DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
Greek Orthodox Church
600 South Willard Street • Burlington, Vermont

Hail, Bridge that truly leads from death
to life all who praise you... – Akathist Hymn

Χαίρε, η γεφυρά οντως η μεταγουσα εκ θανατου
παντας τους ιμνουντας σε... – Ακαθιστον Υμνον
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Sponsors needed! This newsletter is our main outreach ministry, sending the message of faith and community to all the members of our parish and others. As a sponsor, you become an important partner in this ministry. Donation: $50 or more.

Please send the following information to Fr. Ephraim:

☐ Yes! I will sponsor an issue of THE BRIDGE • Н ГЕΦΥΡΑ.

Name

In honor of or memory of / To celebrate
Halfway through this month, on November 15, we begin the Nativity Fast. It is part of the rule of fasting established by our Holy Church, in addition to Great and Holy Lent, the Apostles’ Fast (from the second Monday after Pentecost through June 28), the Dormition Fast (August 1–15), and almost all Wednesdays and Fridays. This rule of fasting is not an obstacle to overcome for salvation but a discipline for growth.

Like athletes train, practice, and exercise before going to competition, so also must the Christian practice in the war against evil. We may forget sometimes that the Scriptures are clear about the spiritual reality of our existence. In the Gospel of Mark (9:14–29), we encounter a boy possessed by epileptic spirits. In response to the Apostles’ questions about why they themselves have been unable to free the boy, Jesus responds that some spirits demand prayer and fasting. Now, without scaring anyone about demonic possession, I like to emphasize fasting as a spiritual practice of our faith. It is not a practice to make life harder—although fasting is certainly hard if it is done without prayer! Fasting is a process to gain discipline and focus on God. It is an aid in our spiritual lives to grow in our relationship with the Almighty. And what a privilege it is. In the words of St. Athanasius of Alexandria, “For He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might be made God.” Christ’s incarnation is the message and reality of our faith.

In order for us to grow in Christ and become more God-like, fasting is one of the main tools, second only to prayer. First we must talk to God, and then we must join unto the first commandment, “And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, ‘You may eat food from every tree in the Garden; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat; for in whatever day you eat from it, you shall die from death’” (Genesis 2:16–17). Yes, you read it right: the first commandment from God to Adam is one of fasting. Adam is instructed to abstain from something. We all know that he and Eve failed to do so, and thus all humanity now lives with the reality of the physical death, but for the triumph of Jesus Christ in the resurrection. Death has no longer any power over us, but for the temporary falling of sleep and separation of body and soul. In fact, in the icon of the resurrection, we see Christ pulling Adam and Eve from their tombs first. And so Christ’s resurrection is also the truth and reality of our faith.

Now, what will our response be? Will we make a wholehearted effort to serve our God and be transformed, or shall we let worldly distractions lead us away from our salvation? Salvation in our Orthodox tradition is not set in stone; it demands our continuous response. We need to learn to love God more than anything in our existence and our neighbor like ourselves. The person next to you in the pew, the person next to you at work, the person next to you on the couch at home—and the hungry, sick, and imprisoned everywhere.

Being a Christian, living in Christ, is no small undertaking. We must all face the Lord and make our choice. Our community here in Burlington is the Lord Jesus’s Church, and each one of us makes the choice to follow Him or not. Let us together choose Jesus, and realize that our calling is not maintenance of the status quo but the salvation of all. And by “saving,” I mean being transformed by Christ not into some magical being, but into the perfected glorious person of Christ. Holiness is the perfection of the earthly. And thus I encourage you to take the fast seriously and deepen your commitment to Christ by fasting and prayer throughout these 40 days.
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Dormition of the Mother of God Greek Orthodox Church

November 2013
Philoptochos News and Announcements

The Philoptochos Society is the official philanthropic organization of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Come and join us in doing the charity of our Orthodox Christian faith in this place.

Thank you to everyone who helped out with our Greece-Cyprus Fund Raiser and our October Pot Luck, food and prep.

Please support the Fall Food Drive to benefit the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf through Sunday, November 17.

Mark your calendars:

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9: BAKE SALE & TAKEOUT DINNER**
- Tuesday, November 5, 9:30 am: Baklava and Crescent making
- Friday, November 8, 10:00 am: Cupping and set up for the Bake Sale

Sunday, December 9, 12:15 pm: Next regular meeting

November 1

**Sts. Cosmas and Damian, the Unmercenaries**
**Patron Saints of the Philoptochos**

**Apolytikion:** Sainted Unmercenaries and Wonder Workers, regard our infirmities; freely you have received, freely share with us.

**Kontakion:** O glorious, wonderworking physicians, having received the grace of healing, you reach out and restore health to those in need. But also, by your visitation you cast down the arrogance of the enemy, healing the world through miracles.

If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will not find Him in the chalice.

– St. John Chrysostom
Learn how to make prosforo!

Prosforo means “offering”. As an offering to God, we make special bread that the priest uses for the Divine Liturgy. The seal is used to prepare Holy Communion and the rest of the loaf is used for the “antidoron” that we receive at the end of the Liturgy.

PROSFORO BAKING CLASS
Saturday, December 7
10:00 am in the community center
Children must be accompanied by a parent.

Parish Council News

The Parish Council met on October 13, 2013.

The Treas.’s report revealed a balance of $9,549 in the checking account, $68,500 in the money market account and $115, 101 in the Sentinel account. It was noted that $25,000 has been withdrawn from the Sentinel account to pay for the repairs of the parish house.

The building committee reported that there was a cost of $1,000 to repair fireplace and chimney.

The building committee is awaiting bids to repair the roofs of the church and the parish house. Additional bids are also expected for lawn repairs this fall and for lawn care next year.

The Council received word that our national ministries allocation for 2014 will increase to $8,000.

The Council discussed consideration of establishing a charitable fund that would be used by Fr. Ephraim to respond to individual requests for such items as food or transportation. It was noted that this should be reviewed with the Philoptochos whose mission is also to provide support to the needy. Fr. Ephraim also agreed to contact with the Ecumenical coordinator to determine what resources are available in Burlington. The Council decided to review this issue once more information is available.

The education committee reported it is meeting with Presvytera Aimee to assist in planning for expanding the Sunday school program.

The Council is considering a request from Noyana, a hospice choir associated with the VNA, which is in need for rehearsal space beginning in January. In exchange for the rehearsal space they would offer to sing for our church service twice per year. Additional information will be sought prior to responding to this request.

Justin and Jackie both accompanied Fr. Ephraim to the recent Metropolis of Boston Clergy–Laity assembly at the seminary in Brookline. They were impressed with the presentations and feel their experience in attending will prove valuable in future Council deliberations.

The minister of the Redeemer church, which meets in our parish, indicated that the growth in their membership may outgrow our space and that they are considering the possibility of moving. This discussion resulted in the suggestion that we consider how we can possibly expand our church to accommodate not only their growing numbers but also the increasing numbers attending our service.

The Council decided to delay plans for a retreat at our Metropolis camp following the election of Parish Council members at the general assembly in October. It is anticipated the retreat would occur next winter, probably in February or March.
THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE

“You saw me hungry and you fed me...”

From the parable of the Last Judgment, Matthew 25:31–46

Give out of our own thanksgiving for God’s great love. Your FOOD DRIVE DONATIONS go to the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Please bring donations to the FOOD DRIVE BOXES in the Community Center.

THE FOOD DRIVE ENDS ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17.

All food collected will be delivered to the Food Shelf on Monday, November 18. The list below is just a guide; bring whatever non-perishable food you’d like.

HOLIDAY FOODS: Canned pumpkin, cranberry sauce, gravy, stuffing mixes, dried fruits, nuts, canned yams, jams & jellies, boxed desserts. (Think about your own holiday table and give out of thankfulness for all your blessings.)

CANNED FOODS: Canned vegetables, fruits, canned meats (tuna, ham, etc.), Crisco or other vegetable shortening, condiments (mustard, ketchup, mayonnaise, etc.).

DRIED FOODS: Instant potatoes, dried soup mixes, bouillon, rice & rice mixes, all kinds of pasta (spaghetti, elbows, noodles, etc.), dried beans (lima, lentils, etc.), cereal, cake/cookie mix, muffin & bread mixes, pancake mix.

AFTER-THE-HOLIDAY FOODS: Holidays end, but let your giving continue. The need continues after the holidays. Please remember your blessings and contribute foods that are daily needs, especially canned meats, peanut butter, jams & jellies, pastas & sauces.

Give thanks to the Lord for His merciful love endures forever!

THE LAST TWO CHOIR REHEARSALS FOR 2013

If you’d like to join the choir, please come to these rehearsals.

Saturdays, 9:30–11:30 am

November 16 – for November & December (with some Christmas hymns and carols)

December 14 – for Christmas & Epiphany
During the Divine Liturgy, the faithful of our parish have been invited to pray in their native languages. (Please let Fr. Ephraim know if there are omissions or mistakes.) Here are some languages you might hear:

**English**

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

**Ελληνικά (Greek)**

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἐγέρθητο τὸ ὄνομά σου ἐλθέτω ἣ βασιλεία σου γενήθητο τὸ βασιλεία σου ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·

tón ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δός ἡμῖν σήμερον· καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφέωμα τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς παρασύρουν, ἀλλὰ ρύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

**Шкіп (Albanian)**

Ati ynë që je në qiell, u shëntjëroftë emri yt; arthë mbretëria jote; u bëftë dëshira jote, si në qiell, edhe mbi dhe. bukën tonë të përditëshme jepna neve sot; edhe falna fajet tona, sikundër edhe ne ua falim fajtorëvet tanë; edhe mos na shtjerë në ngasje, po shpëtona nga i ligu.

**Shqip (Albanian)**

And lead us not into temptation, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.

**Ромână & Limba Moldovenească (Romanian & Moldovan, which have some spelling differences)**

Tatăl nostru care ești în ceruri, Sfințească-se numele Tău; Vie împărăția Ta, Facă-se voia ta, Precum în cer așa și pe pământ. Păinea noastră cea de toate zilele, dă-ne o nouă astăzi Și ne iartă nouă greșelile noastre, Precum și noi iertăm greșitiilor noștri Și nu ne duce pe noi în ispită. Ci ne izbăvește de cel viclean.

**Српски (Serbian)**

Оче наш, који си на Небесима, нека се свети Име твоје, нека дође Царство Твоје, нека буде воља твоја, на Земљи као и на Небу. Хлеб наш насушни дај нам данас, и опости нам дугове наше, као што их и ми оприштамо дужницима својим, и не уведи нас у искушење, већ нас избави од злого.

**Svenska (Swedish)**

Fader vår, som är i himmelen! Helgat varde ditt namn; tillkomme ditt rike; ske din vilja såsom i himmelen så och på jorden; vårt dagliga bröd giv oss i dag; och förlåt oss våra skulder, såsom också vi förlåta dem oss skyldiga åro; och inled oss inte i frestelse, utan fräls oss ifrån ondo.
THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI:
THE SPIRIT OF STEWARDSHIP

(continued from back cover)...What faith, determination and sacrifice they must have had. They surely faced questions and skepticism at the start. During their journey, unexpected challenges and discouraging setbacks would have tested their will. Yet they persevered. They persisted in their search for God’s truth.

When they finally met the Christ Child, they bowed down in worship. They offered Jesus the most precious of their gifts. Although they were the “wise men” of their day, they didn’t allow their egos to interfere with their unexpected discovery. Even when the journey surprisingly took them beyond the king’s palace in Jerusalem to the insignificant village of Bethlehem, they went forward in faith. Everything seemed so astonishing, yet in humility they approached the Christ Child to worship Him and offer the best of their gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh.

The story of the Magi is not simply a cute part of Christmas, but its characters model a path of faith and stewardship worthy of imitation. They offer an example of a sincere search for God using the intellectual gifts they possessed; a willingness to overcome any obstacles or challenging inconveniences in their journey toward God; and the witness of offering the best they had once they encounter the Christ Child.

In connection with this inspiring story of the Magi, we can also reflect on St. John Chrysostom’s words, “The rich man is not the one who has much, but the one who gives much. For what one gives away, he keeps for all eternity.” Both the Magi and Chrysostom offer a challenging perspective of Christian stewardship. We are called to understand that all we have in life—from life itself, to our intellectual abilities and specific talents, to our faith experiences and material possessions—all is a gift from God, and each of us is called to act as a proper and good steward of these gifts.

Think about how the Magi were conscientious stewards with their knowledge, experience and wisdom, as well as stewards of their time and effort, which culminated in their good stewardship of their treasure. St. John Chrysostom highlights that true wealth comes through sharing what we have first received from God Himself. Ultimately, whatever we have isn’t ours! All is God’s, and we are simply caretakers of His riches. As we learn to generously give of ourselves, of our time, talents and treasure, we only increase our wealth and make eternal investments.

Christian stewardship is all about becoming good caretakers of all that God has given us—our health, our family, our opportunities in life, our intelligence, our talents. God has given each of us unique gifts. And through Holy Scripture, He teaches us that all that we have is a loan. God lends everything to us and reminds us that one day He will ask us to give a detailed accounting of what we have done with His gifts. How have we used our time, our talents and our treasure? Have we used them in a self-centered way or God-glorifying ways? Archbishop Anastasios of Albania has noted that “we find ourselves by offering ourselves.” Have we learned the blessedness of generously giving to others of all we have?

Everything we have is temporal. We don’t know for how long we have it. The fundamental question, though, is how will we it for the glory of God?

One day, a person complained to his priest that the Church and Christianity is one continual “give, give, give.” To which the priest replied, “Thank you very much for the finest definition of Christianity I have ever heard. Your right, Christianity is all about a constant ‘give, give, give.’ God giving His only Son to the world to show His unconditional love. His Son Jesus giving His life on the cross to forgive our sins and destroy death. Then our Lord’s disciples giving all they had to make sure God’s Good News of love was preached to all people everywhere. They not only gave away their homes and businesses, but even gave up their lives as martyrs in gratitude to God! And after all that giving of God to the world, yes, God does ask His followers of today to imitate His own generosity by giving—by offering back from all that He ultimately has given each person! So, yes, the Church and Christianity is one continual ‘give, give, and give,’ but from a good and holy perspective!”

The Gifts of the Magi and the words of St. John Chrysostom help clarify our understanding of Christian Stewardship and what it means to act as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.
THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI:
THE SPIRIT OF STEWARDSHIP

Fr. Luke A. Veronis

The Gifts of the Magi icon presents the Wise Men offering gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child. These wealthy scholars and priests of the East endured numerous dangers, and traveled great distances to offer their treasures to the newborn king. What a beautiful and meaningful example of stewardship they set for all future generations, helping us to understand the blessing of properly using and sharing God’s gifts.

To begin with, the Magi represent a sincere desire to seek after God, searching through science, nature and their cultural traditions to communicate with their Creator and discover His will for them, even when it was something so unexpected. Imagine their long, arduous journey, possibly a 1,500-mile expedition from Persia to Bethlehem, over mountains and deserts, a journey that took many months. Surely on such a trip they faced numerous dangers from nature, from bandits, and from the fear of the unknown. (continued inside on page 9)