

# The Heavenly Host

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## Inside this issue:

<i>Youth Project</i>	2
<i>Annual Food Collection</i>	
<i>October Calendar</i>	3
<i>With One Eye Open</i>	4-5
<i>Mortgage Update</i>	6
<i>Librarian Wanted</i>	
<i>Pledge Forms</i>	
<i>Chairman's Letter, cont.</i>	7
<i>Ladies Guild News</i>	
<i>Book Corner</i>	8

## FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL CHAIR

The fall season signifies many things for our parish. By the grace of God, we never seem to slow down, and fall is no exception!

First and foremost, Church School is back in session, and Superintendent Fr. Timothy and his faculty continue to make it possible for our children to understand, appreciate and embrace the Orthodox Faith, as well as make them feel "at home" in Church School.

Fall also stands as a reminder that it is time to recommit ourselves to the Parish of St. Michael. I am speaking of two things in particular: serving on the Parish Council in 2003 and restating our pledges and tithes for 2003.

In the coming weeks, I ask that you consider serving on the Council next year, whether or not you may have served in the past. Each of the twelve positions plays a pivotal role in the many discussions and decisions impacting our parish at present and in the future. It is important that we have as wide a mix as possible of knowledge, skills and experience on the Council. If you have any questions, or wish to consider serving next year, please talk to any of this year's Council members. Kris Thabit, Vice-Chairman, is in charge of Nominations.

Also in the coming weeks, you will receive a 2003 Pledge/Tithe Form. It is so very important to the health of the parish that, as a member in good standing of St. Michael, you complete this form and mail or bring it to church before December 31<sup>st</sup>.

In the next few months, the Parish Council will be addressing capital improvements, maintenance, and long-range planning in the course of the "business" of the church. In a recent letter to all Par-

*(Continued on page 7)*

## **YOUTH PROJECT** by Mae (Skaff) Tortolano, Youth Chorus Co-ordinator

Our Summer, 2002 Youth Project has been revealed! A hearty thank you to all those who participated and attended the debut of the ST. MICHAEL YOUTH CHORUS at the Church School Awards luncheon. We are grateful for the support of the parents and those who assisted in the process of bringing this event to fruition (Rima Hage, Hani Abughazaleh, Sondra Love, Mary Ann Coury, Robin Ibrahim, Cindy Tamoush, Don Meena, Emile Skaff and Daphne Thabet).

A special acknowledgement is due PACIFIC THEATRES (and Cristina Tortolano) for their generosity in donating **free** admission tickets to each person who took part in this worthwhile Youth Project (Karoleen Ababseh, Laura and Johnny Aftimos, Maya el-Darzi, Hilalah Haddad, Alexi and Niki Ibrahim, Mallory and Nick Murr, Jacqueline Roueiheb, Ryan Tamoush, Marja and Nathaniel Tensen). **GOD BLESS YOU!**

## **ANNUAL FOOD COLLECTION**

Did you know that we as a parish are in the upper 10% of the population? Did you know the other 90% starve daily but really get hit during the holidays? Here's a way to do something and to feel good about it without going out of your way to help a family much less fortunate than you.

It's time once again for the Annual Food Collection! During this and every year for the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, you can help by providing a family (8-10 people) with a holiday meal. Below is a sample meal:

Canned ham or a turkey	Instant Milk
Canned yams, instant potatoes, rice, stuffing mix	Dinner rolls
Canned vegetables (3 large)	Coffee/Tea
Canned fruit (3 large) and 2 cans of cranberry sauce	Canned /bottled juices (2)
Desserts; cookies, cakes (no frozen pies)	

All goods need to be boxed for easy transport and have the weight of food contents marked on the box. First drop off date is Sunday, November 24th. I urge for new families as well as the usual faithful families who contribute each year.

**Personal Care Items** such as deodorant, soap and shampoo, tooth brushes, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, disposable razors. **Baby necessities** as food, formula and disposable diapers. **Clothing/Shoes** like new and 'hand-me-down' for all sizes and ages. Any contributions of items or monetary would be greatly appreciated.

If you know of a family who is having a difficult time and needs assistance, please let Fr. Timothy know. Also, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me at 818-345-4363.

Yours in Christ,  
Cindy Tamoush

# St. Michael Church

[www.stmichaelvannuys.com](http://www.stmichaelvannuys.com)

# October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		7:00 pm-Classrooms 1-5 Rented  7:30 pm-Ladies Guild Meeting in Classroom 6  1	2	3	4	5:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rental  5
6	4:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  7	7:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  8	9	10	7:30 am to 4 pm- Ballroom Rented  11	6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rental  12
5:30 pm-St. Ignatius Dinner at Lakeside CC  <b>Sunday of the Holy Fathers</b> 13	4:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  7:15 pm-Parish Council Meeting in Conference Room  14	7:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  15	7:30 am to 4 pm- Ballroom Rented  7:00 pm Ballroom Rented  16	7:30 am-Classroom 6 Rented  17	18	8:00 am-Marriage Committee; Class- rooms 1-4 & Con- ference Room  6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rental  19
20	4:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  21	7:30 am to 4 pm- Ballroom Rented  7:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  22	23	24	25	9:30 am-Marriage Committee in Conference Room  6:00 pm-Kitchen & Banquet Room Rental  26
27	4:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  28	7:00 pm-Classrooms 1-6 Rented  29	30	31		

Regular Services

Saturdays:  
Great Vespers at 5 pm in the Church.

Sundays:  
Orthos at 8:45 am & Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am in the Church.

Confessions are arranged by appointment or prior to services.

Wednesdays and Fridays are observed as *fast days* in all Orthodox churches.

**WITH ONE EYE OPEN** by Very Rev. John P. Abdalah (printed in the Word Magazine, February 2002)

Should someone be told what to expect before being invited to run for a seat on the parish council? While some people say it is an honor to serve on the parish council, others consider it a responsibility, or a birth right, and exercise in futility, a distraction from the spiritual life, or even a curse! I believe that service on parish council is a calling. I had my first parish council experience while I was a college student, and I learned more about the Church, people, business and the world from that parish council experience than from any of my college classes. I believe that serving on the parish council is a wonderful opportunity for learning and growth; we would do well to enter this ministry opportunity with at least one eye, if not both, open.

This organization, different from all other human organizations, is part of the Church of Christ that is in the body of Christ and belongs to the Kingdom of Heaven. The parish council is made up of real people, each with a vision, and agenda, abilities, spiritual struggles and family circumstances. The council itself is an organism with a history. It is a system with its own rules of operation, some understood and others that operate outside of our awareness. Knowing all of this, we must go still further for a full understanding of what is happening when the parish council meets and acts. We must superimpose on all of these factors our understanding that the council gathers to lead the Church of Christ, and invites the Holy Spirit to guide and lead it. Considering all of this, it is no wonder that a year on the parish council might seem like a year-long ride that is unpredictable, challenging and sometimes confusing. More importantly, it carries the responsibility of judgment before the Lord whose Church we have dared to serve as stewards.

I wrote above that each individual on parish council has a vision and an agenda. By vision, I mean how each of us understands the Church, and the ability and direction for this particular church community to be Church. Is the Church "a mother," a source of life, or an unwanted step-child sapping away our resources? Is She the mystical expression of heaven on earth, or a social club to meet our most human needs? Is this community capable of growing, bearing witness to all the world of the undistorted Gospel proclamations, or is it an ethnic ghetto, not quite viable on the American scene? Can our members work hard together and accomplish great things, or are we too tired, too small, too busy and too disinterested? I understand each of these questions to represent point on a continuum, and suspect that each of us weighs in at a different place for each. Nevertheless, being aware that we come to the table with different visions is helpful, perhaps crucial.

By agenda, I mean the particular choices and dreams that each of us comes on to the council hoping to accomplish. This is not necessarily a negative thing; however, it will cause us to have a bias as we listen to the goals and ideas of one another.

We would do well to remember that we really know only a fraction of the history and circumstances of our fellow council members. We don't know each other's other responsibilities, stressors, or troubles. While we would probably deal more empathetically with our brothers and sisters if we were more aware of the specific difficulties each was dealing with, that empathy can come only if and when they are willing to disclose those difficulties. When someone's response to an issue of regular church business is exaggerated, it is probable that he or she is dealing with some kind of related, and serious, issue. I don't offer this information to make us all armchair psychologists, just to offer a bit of perspective which will allow us to respond in kindness and in love, the

*(Continued on page 5)*

## WITH ONE EYE OPEN, continued

*(Continued from page 4)*

way Christ does.

Now, whenever we gather as a group, there are many group dynamics that come alive. Who will lead, what is the style of this leadership, how will we make decisions, how will each of us respond, what will each of us do to guarantee that each of our own needs and desires is met? The style of leadership we each have will have as much to do with the other members of the group as with our own personality and style. Remember, the parish council, like the parish, is a living organism of persons. Every year, with the addition of new members and the loss of others, the mix of persons and unique personalities changes.

In addition, the parish council itself has a way of dealing with things, one that has been formed by years of experiences with particular persons and events. The issues and people that helped forge the “way” the council does things have probably changed. Some of the “ways” we do things are formalized into by-laws, others maintained by members who will say, “That is not the way we do it.” It is difficult to change the way things are done, especially without understanding why they are done in a particular way. I caution against changing the way things are done without understanding why things are done, because the way is generally a safeguard about something. Making such ways and reasons explicit allows us to be more deliberate in our decision-making and helps us to be more comfortable in the decision-making process.

The Church is not a social club. In the Creed of Nicea, we say that we believe in four things: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Church that we believe in is a gift from God that will bring us to share the Kingdom. She is in the body of Christ and is led by the Holy Spirit. The Church is gathered around bishops, who are entrusted with the responsibility of rightly dividing the word of God, of guiding and revealing God’s presence and will for us. The council is elected to assist the bishop and his designates, the presbyters, in administering the life of the Church. As stewards of God’s Church, we will be held accountable for our leadership, first to our bishops and presbyters, and finally to God, who’s Church we have attempted to lead. Ultimately, no vote or decision of parish council is about our will, but is rather about discerning God’s for His Church.

We can ensure that our leadership will be within God’s will by testing our thoughts, to be sure that they are in line with the Scriptures, worship, writings of the Church Fathers, and writings of our bishops. We must take advice from our bishops when necessary, and must approach our decisions prayerfully and humbly. It is essential that we ask God explicitly for direction. We must use the scriptural images of Christ’s leadership as our own example and we must constantly examine our goals and motives, to be sure that they are in line with what God is calling us to do.

I believe that the goal of parish council activity must be the same as the goal of the Church, i.e., salvation of the world. This is accomplished by God through our cooperation with Him and with one another. To serve in this ministry of parish council is more than an honor. It is a manifestation of the very reason we exist, to serve and to love one another and, in so doing, to serve and to love God. The next time you are asked to serve on the parish council, fulfill your calling, with at least one eye open.

# Mortgage Update

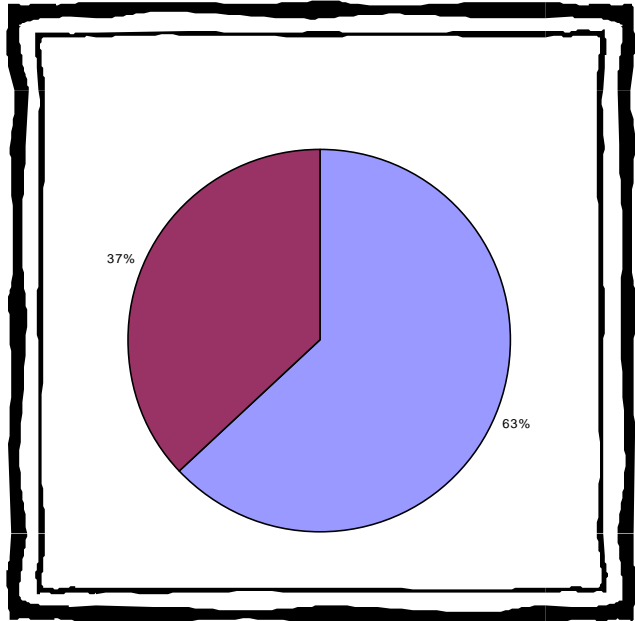
Our original loan was for \$850,000.

We have paid down  
\$314,412.70 or 37%.

As of this month we owe  
\$535,587.31.



Note: Part of the proceeds from the Golf Tournament have not all been transferred since some of the funds are being used to carry the expenses of the Church. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR PLEDGE INFORMATION IS UP TO DATE.



## LIBRARIAN WANTED

A librarian is needed to manage and grow the St. Michael Library, including developing a catalog system, managing borrower services, acquiring new inventory, and promotions. If you are interested, please see or contact John Khouri (310/526-4286, jkhouri@yahoo-inc.com)

## 2003 PLEDGE/TITHE FORMS

2003 Pledge/Tithe Forms have been mailed to all parishioner households and one is included in the newsletter, as well. As a committed member of St. Michael, please complete and return yours by December 31st. All parishioners who are at least 18 years old and self-supporting must complete a new Pledge/Tithe Form each year, and all information is strictly confidential.

Your pledge or tithe supports the church's day-to-day operating expenses, which, like our personal expenses, are expected to increase in 2003. Any questions or concerns, please contact Mary Ann Coury, Comptroller, at (818) 994-2313, or Sondra Love, Treasurer, at (818) 996-0271. Thank you, in advance, for your commitment, and we look forward to a bright 2003 for the parish of St. Michael.

## COUNCIL CHAIR LETTER, by John Khouri, cont.

*(Continued from page 1)*

ish Councils of the Western Region, Bishop JOSEPH asked, "What is your vision for your parish?" It is my sincere hope that, among other things, we begin thinking about the next milestone for our parish – a new church building -- especially as the mortgage on the Community Center continues to shrink. A new church building is not so much a new undertaking as it is the completion of a plan begun several years ago.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the excitement and activity around the fall season at St. Michael is to share with you an e-mail I received from Father Timothy on Monday, September 23rd, which he has given me permission to share with you:

*The family that visited us on Sunday commented how wonderful it [our website] was to get the information on the Internet. They said it adequately gave them insight into the parish. Also, it seemed that everything happened on Sunday! We had three theological students from Pepperdine University who will be meeting with me tomorrow and are not only interested in fulfilling requirements for their course, but have a personal interest in the faith!!! The Bookstore opening was also very timely. The diversity in our parish life, i.e., membership, programs, activities, was truly reflected by all that took place on Sunday. I'm excited - can you tell?*

## From the Ladies Guild

Scrip available each Sunday in the Community Center. A portion of each dollar is donated to our Church and is applied to our mortgage. Shop at your favorite stores and buy item for work, home or school!

You're all invited to sign up for Holy Bread & to host a coffee hour. Please call Leila Abu-Ghazaleh for more information on open dates at (805) 522-4797. The following dates are still available: December 8 for Holy Bread and November 17 & 24 for the Coffee Hour.

Spiritual Bouquets: Donations are offered in memory of the deceased in lieu of flowers. If you wish to participate, please see Jeannette Aboud.

**Dates to Remember (please change your calendars since some dates are different):** *St. Michael Feast Day Coffee Hour* is Sunday, November 10. *Second Annual Christmas Festival* is Saturday, November 23. *Church School Christmas Program* is Sunday, December 15.

Christmas Cultural Event: Group rate available at \$20/person for *Messiah Sing-a-long* on Monday, December 16, 2002. Contact Carrie Skaff (818) 501-3477. Bus available if we get 35 reservations!

ST. MICHAEL ANTIOCHIAN  
ORTHODOX CHURCH  
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Newsletter Editor

John E. Andrews

Please send all announcements, articles or news worthy stories by email or text sent to the church office for submission to our newsletter. Deadline is the third Sunday of the month prior to next month's issue. Thank you.

**Book Corner** - Book Reviews featuring books currently in the our Bookstore by Gloria Mitty

Paperback Book; 185 pages; \$14.95

**THIRSTING FOR GOD IN A LAND OF SHALLOW WELLS** by Matthew Gallatin

This book is a very inspiring book for Protestants and Orthodox. Matthew, who is a philosophy professor, was a cavalry chapel pastor, and devoted more than twenty years to Christian ministry. He traveled many denominational paths desiring to seek the truth and could not find fulfillment, always asking himself, "is this the truth." Many Protestant churches were divided in their beliefs and had depended on personal interpretations for answers.

His journey lead him to the church of the Apostles. The Orthodox Church, rich in history, traditions and sacramental paths, where millions of people worshipped the same all over the world. They celebrated the same liturgy, prayed the same prayers, sang the same hymns, all had the same service. Matthew knew that he had found the true church, one church, one body with Christ. He found a deeper relationship with God, a renewed love which he had been longing and thirsting for.

Matthew's great humility and never-ending love for God, moves the reader logically and informatively and shows us "to be Christian is to be Orthodox."

This is a wonderful book to give to any Protestant who is searching or unfulfilled and wants to know about the Orthodox Church. Matthew touches on Orthodox traditions, baptism, formal prayer, icons, Mary the Theotokos and the saints.

This is a must read for all Orthodox, especially for those who are drifting away and are complacent about their Orthodox faith. This book will help all of us to embrace with a renewed love and understanding of Christ's Holy undivided Church, the Orthodox Church.

Matthew's hope and dream is that everyone will be Orthodox.