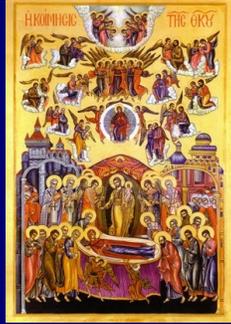


CHURCH STAFF

- Parish Priest: Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- Parish Council President: Jim (Demetrios) Katsitis
- Philoptochos President: Eleni Giakoumopoulos
- Sunday School Directors: Susu Saba & Peli Galiti
- Greek School: Ilektra Kolokouri
- Choir Director: George Tzougros

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The Message

JANUARY 2021

A NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

As a New Year dawns upon us, the time has come again where Americans everywhere will begin to make their New Year resolutions. With the Pandemic many might be different than the usual ones. But some will be practical, others will be outrageous. Some will be to better ourselves, others to make the world a better place. But now the sad reality must be faced as well, out of all these resolutions, how many will never be fulfilled?

There is nothing wrong with making a resolution; for the most part its role is to make us healthier, happier and an all around better person. But let us put some serious thought into these before we just run off and proclaim something on the spur of the moment. I believe this is why so many resolutions go unfinished. Too many times we are caught up in the moment, and we make proclamations out of jealousy or pride. We see that person who is skinny and we vow to lose weight, not because we are concerned about our own health, but rather because you want to look like them as well. That is only one of many examples, but the fact remains. It is a good thing to go through life always trying to better ourselves, to not be satisfied with where we are, but always striving to achieve new heights.

Now as we continue to better ourselves physically, we cannot forget our spiritual growth as well. As we progress in life we must always strive to continue to strengthen our faith. I remember hearing Fr. Anthony Coniaris of blessed memory speak a years ago at the seminary. He was in his 80's and is one of the best speakers in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. A student asked him how he continues after so many years to still write numerous books and give incredible sermons. His answer was simple. He told us we can never stop learning, for the day we stop learning is the day we die. To keep a zeal within us always read, not only the Bible, but spiritual books, writings of the Saints and Church Fathers, as well newspapers and magazines of the day. For as clergymen, we must make sense of the secular world as well as the spiritual world to truly be able to touch our own congregations. This shows us a beautiful example of a man who continues to grow towards Christ, as we all should be doing as well.

So now as I stated above the year is coming to a close, and a New Year is dawning upon us. Let us better ourselves in everyway possible. Take some time this month and think about where your spiritual life is heading. Then think of some ways to strengthen your faith, and to grow closer to God. Now you have yourself some new resolutions. Strive to accomplish them as their rewards are beneficial. I hope and pray that God bless all of us in our upcoming endeavors this New Year and that He be with us always!

+Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos

What wondrous gifts our God has given us!

The Holy Theophany of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

January 6

The Holy Trinity is made manifest on earth for our salvation.

+ St. John the Baptist touches Christ's head, indicating His humanity.

+ He also gestures toward heaven with his left hand, indicating Christ's divinity.

+ It is not the Baptist who blesses Christ, but Christ who blesses St. John when he puts his hand upon His head.



+ Christ is baptized, not because He needs purification, but "to identify

Himself with our purification," says St. John of Damaskos.

+ Humbly, Christ identifies with mankind, in all our brokenness.

+ His has come to earth to redeem us from our sins!



+ The voice of the Father and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, reveal Christ as one of the Holy Trinity.

+ A dove reminds us of Noah's flood. The moment of Christ's baptism indicates our release from the flood of sin.



+ Angels are shown attending to and glorifying the Lord.

+ Covered hands and bowed heads show submission to the God-made-man.

+ Their response to Our Lord and Savior is what ours is supposed to be, as well.



+ A tree bearing no good fruit is shown with an axe, ready to be cut down.

+ St. John the Baptist warns us not to be fruitless, saying, *"The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire"* (Matthew 3:10).

+ What a contrast to Christ's ministry, which produces every good fruit!



+ By Christ's baptism, water itself was blessed, becoming water of renewal.

+ Fish swim both down and upstream. Why? To show the Jordan River and the seas are turned back, as was foretold in Psalm 113.

+ The Jordan is represented as a man fleeing and the seas are symbolized by a sea dragon.



The Parish Council Update

January 2021

Officers: Jim Katsihtis, President; Maria Molzahn, Vice President; Bruce Hansen, Secretary; Niko Papadopoulos, Treasurer; Scott Storck, Assistant Treasurer

Members: John Bayouth, Christy Chappell-Belkin, Conn Choles, Maria Schirmer-Devitt, Dori Hosek, Carol Griskavich, Mike Smith

Christ is Born! And a blessed New (calendar) Year to all!

As difficult as this past year was, we give thanks to you, and thanks and glory to God, for the love and unity our parish showed through it all.

As we reflect on Christ's Nativity, let's be reminded that Christ became like one of us out of his ineffable love for all of us, and to save and renew us. The calendar may have changed, but God's love for us never will. This new year, let's choose to love our God and our neighbor, and try to manifest the love and healing of the Holy Trinity to everyone and in everything we do. It's fitting that at the start of the year on January 1st, the Church commemorates an example of Christ's perfect obedience and the wonderful example of St. Basil to further inspire us.

The Parish Council looks forward to serving you this year, and to the hopeful post-pandemic return of services and ministries.

Safety Update

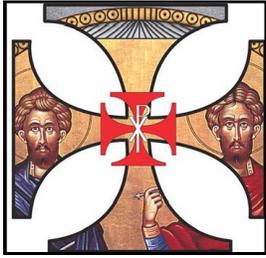
The Safety Committee continues to regularly meet and closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for your continued support of the safety precautions and guidelines we've implemented for worshipping together, including wearing masks and physically distancing. You are demonstrating beautiful examples of loving your neighbor. And you are helping us be able to continue to worship together, albeit in limited capacity.

2021 Stewardship

2021 Stewardship forms have been sent out. Please return your form and continue to pray for, and generously support, our parish. As always, please let us know how we can serve you better.

The next two Parish Council meetings are scheduled for Tuesday January 5th and tentatively Tuesday, February 2nd.

On behalf of the Parish Council,
Jim
407-408-3096
jkatsihtis@gmail.com



FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

**President, Eleni Giakoumopoulos, lenagiak@gmail.com
608-556-8186**

**Vice President: Maria Molzahn, Secretary: Sue Soloninka, Treasurer: Maria Heide,
Asst. Treasurer: Jenny Glatch, Corresponding Secretary: Nancy Briamis, Asst. Corre-
sponding Secretary: Kathie Fafalios**

The year 2020 has taught us many lessons. We learned to work together but remain socially distant. We learned to conduct our business via virtual means. We learned that rather than falter, we have chosen to remain hopeful, become stronger and continue in our efforts through the chapter's work.

A new year is upon us!! Heartfelt wishes for 2021 from our Philoptochos chapter to you and your families for a new year full of health, happiness and a commitment to doing things the Philoptochos way! We look forward to continuing our work together and thank you again for your support to all our endeavors. If you are interested in joining us, please contact anyone of the officers.

We continue to be #PhiloStrong because of the support of this amazing community!!

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES:

CHAPTER COMMITMENTS

December: Ecumenical Patriarchate (\$358), National Sisterhood of Presvyteres (\$25), UN International Children's Emergency Fund (\$25), General Medical Fund (\$25), Giving Tuesday/National Philoptochos Social Services (\$25)

MONTHLY TRAY

Pre-Covid-19, the chapter would have a monthly collection basket as a way to collect donations for the various commitments (local, Metropolis and national). This was usually passed at the end of a church service.

As we are having to pivot our fundraising activities and try to maintain a flow of revenue to our accounts, we are sharing the monthly tray schedule with you. This is an excellent way to continue contributing to Philoptochos and all our efforts. We invite all parishioners who are interested in making a donation to:

- Place a donation in the tray located as you exit the church
- Send a check to our Treasurer, Maria Heide at 5751 Ballina Pkwy, Fitchburg, WI 53711 and place a note in the memo line for which monthly tray collection you wish your donation to be allocated

ST BASILSACADEMY/VASILOPITA FUNDRAISER

Each January the chapter holds a fundraiser for St. Basil Academy, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese home for children in need. The academy, located in Garrison, NY, provides an environment where resident children are nurtured to adulthood.

Look for more information to come on the 2021 virtual fundraising activity hosted by Philoptochos.

MASKS MATTER

Our chapter has become involved in the Metropolis humanitarian initiative Masks Matter. Our chapter donated over 500 masks in 2020. Congratulations to Nancy Briamis, Jenny Glatch, Jane Schirmer, Kathie Fafalios and everyone else who was involved with the sewing of the masks.

The goal for the Metropolis was to sew and distribute 10,000 masks by December 31, 2020 to non- first responders (ie. caregivers, other hospital workers, grocery store clerks, and parishioners). More than 20,000 masks were made!!!

2021 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE - BEGINNING FEBRUARY

We invite you to join us and share in our philanthropic mission. Through your stewardships and our various fundraisers, we are able to donate to many worthy causes helping people in need locally, nationally, and internationally. Locally we donate our resources and “women power” to several organizations on a regular basis, and also to special hardship situations as needs are presented to us. Nationally and internationally, we support the philanthropic programs of our Metropolis Philoptochos and our National Philoptochos.

Come join us and be part of an army of more than 26,000 dynamic stewards in 400 chapters.

METROPOLIS

UPCOMING DATES

December 5, 2020: Ordination of Bishop Elect Timothy of Hexamilion at Saints Constantine & Helen, Greek Orthodox Church, Merrillville, Indiana.

2021 PHILOPTOCHOS

MONTHLY TRAY SCHEDULE

JANUARY.....ST BASILS ACADEMY/VASILOPITA FUNDRAISER
FEBRUARY.....LOCAL SCHOOL CHILDREN FUND
MARCH.....RELIEF FOR GREECE/GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY
APRIL.....IOCC
MAY.....RIVER FOOD PANTRY
JUNE.....PHILANTHROPY FUND
JULY.....PHILANTROPY FUND
AUGUST.....MADISON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SEPTEMBER.....HELLENIC COLLEGE/HOLY CROSS
OCTOBER.....CHOIR
NOVEMBER.....ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
DECEMBER.....ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRISON MISSION

River Food Pantry - Nancy Briamis, nbriamis@gmail.com

The Sunday School food drive for The River Food Pantry will continue into January. We have donated over 600 pounds of food so far to The River Food Pantry. A big THANK YOU from The River Food Pantry; they sent me an e-mail and posted a thank you on their face book page.

The River Food Pantry is implementing additional programs to improve access to food during this pandemic. The River needs volunteers to expand both of these programs.

1. Expansion of their MUNCH (bagged lunches for kids) program from once a day to twice a day Monday through Friday
2. Dane County residents who cannot leave home to travel to The River may qualify for The River's new free delivery service, called River Delivers, to receive both household groceries and pre-prepared meals.



Please contact The River Food Pantry at (608) 442-8815 or riverfoodpantry.org if you can help.

FOOD DRIVE

MOST-NEEDED HOLIDAY ITEMS

- Boxed Dinners
- Canned beans, tomatoes & vegetables
- Cereal
- Dried Beans
- Grits
- Jell-O
- Oatmeal
- Soup with protein
- Diapers
- Paper Towels
- Soap (all kinds)

Thank you for supporting The River, Dane County's busiest food pantry serving 1,000+ households every week. Learn more at riverfoodpantry.org.



Church Women United in Madison, Wisconsin

January 8, 2021 10:00 am Human Rights Celebration via Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7709641470>

January Human Rights Day

We will begin the new year with the Human Rights Celebration "Becoming One in 2021" on zoom on Friday, January 8 at 10:00 a.m. A reminder with the link will be sent before that day. Here is the ZOOM LINK for our Jan 8 CWU celebration. Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7709641470>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a milestone document in history. It was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 10, 1948 as a result of the second world war ending.

A Human Right is a right that is believed to belong justifiably to every person in the world. "Becoming One in 2021" refers to John 13:34-35. "A new command I give to you: love one another, as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another". Start the new year with inspiration.

We will recognize a major source of inspiration as we present the Church Women United Human Rights Award to Rabbi Bonnie Margulis. We include her biography as presented to national to support her receiving this award.

We will have a time at the end for a memorial for all the folks who have died in this pandemic. You are invited to have a candle to light or turn on at that time as we share via zoom.

Church Women United of Madison WI – Human Rights Award January 2021 to Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

The Human Rights Award is presented to an individual(s) who has demonstrated a personal involvement in the struggle for human rights; who belongs to organizations that stand up for human rights, or who stands up for human rights as part of her job.

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis indeed meets and exceeds the expectations of the Human Rights Award.

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis is the founder and Executive Director of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice and Chair of the Wisconsin Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, as well as a member of the executive Committee of the NAACP of Dane County, and a founder and steering committee member for the Dane Sanctuary Coalition. She was a founding board member of We Are Many – United Against Hate.

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis is committed to advocate for the most vulnerable in society. She has empowered people of faith to speak out on issues of poverty, immigration, hunger, healthcare, and voting

rights. Through her leadership, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice has championed the rights of undocumented immigrants, the building of bridges with the Muslim community and generally promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding.

In 2019 Rabbi Bonnie Margulis made a trip to the U.S.-Mexico border to visit a migrant shelter in Juarez, a detention center in New Mexico, a criminal court proceeding and the Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center. Upon her return she shared her observations about the treatment of Asylum-seekers and undocumented immigrants with our Madison community through radio broadcasts, interviews etc.

Rabbi Margulis has served as a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis Justice and Peace Committee and is a Past Chair of the Women's Rabbinic Network Social Justice Committee. In addition, Rabbi Margulis has served as a member of the J Street National Advisory Board for Field and Grassroots Organizing. Rabbi Margulis is proud to have been a member of the Reform Jewish Movement's Commission on Social Action, where she sat on the Women and Minorities Task Force.

From 1992-1996, Rabbi Margulis served as rabbi of the Blacksburg Jewish Community Center and the Virginia Polytechnic Institute Hillel. During that time, she was also the coordinator of the Shenandoah Friends of Planned Parenthood, a grassroots education and advocacy group dedicated to preserving reproductive freedom. She has taught courses in Judaism and in Hebrew Bible at Washington and Lee University and at James Madison University in Virginia and has been an adjunct faculty member in the Religious Studies Department of Edgewood College, in Madison, WI.

THEME : Becoming One in 2021 "Experiencing Hope at the Table"

The national theme for the 2021 celebrations is, "BECOMING ONE IN 2021" with the scripture reference of John 13:34-35 (NIV) – ³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

What are Human Rights? "A Human Right is a right that is believed to belong justifiably to every person." The recognition and respect of people's dignity, a set of moral and legal guidelines that promote and protect a recognition of our values, our identity and ability to ensure an adequate standard of living, and those rights associated with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Human Rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world from birth to death. They apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe, or how you choose to live your life.

Why we celebrate Human Rights Day—The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948 as a result of the Second World War. World leaders decided to adopt a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere and vowed never again to allow the atrocities of that war to happen again. Human Rights Day is celebrated every year on December 10th, to honor the United Nations General Assembly for declaring the human rights universally. However, Human Rights Day can be celebrated at any time throughout the year.

Human Rights History--On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This Declaration guarantees the rights of all people and encompasses a broad spectrum of economic, social, cultural, political, and civil rights. (from Human Rights Resource Center-University of Minnesota)

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt

October 11, 1884 –November 7, 1962--was an American political figure, diplomat and activist. She served as the First Lady of the United States from March 4, 1933, to April 12, 1945, during her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's four terms in office, making her the longest-serving First Lady of the United States.

Roosevelt served as United States Delegate to the United Nations General Assembly from 1945 to 1952.

She advocated for expanded roles for women in the workplace, the civil rights of African Americans and Asian Americans, and the rights of World War II refugees. Following her husband's death in 1945, Roosevelt remained active in politics for the remaining 17 years of her life.

She pressed the United States to join and support the United Nations and became its first delegate. She served as the first chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights and oversaw the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sunday School

Co-Directors: Seham Akkawi, sususaba@yahoo.com,

Peli Galiti, Co-pegaliti@gmail.com,

Spiritual Advisor: Fr. Christodoulos, frchristos@gmail.com

Hello Sunday school families,

We hope that you all enjoyed Thanksgiving break with your families.

Starting Sunday, January 10th, 2021 we will once again begin our Virtual Sunday School Classes. Lessons and zoom information will be sent out Sunday Mornings.

Let us have a good beginning to our Sunday school in this new year.

GREEK SCHOOL

Elektra Kolokouri, ilektra.kol@gmail.com

I hope this finds everyone healthy.

I would like to thank the Greek school students and their families, for the lovely Christmas celebration that we all put together to celebrate in a different, cultural way, the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the coming of the New Year. The last ten years that I have been the director of the Greek school, our youth had the privilege to always celebrate the Holiday Season perform in person, in our beautiful church, in front of our parish, but this year, 2020, everything was different. Our church youth had to show their resilience and even with the world being upside down, they had to stand tall to the adversity.

Some people ask me, why do you, Andreas and Alex (who teach the little kids), still try to keep the Greek school going? Greek after all, is a language spoken only by a small number of families. Many in our community are second and third generation Greeks, and drifting away from their Greek origin. I know it takes a lot of effort to learn a new language. Learning Greek as any other language, is very important for developing well rounded, inclusive young people, who are real “citizens of our world”.

Our Greek school is as diverse as our church community and some of our best students who are fully engaged and committed are not students from families of Greek origin or they are from ethnically mixed marriages. Our community consists of people of different backgrounds and cultures. I am moved by the fact that the parents of some of our children understand the need to keep our youth connected with our roots and our past.

Keeping one's culture or language alive is important to keep the young generation reminded that this world, is not only about money, fame, success, being a good athlete or being a celebrity, or just professionally accomplished. All material success is irrelevant without focusing on spiritual growth based in our Christian faith and on the importance of celebrating one's heritage. We should continue to deliver to our youth the message that being well-rounded, open minded with tolerance, respect and kindness to different cultures and backgrounds need to be the basis of our society.

Also it is important as Christians to remember that Greek language is part of our Orthodox religion and faith. Many Orthodox hymns and Christian scriptures were written in Greek and you hear the Greek language as part of the Orthodox liturgy and other liturgical church services. Learning Greek establishes a bond with our faith that has been alive and thriving for over two thousands years. What a great message for our kids and our families, that they are part of such an amazing journey!

As I say to my kids: living and growing up in America but staying connected to your culture and your Orthodox Christian faith is like a tree. A tree grows and flourishes aiming to the skies but without watering and nourishing the roots (the Soul and Heart) could never be solid and is always at risk.

I hope the Assumption Greek Orthodox community will continue to support the "Greek school" program as part of the development and enrichment of our youth. I am praying that COVID will be over soon and we will continue to celebrate together in person, in the coming, free of COVID, years.

Thank you all for your support and I wish everyone a blessed, healthy and full of love and kindness New Year!

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS

We are continuing our Adult Religious Education classes every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom. The links are emailed out every Wednesday and everyone is welcome to join. We are going over the book of Genesis.

Please join us to learn more about our faith and history.

Assumption Cookbook Project

We are starting to collect recipes for our AGOC cookbook. Please submit your recipe using this online form: <https://forms.gle/jdEM9USt1nSXjGGR8>. We are excited to create a memorable book to preserve our stories through food! If you are interested in being part of the cookbook committee please email Maria Schirmer Devitt at schirmerdevitt@gmail.com.

WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL MEETING

Peli Galiti: pegaliti@gmail.com

Time magazine points out the distinctly awful things that have happened throughout 2020 and acknowledges that this has been one of the worst years ever.

And a survey by the NCH shows nearly 30% of people are experiencing symptoms of clinical depression, compared to 6% at the same time last year. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped our world, and behind closed doors, many people are suffering not only with isolation but also with uncertainty, fear and worry.

We are not victims of chance. Resilient faithful people recognize crisis and suffering is inevitable, but they respond wisely. What keeps us, as Orthodox Christians, from sinking deeply in despair in any crisis? The journey is not easy but in whom the heart is full of the consolation of the incorruptible grace of Theophany, can endure all external afflictions, transforming them into a feast of spiritual joy.

We will find out more about the meaning of Theophany in our everyday life through practical ways on Thursday January 7, at 7:00 pm in the zoom spiritual meeting. The zoom link will be sent to those on the spiritual meeting mailing list. Anyone who is not on the list and wishes to attend, please email pegaliti@gmail.com.

CHURCH WEBSITE

Lainey Skoumbouris, laney0220@yahoo.com

The church website is set-up for private login to access the monthly newsletters and are meant for Church members only, not the public. Church members can read the newsletter on the website, but you must create an account before you can view it. Log onto the website and click on "Newsletter" on the side-bar <http://www.agocwi.org/registration-required/>, or "login" on the main menu <http://www.agocwi.org/login/>; it will direct you to sign up. If you need help, have questions or something isn't working in the registration contact me.

CHRISTMAS CARD CORRECTIONS: We wanted to add two names that were accidentally left off the Christmas Card.

1. George and Maria Tzougros
2. Lainey Skoumbouris

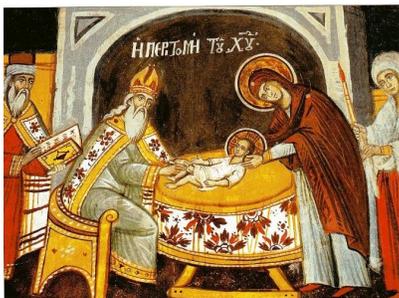
ANNOUNCEMENTS

J and M Home Helpers

AGOC's handymen, John and Mike, will do minor home repairs and maintenance for \$25/hour, with the money for their work being donated to the church.



Call Mike at (608) 516-9188 and John at (608) 575-1014 today!



The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised in accordance with the Old Testament Law. All male infants underwent circumcision as a sign of God's Covenant with the holy Forefather Abraham and his descendants [Genesis 17:10-14, Leviticus 12:3].

After this ritual, the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, as the Archangel Gabriel declared on the day of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos [Luke 1:31-33, 2:21]. The Fathers of the Church explain that the Lord, the Creator of the Law, underwent circumcision in order to give people an example of how faithfully the divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord was circumcised so that later no one would doubt that He had truly assumed human flesh, and that His Incarnation was not merely an illusion, as certain heretics had taught.

In the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision gave way to the Mystery of Baptism, which it prefigured [Colossians 2:11-12]. Accounts of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord continue in the Eastern Church right up through the fourth century. The Canon of the Feast was written by Saint Stephen of the Saint Sava Monastery.

In addition to circumcision, which the Lord accepted as a sign of God's Covenant with mankind, He also received the Name Jesus [Savior] on the eighth day after His Nativity as an indication of His service, the work of the salvation of the world [Matthew 1:21; Mark 9:38-39, 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Philippians 2:9-10]. These two events -- the Lord's Circumcision and Naming -- remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" [Colossians 2:11]. The very name "Christian" is a sign of mankind's entrance into a New Covenant with God.

St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia: Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, "belongs not to the Church of Caesarea alone, nor merely to his own time, nor was he of benefit only to his own kinsmen, but rather to all lands and cities worldwide, and to all people he brought and still brings benefit, and for Christians he always was and will be a most salvific teacher." Thus spoke Saint Basil's contemporary, Saint Amphilochios, Bishop of Iconium.

Saint Basil was born in the year 330 at Caesarea, the administrative center of Cappadocia. He was of illustrious lineage, famed for its eminence and wealth, and zealous for the Christian Faith. The saint's grandfather and grandmother on his father's side had to hide in the forests of Pontus for seven years during the persecution under Diocletian.

Saint Basil's mother Saint Emilia was the daughter of a martyr. On the Greek calendar, she is commemorated on May 30. Saint Basil's father was also named Basil. He was a lawyer and renowned rhetorician, and lived at Caesarea.

Ten children were born to the elder Basil and Emilia: five sons and five daughters. Five of them were later numbered among the saints: Basil the Great; Macrina (July 19) was an exemplar of ascetic life, and exerted strong influence on the life and character of Saint Basil the Great; Gregory, afterwards Bishop of Nyssa (January 10); Peter, Bishop of Sebaste (January 9); and Theosebia, a deaconess (January 10).

Saint Basil spent the first years of his life on an estate belonging to his parents at the River Iris, where he was raised under the supervision of his mother Emilia and grandmother Macrina. They were women of great refinement, who remembered an earlier bishop of Cappadocia, Saint Gregory the Wonderworker (November 17). Basil received his initial education under the supervision of his father, and then he studied under the finest teachers in Caesarea of Cappadocia, and it was here that he made the acquaintance of Saint Gregory the Theo-

logian (January 25 and January 30). Later, Basil transferred to a school at Constantinople, where he listened to eminent orators and philosophers. To complete his education Saint Basil went to Athens, the center of classical enlightenment.

After a four or five year stay at Athens, Basil had mastered all the available disciplines. “He studied everything thoroughly, more than others are wont to study a single subject. He studied each science in its very totality, as though he would study nothing else.” Philosopher, philologist, orator, jurist, naturalist, possessing profound knowledge in astronomy, mathematics and medicine, “he was a ship fully laden with learning, to the extent permitted by human nature.”

At Athens a close friendship developed between Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzus), which continued throughout their life. In fact, they regarded themselves as one soul in two bodies. Later on, in his eulogy for Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian speaks with delight about this period: “Various hopes guided us, and indeed inevitably, in learning... Two paths opened up before us: the one to our sacred temples and the teachers therein; the other towards preceptors of disciplines beyond.”

About the year 357, Saint Basil returned to Caesarea, where for a while he devoted himself to rhetoric. But soon, refusing offers from Caesarea’s citizens who wanted to entrust him with the education of their offspring, Saint Basil entered upon the path of ascetic life.

After the death of her husband, Basil’s mother, her eldest daughter Macrina, and several female servants withdrew to the family estate at Iris and there began to lead an ascetic life. Basil was baptized by Dianios, the Bishop of Caesarea, and was tonsured a Reader (On the Holy Spirit, 29). He first read the Holy Scriptures to the people, then explained them.

Later on, “wishing to acquire a guide to the knowledge of truth”, the saint undertook a journey into Egypt, Syria and Palestine, to meet the great Christian ascetics dwelling there. On returning to Cappadocia, he decided to do as they did. He distributed his wealth to the needy, then settled on the opposite side of the river not far from his mother Emilia and sister Macrina, gathering around him monks living a cenobitic life.

By his letters, Basil drew his good friend Gregory the Theologian to the monastery. Saints Basil and Gregory labored in strict abstinence in their dwelling place, which had no roof or fireplace, and the food was very humble. They themselves cleared away the stones, planted and watered the trees, and carried heavy loads. Their hands were constantly calloused from the hard work. For clothing Basil had only a tunic and monastic mantle. He wore a hairshirt, but only at night, so that it would not be obvious.

In their solitude, Saints Basil and Gregory occupied themselves in an intense study of Holy Scripture. They were guided by the writings of the Fathers and commentators of the past, especially the good writings of Origen. From all these works they compiled an anthology called Philokalia. Also at this time, at the request of the monks, Saint Basil wrote down a collection of rules for virtuous life. By his preaching and by his example Saint Basil assisted in the spiritual perfection of Christians in Cappadocia and Pontus; and many indeed turned to him. Monasteries were organized for men and for women, in which places Basil sought to combine the cenobitic (koine bios, or common) lifestyle with that of the solitary hermit.

During the reign of Constantius (337-361) the heretical teachings of Arius were spreading, and the Church summoned both its saints into service. Saint Basil returned to Caesarea. In the year 362 he was ordained deacon by Bishop Meletius of Antioch. In 364 he was ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. “But seeing,” as Gregory the Theologian relates, “that everyone exceedingly praised and honored Basil for his wisdom and reverence, Eusebius, through human weakness, succumbed to jealousy of him, and began to show dislike for him.” The monks rose up in defense of Saint Basil. To avoid causing Church discord, Basil withdrew to his own monastery and concerned himself with the organization of monasteries.

With the coming to power of the emperor Valens (364-378), who was a resolute adherent of Arianism, a time of troubles began for Orthodoxy, the onset of a great struggle. Saint Basil hastily returned to Caesarea at the request of Bishop Eusebius. In the words of Gregory the Theologian, he was for Bishop Eusebius “a good advisor, a righteous representative, an expounder of the Word of God, a staff for the aged, a faithful support in internal matters, and an activist in external matters.”

From this time church governance passed over to Basil, though he was subordinate to the hierarch. He preached daily, and often twice, in the morning and in the evening. During this time Saint Basil composed his Liturgy. He wrote a work “On the Six Days of Creation” (Hexaemeron) and another on the Prophet Isaiah in sixteen chapters, yet another on the Psalms, and also a second compilation of monastic rules. Saint Basil wrote also three books “Against Eunomius,” an Arian teacher who, with the help of Aristotelian concepts, had presented the Arian dogma in philosophic form, converting Christian teaching into a logical scheme of rational concepts.

Saint Gregory the Theologian, speaking about the activity of Basil the Great during this period, points to “the caring for the destitute and the taking in of strangers, the supervision of virgins, written and unwritten monastic rules for monks, the arrangement of prayers [Liturgy], the felicitous arrangement of altars and other things.” Upon the death of Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, Saint Basil was chosen to succeed him in the year 370. As Bishop of Caesarea, Saint Basil the Great was the newest of fifty bishops in eleven provinces. Saint Athanasius the Great (May 2), with joy and with thanks to God welcomed the appointment to Cappadocia of such a bishop as Basil, famed for his reverence, deep knowledge of Holy Scripture, great learning, and his efforts for the welfare of Church peace and unity.

Under Valens, the external government belonged to the Arians, who held various opinions regarding the divinity of the Son of God, and were divided into several factions. These dogmatic disputes were concerned with questions about the Holy Spirit. In his books *Against Eunomios*, Saint Basil the Great taught the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His equality with the Father and the Son. Subsequently, in order to provide a full explanation of Orthodox teaching on this question, Saint Basil wrote his book *On the Holy Spirit* at the request of Saint Amphilochius, the Bishop of Iconium.

Saint Basil’s difficulties were made worse by various circumstances: Cappadocia was divided in two under the rearrangement of provincial districts. Then at Antioch a schism occurred, occasioned by the consecration of a second bishop. There was the negative and haughty attitude of Western bishops to the attempts to draw them into the struggle with the Arians. And there was also the departure of Eustathius of Sebaste over to the Arian side. Basil had been connected to him by ties of close friendship. Amidst the constant perils Saint Basil gave encouragement to the Orthodox, confirmed them in the Faith, summoning them to bravery and endurance. The holy bishop wrote numerous letters to the churches, to bishops, to clergy and to individuals. Overcoming the heretics “by the weapon of his mouth, and by the arrows of his letters,” as an untiring champion of Orthodoxy, Saint Basil challenged the hostility and intrigues of the Arian heretics all his life. He has been compared to a bee, stinging the Church’s enemies, yet nourishing his flock with the sweet honey of his teaching.

The emperor Valens, mercilessly sending into exile any bishop who displeased him, and having implanted Arianism into other Asia Minor provinces, suddenly appeared in Cappadocia for this same purpose. He sent the prefect Modestus to Saint Basil. He began to threaten the saint with the confiscation of his property, banishment, beatings, and even death.

Saint Basil said, “If you take away my possessions, you will not enrich yourself, nor will you make me a pauper. You have no need of my old worn-out clothing, nor of my few books, of which the entirety of my wealth is comprised. Exile means nothing to me, since I am bound to no particular place. This place in which I now dwell is not mine, and any place you send me shall be mine. Better to say: every place is God’s. Where would

I be neither a stranger and sojourner (Ps. 38/39:13)? Who can torture me? I am so weak, that the very first blow would render me insensible. Death would be a kindness to me, for it will bring me all the sooner to God, for Whom I live and labor, and to Whom I hasten.”

The official was stunned by his answer. “No one has ever spoken so audaciously to me,” he said.

“Perhaps,” the saint remarked, “ that is because you’ve never spoken to a bishop before. In all else we are meek, the most humble of all. But when it concerns God, and people rise up against Him, then we, counting everything else as naught, look to Him alone. Then fire, sword, wild beasts and iron rods that rend the body, serve to fill us with joy, rather than fear.”

Reporting to Valens that Saint Basil was not to be intimidated, Modestus said, “Emperor, we stand defeated by a leader of the Church.” Basil the Great again showed firmness before the emperor and his retinue and made such a strong impression on Valens that the emperor dared not give in to the Arians demanding Basil’s exile. “On the day of Theophany, amidst an innumerable multitude of the people, Valens entered the church and mixed in with the throng, in order to give the appearance of being in unity with the Church. When the singing of Psalms began in the church, it was like thunder to his hearing. The emperor beheld a sea of people, and in the altar and all around was splendor; in front of all was Basil, who acknowledged neither by gesture nor by glance, that anything else was going on in church.” Everything was focused only on God and the altar-table, and the clergy serving there in awe and reverence.

Saint Basil celebrated the church services almost every day. He was particularly concerned about the strict fulfilling of the Canons of the Church, and took care that only worthy individuals should enter into the clergy. He incessantly made the rounds of his own church, lest anywhere there be an infraction of Church discipline, and setting aright any unseemliness. At Caesarea, Saint Basil built two monasteries, a men’s and a women’s, with a church in honor of the Forty Martyrs (March 9) whose relics were buried there. Following the example of monks, the saint’s clergy, even deacons and priests, lived in remarkable poverty, to toil and lead chaste and virtuous lives. For his clergy Saint Basil obtained an exemption from taxation. He used all his personal wealth and the income from his church for the benefit of the destitute; in every center of his diocese he built a poor-house; and at Caesarea, a home for wanderers and the homeless.

Sickly since youth, the toil of teaching, his life of abstinence, and the concerns and sorrows of pastoral service took their toll on him. Saint Basil died on January 1, 379 at age 49. Shortly before his death, the saint blessed Saint Gregory the Theologian to accept the See of Constantinople.

Upon the repose of Saint Basil, the Church immediately began to celebrate his memory. Saint Amphilochios, Bishop of Iconium (November 23), in his eulogy to Saint Basil the Great, said: “It is neither without a reason nor by chance that holy Basil has taken leave from the body and had repose from the world unto God on the day of the Circumcision of Jesus, celebrated between the day of the Nativity and the day of the Baptism of Christ. Therefore, this most blessed one, preaching and praising the Nativity and Baptism of Christ, extolling spiritual circumcision, himself forsaking the flesh, now ascends to Christ on the sacred day of remembrance of the Circumcision of Christ. Therefore, let it also be established on this present day annually to honor the memory of Basil the Great festively and with solemnity.”

Saint Basil is also called “the revealer of heavenly mysteries” (Ouranophantor), a “renowned and bright star,” and “the glory and beauty of the Church.” His honorable head is in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.

In some countries it is customary to sing special carols today in honor of Saint Basil. He is believed to visit the homes of the faithful, and a place is set for him at the table. People visit the homes of friends and relatives, and the mistress of the house gives a small gift to the children. A special bread (Vasilopita) is blessed and distributed after the Liturgy. A silver coin is baked into the bread, and whoever receives the slice with the coin is said to receive the blessing of Saint Basil for the coming year.

ASSUMPTION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH CONFIDENTIAL STEWARDSHIP & FAMILY INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the 2021 Stewardship & Commitment form and return this form to the Church Office

Family Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Telephone: _____

In gratitude for God's blessings, I/We commit to Christ and His Church the following amount:

\$ \$1,560 (\$30/week) \$1,976 (\$38/week) \$2,600 (\$50/week) \$5,200 (\$100/week) Other _____

Highlighted amount of \$1,976 is what we need to average per steward to run the church on Stewardship alone.

	Member	Spouse	Children	/ Age
Name:	_____	_____	_____	/ _____
Mobile Tel:	_____	_____	_____	/ _____
E-mail:	_____	_____	_____	/ _____
Occupation:	_____	_____	_____	/ _____
Work Tel:	_____	_____	_____	/ _____

ASSUMPTION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH FAMILY INFORMATION FORM

Please complete and return this form to the Church Office

Family Name: _____

Please check ✓ those items in which you or a member of your family has some expertise or interest.

Place name or initials of the specific family member after each item checked.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday School | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Language School | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Choir | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Camp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visitation of Elderly/Infirm | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking-Events or Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Ministry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer - general | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ushering / Welcome | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer – Web Site Mgt | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical / Plumbing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reader (in liturgy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Parish Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

The Assumption Greek Orthodox Church 2021 Parish Budget Anticipates a commitment \$145,000 from Stewardship. This represents only 2/3 of our anticipated expenses. Every Stewardship Pledge should conscientiously contribute to the support of our Church for ONE FULL YEAR! To meet our expenses, Assumption needs an average of \$642 a day. We must

Yearly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
\$ 200	\$ 16.67	\$ 3.85	\$ 0.55
\$ 400	\$ 33.33	\$ 7.69	\$ 1.10
\$ 600	\$ 50	\$ 11.53	\$ 1.64

ask ourselves prayerfully are we doing enough to continue our mission as a parish. **Please consider using the above table to see how simple it is to increase your stewardship.** With this simple increase we can bring our stewardship closer to fully covering our anticipated budget for 2021. We know not everyone can do this, just try your best and God will provide. You can set up auto pay by going to our website <http://www.agocwi.org/> and clicking on the giving button.

STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE

2021 STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT: Assumption Greek Orthodox Church depends on the love and gratitude of its members in order to perform its sacred ministry. Each member is asked to support the church by annually setting his or her own level of giving, in proportion to his or her earnings. This year, we ask you to search your heart and conscience, and to seriously consider the many needs of our Church, as you determine your Stewardship Pledge of Commitment for 2021.

Your giving should be a profound spiritual action, coming as an expression of your love and gratitude to God and his church, which blesses you and your family, and preserves and cultivates our Orthodox Christian Faith. To be meaningful, your Stewardship Commitment should not be simply a token offering from your surplus resources, but should be a true sacrifice, giving a feeling that “I gave something valuable in order to help my Church,” a GOOD FEELING.

Our 2021 Parish Budget is counting on drawing \$145,000 from Stewardship. This represents about 2/3 of our anticipated expenses. Please realize that every Stewardship Pledge of Commitment should represent conscientious support of our Church for ONE FULL YEAR! To meet our expenses, Assumption needs an average of \$1,976 to be able to survive on stewardship alone. So you can see how important your contribution is! Some stewards can give more than this; some will give less. We are hoping that every steward of our parish can try to raise their stewardship for the year. Just like we get a cost of living increase through work, so do the expenses of the church go up each year. We need to be mindful to try and increase our giving by at least a bit every year. We know that giving certain amounts can seem daunting over time when you are only looking at the final number. Many people would like to give \$1,000, \$1,500 or even \$2,000 a year for stewardship. But that number can seem overwhelming. The best thing we can do is to try and break down those numbers to more manageable expectations. Do you know that setting aside \$20 a week for stewardship will mean at the end of the year you will have given \$1,040 in Stewardship. \$30 a week makes an offering of \$1,560 at the end of the year. And \$40 a week makes it \$2,080 for the year. We know not everyone can do this, and that is ok.

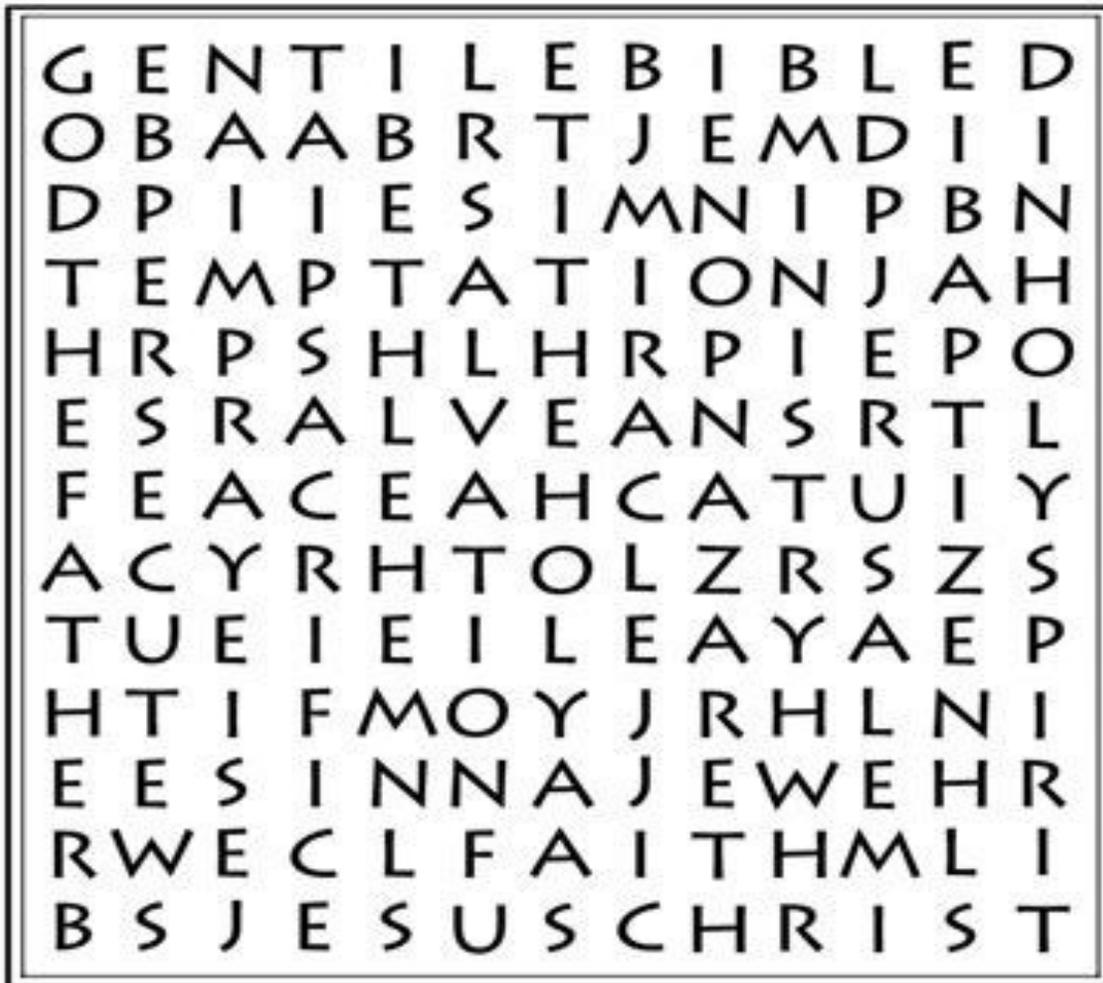
Try your best and God will provide.



KIDS CORNER

BIBLE WORD SEARCH!

BASIC WORDS OF THE BIBLE



JESUS CHRIST

SALVATION

JEW

GENTILE

HOLY SPIRIT

GOD THE FATHER

PERSECUTE

PRAY

TITHE

MINISTRY

BIBLE

HOLY

SACRIFICE

FAITH

MIRACLE

NAZARETH

BETHLEHEM

JERUSALEM

BAPTIZE

TEMPTATION

SIN

CREATED BY MELINDA SKAGGS

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