

THE HOLY TRINITY

HERALD

Faith. Family. Community

November-December 2020
Volume 28 | Issue 4

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PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Page 10: Holy Trinity Bereavement Ministry volunteers. Want to see more photos of the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? Visit our Photo Gallery at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.



CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, PITTSBURGH, PA



Father John Touloumes
Proistamenos

Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised.

(Hebrews 10.35-36)

Endurance. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines “endurance” as follows: “The ability to withstand hardship or adversity; especially: the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity.” Has anyone else been feeling like most of this year has been just all of us trying to “withstand hardship or adversity?” As individuals? As families? As a community? As a nation? Or even as all humanity? Yes? Right. I didn’t think I was alone.

The COVID-19 pandemic has probably brought many of us to what feels like the end of our endurance. What started out as weeks has turned into months, and we’re not through it yet. It has challenged us and brought on hardships probably none of would have ever imagined experiencing. The dreadful and tragic loss of life, the emotional and economic impact and the drastic alteration of our way of life as we have know it has been devastating to many. We all question when it will end, and some even wonder where God has been through it all.

The difference for Christians is that hardships, adversity and challenges in our lives are not seen as being without purpose and without rewards...and certainly not without God. They are, rather, opportunities for us to find Him. This is powerfully reflected in the morning prayer of Saint Philaret of Moscow, which prays:

Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all...In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all things are under Your care...Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with all that it shall bring.

These prayers, along with many scriptures, examples from the lives of the saints and inspiring models of many faithful people, allow us to redeem suffering as pathways to holiness. They even become hope-bearing opportunities when we acknowledge that God is not absent, but there in the midst of them.

My dear spiritual family, it is not obvious to the world, but it should be for us: the Lord has been with us through it all. The very God Who suffered and died for us has never left us and will not leave us now. Look for Him. He is there. And He is calling us and equipping us to endure, “that we may do the will of God and receive what is promised.”

It is truly a joy to finally return to producing *The Herald* after the first interruption in its production since its debut 27 years ago. This issue is yet another part of the restoration of the life of this community to a fully-functioning ministry, even in the midst of the continuing pandemic. The January issue will be mailed toward the end of December. Thank you for your patience, love, faith, support and encouragement for one another and for this community throughout. We have been through it all together. By the grace of God, we will endure.

Paternally yours in Christ,

INTRODUCING THE NEW HERALD

When I had the blessing of being appointed to Holy Trinity Church in August, 1993, one of the first tasks was the creation of a parish newsletter. Up until that time, the primary means of communicating parish news was the weekly Sunday Bulletin. Thus, the *Holy Trinity Herald* was born.

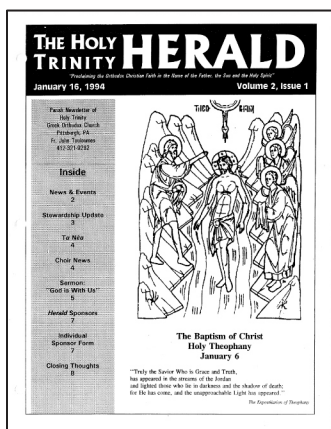
1993—VERSION 1: At the time, we didn't have the in-house technology of producing a publication of appropriate quality, so we developed a relationship with a printing company on East Street and would deliver a master copy out of our laser printer, which the printer then lithographed and folded. It wasn't even stapled back then. It was black-and-white only, with few or no photographs, since they were quite a bit of work and still film-based. But it was a great addition to the life of the community and began to effectively spread the news of our growing ministries. In November 2000, a new column, "Gheronda's Corner" was added, featuring inspiring reflections by Father John Androutsopoulos, an labor of love he offered for 19 years until his repose last year. Spero the Orthodox Church Mouse began writing his "Mouse Tales" articles about the Saint Spyridon Children's Lending Library and how children can connect with our Orthodox Christian Faith. And various contributors eventually started writing the "Cultural Side" column, on topics of Greek cultural and heritage.

2002—VERSION 2: With the advent of digital photography and with an upgrade of our in-house printing capabilities, Version 2 was born. The first issue featured photos of the Parish Council installation, Christmas pageant, GOYA

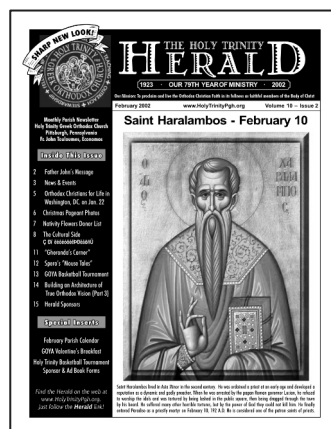
Basketball Tournament and more. Christ Kamages was featured in a multi-part series on Orthodox architecture as we looked toward the future and the potential of a new church building. "Cultural Side" authors Mike Kritiotis, Maria Kranioi, Voula Hareras and Vickie Bellios continued to contribute history, poetry and cultural highlights.

2007—VERSION 3: In January, 2007, we were able, with the support of the community, to upgrade our equipment and produce our first full-color *Herald* entirely in-house. Our new printer was capable of taking an electronic file and printing, folding and stapling the entire issue. A new format was developed, including a "Quick News" photo on the front page and many beautiful full-color icons from around the world. The "Community Life Photo Journal" began more extensive photo coverage of parish events and ministries through the help of our great volunteer photographers. The format was slightly adjusted in June of 2013 with the opening of the new church and the placing of the new Holy Trinity logo on the front page. This reliable and stable format received many positive comments from around the Archdiocese and continued for 13 years.

2020—VERSION 4: The current issue is the first featuring "Version 4," with a clean, new look. It transitions from a "newsletter" style to a more contemporary "news magazine" approach, produced with some amazing new software from Serif Affinity. With a fresh style guide, a consistent palette of colors and a coordinated family of fonts, it is designed to better communicate the active life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church. Enjoy! ❖



1993: Version 1



2002: Version 2



2007: Version 3



2020: Version 4

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

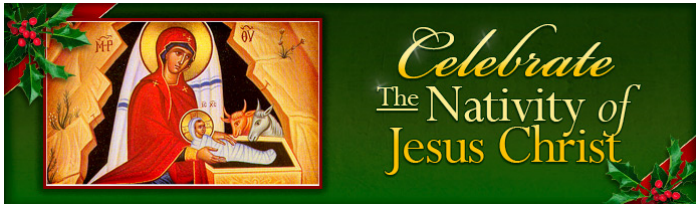
WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services

Weekday Divine Liturgies are normally held at the Saint George Chapel, but due to current Metropolis COVID safety regulations, they are being held at Holy Trinity Church. Orthros is at 8:30am, followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30.

- Nov. 9: St. Nektarios the Wonderworker
- Nov. 13: St. John Chrysostom
- Nov. 16: St. Matthew the Evangelist
- Nov. 24, 6:30pm: St. Katherine the Great Martyr
(Note: *EVENING* service begins at 6:30pm)
- Nov. 30: St. Andrew the First-Called Apostle
- Dec. 9: Conception of the Theotokos
- Dec. 12: St. Spyridon the Wonderworker
(Note: *Service held at St. Spyridon Church, Monessen*)
- Dec. 24, 9:30am: Royal Hours of the Nativity
- Dec. 24, 6:30pm: Vespers Liturgy of the Nativity
- Dec. 25, 9:30am: Orthros/Divine Liturgy Nativity
- Dec. 31, 6:30pm: St. Basil the Great
(Note: *EVENING* service begins at 6:30pm)

Services for the Nativity of Christ ... December 24/25



Please remember these festal celebrations for the Nativity of Christ and participate in them with your family. Please note that all Christmas services will be held at Holy Trinity Church.

- **Thu. Dec. 24, 9:30 am: Royal Hours of the Nativity**
This special service offers readings, prophecies and hymns which point to and interpret the Divine Incarnation.
- **Thu. Dec. 24, 6:30pm: Vespers Liturgy of the Nativity**
This service "opens the liturgical day" and begins the celebration of the Nativity. Also, the Holy Trinity Choir will be offering a selection of beautiful Christmas carols following the service. (Note: This is a Divine Liturgy. Those wishing to receive Holy Communion need to observe proper fasting and preparation during the day)
- **Fri. Dec. 25. 8:30am Orthros/9:30am Liturgy of The Nativity of the Lord**
This is the main service of the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Open the best gift first by

attending Liturgy with your family and receiving the Holy Mysteries together! Make it a family tradition to keep the most important thing about Christmas the most important thing in your home!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

Church School Continues with Safety Measures

With thanks to our dedicated Church School staff, the love and support of all our parents, and the enthusiastic response of our children, our 2020-2021 Church School ministry is off to a great start. Please be assured the physical safety and spiritual well-being of all students and staff are top priorities as our children continue to know and grow in the love of Christ. Here are some highlights of the measures being taken:

- At Holy Communion, children will be receiving first and then proceed to class, after which the rest of the congregation will be invited forward.
- All students and staff are required to wear masks at all times while in class.
- Class structure and room locations have been reconfigured in certain cases.
- Class sizes are limited to observe capacity restrictions.
- Classroom doors are being left open to promote air circulation.
- Hand sanitizer is available in each room.
- Traffic flow to and from class is being directed to minimize congestion and crowding. Access to upper level is limited to students and staff, with the exception of the parents of the Pre-School and Kindergarten classes, who may enter the upper level to retrieve their children if necessary; Parents of all others are requested to refrain from the upper level.
- Children are being dismissed and brought by staff to a designated pickup area in the Grand Room at the end of class at 11:30am.

Church School Thanksgiving Food Drive ... November

During the month of November, Holy Trinity Church School is once again holding its Fall Food Drive...but this year there is a special twist: it's Church School vs, the Community! All month there will be two food collection bins in the Gallery during Coffee Hour: one for Church School collections and the other for the rest of the community. Which will collect more? We'll see! At the end the winner will be announced, and a special award given, but the real winners will be those in need who will receive food supplies as we approach the winter months. Items

will be donated to the Orthodox Christian ministry at the Neighborhood Resilience Project in the Hill District, which Holy Trinity has been supporting actively since its founding at FOCUS Pittsburgh many years ago. See the list of requested food items at the church office window and thanks for taking the challenge!

Church School Christmas Pageant.....December 20

The Holy Trinity Church School ministry will be offering its annual Christmas Pageant this year on Sunday, December 20, but in a whole new way! Rather than gather in person for one of our largest annual parish events, due to the required safety restrictions this year, it will be a **Virtual Christmas Pageant**, recorded ahead of time and released on December 20th. Watch for details in the Sunday Bulletin.

No Church School ClassDecember 27

Attention, parents: there will be no Church School class on December 27 due to the holiday break, so please join together to worship as a family on that day.

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

GOYA Christmas Fireside Chat.....December 6

The GOYA teen ministry will hold its annual Christmas Fireside Chat on Sunday, December 6 from 4:30-6:30pm. Information and location is being sent directly to GOYA families on the GOYA email and Remind systems.

GOYA Christmas BreadOrder by December 17

Our GOYA teens will once again offer their delicious and popular Greek Christmas Bread this year. Orders must be placed by Wednesday, December 17. **New this year: orders may be placed with any GOYA teen OR ONLINE at HolyTrinityPgh.org/goyabread.** See page 19 of this issue for more information. (Note: *Philoptochos* will not be offering Christmas bread as in the past, so all Christmas bread orders should be placed through GOYA.)

PHILOPTOCHOS MINISTRY NEWS

Philoptochos Membership Drive Now Due

The Philoptochos Society 2021 Stewardship Form is enclosed in this issue of *The Herald*. All members and anyone interested in joining the largest national women's philanthropic organization are asked to complete and return the form as soon as possible.

Philoptochos Christmas LuncheonCanceled

Typically, every year our Holy Trinity Philoptochos "Omonia" Chapter hosts a Christmas luncheon for all of the seniors in our parish. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we will not be hosting the luncheon this year. As a group we have decided that it is in the best interest of

our seniors to cancel this event this year. It is with a heavy heart that we made this decision, but we love our seniors and want to keep them safe and well. Our hope is to have something next year in the summer to show them how much we appreciate and love them!!! Thank you to all for your understanding.

BEREAVEMENT MINISTRY NEWS

Bereavement Ministry VespersDecember 7

Holidays may bring mixed feelings for those experiencing loss and grief (see page 17). Many of us in the year of 2020 have experienced various losses, especially loss of a loved one. For some, our loved ones have been gone for many years, but the holidays may bring sadness as we remember them. Our Bereavement Support Ministry Team is offering a special Vespers Service for "Our Losses and in Remembering our Loved Ones who have Fallen Asleep in the Lord" on Monday, December 7th at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary. Father John and Amy Armanious have coordinated this special Vespers Service.

We are inviting parishioners and their extended family and friends. It will be a quiet, sacred time for worship, reflection, and prayer. We encourage each person to bring a photo frame of their loved one. We will display these photo frames on a table. A special votive candle will be lit by each photo as a remembrance of the light and warmth that our loved ones have shared in our lives. Also, our Bereavement facilitator Jonathan Kohan will be delivering a brief message titled "Honesty and the Holidays." At the end, each person will take home their photo and votive as we focus on God's abiding love and hope. Please join us for this special evening together as we prepare for the Nativity of our Lord and the Christmas holiday. If you want to learn more, contact Amy Armanious, Visitation Ministry Coordinator, at visitation@holyltrinitypgh.org.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Christmas Card FormsDue December 6

If you would like to include your name in this annual community tradition, please be sure to submit your form and donation to the Church Office by December 6. The card will be mailed with the Christmas/New Year bundle.

Holiday Poinsettias Form.....Due December 6

This issue of the Herald contains a form for the sponsoring of holiday poinsettias for use in the church during the Christmas and Theophany season. To donate one or more flowers in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special person or event, please complete the form and return it to the Church Office with your donation by December 6. ❖

Right it is indeed,
life-bestowing
Lord, to magnify
You, for upon the
cross were Your
hands outstretched
and the strength of
our dread foe You
have destroyed.

Holy Friday Engomia



2020 Lenten and Paschal Flowers

Thank you to the many parishioners and friends who offered donations for Lent and Holy Week.

Even though our pandemic restrictions limited attendance, it did not limit your love and honor for Christ and Holy Trinity Church. May those you have honored be blessed and remembered always.

Salutations to the Theotokos Icon

Connie Fries.....for the health of family & friends
Eugenia Graser in memory of her husband Robert Graser
Matt & Nancy Palamara..... for the health of the Anh & Palamara Families
Jon & Judy Stipanovich in memory of their parents George & Stella Stipanovich and brother Greg
Anthony & Aspasia Zissis.....in memory of our parents, Anna & Fotie and Vasiliki & George

Lent, Holy Week and Resurrection Services

Annunciation Icon Flowers.....Chris & Kathy Balouris, for the health of Presvytera Ethel Androutsopoulos
Veneration of the Cross Flowers..... Jonathan, Jenna, Jack, Grace & Aristotle Kratsas, for the health of family & friends
Saturday of Lazarus Icon Flowers Cindy Morris Criss, in memory of Tom & Dora Morris
Palm Sunday Icon Flowers.....Chris & Kathy Balouris, for the health of Anthony C. Balouris
Palms for the Chapel on Palm SundayGeorgeann Festas Graf, in memory of Peter & Anna Festas
Kirk & Fran Stephen, in memory of their beloved parents and brother-in-law
Christ the Bridegroom (Nymphios) Icon Flowers Constantine & Diane Balouris, in memory of Helen C. Balouris
Crucifix Wreath of Flowers Gus & Penny Georgiadis, for the health of our family and in memory of our parents
Burial Shroud Sheet for Epitaphion..... Arlene Metropulos, in memory of her husband Dean Metropulos
Holy Friday Rosewater..... Chris T. Balouris & Family in memory of his father Themistocles C. Balouris
Holy Friday Icon FlowersIrene Karavolos, in memory of Charles Siebott and Steve & Kelly Karavolos

Epitaphion Flowers

Holy Trinity Offering Envelopes

Frank & Katina Erdeljac..... in memory of Mike & Theologia Alexiades and Mary Alexiades
John & Georgia Franciscus in memory of George and Betty Beckas
Connie Fries.....for the health of family & friends
Eugenia Graser in memory of her husband Robert Graser
Eugenia Graserin memory of her parents Michael & Mary Patsalos
Gus Kalarisin memory of his wife Stella Kalaris
Dr. James & Mrs. Bettina Kermes in memory of family and friends
George & Rhea Pantelakis in memory of their parents John & Maria Pantelakis and John & Stavroula Scopelitis
James Sicalias in memory of his mother Bessie Cocheres Sicalias
Anthony & Aspasia Zissis.....in memory of our parents, Anna & Fotie and Vasiliki & George

Pascha & Paschal Season Flowers & Items

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Bay Leaves for Holy Saturday | Pamela Bolkovac, in memory of her parents Nick & Mary Bolkovac |
| Rose Petals for Holy Saturday | Cindy Morris Criss, in memory of Tom & Dora Morris |
| Resurrection Icon Flowers..... | Irene Karavolos, in memory of Charles Siebott and Steve & Kelly Karavolos |
| Resurrection Banner Ribbons..... | The family of Chrissie Georgiadis in her memory |
| Priest's Resurrection Candles | Reggie & Marianne Bonfield, for the health of family and friends |
| | Athena, Munish, Nicholas & Chrysanthi Grover, in memory of their mother and YiaYia, Helen Balouris |
| Prosforon (Offering Bread)..... | Stacy Dickos, Mary-Magdalene Welsh, Nancy Palamara |
| Myrrh Bearing Women Icon Flowers..... | Eugenia Graser, in memory of her parents Michael & Mary Patsalos |
| Pentecost Icon Flowers | Mary-Magdalene Welsh, in memory of her mother Julia Welsh |

Paschal Lillies

Chris & Kathy Balouris in memory of Father John Androutsopoulos (2 plants)
Chris & Kathy Balouris in memory of Helen Balouris (2 plants)
Pamela Bolkovac in memory of her parents Nick & Mary Bolkovac (3 plants)
Reggie & Marianne Bonfield in memory of John and Mary Bonfield
The Bonfield & Chapas Families in memory of Frank and Anne Chapas
Cindy Morris Criss..... for the health of the Morris family (5 plants)
Frank & Katina Erdeljac..... in memory of Mike and Theologia Alexiades
Frank & Katina Erdeljac.....in memory of Mary Alexiades
John & Georgia Franciscus in memory of George and Betty Beckas (2 plants)
Connie Fries.....for the health of family & friends
Eugenia Graser in memory of her husband Robert Graser
Eugenia Graserin memory of her parents Michael & Mary Patsalos
Kristina Johnsonin memory of her parents Stella & Homer J. Johnson
Kristina Johnson in memory of Augustina Makris
Irene Karavolos for the health of her family
James & Bettina Kermes in memory of family and friends
George & Veronica Mellis in memory of Anna and James Mellis (2 plants)
Milita Mellis in memory of Constantine Metropulos
Penny & Jeff Mercadante in memory of George and Elaine Christ (2 plants)
Arlene Metropulosin memory of her husband Dean Metropulos
Matt & Nancy Palamara.....for the health of the Anh and Palamara Families
George & Rhea Pantelakis in memory of their parents John & Maria Pantelakis and John & Stavroula Scopelitis
James Sicalias in memory of his mother Bessie Cocheres Sicalias
Kirk & Fran Stephen.....in memory of their beloved parents Peter, Vi and Clesson (2 plants)
Anthony & Aspasia Zissis..... in memory of our parents Anna and Fotie
Anthony & Aspasia Zissis.....in memory of our parents Vasiliki and George ❖



GRIEF: A UNIVERSAL EMOTION

The Holy Trinity Bereavement Ministry

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



Can I see
another's woe,
And not be
in sorrow, too?
Can I see
another's grief,
And not seek
for kind relief?

William Blake
English Poet and Painter
18th Century



Giving support or advice, whether as a therapist, parent, or loved one, is like planting seeds. You may not know right away whether the seeds will take. But if you're patient and trust the process, perhaps something beautiful will grow.

Michele A. Reiss, Ph.D.

We all experience grief and loss at various times in our lives. Whether it's the loss of a parent, spouse, sibling, relative, friend or beloved pet, grief leaves a hole in our heart for some time. And I say "some time" because we hopefully will not be in an extreme state of grief forever. Realistically, however, grief could last for months, a year or several years depending on the individual who is grieving, the support he or she receives and the faith in God to heal. One thing is for sure: the absence of that loved individual remains with us throughout our lifetime. But it is only through our strong Orthodox Christian faith—which teaches us we will indeed be reunited with our loved one in the Resurrection—that grief can be transformed into joy.

In the holy of season of Lent, our Greek Orthodox Faith leads us through experiencing grief in the Holy Friday services as we participate the sorrowful Crucifixion and death of our beloved Lord, Jesus Christ—only to find ourselves lifted to hope and joy with the news of His Resurrection on Pascha. How can this grief turn to joy so quickly? Our Savior's death and Resurrection is the "pattern" or the "prototype" that those of us with faith can embrace in our deepest state of grief.

This will not bring our loved one back to us in this life in the same three days Jesus did. Our loss will still be felt in our everyday activities as we look at belongings that remind us of her, miss her during our celebrations, feel her absence in our household. But it does present to us the invitation to engage in that challenge of faith.

What I do know as a therapist is that we must feel our grief. We must mourn, cry,



Holy Trinity Bereavement Ministry Session
October 5, 2020

stamp our feet and allow ourselves to feel all the diverse feelings that may change throughout the course of a day, as well as to acknowledge the emptiness and loneliness that may engulf us. But, we don't need to do it alone. Nor should we avoid looking into what is normal to feel and experience at this time or to accept that indeed we may need more help to get through these difficult times.

Grief is manifested in physical, social, emotional, spiritual and psycho-social dimensions. It is absolutely necessary to take care of ourselves in the best possible way at this time and seek professional help and social support to stay mentally and physically healthy. It takes work to get through this process. According to Lillian Meyers, Ph.D., a grief specialist, "Grief is what happens on the inside. Mourning is what happens on the outside. Mourning is working through the grief response with intentionality."

Although it is known that a good support system will help tremendously during the bereavement process, sadly everyone does not have access

to one. Some may not have friends or relatives to turn to for help. Since grief is such a personal emotion, various family members may not experience death in the same way. Others may find that their relatives or friends may not even want to talk about the loss after the funeral and the days that follow. To them, the deceased have simply disappeared. As time goes on, many will say to the person who is still grieving, "It's time to get over it", or "You need to move on with your life." This often may leave the grieving person embarrassed and guarded in her speech while feeling abandoned, misunderstood and so very alone.

As with any situation that evokes sadness, anxiety and depression, being able to change our thoughts and thus change our emotions (practiced as "cognitive behavioral therapy") is an important part of healing. Especially as time goes on, the thoughts of how horrible we feel because of the loss can be changed to how blessed we feel to have had that person in our lives. The horrible events that led to death can be replaced by the joyful

memories of good times together. Staying in the moment and practicing mindfulness can help us get through what could have been a very dark day. Pick up the phone and talk to someone who is supportive. I call that "putting money in the bank" for them, because someday that person may need support with something also and you will be there for her! Take time to write in a journal. Just externalizing your feelings and thoughts can bring relief. Get out of the house and take a walk, play with a pet or go to a movie. Never forget to pray. God is always listening.

The Visitation Ministry at Holy Trinity realized that there was a need to address the grieving process for our members and the community as well. So, last year a group was formed utilizing professionals in the health and mental health fields and a parishioner who had gone through the grief process with the loss of her spouse. The group meets once a month on the first Monday of the month. From 6-6:30 PM we host a social time to casually meet and greet and enjoy re-



Bereavement Ministry Volunteers
(L-R): Anita Sinicrope-Maier, Arlene Metropulos, Maria Mason, Jonathan Kohan



“Grief is what happens on the inside. Mourning is what happens on the outside. Mourning is working through the grief response with intentionality.”

Lillian Meyers, Ph.D.

freshments. If you cannot come that early, it's ok. We start the group at 7:00. From 7:00-8:30pm, the group watches a short video on various topics involving the grieving process. This is followed by a discussion of the video's topic and any concerns, questions, or happenings that the attendee's wish to process with the leaders and peers who also resonate with each other's concerns.

This is a very non-threatening and warm group that is filled with com-

passion, empathy and understanding. No one should be afraid to attend. No concern is too little or too big for us to discuss. Arlene Metropulos, who lost her beloved husband Dean three years ago, is one of the group's facilitators, and she shares her experience of grief after Dean's intense bout of cancer and his subsequent passing. She stills grieves his loss although she agrees it is not always as painful as it was the first two years. “My greatest pain is that I just miss him,” she says. She was used to doing everything with him. Her favorite time of day was when they just cuddled in bed at night. “Just being able to reach out my foot and touch his toe was so comforting to me.” Her family—composed of daughters, grandchildren and a great grandchild—are super supportive. But the void created by the loss of her husband will always be there for her. “I have learned so much myself from this group,” Arlene says. “I just love everything about it and the people here.”

Jonathan Kohan, one of the two main

group leaders, has worked in mental health for many years both in an agency and in private practice. He has also spent many years working with hospice so he understands the pain that families go through both in sickness and in death. Jonathan is a deeply spiritual person who was received into the Greek Orthodox Church a few years ago. He was quick to volunteer to teach and minister to this group, and he is not afraid to share his own losses (sometimes with tears), such as that of his sister and best friend. His words are compassionate and his tone is soothing.

As a therapist of 35 years in non-profit work and private practice, I have experienced families going through grief at all stages. My Greek heritage and family taught me to not be afraid of openly grieving. My family talks about the deceased as if they were still present. I had often thought a grief group would be so beneficial for our church. Just as I was going to talk to Father John about my desire to somehow be a part of this mission, Amy Armanious told me that she was thinking of starting a group as part of the Visitation Ministry that she heads! No coincidence that I brought this up to her at coffee hour. That's how God works. I was thrilled that I could become a part of this effort.

Jonathan and I rotate leading the group every month. Some of the clients I have treated in therapy may have never gotten to grieve their losses, because they were either “too young” in their families' eyes or their family was not sensitive to the process and death was swept under the rug. In these cases, we may begin working on the grief from the time of sickness to the death of a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or even a pet

and openly process the feelings they were not able to acknowledge often ten, twenty or thirty years earlier. It is never too late to grieve. And, often, problems that seemingly had nothing to do with loss are resolved as they are led and given permission to grieve. One of our faithful group members has several members of her family that she still grieves for, but her immediate family does not seem interested to talk about it anymore. She adds another dimension to the group.

Amy was the impetus to making this group happen. For that we are all very grateful. Her years in nursing, working with hospice and as one who designs programs in her “day job” makes her a great addition to our team. She had researched other groups and how they functioned before we even had our first team planning meeting. With respectful input from all of us, however, we have made this group our special design which we hope meets the needs of our Holy Trinity community.

Maria Mason attended group to perhaps learn what could enhance her nursing and hospice work. It wasn't long before it became evident that she was an asset to the group and we could use her more efficiently as a co-facilitator for a group leader. So Maria and Arlene rotate every month as a support to myself or Jonathan.

Almost every week we seem to have memorial services for our church community. During these memorials, we mourn members of our church or family members who have passed away anywhere from 40 days to several years ago. We sensitively invite those family members and friends to join us in our Bereavement Ministry. Even if they don't initially feel they “need” the group to deal with their grief, they may have something from their experiences they could share



“My Greek heritage and family taught me to not be afraid of openly grieving. My family talks about the deceased as if they were still present.”

with others who are suffering, because they have no support system or people in their lives that understand grief. One member, who I will call Helen (for reasons of confidentiality which we practice at all times) tells us every week that “she does not know what she would do without our group”. The anniversary of her husband's death was last month. We mourned with her and acknowledged her pain. We gave her hope for the af-

terlife reunion. We prayed together and taught her new ways to deal with her despair. She has never missed a group since we began last Spring. “I look forward to this group meeting all month long. I have no one else to talk to about my sadness,” says Helen, “even in my church.” Although she is not a member of Holy Trinity, Helen's priest referred her to the group.

All are welcome to come at any stage of grieving. Bring a friend. It is certain that at some time in our life, we will all experience the loss of one or more loved ones. Although we will never be able to eliminate grief altogether, we can hopefully learn how to get through it “better” with the support of fellow Christians and people who truly care. ❖

Comments, feedback or just want to say thank you for this article? Contact Anita via email at pened1@aol.com



Sometimes we just need a hug!



Katerina Balouris | North Allegheny High School | Penn State

Katerina is a 4-year North Allegheny honor student. She was basketball team captain and a 3-year varsity letter winner, and their team won the WPIAL championship in 2017, 2018 & 2020.

She has been active all her life at Holy Trinity Church, including Church School, the Greek Dance troupe, the Greek Festival and GOYA, where she was the 2019-2020 president. Katerina attended St. Nicholas Greek school and danced in the Arkadi Maleme Cretan Association Dance Troupe.

Petros Balouris | Pine-Richland High School | Michigan State

Petros graduated as a 4-year Highest Honor Roll student and Merit Scholar. He was active in Spanish Club, Student Government and basketball.

As a life-long Holy Trinity member, he attended Church School, mission trips, summer camp and Ionian Village. Petros participated in the Greek Dance troupe, HOPE, JOY and GOYA, served as an Acolyte and volunteered for the Greek Festival. He plans to major in special education.



Christian Georgiadis | North Allegheny High School | Villanova

Christian was active in many NA clubs and activities, including hockey, the Investment Club, French Club, the Wind Ensemble, the PMEA Band & Orchestra and he was president of the Young Republican Club.

At Holy Trinity, Christian participated in HOPE, JOY and GOYA, where he was Vice-President. He has been an Acolyte since age 8 and served the Greek Festival as a volunteer and Greek Dancer. He is majoring in Finance and plans to work as an Investment Banker.

Chloe Germanos | Fox Chapel Area High School | Miami University

Chloe graduated as a 4-year Honor Roll student at Fox Chapel, where she was a member of Future Business Leaders of America, Environmental Club, History Club, Latin Club, STEM Outreach Club, Middle Eastern Student Union, and Best Buddies Club.

She has been a lifetime participant in Church School, youth ministries and GOYA as well as summer camp and Ionian Village. Chloe has volunteered for Greek Dance, the Festival, and local and international mission work. She plans to major in Chemical Engineering.

**Luci Morris | North Allegheny High School | University of Delaware**

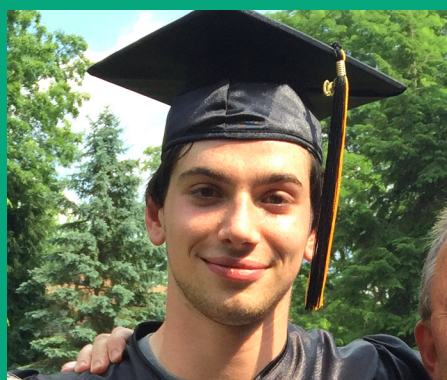
Luci has been on the North Allegheny Varsity Cheerleading team for 4 years, the competition cheerleading team for 3 years, and was a captain this past year. She been a scholar athlete for 4 years. Luci participated in Track and Field, DECA, Art Club, and the Tiger Thon.

She has participated in many Holy Trinity activities such as basketball/volleyball, Church School, Greek Dance and the Festival. She has been GOYA Recording Secretary for 2 years and has attended Camp Nazareth and Ionian Village. She will major in Marketing.

Sam Passodelis | North Allegheny High School | William and Mary

Sam is a 4-year All Academic Scholar Athlete and an AP Scholar with Honor. He competed in club soccer for 10 years and played on the NA Varsity Soccer team, where he earned two varsity letters. Sam played trumpet in both the NA Jazz 1 and Honors Wind Ensembles. He was also a Key Club International Distinguished Member.

He has been active at Holy Trinity Church through Church School, GOYA, basketball and fellowship activities and has also volunteered for the Greek Festival for many years.

**Theo Scoumis | North Allegheny High School | Youngstown University**

Theo was active in sports at North Allegheny, including receiving a 4-year in Track and Field, 2 years of wrestling and being a Tae Kwon Do Second Degree Black Belt. He has also played violin since Second Grade and was in the NA Orchestra.

He is a life-long participant in Holy Trinity Church School and has been involved in GOYA basketball, the Greek Dance troupe and has served as an Acolyte. He has also volunteered as a summer camp counselor. He will major in Biomedical Engineering.

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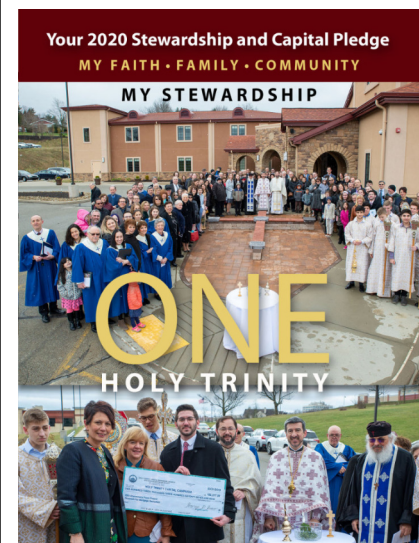
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STEWARDSHIP: THE CHOICES WE MAKE

The Stewardship Ministry would like to thank those who have continued to support the church in these areas. Your commitment to “weather the storm” is greatly appreciated as you made a “choice” at the beginning of the year with your individual pledge.

| YEAR | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| NUMBER OF PLEDGES | 244 | 281 | 266 |
| AVERAGE PLEDGE | 1,433 | \$1,307 | \$1,359 |
| PLEDGED TOTAL | \$349,760 | \$367,320 | \$361,591 |
| PLEDGED OFFERINGS | \$298,529 | \$263,028 | \$262,649 |
| NON-PLEDGED OFFERINGS | \$34,235 | \$28,072 | \$30,866 |

All figures as of the beginning of November each year

Every day we are faced with the opportunity to make choices. These choices have an impact on every area of our lives, so we must give them the attention they deserve. The complexity of these choices can be difficult and we need God’s guidance to help us stay on track and fulfill the mission.

In reference to the mission of the church, those choices sometimes are not easy to make as they often place us in a sacrificial position and we must decide how we are going to fulfill those choices. God places us in these types of situations to test our faith in order for us to grow. During this pandemic we have all been faced with difficult choices and the effects of this situation will be felt longer than we anticipated.

We still have many challenges ahead of us that will impact our Time, Talents and Treasures. Many “material” needs come to the surface, and unexpected obstacles that need to be addressed. With that in mind, the Stewardship Ministry would like to thank those who have continued to support the church in these areas. Your commitment to “weather the storm” is greatly appreciated as you made a “choice” at the beginning of the year with your individual pledge. We fully understand there are also some of you who were impacted to the point where you had to make some tougher choices. Please keep in mind, the church understands and we pray God continues to provide for you and your families during these difficult times.

In the graph below, you see our current status, in terms of where we stand financially with our stewardship, and as compared to prior years. With the pandemic, we have experienced a bit of a slow-down in pledges and donations, as the trend shows. But most of you, thankfully, have kept your promise to the church and taken advantage of the various new ways to give. Our future goal remains: that funds received through tithes, pledges and offerings will fully cover our operating/capital expenditure budgets, and other finances received from other sources (such as the festival) will be able to fully support – and grow – our many worthwhile Ministries that God has put us here to provide. We are not there yet. We project that our members’ contributions will cover about two-thirds of the budget this year. As personal finances are restored, please remember your commitment to your church. The choices we make as a church are also sacrificial in nature and are dependent on the faithfulness of all. We look forward to seeing you all back in church as each personal situation permits. May the Lord continue to draw us all closer to Himself now and in the days ahead. ❖

LOSS, GRIEF & THE HOLIDAYS

By Anita Sinicrope Maier, MSW



The holidays can be a particularly difficult time for many, especially if you have lost loved ones and are grieving for that loss. Nothing will seem the same without their presence. Rituals and traditions will not feel right without their participation. It is important to realize that this is truly a new beginning which may mean adaptations in order to create a new way of doing things. Family and friends may or may not understand the rollercoaster emotions you are experiencing and may try to 'take control' of your time and what you will be doing. You must be your own best advocate and decide which events you will attend and how you will participate so that your comfort and desires become known and respected by all.

The following are some suggestions to help you do advance planning for the holiday season:

- ▶ benefit will not only be for you but also for the people who provide the help. Someday you may be able to return the favor as loss is inevitable for all of us.
- ▶ Allow your loved one to be a part of the holiday. Talk about them. Share pictures. Reminisce about good memories with family and friends. Light a candle for them.
- ▶ Pay special attention to good things that happen—even the smallest ones. Feeling gratitude has been shown to be the number one thing that leads to happiness. Don't be afraid to laugh and smile. Grief does not have to be all encompassing. You will not be betraying your loved one when you let yourself feel good things.
- ▶ Say "Thank you God" for the good things that happen. Pray. Prayer will calm and comfort you and God is always there!
- ▶ Be sure to adjust your expectations as to how the holidays will unfold. Things will not be the same so they may not feel right. Create new rituals and traditions that you can call your own. They will become your new "go to" to provide comfort and familiarity, either alone or with others.
- ▶ You may need to shorten your visits with others. Be in touch with anxiety and uncomfortable feelings. Drive yourself to events, if possible, so you can escape early!
- ▶ Reach out and help others. Volunteer at a center that provides food and meals. Invite someone who may be alone to share your holiday. Donate presents for needy children. ❖
- ▶ Be sure to eat, exercise and sleep well. There is nothing that will negatively affect your mood more than food or sleep deprivation. Exercise, however, will produce endorphins that can boost your mood when you are feeling down.
- ▶ As you make your needs known, be sure not to isolate either. It is difficult to distract from negative thoughts when you have too much time alone. Making a schedule will help you manage your time.
- ▶ Don't be afraid of your grief but allow yourself to feel it and then let it go. This is how we heal. Read articles and books on loss; watch a YouTube video; journal your memories and feelings; write a letter to your loved one; talk to them out loud; speak with a professional.
- ▶ Allow yourself to accept help and comfort from others. Reach out to them if they have not offered. The

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Start date: September 2020

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SIRACH, MEECH AND TEENS

HOLY TRINITY YOUNG ADULT CO-HOSTS NEW PODCAST

Dimitri (Meech) Gagianas and Christina Andresen (Teens) reflect on living the wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach. Perfect for your walk to class, your morning drive, or a Bible study with your OCF, this podcast offers practical advice for being faithful to God in any situation.

One of Holy Trinity Church's own young adult parishioners is now on Ancient Faith Radio! Dimitri Gagianas, son of Dr. Peter and Theanne Gagianas, and a recent graduate of Ohio State University, has teamed up with Christina Andresen, Director of Ministries at the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) for weekly podcasts aimed at bringing the wisdom of the Bible to college students and young adults in today's world.

Why focus on the Wisdom of Sirach? Dimitri says he was attracted toward that book because it was written as advice for young people but has timeless wisdom for all ages. "What

struck me the first time I read it was how simple and practical it is."

According to Dimitri, it's a perfect team. Christina holds a Master of Divinity degree from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, so she provides much of the history, commentary and explanations. Dimitri, representing the young adult generation, gets to ask lots of questions and explore what those answers mean in a young adult's life.

The series launched in September and has already released 5 episodes, with titles like "Warnings to the Wise" and "Fearing the Lord." ❖



Dimitri Gagianas

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Over the years, Holy Trinity Church has been blessed to send home-building teams to Project Mexico, leading to 10 homes donated to needy families and lives of missionaries transformed by the experience. Though homebuilding was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic, the needs of this valuable ministry continue. If you are able to help, please consider a donation.

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SERVICE WORKS

Geronda, what are some of the other blessings we receive by being thankful?

St Barsanuphius says that thanking God makes up for our shortcomings and intercedes before God for our weaknesses. If we give ourselves over to the spirit of thanksgiving, God showers upon us even greater blessings, inspiring us to ever-increasing fervor. And there comes a point when we see God's providence everywhere we look. We will thank Him for every breath of air, as we say in one of the prayers during the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The spirit of thanksgiving also leads man to repentance, because he senses that his fallenness stops him from offering such gratitude as is worthy of God.

When we thank Him for them, it is like celebrating our own liturgy before God, similar to the Divine Liturgy. Thanking God generally broadens our heart, and thanking Him for His gifts to our brethren makes them ours so that, in a mysterious way, we are spiritually enriched.

How does being thankful bring blessings to others around us as well?

Whenever we stand before God in prayer we should carry within our hearts our whole family or community, and each of its members in particular: if there are forty of us, forty people should be present in my heart. The Lord enjoins us to be united as one man by His Spirit, that there be no division among us. And if we all have this in mind and live by the same thought, this unity will be given us by God, and no member of the community will be absent from our heart as we stand in prayer.

The Body of Christ is manifest in every community on which God pours out His grace. His gifts are numerous and each member receives a particular charism, Christ Himself being in-

GIVING THANKS IN ALL THINGS

We rely on the prayers and intercessions of the Saints, who are the strong members of the Church. And simply by thanking God for them, we partake of the greatness of their faith, their strength and their spiritual gifts.



Archimandrite Zacharias of Essex

visibly present as the Head of the Body which contains the fulness of His grace. And because the Body is one, its members benefit from each other's strength: the strength of the Head passes to the leg, and the strength of the arm passes to the foot and vice versa. And as the Apostle says, 'Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.'

Every member of our community therefore has a place in my heart as I stand before God in prayer and give

thanks for them. I am then, in a mysterious way, gifted forty times over. And all this without any labour. When we pray, whether in church or in our rooms, we could begin with a prayer such as this:

Lord, I come before You together with all my brethren. Bless us as we stand before You. Make our souls and minds to rejoice in the invocation of Your Holy Name. Pour out Your grace upon us all. Fill our hearts with the great comfort of Your goodness, and let none of us leave Your holy temple without the incorruptible consolation of Your Spirit.

This kind of prayer begets a spirit of unity and draws down on us such blessings that we will not want to stop praying.

As we carry each of our brethren in our hearts, we are enlarged, and the day will come when we bear within ourselves not only the immediate members of our spiritual family but the whole world, even as Christ the New Adam did. We are, all of us, small leaves on the great tree of mankind, and our lives can never be independent of the tree. ❖

Excerpted from
Remember Thy First Love

THE HOLY TRINITY

HERALD

Faith. Family. Community

About the Herald

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

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

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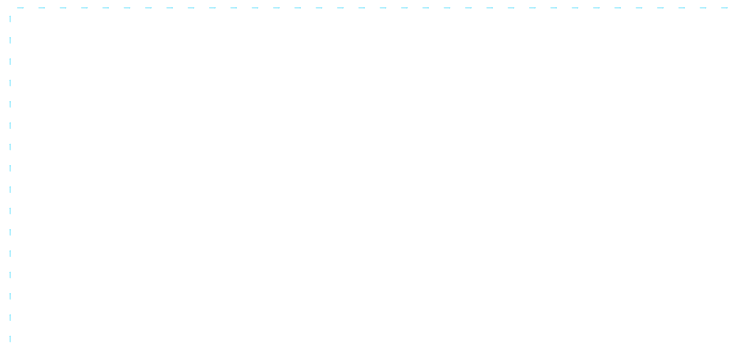
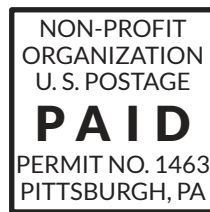
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PRAYER IS...



Payer is union with God and conversation with Him. Prayer maintains the equilibrium of the world, reconciles people to God, produces holy tears, forms a bridge over temptations, and acts as a buttress between us and affliction.

Prayer drives away the struggles of the spirit. It is the blessedness to come. It is an action that will never come to an end.

Prayer is a spring of the virtues, it is an illumination of the mind, it is a curtain to shut out despair, it is a sign of hope, it is victory over depression.

Prayer is a mirror in which we see our steps forward, it is a signpost of the route to follow, it is an unveiling of good things to come, it is a pledge of glory.

Prayer, for one who prays truly, is the soul's tribunal, it is the Lord's judgment on that person now, in advance of the final judgment.

Prayer is the queen of the virtues which summons us with a loud voice and says to us again: "Come to Me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you perfect rest! Take My yoke upon you! You will find peace for your souls and healing for your wounds! For My yoke is easy and can restore the greatest fall" (Matt. 11.28-30).

Let your prayer be very simple. For the tax-collector and the prodigal son just one word was enough to reconcile them with God.

St. John of the Ladder, *Stairway to Paradise*