NOVEMBER’ S MAJOR FEAST DAYS by (DR. CHRISTOS STRUBAKOS)

NOVEMBER 8: THE HOLY ARCHANGELS: On November the 8th our Church celebrates the “Synaxis” or coming together to honor the holy archangels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and all of the other bodiless powers, the angels and archangels. The holy Angels surround the throne of God, doing his will in perfect obedience to Him. They are spiritual, immaterial and immortal beings who are free of sin and corruption through their own choosing. It is said that the Archangel Michael was present when Satan fell and gathered all of the other angels together and warned them with the same admonition that is said at every Divine Liturgy: ‘let us stand well, let us stand in awe, let us stand attentive!’ The Archangel Gabriel was tasked with delivering the news to the Holy Virgin Mary that she would conceive and become the mother of the Word of God, of our Lord Jesus Christ. The feast day of the holy angels is a great one in our church because we also remember our own guardian angels and ask for their continued protection and prayers. The icons of the holy angels decorate our Church and are especially noteworthy on the Iconostasis where the Archangels make up the doors to the Holy Altar, symbolizing both their entrance to the Holy and their preventing of just anyone entering. Let us all honor the holy angels and pray for their guidance and protections throughout our lives.

NOVEMBER 9: ST. NEKTARIOS: When we think about the Saints we often think of men and women who lived many years ago in places that are remote to our own. But the saints are among us at all times in the Church’s history thus showing the active working of the Holy Spirit through the Church even to this day. St. Nektarios stands in stark contrast to this as he was a Saint who lived and died just 100 years ago. He was a bishop in Egypt of the Metropolis of Pentapolis but due to envy he was slandered and was deposed and forced to leave. Nektarios then went to Greece where he was the principal of the Rizarios theological school and eventually founded a monastery on the island of Aegina dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Again, he fell victim to envy and was persecuted, having rumors spread about him and his work. Truly the words of the Psalmist hold true with this saint: “many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all”. Suffering from cancer he was hospitalized and in November 1920 he died. It is said that during his funeral procession his body was exuding a sweet-smelling myrrh that was the first sign of his sanctity. St. Nektarios is the patron saint of those suffering from terminal illnesses and has worked countless miracles throughout the world. He is an example of righteousness in the face of suffering and is truly a dynamic, miracle working saint. May we all have his prayers and intercessions.

NOVEMBER 15: BEGINNING OF THE NATIVITY FAST: Our church teaches us that prior to every major feast there needs to be a period of spiritual preparation. This is important in order for us to maximize the grace we get from celebrating the feast and in order for it to have the biggest impact in our lives. The biggest feast of the Church is Pascha, and as we know there is a long period of preparation that consists of Great Lent and several Sundays before Lent. Christmas, is the next biggest feast on which we celebrate the birth of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. In order for us to fully prepared to spiritually celebrate this day, the Church asks us to begin our preparation 40 days before Christmas, on November 15. While the secular world uses the time before Christmas for parties and celebrations, the church uses this time for quiet contemplation, prayer and eager anticipation. We should fast during this time, come to
**Dear Friends** is an in-print outreach effort to the Orthodox Christian community of St. John as well as the community at large. This monthly publication aims to inform, edify, and serve as a witness to its readers of the Truth of Jesus Christ as confirmed in the Holy Gospel.

**Dear Friends** is a ministry of:

**St. John The Baptist Greek Orthodox Church**
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Sterling Heights, MI 48312
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**Clergy:**
Fr. Nicholas Kyritses, Proistamenos

**Chanter:** Dr. Christos Strubakos PhD

**Office Staff:** Orsalia Kostakis

**Church Maintenance:** Nicholas Makrides

**Parish Council:**
Dr. Steve Kotsonis, President

**Philoptochos:** Kim LaForest

**Seniors:** Nick Prantzalos, President

**Choir:** John Tangalos & Dr. Andy Kotsis

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**YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES**

**College Connection:** Cathy Kondoleon & Dina Demetriou

**Sunday School:**
Tara Kosmides, Sophia Papastamatis & Dr. Zoy Patouhas-Gilbert

**Greek School:** Elli Patouhas

**Altar Boys:** Matthew Vasilakis

**GOYA:** Mary Kotsonis, President
**Advisors:** Angela Kotsonis, Angie Stathakios, Maria Souris & Sky Bastounis

**HOPE & JOY ADVISORS:**
Irene Kourtesis, Dimetra Mansoor & Peggy Marselis

**Little Angels Advisors:** Popi Stavrou, Becky Patouhas & Erin Papakonstantinou

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**ST. JOHN PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS**

**Dear St. John Family,**

Each year on the fourth Thursday of November, numerous families sit down at their dinner tables that are overflowing with golden turkeys and traditional sides as they celebrate the holiday known as Thanksgiving. Centuries before, the ancient Romans, Egyptians, Hebrews, and Greeks held similar celebrations known as harvest festivals. Ancient Greek women held a harvest festival known as **Themophoria**. This was a religious festival in honor of the Goddess Demeter, who was the Goddess of harvest and grain. It is evident that the human need to express gratitude is powerful and universal, but how can we take our gratitude further than just giving thanks on the fourth Thursday of November? For the month of November, I challenge you to give thanks each day. There are three elements of living a life of Thanksgiving: humility, gratitude, and remembrance. Humility is an inward attitude and with many things in life, we must begin within. Humility centers us to realize that we are not better or more important than anyone else. It also rejects the mentality of “**I deserve this and I deserve it now**”. When you have a humble mindset, you will be satisfied with what you have and accept the life you’ve been given. On the other hand, gratitude is an outward expression and often comes after adopting an attitude of humility. People who recognize kindness and goodness internally begin to wonder how they can help others around them. A form of gratitude is the consideration of someone or something through the act of prayer. If you are thankful for your friends and family, you can pray for their health, well-being, and overall happiness. Lastly, remembrance means recognizing and always remembering what has been done for you. Our daily lives can become hectic and that often means we forget small gestures of kindness. Be grateful because grateful people choose to recall on the times that someone was kind to them. By adopting these three elements of humility, gratitude, and remembrance, you will live a life of thanksgiving.

**Love, Sotiria Seremetis St. John Ladies Philoptochos Member**

**Upcoming Philoptochos events:**

- **Sunday, November 4 = Philoptochos Sunday**
- **Monday, November 12 = Philoptochos General Meeting**
- **Sunday, November 18 = Feather Party**

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**ST. JOHN PHILOPTOCHOS OCTOBER MEETING**

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Church more often, prepare ourselves for more frequent communion and examine ourselves and go for holy confession. We become in essence like the Magi, seeing the star in the west and beginning our journey through the dessert to arrive at the manger. By following these practices we will celebrate Christmas this year in ways we never have before. Let us all take the time beginning on November 15th to spiritually prepare ourselves for Christmas.

**NOVEMBER 21: ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE:** The Virgin Mary’s parents were very old and still had not been able to have a child. They prayed earnestly to God and promised Him that if they were granted their prayer they would dedicate their child to God. God heard their crying and Anna, Mary’s mother, became pregnant and gave birth to their baby daughter on September 8. When the child had just turned three, her parents fulfilled their promise to God and took her to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. They walked her through the streets and together with them were maidens carrying candles and singing hymns to God. When they arrived at the temple, the three-year old Panagia ran from her mother into the holy of holies where she lived, praying daily and being under the care of the high priest Zacharias. Here, in the holy of holies she prepared herself to become the Mother of God. It was here where the Archangel Gabriel came to deliver the good news of the Incarnation once she was of age. This feast is celebrated throughout the Orthodox world with great joy because one of us, the Virgin Mary, was so pure and so holy that she was deemed by God worthy to be His mother.

**NOVEMBER 30: ST. ANDREW:** St. Andrew was the brother of Peter the Apostle and is called the first-called because he was the first to be invited by Christ to follow Him. Andrew was with the Lord throughout His earthly ministry, and after the Lord’s Ascension he preached the Gospel throughout the known world, perhaps even reaching as far as the Ukraine. Significantly for us, St. Andrew established the first church in the city of Byzantium which would eventually become Constantinople under the emperor Constantine. It is for this reason that our Holy Ecumenical Patriarchate celebrates the feast of St. Andrew and we, the spiritual children of the patriarchate, along with them are full of joy that the mother Church of Constantinople continues to be under his protection and guidance. St. Andrew was eventually arrested because of his preaching and sentenced to death. He was crucified on an x-shaped cross in the city of Patra.

**INTRODUCING THE ORTHODOX CHURCH CLASSES AT ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

*Every Wednesday evening following Paraklesis service. Service at 7:00pm, lecture immediately following by Dr. Christos Stroubakos, PhD.*

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3:** What we believe about God  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10:** What we believe about the Divine Liturgy  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17:** What we believe about Salvation  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24:** What we believe about the Saints  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31:** No class  
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7:** What we believe about the church year  
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14:** What we believe about the Icons  
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21:** No class  
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28:** What we believe about the Theotokos  
**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5:** No class  
**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12:** What we believe about life after death

Weekly supplemental readings will be taken from the book *Introducing the Orthodox Church Its Faith and Life* by Anthony Coniaris. We have copies of this book available at our church and it is available online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

**ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND.**
**Little Angels (under 4 year), Hope (K-2nd grade) & Joy (3rd-6th grade)**

On Saturday, October 20th, Hope and Joy and Little Angels held our annual Halloween party. **One hundred and seventy people** (adults and children) attended this event! Nineteen families decorated tables in our church hall with fun, non-scary Halloween themes and passed out candy and treats to the little ones. Afterwards we all enjoyed salad, pizza, and refreshments along with music and dancing. We appreciate how the parents, despite their busy schedules, made time to come together and to bring their children to attend our Halloween party. Many stayed afterwards to help clean up and to make sure the hall was spotless for coffee hour the next day. Thank you to everyone who attended, decorated tables, passed out candy, and to those who stayed to clean up. Some even vacuuming and/or cleaning the floors. We feel that our group continues to stay strong due to the dedication and enthusiasm of all the parents and advisors. Many often ask if we need any help and we truly appreciate it.

**On Sunday, November 11th,** we will be having our **Thanksgiving** event right after church. Plans are still in the works as to what exactly will be involved. We will keep you all posted.

**On December 8th,** we will having our **Christmas party.** We plan to have it in the late afternoon/evening and we have a fun time planned for everyone.

Once again, thank you all for your enthusiasm, dedication, and words of encouragement. They mean a lot!

The Hope and Joy and Little Angels advisors. **Demetra Mansoor, Irene Kourtesis and Popi Stavrou**
As an Orthodox Christian and a human, I find myself always asking myself: Does Heaven exist? I believe that most Christians have doubted their faith due to not having any proof. I personally, am in a constant fight with myself over whether or not such a beautiful paradise exists. That is why I try to go to church every Sunday to further my belief in God and create a closer relationship with Him. Instead of trying to picture a Heaven, why don’t we think about a world without sin and filled with eternal love and happiness?

Another question I have asked myself is: What is considered paradise in Heaven? We have connected ourselves to so many materialistic things on earth such as our house, car, cell phone, and television. Our idea of paradise on earth may be relaxing at a beach, taking a day off of work, taking a trip to Greece or (for younger people like me) watching Netflix in our rooms. How can you imagine a paradise in Heaven when all of those things aren’t there? I believe that there is a beautiful place where Jesus (our savior) sits at the right hand of God, where our faithful souls would live in joy for the rest of eternity. We are told that Heaven is a place where there is no pain, no sorrow, and no suffering. If you live in this world it’s hard to envision such a place. Maybe it’s best not to define heaven, because it’s beyond our understanding. If you’re seeking for the truth it is best to accept with humility that you can’t fully understand the mysteries of the church. The most important thing is that with faith, if we live a Christian life and by the grace of God, we will experience the truth when it is time.
Greetings from Danielle Alexopoulos! I am a senior at Central Michigan University and majoring in Communication Science and Disorders with a minor in Child Development. I plan on attending graduate school to become a Speech-Language Pathologist. My ultimate goal is to work in an education setting with students who have speech impairments.

I am very passionate about my major. I am currently involved in an organization for my major called Speech-Language and Hearing Club. Every year, we raise money for children and adolescents with communication disorders who can benefit from an intervention program. I also enjoy playing club soccer, where several of my teammates have been Greek, being involved in Special Olympics, and working out. I am the Vice President of the Women’s Club Soccer team at Central Michigan University. We travel and play different schools from our conference (e.g. Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, University of Michigan, etc.). For Special Olympics, I play different sports that allow people with disabilities to understand what it feels like to be part of a team. It’s a great way to meet new people and give back to those individuals who have not been blessed with the physical and mental gifts that God has given me. As an Orthodox Christian, I believe that we should help our fellow man, especially those less fortunate than ourselves.

Central Michigan University is located in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. There are many student organizations to join. However, there are no Orthodox Christian Fellowship student organizations or Greek Orthodox Churches in Mt. Pleasant. The closest Greek Orthodox Church is Holy Trinity in Lansing, Michigan, which is a one hour drive from Mount Pleasant. I attend church at Holy Trinity on Sunday’s as much as I can, but not as often as I would like due to the distance and the amount of time I spend studying at school. Whenever I have been able to attend services at Holy Trinity, its members have been very welcoming. The members there include Greek friends of our family who live in the Lansing area. I have also been able to see several Michigan State University students who are members of St. John’s Greek Orthodox Church while attending services at Holy Trinity, including my first cousin Angelina Alexopoulos. Seeing them always makes me feel closer to home.

Going away to school has strengthened my faith in God. He gives me hope and strength whenever I feel down and makes me feel like I am never alone. Knowing that he is with me and watching over me allows me to overcome the obstacles that have been thrown my way. I am thankful every day that I am a Greek Orthodox Christian. I cannot imagine my life without my faith, guidance and support I receive from my family and God. I hope everyone at the St. John’s parish is doing well and would like to personally thank everyone for the care packages I have received during the time I have been away at school.

Faithfully yours, Danielle Alexopoulos

ST. JOHN COLLEGE CONNECTION CARE PACKAGES

College Connection is in the process of updating addresses for all our post-high school students in preparation to mail care packages to them. If you would like your student(s) to receive their care package, please submit the following contact information no later than October 25th:

- Student Name
- College/University/Technical School Name
- Home email address AND School email address, if different
- Mailing Address, if away at school, and different than home address
- Cell Phone
- Expected Graduation Date

Contact information can be forwarded by:
- Email: parish@stjohngoc.net
- Website submission: www.stjohngoc.net and by clicking the “Young Adult” tab on the home page
- Church Office Phone: 586-977-6080
We opened our doors September 10, 2018 and will run through June 11, 2019. We have 160 active Sunday School students and 30-40 Senior Forum students, for a total of approximately 200 students. Several students still have yet to register so we encourage parents to come see us in the Sunday School office to confirm the information in the pre-filled registration forms for their children.

We have a dedicated staff of 23 directors and teachers and several individuals on our list of substitutes. With so many staff and parent helpers we are very blessed in our community. We have welcomed a couple new teachers and subs and a new director, Dr. Zoy Patouhas-Gilbert this year. We are always happy to grow our Sunday School family. If you or someone you know is interested in being a substitute teacher for Sunday School, please see Tara, Sophia or Zoy.

Registration fees are deposited into the church’s General fund. Our expenses are taken from that fund and include:
- Textbooks
- Classroom materials and supplies
- Funding holiday programs, such as the Christmas pageant and Saturday of Lazarus breakfast.
- Funding events such as our graduation ceremony and welcome celebration

We continue to facilitate charities throughout the year. We’ll do the Super Bowl for Caring on Super Bowl Sunday. During Lent we will also do our annual Mission box collection. We also take opportunities to partner with Philoptochos on their charitable pursuits.

Our Open House was held on October 15. Parents visited their children’s classrooms for a teacher presentation of annual goals and expectations. Teachers distributed the goals that children need to accomplish to earn an honor pin by year’s end. If you couldn’t make it to Open House, please feel free to stop by your students’ classrooms any time after class to talk to their teacher – we are always happy to share what we are learning in class!

Many of the classes this year are using the Remind 101 app to communicate with their students’ parents. You can join your classroom’s page to keep up to date on class announcements.

This year’s Christmas Pageant is scheduled for Sunday, December 17th in the church immediately following Divine Liturgy. Practices will begin on December 3rd immediately after Sunday School in the church. They will run no later than 12:30pm and we ask that every parent make an effort to have their children stay for practices. The kids are really excited to put on a heartfelt reenactment of the Nativity of Christ for you.

PRECKHOOL 4

Tara Kosmides and Angela Kotsonis are the preschool 4 Sunday school teachers. We have been teaching for the last 11 years together and love having the children learning all about our Lord Jesus Christ. We will teach the children the basics about our church, the importance of attending church, the sacraments, work on mastering the cross (holding our fingers correctly and how to do our cross), and work on the Lord’s Prayer. We have enjoyed watching the children of our parish grow to become teenagers. In today’s world with all the temptations, it is important to start teaching our faith and traditions from a young age. We hope our efforts are successful in setting the foundation of our Orthodox faith in your children.
ST. JOHN ALTAR BOYS (3rd-12th GRADE)

Beloved parents of St. John, many of your boys would like to attend and participate as Altar Boys and they are very interested in arriving on time for service. Please help them and demonstrate your good example by bringing them each Sunday to service on time and prepared. All boys grade 3-12 are welcome to serve in the Holy Altar each and every Sunday. Please come prepared for Church and arrive no later than 9:50AM.
ST. JOHN CHOIR

Many thanks to St. John Directors John Tungalos and Andy Kotsis as well as to all St. John Choir members for their
Love, Service and Dedication to our church.

God bless you all!

ST. JOHN SENIOR CITIZENS

Our next senior citizens meeting will take place on the first Thursday of November. We hope you had a
blessed summer and look forward to seeing all of you in the Divine Liturgy every Sunday! The photos
below are from our last meeting and picnic on October 4, 2018, which was attended by almost 110 people!
ST. JOHN GREEK SCHOOL NEWS

The St. John Greek Afternoon School started the new school year with “Agiasmos” and Orientation on September 18, 2018. We have 61 students and 6 teachers.

- Gina Sandas teaches PK-K
- Orsalia Kostakis teaches 1st grade
- Niki Antoniou teaches 2nd grade
- Samantha Balasis teaches 3rd grade
- Maria Tasiopoulou teaches 4th grade
- Elli Patouhas teaches 5th and 6th grade

Two of our students who already graduated are coming back to take 7th grade and practice for the Greek proficiency test. It is a great year.

Children as young as 4 years old can start Greek School. We have classes every Tuesday and Thursday in the afternoon. The students receive approximately 120 hours of Greek language every year, and learn Greek reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary and conversation. Special attention is given to Greek culture throughout the year.

Every year we devote even more time in conversation. Our goal is for all students to speak Greek every day. Included in our program is Greek dancing. It takes place during Greek School and is everybody’s favorite.

**We also offer Conversational Classes for Adult and Teeny:** Lessons designed to provide vocabulary and grammar needed for everyday situations such as meeting people, asking questions and conducting simple business transactions. The classes are every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 6:30-7:30.

**And now about what is coming up:**

- In November, the parents will receive a progress report.
- The Greek School is going to have the Christmas show, on Tuesday, December 18, in the afternoon. Everybody is invited to hear our students sing the traditional Christmas songs.
- In January, the older students give wonderful speeches in church for the Three Hierarchs and the Greek Letters Day.
- February is the months for report cards and parent/teacher conference.
- This year we will celebrate the Greek Independence Day on March 26 and we will have Graduation on Thursday, May 16, 2019.

Please come and see our programs. The kids are doing a wonderful job.

By Elli Patouhas, Director

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**Kyria Gina's Preschool / Kindergarten Class**

Our school year is off to a great start! Our days have been very busy and full of activities. While getting to know each other, we have also been working together to develop routines and set up classroom expectations. I look forward to introducing our students to the Greek language and culture in a fun and interactive environment. Thank you to all our families for their hard work and dedication, and for being part of our Greek School community.
FEATHER PARTY

Hosted By

St. John Greek Orthodox Church Ladies Philoptochos Society

Sunday, November 18th - doors open at 5pm inside our community hall located at 11455 Metropolitan Parkway in Sterling Heights

$5.00 admission fee includes a book of cards and a door prize ticket

Lots of great prizes, hams, turkeys, door prizes and much more!

Please come enjoy an evening of fun, food and community.

See you then!
Meetings

ADULT GREEK SCHOOL
Tuesdays and Thursdays
6:30pm -7:30pm
Call the church office if interested

GOYA  (7 - 12 grade)
November 4 - Goya Meeting after Sunday School
St.John Holiday Hoops Basketball Tournament
November 9, 10, and 11

HOPE and JOY & LITTLE ANGELS
Enjoy the Event on November 11, after coffee hour

GREEK SCHOOL
Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:30pm-6:30pm

PARISH COUNCIL
2nd Tuesday of every month
Tuesday, November 13, Meeting at 7:00pm

PHILOPTOCHOS
2nd Monday of every month
November 12, Meeting at 7:30pm

SENIOR CITIZENS
1st Thursday of every month
Thursday, October 4
Meeting & Luncheon at Royalty House 12:00pm

SUNDAY SCHOOL
Every Sunday

Baptisms

Saturday, November 3
Arianna daughter of
Lampros & Nicoletta Koutelas

Saturday, November 17
Aristides son of
Nicholas & Ioanna Kokas

Prayers and Condolences to the family and friends of:

- Christina M. Rheha
- Dr. Harry Kotsis
- Betty Pappas, sister- in -law of Alexandra Tangalos

May their memory be eternal

50th Wedding Anniversary

Demetrios & Anthi Stavrou
John & Anastasia Flerianos

Thanksgiving Thought

We pray for the big things and forget to give thanks for the ordinary, small (and yet really not small) gifts. How can God entrust great things to one who will not thankfully receive from him the little things?
If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed, even where there is no greater experience, no discoverable riches, but much weakness, small faith and difficulty; if on the contrary, we only keep complaining to God that everything is too paltry and petty, so far from what we expected, then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Happy Thanksgiving!
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**SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 10TH ANNUAL**

**Event dates:** **November 9-11, 2018**  
**St. John Greek Orthodox Church/Hall**  
***More info on the website at stjohnsoc.net**

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**“Holiday Hoops” Dinner/Dance at**  
on Saturday, November 10, 2018