

# SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 25 Issue 1

January 2025

## December Council Highlights

- ✘ November's Operating Income was \$18,066.71 and Operating Expenses were \$17,991.63, resulting in a net income of \$75.08 for November.
- ✘ Annual Church Meeting will be held Sunday, January 26, 2025. A critical item on the agenda is to vote to approve the replacement of the shingles and foam roof on the Cultural Center/hall.



SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church  
1614 E. Monte Vista Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85006  
602.253.9515

[www.sspeterpaulaz.org](http://www.sspeterpaulaz.org)  
[www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)  
[www.orthodoxfellowship.org](http://www.orthodoxfellowship.org)

Archpriest Mikel Bock,  
Rector  
907-444-8545  
[fmikel@sspeterpaulaz.org](mailto:fmikel@sspeterpaulaz.org)

Archpriest David Balmer, Attached  
Retired  
[frdavidbalmer@sspeterpaulaz.org](mailto:frdavidbalmer@sspeterpaulaz.org)  
480-213-7631

Deacon John Weiss  
[deaconjohn@sspeterpaulaz.org](mailto:deaconjohn@sspeterpaulaz.org)  
Deacon Rodion Pfeiffer  
[deaconrodion@sspeterpaulaz.org](mailto:deaconrodion@sspeterpaulaz.org)

John Bushko  
Council President  
614.204.0413

Barbara Harp  
Choir Director  
[barbaraharp.2030@gmail.com](mailto:barbaraharp.2030@gmail.com)

Stephanie A. Homyak  
Church School Director  
Newsletter Editor  
602.432.7473  
[stephanie\\_homyak@yahoo.com](mailto:stephanie_homyak@yahoo.com)

Matushka Elizabeth Pfeiffer  
Myrrhbearers Altar Society  
[flagstaffred@gmail.com](mailto:flagstaffred@gmail.com)

## The Liturgical Year

### The Creation of the Church Calendar

The Church's liturgical worship is spread throughout the year, finding expression in the use of a calendar to regulate the observances of the Church's feasts. This is because Christian worship is corporate as well as private, and so if Christians will celebrate (for example) Christ's birth, they must first agree upon which date that celebration will take place. If Christian worship were merely individual, then different individual Christians might choose to celebrate Christ's birth on differing days, with no loss. But since our worship is corporate, a calendar becomes necessary if feast days and other special occasions are to be kept.

At first there was no such thing as a liturgical year, and no specifically Christian calendar, so that no calendar can claim apostolic provenance or authority. The apostles simply mandated the gathering together of all the baptized in a weekly *qahal* or *ekklesia*. It was on this day that all the Christians within a given locale (be it small hamlet or larger town) would meet (ideally in one place) to hear the Word and offer the Eucharist. This gathering anticipated the age to come

and was the Christians' weekly experience of the power that would flood the world in that age to come. There was, in other words, an eschatological dimension to the Christians' sacramental gathering. This eschatological gathering was the sole "Christian calendar" known to the apostles.

Very soon, however, martyrdoms began to multiply. The local church would treasure and celebrate their local martyrs, meeting on the anniversary of his or her martyrdom to rehearse those glorious events and celebrate the Eucharist (ideally, over the grave of the martyr). These annual celebrations of the martyred saints became the next layer of celebrations added to the apostolic gatherings on Sunday. As the stories of the martyrs became more widely known, the feast of the martyr might be celebrated not just by the community in which the martyr had lived and died, but by other church communities as well.

Around this time, in the second century, the Church began to also celebrate annually the death and resurrection of Christ. Some churches (like those in Asia Minor) celebrated this feast on the 14th day of

the month of Nisan,<sup>1</sup> the day when Christ was crucified, regardless of whether or not that day fell on a Sunday. Many other churches, such as those of Rome, celebrated this feast always on a Sunday, regardless of whether that day was the 14th of Nisan.

Such diversity of calendar and practice was not considered problematic by those such as St. Irenaeus, who urged the bishop of Rome to relax and not break communion with those who celebrated it on the 14th of Nisan as he was tempted to do.<sup>2</sup> But after the Council of Nicaea in 325, such diversity was becoming pastorally problematic to the perception of the Church's unity in the eyes of the world, and a formula was agreed upon: the feast of Pascha would be celebrated by all churches on the Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Those insisting on the date of the 14th of Nisan (the so-called "Quartodecimans" or "fourteeners") now had to conform or leave.

Soon other feasts were added, such as the feast of Epiphany—i.e., the "manifestation" of Christ's glory, seen at his birth,

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# Message From Our Rector

As we begin the New Year, it is fitting that we celebrate the day of the feast of Theophany, the Baptism of our Lord. It is not out of place to remember another baptism: that baptism which was performed over each of us Orthodox Christians; that baptism at which each of us as adults, or by the mouth of our godparents, gave a promise to God that we would always renounce Satan and his works and would always unite ourselves with Christ. This is especially fitting for us to always remember.



The solemn rite of the Great Sanctification of Water is performed. Its center, its main part, one could say, is the prayer where the Lord is glorified and the grace of the Holy Spirit is called down upon the water being sanctified. This prayer begins with the words: "Great art Thou, O Lord, and marvelous are Thy works, and there is no word sufficeth to hymn Thy wonders." Whoever has been at a service of the mystery of Baptism and was listening, knows that the prayer at the sanctification of the water in which a man will be baptized begins with these same words, and the first part of this prayer is entirely the same, both at the Great Sanctification of Water and at the service of Baptism. And only later, in the last part, does the prayer at the Baptism change, as applicable to this mystery, when a new human soul will be baptized. And so, it would not do us any harm to remember those vows given at Baptism on behalf of each of us. When a person is baptized as an adult, that person makes the vows on his own behalf; but if he is baptized as an infant, his godfather or godmother—his "sponsors," as the Church calls them, say these vows for them. And so these vows, in which a Christian has promised God to renounce Satan

and all his works and to join himself, to unite himself with Christ, these vows are not only forgotten by some people, but many in general know nothing about them or about the fact that these vows were pronounced for them and that they ought to think a little about how they must fulfill these vows.

What if on the last day of the human race on earth, which is that day of the Dread Judgment, it turns out that a man (or his sponsors for him) made vows, and he does not even know what the vows were and what was promised? What will happen to the soul of such a man? Think about what it means to renounce Satan and all his works and to join oneself to Christ. If we made a vow to renounce Satan and all his works, then, in fulfilling it, we ought to strive not to stifle our soul with distractions, but to reject them and to remember how it says in Luke, "One thing is needed"—only one thing is necessary—and to remember that we must join ourselves with Christ, that is, not only to fulfill His commandments, but also to unite ourselves with Him.

It is good to think about this, that on this day of the great feast; think and pray that the Lord send you firm faith and the commitment to fulfill these vows that were made, and not to be swallowed up by the distractions of the world and lose the union with Christ. This commitment with Christ was a promise to join yourself forever to Him.

May our good Lord give us the strength and wisdom to fulfill our baptismal vows throughout this year of 2025.

*Fr. Mikel*

## VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS



# The Liturgical Year

(Continued from page 1)

at his revelation to the Magi, at his baptism, and at his miracle of turning water into wine. This feast was held on January 6. Eventually the West decided to commemorate Christ's birth on December 25, drawing the events of his birth and the visit of the Magi away from its original feast in January to the new one in December.

Feasts were added at different times and in different places. Eventually certain calendars came into wide-spread use, so that today all the Orthodox world uses the same Church calendar for feasts. This calendar contains a number of saints' days, commemorating various saints (usually one or more per day), and a number of feasts celebrating events in the life of Christ and the life of Mary the Theotokos.

## The Twelve Great Feasts

In Orthodoxy today, there are feasts of the Lord and feasts of the Theotokos.

The feasts of the Lord are: the Elevation of the Cross (commemorating the finding of the true Cross in the fourth century), Nativity (celebrating his birth), Theophany (celebrating his baptism), Palm Sunday (celebrating his final entry into Jerusalem), the Ascension (celebrating his glorification in heaven 40 days after his Resurrection), Pentecost (celebrating his pouring out the Spirit upon his Church 50 days after his Resurrection), and his Transfiguration.

The feasts of the Theotokos are: the Nativity of the Theotokos (celebrating her birth), the Entrance (celebrating the first time she entered the Temple as a small child), the Meeting (celebrating the encounter with Simeon and Anna in the after Jesus was born), the Annunciation (celebrating the announcement of Gabriel to her that she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah), and the Dormition (celebrating her "falling asleep" in death).

These feasts are twelve in total. There are other feasts as well, but these are espe-

cially important to the Church's liturgical life. A close reading will reveal that some of the feasts are attached to the solar calendar (and therefore are celebrated on the same date every year), while some are part of the Paschal cycle, which is dependent upon the date of the full moon after the spring equinox.

The names and dates for the twelve great feasts are:

<i>Theophany</i>	January 6
Meeting of Our Lord	February 2
<i>Annunciation</i>	March 25
<i>Palm Sunday</i>	1 wk before Pascha
<i>Ascension</i>	40 days after Pascha
<i>Pentecost</i>	50 days after Pascha
Transfiguration	August 6
<i>Dormition</i>	August 15
<i>Nativity of the Theotokos</i>	September 8
<i>Elevation of the Cross</i>	September 14
<i>Entrance of the Theotokos</i>	November 21
<i>Christmas</i>	December 25

It will be noted that Pascha itself is not a part of the Twelve Great Feasts, since it is considered too important to be one feast among many. Rather, it is regarded as the Feast of Feasts, the source of everything else.

## Fasting Periods

As well as the feasts, there are four fasting periods during the liturgical year:

1. the **Great Lent**, beginning 40 days before Pascha, with a pre-Lenten series of Sundays preceding it;
2. the **Fast of Sts. Peter and Paul** (or the Apostle's Fast), beginning a week after Pentecost and ending with the feast of Peter and Paul on June 29;
3. the **Dormition fast**, beginning August 1 and ending with the feast of the Dormition on August 15; and
4. the **Nativity fast** (sometimes called "Advent", a western liturgical term),

beginning November 15 and ending 40 days later with the feast of Christmas

The fasts are of varying strictness, with Great Lent being the strictest of all. They are also of varying lengths: the Great Lenten fast is 40 days long, plus Holy Week after that; the Nativity Fast is 40 days long; the Dormition fast is two weeks long; and the Apostle's fast is of varying length, dependent as it is upon the varying date of Pentecost (since the date of Pentecost depends upon the date of Pascha which varies each year according to the date of the full moon).

Regarding the Apostle's Fast: after Pentecost there is a fast-free week when fasting is disallowed, so that the Apostle's Fast cannot begin until after that fast-free week is over. But regardless of when the Apostle's Fast begins, it must end with the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul on June 29, which means that some years that fast is very long, while other years it is very short. That is why most parishes offer a church calendar to their faithful, so that such things can be easily learned. Experienced Orthodox, upon receiving their new calendar in January, usually immediately look up the month of June to see how long the Apostle's fast is going to be that year!

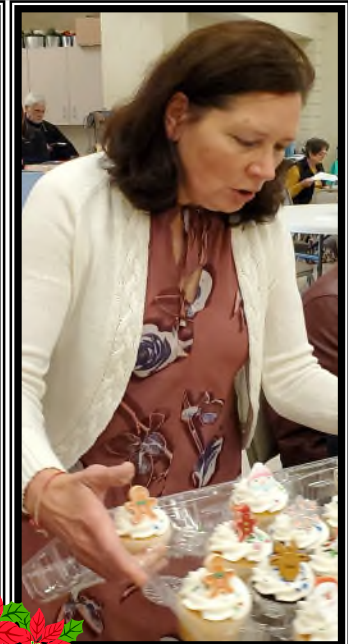
The liturgical year therefore consists of an alternating series of fasting and feasting, the former being a preparation for the latter.

1. Using an ancient calendar system, the first day of Nisan was the day after the first new moon after the spring equinox, corresponding, roughly to the end of March into April.
2. Thomas Hopko, *The Orthodox Faith: Church History*, Vol III, "The Quarta-deciman Controversy"

Excerpted from the OCA website, <https://essentialbeliefs.org/chapter-4/the-liturgical-year>\*



# December in Pictures at SS Peter and Paul





## Venerable Xenia of Rome, and Her Two Female Servants

**S**aint Xenia of Rome, in the world Eusebia, was the only daughter of an eminent Roman senator. From her youth she loved God, and wished to avoid the marriage arranged for her. She secretly left her parental home with two servants devoted to her, and set sail upon a ship. Through the Providence of God she met the head of the monastery of the holy Apostle Andrew in Milassa, a town of Caria (Asia Minor). She besought him to take her and her companions to Milassa. She also changed her name, calling herself Xenia [which means "stranger" or "foreigner" in Greek].

At Milassa she bought land, built a church dedicated to Saint Stephen, and founded a woman's monastery. Soon after this, Bishop Paul of Milassa made Xenia a deacon-



ess, because of her virtuous life. The saint helped everyone: for the destitute, she was a benefactress; for the grief-stricken, a comforter; for sinners, a guide to repentance. She possessed a deep humility, accounting herself the worst and most sinful of all.

In her ascetic deeds she was guided by the counsels of the Palestinian ascetic, Saint Euthymius. The sublime life of Saint Xenia drew many souls to Christ. The holy virgin died in 450 while she was praying. During her funeral, a luminous wreath of stars surrounding a radiant cross appeared over the monastery in the heavens. This sign accompanied the body of the saint when it was carried into the city, and remained until the saint's burial. Many of the sick

received healing after touching the relics of the saint.

Following the death of Saint Xenia, first one of her former servants died, then the other. They were buried at the saint's feet.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2025/01/24/100286-venerable-xenia-of-rome-and-her-two-female-servants>

### *From the Fathers...*

*The sanctification of the soul is achieved in Baptism, the sanctification of the body through the Eucharist. Both are needed for the salvation of mankind... Full redemption involves no less care than rescue.*

*- Saint Gregory of Nyssa*

## Whittier Elementary Christmas Outreach

**T**hanks to your generous support, we had donations and student adoptions to support 50 of the neediest students at Whittier Elementary school. Each child received one gift, and families received a food gift card of \$50 for a family with 1 child, \$75 for 2 children, and \$100 for 3 or more children. The gifts were delivered by Fr. David, Shayla Felix, Bill Weiss, Chris-

tine Sanchez and her son, and Barbara Harp. Thanks to Shayla Felix and Christine Sanchez for coordinating this year's outreach effort. Also, thanks to all who contributed or helped.



*"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

2 Corinthians 9:7



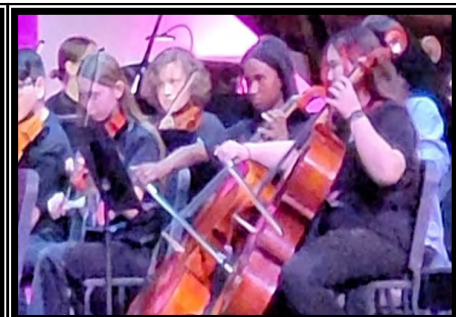
## Bits . . .

Congratulations and Many Years to the newly-illuminated Alexander Voght and to his sponsor, Luka Radjenovich who was received into the Orthodox Church through baptism on January 4<sup>th</sup>. May the Lord grant him many blessings as he begins to follow Christ as a member of His Holy Orthodox



Did you know that SS Peter and Paul has many talented musicians? James and Randall LeGendre play with the West Valley Youth Orchestra. Randall, viola, and James on percussion, were also invited to play with the West Valley Symphony last month. Several of our parishioners were fortunate enough to attend the concert.

Nya Deng plays cello in the Madison #1 School's orchestra. Despite only playing for 1.5 years, she is talented enough to play in the advanced orchestra. She had a stellar performance in their December 17<sup>th</sup> concert.



## Around Saints Peter & Paul

### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- January 1 George Moriarty  
 2 Lance Christiansen  
 3 John Tanner  
 4 Alexander Dolenko  
 5 Pat Starkey  
 Deacon John Weiss  
 6 Walter Booriakin  
 8 John & Lauren Hecht  
 David Sourk  
 Bill Weiss  
 Jeff Holliday  
 Randall LeGendre  
 12 Victor Zarembo  
 16 Liliya Armstrong  
 18 Antonia Adams-Clement  
 Tatiana Pavlova  
 19 John Hecht  
 George & Nadya Moriarty  
 Alexander Shubin  
 21 Monya Bock  
 25 Pat Rolston  
 26 Nick Rolston  
 26 Teddi Gardner  
 29 John & Carol Yavornitzky

### CONGRATULATIONS AND MANY YEARS!

To Deacon John Weiss as he celebrates the seventh anniversary of his ordination to the Holy Diaconate. May the Lord bless him and grant him, Matushka Juliana, and their family many blessings as they continue serve Christ's Holy Church!



### PRAYER LIST

*"May Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Physician of our souls and bodies, reach out his healing hand and bless these, His servants.*

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

*Fr. David Balmer  
 Matushka Mary Balmer  
 Gina Mudrenko  
 Jamie Arango  
 Elena Kerr  
 Marie Lobb  
 Ann Carroll  
 Antonia Adams-Clement  
 Walter Booriakin  
 The suffering people of Ukraine*

*If you know of anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Fr. Mikel Bock.*



## ... and Pieces

**THEOPHANY** On Sunday Jan 5<sup>th</sup>, Divine Liturgy will be followed by the Great Blessing of waters indoors. At noon, following Coffee Hour, Vespers for theophany will be held. Monday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, is the Great Feast of Theophany. Divine Liturgy will be at 9:00am, with the Great Blessing of water outdoors at Tempe Town Lake at noon.

**THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS** The rich liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church includes a variety of services and blessings. Each year, after the celebration of the Feast of Theophany and the Blessing of Water (January 6), it is customary for the priest to visit parishioners' homes, bringing with him the newly blessed Holy Water to sprinkle and thereby bless the home. To arrange to have your house blessed, please speak with Fr Mikel.

**MBAS LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF ELIZABETH MIKEL** The Myrrh Bearers Altar Society and Choir will be hosting coffee hour on Sunday, January 12, in memory of Elizabeth Mikel's 40<sup>th</sup> day of repose. She was a long-time member of the Myrrh Bearers Altar Society, choir, and served SS Peter and Paul Parish in many ways. Elizabeth was instrumental in creating the nut roll bake along with her sister, Dorothy, as well as many of the other activities that the Myrrh Bearers conduct every year. May her memory be eternal.

**MBAS HOLIDAY THANK YOU** The Myrrh Bearers Altar Society would like to thank everyone who supported our holiday fund-raising by purchasing nut rolls, items from the bake sale, or tickets for the prize drawing. This year the funds raised from the prize drawing will support the St. Olga reliquary fund. The funds from the nut roll bake and bake sale are used for various purposes throughout the year including the purchase of new cloths for the altar.

**MISSION TRIP** Steve Doerksen is seeking to organize a mission trip to Kodiak Island in Alaska for the last week of July. If you wish to attend please see Steve or Fr. Mikel.

**HOLY SUPPER THANK YOU** The Myrrh Bearers would like to thank all of the volunteers who helped in various fashions for the Holy Supper held on December 24. From assistance with setup, cleanup, bringing a dish, or donating towards the dinner, your help and support made the dinner a wonderful celebration and success.

**THANK YOU** to everyone who made our 2024 celebration of the Nativity of Christ another joy-filled, beautiful, inspiring, and spiritually-rewarding celebration. We are truly blessed! The Divine Services, Holy Supper, music, flowers, decorations, food, etc., were all wonderfully arranged and a sign of our parish community's love of God and of neighbor. Blessings to everyone!

**PROJECT MEXICO** Collections for Project Mexico are on the 1st Sunday of the month. The next collection will be on January 5th.

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** The annual parish meeting will be held on Sunday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, following the Divine Liturgy. There will be a potluck luncheon at coffee hour followed by the meeting.

**CROSS ROAD INSTITUTE** is now taking applications for 2025. This is a 10 day Institute for Junior and Senior High School students. There are 2 posters in the church hall to read, or you can go on-line at <https://crossroadinstitute.org/>. The deadline for applications is January 21<sup>st</sup> for priority, and February 18<sup>th</sup> for regular. Financial aid is available.

**FOCA TAILGATE PARTY** February 9th is Super Bowl Sunday and FOCA will be having their tailgate party, which was postponed in October.

**STEWARDSHIP/PLEDGES/BUDGET** You will be receiving your 2024 Statement of Contributions shortly for your tax purposes. It's also time to start thinking about your pledge for 2025. Please be generous when filling out your 2025 Pledge Form and return it by or at the Annual Meeting, January 26, 2025. If you have any questions, please see David Homyak.

**CHURCH CALENDARS** We are grateful to Nick Enoch and John Blischak for their generosity in continuing to provide our parish with complimentary church calendars! Thank you!

**BOOKSTORE** Travel size Holy Water bottles are available for Theophany. \$2 for small, \$4 for large.

We have fully restocked in icons! Most of the icons are from St. John the Baptist Monastery here in Phoenix, so purchasing an icon from us supports them as well. Prices range from \$10 to \$60. We also have lovely candles to light in your icon corner for \$5. They will last 5-6 days if burned continually.

Lastly, we now have a beautiful selection of children's books, including three graphic novels, perfect for the older child in your life.

**MATUSHKA OLGA'S CANONIZATION AND FEAST DAY** Meeting in its regular Fall Session under the presidency of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America made several decisions related to the upcoming canonization of Matushka Olga.

The Holy Synod has decided that Matushka Olga's liturgical glorification will take place at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Kwethluk, AK, with the Vigil and Glorification taking place on the evening of Thursday, June 19, 2025. Divine Liturgy will be celebrated in Kwethluk on Friday, June 20, 2025.

Celebrations of the glorification will continue with services at St. Innocent Cathedral in Anchorage for the Sunday of All Saints of North America, Saturday, June 21 - Sunday, June 22. Finally, a capstone celebration will take place of the 21st All-American Council in Phoenix, AZ, on July 16 - 17, 2025.

Additionally, the Holy Synod has clarified and confirmed that Matushka Olga's feast day will henceforth be celebrated annually on October 27 (Revised Julian; Julian October 27 / November 9), with the first celebration taking place in temples of the Orthodox Church in America on October 26 - 27, 2025.

# January 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><i>Welcome</i> all visitors to SS Peter &amp; Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center, behind the church, for our Fellowship Hour.</p>			<p><b>1</b> Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>2</b> Repose of St. Seraphim of Sarov</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>6:00pm Matins</p>	<p><b>4</b> Synaxis of the 70 Apostles 10:00am Baptism 5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>5</b> Eve of Theophany 8:00am Royal Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Water</i> 12:00pm Vespers <b>NO CHURCH SCHOOL FOCA MEETING</b></p>	<p><b>6 THEOPHANY</b> 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy 12:00pm Blessing of Waters at Tempe Town Lake</p>	<p><b>7</b> Synaxis of St. John the Baptist</p>	<p><b>THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS</b> Please speak with Fr Mikel to arrange to have your house blessed.</p>		<p><b>10</b> Ven. Gregory of Nyssa</p>	<p><b>11</b> Sat. after Theophany Ven. Theodosius the Great 5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>12</b> Akathist &amp; Milk-Giver Icons 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Panikhida-Elizabeth Michel</i> <b>CHURCH SCHOOL 40<sup>TH</sup> DAY LUNCHEON - ELIZABETH MICHEL</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b> Leavetaking of Theophany 6:00pm Church Council Meeting</p>	<p><b>15</b> 6:00pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>16</b> 6:00pm Vespers</p>	<p><b>17</b> St. Anthony the Great 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>18</b> 5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>19</b> Ven Macarius the Great of Egypt 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>CHURCH SCHOOL MBAS MEETING</b></p>	<p><b>20</b> Ven. Euthymius The Great</p>	<p><b>21</b> Ven Maximus the Confessor</p>	<p><b>22</b> Apostle Timothy of the 70 6:00pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>ANNUAL PARISH MEETING</b> The annual parish meeting will be held on Sunday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, following the Divine Liturgy.</p>		<p><b>25</b> St. Gregory the Theologian 5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>26</b> New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>NO CHURCH SCHOOL ANNUAL MEETING POTLUCK LUNCHEON</b></p>	<p><b>27</b> Translation of the Relics of St. John Chrysostom</p>	<p><b>28</b> Venerable Ephraim the Syrian St. Isaac of Syria</p>	<p><b>29</b> Relics Hieromartyr Ignatius of Antioch 5:00 Vespers 6:00pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>30</b> Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>31</b> Holy Wonderworkers &amp; Unmercenarys Cyrus &amp; John</p>	<p><b>1</b> Forefeast of the Meeting 5:00pm Vespers</p>
<p><b>2</b> Meeting of the LORD in the Temple Zaccheus Sunday 8:40am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Candles</i></p>	<p><b>3</b> Righteous Simeon Anna the Prophetess</p>	<p><b>NATIVITY CARD UPDATE</b> Thanks to your generous support, the parish Nativity card raised \$1,335 for the St. Macarius Monastery Building Fund to date.</p>				<p><b>8</b> 5:00pm Vespers</p>
			<p>6:00pm Bible Study</p>			