

# CROSS CURRENTS

Monthly Newsletter  
December 2004

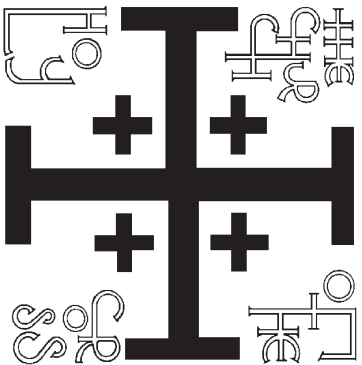


## CHRIST IS BORN!



## GLORIFY

## HIM!



**900 Alameda**  
BELMONT CA 94002-1604

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TIME VALUE



## CROSS CURRENTS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Church of the Holy Cross  
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Articles and ads for *Cross Currents* are due on the 26th of the month prior to the month of desired publication.

## CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

The brevity of this phrase, the proclamation of the reality of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in no way diminishes its significance. Everything about who Christ is in our life and about how we are asked by God Himself to respond to His Son is included in these five words.

Christ, the savior promised to us by God the Father in the Old Testament, has taken on flesh. The one before all ages physically becomes one with our age. There is no magical appearance, for He is born like one of us. He grows and matures in the very world in which we live, this in the hope that His example to us will be liberating, confirming his power over evil and granting life everlasting.

His birth is humble so that we may all relate to His coming. His birth is anticipated in prophecy and in the stars, guiding wise men from the East to this manger of love and hope, drawing all who choose to follow the star to the manger of His light and life.

Our response is crucial to our relationship to Him. As Orthodox Christians, we cannot ignore the impact of His Birth; the present age of deception, fear, and greed is no different than the ages before us; our need for Him is as great as it has always been. Sadly, as a people, our recognition of Him is generally as lukewarm as that of many of our predecessors. A long-term commitment, renewed moment by moment, is what He seeks from us, yet we are so tenuous in our response. We want to embrace Him as our Savior but we are unwilling to give up who we are without Him, hoping that somehow we can “re-form” Him into our image and likeness.

The reality is that God is God and man is man. Christ, in bridging the distance through His Incarnation, offers us the opportunity to become like Him, Godlike. As we celebrate His Incarnation and Birth once again, I ask that you commit to His will and word with a greater conviction. His Church, the people of God, is our means for sanctification and greater commitment. Glorify God in your actions. Glorify God in your speech. Glorify God in your thoughts and prayerful response to His call. Glory and honor and worship and thanksgiving and praise to Him always and forevermore.

May the wonder and joy of celebrating His Incarnation and Birth bring peace and love to you and yours.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER - A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

by *Jenny Cladis, Parish Council President*

Whenever I get caught up in the frenzy of the Christmas season, I calm down when I reflect on a Christmas message written by our son, George, when he was 15 years old. He was working at the Chinese Inn restaurant in Menlo Park during most of his spare time in high school, and when he came home from work on Christmas Eve, he posted a chart over our fireplace with the following words:

“At this time of the year, people are dashing here and there, driving madly, shoving and elbowing people at the stores, and crime is

rampant. The presence of the Christmas decorations, and Santa music seem to spur them onward.

Doesn't anyone know the true meaning of Christmas? I see the Christ Child with tears in His eyes and the Kings disappearing as they view our modern-day celebration of Christmas. Let us all slow down and worship the birth of our Savior. Let us keep Christ alive in our hearts, not only during the Christmas Season, but also through out the year."

We will never forget the impact of George's words at that time! Jesus' birth was threadbare, and He lived meagerly. Yet, His Word has changed peoples' lives forever.

I wish you all a very meaningful Merry Christmas and pray Jesus will lead us to a glorious New Year.

## **SUNRISE, SON RISE**

by *Chris Canellos, Parish Council Treasurer*

It's Christmastime at Holy Cross. The parish is preparing for all of the wonderful traditions of this time of year. A rousing Christmas celebration featuring our Sunday School and Greek School kids, the Family-to-Family Sharing Project, the Choir singing the beautiful liturgical hymns of the season and singing our favorite carols as we file out of Church each Sunday, the majestic Christmas tree that adorns the Oaks, the elegant Philoptochos Christmas tea, a great New Year's Eve party to usher in 2005 and even a visit from a jolly old elf in a big red suit. I hope you and your family will participate in all of these wonderful offerings.

Santa is going to be very good to the Holy Cross Choir this year. He loaded up his sleigh with some beautiful new robes. In this case, Santa had some help from one especially generous donor – **Arick Mathios** – as well as many of our parishioners and friends who also donated money for the robes, and a frugal, hard working choir that hosted many a pre-Lenten luncheon to raise the funds necessary. Congratulations to **Loula Anaston** for her leadership of this effort and to **Helen Valavanis** who worked very hard to obtain and fit everyone for

the robes. Many thanks to all of you who helped us with your donations!

While the new robes may mark a tangible achievement, quietly, year in and year out, under the dedicated stewardship of director **Steve Cardiasmenos**, the Choir has served our community well. Always there to provide the liturgical responses each Sunday and for the major holidays, the Choir freely gives of its gift of music. During Steve's 19-year tenure as director, the sound of the Choir has reflected its membership, the core members have been there throughout, but our new members have added a great deal. The basic liturgies remain the same, Desby and Steve's own, but over time, thanks to Steve's own creativity, certain portions of the music have changed, such as the *Kyrie Eleison*'s of the Great Litany and the new gospel responses. Recognizing a nationwide need, Steve has produced several English versions of liturgical hymns such as the Cherubic Hymn, and he will soon complete an entire new liturgy in English. He drew great acclaim for his "Praise the Lord" which brought the Adult and Youth Choirs together in song at the highest point of the liturgy, the moment before Communion is distributed to the faithful. His latest work, an English Trisagion hymn, is a beautiful addition. And every once in awhile, the proud dad brings in a beautiful Cherubic Hymn written by his son Andrew.

Steve has that perfect balance of patience, forbearance and the drive for excellence. I think he is able to bring out the best in each of us by understanding the demands on our schedules and knowing that the best way to bring out excellence in the individual is to motivate that person to give their very best in a supportive, fun atmosphere.

I am particularly heartened by one trend I have witnessed in the Choir loft over the last two decades. It is in the way the children of Choir members are loved and welcomed to the loft. First came Steve and Leslie's own, **Andrew** and **Kristen**, then **Sarah** and **John Haddad** joined, and soon **Marcie**, **Sophia** (our goddaughter) and **Matthew** came along. The Choir has so far been able to withstand Christian and has recently welcomed **Michael** and **Thalia Hohenthal** and their daughter **Jonna**. So here's to the Choir Loft Kids. We can't wait to hear you join your parents in praising God in song!

So, thanks to all the Choir members for your unselfish service to Holy Cross and especially to our extraordinary leader. And to all of you on the ground floor ...

Won't you please join us? Most of us are not accomplished singers, but simply do our best to praise our Lord through our voices. There is plenty of room up in the loft, and we know that many of you sing along downstairs. So, how about joining the Choir in 2005. If you would like more info on the Choir, just ask any member.

The New Year will be upon us shortly. Can you believe it's almost 2005! We are halfway through another decade. And with the celebration (and you really must come to Holy Cross for the best New Year's Party in the Bay Area! See **Gary Brenner** for reservations!), also come a series of New Year's Resolutions which I hope you will join me in.

1. I will bring my family to Church on time each and every Sunday of the New Year. There can be no matter more important than offering thanks to God for the blessings of the previous week and asking His help in the week to come.
2. I will read the Bible each day and will share Bible stories and those of our Saints frequently with my family. (Daily Bible passages may be found at [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org) or just start with Matthew and read a chapter per day.)
3. I will carefully examine my stewardship giving to the Church and increase my commitment commensurate with all the blessings I have received from God. I will give my gifts joyfully and from the very first fruits I receive each month.
4. I will think of new and better ways to assist the Church in its mission of doing God's work here on the Peninsula. I'll volunteer to assist a youth group, help a Sunday School class, sing in the Choir, assist local charities, help others get to Church, visit those who are ill, or lend a hand to the Festival or other fundraiser.

5. I will happily introduce myself to people that I have never met before at Church. New families are a special blessing to our Parish.
6. I will always speak well of Holy Cross Church and offer encouragement to its members. It may not be perfect, but our families have worked hard for nearly 50 years to build what we have. We need to be proud of it! We need to be thankful for it! And if we think we can improve on it, let's be the first to pick up a hammer and build, pick up the phone and organize and pick up each others' spirits and lead. Sure, it's a lot easier to complain. But when was the last time anything worthwhile was built on a foundation of complaints, bitterness and ill will? When people of good will come together in a united purpose, miracles can happen.
7. I recognize that I am responsible for my child's religious education. I will review my child's Sunday School lesson with him each week. I will contribute whatever experiences or talents I have to amplify the lesson. I will speak to his Sunday School teacher and with **Fr. Peter** from time to time in order to partner with them in this most important part of parenthood. I will live the best possible example I can for my child, because I realize how much my child learns from my actions alone.
8. I will spend more time in prayer, so that I may come closer in my relationship with God and better understand His will.
9. I will regularly and respectfully participate in the sacraments of the Church, most notably Holy Communion, Confession and Unction, that they may strengthen me in all of my earthly struggles. And in seeking forgiveness, I will also offer it to those who have done me wrong.

10. I realize and respect my own humanity and as I fail at each of the above resolutions, I will resolve to continue to work at each of them and, at least, be just a little better at them than in the previous year.

From our family to yours, a joyous Christmas and all the best in the wonderful year to come!

## **'TIS THE SEASON TO SAVE TAXES**

As 2004 fades into history, these final December days present us with the last opportunities to reduce our annual income tax bill. One of the best ways to do this is with a charitable contribution to Holy Cross Church.

The easiest way to earn that extra deduction is to write a generous check to the Church and put it in the mail to us by December 31, 2004. For every hundred dollars you donate, you could save as much as \$44.30 in federal and state income taxes.

If you are a little short on cash from all the Christmas shopping and those other December bills, you may still get a charitable deduction by contacting the Church office and putting your contribution on a credit card. As long as you make your arrangement with the Church by **December 31**, we can acknowledge your gift as made in 2004.

Another smart giving strategy is to review your stock portfolio and make gifts of stock which you have held for over one year and which have gained in value. Your charitable deduction is based on the full fair market value of the stock on the date of your gift and you completely avoid the capital gains taxes you would otherwise pay. For every hundred dollars you donate in this way, you could save as much as \$68.30 (the value of the charitable gift plus the capital gains tax avoided.)

You may gift other assets such as cars, real estate, art work or jewelry to the Church as well. If you considering donating a car, you should do so, before 2004 ends, since tax rules in 2005 will be less

favorable for this type of contribution. And the Church is prepared to enter into more complex arrangements such as Charitable Remainder and Lead Trusts. Many of us remember our Church in our estate planning as well. The Church office can provide you with further details.

Don't forget that all automobile mileage you incur in a volunteer capacity for the Church is deductible at a rate of 14 cents per mile. You may also deduct out-of-pocket costs you incur as a volunteer. Here's to a less taxing tax season.

## **HOLY CROSS DEPOSIT PLAN ACCEPTING NEW DEPOSITS**

Want the highest possible interest rate on your savings? Want to be able to help the Church at the same time? Consider opening a Certificate of Deposit account with the Holy Cross Deposit Plan.

Here are the benefits:

- o Higher interest than any bank or savings and loan will pay
- o Flexible terms (we offer terms of 1, 2½ and 5 years, as well as daily access)
- o Security - peace of mind in the knowledge that we have handled over \$1 million of parishioner funds and have returned each deposit with interest
- o Knowledge that your deposit is also helping the Church by reducing the amount of interest we would otherwise have to pay of borrowed funds from the bank.

If you have questions or are ready to make a deposit, please contact the Church office.

# **POLITICS PAST, CHRISTMAS PRESENT, STEWARDSHIP FUTURE**

by *Peter Bibbes, Parish Council Member*

The Presidential elections and all the politics rhetoric are finally over. The problems of our economy, the war in Iraq, Social Security, health care, etc. though are still and will be with us for some time.

In the meantime we have fallen somewhat short in our Stewardship giving as a community to the Church. Our Church expenses are ongoing and bills need to be paid for the services we receive. Now is the time to change our focus back to the Church and Stewardship and to reevaluate our giving practices. We need to support not only the services we receive but the services we provide to others. Our immediate need has never been greater.

Christmas is fast approaching and will be here shortly. As individuals and as a community we are most blessed and have much to be thankful for in so many ways. We should take the time to reflect now on all our blessings and make our gift at Christmas time through Stewardship.

The future of our Church and community depends upon what we do today. Giving to Stewardship is the means we can continue to grow as a community. We need each of us to do our bit – our fair share. This is a call to respond to the appeal to increase your stewardship commitment, to sign and turn in the membership cards and become an active member of the community. Please help.

## **PLEDGE CAMPAIGN 2005**

2004 is almost over: the rains have come, the clocks have fallen back, school is in full swing, and catalogs stuff our mailboxes. So, here is another very important item to attend to: our Church budget and your financial pledge for 2005.

You have received in the mail a missive from **Father Peter** and a chart of suggested weekly pledge amounts. Take a minute and review your situation: think of how blessed we all are, how grateful for life as we know it, how abundant the fruits of our labors. Address the debt you owe as you acknowledge how much has been granted to you and your family by the grace of our Lord. Pray for guidance and then return the enclosed card to the Church office as soon as you can.

Remember: give willingly, recognizing that all we have is from God and that our tithe shall accrue to our spiritual benefit, as promised by the Lord.

## **DONATE YOUR CAR TO HOLY CROSS BEFORE THE LOOPHOLE CLOSSES!!!**

When we all gather on New Year's Eve at Holy Cross to say good-bye to 2004, we will also bid farewell to tax-friendly rules covering donations of automobiles. If you or a friend you know are considering donating a car to charity in the near future, it will most likely be to your advantage to make the gift before 2004 ends.

A recent tax law change, becoming effective on January 1, will generally reduce the amount you can take as a charitable deduction when you donate your car. In 2005, the law will limit your deduction to the amount that your charity receives when it sells the car, if the amount you wish to claim as a deduction is \$500 or more. Currently, the donor can deduct his estimate of the fair market value of the car, independent of what the charity receives.

Further, as one more year passes, your car will be worth less, because a new "blue book" is published in January of 2005.

We urge you to donate your car to Holy Cross as soon as possible and certainly no later than **December 31**. Contact the Church office to make the necessary arrangements. The car must be drivable and we will need your current pink slip. Because we sell your car to a local dealer directly, you can rest assured that your auto donation proceeds will be as high as possible and will benefit the good programs of the Church.

# SPOTLIGHT

**Alexandra Spirtos**, sophomore at Pinewood High School and honor roll student, recently completed her training and testing for second-degree black belt in *tae kwon do* with incorporated different martial arts styles. Her performance was outstanding with awards in speed and spirit. Parents Drs. **Nick and Tanya Spirtos** are very proud of her efforts in this as well as in Greek dancing, GOYA, and school basketball and golf teams.



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The work of **James Lagiss**, son of parishioners **Jim & Virginia Lagiss**, will be on display at the Stellar-Somerset Gallery in Palo Alto through the end of the year. After studying at UC Davis under Wayne Thiebaud and Manuel Neri; and at Stanford under Nathan Oliveira, James traveled extensively through Europe and Asia and is gifted in several media including painting, sculpture, photography and print-making. His works are in the collections of the Legion of Honor in SF and Harvard University, among others. Call 328-6688 for more info.



## VASILOPITA

*Sunday, January 9  
- following Divine Liturgy*

*a fine luncheon  
- a beautiful tradition not to be missed*

## YOUTH CURRENTS

December 2004 edition

Grow in the Grace and knowledge  
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18



## CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

by *Father Silviu Stanculescu*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are currently observing the Advent Fast, which began on November 15<sup>th</sup> and will end on Christmas Day. Time is running out as we rush from store to store searching for the perfect gift for our loved ones during the month of December. The Church hymns express great joy announcing that Christ is born! The perfect gift will arrive soon! The Christ Child is about to be born! He is the perfect gift!

Christ is born; glorify Him! Christ comes from heaven; go to meet Him! Christ is on earth; be exalted! Sing to the Lord, all the earth! And praise Him in gladness, O people, for He has been glorified!

The Virgin Mary, the Theotokos (the Mother of God), responded in humility when she consented to bear the Christ-Child. Christ chose a humble cave in which to be born. The shepherds gathered around the manger in reverence to the newborn King. The three wise kings traveled vast distances to pay homage to a baby in a cave used to shelter farm animals. Wise men kneeling, shepherds and angels singing are great images of this wonderful event in the history of mankind! We are awe struck when we realize that God is among us! Christ's birthplace also reminds us that He depends upon each of us to welcome Him into our own homes, and to make Him part of our lives and families. Take the time make the effort to welcome the New Born Child into your hearts, and your homes!

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May you truly experience the coming of Christ into to your heart. Have a most blessed Christmas!

**Father Silviu** and **Presbytera Irina** together with **Tiberiu-Nicolae** and **Maria-Antonia** wish all of you a most blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year. May God bless all of you!

## AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY "RELAY FOR LIFE"

by *Ashley Brenner*

The American Cancer Society hosted a 24 hour walk in October called "Relay for Life". The main rule was that there had to be someone from each team on the track at all times, which was not a problem considering the great turnout we had from people all around the Bay Area. There were walkers of all ages there -- from infants to adults. Everyone was doing their share of walking around Burlingame High School's track.

I helped raise money for Team Anna-Maria and send *thank you's* to everyone who donated. Our team alone raised \$10,000! The American Cancer Society all together raised \$60,000. Anna-Maria and her family were very happy to see everyone show up to help support them in their time of need. There was a great turnout of youth from the Greek churches around this area. Everyone wanted to come show their support, even if they did not know Anna-Maria.

Everyone who walked received a T-shirt that was baby blue with pink writing that said "Team **Anna-Maria Kakis** '04". It was amazing to look at the track and see hundreds of people with Team Anna-Maria shirts on. When we entered the stadium, we were all handed paper bags and markers and were asked to write the names of people who were undergoing cancer at the moment, who were survivors, or people who had passed on. At night they took all the bags a put a candle in each one and lined to track with them. It was very pretty too see all those people walking around the track with the bags lighting their way.

It was a very moving experience and I am looking forward to next year's Relay for Life.

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## NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNER DANCE

Make plans to be with your Holy Cross family as we welcome in  
the **NEW YEAR!**

Our evening will include a delicious catered dinner,  
a vasilopeta at every table,  
dancing to music by "Vital Sounds",  
and midnight toast with champagne and sparkling cider.

**Adults - \$70; Youth 16 & Under - \$35**

### Friday, December 31, 2004

----- 6:00 PM, Orthros; 7:00 PM, Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil -----  
8:30 PM, hors d'oeuvres and cocktails; 9:00 PM, dinner & dancing

Call Carole at 650-592-2754 with the information below to reserve your place,  
or drop off/send in the tear-off below (with payment!) as soon as you can!

**SEATING IS LIMITED! Make your reservations TODAY!**

NOTE THE CHANGE IN EVENT DAY!

## HOLY CROSS CRAB FEED

Friday, February 11  
Belmont Church of the Holy Cross

6:30 PM - No-host cocktails / Hors d'oeuvres  
7:30 PM - Dinner

salad ♦ makaronada ♦ garlic bread  
dessert

wine & refreshments

*Meal prepared by* Nob Hill Catering

\$40 adults  
\$20 children 12 & under

For reservations, e-mail [office@goholycross.org](mailto:office@goholycross.org) or call Ella at 650-369-9825

# **CALENDAR**

*subject to changes - please check your Sunday Bulletins*

## **UPCOMING SERVICES**

Sunday, December 26 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
 Monday, December 27 – Saint Stephen - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy;  
 5:30 PM, Great Vespers  
 Friday, December 31 – New Year’s Eve - Saint Basil the Great – 6 PM, Orthros;  
 7 PM, Divine Liturgy; 9 PM, New Year’s Eve Dinner Dance  
 Saturday, January 1 – No Great Vespers  
Sunday, January 2 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
 Wednesday, January 5 - Eve of Holy Theophany - 8 AM, Hours; 9 AM, Vesperal  
 Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil (Lesser Agiasmos)  
 Thursday, January 6 - Holy Theophany - 8 AM, Orthros; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy  
 (Greater Agiasmos)

Saturday, January 8,15,22,29; February 5,12,19,26 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers  
Sunday, January 9,16,23,30; February 6,13,20,27 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM,  
 Divine Liturgy  
 Thursday, February 10 – Saint Haralambos - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine  
 Liturgy

## **MEETINGS & UPCOMING EVENTS**

**26th** of the Month, 4 PM - Articles and ads due for *Cross Currents* and *Youth Currents*  
 (church office)  
**Weekdays**, 9-Noon – Preschool  
**Tuesdays**, 10:30 AM - Bible Study (Fireside Room/Contos Library)  
 First **Tuesday** of the month, 11 AM – ORA (Oaks)  
 First **Tuesday** of the month, 7:30 PM, Philoptochos Board (Contos Library)  
 First & third **Tuesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM, OCF at Stanford (Stanford)  
 Second & Fourth **Tuesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM, Youth Groups (Classrooms)  
 First three **Wednesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM, Choir (Loft)  
**Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays**, 4:30-6:30 PM – Greek School (Classrooms)  
**Wednesdays**, 7:30 PM – Studies in the Faith (Contos Library)  
**Wednesdays**, 7:30 PM - Volleyball (Gym)  
 First **Thursdays** of the month, 6:30 PM - Technology Committee (Contos Library)  
 Third **Tuesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM – Parish Council (Contos Library)  
 First and Third **Fridays** of the month, 10:00 AM, Toddler Play Group (Oaks)

**Sunday, January 9** - following Liturgy, Vasilopeta (Oaks)

# **BLESSING OF HOMES**

Each year, after the celebration of Epiphany (January 6), it is the Orthodox tradition to bless our homes with the Holy Water of Epiphany. Please fill out the form and return it to the Church Office if you would like to have Father bless your home. (Father will call to confirm.) Yes, I would like to have Father bless our home in January :

DAY :  
 (a weekday after January 6) : January \_\_\_\_\_ , 2005

TIME :  
 \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM (between 10:00 AM & 5:00 PM)

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (s) : \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Directions from church (please indicate cross-streets / draw simple map if you think that would help) :

For your records  
 Father will bless our house on January \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
 o'clock.

*if necessary, remove this page from Cross Currents for reference*