



St. Susanna Orthodox Church

The Diocese of the West
The Orthodox Church in America

www.stsusanna.com

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CHRIST IS BORN. GLORIFY HIM.

December 2009

Pastor:

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For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever...

—Isaiah 9:6-7

The Nativity According to the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ

What could possibly be said about the Nativity that could add to its meaning? That God Himself came down into the flesh, walked among us, did many miracles while still in the flesh, and continues to do them in our lives—and He also shows us that the wonderful miracles are only the prelude to the greatest miracle of all: our relationship with Him? One could say this only illustrates, or reminds us of, His truth. Yet a reminder, in this changeable world, of the only true stability afforded us mortals is sometimes worth the effort, especially as we prepare to celebrate that very central and essential truth: the coming into our midst of the embodiment of our faith—the Person Who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

His imminent arrival as a baby was attested to by another as-yet unborn and

holy baby, and this is related to us by Holy Scripture, in Luke 1:41–45: “And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.’”

St. Ambrose said of this exchange that, “Elizabeth was indeed the first to hear the voice of Mary, but John was the first to feel his Lord’s gracious presence. Sweet is the harmony of prophecy with prophecy, of woman with woman, of baby with Baby. The women speak words of grace; the babies move in a hidden manner. And, as their mothers approach one another, so do they engage in a mysterious converse of love. And in a twofold miracle, though in diverse degrees of honor, the mothers prophesy in the Spirit of their little ones.”

That most wonderful Baby was later born in a cave surrounded by simple livestock animals—and there, too, was abundant testimony as to Who this newborn child was, is, and ever shall be. Of the gifts of the magi, from Luke 2:11, St. Gregory the Great wrote: “Gold befits a king; incense is offered as sacrifice to God; myrrh embalms the human

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*Corner of Jamestown Rd. & Robinwood Ln. (2 blocks north of Racetrack Rd.)

flesh. Therefore, with their mystical gifts, the magi also proclaimed and preached Him Whom they worshipped—with the gold, The King; with the incense, God Himself; and with the myrrh, a true man, born in the flesh (Who would sacrifice Himself for the life of the world).” And, of course we know that the angels proclaimed Him from Heaven, and the shepherds also came faithfully to worship Him.

We know these things because we believe. We believe because most of us have been taught properly—either from the cradle up, or as seekers who have found that deep understanding, love and beauty that only the truth will render. That we have found the pearl of great price, the treasure, and the source of all life is a privilege that we possess, and yet is open to all who truly and sincerely inquire about the way that we all should live. Looking beyond the half-truths of the deceiver and the rampant opportunistic interpretations of Scripture that so plague our present world, we find the path of life in our Faith and Tradition encapsulated in the historical and ever present, undeniable, certainty that “Unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given...”

Tenth Anniversary Celebration

Again, let us not forget that our Parish 10th Anniversary Celebration will occur on December 19; mark your calendars, tell your friends and acquaintances! Bishop Benjamin will be with us, and this will be a grand occasion. Great Vespers on the evening of Friday the 18th will be at 6:00 p.m., and Hierarchal Divine Liturgy with Bishop Benjamin on Saturday

the 19th will be at 10:00 a.m. All of us should attend these services to honor the visit of our Bishop.

Lunch will follow Divine Liturgy. At \$30 per person and \$10 per child, this is not an overly expensive lunch for such an occasion—and, it is a positive support for the work of our parish. We should especially invite our friends and acquaintances to attend the Hierarchal Liturgy—something many non-Orthodox have never witnessed, and which is sure to deeply impress them with its beauty, solemnity and rich spiritual depth.

Please see the details in the liturgical schedule.

Elizabeth Union Wedding

On Sunday, December 27, following Divine Liturgy for the Third Day of Nativity, we will celebrate an additional joyous occasion: Elizabeth Union and her fiancée Benjamin Cooper will be married in our church. Elizabeth and Benjamin met while in the U.S. Army. (Let no one say that serving our country is unromantic!) As Benjamin will be engaged in intensive pre-deployment training very shortly after the wedding date, His Grace Bishop Benjamin very lovingly and graciously granted a dispensation for Elizabeth and Benjamin to be wed during the Nativity season. Let us pray that they have great happiness, and experience fully the riches of the marital life. God bless you, Elizabeth and Benjamin!

May we all have a most joyous and fruitful Nativity season! CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

In Christ, *Fr. Andrew*



*Feast Day Service,
December, 2008*

Prayer List

PLEASE JOIN US IN GIVING THANKS TO GOD:

- For the skill and devotion of those beautifying our temple and gardens.
- For the beauty of the Mother Lode, and for the privilege we have been given to live here.
- That the Holy Mother of Jesus continues to care for the unborn.
- That many of our petitions are being answered.
- For Natasha's recovery.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYING FOR GOD'S HELP:

- "St. John, please intercede for us before God for the membership growth of St. Susanna."
- That St. Susanna Mission may receive a Church Planting Grant.
- For repose of the souls of our service men and women who have given their lives for the people of foreign lands.
- To safeguard all the troops who remain in heathen lands.
- To help us forgive the heathen fanatics who continue to murder our soldiers and their own citizens and children.
- That many may come to Orthodoxy through our witness and example.
- To bless our monasteries and the men and women who dwell in them.
- For the healing of Matushka Anna.
- For health for Shay.
- For the healing of Bishop Nikolai.
- For health and strength for Ron and Judy.

To ask us to pray for you, your family or friends, please call Alex Teshin at 209-536-9999.

Please Mark Your Calendar!

EVERYONE WORK PARTY

on *December 12th, 9:00 a.m.*

to prepare for Bishop BENJAMIN's visit and Christmas!!

*Please don't forget to start bringing in **POINSETTIA**s to decorate the church.*

MANY YEARS

Birthdays:

Elizabeth Union December 12

Namesdays:

Nicolas Teshin December 6

Nick Worth December 6

Rachel Reed December 20

Rebecca Teshin December 20

Liturgical Schedule for December 2009

Note: Confessions can be said after Saturday Vespers, before Sunday Divine Liturgy, or by appointment.

- Wednesday, Dec. 2** 8:00 a.m.—Molieben for Church growth with Fr. Andrew
- Saturday, Dec. 5** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers with Litya for **St. Nicholas Day**
- Sunday, Dec. 6** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **St. Nicholas Day**
Scripture Readings—Ephesians 5:9–19 and Luke 17:12–19
*The parish **ANNUAL MEETING** and a potluck will take place following Divine Liturgy.*
- Wednesday, Dec. 9** 8:00 a.m.—Molieben for Church growth with Fr. Andrew
- Saturday, Dec. 12** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for the **Sunday of the Holy Forefathers**
- Sunday, Dec. 13** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Sunday of the Holy Forefathers**
Scripture Readings—Colossians 3:4–11 and Luke 14:16–24
- Wednesday, Dec. 16** 8:00 a.m.—Molieben for Church growth with Fr. Andrew
- St. Susanna 10th Anniversary Celebration with His Grace, Bishop Benjamin**
- Friday, Dec. 18** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers with **His Grace, Bishop Benjamin**
- Saturday, Dec. 19** 10:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy and **10th Anniversary Celebration**
Scripture Readings—Ephesians 1:16–23 and Luke 14:1–11
*All should attend these services to honor the visit of our Diocesan Bishop
—Feast and Reception following Divine Liturgy—*
- Saturday, Dec. 19** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers for the **Sunday Before Nativity**
- Sunday, Dec. 20** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for the **Sunday Before Nativity**
Scripture Readings—Hebrews 11:9–40 and Matthew 1:1–25
- Wednesday, Dec. 23** 8:00 a.m.—Molieben for Church growth with Fr. Andrew
- Thursday, Dec. 24** 9:00 a.m.—**Royal Hours for the Nativity** (Hours 1,3,6,9 and Typica)
1:00 p.m.—**Vespers with Liturgy of St. Basil the Great**
6:00 p.m.—**Eve of the Nativity: Nativity Vigil**
- Friday, Dec. 25** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for the **Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ**
Scripture Readings—Galatians 4:4–7 and Matthew 2:1–12
- Saturday, Dec. 26** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers with Litya for the **Third Day of Nativity**
- Sunday, Dec. 27** 9:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for the **Third Day of Nativity**
Scripture Readings—Galatians 1:11–19 and Matthew 2:13–23
The Wedding of Elizabeth Union and Benjamin Cooper will take place after Divine Liturgy.
- Wednesday, Dec. 30** 8:00 a.m.—Molieben for Church growth with Fr. Andrew
- In January*
- Tuesday, Jan. 5** 6:00 p.m.—Great Vespers with **Blessing of the Waters for Theophany**
- Wednesday, Jan. 6** 6:00 a.m.—Divine Liturgy for **Theophany**
Scripture Readings—Titus 2:11–14; 3:4–7 and Matthew 3:13–17