

# THE MESSENGER

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
BANGOR, MAINE

EDITORS:  
AMBROSE &  
MARINA  
SMITHERMAN

NATIVITY 2016

## THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS - An Orthodox Tradition



After the lengthy Advent fast in anticipation of our Lord's Nativity, the faithful are rewarded with the joy of celebrating the Twelve Holy Days which begin on Christmas Day! Christmas was never meant to be celebrated for just one day (what a let down that is!) Rather it was designed to be celebrated for an extended period. The Church has given us a full twelve days for this sacred festival. These are known as the "Twelve Holy Days." And, yes, it is Orthodox to celebrate them all. When is the First day of Christmas? The day you would expect—December 25. The day we come together to celebrate our Lord's Holy Nativity Feast. When is the Twelfth day? January 5, the eve of Holy Theophany. Is there a greeting for Christmas like there is for Pascha? Yes. At Christmas we say, "Christ is Born!" The reply is "Glorify Him!" Do we learn about the Twelve Holy Days from the Church? In 567 AD, the [Council of Tours](#) "proclaimed the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany as a sacred and festive season, and established the duty of [Advent](#) fasting in preparation for the feast." What makes these days special? After the weeks of fasting known as Advent, the Twelve Holy Days are set aside as days of feasting and joy honoring this sacred season. There is no fasting during these days, with just one exception—January 5 is held as a strict fast day in anticipation of the Feast of Holy Theophany. Otherwise—no fasting at all.

**What does the Church do during the Twelve Holy Days?** There are a variety of events and Saints celebrated during the Twelve Holy Days of Christmas. A few are noted here:

**Dec 25** Feast of Christ's Holy Nativity

**Dec 26** Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos

**Dec 27** Feast of St. Stephen, Protomartyr

**Dec 29** 14,000 Holy Innocents

**Dec 31** Leave-taking of the Holy Nativity Feast

**Jan 1** Circumcision of Christ / Feast of St. Basil the Great

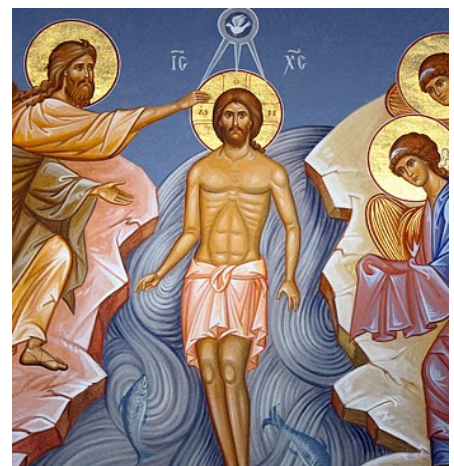
**Jan 4** Synaxis of the 70 Apostles

**Jan 6** Holy Theophany of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ

Read more here:

<http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009/12/twelve-days-of-christmas-in-orthodox.html>

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Dear Parish Family,

Xronia sas polla! Many years to you!

Not every month, but most months, I travel to our Metropolis for a Brotherhood meeting. It is always good to catch up with my brother priests. All of them are sensitive to the anguish our parish has undergone in the not so distant past. They always ask how things are going. And they always extend their best wishes and regards to you all.

My response to their queries has been that our parish is doing very well, glory to God! I have the distinct privilege to say with all honesty that we have a truly special parish. The most notable hallmark, I believe, is love. I tell my brothers, "They really seem to love one another. I have not witnessed factions among them. They truly care for one another." In truth, in all my years as a presbyter, I have never heard another priest give such a report. I take pride, in the best sort of way, in you, the community of believers here at St. George, Bangor. May God always preserve your bonds of love with one another, for Christ's sake. It is a beautiful witness and a credit to our holy Faith.

God bless you all,  
+Fr. Leo

### 2016 Parish News

5 Baptisms this year: Jackson Eli Nelson, Hadrian Morrill, Alexandra Stockman, Sophia Otter, Dino Kisamitakis.

4 Funerals: Hopie Montgomery, Mary Limberis, Nicholas George, Maria Muller. Memory eternal!

New to parish council, Cole (Basil) Brown.

Prayers needed in particular for Athena Brountas, Elizabeth Markowsky, Arthur and Maria Brountas.

*The Messenger* publication is now only twice a year, for Christmas and Pascha. Fr. Leo posts a weekly church bulletin which is available at the church web site:  
[www.stgeorge.me.goarch.org](http://www.stgeorge.me.goarch.org)

### Underwriting *The Messenger*

We invite parishioners to help subsidize our newsletter. You can support publication of *The Messenger* by becoming a Messenger Patron @ \$50.00 for the year.





Dear Fellow Members of the Saint George Family,

Greetings to all! As we approach the Holiday season of Christmas and Epiphany, I want to thank all of you for creating the very special environment of love and warmth that is Saint George. As a community and a family, Saint George is shining in the light of Orthodoxy. We are strong in both our faith and each other. Thank you to the entire Parish family both here and our special family who are now away from Bangor. We are, and will always be, a strong, joyous and loving community.

As the Parish Council president, it is my great pleasure to accept this duty as a gift and to act with humility while serving the community once again. Please continue to be stewards of our parish in service and in giving. We are accomplishing great things at Saint George and through stewardship we can experience "theosis" which is the path to heaven on earth.

The Parish Council gives special thanks to Cynthia Karris and Cathy Speronis for once again surpassing their past success. Dancing with the Greeks was a huge success not only as a fundraiser but most importantly filled the hall with Parishioners, Visitors and Friends. Dr. Lambros Karris dedicated his time on each Wednesday in October by giving dance lessons to all. The Folk Festival continues to be the largest fundraiser in the church so "Thank you" to all who assisted. Additionally your Parish Council deserves many thanks for their time and efforts for our community. Opa!

Please feel free to contact me at any time to offer your wisdom or guidance. Should any of you ever have any questions about the operations of the Parish please do not hesitate to inquire. All information belongs to you, the parishioners of Saint George and the Parish Council strives to maintain a culture of respect peace, love and order though transparency.

Yours in the love of Our Lord,



Lee P. Speronis  
President, Parish Council 2016

### **CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT**

YTD 2016 As of 11/14/2016

REVENUE TOTAL: \$78,751.62  
EXPENSE TOTAL: \$78,335.99  
YTD 2016 +/- \$ 415.63

### **AMERICAN FOLK FESTIVAL 2016**

REVENUE TOTAL: \$30,818.85  
EXPENSE TOTAL: \$13,288.16  
NET INCOME: \$17,531.00

### **GREEK DANCE 2016**

REVENUE TOTAL: \$5,481.00  
EXPENSE TOTAL: \$1,943.00  
NET INCOME: \$3,538.00

### **ST. GEORGE PARISH COUNCIL 2016**

Lee Speronis, President.....942-7822  
George Leakos, Vice-President.....989-2166  
Kathy Fitzpatrick, Secretary.....942-7532  
Ambrose Smitherman, Treasurer.....991-4555  
George Brontas..... 989-4987  
Kevin Cox.....667-6257  
Jack Montgomery.....945-6022  
Donna Walter.....941-6280  
Tim Kulikowski.....(607)-237-4399



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**Do we give and receive gifts on Christmas?** Some people exchange gifts on one or more days during the Twelve Holy Days. Some people receive gifts on December 25. Some wait for January 1, St. Basil's Day. St. Basil is known as the distributor of gifts in Greece and Jan. 1 is the traditional gift exchange day. Some people give generously and philanthropically throughout the Twelve Holy Days—to benefit others, sharing Christ's love.

**How do we get ready?** One way to get ready is to *anticipate* and to *celebrate at the appointed time*—not two or three weeks prior as many people have become accustomed to. For example, if we are celebrating our birthday, we usually don't light the candles on the cake two weeks before. We wait for the day and then we make it special. In this case, we wait for December 25 and then start and carry out the celebration during the Twelve Days.

Suggestions: Buy your tree close to the 25<sup>th</sup>. Decorate it on the 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup>, waiting to officially light it on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Bake your holiday treats closer to the Nativity Feast. Try your hand at making a *Christopsomo* (Christmas Bread) this season. It is usually shared with others on Christmas Eve. Write your Christmas greetings and mail them on December 26. Use the opportunity to share with others about the traditional celebration of the Twelve Holy Days.

Start playing/singing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve & Day. Carol with others on these days, making stops at homes in your neighborhood. Turn off the radio if necessary to keep the temptation to pre-celebrate at a low roar. Look up all the verses to traditional Western Christmas carols. Most of them are theologically rich in content. Sing them—most people are not familiar with them and may marvel at what they hear.

If you know the Greek language, learn a few of the traditional Greek Christmas songs—known as *kalanda* and teach them to others. These carols are sung during the Twelve Days of Christmas. In Greece, children often go house to house with sweet sounding triangles and a small drum singing the *kalanda*. These days, children can be taught some *kalanda* and at a pre-planned fellowship hour, they can circulate from table to table, singing to adults who come prepared to “treat” them with sweets and coins as they make the rounds. An event like this brings happiness to both generations and perpetuates a long-standing tradition.

On January 1, celebrate St. Basil's Day with a Vasilopita. This sweet bread with a coin baked inside is a commemoration of a miracle of the Saint from the 4<sup>th</sup> century. One can choose to celebrate this day in a Christ honoring way by attending the Divine Liturgy for the Saint, sharing his life story and a delicious Vasilopita which contains the coin of blessing with family and friends. The life of the Saint and recipes for Vasilopita are easily found on-line. This is a perfect day for *kalanda* singing and gift exchanges, too. Prepare a special meal and invite friends. Dedicate the first day of the calendar New Year to God in a bright and beautiful way!

This year, if you've never done so, incorporate the Twelve Holy Days as part of your Christmas tradition. Use this season to perpetuate joy within yourself, sharing the wondrous message of the birth of Christ. Indeed--Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

-Presbytera Candace



## Painting of the Church Nave

Thank you to Father Leo who spent about 400 hours meticulously painting the nave of the church. Axios! The icons really stand out, and the color scheme compliments the windows as well.

Mike Pullen, Senior Architect at Ames Associates selected the color scheme. Here are his comments:

“The church has wonderful details in the paneled wainscot and vertical applied trim between the icons which was not apparent when everything was painted white. The new paint scheme enhances that detail and helps integrate the walls with the warm, rich, wooden elements of the church’s interior. The color between the icons coordinates with the deep blue/green “sky” tones present in this beautiful artwork.”



## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

The “Clean Slates,” (our youngest students, ages 5-6/7) meet once monthly for instruction with Athanasia. Most recently the younger students learned about the life of St. Nicholas on the first Sunday of December. While Athanasia was unable to teach due to illness, Nina filled in, telling the story of the historical St. Nicholas and concluding with a beloved tale about St. Nicholas called “The Baker’s Dozen.” The kids were caught up in the story while they had left their shoes on the stairs to the classroom waiting for St. Nicholas to lay a treat at their shoes. Sure enough, the Saint made sure all the students found a large, juicy orange, a chocolate mint candy cane and a bag of gold foil wrapped chocolate coins atop their shoes. A couple children went home and made their own “baker’s dozen” of cookies (numbered 13) in remembrance of the baker who learned to be generous from St. Nicholas. As they say, it is always good to practice what you learn in Sunday School!

The Junior Class (ages 7/8+) is making a journey through the life of Christ as told to us in the Gospel of Luke. Every now and then we stop along the way to learn about the life of Saints. The student are sharp, engaged and ask great questions! We even have a couple adults who join us regularly which adds to the diversity and interest of this class. We have a neat format—we worship together during the Liturgy, we eat in class (it’s held during fellowship hour), we watch film clips that support our Gospel lessons, sometimes we do puzzles and word searches for fun. And, occasionally, we earn (yummy) rewards for work done at home!

Mostly, we are reminded that Jesus came to teach and fellowship with people just like us. That the events of His life happened in real time and space—actual history—to real people. With this perspective, we imagine how we would have reacted if we’d been in Christ’s midst back then. God willing, these “encounters” with Christ in the Sunday School format will leave an impression as a lasting and solid memory of truth long after the days of Sunday School have ended. It’s a hope and a prayer and what Sunday School teachers labor for. Please remember this year’s teachers in your prayers: Athanasia Panakis, Nina Schefe & Presbytera Candace. Thank you!

# **ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

90 Sanford Street  
Bangor, Maine 04401

Proistamenos: Fr. Leo Schefe  
Church Phone: (207) 945-9588  
Email: [stgeorgebangorme1@myfairpoint.net](mailto:stgeorgebangorme1@myfairpoint.net)  
Website: [www.stgeorge.me.goarch.org](http://www.stgeorge.me.goarch.org)

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