

THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER VOL. 1 MAY 2011



ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

WELCOME to the first 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.

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A MESSAGE FROM FR. NICHOLAS



Dear Beloved Church Family,
Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

It is with joy in my heart and peace in my soul that I write this letter on this, the Inaugural Newsletter, for our new spiritual home. For almost 95 years, our Church family has proudly been serving and ministering to the needs of the Orthodox faithful in the Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia area. Through the efforts of our first priest, Fr. Anthony Sarris and countless clergy and lay leaders over the years, we have sought to touch the lives of many, impacting our community and sharing our Orthodox Faith. It is through their efforts, that we stand today as a vibrant and dynamic community serving as a beacon of Orthodox Christianity.

And now, my beloved brothers and sisters, the torch has been given to us to hand down to the next generation. We now have been given the responsibility to live out their legacies in our everyday life. We now have the opportunity to remember their legacy, by "raising up a new foundation," (Isaiah 58:12) a foundation seeded in Jesus Christ and to take our community to an entirely new level. It is for this reason that I humbly ask you to commit to building a new spiritual home in Jacksonville, a home that will meet the growing demands of our vibrant community today as well as in the future. A home that will continue to build upon the sure foundation that has been previously built, but also to create new ministries, new programs, new opportunities that aim to bring people closer to Christ and to each other. We want 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." (Matt. 28:19). And yes, we realize that, like with any new endeavor, we will face struggles and challenges along the way, but the family of St. John the Divine knows that when we put our faith and trust in God, we will never be disappointed, that "we can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens us." (Philippians 4:13)

Friends, this is an exciting time in the life of our community and I encourage you to join us as we embark on this new chapter in our life. For Christ's new home to be successfully built here in Jacksonville, it will require first much prayer, but it also needs your love, support and participation. This will be a community effort and I know that the family of St. John the Divine is ready, able and willing to honor God by building up His Home in Jacksonville. Let's go for it!

Wishing you a blessed Paschal season, I remain

Yours in the Risen Christ,
Rev. Dr. Nicholas G. Louh, Priest

THE VISION

Honoring tradition and planning for the future are hallmarks of Orthodox Christianity. We are charged with observing a 2,000-year-old faith while avoiding complacency and embracing bold visions to meet the needs of future generations.

Fortunately, as Orthodox Christians we are blessed with many examples of how to live our faith in this bold way. The Apostles and the martyrs, the desert fathers and mothers, the Theotokos and Christ himself serve as our role models. Through sacred writings and icons, they remind us that courageous, generous and joyful service to God are the keys to embracing the challenges we face as individuals and as communities.

St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church has its own spiritual heroes and heritage to inspire and guide it: Visionary men and women who took brave steps in 1916 to establish an Orthodox parish in a city where none stood before. They saw a need, created a plan and took decisive action. The original charter captures this moment of truth. It calls for the commitment of time and money “to own, lease, mortgage or otherwise acquire lands” on which “to erect buildings and structures” that will enable the church “to exist in perpetuity.” Yet they never focused solely on their immediate needs and wants. When blessed with growth in numbers, they again sacrificed time, money and comfort to purchase, build and move again in 1968.

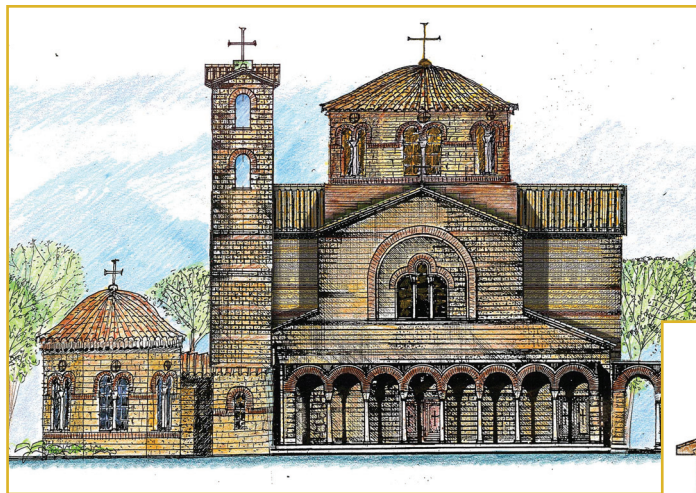
And again the congregation faces a challenge: How to meet its current needs and those of future generations of Orthodox Christians and their neighbors. With more than 350 families on the rolls, our makeshift Sunday school facilities are bursting at the seams and our Parish Hall is becoming uncomfortably crowded during banquets, luncheons and coffee hours. The sanctuary is increasingly overflowing and parking has become difficult if not hazardous at times. The parish currently boasts

20 active programs for Christians of all ages. Baptisms and Chrismations are steady as families grow and word spreads about the spiritual experience offered by Orthodoxy.

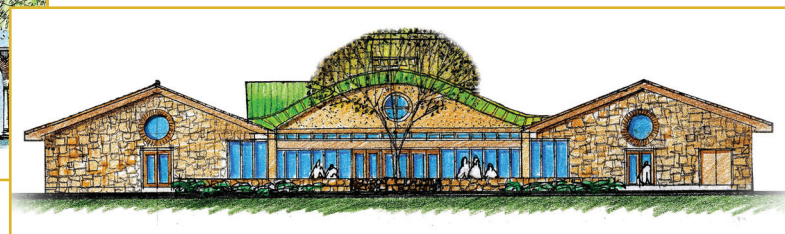
Fortunately, a vision and plan has been created to address these difficulties. Following the example set by our founders, a long range planning committee was formed and the parish purchased 20 acres on Beach Boulevard with the goal of eventual construction. The faithful have consistently directed lay leaders and clergy, in numerous parish assemblies, to engage architects and fundraisers, commission drawings and, in April 2011, to launch a Capital Campaign.

Architectural renderings of the proposed Church and Family Life Center have drawn gasps of amazement. While conceived to proceed in phases, the basilica-style structure is envisioned to reach almost 16,000 square feet. It will also include a smaller, more intimate chapel for smaller services and arrangements are being made to incorporate the parish’s current icons and altar into the design to connect past, present and future. The 20,000-square-foot Family Life Center will provide administrative spaces, kitchen, classrooms, multi-purpose space in addition to a Coffee Area and Atrium.

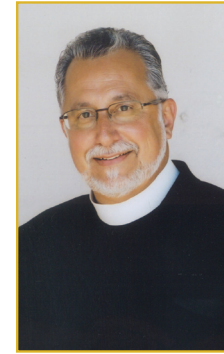
The plan is bold and requires hard work and generous giving on the part every member of St. John the Divine. The vision of our parish founders extended well beyond their immediate needs for worship, fellowship and religious education, and so must ours. They modeled for us a commitment to future generations that we must emulate. Determined actions by a few almost 100 years ago have made possible our faith and worship today. We are now called to follow St. John the Divine’s century-old vision: To act for those who follow us.



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



PARISH STEWARDSHIP DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS TO ASSIST THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN



Saint John the Divine has engaged Father Constantine A. Zozos of Parish Stewardship Development Consultants, to serve as its Capital Campaign consultant. He was initially retained to conduct a Feasibility Study for our parish. The goal of this Study was to determine the depth of support for the building project and how to best achieve our needs. He is currently helping our community with our Capital Campaign.

Father Constantine is a graduate of the Holy Cross School of Theology, where he completed his Master of Divinity in Theology. He also taught in the Boston Schools. In 1976, he became the associate priest at St Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles. In 1980, Father was appointed Proestamenos for the Saint Barbara Greek Church, Santa Barbara, Ca. He served in this post with distinction for over 22 years, until he became a full-time consultant to Archdiocesan parishes seeking to build and grow. His years of experience include Needs Assessments, Vision and Feasibility Studies, Stewardship Programs, Capital Campaigns, interior and ecclesiastical space designs and fundraising including consultation on Greek Festivals.

Having served the Archdiocese for over 35 years and elevated to the rank of Protopresbyter by His All Holiness Bartholomew the Ecumenical Patriarch; he brings with him a deep understanding of the interworking of a Greek Orthodox parish community and mindset which will prove

invaluable to the Campaign. As a parish priest in Santa Barbara, he spearheaded his own community’s Capital Campaign project by leading his parishioners through the building and financing of a major expansion project.

Father Constantine has established a working partnership with Father Nicholas, Father Milton and the parish lay leaders who are conducting St John the Divine’s Capital Campaign. Through the various Capital campaign committees, the lay leaders are working directly with Fr Constantine, in establishing strategy and policy of this Campaign.

Rooted in sound Orthodox Theology, Father Constantine has stated that, “giving back to God and taking part in Christ’s great commission to extend His Kingdom to the ends of the earth is a high priority task of the people of God. I believe we have assembled a team of faithful givers who have taken ownership of this project and are creating an image of God’s Kingdom being built here on earth”

His recent Campaigns have included parishes in New York, Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Missouri, as well as the St Photios National Shrine and Museum in St Augustine, Florida.

Father Nicholas, Father Milton, along with the Parish Council and the Capital Campaign Committee members, look forward in working with Father Constantine, whom we feel will relate well to our community, and assist us in achieving our goals.

MEET THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Father Nicholas, Father Milton, Steve Bacalis (co-chair), Athena Mann (co-chair), Sandy Antonopoulos, Danny Assi, Angela Assimenios, Dr. Norman Bateh, Dr. Tasso Bouras, Maria Chrissovergis, Paula Del Rio, Nick Furriss, Tom Gibson, Farley Grainger, Melody Henley, Nadia Ioannides, Ted Johnson, Anthony Megas, Beverly Pappas, Mary Lee Pappas, Maria Pappas, Rose Marie Preddy, Chris Regas, Nick Stamatogiannakis, George Stavros, Dean Stoumbelis, Bill Toundas, Kathie Tsataros



MEET THE BUILDING COMMITTEE

Father Nicholas Louh, Father Milton Magos, Nick Furriss (Chairman), Mike Antonopoulos, Caryn Assi, Tellis Assimenios, Maria Carantzias, Milton Chrissovergis, Judge Eleni Derke, Deno Hicks, Tanya Kristoff-Powder, Gem Mann, Anthony Megas, John P. Pappas, Nick Trizonis, Nick Tsengas



A MESSAGE FROM NICHOLAS FURRIS



Brothers and Sisters,
Christ is Risen!

How truly blessed we are to have the opportunity as a Church Community to build God’s home. Reflection upon this can truly become overwhelming. How can we ever show enough love and dedication to our Lord than to dare build His home? Yet we can.

We can because of God’s Grace, allowing us, the united Orthodox Family of St. John the Divine, to magnify His Holy Name in brick and mortar and establish a Church and Family Life Center that will feed the spiritual needs of all of our families, and even families not yet know to us, for generations to come. What a blessing and yet at the same time, what an incredible challenge!

To this we say, “FEAR NOT!” Those two words, heard often within the New and Old Testaments should comfort us all. If our focus is Jesus Christ and His Church, then we have nothing to fear as He will continue to bless us abundantly. There is no doubt in that statement. This is our Faith and this is our destiny as a Church Community.

YOUR Building Committee will continue to work hard as it has done over the past decade. YOUR Building Committee, working with the talents of Archon Steven Papadatos and Papadatos Partnership, along with our local Architect KBJ Design Group, will allow us to ensure that every recommendation we bring the Parish Council and ultimately the Community will have been researched, debated and examined thoroughly; all with the best interests of the Church at the forefront of our recommendation but also with the foresight of future generations.

We have a beautiful initial rendering(s) of the new St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church as well as our Family Life Center. This new home IS possible. However it is only possible with great Faith, Love and Trust in our Lord, and your commitment and devotion. Let us together glorify His Holy Name and at the same time respectfully honor those who have labored to bring us where we are today.

On behalf of the entire Millennium Building Committee, I thank you for your trust and confidence in our work.

Truly He is Risen!
Nicholas J. Furris
Chairman- Millennium Building Committee

A MESSAGE FROM STEVE BACALIS

Dear fellow parishioners:

We are about to embark on an important journey to determine how we proceed with the future of our church. We are blessed with two wonderful priests and our church family is growing. Our youth program is well led and active. I truly believe we are on the threshold of outgrowing our current facilities, particularly our Sunday school class rooms.

Both the parish council and our latest general assembly have overwhelmingly voted to proceed with our capital campaign to build a new church. But ultimately what we do will be decided by you. You will vote with your financial pledges. What we are considering will require sacrificial giving from all of us. Please approach your decision prayerfully.

With Love in Christ
Steve Bacalis
Capital Campaign Co-Chairman

A MESSAGE FROM ATHENA MANN

As we launch the St. John the Divine Capital Campaign, we are setting into motion a new era for our community. My church family...we are growing and so are our needs. NOW is the time to continue our legacy, as we look towards building a new Church and Family Life Center at our property on Beach Boulevard. However, this building project will not come without a financial commitment. Just as our founding fathers and mothers committed and sacrificed, so too we must commit and look to provide for the needs of future generations.

These upcoming months are going to be very exciting for our community. I am honored to walk side by side with each of you in what will be God’s greatest task put before us. The Capital Campaign Committee is working hard with our consultant, Fr. Constantine Zozos, in making our vision a reality. With great humility, we will personally be meeting with everyone in our community to answer questions, to communicate information about the project, and to discuss your financial contribution to our new Church and Family Life Center. Every gift and every prayer will be received with profound gratitude! We are all one loving Church family... together NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!

I offer to each of you this Capital Campaign Prayer:
Lord Jesus Christ, our God, as we prayerfully contemplate our sacrificial gift, we ask that you will accept our offering as You accepted the gifts of Your people throughout the ages. We offer this gift to build the Church and Family Life Center of St. John the Divine to Your glory, as we proclaim Your Gospel to the whole world.

Grant us Your blessing, Lord our Savior, that we may always be faithful stewards, continuing to share through our sacrificial offering, the gifts you have given us, by the power of Your grace, mercy, and love. May Your name be glorified forever. Through the intercessions of St. John the Divine and all the Saints. Amen.

Your generosity and commitment to the future of our Church will allow us the ability to keep building upon the foundation of many generations.

With God’s Love,
Athena Mann
Capital Campaign Co-Chair



ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WITH GOD

As we approach our 100 years of existence in the city of Jacksonville, it is important to remember how our congregation evolved and who we are. St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church is a thriving “Beacon on the Hill” due to the hard work, perseverance and Godly stewardship of those before us and those who worship with us today.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews 11:1 we read “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The entire 11th chapter of Hebrews is about persons who trusted God for things that seemed impossible to them or others. They had a dream for a great future. They saw something beyond what happened in the ordinary. Their faith gave them a vision of the future, captured their imagination, and mobilized their resources.

Together this parish of St. John the Divine has embarked on making the vision of the future a reality. We have purchased 20 acres of land that now awaits the construction of God’s home and a Family Life Center to accommodate the many ministries He has laid before us. When Jesus was getting ready to leave His disciples to go to His Father, He said, “Anyone who believes in Me, the works that I have done, he will also do and even greater works than these.” John 14:12. This is our Lord’s visionary promise – that we can do greater things than Jesus did. But because He said it, we can believe it is possible. For all things are possible through Him.

PROPERTY BLESSING



A tent and folding chairs were erected. A sound system with two microphones were set on a small stage. Stands held icons of Christ and the Blessed Mother. A film crew and still photographers roamed the crowd. The vestments of bishops and priests, along with the pages of prayer books, fluttered in the September wind.

Certainly the dusty, tree strewn lot was not the typical setting for an Orthodox Christian service. But the ceremony marked a turning point in the history of St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church. The actions taken and words spoken that day in 2010 transformed a 20-acre parcel on Beach Boulevard into sacred ground that will become the parish's future home.

The faithful, young and old and in between, sat and stood as his Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta — joined by his Grace Bishop Demetrios of Xanthos and the Very Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh and Very Rev. Dr. Milton Magos — led prayers to bless the property. Participating were close to 10 other priests representing Greek, Antiochian and Russian Orthodox parishes near and far. Also present was the Very Rev. Constantine Zozos, the consultant who has been invited by the parish to lead its building Capital Campaign.

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios reflected on the importance of the moment. In his rich, deep voice he praised Fathers Nicholas and Milton for their leadership, and members of the Building Committee for getting their sacrifice of time and talent to get the parish to this point. He also challenged parishioners not to falter, urging them to proceed boldly into the next phases of fundraising and construction in order that St. John the Divine may continue to be the beacon of Orthodoxy in Jacksonville.

The Sept. 25 ceremony was an occasion those who attended will never forget. Shortly after the ceremony parishioners drove off the dusty grounds and into their cars to go to the parish dinner dance to honor our parish legacy and celebrate our blessings. But the ritual's significance wasn't lost on those in attendance. They had just participated in a one-time event of major historical and religious significance in the life of their parish.

Parishioner Michelle Tsengas was one of them. Michelle said she was moved to stand on ground that will someday support the church where she will raise her own children. "I've always said that one day I want to get married in the new church," the 20-year-old said. "The blessing of the property was part of our church history and I'm so glad I was able to be part of it."



CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

An estimated nearly five hundred faithful from St. John the Divine entered into the Narthex of the church on Holy Saturday and were greeted with the scents of fresh flowers, visions of flickering candles, and sounds of the chanters praying and the empty tomb of Christ before them. Everyone was in great anticipation of the Holy Resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the church quickly fell into darkness near midnight, Father Nicholas exited the Royal Doors exclaiming "Thevte Lavete fos..." "Come receive the light...". Slowly the church was illuminated with lit candles as parishioners passed the flame to one another until everyone was holding the symbolic light of Christ. The procession then began outside where the faithful exclaimed with joy, "Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!" and "Xristos Anesti! Alithos Anesti!".

For Orthodox Christians around the world, the Resurrection of Christ marks one of the Holiest of Holy days in our Liturgical calendar. And for the faithful of this parish, it was a 40-day journey spent together in fasting, prayer and preparation for Christ to arise from the dead for our salvation. Many parishioners remarked about the beauty of this year's procession on Friday evening as the Priests, choir, altar boys, Archons, flower girls and faithful sang in unison "AgiOS O Theos". Others also commented about the mass numbers of parishioners who attended services throughout Holy Week. "I would estimate we had more people attend services this year than ever before. We anticipated great crowds but this year even exceeded our expectations, all week long," said Bill Toundas, Parish Council President. While crowds arrived early to church many were left without seats and were seated downstairs in the church's social hall where they viewed the services on a projection screen. Even more people participated in the services outside on the church steps once the church hall was filled. "It's a blessing to see so many people come worship with us. Our ushers try very hard each year to make sure that every one is able to enjoy the services but it is difficult when we run out of space. It will be an even greater blessing when we are able to worship in a new church that will accommodate all of our needs year round," said Anthony Megas, Head Usher.

The festivities concluded with the AGAPE service and Easter picnic at Metro Park on Sunday afternoon where an estimated more than 500 people attended. This was the first year in 15 years the picnic was held at Metro Park. The facilities perfectly accommodated the church's planned events — Easter egg hunt, egg toss, and other children's activities. Parishioners celebrated the day eating the traditional Greek feast of lamb and blood red hard-boiled eggs among other favorites. Throughout the day the words "Xristos Anesti!" and "Alithos Anesti!" were exchanged, as everyone in attendance was thankful for the sacrifice our Lord Jesus Christ made for each of us.

SAVE THE DATE! MAY 22ND



Our church family will celebrate the future of St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church during a historical event in the life of our church on Sunday May 22nd. The event will begin at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy and will continue downstairs in the church's social hall concluding with a catered lunch for everyone to enjoy.

This exciting event certainly comes with a cost. At a time when our church is working to raise money to build our future home and while we encourage everyone to participate, we also ask for a Love Offering to help cover the expenses of the luncheon. A \$10.00/person donation is suggested.

On behalf of Father Nicholas, Father Milton and the Capital Campaign fundraising committee, we hope you will make every effort to attend this event with your family to make your mark in the history of St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church.



ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
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