

**acbooksonline@gmail.com**

---

**From:** <mwbonline@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Saturday, January 03, 2015 9:00 PM  
**To:** <acbooksonline@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Fw: Site modification

KEEPING WITH TRADITION

## Orthodox Christian Congregation Awaits Holiday

Posted: January 3, 2015

By **KATIE KING**

*Daily News-Record*



Though Christmas tree recycling schedules are already set, the congregation at Harrisonburg's Holy Myrrhbearers Orthodox Christian Church still awaits the holy holiday's arrival.

Father Gabriel Weller, a priest at Holy Myrrhbearers, explained that his church celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7 because it relies on the Julian calendar — introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C — to mark holidays.

Though much of the Western world has switched to the Gregorian calendar, established in the 16th century and named for Pope Gregory XIII, Weller says many orthodox Christians greatly value tradition and thus rejected the switch.

To spiritually prepare for the holiday, Weller said healthy congregation members adhere to a vegan diet — one without dairy and meat — for 40 days prior to Christmas.

“Christ encourages everybody to fast in all his teachings. ... It's supposed to help us move ourselves closer to God,” he explained.

Each time you control a craving or pass up a visit to the drive thru, says Weller, you'll remember the reason for abstaining.



*According to Father Gabriel Weller, one of the priests at Holy Myrrhbearers Orthodox Christian Church in Harrisonburg, for the 40 days leading up to Christmas — celebrated Jan. 7 in the faith tradition — many congregants adhere to a strictly vegan diet to help move closer to God and honor His sacrifice. (Courtesy Photo)*

“It reminds you of why you are doing it,” he said. “You are making a small sacrifice for God for the large sacrifice that He made for us.”

Fasting, however, doesn't mean the congregation can't enjoy any special dinners. At 7:30 p.m. Jan. 6, church members will come together for the annual 12 dish Biblical-era meal.

Prepared by The Sisterhood, one of the church's groups for women, the meal will consist of traditional dishes, including honey and garlic with bread, kutia (a sweet grain pudding), mushroom soup, peas, sauerkraut, fruit compote, holubtsi, lenten pirozhki, spice cake, bobalki and borsch.

Susan Mansfield, a The Sisterhood member, says the 12 dishes represent each of the apostles.

“It's really a beautiful meal because it's all done by candlelight,” she said. “It's all very quiet and we serve one [dish] at a time.”

Mansfield adds that she loves belonging to a church community that values old customs.

“The church is steeped in tradition and people find comfort in that I think,” she remarked.

For more information, visit [valleyorthodox.org](http://valleyorthodox.org) or call 908-2094.

*Contact Katie King at 574-6271 or [kking@dnronline.com](mailto:kking@dnronline.com)*

Recommend Share

---