



ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Father's Message.....p1-2
Parish Calendar.....p2
Volunteers of the Month, .
Divine Services Month of Dec
Christmas Pageant.....p3
Youth Group News
Parish Christmas Cardp4
Poinsettia Order Form
Christmas Wish Tree.....p5
Journey to Orthodoxy.....p6-7
Why become Orthodoxp8-9
Stewardship Info.....p10-13
Epiphany Service.....p14
Reading Scripture
Prayer Requests.....p15
General Assembly Update
Prayer in time of Suffering
Baptism Schoenrock.....p16
Jaminson Blessings.....p17
Veterans Honored.....p18-19
Gyro Fall Fest Photos
Prepare for the Nativity.....p20
Renovation of Social Hall

The Epistle

Volume 14, Issue 12 **CELEBRATING OUR 110TH ANNIVERSARY** DECEMBER 2025

FATHER'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE: CHRIST IS BORN! LET US GLORIFY HIM!

"For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

As we approach the great and holy Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, my heart overflows with joy to greet you in this most sacred season. In these winter days, as creation itself seems to hold its breath in quiet anticipation, we prepare to celebrate the most wondrous mystery—God becoming man for our salvation.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold centuries before, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). In the humility of a cave in Bethlehem, surrounded by animals, the eternal Word took flesh and dwelt among us. The King of Glory was born not in a palace adorned with gold, but in poverty and simplicity, welcomed not by earthly princes, but by simple shepherds keeping watch over their flocks and the Magi who followed the star from distant lands. It was the divine love of the Creator that He would humble Himself to become human, and be wrapped in swaddling clothes, that Heaven would touch Earth in so tender and intimate a way.

As we continue our journey through the Nativity Fast, let us remember that our fasting is not an end in itself, nor merely an outward observance, but a preparation of our hearts to receive Christ. The Church in her wisdom gives us this season of spiritual preparation so that we might approach the manger with pure hearts and minds. Through prayer, almsgiving, and self-denial, we clear away the clutter and distractions of our souls to make room for Him who had no room at the inn.

In this season of preparation, let us also reach out with compassion to those in need around us. The Mother of God and Saint Joseph found no room in the inn—how many among us today feel excluded, forgotten, or alone? Let us open our hearts and homes in hospitality. Whether through our parish charitable efforts, visiting the sick and elderly, or simply offering a kind word to someone who is struggling, we serve Christ Himself. He told us plainly: "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

Our fasting should make us more compassionate, not more judgmental. Our prayers should soften our hearts, not harden them. Our preparation should draw us closer to one another as members of the Body of Christ, the Church. If our spiritual disciplines do not produce the fruit of love, patience, and kindness, then we must examine whether we are truly following the path Christ has set before us.

In a world of constant noise, endless entertainment, and digital distraction, let your homes become a little Bethlehem—sanctuaries of peace where Christ is born anew in love, prayer, and mutual respect. I encourage each family to gather before your icons, to pray together, to read the Nativity story from the Gospels. Teach your children the hymns and traditions of our Faith. Let the glow of your icon lamps remind you of the Light that has come into the world. Let the silence of prayer be more precious than the chatter of the television. Let the breaking of bread together as a family reflect the unity we share in the Eucharist.

I invite you to come to the Divine Liturgy on the Feast Day itself, where we



Father's Message continued page 2...

receive the Body and Blood of the One born in Bethlehem. Where the holy gifts to be embraced moments when Heaven touches Earth, when the angels join us in worship, when we stand outside of time in the presence of the Eternal God.

May the light of the Star of Bethlehem illumine your path in the coming year. May the newborn King grant you His peace—not as the world gives, but the peace that surpasses all understanding. May the Theotokos, who pondered all these things in her heart, intercede for you and your families. And may we all grow in holiness, in love for God and neighbor, and in gratitude for the ineffable gift of our salvation. I hope earnestly and pray fervently that the dawning of 2026 will be for everyone a year of worldly reconciliation, good will, peace, and joy. May the pre eternal Word of the Father, who was born in a manger, establishing peace on earth, grant all of us patience, hope and strength, while blessing the world with the divine gifts of His love.

Merry Christmas and a Happy Spirit-filled New Year!

Father Constantine

DIVINE SERVICES-Month of December

MATINS 9:00am DIVINE LITURGY 10:00am

Saturday, December 6th, Saint Nicholas, Feast-day

Divine Liturgy 10:00am

Sunday, December 7th

Matins 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am

Memorial for the servant of God Mitch McCurry.

Sunday, December 14th,

Matins 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am, followed by

"A Traditional Christmas Pageant"

Sunday before Christmas December 21st

Matins Service 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am

followed by Prophetic Readings

Thursday, December 25th, Christmas Day-

Nativity Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, 10:00am

Sunday, December 28th

Matins 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am

Sunday, Jan. 4th Holy Epiphany Service

Matins Service 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am & the

Blessing of the Holy Water

VOLUNTEERS MONTH OF DECEMBER

Sunday, December 7th

Orthros & Epistle Reader: Greg Painter

Ushers: Tressa Rockwood, Tom Hugie

Prosporon: Hala Dib

Agape Fellowship: Sophie McCurry in Memory of her husband Mitch

Sunday December 14th

Orthros Reader: John Speck, Epistle: Alex Tarasau

Ushers: Goldie Homan, Kade Schmalz

Prosporon: Terri Pliley-Owen

Agape Fellowship: Filio Paloukos & Ailaine Carroll

Sunday, December 21st

Orthros & Epistle Reader: Jacob Denton

Ushers: Vicky Fullmer, Ron Sims

Prosporon: Sophie McCurry

Agape Fellowship: Phil Homan & Ailaine Carroll

Sunday, December 28th

Orthros & Epistle Reader: Steven Swanson

Ushers: Goldie Homan, Sophie McCurry

Prosporon: Hala Dib

Agape Fellowship: Nate & Samantha Mountain

PARISH MINISTRY CALENDAR

Orthodox Catechism, Tuesdays Dec. 9th 16th, at 6:30 pm

Classes will then resume after Christmas Jan., 13th.

Those interested in embracing the Orthodox Faith are asked to attend on Tuesday Evenings,

In-Person or Zoom Class also class at 11:00am

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87525594697?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87525594697?pwd=TLIKV2pkcmFTdStza0RLMXkvNC9ydz09)

[pwd=TLIKV2pkcmFTdStza0RLMXkvNC9ydz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87525594697?pwd=TLIKV2pkcmFTdStza0RLMXkvNC9ydz09)

Zoom Meeting ID: 875 2559 4697, Passcode: 477296

BIBLE STUDY, Tuesday, Dec. 9th, 16th 5:30pm,

In-Person or Zoom.

BIBLE STUDY will resume after Christmas on Jan. 13th.

Sunday, December 7th

Pageant Rehearsal after the Liturgy

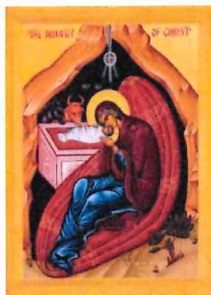
Sunday, December 14th return Gifts for the Christmas Wish Tree.

Sunday, December 14th Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 21st Youth and Choir Members Christmas Caroling,

Sunday, December 28th Parish Council Meeting

CHRISTMAS DIVINE SERVICES



SUNDAY DECEMBER 14TH, Matins 9:00AM, Divine Liturgy 10:00AM; followed by **"A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT"** presented by our parish Church School Students and our church choir, also the arrival of **St Nicholas and Christmas Carols**.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST, SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY
Matins 9:00AM, Divine Liturgy 10:00AM and Prophetic Readings.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25TH, CHRISTMAS DAY LITURGY
Matins Service 9:00AM, Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, 10:00AM

PARISH CHRISTMAS OFFERING ENVELOPE

An offering envelope for Christmas will be included with the Parish Christmas Card for your consideration. You may mail your Christmas Donation to the church or bring it with you during Christmas services. Thank you.

We invite all of our faithful here at the Assumption to attend the Divine Services as we celebrate the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Bring your family, your friends and neighbors so we can worship and thank our Lord who opened the door to salvation and everlasting life. Please join us in singing the beautiful hymns and carols and exchanging the greeting



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT - SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14th

Attention parents: our Church School will be presenting a Traditional Christmas Pageant following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 14th.

Please make every effort to attend the Liturgy so you and your children can experience the **TRUE MEANING** of Christmas through the Nativity

Pageant and receive Holy Communion together.

The secular world with its glitter offers us a different festivity; our Holy Church offers a spiritual celebration, one devoted to Our Lord. Please allow your children to participate in the deeper meaning of Christmas.

The teachers will need your assistance with costumes, rehearsals and on the day of the pageant.

Please contact Angela Fullmer and offer your help.

REHEARSAL FOR THE PAGEANT IS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7TH.



YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

Parents please encourage your children to participate in the Youth Ministry so they can have fellowship with their peers. Our kids today face many challenges in school; the youth ministry gives them an opportunity to enjoy a Christ-centered atmosphere.

DECEMBER YOUTH SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7th -PAGEANT REHEARSAL

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14th-Christmas Pageant following the Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21st - CHRISTMAS CAROLING TO OUR SENIORS & HOME BOUND.

SANCTUARY POINSETTIA ORDER FORM



Those wishing to donate a poinsettia plant to decorate the Sanctuary for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord may do so by completing the Poinsettia Plant Form in the Epistle **bringing it to church or mailing it** with their remittance to the church (**PO Box 4567, Pocatello, ID 83205.**) You may offer the beautiful poinsettia plants for the health or in memory of a loved one. Their names will be remembered during the Christmas Day Liturgy.

DONATION: \$20.00 PER PLANT

Name _____

Number of Plants _____

Amount of Donation \$ _____

(FIRST NAMES ONLY)

Health of _____

In Memory of _____

PLEASE SUBMIT POINSETTIA ORDER WITH YOUR DONATION THANK YOU!

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, PO Box 4567 Pocatello, ID 83205

PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD FORM



One of the wonderful traditions of our Parish is to share greetings for the Christmas Season and the New Year with each other. The Parish will once again send each Steward of the Parish a beautiful color Byzantine Christmas Card depicting the Nativity of Our Lord with the names of the faithful. In order to cover postage, mailing and printing, A FREE-WILL DONATION is welcomed. We hope you will join your fellow parishioners and consider including your name as part of the Parish Christmas Card.

Whatever amount you decide will be greatly appreciated.

PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD SIGN-UP

Please PRINT NAME as you would like it to appear in the card:

NAME _____

AMOUNT of **FREE-WILL DONATION:** \$ _____

RETURN SLIP TO THE CHURCH WITH YOUR DONATION, or mail to:

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, PO Box 4567 Pocatello, ID 83205



PARISH CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE -LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS PROJECT

Especially during the Christmas season, many of us look for ways to reach out and help those of us who are less fortunate in our community. The Parish Philoptochos Society has found a worthy giving project on which we can focus our efforts. This year the Philoptochos has selected two local agencies to contribute necessary items to help the day-to-day needs of its clients and its agency.

The Parish Christmas Giving Tree will be in the Church Narthex with Christmas ornaments made by our Sunday School children. On the back of each ornament will be a label listing the needed items by category and the Name of the Agency. You may select as many ornaments as you wish.

AID FOR FRIENDS SHELTER needs are as follows:

Toilet Paper (much needed item)

Men's & Women's Razors (please purchase five of each item)

40 Gallon Black Trash Bags

Laundry Soap

Body Wash

Women's Deodorant

Package of Men's Boxer Underwear (Large & Extra Large)

Diapers (Any Size)

FAMILY SERVICE ALLIANCE OF SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO:

EMERGENCY SHELTER/CLEANING SUPPLIES:

Paper Towels

Toilet Paper

Toilet Cleaner

Kitchen/Bathroom Cleaner

HYGIENE NEEDS: (please purchase five of each item)

Full Size Bottles of Shampoo & Conditioner

Soap/Body Wash

Toothbrushes & Toothpaste

Liquid Hand Soap/Hand Sanitizer

FAST FOOD GIFT CARDS \$10 EACH

FOOD SUPPLIES:

Hot and Cold Cereals

Canned Fruits and Vegetables

Canned Meats, Stews

Sealed Individual Water Bottles

Pasta & Pasta Sauce

Snack Items (no preparation needed)



If you would like make a **CASH DONATION**, please make your check payable to Assumption GOC with Memo line (Ladies Philoptochos) and mail to the church PO BOX 4567, Pocatello, ID 83205, or bring your donation to church. Checks will be cashed and gifts will be bought with your donation.

PLEASE DO NOT WRAP THE ITEMS

PLACE THE PURCHASED ITEMS IN A BAG BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE BY DECEMBER 14TH.

Over these past six years, our parish has had an influx of families and individuals migrating from the Northwest and California. We have also been blessed with many who have come seeking the Historic Christian Church, and thus found themselves here in Southeastern Idaho and the parish of the Assumption. Once a month The Epistle will feature a family or individual who has embraced the Faith and how they came to Orthodoxy.

THE BLACK'S JOURNEY INTO ORTHODOXY by Brandon Black, November 2024

**Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church,
Protobresvyter of the Ecumenical Throne Father Constantine A. Zozos**



Our move to the quiet streets of Rigby, Idaho in 2018 was our big push to flee the depraved carnival of Reno, Nevada; to put down roots and raise a family. We knew the region was heavily populated by Mormons, which was fine by us, as we knew they made great neighbors and we even threw around the idea of becoming Mormon. While faith was in the back of our minds, our journey into Orthodoxy began when we gave up on organized religion.

Melissa and I were both raised in the central valley of California. Despite an eight year age difference, we found a common thread of shared careers and similar local experiences on which to build our relationship. One element we didn't have in common was our religious history. She was raised as something we jokingly call a "Basic Christian"- meaning, when asked about her faith, she would answer "I believe in God."

and that would be the extent of it.

Unlike her, I was baptized and raised in a Methodist home. My family went to church every Sunday. What I remember about Methodism was being bored and not understanding why I had to dress up in too-tight corduroy pants to sit around stuffy people who were unnaturally friendly. It all seemed perfunctory and I hated it. I also hated that my family would spend all week outside of church engaged in a variety of abuses and criminality that ultimately blossomed into divorce. A couple years after my family withered away, I witnessed our Pastor boldly perform a same-sex marriage that detonated our congregation. This was in the mid-90's, and that was the last straw for me. At age 12, I refused to attend any longer and proudly thought that I'd freed myself of stifling hypocrisy. The reality was I cast myself adrift in an ocean of hedonism and nihilism, following any "spiritual" wind (mostly evil) that caught my sails. Roughly 30 years of spiritual truth seeking passed in this way; culminating in a strict adherence to Atheistic Rational Philosophy- the belief that reason and evidence are the primary sources of knowledge and that spirituality was irrelevant to a happy life. And that's what I brought into my relationship with my young wife.

We embraced the idea that modern psychological theory could sufficiently explain away the irrational, or even sinful, behaviors we'd engage in. The questions of creation and afterlife became moot as they were beyond our concerns in daily life. Spiritual perspectives were unprovable and therefore anecdotal... so they could be ignored. We were satisfied with ethics and morality, arrived at through evidence and rational discourse. Killing, rape, and theft were objec-

tively bad for humanity and that knowledge was good enough. Building self-esteem through mental health was of primary importance. We'd replaced God with clever argumentation and, so doing, we reasoned ourselves out of anything transcendental. That worldview worked until we became pregnant.

Humility entered our lives when we realized we didn't want our children to inherit spiritual emptiness. Love became something more than our "involuntary response to virtue in others" when we looked into our first son's eyes and felt the scary-deep, vulnerable love parents are often inspired to have for a child's mere existence. We'd glimpsed Christ's love for us in our love for our child. We turned back toward Christ when we saw what we'd been trying to do all along: to be Christian without Christ.

A grand parade of local Catholic churches and Protestant denominations ensued as we attended all the services we could manage. The Mormons love-bombed us relentlessly and we were nearly recruited. The prohibition of coffee, the endless busywork of a high-demand religion just to maintain Temple worthiness, and mandatory tithing to a multi-billion dollar organization were enough to ward us off. We finally gave up on finding a church home when we attended Watersprings Church in Idaho Falls one Easter and we heard the Pastor in his sermon encourage the faithful to "... come on into church even if you've just smoked a joint! (laughs, applause) and don't worry about your loud kids. If they get out of hand, just whoop on them a little bit... Pastor says it's okay! (more laughs, applause) and that will straighten them out... We want you HERE being SAVED!" Much of what we saw in a variety of churches wasn't love. It was irreverent, felt spiritually empty, and seemed to serve egos and church finances. None of it made sense and it felt like we were being played.

Decisively finished with church, we resigned ourselves to prayer and Bible reading at home. It was a visit from an old friend who unexpectedly brought up their interest in the Eastern Orthodox faith that held the key for us. We already knew of the church in Pocatello, but questioned who in their right mind would drive an hour, both ways, every Sunday to attend what was likely to be more of the same hollow let-down? I believe the Holy Spirit acted on our behalf that day, inspiring our friend to bravely and lovingly deliver His message of Faith and Wisdom at a time when we'd abandoned hope. Glory to God, we heard the message through our apathy. My dear friend explained to me the Pre-Biblical history of the Ancient Church, the purpose of Christian life being Theosis- that "God became man so that man might become God through Grace." and the spiritual value of asceticism. In the light of these revelations, a hour drive no longer sounded so bad.

I knew immediately on a gut level that Orthodoxy presented a truth about life and Christianity that I'd wandered the wilderness in search of for decades. To this day, the more I learn about our ancient faith, the more it all makes sense. Orthodoxy is the place where the full truth of our Christian Faith is nurtured. Orthodoxy is where we are free to ask ANY question of our faith and find a suitable, honest, and wise answer. Orthodoxy is where God's love and plan for us can be clearly understood and fully experienced. Orthodoxy is where our souls can find rest and work toward refinement. We knew we found a church home after our first Divine Liturgy. For the first time in our lives we look forward to worshiping as often as possible and growing with our church family. My wife and I are confident that we're endowing our children with the priceless lifelong gifts of Faith, Hope, and Love.

The Black Family: Brandon (St. Jerome), Melissa (Mary the Theotokos), their children August (St. George), Buchanan (St. John Chrysostom), and Juniper (St Sophia and her daughters).

WHY DO YOU WANT TO BECOME ORTHODOX?

There are many answers one might give to this question, but the main answer should be related to communion with God, your Creator (see quote below). There are many other “churches” in this world that teach their version of Christianity and what they believe “Truth” is. The Orthodox Church claims to be THE Church, the “fullness of Christianity” that is handed down by Christ and His apostles. One who is seeking to be Orthodox should be doing so because “...you come here and find Christ here. If you come to the conclusion that Christ is here and that this is Christ’s Church, then whatever the Church is teaching, if this is Christ’s Church, is the truth.” (Fr. Stephen DeYoung). The following guide is assuming that in looking to join the Orthodox Church, you have already come to this conclusion or are close to it. This guide about prayer is not about proving that the Orthodox Church is THE Church of Christ (see someone in the Agape Bookstore for suggested readings or speak with Father.) This guide is about teaching one how to get started living the life of a Christian and learning to be in communion with Christ and His Body, the Church.

The final goal of man is communion with God. The path to this communion has been precisely defined: faith, and walking in the Commandments with the help of God’s grace. -St. Theophan the Recluse

Most of us never take the time to reflect on the purpose of our lives. Often, we don’t do this until someone we love departs from this life, especially if unexpectedly. During this moment of grief, our soul has our attention, and we begin to think about what life is all about. In one way, life is about death. We all know that our time will come to die, but all too often we refuse to think about it seriously because of the unknown and the fear it presents.

The purpose of life taught by the Apostles and the Church Fathers is one of finding union with God, what we call Theosis. Jesus came to save us and to open the gates of heaven for us. He showed us how to live through His teaching and example. He showed us that while facing death can be fearful, it is not something we need to despair about, for He has defeated death.

The Orthodox way of life is given to us by Christ Himself through His Church. It is a proven way of life, but not an easy one; however, it will bring you closer to God. As you come closer to God, you increase your capability to deal with any difficulties in life you may face. You increase your ability to live according to the virtues.

PRAYING DAILY



Prayer is the foundation of the Orthodox way of life. What is Prayer? It is a dialogue between you and God. It unites your soul with God. It is through prayer that you unite with God and receive the gift of His grace to aid you in overcoming your passions and living life based on love. Through prayer you also learn to control the distractions of your mind, allowing you to become more watchful and focused in your daily activities. Prayer is the key to entering a life based on the virtues.

How do you pray? First, establish a regular time and a private place. You should have a specific rule for both morning and evening. Don’t try to “wing it.” This is not a relaxation exercise, but a path of communion with your God. You will benefit from having a specific set of guidelines that you follow each time with no excuses for shortcutting them. In your rule, incorporate standing, prostrations, kneeling, making the sign of the cross, reading, and at times singing. Use prayer books and written prayers. The Orthodox prayer books are filled with prayers that have been well tested and used for hundreds of years. Prayer does not need to be a creative activity. Above all, you need to be sincere. Keep your awareness in your heart and concentrate on the words of the prayer. Once you establish a rule, always keep it.

You begin praying by focusing your consciousness in your heart and forcibly gathering there all the powers of your soul and body. Before you start your prayers, take time to quiet yourself and to concentrate your energies in your heart. Christ says, “Enter into thy closet and ... shut thy door” (Mt 6:6). Remove all activities that could disrupt your inner descent. Set aside, to the best of your ability, all of your problems of the day



and your worries for tomorrow. This is not a time for thinking or worrying. When you are preparing to pray, stand, sit or walk a few minutes and steady your mind to concentrate on God. Reflect on who it is that you will be addressing. Remember, it is God Himself, the Creator of All, with whom you are about to talk. Try to hold in your heart a feeling of humility and reverent awe. If you are able, make some prostrations before you begin. (What is a prostration? It is humble bowing either your entire body half way to the ground or a complete prostration if you are unsure, ask Father.)

As you begin to pray, enter into every word of the prayer. Bring the meaning of the words down into your heart. Do not rush through the prayers like you are in a hurry to finish them. Let

the words of the prayer slowly drop into the depths of your heart with humility and awe of God. You need to slow your mind down so you can concentrate solely on your prayer. You want to train it to slow down so you can open your heart to God's presence. So, in prayer say the words slowly so you can gain the full meaning of them and allow them to penetrate your consciousness and to bring to your heart feelings of love and reverence for God.

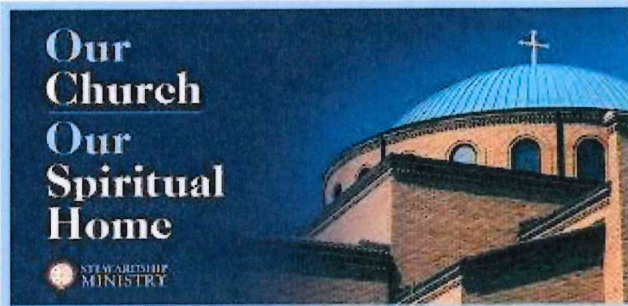
Beware of the tendency to rush to complete your prayers hurriedly. When this happens, you have turned your prayer into an obligation, another task to complete, and it is no longer true prayer. Don't worry if you catch yourself doing this. It is normal at first – when you catch mind wandering; just stop, slow down, ask God's forgiveness and help, then continue where you left off. You will eventually find the right pace for yourself. Also, study the prayers before you use them, so you know the meaning of each word. Eventually you will want to memorize them and probably will without even trying hard.

As mentioned, you might find that your mind and thoughts wander very easily – this is very natural, especially in our technological age that stimulates or minds to be overactive. Work constantly to improve your ability to concentrate your attention on God and your prayer. When your mind does wander, be gentle with yourself. Think of God and how He loves you and go back to recite again what you said while your mind was elsewhere. Bring yourself back to concentrate on God and the words of the prayer. Sometimes it helps to say your prayers out loud for a while to help you concentrate.

The mind is quite skilled at trying to do more than one thing at a time. But in reality, you only concentrate on one thing at a time. You can easily be deceived by the mind as it leaves prayer to focus on other matters. These wanderings of the mind show you the dimensions of your busy life and where you need to find ways to make it quieter so you can be always mindful of God. Prayer is NOT the time to focus on these worldly activities, because this will only further distract you from prayer. Work to concentrate your attention more and more each time you pray. Each day you will gain in your attentiveness during prayer.

When you finish your prayers, stand for a few moments and do the sign of the cross. Consider to what your prayer life commits you too. Try to hold in your heart what has been given to you. Treasure it for a few moments.

It is important to make your prayer life one that is a firm rule, a desired habit, and not something that is done occasionally, sporadically or casually. Be consistent! Pray each and every morning and evening for fifteen minutes at a minimum. Your prayer rule should include specific prayers. Commit to doing your rule each and every day, just like you are committed to daily personal hygiene tasks such as brushing your teeth. You don't forget to do them each day. You need to make prayer a similar habit, one that you never forget. Just like brushing our teeth is essential for the health of our gums and teeth, prayer is essential for the health of our soul. Persistence and patience in prayer will prepare you for God's grace to work within you.



Stewardship FAIR SHARE PLEDGE

What does Stewardship mean to me? What should Stewardship mean to you? These are questions that have perplexed churches since the first church budget was ever proposed. It is not a subject that many people like to deal with. We believe that God will provide. Stewardship is more than just giving money so that the church can meet its budgetary needs. Stewardship is about returning to God what God has given to us. "What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?" He made clear that our giving is not based on what we think we should give, but giving what we want to give because of God's generosity to us. God is not asking us for compliance, but to begin a journey of the heart, where we surrender to our trust in God's unfailing mercy.

Stewardship is our responsibility to see that God's work on this earth is done. Unfortunately, that does require money. It also requires our participation.

Why We Give and a Guide to Show Us the Way!

God has provided us with everything that we need for an abundant life.

As a token of our appreciation, we should offer a gift back. As Jesus taught on the mount, "give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you receive." Luke 6:38

We give to the church as the embodiment of our Lord here on earth, to support its good works. Giving is a form of spiritual discipline – akin to prayer, church attendance, and doing charitable works – and helps you to grow in your faith.

Qualities of an Orthodox Christian Steward

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS COMPASSIONATE.

Christian stewards are caretakers and caregivers. They concern themselves with the distribution of gifts and resources so that all might benefit

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS CONTENT.

Christian stewards acknowledge that their strength comes from God through whom they can do all things, regardless of how many or how few material possessions they have.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS GENEROUS.

Christian stewards give whatever is needed and whenever it is.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS GRATEFUL.

Christian stewards value what has been entrusted to their care and protect and preserve everything as if it were their own, yet acknowledging that the earth and all that is in it belong to God.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS LOVING.

Christian stewards know that the Lord requires justice and kindness and humility, and they follow the two greatest commandments.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS LOYAL.

Christian stewards serve God faithfully, remembering who they are, whose they are, and why they are here on earth.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS OBEDIENT.

Christian stewards obey God by setting aside a part of all their income for others.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS PRAYERFUL.

Christian stewards acknowledge the greatness and goodness of God through prayer, fellowship, study, worship, and reflection.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD IS RESPONSIBLE.

Christian stewards realize that caring for God's creation and wisely managing resources never ends.

A CHRISTIAN STEWARD SACRIFICES.

Christian stewards follow Jesus' teaching to sacrifice what they have out of gratitude for

Giving Thanks Eucharistic Stewardship

A Time to Plant, a Time to Reap!

COMMITMENT OF TREASURE *(personal and Confidential)*

As an expression of my/our commitment to the ministry of Christ's

Church, I/we pledge as my/our 2026

Financial Commitment to the Assumption Church \$_____.

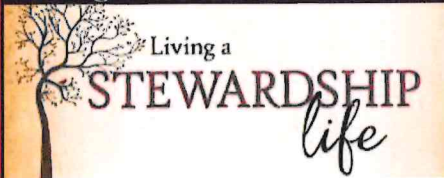
Name (Print) _____, Spouse (Print) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Cell () _____ Cell () _____

Email _____ Email _____

*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church
P.O.Box 4567, Pocatello, Idaho 83205*



2026 AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS YOUR LOVE...
PROVIDING FOR THE FUTURE, SERVING THE PRESENT.

**IN ORDER TO MEET OUR BUDGETARY NEEDS FOR NEXT YEAR,
 WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK EVERYONE TO CONSIDER, IF POSSIBLE,
 AN INCREASE IN THEIR PLEDGE FOR 2026**

WE ARE STEWARDS OF THE FREE WILL GOD GAVE US!

The reason He gave us free will is that we may freely choose to follow Him all the way to Heaven. How are you using the free will God gave you? Are you choosing to follow Christ all the way to heaven or have you chosen to follow your sinful passions and desires all the way to hell? As a steward of the free will that God has given you, the choice has been left in your hands.

In addition, we are stewards of the planet earth to preserve it and not pollute it. We are stewards of the great privilege of prayer whereby we may approach the heavenly throne at any moment to find grace to help in time of need.

We are stewards of the Bible. God's promises are for you. Read them! Claim them! Memorize them! We are stewards of money and our possessions. Money says everything about us, about our values, about our commitment. In the final analysis, it is our checkbook that shows what our true priorities really are, who or what is really our God!

I love this definition of Christian stewardship:

"Stewardship is the ecstasy of giving the best we have to the one we love the most." The question the Psalmist asks: "What shall I give to the Lord in return for all His benefits towards me?" (Ps 116:12), is answered in the liturgy when the priest invites us to offer "ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."

STEWARDSHIP IS CARING FOR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

STEWARDSHIP IS OFFERING ONE'S SELF TO GOD AS HE OFFERED HIMSELF TO US.

STEWARDSHIP IS WHAT A PERSON DOES AFTER SAYING "I BELIEVE..."

AS PROOF OF THAT

Stewardship: A Way of Life

The Church belongs to each of us. It is our second home. It is a place to come together to learn the teachings of Jesus Christ and enjoy Orthodox Christian fellowship. In order to sustain a place of worship, we are obligated to fulfill certain needs, both functional and financial. As our Church community grows, our needs increase. The Church requires the time, talent, and treasure of all of our members to function successfully.

Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges accountability, reverence and responsibility before God. Stewardship begins when we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty, and trust, and act on those beliefs. As Stewards, we affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. Stewardship calls on the faithful to cheerfully offer back to God a portion of the gifts with which we have been blessed.

An Active, Annual Commitment

An Orthodox Christian Steward is an active participant in the life of the Church. The parish encourages all who accept the Orthodox Faith to become practicing Stewards. Each year the Steward is expected to carefully review his or her personal circumstances and make a commitment of time, talent, and treasure to support the Parish and her Ministries.

Giving Thanks Eucharistic Stewardship



2026 STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Thank you for your pledges and regular payments toward stewardship. As we head toward the end of 2025, it is more important than ever to make your pledge if you have not done so. Your **2026 Pledge Commitment Card** will shortly be mailed to you for your **NEW Pledge**. Please take this opportunity to pledge your time, talent, and treasure for 2026.

List of Stewards This list of Stewards reflects those who have made their 2025 Stewardship Commitment or contributed to their 2025 Stewardship Commitment as of November 27th. We thank them for their generosity and loving support. We invite you to join with them joyously and support the ministries of the Church.

2025 Stewards 11/27/25 Please consider bringing your Stewardship up to date.

Thank You!

Father Constantine Zozos
Betty Angelos
John & Candice Apostle
Mr. & Mrs. Chris Arvas
Kelly Moses Autrey
Naglaa & Chris Bargelski
Tom & Molly Beseris
Brandon & Melissa Black
Penny Blue & Martin Carlsen
Ryan Bowlby
Brian & Ailaine Carroll
Afton and Jamie Carlson
John N. Christ
Clarence & Vivian Close
Kayne & Amy Cummins
JoAnn Contos
Mary Frances Cozakos
Jacob Denton
Hala & Ghassan Dib
Chris Drakos +
Kenny & Kristina Dudunakis
Scott and Rebecca Eames
Angela Fullmer
Rocky & Vicky Fullmer
Nicholas & Stella Gdontakis
Lisa Gentry
Ted Georges
Frank Grant
Botros & Monika Hanna
David & Jeanne + Harmer
Dean & Kathy Harris
Seth & Brooke Harris
John Harris

Andrew Hearne
Goldie Homan
Philip Homan
Anthony & Svitlana Hoskin
Thomas & Tracey Hugie
Nathan & Rosy Jamison
Maria Katsilometes
George & Betty Katsilometes
John Katsilometes
Dan & Angela Kimball
James & Cora Ligor
Tony & Georgia Ligor
Randall Lillie
Heidi Linehan
Kim Lundstrom
Scott & Elly MacDonald
Dina Manolis
Andrea Marks
Melissa Mosbrucker
Brian & Nicolette Maw
Treon Maroudas
Mitch+ & Sophie McCurry
John & Stephaine Mermigas
Nate & Samantha Mountain
Jake & Nichole Nyenhuis
Gregory & Olenda Painter
Konstantenos Paloukos
Sam & Filio Paloukos
Terri Pliley-Owen
Les & Helene Poulos-Edmo
Sergey & Catherine Rashkeev
Trisha & Colby Reddin
Yolanda Riech
Corrinthia Riedel
Scott & Tressa Rockwood
Swayer Shaffer
Kade & Devyn Schmalz

Aaron & Annie Sandy
Ian & Chayla Schoenrock
Anne Marie Schulze
Annie Semons
Rita Sherburne
Ron & Kim Sims
Karen Solomon
Phil & LuAnn Spain
John & Lorre Speck
Nathan & Sophia Speck
Gary & Pamela Swan
Steven & Jacque Swanson
Katie Swore & Ryan Pope
Travis & Ryan Swore
Tim & Maria Swore
Alex & Ashley Tarasau
Nick & Tasia Tsakrios
Pauline Thiros
Scott & Rebecca+ Tysor
Aaron & Siara Walters
Lionel Weisburg
Vadym Ustianskyi



If not
YOU...
WHO?

If not
NOW...
WHEN?

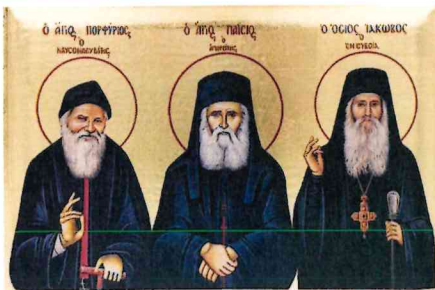
THE GREAT FEAST OF EPIPHANY LITURGY, SUNDAY, JANUARY 4TH AT 10:00AM



Although we commonly refer to the Great Feast celebrated on January 6th as Epiphany, it's easier to understand the feast from the definition of its formal name, Theophany, which is from the Greek theophania, meaning "appearance of God."

Theophany is the feast which reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord. When John the Baptist and Forerunner baptized Christ in the River Jordan, the Holy Trinity appeared clearly to mankind for the first time: God the Father's voice is heard from Heaven, the Son of God is incarnate, standing physically in the Jordan, and the Holy Spirit descends on Him in the form of a dove. Theophany is the culmination of the Orthodox Christmas Season which starts on December 25th and ends on January 6th. The parish will celebrate the sacred day of Epiphany on Sunday, January 4th, at 10:00am following the Divine Liturgy.

We encourage the faithful to attend and receive the Lord's Blessing and Holy Water to take home.



Reading Scripture and the Holy Fathers

What you watch and read has an impact on the way you think. Think about what you want to let into your mind to influence your thinking. The things you watch and read should be those that have a positive impact on your spiritual growth; that will shape your mind and orient it towards God. The more you fill your mind with the things of God, the more your thoughts will be godly. Your conscience will become more acute, and you will become less and less likely to do those things that feed your passions. Make

time to regularly read the Holy Scriptures (Bible – especially the Gospel – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), the writings of the Holy Fathers (Saints of the Church) and the lives of the Saints. You should organize your life so that you can spend at least 15 minutes a day reading. Consider how much time you spend entertaining yourself (online, "screen time" etc.) and see how little 15 minutes is in comparison. Integrating your reading can be done as part of your prayer rule or as family time too.

The spiritual life is challenging. It is like an ascent up a steep slope or mountain side. It is a long and slow pathway with joyful moments along the way. As you move along the path, you gain strength. You can begin to look back and reflect on how far you have come while still seeing that you have much further to travel. As you gain strength, you will be able to face an ever more difficult terrain as well as the uncertainty of storms that you cannot predict. It is often a lonely path, and at times it seems like you will never reach the summit.

As you face these difficulties the readings, especially the lives of the Saints, can inspire you with courage to continue along the path. You can see that others have traveled this path before you, and with persistence and faith, they have reached much higher heights than you can now see. As you turn to those who had an intimate relationship with God, they will give you hope and kindle a spark of warmth in your heart. They will help you keep your head high and your eyes fixed on the summit ahead. They will show you that your capacity to choose, to change, and to endure is a reality. They will show you the way to wisdom and love and the potential to be able to radiate spiritual glory as you discover the uncreated light of God and find yourself in glorious union with Him.

A note on reading the Bible: When you read the Bible, don't try to make up your own interpretation. Scripture is to be interpreted through the Church. In the book of Acts, there is the story of Philip encountering an Ethiopian official reading the Bible in his chariot. Philip asks him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian replied, "How can I unless someone guides me." This is the same attitude you should have. Scripture can be difficult to understand, especially because of the context – the time, place, culture, etc. Listen to your priest and his homilies which are on Holy Scripture. Take advantage of bible studies your parish might provide. In this day and age there are a number of good podcasts available that go verse by verse through Scripture – ask your priest about what he might recommend. Use tools such as the notes in the Orthodox Study Bible and commentaries by the Church Fathers. In conclusion, when you have questions or opinions, submit them to the Church for clarification.



PRAYER REQUESTS

Please offer names (first name only) to the clergy for mention during services. Please also offer names (first name only) of those who are suffering from illnesses so they can be included in our prayers and the prayer list to be published in *The Epistle Newsletter* as well as the weekly *Sunday Herald*. Contact Father Constantine (805) 570-6525 to submit your names.

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Heavenly Father, physician of our souls and bodies, who sent Your only begotten Son and Lord Jesus Christ to heal every sickness and infirmity, visit and heal also your servants: **Hiedi, Elaine, John, Maria, Larisa, Stella, Venetia, Jon, Gary, Ahmad, Jason, Tommy, John, Natalia, Svitlana, Ivanna, James, Pam, Christoforos, Hosea, Richard, Sotirios, Kathy, Mary Frances, Lavada, Steven, Alicia, Christopher, Barbara, Georgia, Vlasios, Vivian, Thomas, Sienna, James, Casi, Jim, Scarlett, Zachary, Sara, Martha, Anna, Kieran, Valentin, Valentina, Rose Mary, Patricia, Anthony, Maria, Michael, Krista, John, Bobby, Eric, George, Martin, Gayle, Alicia, Dianna, Chelsea, Dell, Gregory, Dimitri, Oleg, Tania, Ocey, Ethel, Carol, Robert, Casi, Jack, Carol, Roger, Anna, Steve, Christopher, Freda, Larry, Maria, Judy, Ignatius, Elaine, George, Barbara, Nicholas, Matthew, Jeff, Jacqueline, Dianna, Alton, Anna, Larry, Paula, Stacey, Orestes, Helen, Catherine, Andrew, Mary, Steve, Nicholas, Scarlett, Marie, Demetrios, George, Melissa, Galina, Sofia, Cheryl, Christ, Carolyn, Paul, Mary, Nick, John, Elaine, Nicholas** from all physical and spiritual ailments through the grace of Your Christ. Grant them patience in this sickness, strength of body and spirit and recovery of health. Lord You have taught us through Your Word to pray for each other that we may be healed. I pray that You heal these Your servants and grant to them the gift of complete health. For You are the source of healing and to You I give the Glory, to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Nominations for PARISH COUNCIL and the 2026 Parish BUDGET APPROVED

At the recent General Assembly, the 2026 Budget given by **Dave Harmer** and was approved and nominations for new Parish Council members took place. The Assembly nominated members for four vacancies for the Parish Council, they included **Tressa Rockwood, Jacque Swanson, Anthony Hoskin and Goldie Homan** for a three year term. The remaining members of the Parish Council include **Gregory Painter, Vicky Fullmer, Kade Schmalz, David Harmer, Tom Hugie, Vivian Close, and Ron Sims**. All members of the Council will take the Oath of Office in January. The Council will also elect their 2026 officers at their first meeting in January.

The 2026 Audit Committee was elected, members include: **Kim Sims, Ailaine Carroll, Evan Myers**

Reports were also given for the parish ministries which included, **Sunday School, Youth Report** by **Angela Fullmer & Ashley Tarasau**, **The Ladies Philoptochos** by **Goldie Homan**. A report was also given regarding the success of this year's Festival and a report on the Renovation of our Social Hall and about an adult baptistry. Father Constantine gave his report about the well-being of the parish.



Call/text **Goldie Homan** (208) 643-3031 to host an Agape Fellowship after Sunday Services. You can also speak to her after church, and she can sign you up also. Thank you in advance for considering offering this

hospitality to our parish family and guests.

Agape Fellowship affords us an opportunity to meet parishioners of our growing parish, as well as welcome those who are new and those seeking to embrace our Orthodox Faith.

PRAYER IN TIME OF SUFFERING

Grant us, O Lord, we ask Thee, Thy divine strength to endure our tribulation with complete submission to Thy will.

Thou knowest our miseries and sufferings, and to Thee, our only hope and refuge, we flee for relief and comfort, trusting in Thy infinite love and compassion, that in due time, when Thou knowest best, Thou will deliver us from this trouble, and turn our distress into comfort, and we shall rejoice in Thy mercy and exalt Thy Holy Name, + O Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.