December 2018

Inside This Issue
Bookstore ........................................... 11
Children and Youth ......................... 12
Education and Fellowship ............... 3
Koinonia .................................................. 3
Mission and Outreach ................. 6
Our Life Together ......................... 2
Parish News and Events .......... 4
Philoptochos ..................................... 7
Stewardship ....................................... 8
Worship Schedule ................... 3

A Message from Father Jason
Father Jason Houck, Associate Priest

What Does Getting Ready for Christmas have to do with Getting Ready for Holy Communion?

Sometimes when we think of the great feast days of the Church—like Christmas—we are nudged a bit, to look a little deeper. We are prodded to not only consider the feast and what happened, we are also compelled to ask, “So... how does this affect me today? How does this bear on what I am doing in Church today? How should I respond?

On Christmas, like other feast days of the year, we may receive Holy Communion. But what is the connection with Christmas? Sometimes icons, like the one to the left, give us the answer. The icon of the “Inexhaustible Chalice” shows Mary, the Mother of God, with outstretched hands in prayer and adoration towards the Christ Child. The Christ Child, interestingly, is blessing us, while perched inside a cup—a Holy Communion chalice. Similar icons exist, like the one on the eastern wall behind the altar in Orthodox Churches, with Mary’s arms reaching out and the Christ child in a circular medallion in the center. In the “Inexhaustible Chalice” icon, however, Christ is coming out of a chalice. The message is: Christ was born of Mary, but he is also physically present and “born” in us through Holy Communion.

We can also find the connection of Christmas to Holy Communion in the pre-communion prayers. We should pray these words before receiving Holy Communion. We can find them in an Orthodox prayer book or online. One such example is the third prayer, written by St. John Chrysostom in the late fourth century:

Lord my God, I know that I am not worthy, nor sufficient, that you should come under the roof of the house of my soul, for it is entirely desolate and in ruins, and you do not have a worthy place in me to lay your head. But as you humbled yourself from on high for our sake, do likewise also for my unworthiness. And as you willed in the cave to lie in a manger of dumb animals, take it upon yourself now to enter the manger of my dumb soul and into my soiled body...

The prayer draws the connection between the manger (that is, a trough for feeding or watering animals) and our own souls and bodies. God humbles Himself and resides within us, despite our unworthiness. Our unworthiness to have the God of all within us should not be taken lightly. We, sinful as we are, need to respond appropriately. We need to realize our unworthiness. We need to realize our sin. We need to confess our sin. We need to be reconciled with others we have offended and with God. We need, with God’s help, to fix our broken relationships with God and with those around us. We need to sweep the barn floor. The prayer continues:

For it is not with a light heart, Christ my God, that I venture to approach

Please turn to page 5 for remainder of the article.
Our Life Together

Baptisms
Lena Elizabeth
Parents: Will & Lisa Wahlers
October 18, 2018

Kaleb Filmon
Parents: Filmon Michael and Yodit Kassa
November 4, 2018

Chrsimation
Sylvia Kafkas
November 18, 2018

Marriages
Paul Patane to Sophia Myerly
October 20, 2018

Deaths
Lilla Eakins
November 14, 2018
May her memory be eternal.

Memorial Prayers
Sunday, December 30
Arthur Smith (10 years)

Thank You
Thank you for your heartfelt love and prayers throughout this difficult time. May Bill’s memory be eternal.
Love in Christ,
The family of Bill Peters

I would like to thank our parishioners for the many heartfelt expressions of love that I received during my recent medical leave. The many prayers, visits, cards, texts, emails, phone calls, flowers, treats and gentle hugs have been so wonderful.

I’m thankful to God for the blessing of being a part of such a loving community!
Doria Saros

Share YourShelf
December’s recipient of Share YourShelf contributions is Community Emergency Service.

Sunday, December 2
Canned soup or vegetables

Sunday, December 9
Diapers (Size 5)

Sunday, December 16
Hygiene items
(toothpaste, soap, shampoo, razors)

Sunday, December 23
Peanut Butter and Jelly

Sunday, December 30
Canned meats (e.g.: tuna/chicken)

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

—Hebrews 13:16

Holiday Office Closures
Saint Mary’s Church Office will close at 12:00 noon on Monday, December 24, and reopen at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, December 27, for the Christmas holiday. Our New Year break will be Tuesday, January 1, and reopen at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 2.
Education, Fellowship, & Worship

Sunday Schedule
Saturday Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Weekday Schedule
Tuesday, December 4
Saint Barbara
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, December 6
Saint Nicholas
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, December 12
Saint Spyridon
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, December 15
Saint Eleutherios
Orthros – 9:00 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Monday, December 17
Prophet Daniel
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Monday, December 24
Eve of Nativity
Royal Hours – 9:00 a.m.
Vesperal Divine Liturgy – 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, December 25
Holy Nativity
Orthros – 9:00 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, December 27
Saint Stephen, the First Martyr
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Living a Disciplined Life in Christ

~ 2018 Advent Retreat ~
Fr. Evan Armatas, Retreat Leader
Saturday, December 1, 2018
8:30 a.m.: Morning Prayers; 9:00 a.m.: Breakfast; 9:30 a.m.: Presentations
The Retreat will conclude about Noon

Topics of Discussion:
“I’ve fallen and I need to get up!”
Using the Parable of the Prodigal Son as our guide, we will examine the need to repent and return to our Loving Father.

“Upright and walking in Christ”
Using the Sermon on the Mount as our guide, we will examine the need to walk upright and in the disciplines given by our Lord and Savior.

A program for youth, grades K-12, will be offered as a part of the Retreat.

Please RSVP to Saint Mary’s Church Office
or on via website: www.stmarysgoc.org

Father Evan Armatas, a Colorado native, is the parish priest of Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Loveland, Colorado. Father Evan is a graduate of Boston College and Holy Cross. He served as an assistant priest at Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church in Greenwood Village before being assigned as St. Spyridon’s first full time priest in August of 2007.
A Time to Weep, and a Time to Laugh
Dealing with Grief during the Holidays
The Grief Support Group led by Fr. John will meet in the Lecture Room on Sunday, December 2, at 11:30 a.m., to discuss coping with losses during the holiday season. All are welcome.

YAL Event
Saturday, December 8
St. George Antiochian in West St. Paul will be hosting a Pan-Orthodox event for young adults (18-35) on Saturday, December 8, beginning at 3:30 p.m.
• 3:30 p.m. - Presentation by Paul Karos on the topic “An Orthodox Perspective on Work”
• 5:00 p.m. - Vespers
• 6:00 p.m. - Dinner at the Zaine home, which is approximately 5 minutes from St. George

Please RSVP to jamiezaine@gmail.com by Wednesday, December 5, so we have a headcount for food. We hope you can join us for an evening of discussion, worship, and fellowship!

Questions? Please contact Katherine Pappas at kaypapps@gmail.com

Senior Citizens’ Christmas Party
Tuesday, December 11, 11:00 a.m.
Kick-off the Christmas season with the Senior Citizens’ Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 11, beginning at 11:00 a.m., in the Terrace Room. We’ll begin with a social time complete with appetizers, punch, and wine. Our lunch menu will be salad, garithes with manestra (shrimp with manestra in a special tomato sauce), a special Christmas dessert, and coffee. We will be entertained by our own Isabell Tiggas, a member of the Minnesota Opera’s Project Opera, the Minnesota Opera’s youth training program for talented young singers. She will perform holiday favorites and other delights. Our afternoon will conclude with Bingo, complete with prizes. Tickets are $5.00 for Senior Citizens’ Club members and $30.00 for non-members and available during Sunday coffee hour. Deadline to purchase tickets is Friday, December 7.

Choir Christmas Meditation
Sunday, December 23
St. Mary’s Choir will present its annual Musical Christmas Meditation on Sunday, December 23, after Liturgy. Begin your Christmas celebration with our choir’s musical expression of the feast. Stay and enjoy the carols, hymns, and readings of Christmas as sung by our choir and the Women’s Chant Group. Don’t miss this half hour of beautiful, contemplative music of the season. Mark your calendars!

Year-End Giving
Due Monday, December 31, 12:00 noon
All contributions intended for 2018, whether fair share giving or other contributions, must be received no later than 12:00 noon on Monday, December 31. Additionally, contributions made via the church’s website should be made by Wednesday, December 26, in order to be posted and reach our bank by year’s end. Contributions not received by year’s end will be posted in 2019.

Questions over Coffee
Second Sunday of Each Month
Lecture Room: 11:30-Noon
Beginning in January, Fr. John will be available to lead a discussion about the practices and meaning of our Orthodox worship life: liturgy, Lenten services, the sacraments, and prayer.

Pan-Orthodox Ethnic Folk Dance Party
Saturday, February 2, 2019
Mark your calendars for a fun event. Many of our fellow Orthodox parishes in the Twin Cities are participating in a pan-Orthodox ethnic dance party on Saturday evening, February 2, 2019, at St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church. All ages invited. The youth are going to provide the energy, but they’re hoping their parents and grandparents will put aside their worries and come out and celebrate life and their heritage with them. We’ll all receive instruction in at least one Arab, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, and Serbian dance then, let the fun begin! Details will be revealed after Christmas.

The Blessings of Saint Mary’s
St Mary’s is blessed with a multitude of individuals who lovingly support our parish, including those who remember us in their wills. One such family is the beloved Bisbecos sisters, Lillian and Bertha, who named St. Mary’s as one of the beneficiaries in their trust. Remembering their interest, careers, and working closely with family members, a number of items have been identified that will benefit St Mary’s now and for future generations. During the November meeting, our Parish Council approved the following disbursements.

$10,000 — Hellenic College/Holy Cross
$10,000 — Higher Education Scholarship Fund for Clergy Families
$6,000 — FOCUS MN to assist with renovations for their new building
$50,000 — St. Mary’s Foundation
This is the first wave of several items which will be funded through the love and generosity of Lillian and Bertha. May their memories be eternal.
Church Cancellation Procedures for Winter

As we approach winter in our beloved Minnesota, we want to ensure all our parishioners stay safe and do not attempt to travel during icy or severe conditions. Here’s how we plan to keep you informed.

- Cancellations of events, activities, and services will be announced a minimum of two (2) hours prior to the start time.
- We will update our website and office voicemail announcing the cancellation as another opportunity for you to be notified.
- All individual group leaders (choir, church school, senior citizens, etc.) must notify the church office of your decision to cancel so we can make the necessary updates.
- The Parish Council President must also be notified of any cancellations, and no cancellations will occur without the blessing of our priests.

While we plan on always having scheduled services, no one should travel to church if road conditions in your area are dangerous. Please remain at home, giving thanks to God that at least a priest and chanter are leading the services praying for all of us.

Coffee Hour Reminders

As we continue through the Advent Season in preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of our Savior, just a quick reminder that all individuals and groups hosting Coffee Hour through Monday, December 24th should provide fasting food. Appropriate items are listed below for your convenience.

- Whole or sliced fruit
- Sliced large or mini bagels with peanut butter and jelly
- Pretzels
- Vegetables and guacamole
- Vegan cookies – including Girl Scout Thin Mints and Peanut Butter Patties, Nabisco Nutter Butters, Trader Joe’s animal crackers, Belvita Breakfast Biscuits, granola bars, and Oreos
- Water, juice, lemonade, or punch

Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact the Church Office.

OCF Midwest College Conference

The Midwest College Conference at the Iakovos Retreat Center will be December 27-30, 2018. It is a fantastic opportunity for Orthodox College students (age 18-25) from all different backgrounds to gather to learn about their faith, take a break, meet new people, and worship together in our beautiful Orthodox retreat center in Wisconsin. Spots are filling fast. This conference is a BLAST and, simply put, can be life-changing. If you aren’t a student but a parent, godparent, grandparent, or friend, you are urged to reach out to college students to attend this conference, because they will not regret it. For more information and to register, go to the website: www.ocf.net/events/college-conference-midwest-2018/, or contact Peter Karos with questions: ccmidweststudent@ocf.net.

Saint Nicholas Day Celebration

Our annual St. Nicholas Day Celebration will be held on Sunday, December 2. There will be a procession of gifts during the Liturgy followed by a lunch, hosted by AHEPA, afterwards. St. Nicholas is expected to pay us a visit again this year.

The children are asked to bring a small, unwrapped gift, $5-$10, to church to donate to the children of FOCUS Minnesota.

We hope to see everyone at the celebration!

Fr. Jason’s article continued.

you. But I trust in your ineffable goodness. May I not become prey to Satan by abstaining for long from your communion. Therefore, Lord, I pray to you who alone are holy, that you sanctify my soul and body, my heart, and my mind, and renewing me wholly, implant in my members fear of you. Do not let your sanctification be taken from me, but be my help and protector, governing my life in peace. Make me worthy to obtain a place at your right hand with your saints...

The prayer notes that approaching Christ should not be taken lightly, yet the prayer acknowledges that we should not stay away from God. In this prayer we ask that God help us and cleanse our souls and bodies. Like a dirty manger, we need cleaning. After cleaning ourselves up, then we invite God into the manger of our souls. Then we ask God to make us worthy of receiving Holy Communion.

But receiving God into our souls and bodies is not only a cleansing. When Christ was born, the angels proclaimed, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of goodwill.” God came not only to forgive us of our sins, but, as the prayer says, “be my help and protector, governing my life in peace.” God came to govern our lives, lives that are supposed to be filled with His peace.

This Christmas season, may we all carefully approach Holy Communion, cleansing our souls and bodies, so that the King of Peace may be born within us, in order to govern our lives with His peace.

Fr. Jason Houck
Associate Pastor

Fr. Jason’s article continued.
Do you remember the popular refrain “Everybody Needs Somebody”? (Everybody needs a friend)

It is great to say hello. We all enjoy a few words with one another. There are always going to be special moments of sharing in our community.

There are times when we miss that chance at a hello. Perhaps you have passed someone and wanted to say hello, but you were expected somewhere else. Understandable, but …

During 2018, St. Mary’s has added Ambassadors to help strengthen our welcome and greeting of newcomers. We continue our efforts to connect new members with not only Liturgy (most important), but to help each new member learn more about the Orthodox faith, to feel and be a part of St. Mary’s church family, and learn about the many St. Mary’s ministries.

This is especially important for new members who are Orthodox but new to Minneapolis, or coming from other faith backgrounds (Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, to name a few). It is very helpful to each new member to have someone to ask questions before and after being chrismated into the Orthodox faith. The Mission and Outreach Welcome, Greeters and Ambassador have a process to connect the new member with someone of a like age, family, interests, or work.

Everyone at St. Mary’s has a part to play.

If you see a new person visiting St. Mary’s, please reach out to say ‘hello,’ and after Liturgy have the new person(s)
dinner and breakout sessions for the adults and kids, and a wrap up to share what each group learned. The evenings conclude by 8:00.

**January 16, 2019 - The Fruit of Goodness**
- Adults/Senior GOYA- Holiness in Action
- HOPE/JOY/Junior GOYA- Be the Bee

**February 20, 2019 - The Fruit of Self-Control**
- Adults/Senior GOYA- Hold your Horses
- HOPE/JOY/Junior GOYA- Healthy Habits

**May 15, 2019 - The Fruit of Faithfulness**
- Adults/Senior GOYA- Stick to It
- HOPE/JOY/Junior GOYA- In God We Trust

**Mission and Outreach**

Angel Tree Ministry

Angel Tree is a ministry that provides Christmas presents to children whose parents are imprisoned. Please remember these children who are faced with a Christmas knowing their parent will not be with them to share in the joy that comes with the season. You have an opportunity to help bring that joy to these young ones (and their caretakers). Please come by the Angel Tree table beginning November 25 and take a paper angel. We ask that you have the wrapped gifts back to St. Mary’s no later than Sunday, December 16, so we can prepare them for delivery on December 23. There will be instructions at the table. Thank you so much!
From Philoptochos to our St. Mary’s Parish Family, we wish you a blessed Advent season and wonderful Christmas celebrations! Please join in on our activities and fundraisers in the coming days.

**Order Your New Year’s Day Vasilopita**
**Sundays, December 2, 9, 16**
Our annual fundraiser for St. Basil Academy is here! Pre-order delicious vasilopita (sweet bread) for your New Year’s celebration by stopping at the Philoptochos table on Sundays through December 16. Loaves are $15 each with payment requested at the time of your order. You can pick up your bread on Sunday, December 23. It will be frozen and will include thawing and powdering instructions. A limited number of additional loaves will be available for purchase on Vasilopita Sunday, January 13, 2019. Chair: Toni Bazakos.

The National Philoptochos Society purchased the estate that became St. Basil Academy in 1944, and has responded to the needs of the Academy and its children for more than 70 years. Located in Garrison, NY, St. Basil Academy is a home for children in need. The academy provides a loving Christian environment where resident children are nurtured to adulthood.

**Decorate the Church for Christmas**
**Wednesday, December 5, 12:00 noon-5:00 p.m.**
Join us for part or all of the afternoon to beautify the church campus with Christmas decorations. We will begin immediately after the Women’s Bible Study and continue until all the halls are decked! Chair: Andrea Tiggas.

**Final Bling Sale at Redeemer**
**Saturday, December 8, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**
The final sale related to our Bling Sale for fire relief in Greece will take place on Saturday, December 8, at the Community Holiday Sale at Redeemer Health and Rehab Center on 31st and Lyndale Avenue. If you would like to help at this event, please contact the chair. Shoppers are also welcome! Chair: Mary Kafkas.

Following this event, all remaining bling will be donated, as suggested by the membership. In November, the women of Healing House were able to select some jewelry for themselves, and their children selected scarves as gifts to give to their moms.

**Cookbooks Make Great Gifts!**
The St. Mary’s cookbook, “Come Sit at Our Table: A Celebration of Food,” makes a great hostess gift or present for a godchild, friend or relative! Purchases can be made for $20 in the bookstore or Great Hall after church on Sundays in December. For more information, see the website [Recipes.StMarysGOC.org](http://Recipes.StMarysGOC.org).

**Christmas Services and Receptions**
**Monday, December 24, after 4:00 p.m. Liturgy**
**Tuesday, December 25, after 10:00 a.m. Liturgy**
Philoptochos is providing holiday treats after the Christmas Eve Vesperal and Christmas Day liturgies. Please join us for these receptions! If you are able to serve as a host, please contact Paulette at [MplsPhilo@gmail.com](mailto:MplsPhilo@gmail.com) or 952.564.8388. No baking required!

**New Book Club**
Philoptochos started a new book club and all women of the parish are welcome! We will read 3-4 books per year, with leaders and dates rotating throughout the year. Details of the first read are:
- “God’s Path to Sanity” by Dee Pennock
- Discussion Date: Monday, January 28 (evening)
- Leader: Diakonissa Alexandria Kalina

We are ordering books in bulk. If you want one, please sign up at the Philoptochos table after church. Cost will be about $20.00.

**Thank You…**
To our Presvyteras Alexandria, Christa, and Janis, for sharing their lives with us at our October Presvytera Panel. We are blessed to have you at St. Mary’s! Thanks also to Sandra Anderson, Stephanie George, and Carol Smith for coordinating the program, and to all who helped with set-up that evening.

To John Anderson, Paulette Hastings, Anna Dovolis, Dianne Dovolis, and Tina Menter, who baked koulouria and kourambiethes for the annual IOCC fundraiser.

To Philoptochos Sunday organizers, Paulette Hastings, Linda Hodge, Connie Kouzes, Tina Menter, Carol Smith, and Dena Tortorelis, and all who helped recognize those in our parish who have or are serving in the Military, Reserves, or National Guard.

To Sofia Johnson for coordinating the Days for Girls Service Project in November, and to all who attended. FYI, the kits we prepared at our previous event were distributed in Uganda to women in prison, at a women’s conference, and in a girl’s school.

To Sandra Anderson, Linda Hodge, and Carol Smith, for coordinating the bling donations to the families of Healing House.

*Philoptochos News continues on page 13.*
Saint Mary’s Stewardship Sunday Testimonial

Parishioner, Nikki Beauchamp, shared the following powerful testimonial with us on Sunday, November 11, 2018, following the Liturgy:

Good Morning. I find myself in front of you today to talk a little bit about stewardship, perhaps unworthily, and for sure without the gift of being an eloquent speaker. For those of you who do not know me, I am Nikki Speliopoulos Beauchamp. I was baptized, raised, and married in this church; this is the church of my parents and grandparents; and my husband John and I raised our kids in this church. God willing, we will see them married and raising their own children in this church, so I feel passionately about preserving its legacy and securing its future. To help you better understand, allow me to share a story:

A few years ago, I lost my job. There is never good timing for that, but I lost it unexpectedly and suddenly, right as we were preparing to pay our first college tuition, and just as we had signed a bank loan for a large remodeling project. We were counting on my job to help pay for both. I was panicked, to say the least. In looking at our family’s budget, I knew something had to go, but what? We needed groceries, electricity, tuition. I’m ashamed to say that I very quickly believed it would have to be our church dues we would have to eliminate. Unwittingly allowing the devil to have a say, I convinced myself that every other bill and obligation had to be paid, but the church would understand and not come knocking on our door, right? Maybe, possibly, probably, but I knew in my heart that was wrong. I knew that is not how I was raised. I knew that is not what scripture teaches, and yet, I couldn’t see another way.

While I was grappling with our situation, God, in His infinite wisdom, reminded me of a time, years earlier, when I was in Guatemala at the Hogar Rafael orphanage. Every evening during the prayer service, Mother Ivonne, one of the nuns, gave a brief talk to the kids. On this particular night, as I listened to the interpreter, I learned that the discussion was on luxuries. I’ll be honest with you – I started to chuckle a little because here I was at an orphanage, with abused and neglected children, in one of the poorest cities, in one of the poorest countries in the world, and the subject was luxuries. Madre asked the kids if they knew what a luxury was. The kids respectfully raised their hands and one by one answered her: clothes, food, and a bed. The very things we consider necessities, these orphans considered luxuries. While I was trying to grasp what I was hearing, I looked around and saw one more hand in the air, and the last little boy answered ‘una mamá.’ I needed no interpreter for this one. I realized in an instant that this little boy thought that having a mother was a luxury. I sat in that church and cried uncontrollably.

It was right there in that memory, I absolutely knew that we could not take one penny away from the church, that through God we would figure something else out. May God forgive my doubting, unfaithful heart. How did I forget about the widow who gave her last penny without any thought as to how she would feed herself and her children? I would like to tell you I was able to find work right away, but it took me nine months to get another job. Somehow, in that nine months, we made it. I can’t actually tell you how, other than the grace of the Holy Spirit, because not once in that nine-month period did we lower or stop our dues to the church.

Our time, talents, and treasures are the perfect trifecta of giving. Sometimes we falter in our thinking. We stumble and lose our way, but what we have to try to always remember is that when we give back to God from our hearts, and in faith, we allow His work and His will to be done.

I would not presume to stand here before you today asking you to give up your daily latte. I will leave your stewardship between you and God, where it belongs. But I will ask you to join my family in prayerfully considering that when we surrender our gifts to God, He blesses and multiplies them for those in need, especially children who believe that having a mother is a luxury.

Glory be to God for His abounding gifts and His infinite grace. —Nikki Speliopoulos Beauchamp

Annual Stewardship Appreciation Glendi Was a Huge Success!

On November 10, the Stewardship Committee and Parish Council hosted the third annual Stewardship Appreciation Glendi to express our gratitude for your gifts of time, talent and treasure, and to honor Sylvia Kafkas for her 32 years of service to St. Mary’s.

“Thank you, Sylvia, for your dedication and commitment to St. Mary’s for so many years. St. Mary’s will not be the same without you in the office each day. Know that you have made a difference.”

Thank you to all parishioners that came out to celebrate on November 10, despite the cold weather. Nearly 400 members attended the Appreciation Glendi. It was a wonderful evening of fellowship, delicious food, laughter, dancing, and reminded us of the valuable relationships we have with each other and the importance of our faith community.

A big THANK YOU to all the volunteers that helped to make the event such a huge success again this year.
We also want to recognize and thank Annette Legeros and Jimmy Geogleris for planning and coordinating all the event details. It took a small army of people to set-up for the event, prepare food for 400 guests, and clean up after the event. We couldn’t have done it without everyone's help and participation!

And last, but not least, thank you to Queen of Cakes for donating the cakes, Bill’s Imported Foods for donating the appetizers, and It’s Greek to Me for providing the food.

2018 Ark of the Covenant Stewardship Campaign Update – “Christ Is in Our Midst”
Positive Trends Continue through October!
Thank you to all parishioners for your generous gifts! Due to your generosity, financial stewardship results through October 31, 2018, are continuing to show very positive trends on all key metrics.

Offering Income payments received as of October 31, 2018 are $87,455 ahead of last year at this time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offering Income as of 10/31/18</th>
<th>2018 YTD</th>
<th>2017 YTD</th>
<th>YTD Increase vs. Prior Year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Payments Received</td>
<td>$746,957</td>
<td>$659,502</td>
<td>$87,455</td>
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Additional offering income payments needed by December 31 to reach our goal = $173,799

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<tr>
<th>Offering Income as of 10/31/18</th>
<th>2018 Annual Budget</th>
<th>Additional Needed by Dec. 31</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Payments Received</td>
<td>$746,957</td>
<td>$173,799</td>
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</tbody>
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“Stewards of Our Faith” Ark of the Covenant Stewardship Campaign 2019 Kick-Off
On Sunday, November 11, 2018, the St. Mary’s Stewardship Committee kicked off its 2019 Stewardship activities:
- Stewardship Sunday was held on November 11 which included a beautiful testimonial from parishioner, Nikki Beauchamp, and the Ministry Fair following the Liturgy.
- Many people attended the Ministry Fair and explored opportunities to get involved with St. Mary’s ministries.
- Personal testimonials were also shared by Sophia Rouman on November 4 and Binhane Baye on November 18. (Their testimonials will be printed in future issues of “The Messenger.”)

This year, we are continuing with a simpler version of the ARK OF THE COVENANT stewardship program. You may remember the ARK OF THE COVENANT program from last year, which greatly increased engagement and stewardship in our parish this year. We hope to further build on last year’s successful personalized campaign to foster parish growth and unity with this unique in-reach effort.

As Stewards of Our Faith, our main objective is to connect to every parishioner in a very personal way:
- Once again, stewardship captains will be going door-to-door to meet parishioners and to bring 2019 stewardship packets to your home.
- You will NOT be asked to deliver the packets to the next person on the list this time.
- Captains will NOT be asking you for a financial contribution. They will simply be dropping off your stewardship packet and asking to visit with you for a brief time.
- One of our goals is to connect with you outside of church and find out how you are doing. This is part of the Stewardship Committee’s goal of increasing in-reach to our members.

35 parishioners have volunteered to serve as stewardship captains this year. Each captain will be assigned to seven households each. They will be reaching out to schedule a time to deliver your stewardship packet and to visit with you. Because we only have 35 captains, we will not be able to visit all member households this year. Some of you will be receiving your stewardship packets in the mail instead. But your turn may come next year!

How can you help make the ARK OF THE COVENANT campaign a success?
- If you receive a call from an ARK stewardship captain, please schedule a time for them to stop by your home to deliver your stewardship packet and spend a few minutes enjoying a conversation with you.
- Prayerfully consider sharing your time and talents by joining one of St. Mary’s ministries.
- Prayerfully consider increasing your annual stewardship contribution.
- Complete the Time and Talent and the Financial Commitment forms for 2019.
- Return both forms to the Church Office before December 31, 2018.

For more information, contact:
- Diakonissa Alexandria Kalina at: 952.913.7540 or ackalina@yahoo.com
- Athena Mihas at: 612.387.3890 or athenamihas@gmail.com

We really appreciate your participation. Your contributions of Time, Talent and Treasure make a significant difference to our Parish community.

You are the STEWARDS OF OUR FAITH!
Reminder: Employer Matching Gifts
New Opportunity to Give to St. Mary’s

Many of you may work at companies that will match your contributions to nonprofit organizations. Now, we have made it possible for your employers to match your gifts to St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church. St. Mary’s has now registered on the GuideStar website. This will allow your company to verify that St. Mary’s Church is a nonprofit entity registered with the IRS. If your company matching gift will only support non-sectarian activities, we can ensure that the matching gift from your company will only support our missions and outreach work and grants to other charities.

The mission of GuideStar is: to revolutionize philanthropy by providing information that advances transparency, enables users to make better decisions, and encourages charitable giving.

Each year, millions of people use GuideStar information to make decisions about nonprofits and the work they do. Donors explore charities and issues they want to support. Nonprofit leaders benchmark their organizations against their peers. Funders research grantees. GuideStar strives to be the most complete nonprofit information available.

Check out St. Mary’s profile on GuideStar by going to: www.guidestar.org and search for St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church.
Family Camp
by Roxanne Muchulas

2018 was our family’s first attendance at Family Camp, and what a joy it was! Having never attended Family Camp we didn’t know what to expect, and it exceeded our expectations in every way! The site, the fellowship, and speaker were all we hoped it would be and more! We learned a lot from, the speaker, Deacon Perry’s message and how we could apply what we learned over the week – and while making new friends – what a blessing it was!

We are so grateful and thankful for all of the people that put their time and energy into making family camp a wonderful experience for us, all of our St. Mary’s parishioners, and all of the other Orthodox families from neighboring communities.

Praise the Lord!

In the Bookstore

Please come visit the bookstore for truly meaningful Christmas gifts. You will find a large selection of icons, a vast array of books for people of all ages and stages in their life journey, and many other gift ideas, including incense burning kits hand made and assembled by Doria Saros. Featured in the bookstore are two icons painted by a local artist along with beautiful icon pendants and handmade cards, including Christmas cards, prayerfully made by the same person.

Father Anthony Coniaris has blessed so many through his books. Although Father Anthony is no longer writing books and the majority of the books he wrote are now out of print, the bookstore keeps a good stock of the titles that are still available. His words and messages have inspired and comforted and encouraged so many, penetrating to the heart and lifting the spirit of those who read his books. Giving a book by Father Anthony for Christmas is giving an eternal blessing.

The gift of family time together is a treasure often neglected or overlooked when the worldly busyness of the Christmas season tempts with its consuming “demands” that are often presented in the guise of opportunities. A Christian treasure currently not widely known or acknowledged, is celebrating the Twelve Days of Christmas—the time between the Nativity of the Lord and His Theophany on January 6. Celebrating the Twelve Days of Christmas: A Family Devotional in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition by Amanda Eve Wigglesworth is a good resource for families wanting to celebrate this special time in the liturgical year. For each day of the Twelve Days the author includes a description and/or story about the feast or the saints celebrated, the Troparion and Kontakion of the day, and a family activity or project idea. Simple to use, this is a convenient book to help families keep the focus on the real reason for this season.

FOCUS Minnesota Purchases New Home

Location Near State Capitol Lends Itself to Providing Basic Needs to Poor and Homeless

FOCUS Minnesota is pleased to announce that after an extensive six month search throughout the Twin Cities and with the generous contribution of donors, it now has a permanent home in the Minnesota Women’s Building in the historic Capitol Rice District of St. Paul. From this location and beginning in 2019, FOCUS will resume its basic needs services including hot meals, a food shelf, distribution of clothing and household items, brown bag meals through low-income neighborhood schools and homeless youth support agencies, and more. All services will be provided free of charge.

Located on the corner of Rice and Charles Streets, the Minnesota Women’s Building was built in 1889, and is home to several non-profit organizations. FOCUS Minnesota will occupy the first and lower floors, and is embarking on a renovation to create a space that better serves the needs of their clients. Located three blocks from the Minnesota State Capitol, the building is walking distance from bus and train lines, easily accessible with no stairs at the entry and an elevator inside, and in an area of need.

As owner of the building at 550 Rice Street, FOCUS Minnesota is secure in its future and ready to move to its next phase of service. In 2019, the non-profit looks forward to creating a house of hospitality and comfort, building relationships with residents, businesses and social services in the new neighborhood, and launching a free mobile medical clinic in the Twin Cities. If you would like more information, please contact Executive Director Vera Proctor at vproctor@FocusNA.org or 651.324.2705.

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We are so grateful and thankful for all of the people that put their time and energy into making family camp a wonderful experience for us, all of our St. Mary’s parishioners, and all of the other Orthodox families from neighboring communities.

Praise the Lord!
Our Children and Youth Mission Statement
To cultivate a safe and welcoming environment for kids by nurturing healthy relationships within the church family. We will teach the youth by building a strong foundation of knowledge, and together, we will experience the Orthodox tradition by following the four circles of youth ministry: Liturgia (Worship), Diakonia (Service), Martyria (Witness), and Koinonia (Fellowship), leading our youth to develop, by their own free will, a personal relationship with God and to pursue union with Him.

What's Happening?

Faith Group
0-5 Year Olds and Parents
► Wednesday, December 19
  9:30-11:00 a.m.
  Great Hall and Terrace Room

HOPE and JOY
Kindergarten-Grade 2 and Grades 3-5
► Sunday, December 9
  11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
  Caroling at Jones-Harrison
  We will start out with lunch in the Terrace Room and leave for Jones-Harrison around 12:25. Wear your favorite Christmas/holiday outfit. We will be caroling from 12:45-1:30 p.m. Please RSVP to jon@stmarysgoc.org so we can get a count for food.

► Wednesday, December 19
  6:15-8:00 p.m.
  HOPE and JOY at Parish Night
  Fruit of Patience: What does the future hold?

Junior GOYA
Grades 6-8
► Wednesday, December 5
  6:15-8:00 p.m.
  Christmas party at Church

► Wednesday, December 19
  6:15-8:00 p.m.
  Jr. GOYA at Parish Night
  Fruit of Patience: What does the future hold?

► Winter Break Outing will occur sometime between December 22 and January 2. Be on the lookout for an email from Jon!

Basketball Practices ~ in the Great Hall
Sunday, December 2
12:45-1:45 p.m.: Boys GOYA Basketball Practice
1:45-2:45 p.m.: Girls GOYA Basketball Practice

Sunday, December 9
12:45-1:45 p.m.: Girls GOYA Basketball Practice
1:45-2:45 p.m.: Boys GOYA Basketball Practice

Sunday, December 16
12:45-1:45 p.m.: JOY Basketball Practice in Great Hall
1:45-2:45 p.m.: Boys GOYA Basketball Practice

Saturday, December 22
2:30-4:30 p.m.: JOY Basketball Practice (tentative)

Sunday, December 23
12:45-1:45 p.m.: JOY Basketball Practice
1:45-2:45 p.m.: Girls GOYA Basketball Practice

Sunday, December 30
12:45-1:45 p.m.: JOY Basketball Practice
1:45-2:45 p.m.: Boys GOYA Basketball Practice

Advent Retreat
Saturday, December 1: 8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon
The Advent Retreat has something for our whole parish! We begin with morning prayers, enjoy breakfast, and then break off into our separate groups. The adults will be with Fr. Evan Armatas in the nave and the kids (K-12) will be rotating between the Great Hall, Youth Room, and a lesson in the Meeting Room. RSVP on the Church website so we can get a count for food.

Youth Feedback
If you have any comments, suggestions, or concerns regarding our youth program(s) please let us know. We have a new formal feedback process. Go to our St. Mary’s home page-Click on “Youth,” then “Youth Program Feedback.” Your comments will be forwarded to a member of the Parish Council and will be reviewed for follow up.”

More news on next page...
Church School News
We’re celebrating St. Nicholas’ feast day on Sunday, December 2. Children: please bring a small, unwrapped gift, $5-$10, to church to donate to the children of FOCUS. Be on time for Liturgy to process in the Great Entrance and place your gift in front of the icon of St. Nicholas on the solea.

Sunday, December 16
Our Christmas program, after Liturgy, will be in the Nave. Please have your child in class these next few weeks to learn the songs and hear instructions for the program. Parents, watch for emails with details by class.

Sunday, December 23: No class
Sunday, December 30: Regular class.
Lessons on Epiphany (Theophany)
Sunday, January 6: No class (Theophany)

Follow the GOYAns on Instagram: St_Marys_GOYA

Myrrhbearer Greeter Ministry
Young ladies of St. Mary’s ages 12-18: We need you! St. Mary’s now has a year-round Myrrhbearer Greeter Ministry and we’re looking for young ladies who are interested in being greeters (you will be paired up with an adult greeter). Please prayerfully consider joining – it’s easy and fun, and you can sign up to greet our parishioners and visitors when it works for your schedule (via Doodle). You will go through a brief training, then you, and a parent/guardian, will sign a consent/commitment form. If interested, or any questions, please contact Mrs. Beauchamp @ 952.906.8974 or inkehoots@q.com.

October Recap
The HOPE/JOY group went to Feed My Starving Children and packed meals for children in Haiti for enough food to feed 99 kids for one year! The Junior GOYAns had a movie night where we watched Inside Out and had a discussion following the movie about the Fruit of the Spirit-Joy. The Senior GOYAns got together and made tie blankets for the children over at Healing House. Finally, Family Camp was a success! We had a beautiful weekend of learning and fellowship reconnecting with our Pan-Orthodox community.

Philoptochos News concluded
To AHEPA, who is hosting the families of Healing House at their December 15 Children’s Christmas Party. Special thanks also to Donna Psihos for coordinating transportation of the families, and Donna, Hope Kenney, Annette Legeros, and Carol Smith for purchasing and wrapping gifts for each Healing House child.

Coming Up in January 2019
- Sunday, January 13: Vasilopita Sale during Coffee Hour
- Tuesday, January 15: Board Meeting, Fireside Room, 6:30 p.m.
- Sunday, January 20: Philoptochos Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Terrace Room
- Monday, January 28: Book Club Conversation: “God’s Path to Sanity” by Dee Pennock
Saint Nicholas’ Day
Thursday, December 6
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Saint Nicholas Celebration
Sunday, December 2

Please see page 5 for details.

An example of the Faith and a life of humility, as a teacher of abstinence you did inspire and lead your flock; and through the truthfulness of your deeds were exalted by greatness through your humility uplifting all, and by poverty gaining wealth. Father and Hierarch St. Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

— *Apolytikion of St. Nicholas, 4th Tone*
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<td>8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>10:30am-Intercessory Prayer 11:00am-Women’s Bible Study 12noon-Decorate for Christmas 6:00pm-Small Blessing of Water 6:15pm-Junior GOYA 6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm-West Metro Koinonia</td>
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<td>8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy Choir Christmas Meditation 12:45/1:45pm-BBall</td>
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Join us for the annual…

Children’s Christmas Party

Santa’s visit and keepsake photo,
caroling with Kally, entertainment,
and lunch highlight this special,
St. Mary’s Community event.

Saturday, December 15, 2018 * 11:00 a.m.
St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church
Terrace Room, 3450 Irving Avenue South, Minneapolis

All for just $12 per child*

In the spirit of the season please bring a food donation for the food shelves supported by St. Mary’s

RSVP by Tuesday, December 8 to:
Mark Alevizos • 2116  Second Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404

For more info contact Mark at 612.990.4211 or mark.alevizos@gmail.com

Parents’ Name(s) ________________________________

Telephone ______________________________________

E-Mail __________________________________________

Children’s Names Boy / Girl Age

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Sponsored by Minneapolis AHEPA* (free for all children of AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope members)