

April & May 2009

MESSENGER

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER NEWSLETTER

The Very Reverend Father Samer Youssef

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From the Pastor's Desk



Dear beloved Parishioners:

Greetings in the name of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ to you and all your household. I pray that this Lenten Season is a spiritual one.

As it is the first Messenger in this year, I would like to thank the out-going members of the Parish Council who worked diligently during their term, especially the Chairman Henry Veizades for his dedication and loving leadership he demonstrated, work well done. Also, I would like to welcome the new Parish Council for the year 2009 and its Chairman Robert Wells.

It is only one week left for Easter. Easter is the greatest celebration of the liturgical year. During Great Lent: the services lead us on a journey of repentance toward the empty tomb.

My beloved, this is the season for working hard for purification and transformation of the heart. In this Messenger you will find the schedule of services during Holy week. Also you will find spiritual readings and opportunities for charitable giving. May our Master Jesus Christ strengthen us as we struggle to do His commandments and emulate His

unconditional love. As much as we put efforts to do so we will have much joy in singing "Christ is risen from the dead trampling death by death and to those in the tombs bestowing life."

Yours in Christ,

V. Rev. Fr. Samer Youssef

Parish Council

I am honored to have been selected this year to be Parish Council Chairman.

With the support and involvement of the parish and the other parish council members, this year will be filled with many successful and rewarding events and activities.

This Year's Parish Council Members are as follows:

Chairman	Robert Wells
Vice-Chairman	Basma Batmani
Secretary	Maria Segal
Treasurer	Dania Amireh
Men's Auxiliary	George Barghouth
Women's Auxiliary	Norma Hanani
	Alhadad & Hala
	Aboujudom
Sunday School	Hala Elmasu
Member	David Aboujudom
Member	Carmen Batmani
Member	Fadi Hanani
Member (Honorary)	Simon Hanhan
Member	Joe Landino
Member (Honorary)	Basheer Salameh
Member	Jim Stroud
Member	Sheila Veizades

We have the following standing committees this year:

1. Food Festival, September 12-13, 2009 – Nabil and Basma Batmani – planning is already underway for this year's food festival, please say YES when we ask for your help and involvement – everyone's help is needed and appreciated to make this year's food festival a great success.
2. Website – Robert Wells – Our new website is live as of the end of March, please visit it at <http://orthodoxredeemer.org>. Please contact Robert Wells or Christian Manasseh with suggestions for improvement, events or content to add to it, or if you would like to learn how to update parts of the site yourself – it is easy if you know how to use a web browser, after one of us shows you how and grants you the needed permissions. One way to contact us is by using the Contact Us link at the upper right of each web page.
3. Stewardship – Joe Landino & Fadi Hanani – Joe and Fadi are brainstorming ways of increasing awareness of the importance of stewardship and giving in our Christian life, and the advantages to our church community of having more members pledging contributions we can count on, in our planning for the year.
4. Charity – Jim Stroud – Jim is investigating ways for us to get more directly involved in charitable acts as a church community, please contact him with suggestions.
5. Maintenance & Grounds – Sheila Veizades – Sheila has organized our first parish work Saturday of this year for Saturday April 4 from 10am to 4pm, see the website for details – Ann and I will be there, and hope many of you hear about it and are there as well – it will be fun and satisfying to do much needed maintenance on our beloved church, together.
6. Church Hall – David Aboujudom – David has agreed to lead the planning effort for a new Church Hall, and you will be hearing more about this as the year progresses.

I look forward to seeing you in Church and encourage everyone to attend Wednesday Pre-

Sanctified Liturgy and/or Friday night Akathist Services during this Lenten season, and the Holy Week services leading up to Pascha and Bright Week.

I have really enjoyed the Bible study classes I've attended so far – we are meeting every two weeks on Friday night, currently after the Akathist service, and participation has been great – we are working our way through the first chapters of the Gospel of John, and the discussions have been very interesting and fun. The next Bible Study class is this Friday, on April 3.

Yours In Christ
Robert Wells
Chairman of Parish Council

Treasurer's Report

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

First of all I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generous contributions for the ministry of our Church throughout the year. You have always been there with your support when we call upon you for the Church and we thank you for that.

God Bless You All
Dania Amireh, Treasurer
E-mail: Dania@svminc.com

Antiochian Women of The Orthodox Church of the Redeemer

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for entrusting us with being the presidents of the Ladies Auxiliary. We are honored to take this position to serve our Church.

The Ladies Auxiliary started out this year with the Annual Senior Luncheon in January in honor of our senior for their continuous support and dedication of this great Parish and community. It was a great success and everyone had a lot of fun. A big thanks to all the ladies who worked very hard to make this event a very successful one.

Women throughout centuries played an important role in the Church. Therefore, March was designated by our Archdiocese as Antiochian Women's Month. We remember and honor all of the women who serve in their ministry in the life of the Church, we remember the biblical figures, the Virgin Mary, Ruth, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachael, and the Ointment-Bearing Women. We would like to thank all the ladies in our Parish who have been giving the weekly sermonette, reading the Epistle and ushering. May God bless.

Cheese Fare Luncheon, March 1st, was sponsored the wonderful ladies of the Redeemer. May God bless you, protect and keep you in the best of health.

Our Annual Palm Sunday Bake Sale is April 12th. Please see Norma Hanani or [Hala](#) Aboujudom to sign up for [baked goods](#). Proceeds will go to help one of our Orthodox Charities.

Ladies Annual Retreat in beautiful [Santa Cruz](#) is coming up in May. Space is still available for anyone who is interested to attend this event. Please see Basma Batmani for more information.

Please join us for Bible Study every other Friday at 7:30pm in the [Church Hall](#). The next one is scheduled for April 3rd.

Ladies Annual Potluck Tea Party will be hosted at the home of Basma Batmani on Saturday, May 16th at 1:00 p.m. Please bring a side dish to share. For more information see Basma.

We would like to thank Basma Batmani for all the work she has done for the Ladies in our parish for the last two years, a job well done! May God bless.

We welcome any suggestions, ideas and input you may have, so please do not hesitate to call us.

Yours in Christ,

Hala Aboujudom & Norma Hanani

[Men's Fellowship](#)

We had our annual Crab Feed on March 7th. It was a successful event and we all had a great time. Many thanks to all those who participated and helped and made it such a success. I am looking forward to discussing future activities with all the parishioners in our next monthly meeting.

Your brother in Christ
George Barghouth

[SOYO](#)

The last 3 months the SOYO has been very busy with activities and meetings. We have been ice skating with St. Stephens's teens at the Vallco Shopping Center in January, a ski trip to Squaw Valley for some skiing and snowboarding in February, and a day retreat with Fr. Nasser of Project Mexico in March. Most all of the events and meetings have been well attended by 15-25 teens. This is so great, we hope you keep it up teens!

We've also had a SOYO meeting the first Friday of every month with either a teaching by Karim Azar or movie night, games, making chocolate flowers for Valentines and fellowship.

The teens enjoyed ice skating with the St. Stephens teens and we hope to plan more together in the future. They also joined us for the retreat. Fr. Nasser talked to the teens and parents about how to communicate effectively in an Orthodox Christian manner. It was very dynamic and uplifting. We hope to have another day retreat in the fall.

Some other activities which are up and coming are service day at Sacred Heart Ministries and at the church. We hope to beautify our grounds and plant more flowers and some native plants which require less water. We will have the Good Friday all night Vigil and making Palm Crosses and Candles for Palm Sunday.

We also have started a recycling program at the Church and hope to raise funds for the SOYO through this program. The teens with the help of Bassam Khoury and others put on a Falafel Luncheon to raise money for St. Innocent

Orphanage where Fr. Michael Nasser lives and works.

The teens hope to plan a biking day, a dance, a beach trip and also a camping trip in the summer. All church teens that are 7th – 12th grade are welcome to come. Parents please bring your teens to the up and coming events and meetings through your support we can grow our group to 30 teens.

The Parish life Conference is coming on May 23-25 Memorial Day weekend, and I encourage all teens to come and participate. We have youths signed up to participate in all events.

Oratorical Festival Senior Division:

Junior Division:

1. Sandra Kreitem
 1. Michael Veizades
 2. Richard Kotite

Bible Bowl Contest Senior Division:

Junior Division:

1. Richard Kotite
 1. Michael Veizades
2. Gregory Veizades
 2. Mona Batmani
3. Aireen Karkar
 3. Joey Stroud
4. Elias Karkar
 4. Alice Dalo
5. Michelle Saleh
 5. Annette Saleh

We wish them all good luck in their endeavors.

Yours in Christ, Sheila Veizades (SOYO Advisor)

Sunday School

“OF ALL HOLY WORKS, THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IS THE MOST HOLY”. St. Theophan the Recluse

Preschool – Kindergarten: We learned about the Annunciation, and St. Valentine, and the meaning of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. We also expressed our love by making Valentine’s Day cards. We discussed guardian angels and how each one of us has one for protection and guidance. We will soon begin learning about Easter and its significance. The children will be learning the

Pascha Troparian “Christ is Risen”. All the children continue to bring a wonderful energy to the classroom!

Widad Tarazi

1st – 2nd: We studied the three Sacraments: Baptism, Communion and Chrismation; when we receive these Sacraments, we become members of God’s family. We learned about the mystery of Chrismation and how Jesus sends his Holy Spirit who guides and teaches us to make the right choices. With the power of the Holy Spirit we live and act like Jesus did and we become Orthodox Christians. We learned that each one of us can make a difference by helping, showing our love, caring, and sharing our talents with the unfortunate or needy. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We will be studying about the Great Lent and Easter.

Mona Awad & Sandra Kreitem

3rd – 6th: We wanted our class to prepare themselves for Easter by having an understanding of the important parts such as confession, giving to others, and fasting. To prepare them for the opportunity of partaking in the Sacrament of Confession, we have been discussing sin and the Ten Commandments. In order to ensure that our children understand the significance of Easter, we will be discussing the days of Holy Week and their significance so that the services can have a deeper and more powerful meaning. Our hope is that they will come to understand Easter as our Lord's greatest gift to us by giving His only Son for our sake.

George Barghouth and Amanda Salameh

7th - 8th: The students are learning about the Orthodox Faith. After studying in details the Nicene Creed, we are examining the development of the Early Church and the trials and tribulations of the First Christians. Thus, we have learnt about the persecutions and the martyrdom of many Christians under Roman tyranny. We studied the advent of Constantine the Great, who was able to win a battle with the sign of Christ on his army's shields and to declare Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, thus establishing the peace of the Church. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we had a lesson on Iconoclasm and its catastrophic effect on the Byzantine Empire. We learned that the text that we declare in church after the procession is from the Final Declaration of the Second Council of Nicaea

in 787 that re-established the Holy Icons in the churches. In the coming weeks, we shall learn about all the heresies confronting Orthodoxy and the decisions of the Ecumenical councils that defended the True Faith.

Rima Gannage & Sheila Veizades

9th – 12th: We have been progressing through Acts from St. Paul's conversion to the spread of Christianity to the world at the time. Our Teen SOYO will begin to prepare for the Bible Bowl and Oratorical competition that will be held at the Parish Life Conference in Santa Clara this May.

Karim Azar & Stacey Aboujudom

I would like to thank all the parents that have been encouraging their children to participate in Sunday School and Teen SOYO. Please stay committed to the Sunday school program by making every effort to attend Sunday school on a regular basis.

Thank you to all the families who brought snack and juice to share with the Sunday school. Your help is appreciated.

On March 8, Orthodoxy Sunday, the children had a beautiful procession holding their special Icon around the Church.

This Year's **Parish Life Conference** is being hosted by St. St. Stephen Church in Campbell at the Santa Clara Marriott Hotel, May 20 - 24.

The Theme for the Conference is "*Be mindful, O Lord, of those who bear fruit and do good works in Thy Holy Churches, and who remember the poor.*" (Anaphora of St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom)

Sunday school had two workshops on Feb 22 - March 1 to help the children submit an entry in this year's Creative Arts Festival. The staff encouraged all the children to participate; the lessons learned from this activity are wonderful and develop their spiritual growth. Seventeen students participated, all their artwork and or writing was displayed in the Narthex before mailing entries for judging. We had a raffle drawing, and presented three winners with a small gift, the winners were Mona Batmani, Damian Youssef, and Jonathan Ijha. We will have

three teams, Junior, Senior, and Adult team, represent our Church in the Bible Bowl Competition at the Western Region Parish Life Conference. The topic will be on Gospel of John as found in the Orthodox Study Bible. Come on Saturday, May 23 and cheer our teams as they compete in the Bible Bowl. George Barghouth & Sheila Veizades have graciously accepted to coordinate the Bible studies.

On **April 5**, the students will have a special **Holy Unction Service after Liturgy**. The Holy Unction, one of the seven sacraments, is given once a year on Holy Wednesday. Fr. Samer added this special service for the children since many are unable to attend night services.

On **Lazarus Saturday, April 11 from 10:00 to 1:00 p.m.**, we will have a spiritual event "**JOURNEY TO PASCHA**". The children will be kneeling under the Gospel for special blessings. Father Samer will explain the significance behind the offering of the Holy Bread at the end of Liturgy. During the Great Lenten period this year, we will be studying the events that we celebrate during **Holy Week and Pascha** by having a special activity for the children. We will begin with the story of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, and continue, with our celebration of Jesus' joyful Entrance into Jerusalem. We will learn about each day of Holy Week, what Jesus taught his disciples during this time and what happened to Jesus as he was put to death and finally celebrating Christ's Resurrection.

You are invited to attend our annual pancake breakfast and other goodies.

Please bring the following food items to share:

Preschool – 4th Grade

**Fruits, Grapes,
Cantaloupe etc.**

5th – 6th Grade

Hummus & Bread

7th – 12th Grade

Manaish (Zatar & Bread)

After the breakfast the parents and teens decorate the candles for the Palm Sunday service. We will show a video for the young ones called "The Easter Story".

On June 7, we will celebrate **Sunday School Graduation** after Divine Liturgy for all the children who participated in the school year. A **special**

certificate and gift will be given for those students who attended **50%** or more. A participation certificate will be given to all students who attended at least 25%.

Ice Cream Social will follow the ceremony. Everyone is Welcome!

IMPORTANT DATES:

- April 5 Holy Uction Service for students
- April 11 Lazarus Saturday
Pancake breakfast and decoration of candles.
Youth confession eight to twelve year old at 9:30
Easter video for the young ones
- April 12 Palm Sunday....No Sunday school
- April 17 Good Friday, Teen confession and All night vigil at 6:30
- April 19 Pascha ...No Sunday school
Easter Egg Hunt after Agape
Vespers at 12:00
- May 10 Mother's Day Craft
- May 24 No Sunday school – Memorial Day weekend ,
Parish Life Conference
- May 31 Last day of Sunday school
- June 7 Sunday school Graduation & Ice cream social

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Hala Elmasu - Superintendent

What are Our Goals for Spiritual Growth?

We as responsible, caring and loving parents tend to have goals for our children that would ensure their social, financial and educational welfare. However, as Christian parents, do we ever think about setting goals for our children's spiritual growth? Frankly, I personally never thought about setting goals for my family's spiritual growth, until I heard the question being asked to my daughter by the school administrator during a high school interview. On the way home, questions were floating in my mind; what should my spiritual goals be as a Christian? What does the Bible say our spiritual goals should be? How do we attain our goals for spiritual growth? What does it mean to have spiritual growth?

As Christians we strive to be worthy of God's kingdom. We try to attend Church regularly, some of us pray daily prayers or fast during Lenten season, we occasionally reach out to the needy in our community. But is this enough to grow spiritually and when do we know if we are spiritually mature and that we are whole in the eyes of God? Jesus clearly points out in his teachings, that our number one goal is not moral perfection, it is to love God. In Mark 12: 30-31 Jesus tells us that "the two greatest commandments are to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength, this the first commandment and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself." Unfailing love and faithfulness is what God expects of us. In order for spiritual growth to occur, we also need to make sure we have faith in Christ Jesus as our savior. When you believe in Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. John 1:12 says "All who believed him and accepted him as Lord and Savior, Jesus gave them the right to be children of God."

Do love and faith alone lead to spiritual growth? According to the teachings of St. Paul to the Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them". Also, in the Sermon on the Mount, Mathew 5:3-12, Jesus introduces the kind of life those who seek his kingdom must lead. So according to St. Paul, submission to God's will and putting our trust in Him are also required to attain spiritual growth. Moreover, per Jesus' teachings in His Sermon on the Mount; pursuing a life of righteousness that is based on humility and love for others is also a requirement to grow spiritually. In the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians 5:22-23 it reads "the fruits of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control for such there is no law". So, if we embrace the fruits of the Holy Spirit and become more loving, more joyful, more kind, more self controlled, so on and so forth, then we can rest assured that spiritual growth is genuinely occurring in our lives.

How do we set goals for spiritual growth? Well, setting spiritual goals can be tremendously frustrating. There are plenty of people who attend a service or two, and they seem enthusiastic to get

closer to God and develop relationships with other Christians yet they don't come back. It is easy to fail at things we deeply want to achieve just because we aren't truly committed or with today's tough life demands it is simply hard to commit. It is a life-long journey to reaching spiritual maturity. God works in people differently, some reach spiritual maturity faster than others.

From my personal experience, I found out that we don't need to set goals to experience spiritual growth. You know, I've expressed on many occasions, how rewarding my experience has been serving in the church. Some have asked me "why put the extra time and effort, it's not like you're getting paid for it?" Also, some said to me that "committing so much of your time for Church related activities is taking away from your family time". Well, the rewards that I have received from the time that I have invested serving in our Church have far exceeded any monetary compensation and my relationship with my family has never been closer. I found out that **there's a direct relationship with serving in the church and growing stronger in faith.** The more time I committed to being involved and serving in the community, the closer it brought me to God, to my family and to my fellow Christians. The more time I've committed to serving and attending church more regularly, the more I've learned to lean on God for strength and endurance, the more I became involved in my children's religious and spiritual education, the more I became supportive and understanding to my husband, more caring and loving to my fellow Christians, more forgiving to those who have wronged me, more patient and understanding of those with whom I have a conflict. I've also found spiritual nourishment when I started reading the Bible and reflecting on God's word. You see my involvement in the church has grown my faith which has helped me to fervently persevere at pursuing the life of which Jesus has spoken in His Sermon on the Mount. St. James says in his Epistle 2:17 "Thus also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, it is dead.**" We must grow our faith in God through our works and commitment to serving others.

In conclusion, this is how I believe spiritual growth can be reached; first by allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell inside us through faith in our Lord

Jesus Christ. Second, by being more like Jesus and emulating his actions and way of life, third, by attending church regularly and receiving and giving support to others to reach their individual spiritual goals. And last but not least by reading and applying God's word to our lives. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches us, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." In order for spiritual growth to occur we must be grounded in God's word so that we can effectively proceed in what God has designed us to accomplish. Then, we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work. This is the essence of spiritual growth.

By the way, in case you are wondering what my daughter's answer was to the school administrator. Well, after taking a moment of thought and later asking the administrator to rephrase the question, her answer was simple yet appropriately convincing. This is what she said "I would read the Bible more often, pray to God on daily basis to maintain a personal relationship with Him and attend Church more regularly."

(This sermon was delivered by Basma Batmani during the Antiochian Women Month, March 22, 09.)

**54th PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE
DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND
THE WEST**

May 20 – 24, 2009

**"Be mindful, O Lord, of those who bear fruit
and do good works in
Thy holy Churches, and who remember the
poor."**

**The Very Reverend Father Thomas Hopko,
keynote speaker**

**Hosted by St. Stephen Antiochian
Orthodox Church in Campbell**

**Presided over by his Grace Bishop
JOSEPH**

**At the Santa Clara Marriott in Santa Clara
** That Sunday, May 24, the Church
of the Redeemer will be celebrating
Divine Liturgy there at the hotel. ****

**Contact 408.370.0704 or www.plc2009.org
for more information**

**Early Bird Deadline: April 15, 2009 Many
activities for all ages!**

**Camp St. Nicholas in Frazier
Park**
**The Diocese of Los Angeles and
the West**

“He who has ears, let him hear.”

Matthew 13:9

Session #1 July 12-18 (youth)

Session #2 July 19-25 (all ages)
Early Bird Deadline is April 6
Register online at www.campstnicholas.com

ICON & FURNISHING DONATIONS

Note that we still have icons available for donation in the dome they are the Prophets. You can donate them for the good health or in memory of a loved one.

These are the items we need donations for.

The name of the Icon	The Location	Donation
12 Prophets: Jeremiah, Joel, Abbakum, and Jonas	Between Dome Windows	\$1875.00 each

Description of the item	Donation
Virgin Mary Medallion	\$1500.00 donated as of Nov 9, 08
St. Peter Medallion	\$1500.00
St. John the Baptist Medallion	\$1500.00
St. Ignatius Medallion	\$1500.00 donated as of Jan 17, 09
Standing Candle Holder on table	\$2500.00
St. Paul Medallion	\$1500.00 donated as of Nov 16,08
Two Chandeliers	\$5000.00 each
Two Candle Stands	\$1600.00 each

HOLY WEEK and Easter SERVICES 2009

Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy April 11th at 10:00 A.M
Palm Sunday April 12th

April 13	April 14	April 15	April 16	April 17	April 18	April 19
HOLY MONDAY	HOLY TUESDAY	HOLY WEDNESDAY	HOLY THURSDAY	GOOD FRIDAY	GREAT SATURDAY	PASCHA SUNDAY
7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Service	7:00 p.m. Bridegroom Service	7:00 p.m. Service of Holy Unction	10:00 a.m. Vesperal Divine Liturgy 7:00 p.m. Twelve Passion Gospels	12:00 noon Decoration of the Tomb 4:00 p.m. Vespers, Procession with the Epitaphion 7:00 p.m. Lamentations All night vigil by SOYO.	10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy 11:00 P.M Resurrection Matins and rush Service (Haimeh) followed by the Divine Liturgy for Easter, Pascha and potluck	12:00 p.m. Easter Day Agape Vespers (Baouth Service) Easter Egg Hunt)

*You can go to our web site for the schedule of services as will
 @ www.orthodoxredeemer.org*

EASTER FLOWERS

Please use the enclosed flyer to send or bring your Easter Offering to decorate the Tomb of Christ and for Easter Services. All names will be remembered at Pascha Liturgy. However they should be in the Church Office before Wednesday April 15.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

- **April 8:** Pre sanctified Liturgy @ 7:00 p.m. Followed by Food Festival Committee Meeting
- **April 10; NO Madayeh, Akathist**
- **April 12:** Palm Sunday, Bake Sale
- **April 13-18:** Holy Week
- **April 18, 11:00 p.m. Easter Liturgy (Hajmeh),** Followed by Easter Potluck
- **April 19:** Agape Vesters at Noon, followed by Egg Hunt
- **April 25:** BBQ at 4:00 p.m., see flyer for more info
- **May 8:** Women's Retreat, Santa Cruz
- May 10:** Mother's Day.
- May 20-24:** Parish Life Conference. Marriott, Santa Clara
- May 24 Divine Liturgy,** Marriott, Santa Clara
- May 28** Divine Liturgy, 10:00 a.m., Feast of the Ascension

Antiochian Orthodox
Church of the Redeemer
380 Magdalena Avenue
Los Altos Hills, CA 94024



