

Voice of St. George

SAINT GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE DESERT 74-109 LARREA ST., PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA

WHAT IS FREEDOM FOR?

Volumes of articles, treatises and books have been written about the topic of human freedom-its nature and its purpose. This matter has been no less of a concern for the framers of the U.S. Constitution than for ancient and even philosophers. modern Yet, on July 4th every year, American freedom is celebrated in holiday fashion with parades and BBQs. Along the way there are cases where American freedom is celebrated by acting freely irresponsibly.

This "free irresponsibly" needs to be addressed, because, somewhere the notion of freedom has been divorced from the notion of responsibility. For example, with regard to the press, we hear "freedom of the press," as an axiom seemingly devoid of a responsibility to the truth; to good order and to the quest of achieving and maintaining anything "for the peace of the

whole world," for which we pray during the Divine Liturgy -- a peace that is the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Giver of Life through Divine love. So, let us ask: "What is Freedom for?" And the answer is this: "to love God forever." Period.

As simple as that may sound, each word of it involves a deep understand-

"To love," refers to effort and energy. We give love. By "love," is meant Christlike love-sacrificial love given for the Eternal Salvation of others (not the "free love" selfof gratification, or the "touchy-feely" love which is geared to euphoria). Christ-like love is often called "Agape love." However, what is often missed with the idea of Agape Love is that there actually is no love without Christ: "For so God loved the world that He sent His Only - Begotten Son..." (St.

John 3:16). In these Biblical words, it is clear that God's love is an energy freely given. In fact, understanding this, helps us to know our own human nature as being created in the Image and Likeness of God. Our capacity to love is like God's "capacity" in that we can know such divine love and give such divine love. Hence, we are created to love. Yet, there can be no love given unless it is given out of our free will, which is another factor that compares us with the Image of God. So, in a sense the purpose of freedom is for us to Altar Flower freely give love to God and to other people as a reflection of God's love for all.

"To love God," then, means that, in our love for God, we give the effort from within our souls to be like God in His love. If anything, the one quality of God (among the traits of being all-knowing, allpowerful, all - present) is

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Bouquet Program

2018-2019

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-Fr. Theodore Pantels, Pastor -Dcn. Euthym Kontaxis, M.D. God's unbridled *freedom*. Being like God is freedom from worldly, self-centered attachments. It's the inner freedom that alcoholics have in "letting go and letting God." But, "letting God" needs to ultimately be understood to mean: to be like God, rather than being absolved of any personal responsibility, since we just "let God do it for us." Being like God requires the energies of the Holy Spirit, Who not only continuously reveals the Resurrected and Ascended Christ to us, but Who grants us His Grace so that our human nature becomes divine for God's love to be manifested through us. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us Christ in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, transforming the bread and the wine into the very Body and Blood of Christ, as we pray these words: "Send down Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these Gifts here presented...changing them by Your Holy Spirit."

"To love God forever." This "forever" is Eternal Life, which begins here and now in this present life. It is a life that forever is free from "pain, or sorrow or suffering," to recall the words of the Orthodox Funeral Service—a true freedom. In essence, then, the question, "What is freedom for?" can be answered in a seemingly coy fashion: "Freedom is for freedom," understanding that this Eternal freedom is in Christ from this moment forward. The life with Christ in our hearts and souls is freedom, to paraphrase Fr. Alexander Schmemann's words which connect the truly Christian life-style to the Sacramental Life of the Church, saying, "The Church is freedom." (The Mission of the Church in Today's World [Gr.], pg. 225). To bring *Divine* freedom into the world, which is the salvation of humanity, is, indeed, the work of the Church.

The work of *inspiring* others is Godly love in action as we join in being *living examples* of such love for the world to see — and, thank God, in America, still, we are actually *free* to do so. +FR. THEODORE

THE 2018 GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY



Boston, Massachusetts is the hostcity for the combined conventions

of our Holy Archdiocese of America and our National Ladies Philoptochos Society from July 1-July 5, 2018. Many of the proceedings from both of these assemblies can be found online daily at: www.goarch.org and www.philoptochos.org.

In preparation for the Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Assembly, the Archdiocesan Council met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from May 3-4, 2018. As reported by the Archdiocese Press Office. At this gathering, after leading with the Opening Prayer, Archbishop Demetrios talked about the flourishing parishes and communities of the Archdiocese across the country, many of which have celebrated and continue to celebrate centennial anniversaries, thus demonstrating their vitality and growth in the faith. He said that this is the promising reality of the Archdiocese and you can see it in the radiant faces of our children across the country. The Archbishop acknowledged the painful conditions in some financial aspects in the life of the Archdiocese; he said that the situation is many times intentionally or unintentionally distorted by an amazing number of misunderstandings and inaccuracies, as people in this post -truth era rush to express and disseminate falsehoods and baseless opinions but not precise data. This is a painful situation for people of truth and precision.

The Vice President of the Archdiocesan Council George S. Tsandikos, said that the challenges of the financial crisis have come to an end. He also said that everyone is working hard towards the completion of St. Nicholas National Shrine. He said that we are united with our beloved Archbishop, adding that the people in the Church will remain united. He urged the members of the Council to share the truth and, through the truth of the Risen Lord and the unifying message of His Resurrection, to remain united and rejoice.

CHURCH AND MENTAL HEALTH

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF PEACEMAKERS!

It's time to look at ourselves. Can we be content with the "politics-as-usual" culture of parish life? Can we be content with the on-going feuds between relatives and/or fellow parishioners? Is there not something that *you* can do in the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ to heal our homes and our community? The answer is "Yes!" *You* can join the "League of Peacemakers" of St. George Greek Orthodox Church! After all, if you want our Lord to answer prayers, then the work appointed to us by our Savior is needed. For, the Lord did say, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (St. Matthew 5:9).

Your priest wants everyone to join St. George's "League of Peacemakers," because, frankly, we very much need to embrace God's peace in our lives as a parish and as households of the parish. This brings me to a very nice book, entitled, 10 Things You Need to Know About Being a Peacemaker, by Deb Wolf ("Counting My Blessings Series"). She challenges you and me to become good peacemakers. There is a difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking. In short, peacekeeping is done out of fear rather than faith. Peacekeepers want peace at any cost. They are afraid of conflict. To the contrary, peacemakers do the work of the Lord -- and it really is work (spiritual askesis).

In her book, Deb Wolf outlines ten things that peace<u>makers</u> need to be willing to do, all the while remembering that prayer for God's enlightenment is chief among all duties:

- 1. A peacemaker needs to acquire the peace of God. When the priest blesses the faithful during the Divine Liturgy, saying, "Peace be unto you," he is praying for our Lord to grant to each person spiritual peace based on a good conscience; on trust in God; on love for neighbor. A peacemaker is to be a person who is a peaceful and peace-loving person.
- A peacemaker needs to have genuine love and concern for others; for the feelings of oth-

ers; for their spiritual and physical welfare.

- 3. A peacemaker prays without ceasing.
- 4. A peacemaker *builds* trust by being trustworthy.
- 5. A peacemaker addresses conflicts using three important factors to bring about peace: 1) How can we honor God? 2) How can we honor the individual? 3) How can we improve our communication and our understanding of one another?
- 6. A peacemaker spends time and effort to try to understand the people in his or her life. What are their trials? How can their strengths be strengthened? Given their individual characteristics, how can they be encouraged to keep the faith and love God and neighbor?
- 7. A peacemaker *controls* his or her anger. Self-control is the main Christian ascetic effort. Fasting teaches self-control; prayer energizes self-control.
- 8. A peacemaker speaks the truth *with love*. It is not necessarily *what* we say; it is important *how* we say it. We need to pray for the wisdom to express ourselves with love and care so that the other person can be willing to *accept* the truth as a sign of friendship, rather than as a put-down.
- 9. A peacemaker seeks solutions and works toward resolution. Blame is *not* the game! We need to listen to solutions and ideas offered by those who care to fix whatever is broken to address the issues and not to condemn the people. Parenthetically, this is where we must be careful not to gossip! Gossip tears relationships apart with a spirit of mistrust. Whoever gossips *to* you, likely gossips *about* you. Do not lend ears to gossip.
- 10. A peacemaker needs to boldly invite other people to work with him or her. Let's not be afraid to personally "mend the fences" with someone we may have had differences with in the past. We need to forgive!

+FR. THEODORE

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

the Church.

Philoptochos works hard supporting our charities and our Church. As generous as our parishioners are, we also need the support of our President and Board by the Church members. If anytime you have questions about how the Board runs the chapter, please ask a Board member or the President. We will be happy to answer your questions. Let's not pass rumors and untruths about our members and split the

congregation. There are two sides to every story.

We want to be united in our work and goals for

Memorials come under the auspices of Philoptochos. We want to clear up some misconceptions. When you are planning a memorial, contact Father Ted Pantels to make the arrangements. He will call the Philoptochos President to let her know when the memorial will be. She will contact the family and make arrangements for the koliva and food served at the Coffee Hour. Our current rate of \$150.00 includes the koliva, 8 dozen koulourakia and 8 dozen paxamadia. The cookies will now be made by members volunteering when we announce the bake date. We have 9 women currently who can make koliva. These are Stacy Argyros, Eva Canakis, Pat Dalkas, Christina Kudanis, Pres. Petula Pantels, Alice Pulos, Lula Valissarakos, Tina Veroulis and Kalitsa Xitco. We will be asking them to volunteer for a memorial. The member making the koliva will shop for the ingredients and turn in the receipt(s) to Philoptochos for reimbursement. At no time do we ask for donations to buy koliva ingredients. The Board would like to give the opportunity to several members of Philoptochos to serve in a leadership role at different occasions. It is important that we take advantage of our members' talents. The family makes the check out to Philoptochos of St. George and gives it to our Treasurer or President, not Father Ted.

The year's donations to charities by Philoptochos from September 2017 through July 2018 are as follows, (listed in broad headings, since space does not allow for the listing of each particular cat-

egory):

Total 2017 - 2018

\$5,465.00National Philoptochos charities \$2,590.00Metropolis Philoptochos charities \$5,889.39Local charities

\$3,102.00Church

Total: \$17,046.39

Thank you for supporting Philoptochos.

— LINDA KALLIS, Philoptochos President

NATIONAL LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY CONVENTION:

Boston, Massachusetts, July 1-July 5, 2018

The National Philoptochos Society Convention will take place at the same time and place as the Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Congress - in Boston, Massachusetts from July 1-July 5, 2018.

It is always an up-beat, inspiring convention. Reports will be given from throughout our country about the wonderful work that Philoptochos does to help those in need. A cursory gander at the National Philoptochos Society Committee Reports to be given serve to show the active love that Philoptochos imparts to our nation, as well as to our regional and local communities. Committee reports to be given include the following:

- 1. Committee on Aging
- 2. Aid to Greece and Cyprus
- 3. Arts and Education
- 4. Autism
- 5. Children's Medical Fund
- 6. Educational Initiatives
- 7. Environment Responsibility
- 8. Family and Society
- 9. Feed the Hungry
- 10. Hellenic College/Holy Cross School Theology
- 11. Leadership Institute
- 12. Literacy
- 14.Orthodox Christian ministry to college students
- 15. Orthodox Christian Missions and Mission Priests
- 16. Saint Basil Academy
- 17. Saint Photios Shrine
- 18. Social Services
- 19. Spiritual Enrichment
- 20. UNICEF

AHEPA NEWS

This year, our parish AHEPA Chapter 528 has donated time, effort and resources as follows:



- 1. Awarded four scholarships from the AHEPA Chapter 528 Fr. T. P. Theophilos Memorial Scholarship Fund to outstanding college students of our community.
- 2. Donated for the future new red Altar Coverings for our parish.
- 3. Planned and hosted the annual parish Veteran's Day celebration, and will do so in November 2018.
- 4. Held the annual Thanksgiving luncheon in the fall: November 2017. Planning for 2018.
- 5. Hosted the Super Bowl Party at our parish hall. AHEPA is planning again to host the 2019 Super Bowl party on February 3rd.
- 6. As always, AHEPANs have helped in the effort to make our annual parish Festival successful -- and will do so again for 2019.
- 7. Our AHEPA Chapter was represented at the AHEPA Family Western Regional District Convention held in Reno, NV: June 21-24.
- 8. I am honored to be voted to represent our parish chapter at the National Supreme AHEPA Family Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey --July 22-July 27, 2018.
- --WYNN STORTON, AHEPA Chapter 528 President

NATIONAL AHEPA FAMILY CONVENTION: Atlantic City, New Jersey - July 22-27, 2018

This year, at the National AHEPA Family Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the following reports will be delivered, showing the work of the National AHEPA Family over the past year. These reports include:

- Support for U.S. Military men and women .
- Continued support for AHEPA Health Centers throughout our country.

- ◆ Review of the AHEPA Hall for Boys, St. Basil Academy and the AHEPA School Building, also at St. Basil Academy, completed in 1962, \$245,000 donated in support.
- AHEPA Cooley's Anemia Foundation established in the late 1970s.
- AHEPA National Housing Corporation formed in 1983 to pursue housing projects from HUD. Today, the HUD commitment to AHEPA National Housing Corporation has accumulated to over \$500 million.
- Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island Restoration Project, earning special recognition by the United States Department of the Interior.
- AHEPA Bone Marrow Registry established in late 1980s to help find donors for bone marrow transplants.
- Substantial national financial support for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese St. Nicholas Shrine in New York City

OUR GRADUATES:

We congratulate our high school and college graduates - the Class of 2018:

Graduating from high school:

Tia Kolytiris - Rancho Mirage High School **Shania Krespis** - Summit High School

Graduating from college:

Despina Karalis - Dartmouth University

Many blessings to our graduates. We pray that our merciful and loving Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ will open to them many doors of opportunity for success in doing His work in whatever career they choose as good and productive citizens of our country and of the world. Their knowledge is a precious gift from their parents, teachers and, most of all, from Christ our God.

PROPHET ELIJAH: A TRUE FORRRUNNER TO JESUS CHRIST

The Prophet Elijah (also known in the Orthodox world as *Elias*) embodied a new spirituality that changed the nature of God's blessing to the Jewish People, yet made Gentiles a real part of God's plan for all of mankind. Elijah's life showed that the new spirit of the Son of God (Christ) would dominate the later plan for mankind in the New Testament. The Feast of St. Prophet Elijah (Elias) is celebrated on **July 20th** every year.

Elijah is introduced in 1 Kings 17:1 as Elijah "the Tishbite" and from the whole of his life he dedicated himself to the One God. He settled in the wilderness and spent his time in strict fasting, meditation and prayer. Called to prophetic service, he soon was in conflict with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Because of his dedication to God, the Prophet became a fiery zealot of true faith and real piety. Throughout his life, Prophet Elijah was a beacon to true worship of the one true God of the universe. He was in opposition to the worship of many gods in the Near East; many were promoted by Israel's King Ahab and the pagan queen, Jezebel, who promoted the worship of the idol, Baal.

The greatest conflict between the One God and Baal was staged in the setting of the great drought that afflicted Israel for three years. Prophet Elijah made it clear to Ahab that only Elijah's own prayer would end the drought. To prove this, Elijah confronted the priests of Baal to show who the real God was that the Jewish People should worship. Elijah set his sacrificial offering upon an altar drenched with water after the priests of Baal prayed exhaustively for God to accept their prayers. When Elijah prayed, God sent fire upon Elijah's altar and accepted his sacrifice. Ahab repented, but Jezebel opposed Elijah. Elijah's prayer ended the drought and the People of Israel came to the knowledge of the True God. 1 Kings 1-18 describes the ministry of Elijah. In the New Testament, we are shown how Elijah conversed with Jesus at His Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (St. Matthew 17:3).

The life of Prophet Elijah is in itself a prophecy of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world. There are parallels. He was the first of all the prophets to be dedicated to virginity. Most ideals of monasticism can be traced to the life of the Lord and even to the Prophet Elijah. The Book of Malachi prophesies Elijah's return "before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, making him a harbinger of the Messiah and the fulfillment of all faith rooted in the Old Testament. This is why many confused Christ with Elijah. Aside from one other character in the Book of Genesis, Elijah is the only one to be received into heaven. He ascended on a fiery chariot. Elisha received the great prophetic gift, following Elijah.

The Old Testament has a dramatic teaching on what the voice of God really is. Elijah found that God's voice is not in a clap of thunder, or a bolt of lightening, or a rumble of nature, but in a "still, small voice."

Elijah's confrontations with Ahab and Jezebel climaxed with the history of the Vineyard of Na both. Ahab wanted to gain the vineyard unjustly through murder. Elijah made it clear that kings are also subject to law and cannot violate God's Law.

Another great ministry about the Prophet is similar to that of the ministry of Christ. Elijah was a prophet to the Jewish People of Israel, although he had to sometimes flee to Judah as well as to a Gentile widow, Zarephath, who helped care for him. It is here that a miracle gives heavenly "manna" to help feed them. It is this widow's son who died and who was then resurrected from the dead. This is the first instance of raising from the dead recorded in Scripture. The ministry to the Gentile widow shows the scope of God's ministry to all people. We are reminded of Christ and the Samaritan Woman. God's grace and love extend to all peoples.

--MATTHEW DAVIS

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

As a form of a mid -year Parish Council report, we turn to the Parish Council meeting of **June 5**, **2018** for an overview:



- 1. Regarding parish Stewardship: the pledges received so far were \$62,374.38. The Stewardship budget through 5/30/18 is \$53,245.97. We have 105 Stewards, going into June 2018.
- The Parish Council voted for George Argyros to serve as the Chairman for the 2019 St. George Greek Festival, which is scheduled for Presidents' Day Weekend (February 16-17, 2019).
- 3. The Parish Council will help with the promotion of the 2019 Greek Festival by getting good vendors and encouraging volunteers.
- 4. A list indicating those who are in possession of keys to the church and church hall will be maintained. This list will be posted in our parish office.
- 5. Although it was not brought up at this meeting, on a separate note, efforts will be made to once again post a parish Master Calendar for 2018-2019. As the summer continues to press upon us, it will be good to consider from now dates to be set for weddings and/or baptisms, or special events.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: COMMANDMENT #6

The Sixth of God's Ten Commandments is this: "Thou shalt not murder."

Questions to ask of one's self when preparing for Holy Confession:

- 1. Have I caused injury or death to anyone, or wished that I were dead?
- 2. Have I done anything to shorten my own life or that of someone else by injuring health, or through evil and intemperate living?
- 3. Have I given way to anger or harmed others

with words or actions?

- 4. Have I defamed others who needed help or failed to stand up for those unjustly treated?
- 5. Have I been cruel to anyone or hated them?
- 6. Have I mistreated animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily?
- 7. Have I failed to forgive anyone or harbored evil thoughts against them?

AED DEFIBULATOR FOR OUR CHURCH

The AED is here! We now have an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) here at St George! What is an AED? What does this mean? When and how do we use the AED? It means the benefits of having an AED in a place of worship, or any public place for that matter, far outweigh the costs of implementing an AED program.

Defibrillation is a process in which an electronic device gives an electrical shock and allows the return of a normal heart rhythm when needed. Studies have shown that without treatment, the chance of survival decreases by 7 to 10 percent for every minute that passes without defibrillation. Calling 911 and starting Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) are important first steps. But emergency response teams and paramedics can take longer than the vital 3 – 5 minute window to arrive, and by the time they arrive, irreversible damage may have already happened. Having an AED in the church building is the only way to ensure that a victim receives the necessary defibrillation (restarting of the heart) treatment within those first critical minutes.

The American Heart Association and the American Red Cross acknowledge that many churches provide vital spiritual assistance in today's stress-filled American society. Now, with AEDs widely available, financially accessible and user-friendly machines, churches can also provide vital physical assistance. We achieved our goal in raising funds to purchase the AED and training equipment and have been well supported by

Continued on the next page ---->

AED DEFIBULATOR, continued

our Philoptochos Bake Sale fundraisers, Parish Council and anonymous donations! The AED is portable and will be located in a central location. 2. It is easy to use and comes with voice prompts that tell the first responder if a shock to the heart is needed and will automatically deliver the shock. If no shock is needed it will continue to monitor their heart rhythm.

Demonstrations and hands-on training will begin at the end of July and continue as often as needed. Anyone can be trained and you do not have to be a medical professional or have a medical background. Our goal is to have all employees, organization members and other parishioners trained in the important first steps and AED use. — ATHENA SNARSKIS

2019 GREEK FESTIVAL

It is with great joy that we officially announce that **George Argyros** will serve as **Chairman** for the **2019 Greek Festival** of our parish, **St. George.**

Festival Committee meetings have already been held with a core group of parishioners who are laying plans for our Festival from now.

Areas in which help is very much needed are the following:

1. Promotion—getting the word out to the community. This can already start happening

- through personal contacts, reminding people of the date for our 2019 Greek Festival: **President's Day Weekend**, **February 16-17**, **2019**.
- Monetary donations are very much needed. Costs of materials and permits for the Festival keep going up. One of the best ways to insure a good net profit from the Festival is to donate funds in order to defray these costs. Donations toward our 2019 Greek Festival are currently accepted with much gratitude. One area where the donation of funds helps greatly is in the area of manpower. Volunteer manpower is greatly appreciated—and it saves money. Not only are people needed to prepare Festival menu items, but people are needed to freely offer skills and talents, which are needed, but which cost money for services to be requested from outside our parish. The costs associated with paid manpower can be defrayed through donations contributed to cover the hourly rate or service-contracted amounts of paid workers. Hourly rate for direct Festival help is about \$15.00 per hour, \$60.00 for a four-hour shift.
- Week-day volunteers are needed to help with kitchen duties and with packaging the Festival menu items.

For more information, contact our parish office, or **George Argyros**, Festival Chairman.

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS AND CHURCH SERVICES FOR THE MONTH OF: JULY 2018

Fr. Ted will be away from **Sunday evening**, **July 1, 2018**, **returning on Saturday**, **July 14, 2018**. As always St. George parishioners, in case of emergency, are encouraged to contact **Fr. Andrew Lesko**, pastor of <u>St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Temecula, California</u> (909-224-5046), or **Fr. David Kruse**, pastor of <u>St. Raphael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Thousand Palms, California</u> (760-406-6116). **Fr. Dionisie Marian** of the <u>Holy Resurrection Romanian Orthodox Monastery</u> in Temecula, California **will celebrate the Divine Liturgy here at St. George on Sunday, July 8, 2018**.

Bible Studies – Tuesdays, July 17th, July 24 and July 31 - 10:00 a.m.

Mid-Week Divine Liturgy – Friday, July 20th (Prophet Elijah); Thursday, July 26th (St. Paraskevi) Friday, July 27th (St. Panteleimon)*

*As always, mid-week celebrations of the Liturgy follow this schedule: Orthros-8:30/Liturgy-9:30

October, 2018 - MAY, 2019

ALTAR FLOWER SEASON – OPEN!

(A TAX DEDECTIBLE GIFT)

PARISHIONERS PLEASE BEGIN SIGN-UP NOW!

INFORMATION: WRITE YOUR CHECKS AS FOLLOWS

DATE:

TO: ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

IN MEMO COLUMN: ALTAR FLOWERS /DATE OF DISPLAY

Credit cards are accepted (see Administration Office)

ADVISE ALTAR FLOWER COORDINATOR AS TO WHOM YOU ARE DEDICATING YOUR BOUQUET(S), AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE i.e.; IN MEMORY OF, CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES, BIRTHDAYS, OTHER, ALSO ADVISE OF ANY SPECIAL REQUEST/MESSAGE FOR 'THE LADDER'.

THANK YOU,

Louise Dobbs Barringer,

Altar Flower Coordinator