



THE PARISH PRESS

St. Philip Orthodox Church

BABY STEPS TO BIBLICAL LITERACY - 1-2-3 MACCABEES

NEWS ~ N ~ NOTES

HOME BLESSINGS

A couple more weeks remain! Sign up in the narthex.

PHOTO DIRECTORY

We take photos for our upcoming photo directory on Feb 8 & 15. Sign up in the narthex, or send a family photo to apostlephilip@gmail.com.



From the Missions and Evangelism Team:

HOME BIBLE STUDY

Please consider hosting a home Bible study. If you are interested speak with Fr. Noah for a blessing and guidance and resources. A good beginning: The Psalms, a New Testament book, or even an important topic. Vince Ciraolo says, "Don't rush but please prayerfully consider this as an opportunity of a lifetime. What I mean by this is that your life will never be the same."

MOBILE LIBRARY

This month, the mobile library, located in the narthex, includes cookbooks. Check one out to get some new ideas for Great Lent!

GIVING UPDATES

MONTHLY OUTREACH COLLECTION: Thanks to all for your generosity to the needy of our community! For February, we are collecting paper products.

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD COLLECTION: We continue to collect non-perishables of all kinds for the food pantries as well.

NEWSPAPERS: Salfid Rescue Kennel, our neighbor on Clearview Road, is always in need of old newspapers. Look for the box in the narthex.



MAY GOD BLESS ALL OUR FAITHFUL GIVERS!

A Message from Fr Noah

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am reading through the Bible again this year and really enjoying and benefiting from my rereading of Exodus. On Mount Sinai Moses received the Ten Commandments and many other societal and liturgical rules for God's newly freed people. In commanding the keeping of the three yearly feasts of Unleavened Bread, Harvest, and Ingathering, God says: "none shall appear before me empty" (Ex 23:15). What does it mean to appear to God empty? First, the literal meaning here, is that the people must bring gifts with them as a thank-offering. Besides the practical necessity of supporting the tabernacle, this has the pedagogical purpose of reminding the people that everything in their new life in the land is a gift from God.



By God's providence, and the heroism of the righteous throughout the ages, this command is given to us, as well. We shall not appear before God in worship empty. What does this mean for us? We must support the church with a portion of our earnings and we must make special offerings (wine, holy bread, candles, flowers, memorial wheat) as appropriate. Above the literal dimension there is also the spiritual meaning. We should not stand in prayer with empty, cold hearts but be overflowing with love and thanksgiving for all of God's bounties. We must also appear with the fruits of repentance. As God has saved us and is calling us to deeper communion with Him, He will be faithful to repay us. This is his promise in Malachi 3:10: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven!"

May God help us to be rich in good works from our thankful hearts!

Grateful for God's richness to us and faithfulness to us in the Church, I remain, Your Servant in Christ,

+ Fr. Noah

Mark Your Calendar:

Creative Arts Workshop
Sunday, February 8, 2-5 p.m.

Soul Saturday - February 14
Divine Liturgy 10 a.m.

Missionary Visit
Saturday, February 14
following Vespers
Dr. William Black, OCMC missionary candidate to Kenya

Upcoming Dates:
Publican & Pharisee: February 1
Prodigal Son: February 8
Meatfare/Last Judgment: February 15
Cheesefare/Forgiveness: February 22
Forgiveness Vespers 1 p.m.

Lenten Retreat
Saturday, March 7
Fr. Josiah Trenham

Teen Retreat
Saturday, March 14
Marek & Allison Simon

Annunciation
Tuesday, March 24
6 p.m. Matins
7 p.m. Vespers & Artoklasia
Wednesday, March 2
7 p.m. Divine Liturgy

Pascha - April 12, 2015

Honoring Fr Boniface & Kh Joyce
Tuesday, May 19

Parish Life Conference
July 1-5, 2015
Hauppauge, NY
www.stjohnorthodoxchurch.com

Did You Know?

- Michael & Marcia Ibrahim recently visited Germany, Austria, Slovenia, and Hungary. They visited the oldest church in Hungary, which is Orthodox!
- St Philip's Youth Choir rehearsals are scheduled for 5 pm on Saturdays, February 7 through March 14.
- Scholarships are available for youth who want to attend Antiochian Village Camp this summer; see Fr Noah. Donors are needed to maintain this fund and support the growth of our youth in the Orthodox Faith.
- Coffee hour is a vital ministry of hospitality. Please help us keep this tradition of fellowship strong in our parish. Remember, it doesn't have to be a meal; just a refreshing snack is sufficient.
- Today can be a blessing if you allow God's love to shine through you!
- The kingdom of heaven is not a reward for works, but a gift of grace prepared by the Master for His faithful servants. Are you a faithful servant?
- There are new families at St. Philip's! Do you know their names? Do they know yours? Do they know your smile?
- You can bring someone back to church. Open the directory, say a prayer, and give them a call. This holy season is a great time to help someone reconcile with God!
- Great Vespers is a beautiful, peaceful service that prepares our hearts for the Divine Liturgy through its theologically rich hymns. It is a great service to bring someone to for the first time.
 - We have a Sunshine List so that we can send cards, pray, and visit our shut-ins. Pick one up on the free literature table.
- We live from Pascha to Pascha – April 12th, 2015.



OUR SYMPATHY IN CHRIST

 is offered to the extended Morrash family upon the passing of Jack's mother, Sylvia. Services were held at St Mary Church in Wilkes-Barre on January 6.

MAY HER MEMORY BE ETERNAL!

Baby Steps to Biblical Literacy: Old Testament 1-2-3 Maccabees

These books are not in the shorter Hebrew Bible that the protestants have published in the last several hundred years, though they were included, along with the rest of the Deuterocanonical Books, in the initial printing of the King James Version. The exiles are back in their homes, the temple has been rebuilt, but there is great pressure from warring empires (the Greeks, the Syrians, and eventually Romans) to assimilate. Because of the warfare, this is a very difficult set of books to read – macabre, indeed! – but very important in understanding the Judaism preceding Christ's coming as well as the wisdom, diplomacy, and intensity needed in the struggle to stay faithful to God.



We are continuing to read the Old Testament for understanding and application. As you read through these books of the Bible try to understand the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of the following people and events in the books and then apply it to your life.

What is the significance of these people and events?

Antiochus Epiphanes; Mattathias; Judas Maccabeus and prayer for the fallen; Demetrius I; Jonathan; Jason; Simon; Solomonia and her Seven Sons; Ptolemy; Eleazar's prayer and deliverance.



Challenge for 2015: Build Up the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4)

How can you help?

We are living stones, being built together into a living temple. Strengthen your prayer life and your relationships; this strengthens the Church.

Ask Abouna

Previous Question: I want to forgive, but I can't!

Answer: Forgiveness, a most essential aspect of our life in Christ, is also perhaps the most elusive. Why is this? Because we are self-centered rather than God-centered. Forgiveness grows out of the soil of repentance. So forgiveness starts with repentance and ends with humility. Repenting, changing our hearts, we say to God: "forgive me for my lack of forgiveness;" forgive the person who hurt me: "forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." "Lord, I need your help to forgive!" When we come to humility, we come to forgiveness in full. When we see ourselves, and each other, as God's children and command all our lives to Him, then we can move beyond the pain and into the healing of God's presence. Finally, forgiveness and humility go hand in hand in allowing God to be God instead of putting ourselves in His place as judge, jury, and executioner. If a person gave you a cup of poison what would you do with it? Hang on to it to sip from it now and then? No! You'd dispose of it as quickly and as carefully as possible. Thus is forgiveness.

New Question: How should I answer if someone asks what makes us Orthodox Christians?



Practical Wisdom From the Saints

Do not ask for love from your neighbor, for if you ask and he does not respond, you will be troubled. Instead, show your love for your neighbor and you will be at rest, and so will bring your neighbor to love.

- St. Dorotheus of Gaza

Let us not grieve when we make a slip, but when we become hardened by it.

- St. Isaac the Syrian

The ignorance of Scripture is a great cliff and a deep abyss; to know nothing of the divine laws is a great betrayal of salvation.

- St. John Chrysostom