



ST. GEORGE Chronicle

MARCH 2020



The Very Rev. Christopher Morris
Pastor

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ST GEORGE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

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SAVE THE DATES

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Sunday, March 8

PURE MONDAY AND GREAT
FAST BEGINS
Monday, March 2

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION
March 25

PALM SUNDAY
April 12

PASCHA
April 19

Forgiveness Vespers, Sunday

March 1st

By Fr. Stephen Freeman

The first service of Great Lent in the Orthodox Church is “Forgiveness Vespers,” served on the eve of Monday of the First Week. There is nothing unusual about the service itself – other than the “rite of forgiveness” appended to it. In this, the priest and the faithful ask forgiveness of one another. Often this is done with mutual prostrations or bows. Each asks the forgiveness of the other. The rite can take time, depending on the number in attendance. When it is complete, the long labors of Lent can begin. Fasting without forgiveness would be a hollow activity.

Perhaps the most generous words spoken by Christ are those we hear from the Cross: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Taken at face value, the words make little sense. Surely, those who crucified Christ knew that they were killing a man. Surely they

were even aware that his execution was largely political and unjust. The centurion in charge of the crucifixion is said to have stated, “Surely this man was the Son of God.” So how could Christ say, “They do not know what they are doing?”

I believe this goes to the very heart of our lives and actions. We almost never know what we are doing. The greater context, the meaning of anything, is hidden from us. We have children, work at a job, and live our lives, hoping that these have been worthwhile actions. We know

that much, even most of what we have done has been tainted with bad intentions and other less-than-worthy motivations. But we never actually grasp the full scope of our actions. Even those good things that we do have a hidden aspect. Did that kind word spoken earlier make a difference? Did that act of charity actually change anything?

This hidden aspect of our lives is an inherent part of the human condition. We simply don’t know what we’re doing. This makes it very hard for us to judge our actions or to weigh them for their value.

Christ’s words are addressed to the Father on behalf of all of humanity. For it is not just the small number of people in Jerusalem who were consenting to His death. His death is “on behalf of all and for all.”



And this brings us to Forgiveness Sunday. “Why do I need to ask forgiveness of others if I have done them no wrong?”

The simple answer is: You don’t know what you have or have not done. But it is commonly understood in Orthodoxy that “each person is responsible for the sins of the whole world.” Our lives are deeply connected—we are never uninvolved in the lives of others. What I have done and what I have not done both effect the lives of the whole world. A child dies on the other side of the world. I may have had no direct hand in the death, and yet I cannot excuse myself as if I have no share in what happens everywhere. The world is as we make it.

(continued on page 2)

(Forgiveness - continued from page 1)

I once heard a monk say, "The person of prayer does not need to go any further than his own heart to find the source of all violence in the world."

But none of this is to call us to a morbid guilt. It calls us to Christ and calls us to hear His words. On Forgiveness Sunday each of us asks forgiveness of the others around us. It is both a personal matter and collective. I have failed and need forgiveness. We have failed and need forgiveness. And perhaps the even greater call comes to us to join ourselves with Christ who says: "Father, forgive them!"

"Forgive me," we say. "God forgives us all," comes the response. It sometimes feels awkward, even embarrassing. Some people begin to weep. Others begin to giggle. Both are part of the human condition within our shame.

But the actions of Forgiveness Sunday unite us necessarily to the actions of Christ. By submitting Himself to crucifixion, Christ put Himself in the place of the sinner, the one needing forgiveness. He was displayed naked, nailed on high for all the world to see ("on His shoulders He bore our shame," Isaiah prophesied).

In the mild social embarrassment of saying, "Forgive me," to another human being, we unite ourselves to the deep, profound healing shame of Christ. And with brazen boldness we confess, "God forgives us all!" uniting ourselves with the priestly cry of Christ Himself, "Father, forgive them!"

And having read this, and done all that, we still will not know what we have done. But we are not saved by knowing what we do. We are saved by doing what He does.

source: pravmir.com

Congratulations to – GRACE MALOLEY

Our 4th
quarter
winner
2019



Thank you for participating in the Chronicle's KIDZONE corner. Your submission was a winner!

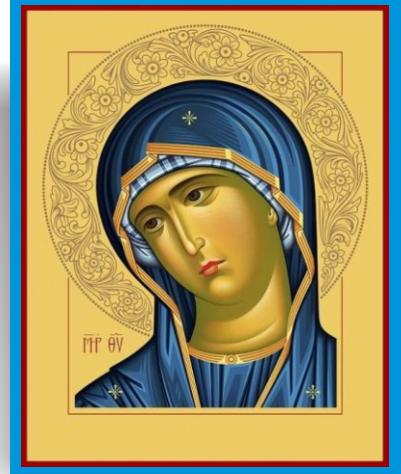


THE AKATHIST TO THE MOTHER OF GOD

The "Akathist" service during Great Lent is a service in honor of the Most Holy Mother of God. It is served on Friday evenings, in conjunction with the Compline. The word "akathist" means "without sitting" in Greek. For those who are able, we are called to stand for the entire singing of the Akathist.

The "Akathist to the Theotokos" is a hymn that was written by St. Romanos the Melodist in the city of Constantinople sometime before his death in 556AD. It is an ancient and beloved hymn, which has also inspired many other similar

hymns to be written in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ and others of His saints.



The hymn itself consists of 24 stanzas, alternating between long and short. Each short stanza ends with the refrain: Alleluia; and each long one ends with the refrain: 'Hail, O Bride without bridegroom.' These stanzas are broken into four parts, sung throughout the first four weeks of Great Lent. **The first part of the hymn** is about the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary by the Angel. It describes Mary's surprise at the news, her visit to her aunt Elizabeth, and Joseph's doubts as to her innocence.

The second part is about the birth of Christ, the worship of the Shepherds and Magi, the flight to Egypt and the visit to Saint Simeon in the Temple.

In the third part the hymn directs our attention to the renewal of the world by Christ's coming, and the amazement of the Angels and the wise men at the sight of the Incarnation of God's Son.

The fourth and the last part is once more a lyric and rhetorical appraisal of Virgin Mary, whom the poet adorns with the most beautiful of adjectives asking her to accept his poetical offering and to intercede for the salvation of human race from the earthly sin.



Saint George has a beautiful hand-painted icon of St. Romanos the Melodist on the back of the south chanter stand cabinet (other side of St. Raphael of Brooklyn). Take a peek!

source: www.stnicholassteelton.org

By the mercy of God Almighty
JOHN X
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
to
My brothers, Pastors of the Holy Church of Antioch
My sons and daughters, all over this Apostolic See
Beloved spiritual Brethren and Children,

At the beginning of Great Lent, it is a good thing to reflect on how the Church leads the ascent of the soul to the threshold of the Holy Resurrection. In this procession that we have joined, the soul accompanies Christ to reach His resurrection and her own resurrection, with Christ and through Him. The Holy Church established Great Lent to say that a person is their own master as long as they lean on God. The Church established Lent to say that the defilement of the soul must be washed before entering the threshold of Resurrection. She established it to say that God is satisfied with the one who works to achieve self-purification, taming oneself to become bright and clean. Fasting is charity, mercy, and feeling with the other. Above all, it is continuous giving. It is not just deprivation from food, but rather a symbol through which we say to our Creator God that we deprive ourselves to feed the poor who is beloved to You. Fasting is giving, yielding and renunciation. Perhaps all its aspects are summed up in this point. Fasting is forgiveness and forgiveness is a kind of renunciation, and thus it is giving to those whom God has not endowed with earthly money. Fasting is letting go of the anger in the soul and forgiving "those who trespassed against us" until the light of Christ irradiates in us so that we illuminate everyone else. The Holy Fathers have a saying that means: Let us not let the sun of this world set on our wrath, lest our soul be abandoned by the Sun of Justice and Righteousness, i.e., Christ to Him be the glory. Fasting is a path by which we cleanse the depth of the soul with the balm of Christ. Fasting is a baptism by which we wash self-resentment in the font of repentance. Fasting is a Passover (Pascha), a transition from the routine of life to the spring of the souls. Fasting is a soul that falls on the knees in the Golgotha of Christ to rise with Him again. Fasting is the nourishment of the soul that draws from its mortification the flood of life in the Lord; it senses in its strife and ascetic struggle the triumph of the Victorious Lord. As Christians of the Levant, we have

inherited this practice since the dawn of Christianity. At a young age, we have learned how to associate our temporal life with our eternal life. We have learned, especially during this period of Lent, how our ringing bells knock at the door of our heart to worship the "Lord of Hosts". We were acquainted with these bells calling upon us up to gather in one voice around the Virgin in the Akathist Hymn.

Our bells and churches these days invite us to blossom with the spring of nature into the spring of a relationship with the loving Creator. They call us to shake off from the soul every obstacle to our entry into the nuptial room of Christ, the Bridegroom of the soul, to light the lamp of the souls like the wise virgins by vigilance, wisdom, love, longing, and discernment amid this world. They shake us to stand watching the richness of a love that has not relented from walking the path of suffering and the cross for the sake of humankind. In the end, they urge us to seek the dawn of the Resurrection of Jesus and to spread on his empty tomb wreaths of triumph and laurel leaves, in commemoration of his victory over death and the glad tidings of his glorious resurrection.

We raise our prayers for the peace of the whole world and for this wounded Levant, which is in travail from pain of its countries and its people from all walks of life. We raise our prayers so that the roaring of wars melts away before the cheering of peace. We extend our prayers for every beloved person ripped away from us by the cruelty of our days. We also pray for all those who departed in the hope of resurrection and eternal life. We pray for God to keep a watchful eye on our homelands, and to be protected from all takfirism, terrorism, kidnapping, violence, and distress.

We raise our prayers for the kidnapped, including our two brothers John Ibrahim and Paul Yazji, the Archbishops of Aleppo, who have been kidnapped since April 2013, under a deep and dubious international silence that grieves our souls and leaves us as indignant as towards the horrid kidnapping itself. We ask your forgiveness, my brothers and beloved ones, in these blessed days and may the Almighty Lord, who fasted first to guide us on this path, pour his everlasting mercies in all of your hearts, granting us the abundance of His divine blessings and "anointing" our whole lives by His holy presence, for He is blessed forever Amen.

February 23, 2020 From our Patriarchate in Damascus



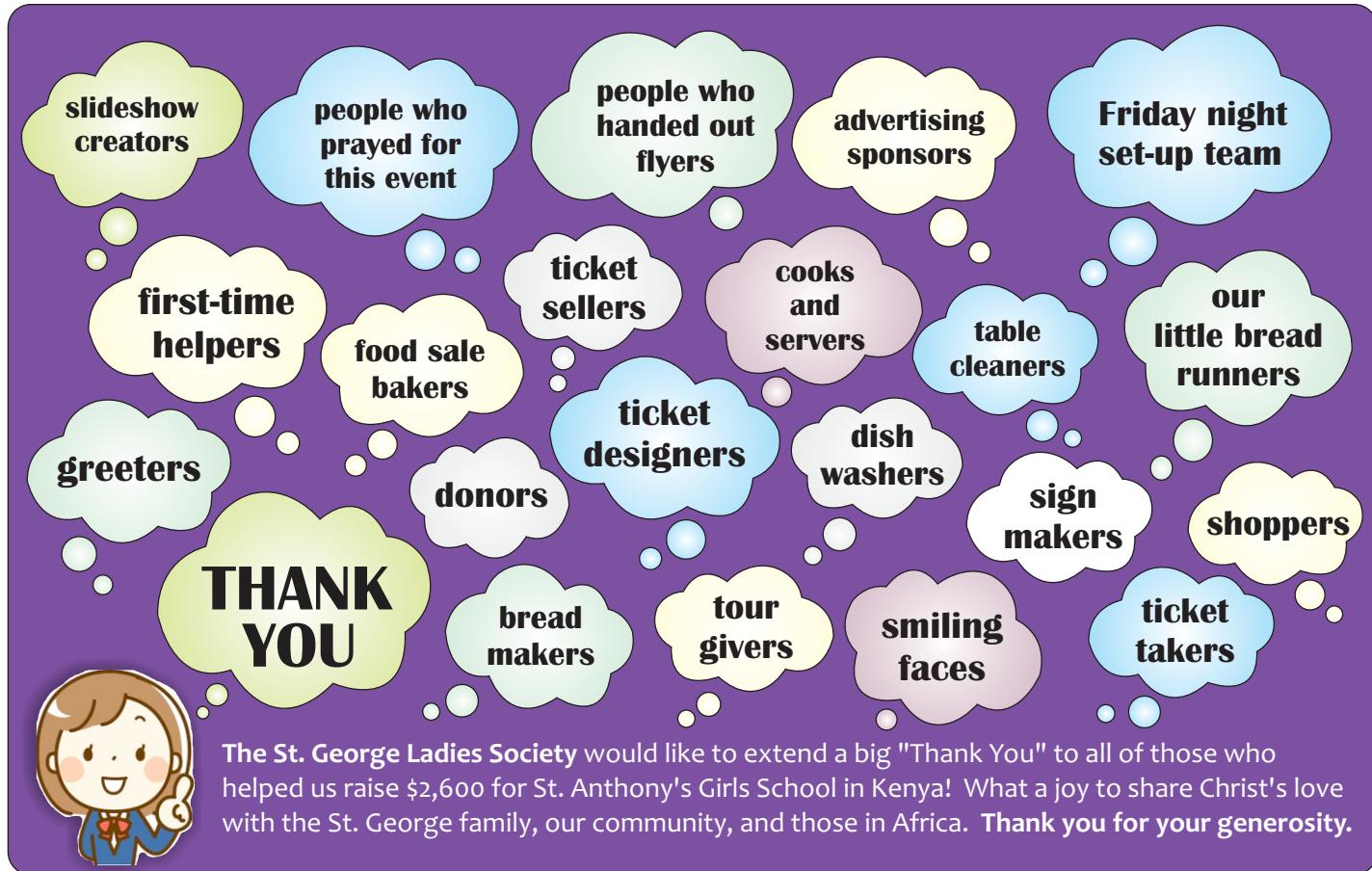
The Stranger

A few months before I was born, my dad met a stranger who was new to our small Tennessee town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer, and soon invited him to live with our family.

The stranger was quickly accepted and was around to welcome me into the world a few months later. As I grew up I never questioned his place in our family. Mom taught me to love the Word of God. Dad taught me to obey it. But the stranger was our storyteller. He could weave the most fascinating tales. Adventures, mysteries and comedies were daily conversations. He could hold our whole family spellbound for hours each evening. He was like a friend to the whole family. He took Dad, Bill and me to our first major league baseball game. He was always encouraging us to see the movies and he even made arrangements to introduce us to several movie stars. The stranger was an incessant talker. Dad didn't seem to mind, but sometimes Mom would quietly get up - while the rest of us were enthralled with one of his stories of faraway places - and go to her room read her Bible and pray. I wonder now if she ever prayed that the stranger would leave. You see, my dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions. But this stranger never felt an

obligation to honor them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our house - not from us, from our friends, or adults. Our longtime visitor, however, used occasional four-letter words that burned my ears and made Dad squirm. To my knowledge the stranger was never confronted. My dad was a teetotaler who didn't permit alcohol in his home - not even for cooking. But the stranger felt he needed exposure and enlightened us to other ways of life. He offered us beer and other alcoholic beverages often. He made cigarettes look tasty, cigars manly, and pipes distinguished. He talked freely (too much too freely) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I know now that my early concepts of the man/woman relationship were influenced by the stranger. As I look back, I believe it was the grace of God that the stranger did not influence us more. Time after time he opposed the values of my parents. Yet he was seldom rebuked and never asked to leave. More than thirty years have passed since the stranger moved in with the young family on Morningside Drive. But if I were to walk into my parents' den today, you would still see him sitting over in a corner, waiting for someone to listen to him talk and watch him draw his pictures. His name you ask? We always called him TV.

– author unknown



The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian

O Lord and Master of my Life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, meddling, lust of power and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.
Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother;
For blessed art Thou unto ages of ages.
Amen.



The knowledge of God does not reside in a body that loves comforts.

– St. Isaac the Syrian

**WHAT IF
YOU WOKE UP
TOMORROW
WITH ONLY
WHAT YOU WERE
GRATEFUL FOR
TODAY?**

"One day, a person complained to his priest that the Church and Christianity is one continual "give, give, give." To which the priest replied, "Thank you very much for the finest definition of Christianity I have ever heard. You're right, Christianity is all about a constant "give, give, give." God giving His only Son to the world to show His unconditional love. His Son Jesus giving His life on the cross to forgive our sins and destroy death. Then our Lord's disciples giving all they had to make sure God's Good News of love was preached to all people everywhere. They not only gave away their homes and businesses, but even gave up their lives as martyrs in gratitude to God!"

– author unknown



March 1
Rachel Rehtus
March 3
Emma Rehtus
March 7
Nick Shada
March 8
Gracelynn McCracken

March 15
Tracey Shada
March 17
Amber Hartley
March 19
Mariam Browne
March 21
Theodora Wolf
Mark Klein
March 25
Sara Theoharis
March 27
John Maloley
March 30
Ron Denny

GOD GRANT YOU
MANY YEARS

No Anniversaries that the Chronicle is aware of for March

Donations
Gratefully Received

Donation to the **St. George Burn the Mortgage fundraiser**, in honor of **Nick Shada** from Judy Yacio.

Donation to the **Ladies Society Spring Breakfast** to benefit the Girls' School in Kenya from **Judy Yacio**.

Donation to the **St. Helena Ladies Society**, in honor of **Bessie Shada** February birthday, by anonymous donor.

Donation to the **St. George Burn the Mortgage fundraiser**, in honor of **Darlene Liakos** birthday, by anonymous donor.

May God bless you all for your generosity!

The devil does not have any power and authority over a believer who goes to church, confesses, takes communion. The devil only paws at such a person, the same as a toothless dog.

– St. Paisios the Athonite

IMPORTANT DATES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH



MARCH 2020

March 1 - Forgiveness Sunday
March 8 - Sunday of Orthodoxy (bring icons)
March 15 - St. Gregory Palamas
March 22 - Veneration of the Holy Cross
March 29 - St. John of the Ladder

APRIL 2020

April 5 - St. Mary of Egypt
April 12 - Palm Sunday
April 17 - Great and Holy Friday
April 18 - Great and Holy Saturday
April 19 - Feast of Feasts! Holy Pascha



MINISTRY UPDATES



When Fr. Christopher met with the Ladies Society just over a year ago, he presented us with a new vision that challenged us to shift our focus from providing for some of the basic needs of the parish to "letting our light shine" by sharing the love of Christ with those outside of St. George. Through sisterhood and charity, we would continue to work together and share with others.

Through the grace of God and your support, we have accomplished a lot during the past year. Here are just a few highlights. You have helped us pay down the mortgage with proceeds from the Fall breakfast and provide scholarships for ladies to attend the Midwest Orthodox Women's Retreat. In the Kearney community, you have encouraged children in foster care by providing supplies for the Compass backpacks, comforted and supported the Salyer family after the loss of their wife/mother through the proceeds from the 2019 Spring breakfast, blessed 20 families with baskets of food and supplies with the Easter Blessing baskets, fed the hungry with your generous donations for the food pantry, and clothed needy children at Headstart through your donations to the Mitten Tree.

We are grateful to the Lord for blessing us over the past year with the opportunity to come together and share His love with the Kearney community and beyond. Thanks to all who share and support this vision with your prayers, labors of love, and donations.

YOUTH GROUP

at St. George



Thank You

"The youth group enjoyed some friendly competition in the kitchen during our January activity. The activity was a fundraiser for money to use to purchase items for **IOCC hygiene kits** that will be distributed to international children/families in need.

We met on a Saturday afternoon before Vespers to prepare our snacks for the coffee hour we provided the next day after Liturgy. The original plan was to just split up into two groups to make two pans of "scotcheroos" (peanut butter rice crispy treats covered in chocolate). Our activity quickly turned into a timed competition to see who could complete the task of making the treats

within 30 minutes. It was a quick and fun-filled 30 minutes. We all then sampled the treats to see which one we liked more. All of the **parishioners of St. George** enjoyed them during coffee hour and

seemed to like them both. There were no leftovers and a basket full of donations. Success!



The IOCC kits will be assembled at our next youth group and mailed out in early March. **Thank you to all who donated.** We wouldn't be able to do these service projects without your generosity."

ST. GEORGE BULLETIN BOARD



Ladies Society will host
Forgiveness Sunday "Sundaes"
and everyone is invited
for ice cream
Sunday, March 1st
After Forgiveness Vespers
we hope to see you all!



POT LUCK Raffle Baskets They're Back!

The youth group will be offering raffle baskets during pot lucks this spring! Your donations are greatly appreciated. The youth are raising money to help offset Camp St. Raphael expenses.

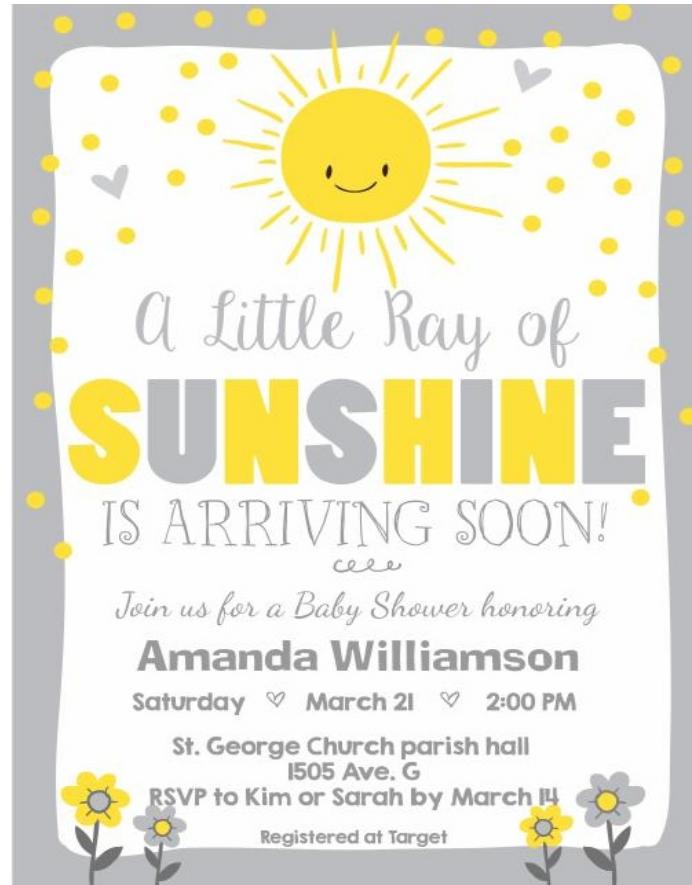


**LOOK for the first
Basket on
March 1st**



If you examine your life well, you will find many instances when God showed his unmistakable mercy to you. Trouble was brewing, but it passed you by for some reason. God delivered you. Acknowledge these and thank God, who loves you.

— St. Theophan the Recluse



MARCH 22

The youth group will host coffee hour and will accept free-will donations to help offset the cost of attending Camp St. Raphael. Thank you for your donations! We have nine youth attending camp this year. Glory to God!

CAMP SAINT RAPHAEL

Coming Soon for our Youth!

ST. GEORGE SCRAPBOOK



We provided ham & eggs, bread, fruit cup and unlimited coffee and juice as we shared our hospitality to those who came...



We set-up, diced ham, prepped and made bread for proofing on Friday night ...



ETHNIC FOOD SALE



The Ladies Society offered their traditional Lebanese favorites for purchase - SOLD IT ALL!!



We fried eggs and ham ...



SAINT GEORGE ANNUAL SPRING BREAKFAST 2020



We shared stories ...



We fried bread (120 lbs. of flour) and sprinkled some of it with cinnamon and sugar, yummy - SO GOOD!



We offered church tours ...



We served in many ways ... and our +210 guests gave generously to our Kenya cause.



Thank You

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Year-to-date for 2020
St. George Church

\$ FINANCIAL REPORT

As of FEBRUARY 28th... We have received \$9,965 of the \$97,085 we have budgeted for pledges.

As of FEBRUARY 28th... We have received \$3,729 of the \$22,000 we have budgeted for trays and candles.

Expenses paid \$14,072 of the budgeted \$120,085 for 2020.

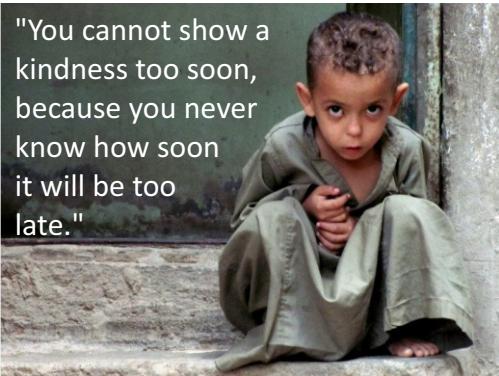
Thank you for your faithful stewardship!

Always give thanks

Live in constant glorification of and thanksgiving towards God, for the greatest sin is ingratitude and the worst sinner is the ungrateful person.

— St. Paisios the Athonite

"You cannot show a kindness too soon, because you never know how soon it will be too late."



DON'T FORGET TO SPRING FORWARD

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

BEGINS MARCH 8



Remember to set your clocks **AHEAD 1 HOUR** on Saturday Night.



Feast Day - March 25

MARCH & APRIL FASTING

March 1, 2020 Cheesefare (Forgiveness) Sunday

March 2, 2020 - Pure Monday

First Day of the Great Fast.

From Pure Monday until Pascha, the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, poultry, eggs, dairy, fish, wine, and olive oil during weekdays unless otherwise noted on the calendar) with katalysis for wine and olive oil on Saturdays and Sundays.

March 25, 2020 - The Annunciation. On this day fish, wine and olive oil are permitted following the festal Divine Liturgy.

April 12, 2020 - Palm Sunday

On this day fish, wine and olive oil are permitted following the festal Divine Liturgy. During Great and Holy Week it is traditional to keep a total fast until after the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesday.

April 17, 2020 - Great and Holy Friday.

Friday. On this day it is traditional to keep a total fast.

April 18, 2020 - Great and Holy Saturday.

This is the only Saturday on which we fast, though there is katalysis for wine.

April 19, 2020 - Pascha! Christ is Risen! We will break the fast with a feast following our festal Divine Liturgy on Saturday night.



THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

In faith and obedience to the will of God, Mary replied to the angel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word."



"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Acts 11:26