St. George Orthodox Church

5191 Lennon Road Flint, Michigan 48507-1050 (810) 732-0720

V. Rev. Fr. Amin Houli
Pastor

Supporting St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church

Glory to Jesus Christ!

I am writing you, the members of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church to present the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church's views on how the Members of the church should respond to their duty as members.

First, let me explain that the church is viewed as the body of Christ, with Him as the head of the church. To honor and support the Church is to honor and support Christ Himself. From the Resurrection on, we became the temples of Christ. Each of us has in our own hearts the church of the risen Lord.

It is an accepted sacrament that there be an assembly-an ecclesia, of Christians for the purpose of partaking in the sacrament of the Eucharist. This sacrament is accomplished through the ceremonies, rituals, and rubrics of the Divine Liturgy as set forth by the Fathers of the Church.

In the Church, there have always been needs, to be addressed by the generosity of the members. It is the duty of the parishioners to support and maintain their respective houses of worship. It is with love that this should be done. As the Apostle Paul said, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

To be able to fully participate in all the sacraments of the church, regular attendance in the sacramental life of the church is a necessity. We want to have you as full members of the body of Christ to feed your spirit, mind, and body. Members must attend to the physical needs of the place of assembly, St. George Church. We welcome, with open arms, those who would want to be friends of the church, with the knowledge that sacramental bond is only possible through the devoted efforts to support the individual's spiritual wellbeing, as well as the needs of their place of worship.

Yours Father in Christ,

Fr. Amin

V. Rev. Fr. Amin Houli

St. George Orthodox Church
Parishioner Manual

5191 Lennon Rd.
Flint, MI 48507
810.732.0720

Church Services

Saturday:	Evening Vespers Service	4:00 PM
Sunday:	Matins Service	8:50 AM
	Divine Liturgy	10:00 AM

Other services as announced during the year but most regularly Arabic Divine Liturgy on Wed's 6:00 PM

Confession

Confessions are heard every Saturday after Vespers, or by appointment.

Fees

Tithes & Donations

Tithe & Pledge minimum is $1,200 annually to be a member at St. George. These fees can be adjusted for financial hardship. Exceptions are made at the Pastor's discretion.

A member is a person that:

- Is a registered "pledged" member of our church
- Has regular participation in liturgical life of the church
- Has fulfilled his/her stewardship obligation for the previous year and is up to date for the current year, there is a $1,200 pledge per year.

Orthodox Weddings

Members in Good Standing: $500
Members in Faith: $1,000 plus $250 administrative fee

*Orthodox weddings only
*Premarital counseling with the priest or one appointed by him is strictly required.
*Donations to Priest(s) at the family's discretion

Orthodox Baptisms

Members in Good Standing: $200
Members in Faith: $400 plus $100 administrative fee per child

*Orthodox Baptisms only
*Donations to Priest(s) at the family's discretion

Orthodox Funerals

Members in Good Standing: Donations at the family's discretion
Members in Faith: Suggested donation of $1,500 details to be arranged with the priest and church office.

*Donations to Priest(s) at the family's discretion

Notes

The above fees are strictly for the church. Honorariums are clergy, church servers, chanters, musicians, etc. are above and beyond those fees.

Church Banquet Center

Parishioners may rent the church banquet center for pre-approved occasions (baptisms, weddings, etc.) upon availability. Please refer to the Banquet Center Rental Guide for detailed information or contact the Church.

General Decorum for Parishioners

Appearance: Carefully consider appropriate dress and accessories.

Punctuality: Would you arrive late for a meeting with your boss or the President? Don't be late for church to meet with God and His people. Leaving early is also inappropriate, especially from Divine Liturgy. It is disrespectful and ungrateful to leave before completing the Divine Liturgy and giving thanks for the Eucharist.

Bow when you are incensed. We are incensed as living icons of God. Show respect to clergy and each other; venerate bishops properly.

Quiet your heart and your mouth. Train your children to do the same.

Do not chew gum, cross your legs, or clap.

Please remove lipstick prior to receiving communion or kissing icons.

Cell phones and pagers should be turned off (or put on vibrate mode).

Churching of Mother and Child

As soon as the mother is ready to leave her home following childbirth (usually after 40 days) to do shopping, eat at restaurants, go to work, etc., the first thing she should do is return to the church with her child to give thanks to God and be "Churched." In imitation of the purification ritual of the Virgin Mary, the rite of Churching welcomes the mother back into the community after being separated during her participation with God in the holy act of birth. It also introduces the child "in the midst of the congregation" for the first time. This is done around the 40th day to reflect the offering of Christ in the Temple on the customary 40th day of Jewish law.

Baptism/Chrismation

Please note the following guidelines for Baptism/Chrismation:

There must be reasonable certitude that the person to be baptized will be raised in the Orthodox Faith. (It is not enough if a person merely wants their child baptized for the sake of custom!)

The candidate must have at least one sponsor/grandparent, and this person must be a practicing Orthodox Christian. If the sponsor is from another Orthodox parish, a letter from the sponsor's parish priest must verify he/she is in good standing with the Orthodox church. Sponsorship is a serious responsibility, a promise to do everything possible to ensure that the person (child or adult) continues in Faith. St John Chrysostom warned: "You, the sponsors, have learned that no slight danger hangs over your head if you are remiss."

A non-Orthodox witness in addition to the Orthodox sponsor must be in good standing with a recognized Christian Church. The pastor of the Church must secure a letter stating that the witness is a practicing Christian in good standing.

Preparation for Baptism/Chrismation on the part of the sponsor(s) will include participation in Confession and Holy Communion, prior to the baptism, and may also include counseling sessions with the priest and parents.

The priest will not baptize in individual homes except in the case of an emergency.

Preparation for Communion

This is a most serious matter. The following guidelines should be carefully considered and observed:

- The first requirement is for a person to be a baptized Orthodox Christian. The importance of the Eucharist's connection to Baptism cannot be understated. In communion, the faithful renew their baptism into the Eucharistic body of Christ.
- Regular attendance at Divine Liturgy is essential. If you miss Divine Liturgy for a mundane, unworthy cause, you should not partake without going to Confession. You should not commune if you are late to the Divine Liturgy. The Eucharist is not a dispensed dosage of grace to be taken at our convenience, in isolation from the whole work of the service. In light of the statements above, you absolutely must be there before the Scripture readings in order to partake.
- Communicants should prepare by praying at the Saturday evening Great Vespers with regularity. This is really the beginning of the Lord's Day.
- You must fast from all food and drink from, minimally, midnight Saturday. Of course, there are exceptions, for reasons of health, pregnancy, etc. This should be discussed with the priest.
- A prepared person must have been to Confession recently. Frequency is established individually with the priest. If you have not communed in a while, it is mandatory to first go to Confession. Note: Unless the pastor discerns reason for an exception, he will serve as each member's spiritual father/confessor.
- Sometime on Saturday or on Sunday morning, you should pray the Prayers of Preparation. These can be found in the red Service Book, p.204, or your own prayer book. Also pray the Prayers of Thanksgiving, starting with the one the faithful pray together at the Litany of Thanksgiving.
- Perhaps most important of all, you must seek to be at peace with everyone before taking Holy Communion. Our Master taught that we cannot offer our gift (which is Christ Himself) at the Alter if our brother has something against us; we must first be reconciled. You must, therefore, seek and give forgiveness before receiving the Eucharist.

If we faithfully follow these guidelines, we will commune worthily. Yet there is a critical distinction to be made: while we strive to commune in a worthy manner, we ourselves are never worthy. "Holy things are for the holy," the priest exclaims; and our immediate response is: "One is holy, One is the Lord, Jesus Christ." By God's grace alone, we partake of his Holiness, and receive a foretaste of the kingdom.

Marriage/Weddings

Marriage in the Church is reserved for those Orthodox who embrace it as the beautiful and joyous reflection of the mystery of Christ and the Church. Guidelines for getting married are as follows:

- Based on the conditions above, the priest will determine whether a couple is eligible for marriage in the Orthodox Church before a date can be set.
- A minimum of 6 months-1 year notice is required to set a wedding date.
- Premarital counseling with the priest or one appointed by him is strictly required.

- At least one of the persons getting married must be an Orthodox Christian and a member of St. George in good standing. The other party, if not Orthodox, must be a Christian in good standing with their church. (Speak to the priest about specific norms for "mixed marriages.")
- At least one of the sponsors (usually the best man/maid of honor) must be a committed Orthodox Christian. Sponsors who belong to another Orthodox parish must ask his or her pastor to write a letter stating he/she is in good standing. The non-Orthodox witness must be a practicing Christian in good standing with the Christian Community he or she attends.
- At the rehearsal, all participants should be appropriately dressed for entering the Nave of the Church.

Weddings are not permitted at the following times:

- Wednesdays and Fridays;
- Eves/days of the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, the Beheading of John the Forerunner, during Great Lent, including Cheese Week and Bright Week, i.e., Meat Fare Sunday through Thomas Sunday, and during the Nativity Fast (December 20 through December 25);
- During the Saints Peter & Paul Fast (variable through June 29);
- During the Dormition Fast (August 1 through 15);
- Only Orthodox hymns prescribed by the rubrics are permitted.
- In the case of candidates who have been divorced, the process of reconciliation with the Church is done through the priest. All necessary information is submitted to the Metropolitan in writing for his final approval.

Visitation of the Sick

One of the priest's primary tasks is indeed the visitation of the sick:

- The pastor will visit the sick and suffering as much as possible; but only the seriously ill will be visited on a daily basis.
- For you or your loved ones to be visited, it is imperative that an immediate family member calls the priest. He cannot depend on word of mouth, which is often unreliable.
- Members in good standing have first priority.
- Holy Unction is given to the seriously ill. There are no "last rites."

"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord..." (James 5:14)

Funerals

An Orthodox priest may perform a funeral service for a non-Orthodox person after consulting with the bishop, on a case-by-case basis, but the Orthodox Service may not be

used. The rite for the burial of a non-Orthodox must be used. The prayer for absolution may never be read for a non-Orthodox, nor may the service be celebrated in the church.

Funerals are not provided for people who are married and their marriage was not an Orthodox marriage performed in an Orthodox church by an Orthodox priest (e.g., marrying a non-Christian would disqualify the Orthodox from the Orthodox funeral).

Trisagion prayers may be said at the funeral home for anyone.

Eulogies in the church must be done only by an Orthodox cleric. Remarks by laypersons may be made at the Mercy Meal.

No person being cremated may receive an Orthodox funeral, as according to the synod, "Cremation is not acceptable in the Orthodox Church." The priest may say a Trisagion at the Funeral home, but under no circumstances will any prayer be offered over ashes.

During the Paschal Season (including Bright Week), the Paschal Funeral Service must be celebrated.

No activities other than those found in the Service Book of the Archdiocese may be conducted at either a funeral or before the graveside Trisagion Service. Clergy may be present for military, or government recognition of service, conducted after the Trisagion.

Non-Orthodox clergy may not participate in any service of the church.

Any person committing suicide may not receive an Orthodox funeral service.