



# THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

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HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA  
OUR VISION: "FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."

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**SPECIAL INSERT:  
ENTHRONEMENT OF OUR NEW  
ARCHBISHOP ELPIDOPHOROS**

## QUICK NEWS



His Eminence Metropolitan Savas leads the procession with the relics around the St. George Chapel. Want to see more photos of this event and others in the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 6-12 or browse through our online photo gallery at [photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org).

## Saint Paisios of Mount Athos - Feast Day: July 12

*One of the most recently proclaimed Saints of the Orthodox Church. Canonized January 13, 2015.*



**Our Mission: To proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful members of the Body of Christ**

# THE HOLY TRINITY **HERALD**

## About the Herald

The Herald is the Monthly Newsletter of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

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## About the Parish

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Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh ([pittsburgh.goarch.org](http://pittsburgh.goarch.org)) and Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)) under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

## Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Parish Administration

### Clergy

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

### 2019 Parish Council

George Danis, President

Alvin Backeris Dean A. Balouris

George Dickos Tom Germanos

Karen Georgiadis Richard Paese

Michael Passodelis Stephen Stearns

Ted Stewart Alex Trilivas

Gerri Valliant Jeanne Willow

### Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org) for descriptions and contact information on Holy Trinity Church's ministries, including spiritual life, education, youth, senior, family and cultural opportunities. There is something for everyone, so please get involved today!

**"FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."**



# Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10.31

My, beloved spiritual family,

Whew! In preparing this issue of *The Herald*, I had the opportunity to take inventory of the past two months here at Holy Trinity Church events associated with the life of the community, and it's quite a list! You'll see them in the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 6-12, but here is what's been happening since the last issue:

- Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the celebration of the Resurrection
- The historic Consecration of our beautiful now-complete Saint George Chapel by His Eminence Metropolitan Savas.
- The Saint Photios Metropolis Awards Banquet, with our honorees George Dickos and Presvytera Becky
- The annual TELOS Project consultation in Boston, at which our Young Adult leaders presented on their progress, including the success of the new "Grounded in Faith" Coffee House here at Holy Trinity Church.
- The Hellenic College Holy Cross Alumni of the Year Award, presented to Father John on the campus of HCHC in Brookline, MA.
- Church School Graduation
- The GOYA Senior Recognition Dinner
- Our IOCC mission trip to Houston to assist with the ongoing recovery from Hurricane Harvey.
- And, of course, the continuing preparations for our 2019 Taste of Greece Festival!

As I said above, "Whew!" And all of it was and is, as Saint Paul says above, "to the glory of God." Yet even so, it still takes a lot of love and sacrificial efforts to make such a list possible, and I am so humbled to be able to bow before you and say, "Thank you!" The dedication of this community to offer whatever is needed for events such as this—or really anything in the life of the Church—is truly amazing and inspiring.

From all the essential components of Holy Week to the Anastasi Dinner to the Consecration of the Chapel and so on down the list, you are truly living models of the Gospel, in which Jesus said "pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9.38). You are in so many ways the answers to that prayer, and you have my deepest thanks and sincere prayers that the Lord may bountifully bless you for all you do. (The modern version of that quote might ask for laborers in the Festival kitchen!)

The incredible amount of details, planning and preparations that went into the Consecration of the Saint George Chapel was truly a testimony to the love this community has for its worship life and for the honoring of the memory of those whose labors of love blazed the trail and established the parish before us. May their memory be eternal and may they join us in the sacred and every Divine Liturgy from now until the coming of the Lord, praying and united with us from the resurrected side of life in Christ!

Of course, the wonderful offerings of this parish bless not only our own community, but those whom Jesus Christ has called us to serve in His larger vineyard, as witnessed in the IOCC mission trip to Houston. Presvytera Becky and I did not cease to be amazed and thankful for the selfless and tireless work offered by Parish Council member Tom Germanos and the six GOYA teens who attended. In just four days, our team was blessed to be able to take an uninhabitable home of a single mother that had been submerged in three to four feet of water and strip it of the damaged materials, do a complete mold remediation (with proper safety equipment, of course!), re-insulate and make significant progress on the drywall. And all that in temperatures sometimes over 100 degrees! We look forward to more such projects and invite you to participate.

Thank you again for all you do, and thank you for always doing it "to the glory of God."

Paternally yours in Jesus Christ,

## WORSHIP LIFE

### Weekday Services ..... July/August

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies for the feast days in July and August. Orthros is at 8:30 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30. Guide to locations for services: Holy Trinity Church = **HT**; St. George Chapel = **SG**.

**Jul. 27:** St. Panteleimon the Great Martyr and Healer (SG)

*Note: A relic of St. Panteleimon was placed in the Holy Altar table of the St. George Chapel at the Consecration. This is the first time the Liturgy of this great saint is being celebrated with his relic present.*

**Aug. 2:** 6:30pm Paraclesis Service (SG)

*Note: The period of August 1-15 is a strict fast season.*

**Aug. 5:** 6:30pm Great Vespers of the Transfiguration and the Blessing of the Grapes (SG)

**Aug. 6:** 9:00am Akathist and Divine Liturgy of the Transfiguration followed by luncheon

*Services held at Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City*

**Aug. 7:** 6:30pm Paraclesis Service (SG)

**Aug. 9:** 6:30pm Paraclesis Service (SG)

**Aug. 12:** 6:30pm Paraclesis Service (SG)

**Aug. 14:** 7:00pm Great Vespers of Koimissis

*Services held at our sister parishes celebrating their Feast Day in Aliquippa & Oakmont.*

**Aug. 15:** The Falling Asleep of the Theotokos (SG)

**Aug. 29:** 7:30am Orthros/8:30am Liturgy - Beheading of St. John the Baptist (HT)

*Notes: 1) This is a strict fast day. 2) Services held at Holy Trinity Church with an early start due to the Taste of Greece Festival starting at 11am.*

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Church School Registration .....Through August 11

Registration for the 2019/2020 Church School year will be held on Sundays in the Gallery following Divine Liturgy. All students should be registered by Sunday, August 11.

## YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

### GOYA Elects Officers for 2019-2020

The GOYA teen ministry held its elections for 2019/2020 on June 2. Congratulations to the newly-elected officers: President - Katerina Balouris; Vice-President - Christian Georgiadis; Treasurer - Petros Balouris; Corresponding Secretary - Chloe Germanos; Recording Secretary - Luci Morris; Outreach Coordinators - Ekaterina Balouris and Ana Bordeianu.

## COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

### Hospitality Ministry Opportunities

Have you noticed that Hospitality and Outreach are a large part of our Holy Trinity mission? Helping everyone feel welcomed into our Church, whether it is just one visit or return-

ing guests and members.... we continue to reach out. There are currently 3 areas we have identified and are looking for additional folks to help:

**1. Funeral Greeters:** This is our newest addition to Hospitality Ministry. We have found it to be very important and comforting to have a Holy Trinity representative in the Narthex to greet the family and guests during visitations and funerals. The commitment is on an 'as available' basis. You would get a phone call or email describing the times needed and can volunteer as your schedule allows. Because it tends to be a 'last minute' need, we could use several people who are willing to help.

**2. Connect Center Staff:** The Connect Center is relatively new, set up outside of the Grand Room during coffee hour, it provides a place for ALL folks to get information about Holy Trinity and its Ministries. One person per week is needed for at least the first 1/2 hour after Liturgy. This is on a rotating basis, approximately every 4-6 weeks.

**3. Sunday Morning Greeters:** This ministry is fairly well staffed. Two greeters Sept-May (one greeter June-August) from 9am- 10:15 am. These folks welcome everyone, focusing on new visitors. Greeters rotate approximately once every six weeks. Responsibilities also involve some follow up at coffee hours and beyond.

If you are interested in being a part of any or all of these outreach efforts, please Contact Stacy Dickos at [hospitality@holytrinitypgh.org](mailto:hospitality@holytrinitypgh.org) or 412-298-9409.

### Bereavement Ministry Meetings ..... July 1/August 19

Our new Bereavement Support Ministry Team will provide spiritual care to our parishioners and their extended family & friends in time of grief and loss. If you have questions about grief and want to learn and share conversation, then please attend our Bereavement Support Group sessions on Mondays, July 1 and August 19, in the Conference Room. Light refreshments and relaxed fellowship begin at 6:30 p.m. for those who choose. Then 7:00-8:30 p.m. is group learning and sharing with our Bereavement facilitators. Feel free to bring a family member and/or friend. Contact Amy Armanious, Visitation Ministry Coordinator with any questions at email [Visitation@holytrinitypgh.org](mailto:Visitation@holytrinitypgh.org)

### Festival Ad Book Volunteers and Ads Needed!

The Festival Ad Book provides tremendous support for this annual event, and we are seeking sponsors to advertise and volunteers to join the 2019 Festival Ad Book committee. Please contact Al Backeris or Connee Bistolas or email [inquires@holytrinitypgh.org](mailto:inquires@holytrinitypgh.org) and interest to [festivalads@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:festivalads@HolyTrinityPgh.org).

### Festival Food & Pastry Preparation ..... July/August

Calling all volunteers! Be there for the remaining food and pastry preparation in July and August. Check them out on the enclosed flyer or find them on our website.

### Holy Trinity's Taste of Greece .....Labor Day Weekend

See you Wed., Aug. 28, through Sun., Sept. , for this summer's "Taste of Greece" Festival. Your help is needed!

**For the latest updates and schedule of parish events, visit [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar)**

Part of a regular series of contributions by our resident "Gheronda" (respected elder clergy), Father John Androutsopoulos

### LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS



Father John Androutsopoulos

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

"Lift up your hearts." This is a familiar exhortation in the Divine Liturgy when we join in an act of sheer praise to God. Beginning "Holy, Holy, Holy," we are encouraged to be joyful and to praise God.

This praise to God is proper not only during the Liturgy but

at other times. Sometimes we come upon moments of discouragement. We have the "blues." As Christians people we can lift up our hearts. They may be sad, but we can still lift them up unto the Lord.

We may be happy and things may be going well for us. We can lift up our hearts with joy to the Lord, and happiness will be all the better.

Perhaps we are perplexed and do not know what decision to make. It will help to lift the whole problem up to the Lord.

Than as a constant attitude we do well to keep our hearts lifted up to Him. He merits our heartfelt praise. When we recognize that by right, God has the first place in our lives, we see our lives in clearer perspective.

So "Lift up your hearts"—whatever your mood or situation.

### "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." (Proverbs 20:27)

A candle may be small, but no darkness can put out the light of even the smallest one. Neither can the influence of our lives be put out. The spirit in our hearts can be such as to signify to Christ that we want Him to come into our hearts. Now is a good time to let Him know there is room in our hearts for Him. Let Him make our Spirit truly the candle of the Lord.

### Why Do We Go To Holy Liturgy?

- To gather in the House of our heavenly Father and realize that we are really brethren, members of the same family.
- To offer to God our common worship and especially the most holy sacrifice of the Eucharist.
- To thank God for all His graces and His manifold gifts to us.
- To make known to God our needs, our problems,

and our requests.

- To be united with the Church triumphant in heaven and with all our brethren departed in Christ.
- To sanctify by the grace of the most Holy Sacrament our thoughts and our desires, our intentions and our plans concerning our work.
- To have Christ dwelling in us and acting through us.
- To get strength and courage for the hard fight.
- To see every good works of ours flourish and bring abundant fruit.
- To be knit together in an unbroken union with

Christ and in Christ our Lord.



Beloved, God continually gives us blessings day by day. What do we give Him in return? Remember that God calls us to use the talents He has given us in Christ-like love and service.

### Marks of a Good Christian

A good Christian...

- ❖ moves his Church membership when he moves to a new place.
- ❖ pays his debts to God and man, regularly and cheerfully.
- ❖ regularly attends his Church's services.
- ❖ knows, believes, and practices the Old and New Testament teachings.
- ❖ strives for the Holiness of God, and for peace with all men.
- ❖ loves the Word of God and reads it regularly.
- ❖ knows whom he has believed and prays to his God daily.
- ❖ is kind, friendly, spiritual, and seeks good for all.
- ❖ knows how to return good for evil and to turn the other cheek.
- ❖ is always ready and eager to FORGIVE and FORGET.

### Vacation Time

"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy" applies to vacation Sundays as well as the rest of the year.

We expect God's grace in summer as well as in winter. Has He not a right to our all year round devotion?

Have a Blessed Summer!

*With the love of the Lord,*

*Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos  
Protosphyter and Internal Missionary*

**Time, Talents and Treasures: Notes of a Beautiful Chord**

Blessed are You, O Christ our God, Who has shown forth the fishermen to be most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. And through them, You drew the world into Your net. O merciful One, glory to You! (*Apolytikon of Pentecost/Festal Hymn of Holy Trinity Church*).

**The Indelible Impact of Stewardship**

Our time, talent and treasures are like the many notes of a chord: they resonate more powerfully when all are engaged. And just as it requires a concerted effort to sustain the notes of a chord, so does it require stamina and dedication to devote one’s time and talents to a ministry. But the result of the efforts? An indelible impact on all those around.

As summer is upon us, and the Church celebrates its sixth anniversary at our McCandless Township location, I encourage you to use this time to explore a new way in which you can support the Church. Join the Tuesday festival cooking events, learn about the Philoptochos, minister with the Visitation Committee, or volunteer with a youth fundraising effort. Visit the Connect Center during coffee hour to learn about upcoming events and how to get involved. We have different gifts “according to the grace given to each of us” (Romans, 12.6), and all of those gifts are necessary to sustain the growth of our community.

Through the choir ministry, we lead worshipers in hymns, but do not replace the voices of the congregation. Whether you’re looking for a musical outlet, you’re afforded a break from your typical Sunday responsibilities, or you’re drawn to a particular hymn—whatever the reason—you are always



welcome to join us. Summertime is a perfect (and non-committal) time to learn, and is a great opportunity to experience the Divine Liturgy in a way that I pray that we all someday do—fully engaged in hymns of thanks. No experience is necessary, and children are welcome!

Even if you insist that your calling is not music, please consider this submission as a reminder to give of your time and talents for the glory of God, and as encouragement to pursue a new ministry. Like each note in a chord, all of us must work in concert to achieve harmony. Our time, talents and treasures are gifts that fall silent if not purposed to His good work.

*Eleni Valliant and Your Co-Workers in Christ  
The Holy Trinity Stewardship Ministry Committee*

**Summer Vacation: While You’re Away, Your Church Still Has Bills to Pay!**



As we enter the summer months and look forward to our vacations and time away from work, please remember: Our Church doesn’t take a vacation! So please, Don’t Take a Vacation from Giving! Sometimes the thought is that, “I’ll catch up later.” Rarely, though, does someone come to church in September, with a check for missed offerings in June, July, and August. It just doesn’t happen. Something practical you can do is set up automatic giving through your bank. This will ensure your giving stays strong during the summer, and you don’t take a break from honoring God with your finances. After all... who do we think has blessed us to the point that we can enjoy the good things of life? And, by the way, expenses do not change in the summer months in our church! Enjoy your vacation. Honor your God.

Here’s an idea: Set up an automatic Stewardship donation by visiting <http://www.holytrinitypgh.org/give>. It’s easy!



### STEWARDSHIP UPDATE AS OF JUNE 20, 2019



PLEDGES RECEIVED	AMOUNT PLEDGED
2019 GOAL: 310	2019 GOAL: \$400,000+
YTD 2019: 249	YTD 2019: \$385,400
YTD 2018: 232	YTD 2018: \$352,100



**May 11, 2019:** Dozens of Holy Trinity parishioners and family members showed up to honor 2019 parish recipients of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh Saint Photios Award, George Dickos and Presvytera Becky Touloumes. Over 700 people attended this sixth annual event, which honors the service and contributions to the life of the Church. Each recipient receives his/her award from Metropolitan Savas.





**The Holy Trinity 2019 IOCC Houston Mission Team (L-R):** Dan Christopulos (IOCC Staff), Evan Chisanthus, Father John Touloumes, Tom Germanos, Dan Hoelt (IOCC Staff), Michael Chisanthus, Max Germanos, Chloe Germanos, Emily Durosco, Presvytera Becky Touloumes, Sophia Mellis, Pia Carey (IOCC Staff). Our Holy Trinity team was in Houston from June 17-22 to do disaster recovery work on a home that was submerged under more than three feet of water during Hurricane Harvey. They gutted, treated for mold, painted, insulated and drywalled in heat that sometimes topped 100 degrees. Glory to God! Thank you, team, for representing us all!







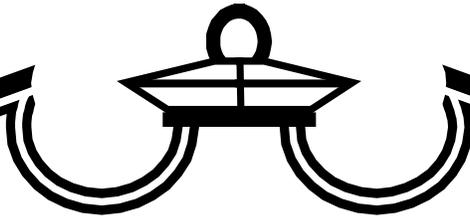






(Clockwise from above) Father John receives the HCHC Alumni of the Year Award; Andrew Abboud and Yianni Gagianas present to the TELOS Young Adult Project; Father John honors the birthday of Esther Ladakos and the 62nd wedding anniversary of Anthony and Helen Balouris; Festival cooking continues; The 2019 GOYA Senior Dinner.





# HOLY TRINITY CHURCH CLASS OF 2019

## Jakob Cervenak Peters Township High School



Jakob Demetri Cervenak graduated from Peters Township High School as a PT Scholar (*summa cum laude*). He was a member of the National Honor Society and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), where he was a state qualifier this year. Jakob also lettered for two years with the varsity football team.

He has been very active with GOYA, participating in basketball and GOYA fellowship events. He has attended the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese's Ionian Village summer camp program and served as GOYA president his senior year. He will be attending The Ohio State University in the fall.

## Sarah Hulse The PA Cyber Charter School



Sarah graduated with honors and a STEM designation from the PA Cyber Charter school. She was the executive editor of the PA Cyber Press newspaper, the VP of Marketing & Hospitality and Chapter President of DECA, where she competed at the local and state levels and in the International Career Development Conference. Sarah worked with Four Diamonds to start Mini-THON programs at the school and was recognized as an Emerging Leader for contributions to her school and community. She was also a member of the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, the science club, and the IMPACT tutoring program. She was a member of the Holy Trinity choir for five years. Sarah's other interests include volunteering at Washington Hospital and mentoring students as they prepare for college. She will attend the University of Pittsburgh, University Honors College, in the fall, where she will major in neuroscience with a minor in chemistry on the pre-med track. She also looks forward to continuing her studies in American Sign Language (ASL) and volunteering through the Imagination Project and other organizations.

## Niko Marsh Pice-Richland High School



Niko Marsh graduated on the Highest Honor Roll from Pine-Richland High School and was a participant in the Model United Nations. He was a member of the Pine-Richland Soccer Team, where he was a three-year Varsity Letterman. He also played club soccer and recreational basketball. Niko has been active at Holy Trinity Church, including serving as GOYA Vice-President, playing GOYA basketball and volleyball, participating in Church School and Greek Dance and volunteering at the Greek Festival. He has also attended Camp Nazareth and Ionian Village. He will be attending Pennsylvania State University Main Campus in the fall.





The Holy Trinity Greek Dancers at the 2017 "Taste of Greece" Festival at the new Holy Trinity Church

### **"The Holy Trinity Greek Dancers"**

#### **A Tradition of Greek Culture, Heritage and History Spanning Six Decades and Four Generations**

*A Holy Trinity Herald Feature Article by Anita Sinicrope-Maier, MSW*

From the earliest of times, the ancient Greeks embraced dancing. It was performed for religious ceremonies, plays, festivals, marriages, funerals, births, holidays, harvests and even military functions and celebrations. For the Greeks, dance, music, poetry and wine making were activities which marked a civilized and educated person. Dance was inseparable from music and poetry and these things were all facets of what the Greeks called "mousike" or "the art of the muses". Terpsichore, which means "join in the dance", was actually the name of one of the nine Muses.

Skilled dancers were highly thought of and some were even presented with crowns and had monuments built to commemorate them. Well known dancers were sometimes even able to marry into the upper class---an opportunity denied to others. Dancing became a necessary part of a child's education which favored the appreciation of beauty. So children learned to dance at a very early age. Sparta consequently passed a law that children must be taught dance by the age of five!

The ancient Greeks believed that dance originated in Crete, in approximately 1500 BC. When the Mycenaeans conquered Crete, they made it a Greek province and thus borrowed innovations from the Cretans. The Mycenaeans performed dances that were recorded by Homer in the Iliad and the Odyssey during the 9th century BC. Dancers were depicted on frescoes, reliefs, jewelry and vase paintings. Archeological digs

discovered a vase from the 8th century BC thought to be a trophy that was given to a dancer which was inscribed with "whoever of the dancers makes merry most gracefully, let him receive this".

These dances often involved dancing in a circle or line with people holding hands. In ancient Greek, the word "chorus" originally meant a sacred ring dance. Men danced with men and women with women, but soon blending of the sexes was allowed in certain dances. Performers were accompanied by music made by strings, winds, flutes and percussions. The lyre was the most important and widespread instrument used in those times. The kithara, a 7 string instrument, was the most sophisticated and was played mostly by professionals. Duets were often played by the ardos, a double reed instrument, and the kithara. Singing was included in many of the dances as the leader called out a statement and another group repeated it.

And so as we travel through the centuries, the Greeks are still dancing! What is now called Greek Folk dancing is still very similar to the ancient Greek versions. Circles and lines are the most prominent formations of group dances and the music that accompanies the dancers still is composed of strings, winds and percussion. The bouzouki, clarinet and singing ring out at festivities as dancers perform their stylized movements. Performances occur at festivals and various ceremonies while the guests at weddings, baptisms, births,



Stella Athanasiou adds her touch to Stergios Anezoulakis' costume.

The 25th Annual Pittsburgh Folk Festival

## A LOVE AFFAIR WITH DANCE

by Sue Maloney

**S**tella Athanasiou's lifelong love affair with the folk dances of Greece began when she was a child and her father was the leader of one of the first authentic Greek bands in Pittsburgh. Even then she couldn't resist the blood-tingling Mediterranean rhythms or the exhilarating freedom she felt when she danced.

The love affair flowered as Stella matured, and it is her good fortune that she has been able to make Greek dancing a central part of her life: she is the instructor of one of the most popular folk dancing groups in the city, and, for the last 20 years, she has been the director of the Greek dance performances at the Pittsburgh Folk Festival.

"I love Greek dancing," she says. "I grew up with it. I danced before I walked."

For the 1981 Folk Festival this month, Stella is coordinating dance groups from the city's Greek Orthodox parishes. Practice started in January when she began drilling close to 50 dancers in the hall of Holy Trinity Church on the North Side. The dancers range in age from 4 to 20, years when intangibles such as "tradition" and "ancestry" are not always priority considerations, but Stella says there is no problem with apathy.

"We have no trouble-finding dancers," she says. "Our young people are really interested. There was a time a few years ago when they'd say, 'I'm embarrassed. I don't want to do this,' but now it's different. Kids are becoming aware of their ethnicity and they want to belong. Now even the really young ones can't wait to start dancing."

This year, the Pittsburgh Folk Festival, sponsored by

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM J. DRIS

name days, holidays and other occasions still delight in this ancient tradition.

Today we are blessed that our Greek culture still continues to be represented by its dances. Here in America, that tradition is sustained by members of the Greek Orthodox community, whose youth perform at festivals and events around the country. Holy Trinity Church, in particular, has been embracing this part of our culture for almost 60 years. And the name most famously associated with the beginnings of a dance troupe representing our church is Stella Athanasiou. Known as "Thea Stella" or "Yiayia Stella" (she would not let her dancers call her "Mrs. Athanasiou"), she taught with patience, passion, commitment and love. Throughout the 60's, 70's, 80's, and even into the 90's, teaching Greek dancing took her to many Greek communities outside of Holy Trinity as well. If they didn't have teachers, Stella was the one to call. She inspired other churches and communities to begin dancing. She researched Greek dance and not only taught the steps, but also the regions and islands that birthed the various dances and the intent and meaning behind them.

Quoting Gregory Pappas, one of her dancers from decades past and a former parishioner now living in Boston, her favorite saying was "To dance is to live and to live is to dance." He reminisced of Stella in a beautiful tribute that he wrote upon her recent passing saying, "She taught us that Greek dancing was more than just dance steps. It was about living your

life with love and passion. Thea Stella taught us to shout out 'Opa' with passion at just the perfect moment in the dance."

Irene Karavalos and her sister Fanny could legitimately call Stella "Thea" because she really was their aunt! Irene's mother and Stella were sisters and, as Irene describes it, "We were blood, so we danced. There was no choice. It was just like that." She described her aunt as "relentless." She would take the dancers everywhere despite the weather or the time of day. Irene remembers driving home during a snowstorm from a performance in the South Hills at St. Bernard's Church as her sister laid down on the floor of the car praying that they did not get killed. They sometimes danced at a supper club downtown for 'Greek Night' until all hours of the night even though most of them had school the next day!

Stella came from a musical family where her father, who played the clarinet, started the first Greek band in Pittsburgh. She not only taught dance but she choreographed it, putting in her own innovations to make every program interesting. If a couple was getting married, Stella was called to teach them the "Kalamatianos" for the bridal dance. One didn't have to be Greek, however, for them to be the recipient of her teaching. Franco Harris, the former Steeler, lived close to the North Side church and he brought his son to her to learn Greek dancing! She led classes for other non-Greek people as well. A jack of all trades, she helped sew and design the costumes, iron the "fustanelles" (the pleated "skirts" in the male costumes) before performances, arrange transportation for everyone to all the events and anything else that needed to be done. Irene says, "Stella led the way. Our dancers represented the Greek community. She was the genesis of everything that is out there today."

Nick Loomis, now 71, started Greek dancing in the 1960's when he was a teenager. Stella Athanasiou had become the coordinator of the dancers by that time and his mentor. She continued to call Nick "her first (dancer)" throughout the years. There was a group of young people who would get together to practice dancing and some of them, like the Sanios brothers (Mike and Pete) and the Nychis brothers (John, Bill and Pete) brought their skills with them from their homeland--the island of Rhodes. Nick remembers that with Angelo Venaris, Nick's brother Leo, Ernie Kampetis, the Sanios' and Nychis', they and other members of the troupe improvised and created their own version of the Sailor Dance made popular in the 60's by the movie "Zorba the Greek." They creatively made up intricate steps and named the steps sometime silly names like the 'chicken step'. They would search for Greek dances to attend in the tri-state area and travel there in



There are hours of rehearsals for high-kicking sailors (left) and children practicing the handkerchief dance.

## Feature Article | The Holy Trinity Greek Dancers

groups. As they walked into the dance halls, they would hear people saying, "Oh, the North Side kids are here! They're the good dancers." After a time, they discovered that their and Stella's version of the Sailor dance, along with their original steps, was being danced all over!

Of course, there were girls in the dance troupe also. The originals were Fanny and Irene Karavalos, Elaine Lardas, Mary Kilantonis, and Jenny Francos. They danced at the Syria Mosque and Civic arena with the Tamburitians for the Pittsburgh Folk Festival. Here they would use their creativity to create little plays with scenery to go along with their choreography. Some members of the troupe were also from Holy Cross in Mount Lebanon. They danced at food festivals, country clubs, night clubs, the University of Pittsburgh, the South Hills Fair and anywhere that Greek dancing was desired.

Nick had a request to teach Greek dancing to a troupe forming in Erie with members of the church that his wife Joy had attended before their marriage. When offered payment for his services, he declined it and settled for a bottle of ouzo! He went on to dance at the Greek nightclub Old Athena on Route 51 in the South Hills, and sometimes even danced with the belly dancer! Nick misses those days and remembers it as "almost a way of life" for him for many years.

Fast forward over five decades and we come to our present day dance troupes at Holy Trinity. The dancers are now only school-aged children. They mostly perform at the festival each year, providing a wonderful addition to the food and music. They begin practicing in May two or three times a week. Practice continues until the performances during Labor Day weekend. There are three troupes: HOPE is ages kinder-

garten to second grade; JOY is third through sixth grade; and GOYA is seventh through twelfth grade. Greek dancing provides our young people with the opportunity to learn about their culture and their heritage and to keep the traditions alive.

The newest member of the teaching team is Eleni Dedousis. When her children began dancing with the troupe she saw that the teacher, Victoria Andromalos-Dale, was all alone. She recognized that she needed help and asked Victoria if she would like her to assist. She has now been teaching for three years. Eleni also came with a great deal of her own experience. Her mother was a teacher of the dance troupe in her hometown of Warren, Ohio. She began Greek dancing when she was 4 or 5 years old and was taught by her mom. She moved to Pittsburgh thirteen years ago after marrying her husband, Pete. After attending the Oakmont church for a time, they joined Holy Trinity when the new church was built. When asked where she met her husband, she chuckled that it was at a Greek dance in Warren!

She is now teaching the HOPE and JOY groups, which has her teaching her own children Anna, age 10, and Constantine, age 7. This puts her in the same position of carrying on the tradition of being taught by her

mother! When asked why she likes teaching dance, she said it's fun and exciting to teach little ones something new. These children are really enthusiastic and they love to be able to wear the costumes and perform. It is very satisfying to see the children gain new skills and improve in their dancing over the years.

"It's important," says Eleni, "to get the boys comfortable with dancing at a young age. My husband, Pete, always says



The Holy Trinity Greek Dancers at the Holy Trinity 50th Anniversary



The Holy Trinity Greek Dancers at the 2002 Holy Trinity Greek Festival

that when he watches the kids perform he wishes he had learned the dances when he was younger.” Eleni says it is all about being Greek—learning one’s heritage, the different regions and islands of Greece and their traditions, the costumes that go along with the different regions, and replicating the dances that their parents, grandparents and even great grandparents danced!

Victoria Andromalos-Dale began dancing when she was three years old. Her mother, Diana, would joke that she “came out of the womb dancing.” She studied ballet, lyrical, tap, jazz—all forms of dance—as a child and continued to even minor in dance in college as she was getting her degree in nursing. She began Greek dancing also as a young child at Holy Trinity on the North side under ... wait for it ... Stella Athanasiou! By age eleven she began dancing with the Olympic Dancers, a troupe led by Koula Pantzoulas. The dancers originated from all over the Pittsburgh area and were of all ages. They danced all year long and performed all over Pennsylvania, Ohio, and even in New York City in the Greek Independence Day parade. She continued dancing with that group until college.

Stella had a great influence on Victoria and she described her as “being very good to me.” She began helping with the troupe when in high school and occasionally while in college as Stella’s assistant. About ten years ago, she assumed the lead role of coordinator and teacher. Victoria remembers that one day Stella invited her to her home and showed her the many books and albums that she had created over the years. There were pictures of costumes and dancers as well as clippings of articles that had been written about Holy Trinity dancers. It was a wealth of information. Stella presented some of the books to Victoria to have as her own. It was the passing down of the dynasty, even though Victoria may not have realized it.

As head teacher and coordinator, Victoria continues so many of Stella’s practices with the children as well as adding her own touches. “Dance is the universal language,” she says. “You don’t have to be Greek to understand it.” But as she teaches that universal language, she adds so much of the Greek culture to the teaching. She, too, explains which region or island that the dances come from and why they dance the way they dance them. They learn the name of the instruments that play the music. They even use the Greek words of the various parts of the costumes as they get dressed for a performance. She is excited to slowly be adding more dances and details from different regions of Greece to the program that aren’t often performed and likes to change up the program from year to year. “The dancers must be able to employ strength, agility and flexibility as they perform,” she says. “It’s really quite amazing.”

Victoria would love to see there be a troupe for adult dancers in the future also. Many have requested it. From the time of Stella’s troupes, all the teachers and people who help with the dance troupes have been volunteers. Victoria says, “Stella Athanasiou left a legacy, and I want to be able to continue it. If I can carry on that legacy, I am thrilled to be a part of it.”

It is impossible to talk about the dancers without talking about the costumes they wear. The original costumes were

made by family members and friends with love and care. The current costumes originated about thirty years ago and throughout those years, various parts have needed to be replaced. Maybe a skirt for this one, a vest for another and all of these parts still made by parishioners. Penny Balouris has been in charge of cleaning and restoring the costumes for a long time. Her work is never ending. Victoria says the costumes they have been using are the same ones that she had worn as a girl, so the need for new outfits has been long overdue. To meet that need, a fundraising campaign was undertaken by the parents and dancers, and thanks to generous support of the Holy Trinity community, they have ordered new costumes from Greece for all the dancers. They will wear them for the first time at this year’s festival!

The next time our readers attend a Greek festival, or wherever Greek dances are performed, we hope that you embrace a deeper appreciation for not only the work and pride that goes into those performances, but also the tradition, heritage and history that spans over thirty five centuries of Greek life and six decades here at Holy Trinity Church. Opa!

*Comments, feedback or thanks about this article?  
Contact Anita Sinicrope-Maier at pened1@aol.com*

## POPULAR TRADITIONAL GREEK DANCES

**Syrtaki:** One of the most famous Greek dances known around the world. The Sailor Dance is a variation of this. There is an acceleration of the pace from a 4/4 tempo to a 2/4 pace. Dancers place their hands on each other’s shoulders and dance in a line or circle.

**Kalamatiano:** This is a popular Folk dance that is known throughout Greece and Cyprus. It is considered the national dance of Greece. It’s roots date back to antiquity and can be found in the early writings of Homer. The name comes from the city of Kalamata in the Peloponnesos peninsula. Dancers hold hands while dancing in a circle.

**Hasapiko:** A traditional dance with it’s roots from Constantinople. This dance originated in the Middle Ages as a battle dance that butchers used to perform with swords.

**Pentozali:** Originating in Crete, it is a fast paced dance where dancers hold on to each other at the shoulder. The lead dancer can perform variations while the others dance in a line following basic steps.

**Ikariotiko:** A traditional dance from the island of Icaria in the Aegean Sea. It is danced in an open circle with men and women holding hands at shoulder height. It is danced in three tempos, the first being slow walking steps, quickening in the 2nd part, to a quicker step in the 3rd and last part of the dance. This dance showcases the agility of the body and legs of the dancers.

**Tsamiko:** Originally a battle dance done after a victory in war or before battle. Originating in the Peloponnesos, Thessaly and Epiros. It was originally performed only by men and has a strict tempo that doesn’t focus on the basic steps but instead on the attitude of the dancers, where the lead dancer performs leaps and squats according to the rhythm while the other dancers hold hands at a 90 degree angle dancing in a circle.

**Zebekiko:** Not a group dance but originally performed by two armed men facing one another. There are no particular steps but certain figures that developed into an improvised dance. Sometimes called the ‘Eagle Dance’, it is danced with arms open wide with a strong intensity.

One of the great blessings of Orthodoxy is the presence, prayers and inspired words of the Holy Elders of the Faith. They have been referred to as “precious vessels of the Holy Spirit.” In recent years, many books have been published in English with their writings and talks. This column provides an opportunity for each of us to be inspired by their wisdom, formatted in a question-and-answer interview approach.



**Saint Paisios**

**Geronda, sometimes I feel the love of God intensely and am pained by my lack of gratitude.**

Hope and pray that you will respond to the many benefactions of God. David said, “Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life” (Ps. 23.6). You should also say this, because it is true that the same thing is also happening to you; but it is also true that you acknowledge it, and thank and glorify God.

When one acknowledges the love of God, then God “bombards” him with His love. The word “bombards” may seem strange to you, but it takes divine bombs, made out of the love of God, to break through the scales or granite encasing our heart. Once its casing is shattered, the heart becomes sensitive, and a person is moved even by the smallest blessings of God. One feels completely indebted to God and is deeply moved at all times, because while he is thinking of ways to pay off his debt, God is showering him with more and more blessings, until his philotimo-filled heart has been melted by the love of God

**Geronda, why does God love us so much?**

Because we are His children; I can’t add more to that!

**Although we may be struggling, doesn’t it displease God if we constantly fall into the same sins? Don’t we disappoint Him?**

Is God expecting any progress from us in the first place? No. But we are His children and He loves us all the same. One of the children of a father I once saw was mentally handicapped, and although he kept wiping his runny nose on his sleeves, his father hugged him, kissed him and caressed him, just as much as his other children. God does the same thing. Being the Good Father He is, God not only loves His accomplished children, but He also loves those who are spiritually weak for Whom He is all the more pained and concerned.

No one can grasp how much God loves man! His love is incomparable! It is boundless! His love is so vast and powerful that our earthen heart cannot withstand even the slightest bit we may feel of it; His love dissolves the heart because the heart is made of earth.

God often allows His love to fall profusely upon His creatures, such that our soul becomes heated and we see that divine love is so sweet, so immense, that it becomes unbearable, and we come to the point of saying, “It is enough, God! Turn down Your love a bit because I cannot bear it.” This is God’s way of showing us that although He is fully inclined to give His profuse love to us, He doesn’t, because our battery is small and weak. We need to enlarge our battery so that it can

take in more divine love, because the divine current of God’s love comes to us in proportion to our capacity.

**How can this capacity for love be increased in us?**

The greater the cleansing of our heart, the greater its capacity and the greater will be its acceptance of divine love, which is boundless, undivided and inexhaustible.

**Geronda, is it possible for one to love God but not love his fellow men?**

No, because when you love God, it is impossible not to love your fellow men, the images of God. Our love for God leads to love for our neighbour, because whoever is close to God is also close to mankind, just like the Saints. Concealed within our love for our neighbour is our great love for God.

When one gives his heart to God, he loves everything; he not only loves all people, he also loves the birds and the trees, even the snakes. He reveres with devotion not only God and the saints, but also all human beings, the images of God. Since he considers all of creation to be a blessing from his Creator, he holds each creation—large or small, precious or insignificant, little sticks and stones—and kisses each with reverence, just as one would reverence a large or small object that has been blessed by a person he esteems.

**Then what do I have to do in order to love God?**

In order to love God, you should start with sacrifice. When a person does not take himself into account and sacrifices himself instead, then things are in order: he loves his neighbour he loves God. Those who claim to love God but fail to make a single sacrifice for their neighbour have “loved Him with their mouths and they lied unto Him with their tongues.”

**And how can I increase my love for God?**

By keeping your mind constantly on God, by thinking of God; invoke the Jesus Prayer; speak with God. When a person practises this, he will, at first, sense a little bit of the love of God; later, as he advances, he will feel it all the more. In time, his mind is permanently fixed on God and he is no longer moved by anything earthly or vain. Ablaze with the love of God, his heart is filled and he doesn’t want to think of anything else except God. No longer interested in any worldly matters, he thinks constantly of the Heavenly Father.

You see, those involved with inventions and discoveries are deeply absorbed by their study. However, how deeply absorbed are we by Christ! When one gives his heart to God, then even his mind is consumed by love for God and his heart leaps constantly for joy; his head feels light, and his body feels as light as a feather. And when love for God exceeds the heart’s capacity, then one’s heartbeat can be heard by those around him, because the body itself is also participating in this exalted state.

*Excerpted from “Saint Paisios of Mount Athos, The Spiritual Counsels, Volume V: Passions and Virtues”*



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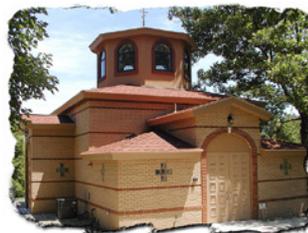
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## The Image of Christ in Christian Marriage

Serious Christians are continually drawing upon the ongoing grace of the Holy Spirit to help them live in their marriage as our Lord is wishing and encouraging them to do. So the possibility opens up that the husband and wife may actually love each other with ineffably tender, gentle, strong, self-sacrificial love—indeed, Christ-like love—and thereby truly image Christ’s ineffably tender, gentle, strong, self-sacrificial love for his Bride, his Body, the Church.

Archimandrite Aimilianos [of Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos, +2019] is so convinced of this possibility that he can say, in his famous sermon on marriage:

“Whenever two people are married in the name of Christ, they become the sign which contains and expresses Christ himself. When you see a couple who are conscious of this, it is as if you are seeing Christ. Together they are a theophany.”

What a beautiful and awesome goal to aspire to!

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