



Issue 1 January 2024

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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.

THE NEWS FROM ST. NEKTARIOS

THE TRISAGION HYMN

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos

On the Trisagion Hymn (St. John of Damascus)

St. John of Damascus (d. 749), in his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, among many other things, writes about the Trisagion (Thrice-holy) Hymn (“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us”). Before sharing with us the origins of the hymn and its incorporation into the Divine Liturgy, he contrasts it with a novel teaching that had been advanced in the fifth century primarily by a man named Peter “The Fuller” — a fuller is someone who works wool with a particular technique, and this is what Peter did prior to becoming a churchman. Peter, a non-Chalcedonian (someone who rejects the Fourth Ecumenical Council) avidly harassed and persecuted Orthodox bishops. He insisted that the heretical phrase “who was crucified for us” be added to the Trisagion, essentially as a test of his version of “orthodoxy”. However, as St. John and others explain, this hymn, delivered to us by angels, is strictly about the Holy Trinity. Adding “who was crucified for us” was a blasphemous innovation—the Holy Trinity was not crucified. This problematic addition was ultimately rejected and banished from the Orthodox Church, while it remains in use today by the non-Chalcedonian communions.

Often, we take for granted the words of the Divine Liturgy and other sacred services of the Church. Better understanding their meaning and origin helps us better appreciate who we are and what we do as members of Christ’s Body.

+Fr. Andreas

St. John of Damascus: On the Trisagion (Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Book III, Ch. 10)

We declare that the addition which the vain-minded Peter the Fuller made to the Trisagion Hymn is blasphemous. This is because it introduces a fourth person into the Trinity, giving a separate place to the Son of God, who is the truly subsisting power of the Father, and a separate place to him who was crucified, as though he

“The words “Holy Mighty” we ascribe to the Son, without stripping the Father and the Holy Spirit of might.”

were different from the “Mighty” one, or as if though the Holy Trinity thought to be able to suffer, and the Father and the Holy Spirit suffered on the Cross along with the Son.

Be done with this blasphemous and nonsensical addition! For we hold the words “Holy God” to refer to the Father, without limiting the title of divinity to him alone, but acknowledging also as God the Son and the Holy Spirit. The words “Holy Mighty” we ascribe to the Son, without

stripping the Father and the Holy Spirit of might. “Holy Immortal” we attribute to the Holy Spirit, without depriving the Father and the Son of immortality.

Indeed, we apply all the divine names simply and unconditionally to each of the subsistences (hypostaseis), in imitation of the divine Apostle’s words: “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him”.(1 Cor 8:5)

And, nevertheless, we follow Gregory the Theologian, when he says, “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom, are all things; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom, are all things; and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things”. The words “of whom” and “through whom” and “in whom” do not divide the natures (for neither the prepositions nor the order of the names could ever be changed), but they characterize the properties of one unconfused nature. And this becomes clear from the fact that they are once more gathered into one, if only one reads with care these words of the same

(Continued on page 16)

In the Spotlight

Happy Name Day,
Fr Andreas

Many years to Fr. Andreas who celebrated his name day on the feast day of St. Andrew in November. May your years be blessed. +



Happy Birthday,
Fr. Steve, Mar ko and
Pr esbyter a Mer edyth
In January



Wishing you many years with happiness, joy, health, and love.+

FOCUS ON OUR COMMUNITY

Celebrations, Milestones, Comfort & Support

In our prayers

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

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 Brianna and Daniel Elston on the birth of their son, Daniel Elliot and to Kim Braswell on the birth of her grandson
To Mirna and Ramzi Yaxbeck on the 40th day blessing of their son, Maurice
To Camille and Kevin Deisenroth on the 40th day blessing of Kacey's brother, Clark

Chr ismations & Baptisms

To Norelle and Dean Thevaos on the baptism of Anna Grace's sister, Claire Elizabeth, and to her godparent, Mary Cestrone
To Corey, Christina, Corey Jr., Ellie and Theodore Mullis on their baptisms and to their sponsors, Kathryn & Chris Mason, Olesya & Dustin Holland and Emily and Dave Hanegraaff
To Inna Dintsen and Dennis Purser on the baptism of their son, Alexander Nicholas and to the godparents Larisa Cato and Kenny Andujar
To Jacob Leatherman on his baptism and to his sponsor, Jim Keown
To Andrew Major on his baptism and to his sponsor, Bryan Steel
To Luke Monette on his baptism and to his sponsor, Dwayne Cogdill
To Matthew Sharpe on his baptism and to his sponsor, Peter Keretsis
To Emilio Brambila on his chrismation and to his sponsor, Jim Keown
To Daniel Siragusa on his chrismation and to his sponsors, Maryann & Konstantine Zitsos
To Marta and Jack Zitsos on the baptism of Olivia's sister, Matilda and to her sponsor, Carter Lorant

**With Sympathy on the Repose
of our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ**
To the Maloney, Vassely and Vlahoplus families on the repose of Alexis Maloney's mother, Mary Vassely Vlahoplus

To the family of Jennifer Elizabeth Vahamikos on her repose
To the Azar family on the repose of Irma's father, Hanna Nassif in Lebanon
To the Dunn family on the passing of Jim's father, Elmer Kirk Dunn
To the Cox family on the passing of Rima's sister, Irma

In Appreciation

Thank you to Fr. Andreas & Presbyteria Meredyth, Fr. Nektarios & Presbyteria Ellia, Elie Azar, Kim Braswell, Jim Keown, Despina Gallis, Anastasia Holevas, Evelyn Klund, and to Irene Liapis (for last month's issue) for the use of their photos
Thanks to Diane Gilbert and Copycat for printing the Church Bulletin and Newsletter.

**If you have information or photos for the newsletter,
please contact Kim Braswell in the office.**

Farewell to Presbyter a Elia & Fr. Nektarios and family

It is with sadness for our community that we say a fond farewell to the Karantonis family, Fr. Nektarios, Presbyteria Ellia, John and Peter but with grateful hearts that they were a part of St. Nektarios for over 4 years. We wish them many blessings in their new community of Missoula, Montana. May their days there be blessed and prosperous.

Pictured here you will see some of the many photos of their family over the years - Father and Presbyteria working with the youth at St. Nektarios VCC, First Fridays, Joy Hope, GOYA, St. Stephen's Camp, singing Peter in the choir, John serving in the altar, House Blessings, Holy Communion, Baptisms, Weddings, Ministry Fair, with staff on his last day and the many services of the Church.

Pictured top right is on their last Sunday with us as we bless them. Thank you for your service and especially your kindness to all of us. Axios!



Fr. Nektarios' Ordination to the priesthood



Parish Council



2024 PARISH COUNCIL

President

Despina Gallis

Vice President

George Harris

Treasurer

Chris Mortis

Assistant Treasurer

Elie Azar

Secretary

Gene Borowski

Assistant Secretary

Manal Choueiri

General Members

George Bacogorge

Dave Hanegraaff

Joanne Kiser

The evening of Monday, January 22, our elected 2024 Parish Council members recited the Affirmation of Office. The Affirmation is made prayerfully, with the hands of the Council members placed upon the Holy Gospel book, in the presence of the sacred relic and icon of our patron, St. Nektarios.

Following the Affirmation and brief remarks by Fr. Andreas, a meeting was called to order and

executive officers were elected. The newly formed Parish Council then conducted its first regular meeting of the year, hearing special reports from the Construction Committee and Stewardship Committee.

The Council reflected on our parish's fruitful 25th Anniversary year (2023), considered our course for 2024, and entertained the business at hand for the current meeting. ❖

Scout Troop 490 End of Year News

Troop 490 would like to welcome new Scout Master, Brad Kellen! Brad brings with him **several years' experience as a cub scout leader, merit badge counselor and outdoorsman.** Troop meetings are Sunday afternoons from 3:45 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. During the meetings, the Scouts work on rank requirements, share tips on camping, and participate in different games for fun and camaraderie. The Scouts also plan and prepare for monthly camping. So far, the Scouts have participated in two overnight camping trips, going to Crowders Mountain and Morrow Mountain. Both

excursions offered the Troop the opportunity to take in the natural beauty of Autumn, hike for 5 miles and how to survive the outdoors in cooler weather. Scouts made delicious lunches and dinners, including tacos in a bag, fried rice and sausage, pasta bolognese, and hamburgers and hot dogs. Hikes and food were followed by evening campfires that provided time for games and socializing. The Scouts really enjoy camping, and look forward to more outings in the future. ❖



YOUTH MINISTRIES

Winter Youth Rally to close out 2023;
Welcoming in 2024 with GOYA Bowling &
Youth Catechism fun!

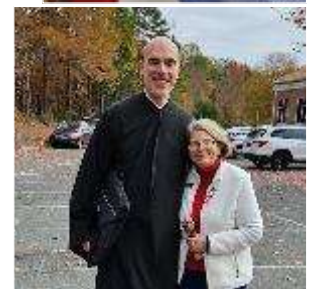


Honoring Our Veterans

Sunday, November 12th, (the official date of the holiday is November 11th), we paid tribute to our military veterans by a recognition on the Solea, a gift of a special ribbon with a cross, a prayer service, memorial service for departed veterans and a reception following Divine Liturgy.

We are always happy to honor our veterans for their service. They have sacrificed greatly for our country and the world by protecting those in need both here and abroad. They have all given of themselves whether in time away from family, or their own plans, or in giving of their own lives to keep our country safe. May God bless all of you for your service.

Special thanks go to Peter Keretsis, leader of the Military Ministry, and Ron Drobonick for the hard work they put into setting up the display, the hospitality team and to Kim Braswell and Dimetry Loren for serving the cake at the reception and Kim, Sandy Capousis and Shannon Emmanuel for pinning the pins on our veterans at the door. If you are interested in becoming a part of this ministry, please contact Kim Braswell in the office. ❖



St. Nektarios 5K Walk/run

On November 18th, our parishioners, neighbors and friends set out for an early morning run, our 6th annual St. Nektarios Taking Steps 5K Walk/Run, benefitting St. Hermione Home and Shelter Health Services. We had a total of 336 registered participants raising \$4,158.45. for St. Hermione Home and \$1,893.23 for Shelter Health Services.

Many donors and sponsors continue to support the mission of this ministry. The ministry continues to support the homeless women and the children of the shelter and St. Hermione Home. Many thanks to the 5K committee, Kholoud Alyateem, Mike Burgan, Dan Wixon, George Demakis, to all their race day volunteers, and to all participants, donors, sponsors and supporters of this event.

We are grateful for our parishioners, and those of neighboring parishes, and our neighbors and all of goodwill who participated. May God multiply these efforts to help the "least" and move us all to greater love for Him and for our neighbor. ❖



participated. May God multiply these efforts to help the "least" and move us all to greater love for Him and for our neighbor. ❖



St. Nektarios Byzantine Choir /Opera Carolina

Our parish once more hosted Opera Carolina, who presented a program of Christmas-themed vocal selections. As we have in the past couple of years, this year we also led the program with an offering of traditional Orthodox ecclesiastical hymnody, performed by our choir members and a few visiting cantors. Proceeds from the evening benefitted the Child of God Academy in Kenya, with which we have a long standing supporting relationship. ❖



BEYOND ST. NEKTARIOS

PANAGIA PROUSIOTISSA MONASTERY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS



Blessings to Panagia Prousiotissa Monastery in Troy NC. With the blessing of Metropolitan Alexios, and through the prayers of holy Geronda Ephraim, they began the 5-phase Building Campaign to expand the Holy Monastery of Panagia Prousiotissa on its 25th Anniversary in response to the growing needs. ❖

ST. NEKTARIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
GIVING THANKS — EUCHARISTIC STEWARDSHIP
2023 STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

2023 IN REVIEW

JANUARY 2024

Grateful for 25 years of Building Up the Body of Christ

Striving together to continue the saving ministry our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

As we welcome 2024, we reflect on 2023 and the incredible first quarter of a century we've shared since our founding in 1998. The past year was alive with events, activities, and most importantly, blessings. These blessings are many; among the first are the stewards who have provided the foundation for our ministries and our efforts to spread Christ's Word and our Orthodox Faith.

Stewardship is involvement, both financial and spiritual. Our actively engaged community has strengthened our ministries, preparing us for our next quarter-century together. This is exemplified in full-time appointments during the past year: Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Director of Music Ministry, and Facilities Manager.

Generosity helps transform lives through solemn worship, faithful witnessing, community fellowship, and service to others.

OPERATING FUND

Total Offerings exceeded \$1,238,000

We surpassed our income goal established through our 2023 financial plan by 2.6%; and exceeded 2022 by \$155,000 and 14%.

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 4.9% and were **\$1,265,000+**. We were able to cover our **\$27,000+** shortfall by drawing 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:

- \$398,000 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
- \$21,000 to our St. Nicholas Altar Benevolence Fund
- Over \$49,000 to Ladies Philoptochos Society (LPS) which they distributed in 2023

STEWARDSHIP

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR SPIRITUAL HOME

\$ 907,000 — Stewardship grew by 6% over 2022

Thank you for your stewardship offerings which

- Grew from you giving back to God what is His.
- Came from our growing Membership
- Funded three quarters of our total operating income
- Becomes a visible expression of our commitment, faith, and love for Jesus

BUILDING FUND

YOUR GENEROSITY Investing in our Future

\$1.4 MILLION CASH RECEIVED

which brings our cash balance to \$5.5 million

Moving us closer to building the Ministry Center and renovating the Spiritual Life Center

2023 YEAR END FINANCIAL REPORTS

Beginning, February 11, 2024, a full set of

Income and Expense Reports for all funds and Schedule of Assets and Liabilities

will be available for your review at the Information Center in the Hall and at the Receptionist Area in the Lower Level

PHILOPTOCHOS — FINAL QUARTER RECAP 2023

On October 6, 2023, St. Nektarios Philoptochos provided a speaker series on personal financial health, along with a dinner in collaboration with Joy/Hope. While the Joy/Hope children had their activities, the parents were able to hear from guest speaker, Mr. Brad Kellen, CFP with FairWay Financial, Inc. This speaker collaboration marked the beginning to provide several of these on different topics and with different ministries throughout the St. Nektarios community during the calendar year.

Snack packs for the local ministry, Roof Above were packed on November 3rd along with the Joy/Hope ministry. Philoptochos provided a spaghetti dinner for all attendees prior to the packing. The volunteers packed hundreds of snacks for Roof Above. Great fun was had by all who participated in this wonderful service project which helps teach our youth to give back to our local community in a meaningful way.

Our St. Nektarios Feast Day was held on November 8th with the Philoptochos providing a beautiful reception after services. Philoptochos members not only provided a wonderful menu, but volunteers also worked to set up and serve as well. It was a beautiful evening to honor the patron saint of our church.

The fall kept Philoptochos members with its food drive for Friendship Trays and Loaves & Fishes. This year the local food pantry got very low, so they reached out to the Charlotte area community at large and our Philoptochos stepped up! We were able to collect hundreds of much need food pantry items to help restock the pantry. Collections were held between early October and November 19, 2023. Thanks to all contributors for our Charlotte needy.

Every November, Philoptochos and its volunteers **"Deck the Hall"** by putting up the Christmas decor around the spiritual life center. This is done to spread the joy of the Christmas season and to make our SPL look **beautiful too. It's a lot of fun and wonderful** to see the décor when completed for the holidays.

The St. Nektarios Philoptochos Bake sale - for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays were a huge success. We raised the most money from our bake sale this year, which meant that



Nektarios family hasn't forgotten them.

all our supported ministries were able to receive great donations from our Philoptochos and those who bought our scrumptious desserts had delicious treats. We offered Thanksgiving and December pick up dates on November 19th and December 17th. All the baking volunteers and baking leads did an amazing job this year making it not only fun, but also delicious. The recipes are fabulous, and newcomers were able to learn how to make such wonderful Greek pastries too.

Shut in baskets for Christmas were assembled on December 15th and then delivered to those vulnerable, elderly community members to know that their St.

Many volunteers assembled and delivered these around our neighborhoods spreading good cheer and joy to each shut-in. Thanks to those who go out of their way to meet this need in our church.

Also in December, Philoptochos held a blanket collection drive through mid-December 17th to donate blankets to the St. Hermione home for the homeless. Over 270 blankets were collected at the Philoptochos hut. It is amazing

(Continued on page 11)

Philoptochos Christmas Brunch



Brunch Committee: (Seated front) Renee Keretses and Katherine Cestrone, Co-chairs (Left to Right) Evelyn Klund, Constance Gianakopoulos, Madalina Lowen, Missy Davis, Michelle Kash, Presv. Lea Tsahakis, Deidre Lepkowski, Christina Diamantis, Ana Levantis, Maria Diamantis, Emily Hahn, Elena Klund, Michaelina Franks, Christine Malatras, Dee Drobonick, and Kristy Kleto

Not Pictured: Helen Bakos, Cathy DeWolfe, Phyllis Gianakopoulos, Kellie Karavokiros, Sharon Koutroumpis, Christina Melissaris, Stephanie Scolinos, and Bessie Vrettos

Models: Stephanie Jurney, Noura Daher, Stephanie Tsahakis, Katherine Bartis, Theona Gallis, Stephanie Scolinos, Despina Gallis, Ariadne Zitsos-Stee, Maryann Zitsos, Maria Mortis, Helen Bakos, Kiki Tingas



Anita Boulmetis



(Continued from page 10)

how giving our community is to those in need. Thank you for providing a blanket of warmth to those who do not have a home of their own and prayers for them to be able to stay warm this winter season.

Our end of the year always ends with **Philoptochos' largest fundraising event, the Christmas Brunch and Fashion Show.** We raise funds for a local charity and the chair(s) of the event always get to choose which local charity it will be. This year, the co-chairs, Katherine Cestrone, Madalina Lowen and Renee Keretses chose the Parkinson Association of the Carolinas, otherwise known as PAC. The fundraiser was held at Providence Country Club and this year the fashions modeled were presented by St. John Knits. All our models did a fabulous job showcasing the beautiful clothing from St. John Knits. We had



a special treat to have Gloria Kontoulas be a model this year as well. Gloria was diagnosed with early on-set Parkinson's years ago and it was wonderful being able to honor Gloria and Mr. Windy Woodall a former colleague of co-chair Renee Keretses. Windy and his wife Cheryl were able to attend the event as well. In addition to the fashion show, we had the largest silent auction ever. Thanks to Ballantyne Jewelers for providing a huge amount of jewelry to be auctioned in our silent auction as well as beautiful artwork, home goods and many other items, for the silent auction. Another huge highlight of the silent auction was the amazing table centerpieces our community creates for the event every year. Each table is adorned with either a wreath or Christmas themed décor that attendees bid on. They also choose one best of show as well. Also, raffle tickets are sold during the event to raffle off amazing prizes and door prize winners were chosen by Fr. Andreas this year so that when attendees walked into the event, many surprised guests received their

door prize. All our table sponsors and donors really came through this year to help Philoptochos raise the most money ever and to have the most attendees ever at the brunch. It was an amazing time to support PAC who provides outreach and services to those suffering from Parkinson's and provides much needed support for family members too. The food, fashions, silent auction, donated centerpieces, sponsors etc. came together so that each guest had a wonderful time getting into the spirit of giving in early December. Philoptochos was able to present a \$20,000 check to Ann Marie Worman, Director of PAC and Windy and Cheryl Woodall were able to attend the check presentation as well in early January once all our expenses were paid. Philoptochos was thrilled to be able to give so much to PAC and appreciate the hard work that **each volunteer provided to make this year's** event such a huge success. It truly takes everyone to make this event fun and fruitful to a local charity. Thank you all!

Celebrating the Nativity of Our Lord

On December 3rd we packed our hall with a burst of family fun to welcome in the month of December, in **anticipation of our Lord's** Nativity. The hall was buzzing with song, crafts, and a family meal. We finished up outside with the lighting of our tree which arrived the week before.. We hope all who attended had a wonderful time, and that we can in earnest set our sights on the Reason for the season.



On the eve of the feast of St. Nicholas, our little ones learned about **this great saint's generosity and deep** love for God and neighbor. After, we all headed over to the church for Vespers,



where we gathered to sing hymns to God and in honor of St. Nicholas, and we **blessed our children's own offering of** socks to the St. Hermione Home.

On December 6th we gathered again for a festive Divine Liturgy. We were joined by visitors from a neighboring school, and a second group joined us just after services to learn about our temple and the Orthodox Faith. Both also learned about the true story of who St. Nicholas is.

We also wish "many years!" to Nolan ("Nicholas" pictured on pg. 13 top left) who is an immense help in our services, and to all those in our community who bear the name of this man of God. St. Nicholas, intercede for us!

This year we held The Holy 40 Divine Liturgies of the Nativity Fast and on Wednesday evening (the week before the



Celebrating the Nativity of Our Lord



to the Theotokos, making a beautiful living icon of our Lord's Nativity. We were pleased to welcome home His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa, to preside over the Divine Liturgy, 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



Dodekaemeron, the twelve days of Christmas. ❖



momentous event. We reconvened Monday 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



feast day) we offered the sacrament of Anointing with Holy Oil (Unction), in anticipation of the feast of our Lord's Nativity. In correlation with a sincere confession of sins and a penitent heart, Holy Unction is a great aid in advancing our spiritual health.



On December 24th our youth catechism students presented an interpretation of the story of our salvation, based on the Akathist Hymn



GREEK LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Our Greek language learners participated in a very special representation of the Nativity of Christ by singing and reciting poems during a festive Christmas program held at our parish's Spiritual Life center on December 15, 2023. Congratulations to all our students for their amazing performance! We are so proud of them! A heartfelt thank you to our Protospesbyter, Father Andreas Houpos, and Father Paul Tsahakis, our dedicated teachers Presbytera Lea Tsahakis, Vivian Pitsikoulis Karampourniotis, Sophia Shinas, our youth Director, Caroline Mellekas, Kim Braswell, my son George, and my husband John for supporting us before or during this event. Thank you to my dear friend, Helen Giles, and her daughter Catherine for their valuable advice and encouragement! Many thanks to Ariadne Zitsos, who accompanied the children in their singing by playing the baglamas and worked on the audio technical component to support the children's performance! A great big thank you to my uncle Costa Vrettos for changing his plans to offer us invaluable assistance during the program! We warmly thank everyone who offered desserts, beverages, setup/preparation help in the kitchen or hall, help with stage decorations/props, took photos/videos, or assisted our learners to dress in costume: Katerina and Rick Coker, Irene Margetis Diakolambrianos, Vasi and Thomas Digkas, Helen Douglas, Maria Mingo, Marina Lewis, Evangelia and Zois Konidaris, Ariadne Zitsos, Vivian Pitsikoulis Karampourniotis, Sophia Shinas, Presbytera Lea Tsahakis, Nadina Garbu, Marko Milich, Alec Giles, Kathryn Baker, Kim Braswell, Sara Maude Tsahakis, Vasiliki Tzefos, Evelyn Klund, and Taso Douglas.

A great big thank you to Vickie and Dan Wixon, Kim and Nick Tzefos, and Maria and Chris Mortis who graciously volunteered to organize, sponsor, and prepare the delicious Lenten meal we enjoyed that night! Lastly, we thank the folks who voluntarily contributed toward the collection of \$340 that night to help support our school! We wish

everyone a Happy New Year filled with good health and joy!

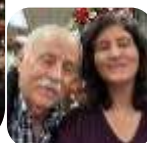
Anastasia Holevas



Με ζωντάνια και χαρά οι μαθητές του ελληνικού μας σχολείου συμμετείχαν σε μια ξεχωριστή αναπαράσταση της Γέννησης του Θεανθρώπου τραγουδώντας και απαγγέλοντας ποιήματα στα πλαίσια εορταστικής εκδήλωσης που πραγματοποιήθηκε στο πνευματικό κέντρο της κοινότητας μας στις 15 Δεκεμβρίου 2023. Οι μαθητές μας είναι άξιοι συγχαρητηρίων! Αν και ο χρόνος προετοιμασίας ήταν πολύ περιορισμένος τα παιδιά μας έκαναν περήφανους! Ο πρωτοπρεσβύτερος μας, πατέρας Ανδρέας Χούπος καθώς και ο πατέρας Παύλος Τσαχάκης, οι αφοσιωμένες μας δασκάλες, η υπεύθυνη νεολαίας μας, οι γονείς και πολλοί φίλοι ήταν εκεί έτοιμοι να στηρίξουν τα παιδιά και να τα ενθαρρύνουν στην προσπάθεια τους αυτή. Από την εκδήλωση μας δεν έλλειψε και ο αγαπημένος σε όλους μας, Άγιος Νικόλαος, που μοίρασε δωράκια στους μαθητές μας και τους συνεχάρη για τις επιδόσεις τους στο σχολειό μετά το τέλος του νόστιμου γεύματος που προσφέρθηκε με πολλή αγάπη από τους γονείς! Ένα μεγάλο ευχαριστώ σε όλους όσους συνέβαλαν στην επιτυχία αυτής της εκδήλωσης! Ευχόμαστε να γιορτάσουμε όλοι μαζί και του χρόνου! Χρόνια πολλά κι ευλογημένα! Το φως του γεννηθέντα Χριστού ως φωτίζει τη ζωή μας αυτή τη Νέα Χρονιά!

Αναστασία Κ. Χολέβα

Our Greek language learners sang the Christmas song, "Χριστούγεννα-Πρωτούγεννα" (Christmas-First Birth) accompanied by Ariadne Zitsos on the baglamas on Dec. 3rd, 2023 during our parish's Christmas Tree Lighting Event! We thank Ariadne for inviting us to participate in this memorable family program!



NEW YEAR'S DAY BLESSING OF ST. BASIL'S BREAD

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 Safety Ministry represented by Bryan Steel who received the coin this year.



Thank you to Ritsa (pictured 3rd from left) 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 blessed the bread and distributed slices to the representative of each ministry group:

Ministry Representatives:

Costa Vrettos (Patriarch Bartholomew)
 Sam Kleto (Archbishop Elpidophoros)
 Evelyn Klund (Metropolis Council Member)
 Elie Azar Parish Council)
 Nina Dzyak (Staff)
 Bess Vrettos (Administrative Support)
 Gerry Clonaris (Adult Religious Education)
 Kathryn Mason (Bookstore)
 Theodora Sexstone (Endowment)
 Ayoub Ayoub (Hospitality)
 Greek Language School (Anastasia Holevas)
 Theo Karavokiros (HUMS)
 Joan Davis (Life and Family)
 Jim Keown (Liturgical)
 Safwat Wassef (Altar Support)
 Tim Klund (Missions and Philanthropy)
 Sam Herron (Music)
 Linda Borowski (Outreach and Welcoming)



Madalina Lowen (Philoptochos)
 Mark Malatras (Property Mgt.)
 Christina Hanegraaff (St. Hermione Home)
 Christina Bonderer (St. Phoebe Ministry)
 Mike Neary (Young at Heart)
 Matthew Gervescu (Youth Ministries)
 Special Recognition by Fr. Andreas
 (Ritsa Neary and Kim Braswell)

Our appreciation goes out to the many volunteers who serve in the various ministries of St. Nektarios. May God bless all of you. ❖

BLESSING CLARK RIVER

Many blessings to Fr. Nektarios, Presbytera Ellia and family who celebrated the feast of Theophany in their own parish in Missoula, Montana with the Blessing of the Clark Fork River.



Feast of Theophany

Καλό μήνα! Blessings to all for this new year.

Between the Divine Liturgies and two Great Blessings of Water, 8 baptisms and 2 chrismations so far 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! ❖



Apostle: "Of him and through him and in him are all things: to him be the glory unto the ages of ages. Amen." (Romans 11:36).

For that the Trisagion refers not to the Son alone, but to the Holy Trinity, the divine and saintly Athanasios and Basil and Gregory, and all the band of the divinely-inspired Fathers bear witness: because, as a matter of fact, by the threefold holiness the Holy Seraphim suggest to us the three subsistences of the superessential Godhead. But by the one Lordship they denote the one essence and dominion of the supremely-divine Trinity. Gregory the Theologian of a **truth says, "Thus, then, the Holy of Holies, which is completely veiled by the Seraphim, and is glorified with three consecrations, meet together in one lordship and one divinity." This was the most beautiful and sublime philosophy of still another of our predecessors.**

Ecclesiastical historians, then, say that once when the people of Constantinople were offering prayers to God to avert a threatened calamity, during Proclus' tenure of the office of Archbishop, it happened that a boy was snatched up from among the people, and was taught by angelic teachers the Trisagion Hymn—**"Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us"**—and when once more he was restored to earth, he told what he had learned, and all the people sang the Hymn, and so the threatened calamity was averted.

And in the fourth holy and great Ecumenical Council, I mean the one at Chalcedon, we are told that it was in this form that the Hymn was sung, for the minutes of this holy assembly so record it. It is, therefore, a matter for laughter and ridicule that this Trisagion Hymn, taught us by the angels, and confirmed by the averting of calamity, ratified and established by so great an assembly of the holy Fathers, and sung first by the Seraphim as a declaration of the three subsistences of the Godhead, should be mangled and emended to suit the view of the foolish Fuller as though he were higher than the Seraphim. But oh! The arrogance, not to say folly! So, this is how we **say it, even if the demons tear us to pieces: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!"** ❖

DIRECTORY

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Clergy

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Parish Staff

Parish Administrator - Evelyn Klund

Administration Staff

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

Director of Youth and Young Adults -

Caroline Mellekas

Facility Manager - Marko Milich

Sexton - Jim Keown

Protopsaltis - Sam Herron

2024 Parish Council

President: Despina Gallis

Vice President: George Harris

Treasurer: Chris Mortis

Assist. Treasurer: Elie Azar

Secretary: Gene Borowski

Assist. Secretary: Manal Choueiri

Members: George Bacogeorge,

Dave Hanegraaff, Joanne Kiser

Philoptochos Board

President: Madalina Lowen

1st Vice President: Kathrine Cestrone

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

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:
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