THE ST. GEORGE
Grapevine
Vol. 30, No. 3 Fall 2026

Celebrating 30 Years of the Grapevine!



Pastor's Corner

by Rev. Fr. Alex Mackoul

Beloved in Christ, growing up as a "millennial" and becoming a priest has had its difficulties. One of the hardest things to navigate is how to fit together the way the self-help world and the Church tell us to think about ourselves.

How do we understand who we are when we hear things in the Church like, "You are the chief of sinners" and "Struggle against yourself" and then we go on social media and hear the self-help world and many of the influencers in society share things like, "You are enough" and "Perfect is what you are".

We have all this terminology about how to deal with our struggles, mistakes, sins, anxiety, depression, and human weakness, but how do we make sense of it all? Can we be sinful and good? Can we be struggling and holy? I hope what comes next is a helpful first step in understanding all of this!

It is very clear that we are all very weak. Like dust, we get blown back and forth between pride and insecurity. We struggle with despondency and overindulgence. We fall prey to anxiety and worry. Some of us put on bigger shows than others to mask it, but we are all struggling with who we really are and who we are supposed to be. It's this deadly combination that leaves room for guilt to enter our lives and paralyze us from real repentance and growth.

So how are we to understand and process all of this? How are we supposed to see ourselves and know how God sees us? The simple answer is we are God's children - weak, struggling, growing, beloved by Him, whom He desires to raise into citizens of his Kingdom.

I think the term "embracing our imperfection" is also a good place to start. It begins by realizing that it is okay to be weak and struggling. This is part of our human story where God works strength through weakness. I think we begin to have problems when we take this truth too far and start to take Christ out of it by using phrases like, "You are enough". That phrase gets thrown around a lot and can be misleading. It's important to know that we are not perfect the way we are. We need to be embraced, nurtured, supported, and encompassed in love like a child learning to grow up. And that's a beautiful thing!

Maybe instead of just turning inward and embracing ourselves, we can also open our arms to God who can then embrace us and bring us to a deep sense of security and unity that only an all-powerful God whom we call "Father" can do. To be encompassed and embraced is what we really desire and what makes us whole. This is what happens in confession and repentance, through our weakness. It is only in weakness that we unite with God!

Christianity is not achievement. It is surrender! It is then that we can be encompassed by God's love, the love of the one who gives his life for us in the midst of weakness, betrayal, and human frailty.

One of the first things we ask of God, once we are baptized and chrismated, is that He preserve us as an "invincible struggler". You don't ever see those words put together, but from the very outset of our Church life, that is the reality! We enter the Church to grow, to be changed, and to experience resurrection over and over again, until it becomes our reality and eternal joy. We continually stretch out to the wounded open hands of the Saviour, who reaches to us (not to commend our "good job"), but to raise us out of our fallen state!

Maybe instead of "you are enough" we can say, "love through the process because God certainly does!" Human beings are good, weak, struggling, children of God with whom He desires to share eternity! This life is one of growth, repentance, and the beginning of the unending joy that God is known through his abounding, great, steadfast, and endless mercy and love for mankind!

Happy 30th Birthday, Grapevine!

by Maryann Skaff

"Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established." Proverbs 16:3

"Thirty days has September, April, June and November…" and this September began our 30th year of the St. George Grapevine.

In 1996, the Fellowship of St. John the Divine wanted to promote activities and events about and for the parishioners of St. George. So, Rita Kee and I, Maryann Skaff, were asked to start a newsletter for St. George. I was the editor and Rita the designer and layout editor.

Although there were a few missed issues, we are back in print.

Today, Rita, Becky Ofiesh and I comprise the newsletter staff under the Pastoral committee.

We would like to thank all the "cub reporters" of each organization, and all those who have contributed articles, suggestions, and compliments, which encouraged us to go to press for the last 30 years. We, also, thank our parish priests who gave their time to offer articles for the Pastor's Corner which were informative and inspirational to our readers.

During those 30 years we became a Cathedral and have continued to grow and prosper.

In 1996, the PLC was held in Toledo, Ohio, (when we were still a part of the Midwest Diocese), and our Teen SOYO Catechism Bowl team of Nicholas Haddad, Barbara Michael, and Lindsay Jackfert won first place. Kim Krase won 1st place in the oratorical contest.

Our St. George Choir put on a wonderful performance with Al "Big Bopper" Sahley stealing the show. And, several participated in the Creative Arts Festival and won or placed in several categories.

This year our teen Catechism Bowl team (Will, Chase, Thomas, Alyssa, Anna, and Abbie) displayed a valiant effort in the Catechism Bowl. Congratulations to all who participated in the Creative Arts Festival on a job well done.

Thank you readers for your continued support of the St. George Grapevine!

If you would prefer to receive the Grapevine newsletter by email instead of mail, please contact the church office with your name and email 304-346-0106 or email office@stgeorgecharleston.org or ritakee@aol.com

THE ST. GEORGE Grapevine

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http://www.stgeorgecharleston.org/

A parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
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Pastoral Committee Chair: Ganim Howard
Co/Editors: Becky Ofiesh, Maryann Skaff
Design: Rita Damous Kee

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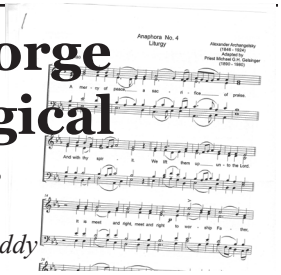
The St George Grapevine is published about every three months and is mailed during the first week of the month.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Our Liturgical new year began Sept. 1.



St George Liturgical Choir



by Loretta Haddy

We continue to learn new liturgical hymns under the skilled leadership of Lexie Damous. We have already been singing some of them during Sunday Liturgy. Now's the time to join. We know several parishioners that have expressed interest in becoming a member. All are welcome.

As always we rehearse every Thursday at 7 to 8:30 pm. We also, warm-up at 9:45 am to 10:20 am on Sunday morning if you were unable to attend Thursdays's rehearsal.

St. George Cathedral Book Store



by Loretta Haddy

The bookstore has a few new books Fr Alex requested we order for the parish to read. Come by and see the new display.

We continue to improve our customer service with our new electric data system. New prayer ropes and bracelets will be coming soon. We have ordered several holy bread pans and seal. They go fast in case you've wanted to make your own bread after attending the recent Ladies Guild bread making class.

We will start to consider items for Christmas soon. If there's anything you'd like to have now is the time to tell us.

Thank you for your continued support as we look forward to serving our church family.

Parish Council Update: What's Going On??

by M.G. Skaff

In case you haven't noticed a lot has been happening at your Cathedral!

- Domes have been cleaned and restored
- Front sidewalk, step and porch replaced and repaired
- Cathedral's external brick has all been cleaned, pointed and sealed
- New ballroom air conditioner installed
- Three New AED's installed and first aid training being scheduled
- New window seals in the Sunday school have been ordered
- New altar boy robes have been ordered
- Parking lot is scheduled to be repaired and sealed
- Flu and Covid shot clinic scheduled for October 4

The following projects are under consideration:

- Refurbishing sanctuary pews and new pew cushions
- New flooring in sanctuary
- Adult baptism font
- Conference Center kitchen repairs and upgrades

Your input is always welcome. Please don't hesitate to provide your input to any parish council member.

Interested in Church History?

Stop by the bookstore and view the history display!

Need to read a good book?

The bookstore Library has books you can check out and read.

St. George Senior Fellowship

by Maryann Skaff



We hope all of you seniors survived the "summer sunshine," "raging rainstorms," "wild windstorms," and "Hades heat," this summer. As Autumn leaves and temperatures begin to fall, we held our first fall get-together on September 1st. A Beach Party Bingo night was held with barbecues and the fixings and prizes for bingo. Everyone had fun.

We are planning to attend the Light Opera Guild's production of "Annie" on Sunday, Nov. 8, at 2 p.m. If you are interested in attending, please contact Maryann Skaff by Sept. 20.

Our next get-together will be on THURSDAY, Nov. 12 at 5:30 p.m. with dinner and entertainment in the ballroom. Watch for details in the bulletin.













Community Outreach Committee

by Doug Pence

Over the summer the COC has been involved with the following:

1. Ongoing clothing drive for the Fellowship of St. George. We need to start collecting new and slightly used coats for kids through adult in October. Clothing and coats are donated to the homeless shelter at Bream Presbyterian Church.

2. We are attending the Mutual Aid Fair monthly at Kanawha Presbyterian Church. Saint George has a table representing our church where we distribute hygiene items and food. This fair is organized by SOAR (Solutions Oriented Addiction Response) and is solely to assist the homeless and poor. We usually serve 150 to 200 people.

3. We have had two sandwich drives to provide food to the homeless and/or hungry through Saint Marks. Starting in September we will have one sandwich making drive per month to help Saint Marks in their daily feeding efforts.

4. We have made a monetary donation this month to Recovery Point to assist the women in recovery with much needed hygiene and beauty items and backpacks.





Take Time

Take time to be aware
It is the opportunity to help others.

Take time to be quiet
It is the moment to seek God.

Take time to love and be loved
It is God's greatest gift.

Take time to pray
It is the greatest power on earth.



WORD SEARCH

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS & PRAISE WORDS IN THE BIBLE

ALLELUIA
ALMIGHTY
AMEN
BLESSED
CORONET
CYMBAL
DULCIMER
FAITHFUL
FLUTE
GLORY
GRACE
GREAT
HALLELUJAH
HARP
HIGH
HOLY
HONOR
HORN
JUST
OMNIPOTENT
ORGAN
PIPE
POWER
PRAISE
PSALTERY
PURE
REJOICE
RIGHTEOUS
SALVATION
TABRET
TIMBREL
TRUE
TRUMPET
VIOL
VOICE

C	E	R	F	D	O	M	N	I	P	O	T	E	N	T
Y	C	E	X	U	R	T	A	B	R	E	T	U	L	F
M	A	W	A	L	L	E	L	U	I	A	N	S	H	H
B	R	O	E	C	I	O	V	H	O	R	N	N	O	I
A	G	P	M	I	T	E	N	O	R	O	C	O	L	G
L	J	R	S	M	L	E	R	B	M	I	T	I	Y	H
S	O	A	M	E	N	P	E	U	R	T	V	T	R	T
U	R	H	Y	R	E	S	I	A	R	P	F	A	O	R
O	G	F	A	I	T	H	F	U	L	F	B	V	L	U
E	A	V	Y	T	H	G	I	M	L	A	E	L	G	M
T	N	B	F	H	A	J	U	L	E	L	L	A	H	P
H	E	C	R	E	J	O	I	C	E	W	Y	S	C	E
G	L	O	I	V	P	U	R	E	H	O	N	O	R	T
I	G	R	E	A	T	I	P	S	A	L	T	E	R	Y
R	O	T	S	U	J	H	P	D	E	S	S	E	L	B

One Body, One Spirit: A New Church School Year

by Crissy Asseff
Church School Director

As we begin another Church School year at St. George, my heart is filled with gratitude for our children, our families, and our wonderful teachers. Our Church School children are such a special part of the life of our parish. Watching them grow not only in age, but in their knowledge and love of Christ and His Church, is truly a blessing.

This summer, we had a wonderful Vacation Church School centered around the theme "Lift Up Your Hearts." Our children spent two days learning what it means to lift our hearts to God through prayer, worship, love, and service to others. They created a beautiful Heart Wall filled with things they wanted to lift up to God, baked holy bread for Divine Liturgy, made rice socks for kittens at the Fix'Em Clinic, and wrote letters and colored icons for our shut-ins and parishioners who were ill or unable to attend church. Of course, there was also plenty of fun, including the splash park, Kona Ice, singing, games, and time together. It was such a beautiful reminder that our faith is something we learn, live, and share.

This year, our Church School curriculum is "One Body, One Spirit," based on First and Second Corinthians. Throughout the year, our children will learn what it means to be members of the Body of Christ—each of us different, each of us important, but all united in Christ and called to love and serve one another.

We are especially thankful for our Church School teachers who give so generously of their time and hearts. They do so much more than teach a weekly lesson. Through their example, love, patience, and faithfulness, they help our children understand what it means to live as Orthodox Christians. We are truly blessed by their ministry.

Our prayer for this Church School year is that our children will continue to grow in their love for Christ, deepen their understanding of our Orthodox faith, and know that the Church is their home and that they are an important part of her life.

As St. Paul reminds us, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Corinthians 12:13)

May God bless our Church School children, our teachers and families, and our entire St. George parish as we begin this new year together—One Body, One Spirit, in Christ.







Kids Corner Q & A

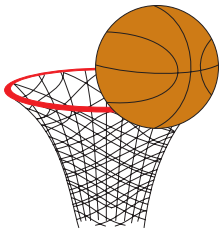
Q. Who was St. Gabriel?

A. St. Gabriel is the Archangel of the Annunciation. He came to Mary to tell here of the birth of Jesus(St. Luke 1:26- 38). St. Gabriel on the Iconastasis with two other Archangels,St. Michael and St. Raphael. From Gabriel also Zacharias heard of the announcement of the birth of his son, John, who was to become famous as St. John the Baptist (St. Luke 1:5-20).



Teen SOYO

by Diane Nester, Teen Advisor





Teen SOYO has been busy since the last issue of the Grapevine! Here's a recap of recent events and a look ahead to the new school year.

On May 31st the annual Teens vs. Adults basketball game was held. Both teams played hard but the teens pulled out a victory!

In July, Teen SOYO traveled to Virginia for the Parish Life Conference. Will, Chase, Thomas, Alyssa, Anna, and Abbie participated in the Bible Bowl competition, bringing great energy and enthusiasm and representing our Church well.

Looking ahead. On September 27th, Teen SOYO will kick off the new school year at Southridge Golf Range. Teens will enjoy pizza, play golf, and brainstorm ideas for the year ahead.

Save the date: Sunday, January 10th. The Teens vs. Adults basketball game will move to January (instead of May) starting in 2027, to avoid scheduling conflicts with prom and graduation.

The ultimate goal of Teen SOYO is to fully integrate each teen into the life of the Church, to create a safe and nurturing environment for teenagers to grow in Christ, and to form lasting spiritual and social bonds.

















Ladies Guild

by Athena Howard, President

In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Myrrh-Bearing Women—the group of faithful female disciples including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Salome, Mary and Martha of Bethany, and others—represent the ultimate expression of hospitality as an act of raw, unconditional love and liturgical devotion

Hospitality is not just about potlucks and fellowship meetings. It's about being there for one another, being a shoulder to cry on and supporting each other in a time of need.

I couldn't help but to think of many of us in our Cathedral. How we look after each other, welcome others and how we offer hospitality through this ladies guild while we take care of the stranger through our works and donations. I know we are capable of wonderful things because this ladies guild has done great in the past - not just long ago but in the recent past too.

Each of you ladies of St George Cathedral are not only amazing. But you extend your hand and heart out of hospitality to your sisters and the stranger in need.

We are excited to prepare for the Annual Dinner on October 25. For specific dates of when we can use help, please see the bulletin.

In addition, Mother Maria's closet continues to collect children's clothing. Please free to go and see what we have for your friends and family's use.

We also held a church bread making class in August with 13 participants. The excitement was so much that we are looking at more classes like this as well as more times to get together.

We look forward to seeing you all.

Happy Fall!

Calendar of Events

Weekly Schedule

Check the weekly bulletin for updates, changes or cancellations.

Sunday: 9:30 am Orthros; 10:30 am Divine Liturgy; Church School after Communion; Orthdoxy 101 after Liturgy
Monday: 11:00 am Bible Study Noon 6th Hour Prayers
Wednesday: 3:00 pm Afterschool/ Homeschool Program, 5:30 pm Vespers, Potluck & Teaching
Thursday: 7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal
Saturday: 5:00 pm Great Vespers & Confessions

SEPTEMBER 2026

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Sept September

13: Welcome back luncheon for Church School.(immediately following liturgy)
16, 17, 18 & 19: Roll Grape Leaves for annual dinner 10:00 AM
20: First week of Church School classes
23: Orthros for Feast of St. Thekla 5:30 PM, Liturgy 6:30 PM, Potluck 8 PM
27: Teen SOYO will kick off the new school year at Southridge Golf Range.

October is Youth Month

Do You Know This Parishioner
Answer: Ann Bsharah

OCTOBER 2026

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Oct October

5: Ladies Guild Meeting 7:00 PM
7 & 8: Make Kibbie for annual dinner 10:00 AM
11: Blessing of Pets 5:00 PM at Joplin Park
13: Parish Council Meeting 6:30 PM
9, 20, 21, & 22: Make Baklawa for annual dinner 10:00 AM
19: Ladies Guild Book Club 6:00 PM
23 & 24: Room setup and prep for annual dinner 10:00 AM
25: Annual Dinner Noon-6 PM. No Church School

NOVEMBER 2026

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	30				

Nov November

2: Ladies Guild Meeting 7:00 PM
6: Vigil for St Raphael 7:00 PM
9: Akathist to St Nektarios 6:00 PM
10: Parish Council Meeting 6:30 PM
12: Senior Dinner with Entertainment 5:30 p.m.
13: Orthros 9:30 AM for St John Chrysostom, Liturgy at 10:30 AM for St. John Chrysostom
16: Ladies Guild Book Club 6:00 PM
20-22: Parish retreat at the Antiochian Village in Bolivar Pennsylvania

St. George Orthodox Cathedral

Annual Dinner

October 25, 2026

12 noon - 6 p.m.

St. George Conference Center
Corner Court & Lee Streets • Charleston, WV
304-346-0106

Donation $20.00

Day of Dinner

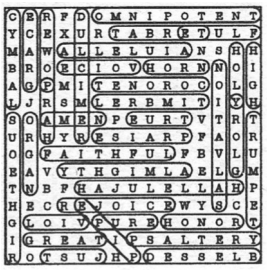
Noon - 6 pm: Carry-out Orders & Ethnic Groceries (Lower Level)

1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 pm: Diners are invited to tour the Sanctuary

Purchase tickets at door or online:
https://stg-annualdinner.square.site/
.www.stgeorgecharleston.org

If you would like to volunteer to help before or during the annual dinner in October, please contact Loretta Haddy at 304-989-3624 or Andrea Ellis at 304-421-1306 or the Church Office 304-346-0106.

Word Search Answers



Do You Know This Parishioner?

Height: 5’3”
Eye Color: Hazel
Hobbies or Interests: Beach-Shopping-Reading. Helping the Elderly
Favorite Color: Red
Favorite Food: Filet, Pizza
Favorite TV or Movie Show: A Star Is Born
Occupation: Stay-at-home Mom

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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