The Messenger

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; for thereby they that worshipped the stars were instructed by a star to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

DECEMBER 2020

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A Message from Father Rick

Father Richard Demetrius Andrews

Greetings Brothers and Sisters:

By the time you read this, we will be two weeks into the **Advent Fast** (Nov.15-Dec.25) in preparation for the celebration of our Lord's Nativity. This Fast consists of abstention from meat and dairy products throughout but is not as austere as the Fast of Great Lent, in that fish is allowed except on Wednesdays and Fridays and after December 12th. In addition to fasting, part of the preparation is preserving the spirit of the season. Quiet contemplation often is in direct conflict with the holiday shopping season and the many Christmas parties put on by friends, family and work. Now Covid-19 may put a damper on all of this. No matter what we should strive not to pre-celebrate Christmas. The Orthodox Church offers another season of celebration which begins on December 25th and extends to January 6th, on Theophany/Epiphany—the Baptism of our Lord. This is where the ***Twelve (12) Days of Christmas*** comes from. These days are fast-free, in other words, no fasting is allowed because it is a period of rejoicing. Just like a party or celebration often requires planning and forethought, so do periods of fasting and solemn reflection. We must be intentional about how and where we will spend our time and energy during Advent.

Continued on page 4

Saints Peter & Paul Greek Orthodox Church

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Glenview, IL 60025
Phone: (847) 729-2235
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Email: *office@ssppglenview.org*
Website: *ssppglenview.org*

Rev. Dr. Fr. Richard Demetrius Andrews, Protobresbyter, *frrick@ssppglenview.org*
Rev. Fr. Paul Dinkov, Associate Priest
frpaul@ssppglenview.org
Rev. Dn. Theodore Saclarides, M.D.

Sunday & Weekly Services
Matins 8:15 am
Divine Liturgy 9:30 am
Church Office Hours:
Mon.-Thurs. 8:30am-4:30pm
Fri. 8:30am - 3:00pm

Parish Administrator: Sandra Glisic
parishadmin@ssppglenview.org
Youth Director: Angela Tsarouhis
youthdirector@ssppglenview.org
Bookkeeper: Diane Bravos
diane@ssppglenview.org
Stewardship: Voula Colburn & Dino Tsitsis
sspp.stewarship@gmail.com

2020 PARISH COUNCIL

Keith Anderson, President
Anne Marie Adams, Vice President
Louis Pappamichiel, Treasurer
Steve Koulogeorge, Assistant Treasurer
Christy Gouletas, Recording Secretary
Brad DeSent, Corresponding Secretary
Mary Alukos
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Steve Callas
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Nick Colis
George Logothetis
Tommy Mantice
George Nassos
Jim Santos
Pat Siuntres
Therese Speropoulos

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Agape Preschool: Renee Tzakis, *agape60025@gmail.com*
Acolytes: Dn.Ted Saclarides, Elias Papadakis, Tommy Mantice, *sspp.acolytes@gmail.com*
Athletics: Chris Atsaves, sspp.athletics1@gmail.com
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Choir Director: Therese Speropoulos *sspp.church.choir@gmail.com*
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Coffee Connection: Dr. Helen Theodoropoulos, Randa Anderson, Doreen DeSent *sspp.coffee.connection@gmail.com*
Coffee Fellowship: Lucy Economos (847) 827-5593 *sspp.coffeefellowship1@gmail.com*
Divorce Rebuilders: Maria Boyle *sspp.divorcerebuilders@gmail.com*
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Orthodox Couples Club: Melissa Theodore *sspp.occ@gmail.com*
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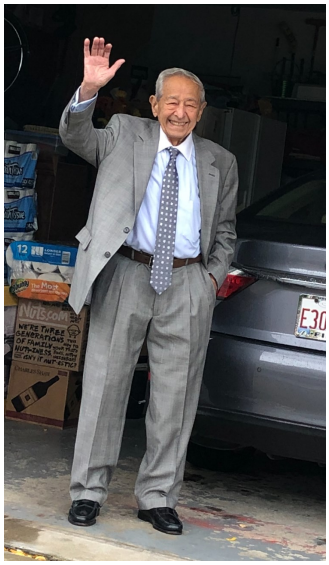
Prosphora: Eleni Soukoulis, *sspp.prosphora@gmail.com*
Saint Basil's Philanthropy: Christy Gouletas *sspp.philanthropy@gmail.com*
Saint Stephen's Men's Group: Joe Zubay *sspp.mensgroup@gmail.com*
Ushering: Bo LaMotte and Louie Pappamichiel *sspp.ushering@gmail.com*
Welcome: Sylvia Creatura *sspp.outreach@gmail.com*
Young Adult League (YAL): Tommy Mantice, Julie Stefanski, Maria Mantice, Alexandra Mamalakis, Mia Shanley *sspp.yal@gmail.com*

For emergencies, please call 847-282-0137

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

Welcome to our new member, Andrew Spores, to our SSPP family!

On September 19th, we celebrated our one and only wedding at SSPP for the year 2020. A joyous occasion! Blessings to Elyse Kolbaba and Jonathan McClish with their sponsors Ariana and Marcus Geromes. Kala Stefana!



Mr. Jim Corolis celebrated his 97th birthday on November 18th! Good health and many years to Jim, a faithful member and founder of our parish.

Vivian Karagianis and baby Maia participated in the 40 Day Churching service on October 30! Congrats also to dad, Achilles!

Jenna Nikolaides and baby James celebrated the 40 Day Churching on October 17! Congrats also to dad, Daniel Nikolaides!

Our first baptism of the year-Nicoletta Priola became an Orthodox Christian! Congrats to parents Phil and Alexandra and to Nouna Eleni Barkulis!

Corey O'Neill and baby Grace participated in the 40 Day Churching service on October 20th! Congrats also to dad, Matt O'Neill!

PASTORAL MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Again, we offer a hearty congratulatory "Axios!" to our new elected *Bishop Timothy Bakakos* of Hexamilion. He will be ordained to the episcopacy on *Saturday December 5th* at Saints Constantine & Helen Church in Merrillville Indiana. Bishop Timothy will continue to serve as chancellor for the Metropolis of Chicago.

The ***60th Anniversary Year*** celebration will conclude with the anticipated publication of our commemorative album and directory hopefully by year-end. If you have not yet paid for your memory page, please do so asap. In early October, we had our last event. ***Mr. Paul Karos*** spoke about *Suffering, Healing & Being Light in the World*" and "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, even in our suffering by becoming a light of joy.*" As always, "*It is good for us to be here*" (Matthew 17:4).

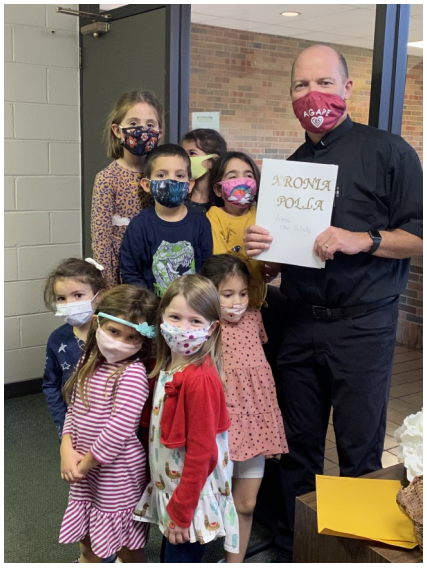
The ***Archdiocese Stewardship theme*** is "*And the greatest of these is love*" (1Corinthians 13:13), which is drawn from the full verse, "*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*" The 'love' our patron Apostle Paul speaks of is 'agape' or the self-sacrificial love of God we all strive to have and to live. This love is not a sentiment or feeling, rather it is an action. The Apostle James states: "*faith without works is dead*" (James 2:20). We ask everyone to contribute generously and sacrificially of their Time, Talents, and Treasures including ***giving at least two percent*** (2%) of their gross income to the parish to support our ministries and facilities.

The ***new registration system*** for Sunday Divine Liturgy participation is in place. It will open early each week for the following Sunday. It is a first-come, first serve sign-up that can accommodate eighty (80) persons each time. When sign-ups reach capacity, parishioners can sign-up on an overflow list. This list will be monitored closely for several weeks to determine if there is enough demand to warrant having a second liturgy, either on Sunday or Saturday. Again, a person must attend worship when he or she signs-up. However, if you're not able to come, you must remove your name from the sign-up so someone else has a chance to sign-up and attend. Weekday service registration has not changed.

Looking into this month, in addition to the regular Sunday worship, we eagerly anticipate the ***weekday Feasts*** of *St Spyridon* (Dec.12), *St Eleftherios* (Dec.15), *St Anastasia Pharmokalytria*, a portion of whose relics reside in our altar table (Dec.22), *Nativity of our Lord* (Dec.24 & 25).

Blessed Remainder of Advent!
+Fr. Rick

Our trunk or treat event was a success! Thanks to all the kids and parents who participated!



Agape students with Father on his birthday!

Celebrating our 60th anniversary!

LEARNING THE SAINTS WITH FR. PAUL

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the 12th of December we celebrate the feast of Saint Spyridon the Wonderworker. He is a dear to me saint not only because I was ordained a deacon in his Church but also because he actively helps many people even today. He first began working miracles during his life and during the First Ecumenical Council (325 AD). The pilgrims who have venerated his relics situated on the island of Corfu between the three seas - the Ionian, Adriatic and Mediterranean tell us that every year the monks change the saint's shoes. The shoes need to be changed because they get worn-out by the saint throughout the year since he works miracles and visits people constantly.

One recent miracle proving that the saint moves around and goes places comes from a fisherman from a nearby town. His name is Spyridon (like the saint). This fisherman was not a believer. One day he went out with his boat to fish but a big storm came upon him. Just when he was about to drawn someone pulled him out of the water and he found himself on the shore. Not knowing with certainty who that was, he rushed quickly to go to Saint Spyridon's Church. Upon arrival he found something strange. Some monks were trying to open the coffin where the saint is laid but the coffin would not open. As soon as Spyro came close to it, the coffin opened. The monks were surprised and so was Spyro. The shoes of the saint were wet and upon them could be found seaweed and seashells. Spyro knew why the shoes were wet and with great awe told his story to the monks. In a sign of thanksgiving for having his life saved, Spyro, who used to not believe the stories about the saint, now fully believing gave a golden candelabra as a gift to the saint. This oil lamp can be seen even today by the visitors. May Saint Spyridon intercede for us.

+Fr. Paul

Parish Council News

Lord, it is good for us to be here. Matthew 17:4

By Keith Anderson, Parish Council President

Celebrating 60 Years!

DECEMBER 2020

First Things First

As 2020 begins to wrap up we have all been recognizing those people in our life for whom we are thankful and inspired. The parish council and executive committee deliberated through more meetings this year than in any two years combined previously. With heartfelt appreciation for the shear time, I am also humbled by their willingness to engage, debate, and mutually support our parish through difficult decisions and transitions from pandemic responses and general management alike. In a similar fashion, the first 17 months of his assignment included a 4-month transition while the Metropolis continued clergy moves, 9-months with no assigned second priest, and 9-months of pandemic constraints. Fr. Rick, many thanks for your tireless efforts throughout the period and in your 25th year of service for the well being of all members in the parish. Many (I hope most, if not all) of the committees and ministries, their leaders and members, have been recognized through the year as part of First Things First. I would add one more for good measure, as John Vranas, chair of the parish Maintenance and Projects committee, has been tireless, diligent, and highly effective on behalf of our facilities and supporting operations. Many thanks!

The Heart of the Matter

With three quarters of the year available for reporting, the parish finances remain…promising. At the end of 2019 we set a new course for Stewardship, recognizing that our mutual and concerted effort would be required to fund parish operations and capital projects to be planned through the next decade. The chart below shows a 9-month snapshot of our response to the new call to Stewardship, despite pandemic impacts across our lives and livelihoods.

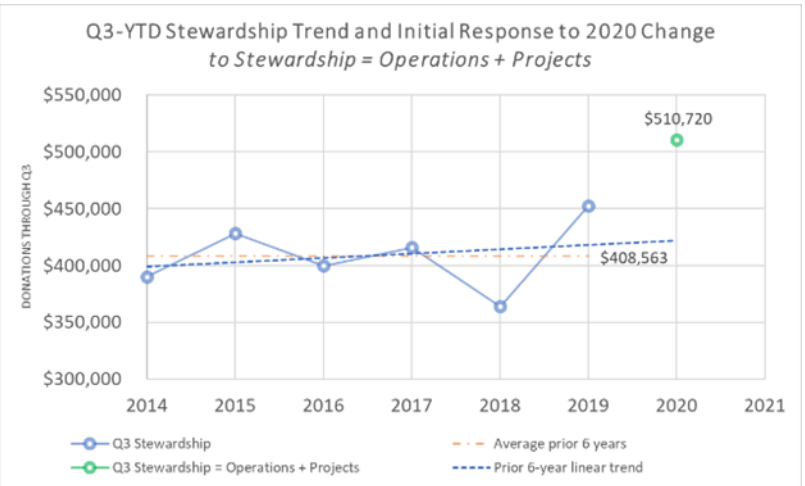
In Brief

Parish Council: 17-DEC-2020

Parish Council President email:
PCpresident@ssppglenview.org

Website feedback:
im@ssppglenview.org

Please request addition to our parish email distribution list:
office@ssppglenview.org



THANK YOU to all those that have contributed (and at higher levels than in the past) so far in 2020. Together we are making a difference for our parish – our first home! We have more funds to raise, along with a roof on the church, but look forward to the ministry and the mission that our effort enables.

On behalf of the parish council, for myself and my family, may the season bring peace to you and yours. Be well.

On the Horizon

Of course, there is a New Year looming quickly, the first of our next decade together. As much as a year interrupted by pandemic suggests we could wait for a bit longer to set goals, there is also a pent up energy, a desire for positive impact, and a true opportunity to make a difference in the world by living the faith. Enjoy the holiday season. Recharge. And be ready!

Stewardship

Staints Peter & Paul Greek Orthodox Church
Glenview, IL

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Saints Peter & Paul,

As the year draws to a close, I would like to reflect on how this year - with its ups and downs - has brought us closer together. Whether it is your Time, Talent, or Treasure, giving back can be one of life's greatest rewards.

We have donated our time by reaching out to each other through Virtual Fellowship Hours and check-in calls to all families.

We have exercised our talents by providing livestream liturgical events throughout the Metropolis, participated in our "Front Porch" project, directory, and memory book, and cultivated our Zoom skills across the parish during our first ever virtual Parish Assembly.

As a testament to this communal effort, and despite the current economic challenges, we collectively surpassed stewardship giving benchmarks with generous consideration of our treasures.

Looking forward, the Archdiocese Stewardship theme for 2021 is "...and the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13), which is drawn from the full verse, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." The 'love' our patron Apostle Paul speaks of is 'agape' or the self-sacrificial love of God we all strive to have and to live.

We have aligned our mission statement with the theme as follows, "The mission of the SSPP Stewardship Ministry is to inspire joyful, generous, and sacrificial giving of our Time, Talents, and Treasure to care for God's House -- our first home -- and for one another through Christian love."

May the light, the peace, and the joy of Christmas be with your homes and families today, and in the dawning New Year. **--The Stewardship Ministry--**

Website: https://ssppglenview.org/stewardship-information/
Email: sspp.stewardship@gmail.com

A Letter of Celebration and Gratitude from your 60th Anniversary Co-Chairs!

Who knew back in August 2019 when we embarked on this 60th year celebratory journey where it would lead? *We certainly didn't!* Fr. Rick had just been assigned as our new Proistamenos and a few short months later, we had a beautiful logo designed with our theme, ***"LORD", it is good for us to be here."***

A year later, "it is good for us to be here" has taken on a ***whole new meaning***! Our 60th year began in January 2020 typically enough with our Vasilopita Brunch. We are grateful to *Presvytera Jane Andrews*, *Christy Gouletas* and *Sandra Glisic* for chairing this well organized and attended fun fellowship gathering!

By March, however, "Transfiguration" took on increased significance as COVID worries led to the prudent cancellation of our 60th Anniversary philanthropy event for parish families at *Feed My Starving Children*.

But it would take more than a global pandemic to stop the SSPP dyanamos! Our team quickly pivoted to launch a line-up of "transfigured" events, including: Parish Feast Day, Glenview Independence Day Parade, Greek Fest, Parish Talent Show, And a transfigured weekend of worship with the Sacrament of Holy Unction and a Great Vespers service, both followed by inspiring and uplifting lectures from Orthodox Christian thought leader and speaker, *Paul Karos*.

As these notable achievements show, what might have kept us apart brought us together, and we stand stronger today as a community in our commitment to our faith and to each other. Truly, we proved the words of Paul Karos who reminded us that *"in darkness there is still light!"* We are humbled and grateful to so many for their support throughout this year!

First and foremost, we thank *Fr. Rick Andrews* for his active leadership and participation in every aspect of our planning and transfiguring! *Sandra Glisic* who serves and supports all of us from the Church office was instrumental with all our 60th planning activities. *Pres. Jane Andrews* who served on both 60th Anniversary Steering and Dinner Dance Committees helped with everything from creating our events banner to cooking and serving at our Vasilopita brunch.

We are equally grateful to our 60th Anniversary Steering Committee, including *Keith Anderson, Christy Gouletas, Suzanne and Jim Santos, Chris Atsaves, Elaine Buscaglia, and Mike O'Neil* for their continued commitment and support.

While our 60th Dinner Dance could not take place, our committee members contributed abundantly in the early months! We are grateful to the talented *Vicky Limperis, Olga Panagakis*, and *Maria Costas* who designed a beautiful save the date postcard with iconic images from SSPP's 60-year history. This lovely postcard never made it to the printer or to the post office due to the pandemic, but it did appear in the April and May Messengers and in many Church emails.

We are also thankful to *Lucy Economos, Patty Damisch, Suzanne Santos, Pres. Jane Andrews, Sandra Glisic and Andra O'Neil* for volunteering their participation.

We humbly recognize *Helen Theodoropoulos* and the Creticos Lecture Series for sponsoring an inspirational 60th Anniversary weekend with *Paul Karos*.

Lastly, we acknowledge our 60th Anniversary Commemorative Directory Committee for producing an extraordinary compilation of parishioner pictures, contact information, heartfelt memories and a comprehensive history of SSPP's last 10 years so eloquently captured by *Elaine Buscaglia*. To this end, we especially thank *Brad DeSent, Therese Speropoulos, Carolyn Kolbaba, Mitry Anderson* and photographer extraordinaire *Eva Kirie*!

In closing, we would be remiss if we did not also thank the Westin Hotel and the fabulous band, Together Productions, for fully refunding our deposit money and to Parish Council member, *Mike Carrozza*, for his wise counsel on these contracts.

"LORD, it is good for us to be here" united together in our SSPP parish family!

With heartfelt gratitude and appreciation,
Carrie Colis, Kathy Lucas, and Stephanie Vlahakis

SSPP 60th Anniversary Co-chairs

Reflections on the Last Decade...

As tumultuous as the early years of this last decade seemed for Saints Peter and Paul parishioners, the unexpected roller coaster ride we've been on in 2020 presented a host of challenges – and a few opportunities, as well.

The year, the parish's 60th anniversary, started out peaceful enough. The anniversary steering committee had formed in mid-2019 and already had a series of celebratory events planned, culminating with an October dinner dance. A vasilopita brunch in early January kicked off the year.

Fr. Rick, Presbytera Jane and Christy Gouletas at January vasilopita brunch. The banner displays 60th Anniversary events planned at that time.

And then COVID-19 happened. Lent was just underway in early March and we were anticipating Pascha. Word came down that all activity must stop. Would the church have to close its doors? We hoped and prayed that it was only temporary.

"We had about a week to figure out what needed to happen," said Sandra Glisic, parish administrator. While awaiting directions from the Metropolis for worship services, she explained, "We hurried to prioritize what ministries would take precedence and determine how we could best serve the community in this time. We had to quickly learn how to navigate Zoom and move all the ministries and schools to it. Eventually, we've all learned to 'live' on Zoom."

The parish council began meeting virtually. A task force, including Fr. Andrews, Glisic, Ann Marie Adams, Brad DeSent, Christy Gouletas and Louis Pappamichiel, helped facilitate the transition and address technical needs.

"We quickly shifted gears to respond to the restrictions, focusing first on getting everything online – schools, ministries and then our meetings," noted parish council president Keith Anderson. "We had a lot of Zoom meetings up front to put everything in place and keep moving forward. By summer, we had prioritized which other projects the council could still execute and which had to move to the back burner."

Livestreaming Brings Worship to Parishioners' Homes

In the first months, the Metropolis did not permit parishioners to attend worship services. Only chanters and altar servers could be present to assist Fr. Rick and Deacon Ted Saclarides. George Burbules coordinated livestreaming the services.

"We all did what we had to do to keep the services going," Fr. Rick remarked. "It wasn't difficult for us to adapt to livestreaming because we already were doing it for a couple years. I was very moved by the surprise thank you we all received after Pascha." Cars filled the parking lot and people honked or held signs to show appreciation for being able to experience Lenten and Holy Week services, even if just virtually.

"For me, not having congregants present was not that different than many weekday services," he stated. "What did feel odd was the sermon. Usually you're preaching in front of a group of people. I felt more like a reporter or news anchor talking to the camera."

"Our staff focused on seeking ways to best engage the community and provide whatever connection we could during that time," Glisic said. "Our communications went from typically one weekly update email and a Sunday bulletin email to at least two updates a week. We turned the Friday email into one with more information about upcoming services and included some spiritual content as well.

"We also stepped up our social media presence, to remind people that we are there in their lives, even if it's just scrolling through their Facebook feed and seeing one of our posts," she added. It also offered an additional way to view previous services, sermons and religious education classes.

"We set up the Virtual Candle option," Glisic said. "Once a week, Christy Gouletas lights all the candles requested, and the priests read the names submitted."

Guidelines Ensure Safe Reopening

In June a safety team chaired by Alex Michalakos was formed to develop and manage policy and proce-

(Continued on next page)

dures for the transition to limited attendance at worship services. A maximum of 100 people (including clergy, chanters, altar servers and ushers), or 25 percent of capacity, was permitted by the Metropolis.

"I sit on the safety team, as an intermediary between what's going on in the parish and what we need to do from the safety perspective," Glisic explained. "It took a lot of time for us to physically prepare the church for social distancing and ensure we were opening in the safest manner possible."

"The first month or two of not being able to attend services, many people were saying how much they missed it," Fr. Rick noted. "When we reopened, there wasn't the great demand we thought there would be. That was disheartening. If someone is not going anywhere because of concern about getting the virus, then I wouldn't expect them to go to church. But if they're going to stores, restaurants and friends' homes but not coming to church then, to me, that's an issue.

"I've done a couple of sermons about people's fear relating to the possibility of transmission of infection through communion and I've encouraged them to come back," he continued. "I've tried to play that message gentle, because some people are genuinely concerned about being out and possibly exposed. These are certainly not normal circumstances."

"Sacraments are allowed once again. Initially only funerals could take place, limited to a small number of people," Glisic said. "We have a few baptisms scheduled, but only one wedding, through year end. We still have to follow the guidelines and attendance limits. Fortunately, our livestreaming is one of the best in the Metropolis, so families can opt to livestream the sacrament for other family and friends. The safety ushers are amazing and come to many sacraments to help out."

Agape Ends Last Year Remotely

COVID restrictions last spring forced the church and Greek schools, Agape preschool and the youth ministry to make significant adjustments quickly. Athletics shut down altogether.

"We follow Glenview District 34 regarding closing for holidays or bad weather," explained Renee Tzakis, Agape's director since 2008. "When we received word they were closing the second week of March, we immediately sent letters to our parents that we would also close until further notice. We didn't think at that time it would continue through the end of the school year.

"It was the week before spring break, so a few teachers emailed links to websites the kids could look at during break," she said. "We held a staff planning meeting and, after the break, switched to virtual learning over Zoom. We tried to emulate the same schedule as much as possible, with shorter 25-minute sessions, or whatever suited each age group's attention span.

"We sent out lesson plans with actual work the kids would be doing in class, as well as extra online resources," Tzakis continued. "Kindergarteners had language arts, math, science, gym and art on various days. I was there for all the Zoom classes. Fr. Rick did a 'Come and See' religious class once a week. Peter Savas, the youth ministry director then, told a story about a saint, then played a version of Pictionary with them to test how well they comprehended it.

Agape returned to in-person learning this fall. Students wear masks on a visit to Wagner Farm.

"Younger classes met twice a week. Our two year olds were the hardest group to teach online," Tzakis remarked. "Jana Tranas, their teacher last year, did a science session she called 'Sink or Float.' She had a table with a tub of water and all these objects spread out. The kids chose an object and predicted if it would sink or float. They were really engaged."

Return to Classroom Comes with Restrictions

In the fall, Agape returned to holding classes in the community center, adhering to Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) guidelines. In addition, DCFS required a reopening plan and special COVID-updated risk management plan. Similar information was submitted to the Metropolis for approval as well.

"We have to follow DCFS rules to remain certified, so right now parents are not allowed in the building," Tzakis said. "We usually do a meet and greet with each child and the parents before the school year starts. They come in, meet the teacher and pick out their cubby. That was all done virtually this year.

"Going back to in-person classes presented a dilemma for some teachers whose own children were staying home doing remote learning," she explained. "Because of these issues, combined with a few older teachers not wanting to risk catching COVID, I lost about half of our staff before we started this fall.

"We are running at about 75 percent of last year's registration," Tzakis pointed out. "Our highest teacher-student ratio is one teacher per nine students.

(Continued on next page)

That's slightly below the present DCFS maximum allowed of one per 10. I didn't offer the two-year-old class this term because the only time kids can take their masks off is when they're socially distanced. How do you ask a two-year-old to social distance?"

All soft items (bean bags, puppets and dress-up clothes,etc.) that might be shared and can't be sanitized on the spot had to be removed from classrooms. Sensory tables, usually used by multiple children, also were removed. Cleaning and sanitizing of classrooms and bathrooms takes place after each group leaves.

To allay parents' concerns about the kids having to keep their masks on all day, plastic see-through dividers were installed on some tables and others were equipped with three-sided, clear shields similar to voting booths. Chairs were spaced farther apart, so when kids are sitting at their own table space doing work or eating a snack, they can take off their masks.

"We don't have lunch together anymore; each class has individually scheduled time for lunch," Tzakis noted. "The same is true for the playground; only one group out there at a time. All schedules were redone."

Parent-teacher conferences will be held virtually the week of Thanksgiving. "For the teachers, there's a little more prep involved," Tzakis explained. "Things normally discussed face to face now have to be written up in a report and sent home prior to the meeting.

"Even though there was a lot of reorganizing at the start of the year and we have extra paperwork on occasion," she concluded, "I think now we're in a groove. We've found the new normal!"

Church School Adapts to Zoom

The church school also had little warning (only two days) before they had to stop meeting in March. "After Pascha we were told to prepare to do a virtual class in early May, to give some reassurance and closure to our students, because we hadn't seen them for over a month. We did a second class at the end of the school year," noted Nick Obradovich, who was a teacher last year and in August was named church school co-director with his wife Kery.

"It was nice for the teachers to have some closure, too, because we'd been with these students for five or six months and had gotten to know them," he said. "But there were a lot of technical and internet challenges and the Zoom platform was very new to us. None of us were too acquainted with teaching anything interactive yet, so it was a stark reality."

Prior to the 2020-21 school year, the new leadership team – also including Bonnie Kallis, heading curriculum and teacher support; and Elaine Carrozza, heading communications – called every teacher from the previous year. "We had one-on-one conversations to hear their thoughts about starting virtually or in person and determine their level of comfort and what support they needed," Obradovich explained.

"We were concerned about having to find new teachers if some didn't want to return, for whatever reasons," he continued. "There's a definite learning curve and it would have been difficult to bring someone new up to speed under these circumstances. Fortunately, almost all the teachers, who are volunteers, agreed to return. After having the summer to reflect, many felt they could improve on engaging the students better than we did in our May experiment.

Parents Split: Remote vs. In-Person

"Our next step was to survey parents who had registered last year," Obradovich said. "The results were split between wanting to go virtual and having in-person classes. Frankly, we weren't really sure how we could properly social distance, given our program size and our space limitations. We felt the most prudent thing was to at least start the year virtually.

"Typically, our new school year begins with welcoming students and parents in person," he commented. "This year we asked parents and kids to do a drive-thru in the church lot, staying in their car, but stopping in front of appropriate teachers to have brief conversations. We all handed out new materials or crafts the class would be working on. We were very pleased with the turnout and parents seemed happy to be able to connect faces with our names."

Teachers were told to set up a consistent start time between noon and 1:00 p.m. on Sunday. They send a weekly link to log in to the class, along with material to read or view ahead of time for class discussion.

"Registration is a little down from last year, but the teachers seem pleased with the number of kids logging in and participating," Obradovich remarked. "I think I speak for all the teachers that we feel parents and kids have been wonderful in their support, showing up week after week, in spite of the Zoom mode.

"We aren't aware of any Chicago area parish that is holding in-person church school. Some have even cancelled it altogether," he concluded. "In November, we sent out a second parent survey and we're accumulating that data. We continue to watch for any guideline changes from the state or Metropolis, and we're fleshing out plans for properly distancing, should we be able to return to in-person learning."

(Continued on next page)

Reflections on the Last Decade...

Although all youth athletics activities stopped, a fundraiser for athletics and youth programs was held in October. "It was a golf outing and since it was easier to social distance, we decided to proceed with this annual event. We had a record 108 participants," said Chris Atsaves, athletics ministry director.

"While the gymnasium was not in use, we were able to do a deep clean there and in the store rooms," he added. "COVID gave us the chance to make the gym floor sparkle, clean bleachers and store rooms, and test equipment. We donated old equipment that would have provided very little use for our athletes in the future."

COVID Challenges Are Test for New Youth Director

The parish's youth ministry was already dealing with COVID restrictions when Angela Tsarouhis arrived in August. She was hired to replace Peter Savas as youth director and, for that first month, he stayed on to help train her and provide some guidance.

"We both agreed the training should be done as if things were normal," Tsarouhis stated. "Peter's view was that even though there might be fewer kids, that they had to wear masks and couldn't eat any food together, the purpose for gathering didn't change. I think keeping that in perspective was helpful, in terms of learning how to do this job.

Youth director Angela Tsarouhis works outdoors with Jr. GOYA.

"Peter ran the first few meetings, modeling how it should be done, and I observed," she added. "The second stage was both of us co-leading the meetings, and the third stage was me leading while he observed.

"So far we met twice in person with Faith, Love and Joy group, which is kindergarten through fifth grade," Tsarouhis explained. "Junior GOYA, sixth to eighth grades, and Senior GOYA, the high schoolers, met outside where they could socially distance. With the first cold weather, we switched all groups to Zoom temporarily. I didn't have anything planned for HOPE group online, because Zoom is hard for the little ones, but having in-person groups is in the works.

"Plans for meeting safely indoors were just approved in early November," she noted. "I'm optimistic that because we'll be meeting in such a restricted way – with only 10 people together and a lot of sanitizing and precautionary measures – we can keep everyone safe. Some parents and young adults have already offered to help as advisors.

"Our objective is to get the kids together. We're doing everything we can to make that happen," Tsarouhis said. "There's still a lot of uncertainty in the larger community, so we're monitoring any changes to state and Metropolis regulations. We don't want to put anyone at risk.

"My goal for this year has been very simple: keep the memory of church alive, keep the connection alive," she remarked. "I think it's too ambitious under the circumstances to hope to grow numbers or anything like that. Less is more right now; simply help the kids remember what church is to them, who Christ is to them and what their faith is for in all of this, and then help them reconnect.

"People's rhythms and routines are totally bulldozed by this pandemic, which is understandable," she continued. "With GOYA especially, I'm hoping to keep their connection with Sunday Liturgy alive."

60th Anniversary Events 'Transfigured' After COVID

When Carrie Colis, Kathy Lucas and Stephanie Vlahakis were named co-chairs for the 60th Anniversary, their responsibilities got divided up according to individual strengths. "I negotiated with the Westin for our dinner dance and set up the contract," said Lucas. "Carrie took on communications, preparing weekly reflections. Stephanie ran our meetings and recruited people for the steering committee, dinner dance committee and other subcommittees."

Steering committee members also included Keith Anderson, Presvytera Jane Andrews, Chris Atsaves, Elaine Buscaglia, Christy Gouletas, Mike O'Neill and Suzanne and Jim Santos. "We certainly appreciated Fr. Rick's guidance and involvement throughout the year as well," Vlahakis noted. "He's always been very constructive in his comments and suggestions."

The 60th Anniversary logo was designed, incorporating the scripture passage "Lord, it is good for us to be here."*(Matthew 17:4)* No one realized at the time how prophetic the theme associated with the Transfiguration would become.

"Just before we were to host our March event, the Feed My Starving Children outreach, the stay-at-home orders were announced," Vlahakis explained. "One by

(Continued on next page)

one, the events planned had to be 'transfigured,' or reconfigured, to accommodate the COVID constraints."

"The activities originally planned actually gave us an outline for what we needed to redo or alter," Lucas remarked. "I think these past months would have been even more difficult for our parish if we just cancelled everything and didn't have the activities we did, albeit reconfigured, for people to focus on."

"For me, it's been inspiring to see how our committees worked to do our best, in light of circumstances, to make the experiences meaningful and impactful for parishioners," Vlahakis said.

"We added 'Reflections' to the email updates starting in late April," Colis noted. "We wanted to remind everyone that, COVID or not, this is still our 60th year. Celebrations were still going on, just differently.

Different Look, Greater Impact

"Each transfigured event probably had more lasting impact than it would have originally," Colis stated. "We missed being physically together for the Feed My Starving Children outreach. But instead, we turned it into 'Giving Tuesday' and raised enough money to feed nine hungry families for a year. That's amazing!

"In June, we honored our Feast Day with a blood drive, and donors filled every slot available," she said. "Communications all month focused on the lives of our patron saints in preparation for Feast Day worship.

"With the cancellation of our Festival, we decided to pay it forward," Colis continued. "We took time to appreciate past Fest sponsors and donors by patronizing them during the summer. The restaurants, especially, need our prayers and support right now.

August reflections focused on the "Porch Project." With COVID, Eva Kirie took outdoor photos for the commemorative directory, at parishioners' homes or on church grounds. "I encouraged participation, showing a variety of ages and family combinations," she pointed out. "I tried to say, 'We miss seeing you. Be part of this visual display of our parish family.'"

Weekly Reflections, like this one talking about our patron saints before our Feast Day in June, helped keep parishioners connected during COVID.

The September talent show, intended as a live event, was transformed into a presentation of pre-recorded clips. The video format enabled viewers to enjoy ice skating and gymnastics routines, as well as youngsters performing who might be too intimidated in front of a live audience. "Some people formed small watch groups and supported our sister parish, St. Haralambos, by purchasing food from their drive-thru Greek Fest hosted that same weekend," said Colis.

In October the final anniversary event was held on the weekend the dinner dance was originally scheduled. Holy Unction on Friday and Great Vespers on Saturday were followed by presentations each evening by noted Orthodox speaker Paul Karos, underwritten by the Creticos Memorial Lecture Fund.

"How meaningful to receive Holy Unction on that particular weekend and hear Mr. Karos's inspirational words, which bore lasting spiritual fruit," Colis added.

Dark Year Ends on Bright Note

"During the year, our initial mission of celebrating our gratitude for our church and parish family shifted," Lucas said. "We became more focused on helping to maintain a sense of community by keeping people aware of and involved in the reshaped activities that have been part of this unusual year."

"The commemorative directory that will be completed shortly is a remarkable gift, given all that we've been through this year," Vlahakis noted. "It beautifully acknowledges this milestone year, and is an enduring end-of-the-decade tribute to the church, to the community, to the spirit of coming together and making something happen, despite the obstacles."

"Working together this year enabled us to lean on and learn from each other," Colis stated. "It was a way to reflect on what it means to be the 'church,' and draw closer as a parish family. We truly experienced 'Lord, it is good for us to be here,' not just in the ordinary, but in the extraordinary time of our anniversary year, 2020."

"This is an unprecedented year," Fr. Rick concluded. "With lockdowns, sheltering in place, wearing masks, social distancing – we've been forced into unknown territory and we're all trying to figure it out as we go. I've been very impressed with our core leadership that has stepped up to the plate. Our ministries haven't stopped, and they're finding creative ways to continue activities. All in all, in terms of adapting to this COVID era, I think our parish has done very, very well."

— Elaine Buscaglia

Merry Christmas

from all of us at Agape Preschool and Kindergarten!

For questions regarding Agape Preschool and Kindergarten or to register for the 2021-2022 school year, please call Renée Tzakis at 847-729-5814.

DECEMBER 2020

LOOKING BACK AT THE YEAR!

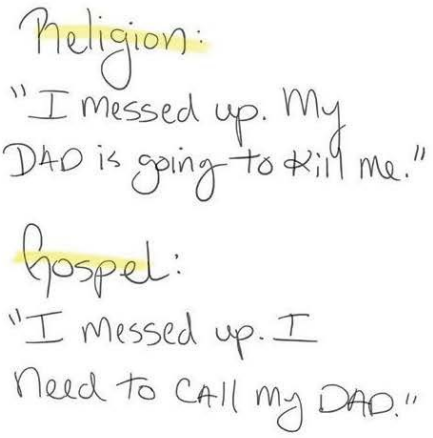
REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF A YOUTH WORKER

What is the role of a Youth Worker?

What do we do when we mess up? Run and hide? Or call the person we know can help us?

The more our youth are able to grasp God's unfathomable love for them, the more the second will be true and real in their lives, when they find that they have "messed up".

What must be in place for them to accept God's love? What can make this acceptance happen?



TO MODEL THE LOVE OF GOD

The way that we know God's self-sacrificial and unconditional love is through **loving relationships** with each other! The more we experience Christ-like love from the people in our lives, the more we understand what God's love is! However, If our relationships in our lives are fearful, and based on conditions of worthiness, then we'll have a skewed view of love, ourselves, and of God.

That said, youth workers (meaning, anyone who serves the youth of our church) ***have the potential to reflect God's love.*** Will our youth feel accepted by us? If yes, then they will find it easier to feel accepted by God. Will they feel able and compelled to call when they've "messed up"? If yes, then they will be more likely to seek God for help, rather than run from him in fear. Let us act and speak wisely, then, by God's grace and through our love for our youth!

Gifts that Give

Please support Saints Peter and Paul Philoptochos in an online shopping fundraiser with the Boon Supply Company.

40 percent of your purchase will support our causes.

Boon Supply was founded by the co-founder of the Serena and Lily company, and is an eco-conscious living and giving company.

Shop organizational items, kitchen gadgets, totes and bags, holiday gifts, gift wrapping, home products and much more!

Please click the link below to take you to our fundraising page.

Our fundraiser will end on December 12th, 2020.

Please contact Dena Pavlopoulos at denapav@yahoo.com or 847-668-3607 or Georgene Shanley at Buffetline5@aol.com or 847-612-3999 with any questions.

Happy Shopping!

https://www.boonsupply.com/collections/611822-saints-peter-and-paul-philoptochos-gifts-that-give

Philoptochos News

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.-2 Corinthians 9:11

Philoptochos is all about community and Philanthropy. Please participate in one of our many projects from Feeding the Hungry to creating masks. Below is a small example of our "good vibes".

20 Uninterrupted Years of Blanket Donations

Pictured Left: Mildred, RN, getting ready to give this panda blanket to a 2-year-old girl when she gets out of her surgery. Pictured Right: 3 year old Harmony, who comes to the hospital every two weeks for an infusion loved her bumblebee blanket.

Dana Thornquist, MS, CCLS, Certified Child Life Specialist, Pediatrics, Pediatric Intensive Care, Children's Hospital University of Illinois: *"I wanted to reach out to say a giant THANK YOU from all of us over here in the pediatric units. We are having the best day handing out the beautiful blankets you donated. The blankets have been bringing smiles and comfort to our kids and staff. We are so grateful for all you do for us year-round. Gestures like this make our days so much brighter and bring happiness on even the toughest days! From all the staff and kids in pediatrics… Thank you so much, for your kindness and generosity to us."*

Senior/Homebound Ministry

Due to Covid-19 we will not be making home visits at this time but will be making phone calls and sending cards. Also, one of our parishioners has graciously offered to make a pastichio dinner for some of our seniors. The meals will be delivered by the various committee members the week of Thanksgiving. A blessed Thanksgiving to all, and if you know of someone who would like an occasional phone call, please contact Ida Haris-847-309-9223 or Pat Nassos-847-421-3526.

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Due to Covid restrictions, many of our regular events will not be able to take place this year. However, SSPP Philoptochos will have many opportunities for other philanthropic fundraisers and events this year.

We know your time is limited, but we are always looking for volunteers!! Please let us know if you would like to volunteer this year.

YES_____

NO, but please keep me keep me on the email list _____

Please indicate any particular interest or talent_____

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Sessions are Sundays from **12:00pm-1:00pm via Zoom.**

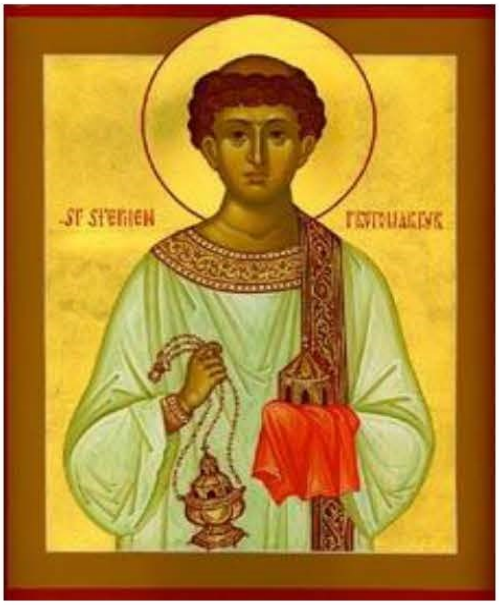
Click to attend: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/820229387

December –May 2021 Schedule

Date	Hymn Topic
NOTE DATE CHANGE! December 13	Wisdom of the Ages: How St. Ephraim the Syrian teaches about the Nativity through hymns
January 10	Wisdom of the Ages: What St. Basil the Great teaches about generosity and love of neighbor
January 24	Wisdom of the Ages: What St. John Chrysostom teaches about family relationships
February 7	Wisdom of the Ages: St. Simeon the New Theologian Experiencing the Spirit-filled life
February 21	Wisdom of the Ages: St. Isaac the Syrian Developing a Merciful Heart
March 7	Wisdom of the Ages: St. Nilus of Sora A Practical Guide to Confronting and Controlling the Passions
March 28	Wisdom of the Ages: St. Gregory Palamas How we experience the Light of God
April 18	Wisdom of the Ages: St. John of Damascus How his teaching about icons illumines our care for Creation
May 9	Wisdom of the Ages: What St. Nicholas Cabasilas teaches about our life in Christ

Questions? Contact ***sspp.coffee.connection@gmail.com***
or visit
https://ssppglenview.org/education/adult-education/coffee-connection

Saint Stephen Men's Group



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(During COVID-19 Pandemic - meet from whereever you are Via Zoom)

Join the group. It only costs you 1 hour a week, nothing more.
(Or just give it a try one time or two to see if it meets your needs.)
It's a great way to begin the day.
Just send an email message to: sspp.mensgroup@gmail.com
(A Zoom link and the topic of the day will be returned to you.)

The Saint Stephen Men's Group is open to all men (fathers, grand fathers, sons, grandsons and their friends) interested in personal growth, deepening their understanding of men's responsibilities in this life and real life applications of the principles taught to us by our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

December 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 *Advent Fast* 10am Q&A with Fr. Rick 7pm Intro to Orthodoxy	2 10:30am Morning Bible Study	3 7am St. Stephen's Men's Group 7pm PC Executive	4 6:30pm Jr. GOYA Friday Funday	5 Holiday Faire Virtual Shopping Event 5pm VESPERS
6 ***ST. NICHOLAS*** 8:15am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY	7 4pm FLJ Monday 7pm Agape Preschool Board Meeting 8pm Stewardship Meeting	8 6:30pm Philoptochos Board Meeting 7pm Intro to Orthodoxy	9 6:30pm Paraklesis 7:30pm YAL Faith Talk	10 7am St. Stephen's Men's Group	11 7pm Great Vespers @ St. Spyridon 8pm Virtual Fellowship Hour	12 8:30am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY 9:30am Greek School 5pm VESPERS
13 8:15am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY 12pm YAL After Liturgy Talk	14	15 ***ST. ELEFTHERIOS*** 8:30am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY 10am Q&A with Fr. Rick	16 10:30am Morning Bible Study	17 7amv St. Stephen's Men's Group 10:30am Agape Christmas Program 7pm PC Regular Meeting	18 5:30pm Jr. GOYA General Meeting	19 5pm GOYAlumni Liturgy in the Streets 5pm VESPERS
20 ***ST. IGNATIUS THE GODBEARER*** 8:15am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY 12pm Coffee Connection 6pm YAL Movie Night	21 *Agape Preschool Christmas Break* 8pm Stewardship Committee	22 ***ST. ANASTASIA*** 8:30am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY	23	24 *OFFICE CLOSED* ***FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY*** 9am Royal Hours 6pm Vesperal Liturgy	25 *OFFICE CLOSED* ***NATIVITY OF THE LORD*** 8:30am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY	26 2pm GOYAlumni Coffee Talk 5pm VESPERS*
27 ***ST. STEPHEN PROTOMARTYR*** 8:15am MATINS 9:30am DIVINE LITURGY	28 6:30pm Sn. GOYA Meeting	29	30 *Fast Day* *OFFICE CLOSED*	31 *OFFICE CLOSED* 7pm Great Vespers @St. Basil		

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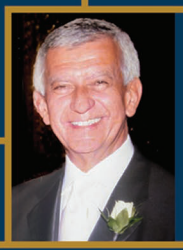

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