

# Scrip News

Great Lakes Scrip Center®

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## KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON AT ST. JOHN'S

Pittsburgh. It's the second biggest city in Pennsylvania, at 58.3 square miles and a population of 305,412. The home of professional sports teams—the Steelers, Penguins, and Pirates—and a good deal of art and culture, the steel city is a small metropolis. Eleven miles away, in a little, 0.4 square mile borough called East Pittsburgh, 1,800 people reside. This is also where St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church was founded in 1919 and continues to keep its lights on today by fundraising with scrip.

John S., the coordinator at St. John's and life-long congregation member, saw scrip as an interesting way to raise money, and decided to start a "one-man" program in 2005. "I got the ball rolling at St. John's after I witnessed the GLSC fundraising potential at my daughter's school," John

said. "The school secretary who ran their program was an ultra-wiz at organizing their program and ensuring scrip sales' credits were properly assigned. With some database control, I was able to track orders and sales for our parish and keep it manageable."

For the then 86-year-old church, scrip was a "no cost" mechanism to address ever increasing costs, which was also appealing to our parishioners," John said. "We have a high percentage of seniors in our membership and they simply cannot open their wallets as they once did without hesitation."

Scrip fundraising was the best option for St. John's, whose membership has slowly been on the decline like many small churches across the nation. Their congregation now sits at around 75 people, whereas when John was growing up in the church, there were hundreds of members worshipping and partaking in the Orthodox tradition. From that group, about 25% of the members participate in scrip fundraising, although anyone can purchase. "During the Christmas holiday season, orders of scrip from member's friends and extended families also are received," John said.

St. John's makes the most of this participation in allocating funds. "The funds are completely deposited into the



treasury for use with supplies, utilities and other pressing parish needs," John said. "The funds are also used to support the 'Needy Fund,' which supplies grocery, food, and medication scrip cards for the neediest members."

In addition to supporting the needy fund and aiding with maintenance fees, the scrip program at St. John's has helped go beyond their community in East Pittsburgh. John mentioned, "We've sponsored our children to attend summer camps, we've sent members to Alaska and other parts of the country to teach and be taught, we've contributed to weather relief efforts like New Orleans rebuilding projects, and rendered support to mission start-up churches."

While scrip is a big contributing factor for

### CHRISTMAS AT ST. JOHN'S

The Orthodox Church follows the Julian calendar, which means that they observe Christmas on January 7th. Although there is extra time, St. John's still has a lot slotted during the holiday season including a visit from St. Nicolas and parish members caroling and delivering the Christmas spirit and small gifts in the community.

the funding of these activities, St. John's parish members also "hold a number of events through the year: Calendar Dinner Parties, Raffles, Bingo, and all the usual suspects in order to raise funds," John said. "I participate in just about all of the events when and where assistance is needed. Everyone pitches in."

This sentiment holds true not only from a fundraising aspect, but for all church happenings. "We have a lot of unselfish people—many retirees—who devote their time as labor to maintain the building and small grounds. Like many older parishes in decaying urban environments, our church is one of the few bright sights

of hope for a better tomorrow," John said. "As beautiful as the building and grounds may be, it is the Divine Liturgy, teachings of the church, traditions of the generations of people of the parish and more that I see must be preserved. Scrip helps us do that."

## *Helping Your Parish*

We know that St. John's isn't the only church relying on their parish and scrip to keep the lights on. John had some encouraging ideas for any parish that needs help:

- \* Know that every parishioner purchase is a valuable contribution to your parish no matter how seemingly small it may be. Every dollar is important; let first time buyers and the infrequent participants feel as important as the regular participants.
- \* Always remind potential customers that it costs you nothing to fundraise with scrip.
- \* The proceeds from a single scrip card may represent but one candle in the sanctuary that would not be there otherwise.
- \* Set up a scrip selling location in your parish hall and staff it every week without fail. Show your parishioners you are serious about the program by being present in the same place every week.
- \* Write some type of reminder in your church bulletin every week. Be creative, be funny, and be interesting to get people talking.
- \* Get the kids involved by making a poster with used scrip cards to show people what scrip cards look like and what's available.

Does your organization have a great scrip story you'd like to share? Send us an email at [shopwithscrip@glscrip.com](mailto:shopwithscrip@glscrip.com) and we'd love to talk to you!

## GIFT-GIVING IDEAS

Shopping for yourself is always fun, but sometimes shopping for the ones you love can pose as a little tougher of a challenge. Luckily for you, you have access to the best gift to give: scrip gift cards!

Gift cards are the perfect gift for everyone on your list, all you have to do is give it some thought and they'll know it comes from the heart. For example, give your friend who is always on her phone a ScripNow Target eGiftCard so she can check out with her favorite device. Give your daughter gift cards to her

favorite stores, and then take her on a shopping spree for post-holiday deals. For the hostess extraordinaire in your life, give them a gift card before the holidays so they can use it for party planning, or send them scrip for a restaurant so she can take the night off.

For the other not-so-specific friends and family members you're shopping for, you really can't go wrong with crowd-pleasing favorites. Here's a list of proven winners:

