeze
Your Restaurant on Webster Lake
114 Point Breeze Road
Webster, MA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dec 1</strong></td>
<td>8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy w 40 Day Memorial for Jennie Manthos <strong>Prayer Chain Begins!!!</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>6 St Nicholas</strong> 8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy 6:00pm Youth Overnight Retreat <strong>7 12:30 Living Bread Luncheon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8 St. Nicholas Sunday</strong> 8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy <strong>Prayer Chain Begins 7pm AA</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12 <strong>St Spyridon</strong> <strong>Prayer Chain</strong></td>
<td>13 <strong>St Herman of Alaska</strong> 8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy <strong>Prayer Chain</strong></td>
<td>14 Habitat for Humanity Build in Worcester <strong>Prayer Chain 5pm Vespers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy Parish Council Elections 7pm AA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td><strong>20 St Ignatius of Antioch</strong> 8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy <strong>21</strong> 5pm Vespers</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy w Christmas Pageant 7pm AA</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td><strong>27 St Stephen the First Martyr</strong> <strong>Fast Free Day</strong> 28 5pm Vespers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1 <strong>St Basil</strong> <strong>A Blessed and Happy New Year to all!!!</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>3</strong> 4 5pm Vespers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td><strong>6:00pm Philoptochos Christmas Dinner</strong></td>
<td><strong>6:00pm</strong> 4:00 Christmas Matins 5pm Christmas Eve Service</td>
<td><strong>10am Christmas Liturgy</strong> Christ is Born! Glorify Him! 5pm Vespers</td>
<td><strong>26</strong> 5pm Vespers</td>
<td><strong>28</strong> 5pm Vespers</td>
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</table>
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.
AMEN.