

Volume 27, Issue 1
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THE NEWS FROM ST. NEKTARIOS

CONCERNING HOW WE APPROACH HOLY COMMUNION

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos

Ought we to give Holy Communion to everyone, without question?

Are we permitted to forbid a certain Christian who has committed a mortal sin from communing? If so, then in what manner?

Ought we to commune those Christians whom we previously have enjoined to confess, who nevertheless come forward unprepared?

These three questions <submitted by clergy> bring up the difficult matter of a priest giving Holy Communion to the faithful. I say “difficult” because, on one side, it is bound to the matter of the burden of the priest as being accountable before God as a minister of the Mysteries and, from the other side, it is bound to the conscience of the believer, as well as the particular composition of each parish.

There are so many unpredictable situations, and not all may be judged by the same metric. Each human being constitutes a unique case; as **St. Paul puts it: “what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?”** (1 Cor. 2:11). Besides this, we must not forget that our religion is a religion of freedom and of grace, and how all of our energy must focus on the salvation of the human being, for whom Christ died and for whose redemption He gave His Body, **“which was broken for us, for the forgiveness of sins”, and His Blood, “which was poured out for us, for the forgiveness of sins”,**

as is repeated in each Divine Liturgy. It is precisely this that the Mystery presupposes: the forgiveness of the sins of sinners, not a reward for sinlessness.

On the other side stand the exhortations of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:27-32) and of the Church, regarding preparation before Holy Communion, of **“examination”, so that our participation in the Mystery**

“With the fear of God, with faith, and with love, draw near!”

might be helpful, and “not unto judgment or condemnation”. The Mysteries, our noetic pearls, are not cast before swine, because they will be trampled and profaned. It is here that the accountability of the priest begins.

Now, the enlightened and faithful priest will find a middle ground between these two points that will be suitable to both. He will instruct the Christians in his care in such a way as to neither embolden them to the point that they approach Holy Communion unprepared, nor to terrorize them, by means of a hyperbolic estimation of their sinfulness, to the point that they withdraw from the Cup of Life. The criteria are to be found in that exhortation of the Divine Liturgy that, many times, is said or

heard in a mechanical fashion and without understanding:

“With the fear of God, with faith, and with love, draw near!”.

The **“fear of God”** repels the sinful man from the Lord’s Supper. Perfect **“love”** attracts him and, according to the **Evangelist John**, **“casts out fear”**. **“Faith”** will achieve the sacred union of these two poles and will give a faithful person the proper attitude with which to stand before God and His Mysteries. The priest must aim to support the growth and enlightenment of this faith with all of his pastoral work. Thus, fewer problems like the ones brought up in these three questions will present themselves, since in due time Christians consciously guided and educated in the Mysteries by their priest will know when and how to approach Holy Communion.

And something more: these questions presuppose an ideal relationship between a priest and his flock. The priest seeks them out by name and knows the problems of his parishioners. He hears their confessions, he follows up with them, he guides them in the Christian life—in a word, he shepherds them. Unfortunately, these days this is not always possible, especially in big cities with heavily populated parishes and few shepherds. From among the hundreds who come for Holy Communion at Pascha and Nativity, we may wonder whether the priest knows even a small percentage of them.

(Continued on page 3)

Happy Birthday!

Happy Birthday to our clergy, Presbyteres, and staff who recently celebrated birthdays in December, January and February



DECEMBER

Left: Fr. Dr. Paul Tsahakis
Right: Fr. Nektarios Karantonis



JANUARY

Left: Fr. Steve Dalber
Right: Presbyteria Meredyth Houpos



FEBRUARY

Left to right: Presbyteria Ellia Karantonis,
Tim Shelton, Tony Wilson

FOCUS ON OUR COMMUNITY

Celebrations, Milestones, Comfort & Support

In our prayers

Adrienne Tim Aphroula John Pat KS Joe Kim Johanna Edward Theona Helen DG Chuck
Handsel Mason Robin & Benny John & Elaine Jennifer & family Eleftheria Mary Shan Dawn
Grant Jack Phyllis Melton family Tish Joanne Christina Stephen Barbara & Spiro
Gloria Phil & Ronnie John & Michelle & family MP MSR Ashley Glen Cheryl & Brian Paul Dina
John T. John D. Terry Dorothy Erma (Hermione) Phyllis John Emmanoeuel
Mariham Helen Debbie Hanna Chris Greg

FOR THOSE IN SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY

Helene Jordan Krassimire Nicholas Michael Constantine Zack
Matthew Amanda Danielle Anton Jimmy Thomas Cris

Congratulations and best wishes

Bir ths & 40th Day Blessings

To Dea Tchikaberidze and Giorgi Otiashvili on the 40th day blessing of their daughter, Eva
To Angie & Michael Thomopoulos on the birth & 40th day blessing of Evie's sister, Mila Gisele
To Madlen & Ivan Ivanov on the birth & 40th day blessing of Daniel's brother, Nikola Savov
To Maria and Mitchell Pernal on the birth & 40th day blessing of Nicholas' brother, Alexander
To Justine and CJ Dellinger on the birth & 40th day blessing of their son, Henry Scott Dellinger

Chrismations & Baptisms

To Maite and John Manos on the baptism of Sophia and Elina's brother, Alexander John, and to his godmother, Jenny Bowling
To Ranim Rustom and George Mawardi on the baptism of Bruce's sister, Soleil, and to her godparents Mariette Andraos and Nabil Rustom
To Joseph (Paul) Marquard on his chrismation and to his sponsor, Jeremiah Courter
To Sarah & Rob Friedman on the baptism of Aine, Malcom & Brighid's sister, Saoirse Ivy and to her godparents, Presbyteria Ellia & Fr. Nektarios Karantonis
To Nina and Joshua Dzyak on the baptism of Roman's brother, Ezekiel Leon "Zeke" and to the godparents, Adrian Skok and Dr. Jennifer Grabowski
To Daria and Vlad Melnicenco on the baptism of Matthew & Mayson's sister, Sophie and to the godparents, Liuba Stirbu and Igor Leahu

MARRIAGES

To Michelle Anderson and Donovan Law on their marriage
To Tina Nasios and Tasos Douglas on their marriage

Par ishioners in the news

To Andrew McCullough & Megan Sadler chosen for Business North Carolina's 2023 Legal Elite

With Sympathy on the Repose of our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ

To the Tekin, Pamukci, Ibrahim and Tash families for the repose of their mother, Hasine Tekin
To the Nikopoulos family on the repose of Sylvia's husband, Serafim Basilios Nikopoulos
To the Fadel, Stewart & Raad families on the repose of Alene Ward Fadel
The family of Elizabeth A. Tanos-Priest on her repose
To the Malatras family on the repose of Mark's mother, Lucille Malatras
To the Pappas, Kelly, Tatsis and Ziogas families on the repose of Helen Tzefos Pappas
To the Kapantais family on the repose of Ekaterini's husband, Dimitrios Kapantais
To the Koufaliotis family on the passing of Anna's husband, Taxiarchis "Tom" Koufaliotis
To the Koutsopoulos and Balosos families for the repose of Christos' wife, Athena "Tina" Balosos
The Sikiotis family on the repose of Joanna's husband, Panagiotis "Pete" Sikiotis
To the Gretes family on the repose of John's brother, William "Bill" Gretes

In Appreciation

Thanks to Diane Gilbert and Copycat for printing the Church Bulletin and Newsletter.
Thank you to all who allowed us to use your photos for this month's newsletter: Fr. Andreas, Fr. Nektarios, Presbyteria Ellia, Fr. Paul, Presbyteria Lea, Kim Sheree' Braswell, Phyllis Gianakopoulos, Tony Wilson, Jim Keown, John Cosmas, Stavroula Couchell, Debbie Assad (last issue) and Costa Vrettos (Dec.)

Please contact Kim Clewell at kclewell@stnektarios.org with information we may share with the community, to request a photo from or submit a photo to the newsletter, add someone to the prayer list or to request a clergy visit.

Concerning How We Approach Holy Communion

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos (Continued from page 1)

Having considered these general points, let's take a closer look at the questions.

At the outset it must be said that we cannot give Holy Communion to everyone without question. Holy Communion is only given to the faithful—that is, to those who, by their baptism, have become members of the Church and belong to her and are found to be in mystical communion with her. In other words, only Orthodox Christians may commune. Non-Christians are excluded (and, consequently, so are unbaptized infants), as are those Christians who belong to other churches (Catholic, Protestant, Armenian, Coptic, etc.), schismatics, and those who have been formally excommunicated from the Church. Holy Communion is the symbol and the constitutive element of the Christian Church, the family in Christ. It makes the people of God one flesh and one blood. It makes us siblings in Christ, no matter what place, race, language, and era to which we belong, since **all partake “from one bread” and “of His cup”, and in our veins runs the Blood of Christ**, and our body has become like His Body. The priest is not only not able to give Communion to those who are not members of this community, but he bears a heavy blame if he does. When they draw near to our Church, then may they partake of our Communion.

However, our Church also imposes penance as pedagogical discipline, depriving of Holy Communion those who have fallen into certain sins. This is also what took place in the ancient Church, where there existed **special classes of “repenting” Christians**. Some of these classes were not only barred from receiving Holy Communion, but were not even allowed to observe the Divine Liturgy, only being permitted to hear the readings and the sermon. For certain occasions of grave sin, such as denying Christ, the severance from Holy Communion might even have lasted until one was on **one's deathbed**. With the passage of time, the Church became more and more lenient. It will suffice for someone to compare the canons of Basil the Great, the canons of John the Faster, and

contemporary practices to see the gradual decrease in austerity. The enforcement of this penance took (and takes) place during **Confession with one's spiritual father**. Naturally, the spiritual father would apply it with all his love and psychological deftness, so that the one confessing might sense the urgency of the matter, as this is happening for his or her own good and for the salvation of his or her soul. The same is the case should some great sin of a parishioner come to the attention of the priest. In such a situation, before this person approaches for Holy Communion, the priest should take care to approach him or her with love and care, indicating the appropriate remedy, and possibly recommending abstinence from Holy Communion. To do so when the faithful are approaching for Holy Communion is rather late for this, and making a scene at that point may become a cause for the one approaching to be hurt, and for our recommendation to have the opposite of the intended effect, distancing him or her from the Church—or, further still, to cause the priest to fall into mortal sin by violating the confidentiality of Confession, thus becoming guilty before God and man.

Then again, if for some reason it is no secret, but the one approaching has become a cause for public scandal, then the priest may—with all his love, with Christian graciousness and solemnity—deny him or her Holy Communion, requesting to see him or her at the end of the service, or acting by some other noble and tactful means, so that **the “ailing” Christian might be won, not lost**. St. Ambrose of Milan did something similar to Emperor Theodosios, who massacred the Thessalonians. In any event, in such encounters we must not forget that it is too late for us to wait until the moment of Holy Communion to counsel the faithful. If the **sinner is the “lost sheep”, great is the blame** of the shepherd who left it to wander about the hills and become prey for the noetic wolf, and did not run after it from the first moment. In every encounter, let the priest ask what Christ would do if He were in his position.

Finally, regarding the third point of the inquiry—namely, whether the priest shall

prohibit from Holy Communion those whom he has advised to confess, and they do not confess—I think the answer is rather difficult. The priest ought to recommend that the faithful approach Holy Communion having prepared to do so, according to their ability. He should give examples of the means of preparation, one of which is Confession. From there, it is a matter of conscience for the believer. It is a good thing for the believer to have confessed prior to Holy Communion, to have received forgiveness of his or her sins. Thereby, he or she may approach more worthily and with less fear of condemnation. The priest should not forget, however, that Confession is one Mystery, and Holy Communion is another; the second does not presuppose the first. Repentance is a self-sufficient and independent Mystery, to which Christians do not formally go every day, but rather when they sense the need for spiritual rehabilitation, for confession and forgiveness the sins that weigh them down. Holy Communion is the nourishment, the **source of immortality, the manna, the “true food and drink”** (cf. John 6:55). To this, a person approaches continually, as regularly **as possible, “so as not to die”** (cf. John 6:50). It is for this reason that the Divine Liturgy is celebrated almost daily. Moreover, you invite all those present to receive—**“draw near!”**—and for this reason it is prior to receiving Holy Communion that they are bound to do so worthily, and it is afterward that you will give thanks on their behalf to the Master Who loves mankind.

Let me write it again: Concerning such serious matters as the distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord to the faithful, the key is to be found in the hand of the priest who is good, prudent, and full of love and awe of God. He has only to use this to open the hearts of his parishioners so that their Bridegroom might enter.

Questions 3, 4, and 5 from Volume 1 of 'Liturgical Questions and Answers' by Prof. Ioannes Phountoules (Apostolike Diakonia, 1967; 6th Ed. 2006), pp. 17-22. Translated from the original Greek by Fr. Andreas Houpos.

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE



The Parish Council is comprised of 11 individuals seeking to serve God as servant-leaders to our clergy, our ministries, and our community. While Parish Council members come from diverse backgrounds and skills, all members share a joy of working together to build a Christ-centered parish of faith and love. As servant leaders, they are key participants in setting the future direction of the community and maintaining the principles of our Mission and Vision.

range from ensuring the good governance of the community, short and long range planning, implementing sound fiscal policies, and helping with church-wide events to promote strong ministry programs and activities. They strive to connect with our parishioners, ushering during worship services and building our church family.

The members of the 2023 Parish Council were installed on January 17. Officer elections took place in a special meeting immediately after the Service. ❖

Duties and responsibilities of Council members

WELCOME FR. SEAN Govostes

During February 2nd's services for the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, we had Fr. Sean Govostes praying with us. Fr. Sean lives here in Charlotte, but serves the parish of St. Katherine in Burlington. February 2nd marks the 20th anniversary of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood. Together we say «ΑΞΙΟΣ!» "AXIOS!" "WORTHY!" and pray that the Lord our God will remember his priesthood in His kingdom. ❖



2023 PARISH COUNCIL



Despina Gallis
PRESIDENT



Mike Burgan
VICE PRESIDENT



Chris Mortis
TREASURER



Chris Levantis
ASSISTANT TREASURER



George Harris
SECRETARY



Manal Choueiri
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Elio Azar



Joanne Kiser



Aka Vashakidze



Frank Bertis *



Gus Gianakopoulos *

*Appointed, pending
Metropolis ratification

MAKING LENT GREAT FOR YOUR FAMILY

Great Lent is like . . . this incredible banquet feast for our souls to learn, indulge, and devour. We have a tremendous spread of services, traditions, rituals, prayers, hymns, and guidelines for preparing for Christ's resurrection. How can we make Lent great for our kids and our families? Well, it is as simple, and as challenging, as learning to indulge ourselves in the Lenten buffet that God offers to nourish our souls.

Lent is a time that we are invited to change our lifestyle in preparation for Easter. Like anything else in life, the more we understand what is happening, the more we indulge in the banquet, the more we will experience God's healing presence in our lives . . . I will highlight three of the dishes that families can partake in, as a way of connecting to the banquet ourselves and teaching our children to partake. Notice the first connection though. The most effective way to teach our children the joy of the liturgical life of the Church is to embrace it in our own lives.

MAKE A COMMITMENT ON HOW YOU WILL FAST DURING LENT.

As Orthodox we fast from food to be able to fast from sin. And it is our sin that keeps us from experiencing God fully. This connection between how we eat and how we sin is what the Fathers of the Church are clear on. This connection is also something that is lost in contemporary society . . . Essentially the more we indulge ourselves in whatever we want, the more we become enslaved to our desires . . . Fasting is not magic, but . . . through fasting we see God transforming our worldly desires towards His Kingdom. Opening up . . . to fasting opens up our hearts to be filled with the Grace of God and be truly free.

Fasting rules for families are a personal thing. Each family will do it differently. In consultation with your Priest, or Spiritual Father, consider following the fasting guidelines of the Church. Consider what you did last year, and take a step further this year . . . Fasting is not just about

food, but also about healing our souls. It is a challenge for us today, but like any sacrifices we make in faith, God's blessings that come from it are uncountable.

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO FAMILY PRAYER AT HOME DURING LENT.

Kids are more likely to feel at home at church if their home feels more like a church . . . Lent is a great time to build your family icon corner, or come together before your icon corner in prayer. Lent is a time to consider coming together as a family before the icons instead of before the television . . . Consider specifically incorporating the Lenten Prayer of Saint Ephraim as a family. [Daily] . . . when everyone is together, gather at the family icon corner and say the prayer all together.

*O Lord and Master of my life,
give me not the spirit of sloth,
faintheartedness, lust for
power, or idle talk.
(prostration)*

*But grant me, your servant, the
spirit of moderation, humility,
patience, and love.
(prostration)*

*Yes, O Lord and King, grant me
to see my own faults and not
to judge my brothers and
sisters. For you are blessed to
the ages of ages. Amen
(prostration)*

After each verse, do a full prostration, or bow, in front of the icon of Christ. This is the same prostration the Priest does at the beginning of services. Nothing shifts a family prayer time like doing prostrations together. Christ is present as we gather, and through the icons. Bowing down to Him makes it real and requires a step in faith. Paradoxically, it strengthens our faith, which is what we need as we try to turn our lives towards Him.

So the Lenten buffet is laid out before us to nourish our souls and prepare us to receive Christ at Easter. We can partake

of fasting, church services, and prayer in the home. I have not mentioned many of the other 'dishes' available like *confession, forgiveness, almsgiving, reading the scriptures, pilgrimages, reading the lives of the Saints, or memorizing scripture or prayers*. The banquet is set for us to partake as much as we desire.

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO A CHURCH SCHEDULE DURING LENT.

During Lent, the Church offers more opportunities for us to come together in prayer. When we make any efforts to re-orient our lives towards God, we will be challenged. The Church knows this and provides opportunities for us to strengthen ourselves for this effort through prayer. The church services are for us to be encouraged and strengthened . . . Decide as a family what your church service schedule will be . . . Planning in advance that you will go to [Monday Compline], Wednesday night Pre-Sanctified service, or Friday night Salutations service, . . . is a commitment towards heavenly rewards of peace and healing. Planning ahead what services you will commit to is a way of setting our family's Lenten journey within the life of the parish; right where it belongs.

The goal or purpose of Lent is not to fast or pray. The goal of Lent is to experience God directly. Helping our kids 'get more out of Church' means helping them experience God directly. Lent is a time for families to reorient ourselves towards God, but it takes a commitment to open our families to the life in Christ and open our homes to God's saving Grace. The feast is there for us to partake. . . [and] God promises those who partake, that "Blessed our those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Philip Mamalakis, PhD

Excerpts from GOARCH.COM <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/making-lent-great/>

PHILOPTOCHOS FALL-WINTER RE-CAP

With just under 100 members strong the Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. Nektarios Church has been very busy this fall and winter supporting many local and national charities! We kicked off the school year by donating school supplies this past August to Thomasboro Elementary. An overwhelming number of supplies came in to support this school which is much appreciated!

The Kuykendall Road clean-up projects continue being advertised and supported by LPS for our entire church community. We not only clean up Kuykendall Road and give back to our neighborhood community, but also clean up our church property as well. We had an event in October and currently do this three times a year.



At our October 20th general meeting, Deidre Lepkowski provided a wonderful empowering topic on self-care, especially with being out and about during the upcoming holiday shopping season. Deidre provided great insight to members and visitors on how to protect, observe and be aware of our surroundings at all times for our protection. It was a well-attended meeting with a lot of great information shared. Thank you Deidre!



Baking throughout the fall time was being done in preparations for the annual holiday bake sale. We had wonderful sales and a lot of happy customers! Monies raised allowed us to support many local ministries, regional and national ministries! LPS wants to thank each person who helped bake, pack, distribute, sale and purchase these delicious pastries for the holidays, especially since all proceeds benefitted those in need!

LPS provided a wonderful fellowship time celebrating our patron Saint Nektarios after vespers on October 31st. The reception was a wonderful time for those to gather after worship service.



Mid November marked the snack bag packing for LPS to get the youth involved in service projects. LPS provided a wonderful spaghetti dinner and then the packing began. Hundreds of snack packs were packed and all participants had a great time. Early December we held our annual Christmas Brunch & Fashion Show with this year's event at Firethorne Country Club in Marvin, NC. The fashion show was St. John Knits and funds were raised for two charities Multiple Sclerosis Navigators and St. Anastasia Medical Assistance fund. The event was a huge sale out with over 230 attendees and the most funds ever raised at this charity event. LPS wants to thank all the volunteers, models, Firethorne Country Club staff, event sponsors and all those who donated to make this event a huge success. With \$14,000 combined in raised monies at the Christmas Brunch, LPS distributed \$7,000 to each of the charities. WOW and Praise Jesus for His goodness to those in need!

St. Nektarios Women's Bible study group and provided throw blankets to the St. Hermione home. It was a pleasure to bring in well over 200 blankets for this wonderful cause.

Finally, 2022 ended with our LPS being able to support other ministries/charities such as Loaves and Fishes, Charlotte Rescue Mission, Crisis Assistance Ministry, Carolina Breast Friends and Holy Angels. Again, we are only as strong as our members and our community. None of this would be possible without each and every one of you. Thanks to all you giving your time and talent to the Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. Nektarios Church.

To close out the Christmas season LPS joined in with our

Renee Keretses

CHRISTMAS BRUNCH



Pictured above:

Just a sampling of our many festive centerpieces—Thank you to all for your hard work on these masterpieces!
Congratulations to Deidre Lepkowski (#10 above) who won the contest for best centerpiece.

CHRISTMAS ON THE PLAZA



What a lovely evening of family fellowship and fun! Many thanks to the Capital Campaign Committee who hosted the meal, to Ariadne Zitsos Steel who organized the talent program, to our musicians who performed, to Najib and Debbie Assad serving as Santa and Mrs. Clause, to Stavroula and John Couchell for decorating the outdoor tree, to Danny Ziozios and kitchen crew for the delicious meal. All contributed to the evening's anticipatory celebration of the Nativity! Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth, and goodwill to all! ❖



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

We were pleased to welcome His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa at the morning's Matins and Divine Liturgy for the Eve of our Lord's Nativity. The Vespers service for the feast, in which we heard the powerful prophetic and evangelical readings and hymns that set forth the meaning of this momentous event. We reconvened Sunday morning at 7:00 a.m. for Matins, followed by

the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, the Eucharistic celebration of the feast proper, which ended the Nativity Fast and inaugurated the Dodekaemeron, the twelve days of Christmas. ❖



NEW YEAR'S DAY ST. BASIL'S DIVINE LITURGY

Our New Year's Day tradition at St. Nektarios includes the blessing and cutting of the Vasilopita (St. Basil's Bread) following Divine Liturgy on New Year's Day. Various members of our ministry groups participate in this annual event. Pictured are those who came forward to receive for their ministry, eagerly looking for the coin and blessing. We blessed, cut and distributed the traditional Vasilopita. May God show special blessings to our staff represented by Samara Clewell, and to Sandy Capousis who received the coins this year.



Thank you to our Philoptochos ladies, (pictured far right) who baked the bread following the tradition from the 4th century. A band of pirates stole from the townspeople and St. Basil retrieved the items from the pirates. There was a dispute as to who owned what piece of property. In order to resolve the dispute, St. Basil commissioned women to bake bread in which the gold coins, jewelry, etc. were placed into the dough before baking. The legend says that as each person was given a slice of bread, his or her own items were received back in the piece of bread.

Fr. Andreas and Fr. Nektarios blessed the bread and distributed slices to the representative of each ministry group:

Terry Sarantou (Archons of the Patriarchate)
 Gerry Clonaris (Archdiocesan Council Member)
 Evelyn Klund (Metropolis Council Member)
 Despina Gallis (Parish Council)

Samara Clewell (Staff)
 Dimitri Triantafyllides (Adult Religious Education)
 Debbie & Naguib Assad (Bookstore)
 Chris Levantis (Endowment and Property Management)
 Maria Mortis (Capital Fund Development)
 Safwat Wassef (Administrative Support)
 Ayoub Ayoub (Hospitality)
 George Harris (Holy Unmercenaries Medical Society)
 Deidre Lepkowski (Life and Family)
 Steve Constantelos (Liturgical)
 Christie Asimos & Vivian Karampouniotis (Altar Support)
 Dee Drobonick (Missions and Philanthropy)
 Andrew Asimos (Music)
 Linda Borowski (Outreach and Welcoming)
 Charlotte Nickolopoulos (Philoptochos)
 Theo Karavokiros (Property Mgt.)



Costa Vrettos (St. Hermione Home)
 Bess Karavokiros (St. Phoebe Ministry)
 Ritsa Neary (Young at Heart)
 Fr. Nektarios Karantonis (Youth Ministries)

Our appreciation goes out to the many volunteers who serve in the various ministries of St. Nektarios. ❖

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL RECIPIENTS

We recognized our 2022 Archangel Michael Honorees, Stavroula Couchell and Dimitri Triantafyllides, on January 17th. The Metropolis of Atlanta Archangel Michael Feast and Honors has been prayerfully conceived as the annual double feast of the Metropolis family. Since 1998, the Metropolis family had been coming together in Atlanta on the weekend around the November 8th feast of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, to honor and celebrate the Metropolis patron saint and the lives of two members from each parish who are living examples of the Orthodox Christian life and journey to Theosis. This special Metropolis feast is also the annual Metropolis celebration and thanksgiving for all devout stewards of faith, time and talent,

"who first give themselves to the Lord by the will of God." 2 Corinthians 8:5.



*Pictured left: to right : Dimitri Triantafyllides and Stavroula Couchell with Fr. Andreas
 Our previous Archangel Michael recipients*

Honorees are chosen by each parish priest following his consultations with leaders from the community. Honorees exemplify the true Orthodox Christian way of life by their deep faith, commitment, dedication and service to the parish and to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is a difficult decision in that our parish is blessed with so many faithful stewards. So as we honor individuals from St. Nektarios, we are at the same time, celebrating and giving thanks for all the devout and faithful people in our parish who continue to unselfishly offer their time, talents, energy and resources. ❖

FEAST OF THEOPHANY AND HOUSE BLESSINGS

Καλό μήνα! Blessings to all for this new year.

Between the three Divine Liturgies and two Great Blessings of Water this month, much grace has been poured out upon the world and God's people. May God bless us to live a life full of Theophanies! ❖



"Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear us, the one who condescended to be baptized in the Jordan River and sanctified its waters. Bless all of us who, through the bowing of our heads, express our obedience to you. Grant that we may be filled with your sanctification through the drinking and sprinkling of this water, and may it bring us, O Lord, health of soul and body."



Christ is in our midst!

Did you miss the Great Blessing of Water at the Vespereal Divine Liturgy that ushers in the feast of Theophany? One of the great and much-loved observances connected to the feast of Theophany is the blessing of homes. In it, the parish priest visits the homes of the faithful to bless them with the water sanctified during the Theophany feast. It is a unique opportunity for the faithful to invite the Church into their home in a concrete way.

To schedule a visit by one of our priests to your home, please call the office. We generally have house blessings until the end of February each year but homes can be blessed any time. If you are unable to meet with a priest, you may request a House Blessing Card from the office and take some holy water (also available in the office) and bless your home according to the instructions on the card. ❖



ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Becoming Orthodox

On Friday evenings, our Catechumens and those inquiring to know more, have been gathering for the “Becoming Orthodox” class. This class is a part of the larger Adult Religious Education program at St. Nektarios church and is taught by our clergy. The course covers various topics including the principles of Orthodox Theology, tradition, and history. Through this class, the participants gain a deeper understanding as they continue their journey toward baptism/Chrismation. Pictured is Fr. Nektarios teaching on the Holy Sacraments of the Orthodox Church in the church. ❖



Above :

Fr. Nektarios leading a class on the Holy Sacraments of the Church for our Catechumens



Pictured above right:

Fr. Andreas & Maryann Zitsos leading our Women's Bible Study

Planning Session

Fittingly, on the day the church commemorates St. Athanasios the Great, who helped confirm the canon of Holy Scripture during the fourth century, our Bible Study team met to begin planning for 2023's study. This year, our Men's and Women's study cohorts have been devouring and digesting the book of the Acts of the Apostles, seeing our direct relationship to the nascent Church in the

commission by Christ of his Apostles in the Holy Spirit. That study wrapped up this month. On my behalf and for our parishioners and others who have benefitted, I thank our team members for their dedication, faith, humility, and hard work, and look forward to what is to come.

+Fr. Andreas

5K CHECK PRESENTATION

On January 29th, the Sunday of the Canaanite Woman, proceeds totaling \$33,000 from November's St.

Nektarios 5K were presented to St. Hermione Home (SHH), and Shelter Health Services (SHS).

Fr. Paul Tsahakis, who provides medical care at the SHS free clinic, and is the driving force behind SHH, which seeks to serve women facing crises in pregnancy, presided over the Divine Liturgy.

St. Hermione Home, Shelter Health Services and 5K board members later gathered for fellowship courtesy of Limani restaurant and a generous benefactor. Today was also the Membership Tea event



for our Ladies Philoptochos. May our Lord ever inspire us to serve those in need, as an outpouring of our repentance in love for him and for our neighbor. ❖





Sama and GOYANS GONE GRAY

Hundreds of GOYANS (who have gone gray (or are going gray) reunited on February 11th to raise over \$7,000 to benefit the St. Anastasia Medical Assistance Fund. The SLC hall decorated for the celebration and filled with music from “our youth” set the stage for a great evening. People congregated around the table sampling a feast of sweet and savory appetizers. The center floor was regularly full with dancers moving to American, Arabic or Greek music.

Then came a moment of excitement when Jeff Mathews’ custom deluxe cutting boards were auctioned adding to the funds being raised.

Thank you to the organizing committee, Christina Melissaris, Susan Triantafyllides, and Phyllis Gianakopoulos with their team of many others for creating this happy time which results in some love, caring and happiness for others. ❖



St. Anastasia Medical Assistance
A Ministry of
St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church

Mission

To provide aid to members of the community with serious financial needs, requiring immediate action, as a result of significant medical issues.

Background

The Ministry began in 2010 as the Medical Assistance Fund from the deep desire of Anastasia (Ana) Crambes Sistare to help those suffering from serious illness. As a result, the GOYANS Gone Gray event was created. Ana gathered childhood church friends and new friends, many of whom are former GOYANS (Greek Orthodox Youth of America), to re-**kindle memories of “the teen years”**, for fun, fellowship, and fundraising for those in need.

Ana chaired the annual event from 2010 through 2018. Under her leadership and with her deep faith, diligence, and strength to carry its mission despite her own cancer diagnosis, over \$100,000 was raised and dispersed.

In 2019 a leadership board was formally established to oversee the continuation of the Fund. The board in 2021 renamed the fund in honor of the works of St. Anastasia and in memory of Ana.

By July 2022, the fund had distributed over \$150,000 to benefit more than 20 people.



FINANCIAL MATTERS

2022 In Review

Our St. Nektarios Church is our spiritual home.

In the post-pandemic year 2022, our Parish became a vibrant place of prayer, comfort, spiritual healing, and celebration. Last year, our ministries returned to full activity. Your generosity of time, talent and treasure provided the needed support of our spiritual home, of the programs undertaken for the spiritual needs of the families entrusted to our care and for our worthy ministries.

OPERATING FUND

**Total Offerings exceeded
\$1,082,000**

We met our income goal established through our budget, exceeding 2021 by 5%.

These funds are the financial foundation for all of our ministry efforts within and beyond St. Nektarios. They provide support for:

Worship services, pastoral care, religious education, youth programs, membership outreach, communications, event programming, hospitality, philanthropic ministry programming, building facilities, our Archdiocese and Metropolis.

Our total expenses exceeded our financial plan by 1% and were **\$1,095,000**. We were able to cover our shortfall without having to draw on our unrestricted Discretionary Savings Fund.

FAITH IN ACTION

**Ministries Making a Difference
in the Life of Others**

In addition to the Operating Fund, *Your Generosity of time, talent, and treasure* provided:

- \$265,000 to our Dedicated Fund— support includes
 - Child of God **feeding** hundreds of children in Kenya, five days a week with two meals per day.
 - St. Anastasia Medical Assistance Fund **offering financial assistance**
 - 5K Taking Steps and St. Hermione House **supporting homeless** women and children in Charlotte
 - St. Dionysius Hospital, Matthews Help Center, Prison Ministry, and Crisis Assistance
 - And more
- \$17,000 to our St. Nicholas Altar Benevolence Fund
- Over \$38,000 to Ladies Philoptochos Society (LPS) which they distributed in 2022

STEWARDSHIP

**OUR COMMITMENT
TO OUR SPIRITUAL HOME
\$ 854,700 Received in 2022
Stewardship grew by 5% over 2021**

Thank you for your stewardship offerings which

- Grew from you giving back to God what is His.
- Came from our growing Membership
- Funded over three quarters of our overall ministry operations
- Allowed for us to be fully back to our parish home life

BUILDING FUND

**YOUR GENEROSITY
Investing in our Future
\$1.6 MILLION CASH RECEIVED
which brings
our cash balance over \$4 million
Moving us closer to building
the Ministry Center and renovating the
Spiritual Life Center in 2023
For our 25th Anniversary**

2022 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Available at the Church office beginning February 19th

To be presented at the Spring Parish Assembly on March 12, 2023 following the Divine Liturgy

YOUTH MINISTRY



Some of our teens, accompanied by Fr. Nektarios and other chaperones, before leaving for Atlanta for this year's Winter Youth Rally.



Pictured above: Our Boys' Basketball Team



Pictured right: Our Minis-Tree



An activity for Youth/Building Campaign where they wrote their wishes for the new building and placed it inside of an ornament that went on the lighted tree behind them.

ST. PHOEBE MINISTRY



Our St. Phoebe Ministry made and took lunch to a Habitat for Humanity build team.



The two photos above and one on the left are from the St. Phoebe Prospora workshop. Many thanks go to Christie Asimos for holding this workshop for our St. Phoebe girls.

BEYOND ST. NEKTARIOS



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Peace of mind Training in mental Health First Aid and Orthodox Bridging

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America presented Peace of Mind training on Friday evening February 10th and Saturday, February 11th. This pilot session included clergy and parishioners from Holy Trinity Cathedral, St. Luke and St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Churches.

The Vision is for Peace of Mind to become a standard training across all jurisdictions, parishes and seminaries in order to uphold exceptional pastoral care standards within the Orthodox Christian communities in the United States.

This program aims to support clergy and ministry leaders in:

1. Appropriately identifying, understanding, responding and referring mental health concerns as they arise in the parish.
2. Exploring the connection between Orthodox Christian anthropology, pastoral care and mental health care.
3. Cultivating ongoing conversations about mental wellness within the parish and the greater pan-Orthodox Christian community.

Our program facilitator, Danielle Xanthos, PsyD, led us through a clinically-based course (*Mental Health First Aid™*, owned by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing) that covered:

- ◆ Common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges
- ◆ Common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges
- ◆ How to interact with a person in crisis
- ◆ How to connect a person with help
- ◆ Expanded content on trauma, substance use and self-care

The program was augmented by a theologically-based presentation developed by the Assembly of Bishops.

Danielle has worked extensively in this field and now through the Assembly of Bishops and the presentation of this program, she is able to speak more openly about this subject and bring this serious health matter to the forefront.

Those who took this class and passed the exam are now certified as Mental Health First Responders.

Thank you to Fr. Robert Lawrence of St. Luke for organizing this



Pictured Left: Fr. Constantine is speaking into someone's ear while they are trying to have a conversation with someone else. This exercise helped us understand what a person with a disorder may be experiencing when they are hearing voices.



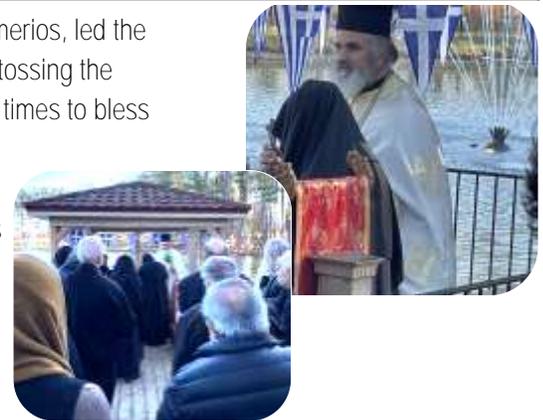
class. Thank you to Rev. Dr. Jonathan Resmini and to Fr. Christian Siskos of Holy Trinity for hosting this important event and for the delicious lunch from YaFo Kitchen. Thank you to Fr. Constantine Shepherd of Winston Salem Annunciation Church who assisted facilitating this class.

For more information, go to www.assemblyofbishops.org/peaceofmind or mentalhealth@assemblyofbishops.org or call (212)570-3593. ❖

PANAGIA PROUSIOTISSA MONASTERY IN TROY, NC



Fr. Paul Tsahakis, Ephemerios, led the service of Theophany, tossing the Holy Cross into the lake three times to bless the water... which with evaporation and rain... blesses the entire region. This is done every year on Theophany. May God continue to bless the Holy work of this monastery. ❖



Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles & Teacher of the Slavs

February 14



Saint Cyril was born in Thessaloniki in the early 9th century to pious parents. His family was one of only a few Byzantines in Thessaloniki at that time since it was largely populated by Slavs. Growing up in this situation, Cyril learned the Slavonic language, which later in life would serve him and the Church at large. He continued his education in Constantinople with his brother Methodios (see May 11th), each taking to their particular interests: Methodios in politics, and Cyril in philosophy and teaching.

The two brothers were approached in 850 by Saint Photios the Great (see February 6th) to lead a diplomatic mission to the Khazars, the people who inhabited the western shore of the Caspian Sea. Cyril and Methodios accepted this mission and departed to the North. After the success of this trip, the brothers lived for a time in a monastery on Mount Olympus where Methodios became a monk. At this time the brothers utilized their childhood Slavonic education to develop a written alphabet for the Slavonic language, which to this time had never existed. This alphabet became known as the Glagolitic Alphabet. On their own instigation, the brothers began translating the Gospels and liturgical service books into Slavonic.

Providentially, Cyril and Methodios were again called upon for a mission, this time to travel to Moravia to spread the Christian faith to King Rostislav (see May 11th) and his people. The brothers departed in 862, bringing with them their Slavonic alphabet and service books. After five years of service, the brothers made their way to Rome in 867 to have members of their company ordained to the priesthood to aid in the missionary journey. The group of missionaries celebrated the Divine Liturgy in Rome in the Slavonic language for the very first time with members of their party being ordained as they intended. While in Rome, Cyril fell deathly ill. He was tonsured a monk and died. His brother Methodios continued their missionary work, utilizing the Glagolitic Alphabet. Cyril and his brother Methodios are commemorated together on May 11th.

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OUR MISSION:

St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to the continuation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's ministry of salvation through the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel; through Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and through loving service to God and to mankind.

OUR VISION:

The community will provide a loving, caring and welcoming environment where all belong and grow in the faith through worship, service, witness, and fellowship.

DIRECTORY

Church Office: 704-708-4669

Church Fax: 704-846-6094

Email: office@stnektarios.org

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5108 Kuykendall Rd. Charlotte, NC 28270

Clergy

Father Andreas Houpos, Proistamenos

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Father Nektarios Karantonis, Ephemerios

Mobile: 980-829-5215

Email: frkarantonis@stnektarios.org

Father Steve Dalber, Pastor Emeritus

Mobile: 704-451-6524

Email: frdalber@stnektarios.org

Father Paul Tshahakis, Presbyter

Mobile: (704) 608-1112

Email: frtsahakis@stnektarios.org

Parish Staff

Parish Administrator - Evelyn Klund

Administration Staff

Silva Awaimrin, Kim Braswell, Samara Clewell,

Nina Dzyak, Sofia Nicolopoulos, and

Sammie Sedhom

Sexton - Jim Keown

Chanters - Sam Herron, Jeff Clewell,

Dina Marinakos-Oara

2023 Parish Council

President: Despina Gallis

Vice President: Mike Burgan

Treasurer: Chris Mortis

Assist. Treasurer: Chris Levantis

Secretary: George Harris

Assist. Secretary: Manal Choueir

Members: Elie Azar, Frank Bartis,

Gus Giannakopoulos, Joanne Kiser,

Aka Vashakidze

Philoptochos Board

President: Madalina Lowen

1st Vice President: Kathrine Cestrone

2nd Vice President: Deidre Lepkowski

Recording Secretary: Sharon Koutroumpis

Corr. Secretary: Michaelina Franks

Treasurer: Evelyn Klund

Ass't. Treasurer: Christine Malatras

Advisor: Niki Kleto

Members: Helen Bakos,

Phyllis Giannakopoulos, and Renee Keretses

(Email: philoptochos@stnektarios.org)

SUNDAYS AT SAINT NEKTARIOS

Worship

Matins 8:00 a.m. and

Divine Liturgy 9:15 a.m.

Fellowship Coffee:

Following Divine Liturgy

Prosphora

Please contact the church office or Christie Asimos at 704-756-1512 if you would like to provide or sponsor Prosphora.

Coffee Hour

Please contact the church office if you would like to host or co-host a Coffee Hour on Sunday. Your Stewardship pays for the coffee hour refreshments provided by the Hospitality Ministry Team.

Flowers

You may donate flowers in honor of a **family member's feast day, in memory** of a loved one or friend, on the occasion of a holiday, or simply as a gift to the community of St. Nektarios. To donate flower arrangements to be placed at the Iconostasis, St. Nektarios Shrine or in the Narthex for Sunday Services, please contact the church office to reserve a Sunday.

Sacramental Wine & Pure Olive Oil

You may make a financial gift to help defray the cost of the sacramental wine that is used for Holy Communion. Please note on the memo line of your **check or on the envelope "Communion Wine"**. You may also donate a bottle or can of pure olive oil which is then blessed at the Shrine of St. Nektarios and is offered in the anointing kits. Please feel free to bring this with you to any of our services and give to an usher on duty. For additional information contact the church office.

UPCOMING DEADLINE

Newsletter & Bulletin Due Dates:

Information Due: March 21, 2023

Published: March 28, 2023