

# THE MESSENGER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF  
ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH  
JANUARY 2015



## THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD (January 6)

### MARK THE DATES

January 1-4: FAST FREE

January 3: Russian Moleben and Yolka, 10:00 AM

January 5: Vespers and the Great Blessing of Water, 6:30 PM

January 6: THEOPHANY; Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

**Blessing of Lake Mead, 1:00 PM**

January 7: Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM, Synaxis of St. John

January 18: Installation of 2015 Parish Council

January 20: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM

January 27-30: Father John out of town

February 2: MEETING OF THE LORD

February 8: ANNUAL FUNDRAISER DINNER and SILENT AUCTION

Send email addresses and corrections to: [fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com](mailto:fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com)

# JANUARY 2015

ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH • LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

<p><b>GREETERS</b></p> <p>JANUARY 4: OSBURN/MASON          JANUARY 11: CAMPBELL/JOHNSON          JANUARY 18: MCAULEY/WHEELER          JANUARY 25: MURPHY/CONDUCTOR</p>				<p>FAST FREE 1</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM          NO COFFEE CHAT</p> <p><b>CIRCUMCISION          OF THE LORD</b></p>	<p>FAST FREE 2</p>	<p>FAST FREE 3</p> <p>RUSSIAN MOLEBEN          AND YOLKA, 10:00 AM</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS</p>
<p>FAST FREE 4</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: YOUTH          EPISTLE: YOUTH          POST-COMM: YOUTH          CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>STRICT FAST 5</p> <p>VESPERS/BLESSING OF          WATER, 6:30 PM</p>	<p>6</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM          THEOPHANY          BLESS LAKE MEAD, 1 PM</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 6:00 PM</p>	<p>7</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM          SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM          ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>8</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM          COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS</p>
<p>11</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: DEMKO          EPISTLE: STRANSKY          POST-COMM: BROOKS          CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM          ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>15</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM          COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS</p>
<p>18</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: HOOD          EPISTLE: DEMKO          POST-COMM: WHEELER          INSTALLATION OF COUNCIL          CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p> <p>PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM</p>	<p>21</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM          ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>22</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM          COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS  <b>CHILI COOKOFF</b></p>
<p>25</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: HUFFMAN          EPISTLE: HOOD          POST-COMM: PARKER          CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p><b>FATHER JOHN OUT OF TOWN, JANUARY 27-30</b></p>	<p>29</p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM          NO COFFEE CHAT</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS</p>



# The Messenger

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

P.O. Box 12635 • 5400 Annie Oakley Drive

Las Vegas, Nevada 89112-0635

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## JANUARY 2015

### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RECTOR

*(Delivered at the Annual Parish Meeting on December 14, 2014)*

#### **METRICAL RECORDS 2014 (since last annual meeting)**

Baptisms	17
Chrismations	6
Weddings	4
Burials	0

#### **THANKS**

Every year I struggle with beginning my report with thanks. There are so many people who do so many things to help maintain the day-to-day life of St. Paul's that I worry about forgetting or missing a name or two. To all those who serve on the parish council and fellowship committee, to all those who serve in the sanctuary or raise their voices to the glory of God in our worship services, to all those who teach in and organize our church school program, to those who decorate, clean, and maintain our church building and the vestments, to those who watch over our kitchen and hall and help make fellowship

each week enjoyable, to those who organize and volunteer in our charitable outreach projects, to those who gather to study the Word of God, to those who simply offer up our parish and activities to God in prayer — thank you! As always, I offer special thanks for my wife, who not only directs the choir, but makes my ministry here so much easier by her energetic participation and leadership in a number of areas, her support of me, and her love.

#### **REFLECTIONS**

Our parish welcomed His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, for his annual visit and our parish patronal feastday of Ss. Peter and Paul back in June. Additionally, we celebrated my 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination to the Holy Priesthood. As a golfer might say, I have realized for quite some time that I am on the back nine, but I can't quite see the clubhouse or the eighteenth hole just yet. Every anniversary makes one reflective about one's life. Like anyone, I have had my share of struggles

and crosses, but overwhelmingly I am thankful to God for a truly blessed life. I am basically healthy, I have a wonderful wife and family who are also basically healthy, a parish and people that I love and the blessing from God to stand at His altar and serve the Divine Services. A human being has no right to expect such blessings, much less ask for more.

Instead of just listing what we have done the past year, I want to share with you simply what we do. My day-to-day duties are many and varied. My normal work week consists of serving the services, making visitations that need to be made, hospital calls when necessary, meetings of the parish council and other committees as necessary, meeting with catechumens for instruction, preparing for adult discussion classes, meeting with the coffee chat group on Thursdays, and scheduling counseling appointments when asked. In addition, I have a daily reading schedule of Scripture and other materials and preparation for one,

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## RECTOR

Archpriest John J. Dresko  
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Las Vegas, NV 89123  
860.833.4921 (Mobile)  
fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

CHOIR DIRECTOR  
Matushka Elizabeth Dresko

## PARISH COUNCIL

Virginia Hood, Vice-President

Karen Short, Treasurer

Catherine Wilkalis, Secretary

James Brophy  
Alan Buttell  
Kevin McAuley  
Karen Murphy  
Litsa Osburn  
Joseph Wheeler

## SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds  
Kevin McAuley

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach  
Genet Bokre

Russian Outreach  
Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth  
Amy McAuley  
Stephan Tanksley

Fellowship Committee

sometimes more, sermons per week. I hear the confessions (at varying intervals) of over 200 people. And all of that is when it is NOT Great Lent!

In addition, I have duties for the Church beyond our parish activities. I serve on the Bishop's Advisory Committee and our Diocesan Council (four meetings or more per year), our Diocesan Finance Committee (one meeting, other phone conferences per year), and am the clergy representative of our diocese to the Metropolitan Council of the OCA (two meetings per year in New York as well as occasional phone meetings). I am also asked to occasionally speak at other parishes and to consult on various clergy matters.

But none of that is my most important work. The primary calling of a priest is to do actually just a few things. First task, serve the Divine Services with love and care. I strive continuously to prepare with love and care. Our services are generally beautiful, with the choir working very hard to make them as beautiful as they are. Second task, preach the Word of God, in season and out of season. I work very hard at preaching and try to discern the specific word that God wants us all to hear at a given moment. Third task — teach. I try to make our adult discussions lively and informative and, most importantly, edifying. Our weekly bulletins, monthly newsletters and website always contain interesting articles authored by others and/or myself. Fourth task, administer the parish in a way that leads to growth and shows care

and concern for the resources provided to accomplish our mission. Hand in hand with the hard work of the parish council, I believe we do just that. Final task, minister the great *hatch, match and dispatch* — baptizing, marrying and burying the People of God. All other things are secondary to these tasks.

I also want to comment briefly on the stability of the finances of our parish. Karen is going to speak more at length about this. But I simply want to note that for the first time in memory, our parish will begin the new year owing nothing to anyone outside of our mortgage. It has taken seven years to move from a worse than day-to-day existence to a stability that allows us to pay our bills early! It is now time to begin work on eliminating the last albatross around our necks — the mortgage. I am going to invite to a parish summit selected professionals with the resources and connections to help us either refinance our mortgage through instruments other than a bank or to simply find a way to pay it off. I know that God will bless our efforts if we prayerfully and with trust begin this work. Please pray that He light our path to this destination.

God willing, in a few months, I will begin my eighth year as pastor of this God-protected flock. That will make me the second-longest tenured rector of this parish since it's founding. Those years have seen much change, hopefully mostly for the good. One thing that stands out is the constant migration of people in and out of our parish. We have many visitors and besides

that, Las Vegas seems to be a stopping place for some on their way to or from whatever life is bringing them. We have suffered some very large losses in the past couple of years — people like the Anagnastopoulouses, the Bowmans, and the Sases. But it works the other way also, as we have seen this year a huge influx of new people, some moving in and already Orthodox like Sam Georges, Francis and Olga Riggs, and Jaymi Latzen. In addition, we have the great blessing of receiving new Orthodox Christians. We received four adults and four children just this weekend! Bill Stafford was received a few weeks ago, we have two more getting ready for Chrismation, and another six possible catechumens in the pipeline. All are wonderful additions to the parish!

Fr. Paul Tarazi, my Old Testament professor at St. Vladimir's Seminary, once famously said, "Shepherds don't beget sheep. Sheep beget sheep." The stability, friendliness and welcoming spirit in our parish do not come just from me. It comes from everyone here. One looking for a genuine spiritual home can spot a phony or a cold community a mile away. That we continue to add souls speaks well of our community, *our family*. One of our former parishioners called St. Paul's a "jewel in the desert." It is indeed. Let's all keep polishing that jewel so its shine can be seen by anyone looking. I believe that our parish is remarkably healthy.

Finally, in the past year, there are many times when I have fallen short as a father, pastor,

preacher, and priest. For this and any possible offense I may have committed against any one of you, I beg your forgiveness. May God continue to bless St. Paul's with His goodness and light. May the Lord bless you from Zion and may each of you see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

*Father John*

#### FEASTDAYS

During January, we celebrate the following feastdays. Please join us!

#### THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD January 6

VESPERS/BLESSING OF WATER  
6:30 PM (MON)  
DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (TUES)  
BLESSING OF LAKE MEAD, 1PM

#### Synaxis of St. John the Baptist January 7

DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (WED)

#### FAST FREE

The period between the celebration of our Lord's Nativity (December 25) and the Eve of Theophany is a **fast-free** period in the Orthodox Church. Note, however, that the Eve of Theophany itself (January 5) is a **strict-fast** day!

#### SLAVONIC SERVICE

Father Alexander will be here on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, when the Russian community will celebrate a Yolka at 10:00 AM, beginning with a Moleben. There will be no liturgy on that day. The normal schedule resumes in February.

#### HOUSE BLESSINGS

Father John will begin blessings homes after the services

of Theophany and the Blessing of Lake Mead on January 6. A sign-up list is available in the vestibule. Father will contact each signee about the actual date and time of his visit.

**Please have prepared the following:**

**Bowl of holy water**

**Candle**

**Icon**

**List of living to remember**

**List of departed**

**In addition, when Father arrives, please have all TVs, etc. off. If you wish to give Father John a gift, please have it separate in an envelope.**

#### FATHER AWAY

Father John will be away January 27-30 for a family commitment. If you have an emergency during his absence, please contact Ginny Hood (702-526-4428), who will arrange an appropriate local response.

#### PARISH COUNCIL

The Installation of our 2015 Parish Council will take place at the end of the liturgy on January 18. Congratulations to:

Ginny Hood, *Vice President*  
Cathy Wilkalis, *Secretary*  
Karen Short, *Treasurer*  
Jim Brophy  
Alan Buttell  
Kevin McAuley  
Karen Murphy  
Litsa Osburn  
Joseph Wheeler

#### CHILI COOKOFF

Our second annual Chili Cookoff will be held following Vespers on Saturday, January 24. Chefs from throughout the greater St. Paul's community will be showing off their culinary skills. There

will be a fee of \$5.00, but that includes all the chili you can eat (no antacids included). Beer and wine will also be available for purchase. Cooks are asked to sign up in the hall.

### BENEFIT DINNER

Looking ahead, it is time to plan for our annual Fundraiser and Silent Auction Dinner to be held on February 8 at Sunset Gardens. Silent Auction will begin at 5:30, with dinner served at 6:30. Dancing will follow. Tickets are \$100 and available from Pam Campbell. This is the only major fundraiser our parish holds during the year. Please invite friends of St. Paul's and any family and friends that might be willing to support our efforts.

### VOICES OF THE MARTYRS

We are still collecting winter clothes and items which will be sent to Syrian refugee camps to be distributed by local Christians. **Only these items will be sent, nothing else:** knit hat, gloves, mittens, socks, sweater, solid color T-shirt, jacket or windbreaker, blanket, sheet, towel, bar of soap, foam or sponge ball. No pictures or words on the clothes, no notes, literature, names or contact information. For more information see the brochure. Leave donations in the plastic bin at the table in the vestibule, where the Voice of the Martyrs poster and brochures are located —look at the poster to see what a difference we will be making.

### PLEDGE FORMS DUE

It is **past** time to make a pledge for 2015. Pledge Forms have been distributed and all are

asked to prayerfully and soberly make a pledge of time, talent and treasure to support the work of our parish next year. A scripturally based financial pledge is a proportionate (percentage) pledge, tithing (10% of your income) if possible. Forms are now due back to Fr. John or Karen Short. All pledges and personal information are confidential and never shared.

### FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project date is **Saturday, February 21<sup>st</sup>**. We gather at 10:30 AM to prepare bag lunches then go down to distribute them to the needy. Join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated.

### ADULT FAITH FORUM

The Adult Faith Forum continues with discussion/bible study about the Orthodox teachings on contemporary issues. We are focusing right now on the Sermon on the Mount. Once again, we will have Wednesday evening Daily Vespers at 6:30 PM, followed by class.

### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

We have established a goal of \$60,000 to fund needed projects to maintain and repair our aging infrastructure. We ask everyone to consider a special donation to this fund, above and beyond your normal contributions for the support of the parish.

### CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. Special needs at this time:

jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken. Thank you!

### ORTHODOX VENDORS

We have established a list of businesses that our parish uses or are owned and operated by Orthodox Christians (some parishioners). We provide this information for you to consider if you need services.

CB Air Conditioning  
Cedomir Blagojevic  
(702) 493-0295

Dolphin Court Salon & Day Spa  
7581 W. Lake Mead Blvd.  
(702) 946-6000

Nina Grozav, Realtor  
bnv7777@gmail.com  
(702) 521-0208  
speaks Russian and Romanian

Kyklos Café (Greek food)  
Galleria Mall  
Sophocles Frangakis  
(702) 450-1515

XpressPro (auto repair)  
3190 E. Sunset Rd.  
Bruce & Svetlana Balasky  
(702) 815-0444

### PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer: Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts — time, talent and treasure — which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are

the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

#### SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

- Baptisms. A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism requested.
- Matrimony. A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.
- Memorials (Panikhida). Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

#### PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS NO DECEMBER MEETING

The parish council met briefly after the annual meeting and determined anything that needed to be discussed was already covered at the annual meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short reported on our financials as of the annual meeting:

Capital Fund: \$2,069.33  
Rainy Day: \$9,006.97  
Icon Fund: \$7,301.13

Income for November was \$18,372.15, with expenses of \$16,279.41 for a surplus of \$2,092.74.

YTD 2014 (Jan-Nov)

2014 Inc           \$ 216,999.39  
2014 Exp           \$ 197,826.55  
Inc over Exp       \$ 19,172.84

Karen reports all parish finances including accounts payable are totally current.

*Next Council Meeting:  
Tuesday, January 20, 2015.*

## PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers. They will be remembered in the proskomedia before each liturgy.

### MONTH OF JANUARY

- Mark Medick  
January 6, 1991
- George Gavrilov  
January 10, 1991
- George Menas, Jr.  
January 11, 1992
- Martha Jean Simmons  
January 14, 1993
- Mehret Berhanu  
January 15, 2009
- Natalia Lissenkoug  
January 17, 2000
- George Zonitch  
January 19, 2001
- Louise (Ljubica) Ford  
January 20, 1994
- David Vranesh  
January 21, 1991
- Helen Hoffman  
January 21, 2003

Roy Babich  
January 22, 1989

Frank Theodore Walko  
January 22, 2002

Ethyl Caras  
January 28, 2008

Stana "Stella" Kekich  
January 30, 2008

## THE GREAT BLESSING OF WATER

Fr. Thomas Hopko

The rite of the Great Blessing of Water is celebrated in the Orthodox Church after the vespereal divine liturgy on the eve of the feast of the Epiphany, and after the Eucharistic liturgy on the day itself. It begins with the chanting of special hymns with the incensing of the water, and concludes with bible readings, petitions and prayers.

*The voice of the Lord upon the waters cries out saying: come, receive ye all the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God. the Spirit of Christ who is made manifest.*

*Today the nature of the waters is sanctified, the Jordan bursts forth and turns back the flood of its streams, seeing the Master wash Himself.*

*As a man You came to that river, O Christ the King, hastening to receive the baptism of a servant, at the hands of the Forerunner because of our sins, O Good One who loves mankind.*

*To the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," You came, O Lord, taking the form of a servant, asking for baptism though You have no sin. The waters saw You and*

were afraid. The Forerunner began to tremble and cried out, saying: "How shall the lampstand illumine the Light? How shall the servant lay hands upon the Master?" Sanctify both me and the waters, O Savior, Who takes away the sins of the world. (Opening Hymns from the Great Blessing of Water)

The water placed in a large receptacle in the midst of the church, or freely flowing in a natural source, is decorated with candles and flowers as a symbol of the beautiful world of God's original creation through His Word and Spirit - the same beautiful world which shall become the Kingdom of God at the end of the ages through its redemption by the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, and the same Holy Spirit.

People sometimes think that the blessing of water, and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it on people and things, is a "paganism" which has crept into the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God before the coming of Christ, as well as at the time of His manifestation. (See John 5-7) And we know that it has existed among Christians from very early times, being witnessed from the beginning especially in connection with the practice of baptism.

The service of the Great Blessing of Water itself reveals the action's meaning for the Christian people. The readings from the Bible, particularly the messianic words from the prophecy of Isaiah, together with the prayers, petitions and hymns all serve to manifest the meaning of the great festival of the Manifestation of the Messiah.

*Thus says the Lord, the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly*

*and rejoice even with joy and singing...they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God...He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water....(Is 35:1-10)*

God has sent His only-begotten Son "not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." (Jn 3:17) He has sent the Lord Jesus Christ not only to save people's souls, but to save their bodies, and not only to save human beings, but to save the entire creation.

*You are great, O Lord, and Your works are wondrous, and there are no words capable of hymning Your wonders...For of Your own will You brought all things into being from nothing, by Your power You uphold the whole of creation, and by Your providence You order the world...the sun sings to You, the moon glorifies You, the stars meet together before Your face, the light obeys You, the deeps shudder before You, the water springs serve You...We confess Your grace, we proclaim Your mercy, we conceal not Your gracious acts: You have set free our mortal nature. By Your birth, You have sanctified the virgin's womb. All creation sings praises to You Who have revealed Yourself. For You, our God, have appeared upon earth and have dwelled among men. You have sanctified the Jordan streams... Therefore O Master, be present here now by the descent of the Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. Give it the blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of incorruption, a*

*gift of sanctification, a remission of sins, a protection against disease, a destruction of demons...and may it be for those who will partake of it, to the cleansing of their souls and bodies, to the healing of their passions, to the sanctification of their homes, to every expedient purpose....(The Main Prayer from the rite of the Great Blessing of Water)*

Since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has appeared in the world, manifesting Himself in His baptism in the Jordan, all flesh and all matter is sanctified. Everything is made pure and holy in Him. Everything which is corrupted and polluted by the sinful works of men is cleansed and purified by the gracious works of God. All death-dealing powers of the devil which poison the good world of God's creation are destroyed. All things are again made new. Through the "prime element" of water on the feast of the Epiphany the entire creation is shown to be sanctified by God's Word through the same Spirit of God who "in the beginning...was moving over the face of the waters." (Gen 1:2)

*Come, O ye faithful, let us praise the greatness of God's dispensation toward us, for He who became Man because of our transgressions and who alone is clean and undefiled, was for our cleansing Himself cleansed in the Jordan that He might sanctify both me and the waters...Let us then draw water in gladness, O Brothers, for upon those that draw in faith the grace of the Spirit is invisibly bestowed by Christ the God and Savior of our souls. (Concluding Hymn from the rite of the Great Blessing of Water)*

*The Winter Pascha,*  
St. Vladimir's Seminary Press,  
1984