



## *St. Gregory of Nyssa Orthodox Church* STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER

**WELCOME TO THE FIRST  
ST. GREGORY'S  
STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER.  
THANKS FOR READING!**

The Stewardship Committee deeply appreciates your generosity, and wishes to update you about the many exciting ministries that your giving of time, treasure and talent make possible!

St. Gregory's has 19 different ministries, from the Food Pantry and Prayer Group to the Choir and St. Elizabeth Mercy Group. This quarter, we're highlighting two in particular: the Church Library and the Church School.



### **St. Gregory's Library Contains 1,200 Books**

St. Gregory's parish library evolved over many years. Being a campus ministry, St. Gregory's clearly needed a parish library as a resource for students and catechumens, as well as for parishioners wanting to learn more about their faith.

Members of St. Gregory's generously donated hundreds of books, which a dedicated team of volunteers catalogued and shelved. Committee members operate under Rector Fr. Dan Rentel, and include Committee Chair Charles DeGrove, Karen Brown, Mary Conroy, Rachel Klippenstein, Carol LeMasters, Caren Stayer, and Nadine Valella.

The Library collection is currently housed in two rooms on the first floor of the Education Building and includes over 1,200 books as well as issues of several periodicals and theological journals. The collection covers such diverse topics as Church history, the lives of saints, writings of the Church Fathers, iconography, liturgy, and Christian living. In addition to Orthodox themes, the library has a significant collection of books on other world religions. The children's section offers engaging, beautifully illustrated stories for children of all ages. The collection also includes a significant number of Russian films, books, and periodicals. *Cont. pg. 2*

*Members of the Library Committee left to right: Caren Stayer, Mary Conroy, Carol LeMasters and Rachel Klippenstein. Not pictured: Committee Chair Charles DeGrove, Karen Brown and Nadine Valella.*

***"I volunteer for the library because Orthodoxy has one of the world's most vibrant intellectual and spiritual traditions. I want my daughter to know that there is more to life than superficial consumerism and soundbites."***

*~ Caren Stayer*

## St. Gregory's Church School Continues to Expand its Program

For 25 years, the Church School has been educating and supporting young people at St. Gregory's in the tenets of the Orthodox faith so they can live it out in their everyday lives. From preschoolers to seniors in high school, children of all ages come together on a weekly basis to

- learn about the worship services,
- study Scripture,
- grow in faith, and
- participate in community outreach and ministry.

Since 1986, the Church School has continually expanded and enhanced programs and activities. Last year, for example, the Church School:

- added music lessons to the curriculum,
- recruited more males as teachers and role models,
- held its first Godparents' Sunday, and
- presented its first special student program for St. Nicholas Day.

### Lenten Projects are a Highlight

One of the Church School's most interesting and rewarding projects is the group project for Lent. Children in all the classes learn about an Orthodox charitable program in another country that needs support, study the country's culture and religious practices, and raise financial contributions or other items on the project's behalf. The projects educate the children about Orthodoxy worldwide and the importance of putting one's faith into practice through active giving.

Past projects have included:

- a library project to increase literacy among Ethiopian children,
- a fundraising drive for an orphanage in Mexico, and
- this year's project in which the students raised \$725 for an orphanage in the Republic of Georgia!

Each summer Karen Brown and Joyce Henkel, Chair and Co-Chair of the Education Committee--led by Rector Fr. Dan Rentel--develop the calendar of events, with teachers actively participating in decision-making for all special projects.

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## St. Gregory's Library *cont. from pg. 1*

With your support, the Library Committee is constantly expanding the collection, which includes a wide array of media. One of the fastest growing sections is our audio-visual section, which offers documentaries, contemporary films with Orthodox themes, and CDs featuring liturgical music and lectures by such well-known authors as Metropolitan Kallistos Ware and Father Thomas Hopko.

In February, the Library hosted St. Gregory's first Library Film Night, with a viewing of *MONASTERY: MR. VIG AND THE NUN* which drew close to 20 parishioners for a fun evening of food and fellowship. More film nights are planned, with a lively discussion following.

The Library supports many of St. Gregory's other ministries by supplying reading materials for the St. Stephen's Group and additional educational resources to teachers. The willingness of Karen Brown, Director of the Church School, to serve on the Library Committee has been key to strengthening the partnership between the two ministries.

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*“Of all holy works, the education of children is the most holy.”*

*~ St. Theophan the Recluse*

## St. Gregory's Library *cont.*

The Library is included in the annual budget. Your generosity has allowed the Committee to achieve the following:

- build up the children's section, which receives fewer donations,
- purchase furniture to display the materials and make the library a more comfortable, welcoming place, and expand the collection beyond donated works to include purchases of current Orthodox books and media.

The Library Committee welcomes volunteers to cover the library, catalogue donated items, and review books for the bulletin. Book donations and suggestions for future purchases and films for Film Night are greatly appreciated.

With a larger budget, the Library Committee could expand and upgrade the collection. A vast wealth of books and other media published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press and other Orthodox sources are available that would greatly benefit parishioners and students.

Library hours are 5:00 pm to 5:45 pm Saturdays; 12:00 pm to 1:15 pm Sundays. Summer hours are 11:30 am to 12:45 pm Sundays. You are also invited to browse the collection online: <http://www.stgregs.info/library.htm>

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## Church School *cont. from previous pg*

The Church School is in a three-year planning process to develop a standard curriculum. Currently nine dedicated teachers teach 41 registered students. Teachers include Gust Mecera, Joseph Mann, Barbara Sizemore, Susan Ruh, Charles Robbins, Jeff and Judith Smith, Chris Kovalcik, and Kelly Reeves.

### Challenges and Rewards

The Church School continues to face challenges: inconsistent student attendance, too few substitute teachers, and difficulty in recruiting new teachers who



*Left to right: Karen Brown, Education Committee Chair and Joyce Henkel, Education Committee Co-Chair*

are willing to make a weekly commitment. However, the rewards of teaching more than make up for the struggles. Karen says teachers are motivated in knowing they are answering God's call to serve as mentors to young people and make a difference in their lives. Karen relates the story of a frustrated teacher who asked, "Why do I do this?" When that teacher witnessed students saying or doing something they learned in class, the teacher's response was, "Ah, that's why!"

### Goals for Coming Year

The coming school year will be an exciting one with the following goals:

- Improving the format of Godparent's Sunday,
- supporting a *local* charity for Lent,
- continuing to present a lively St. Nicholas program or play,
- increasing church school attendance, and
- increasing parent involvement.

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## Church School *cont from previous pg.*

### How Your Pledge Has Helped the Church School Program

The financial support of parishioners deeply impacts the Church School program. Your generosity provides:

- Textbooks for all classes,
- Classroom supplies,
- Furniture and equipment,
- Teacher luncheon meetings,
- Parent/teacher orientation luncheon at the start of the school year, and
- Teacher appreciation gifts and student gift books at the end of the year.

Reflecting on the effect the Church School Program has on children, and why she is part of this ministry, Co-Chair Joyce Henkel said, "Some may see Church School as a simple task, but it is quite complex, even with our small numbers. Our main philosophy is even if there is one child in a classroom, there will be a class. Bishop Job (Memory Eternal!) said to let the children know they are important to the Church *here and now*. They are part of the Church *in the present*. We tend to tell them how important they will be in the future. It is good to know that we do some things here at St. Gregory's to that effect. They learn so much through their giving and doing. This learning stays with them for a lifetime. This is the main reason I work with the Religious Education Program. We are educating the future of our Church. It is done with love, commitment, and prayer for His glory. We are truly blessed to be given this ministry."

### Wish List: A Single Item!

Although teachers are frugal with their spending, the budget for this vital ministry has decreased over the years. Additional funding would give teachers the opportunity to attend wonderful institutes for religious education to grow spiritually and network with other Orthodox Christians in their field. Investing in Church School is an investment in St. Gregory's future. To volunteer or to learn more about the Church School, please contact Karen Brown at [nremtwebhome@yahoo.com](mailto:nremtwebhome@yahoo.com).



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*Karen Brown, Education Committee Chair*

*St. Gregory of Nyssa*

Stewardship Newsletter

Email your comments and suggestions to [annmarie.mecera@gmail.com](mailto:annmarie.mecera@gmail.com)