ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night.” (Psalm 92:1-2)

During this month of November, it is wonderful that our nation pauses to dedicate one day specifically for Thanksgiving. Every American president since Abraham Lincoln has made an official Thanksgiving Proclamation on behalf of our nation. On November 22, we all will continue in that tradition and offer thanksgiving to Almighty God for our countless blessings as a nation, a church, as families and as individuals.

Yet let us take care not to think that one day a year is enough to thank God! As Orthodox Christians, we joyfully participate in this national holiday of Thanksgiving, while simultaneously realizing that a follower of Jesus Christ is someone who daily acknowledges with gratitude all the blessings we receive each and every day! Life, love, faith, health, friendships and relationships, along with our challenges, struggles and everything in between are gifts from our loving Father in heaven!

Henri Nouwen, wrote this about thanksgiving: “Gratitude goes beyond the "mine" and "thine" and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.”

What a profound idea to think of “gratitude” as a discipline, instead of simply as a fleeting emotion that depends on our circumstances. In fact, this way of understanding gratitude goes in line with our Orthodox perspective. Every mature Christian should try to discipline themselves to maintain a true Christ-like spirit - which includes the spirit of gratitude, along with the spirit of joy, the spirit of humility, the spirit of love, the spirit of hope, and the list could go on.

Difficult and disappointing circumstances will tempt us to lose these Christian attitudes, but our spiritual struggle is precisely an effort to constantly turn to God and seek out His Holy Spirit, who will in turn fill us with His fruit of love, joy, peace, hope, and gratitude. Each and every moment of our lives, we have a choice to make - whether to be grateful or to be ungrateful; to see life as a blessing, or to see it as a burden; to notice the hand of God...
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

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present in our own reality, or to pridefully think that we are our own god and to despairingly think that we are on our own.

This spirit and discipline of thanksgiving goes hand-in-hand with our upcoming STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY. Every November, we chose one Sunday to be the day when we reflect upon the blessings God has given us, and think how we can show our gratitude back God. These gifts include our time, talents, and treasure. Acting as a good steward of God in His Church means we consciously strive to offer a portion of our time, our talents, and our treasure to promote His Gospel!

Please come to Church on November 18, and hand in a Stewardship Card where we all will make a concrete commitment of what we can offer the Church for the glory of God. And remember, Saint Paul says, “God loves a cheerful giver!” We don’t want parishioners to give in a grudging or regretful manner.

This Saints Constantine and Helen community is our Church Family, and each one of you are an integral part of it. Just as each of us want the best for our own families, I’m sure that we all want the best for our Church Family as well! May we all act as faithful and dedicated stewards in our offering of time, service, and money. And as a good steward, try to think about what you offered God this past year, and see how you can increase it in the new year. God is continually increasing His blessings to us, and we in like manner, should try to increase our commitment to Him. Maybe we can volunteer more and commit more time to the Church. Maybe we can use the unique talent or knowledge we have to serve a need in the Church. Maybe we can increase our stewardship financial pledge. In whatever we decide, may we all strive to do it solely for the glory of Almighty God!

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, Presvytera Faith and I want to thank everyone in this community for the blessing you have been to us and our family over the past 14 years. We have truly loved being a part of this special church family, and thank God for His presence and love here.

With joy and gratitude in Christ Jesus,

+Luke

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

Stewardship Sunday will take place on Sunday, November 18th. As we reflect back on this past year, let us thank God that our Church Family has supported all the planned expenses of our Church. Every year our Church Family supports our church in generous ways, and we almost always end up fulfilling all our budgeted expenses.

This year, as of October 14th, 125 stewardship members (individuals or families) have given towards their stewardship pledges. We have a community of approximately 170 families. If you are one of the 45 stewards who has not given any financial support to our beloved Church this year, or have not fulfilled your Stewardship Pledge, please reflect on what your faith in Jesus Christ and His holy Church means to you, and make an offering before the end of the year.

Our Church is an oasis, a lighthouse, a hospital, and an intimate family. We are growing in God’s love and grace together, striving to share His light to the world around us, and seeking to serve and minister to those in need in our community and around the world. For everyone who truly gets involved, we know what a special, beautiful church family we have!

Please continue to support our Church and be good and faithful stewards of the time, talents and treasure which our Lord has given to each one of us.

We have collected $99,100 thus far from 125 stewards for an average of $790/year in stewardship offerings. We are hoping to receive another $21,000 to reach our budgeted goal of $120,000. Help us surpass that goal by the end of the year!

Thus far, we have 20 Pacesetters (stewards giving between $1000-$2000), we have 9 Torchbearers (giving between $2001-$4000) and 6 Good Shepherds (giving between $4001-$10,000. Thanks to All!!!
Last month we have all followed the media coverage dealing with accusations against the Supreme Court Judge Brett Kavanaugh. Accusations. Denials. People taking sides and attacking those who disagree with their position. If you scroll down a Twitter or Facebook feed, you will see a nation divided. And this month we have the mid-term elections coming up.

What is our response as Orthodox Christians? Our response is to be informed without allowing ourselves to become distracted. Our response is to rise above the politics, the anger, the angst, and the turmoil, which is gripping and dividing the people of our country.

Our response, as always, is to turn to Christ and His eternal Gospel which leads us on the path of healing, reconciliation, and lasting peace.

Our Lord says in the Gospel: “As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them... But love your enemies, and do good... and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:31-36).”

What words. What wisdom. We marvel at the miracle of the raising of Lazarus and other such miracles when a lifeless body is restored to life. But what can be greater than the miracle of healing divisions and raising dead relationships back to life through mercy, goodness, and love for enemies?

The words of our Lord are simple enough. The problem too often, though, is that we don’t adequately and consistently follow our Lord’s words to see real change within ourselves and within the world around us.

One reason we don’t adequately study the words of Christ and follow them is that we are constantly distracted.

We come late to the Liturgy or skip it all together, but we have no problem spending three hours to watch a football game or movie.

We don’t have time to pray for five or ten minutes each morning, but we’ll watch endless hours of testimony and drama on Capital Hill.

We don’t have time to read a chapter from the Bible each day, but we spend hours each day reading the news and following stories on social media.

In the book, “The Screwtape Letters,” written in 1942, C.S. Lewis writes this spiritual classic as a series of letters from the perspective of an experienced demon, Uncle Screwtape, advising his novice nephew demon, Wormwood. In one of the chapters, the author shows how the demons try to distract us Christians from living a spiritually focused life. The letter begins:

My dear wormwood (the novice demon),

Be sure that the [person] remains completely fixated on politics. Arguments, political gossip, and obsessing on the faults of people they have never met serves as an excellent distraction from advancing in personal virtue, character, and the things the [person] can control. Make sure to keep the [person] in a constant state of angst, frustration, and general disdain towards the rest of the human race in order to avoid any kind of charity or inner peace from further developing. Ensure the [person] continues to believe that the problem is “out there” in the “broken system” rather than recognizing there is a problem with himself.

Keep up the good work,
Uncle Screwtape (the advanced demon).

Although from 1942, it is as though the words were written for us today.

Back in the early 1900’s, St. John of Kron-
stadt wrote the following concerning distractions:

“A strange illness has appeared in our days – the passion for distractions. Never before was there such a desire for distractions; people have forgotten how to lead a serious life for the good of others; they have no spiritual life and are bored. They exchange the profound content of a spiritual life for distractions! What madness!”

This is not to say that we are not to be informed with the current events of the world we live in. Absolutely not. But there is a line between being informed and being obsessed with the news. There is a difference between knowing what’s going on and being distracted with everything that’s going on.

How does spending less time distracting ourselves with current events and more time with our spiritual lives help to overcome the evils in the world – including racial discrimination, social injustice, and sexual assault?

These and other evils are despised by God and should be vehemently opposed by all who claim to be followers of Christ. But our Lord knows that the only way to eradicate these evils is not by toppling dictatorships or political parties, but by overcoming evil within the human heart – beginning with our own.

As Alexander Solzhenitsyn famously wrote: “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either – but right through every human heart.”

Christ did not enter into the world 2,000 years ago merely to overthrow the Roman Empire – and all the racism, slavery, and abuse of women and children that was associated with that empire; He came to overthrow and destroy the power of evil which lurks in every human heart.

“But love your enemies and do good…” ; “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” These are the words which can bring down every trace of evil in the world if they dwell and reign in every human heart.

If a handful of simple disciples – men and women – in an obscure corner of Galilee were enough to transform the mighty Roman Empire from within, imagine what we – and every Orthodox Christian in America – could do for our country if we truly lived the Gospel of Christ within our own hearts?

In my spiritual reading this week I came across the following words from Elder Gabriel of Koutloumosiou: “When we reach the grave we cannot even say, ‘Lord have mercy’ or do any good deed.”

My brothers and sisters, NOW is the time to live the words of our Lord in today’s Gospel reading. After we die it is too late.

On our death bed and as we enter eternity, the thing we will regret the most is that we did not show more mercy, more goodness, more grace, and more love to people – even to our enemies.

In closing, we can all agree that there is a lot going on in our lives, in our politics, and in our country.

But brothers and sisters: Our time to do the precious work of God – in our hearts and in the world – is limited. Let us not be held back and delayed by our distractions.

We heard the life-giving words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel. Let us put those words in our hearts and become the vehicles of change – the instruments of God’s grace – which will bring healing, reconciliation, peace, and Divine love into the world. Amen.
More than 70 percent of Americans identify as Christian, but you wouldn’t know it from listening to them. An overwhelming majority of people say that they don’t feel comfortable speaking about faith, most of the time.

During the Great Depression, the playwright Thornton Wilder remarked, “The revival in religion will be a rhetorical problem — new persuasive words for defaced or degraded ones.” Wilder knew that during times of rapid social change, God-talk is often difficult to muster.

We may have traded 1930s-level poverty and hunger for a resurgence in racism, sexism and environmental cataclysm, but our problems are no less serious — or spiritually disorienting. While many of our most visible leaders claim to be religious, their moral frameworks seem unrecognizable to masses of other believers.

As a student of American Christianity and the son of a prominent megachurch pastor, I’ve been sensing for some time that sacred speech and spiritual conversation are in decline. But this was only a hunch I had formed in response to anecdotal evidence and personal experience. I lacked the quantitative data needed to say for sure.

So last year, I enlisted the Barna Group, a social research firm focused on religion and public life, to conduct a survey of 1,000 American adults. This study revealed that most Americans — more than three-quarters, actually — do not often have spiritual or religious conversations.

More than one-fifth of respondents admit they have not had a spiritual conversation at all in the past year. Six in 10 say they had a spiritual conversation only on rare occasions — either “once or twice” (29 percent) or “several times” (29 percent) in the past year. A paltry 7 percent of Americans say they talk about spiritual matters regularly.

But here’s the real shocker: Practicing Christians who attend church regularly aren’t faring much better. A mere 13 percent had a spiritual conversation around once a week.

For those who practice Christianity, such trends are confounding. It is a religion that has always produced progeny through the combination of spiritual speech and good deeds. Nearly every New Testament author speaks about the power of spiritual speech, and Jesus’ final command to his disciples was to go into the world and spread his teachings. You cannot be a Christian in a vacuum.

And yet even someone like me who has spent his entire life using God-talk knows how hard it has become. Five years ago, I moved from the Bible Belt to New York City and ran headfirst into an unexpected language barrier. Sure, I could still speak English as well as I always had. But I could no longer “speak God.”

By this I mean that spiritual conversations, once a natural part of each day for me, suddenly became a struggle. Whether I spoke to a stranger or a friend, the exchange flowed freely so long as I stuck to small talk. But conversations stalled out the moment the subject turned spiritual.

Before relocating, I worked as a part-time minister at a suburban congregation outside of Atlanta. Before that, I had attended a Christian college and seminary. All my life, I used religious language daily in my home and community, rarely pausing to think about the meaning of my words. But I was not in Georgia anymore.

Whenever I used religious terms I considered common — like “gospel” and “saved” — my conversation partner often stopped me mid-thought to ask for a definition, please. I’d try to rephrase those words in ordinary vernacular, but I couldn’t seem to articulate their meanings. Some words, like “sin,” now felt so negative that they lodged in my throat. Others, like “grace,” I’d spoken so often that I no longer knew what they meant.

In New York — as in much of America, increasingly — religious fluency is not assumed.
Work often takes precedence over worship, social lives are prioritized over spiritual disciplines and most people save their Sunday-best clothing for Monday through Friday. In pluralistic contexts, our neighbors don’t read from the same script or draw from a common spiritual vocabulary.

According to my survey, a range of internal conflicts is driving Americans from God-talk. Some said these types of conversations create tension or arguments (28 percent); others feel put off by how religion has been politicized (17 percent); others still report not wanting to appear religious (7 percent), sound weird (6 percent) or seem extremist (5 percent). Whatever the reason, for most of us in this majority-Christian nation, our conversations almost never address the spirituality we claim is important.

A deeper look reveals that the decline in sacred speech is not a recent trend, though we are only now becoming fully aware of it. By searching the Google Ngram corpus—a collection of millions of books, newspapers, webpages and speeches published between 1500 and 2008—we can now determine the frequency of word usage over the centuries. This data shows that most religious and spiritual words have been declining in the English-speaking world since the early 20th century.

One might expect a meaty theological term like “salvation” to fade, but basic moral and religious words are also falling out of use. A study in The Journal of Positive Psychology analyzed 50 terms associated with moral virtue. Language about Christian virtues—the fruit of the spirit—words like ‘love,’ ‘patience,’ ‘gentleness’ and ‘faithfulness’—has become much rarer. Humility words, like ‘modesty,’ fell 52 percent. Compassion words, like ‘kindness,’ dropped 56 percent. Gratitude words, like “thankfulness,” declined by 49 percent.

A decline in religious language and a decrease in spiritual conversations does not necessarily mean that we are in crisis, of course. But when you combine the data about the decline in religious rhetoric with an emerging body of research that reveals how much our linguistic landscape both reflects and affects our views, it provides ample cause for alarm.

There is also a practical reason we need a revival in God-talk, specifically at this time in American history. Many people now avoid religious and spiritual language because they don’t like the way it has been used, misused and abused by others. But when people stop speaking God because they don’t like what these words have come to mean and the way they’ve been used, those who are causing the problem get to hog the microphone.

That toothy televangelist keeps using spiritual language to call for donations to buy a second jet. The politician keeps using spiritual language to push unjust legislation. The street preacher keeps using spiritual language to peddle the fear of a fiery hell. They can dominate the conversation because we’ve stopped speaking God. In our effort to avoid contributing to the problem, we can actually worsen it.

Christians in 21st-century America now face our own serious “rhetorical problem.” We must work together to revive sacred speech and rekindle confidence in the vocabulary of faith. If we cannot rise to this occasion, sacred speech will continue its rapid decline—and the worst among us will continue to define what the word “Christian” means.
Gratitude is more than an occasional “thanks be to God.” Gratitude is the attitude that enables us to let go of anger and resentment. Gratitude is the heart of celebration.

How can we break through the chains of resentment and regret, and free ourselves from the passion that paralyzes us? Resentment has very deep roots in our human condition and is not easily cleared away. But once we confess our resentments within a safe and supportive faith community, we create space for forgiveness and freedom. When this happens, God’s liberating grace is able to make all things new. We learn how to sing a new song and develop a new spirit of thanksgiving in which all of life can be received as a gift.

Spiritual formation is the way by which resentment can slowly be transformed into gratitude. Through the spiritual practice of letting go of jealousy and bitterness and forgiving and affirming others, we can make rivals into friends and competitors into companions on the way to true greatness. Servanthood might sound like a pious idea, but it really asks for the humble recognition that our life is not our own to be defended but a gift to be shared. All we have has been given to us. Our part is to be grateful and to give thanks…

The movement to gratitude involved the discovery that God is the God of history and that things are quietly and slowly unfolding as they should. My spiritual task is to learn to listen to all that is going on and trust that God’s hand is guiding me. Then life is no longer a series of interruptions to my schedule and plans, but rather the patient and purposeful way by which God forms and leads me day by day. Gratitude makes the interruption into an invitation, and the occasion of complaint into a moment for contemplation…

To be healed of resentment and move into gratitude requires me to dance - to believe again, even amid my pain, that God will orchestrate and guide my life. The mystery of the dance is that its movements are discovered in taking the steps one by one: some slow, some quick; some smoother, some not. If all steps on the journey are movements of grace, we can be grateful for every moment we have lived, knowing that all is grace.

Gratitude at its deepest level embraces all of life with thanksgiving: the good and the bad, the joyful and the painful, the holy and the not so holy. Jesus calls us to recognize that gladness and sadness are never separate, that joy and sorrow really belong together, and that mourning and dancing are part of the same movement. That is why Jesus calls us to be grateful for every moment that we have lived and to claim our unique journey as God’s way to mold our hearts to greater conformation with God’s own.

Gratitude is not a simple emotion or an obvious attitude. It is a difficult discipline in which I constantly reclaim my whole past as the concrete way God has led me to this moment and is sending me into the future. It is hard precisely because it challenges me to face my painful moments - experiences of rejection and abandonment, feelings of loss and failure - and gradually to discover in them the pruning hands of God, purifying my heart for deeper love, strong hope, and broader faith.

I am gradually learning that the call to gratitude asks us to say, “Everything is grace.” Whether there is suffering or joy, I can say, “Yes, I want to live this, and I want to discover in this more fully the gift of life.” When our gratitude for the past is only partial, our hope for a new future can never be full. As long as we remain resentful about things that we wish had not happened, about relationships that we wish had turned out differently, about mistakes we wish we had not made, part of our heart remains isolated, unable to bear fruit in the new life ahead of us. In a converted heart all our past can be gathered up in gratitude, be remembered with joy, and become the source of energy that moves us toward the future.

Let us not be afraid to look at everything that has brought us to where we are now, receive it with gratitude, and see it in the light of a loving God who guides us day by day.
PARISH COUNCIL
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

SOWN SEEDS IN AUTUMN

It has been a day since our parish was blessed with the visit of the wonderful Bishop Athanasios Akunda from Kenya, and his great sermon on one of the most interesting passages of the Gospel, Luke 8:5-15. This passage of the Bible deals with an issue that we all struggle with, especially us New Englanders who are a quiet and closed bunch when it comes to our religion.

As it applies to our daily lives, I believe the gist of this passage is simple, and was driven home in the Bishop’s message; and that is that we should have God in our actions every day in all situations, and those actions are like the seeds that the sower spreads in the parable. And please note that I did not say that we should preach about God every day to every person, but rather that our actions (when properly guided by the teachings of the church) can be an example that all can see and understand. Indeed not all of us might be learned enough to properly preach about Orthodoxy. That is something many of us have to work on. Clearly we can answer questions from the non-Orthodox about our faith, but we might not be expected to take the place of our priests like Father Luke. We can, however, conduct our normal lives in a way that is guided by the teachings in the Bible, and our normal daily actions can be the seeds that perhaps germinate with those that we interact with.

Our religious leaders, like Bishop Athanasios and Father Luke, are sowing the seeds of faith every time they speak about our faith. And perhaps the seeds they sow are stronger in some ways than ours. But we have seeds to sow as well, as meager and weak as they may seem. Every time we greet someone with a smile, hold the door open for someone, or make requests with a polite “please” instead of being demanding we are sowing our seeds. Every time we act that way, we are showing an example of what the Bible asks us to be; kind and understanding. Kindness can be the layperson’s seed, along with understanding, and patience, and many other positive attributes. Every time we display these in our daily lives we are spreading the seeds of our faith.

And like Bishop Athanasios said, in some cases our seeds will fall in a place where they cannot or will not thrive, but in some cases they may thrive the first time. Imagine a person you have to deal with in your job who is constantly sour and bitter around you and it ruins the work relationship you have with them. Should you respond to their bitterness with equal bitterness? Or perhaps you should respond to their bitterness with kindness, with empathy, with understanding? Perhaps they have problems in their life you cannot fathom? On the first day you decide to be positive and friendly with this person (the first day you cast your seed) perhaps they do not respond in kind, but after the 5th day? Eventually the seed will take, and hopefully thrive.

Three days before the Bishop visited with us and spoke, we had a big rain storm here. It being Autumn, and parts of my lawn being a bit bare, I decided to purchase some grass seed to spread before the rain hoping that it would sprout and root this year before the first frost. I carefully spread my seed in the areas with the least grass and over the areas of the lawn where we now have some dormant crabgrass. I even rented one of those aeration machines and aerated my lawn prior to sowing the seeds (oh boy, I shall not do that again!) The rains came on Thursday and Friday, heavy and furious. Too heavy in fact for my poor grass seed. Much of it got washed away into parts of the lawn that were already growing well. But some remained in the bare spots and I hope the seed in those spots will indeed sprout just as I hope our positive day to day actions guided by the Gospel will also sprout, and our world can be a better place in which to live.

With love in Jesus Christ,
Neal Neslusan
PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

On October 1st we had our first meeting of the new year with a pizza party. It was an enjoyable evening by all. Again congratulations to all of us for a successful festival and to all our ladies for putting on a wonderful pastry booth. In recent weeks I have spoken to ladies from Worcester and Southbridge and they all compliment us on how active we are especially being a small group. I even hear it from our own local community how hard working and close knit we are. I am proud to be a part of this group of women who give of themselves unconditionally.

The Pasta Dinner, our next fundraiser, will be from 5-7pm on November 17. Tickets are on sale for $10 now after church. Please support us. We would like to see more of our own parishioners attend. Lake Pizza is donating all the meatballs. And the ladies have been giving us cash donations towards the ingredients and expenses. We need money to cover rolls, salad, water, soft drinks, desserts such as cookies, cupcakes, and cakes. Nothing is too little. Thank you!

Also we are doing the placement ads again for $25 for a business card ad. Sandy Sanderson will be putting it together on the computer and printing it in house. This placement ad will make $625.00 with no expenses. Celia and Dhimitra will be heading the center table again this year. Bring in your gifts as soon as you can to have an attractive table so people want to buy more than 1 sheet of raffles! Thank you to everyone who will be helping by selling tickets, getting ads, giving donations, and that night cooking and serving! Also thank you to our youth who will be serving our guests! Good job!

With the monies we raise we have been able to meet our obligations. Locally we donate to United Way, Tri Valley, St Vincent de Paul, and Webster-Dudley Boys and Girls Club. We also donate to the national Philoptochos which has monthly obligations and to St Basil’s academy, Philoxenia House, and the fire victims in Greece. We also help our youth attend our Metropolis Camp and Project Mexico.

Pres Faith asked us to donate to the Uganda school where their daughter Theodora will be teaching. She is raising $4000 for playground equipment, flooring for their kindergarten and sports balls. We voted to donate $500 to their needs. That is what we are all about!

Our Christmas party this year will be held on Sunday December 9th at 2:00 at Point Breeze. Cost is $20. Marie McNally will be collecting names.

Our next meeting will be Sunday November 4th after church. Please stay and attend. We want to alternate every other month with an evening meeting and after church so all of you have a chance to attend. Also don’t forget to check with Sandi on your dues.

I would also like to thank Jimmy and Tara Karapanos who donated the blinds in the three classrooms. They look perfect and add warmth to the rooms. Thank you!

I would also like to extend our sympathies to the family of Pauline Angelo. She was a wonderful lady that will be sorely missed! She was always there for us attending meetings, baking, donating, and giving so much of herself! She was so young at heart witnessed by all the young people at her funeral! May her memory be eternal!

With much love and gratitude,

Evelyn Pappas
The Light - November 2018

THANK YOU TO THE 2018 STEWARDS

To all the faithful Church Family members who have given a financial donation towards their 2018 Stewardship Offering as of Oct 14, 2018

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Dhimitra/Angelo Adamopoulos
Nicholas Adamopoulos
Grace Arsenault
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Michael Angelo
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Gus/Ethel Anifantis
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George/Helen Kerbici
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Diana/Alex Megas
Helen Metropoulos
Demetrios/Hariklia Milios
Celia Milios
Vasilios/Grace Milios
Bob Mirandola/Lea Koveas
Del/Marie Monroe
Pauline/Carl Mueller
Neal/Charlotte Neslusen
Victor/Linda Nizamoff
George Nonis
Kosta Panagiotou
Ted/Gloria Panagiotou
Barbara Pappas
Emanuel Pappas
Sam/Evelyn Pappas
Olga Pappas
Glykeria Partsalis
Louise/Richard Pavlech
Olga Poloukhine
Chris Bilis Porazzo
Jared/Stephanie Quill
Deb Raymond
Dan/Sue Rivelli

As of October 14th, 125 out of 170 Families have given an average $790/year towards their Stewardship Offering to support our beloved Church and ministries.

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

We have collected $99,167 out of our budgeted $120,000. Help us reach out goal by year end!

Stephanie Robillard
Ron/Sandy Sanderson
Loucia Scaiffi
Nick/Mary Seferi
John/Eleni Sgouritsas
Dimitri/Efkarpia Sidopoulos
Dorothy Sosnowski
Eleanor Teguis
Ted Theodores
John/Ana Thomas
Phil/Barbara Thomas
Bill Thompson
Stelian/David Thompson
George/Lynn Tonna
Ted/Betty Tonna
Nick/Lois /Totolos
Fr Luke/Faith Veronis
Niko/Susana Veronis
Edna Vogel
Steve/Kelly Vosnakis
Tasi Vriga
Danielle/David Weiss
Evangline Wilson
Paul/Eleni Xanthopoulos
Vasiliki Zahariadis
Bill/Helen Zenon
Yuri/Tatyana Zhuk
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.

THANKSGIVING BASKETS

Help our Church give away 30 Thanksgiving Baskets to needy families! Pick up a basket on Oct 28, Nov 4 or 11, and with another family, fill it up with delicious goods! Show your gratitude to God by sharing what you have with others!!! See Sophia Foisy or Pauline Mueller to get a basket. Return date Nov 18th.

2018 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.

THE 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 15 Christmas gifts for the elderly residents at Holy Trinity Nursing Home.
FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
11:30, Sunday, Nov. 18

- Financial Report
- Fr. Luke’s Pastoral Report
- 2018 Budget Proposal
- Select PC Nominations Committee

Please come and join us for an update on the State of our Church Family.

Some of our Youth at the Corn Maze

Some Living Bread Luncheon Volunteers
Come to Our Philoptochos

Spaghetti and Meatball Pasta Dinner

5:00pm-7:00pm  
Saturday, November 17

Adults $10.00  
Kids under 12 for $5.00

Be sure to check out our fabulous Raffle Table

Come and Join our Church Family for a

Pot-Luck THANKSGIVING Celebration

1:00pm, Thursday, Nov 22

We will be celebrating a Thanksgiving Meal with guests from our monthly Living Bread Luncheon together with our Church Family!

RSVP Sara Darlagiannis 508-207-3177  
and let her know what dish you will bring.
OCTOBER PARISH COUNCIL SUMMARY

- 30 minutes was spent on discussing the vision and future of our Church. What do we do well as a Church community? What can we do better? How can we get more people involved and engaged in ministry? How can we reach out to the outside community and invite more people in? Do all our church family members understand the responsibility we all have to invite our friends, neighbors, co-workers and others to come and visit our church? There are a growing number of people who are not connected to any church. How can we reach out to these people? This lively discussion did not come away with any conclusions, but it was a discussion that the parish council is going to continue in future meetings. If anyone has any suggestions on how we can improve, let us know!

- Our stewardship report revealed we are on target to meet our $120,000 stewardship goal, but we are still waiting for 40 families to offer their stewardship this year, as well as for a number of others to fulfill their stewardship pledge.

- The front doors of our church will be stripped and re-stained beginning of November. A leak from the duct work on the roof needs to be repaired. We are still waiting for estimates.

- Parish House foundational work will begin end of October. Discussion was held about how to pay for this - to take from our investment funds or to take from our line of credit. Decision to take needed funds up to $30,000 from the line of credit, and then we will decide by end of year whether to pay this off from our investment funds or not.

- Discussion on how to pay off the remaining balance of $90,000 still remaining from our 2015 renovation project. Almost all of our pledges are complete, but we still will have a balance of $90,000 remaining. Not sure how we will pay this off. We may need some special fundraisers.

LIVING BREAD LUNCHEON DONORS

The December Luncheon is being donated in loving memory of Bessie Koulax from Charlotte and Neal Neslusun and family.

We are looking for Donors to sponsor the “Living Bread Luncheon” for November and the Thanksgiving.

You can honor some special person or event, or offer the meal in loving memory of a beloved one.

We serve approximately 80-90 guests each month, as well as deliver meals to the elderly of our parish.
HOLY LANDS PILGRIMAGE
February 15-24, 2019

LIMITED SPACE FOR 35 Pilgrims!

$500 Deposit deadline ASAP

Total Cost: $3310

We have increased our pilgrimage size from 25 to 35 spots because of the interest in this once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage.

If you are interested, please see Fr. Luke as soon as possible, and send in your $500 deposit to Cloud Tours. Spots will fill up first come/first serve.

BYZANTINE MUSIC CLASS

Every Friday night from 7:00-9:00pm. We have a class of 10 students attending weekly with Vasilios Grigoriadis, proto-psalti from Constantinople and also a student at Hellenic College. Open to anyone who can make the commitment to come consistently.
Congratulations to

RENA KLEBART

who served as the Chairperson of the Building Committee for the new Gladys E. Kelly Library in Webster.

Thank you Rena for caring about our local community and offering your leadership and talent to oversee this beautiful community project!

24 HOUR ADVENT PRAYER CHAIN

During the first 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 1-7, 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 1.

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.
COME AND JOIN A BIBLE STUDY
EVERY
10:00am WEDNESDAY MORNING
or
7:30pm THURSDAY EVENING
at the home of Fr. Luke and Pres. Faith
(41 Noble Street, Dudley)

We are studying
The Gospels: The Extraordinary Life of Jesus of Nazareth
with the video series
“Drive Thru History with Dave Stotts”

SERVING AS A PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER

Every faithful baptized Orthodox Christian should make some effort of active commitment to the Church. 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 and work with Fr. Luke in fulfilling the mission statement and vision of our Church.

The role of a Parish Council member is a sacred and spiritual task. Each Parish Council member is to act as an ambassador of Jesus Christ and offer a good witness of their Orthodox Christian Faith. In assisting in the administrative responsibilities of the Church, the Parish Council works hand-in-hand with Fr. Luke in strengthening the earthly ministry of God’s Holy Church.

One should run for the Parish Council out of a conviction that you want to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ through humble service to one another and to His Church. Any steward wishing to serve on the Parish Council, including those who are seeking re-election, should talk to our Nomination Committee.

Every candidate must:
- Live his/her life in accordance with the Faith and canons of the Church
- Attend a mandatory PARISH COUNCIL SEMINAR on Wednesday, December 5
- Be an UP TO DATE FINANCIAL STEWARD of the parish for at least one year preceding the date of the elections

If elected, a Parish Council member should:
- Attend divine service regularly
- Participate in the sacramental life of the Church
- Administer the affairs of the Parish in such a way as to work with Fr. Luke in the fulfillment of the Church’s ministry.

Candidates must give in name by Dec 2. Elections will take place December 9,
**USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE**

Nov 4  Arthur Bilis, Chris Geoti, Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Ron Sanderson

Nov 11 Marie McNally, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi, Bill Thompson,

Nov 18 Neal Neslusan, Jimmy Karapanos, Tasi Vriga, Tatyana Zhuk, Mike Chito

Nov 25 Nicoleta Cojocaru, Arthur Darlagiannis, Zach Gianaris, Jared Quill, Nikitas Zagoras

**COFFEE FELLOWSHIP SERVING GROUPS**

Nov 4 - Donna Cooney, Leah Didonato, Rena Klebart, Betty Tonna,

Nov 11 - Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi,

Nov 18 - Kathy Bilis, Sara Darlagiannis, Marie Monroe, Charlotte Neslusan, Stephanie Quill

Nov 25 - Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Deb Raymond, Vange Wilson, Alexandra Koulax

**WEEKDAY SERVICES**

Nov 9 - 9:30 Liturgy for St Nektarios
Nov 16 - 9:30 Liturgy for St Matthew
Nov 19 - 6:30pm Thanksgiving Service
Nov 21 - 9:30 Liturgy for Presentation of Virgin Mary in Temple
Nov 30 - 9:30 Liturgy for St Andrew

Saturday Vespers - 6:00pm

**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!!!*

Nov 4 – Sara Darlagiannis, Sissy Darlagiannis, Helen Constantine Alexandra Koulax

Nov 11 – Lisa Healy, Marie McNally, Despina Condos, Trish Lareau

Nov 18 – Charlotte Neslusan, Evis Jordanoglou, Dolly Sosnowski, Annalisa Dunning

Nov 25 – Lynn Purcell, Rayne Purcell, Sophia Foisy, Kelly Vosnakis

Dec 2 – Titi Chito, Rina Sgouritsas, Lorna McWilliam, Pres. Faith Veronis

Dec 9 – Sandi Kunkel, Evelyn Pappas, Gulapka Kostovski, Betty Tonna,

Dec 16 – Kathy Bilis, Marie Monroe, Eleni Sgouritsas, Tina Collelo

Dec 23 – Leah Didonato, Mary Seferi, Olga Pouloukhine, Vasiliki Zahariadis

**YOUTH EPISTLE READERS**

Nov 4 - Lily Mueller
Nov 11 - Helen Dunning
Nov 18 - Panayiota Veronis
Nov 23 - Maia Beaudry
Dec 2 - Zach Beaudry
Dec 9 - Kiera MacKenzie
Remembering Our Church Family

Important Dates in NOVEMBER:

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

BIRTHDAYS:

- Nov 1 Olga Poloukhine
- Nov 4 Despina Condos
- Nov 6 Natalie Megas
- Nov 8 Stella Pappas
- Nov 9 Alex Massie
- Nov 10 Christopher Grzyb
- Nov 10 Logan Mueller
- Nov 13 Charlotte Neslusan
- Nov 13 Victoria McNally
- Nov 14 Ann Chito
- Nov 15 Georgia Beland
- Nov 15 Victor Enache
- Nov 18 Spiro Pappas
- Nov 20 Said Khozami
- Nov 22 Sophia Mackenzie
- Nov 22 Alexandra Koulax
- Nov 26 Elena Mackenzie
- Nov 27 Chris Constantine
- Nov 27 Maria Zagoras
- Nov 30 Leah Didonato
- Nov 30 James Pappas

NAMEDAYS:

- Nov 8 Archangel Michael
  - Michael Angelo
  - Michael Awad
  - Michael Chito
  - Michael Belanger
  - Mike Kokoszka
- Nov 11 St. Menas & St Victor
  - Michel (Mina) Pappas
  - Victoria McNally
- Nov 16 St. Matthew
  - Matt Benoît
  - Matt Neslusan
  - Matthew Weiss
  - Matthew Zhuk
- Nov 25 St. Katherine
  - Katerina Beland
  - Kara Bilis
  - Kathy Bilis
  - Catherine Jordanoglou
  - Kathy Kunkel
  - Katerina McWilliam
  - Katie Mironides
  - Katerina Quill
- Nov 26 St Stelianos
  - Steliane Thompson

Wedding Anniversaries:

- Nov 6 Christie & Helen Constantine
- Nov 10 Chris and Joan Geotis
- Nov 19 Arthur & Kathy Bilis
- Nov 19 Sandi & Gerry Kunkel
- Nov 27 Eric & Katerina Beland

Girls JOY Meeting
Saturdays 5:00pm

GOYA/Teen Meeting
5:00pm at Home of Louisa Foisy
Sunday, Nov 4th
We Need Help for Coffee Fellowship Hour.

Please let Fr. Luke know if you can help ONCE every EIGHT weeks to bring pastries, donuts, fruit or veggies for our coffee fellowship, or if you want to join a group to serve once a month.

O give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His steadfast loves endures forever.
Psalm 136:1

COMMIT TO 20 MINUTES WITH GOD EACH DAY

Use Fr. Luke’s Daily Email to help you spend 20 minutes every day connecting with God throughout the new year.

You can sign up to the daily email at the Church’s website www.schwebster.org. On the left column of the main page you will find a place to sign up.

CATCH UP STEWARDSHIP

As we approach the end of the year, please catch up with your stewardship offering to support our beloved Church!

Look for our safe and convenient

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!
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<td>21 Presentation of Virgin Mary in TempleI 8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy</td>
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LET US GIVE THANKS!!!

Gratitude is a sign of a noble soul

_Aesop_

Who does not thank for little will not thank for much.

_An Estonian Proverb_

The Pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts. No Americans have been more impoverished than these who, nevertheless, set aside a day of thanksgiving.

_H.U. Westermayer_

Ingratitude is a spiritual sickness. The heart filled with God is a heart filled with gratitude.

_Archbishop Anastasios_

You make a living by what you get. But you make a life by what you give.

_Anonymous_

God gave each of us 86,400 seconds in a day. Have we used one to say “thank you?”

_William Ward_

The unthankful heart discovers no mercies, but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds the iron, so the thankful heart will find some heavenly blessing in each hour of the day.

_Henry Ward Beecher_