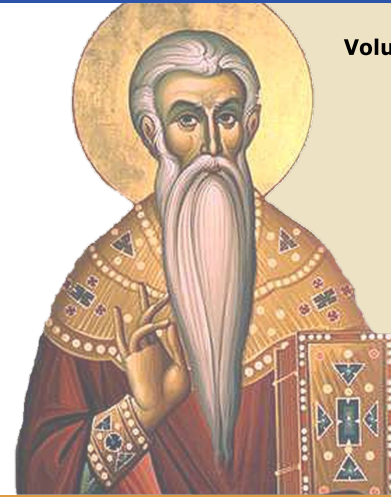


# in Touch

Volume 33, Issue 1  
January 2025



The Official Publication of St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church

**Vasilopita  
Sunday • 2**

**Blessing of  
the Waters • 3**

**Parish Council  
News • 4**

**A Journey  
to Fulness • 4**

**House  
Blessings • 6**



Annual Holy Water Blessing  
Monday, January 6



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



## Vasilopita Sunday

The annual tradition of the cutting of the New Year's Vasilopita (St. Basil bread) will be held following services on Sunday, Jan. 12 in the Fellowship Room. Which of our parish ministries this year will receive the hidden St. Basil coin?

## Christmas Angel Gifts and Food Drive

Thank you to all our Christmas Angels whose generous donations of food and gifts shared the love of the Christmas season with 12 families in our community by partnering with the City of Peoria Community Action Program. Thank you to Presvytera Kristin Pallad for organizing all the Angel Tree gifts and food boxes for pickup and delivery by the City of Peoria staff.



## "Grief Support After the Holidays

For those who have lost someone special, the start of a new year can be difficult. Having support is vital and joining a group such as GriefShare can make a difference.

Following a scripture-based format, GriefShare is a program that combines small group discussion with 30-minute videos. These videos feature sharing from others experiencing loss. Bereavement information and resources on grief are also included.

The group will start Jan. 18 and meet at St. Haralambos on Saturdays from 10am – Noon until Apr. 12. While there

is no cost to join the group, a Participant Guide, featuring invaluable exercises, tips, and resources is recommended and can be purchased for \$20. Limited scholarships are available to apply for.

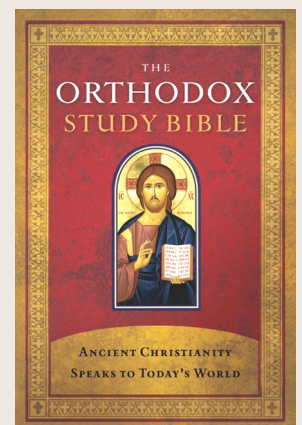
To register for the series, contact the office Mo.-Fri. 10am -2pm at 623-486-8665 or visit [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org). Questions can be directed to facilitators Ann Beranis-Tripsas at 630-251-9011, or Irene Nathanson at 574-344-9349.



At the recent St. Haralambos holiday party, the GriefShare Ministry team donated a "Comfort and Joy" basket for the raffle. Pictured are GriefShare facilitators, Ann Beranis-Tripsas and Irene Nathanson.

## Bible Study

All are welcome to join the lively discussions in the Tuesday morning Bible study group, meeting at 10am in the church library. The current study is on the Gospel of Saint Mark. We read, ask questions, discuss and learn from the Scriptures, and from one another! Personal Prayer Requests close each meeting.





## Blessing of the Waters

The month of January is a unique time in the life of Orthodox Christian parishes, specifically with the blessing of houses. Holy Water is blessed during services on Sunday, Jan. 5, and again at the morning liturgy on Monday, Jan. 6. We use the beautiful Holy Water font (see the front cover) for this service, from which the priest fills the ratistiri (Holy Water sprinkler) for house blessings.

Holy Water is brought by the priest to the homes of parishioners and, in a special service, is sprinkled throughout the house offering the Epiphany blessing for the New Year. Every family can request a house blessing by completing the form found in this month's newsletter, and returning it to the church office.

This is a blessing for the entire family, so parents should try to find a time when children are home, and no other activities are taking place. The significance of the house blessing, in addition to offering prayers for a holy and healthy start to the new year, makes a direct connection with the feastday of Epiphany.

Jesus was baptized with water in the Jordan River. The prayers at the Great Blessing of the Waters service ask our Lord to bless the water for the health of soul and body, and for the sanctification of homes.

Holy Water is a sacred union of a fundamental element of human life (water) together with the invisible grace of the Creator of life. This is the great blessing of Epiphany, our Lord's baptism.

*This is the great blessing of Epiphany, our Lord's baptism.*

It is a joyful and sacred celebration, and provides a wonderful opportunity for parishioners to start the new year by having their homes blessed with Holy Water. Don't be bashful or mistakenly think it's an imposition; this is truly one of the joys of being a priest!

May the New Year 2025 be filled with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.



**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 2 p.m.

### Parish Council

Harry Bekiaris  
Avery Brightwell  
Angie Cholas  
Virginia Dent  
Catalina Raiciof

Vivian Teska  
Demetria Themistocles  
Solomon Woldesilassie  
Ray Wysmierski  
Linda Zakas

## Parish Council News

By Ray Wysmierski, President

I trust everyone had a blessed Christmas and New Years. We begin a new year with all of our projects completed. You see the entire gravel open areas have been graded and the front retention basin is enlarged. So, there should be no more flooding of the front lot.

We also had our newest parishioner, Brooke Brightwell attended our meeting to share with us her ideas for fundraising, and heading up the committee!

Another guest was Evan Bachanos with the Ministry greeters. He has graciously offered to head our stewardship committee, thank you Evan.

Evan is also assembling a committee for the 5-year strategic plan.

It looks like next year will be filled with an infusion of life in the church with these parishioner's stepping up to the call for the time and talent aspect of stewardship.

One of our newest council members attended, Avery Brightwell, who got a chance to see this council in the process of managing the church business.

We have had an inquiry by another cell tower provider who wants to put a tower

on our site. We will see if it meets our approval and definitely out of the immediate public view, like in back of the church. That potentially can gain us up to another \$4500 a month in income. This is worth looking into as the land contract with St. Mary's ends in 4 years which will be a loss of income to us of \$2300 a month.

As you see there is a lot to manage with the church in order to keep it healthy. The weekly offerings by no means would sustain the church without having other means of income.

So far, it's the investment accounts from the cell phone tower lease that generates at least \$1200 a month, and the daycare at \$6808 per month utilities included.

So, as you can see it's a lot of balls to juggle to ensure the church operates well and efficiently.

This may be my last update as our January new council will hold new elections for all the offices for the board. I want to thank everyone that has assisted in making these last two years of many projects go well.

### Birthdays



Saud Bastell (1)  
Sharon Magnani (3)  
Ruth Panousopoulos (5)  
Judy Farr (12)  
Antonios Papamatheakis (13)  
Philemon Russom (13)  
Elaine Giannias (14)  
Naomi Solomon (21)  
Ocbai Tesfay (27)  
Mary Wysmierski (27)  
Frosene Bravos (31)

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.

## A Journey to Fullness

Why learn about Orthodox Christianity? Today, perhaps more so than in previous generations, the Christian Church has become divided into hundreds of different denominations. This naturally leads to questions about the differences between them, and the value of learning about one tradition over another.

Each evening session begins with a delicious dinner, then explores the origins of Orthodox Christianity with a brief video segment and further discussion.

All class sessions begin with dinner at 6pm in the Fellowship Room.

- Session 1: Thursday, Jan 9: Is this Trip Really Necessary?
- Session 2: Thursday, Jan 16: What is the Orthodox Church?
- Session 3: Thursday, Jan 23: When did Orthodoxy Begin?
- Session 4: Thursday, Jan 30: Characteristics of Orthodox Christianity
- Session 5: Thursday, Feb 6: Mindset Matters
- Session 6: Thursday, Feb 13: A Healing Purpose
- Session 7: Thursday, Feb 20: Truth and Tradition
- Session 8: Thursday, Feb 27: How Do I Understand the Bible?



## St. Anna's Philoptochos Society

Happy New Year to all

I pray to God for all in our church family and their families for a Healthy and Happy New Year.

We pray for a year of Peace in the world.

Philoptochos ended this year with our Christmas pastry bake sale.

I would like to thank all the ladies that helped with the preparation, packing and all their time to make it a success.

I would like to especially thank Stella Pagos and Cynthia Bekiaris for their work, preparing and mixing the different recipes. I would like to thank Lisa Theoharatos for coming to work the oven for all the baking. We managed to make it all in one day, it took us 6 hours with all the incredible help.

To end the Christmas festivities Elda Basha and her Sister organized a

Christmas Party with games and Christmas songs executed by the Sunday School children. Winners were giving baskets filled with goodies donated by different Ministries.

Many thanks for all that brought food for the Pot Luck Luncheon

On Jan. 12 the church will celebrate St. Basil with the cutting of the annual Vasilopita.

Fr, Michael will cut pieces and hand them out to the different ministries to share with all,

We will also auction off small vasilopitas that members of Philoptochos make.

We encourage ladies of our church who would like to make a small vasilopita with a coin in (25c) to enter in the auction.

All funds raised go to support St. Basil's Academy.



## Parish Council Elections

Congratulations to the following parishioners who were recently elected to serve on the Parish Council beginning this month: Avery Brightwell, Catalina Raiciof, Vivian Teska, Demetria Themistocles, Solomon Woldesilassie and Ray Wysmierski.

Our thanks and appreciation go to these Parish Council members whose terms finished last month: Cynthia Bekiaris, Deborah Chionchio, Dan Teska and Mary Wysmierski.

May our Lord bless and guide our Parish Council to continue the wise administration of our parish with love and enthusiasm for the year ahead.

## Stewardship

The 2025 Stewardship brochures will be mailed to all parish families. Additional brochures will be available in the Narthex and the church office. Please print legibly, and enter your contributions of time, talents and treasure. Completed brochures can be mailed to the office or dropped off on Sundays.

We continue to remind everyone that there are no Membership Dues in the Orthodox Church. To become a Member in Good Standing is to complete and return each year the Stewardship brochure in which we pledge to offer our time, talents and treasure in support of our Church, in recognition that everything that we have is a gift from God.

The teaching on Christian Stewardship remains consistent to help us learn to be good stewards: we give back to God what is already His. We come into this world with nothing, and we leave it with nothing. All that we have in this life comes from

God's blessings. Returning back a portion to God through His Church, is our way of acknowledging the source of our blessings.

Our financial contributions should be a percentage of our financial resources. This continues the biblical teaching of tithing of percentage giving rather than setting a fixed amount applicable to all families. Above all, our offerings should be cheerfully given, recognizing our desire - not simply obligation - to give back to God a portion of our blessings we receive from Him.

Being a Steward of St. Haralambos Church implies much more than membership. Our parish will continue to grow according to how each of us gives our time, talent and treasure in support of our mission to be 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."

# House Blessings

Start the New Year with a special family event, according to the traditions of the Holy Orthodox Church, asking God’s blessings for your home and your family!

Please complete the form below, check the day of your choice and return to the church office.

All appointments will be confirmed by phone or email.



## House Blessing Request Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR PREFERENCE

**Zone 1: North of Bell Road and West of 99th Ave./Lake Pleasant Pkwy**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday, January 7    | <input type="checkbox"/> Monday, January 13   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday, January 22 | <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday, January 30 |

**Zone 2: North of bell Road and East of 99th Ave./Lake Pleasant Pkwy**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday, January 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday, January 14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday, January 23 | <input type="checkbox"/> Monday, January 27  |

**Zone 3: South of Bell Road and West of 99th Ave./Lake Pleasant Pkwy**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday, January 9  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday, January 15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday, January 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday, January 28   |

**Zone 4: South of Bell Road and East of 99th Ave./Lake Pleasant Pkwy**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday, January 11 | <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday, January 16  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday, January 21  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday, January 29 |

# JANUARY 2025

| Sunday   | Monday   | Tuesday                          | Wednesday   | Thursday   | Friday                                       | Saturday  |
|--|--|----------------------------------|---|--|--|-----------|
|  |  |                                  | <b>1</b><br>10:00am Divine Liturgy<br><b>St. Basil the Great</b><br><br><b>New Year's Day</b> | <b>2</b>   | <b>3</b><br>10:00am Royal Hours of Theophany | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>5</b><br>8:45am Matins<br>10:00am Divine Liturgy<br><br>Sunday before Theophany<br>11:00am Blessing of the Waters | <b>6</b><br>9:00am Divine Liturgy<br><b>Holy Theophany</b><br>10:00am Blessing of the Waters | <b>7</b><br>10:00am Bible Study  | <b>8</b>  | <b>9</b><br><br><br>6:00pm A Journey to Fullness   | <b>10</b>                                    | <b>11</b> |
| <b>12</b><br>8:45am Matins<br>10:00am Divine Liturgy<br><br>Vasilopita Sunday  | <b>13</b>  | <b>14</b><br>10:00am Bible Study | <b>15</b>   | <b>16</b><br><br><br>6:00pm A Journey to Fullness  | <b>17</b>                                    | <b>18</b> |
| <b>19</b><br>8:45am Matins<br>10:00am Divine Liturgy   | <b>20</b>  | <b>21</b><br>10:00am Bible Study | <b>22</b>   | <b>23</b><br><br><br>6:00pm A Journey to Fullness  | <b>24</b>                                    | <b>25</b> |
| <b>26</b><br>8:45am Matins<br>10:00am Divine Liturgy   | <b>27</b>  | <b>28</b><br>10:00am Bible Study | <b>29</b>   | <b>30</b><br>9:00am Divine Liturgy<br><b>Three Great Hierarchs</b><br><br>6:00pm A Journey to Fullness | <b>31</b>                                    |           |