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

Χαίρε, η γέφυρα οντός η μεταγουσσα εκ θανατου
παντας τους υμνουντας σε... – Ακαθιστον Υμνον

Dormition of the Mother of God
Greek Orthodox Church
600 South Willard Street • Burlington, Vermont
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(Honorary member)
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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 Պ Հ ԳԵՓՈՒՐԱ.
Name ______________________________________
In honor or memory of / To celebrate ________________________
“I will enter your holy house and I will worship one Godhead; worshiped in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to the ages. Amen.”

This prayer is on a small plaque to the right of the door that leads from the vestibule into our church. We have the immense, remarkable pleasure of testifying to the truth about who God really is, as far as He has revealed Himself. God, rather than forcefully making His presence known to the world, instead humbled Himself by being baptized in the river by the Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist.

Recall the reason why St. John was baptizing people: “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4). Now why would the Son of God need a baptism for “forgiveness of sins”? We confess that Jesus was like us in everything but sin. Then why did He come to John for baptism? Furthermore, why did it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). We can see that John’s baptism was part of the righteous life that had been revealed to the people of Israel in the Law of Moses, that is to say, in the Old Testament. And the Lord—the source of all righteousness, the New Covenant—accepted to be baptized not for forgiveness of sins, but to begin His mission to fulfill all righteousness.

And so at this baptism, Jesus is anointed as the Messiah. The Jewish kings of old were anointed with oil to assume their place as rulers. Jesus in turn is anointed with Holy Spirit and water. Even from the start, Jesus shows that this Messiah is not merely an earthly king, but the Son of God, the one who ushers in the Kingdom of Heaven. “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:13–17). A few weeks ago, we celebrated the birth of the Son of God in the flesh as a babe in the cave, by the Virgin Mary. Jesus’s baptism is the start of His ministry of love, which is concluded with the cross and the resurrection, unto the life of the world.

Theophany is a light-giving event. We witness the Lord not only becoming King of Israel but also revealing the intricate truth of the Holy Trinity: God is three individual persons sharing in origin and substance. God is revealed fully as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is, the very thing making them divine is shared, but God is also a wholly, eternal, and perfect loving communion. This communion is what permeated into creation. This communion is the opposite of that which is selfish, narcissistic, and indulgent. On the contrary, our God shows us absolute, self-emptying love.

Through the Lord’s baptism, our baptism is now one in the Holy Spirit; we are baptized with divine fire. His immense love has been poured forth in both creation and in the passion of Christ, in order for us to be able to participate fully in the divine.

The feast of Theophany became so central early on in the life of the Church because it is the recognition of God’s love for His creation. Theophany is the second oldest feast of the Lord, being initiated only after Pascha. We have record of the Churches celebrating Theophany as early as the end of the second century. It was in the fourth century that Christians began to mark the Nativity as a separate feast.) The Eve of Theophany, like those of Pascha and Pentecost, was a traditional time for baptizing catechumens.

In connection with the feast day, today we have a Megas Agiasmo service, or “Great Blessing of the Waters.” We as a Church allow for the transformation of created matter into the glorified matter of the end times. Holy water is water that has been transformed and glorified, as all will be at the second coming of Christ. The Blessing of the Waters is in this way similar to the Holy Eucharist, which is also a mysterious manifestation of the transforming work of the Son, realized during the Divine Liturgy by the action of the Holy Spirit, to the glorification of the Father. In this way we are invited to participate not only in the end times but also and most importantly in the glorified and resurrected Christ.
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Dormition of the Mother of God Greek Orthodox Church

JANUARY 2014

- fr. Ephraim’s RIÀ FHKRXUV
- fr. Ehrs Family.
- Vasilopita hosted by Philoptochos
- Sponsor needed
- Sponsor needed
- Sponsor needed
Thank you to Theodora Contis for hosting our annual Christmas get-together! God gave us good weather an everyone had a wonderful time.

Mark your calendars:

- **January 5:** Regular meeting and tray for St. Basil’s Academy
- **January 12:** Divine Liturgy will be immediately followed by the Blessing of the Waters at Lake Champlain. Afterward, Philoptochos will have the cutting of the Vasilopita along with the luncheon hosted by the Parish Council.
- **Note:** There is no meeting in February. Our next regular meeting is **MARCH 2.**
- **Saturday, April 12:** **SPRING BAKE SALE**

Make this the year you show your support by becoming a member!

To all, a blessed New Year 2014!

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**The Greatest Gift**

1 Corinthians 13:1–13 (NKJV)

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
Parish Council News

The Parish Council met on December 8, 2013. The Treasurer reported a balance of $20,906 in the checking account; $75,979 in the money market account; $115,181 in the Sentinel account; $49,025 in the community center account; $180,574 in the Cunavelis account; and $4,966 in the festival account.

The building committee report revealed completion of several of the repair projects scheduled for the parish house. One remaining issue is the planned insulation of the parish house kitchen. Bids for completion of this project are expected later in December.

The grounds committee reported that we are continuing to evaluate proposals for landscaping and lawn maintenance starting next spring.

The handicapped access committee reported that we are awaiting additional bids. Plans are underway for the committee to meet with our architect with the hope that we would be able to have a proposal ready for presentation at the Spring General Assembly.

The Council discussed replacement of the burnt carpet in front of the altar in our church. A decision was made to determine what type of flooring is present under the carpet. If it proves to be a hardwood floor, it is possible we would forgo replacing the carpet in favor of a finished, attractive hardwood floor.

The Council agreed to no longer distribute annual statements of donations the church. Anyone wishing an annual statement, however, may obtain one by requesting a statement from the church treasurer.

Christ Church, Presbyterian in Burlington is moving from its location and will no longer need the comfortable, deep red upholstered chairs that they purchased in 2007. The Council decided to make an offer to purchase 16 of the chairs for $20 each. It is anticipated that 8 could be placed in front of the front pews and 8 behind the last pews in our church.

Prayer for the Blessing of Homes at Theophany

Priest: Blessed is our God always, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Trisagion Prayer

All: All Holy Trinity...Our Father...

Priest: For Yours is the Kingdom...Amen.

Troparion

When You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You His beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. O Christ who revealed Yourself as God and brought light into the world, glory to You.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord have mercy.

Priest: O God our Savior, the True Light, Who was baptized in the Jordan by the Prophet John, and Who did deign to enter under the roof-tree of Zacchaeus, bringing salvation unto him and unto his house: do You, the same Lord, keep safe also from harm those who dwell herein; grant to them Your blessing, purification and bodily health, and all their petitions that are unto salvation and Life everlasting; for blessed are You, as also Your Father, who is from everlasting, and Your all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

The priest blesses the whole house with holy water, singing: When You were baptized in the Jordan...

Apolysis

Priest: May He Who condescended to be baptized in the river Jordan by the Forerunner and Prophet John, for our salvation, through the intercessions of His immaculate mother, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, and of all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is our good and loving Lord.

Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life, health and salvation, and the furtherance of all good things to all Your servants, (Names), who dwell in this house, and preserve them for many years.

All: Many years! (3 times)
...Even as the world mourns the tragic loss of life in the unprecedented Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippine Islands, political leaders have converged on Warsaw, Poland, in yet another anticipated meeting on climate change. Concerned citizens throughout the world are hoping and praying for prompt and practical results. The conference follows on the heels of an important report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which warns of the urgency of immediately addressing the alarming escalation of climate change in order to avoid catastrophic consequences.

Scientists talk of “tipping points” and “abrupt climate change.” Political leaders talk of the “challenges” that lie ahead. Scripture speaks of human crisis and God’s forgiving grace. All three make it clear that the time will come when we must face consequences; the time will come when it is simply too late. At first glance, it may appear strange for the leader of a religious institution concerned with “sacred” values to be so profoundly involved in “worldly” issues. After all, what does preserving the planet have to do with saving the soul? It is commonly assumed that global climate change and the exploitation of our nature’s resources are matters that primarily concern politicians, scientists and technocrats. At best, perhaps they are considered the preoccupation of interest groups, naturalists, or activists. Nevertheless, there are no two ways of looking at either the world or God. There is no distinction between concern for human welfare and concern for ecological preservation. The way we relate to nature as creation directly reflects the way we believe in God as Creator of all things. The sensitivity with which we handle the natural environment clearly mirrors the sacredness that we reserve for the divine. Moreover, scientists estimate that those most hurt by global warming in the years to come are those—energy, water, and forests—threatens us with irreversible climate change. Burning more fuel than we need in an overpopulated city, we may contribute to droughts or floods thousands of miles away. To restore the planet we need a spiritual worldview, which brings frugality and simplicity, humility and respect. We must constantly be aware of the impact of our actions on all of creation. We must direct our focus away from what we want to what the planet needs. We must choose to care for creation; otherwise, we do not really care about anything at all. In our efforts, to contain global warming, we are ultimately admitting just how prepared we are to sacrifice some of our selfish and greedy lifestyles. When will we learn to say, “Enough!”? When will we understand how important it is to leave as light a footprint as possible on this planet for the sake of future generations?

After all, we are all in this together. Our planet unites us in a unique way. While we may differ in our conception of the origins or purpose of our world, and while we may disagree on social or political ideology, surely we can all agree on our responsibility and obligation to protect its natural resources—which are neither limitless nor negotiable—for future generations. It is not too late to respond—as a people and as a planet. We could steer the earth toward our children’s future. Yet we can no longer afford to wait; we can no longer afford to be idle...Our political leaders must accordingly act with urgency. Deadlines can no longer be postponed; indecision and inaction are not options...The time to choose is now...Let us work together; let us offer the earth an opportunity to heal and continue to nurture us.

This statement was addressed on November 14, 2013, to the International Environmental 19th Conference of the Parties (COP 19).
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

It’s Time for Home Blessings!

Please contact Fr. Ephraim (FrEphraimEhrs@mail.goarch.org or 899-0629) to schedule a house blessing for the New Year. It takes just 20 minutes, and you can choose the rooms you’d like blessed! All you need to have ready is an icon and a small bowl for water.

Why Do We Bless Our Homes?

Orthodox Christians sprinkle holy water on people and objects to bless them—to make them holy. Holy means “set apart,” to be used for and by God and God’s purposes. One phrase in the prayer for the Blessing of Water includes “the sanctification of their dwellings.” Although Orthodox Christians can have their homes blessed at any time, a popular time is in the days after Theophany (January 6). We bless our homes to remind us that it is a holy place: a place where God is always present, where no evil power or influence can triumph, and where those who live should live as God intends. (From For to Us a Child Is Born, Department of Religious Education, 2008)