



*News Brief to the Parishioners of*

# Saint Luke Orthodox Church

Erie, CO

December 2023

[stlukeorthodox.org](http://stlukeorthodox.org)

**N**ovember, December is par excellence the month for giving: to the poor, to the Church, to our friends and family. Even those who are only minimally acquainted with the Gospel know that we are in a Season that calls for a charitable disposition. A thoughtful glance at the church calendar reveals that God has also set aside this month as a time to give generously to us: He has given us a roster of saints that no other month can quite match. These holy ones are gifts to us - as we read in Ephesians, "his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." Many of these December saints are given the highest liturgical honor (specifically, the Typikon appoints that a vigil be served on their feast day).

Throughout the month, we commemorate a series of Old Testament Prophets. On the ninth we commemorate not only the Conception of the Theotokos, but also the Prophetess Hanna, mother of the Prophet Samuel. On the Sundays before Christmas, we commemorate all the saints of the Old Testament all the way back to Adam. We honor the Patriarchs and Prophets who kept the long, hard watch waiting for the Messiah and who have become our intercessors and guides now that the Messiah has come. These commemorations are a part of the preparation for the Nativity of our Lord. By meditating on the "faithful remnant" of the Saints of the Old Law, we can better discern the mystery revealed on Christmas.

The most celebrated saints of December are the Holy

Fathers -the bishops and monastics who passed down to us so much of the inheritance: 1) the great wonderworkers Nicholas of Myra and Spyridon of Trimythous, Dionysius of Zakynthos (this is the saint whose shoes have to be replaced periodically); 2) the tremendously important teachers Ignatius of Antioch (one of the earliest teachers), John of Damascus (who composed many of our hymns and compiled centuries of theology into a single work), Ambrose of Milan (the great teacher of the Western church), and Sabbas the Sanctified (he started the monastery outside Jerusalem where most of our services come from), Eleutherios of Illyricum (the patron saint

of the Diocese of Wichita), Herman of Alaska (the 18th century wonderworker and missionary), John of Kronstadt, and from our own time, the newly glorified Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia the miracle worker and clairvoyant saint who reposed in 1991.

December also sees the commemoration of many, many martyrs, including Stephen the Protomartyr, Barbara and the holy Innocents of Bethlehem who died at the command of King Herod.

What a tremendous list of saints God has given us in December! Men

offered the infant Jesus Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. He has in returned given us golden examples of what human beings can become, whose teachings and example are a sweet fragrance that censes the Church and whose intercessions anoint the faithful with mercy and ready them for the Resurrection.



## Chronology of Events

*Please note: Events are in addition to every Sunday Divine Liturgy at 9 AM, Wednesday Divine Liturgy at 5:30 PM (lenten potluck following), and Saturday Vespers at 4:00 PM*

- Myrrhbearers Meeting: Saturday December 2 at 9:00 AM
- Choir Practice: Saturday December 2 at 9:00 AM
- Christmas Decorating: Saturday December 2 at 10 AM
- Catechism Class: Saturday December 2 at 2:30 AM
- Trisagion Memorial Prayers: December 3, after Liturgy, remembering Deborah Brown, Fr. John Falcone, Joseph Fascona, Wallace Griffiths, Richard Lynn Cleveland, Nina Dutcher
- St. Luke Co-op: Monday December 4 at 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM
- HOPE Group Meeting: Monday December 4 at 6:30 PM
- Adult Education Class: Thursday December 7 at 10:30 AM
- Advent Retreat (for Women): Friday December 8 from 7 PM to 9 PM
- Advent Retreat (for Men and Women): Saturday December 9 from 9 AM to 3:30 PM
- Parish Council Meeting: December 12 at 6:00 PM; Everyone is welcome.
- Adult Education Class: Thursday December 14 at 10:30 AM
- Choir Practice: Saturday December 16 at 10:00 AM
- Catechism Class: Saturday December 16 at 2:30 PM
- St. Luke Co-op: Monday December 18 at 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM
- HOPE Group Meeting: Monday December 18 at 6:30 PM (Frances' house)
- Adult Education Class: Thursday December 21 at 10:30 AM
- Royal Hours: Friday December 22 at 9:00 AM
- December Potluck Fellowship: Sunday December 24: No assigned dishes, bring something delicious to share
- Christmas Orthros December 24 at 7:00 AM and Divine Liturgy at 8:00 PM
- Church offices closed December 25 through 29

## News Updates

*Update on our parish financial situation  
from Rob Bell, Parish Council Treasurer*

Preliminary financial results for November are \$25,000 worse than budgeted, primarily due to lower than expected offerings. Expenses were greater than offerings so we have dug into already low cash reserves to meet the month's bills. Disregarding funds committed to the storm repairs which will be paid by mid-January, we are simply much too close to a situation of counting on what comes in for a month to pay what's due for the month. While there are many worthy recipients for almsgiving during this holiday season, we ask that you put additional offerings to our parish high on your list.

### • Year-end offerings & statements

As in past, we will provide offering statements per IRS requirements and as a convenience for parishioners' tax preparation. Offerings will be reflected on 2023 offering statements for those received: in the offering plates by Sunday evening December 24th or via EasyTithe by December 31st. Statements will be provided during January 2024. If you have questions please contact Rob at treasurer@stlukeorthodox.org or 240.447.3243.

## Ministry Updates

We need Ministry Leaders to fill vacancies in the following Ministries: Building Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance, Web/IT Team”, Audiovisual team, Feasts/Festivals, Medical Response Team, and Safety Team. If you are a part of these ministries (or want to join) and would like to lead, please talk to Fr. Raphael.

### *Children, Youth and Family*

- **Sunday School** for all Ages continues. December's schedule is unique.

*Sunday, December 3:* St. Nicholas Day: Children please leave shoes in Narthex.

Guest Speaker for Adults, Youth and Children: Fr. Simon Menya, Northern Uganda

Self Sufficiency Project; Children and Youth will be dismissed after 15 minutes for Pageant Practice.

*Sunday, December 10:* Class for adults (in temple); Nativity Pageant Practice for Children and Youth in Parish hall.

*Sunday, December 17:* Nativity Pageant performed by Children for Parish audience

- **St. Luke Home-school Co-op** meets every other Monday. We have a few late morning activities: ballet class and handcrafts. Next is lunch and fellowship and then we gather for contemplation and recitation of a Psalm, artist and composer study, folk singing and folk dancing. Depending upon the needs and ages of your children mothers and their child/children can come for both morning and afternoon or just for morning activities or for just the afternoon. Please contact Shelli Sittler if you are interested [skstittler@gmail.com](mailto:skstittler@gmail.com)
- **Youth Group** will meet Wednesday, December 6 after Liturgy, during potluck dinner. Make gingerbread houses, learn more about Winter Camp (January 13-15) and plan for 2024.
- **Girls' Basket Ministry** now has 18 young ladies serving in this ministry. What a celebration! Friendly reminder: If you know you will not be in church on the Sunday your daughter is assigned, please try to switch with someone else. If your daughter wants to participate, please contact Janelle Payne, [dj72002@comcast.net](mailto:dj72002@comcast.net)

### *Adult Education Class with Fr. Daniel*

On November 30, December 7, and December 14 we will discuss the lives and teaching of three of the most important Fathers of the Church: St Basil the Great. St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. We will not have classes on December 21st and 28th. We will resume classes on January 4th when we discuss St John Chrysostom. On January 11th we have the last class on the early Fathers with discussion on St. Cyril of Alexandria. Beginning on January 18th and for the next seven classes I will offer The History of the Divine Liturgy. These classes will conclude before the beginning of Great Lent. There will be no classes during Great Lent. I will offer a series of classes on the later Church Fathers sometime in the future. All are welcome to the classes.

### *Antiochian Women*

Antiochian Women of St Luke is hosting an Advent Retreat for the whole parish on the weekend of December 8-9, 2023. Please plan to join us! The speaker is Mother Melania, Abbess of Holy Assumption women's monastery in Calistoga, CA. Friday night will be a talk for the women's group. Saturday open to everyone in the parish. Register here: <http://bit.ly/StLuke2023Advent>. Register by 12/6. See Margaret with any questions.



Sign up for the AW of St Luke newsletter here: <https://tinyurl.com/AWStLukeneews>. The last newsletter went out 11/27, please check your spam filters if you haven't been receiving the newsletters!

### *Lift Up Uganda*

#### *Myrrhbearers Annual Christmas Wreath Sale*

Thank you to everyone who bought Christmas wreaths and to those who donated for mosquito nets. Lift Up Uganda will be able to buy 158 mosquito nets to give to babies delivered at the St Nektarios Health Center in Akonyibedo village, Gulu, Uganda. These insecticide treated bed nets markedly decrease mosquito bites that can spread malaria. This disease often is life threatening in the very young. You are helping to save lives of children in Uganda! Thank you helping to "Fight the Bite"!

#### *School Sponsorship for St. Nektarios Nursery and Primary School, Akonyibedo Village, Gulu, Uganda:*

In 2023 Lift Up Uganda began a school sponsorship program with 40 St Luke families on a trial basis. It was a huge success for the 40 girls and boys who received 3 terms of tuition plus a uniform. Parents/guardians were so grateful knowing

that for one full year there would be no interruption in attendance at school. This is a partnership agreement between the donors and the parents/guardians who provided Food and Other Requirements. As a bonus, the children learned new skills of how to write and to receive letters. All 40 students did well this year and will advance to the next grade level when the first term of school begins February 5, 2024. Education is a tremendous gift to a poor child. Please consider sponsoring a child in 2024 to continue this program. The one time cost is \$150 for 3 terms of tuition and a uniform. Deadline is December 15. Please contact Sue Nelson for questions.



### ***Community Outreach***

#### ***Erie Food Bank Thanksgiving Donation***

"We so appreciate your gift. I will send a thank you note but words fail to convey the deep appreciation we feel. Thank you so much. Our clients have grown from 65 families to 85 families now. The funds are most needed." Joanna, Director, expressed gratitude for our donation of \$1075 .

#### ***Lakota Christmas Outreach***

Once again St. Luke is blessed to share the Nativity Season with our neighbors to the north. We will send needed items to Nancy LaPointe, Wraparound Care Coordinator at Sinte Gleska University Family Program on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. We order gifts, food, personal hygiene items, and cleaning supplies through Amazon. Amazon delivers directly to the University. Please give your check donation directly to Bee Sturgis or make it out to St. Luke with memo: "Lakota Outreach" . The last day to give to this outreach is December 10th. Gifts ordered as donations are received.

#### ***Myrrhbearer Intercessory Prayer Group***

Here at St. Luke's, we believe in the power of prayer. We are committed to the practice of prayer both individually and corporately. As a result, we see the hand of God moving in our lives, and in the lives of those around us. The Myrrhbears' Intercessory Prayer group is the St. Luke ministry team of Orthodox Christian women communicants who commit themselves to daily prayer in the morning and the evening, fasting as prescribed by the Orthodox Church, daily spiritual readings and reflection, intercession and study, and participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of our parish. We consult with Fr. Raphael, our spiritual director. Every request is held in confidence sharing only with the clergy. Prayer requests are prayed for each day for one month. Orthodox Christians are remembered in Liturgy prayers. Opportunities for corporate prayer are open to anyone who would want to attend Liturgy on Sunday, midweek, or a Vesper service. We know that it's not always easy to open up and share what's going on in your life. But life gets messy, and no matter who we are, we need people to come alongside and support us in prayer. If you need prayer for a specific need, let us know and your request will go to our committed team of prayer warriors. We pray over many requests each day so please keep it an appropriate length so we can give each request equal attention. In addition to requesting prayer from a Myrrhbearer, there is a prayer box in the Narthex that is checked weekly.

The Myrrhbearer members you may contact are: Sh. Margaret Ashton, Daya Colborn, Margaret Evans, Marilyn Geerdes, Heather Hennigh, Carol Hynes, Sue Nelson, Olga Peyton, Denise Rice, Rita Rosson, Elaine Senko, Heather Wicht, and Kat Wolff.

#### ***Choir***

Please join our Choir Family! Singing in the St. Luke Liturgical Choir is a lot of fun and will connect you to our choir family. We wish to welcome our newest members: Rose Faissal (alto) and Aimee Colyer (soprano). We are always in need of singers for all sections. Not ready to commit? Try out a practice on December 2 or 16 at 10A or any Sunday at 8A in classroom #4.

#### ***St. Luke's Library***

Please return your library books when they are no longer being actively used. There is a bin in the library for your returns. Aimee Colyer, our Librarian, will re-shelve. Thank you.

### ***Bookstore News***

True Vine Bookstore has recently added a number of new books and icons, including writings of church fathers and saints, children's books and icons of various saints. The bookstore staff is always happy to order items for you, often at a significant wholesale discount. Looking for a special gift for a loved one? Check out the hand carved icon in the bookstore by local iconographer, Anna Vander Wall. She resides in northern Colorado and was trained by Jonathan Pageau and Christopher Gosey. She is available for commission requests.

### ***OCF: College Students***

Greetings CU Boulder OCF! Students are on winter break this months. Meetings will resume in January. All meetings are in Ketchum room 1B64. All students, staff and faculty are invited for Bible Study and pizza. Contact Graham Simpson: [grahamsimpsonco@gmail.com](mailto:grahamsimpsonco@gmail.com) or Robbie Macdonald [roma9153@colorado.edu](mailto:roma9153@colorado.edu)

## **More News**

### ***Word Magazine***

The Word Magazine is a free publication for members of our church provided by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese. Paper or digital copies published. Sign up here: [http://ww1.antiochian.org/address\\_updates](http://ww1.antiochian.org/address_updates)

### ***The Great Doxology***

Our Parish continues to learn the Great Doxology in all eight tones, as appointed in our Liturgical Guide. All new music settings take time to become familiar, please be patient and follow the chanters as you pick up the melody during parts of it. Pick up your copy of each Sunday's tone in the Narthex.

### ***Care of our Temple***

We have two weekly cleaning teams that work very hard to keep our temple beautiful. Please be mindful of our shared sacred space. Wipe muddy and snowy feet on mats in the Narthex. It is good to keep an eye on the children when they are eating blessed bread so that unnecessary crumbs are not going onto the floor. Please remove your trash, kleenex, etc. and place in the trash bins in the Narthex.

### ***Care for our Homebound Members***

Volunteers needed to visit, encourage and help homebound members of our parish. Please let Frances know if you can help.

### ***Live Streaming Services***

Our Sunday 8a Orthros and 9a Sunday Divine Liturgy "live streaming" continues on our YouTube channel "st-lukestream". The link below may be copied and pasted into your web browser. As a "subscriber" to our YouTube channel, you can get an alert - if you wish to know when a live stream is on.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHBtBg43HgfOd4N02UZOR4w>

### ***Looking ahead to 2024***

If any of your or your friends have interest in a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, please speak to Fr. David. He may be planning one in late September with Fr. Constantine Nasr (retired priest in our Archdiocese and born in Palestine). Fr. David hopes to be involved in one pilgrimage each year in his retirement.



## Saturday Catechism Classes — 2023/2024

Beginning in September, Fr. Raphael will offer a series of introductory classes for Inquirers and Catechumens at St. Luke. These classes are geared for all those interested in learning more about the Orthodox Church, for those interested in becoming Orthodox, and for our own members who may never have gone through a series of catechism classes. **These classes will be held on Saturday afternoon before Vespers at 2:30PM.**

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
I.	09/16	Introduction & Revelation
II.	09/30	Nicene Creed - Part I "I believe in One God..."
III.	10/14	Nicene Creed - Part II Who is Jesus Christ?
IV.	10/28	Nicene Creed - Part III The Holy Trinity
V.	11/11	The Holy Scripture & Canons
VI.	12/02	Hagiology & Mariology
VII.	12/16	Sacraments and Worship
VIII.	01/13	Divine Liturgy
IX.	01/27	Iconography
X.	02/10	Spirituality
XI.	02/24	Developing a Rule of Prayer
XII.	03/09	Confession & Entry into the Church

\*Dates, times and topics are subject to revision. See future News Briefs for updates.











