

WELCOME TO ASCENSION

SAVE YOUR PEOPLE, OH GOD, AND BLESS YOUR INHERITANCE

“NOTHING EMBITTERS A PERSON MORE THAN SUFFERING. BUT WHEN IT IS CONSECRATED TO GOD, IT BECOMES HOLY”

THOMAS MERTON

Sun Feb 15 SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE

Rom 13:11-14:4 Mt 6:14-21 Tone 3

11:00 Divine Liturgy For Our Parishioners and For HGB Donald Merkley by Fr. Alex

After – Hospitality – Security Team meeting

Mon. Feb 16 FIRST DAY OF THE GREAT FAST

8:30 Divine Liturgy For Our Parish and Parishioners

Tue. Feb 17 8:30 Divine Liturgy For + Katharina Margan by Peter & Lisa Margan

6:00pm – Men’s Club meeting

Wed. Feb 18 8:30 Divine Liturgy For + Peter Nicholas Peltier by Paula Peltier

Thu. Feb 19 8:30 Divine Liturgy For + Merrill LeBlanc by Lisa & Peter Margan

6:00pm – ROSARY- Prayer For Peace in Our Country & for Protection and Healing of all illnesses by Men’s Club

Fri. Feb 20 **5:30pm Presanctified Gifts** For Our Parish and + Eugene Kokinda by Fr. Alex

After: Simple Diner

Sat. Feb 14 **1:00pm Church Cleaning Hours**

Sun. Feb 15 SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE

Rom 13:11-14:4 Mt 6:14-21 Tone 3

11:00 Divine Liturgy For Our Parishioners and For HGB Donald Merkley by Fr. Alex

After – Hospitality

Happy FEBRUARY Birthdays

2nd Michelle Massie; 4th Dr. Angela Bross; 4th Dr. MaryJean Sotack; 9th Greg Pula; 16th Don Merkley; 17th Dr. Nadia Shockley; 17th Mike Olson;May God bless You all with a long and

happy life!

Advisory Bord: Fr. Alex (Pastor)-Security; Don Merkley & Michelle Massie - Trustees; David Efimizet – Fundraising; Dr. Micheal Lechman-Investment & Adult Bible Study; Betty May Hertz-outreach; Michelle Massie- Property; Sb. Dicon Adithia Kusno-Facebook-Young Adult Education; Patricia Duttry-Book Keeper; Don Merkley, Website; Lee Alexander-Men’s Club President; Lisa Edwards-Children’s Christian Formation Director-Liturgical Committee; Ann Merkley-Bookstore Manager

Ascension prayer list - Kindly remember in your prayers our parishioners and friends who struggle with sickness, pain, hardship, or any special need:

Frank Janke; Mary Grace Dorsey; Betty May Hertz; Emma Bernier; Lolly Vinson; Myron Kotyk; Darren and June Ann Hall; Aurora & Jaime Daquilanea; Lary & Mary Ann Drumtra & their Family; Elaine Hampton; Dr. Micheal & Linda Lechman; Elisabeth Branden; Merly & Teresa Phillips; Mary Sullivan; Michael & Michaela Bross; Peter & Lisa Margan; Wayne Smith & his Family: If you would like to add your name or name of a loved one to this list, please contact Fr. Alex. Thank you.

Visitors, family and friends: Are you curious, do you have questions or inquirers about our church, icons, Divine Liturgy, or Byzantine Catholic traditions? Someone will be waiting to answer your questions after Divine Liturgy on Sunday mornings in the vicinity of the icon corner at the front of the sanctuary. Don’t be afraid to ask, there are no wrong questions.

Young Adults, Children, Adult Bible Study Committee: Subdeacon Adithia Kusno, Dr. Michael Lechman, Lisa Edwards. Special Event/Retreat Speakers Committee: David Efimetz, Don Merkley, Dr. Mary Jean Sotack

Bible Study

The next evening Bible study will be held on **Tuesday, February 24** from 5:00 to 6:30 PM. The session will cover Chapters 3 and 4 in Exodus, - Session Two - The Hesitant Servant- in the Exodus workbook. For questions, please text 757-880-5093.

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Michael Lechman

The Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) is fully operational and located on the wall above the fire extinguisher in St. Phillips Hall. Eight parishioners were certified on the use of the AED on Oct 8,2023 and other parishioners have been certified in the past. Periodic updates will follow. Dr. Michael Lechman.

Enjoy Hospitality after Sunday Liturgy? Please give prayerful consideration to joining Committee. Interested, **SEE Chris Noonan** after liturgy in the Parish Hall.

Liturgy and Candle Requests: Often we want to remember someone and offer special prayers for the departure of a loved one, special occasion, birthday, anniversary, etc. with celebration of a Divine Liturgy or lighting of a candle in front of an icon. To request a liturgy or candle, please complete the form in the appropriate envelope which you will find in the rack on the wall as you enter Ascension church and place it in the Sunday offering basket. Thank you. Fr. Alex.

Spiritual Warfare Scriptures for When You Face the Battle

7. Romans 8:37

"In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." – Rom 8:37
These words resonate deep within our hearts, reminding us that as believers, we are not merely survivors but victors in Christ. The trials, temptations, and challenges we face in the spiritual realm may be formidable, but through the boundless love of Jesus, we are empowered to overcome them. This verse stirs within us a profound sense of resilience and unwavering faith. It assures us that, regardless of the spiritual warfare and battles we encounter, the love of Christ envelops us, providing the strength and courage needed to emerge victorious. In times of spiritual conflict, we cling to this verse as a source of inspiration and a reminder that, with Christ by our side, we are not just conquerors but more than conquerors, prevailing over every obstacle that stands in our way.

8. 1 Corinthians 15:57

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord [Jesus Christ](#)." – 1 Cor 15:57
As we engage in spiritual warfare, the triumphant words of [1 Corinthians 15:57](#) fill our hearts with gratitude and unwavering hope. In the face of spiritual battles, we recognize that it is God Himself who grants us victory through the redeeming work of [Jesus Christ](#). This verse evokes a profound sense of thanksgiving and reassures us that, despite the challenges we encounter, ultimate triumph belongs to those who place their faith in the Lord. In the midst of spiritual warfare, we find solace and confidence in knowing that God's victorious power is at work within us, enabling us to overcome every obstacle and opposition we may face.

9. 2 Thessalonians 3:3

"But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one." – 2 Thes 3:3
As we face spiritual battles, we find solace in the knowledge that our God is not only faithful but also our source of strength. When we feel weak and vulnerable, His divine strength empowers us to stand firm and resolute. Moreover, the promise of protection from the evil one provides a sense of security and assurance. It reminds us that, despite the cunning and malevolent tactics of the adversary, the Lord's shield is our ultimate defense.
In times of spiritual warfare, this verse serves as a beacon of hope and a testament to God's unfailing presence. It encourages us to trust in His faithfulness, draw upon His strength, and take refuge in His protective embrace. As we face the challenges of spiritual conflict, we can rest assured that the Lord is with us, faithfully strengthening us and guarding us from the schemes of the evil one, enabling us to emerge victorious in our spiritual journey.

God bless America!!!

Prayer to Guardian Angel

ANGEL OF GOD, MY GUARDIAN DEAR, TO WHOM HIS LOVE COMMITS ME HERE: EVER THIS DAY
BE AT MY SIDE, TO LIGHT AND GUARD, TO RULE AND GUIDE. AMEN

Help support our church



FEBRUARY 8, 2026

Monthly Dues –500.00; Offertory –547.80; Candles -5.00; Hramoty-0.00;
In –1,052.80; Out- 0.0

Candles for February

Sanctuary Lamp... For Our Parishioners
Tetrapod... For Our Parishioners
Theotokos & Child... For Our Parishioners
John Baptist... For Our Parishioners
St Nicholas... For Our Parishioners
Protection Theotokos... For Our Parishioners
Christ Teacher... For Our Parishioners

SPECIAL ORDERS WELCOMED.

Many unique items come into the shop weekly. We have a great selection of special-occasion gifts and religious items unique to the Williamsburg area, including a wide selection of spiritual books, music, icons and devotional and inspirational articles plus hand-made soaps and local honey. Special orders welcomed.

Parish Activities: All activities should be recorded on the [main calendar](#). Please write in the activity you are responsible for and let Fr. Alex know the details so he can include it in the bulletin.

To Be a Saint – An Eastern Lenten Preparation

In the Western Rite, Lent formally begins on Ash Wednesday (February 18th). In the Eastern Rite, Lent begins two days earlier, on that Monday (Feb 16th). We have discussed the reasoning for the different dates in previous letters, along with various customs of both rites. For this letter I would like to focus on the Eastern Preparation according to the Ruthenian Rite; in this case the Byzantine Catholic Church. This period becomes for the faithful, a special journey of Lenten preparation. A four-week transition from the Christmas season, that prepares us to walk closer with Christ to Calvary, and onto the Resurrectional joy at Easter.

But before we do, some will ask, why does Lent follow so closely the joyous Christmas season? Easter, and therefore the 40-day period of Lent, is based on the Luner Calendar, and follows the Jewish tradition of Passover. With that said, the earliest date Lent can fall on is the 4th of February. So why did the church choose to place Christmas as it did immediately preceding Lent? Well, the answer is murky. The timing and celebration of Christ's Resurrection developed essentially from the beginning, while Christmas traditions came about more slowly. I have pondered the writings of Tertullian and Augustine, concerning the timing of the Annunciation with the passion, the traditions associated with winter pagan celebrations of the Romans, the symbology of the winter solstice, the theory of the timing of lambing season in the region of Judea and so on. Let's not get to overwhelmed by it. For me, I think the timing evolved by design. The arrangement gives a special place to the two great mysteries of our faith, the Incarnation and the Resurrection, while keeping them distinct. In this timing there is a profound beauty and symmetry. Perhaps the Hand of God?

Let's return to the East and the Byzantine Lenten preparations. The pre-Lenten preparations begin even as the Christmas season concludes. For example, the church celebrates the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple on February 2nd, a fixed date 40 days after the Nativity. For this year (2026), the first Sunday of Lenten preparation began a full week before that, on January 25th. You can sense the mood shift during the Sunday Liturgy of the Publican and Pharisee. It begins a transition from a joyous Christmas Spirit to a more sober Lenten mood. The main barrier to all virtue is pride, and we see in that Sunday's Gospel from Luke 18:9-14, the contrast between the Pharisee and the Publican. On one hand we have the Pharisee, who came to the temple to boast of his righteousness, and on the other we have the Publican, who came to seek God's forgiveness and mercy. This gives us then the tone to seek humility for what is to follow.

The next Sunday is called the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. With this Gospel reading from Luke 15:11-32, we take the second step in preparing for Easter, which is the recognition of our own sins and sense of sorrow, a true sense of repentance. With this, we are assured God will forgive us and take us back, for the love of the Father is eternal.

The third Sunday before Lent is called Meat Fare Sunday. It is sometimes called Judgement Sunday. On this Sunday the Church sets before us the Last Judgement from Matthew 25: 31-

46. Where Jesus describes our final judgement and the separation of the sheep from the goats. It is where Jesus describes the acts of mercy by which we will be judged. For those who were not reconciled by the example of the Prodigal Son, they might still be reconciled through understanding how their judgement is to be accomplished.

The Sunday just before the start of Lent is called Cheese Fare Sunday, or sometimes Forgiveness Sunday. Having received the previous instruction leading up to Forgiveness Sunday, the church now presents us with a Gospel reading from Matthew 6: 14-21. This reading includes the message of forgiveness, fasting instructions, and an exhortation for us to build up our treasures in heaven rather than on earth. The Rite of Forgiveness is celebrated following Vespers or Divine Liturgy, during which the priest apologizes to the people for the sins he has committed against them, and the people do the same. Cheese Fare is also the last day to eat dairy products before Great Lent.

The Pre-Lenten season is a time of invitation, a time of mental and spiritual preparation. With Cheese Fare Sunday concluded, the Byzantine faithful are ready to begin their Lenten Journey, which starts the very next day.

Yours in Christ
Brother Joseph

Men's Club - We have a special meeting scheduled for this Tuesday, February 17 at 6pm in the hall. It will be a continuation of our review of the clubs fundraising activities. All members should please try to be there if you can.

Carpathian Kitchen - We had an excellent day last Saturday which resulted in another 50 dozen potato and cheese pierogies add to our inventory. Just in time for lent; they are on sale after Liturgy. Our next scheduled event is 28 March when we will be to make our

Pot Luck! Our first OT Griller event is scheduled for March 1st at the parish potluck. We will feature a Lenten favorite, smoked salmon.

Church Cleaning: We have a very dedicated team at Ascension who cleans God's house weekly generally on Saturdays. However, sometimes schedules run thin and so we are in need of a few more helping hands. Please find it in your heart to help us with this very important ministry for only one hour a week. Thanks to all of you for your hard work and time. Betty Mae Hertz

Psalm 1

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Blessed the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the LORD
and meditates on his law day and night.

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
Whatever he does, prospers.

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Not so, the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
For the LORD watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes.

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Psalm 95

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Messiah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.”

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Psalm 23

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

Psalm 16

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge;
I say to the LORD, "My Lord are you."
O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,
you it is who hold fast my lot.

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

I bless the LORD who counsels me;
even in the night my heart exhorts me.
I set the LORD ever before me;
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,
my body, too, abides in confidence;
Because you will not abandon my soul to the nether world,
nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

You will show me the path to life,
fullness of joys in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever.

Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.

Psalm 138

Your right hand saves me, O Lord.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise;
I will worship at your holy temple,
and give thanks to your name.

Your right hand saves me, O Lord.

Because of your kindness and your truth,
you have made great above all things
your name and your promise.
When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

Your right hand saves me, O Lord.

Your right hand saves me.
The LORD will complete what he has done for me;
your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

Your right hand saves me, O Lord.

Psalm 113

The Lord will give him a seat with the leaders of his people.

Praise, you servants of the LORD,
praise the name of the LORD.
Blessed be the name of the LORD
both now and forever.

The Lord will give him a seat with the leaders of his people.

From the rising to the setting of the sun
is the name of the LORD to be praised.
High above all nations is the LORD;
above the heavens is his glory.

The Lord will give him a seat with the leaders of his people.

Who is like the LORD, our God, who is enthroned on high
and looks upon the heavens and the earth below?

The Lord will give him a seat with the leaders of his people.

He raises up the lowly from the dust;
from the dunghill he lifts up the poor
To seat them with princes,
with the princes of his own people.

The Lord will give him a seat with the leaders of his people.

Psalm 104

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
How manifold are your works, O LORD!
the earth is full of your creatures.

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD be glad in his works!
Pleasing to him be my theme;
I will be glad in the LORD.

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

If you take away their breath, they perish
and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Psalm 11

The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven.
His eyes behold,
his searching glance is on mankind.

The just will gaze on your face, O Lord.

The LORD searches the just and the wicked;
the lover of violence he hates.
For the LORD is just, he loves just deeds;
the upright shall see his face.

The just will gaze on your face, O Lord.

Psalm 103

The Lord has established his throne in heaven.

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he put our transgressions from us.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven.

The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
Bless the LORD, all you his angels,
you mighty in strength, who do his bidding.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven.

Psalm 15

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

He who walks blamelessly and does justice;
who thinks the truth in his heart
and slanders not with his tongue.

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who harms not his fellow man,
nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor;
By whom the reprobate is despised,
while he honors those who fear the LORD.

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who lends not his money at usury
and accepts no bribe against the innocent.
He who does these things
shall never be disturbed.

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Exodus 15

Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

I will sing to the LORD, for he is gloriously triumphant;
horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.
My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.
He is my God, I praise him;
the God of my father, I extol him.

Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

The LORD is a warrior,
LORD is his name!
Pharaoh's chariots and army he hurled into the sea;
the elite of his officers were submerged in the Red Sea.

Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

The flood waters covered them,
they sank into the depths like a stone.
Your right hand, O LORD, magnificent in power,
your right hand, O LORD, has shattered the enemy.

Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

Psalm 69

Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

I am sunk in the abysmal swamp
where there is no foothold;
I have reached the watery depths;
the flood overwhelms me.

Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

But I pray to you, O LORD,
for the time of your favor, O God!
In your great kindness answer me
with your constant help.

Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

But I am afflicted and in pain;
let your saving help, O God, protect me;
I will praise the name of God in song,
and I will glorify him with thanksgiving.

Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

“See, you lowly ones, and be glad;
you who seek God, may your hearts revive!
For the LORD hears the poor,
and his own who are in bonds he spurns not.”

Turn to the Lord in your need, and you will live.

Psalm 106

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

Our fathers made a calf in Horeb
and adored a molten image;
They exchanged their glory
for the image of a grass-eating bullock.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

They forgot the God who had saved them,
who had done great deeds in Egypt,
Wondrous deeds in the land of Ham,
terrible things at the Red Sea.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

Then he spoke of exterminating them,
but Moses, his chosen one,
Withstood him in the breach
to turn back his destructive wrath.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

Psalm 99

Holy is the Lord our God.

Extol the LORD, our God,
and worship at his footstool;
holy is he!

Holy is the Lord our God.

Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
and Samuel, among those who called upon his name;
they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

Holy is the Lord our God.

From the pillar of cloud he spoke to them;
they heard his decrees and the law he gave them.

Holy is the Lord our God.

Extol the LORD, our God,
and worship at his holy mountain;
for holy is the LORD, our God.

Holy is the Lord our God.

Psalm 95

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tested me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.”

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Psalm 106

Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.

We have sinned, we and our fathers;
we have committed crimes; we have done wrong.
Our fathers in Egypt
considered not your wonders.

Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.

But soon they forgot his works;
they waited not for his counsel.
They gave way to craving in the desert
and tempted God in the wilderness.

Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.

They forgot the God who had saved them,
who had done great deeds in Egypt,
Wondrous deeds in the land of Ham,
terrible things at the Red Sea.

Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.

Then he spoke of exterminating them,
but Moses, his chosen one,
Withstood him in the breach
to turn back his destructive wrath.

Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.

Psalm 97

The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice;
let the many islands be glad.
Clouds and darkness are round about him,
justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne.

The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the LORD of all the earth.
The heavens proclaim his justice,
and all peoples see his glory.

The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

Because you, O LORD, are the Most High over all the earth,
exalted far above all gods.

The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

Psalm 85

The Lord speaks of peace to his people.

I will hear what God proclaims;
the LORD—for he proclaims peace
To his people, and to his faithful ones,
and to those who put in him their hope.

The Lord speaks of peace to his people.

Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.

The Lord speaks of peace to his people.

The LORD himself will give his benefits;
our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him,
and salvation, along the way of his steps.

The Lord speaks of peace to his people.