

# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 13 No. 52 \* Sunday December 20, 2020 \* Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

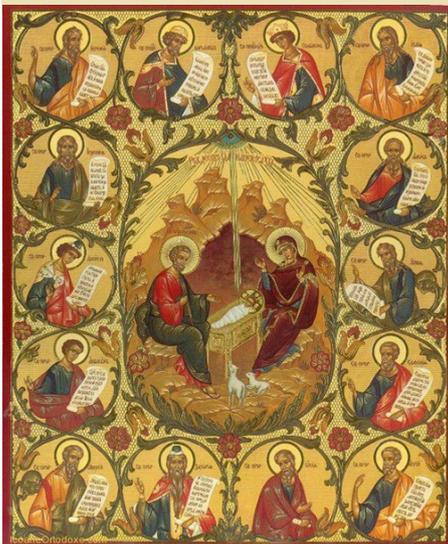
## The Sunday before the Nativity of Our Lord

### Gospel Reading Matthew 1: 1 - 25

**HOLY TRINITY**  
ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

723 N Bodine St.  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123  
Tel./Fax: 215-922-7060  
[www.holytrinityphiladelphia.com](http://www.holytrinityphiladelphia.com)  
V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai BUGA, Rector  
[fr.n.buga@gmail.com](mailto:fr.n.buga@gmail.com)  
Rev. Fr. Timotei AVRAM, Assistant Priest  
[fr.timavram@gmail.com](mailto:fr.timavram@gmail.com)  
Rev. Deacon Petru Bogdan MANEA  
[pbermanea81@gmail.com](mailto:pbermanea81@gmail.com)

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**



The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of Davoid, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of

Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

### Apostle Reading Hebrews 11: 9 - 10; 32 - 40

*Brethren*, by faith Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead

raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel Reading	1
Apostles Reading	1
Metropolitan Nicolae's Pastoral Letter for the Nativity of Our Lord - 2020	2-3
Fr. Philip LeMasters: Born to Raise the Image that Had Fallen	4-5
Liturgical Schedule from December 20, 2020 to January 7, 2021	6
Announces	6

**Synaxarion.** Sunday December 20 (Sunday before Nativity; Sunday of the Forefathers of Our Lord): Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-Bearer, Bishop of Antioch

## PASTORAL LETTER ON THE FEAST OF THE LORD'S NATIVITY 2020

† **NICOLAE**

by the mercies of God

Archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese  
of the USA and Metropolitan of the Romanian Orthodox  
Church of the Americas

To our beloved Clergy and faithful Orthodox Christians,  
peace and joy from Christ the Lord,  
and from us a hierarchical blessing.

*"Let Heaven and earth today make glad  
prophetically.  
Angels and men, let us keep a spiritual  
feast. For God... has appeared in the  
flesh...."*  
(Sticheron from the Litia of the Feast)

**Most Reverend  
Fathers, Beloved Faithful,**

With holy joy let us give glory to God, for he has made us worthy to celebrate together the Lord's Nativity, the festival of hope and of joy, the festival of the descent of God to mankind, the festival of communion between heaven and earth. At this glorious feast it is fitting for us to humbly bow our heads before the interpretation of this great mystery by the Fathers.

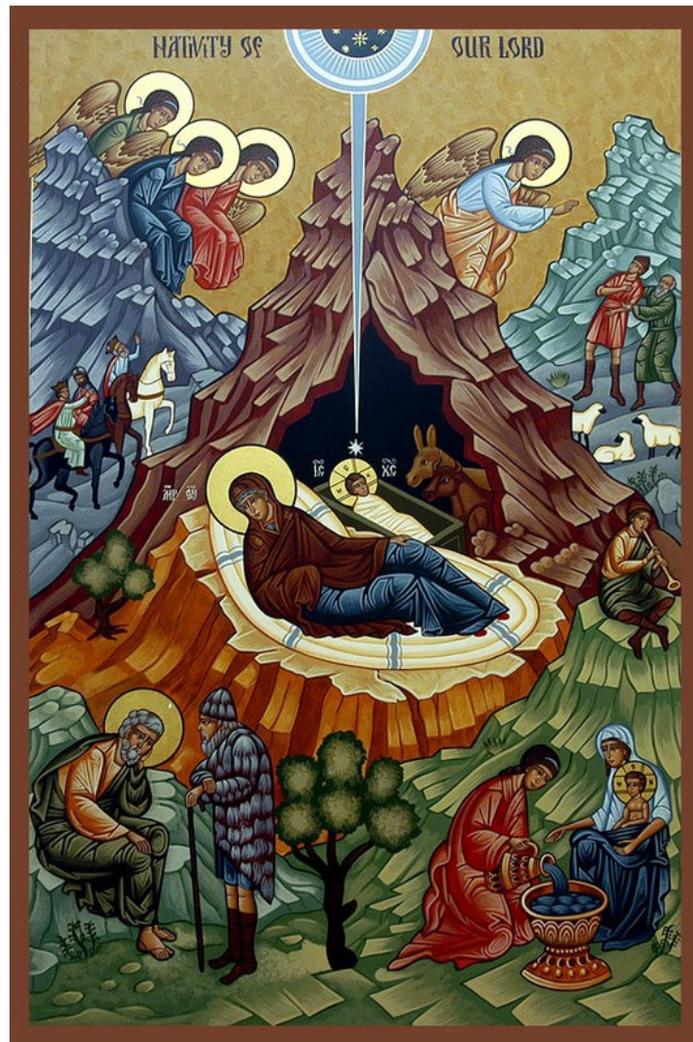
Created in the image of God, adorned with all the gifts and rejoicing in communion with God, man had the possibility to attain to the likeness of God by cultivating communion and multiplying his gifts. *Having created with His hands from dust our nature in His own image and likeness, and having Himself breathed into it the breath of life, says St. Gregory Palamas, He who brought into being everything else simply by His Word allowed that which had been created in a rational manner and which was master over its own judgment, to dwell in its own thoughts, according to its own action. Man, created rationally, was adorned also with the great gift of liberty, so*

that through "his own action" he might attain perfection in communion with God. The saintly Archbishop of Thessalonica clarifies

further in his homily that, left alone, human nature was deceived by the counsel of the evil one and did not preserve that which it had according to its nature, but drifted into things that were against its nature.

The incarnation of the Son of God from the Virgin signifies a re-creation of human nature, its restoration to its

original purposes from the creation: *Uniting Himself indivisibly with it and being born as God and man from the Virgin in order to re-create man as new... the Lord Himself came and saved us by becoming man like us for us, and at the same time remaining God without change.* Created with his gaze toward heaven, toward the Creator, with the desire and eagerness to be perfected, man turned his gaze toward the earth and became its slave, contrary to the way he was created. St. Gregory reveals to us the mystery of salvation by which God Himself comes to re-orient man toward heaven and to show him to be *new*, or re-created. The Son, in whose image man had been created, bows down the heavens



and descends into the Virgin's womb in order to renew broken Adam. This shows us the mystery of the humility of the Son of God, "*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men*" (Phil. 2:6-7).

This mystery of God's descent to earth is sung in the

verses which continue the revelation of this mystery which cannot be grasped by the mind of man.

One of these stichera reveals the joy of the entire creation, of angels and men, to receive the Incarnate God:

*Angelic powers, go before! You Bethlehemites, prepare the manger!*

*The Word is born, Wisdom is coming. Receive the embrace, O Church, in the joy of the Birthgiver of God! O peoples, let us say: Blessed are You who have been born, our God, glory to You!*

The verse speaks to us of the universal joy produced by the event of God's descent to earth, of the collaborating of the heavenly powers with the residents of Bethlehem for the preparation of the manger, of the joy of the Birthgiver of God and of the entire creation, which receives its Savior. Heaven and earth unite at the Birth of Christ, the Father's servants in the heavens lift their voices together with those on earth to witness to the joy of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

This joy is witnessed also in the angels' greeting: "*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!*" (Luke 2:14), the true proclamation of the peace brought to earth through the Incarnation of the Son of God: *Let us be reconciled to God, doing what is pleasing to Him*, again says St. Gregory Palamas, *becoming wise, witnessing the truth, carrying out all righteous deeds... Let us be reconciled also with ourselves, our body becoming subject to our spirit, choosing to live wisely, and let our interior thought world move graciously and in a becoming manner... Let us make peace with one another... showing mercy to one another just as Christ, having only love for us, had mercy and descended among us.*

What could we desire for ourselves in these days of great celebration other than to listen to and fulfill the words of this holy father? What more appropriate idea could we find for our families and our communities other than *to act graciously and in a becoming manner?* What could we desire for our world, so troubled by violence and evil, than the peace of Christ and *mercy for one another?*

It is fitting that the discovery of the meaning of the event of the Lord's Birth should be accompanied by this witness to peace and understanding among mankind

At the end of this Centennial Year, it is fitting that we thank the Good Lord for all His gifts, for all the celebrations dedicated to the Centennial of Greater Romania, and for all the accomplishments of the parishes of our Metropolia. We pray that Christ the Savior, Who is born in the manger of Bethlehem, will continue to make us participants in His blessings, that we may continue the Orthodox mission on American soil, that we may educate our children and youth in the hope of salvation, that we may console the lonely and ill, and that we may give witness to the Christian faith which brings peace to this world.

I pray that God will protect every priest and believer, that He will multiply His gifts in every parish and monastery of our Metropolia. May the New Year be blessed, may we grow in faith, and may we multiply our hope.

I give you a brotherly embrace in Christ the Lord and I pray that you may enjoy the holy time of Christmas, the New Year, and Theophany in health, peace, and spiritual joys!

**Many Years!**

Your Brother in Prayer to God  
desirous of every Heavenly Good,

† **Metropolitan NICOLAE**  
**Chicago, The Feast of the Lord's Nativity, 2020**



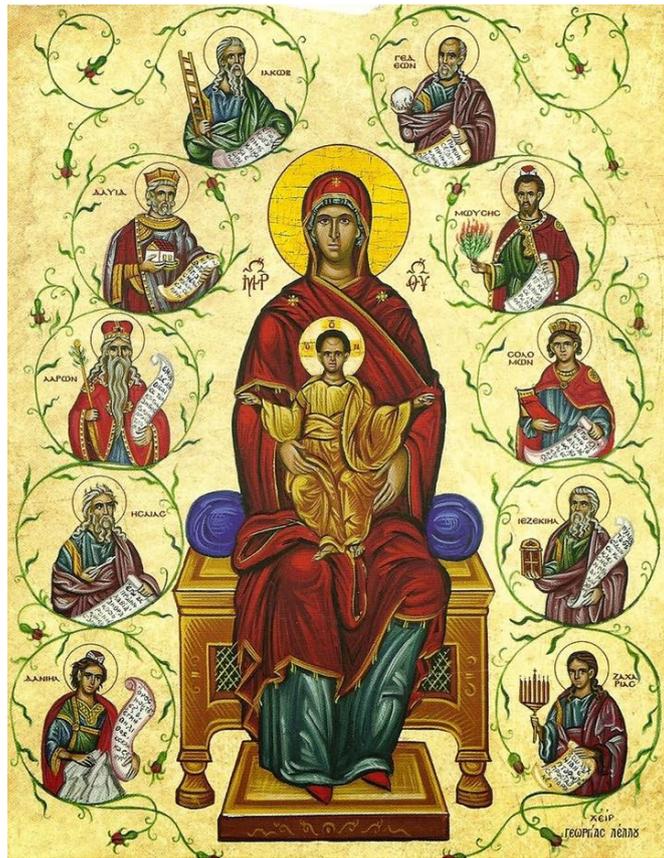
## Born to Raise the Image that Had Fallen

In spite of what we may like to think, the story of our lives did not begin on the day of our birth, but extends back across the generations to those from whom we have inherited so many traits that make us who we are. Knowing about the heritage of our families can give us a sense of rootedness, a healthy acceptance that we are not our own creators. Ultimately, of course, we trace our origins back to the Lord Who created us in His image and likeness by breathing life into our first parents.

As we all know from personal experience, not everything passed down in families is healthy or holy. That is because we all participate personally in the consequences of humanity's refusal to become more like God in holiness. Due to their disobedience, Adam and Eve were cast out of Paradise into the world of corruption that we know all too well. We have followed them in serving our own self-centeredness instead of God. We have followed them into slavery to the distorted desires that we call the passions. Instead of freely becoming more like God in holiness, we suffer the consequences of being held captive to sin and death.

On this Eve of Christmas, we must remember that Jesus Christ "is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforesaid." In other words, He is the New Adam Who fulfills our original calling to become like God in holiness. Indeed, He is truly God and truly human, and thus able to restore us to the sublime dignity for which He breathed life into us in the first place. In Him, we inherit the blessedness of Paradise, for He comes to heal every dimension of our corruption and to unite us to Himself in holiness.

We may wonder, however, if there really is healing for us who suffer the effects of our own sins and of the brokenness of others. We may despair of ever experiencing the fulfillment of our calling to become like God because



pride, anger, lust, and other passions seem so deeply rooted in our souls. We may lose hope of ever finding peace amidst the battles that rage in our minds, hearts, and relationships.

If our struggles were simply about us as isolated individuals left to our own devices, we would have good reason to despair. Today, however, we remember that God worked across the generations from Abraham to the Virgin Mary and Joseph, her betrothed, to prepare for the birth of the New Adam. Since King David served as a model for the Messiah, he figures prominently in the Lord's family tree. Remember, however, that he was guilty of adultery and murder,

which the genealogy indicates by listing Bathsheeba as "the wife of Uriah." Along with this reference, the names of Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth are surprising because they are all women who bring to mind scandalous episodes involving matters such as prostitution or intermarriage with Gentiles.

Our Lord's family heritage was certainly not comprised of perfect people. They experienced all the spiritual and moral brokenness common to humanity in our world of corruption. Nonetheless, they looked forward in faith to the coming of the Messiah. Despite their sufferings and imperfections, God worked through them to prepare for the Virgin Mary to become the Theotokos when she accepted the outrageous calling to become the Mother of God, the living temple of the Savior. In a manner beyond understanding and not tainted by passion of any kind, she conceived and gave birth to the Son of God as a virgin. Joseph, her elderly protector, turned away from his earlier doubts and faithfully played his unique role in caring for both mother and Child.

In the God-Man born at Christmas, we have received the fullness of the promise for which the Old Testament saints longed in faith. By becoming one of us, He has

raised the fallen image and made us “partakers of the divine nature” by grace. The disciplines of the Nativity Fast have helped us to know why we need a Savior Who comes to us in this way. By devoting ourselves for forty days to intensified prayer, fasting, and generosity to the needy, and by preparing conscientiously for Confession, we have come to see our own spiritual brokenness a bit more clearly. These practices have shown us that we need more than a set of rules or a good example to follow. Like all those enslaved by the fear of death and our own distorted desires, we need to be born again in the New Adam. We need to be healed from the spiritual maladies that have taken root in our souls so that we will participate personally in the fulfillment that Christ works when He becomes a human being for our salvation.

None of us, however, is yet fully healed. We all have a long way to go—an infinitely long journey—in order to become like God in holiness. Instead of becoming discouraged at how far we are from fulfilling this high calling, we should remember that we fit right into the Lord’s family tree. Those who prepared for His coming often fell short, even to the point of committing murder, adultery, and idolatry. If He can work through such people to prepare His way, then it should not be surprising that the Savior came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Who needs to be reborn except those who are spiritually dead? Who needs to be set free from captivity except those who are enslaved to sin? Who needs a New Adam if not all the children of the first Adam, all human persons who have fallen short of the glory of God and earned the wages of sin, which is death? Christmas is not a feast focused on rewarding the righteous, for who could possibly have merited or deserved the unbelievable miracle of the Son of God becoming a human being? He fulfills the ancient vocation of all people to become like God in holiness not because any of us have somehow earned that



astounding blessing, but instead on the basis of His love for sinners.

Even before the Incarnation, King David found forgiveness for committing murder and adultery. If already before the promise of the coming of the Messiah was fulfilled, God was so gracious to a repentant sinner, how much more must we trust that the mercy of the Savior born at Christmas will extend also to us? Many people struggle

with a prideful form of shame that paralyzes them when

they catch a true glimpse of their own spiritual state. When they do not live up to their own illusions of perfection, they cannot accept that—like everyone else—they have sinned and need the Lord’s healing mercy. So instead of humbly repenting and trusting in His grace as they stumble forward in obedience, they insist on relying on their own power and ability. That results in worshiping a god of their own imagination, not the Lord Whose family tree included scandalous sinners of all kinds.

The Son of God was born “to raise the fallen image,” which means to restore our beauty as

living icons radiant with His holiness. No matter the present shape of our souls, the New Adam makes it possible for us to be fulfilled in His likeness, to become truly human as He always intended us to be. Nothing but our own prideful will has the power to keep us from entering into the divine joy of Christmas for our salvation. In Christ, we have all inherited by faith the fullness of the promise passed down for so many generations through the children of Abraham. As we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of our Savior, let us all receive Him into our hearts with humility, knowing that He came to save us who were lost. If you think that you do not deserve that great blessing, then you are absolutely right. No one does. That is why the Savior was born.

**Fr. Philip LeMasters**

# HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from December 20, 2020 to January 7, 2021

## **Sunday December 20 (Sunday before the Nativity of Our Lord):**

9:30 am - Matins  
10:30 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 am - Sunday School  
12:00 pm - Coffe hour

## **Thursday December 24 - Nativity Eve (Fasting Day)**

### **Friday December 25 - Nativity of Our Lord:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Here Comes Santa Claus  
1:00 pm - Christmas Brotherly Meal

### **Saturday December 26 - Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos (Second Day of Christmas):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

### **Sunday December 27 (Sunday after the Nativity of Our Lord)- St Stephen's Day:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

### **Friday January 1, 2020 - Circumcision of Our Lord - St Basil the Great; New Year's Day:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:30 pm - Te-Deum (Thanksgiving prayer)  
12:00 pm - Coffe hour

### **Sunday January 3, 2021 (Sunday before the Holy Theophany):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffe hour

### **Thursday January 5, 2021 - Theophany Eve (fasting day)**

### **Wednesday January 6, 2021 - Holy Theophany:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Great Blessing of the Waters  
12:30 pm - Coffee hour

### **Thursday January 7, 2021 - Synaxis of St John the Baptist (Sunday after the Holy Theophany):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:30 pm - Coffe hour

## Announces

**Christmas Fellowship Meal.** On Christmas Day, after the Divine Liturgy, we will have a fellowship meal. All those who will be present at the Divine Liturgy are invited. For this brotherly meal all the ladies of the parish are asked to bring to the church a bit of the goodies prepared at home for these holidays. Thank you!

\*\*\*

**Here Comes Santa Claus!** We would also like to announce you that on Christmas Day, immediately after the Divine Liturgy, our children will meet Santa Claus. As we are convinced that all the children in our parish have been good, Santa will come to give them Christmas presents. Please, make a note that Santa Claus will personally come to offer gifts them Christmas gifts. Please remind them that they too should give something in return to Santa: they may sing a beautiful carol or to recite a little poem to him. I can only imagine how pleased he would be if they would do so. For more details, please contact Mr. Mihai Blidarescu at 408-309-7683.

\*\*\*

**2021 Calendars.** Please note that the calendars for 2021 have arrived and have been placed on display for sale: Wall Calendars = \$ 10; Cello cards = \$ 5; Office calendars = \$ 10. Please hurry! Their number is limited.

\*\*\*

**Your annual church contributions for 2020 and 2021.** We would like to friendly remind our parish members and supporters who have not paid yet their 2020 annual church membership that now is the right time when they can do it. The church is both a divine and a human institution. As a divine institution, by the grace of God and the work of priests, the Church has kept and gives us every Sunday the Divine Liturgy. Thus, we Christians have the chance to take the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins and for eternal life. As a human institution for over two thousand years, the Church has been and is supported by its faithful. Now it is our responsibility to preserve and strengthen the church, not only for us but for future generations. One of the ways we do that is paying annual editing with her church. In addition to our financial aid, but we can offer the Church voluntarily our time, talent and skill with which we were endowed. Your generous contributions allow our church to operate and to continue to do so. We remind you that according to the Church Assembly's decision the annual membership fee is \$85/adult or \$170/family.

Thank you!