

FEBRUARY 2017



# Voice of St. George

**SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
OF THE DESERT**

**74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA**



Inside this issue

## “O, MY SOUL!”

In 1969 Elizabeth Kubler-Ross published her classic book entitled, *On Life After Death*. She had compiled a series of experiences shared from people who had come close to dying. In these near-death experiences, people gave a common narrative in which they felt as though they went through a “tunnel” and began approaching a bright light. Many shared common experiences of hovering over their “dead” bodies, having knowledge of the people around their bodies at the time of their “death” and of the related events. These near-death experiences led Elizabeth-Kubler Ross to state: “As soon as your soul leaves the body, you will immediately realize that you can perceive everything happening at the place of dying, be it in a hospital room, at the site of an accident, or wherever you left your body.” (*On Life After Death*, pg. 4).

In 1975, Dr. Raymond Moody wrote a book, entitled, *Life After Life*, in which he wrote: “[People] report seeing a dying person’s spirit leaving the body, or they report leaving their own bodies and rising upward toward a light, with spirits of their dying loved ones. Some even witness the life review.” (pg. 178).

By 1980 the Orthodox Christian priest, Fr. Seraphim Rose, wrote the following in his book, *The Soul After Death*: “Non-Orthodox texts...when it is a matter of actual experiences that are being described (and not mere opinions and interpretations), often provide striking confirmations of Orthodox truths.” (pg. 2). Fr. Seraphim goes on to state that his chief concern was to present a contrast between Orthodox Christian teaching regarding the state of the soul in relationship to Christ our God, as compared to the macabre occult teachings.

More currently, the vastly popular book, *Heaven is for Real*, by Todd Burpo in 2010 relates the narrative of a four year old boy, Colton Burpo, who experienced life after death.

Fr. Lawrence Farley’s article, “What Happens to the Soul After Death?” was posted on the Orthodox Christian Network website in July of 2014. He cites the book, *Life After Death According to the Orthodox Tradition*, written by Jean-Claude Larchet. Larchet picks up from the writing of Fr. Seraphim Rose, who gave detailed accounts from Orthodox Christian Saints regarding the life of the soul after death. As if by one voice, the Saints of the Church affirm that the soul leaves the body, as has been reported by modern professionals in their carefully submitted documentations. While the experiences of the “tunnel” and the bright light are not re-

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### Mailing Address

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**-Fr. Theodore Pantels, Pastor**  
**-Dcn. Euthym Kontaxis, M.D.**

futed, that which is stressed is the vision of the Last Judgment. In fact, the Saints have a common understanding from their own spiritual lives. Jean-Claude Larchet notes that many saintly figures have shared experiences: “[Eventually] one sees one’s guardian angel and possibly the saints, who may come to welcome the departing Christian soul as it steps from this world to the next. [Yet,] the terrifying ordeal of facing the demons is the subject of much patristic material and many of the Church’s prayers for the dying deal with this.” ([www.myocn.net](http://www.myocn.net)).

It is not unrealistic for Orthodox Christians to suggest that the soul’s origins are founded on the divine in-breathing of God into the first-created humans. Much like human DNA, the soul is part of the make-up of every human being entering the world upon conception.

We note that it is free will that makes us truly human and what we do with our free will is what affects the condition of the soul. Prayer constantly helps us to “freely will” all things that are pleasing to God. We sincerely try to have a “good defense” at the Judgment.

Upon reading the Communion Prayers, we are given the image of a garment, which alludes to the condition of our soul, as to whether or not it is fit to enter the Kingdom of Heaven: “Should I also dare to go into the Festival Chamber, my robe betrays me, for it is not a festive garment and I shall be by the Angels bound and cast out. Cleanse my soul, O Lord, from pollution, and of Your compassion, save me.”

With the beginning of Great Lent coming upon us on **Clean Monday, February 27th**, the Church reminds us that our first priority is to look into the condition of our souls, with sincere honesty – and, yet, with faith in God’s great love.

“O, my soul, be assured that as God was able to turn Moses’ hand white with disease and cleanse it again, so can God also cleanse and purify a diseased life. Therefore, O, my soul, do not despair of yourself even though infected with many sins.” (Ode 6 of the Canon of St. Andrew with the Great Compline Service).  
+FR. THEODORE

## METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY



Beloved Clergy and Parish Councils of the Metropolis of San Francisco,

*“...keep the unity of the Spirit in a bond of Peace.” (Ephesians 4:3)*

Each year the clergy and leaders of our parishes gather for our annual Clergy-Laity Assembly which provides us with the opportunity to learn and grow in our faith; gain new insights into the ministries and programs offered by our Metropolis, and take an active role in the governance of our Church.

**The 2017 Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly will be held at Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center in Dunlap, CA, beginning on Wednesday, April 26 at 1:00 p.m. and concluding on Thursday, April 27 at 3:00 p.m. Our Metropolis Clergy are expected to remain at the Ranch for our Annual Clergy Retreat which will commence immediately following the Assembly and conclude on Friday, April 28 at 2:00 p.m.** As specified in the Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, each parish is expected to have four delegates in attendance at the Clergy-Laity Assembly comprised of the following:

1. The Parish Priest
2. The President of the Parish Council, and in his or her absence, the Vice President, or in his or her absence, any member of the Parish Council designated by it.
3. Two members of the Parish elected by the Parish Assembly.

**Please make sure this important item is placed on the agenda of your upcoming Parish Assembly Meeting so that you may elect these delegates to insure full participation from your parish. A detailed agenda and registration materials will be provided no later than 60 days prior to the convening of the Assembly.**

The Assembly will explore the recent Holy and Great Council in Crete, its historical significance, and its impact on our future. We will also share

*Continued on the next page – – –>*



*METROPOLIS CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY, cont.*

information on the growth and expansion of our Metropolis Ministries which are flourishing, thanks to the efforts of our Strategic Plan.

I look forward to the active participation of all of our communities. Please come with an open mind and an open heart, ready and willing to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and be a beacon of God's love in your parishes.

With Love in Christ,  
+ **METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS**,  
Metropolitan of San Francisco

**2017 GREEK FESTIVAL NEWS**

Our festival food preparations began on Monday, January 9th So far, with the help of our volunteers, 5700 dolmathes were made for the festival, as were 6,000 tyropites.



Photos of the volunteers & food prep are posted in the church hall. Please review the festival preparation calendar and see what days you can volunteer. We need your help!



Pictured above:  
(upper picture) Ladies preparing dolmades.  
(lower picture) Joan Fakinos (left) and Bess Heinrich (right) preparing leaf-wrappings for the dolmades.

Pictured above: Stacey Argyros, Lula Valissarakos, Joan Fakinos, Bess Pressett and Bess Heinrich display one of several pans of prepared dolmades.

**PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS**

Our first General Meeting of the year was held on January 12, 2017. Our treasurer, **Tina Veroulis** gave a comprehensive year-end 2016 report.

**Highlights:**

**Christmas Bake Sale** brought in \$2,268.18  
**Final 2016 donation amount** was \$18,466.89

**January:**

**Taverna Night Dinner Dance** was a success! We had 69 reservations, danced the night away and made some money for our charities. We want to thank the many members who volunteered their time. Our co-chairs were **Linda Petalas, Debbie Vawter, Linda Bozigian, Carol Lyons, Tina Veroulis** and **Linda Kallis**. We want to thank our caterer **George Argyros** and his staff for outstanding food and service. The **Sound Company** with **Nick Krespis** generated our music. Our bartenders were **Doug Lyons** and **Angelo Veroulis**. The dessert was made in house by **Lula Valissarakos, Carol Lyons, Kalitsa Xitco, Joan Fakinos, Bess Heinrich** and **Anna Doubaratzis**. Also helping were Gloria Lehman and Susan Clark. If we have forgotten anyone; the writer apologizes.

Our door prizes were donated by **Chrisanthie Mehas** - Hair by **Christos Hair Care Basket**, **Rhonda Latkovic** - Wine Basket, restaurant gift cards donated by **Stuffed Pizza, Koutouki** and **Si Bon**. Our Grand Prize was a Golf Package for four donated by **Mike Vawter**. See pictures.

**Festival**

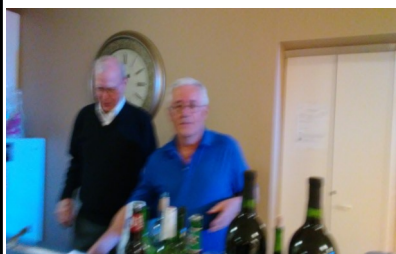
We are already busy preparing food for the Festival. Please check the Food Preparation Schedule on the bulletin board to see what days you can help us. We need at least 12 people per day to keep on schedule.

**Meetings in February**

There will be no Board Meeting or General Meeting in February due to Food Preparation for the Festival ... **Save the Date!** We will be having our **Membership Luncheon on Saturday, March 18.**

— **LINDA KALLIS**,  
Philoptochos President

*PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS, cont. (Taverna Night)*



Pictures from the St. George Philoptochos Annual Taverna Night celebration, January 7, 2017:

Top: Ladies of the Philoptochos begin dancing to popular Greek music. Second from the top: a picture of the many who enjoyed the wonderful Greek-style Taverna Night dinner.



Above left: Doug Lyons, left, chaired the beverages and George Argyros, right, catered the dinner for Taverna Night.

To the left, Fotini and Nick Krespis served as "D.J.s" for the St. George Philoptochos Taverna Night.

AHEPA NEWS



The AHEPA 528 Fr. T.P. Theophilos Scholarship is available for all high school graduates of 2017. For more information regarding the AHEPA Scholarship, visit the chapter website : [www.ahepa528.org](http://www.ahepa528.org), or contact our AHEPA email our 528 Chapter at: [contact@ahempa528.org](mailto:contact@ahempa528.org). Scholarships to be awarded on AHEPA Sunday, May 21st 2017.

Recently, AHEPA 528 did a soft Christmas campaign for Project Mexico and raised \$700 which will be matched by a benefactor.

Our plans for February include:

1. February 8th will be next meeting
2. February 25th is District 20 Mid-winter conference in Tucson AZ.
3. February 25th and 26th will be St. George Greek Festival, Please plan to volunteer for the festival as well as our Chapter 528 Booth.
4. Set up help is needed starting **February 16th through 25th** as well as break down on the **27th**.

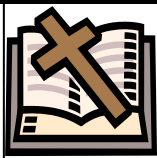
Please consider helping with this task as able bodies to do the work as needed. We need everybody and we can also help manage the hired workers so that the festival will be as great as it always has.

Also, please consider joining AHEPA Chapter 528 and keep Hellenism strong in the desert through philanthropy and brotherhood. Men of faith need to bond together for our traditions and leaders of the faith need to set positive role models for the community.

– WYNN STORTON,  
AHEPA Chapter 528 President



**SUNDAY SCHOOL** – Just as we express our Christian faith by means of bread, wine, water, music and other symbols, so also do we express our faith through icons. Icons are symbols, not idols. Icons are venerated, not worshipped. When we venerate icons, the honor is directed to Christ, or the Saint on the icon, not to the wood, paint or colors of the icon.



The power of icons is not magical or mechanical, but spiritual. It is the working of God's grace in the act of a personal expression of faith and through the intercessory prayers of the saints who live in God's glory.

Icons teach us about Christ and his ministry, as well as about the saints and their record of faith. As sacred art, icons are windows to heaven; they seek to symbolize the transfigured cosmos and the victory of redeemed creation by the glory of Christ. In the words of St. John of Damascus: *"the icon is a song of triumph, and a revelation, and an enduring witness to the victory of Saints."*

Make sure that you have icons at home and that you take some time to share them with your family and children. God bless.

– JIM CHRISTOPOULOS

**ST. GEORGE GOLF TOURNAMENT** – Our first official golf tournament meeting was recently held with **George Argyros**, Chairman, and the golf committee members consisting of **Nick Speliopoulos, Doug Lyons, Demos Karas, Tina Veroulis, Rhonda Latkovic, John Petalas, Fr. Ted and Presvytera Pantels.**

The tournament will be held **April 21-22, 2017** at **Desert Willow** in Palm Desert on **Friday** with a **stroke play** format and a steak & rib buffet dinner at the church. **Saturday is a scramble format** with a cocktail hour & sit-down Greek dinner at the church. A raffle and silent auction will also be held. We are accepting donations for the raffle & silent auction. Items must be in new condition. Please see, me, Rhonda Latkovic, if you have an item to donate.

– RHONDA LATKOVIC

## **THE LAST JUDGMENT: THE MEANING OF "MEAT-FARE SUNDAY" (February 19, 2017)**

The Gospel for Meat-Fare Sunday is from Matthew 25:31-46. To tell everyone the truth, the Gospel scares me a lot. We see how the "Son of Man" will segregate all souls, living and dead, at a great Judgment of all. To us, this is the loving Son of God. We do not expect condemnation and judgment from the Son. We expect love and forbearance. But, this passage does frighten me!

We learn something very serious here. One group is welcomed into the Kingdom which has been prepared for them. Why? Because they treated other humans as they should have treated the Lord. Yet, the "goats" have not treated others as they should have treated the Lord. Because of this, they are refused entrance into the Kingdom. What Christ also tells us in this parable is that, as we treat others, God will treat us.

So, where does this place us in this scheme of Judgment? I fear that I do not do well here. We are supposed to treat our neighbor like Christ. We, however, fall short of this.

A priest of our Archdiocese shared a story of a certain pastor of an urban community: *"One Sunday, as people arrived at church, they were horrified to see a homeless man begging for change as they entered their church. Everyone walked by without saying a word to the man. They were a little like the priest and the Levite from Christ's parable of the 'Good Samaritan.' They waited and noted that their pastor seemed to be late. To their surprise, however, the homeless man walked up to the pulpit where he removed his glasses and hat. They all saw that this man was their pastor. Still in tattered and dirty clothes, he began his sermon by saying, 'Today, I want to talk about Christian love.' What a surprise! Do we do any better than those parishioners?"*

We must remember that the most important thing in life for us is concrete and personal love for any human person in Christ. Love is the wonderful discovery of the "person" in any person. Christianity puts the whole emphasis on *now* as the decisive time for love. The parable of

*Continued on the next page – – – -->*

*THE LAST JUDGMENT, continued*

of the Last Judgment is about Christian love—love in Christ Himself. We remember His words, “For in as much as you have done it unto the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me.” (Matthew 25:46).

—MATTHEW DAVIS

**FUNERAL PLOTS / ORTHODOX SECTION**

In a joint effort, Fr. Ted and Fr. David Kruse of the **St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox parish** in Thousand Palms, California are looking into establishing an Orthodox Church Section at Desert Memorial Park Cemetery at the corner of Ramon and DeVall in Cathedral City. The first step in the process is to determine how much interest there is among the Orthodox Christian faithful in the Coachella Valley (Greek Orthodox, Antiochian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, etc). We have the opportunity for burial plots to be purchased together in one area and then bless the ground making it an Orthodox area. We were given a price of **\$1585.00** per plot. Please let Fr. Ted know if you are interested so that he can work with Fr. David in making the appropriate arrangements.

**SCRIP PROGRAM**

The **Scrip Program** is a fundraising effort to benefit churches and charities throughout our nation. By purchasing “Scrip Cards,” people can shop at the stores of their choice, using these cards as credit cards, through which items are purchased, with a percentage of the card-usage going to the church or charity by which one would obtain such a “Scrip Card.”

There are parishes that have gained a substantial increase in income due to the Scrip Program. Initially, it would be of great value for our St. George parishioners to express their interest, as individuals, in participating in this program. Please give your thoughts to Presvytera Pantels, who will also provide more information regarding this program. The goal is to implement Scrip before the advent of the summer season.

**COLORING BOOK GROUP**

Our January coloring session and luncheon was held on Friday, January 13th. We had 15 attendees who enjoyed a lunch of homemade Chicken and Rice soup, an assortment of raw veggies with dip, baked Brie en crouete with crackers or baguette bread, and two chocolate desserts; a molten lava bundt cake and a gluten free chocolate sliced cake. Yum!

In spite of the rain and colder temps, the group heated things up with warm fellowship & conversation. A lively raffle was held with 8 attendees winning prizes that included a sterling silver necklace, coffee mug, scented candle, 2017 champagne flutes, & more. Our coloring group keeps growing monthly and we welcome more to join our friendly group.

Our next coloring session & luncheon will be held on **Friday, March 17th**. Start time will be **12:00 pm**. Coloring pages and pencils will be supplied. A \$5 minimum donation is requested. All donations will be given to the church.



Pictured clockwise from the left: Jean Chronis, Linda Bozigian & Matushka Gloria Lehman pose during last month's Coloring Book Group session./Sample art work from the Coloring Group./Annette Lewis and Debbie Vawter at work coloring their drawings./ Mary Tatomir, Penelopy Chiotis & Angie Wysup pose.



## FIRST KNITTING CLASS

We held our first Knitting Instruction Class on Wednesday, January 25th from 5:30 p.m.—7:00 p.m. in the church hall. **Tina Veroulis**, who is a proficient knitter, instructed the attendees **Fotini Krespis**, her daughter, **Tatiana**, **Rhonda Latkovic**, and **Mary Ellen Kassiotakis**. The attendees first picked the yarn they wanted to use for the project, which is provided by the Ladies of Philoptochos, thanks to a donation from **Michael Carroll**. Then, Tina gave personal instruction to each.

The knitted items are being made to be given to cancer patients at **City of Hope** from our Philoptochos Organization. We already have over **20 knit throws** completed—many made by **Christina Kundanis**. We are attempting to knit another 40-50 items including caps, headbands, scarves and wristlets.

In February, we have scheduled Knitting Classes for **Wednesdays, at 5:30 p.m. in the church hall**. If you are new to knitting or a master knitter, please join us in the project to help cancer patients. Text, call, or email **Rhonda Latkovic** at: (714) 875-4661, or [r.s.fleminglatkovic@gmail.com](mailto:r.s.fleminglatkovic@gmail.com).



Knitting Project Photos:

To the left, Mary Ellen Kassiotakis and, to the right, Rhonda Latkovic.



From left to right: Fotini Krespis, Tina Veroulis, and Tatiana Krespis

## SAINT OF THE MONTH THE EMPRESS, ST. THEODORA



As for the renowned Empress, Saint Theodora, she was from Paphlogonia and was the daughter of a certain Marinus, the commander of a military regiment.

After marriage to the Byzantine-Roman Emperor Theophilus, she discovered that he wanted the removal of icons of Christ, the Ever-Virgin Mary and the Saints from homes and churches throughout the Empire. Such a negative attitude toward the use of icons was shared by many others, who called themselves *Iconoclasts*. As an Iconoclast, therefore, the Emperor Theophilus waged war against Orthodox Christians who venerated icons during times of worship. To his tremendous dismay, however, his wife, Theodora, began privately venerating icons at times of her personal prayer, though he never publicized her disregard for his agenda.

After a lengthy illness, the Emperor Theophilus died, leaving behind his wife, Theodora, and his young son, Michael. Due to Michael's young age, Theodora ascended the throne as the Empress of the Byzantine Empire. History hails her as being among the wisest of rulers, guiding the Empire to prosperity.

Although a popular ruler, she submitted herself to the decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, through which the veneration of holy icons was pronounced as the official Orthodox doctrine of faith. She ordered the restoration of icons to homes and churches throughout the Empire and the use of icons for personal prayer and church worship has remained as proper Orthodox Christian practice even to this day. The day on which she issued this order was the first Sunday of Great Lent. As a result, the first Sunday of Great Lent every year is celebrated as *The Sunday of Orthodoxy* (this year: Sunday, March 5th).

As age crept up on her, she forsook her throne as Empress and, after being tonsured as a nun in the year 857, she retired to a convent in Constantinople, where she reposed in the Lord. Her Feast Day is **February 11th every year**.

## PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE



The January Parish Council was held on January 14th. At this meeting, the financial report showed the following:

December Income was \$10,869.00, December Expenses were \$20,363.99—a net loss of \$9,494.99. The 2016 Pledge Commitment was \$111,674.00. We received \$108,213.09 from 122 stewards. The J.P. Morgan Stock (per share) has increased from \$58.11 to \$87.02. The Endowment Fund as of Dec. 31, 2016 is \$288,807.91 (an increase of \$14,436.92). In Checking: \$22,736.31; in Savings \$131,277.73 (an increase from January 1, 2016 of \$25,288.70).

The following Parish Council members were elected to serve as officers:

Nick Krespis.....President  
Spiro Astmos.....Vice President  
Tina Veroulis.....Secretary\*  
Nick Kaperonis.....Treasurer

\*Tina Veroulis was also elected to serve in the capacity of “Assistant Treasurer.”

The Endowment Fund has taken an upswing. Once it reaches \$500,000 the interest can be put back into the church’s operating expenses. The committee is encouraging parishioners to donate to the Fund and put it into their estate planning. Also, a suggestion was entertained to plan a raffle that will generate such funds. To commemorate those who contribute to the Fund, we might consider having a plaque that can be displayed in the church hall with donors' names.

To date, almost all of the “Vendor Spots” for the Festival are filled. There are some vendors on “stand-by” in the event that a vendor cancels.

Yearly scheduling

Spring General Assembly – March 19, 2017  
Fall General Assembly – November 19, 2017  
Parish Council Election - December 10, 2017  
Monthly meetings – Second Thursday every Month.

It was decided that parish committee Chairpersons be informed of the Board’s plan to

review the Parish’s over-all committee structure and related committee guidelines.

The Parish Council was informed that the Festival Chairman, George Argyros, revisited the Health Department concerning the “flooring” in the court yard cooking area during the Festival. He was told that the requirements for such “flooring” would have to ultimately be determined with the health inspector assigned to our event, since many inspectors may not have a serious concern with cooking on the grass. In any case, we should be prepared to provide a plywood surface in the cooking area.

**Facebook and Twitter** are among the most cost-effective ways of getting out the message about our Greek Festival. Those who wish to participate in sharing our Festival event dates and times on Facebook or Twitter are asked to acquire information in this regard from either **Ana Storton, Rhonda Latkovic, or Jim Christopoulos.**

**Yiagia’s Attic: Now is the time to bring items for Yiayia’s Attic in support of our 2017 Festival.** Please drop them off in our parish hall at any time during the week. Call before making your delivery to arrange for assistance upon your arrival. The Chairperson is **Becky Allen.**

## CHOIR

Beginning in February, our parish Choir, under the direction of Mrs. Annette Laskaris, will be holding Choir Practice sessions on a weekly basis. As such, the Choir Practice Schedule is as follows:

Thursday, February 2nd – 1:00 p.m.  
Thursday, February 9th – 1:00 p.m.  
Thursday, February 16th - 1:00 p.m.

There will be no Choir Practice on Thursday, February 23rd, due to final preparations for the annual St. George Greek Festival. Practice sessions will include Sunday hymns and preparations for Lenten and Holy Week Church Services.

To join the choir, feel free to contact our Choir Director, Mrs. Annette Laskaris



**STEWARDSHIP REPORT**—First and foremost, we would like to thank all the parishioners that have responded to the 2017 Stewardship Pledge request.

66 parishioners have turned in a pledge card as of January 27th. The total annual pledge to date is \$73,910 or 64% of our 2017 pledge goal of \$115,000. The total pledge to date also represents a 30% increase over the last 5 year average for the same time frame. We appear to be on track to achieve our goal which is needed to make our budget for this year. This is outstanding and we are very grateful for your support!

We also wish to especially thank the many parishioners that increased their annual pledge this year over last year. This is indeed a blessing! 42% of stewards have increased their pledge. Year-end 2016 Donation Recap Letters were mailed out to all stewards as of January 30th.

We will continue to receive pledge cards for those that have not yet turned them in. Please keep in mind that we are able to take payment by cash, check, or credit card. Please see either me or **Tina Veroulis** for assistance.

—RHONDA LATKOVIC,  
Stewardship Chairperson

#### ENDOWMENT FUND EXTENSIVE REPORT

The St. George of the Desert Endowment Fund has seen a steady gain during the 2016 year, bringing its total current balance at End-of-Year 2016 to \$288,807.91 from \$274,370.99 at the end of 2015. The following is a report of the current market results:

- There were total donations of \$350 YTD. This is an increase to \$16,885.83 - a 5.85% increase in value. - **Our current Asset Allocation status follows the Fund's By-Laws as shown below:**

<b>A. Domestic Equities</b> .....	50%.....	<b>\$142,898.75</b>
<b>B. Domestic Fixed Income</b> .....	42%.....	<b>\$122,260.13</b>
<b>C. International Equities</b> .....	7%.....	<b>\$ 19,976.87</b>
<b>D. Cash and Equivalents</b> .....	1%....	<b>\$ 3,672.61</b>

**Markets Rise; Markets Fall.** The final quarter of 2016 offered several landmark developments: a Surprise U.S. presidential election outcome that resulted in Republican control of the federal government, bolstering a substantial rally in U.S. stocks and a downturn in bond markets; the U.K.'s Brexit timeline and negotiating posture evolved from abstract to relatively firm after the High Court decision subjected the plan to Parliamentary approval; and the global oil-price recovery found solid footing as OPEC members and non-members agreed to cut production.

We expect the new President to drive a great deal of activity in the months ahead that aims to provide incentives to hiring, bank funding, new-business formation and investment. Investors are betting that the shake-up in Washington will lead to higher growth and profitability as well as higher inflation. We suspect this reaction is, more or less, the right one. Nonetheless, since there are still more questions than answers regarding the details, investors need to be prepared for a more volatile ride as 2017 unfolds.

The Resource Group who manages the fund assesses an Advisory Fee of 1%, or \$670/qtr. on the current balance, which is considered low by industry standards (2%). In addition, the funds have no load. Although there are funds available in the Index Fund arenas, I feel our risk is better mitigated on inevitable downturns through our existing funds and their current, or Beta factors.

It is the intent to grow the fund not only through prudent investment, but by donations and estate planned giving. An updated Fund By-Law proposal will be submitted to the Board in the 1st quarter of 2017, which will include a proposal for an Archdiocese designed "Eternal Light" Program. This is an exciting and worthwhile program, which will help to insure the Parish's viability into the future by listing families who promise to include the church in their Estate Planning.

In addition to the Executive Summaries of the Fund's activity, I have submitted the St. George Endowment Fund Investment Policy Document

*ENDOWMENT FUND EXTENSIVE REPORT,  
continued*

for your reference – available upon request from Fr. Ted. In addition to the Executive Summaries of the Fund's By-Laws for the Parish's information, below I've added the Endowment Fund's Objectives and Guidelines:

***St George of the Desert Endowment Fund By-Laws EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EOY 2016***

**Plan:**

Endowment	Investment
Current Assets:	\$288,807.91
Time Horizon:	Perpetuity
Risk Tolerance:	Moderate
Spending Policy:	Investment Assets

Investment Assets must reach \$500,000 prior to any spending. Once investment assets total \$500,000 or more, the Fund may be used only for capital improvements, natural disaster, if the church is unable to meet obligations as directed by the Parish Council and/or the General Assembly. The amount of withdrawals shall not exceed an amount that will bring the principal below \$400,000 to be replenished to maintain the \$500,000 reserve amount.

Asset Allocation: Per consultation with the Investment Counselor.

Present Recommendation: 50% to 60% equities, 40% Bonds (market conditions dependent) with some cash reserves as prudent. Structure to be determined in consultation with Investment Committee on periodic basis.

Liquidity: All investments must be highly liquid and able to be converted into cash within a three business day settlement period.

**INVESTMENT OBJECTIVES** – In order to meet its needs, the investment strategy of St. George is to emphasize total return; that is, the prudent aggregate return from capital appreciation and dividend and interest income. Specifically, the primary objective in the investment management for Fund assets shall be the preservation of purchasing power, i.e., to achieve returns in excess of the

rate of inflation over the investment horizon in order to preserve purchasing power of Fund Assets. Also, risk control is an important element in the investment of Fund assets.

The secondary objective of the investment management of Fund assets shall be **income and growth**—i.e., to achieve a balanced return of current income and growth of principal.

**SPECIFIC INVESTMENT GOALS** Specific investment goals are to be recommended by the Investment Committee in consultation with the Investment Manager and approved by the Parish Council. The investment goals of the aggregate Fund are not meant to be imposed on each investment account (if more than one account is used). The goals of the investment manager, over the investment horizon, shall be to: 1. Meet or exceed the Market Index, or Blended Market Index, selected and agreed upon by the Investment Committee that most closely corresponds to the style of investment management. 2. Display an overall level of risk in the portfolio which is consistent with the risk associated with the benchmark specified above. Risk will be measured by the standard deviation of quarterly returns.

**INVESTMENT GUIDELINES**

Allowable Assets: Guaranteed Investments, Cash and Equivalents: Treasury Bills, Money Market Funds Certificates of Deposit, U.S. Government and Agency Securities, Exchange Traded Funds, Common and Preferred Stocks, Real Estate Investment Trusts, Mutual Funds, Open or Closed-End Mutual Funds.

Prohibited Investments: include, but are not limited to the following: Equities purchased on foreign exchanges; Commodities and Futures Contracts; Private Placements; Options; Limited partnerships; Venture-Capital Investments; Real Estate Properties; Interest Only (IO)/Principal Only (PO), and Residual Tranch CMOsd.

Prohibited transactions: include but are not limited to the following: Short Selling and Margin Transactions.

– NICHOLAS LATKOVIC,  
Endowment Fund Chairman



## THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL: THE ORTHODOX FAITH IN AMERICA

The Ecclesiastical, Greek word, "Diaspora" is used to mean: "The Orthodox Church in non-Orthodox Christian countries." "Orthodox countries" are countries in which the Orthodox Christian Faith is the "national religion." Traditionally, Greece, Serbia, Russia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania, Syria are "Orthodox countries" (Syria being dominated by a Muslim population, which now governs the region). Countries in which the Orthodox Faith is not the "state" religion are those countries in Western Europe, Australia, Asia, N. and S. America, and Africa. These are countries/regions of the Orthodox Christian "Diaspora."

The United States is part of the "Diaspora." As such, decisions pertaining to the Orthodox Church in the "Diaspora" made at the Ecumenical Council held in Greece this past summer affect our lives here.

Accordingly, there has been established Episcopal Assemblies in all regions of the "Diaspora," such as the *Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North America*, which involves us. These assemblies include all the bishops of the Greek Orthodox; the Serbian Orthodox; the Russian Orthodox; the Romanian Orthodox; the Bulgarian Orthodox; the Antiochian Orthodox (Syrian Orthodox); the Carpatho-Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox.

The reigning document of the Ecumenical Council (available on the website: [www.holycouncil.org/-/diaspora](http://www.holycouncil.org/-/diaspora)) states the following as being the present course of action:

*"The work and the responsibility of these Episcopal Assemblies will be the concern for manifesting the unity of Orthodoxy, the development of common action of all the Orthodox of each region to address the pastoral needs of Orthodox living in the region, a common representation of all Orthodox vis-à-vis other faiths and the wider society in the region, the cultivation of theological scholarship and ecclesiastical education, etc. Decisions on these subjects will be taken by consensus of the Churches who are represented in the particular assembly."*

### FEBREUARY 2017

### Festival Preparation Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Paximadia	3	4
5	6 Kourambiedes	7 Kourambiedes	8 Packaging	9	10	11
12	13 Baklava	14 Baklava	15 Baklava	16 Syrup & loukoumades	17 Syrup	18
19	20 Tzatziki	21 Tzatziki	22 Galaktobouriko	23 Booth set-up	24 Final Prep.	25 <b>FESTIVAL</b>
26 <b>FESTIVAL</b>	27 Festival	28 Tear-Down				

Above is the 2017 St. George Greek Festival Preparation Schedule. We need at least **12 volunteers each day** to maintain this schedule.

Those who cannot help at all, are asked to offer financial contributions to pay for hired workers to complete the tasks related to this preparation schedule. On the next page, please find a more detailed "Set-up" and "Take-down" schedule, as well as many other ways to help. Presently, there are Festival fliers and posters that need to be distributed throughout the community. Everyone is asked to help!

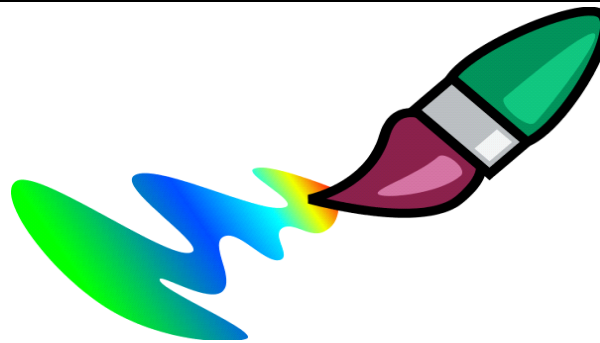
*Continued on the next page - - - ->*

**HELP NEEDED FOR FESTIVAL SETUP AND TEARDOWN**  
**(SIGN-UP AND CIRCLE OR WRITE IN A SHIFT TIME, i.e. 8-12 a.m., or 1-5 p.m., or both)**  
**Please complete this form and return it to the parish office as soon as possible.**

Thurs., February 16th	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
Friday, February 17th	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
Sat., February 18th	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
Tues., February 21st	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
Wed. February 22nd	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
Thrus., February 23rd	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
Fri., February 24th	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
<b>GREEK FESTIVAL – FEBRUARY 25th – 26th</b>			
Mon. February 27th	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:
Tues., February 28th	/ 8-12 a.m.	/ 1-5 p.m.	/ Name:

**FESTIVAL UNDERWRITERS** – Become a Festival Underwriter by contributing a substantial financial offering to help defray the costs of major Festival items: meats, feta cheese, set-up supplies, etc. See Festival Chairman, George Argyros, for details.

**\$60 DOLLARS A SHIFT** – Those who are unable to volunteer time and effort are asked to contribute financial offerings to hire help at **\$60 per shift**. Make checks out to: St. George Greek Orthodox Church, and write: Festival Help in the memo section and give them to our parish office or **Jim Christopoulos** at the “**Festival Volunteer**” Table in the parish hall.



**ADULT COLORING SESSION & LUNCHEON**

**When:** Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup>@ noon-2pm\*

**Where:** St. George church hall

**RSVP:** By March 12<sup>h</sup> to Rhonda Latkovic

Lunch will be served at noon with coloring to follow. A \$5.00 minimum donation is requested. Lunch will be a Valentine theme menu. There will also be a raffle. Coloring supplies provided. Please join us!

**NOTE: NO COLORING BOOK SESSION IN FEBRUARY**



GYROS • GREEK LAMB • BAKLAVA • LOUKOUMADES

GREEK CHICKEN • MOUSSAKA • SPANAKOPITA • DOLMADE • PASTICHIO • SOULVAKI • BAKLAVA • DOLMADES • GYROS



AUTHENTIC GREEK FOOD

HEAVENLY PASTRIES

GREEK FOLK DANCERS

OUZO • RETSINA • METAXA

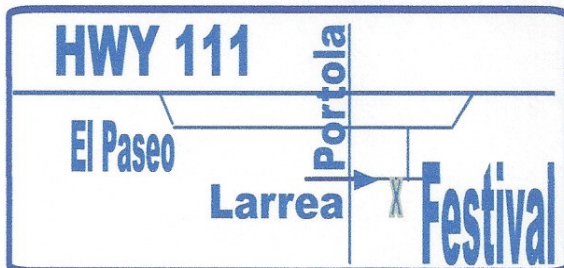
ART & SOUVENIRS

RELIGIOUS ITEMS

CHURCH TOURS

KIDZ ZONE

FUN FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY



# Saint George Greek Orthodox Church

Palm Desert, CA

*Proudly presents the*

## 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL

# GREEK FESTIVAL

*Experience Authentic Greek Food  
Devour Heavenly Pastries  
Dance to live Greek music, and*

### Be Greek for a Day!

## February 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> 2017

### Saturday & Sunday 11am to 8pm

on the Church Grounds  
74-109 Larrea, Palm Desert, CA

**(760) 568-9901**

### Admission \$3

 (Children 12 & under free)

Active Duty Military, Police, Fire & EMT Free w. ID



"We are pleased to provide assistance to anyone requesting it. If you need help, please ask"

GYROS • GREEK LAMB • BAKLAVA • LOUKOUMADES





**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Sunday, April 23, 2017**

**FEAST DAY OF ST. GEORGE**

**HOSTING:**

**HIS EMINENCE,**

**METROPOLITAN GERASIMOS**

**of**

**SAN FRANCISCO**

**On the occasion of the:**

**20th ANNIVERSARY OF CELEBRATING OUR PATRON SAINT IN OUR  
ST. GEORGE PARISH CHURCH EDIFACE!**

**THIS CELEBRATION INCLUDES:**

**St. George Golf Tournament at Desert Willow**

**Golf Resort in Palm Desert: Friday and Saturday, April 21-22.**

**April 21, 2017: Friday afternoon golf followed by steak dinner  
at the church.**

**April 22, 2017: Saturday morning golf followed by Greek-style  
dinner at the church...live music, dancing and fun!**

**More details and information to follow in the months ahead.**

**JOIN US!**



St. George Greek Orthodox Church  
 74-109 Larrea St., Palm Desert, CA 92260  
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 4755, Palm Desert, CA 92261  
 Telephone: (760) 568-9901 / FAX: (760) 568-9492  
 Cell Phone:(760) 880-5869  
 Email address: [pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com](mailto:pdsaintgeorge@gmail.com)  
 Website: [www.go-stgeorge.org](http://www.go-stgeorge.org)

# FEBRUARY 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Schedule of Sunday Services: Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m. Sunday School -10:30 a.m.			1  Knitting Class-5:30 p.m.	2-PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.  Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	3	4  No Vespers
5-Publican & Pharisee Triodion Begins Ep.-2 Tim. 3:10-15 Gos.- St. Luke 18:10-14	6  Festival Meeting-7:00 p.m.	7  Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	8  Knitting Class-5:30 p.m. AHEPA Mtg.-6:30 p.m.	9  Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.  Parish Council-6:30 p.m.	10-ST. HARALAMBOS Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.	11  Vespers-5:00 p.m.
12-Prodigal Son Ep.-1 Cor. 6:12-20 Gos.-St. Luke 15:11-32	13	14  Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	15  Knitting Class-5:30 p.m.	16  Choir Practice-1:00 p.m.	17-ST. THEODORE OF TYRE Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy -9:30 a.m.	18-SATURDAY OF SOULS Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.  Vespers-5:00 p.m.
19- Meatfare Sunday Ep.-1 Cor. 8:8-13-9:2 Gos.-St. Matth. 25:31-46	20  G R E E K	21  F E S T I V	22  A L	23  P R E	24  P A R A T I O	25-SATURDAY OF SOULS Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.  <b>21st ANNUAL ST. GEORGE GREEK FESTIVAL</b>
26-Forgiveness Sunday Gos.-St. Matth. 6: 14-21  <b>21st ANNUAL ST. GEORGE GREEK</b>	27 GREAT LENT BE-GINS  Compline Service-5:30 p.m.	28  Bible Study-10:00 a.m.	<u>MARCH 1</u>  Presanctified Divine Liturgy-6:00	<u>MARCH 2</u>	<u>MARCH 3</u> Presanctified Divine Liturgy-9:00 a.m.  1st Salutations-7:00	<u>MARCH 4</u> SATURDAY OF SOULS Orthros-8:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy-9:30 a.m.  Vespers-5:00 p.m.