

St. John's Newsletter

Volume I, Issue I

January 2014

Important Dates

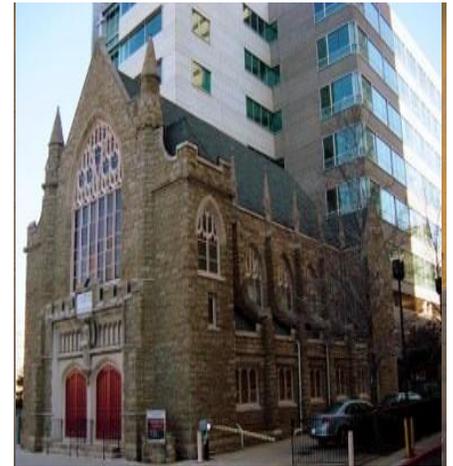
- 5 January: Theophany, Blessing of the Water, Icon Auction.
- 7 January: Parish Council meeting.
- 12 January: 40 day Memorial for Marcy Moore - Icon Auction part 2
- 19 January: 40 day Memorial for Gregory Bendo
- 2 February: Meeting of our Lord in the Temple; Zacchaeus Sunday
- 2 February—Souper-Bowl Sunday!

From The Pastor's Desk

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

New Year's Eve in Philadelphia; the year turns and we all start one more trip around the sun. I am reminded of a New Year's Day spent in London, many years ago, backpacking Europe during one of the coldest winters in decades. A young man, I had left my life in America to try to wrap my head around what had been a very difficult year. My plane had landed at Heathrow Airport in the afternoon on New Year's Eve, and after I checked into a hotel I took a walk. I was determined to stay up until midnight; however, tired from the trip, I was fast asleep by 10:00 o'clock that night.

The next morning, I took another walk – looking for a good breakfast – and found myself walking by St. Faith's Chapel at Winchester Abbey. I was not a believer, but I thought I'd step inside, to get warm if nothing else. A New Year's service was going on, so I sat in one of the back chairs and observed. St. Faith's is not a big chapel, at least in length and width, but it had an enormous arched, cathedral ceiling that spoke – symbolically – of transcendence, a transcendence of something much bigger than me, much bigger than



**Welcome to
St. John Chrysostom
Orthodox Church**

us. After the Gospel reading, the Anglican priest came out and began to speak. It was a good sermon (as sermons go, I thought).

(continued on page 2)

Parish Council Message

It is with great pleasure that I write this message for the first issue of our new Monthly Bulletin. The past few years have been difficult for many of us at St. John Chrysostom. From October 2012 to September of 2013, we were without a full-time

pastor. Working together, we were able to keep the doors open and meet the needs of our parishioners. I'd personally like to thank the parish council, auxiliary council, choir, Sunday School director, teachers and—most importantly—all of you, for keeping our



church going during this transitional period.

(continued on page 2)

From the Pastor's Desk

We thank God for our good fortune, and say, in the words of Archbishop Nikon,

"Welcome home Father Brooks!"

At the end, he wished us all "a good year, a holy year, a blessed year". I was struck by the term "blessed" which recalls the Beatitudes. Our word "blessed" is translated from the New Testament Greek word "makarios", which means "happy". Indeed, "happy" is a better translation. I thought it odd that the priest would

wish us to have a happy year because, at the time, I did not associate happiness with the Church. Years went by but his sermon – about holiness and happiness – stuck with me.

I am older now; hopefully wiser. Changes have taken place. I not only converted to Christianity; I became a priest in the Orthodox

Church. I have learned that happiness and the Church go hand in hand, or certainly should. Just as those of us who are parents understand that we want our children to be happy, I understand that God wants his children to be happy. He also, at least according to Scripture, wants us to be "holy",

(Continued page 3)

Parish Council Message, Continued

Also, we are extremely grateful to Father Stephen Siniari, pastor at our sister church, Saints Peter and Paul, for the assistance and guidance he provided over the past year.

At the semiannual parish meeting on March 3, 2013, parish council received a mandate to obtain the services of a full-time pastor. Our parishioners, while keenly aware of the financial implications of committing to a full-time pastor, knew that our community needed a spiritual leader in order to grow, and thrive, in the decades to come. With that mandate in hand, the parish council began the process—a process that didn't, in fact, take very long at all. The right person for the job turned out to have not been very far from us all along.

Father Brooks Ledford served at St. John Chrysostom from January 2001

to August 2002. Although it was a relatively short period of time, we had an opportunity to become familiar with Father Brooks. When he left our parish for an opportunity to return to his native Texas and a position as director of a homeless shelter, some hearts were broken here in Philadelphia.

With the Blessing of Archbishop Nikon, we reconnected with Father Brooks, and he served at St. John's during Holy Week and Pascha.

Everything went extremely well for the ten days Father Brooks was at our parish. Again with Archbishop Nikon's Blessing, we presented Father Brooks with a proposal to have him return to St. John Chrysostom as our full-time pastor. He immediately accepted, and began work September 1, 2013.

It seems this reconnection was meant to be. Over the past several months with

Father Brooks as our pastor, a renewed feeling of love and goodwill has permeated our church. Our parishioners, the most loving in the entire Arch diocese, have embraced Father Brooks—and he them.

We now look to our sisters and brothers for your assistance as we move forward. We look for your involvement, your commitment, your enthusiasm, and, most of all, your love as we come together with a vision for the future. With Father Brooks as our spiritual leader, I am confident we are headed in the right direction!

We thank God for our good fortune, and say, in the words of Archbishop Nikon, "Welcome home Father Brooks!"

Yours in Christ,

Donna Dimitri

From the Pastor's Desk

which is our word from Old English which means "whole, uninjured, sound, healthy, complete". As we begin a new year, may we all strive to be both holy and happy, and even if, along the way, there are bumps on our journey, struggles, difficulties, even minor defeats, may we all get quickly back on the road and strive for what our Heavenly Father wants for us.

Have a very blessed year!



2013 Christmas Pageant

Home Blessings

It is traditional in the Orthodox Church for the priest to go to each household of his parishioners and bless their homes. This takes place, typically, after the Feast of Theophany, but can be celebrated at any time of the year. The blessing of the homes, of course, is more than a quaint tradition; it is an opportunity for the priest to visit and pray with the individuals, couples, and families in their own homes.

In the early days, priests could actually do this by walking to the homes in the village or town.

Now, it is a somewhat daunting task, especially for St. John's in Philadelphia because we are so spread out. Be patient. I will get to everyone. You will be contacted by e-mail or phone as to when I will be in your area. If you are not available during that time, I will make special arrangements to come at another time. It is, after all, an important time for the priest and Parishioners.

I look forward to visiting and praying with all of you in the weeks ahead.

Fr. Brooks

What to have ready:

- Icon
- Candle
- Small bowl for the Holy Water
- List of family names to be prayed for (one column for the living; one for deceased).



**Super-Bowl
Sunday
February 2, 2014**

Souper-Bowl Sunday

That is no typo! Mark your calendars for Sunday, February 2, 2014 for our first St John's "Soup-er-bowl Sunday". During coffee hour on Superbowl Sunday, the church will be selling homemade soups for \$1.00 per cup. That's right just a dollar. This is a great opportunity to treat the entire family and not break the bank! All proceeds will go to support Covenant House. Larger containers will also be

available to purchase to take home to enjoy later that night during the big game. We will be asking for donations of your best homemade soup or chili to donate to the event. Please see Linda Biando if you are able to bring in your favorite soup.

With this cold winter upon us, what can be better than soup to warm us?

And how much better to enjoy warm soup while helping those in need?

Albanian Women's Day

It's again that time of the year! It's the time for our fabulous Albanian Women's Dance Party. As everyone joining in these last few years has said 'This is the best Albanian Women's Dance Party in Town'!!! We'll have delicious food, great company, superb Albanian music and all for only \$40 donation. Come and join us March

8th 2014 at 7:00+ p.m. at our church hall. Tickets are \$40 for adults and \$10 for children.

Erdhi perseri koha për mbasditen më të bukur të vitit. Festën e Gruas! Të gjithë të ftuarit gjatë viteve të kaluara kanë thënë me të drejtë se 'Ky organizim, ka qënë festimi më i bukur në të gjithë zonën e Phila-

delphias'. Ushqim të shkëlqyer mes shoqërisë tuaj dhe me muzikë 100% shqiptare. Ejani dhe festoni me ne ditën kushtuar nënave, motrave, grave tona më 8 Mars 2014 duke filluar në orën 7mbasdite në katin e dytë të kishës. Biletat janë \$40 për të rritur dhe \$10 për fëmijë.



**What fun! The
Ladies Club
Dinner - 2013!**



Stewardship News

Each year as we welcome in the new year we also ask for your monetary pledge to plan the churches annual budget. Because we receive no outside financial support, this is how we pay our priest's salary, the church utilities and expenses, purchase candles, make donations and pay for our Archdiocese contribution, \$8,690.00 in 2013-2014. Though your monetary pledge is vital to keeping St. Johns operat-

ing, we also need your stewardship through your time and talents.

Stewardship can include singing with the choir, greeting fellow parishioners as they enter, keeping the building in good repair, helping with the Sunday school, visiting shut ins, assisting with the website, attending church council meetings, serving on church committees, attending and helping with

fund raising events such as the annual golf outing, signing up for coffee hour, making mesh and more.

As you contemplate your 2014 pledge, please also ask yourself if there is anything else that you can do to help based on your time and talents? If your answer is yes, please talk with Fr. Brooks or any council member if you would like to know more. Many thanks for your consideration!



Parishioner Pledges - 2013 - Thank you very much!

Rose Adams	Michael & Lisa Costa Levitsky	Theodore & Nancy Gregory
Michele Anderson	Gentian Dano	Elvira & Erion Gusho
Donna & Scott Balara	Gregory & Christine Dardaris	Kymberlee & Sandy Haberman
Ned Basha	Michael & Carolyn Dardaris	Vangjel & Margarita Haxhistasa
Andre Bendo	Robert Dardaris	Karen Kane
James & Paula Bendo	Richard & Rosemary Detskas	Katheen Kane
Pandora Bendo	Theodor & Fiori Diamanti	Katherine & Jerry Kane
Leonard & Entela Beqiraj	Dean Dickos	Marjana & Zisi Kashari
David & Linda Biando	Michael Cosmo & Donna Dimitri	Mark & Tish Klus
Edmund & Veronika Bitri	Petrit & Fotika Disha	Marjana Kokalari
Nilda & Spartak Brahillari	George & Teri Douris	Peters & Valbona Kokalari
Richard Burdumy	Ervin & Yllka Lena Elbasani	Anatol & Diana Kondili
John & Janice Cokos	Alexandra & Robert Fiss	Marsel Kosova
Margarita Sevi & Alfred Coni	John Ghicondes	Linda & Phil Kosta
Diane & Steve Coraluzzi	Steven Ghicondes	Tommy Highland & Stephanie Kosta
Alexander Cosmo	James & Roxane Ghicondey	Fjorentina Lakuriqi
Kristin Cosmo	Peter & Nancy Ghicondey	Anna Laska
Steven Cosmo	Michae & Marjeta Gjogu	Paul & Lisa Laska
Traci Cosmo	Ann Gjoka	Mary Legidakes
Katherine Costa	Viljan & Eleni Gore	Diane & Theodore Lescas
Phillip & Vivian Costa	Ariana & Michael Grabovari	Janice & Mike Leyden



**Pillars of
St. John
Chrysostom**



**Pillars of
St. John
Chrysostom**

Parishioner Pledges 2013 (continued)

Jorjaq Lico	Tim & Donna Pappas	Betty Subashi
Louis Mallios	Candace Pepenelli	Pierre Chanoine & Reem Tarazi
Peter & Diane Mallios	Ernest & Jeannie Pescatore	Erin & Gered Thack
Christopher Manosis	Anthony & Julie Petsis	Phyllis Thomas
Jani & Adriana Mara	Koco & Mimoza Priftanji	Eris & Misto Tiko
Aleksander & Rozeta Marini	Evangeline Prifti	Dorothy Tomassini
Gentjan Marku	George & Nikoleta Prifti	George & Margaret Touros
Katherine Melito	Marinela Prifti	Ida & Gjenci Trebicka
Vladimir & Susan Melnik	Arjan & Albana Qendro	Elisa Bano & Gjergj Vero
Marcena Moore	James Robo/ Meredith Trim & Family	Jennifer & Leonard Waldhauser
Dhimiter & Entela Ndrecka	John & Virginia Rubis	Elinda Xhemaj
Kristina Gore & Klarent Ngjelo	William Rubis	Colleen & Sergio Xhoxhi
Jennifer Monska (Tom) Niedbala	Lluiza & Niko Salavachi	Vasil & Greta Xhoxhi
Linda Notskas	Kathryn Sappas	Cynthia & Gus Zarelli
Mary Louise Notskas	Bessie Satir	Tom & Katherine Zoidis
Rosemary Notskas	Gole & Lefkothe Sevi	Marge & Nick Zoto
Marge & Steve Nowmos	Ilir & Lorena Sevi	
Kostandin & Oanh Pajcini	Lili Shallapi	
Eduard & Elena Papa	Gjorgji & Prene Shegani	
Ilirjan & Fiori Papa	Jim & Elaine Spiro	
Pandeli & Dodona Papa	Pandeli Spiro	
Mark Pappas	Aleko & Valentina Stefani	

**Sunday
School Trip to
the Aquarium**



Our New Newsletter

We are happy to produce our first Newsletter in some time. Hopefully, this will serve as a way to communicate more fully and connect with each other. I am still learning this process, so please be patient, I would also like to invite anyone who is interested to make suggestions for what they would like to see or know and any possible contributions. Thanks, and God bless.

Fr. Brooks

**ST. JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM
ALBANIAN
ORTHODOX
CHURCH**

237 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
Phone: 215-563-0979

We're on the Web!
<http://www.stjohnsphila.org>

Lay Leadership

Donna Dimitri
Lay Contact
chairperson@stjohnsphila.org

Diane Lescas
Choir Director
choirdirector@
stjohnsphila.org

Steve Coraluzzi
Sunday School Director
Sundayschooldirector
@stjohnsphila.org



Schedule of Services & Directions:

10:00 AM Sunday Mornings— Divine Liturgy (*refreshments follow in the church hall*)

7:00 PM Wednesday Evenings in Great Lent—Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts
(*followed by potluck dinner and discussion*)

Confessions are heard before or after Divine Liturgy or by appointment.
Contact Fr. Brooks for additional information.

Please contact Father Brooks at the church office, 215-563-0979 or via email
fr.brooks@stjohnsphila.org for information about the services, baptisms,
marriages, hospital or home visitations.

From Route 95 North or South

Get onto Route 676 [Vine Street Expressway] heading West, get off at the North
15th Street exit, go South on North 15th Street, turn right onto Vine Street, turn left
onto North 17th Street [one way], St. John's is on your left.

Interstate 76 [Schuylkill expressway] to Interstate 676 [Vine Street expressway]

Get off at Broad Street exit, left onto Broad Street North, go three blocks, turn left
onto Wood Street, turn left onto North 15th Street, turn right onto Vine Street, turn
left onto North 17th Street [one way], St. John's is on your left.

Interstate 76 [Schuylkill expressway] to Springarden exit

Go to Art Museum and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, turn right onto Logan Circle/
Logan Square, after you pass in front of Sts. Peter and Paul RC Cathedral turn right
on Vine Street, go one block to 17th Street, turn right [it is one way south], St. John's
is on your left.

Parish History

Since 1931 twelve
priests have served St.
John's which is a parish
of the Albanian Archdio-
cese [Boston] within the
OCA [Orthodox Church in
America] under
Metropolitan Tikhon.

Today St. John's is very
much a "family parish"
with approximately 200
family units. The last
several years have
shown an upward
trend in Sunday School
to 70 this year. The
mission thrust exists on
three fronts: the present
families, the immediate



neighborhood and the
"New American-Albanian
families." Although its
families live throughout
the Greater Philadelphia
area, St. John

Chrysostom Albanian
Orthodox Church is a

community committed to
the witness of God:

Father, Son and Holy
Spirit and the fullness of
the Orthodox Faith in
the City of Philadelphia.