



Issue 4
July - August 2023

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THE NEWS FROM ST. NEKTARIOS

SPIRITUAL TOIL AND PAIN

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos

«Αἱ ἡμέραι τῶν ἐτῶν ἡμῶν
ἐν αὐτοῖς ἑβδομήκοντα ἔτη,
ἐὰν δὲ ἐν δυναστείαις,
ὀγδοήκοντα ἔτη,
καὶ τὸ πλεῖον αὐτῶν
κόπος καὶ πόνος·
ὅτι ἐπῆλθε πράξης
ἐφ' ἡμᾶς, καὶ
παιδευθισόμεθα.»
(Ψαλμός 89,10)

“Our days amount to seventy years—eighty years, if they be in strength—and the greater part of them is toil and pain; for meekness has come upon us, and we have been chastened.” (Psalm 89:10)

«Χρόνια πολλά!» “Many years!”
«Να τα εκατοστήσεις!» “May you live a hundred years!”

Those of us who have experience of the Hellenic heritage are no doubt familiar with these common expressions offered on joyous occasions like birthdays or name days. But reading them here after reading the selected psalm verses above presents us with a tension, a conflict. What is going on?

Regardless of one's span of life, the psalmist, King David, submits that most of these years are spent in “toil and pain”. He seems to express an anguish, a dread of longevity, or perhaps rather a lament that these years, which we experience as being so long and wracked with difficulty, are as but a blink of the Lord's eye: “in your eyes, a thousand years are but as yesterday that has passed, or like a watch in the night” (v. 4). And what is more, we know that people can experience life in vastly different ways. One

person is born healthy and is raised in a loving family, living a life that most might consider “normal” or “good” or “successful”. Meanwhile, another is born with physical impairments, in a broken home, and experiences a life that might be considered “abnormal” or “bad” or “failed”. It is no secret that the experience of life for each individual and family and community runs a gamut of circumstances, of choices and their consequences, of tragedy and joy. But it is common to all humans that life contains “toil and pain”.

... I do not wish you “many years”, but repentance unto eternal life with Christ our God, to whom belongs all glory, honor and worship. ...

However, it is not simply here that our meditation finds its limits. Our entire inheritance of faith is built on the premise that there is more to life than meets the eye. We cannot simply think of “toil and pain” in the ways that might immediately come to mind. As we said, the quantity and quality of material, physical, or emotional “toil and pain” may vary widely from individual to individual. But it is the “toil and pain” that we undertake and undergo in our spiritual life that is necessary for and equally available to all people. To make the point more bluntly, we can turn to the words of St. Anthony

the Great: “Without temptation, no one can be saved”.

Each of us that has taken on the name of Christ in baptism has been called to him and by him. For each of us, the moment we recognize him in our life, it is as if the entirety of the Gospel begins anew in our hearts. And how does Jesus inaugurate the Good News? With the words, “Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” In another place he says “Temptations must come”, and in yet another place he says that we gain the Kingdom of Heaven “by force”. Our salvation is a free gift, but how can we sit idly by and not show gratitude?

Repentance, a constant turning of our mind and heart to Christ in gratitude, does something interesting to life and time. The rich become eager to spread their wealth, and the poor are given an advance from the heavenly treasury. The healthy tame their bodies with fasting and self-control, while the sick are filled with ineffable peace. For the young who acquire a penitential mindset, they become wise beyond their years; the old glow with a childlike simplicity and joy. Repentance levels the playing field; it unites us all in Christ.

The natural progression of biological life consists of toil and pain, and the creature is humbled and chastened by the process of aging, death, and decay. But we have the Spirit of God, and have been called to eternal life in Christ. If we resolve to fill our lives with spiritual toil and pain out of love

(Continued on page 16)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



In August we welcomed Panagiotia Minakakis who helped lead our byzantine chant



and also Caleb Clewell, home on break from his Greek language studies in Thessaloniki, Greece. He is preparing to study Theology at Aristotle University.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY EVELYN

The staff and campers surprised Evelyn with a cake, flowers and singing on her birthday.



(Πολλά χρόνια! Many years to Evelyn)

In Appreciation

Thanks to Diane Gilbert and Copycat for printing the Church Bulletin and Newsletter.

Thank you to Fr. Andreas, Fr. Nektarios, Presbytera Meredyth, Elie Azar, Kim Braswell, Samara Clewell, Stavroula Couchell, Jim Keown, Caleb Clewell, Despina Gallis, Evelyn Klund for the photos in this months issue.

FOCUS ON OUR COMMUNITY

Celebrations, Milestones, Comfort & Support

IN OUR PRAYERS

Nataliya Tim Aphroula John Pat Joe Kim Johanna Edward Tina Theona Helen DG Chuck Handsel Mason Angela Robin & Benny John & Elaine Jennifer & family Eleftheria Mary Dawn Grant Jack Phyllis Melton family Tish Joanne Christina Stephen Barbara & Spiro Jaclyn Phil & Ronnie John & Michelle & family MP MSR Ashley Christian Jeff Shannon Glenn Cheryl & Brian Paul Dina John T. John D. Terry Dorothy Erma (Hermione) Phyllis John George Emmanouel Marihiam Helen Debbie Hanna Chris Greg Mary Yates Peter

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

BIRTHS & 40TH DAY BLESSINGS

To Lindsey & Elliott Hillmann on the 40th day blessing of their son, Noah Joe in May
To Christina and Sam Herron on the 40th day blessing of Alexis & Sophia's sister, Olivia Grace

CHRISMATIONS & BAPTISMS

To Anastasia Berco and Eugeniu Constantinov on the baptism of Jason's sister, Leah Alexandra, and to her sponsors, Daria and Vlad Melnicenco
To Donovan Law on his chrismation and to his sponsor, Dimitri Triantafyllides
To Dani and Dan Monroe of the baptism of Georgia Kate's brother, Daniel Herman, and to his sponsor, Anna Jackson
To Justine and C. J. Dellinger on the baptism of their son, Henry Scott Dellinger, and to his sponsor Preston Dellinger
To Christina and Sam Herron on the baptism of Alexis & Sophia's sister, Olivia Grace, and to her sponsors, Dina Marinakos and David Oara
To Emily, Tyler, Ezra, Emily, Lydia and Micah Hahn on their baptisms and to their sponsors, Presbytera Merredith, Dwayne Cogdill, Ben Dresser and Anastasia Stonestreet

WITH SYMPATHY ON THE REPOSE OF OUR BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

To the Chomakos family on the repose of Gail's husband and Andrea's father, Jim
To the Kizinopoulou & Ladopoulou families on the repose of Nikolitsa Kizinopoulou
To the Tsahakis & Couchell families on the repose of Presbytera Lea's father, John Crambes, in Greece
To the Stojkovich & Kempf families on the repose of Bosiljka "Bosa" Stojkovich, mother of Goran Stojkovich, and LaVerne Kempf, mother of Kim Stojkovich
To the Constantelos and Malatras families on the repose of Steve's brother, Panagiotis, in Greece
To the Nicolopoulos family on the repose of George's wife & Sofia's mother, Pitsa George Nicolopoulos
To the family of George Lucas on his repose
To the Kardous family for the repose of Dr. Marie-Claire Marroum's husband, Khalil "Kal" Elie Kardous
To the Robertson family on the repose of Philip's dad, Philip Benton "Ben" Robertson
To the Kakavitsas family on the repose of Nicholas Kakavitsas
To the Metaxas family on the repose of Stellios' mother, Stavroula Metaxas
To the Munday and Dellinger families on the repose of Scott's Munday's mother, Gayle

STAFF UPDATE

Farewell to Tim Shelton, Property Manager & Landscaper



For three years, the dual role of Property Manager and Landscaper here at St. Nektarios Church was dutifully filled by Tim Shelton. He could be seen regularly working on the various flower beds, riding the lawn mower, pressure washing the campus, fixing plumbing, and doing other such jobs. He had and maintained close working

relationships with all the many vendors needed to care for our campus.

Tim is a well-known and long-time member of our parish and of the greater Orthodox Christian community of Charlotte. Tim served in his role faithfully until personal circumstances led him to take a step

back in Summer 2022, with his employment at the parish ultimately coming to an end by February of this year. As most of our readers know, Tim's beloved wife, Adrienne, of blessed memory, passed from this life just a short while later, in May.

With Tim's departure, our office lost a good-natured, gentle co-worker, who loves to be close to his church, whether conceived of as its buildings, or as its people. I am personally and particularly grateful for Tim's care and attentiveness as I transitioned to my new office, church, and home, as he was always eager to help in any way possible.

And so, I offer this brief reflection on behalf of our community as a word of thanks to Tim Shelton for his years of service to St. Nektarios Church. May God look favorably upon him as one who loves and served the beauty of His house.



+Fr. Andreas

Caroline Mellekas, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Caroline relocated to Charlotte to assume her new role with us in mid-July. We welcome her into our family of faith, and to grow together "to the stature of the fullness of Christ".

A native of Connecticut, Caroline comes to us from Brookline, Massachusetts, where she just graduated from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, with a Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degree.

Caroline brings with her a wealth of knowledge in camping ministry, campus ministry, youth catechism, and young adult

formation. Most notably and recently, she served as Assistant Director for (and is an alumna of) CrossRoad, a national ministry that helps high school students discern their professional vocation through the lens of their Orthodox Christian faith.

She joined us just in time to facilitate the Exploring Aegina Greek Language Camp. Immersed in the four-day program, Caroline received an immediate introduction from camp director, Anastasia Holevas, and some of our wonderful volunteers, youth and their families.

She will be drawing from her own hands-on



experiences in parish, urban mission, seminary, and monastic settings. Her well-rounded education and practical experience is equally well-rooted in our Orthodox Faith and its sacred traditions. All of these qualities are inextricably linked to her love for children and emerging adults. ❖



Marko and his family (Julie, Iliana, and Graham) have been members of St. Nektarios since 2014. Marko joined our staff on August 14 as our Facility Manager. As one of our ministries serving the parish, the Facility Manager plans for the resources

needed to achieve operational efficiencies and best practices in maintaining and developing our campus.

On Sunday August 20th, Fr. Andreas introduced Marko to the community and welcomed him to our staff. Marko brings with him over 20 years of experience in facilities and building construction management. Most recently he comes from SCX Transportation where he worked 13 years—the last 5 as a Senior Facility Manager. His background includes serving active duty and with the reserves of the United States Navy. He has a

Marko Milich, Facility Manager

Bachelor's of Science degree in Building Construction from the University of Florida. Fr. Andreas explained that this position will also serve as a liaison to our construction team.

Fr. Andreas offered a prayer that our Lord God bless his endeavors here, his work, and that the Lord God grant him a sound mind and good health to help our community run at its peak for His glory and for the edification of His people. May God grant him many years of faithful service. ❖

NEWCOMER BRUNCH



Joseph Marquard,
Luciana Faraci , Dustin
Johnson, Rhett Chapman

We were blessed on June 11 to have our second in-person Newcomer Event since COVID-19. We enjoyed a beautiful day! We were excited to see so many Newcomers turn out for brunch.

Members of our Welcome Ministry greeted parishioners, visitors and newcomers at the Welcome Tables under the Portico. It was Name Tag Sunday and we asked everyone to wear a name tag to get better acquainted.

After Divine Liturgy, we hosted a Community Brunch to give our Newcomers an opportunity to have a casual meet and greet with Fr. Andreas and Fr. Nektarios. This may have been our most attended Newcomer Brunch ever. If you are not pictured here, please let us know and we will be happy to include your photo in a future issue of the newsletter !

Thank you to Linda Borowski and our Welcome Ministry for coordinating this event. Thank you to Ayoub Ayoub and Safwat Wassef with our Hospitality Team for preparing the abundant brunch buffet. ❖



Above & right: Welcome team members greeting guests



Emily & Tyler Hahn



Camille & Kevin
Deisenroth



Yelena Heeg &
Presbytera Sandy Stanar



Christina & Corey Mullis



Maria Konnadari
& Ryan Stevens



A group of friends attending a nearby conference visited the Divine Liturgy this day.



John & Jonathan Etcheverry &
Matt Sharpe



Patricia & Lee Millsaps



Leigh and Nathanael Littlefield, Radu Stoica
Presbytera Ellia and Fr. Nektarios Karantonis



Tami and Scott Cameron and family with Anastasia Stonestreet

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is my distinct joy to greet you in anticipation of the new ecclesiastical year, which begins on September 1. With God's help, we will once again offer a Bible Study program through our Adult Religious Education (ARE) ministry. Last season, we had the great blessing of studying the Acts of the Apostles, connecting the earliest days of the Church with our own, being enriched by the potent reminder that we bear the same faith today.

During our parish's recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we were able to visit numerous sites we had encountered in the book of Acts,

and many related to other episodes recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures. These included the sites of our Lord's divine incarnation, birth, childhood, teaching, miracles, trial, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit.

While the Holy Land vividly presents to us the saving events that occurred in "the fullness of time" and "these latter days", it also reminds us of what led to them. It is a story of the beginning of God's loving creation of all that exists, the very foundations of our being

It is my honor therefore to announce that the 2023-24 ARE Bible Study will concern itself with the book of Genesis. As we saw last season the newness of the Church, this season we will be going back to the newness of creation, through the same lens of Christ and our salvation.



Our devoted ARE Bible Study team is working diligently on the study guide and related materials, and our class calendar is forthcoming. If you have participated in the Bible Study in the past, we look forward to welcoming you back. If you haven't, and are otherwise able to do so, we hope you will join in.



Pictured left: Members of our Adult Religious Education team met recently in person and virtually to begin planning for the upcoming ecclesiastical year.

CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY

While the Mystery of the Divine Liturgy unfolded here in Charlotte, the same exact Mystery unfolded in Tarpon Springs at St. Nicholas Cathedral. Fr. Andreas and Parish Council President, Despina Gallis, were present among many faithful from around the Metropolis for the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concluding this year's Clergy-Laity Assembly.

Fr. Andreas and other new and returning members gave the Affirmation of Office for the Metropolis Council and Philoptochos. A wonderful Farewell Luncheon was served before participants made their way home. ❖



Delegates for St. Nektarios were Fr. Andreas Houpos, President Despina Gallis, and Evelyn Klund. Gerry Clonaris was one of the Presenters. Philoptochos delegates were Madalina Lowen, Renee Keretses and Kathryn Cestrone. Additional attendees were Maryann and Constantine Zitsos, Theona Gallis, Terry Sarantou and Tim Klund.

Congratulations to Fr. Andreas, Evelyn Klund and Gerry Clonaris on being elected to the Metropolis Council for the next two year term. ❖



YOUNG AT HEART SUMMER OF ARTS & CRAFTS

In July and August our Young At Heart group had 4 arts & crafts sessions led by our own Samara Clewell. They made compositions of crushed flowers and leaves; painted a portrait of a scene in Santorini; created a cross with crushed shells, stones and pistachios; and painted personal wax candles.

At the last session, the Young at Heart Board presented Samara with a gift of appreciation for all her great planning and diligent preparation to present these sessions.

These Thursday afternoon gatherings were filled with fun, love and fellowship. Creative and expressive opportunities for fellowship like this help our community bonds strengthen, something especially important as we age. By popular demand, planning is in the works to offer more afternoon gatherings. ❖



Fr. Andreas blesses the crosses on the feast day of the Procession of the Holy Cross.



A LETTER FROM YOUR YOUNG AT HEART BOARD

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

So many new beginnings are ahead of us at St. Nektarios this year, and our Young at Heart members are excited to be among the ministries celebrating 25 years of building up the body of Christ as we bridge into the next 25 years of joyful service to the Lord. We thank Michael and Ritsa Neary for serving as co-chairs. Their faithful service over the last six years have kept Young at Heart together and joyful even through COVID.

Our service to Christ begins with our service to each other, particularly our elders, and you are important to make our vision for the future a reality. So many of the founding members of Young at Heart are still carrying the majority of the work to

sustain this important fellowship. Where Christ has called the weary to Him for rest, He calls you to step in and help.

We hope that the attached flyer for the upcoming year sparks your interest. If not, and you have ideas, we are open to change. We are praying that you will join, particularly those who are 55+, who will have the capacity to carry this ministry into the next 25 years.

With the building of our new Ministry Center, Fr. Andreas has a vision of the future for Young at Heart that includes a full-time Senior Center. We will be able to come daily, attend weekday liturgies, have lunch and most importantly have the fellowship of other Orthodox Christians which is critical to maintaining physical, emotional and spiritual health.

I have first-hand experience of how quickly we can deteriorate when we are isolated. My 91-year-old healthy father quickly deteriorated and died after being isolated from his Church and outside activities for two years during the COVID shutdown. May his Memory be Eternal. Even the intense love he had for my mother was not enough to sustain him. He needed his community and his Church, which are the miracles that Christ himself has given us, and are the miracles we can be for each other.

Please join us! You are needed.

With love in Christ,

Presbytera Sandy Stanar, Chairperson
On behalf of the Young at Heart Board

I. O. C. C. SIP AND SEE

On June 28th, members of the Charlotte Orthodox Community met at St. Sarkis Armenian Church to raise funds for IOCC's earthquake relief efforts.

They painted beautiful flower bouquets to take home while sharing fellowship over hors d'oeuvres and wine. Thank you to the Metro-Charlotte Regional IOCC Committee, with our Liaison Missy Davis, that presented this event and to the many people who helped make this event a success.

The Committee asks everyone to mark their calendars for October 6th and plan to attend the next annual fundraiser for IOCC. It will be held at St. Nektarios. ❖



SACRED MOMENTS OF THE DIVINE SERVICES



Sts. Mary Magdalene & Markella



Saturday of Souls

Synaxis of the Holy Apostles

St. Anna, mother of the Theotokos

St. Paisios, the Athonite

PROCESSION OF THE HOLY CROSS



Fr. Andreas and Fr. Nektarios blessed the crosses made by our Exploring Aegina Greek Language Campers



Pictured Left and Right:
At weekly Saturday Vespers (8/26), we commemorated St. Phanourios the Great Martyr. On Sunday morning, August 27th following the Divine Liturgy we blessed the "Phanouropita", the traditional cake made in honor of St. Phanourios.



THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS



LITURGICAL ARTS ACADEMY

The Metropolis of Atlanta Diakonia Retreat Center in Salem, SC is home to what has become the annual Liturgical Arts Academy. Having served as the Academy's chaplain for the last five years, since its inception, I am personally pleased to see how it has grown and borne much fruit across the country. We are so grateful for the vision and persistence of His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, with regard to the establishment of the Diakonia Retreat Center. Likewise, having the loving, supportive, and paternal presence of His Grace, Bishop Sebastian of Zelon, encourages our efforts. The vision and drive of my fellow board members and the founders of the Academy has been very

fruitful in North America, as this sold-out program has a draw from all over the USA and, as of this year, Canada. The level and quality of instruction cannot be adequately described here. More than anything, the Academy serves as a spiritual retreat, offering a near-Holy-Week level of liturgical intensity, and opportunities for confession, reflection, and fellowship that leads to lasting relationships. I've been so proud and honored to watch my colleagues apply their God-given talents and personally developed skills for the good of the Church. It's also unbelievably encouraging to see so many people commit time and resources to travel and take part in this program. It is a humbling privilege to serve as their chaplain (and to be an iconography student!). May God be pleased with our offering and bless what may come in the future, as Orthodoxy deepens her roots and matures to bear life-giving fruit here in



the USA. My joy is doubled by now also being here as a representative of our parish, St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church of Charlotte, NC. Our parish was particularly well-represented at this year's Academy.

- Byzantine Chant Students** - John & Stavroula C. (beginner), Michael D. (beginner), Darlene G. (intermediate), Konstantina M. (advanced)
- Iconography Students** - Fr. Andreas (intermediate), Christina H. (beginner)
- Academy Staff** - Fr. Andreas (chaplain/board mem.), Protopsaltis Sam H. (instructor),
- Diakonia Center** - Mike & Ritsa N. (kitchen staff)

Fr. Andreas H. +

Y. A. M. (YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY)

Some of our young adults got together to have dinner together after Saturday Vespers services. They were joined by Fr. Nektarios and Caroline, our new Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

As we approach the new Ecclesiastical year, we look forward to facilitating different ways for our young adults to gather and grow together. Keep your eyes open for our forthcoming schedule! ❖



SUNDAY BIBLE STORY AND ACTIVITY TIME

Thanks to the creative direction and coordination by Maryann Zitsos and Samara Clewell, our children 3 years old to rising first graders learned about Noah, Joseph, Sampson and Abraham among other Bible characters. They gathered on The Porch following Holy Communion on Sundays during the summer months. Volunteers read Bible stories, presented skits and guided the students with colorful crafts and a variety of fun activities to reinforce lessons from our faith. ❖



Pictured right: The story of Noah's Ark and also the story of the Calming of the Sea - The children made their own boats and were able to sail them in a small pool.



Pictured left: The story of Joseph & the Coat of Many Colors - Shown here are coats the children drew and sewed with yarn

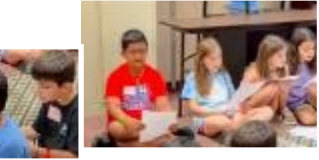
Pictured right: Abraham, Father of Nations



YOUTH MINISTRY



VACATION CHURCH CAMP

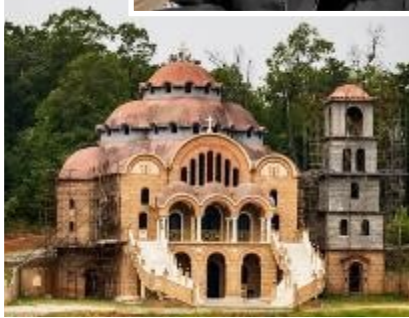


ST. STEPHEN'S CAMP

Fr. Nektarios attended Week 4 of St. Stephen's camp with many of our very own youth and others from the Charlotte area.



Thank you to all who helped with the camp, especially Ritsa and Mike Neary who spend 5 weeks each year cooking for the kids at the camp. ❖



ST. NEKTARIOS CULTURAL MINISTRY—EXPLORING AEGINA

We are grateful that as part of the educational summer Greek program "Exploring Aegina", which took place this year from July 31st to August 3rd, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., the classrooms of our Spiritual Life Center were filled with the joyful voices of young children ages 5-12 in the heart of summer. Their innocence and smiles truly filled our souls with abundant light. In this imaginary four-day trip to Greece, we were given the opportunity to travel with the 45 children who arrived with fun and vitality to experience the Orthodox faith in the warm embrace of our church and to get a taste of the Greek language and culture.

As soon as we "arrived" in Aegina, the island of centenarian olive trees and pistachio nuts, we visited the monastery of Agios Nektarios. We sang the Trisagion Hymn all together and talked about the virtues of the Saint: his humility, patience, and love for God and people. We learned what we see and what we do when we visit a monastery.

Our next stop was none other than our St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church. Yes, by participating in a treasure hunt about "what we see and what we do in church" and sitting as quietly as we could, we attended the Divine Liturgy and received Holy Communion and blessings from above.

During our stay on the island, we visited the farm, met the animals, and imitated their sounds. We even saw peacocks on the nearby island of Moni. We also took a walk to the port taking in the picturesque scenery and enjoying fish, octopuses, and the wonderful sunset. We tasted pistachios without forgetting to purchase fruit from the floating fruit stands. We happily giggled while playing traditional Greek games! Ask us and we will tell you which ones. We sang and danced "hasaposerviko." With a lot of imagination and creativity, we made small works of art that will remind us of the unforgettable moments we experienced on the island! The souvenirs we took with us before we returned such as the alphabet book, the



poem "At the Port", the coloring book with the farm animal drawings, and the workbook about our trip to the monastery will help us not forget everything we learned in Aegina!

On this trip, we were accompanied by the priests of our community, Father Andreas Houpos, Protospresbyter, as well as Father Nektarios Karantonis. Every day Father Andreas approached not only us young but also the older ones among us who supervised us, greeted us in Greek, and encouraged us to do and learn more. Father Nektarios also supported us. One time he even took part in one of our musical activities during our stay in Aegina! The priests chanted hymns to God, blessed us, and gave us Holy Communion. They even blessed the crosses we made. Yes, the priests were there for us! And for that we thank them!

A big thank you to our wonderful new youth director, Miss Caroline Mellekas, a true blessing for our community, who helped us every step of the way, as well as Mrs. Helen Giles, and the staff, Evelyn Klund, Kim Braswell and Silva Awaimrin of our community office, who with Christian love assisted us in so many ways to ensure that our traveling experience would be a memorable one! Our journey to Aegina would not have been possible if it were not for the many talented and knowledgeable educators, professionals, and Goyan youth volunteers who sacrificed their personal time to embark on this journey with us and with love and total respect to us children to impart their enthusiasm for the Greek language



and culture to us. We are grateful for our lead Greek language teachers: Mrs. Despina Gallis, Mrs. Kathy Smith, and Mrs. Sophia Shinas, and the teachers assisting them: Mrs. Cathy DeWolfe, Mrs. Kim Tzefos, Presbyteria Maria Dalber, Miss Virginia O'Brien, Ms. Alex Tatsis, and Miss Evie Demakis. We thank our lead art teacher, Ms. Samara Clewell, and her assistant teacher, Mrs. Ana Martin, as well as Mrs. Maria Mortis and Mr. Chris Mortis who led the Dance and Traditional Greek Games class. We appreciate Mrs. Dina Marinakos for teaching us Greek children's songs and Mr. Sam Herron, our Protosaltis and Director of Music Ministry at our church, who taught us the Trisagion Hymn. A big thank you to our parents who booked our tickets for this long trip!

Let us pray that the All-mighty God will grant us all health and that next year we will meet again all together here at our church for a new imaginary journey to Greece!

Anastasia K. Holevas



ST. NEKTARIOS CULTURAL MINISTRY

Είμαστε ευγνώμονες που στα πλαίσια του εκπαιδευτικού καλοκαιρινού ελληνικού προγράμματος «Εξερευνώ την Αίγινα», που πραγματοποιήθηκε φέτος από τις 31 Ιουλίου έως τις 3 Αυγούστου 2023 και ώρα 9 π.μ. -12 μ.μ., οι αίθουσες του Πνευματικού μας κέντρου γέμισαν με τις χαρούμενες φωνές μικρών παιδιών ηλικίας 5-12 ετών μες την καρδιά του καλοκαιριού. Η αθωότητα και τα χαμόγελα τους αληθινά πλημμύρισαν με άπλετο φως την ψυχή μας. Σ' αυτό το νοερό τετραήμερο μας ταξίδι, στην Ελλάδα μας δόθηκε η ευκαιρία να γίνουμε συνταξιδιώτες με τα 45 παιδιά που κατέφτασαν με κέφι και ζωντάνια να βιώσουν την Ορθόδοξη πίστη στη θερμή αγκαλιά της εκκλησίας μας αλλά και να πάρουν μια γεύση της ελληνικής γλώσσας και κουλτούρας.

Αμέσως μόλις φτάσαμε στην Αίγινα, το νησί των αιωνόβιων ελαιόδεντρων και των φιστικιών, επισκεφτήκαμε το μοναστήρι του Αγίου Νεκταρίου. Ψάλαμε τον Τρισάγιο Ύμνο όλοι μαζί, και μιλήσαμε για τις αρετές του Αγίου, την ταπεινοφροσύνη, την υπομονή και την αγάπη του προς το Θεό και τους ανθρώπους. Μάθαμε τι βλέπουμε και τι κάνουμε όταν επισκεπτόμαστε ένα μοναστήρι.

Επόμενος μας σταθμός δεν ήταν άλλος από την εκκλησία μας, τον Ιερό Ναό του Αγίου Νεκταρίου. Ναι, κάνοντας ένα κυνήγι θησαυρού σχετικά με το «Τι βλέπω και Τι κάνω στην Εκκλησία» όντας καθιστοί, όσο πιο ήσυχοι μπορούσαμε να είμαστε, παρακολουθήσαμε τη θεία λειτουργία και λάβαμε τη Θεία Κοινωνία και την άνωθεν ευλογία.

Κατά τη διαμονή μας στο νησί επισκεφθήκαμε το αγρόκτημα, γνωρίσαμε τα ζωάκια και μιμηθήκαμε τις φωνές τους. Είδαμε ακόμη και παγώνια. Τη βόλτα μας κάναμε και στο λιμάνι όπου απολαύσαμε ψάρια, χταπόδια, αλλά και το θαυμάσιο ηλιοβασίλεμα. Γευτήκαμε φιστίκια Αιγίνης χωρίς να παραλείψουμε να αγοράσουμε και φρούτα από τα πλωτά μανάβικα. Ξεκαρδιστήκαμε στα γέλια παίζοντας παραδοσιακά ελληνικά παιχνίδια! Ρωτήστε μας και θα σας πούμε ποια. Τραγουδήσαμε και χορέψαμε χασαποσερβίκο. Με πολλή φαντασία και δημιουργικότητα φτιάξαμε μικρά έργα τέχνης που θα μας θυμίζουν τις αξέχαστες στιγμές που ζήσαμε στο νησί! Τα σουβενίρ που πήραμε πριν πάρουμε το δρόμο της επιστροφής όπως είναι το αλφαβητάριο, το ποίημα «Στο Λιμάνι», το μπλοκ με τις ζωγραφιές ζώων του

αγροκτήματος αλλά και το τετράδιο εργασιών θα μας βοηθήσουν να μην ξεχάσουμε όλα όσα μάθαμε στην Αίγινα!

Στο ταξίδι μας αυτό μας συντρόφευσαν οι ιερείς της κοινότητας μας, ο πατέρας Ανδρέας Χούπος, Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος, όπως επίσης και ο πατέρας Νεκτάριος Καραντώνης. Καθημερινά ο πατέρας Ανδρέας πλησίαζε όχι μόνο εμάς τους μικρούς αλλά και τους μεγαλύτερους σε ηλικία από εμάς που μας επέβλεπαν, μας χαιρετούσε στα ελληνικά και μας ενθάρρυνε να κάνουμε και να μάθουμε πιο πολλά. Αλλά και ο πατέρας Νεκτάριος μας στήριξε. Κάποια φορά μάλιστα πήρε μέρος κι εκείνος σε μια από τις μουσικές μας δραστηριότητες κατά τη διάρκεια της διαμονής μας στην Αίγινα! Οι ιερείς ήταν παρόντες και στην εκκλησία για εμάς. Έψαλαν ύμνους προς το Θεό, μας ευλόγησαν, μας κοινώνησαν. Ευλόγησαν και τους σταυρούς που φτιάξαμε. Ναι, οι ιερείς ήταν εκεί για μας! Και γι' αυτό τους ευχαριστούμε!

Ένα μεγάλο ευχαριστώ και σ' όλους τους εθελοντές δασκάλους και βοηθούς, την κ. Ελένη Τζάιλις, τη νέα υπεύθυνη νεολαίας, Δις. Καρολάιν Μελίκα, καθώς και το προσωπικό του γραφείου της κοινότητας μας που με χριστιανική αγάπη και απόλυτο σεβασμό προς εμάς τα παιδιά συνέβαλαν ώστε η περιήγησή μας στο νησί της Αίγινας να μας μείνει αξέχαστη! Ένα μεγάλο ευχαριστώ και στους γονείς μας που μας αγόρασαν τα εισιτήρια για το μακρινό αυτό ταξίδι!

Ας ελπίσουμε ότι ο Πανάγαθος Θεός θα χαρίζει σε όλους μας υγεία και ότι του χρόνου θα ξαναβρεθούμε και πάλι όλοι μαζί εδώ στην εκκλησία μας για ένα νέο νοερό ταξίδι στην Ελλάδα!

Αναστασία Κ. Χολέβα



Financial Matters

Your Generosity Supports
our Lord's Ministry through Worship, Witness, Service and Fellowship

So You Know . . .

January 1 through August 25, 2023
Operating Income and Expense Report

Stewardship Received	\$ 549,952
Other Income Received	<u>158,108</u>
Total Income	\$ 708,060
Total Expenses (paid and accrued)	\$ 803,012
Net Income	\$ -94,952

\$933,000 OUR 2023 STEWARDSHIP GOAL
TO FUEL OUR MINISTRIES

\$896,539 PLEDGES RECEIVED AS OF AUG 25
96% OF OUR PLEDGE GOAL!

\$ 36,000 NEEDED TO MEET OUR PLEDGE GOAL.

OUR CHALLENGE:

To Recover from

The Summer Cash Flow Giving Slump

\$598,000 Stewardship we should have received in 8 months

\$550,000 Actual Stewardship received

\$ 48,000 Offerings needed to boost us to Goal



REQUEST — Please check that your offerings as of today are at least at 70% of your pledge.

PROFILES IN FAITH—WITNESS

Through your generosity, lives are transformed as we build our relationship with God.

This is the second in a series of "Profiles in Faith" that will be published alongside the Stewardship report. In the first article, we explored the concept that every person is a word spoken by God and that we may know the name of the person in the pew next to us, but unless we enter into deeper spiritual connection with them, we may never know the word they are speaking with their lives, the word that God himself intends us to hear. Each article for the remainder of the series will highlight a word God is speaking to us through the lives of parishioners who have been interviewed. Their names will remain anonymous because the word they are speaking to us through their actions is far more important.

How do we witness Jesus Christ? The Apostles saw what He did, heard what He said and did these things as well. Jesus himself said to them "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (ACTS 1:8)

Our beloved St. Nektarios witnessed Christ, and from his own suffering, brought miracles of healing. And so it is with the saints among us who minister within our community to those who are in need of encouragement, fellowship, religious instruction and outreach. These are the children of God who provide a direct connection to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by shining His love, light and wisdom. They sometimes do this without even realizing that by doing so their witness has opened a door through which many blessings and healing will continue to pass. One parishioner said,

Sometimes I don't even know where the words of comfort come from or how I knew what to say. People thank me for being there in a time of great need, and I say thank God, not me!

God's work being done as described above by those in the Life and Family Ministries will be amplified in the new Ministry Center. Imagine a multitude of on-site services, a full-time Orthodox counselor, a Senior Citizens Activity Center, and even space prepared to be an emergency shelter. This is Christ's vision for His Church that she will meet the needs of all His people. ❖

FOCUS ON WITNESS

"You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard."
Acts 22:15

An Orthodox Christian is not simply a consumer of God's grace and benefits, but is called to be a witness of these things in the world. We therefore strive to exemplify the sacred teachings of the Church. When we live as Christ teaches, through His commandments and the mystical life of his Body, the Church, will allow his Light to shine to those around us.

Through your generosity of **time, talent and treasure**, we can provide opportunities to grow in our faith and to then share with others. Some ways your generosity supports Witness:

- Youth Catechism
- Orthodox Life
- St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival
- Social media posts of our parish life
- Streaming our services
- Men and Women's Bible Studies
- Becoming Orthodox classes
- Book Studies
- Orthodox Christian Network/Radio Ministry
- Narrow Path Bookstore
- Lent Lunch and Learn
- Speakers Series and special presentations
- Prison Ministry
- Life and Family Ministry outreach.
- Mission work

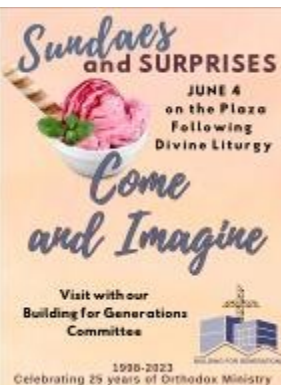
BUILDING FOR GENERATIONS ~ COME AND IMAGINE

This summer, the St. Nektarios Capital Campaign launched the “Come and Imagine” monthly series so parishioners could start to visualize our future — so it becomes more concrete as we take the next steps in the life of our community.

The new Ministry Center and the renovated Spiritual Life Center will help us fulfill our vision and mission which we began so humbly 25 years ago. Our calling as a parish, then and now, is to **Build Up the Body of Christ** through worship, witness, service and fellowship. This expansion program will enable us to fulfill this work as a body of believers for the next 25 years and beyond.



August 20 Sweet Delight Café — An incredible assortment of international delights were featured in the Ministry Center. Thank you to our parishioners who contributed to the café. By looking out over the fence, we could imagine where a café gathering area will offer a place we can enjoy fellowship and support each other.



June 2 Sundaes and Surprises— Everyone had the opportunity to explore the Ministry Center footprint on the plaza. The ground markings indicated the approximate location of the entrances, conference room, bookstore and classrooms that will help us grow in our faith. Sundae making station and popsicles were stocked for all enjoy, who came and imagined.



July 6 A Cold Brew — This was a day to “enter” the Ministry Center and imagine the new permanent home for Narrow Path Bookstore where we can learn about our faith and connect in an orthodox environment. Everyone could grab a cold coffee beverage or a fruit juice on the way to Fellowship Coffee hour.



September 17 Welcome Back to our Catechism Students and Teachers — Coming up, we will ask students, teachers, and parents to imagine new and improved classrooms in the Ministry Center.



More Come and Imagine — October 15 As we honor our founders and celebrate our newcomers, we will reflect on our first 25 years of growth and imagine the future.

November 5 — At our **Community 25th Anniversary Celebration**, we will imagine a new gym and its possibilities as the **Building For Generations** Campaign will host a Junior Olympics with complimentary game day food. ❖

Fr. Andreas' article continued from Page 1

for Christ, whether we live one decade or one century, meekness and chastity will link us to the eternal God, for whom "a thousand years are but as yesterday".

With these things in mind, we may do well to wish our loved ones «Χρόνια πολλά!» insofar as we as Christians are undertaking our spiritual toil and want as much time as possible to do our best. But God calls us well past "many years"—however many or few they may ultimately be - into eternal life with him. With an eye to this work set before us, we can revisit our psalm and invoke David's closing prayer: "Let the splendor of the Lord be upon us; guide the works of our hands, yes, guide the works of our hands" (Psalm 89:17).

Dear reader, I do not wish you "many years", but repentance unto eternal life with Christ our God, to whom belongs all glory, honor and worship, together with his eternal Father and the all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

CORRECTION

In our last issue we incorrectly identified Chris Kontakis in the photo below as Demetri Kanos. Both are scholarship recipients, Demetri was not pictured.

Below:

Fr. Andreas and our Scholarship Committee pictured with our scholarship recipients



Left to Right:

Sam Kleto, Christopher Kontakis, Michael Keretsis, Olivia Journey, Michael Azar, Anthony Choueiri, Fr. Andreas, Theodora Sexstone, Chris Levantis, Emile Khuri, Julie Milich and Maria Mortis

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

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Parish Staff

Parish Administrator - Evelyn Klund

Administration Staff

Silva Awaimrin, Kim Braswell, Samara Clewell, Nina Dzyak, Sofia Nicolopoulos

Sexton - Jim Keown

Protopsaltis - Sam Herron

Director of Youth Ministries -

Caroline Mellekas

Facility Manager - Marko Milich

2023 Parish Council

President: Despina Gallis

Vice President: Mike Burgan

Treasurer: Chris Mortis

Assist. Treasurer: Aka Vashakidze

Secretary: George Harris

Assist. Secretary: Manal Choueiri

Members: Elie Azar, Frank Bartis, Gus Giannakopoulos, Joanne Kiser,

Philoptochos Board

President: Madalina Lowen

1st Vice President: Kathrine Cestrono

2nd Vice President: Deidre Lepkowski

Recording Secretary: Missy Davis

Corr. Secretary: Christine Malatras

Treasurer: Evelyn Klund

Ass't. Treasurer: Sharon Koutroumpis

Members: Helen Bakos, Michaelina Franks

Phyllis Giannakopoulos, Renee Keretses, Ana Levantis, and Stephanie Scolinos

(Email: philoptochos@stnektarios.org)

SUNDAYS AT SAINT NEKTARIOS

Worship on Sundays

Matins 7:45 a.m. and

Divine Liturgy 9:15 a.m.

Fellowship Coffee:

Following Divine Liturgy

Prospora

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

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: September 19

Published: September 26