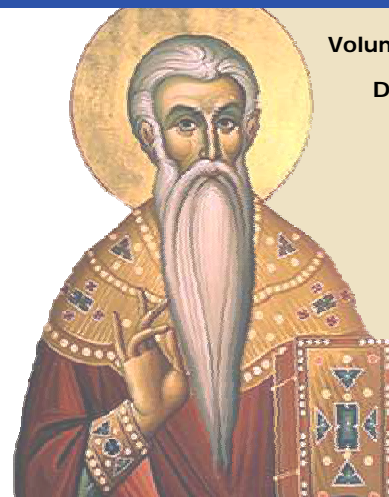


in Touch

Volume 19, Issue 12

December 2011



The Official Publication of St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church

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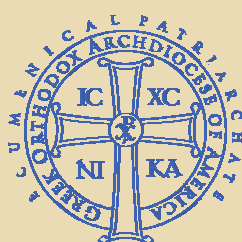
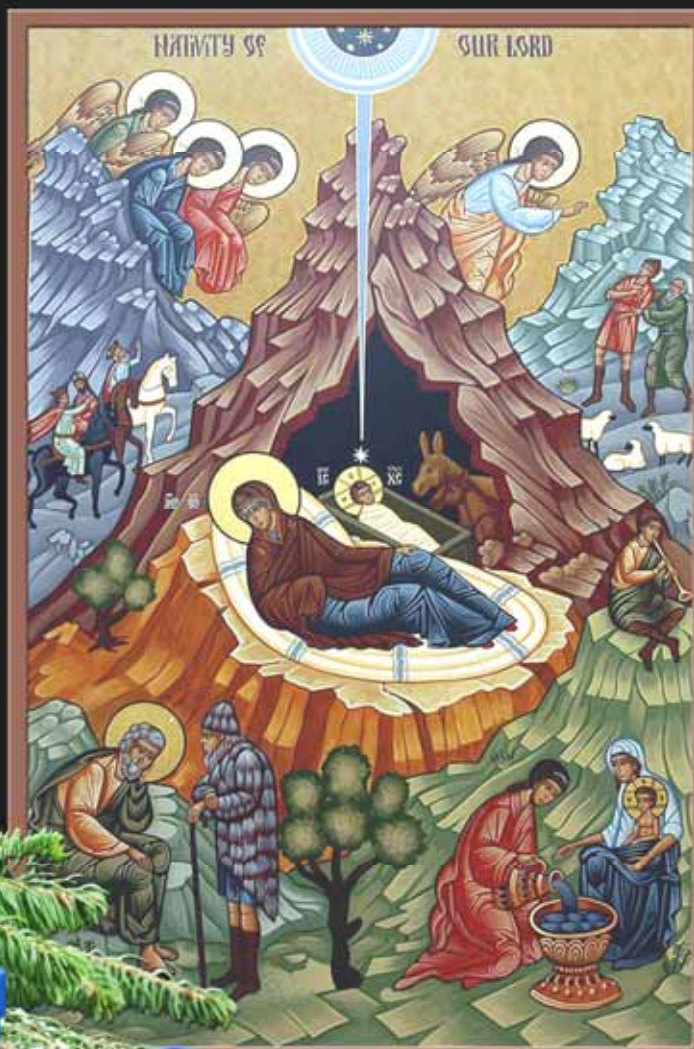
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“And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

(Luke 2:12-14)



Lord, You know that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Your blessing on all. — St. Haralambos

Stewardship Sunday

Why do we use the word “steward” of the Church, and not just “member?” What does being a steward mean for me, and for my family? Come and See!

This year’s celebration of Stewardship Sunday will be on Sunday, December 11. A presentation following the Divine Liturgy will help answer questions and give us all a better understanding of what Church membership is all about.

Everyone will receive a packet of information, including the 2012 Pledge Card that is not just to be returned with a monetary donation, but a gift of our time and talents, as well as our treasure.

St. Haralambos Church offers something for everyone: male, female, children and adults. As we defined at the General Assembly last month, our Mission Statement is: We are a loving, Christ-centered community, whose mission is to keep, practice and proclaim our Orthodox Christian faith as a living presence to those around us.”

Let us continually increase our awareness and our involvement in our sacred calling as Stewards of Christ’s Holy Church!



Christmas Holiday Donations



Once again we are putting up an Angel Tree to provide food and gifts to needy families in Peoria. If you are able, please take an angel from the tree and return it with your wrapped gift by Sunday, Dec. 18.

We are also continuing our Canned/Boxed Food Drive until Dec. 18.

To everyone who donated for the Thanksgiving Food Drive – thank you so much! The 12 family baskets we donated were fantastic.



A Proper Blessing

There is a scene from the musical, "Fiddler on the Roof" when the village Rabbi is asked whether there was a proper blessing for the Tzar. The thoughtful rabbi stops for a moment, then replies, "A blessing for the Tzar? Of course! May God bless and keep the Tzar... far from us!"

Clergymen are routinely asked to offer proper blessings for a variety of occasions, hopefully with the same wit, if not inspiration, as the rabbi from Anatevka.

Among all of our Christmas preparations this month, it is good for us to consider the birth of Christ, if only from the icon of the Nativity, in relation to the word "proper." The manger scene is so familiar and firmly ingrained in our minds that we may see it, but overlook its tremendous irony. We see the peaceful, loving look of Mary; the newborn Lord resting peacefully in the crèche, the animals laying about quietly and comfortably, the angels looking on from above, and, of course, the bright star

of Bethlehem shining brilliantly in the night sky.

The irony? The Lord of All, Creator of the Universe, the Divine Logos of God the Father enters into human history in the most humble and unassuming of circumstances. Not what most of us would call a "proper" birthplace for our Lord and Savior. The plan of Joseph and Mary, of course, was to find a room at the local inn, but it wasn't to be. They were forced outdoors, among the animals, at the entrance of a cave, to deliver Mary's firstborn son. Considering that both Mary and Joseph were told by angels about the holy and sacred mission of their son, it's not difficult to imagine their anxiety over this "improper" birth. This was to be the first, but not the only, case of irony in our Lord's earthly life. (The gospels record a similar ironic event toward the end of Jesus' life at his Entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday: heralding the entrance of a king, riding on the back of a lowly donkey.)

Two thousand years later, the Church continues to call each of us to a proper celebration of our Lord's birth. Along with the many traditions of decorations, parties and presents, it is proper for us as Orthodox Christians to prepare ourselves inwardly for this sacred celebration, including worshipping together and preparing (including fasting and Confession) to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The point, of course, is not just to see the irony of our Lord's birth, but to see it as another reminder of the love of God for us. The birth of Christ is an incredible act of love, first and foremost. Our celebration of Christmas should bring about a response of love to our Loving Lord, and to one another.

May this Christmas season and celebration be "proper" in every sense of the word!

The birth of Christ is an incredible act of love, first and foremost.



**St. Haralambos
Greek Orthodox
Church**

Rev. Michael Pallad
www.stharalambos.org

Sunday Worship

September - May
Matins: 8:45 a.m.
Divine Liturgy: 10 a.m.

June - August
Matins: 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy: 9:30 a.m.

Office

623-486-8665
7950 W. Pinnacle Peak Rd., Peoria, AZ 85383
Office@StHaralambosAZ.com
FrMichael@StHaralambosAZ.com

Hours
Monday - Friday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Parish Council

Dennis Georgen, President
Ray Wysmierski, Vice President
Dean Milonas, Treasurer
Mike Danielek, Secretary
Angie Cholas
David Durgam

Dimitri Gryparis
Mary Manos
George Miller
Katherine Tally
Peter Vardalos
Ken Wrona

25th Anniversary

Get those creative juices flowing! 2012 marks the 25th anniversary of St. Haralambos Church, and a wonderful celebration is being planned. In addition to a celebration banquet on Saturday, Feb. 11, a host of other events and activities are being prepared to mark this special "silver" anniversary, including a variety of creative opportunities for everyone.

Let's start with the logo. Would you like to help design the 25th anniversary logo to be used for announcements and correspondence about our 25th anniversary? The logo will be put on the monthly newsletter, church stationery, anniversary banner, and more. Everyone is invited to submit their ideas for our 25th anniversary. We'll announce the winning design on Sunday, Dec. 4.

This anniversary is a time to hear from our parish family! Each month during 2012, we're going to ask one or more parishioners to submit an article for the monthly In Touch newsletter, to hear their thoughts on our 25th anniversary. What has St. Haralambos Church meant to you, and what do you hope to see over the next 25 years?

Look for more information on other plans, including: a 25th anniversary family directory, a 25th anniversary time capsule, a group commemorative photo of our entire church family, updating and displaying milestones in our parish history.

Now for the really creative designers: let's take a look at our new building. Since moving to our new property, we've made some needed and beautiful modifications to the interior spaces, including our church, social hall and classrooms. The front entrance, however, was not designed to look like a traditional entry of a church building. What can be done about that? How about giving some thought at creating a front entry area that is both inviting and visually more appealing as the entrance to our church.

Since we're just talking about ideas, don't worry about cost, precise materials or dimensions at this point. Just sit down with pencil and paper, and submit your ideas to Church Design Contest (either via email or US Mail) during the months of November and December. Let's see what creative results come in!



Sunday School

By Martha Stithem, Sunday School
Director & Teacher

On Sunday, Dec. 18, our Sunday School students will make a Christmas presentation following Divine Liturgy. Parents, please be sure to bring your family to church on the preceding Sundays, so that your children can practice for and participate in the Christmas presentation.

As a reminder, there will be no Sunday School classes held on the following dates: Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, 2012. May all our parish families be blessed with a joyous

Christmas season as we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Parish Council Corner

By Dennis Georgen, Parish Council President

At our November General Assembly we discussed the need for our Parish to prioritize retiring the mortgage on our Church property. Currently, our monthly mortgage payment is \$7,790 / month. This expense is partially offset in our budget by lease income we receive from AT & T for the cell tower and from the sale of our old building, bringing the net monthly payment to \$3,469, or \$41,628 when annualized.

In reality, we are currently paying \$93,480 annually, of which \$65,152 will be paid in interest in 2012, and \$28,328 will be applied toward the principal. Over five years (2010 – 2015) we will have paid \$467,413, of which \$323,499 would have been interest, and only \$143,914 would have been applied to reduce the original balance of \$1,300,000.

Our present situation requires action. Here is why:

- Our 2012 Budget projects a deficit of

\$16,680. This includes applying all anticipated income from the 2012 Taste of Greece Festival.

- Our current mortgage is a 5-year balloon requiring we re-finance no later than 2015. Mortgage rates are currently at historic lows.

It is important to understand that our Parish is NOT in dire financial straits, but we do have a VERY SERIOUS cash flow problem.

Solutions to our budget deficit include all of the following:

- Completion of the sale of land at 75th & Greenway. Assuming a \$400,000 sale we can anticipate a reduction in our annual mortgage outlay of more than \$38,000. This alone would put our 2012 Parish budget in the black by over \$20,000.
- Undertake a renewed Capital Campaign to raise as much Capital as we are able to pay down the mortgage.
- As soon as is feasible, refinance the

mortgage, applying proceeds from the sale of the land, and funds raised during the capital campaign.

We also can achieve budget stability by considering our Stewardship. Over the past 5 years, our Parish family has grown by 31%, from 132 to 174. Truly Amazing! What is concerning is that during this same time, compiled inflation was 11.25%. The average gift over those same 5 years has only grown by 1.7%, from \$639 to \$650. We can:

- Do everything we can, each of us, each and every Sunday to make newcomers feel welcome so that our Community continues to grow.
- Seriously consider what each of us as Stewards of St Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church can give.

Let's remember that our vision wasn't to worship, nice as it is, in what will be our future Community Center. Our vision was to build a permanent Byzantine-style house of worship. Until we retire our current mortgage, that vision remains but a dream.

Parish Council Elections

Elections for new parish council members who will begin serving a three-year term beginning Jan. 2, 2012, will take place on Sunday, Dec. 4. All parish stewards are reminded to cast

their votes for the four parish council open seats following the Divine Liturgy. A table will be set up to sign-in for a ballot and vote for the candidates of their choice.

The Absentee Ballot below may be used for those not able to vote in person. Absentee Ballots must be signed and received at the church no later than Saturday, Dec. 3.

St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, Peoria, Arizona

Parish Council Elections

Sunday, December 4, 2011

ABSENTEE BALLOT

The following Members in Good Standing are candidates for the 2012 Parish Council. Place an "x" next to the candidates of your choice. There are four (4) openings.

___ Dennis Georgen

___ Dean Milonas

___ Chris Theotocatos

___ Lee Vordos

Print Name

Signature

ORGANIZATIONS

Philoptochos

By Reni Milonas, President

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15

I hope everyone's Thanksgiving holiday was blessed, bountiful, and happy. I know our parishioners with their generous donations made 12 disadvantaged families in Peoria feel blessed, bountiful, and happy when they received their Thanksgiving dinner and dessert boxes. With your assistance again, we would like to donate an additional 12 boxes for Christmas dinner as well. The sign-up chart will be displayed in the coffee room.

Our next meeting will be a Christmas Potluck on Monday, Dec. 5 at 6 pm. It is open to anyone who would like to attend. The Youth Group will be joining us and the Mountain Ridge High School Choir will be singing Christmas carols.

On Saturday, Dec. 17, we will be baking our beautiful Tsourekia to sell for your Christmas table. I hope to see all of our talented bakers at 9 am.



December Commitments National

- General Medical Fund
Provides financial resources for individuals in need of assistance not specifically covered by other restricted National Funds or Programs.

Amount determined by Chapter Treasury

Metropolis

- St. Nicholas Ranch
\$300.00 or more from Chapter Treasury
- Bishop Anthony Philoptochos Student Aid Endowment Fund
Benefits the seminarians and students from this Metropolis to prepare for ordination into the Holy Priesthood and service in the Greek Orthodox Faith.
\$500.00 from Chapter Treasury

May the blessings of Christmas be found in each of our lives throughout the coming year: Joy in the simple things in life, Peace no matter the situation in which we find ourselves, Mercy for those in need, and Love of God, family, and friends." Have a Merry Christmas!

Community Christmas Card

We will again be providing parishioners the opportunity to send Christmas greetings with a beautiful full-color icon greeting card to all our parish families. For each family name, the cost is just \$10.

Please print your name clearly, exactly as you would like it to appear on the card. You may mail this form to the church office or sign up on Sundays during the Coffee Hour. Please make checks payable to: St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church. **The deadline is Monday, Dec. 5, 2011.**

Please include my family's name in this year's Community Christmas Card.

Enclosed is my check for \$10.

(Please return to the church office)



Names (please print clearly)

St. Christopher's Bookstore

A Second Look at the Second Coming: Sorting Through the Speculations by T. L. Frazier, 1999, softback, \$20.00.

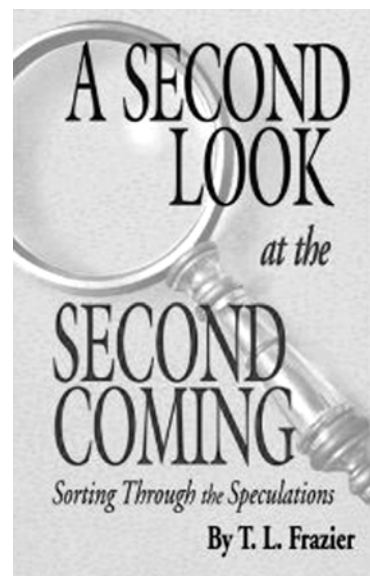
Since the late 1960s there has been a frenzy of so-called prophecy "experts" proposing end-of-the-world scenarios. A huge industry has developed to produce books to fill the shelves of Christian bookstores and the programs of televangelists. But much of what has been said and written by these "born again" fundamentalists is based on bogus "facts" and, certainly, is not within the mainstream of Orthodox Church Tradition.

Fr. A. James Bernstein (St. Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church) in his foreword says, "Without a doubt, Mr. Frazier offers the best-documented, the most serious, and the most historically accurate critique of modern millenarianism to date." What Mr. Frazier does is discredit the theories of persons such as Hal Lindsey, author of The Late Great Planet Earth, the best-selling book of the 1970s; David Hunt, who has written several end-times books; and Jack Van Impe, who produced a video called 666: The United States of Europe and the New World Order, in which he

claims that Israel, the European Union (the Revived Roman Empire), and the World Council of Churches (the Whore of Babylon described in Revelation 17) will all play a vital role in the anti-Christ's New World Order.

Mr. Frazier does this by examining many Bible passages and interpretations of these passages by Orthodox saints and spirit-filled Fathers of the Faith. For example, one specific point of contention is the common "pop religion" belief that there will be a "rapture" or resurrection of the Church faithful before the rise to power of the anti-Christ, WWII, and the period of "Tribulation," and later another resurrection at Christ's coming at Armageddon for Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs, and yet a third resurrection for the unsaved after the millennium. Mr. Frazier refutes the 3-resurrections notion by citing St. Justin's (A.D.150) explanation of several Bible verses that describe only one judgment that will follow a single resurrection when the Lord comes.

Although the book lacks an index, the last twenty pages (the APPENDIX: The Book of Revelation) is possibly the most fascinating section of the book.



Volunteer Ministry

If you enjoy reading the latest news on doctrine and ideology, have a deep love of Greek Orthodoxy and for St. Haralambos Church, you may be interested in the recently opened volunteer position of Bookstore Manager at our church. This ministry is sure to be a fulfilling and meaningful experience. Management responsibilities include the following:

1. Order books, texts, icons and Orthodox accessory items for the bookstore;
2. Upon receipt of book orders from providers, review invoice(s) for

- completeness, accuracy and payment;
3. Inventory all items in bookstore once per year;
4. Write book reviews for In Touch monthly newsletter;
5. Manage set-up and preparation of bookstore booth for our annual "Taste of Greece" Festival.

Don't worry about having to learn the ropes on your own; the current manager will assist you during the transition prior to Great Lent 2012.

Birthdays



Stella Pagos (1)
 Ronnie Ratliff (1)
 Ethel Nicholas (6)
 Paul DeTrana (9)
 Kay Fulghum (9)
 Athena Palaio (9)
 Anna Papamatheakis (9)
 Sam Nicholas (14)
 Leonidas Karandreas (17)
 Steve Mallos (17)
 Adrianna Micka (18)
 Jean Baxter (19)
 Stella Kosta (20)
 Danai Papamatheakis (24)
 Chris Kotsobeis (25)
 George Stivaktakis (26)
 Brianna Selles (29)

If you don't see your name, or those of family members, and would like to be included on the monthly birthday listing, please send the information to the church office.

Sacraments

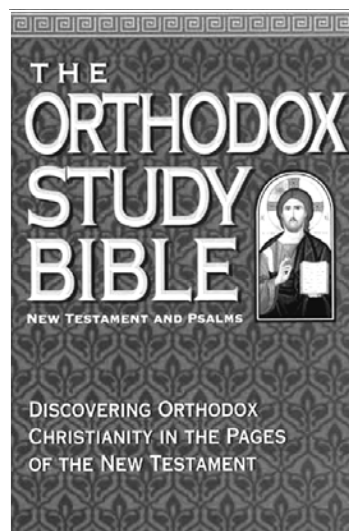
God's blessings and "Many Years" to the newly-baptized Jackson (James) Savoy, son of Tyler and Sarah Savoy, on Saturday, Nov. 5. Jackson's godmother is Kelly Savoy.

Orthodox Study Group

In November we started the Orthodox Study Group on Wednesday evenings, meeting between 7 and 8:30 pm. There are a number of people involved and we would welcome anyone who has an interest in joining our reviews, as a wide range of discussions and opinions are desirable. We have started with the Gospel of John and will be continuing with his works.

People can easily enter the group at any time and we would encourage you to do so. Please feel free to join us at your convenience. An Orthodox Study Bible would be all that one needs to participate. We might desire flexibility of scheduling around the holidays, so please check your weekly bulletin for cancellations or call me for clarifications and/or information.

Please contact Ted Manos at 623-698-6078 or tedmanos@zona.net if you are interested in this group.



Name Days

Many years/*Chronia Polla* to those named after the following saints:

St. Myrope (2nd)	St. Modestos (16th)
St. Theodore of Alexandria (3rd)	St. Sebastian (18th)
St. Barbara (4th)	St. Juliane (21st)
St. Savvas (5th)	St. Anastasia (22nd)
St. Nicholas (6th)	St. Eugenia (24th)
St. Ambrose (7th)	Nativity of Christ (25th)
St. Daniel (11th)	St. Simon (28th)
St. Lucia (13th)	St. Melania (31st)

DECEMBER 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	
4 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Parish Council Elections	5 7:00pm Philoptochos Christmas Potluck	6 11:00am Seniors Games 4:00pm Metropolis Pan-Orthodox Clergy Retreat St. Nicholas Ranch, California	7 7:00pm Bible Study	8 7:00pm Choir	9 9:00am Divine Liturgy Conception of the Theotokos	10
11 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Stewardship Sunday	12 9:00am Divine Liturgy St. Spyridon	13	14	15 7:00pm Choir	16	17
18 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Sunday School Christmas Program	19	20 7:00pm Parish Council	21 7:00pm Bible Study	22 7:00pm Choir	23 9:00am Royal Hours of Christmas	24 9:00am Divine Liturgy Forefeast of Christmas 7:00pm Christmas Eve Vespers
25 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Christmas Day	26	27	28	29 7:00pm Choir	30	31



SPIRITUAL GIFTS Seminar

January 14, 21 and 28

*An opportunity for spiritual growth
and direction in life, according to
God's design and purpose.*

Many people go through life without realizing their God-given potential, reducing their purpose in life to finding a job to pay their bills. God calls us to a much more exciting and fulfilling life! And He equips us with gifts and talents to help enrich our life by using these gifts in a variety of ways. Here is an opportunity to begin discovering God's plan for a fulfilling life.

The Seminar on Spiritual Gifts is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 14, 21 and 28 from 9 am to 4 pm. The seminar, including the workbook, all materials and refreshments, is just \$25 per person. Please return the registration form below, together with payment (checks made payable to St. Haralambos Church) to the church office by Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2012.

Seminar on Spiritual Gifts

January 14, 21 and 28
9 am – 4 pm

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime Phone _____

_____ I am enclosing the Registration fee of \$25 per person, payable to St. Haralambos Church.

Please return this registration form before Jan. 4, 2012.