



St. George Greek Orthodox Church

November 23, 2021

Beloved Parishioners of St. George,

We wanted to reach out and introduce ourselves as the interim priests for St. George until Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco finds a permanent replacement for your wonderful congregation.

There will be two of us, Fr. Jim Pappas and Fr. Christian Burkhard. Fr. Jim has served the Fresno community for almost 30 years. He is a native San Franciscan who served the parishes of St. Paul in Irvine and St. Sophia in Los Angeles, before being assigned to St. George in Fresno. His wife, Presvytera Donna, grew up in a farming community here in the San Joaquin Valley. As Fr. Jim is familiar to many of your church members, so his wife is known due to the fact that she grew up not far from Bakersfield. They have three adult children who are active in their respective careers.

Fr. Christian Burkhard has served the Fresno community for over 6 years, first as the Pastoral Assistant, now as the associate priest. He is married to Presvytera Maria who was born in Fresno and grew up at St. George, Fresno. They have worked extensively with the St. Nicholas Summer Camp program and are known to many of your young families.

We are team players, serving side by side, navigating the many challenges of church life. We know that any transition is filled with uncertainty. Please know we will do what is necessary to serve you with love and compassion. We will conduct your weekly services, sacraments and visitations. We will offer guidance to your parish council, Philoptochos, youth ministries and other groups and organizations. Please be aware that we will be serving two parishes during this time. The Fresno parish covers 5 counties, and we know that Bakersfield covers an extensive geographical area as well.

We are also actively engaged in various Metropolis ministries. Fr. Jim and Pres. Donna are team members of the Metropolis Family Wellness Ministry. Fr. Christian and Pres. Maria are active in the Youth and Young Adult Ministry. At times we overlap with our duties to these ministries. We believe that the Church is much larger than our parishes. Thus, we partner with programs offered by both the Archdiocese and the Metropolis.

We look forward to getting to know you and pray our ministry will be fruitful. Allow us to extend our thanks to Fr. Joseph and his beloved wife Pres. Despina who have loved you and served you faithfully these past many years. May their journey take them to a new and blessed future.

The church of St. George North extends to the parish of St. George South a blessed holy Nativity.

In Christ's Love,

Fr. James C. Pappas

Fr. Christian Burkhard

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