

REJOICE!

The Monthly Publication of the

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church

93 Locust St. Dover, NH 03820 · Tel: (603) 742-7667

Web: www.annunciationdover.org E-mail for church office: annunciationdover@gmail.com

Beloved in Christ,

Each year, the secularization of Christmas becomes more pronounced, starting from the beginning of the season through the feast itself. It is amazing to hear of retailers opening during the pre-dawn hours after Thanksgiving, on what has been named "Black Friday;" in fact, some retailers even adver-tise "pre-Black Friday sales!" As all the madness of the retail world unfolds around us during this time of year, simultaneously, schools and government bodies stifle any reference to what this season is really about, eliminating any reference to the birth of Christ. In the retail world, it is obvious that employees are instructed not to use the greeting Merry Christmas, but rather, Happy Holidays. Now I ask, do we Orthodox simply take all this in stride, or do we attempt to reclaim the sanctity of this holy season to whatever extent we can? For the Orthodox Christian, the pri-

mary focus during the Nativity fast season should be a personal, spiritual preparation for the birth of Christ. As I explain each year, the Orthodox preparation for the Nativity of Christ stands in stark contrast to the worldly observance of the "Christmas season," or to be more politically correct, the "holiday season." For us, the Nativity fast serves as a vigil, as we prayerfully await the birth of our Lord. For the secular world, this is a time of excessiveness – both materialistically, and in the indulgence in food, drink, and merriment. A former parishioner of mine recently wrote to me and made the following profound statement that sums this all up: They say Christmas is the best time of the year, but it has been hijacked and turned into a commercial frenzy of consumer delights.

As with all the fast periods of the Orthodox liturgical calendar, we observe this fast with dietary restrictions, increased prayer and church attendance, and by performing charitable acts. To complete our preparation for the coming of Christ, we should also seek repentance for our sins and shortcomings, and receive spiritual cleansing

through the holy mystery of Confession. After the 40 days of preparation, we are then truly ready to celebrate the birth of Christ through the various church services, most especially at the Divine Liturgy of the Nativity at which we partake of His Spotless Body and Blood.

Even if we observe all these things, the reality is that we are surrounded by the secular observance of the "holiday season." It is not impossible, however, to live in a pluralistic society as we do, and be able to maintain an Orthodox way of life. It may take some "spiritual creativity," but if we are sincere in our efforts, we can maintain an attitude of spiritual vigil throughout the season. If we are obligated to attend pre-Christmas parties at work or at the homes of non-Orthodox relatives and neighbors, we should go and partake in a limited fashion of what the host has prepared. This has always been the advice of the Holy Fathers when we are confronted with such situations during a period of fasting. Obviously however, these should not be seen as opportunities to be gluttonous and lose all self-control! The other advice I always give regarding "rowdy" Christmas parties that include much drinking and carousing, is to politely excuse one's self as the party begins going "downhill."

Now, am I saying that no one is supposed to have fun during this festive time of the year? Of course not, because there is a definite time for celebrating. For the Orthodox Church, the actual celebration begins on the feast of the Nativity and ends on January 4th, just prior to the celebration of Holy Theophany. From the Orthodox perspective, this is the time for Christmas parties, when we should be rejoicing and celebrating the great event of the birth of our Lord in the flesh. During this period, the Church purposefully prohibits fasting in order to emphasize the joy of the season. Why not consider introducing Orthodox Christmas parties in our homes during the alexentics. ties in our homes during the eleven

days of feasting, and invite other Orthodox families as well as friends and | neighbors, in order to cele-brate the true reason for the season (as much Ι dislike overused, cliché

expressions, this

one works well here)?

Besides those things already mentioned, there are also other ways to keep *Christ* ever-present in *Christ*mas. As much as possible, continue saying, "have a Merry Christmas," or "have a Blessed Christmas," which stands out even more profoundly as a Christian greeting. In our homes, we could strive to accentuate the spiritual nature of the advent season through our decorations and family traditions. Why not de-emphasize the mythological side of Christmas in order to not confuse our children? Teach them about St. Nicholas and St. Basil instead. And most importantly, have them involved with charitable acts, such as visits to nursing homes, helping at a soup kitchen, shopping for a needy family, bringing used items to charitable organizations, etc.

Beloved in Christ, especially in our homes, we have the complete ability to make the pre-Christmas season a holy time for our families. In the world at large, we also have the ability to overlook the secular corruption of this season, and to keep a spiritual focus. Let us attempt each year, to put more of an Orthodox perspective into our preparation for, and celebration of the Holy Nativity of Christ. We should see this is as a sacred responsibility toward the salvation of our children, and of ourselves!

In Christ's love,

+Fr. Anthony

Rejoice - December 2024

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church

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FROM FR. ANTHONY

Nativity Fast Continues Through 12/24

On November 15th, the Holy Orthodox Church began its preparation for the Nativity of our Lord through a 40-day fast. The majority of this period is considered a relaxed fast, and not particularly strict until the final 12 days. Following are the generally accepted guidelines for the first and second parts of the Nativity fast, for those who desire to follow it to the full extent.

Up to 12/12

- Fasting from all animal products. Shellfish may be consumed daily.
- Fish, wine (all alcoholic beverages), and olive oil may be consumed daily except for Wednesdays and Fridays.*
 - *Wine and olive oil are permitted on feasts of major saints see Archdiocesan calendar.

From 12/13 – 12/24

- Strict fasting from all animal products, including fish. Shellfish may be consumed daily.
- Fasting from wine and olive oil on weekdays.*
 - *Wine and olive oil may be consumed on Saturdays and Sundays, and on the feasts of major saints.

It behooves us to prepare ourselves spiritually for the Nativity of Our Lord by attempting to keep this fast to whatever extent possible (with the exception of course, of those with particular health concerns, and growing children). As with all fast periods of the Church, remember to incorporate regular church attendance, increased prayer, and charitable works. Holy Confession is also part of each fast season of the Church. I am always available for guidance, so please don't hesitate to ask!

Seasonal Reflections

The following is taken from the book, *The Winter Pascha*, by Fr. Thomas Hopko, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984.

The Christmas-Epiphany season in the Orthodox Church begins with a forty-day fasting period which starts on the feast of the "holy and all-praised apostle Philip." For this reason, Christmas lent is sometimes called "the fast of Philip." Although the coincidence of the feast of the apostle Philip and the beginning of the Christmas fast is accidental, humanly speaking, the eyes of faith may see in it a certain providence of God.

According to St. John's gospel, Philip is one of the first of the apostles to be called by Jesus. On the day after the calling of Andrew and another of St. John the Baptist's disciples, who, since he is not named, is probably the apostle John himself, Philip is called by the Lord. Like Andrew who went and called his brother Simon Peter, Philip goes and calls his friend Nathanael...

The story is typical of St. John's gospel. The people first encounter the man "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." They meet Him as a man, the one "of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote." Then they go further. What they come to see is that this man is not merely the promised prophet and teacher; He is the Anointed, the Christ, the Messiah, the King of Israel. He is the Son of God. Indeed, He is God Himself in human form...

FROM FR. ANTHONY

The first step on the way of the Winter Pascha is the encounter with the man Jesus. We are invited with Philip and the disciples, to "come and see." If we want to come and want to see, we will. Like the first disciples, we will see "greater things" than we ever expected. We will see "heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." We will see Jesus as our Master, and will cry to Him: "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" And we will come to know Him for who and what He really is. But first we must come. For if we do not come, we will never see...

Holy Confession Schedule

The tradition of the Orthodox Church encourages regularity with Holy Confession, which includes each major fast Period, as well as on an "as needed" basis. Now that we are within the Nativity fast, it is time to approach this holy mystery so that we may be cleansed and prepared for the birth of our Savior. Holy Confession is available per the usual schedule as follows:

- Saturdays after Great Vespers
- During office hours by appointment

"Priest" Solicitation Scams

Now that we are within the Christmas season, please know that criminal activity typically picks up this time of year. Once again, hackers are impersonating me by using my name to communicate with parishioners, through outside email addresses and phone numbers. They typically state, "I'm in a meeting and can't talk, but I need you to purchase some gift cards for someone, etc. etc." **Please do not fall prey to this scam!**

As I have stated before, I would never solicit assistance for anyone in this manner. I would only work, confidentially, through our Outreach Committee when there is a need, either within or outside our parish. Again, on these suspicious messages, always look at the e-mail address attached to my name, and you will see that it is not my actual church e-mail address. The same applies to text messages that use other numbers, which are not my emergency contact number. All my contact information appears in both the weekly and monthly bulletins, as well as on our website.

May all of you have a most blessed and joyous celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord as well as a blessed Holy Theophany and healthy new year.

May we all continue to pray for peace in the world!

In the Newborn Savior Jesus Christ,

+Fr. Anthony

PARISH NEWS AND EVENTS

Parish Chronicle

Weddings

11/3 – Tyler Casey and Jacqueline McKinney. Sponsors, George and Sandra Lazarus

Funerals

11/20 – Karol Morfiris-Moutsoulas

Memorials

11/10 – Theofano Chrysafidis, 8 years

12/22 – Karol Morfiris-Moutsoulas – 40 days

12/22 – Helen Panasis, 1 year

May their memory be eternal!

Parish Prayer List

Please pray for our brothers and sisters: Elizabeth, Deborah, Demetrios, Jessica, Jamie

In keeping with a common Church tradition, we will keep names on the parish prayer list for **40 days**. If you wish to offer names for prayer, please send those via e-mail to the church office at:

annunciationdover@gmail.com, or call the office at 742-7667.

Please give first names only, and preferably full names, not nicknames.

Donations

Decoration of Icon of the Entrance of the Theotokos - Christos and Nancy Kastrisios

Icon Decorations for December & January

12/25 – The Nativity of Christ 1/6 – Holy Theophany

Both decorations are \$50 each. Please contact the church office if you would like to sponsor one or both of these icon decorations.

Coffee Hours for December

As of the date of publication of this issue, following is the status of December coffee hours.

12/1: Parish Council 12/22: Moutsoulas family

12/8: Lewis family 12/29: No host

12/15: Delintsiotis family

PARISH NEWS AND EVENTS

Icon Project

We are pleased to inform everyone, that the 14 new icons requested have all been sponsored. The icons and donors are as follows:

All Saints: the Evangelatos family
The Holy 12 Apostles: the Frudakis family
St. Basil the Great: Michael Brackett
St. Gregory the Theologian: Cyprian Fresh
St. Irene Chrysovalantou: Paraskevi Stamelos
St. John Chrysostom: Michael Brackett
St. John of San Francisco: the Evangelatos family

St. Mary of Egypt: "Mary"

St. Mary Magdalene: "anonymous"

St. Nicholas of Myra: Nickolis Demopoulos
St. Paisios the Athonite: Robin (Paisios) Schumaker

St. Photini the Samaritan Woman: Lea Macheras St. Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia: "anonymous" St. Stephen the 1st Martyr: Anthony Weir

May God bless all our faithful donors and their families!

Church Lighting Enhancement

Our next project, which incorporates both beautification and a necessary enhancement, is the installation of four smaller brass chandeliers in the Nave. Please note the following regarding this project:

- Our Nave especially the Soleas is not adequately bright, which is noticeable on Sundays and feast days.
- The new chandeliers will replace the unsightly hanging fans, which no longer serve a purpose.
- Lighting professionals guided us to chandeliers with a polished brass finish, that will blend in stylistically with our existing large chandelier, as well as add additional brightness.
- This improvement in the Nave will not only add needed additional lighting, but will also enhance the elegance and beauty of our holy temple.

As we do with all our beautification projects and liturgical needs, we reach out to our generous and faithful parishioners who would be willing to sponsor one of the four, new chandeliers. We are still gathering pricing information for the purchase and installation, so as soon as that is determined, we will share the cost per chandelier for those considering becoming a donor. May God bless all those who will assist in this project!

Awad Family Support

As Jessica continues her hospital bed-rest during the latter part of her pregnancy, our parish continues to support the Awad family through the meal train that has been set up. Laura Blagojevic is overseeing and coordinating this project, for which we are all grateful. Many of you have stepped up to help out. For those who would like to assist, please contact Laura via e-mail at 19llb88.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Parishioners,

As my term as Parish Council President comes to a close, I reflect on the journey we've shared together. It's a bit funny to imagine my name on the plaque with all the past presidents—a non-Greek, Indian last name that might seem out of place in our Greek Orthodox church. But I feel this speaks volumes about how welcoming and embracing our community is. Not only did you welcome an outsider like myself, but you also gave me the chance to serve as your president. For that, I am deeply honored. Nearly four years ago, as a newcomer to Orthodoxy, I hoped to one day hold this position, though I didn't expect it to happen so soon. Yet here I am, profoundly grateful for the opportunity and the trust you've placed in me.



This experience has had its share of ups and downs, and I wouldn't have made it through without the unwavering support of our Parish Council and each of you. Thank you for being a constant source of encouragement and guidance. This year has truly been transformative. While the role brought unexpected challenges, it also brought countless blessings. I am thankful for every moment, and I hope to serve as president again in the future.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our newly elected Parish Council members: Mark Canney, Nils Elde, Connor Haywood, and Kimon Lalas. I am confident they will bring fresh perspectives and dedication to their roles. Additionally, I'd like to extend a heartfelt thanks to our outgoing council members, Anthi Delintsiotis and Heidi Atkinson, for their outstanding work as Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. Their contributions have been invaluable to the council and to the parish as a whole.

I'd also like to express my gratitude to the Alkistis Ladies Association for the wonderful Dinner/Dance on November 9th. With over 160 attendees, it was a great success that truly showcased their hard work. It seems we've started a wonderful new tradition! Their dedication and effort made for a beautiful evening, and I know many will be looking forward to next year's event.

As we look ahead, I leave with a deep sense of gratitude and hope for the future of our parish. Thank you once again for the honor of serving as your president.

Best regards, Kulin Krishnan Parish Council President

ANNUNCIATION YOUNG ADULTS

Christ is in our midst! The AYA wishes everyone a wonderful and fruitful Nativity Fast. We had our first independent AYA dinner outing in November, which was a great time. We look forward to many more to build a strong young Orthodox community here in Dover. Have a very merry Christmas!

ALKISTIS NEWS



Dear Parishioners,

The Alkistis Ladies Association had an incredibly busy and fruitful November, filled with fellow-ship,celebration, and gratitude.

Dinner Dance - November 9, 2024

On Saturday, November 9, we hosted a wonderful Dinner Dance for our parish, family, and friends, and it was a resounding success! With over 160 attendees, the evening was filled with delcious food, lively dancing, to the sounds of "OPA" and joyful camaraderie. I have included some photos from the evening to capture the memories we made together.

Along with our attendees, we are deeply grateful to our generous donors who helped make the night possible:

- Dr. Jerry & Mrs. Eloise Karabelas
- Mr. Anthony Demetracopoulos
- Mr.& Mrs. George Lazarus
- Mr.& Mrs. Les Hoogeveen
- Mr.& Mrs. Dennis Kostis

A heartfelt thank you to **Sandy Lazarus** for her creative vision in decorating the Hellenic Hall and to **Althea Coussoule** for coordinating the bountiful "Meze" table. Special recognition goes to our incredible chefs, led by **Paul Karoutas** and **Paul Maskwa**, assisted by **Kimon Lalas**, **Tim Abbott**, **George Mitropoulos**, **Peter Mitropoulos**, and **Charley Gurney**.

To the dedicated Alkistis ladies who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, your efforts ensured the event was a night to remember. We also took a moment to commend **Rebecca McNamee** and **Robert Eagle-Mitropoulos** for their years of service chairing our annual festival. Their dedication has been a source of joy and pride for our community.

Veterans Day Coffee Hour – November 10, 2024

The next morning, on Sunday, November 10, the Alkistis Ladies Association hosted the Coffee Hour at church, serving a light luncheon and honoring our living Veterans. Father Athans Hall was adorned in patriotic colors, and we came together to express our gratitude to those who have served our country.

A sincere thank you to the following individuals who helped make this event possible:

Althea Coussoule, Hope Frudakis, Paula Maskwa, Lisa Primes, Presbytera Themmi Evangelatos, Georgette Kostis, Shana Mitropoulos, Rosie O'Hearne, Paula Panasis, Linda Rodden, Pam Byers and Cathy Blouguras

(If I have missed anyone, my sincere apologies—please let me know.) Below are some photos from this meaningful event.

As always, it takes a village to perform our duties well and successfully. Thank you again to everyone for your continued support. Please remember that all the ladies of the church are automatically members of Alkistis. We warmly invite you to join us at our next meeting, which will be held on **December 8th following coffee hour** in the Church Library.

With love and gratitude,

Vula Z. Lalas, Alkistis Ladies Association President

ALKISTIS NEWS























CHURCH SCHOOL

Blessed Nativity Fast to all of our Church School families!

What an incredible school year it has been so far for our youngest members! It has been wonderful hearing from each of the Church School teachers in the Rejoice these past few months. Please continue to support your students by reading here about what is happening every month in their classrooms. Along those lines we have exciting news: we have a new Church School teacher coming into our littlest classroom!

I would love everyone to give a heartfelt welcome to Ms Laura Blagojevic, who will be taking the lead roll in the Under 8 classroom! Ms Laura has helped in the classroom with me several times throughout the year, together or solo by subbing, and she just loved teaching them so much she decided to stay! Many thanks to Ms Laura for volunteering her time to help create strong foundations for the children of God each week.

As you all know Christmas is just around the corner, which means that the pageant too, is just around the corner! Here are some dates to remember:

WHAT TO EXPECT IN DECEMBER:

- Dec 1 We will be learning about St Nicholas Day, which takes place on the 6th of December. We are also preparing for the Nativity pageant, "The Friendly Beasts", which will take place after the Liturgy on December 22. We will begin allocating parts that Sunday in Church School and for those who do not attend Church School regularly, do not worry, there are plenty of parts for everyone, so please come find me to sign up!
- Dec 8 We will be fitting our costumes and focusing on the pageant run-through, a little each Sunday leading up to the pageant.
- Dec 22 Pageant Day! Please make sure the kids are ready to go immediately downstairs after Holy Communion, so that we are dressed and ready to begin on time after the Liturgy.
- Dec 29 No Church School
- Jan 5 We will discuss Theophany in more detail, and resume our typical Church School routine. Our classes are continuing to grow, so we encourage your young ones to come down each Sunday!

"The Giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic His giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves." ~ St. Nicholas of Myra

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Nativity and the Blessing of Giving

The feast of the Nativity celebrates the most generous and selfless act in all of history. God became man in order to rescue the world from death and the dominion of darkness. Even the secular world agrees that the Christmas season is a time for giving, though those without the Light of Christ miss the greater meaning. In Orthodoxy, "alms-giving" refers to the act of giving to the poor and needy, which is considered a vital pillar of the Christian life. Alongside prayer and fasting, the act of giving is considered an essential expression of Christian love and compassion. Orthodox Christians believe that when they give to the poor, they are giving directly to Christ himself, as he identifies with those in need. "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

For Orthodox Christians, the act of alms-giving is seen as a way to cultivate spiritual growth and develop a deeper relationship with God. "Through the cheap price of doing good to men, we can acquire the priceless Kingdom of God." (Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow)

Alms-giving is not just about giving money; it also includes offering time, support, and acts of kindness to those in need. At every time of year, but especially during the great fasts of the Church, it is important to remember to do good by sharing the good things God has entrusted us with. There are many ways to give, and the church offers us some excellent opportunities to do so. We encourage everyone to take advantage of these opportunities. As we journey to the Lord's Nativity together, may we look in our hearts and open our hands to the many needs around us, always remembering that giving is not just an obligation, but a privilege; it is not just a duty, but a blessing:

"Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed." (Prov 19:7)

May the Lord bless you as you seek to bless others this Nativity, and always!

Steve Poole, and your Stewardship Team

OUTREACH

Dear Annunciation Parishioners,

The holidays are fast approaching, and once again, the **Outreach** ministry will sponsor the "Angel" tree. Please open your hearts and share the joy of the season with those less fortunate! In the Narthex, you will find a Christmas tree decorated with paper angels. Each "Angel" ornament (tag) contains the gender, age, need or desire of a child. Please select an "Angel" of your choice, and return your wrapped gift to the Annunciation library, with its **original tag**, by **Friday**, **December 13th**. Your donations will be distributed to local children.



The **Outreach** ministry thanks you for your generosity and kindness!!

Merry Christmas, and may God bless you always.

Rejoice - December 2024

200		
	2024	
	Christmas Card Fundraiser	
*	As the Christmas season is drawing near, we are once again inviting you to participate in our parish family	[
	Christmas Card, which will go out to all of our members. We are asking you to be generous and support this initiative. We leave the amount of the offering up to	[
	you, because we would really like to encourage participation. Please return the form with your donation by Sunday, December 8th in order to ensure timely delivery of	
*	the card. Names of your family members as you would like to see them on the card: (please print legibly)	
	Names:	[
*	names.	
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December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
1 Orthros & Liturgy	2	3	4	5 Great Vespers of St. Nicholas in Portsmouth 6:30 pm reception to follow	6 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Orthros & Lit. <u>here</u>	7 Great Vespers 6:00 pm	
8 Orthros & Liturgy Alkistis meeting after Liturgy	9	10	11 Parish Council <u>5:00 pm</u>	12 St Spyridon the Wonderworker Orthros & Lit.	13 stricter part of Nativity fast begins today through 12/24 (see Nativity fast entry)	14 Great Vespers 6:00 pm	
15 Orthros &	16	17	18	19	20	21 Great Vespers 6:00 pm	
Liturgy				t St. Nektarios r Confession			
22 Orthros & Liturgy Christmas Pageant	23	24 Nativity Eve Great Hours 10:00 am Vesperal Divine Lit. 5:00 pm	25 The Natvity of Our Lord in the Flesh Orthros & Liturgy	26	27	28 <u>No Vespers</u>	
		(Holy Communion)]	Fr. Anthony away		
29 Orthros & Liturgy <u>No Church</u> School	30	31	Wednesday 1/1/25 The Circumcision of Christ & St. Basil the Great			Please note that all Sun- day & week- day Orthros & Liturgies are at 8:45 & 10:00 am.	
	Fr. Antho	ony away	Orthros & Lit.				

2024 CONFIDENTIAL STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE

How Can I Pay My Pledge?

There are many convenient ways to pay your stewardship including:

- Online bill payment through your bank
- Check by mail
- Online through PayPal
- Cash

We highly recommend paying through your online bank bill payment service:

Payments can be made on a recurring monthly or quarterly basis, or in one complete payment.

- It is the easiest method to use (write "stewardship" in the memo line)
- It allows you to budget your stewardship payments to your preference
- It maintains a record for you and it affords you complete control
- Plus, there are NO FEES!
- You may also use your online bank service to make an extra donation

If paying by check:

Please payable to: "Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church", write stewardship on the memo line, and mail to:

93 Locust St, Dover, NH 03820

Attn: Stewardship

If paying by PayPal:

PayPal accepts credit and debit card payments. If you have a personal PayPal account, payments can be linked directly to your bank account to make a credit/debit card payment through PayPal, a 2.9% fee applies, (that we ask you to please cover, above your actual donation, in order to help the church defray that cost)

- To use PayPal go to: www.annunciationdover.org
- Click on to the "Donations" link and follow the prompts.

2024 PARISH STEWARDS - AS OF NOVEMBER 2024

THESE FAMILIES HAVE RETURNED THEIR NEW STEWARDSHIP FORMS
PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO SUBMIT YOUR NEW 2024 STEWARDSHIP FORM

Evangelatos, Rev. Anthony &

Presvytera Themmi

Amankwah, Nana & Katherine

Anestis, Peter & Lydia Anestis, John "Peter" Arvenitis, Paul & Linda Athans, Rev. Arthur &

Presvytera Keta

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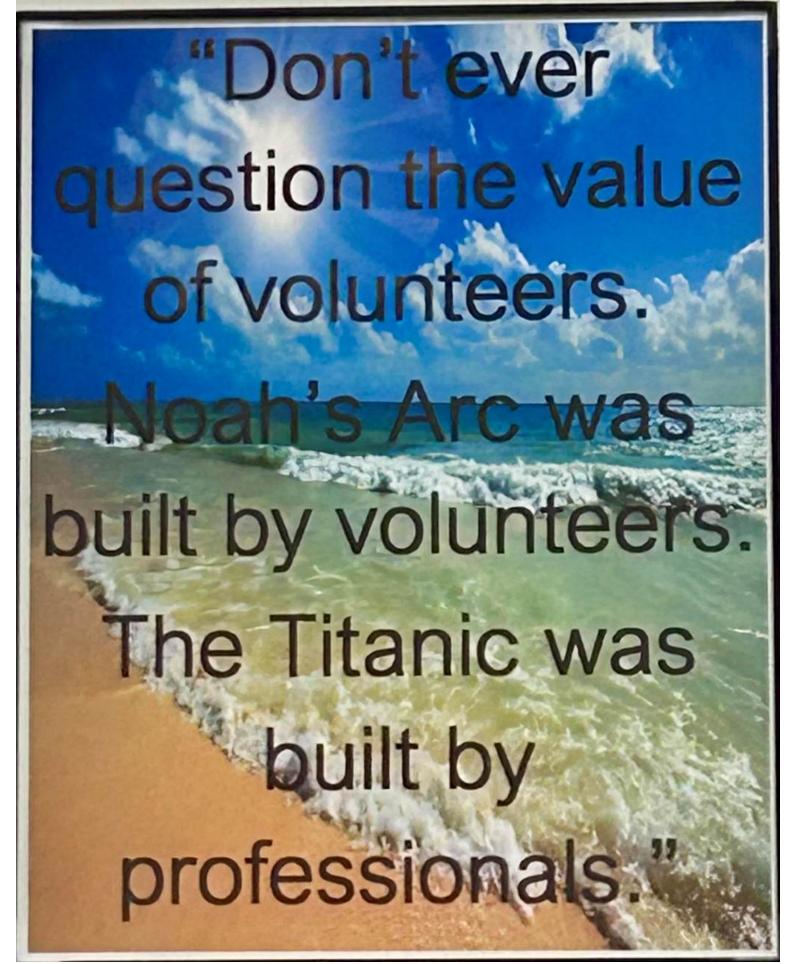
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