



## THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER VOL. 2 AUGUST 2011

### ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

WELCOME to the second issue of "Remembering the Legacy, Raising the Foundation". This Newsletter is intended to keep you apprised of the exciting events, progress and more during this historic time in the life of St. John the Divine. While our entire Church family begins planning and raising money to build God's home and a facility that will suit our growing needs, it is our hope that you will utilize this newsletter as a medium to educate you and your family with the progress of the Capital Campaign. We welcome your comments, thoughts and any suggestions you have for future issues.

## THE LEGACY CONTINUES

### AN HISTORICAL EVENT MARKED THE OFFICIAL KICK-OFF OF THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The pews were packed with parishioners and the choir loft was filled with angelic voices as the Priests of St. John the Divine celebrated the Divine Liturgy with a full house on May 22, 2011. This much anticipated event marked the official kick off of the capital campaign to raise money for the new Church and Family Life Center on Beach Boulevard.

As the Liturgy concluded, children of the parish walked down the center aisles holding in their hands what appeared to be hand painted pieces of wood. Maria Chrissovergis, choir director and member of the Capital Campaign committee, delivered a message to the congregation. As she spoke to her Church family she explained to them,

*"My beloved Church family – there is no coincidence with God. There is no coincidence that you all sit here today...with your families facing a choice of whether or not to support building God's new home in Jacksonville, Florida. God has a plan and there is no coincidence that He is calling all of us to be a part of it."*

*"It will take every single one of us to play an integral part in making this vision...God's plan...become a reality. It will take all of the pieces of the puzzle – every Church family member here – to build His home at 12860 Beach Boulevard."*

Chrissovergis shared that each member of St. John the Divine is an equally important part of the puzzle – no one more important than the other. At that time, those sitting in the pews were instructed to sign their names on the back of the puzzle pieces the children passed out marking a moment in the history of our Church. With every signed name, young and old, this will forever be a part of the Church's legacy. With great anticipation and pride, nearly 350 members of St. John the Divine signed their names marking their commitment to God and to His calling. One by one, the children presented the puzzle pieces to Father Nicholas, Father Milton and Father Constantine to be blessed at the altar. While the colors of the paint on the wood

were beautiful and vibrant, it was still a mystery to the parishioners what the image on the puzzle pieces created.



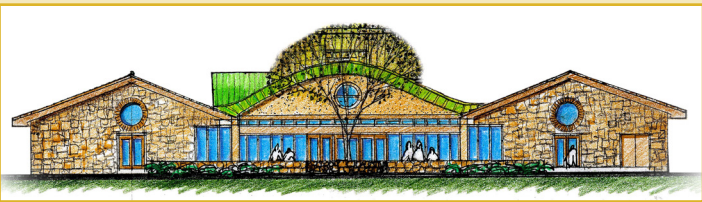
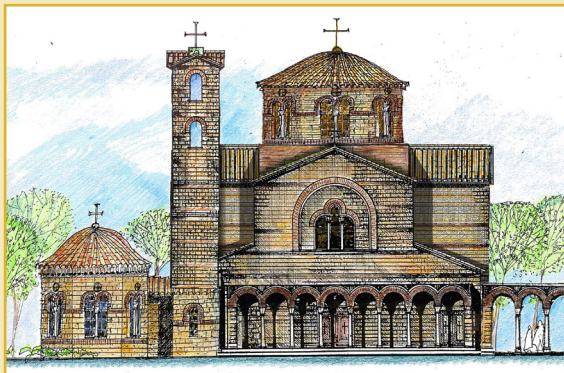
The event continued downstairs in the Church social hall as hundreds gathered in fellowship for lunch to celebrate the event. Church members watched a video documenting the history of St. John the Divine and the exciting emotions and encouraging words of many Church members who are greatly anticipating the building of our new Church home. "This last meeting the Building Committee talked about the plans they've done and then we saw the beautiful pictures of the new Church on the big screen. Honest to God, something happened inside of me and I know it was God! I know because I've been so against the building project and now I can't wait. I think it's going to be beautiful," said Stella Cakmis. Others on the video remarked on the need for a newer and larger facility for our Church ministries to continue to flourish, "We're bursting at the seams. There's no doubt about that. I think that's a true testament to the warmth of this community and of our Priests who do such a fantastic job of making people feel comfortable. We're outgrowing this building," said Dr. Stratis Lagoutaris. Lagoutaris' 10 year old son, Demetri, was even documented on the video sharing his desire for a new Church home, "Some people have to sit downstairs in the Church hall and that's why we have the screen downstairs. When we get enough money to build a new Church everyone could sit upstairs and we'll have a bigger altar so more altar boys can come."

Just as the theme of the day spoke to the need for every piece – or Church member – of the puzzle to come together, at the conclusion of the event the hand painted wooden puzzle pieces were put together and presented by Father Nicholas and Father Milton. The crowd gasped and applauded as the Priests lit a candle and removed the black velvet drape to reveal a stunning icon of St. John the Divine, prayerfully created and painted by Dr. William Cakmis. The event proved the desire and the belief that this Church family can come together to build the vision

God has put before us. The pieces of the puzzle are coming together!

Written By Maria Chrissovergis

# OUR FUTURE HOME



(top) - Future home of St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church  
(bottom) - Family Life Center



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Contributing Editors: Jeff Brumley and Maria Chrissovergis  
Design by: Effie Quintana

## A LEGACY OF GIVING – LIVING BY EXAMPLE A TESTIMONY OF GIVING



A family tradition of giving, coupled with a deep sense of gratitude for St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church has inspired one parishioner to give from the heart to the ongoing Capital Campaign. "I will always make room for the Church, and if ever there is a call for something, I will give," choir member Augusta Rodely said.

Rodely's enthusiasm for "Remembering the Legacy, Raising the Foundation" Capital Campaign to build a new Church and Family Life Center stems partly from an ingrained sense of charity, and from fond memories of how the parish embraced her after she lost everything to Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

"We were always giving people," Rodely said of her family. A perfect example occurred a few years ago when her then 3-year-old granddaughter, Kristi Porter, was informed of another little girl living in poverty and who would be getting no gifts for Christmas. Kristi immediately set about going through her toys and pretty soon had set aside most of them for the girl, the granddaughter of a client of a state agency for whom Rodely worked as a paralegal.

"She donated things she was playing with at the time and said to her mom, Oh mommy, I want her to have nice toys, too." The 3-year-old even gave explicit instructions to her Mother of which toy was her favorite and asked that the young girl play with it often since Kristi played with it often.

Rodely said the desire to give wasn't an unexpected reaction from Kristi. "She got it from all of us. Her mom is like that, too."

Rodely said she found the people of St. John the Divine to be givers, as well. That discovery came when she relocated to Jacksonville shortly after Hurricane Andrew flattened her Miami home and destroyed most of her belongings.

"I am going to start crying just thinking about it," she said of her very first visit to the parish. "The love that I felt that day when they found out I had lost my home was incredible." Just as Rodely was given an opportunity to rebuild a new home and a new life here in Jacksonville after experiencing such devastation from the hurricane she knew helping to build God's home was the right move.

That memory makes giving to the Capital Campaign a joyful act, even for someone who is retired and on a fixed income, she said. "There are things I make room for in my budget, and I make room for that."

## DOING GOD'S WORK MEET THE AMBASSADORS OF THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing His work." John 4:34

While each of us is called to do God's work, there are those who respond with great mercy to perform a task often viewed as difficult and even uncomfortable. It is never easy to sit across from a friend, family member or even a stranger to discuss the topic of "money", especially in these stressful economic times. The Ambassadors are not solicitors, rather they are Christ's Ambassadors imparting information about St John the Divine's future facilities, inspiring their fellow parishioners to join them in building up the faith in the Jacksonville area to continue to spread the good news of Our Lord.

Indeed, the Capital Campaign Ambassador meetings are truly more about our walk with Christ than about dollars and cents. The Ambassadors who have signed up to meet with their Church family members have volunteered their time to assist parishioners in gaining a better understanding of the building project, answer questions, clear up misconceptions and share their testimonies of faith. The meetings are highly confidential, begin with prayer and conclude with a private acknowledgment, through the form of a pledge card, of one's commitment to building God's home. Upon deciding their commitment, the parishioner will place their Pledge Card in the envelope provided and return it to the Church with strict confidentiality.

While many have initially shared their hesitancy to meet with an Ambassador, afterwards, the response to the Ambassador meetings has been overwhelmingly positive. "I didn't know what to expect and was initially very uncomfortable. I'm a private person and this seemed like it was going to be intrusive. But it was truly a very pleasant experience for Tom and me," shared Staci Spanos Gibson.

The following Ambassadors are anxious to meet with you to share the latest information on the campaign and hopefully encourage you to share your gifts by making a financial commitment to the campaign. Please feel free to contact these individuals directly or call the Church office (904) 396-5383 extension 10

<i>Father Nicholas</i>	<i>Mike Koloniotis</i>
<i>Father Milton</i>	<i>Karen Koloniotis</i>
<i>Anthony Megas</i>	<i>Kathie Tsataros</i>
<i>Farley Grainger</i>	<i>Tee Pappas</i>
<i>Mike Antonopoulos</i>	<i>Athena Mann</i>
<i>Sandy Antonopoulos</i>	<i>Steve Bacalis</i>
<i>Bill Toundas</i>	<i>Maria Chrissovergis</i>

If you would like to serve as an Ambassador for the Capital Campaign, we encourage you to contact Athena Mann at (904)563-1786 or Maria Chrissovergis (904)762-4573.

## MEETING WITH FATHER CONSTANTINE: IT'S AS ENJOYABLE AS EATING A PERFECTLY MADE GYRO



As the child of Greek immigrants, having a meeting with someone to talk about giving money is akin to eating a gyros without the meat. It's not that pleasurable of a proposition.

Now, having a meeting with a Priest to talk about giving money is like eating that gyros, without the pita! Very difficult to do, slightly uncomfortable and potentially very messy. Or so I thought.

When my husband proposed to me that we meet with Father Constantine Zozos to discuss what type of financial donation we could make to our beloved Church's building fund, all sorts of questions raced through my mind: would he ask intrusive questions? Would he berate us if we told him we could only donate at a certain level? Why, oh why, did my husband get us involved in this uncomfortable situation?

God has a way of putting people in our lives to make us grow spiritually and emotionally. My husband is one of those people for me. We had many discussions where he reminded me of the importance of the Church in our lives. He experienced his first Greek Easter there, that special, beautiful service. We got married in our Church and we baptized our two beautiful children there. And one day we hoped to see them get married there as well. Tom pointedly reminded me that if we didn't step up, if no one donated to create a Church to fit our future needs, those dreams would be dashed.

I agreed with everything he said, and decided to meet with Father Zozos. Please believe me when I tell you that there was nothing to fear. He was a gentleman and got us to appreciate the role we could play in the future of St. John the Divine. He also made it clear to us that he understands that some are not able to give as much as others, and he is respectful of that.

Look, most of us will never feel comfortable being asked in a face-to-face meeting to donate money. But I ask you, what does our Church mean to you? Is it there for you to celebrate your joys? Is it there for you when you're in pain, or when, God forbid, someone in your family passes? If it's important to you, I urge you to do what you can to donate to the building fund. We're not doing it so we can have a shiny new building; we're doing it to ensure our community continues to grow physically and spiritually for the sake of all of our children and grandchildren.

Written By Staci Spanos Gibson

CAMPAIGN PROGRESS

Our vision is even closer to becoming a reality! Through the prayers of the faithful of our parish and the generous donations made to see God's home built on Beach Boulevard, the Capital Campaign Committee along with Father Nicholas, Father Milton and Father Constantine are excited to report we have received pledges from more than 80 families/individuals. We are only in the 5th month of our Capital Campaign, which means we have many more families to visit. With the commitments we have received, we are now over half way towards reaching our \$5 million goal in support of our vision of building a new Church and Family Life Center on our beautiful Beach Boulevard 20-acre property.

We want and need everyone in our community to become a part of our vision by supporting the St. John the Divine Capital Campaign. The Capital Campaign Committee continues its process of personally contacting everyone in our community to communicate information about the project, to answer questions and to discuss your financial commitment to the building project. We encourage you to contact one of the Campaign Ambassadors so that you can also contribute and participate in this exciting and historical event in the life of St. John the Divine.

No one pledge is more important than the other and our Lord teaches us to be a cheerful giver. While He has provided so much for each of us, we are elated to see the initial generosity of those who have pledged and are encouraged about the continued progress of the Capital Campaign. Those seeking to offer an extraordinary gift (in the range of \$50,000 and above) for a particular area, space or room within the new Family Life Center or Sanctuary will be uniquely recognized. Per the donor's choice, each room selected will be given the name of a Saint, and where appropriate the Saint's icon will be displayed in a niche, with a vigil light. No rooms or space will be named after the donor.

Those selecting Donor Opportunities will be recognized on a plaque set aside within the Family Life Center. Their name, the space selected and the names of those the donation is dedicated for i.e. in honor or in remembrance will be included on the plaque. Contact Athena Mann mannathome@gmail.com or (904) 563-1786 or Steve Bacalis stevebacalis@tomnehl.com or (904) 703-1227 of the Capital Campaign Committee if you are interested in a donor opportunity.

Everyone who calls St. John the Divine their sacred space and spiritual home will be asked to contribute... each according to their ability and capacity. We realize that not everyone is able to participate in a "Donor Opportunity." By no means do we want to convey that this meaningful and important project is restricted to the capabilities of a few. Thus, all contributions will be recognized in a meaningful way.

AN UPDATE FROM YOUR BUILDING COMMITTEE

Your Millennium Building Committee continues to work diligently on the design of the new Church and Family Life Center to be located on our 20-acre property on Beach Boulevard. Our Byzantine Crucifix-form Church will be designed to meet the demands of our growing Community by providing a large sanctuary and a Family Life Center that will provide administrative spaces, kitchen, classrooms, a museum, multi-purpose space in addition to a banquet and coffee area. The Building Committee is collaborating with our architect, Steve Papadatos, in reviewing conceptual drawings of the Church and preliminary drawings of the Family Life Center.

Our new Church home will continue to build upon the sure foundations that have been previously built and allow us to create new ministries, new programs, new opportunities that aim to bring people closer to Christ and to each other. Our goal is to build a Church home that will work towards fulfilling the mandate from Christ when He said, "go forth to ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The Building Committee is working to ensure that our physical buildings are designed to accommodate all of these Church ministries and programs. They are reviewing preliminary layouts of the rooms within the Family Life Center to ensure efficient and cost-effective use of space. In addition, an evaluation and refinement of the location of the Family Life Center on the property relative to the Church is being conducted. Work also continues on addressing the location of parking and access to the buildings.



THANK YOU  
TO OUR DONORS  
TO DATE

Rev. Dr. Nicholas & Presbyteria Dr. Roxanne Louh  
Rev. Dr. Milton & Presbyteria Helen Magos

Anonymous  
Kathy Abraham  
Paul & Gee Gee Angelopoulos  
Mike & Sandy Antonopoulos

Danny & Caryn Assi  
Angela Assimenios  
Tony & Roxanne Attanasio  
Steve & Peggy Bacalis  
George & Marcy Ballis  
Gino Bertoni  
Louis & Elaine Bouchelle  
Boy Scout Troop 850  
Jeff Brumley  
Tom & Stephanie Burt  
Dr. Bill & Stella Cakmis  
Kay Carantzas

Maria Carantzas  
Dr. Perry & Sharon Carlos  
Jim & Rula Carr  
Milton & Maria Chrissovergis  
Mary-Virginia Christakos  
Alexis Clay  
Peter & Lois Dalmares  
Michael & Eleni Derke  
Bill & Joanne Ferguson  
Nick & Maria Furris  
Sophia Galafianakis  
Tom & Staci Gibson

Farley & Tina Grainger  
Demetrios & Melody Herr  
Deno Hicks  
Anthony & Katherine Hicks  
Anthony & Kathy Hicks  
Philip & Angela Howort  
Dr. Kyriakos & Nadia Ioannides  
Paul Kaloyeropoulos  
Demetrios & Demetra Kartsonis  
Tommy & Christina Kartsonis  
Ted & Froulie Kavalieros  
Ken & Merrie Kazia

REFLECT- EVALUATE- IMAGINE  
BY NICHOLAS J. FURRIS,  
CHAIRMAN-MILLENNIUM BUILDING COMMITTEE



Every once in a while, it is good to take the time to reflect and evaluate. I believe this is healthy and gives proper perspective. We are encouraged to do this personally, corporately and yes, spiritually. An inventory of sorts. Asking oneself why it is that I (we) are doing what we are doing and either continuing or correcting the path.

So in preparing to share this article with you, I took a step back and in re-evaluating asked myself, "Why are we building a new Church and Family Life Center?" Regardless of how beautiful the design is or how hard both our Building Committee and Capital Campaign Committee are working, I thought it was important for me to answer the question, honestly evaluate and then come to an honest conclusion. So I took about a week to think on this question and came to the following conclusions.

I think the simple answer is obvious to all of the faithful of St. John the Divine. We are doing this as a community to honor and magnify our Great God through our labors. We are building His Home. In doing so, we humbly pray that the blessings from above will shower down upon us in the form of ministries, outreach and our greatest mandate; the boldness and willingness to share and offer not only the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people but the message of Orthodoxy!

Yet on a more practical level, why are we building? And in doing so, how will this new Home affect me and my family? How will it affect my personal as well as my spiritual family? Why would (I) we take on such a monumental task? Do I (we) really need this?

In this week long re-evaluation, I finally took the time to come into my office very early one morning and sit at the computer in silence. I found myself closing my eyes and simply imagining. I imagined a Byzantine style Church that would be an architectural landmark for all of Jacksonville. More importantly, I imagined a larger space that would allow many more to worship with us during the week and of course for Sunday Divine Liturgy. I saw iconography that would inspire and continue to lift us towards the heavens and I saw my two sons married with their families (my grandchildren) looking up to see the Pantocrator blessing them! And I imagined those I knew but so many more that I do not yet know coming worshiping with us, those who came to know Orthodoxy. Those images

are, I guess, the obvious. But I also imagined buses and vans filled with curious people coming to our Church throughout the month to take a guided tour where they were introduced to Orthodoxy through our architecture and the words of our beloved Priests who welcomed them with open arms.

I imagined a Family Life Center that was in fact full of life! An educational space for our youth with proper resources enabling them to accomplish their research or homework. A social area that would be just that: a place for our faithful to come together and be with one another. Filled classrooms that would accommodate and fill our center with the sounds of tomorrow. A banquet facility that could accommodate a small baptism reception or a large wedding reception yet not be mutually exclusive to our own faithful but to the outside community as well. All of our current ministries growing beyond where they are today because the resources are now available! I imagined other Church denominations coming and visiting us in worship and youth activities as the space would now be adequate. Dare I imagine a pre-school? Dare I imagine my grandson or granddaughter at that school? Yes, I do. Dare I imagine various lecture series attended by hundreds from throughout the city and even the country hosted by our community? Yes, I did with guest lecturers from around the world! Dare I imagine Bible Study sessions that are attended by hundreds of people weekly led by our Priests and even our faithful? I do, as our voice and invitation had been heard throughout the City of Jacksonville through our internet, Facebook, Google+, broadcast television, radio ministries and electronic billboards! WOW!

And finally, I imagined the day that the doors would be knocked upon and the ribbon will be cut and all the difficulties to achieve this dream would vanish in thin air! I imagined the tears of joy during the Theranixia Service and the dance of thanksgiving in the banquet center...all for the Glory of God. And yes, the blessings were showered upon us all!

I pray you all take a step back, reflect and imagine. Ask yourself the tough questions. Find your answers and if what you too imagine fits, then join us in our efforts. I believe it will and with that, no correction needs to be made except to work even harder to make these imaginary images, reality.

In this month when we honor and magnify our most blessed Theotokos, I pray She intercedes to her heavenly Son to bless us all and continue to give us strength and wisdom.

Mike & Karen Koloniotis  
Dr. Stratis & Jeanne Lagoutaris  
George & Violette Louh  
George & Patti Maillis  
Gem & Athena Mann  
Anthony & Michele Megas  
Georgia Megas  
Marko & Julie Milich  
Bill & Joan Milonas  
Tony & Tanya Palatsidis  
Nick & Beverly Pappas  
+ George Pappas

Paul & Jennie Pappas  
Dr. Peter & Mary Pappas  
John & Lisa Pappas  
Bill & Maria Pappas  
Ted & Mary Lee Pappas  
Tee Pappas  
George & Pat Parandes  
Maria Parandes  
George & Fotini Paspalaris  
Eurydice Petrou  
Phil & Stephanie Petty  
+ James Pihos

John & Dena Pirkey  
Lewis & Rose Marie Preddy  
+ Emanuel Pringhipakis  
Peter & Susan Podes  
+ Steven Poulos  
Dr. Ken & Dr. Barbara Rappaport  
Susan Rizk  
Mary Roman  
Spero & Freddie Saxon  
Theodora Skarlis  
Gerald & Elina Springstead  
Jean Stratford

+ John & Metaxia Stathis  
George & Christine Stavros  
John & Theresa Stavros  
Dean & Michele Stoumbelis  
+ Rhoda Thliveros  
John & Michelle Tiliakos  
Nicholas Tiliakos  
Bill & Pam Toundas  
Michael Toundas  
Patricia Toundas  
Nick & Kathie Tsataros  
Nick & Cindy Tsengas

Mary Valis  
David & Catherine Wainer  
Dave & Evvie White  
Margaret Yeager  
Jim & Helen Yeatropoulos  
  
+ Of Blessed Memory  
  
List as of August 18, 2011

TEE IT UP, JACKSONVILLE!

The third annual St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, November 14, 2011 benefiting the Capital Campaign.

We will have a great day of golf staring at 11:00 am at the Marsh Landing Country Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. The event will include a 4-person scramble, boxed lunch, on course beverages and an awards reception following the golf. Player packages are \$175 per player and \$700 per foursome.

We'd like to make this year the best yet and your help can get it done! We are seeking golfers, sponsors and auction items for this event. Come join us, either with your clubs, or your support - or both – help us make our dream of a new worship center a reality!

For more information on golf packages, sponsorships, or to donate an item for the auction, please contact Christine Stavros at (904) 540-9431.



✠ “LEAVING A LEGACY” PLANNED GIVING SEMINARS  
COME LEARN MORE ABOUT PLANNED GIVING AND ESTATE PLANNING

Over the next year, The Capital Campaign Committee will be offering a series of seminars on Planned Giving and Estate Planning for our community. Ted Johnson, chair of the Planned Giving Subcommittee, and subcommittee member Rose Marie Preddy will be conducting the first seminar on September 20th at 11:30 am at the Senior’s Luncheon held in the Church Hall. Seminar topics will include probate, elder law, wills and trusts, guardianship for minors and the incapacitated, and a series on Planned Giving. Information to assist you in keeping abreast of changes in federal income, estate and gift tax laws will be provided. The seminars will also be designed to provide information and resources for those who want to consider including their Church in their estate planning process.

Planned Giving can be very rewarding, allowing you to see your gift at work while receiving tax benefits as well. Our Orthodox Christian legacies...will our last days be consistent with Orthodox teachings? What will we leave behind for our Children...for our Grandchildren...for our Church...? Do You Have a Plan?

Giving to the Church is an opportunity – an opportunity to examine our priorities and values. It is an opportunity to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in God's grace. Our gifts will provide for the needs of the Orthodox Church for generations to come. There is no more personal gift than one given through Estate Planning. We encourage each of you to attend these seminars as they are announced and come and see what we can do together with your support. For additional information contact Ted Johnson at [tntquincy@aol.com](mailto:tntquincy@aol.com).

THANK YOU!

“May the Lord reward you for your kindness...” Ruth1:8

St. John the Divine is tremendously blessed to have many talented and generous parishioners. Through the generosity of many of these faithful members, our church is able to save tremendous costs that otherwise would have consumed much needed funds.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Nick and Beverly Pappas for developing a software program specifically designed and customized for managing the Capital Campaign. This type of software program would have cost the parish thousands of dollars. May God bless you both for your generosity, time and commitment to God and to His work. May God grant you many years!

In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to Nick and Maria Furriss and Spectrum Films for their generousities in defraying the costs of many Capital Campaign communication materials.

SUMMIT FOR GOD

We the family of St. Iakovos, have within our grasp the ability to make a real difference and a genuine contribution to our Church community. Each of us will be asked to invest our thoughts and our dreams for the building of our thoughts for the building of our new spiritual home. We are on this earth but a very short time, yet we have been given an opportunity to leave a legacy for the generations to come. We can approach this project of building our Church from a business point of view, but I would ask you to look at it from a different aspect. Let's just for a moment pull the dreamer out from within ourselves in order to do this I am going to share some of my personal experiences with you, so that you can understand why dreaming is so vital to a person's being.

My mother was terminally ill my senior year of college, and although she died before my dreams became reality she provided me with valuable advice and a stunning example of strength and fortitude. She taught me at an early age that you can achieve whatever you want in life if you have faith in God and the desire is strong enough. To achieve, you must believe something and want something with all your might. Then you must be willing to commit yourself to a course. At the same time she taught me that you have to go through life living each and every day to the fullest.

Nine years ago I went on a heli-hiking trip in British Columbia, Canada. This is a trip where a helicopter takes you up to various peaks and ridges above the tree line and you are able to trek through the mountains without doing the grunt work in the valley. At the lunch break the guides brought harnesses and climbing shoes so that we could try some sport climbing. From that point on I was hooked. It was like an itch I had to scratch. Mountain climbing became my primary focus and I began to research the possibilities for a woman my age, with my lack of knowledge and experience didn't have as climbing a mountain. Then I realized that age and lack of experience didn't have as much to do with it as desire and commitment to my goal. Since that time I've climbed ten different mountains in five different countries and have summited seven of the ten. When I was asked to write this article for the newsletter I felt honored. I was trying to decide how to approach it and it dawned on me that mountain climbing and life's various challenges and goals parallel one another. When I set a goal for myself, whether it is a career goal or a physical challenge such as climbing a mountain, or building a Church with my fellow parishioners there are six standards that I have to live by...

Research the topic: While this may be the primary responsibility of the parish council, we still need to take a personal interest in this ourselves. We must think about what we, as individuals want our Church to look like. What is the architectural style? What facilities would we like to see built along with the Church? These are the types of questions that we would love to have answered by each and every parishioner. If you were building a home for yourself, wouldn't these all be valid issues that you would address? You are building a home for God...let's dream together and write our ideas down to be shared by all. Our Church will be special to all of us!

Preparation-mental, physical, and financial: As Zig Ziglar once said, “your attitude, not your aptitude will determine Your attitude.” Mental attitude often determines success or failure. We need to be positive, realistic, and honest with ourselves. There is a personal balance required of each of us. At this point in our preparation we are asking you to think out of the box for the moment. Tell us what you want to see built and we will determine the logistic and financial possibilities...but we want to hear what you want first.

Organization: We are depending on our council as our leaders to be organized, but we need to invest ourselves as well. We can look to them for guidance but we need to take the initiative, and if we are elected to various committees, grasp that responsibility seriously and in an organized fashion.

Stay focused: As Ed Viesturs, a world renowned climber stated, “The mental challenge for climbing is that you have to, in many cases, will yourself to keep moving, to take the next step and somehow enjoy that it is difficult. If you will yourself the focus...and get to the summit, then the feeling is amazing.” Think about celebrating the Divine Liturgy in our new Ecclesia for the very first time and then think about what you personally invested in the journey to achieve our summit...won't that feeling be incredibly awesome?

Determination and perseverance: “Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly.” (Robert F. Kennedy) We need to put ourselves out there. We have so much talent within our community that I have no doubt that the business and financial aspects of building our Church will all fall into place. What each and every one of us has to do is to put our whole heart into this project. This is a summit for God!”

Last but not least...Respect. Always have respect for your fellow human beings. We must respect one another's opinions and ideas, and know that we are all working toward a common goal. Above all, respect for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are building God's home...how exciting!

In closing I would like to say that the journey is the destination, so let us enjoy the process and work together as a team. Let each and every one of us contribute from our talents and our dreams. Take a pen and a piece of paper now and jot down your ideas and wishes and above all remember when you dream...shoot for the moon because even if you miss it, you will land among the stars.

What you are is God's gift to you, what you make of yourself is your gift to God. Let's put our whole selves into this and SUMMIT FOR GOD!

(This article was written by an Orthodox Christian from Indiana who attended a Church where the parish was 1/3 the size of St. John the Divine. She is an avid mountain climber who used her personal experiences to inspire her fellow parishioners during their building project.)

# OPAI!

## THE JACKSONVILLE GREEK FESTIVAL RETURNS TO THE RIVER CITY



After many years of taking a break from hosting our annual Greek Festival, the time has come for us to fire up the grills, open the tavernas, and put on our fustanellas to share our culture and our Greek Orthodox Faith with the First Coast. St. John the Divine is in the initial stages of planning the Greek Festival. Location, logistics and other details are all being discussed under the leadership of Milton Christosovergis, Festival Chair and his committee. While this is an enormous undertaking of the parish, we encourage everyone's cooperation and participation. Please feel free to contact Milton at mcjax1@yahoo.com if you are interested in serving on the Festival Committee.

The Festival will be an integral part of the financial plan for the new Church and Family Life Center. For this reason, we encourage everyone to share in our enthusiasm of bringing back one of the First Coast's finest festivals!

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