Every year as we embrace the Christmas season, we anticipate the dawn -- the dawn of celebrating the saints of December, the festivities of the period, and time with family.

As you know, one of the most beloved of Christian saints is celebrated in this time, Saint Nicholas the bishop of Myra of Lycia, the Wonderworker. More churches are named after Saint Nicholas than any other saint -- that’s how beloved and popular he is!

And why is he so popular? He was a true Christian pastor, who shepherded the flock of God faithfully. He was the defender of children and orphans. He protected families, and boldly spoke up for those accused by slander. He personally took the sword away from the hand of an executioner as innocent men were to have their lives taken.

He was busy with the word and work of the Lord.

In the modern era, as we have found so many substitutes for our time, even church time, we tend to lose sight of why the church is so important and why spiritual care is life-giving. The church is not only an embassy of God, where we are protected from the effects of the world, but it is also a school of holiness, where we learn to walk with God in the world.

I encourage you to read up on the lives of the saints, especially the saints of the Advent Season, as they are incredible witnesses to the meaning of Jesus Christ for us. The question can thus be asked: What is the meaning at Christmas?

“Today, in the city of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2.11). 
Bible Study  Tuesday @ 6:30PM/ Friday @ 11:00AM
(unless otherwise stipulated)

Orthodox Life  -Weds 6:30p

Council Meetings  2nd
Monday of the month @ 7:00 PM (unless otherwise stipulated)

Dance Practice  TBA

Loaves and Fishes  Pick up on the 3rd Friday of the month

Knitting  1st and 3rd
Wednesday of the month @10:30 (unless otherwise stipulated)

Romeos and Juliets  4th
Thursday of the month (unless otherwise stipulated)

Choir  Thursday @ 6:30 PM
(September 10th - June 10th)
(never otherwise stipulated)

GOYA  3rd Sunday of the month following Liturgy
(never otherwise stipulated)

JOY  3rd Friday of the month
6pm-7:30 unless otherwise announced

Endowment Meeting  2nd
Tuesday @6:30

40 to 4 Club/Hope  - seeking a volunteer coordinator and meetings TBA

Miles to Smiles  - Walking Ministry, TBA

Health Ministry  - Monthly Blood Pressure during coffee hour, TBA

O Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, intercede with our Merciful God, that He may grant our souls remission of sins
– Apolytikion of Saint Luke
With these words, the angel announces to the shepherds the birth of the Lord. But notice the exact wording: “a Savior has been born to you.”

And to whom did Christ come into the world? To you! His birth means that He comes to you in your moments of joy, so remind you that every human joy is a foretaste of Paradise. He comes to you in your moments of doubt, to help you see that wonders and miracles are the norm in the Kingdom; He comes to you in your weakness, so that you can come to see, as Saint Paul did, that His strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12.9).

The birth of the Savior is a cause for celebration because we rejoice as part of a large family. It is easy enough to lose sight of this each day; the Advent season helps reinforce the spiritual calling we have received and into which we have been adopted by highlighting the anticipation with such a great cloud of heavenly witnesses. May you and your families have a most Blessed Nativity Season! May our Savior Jesus Christ be your anchor and salvation, and may you always remember the Good News of the Gospel that a Savior has been born to you.

With love in Christ,
+ Fr. Panteleimon

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**Saint Nicholas December 6**

This Saint lived during the reign of Saint Constantine the Great, and reposed in 330. As a young man, he desired to espouse the solitary life. He made a pilgrimage to the holy city Jerusalem, where he found a place to withdraw to devote himself to prayer. It was made known to him, however, that this was not the will of God for him, but that he should return to his homeland to be a cause of salvation for many. He returned to Myra, and was ordained bishop. He became known for his abundant mercy, providing for the poor and needy, and delivering those who had been unjustly accused. No less was he known for his zeal for the truth. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council of the 318 Fathers at Nicaea in 325; The Dismissal Hymn for holy hierarchs, The truth of things hath revealed thee to thy flock ... was written originally for Saint Nicholas. He is the patron of all travellers, and of sea-farers in particular; he is one of the best known and best loved Saints of all time.
Dear St. Luke Parishioners,

May the blessings of our Lord and Savior be upon all of you and your families!

As we close 2019, I want to wish all of you a Happy Holiday Season, filled with love, health, happiness, and prosperity. I pray to our Lord and savior to grant us the health, wisdom, patience, and clear vision in 2020. I hope He guides us to serve him, the church and our parishioners, stronger than ever and with more clarity in the new coming year.

To my Parish Council Team: I would like to start by thanking you and your families from the bottom of my heart for your hard work, dedication, loyalty, and giving it your best in 2019. I would like to recap few of your tangible accomplishments in a year where the funds were limited. The intangibles accomplishments are countless and priceless. Your record of success speaks volume. Just to mention few. Your support to the Taste of Greece Team has brought a record income (It surpassed all records) to our church. A special thanks to Vicki, Judy and all the contributors mainly the hard working workshop ladies and Gentlemen, along with the Kitchen staff. I don’t want to miss anyone, so Thank you to all the other helpers and volunteers. I want to also give a special thanks to the DWH committee in the leadership of Dorsey, Judy, Paris and the entire team. I can’t wait for the next round of success. I want to thank the Vamvilis (Nick, Kathy and children) family and the helpers for the Harvest Dinner. Also thank you Nick, Joe and Peter Alexopoulos and the helpers for the Lamb Shank Dinner.

We love the Icons that gave our church a new majestic look. We love the book racks that decorate our pews. A special thanks to Judy for not giving up on this project. We are also so proud to have allocated funds to various ministries. We were able to fund young graduates with various scholarships. We funded several youth to attend the camp in NH, as well as Project Mexico etc.

I want to thank Father Panteleimon and his family for being our spiritual leader. I want to thank all the committees leadership for all that you do for our church. I want to welcome our new young leaders in Jennifer Cokotis Russell (GOYA) and Christina Nikolis (Sunday school).

I want to thank everyone at St. Luke and the PC for allowing me the opportunity to serve my beloved Church in the caliber of President of the Parish Council. Also I would like to apologize in advance for whatever failures I had. I can truly say that we had tough four years of distractions, yet we were able to overcome them and move the needle north at the end. Did we bring the church to the promise land? Certainly not, yet we are half way there. In order to get there, it has to be everyone at church not only the leadership. As I say in politics, don’t blame the leaders only, the burden is on all the citizens. We the people must push harder to gain momentum. A quote from the great JFK “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country”/Church. Another quote, “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them”.

Our faith needs us to carry the torch. We are so blessed to live in a country that allows us freedom of worship. Can you only imagine living in a world where ISIS restrict you, or kill you for practicing your Christianity? Let’s not take our faith for granted and let’s not be the silent ISIS that cause’s un-indent harm and destruction to our Church and Faith. We must pass that torch to our children and grandchildren. Please give your Time, Talent and certainly Treasure. Walk the Walk.

Let’s celebrate our 50th year by standing tall with our church and with the 2020 Vision. Let’s help the new PC to achieve and conquer the 2020 vision. I don’t believe that there should be committees to do so, we all must do so. We are asking you to get involve again with Time, Talent and Treasure; that is the simple 2020 vision. Also part of the 2020 vision is to amend the Endowment Fund bylaws to allow the new PC to apply funds to capital expenses that are put together by one of our founders Jim Danalis.

May you have a blessed 2020 and beyond.

Assaad Andrew Hallak
The Christmas season is underway for Philoptochos. I would like to take this time to thank everyone who has participated in many of our planned events:

1. Food Outreach - we were able to help those in need for Thanksgiving with Big Y gift cards.

2. 2019 Saint Luke Christmas card - we are grateful for our very generous community who supported this major fundraiser.

3. Christmas Poinsettia Sale - the beauty of our Christmas Poinsettias will soon adorn our Alter. If you wish to honor a loving family member during the holiday season, please consider supporting this yearly St. Luke Philoptochos campaign.

Philoptochos Christmas Food Outreach is underway. If you wish to contribute to those in need, please consider making a monetary donation. No amount is too little to help someone in need. Please see a member of Philoptochos during coffee hour to make a donation or send a check directly to the church office.

Once again, Philoptochos is helping our friends in need with our gift card Christmas tree. The $20 gift cards will go to members of the “Lighthouse Clubhouse,” which all are challenged with a chronic mental illness. Won’t you open your hearts and help make their Christmas brighter. Please stop by the tree on your way to coffee hour. Please see Parris & Dorsey with any questions.

Thank you again for your continued support of Philoptochos and our mission. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

The Philoptochos Board
Maria, Melissa, Bess, Rosanne, and Evangelia
Good morning, it is so nice to see all of you here today so close to Thanksgiving, my favorite holiday. Aren't we blessed to have such a beautiful place to come to and celebrate the Divine Liturgy! We have such a wonderful community where most of us know one another. Saint Luke's for many of us is our second family.

I feel especially blessed to be able to worship here at Saint Luke's given the religious persecution that many of our fellow Christians face in other parts of the world. We hear so many accounts of Christians having to hide and pray under the cloak of darkness in fear of their lives. We have also heard stories of Christians who walk many miles on Sunday to take part in the Eucharist. Such a stark contrast to what is happening here in the United States. Churches are closing, Orthodox, Catholic and other denominations, not because they are being forced out by another religion such as Islam, or because of political oppression. They are simply closing because of a lack of participation and a lack of belief.

Is this the ultimate fate of Saint Luke? Looking back on my notes, I posed this question seven years ago when we welcomed our brothers and sisters from Saint Nicholas. Are we on the same path? What would we do without the church? Where will we baptize our children or our grandchildren? Where will we bury our parents? Where will we go to simply take refuge from our busy lives and pray each week?

As I just stated, Saint Luke is our second family or community. Do you feel the same? To me Saint Luke is our second home. It’s not even actually ours, it is God’s, as is everything we possess during our short tenure here on earth. Based on the teachings of the Bible, we are simply temporary stewards for what has been granted to us through the blessing of God. Come judgement day God will look upon us and will ask us: have we been good Stewards over what he has granted us? Are we going to be subject to the same fate as the servant in Christ’s parable regarding the servant who buried his talent and did not use it wisely? There are so many references in the Bible as to what is expected from us as it relates to being a good steward. I am certainly not qualified to speak to them, that is Father Panteleimon’s job and we are blessed to have such a knowledgeable and good teacher among us.

The greatest gift that God has granted us is our time, the second may be our treasure. The Stewardship committee believes where you spend your time, your treasure will follow. Unfortunately, the fact that our treasure has not grown in years signifies how we are investing our time. This is evident in our struggle to find volunteers. We even struggled to fill the Parish Council vacancies. Philoptochos has the same issues. We are taxing the same volunteers over and over again. We cannot continue like this! This small parish does some wonderful things for our community. In the next several weeks we will hear from some of the organizations that we support, such as Lighthouse, Springfield Rescue Mission, World Vision, the Shriners Hospital to name a few. These charities help us fulfill our mission which is By practicing charity through stewardship and Christian ministries we will create an environment where all parishioners are involved in the life of the church.

Being the co-chair of the Stewardship Committee and the Treasurer of the church I am obligated to analyze our giving. One of the reports that I run breaks down our giving into different levels such as $0-$100, $100-$200, $200-$300 and so on. As I have recently reported in the messenger, the vestal and most recently at the general assembly, the category of giving that includes the most parishioners is under $300. This is less than $1 per day. This level of giving cannot continue. I know that there are some of you who struggle to give even at that level and to you from all of us we thank you! However, there are many of us who fall under that and other categories who could be giving more.

I urge you to please compare how much you give to your church vs. other things that you may spend your discretionary income on. If we were on a dues-based system your dues would be $1,500. However, the bible guides us and teaches us that a stewardship-based system is the correct way to go. We know this from passages such as for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required and Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing the Lord God gave you.

There are some who suggest that we should publish the names and the amounts that we give in order to motivate or shame us into giving more. To think that the someone will give more money because their ego is hurt when they see their name in print vs. listening to the lessons of the Lord is not very encouraging. We know that this is not the direction we should go.

On your way out of church today we will have your Stewardship pledge packets available for you to take home with you. We want you to thoughtfully review the material and to reflect on how much you can give in order to motivate or shame us into giving more. To think that the someone will give more money because their ego is hurt when they see their name in print vs. listening to the lessons of the Lord is not very encouraging. We know that this is not the direction we should go.

Thank you for your time and Happy Thanksgiving!
Joseph Dasco
**FROM THE CHOIR LOFT**

Choir rehearsals for the month will be held on Thursday, December 5th and Thursday, December 19th. Come and join us as we prepare for our Christmas pageant to celebrate the birth of our Lord!

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**GOYA**

Our GOYAns gathered together on Saturday, December 7 and helped prepare the Pappas Hall for the Christmas Season and Breakfast with Santa.

The set up the various games, placed the posters on the wall, and decorated the Christmas Tree.

GOYA wishes everyone a most Merry Christmas!

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**Romeos & Juliets**

The next Romeos & Juliets schedule is 12:30 pm on 12/19* (Christmas Party - a week earlier than normal due to Christmas holiday). The restaurant is Figaro’s, 90 Elm Street, Enfield, CT. Hope you can join us!

Tentative schedule for 2020 is: 1/23, 2/27, 3/26, 4/23, 5/28, 6/25, 7/23, 8/27, 9/24, 10/22, 11/19* (a week earlier than normal due to Thanksgiving holiday) and 12/17* (Christmas Party - a week earlier than normal due to Christmas holiday).

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**Ushering Ministry**

Please call Harry Georgiades at 413-883-2560 regarding ushering on Sundays. All are welcome, youths, adults - all ages.

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**Loaves & Fishes**

We wish to thank our volunteers! December - Stewardship Committee

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**Knitting Group**

The Knitting Group meets bi-weekly on Wednesdays in the Church conference room.

The Knitters party that everyone has a most wonderful Christmas!
Start the Day with a Grateful Heart!

Fellowship time /coffee hour is a vital ministry of church - please consider signing up and stewarding a Sunday.

Make it as simple as you like- it is all appreciated.

It is a beautiful offering to remember someone or show friendship and gratitude to those around you.

These are the Sundays in December that are open for anyone wishing to make an offering to their friends, family and new friends yet to be.

December 15, 22 and 29th

January all dates available

Coffee is made and set up by our wonderful coffee stewards - Harry Georgiades and Peter Alexopoulos.

Get your Angels Ready!

It’s time to start preparing for the Nativity Pageant. Rehearsal will be on Sunday December 8th and 15th after church school and Pageant will be held on Sunday, December 22nd following Liturgy. Any child can participate and its never too late to join in and make a memory!
We wish to say Thank you to all the wonderful hands that helped make Breakfast with Santa such a wonderful event. Special gratitude to our amazing chefs in the kitchen - Vangelis Valaziotis and Peter Alexopoulos.
Miles To S’Miles Ministry

New day, new week, new month, new decade… NEW MINISTRY

Have you been waiting for an opportunity to work on a new you?

St Luke’s Miles to S’Miles is your first “step” in that direction.
Come one, come all ~ walk, run or crawl!

Sunday, January 5th in the Fellowship Hall during coffee hour.

*Free Fun & Fellowship with a Focus on Fitness.*
*Please join in! Bring your comfy shoes (sneakers)!*

For information call Kathy Kalaitzidis 413-374-3709

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Bible Study Opportunities

Gospel of Luke
Tuesdays 6:30pm in the Conference Room

Orthodox Life

Join us on Wednesdays at 6:30 pm for hour long sessions and discussions on Orthodox life — understanding and connecting our Faith with the world

Will resume in January
Memorials

In memory of William Cotopolis
Peter and Lanie Alexopoulos

In memory of John Marnelakis
Nicholas Votze

In memory of Mary Turner
David Mol

May Their Memories Be Eternal

Kathleen (Kay) Poulopoulos, fell asleep on November 23. Her funeral was on November 27, 2019

Angelo Bilionis, fell asleep on December 2, 2019. His funeral will be on December 9, 2019

May the God of Hope fill you with all Joy & Peace

Thank you

* To our wonderful GOYAN’s who came to decorate for breakfast with Santa and have fellowship together.

* To our Election team, for running a smooth election

* To our Parish Council and all our Ministries at Saint Luke!