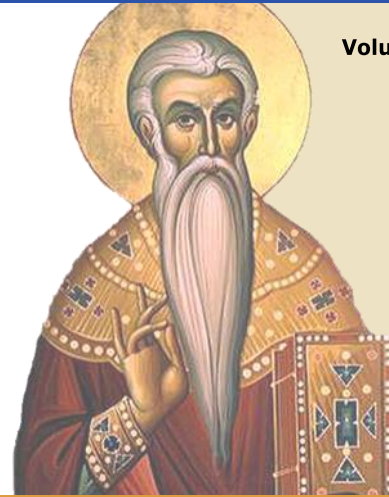


in Touch

Volume 31, Issue 7

July 2023



The Official Publication of St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church

**Book
Club • 2**

**Portico
Project • 2**

**Freedom as
God's Gift • 3**

**Parish Council
News • 4**

**Spring General
Assembly • 5**



Let
Freedom
Ring

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

Thank You Frosene and Stella!

On Sunday, Jun. 25, a special Thank You reception was held in honor of Frosene Bravos and Stella Pagos for the many years of service they offered to our church community. It was a wonderful celebration for two special women and very dedicated parishioners.



Book Club

By Irene Nathanson

Since its inception, the St. Haralambos Book Club had three wonderful gatherings to discuss great books of faith. Although we are a relatively new ministry, we agreed to pause for the summer when many are vacationing or gone.

Please stay tuned for announcements to restart in October. At that time we will regroup and agree on a new day and time to meet, as well as vote on our first book. Let me know if you have a special request to nominate. Enjoy the summer!



Front Entry Portico Project

Help Us Reach Our Goal!

The parish council will soon be deciding on which proposal will be awarded the contract to build the Front Entry Portico. This beautiful addition to our building is quickly moving from “dream” stage to becoming a reality!

Can you help with a gift this month? Donations of any amount are greatly appreciated to help us build this wonderful addition to our building. Donate online at www.stharalambos.org or checks can be made payable to Saint Haralambos Church and sent to the church office.





Freedom as God’s gift to Humanity

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another humbly in love.” (Gal.5:13)

The annual celebration of the independence of our nation, this month on Tuesday, July 4, typically brings the word “freedom” to mind. It is regarded as one of the most important human rights in most every civilized society. It seems appropriate this month, then, to be reminded of several scriptural passages that speak of freedom in the context of God’s love for humankind.

Service and freedom. While some people might see these two words as mutually exclusive, the New Testament writings of St. Paul see them as complementary, working together in pursuit of the highest of human virtues, which is love. To serve another human being, when done with a loving heart, is not servitude but voluntary service, a gift of love. If love is not expressed out of freedom, it is not genuine love. To serve another, without expecting anything in return, is serving with love. The two, service and freedom, can work together beautifully.

To serve the needs of someone else requires humility, the willingness to put someone else’s needs ahead of our own. Can that really be done freely? Doesn’t freedom mean being able to do whatever we want for ourselves first, without restrictions from anyone or anything else?

From the perspective of God’s teachings as revealed in Holy Scripture, freedom - as treasured a gift as it is - does have boundaries. “Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature,” St. Paul admonishes. Unfortunately, history is filled with examples of this type of misuse or abuse of freedom.

Freedom is God-given; it is most properly expressed, therefore, in ways that please God. Recall God’s commandment to Adam recorded in the book of

Genesis. *“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” (Gen.2:16-17)*

Freedom is given by God to the first-created Man, Adam; but God also includes restrictions that were for Adam’s protection and well-being. Exercising freedom within the boundaries set-up by God allowed Adam and Eve to enjoy all that paradise, in the Garden of Eden, had to offer. Their eventual disregard of those boundaries, of God’s commandment, led to Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise, and disastrous negative consequences for humankind ever since.

Their eventual disregard of those boundaries, of God’s commandment, led to Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise,

Even so, there have been others who have understood God’s original intent regarding freedom, and have chosen to respect His boundaries. King David writes in Psalm 119: *“I will always obey your law, forever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.”* Walking in freedom, for King David, meant obedience to God’s laws, respecting God’s boundaries.

St. Peter describes obedience to God in stronger terms when he writes, *“Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves.”* (1Peter 2:16) How do we regard ourselves today as slaves of God?

Slavery is degrading to fellow human beings, disregarding human dignity by forcing someone into servitude. How can we rightly consider slavery as an appropriate relationship between people today, or

(Continued on page 6)

**St. Haralambos
Greek Orthodox
Church**
www.stharalambos.org
Rev. Michael Pallad

Sunday Worship
Matins: 8:45 a.m.
Divine Liturgy: 10 a.m.
[Services live online](#)

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
Cynthia Bekiaris
Deborah Chionchio
Virginia Dent
Hope Evangelinos
Anna Kinniburgh
Dan Teska
Vivian Teska
Mary Wysmierski
Ray Wysmierski
Solomon Woldesilassie

Parish Council News

By Ray Wysmierski, President

Happy summer to all! The heat is here, the snowbirds have left us to savor the 100-degree heat. The time has flown by since Pascha. We have a new lease extension with Brilliant Blessings Day Care until August of 2025, the portico project has the construction bids, the fence project is awaiting a surveyor to put our four parcels of land into one as required by the city of Peoria, and yes repairs.

We have been experiencing air conditioning outages that required repair it's like a domino effect with them.

Since we have the daycare, repair is of utmost urgency and yes, the part supply chain is slow. However, we have a great repair person who has been very attentive and understanding our needs especially with the daycare. Our doors have also needed repair and attention especially the entrance to the church, side entrance on the south side, and the office entrance. The parts and major adjustments have taken time and return by the company to fix them.

We also found out our smoke alarms, that we have been cleaning since 2012, are 20 years old and 8 of them need to be replaced at a significant cost. We are lucky however, that for now, we don't need to replace the other 39 smoke alarms.

Remember as I have been told the technology has changed significantly over 20 years and the system is original to the building. We must keep in mind we have a tenant that operates a business with children that we must always consider their well-being. As you can see, we have encountered some unexpected large expenses that you might not see to keep the church operational.

Father Michael, Vivian Teska and I attended the clergy-laity conference in

May at St. Nicholas ranch in Dunlop, California.

We had a great education, networking opportunities, worship at the monastery, and an enlightening return flight that took us back home via Denver. I wanted to drive, and we would have been home a lot earlier than our flight brought us back, an adventure to say the least!

We could use your talents for several different ministries in our church. Father Michael or myself would be happy to discuss the opportunities with you, you can even choose.

If you have not filled out a stewardship card this year, please do so, it helps us with our church membership. Remember, these are not dues but offerings to operate the church. And on that note, with the repairs that we have unexpectedly encountered, any additional offerings that you were looking to designate are welcome. You know you can budget money for anticipated costs however, it's the unexpected ones that knock you over.

I would like to say THANK YOU! To Stella and Frosene for their countless years of service to the church and all the best to a continued retirement.

Remember, this is our church and some of the structure is getting tired, it's our congregation that will never tire as we are a strong, loving and hardworking parish.

Please stay tuned to ongoing happenings in our church with all the projects that are underway. Just know the fence/ security project once completed will be reimbursed by the department of homeland security.

So stay comfortable this summer and we will see you at Divine Liturgy.

Birthdays



Mary Levendi (4)
Andrew Macrides (5)
Cathy Kapetanakis (8)
Lisa Theoharatos (11)
Peter Michas (14)
Alaina Perreault (14)
Christos Mavridis (17)
Linda Zakas (22)
Angela Karabetsos (27)
Desiree Milonas (27)
Terry Pritchard (28)
Sharon Bolas (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.

Spring General Assembly

By Cynthia Bekiaris, Treasurer

Below are the highlights of the 2023 Spring General Assembly held last month for those who were unable to attend.

- Total Income \$295,612
- Total Expenses \$314,050
- **Net Income (\$18,438)**

Our **Stewardship**

- FY 2021 \$97,987
- FY 2022 \$102,211
- 2023 is behind projections

A high level breakdown shows where we have a budget deficit.

Ministry(salary) and Total Commitments to the Metropolis and Archdiocese.

Our Archdiocese and Metropolis **Commitments**

- FY 2021 \$34,668
- FY 2022 \$41,420

2023 - we are negotiating to have our total commitment lowered.

Our **Ministry**(salary & benefits) expenses

- FY 2021 - \$147,168.86
- FY 2022 - \$172,353.52
- 2023 will remain the same

Thus far in 2023, we have had additional **unbudgeted** expenditures due to the age of our building:

- Repair of several Outside Doors
- Repairs on the Air Conditioner
- Replace several Fire Alarms
- Lot Surveyor as part of a FEMA Grant (not reimbursable)

The above totals close to \$17,000

Our cash on hand as of June 26,2023 is as follows:

- Checking \$10,771
- Savings/Portico \$203,420
- CD @ 4.75% \$20,000
- **TOTAL \$234,191**

Brilliant Blessings Daycare continues to grow and their request for expansion allowed us to obtain a rent increase of \$2,000/mo and raise their portion of utilities to 70%.

If you would like more information or have any questions on the above information, please feel free to contact any member of the Parish Council at shgocparishcouncil@gmail.com



Name Days

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

- St. Kyriaki (7th)
- SS. Cyril and Methodios (7th)
- St. Euphemia (11th)
- St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain (14th)
- St. Macrina (Sister of St. Basil) (19th)
- St. Mary Magdalene (22nd)
- St. Paraskevi (26th)
- St. Panteleimon (The All-Merciful) (27th)
- St. Irene (Chrysovalantou) (28th)
- St. Joseph of Arimathea (31st)

Clergy Column

(Continued from page 3)

perhaps as St. Peter wrote, between a person and God?

When slavery is redefined as serving another out of love, and when the service is offered freely and not out of obligation, I think we can begin to see where St. Peter is coming from. If we understand our freedom as God-given, and choose to exercise our freedom within the boundaries God has established, and recognize those boundaries as intended for our wellbeing, I think that King David's words from Psalm 119 (quoted above) are also more understandable, and more believable.

If I choose to serve the needs of another, whether they are the needs of my children,

my wife or my friends, and I do so freely, this does not make me a slave at all, but rather a loving father, a devoted husband, and a good friend. If a slave is one who does his master's bidding, the only Master I would ever choose to follow would be our Lord, Jesus Christ, who, as St. Paul writes, "*loved me and gave Himself for me.*" (Gal.2:20)

The right exercise of freedom is truly one of God's most important gifts to humanity. When understood within the framework of God's boundaries, it helps provide the strengthening of all human relationships, as well as our relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



2023 Stewardship Families

Abbitt, Dimetra
Asfaha, Moges
Berhe, Almaz
Bekiaris, Harry & Cynthia
Bravos, Frosene
Bryson, Tom & Joan
Carlson, Olga
Chionchio, Debbie
Cholas, Angie
Christian, Thalia
Conklin, Maria
Contes, Jamie
Covault, Lloyd & Angela
Danielek, Michael and Chryss
Davis, Mary
Deming, Janet
Dent, Virginia
Dodd, Voula
Evangelinos, Parry & Hope
Farr, Paula
Farr, Kevin
Farr, Jeff & Judy
Finch, Dennis & Marina
Gardener, Semos
Giannias, Elaine
Gryparis, Demetri and Magda
Hartsel, Barbara
Javaras, Harry
Jolly, Judith
Kapetenakis, Voule and Cathy

Kinniburgh, Bob & Anna
Lafayette, Henry & Maria
Lazzelle, Estelle
Levendi, Mary
Loukas, Christos & Peggy
Magnani, Sharon
Mavridis, Christos
Michas, Peter
Milonas, Nick & Jane
Munteanu, Mirela
Nathanson, Irene
Nicely, Edna
Pagos, Stella
Pallad, Fr. Michael & Pres. Kristin
Pappas, Irene
Servetas, Charlotte
Singleton, Melanie
Stratos, George & Irene
Surman, Dina
Tally, Katherine
Tsfay, Ocbai & Genet
Teska, Dan & Vivian
Tsioutsopoulos, Demetre & Holly
Vardalos, Peter & Lindsay
Vasquez, Argyro
Woldesilassie, Solomon & Lydia
Wysmierski, Ray & Mary
Yannakopoulos, George & Irene
Zakas, Speros & Linda

JULY 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy	3	4 Independence Day (Church Office is Closed)	5	6	7	8
9 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy	10	11 6:00pm Parish Council	12	13	14	15
16 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy	31					