



THE NEWS FROM ST. NEKTARIOS

DEPRIVATION THAT NOURISHES THE SOUL

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos

Issue 2
Feb. - Mar. 2024

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Our gracious Lord has seen fit that we should see another season of fasting in anticipation of hearing again, as if for the first time, the greatest news ever delivered: "He is risen!". Traditionally known as the "Great Fast" (ἡ Μεγάλη Νηστεία) or the "Great Forty Days" (ἡ Μεγάλη [Τεσ]σαρακοστή), this custom is often perceived as a burden. The idea of changing our diet seems an imposition or, perhaps, a legalistic restriction with which we are obliged to comply. Add to this other aspects of the period—abstention, almsgiving, and an augmented liturgical life—and for some the Fast becomes a daunting slog, and is perhaps abandoned or ignored entirely. However, this apparent act of deprivation paradoxically nourishes the soul, and for this reason deserves our attention.

While true that the Church enjoins us to mind what we are eating, fasting transcends mere dietary restrictions. Fasting is a spiritual discipline aimed at purifying the soul and reclaiming nearness to God. It is a voluntary act of self-denial, wherein we abstain from certain physical pleasures or desires for a designated period, allowing us to redirect our focus towards love of God and love of neighbor. While fasting often brings to mind abstention from food and drink, it extends beyond the realm of nutrition to encompass various aspects of our lives.

Consider these characteristic ideals of the Fast:

Dietary Fasting: The Church prescribes a strict fast for weekdays, meaning that meat, fish, dairy, and oil (specifically, olive oil) are forbidden. Moreover,

the food that is taken is to be dry or raw, or cooked very simply. Furthermore, food is not to be taken at all until the ninth hour (3:00 p.m., or after partaking of presanctified Holy Communion), and only then. On Saturdays and Sundays, the fast is lightened, with (olive) oil and wine permitted, and no restriction on time or frequency of meals.

Conjugal Abstention: During this season, weddings are strictly prohibited, and married couples are enjoined to not engage in

"Fasting is a spiritual discipline aimed at purifying the soul and reclaiming nearness to God."

marital relations. It is already understood that any such activity outside of marriage is not in keeping with a Christian life.

Increased Almsgiving: Christians are expected not only to restrain their appetites, but to also expend the money that would otherwise fill our bellies to fill those of the needy. In general, all comforts and entertainment are to be restrained or avoided, in part so that we may help lighten the burden of the discomfited and beleaguered.

Modified Worship: On the weekdays of the Fast, with rare exceptions, the Divine Liturgy is not permitted to be celebrated. Instead, additional bread and wine sanctified at a preceding Sunday's Divine Liturgy is preserved and distributed to the

faithful during a communion service appended to Vespers. This is what we call the Liturgy of the Presanctified [Gifts]. During the week, the temple and clergy are decked in dark vestments; on Saturday and Sunday, days of rest and of the Resurrection, we return briefly to bright colors. On the Sundays of the Fast, the longer Divine Liturgy of St. Basil is offered, and there are in some cases additional rites (e.g., processions with holy icons, and with the Cross).

From these examples, we can see that "fasting" is not narrowly limited to dietary restrictions, but rather touches every aspect of our life. And if, for instance, we viscerally understand eating as a type of consumption, it is not difficult to see that we are constantly consuming through our other senses. What good is it if I fast from food, but gorge myself on gossip and vulgar entertainment? To be sure, to some this can seem overwhelmingly burdensome, and even contrary to the Gospel. After all, didn't Jesus come to set us free from legalistic demands and burdens?

Yet it is these very "deprivations" that stand to help us experience lightness and true freedom in Christ.

Being free does not mean to follow my every impulse, but to not be enslaved by them.

For it is the same Lord and Savior who said "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly," who said, "whoever wants to come after me, let him deny

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Update

THE KARANTONIS FAMILY

As you know Fr. Nektarios and Presbytera Ellia moved to Missoula Montana in December and is now serving at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Missoula, MT.

Thank you to Fr. Nektarios and Presbytera Ellia and family on your years of service to St. Nektarios and blessings in your new community. Here are some photos he shared with us of their new home. You may see Presbytera's smiling face on Sundays still as she travels back and forth until school is out in June. May they be blessed.+



Check out their newly published News page!
Here you can find posts and articles about what's happening in Fr. Nektarios' parish.
<https://annunciationmt.com>

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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.

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

BIRTHS & 40TH DAY BLESSINGS

To Vianca and Pavlo Triantafyllides on the birth and 40th day blessing of their son, Pavlo Jr.
To Mirna and Maurice Yazbeck on the 40
To Kimberly Ann and Makele Medhane on the 40th day blessing of mom and baby, Nova Fiore
To Margaret and Connor Lewis on the birth of their daughter, Georgia Marie

CHRISMATIONS & BAPTISMS

To Margaret and Connor Lewis on the baptism of their daughter, Georgia Marie and to the godparents,
Samara Clewell and Caiden Lewis
To Bess and Brooks Whitmore on the baptism of their daughter, Sophie and
to her godparent, Mary Asimos
To Elena and Sam Burrus on the baptism of Vaia's brother, John, and to the godparents,
Christina Diamantis and Jonathan Diamantis
To Molly Jackson on her chrismation and to her sponsor, Caroline Mellekas
To Justin Carruthers on his baptism and to his sponsor, Patrick Taylor
To Kevin Deisenroth on his chrismation and to his sponsor, John Couchell
To Camille Deisenroth on her baptism and to her sponsor, Stavroula Couchell
To Kacey Deisenroth on her baptism and to her godparent, Ariadne Steel
To Clark Deisenroth on his baptism and to his godparent, Dave Hanegraaff
To Annie and Patrick Boruta on the baptism of their daughter, Sophia Annmarie and to
her godmother, Danielle Monroe

MARRIAGES

To Lena Polemides and Michael Ziozios on their marriage
Jane Cowan and Christopher Weber on the marriage and to their sponsor, Rachel Weber Aristides
To Molly Jackson and Justin Carruthers on their marriage and to the sponsor, Caroline Mellekas

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

To the Papoulias family for the repose of Constantine and Elias' mother, Louise Papoulias
To the Andrews and Psomadakis families for the repose of Zoe Psomadakis Andrews
To Constantine and Elias Papoulias for the repose of their mother, Louise Marie
To the family of James Evangelow for his repose
To the Kalivas and Bennet families for the repose of Catherine Kalivas
To the Vlahos, Bakos, Cestrone, Keretses and Pappas families for the repose of Nick's father and
Helen's brother, George Nick Vlahos
To the Pappas family for the repose of Perry Bill Pappas
To the Candela family for the repose of Jean's husband, Joseph
To the Keretses and Poulos families on the repose of Deno's mother, Olga Poulos Keretses
To the Pappas family on the repose of Bill and Laney's father, Perry

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.

WELCOME FR. PANAYIOTIS & PRESBYTERA EIRINI

On Thursday, February 22, Proistamenos, Fr. Andreas Houpos, and Parish Council President, Despina Gallis, were warmly received at the Metropolis of Atlanta offices for an official meeting with the priest newly assigned to St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church, Fr. Panayiotis Steele. Fr. Panayiotis joins our family after serving the first years of his priestly ministry at St. Sophia Cathedral in Washington, D.C.



With the paternal blessing and guidance of His Eminence Metropolitan ALEXIOS of Atlanta, and the coordination of Fr. George Tsahakis, Chancellor, Fr. Panayiotis' assignment begins effective March 15. Fr. Panayiotis will be visiting our community through this weekend, and we look forward to welcoming Presbytera Eirini and their two young daughters in the near future.

of St. Polycarp (Πολύκαρπος), Fr. Panayiotis celebrated his first of what we pray will be many Divine Liturgies for our parish. It also happened to mark one year since the arrival of our Protopsaltis, Sam Herron, who chanted his first liturgy for us on the same feast. May their and our collective ministry at St. Nektarios continue to be «πολύκαρπη», that is, producing much fruit!



Christ is in our midst! Yesterday, for the feast Axios!

UPDATE ON FR. NEKTARIOS AND FAMILY CONT. FROM PAGE 2

As a parting gift to Fr. Nektarios Karantonis, our community gifted him an *epigonation* (the vestment that hangs down upon the knee, as its name denotes) depicting the Annunciation, the namesake of the community he left to serve in Missoula, MT.

On February 11th, Fr. Nektarios was installed as *proistamenos* (head priest) of that parish by His Grace, Bishop Constantine of Sasima, an act indicated in part by his donning of the epigonation for the first time.

The epigonation communicates the bishop's assessment of Christian maturity on the part of the priest, and the responsibility of stewardship he now bears in that community of believers.

May Fr. Nektarios' ministry in Missoula bear much fruit, and may this emblem of his new chapter of service, ever recall to his priestly prayers, the faithful of our parish.



Fr. Nektarios and family with their new parish on the feast of Theophany



Axios! ❖

MUSIC MINISTRY / ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WOMEN'S CHOIR RETREAT

*Having seen the evening light, we
praise the Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit: God.*

We were blessed to have with us recently a number of women singers, from our own parish and several others, participate in a chanting retreat. The group, led by Dina Marinakos, chanted the entirety of the Vigil for St. Anna's Conceiving of the Theotokos, and the left choir parts for Saturday's Vespers and Sunday's Matins and Divine Liturgy.

Employing Byzantine musical notation and scores of English translations set by contemporary composers (including our own Protopsaltis, Sam Herron), more and more people - men, women, and children - are quickly gaining access to and fluency in, this traditional sacred art.

Those interested in joining our church choirs, or simply learning more about our Church's traditional music, are encouraged to contact Sam Herron: protopsaltis@stnektarios.org ❖

THE FIRST ANTIPHON
On Sunday and Four Days
Psalm 137: 1-6

Voice #1: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all that he has done for you. Unaccompanied. Refrain

Voice #2: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all that he has done for you. Unaccompanied. Refrain

Voice #3: The Lord has prepared the throne in heaven, and the Kingless sits over all. Unaccompanied. Refrain

Voice #4: Bless the Lord, all you His works in every place of His dominion. Unaccompanied. Refrain

Group Response (Final Refrain)
Sing all glory to the Lord.

WEEKDAY VERSES

Voice #1: It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing to Him with the Organ. Unaccompanied. Refrain

Voice #2: To proclaim Your name to the morning and Your truth at night. Unaccompanied. Refrain



UNDERSTANDING BYZANTINE CHANT



Following the sacred service of Vespers on January 20th, Protopsaltis, Sam Herron offered an excellent, engaging presentation titled "understanding Byzantine Chant" to our young adults and he concluded the four-part, in-person weekly series by the same name, running from February 27– March 5th, as part of our winter Adult Religious Education program. ❖

VISITING PRIESTS TO ST. NEKTARIOS

We were blessed to have with us Fr. Christopher and Khouria (Presbytera) Stephanie McCoy for the feast of the Meeting of Our Lord. Fr. Christopher is a Colonel in the U.S. Army, and Associate Dean of Research at West Point. He was recently ordained to the Holy Priesthood in the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Fr. Christopher presided over the divine services, and Khouria Stephanie helped to chant them.

On March 3rd, we were pleased to welcome into our midst Fr. David Winn, presiding priest at All Saints Antiochian Orthodox Church in Raleigh, and his family.

We also enjoyed a special presentation from Fr. Anastasios Yaoundé, of Cameroon, who offered a presentation on mission life there. May God continue to offer us opportunities to connect and grow our witness of Orthodoxy across jurisdictional borders. ❖



Above: Fr. Christopher and Khouria (Presbytera) Stephanie with Fr. Andreas



Above left: Fr. Andreas with Fr. David Winn **Right:** Jim Keown, Fr. Anastasios, Fr. Andreas and Fr. Panayiotis

TOGETHER IN CHRIST

February 17th in Charlotte, it was a day of trading places and coming together. Frs. Steve and Andreas of St. Nektarios Church celebrated a wedding together at Holy Trinity Cathedral. Meanwhile, Frs. Jonathan and Christian of Holy Trinity Cathedral served Vespers at St. Nektarios Church, in Fr. Andreas' absence, and then three were able to join the participants of the Queen City Classic for their evening affair, held at St. Nektarios. Glory to God for reminders that we are all one in Christ! ❖



YOUNG AT HEART

Young at Heart brought in the 2023 holiday season with a day trip to the Alabama Theater Christmas Show at Myrtle Beach on November 29th. The group boarded the bus and were on their way at 8 a.m. After a rest stop on the road, they got to the theater in plenty of time for their festive matinee performance. Exiting the theater, all were now in the Christmas spirit. Dinner followed at an all you can eat buffet at the Crab House restaurant before they made their way home.



The group then closed out 2023 with a Holly Celebration on December 30th. It was a casual evening of food, fun, music, and dancing. Thank you to Siragusa family for catering an incredible all-you-can-eat Italian Buffet. Tommy Pappas, our DJ, filled the evening with Arabic, Greek, and American music; keeping the dance floor active. Our door prize winners were smiling ear to ear as they realized they had the winning numbers! The group donned on their New Year hats and did an early countdown on the eve of New Year's Eve.



Above & right:
Our "Holly Celebration"
in December



The January 11th lunch gathering continued the New Year's celebration. There were the monthly birthday wishes, cake, and singing Happy Birthday. The afternoon was filled with Bingo Fun with lots of prizes.



Above: Our January hosts and servers

On February 9th, the group had A Valentine Afternoon cherishing our church friends and family. Maria Balatsias was our sweetheart to lead the kitchen crew in preparing a yummy spaghetti lunch. In honor of Valentines, we showed a romantic movie, none other than An Affair to Remember! And of course there were special bags of popcorn treats.



Above left: December & January birthdays **Above right:** February birthdays

Thank you to our monthly hosts for preparing a great lunch, setting up the room and decor. A special thanks goes out to our board who make sure all the details are covered so everyone has a joyful time with their Young at Heart family. ❖



Above left: Our Young at Heart board planning future events
Right: Our February hosts

PROPERTY UPDATE

On February 10th we were blessed to have a group of about 10 people pitch in to help clean the storm drainage field. Thank you to all who gave of their time. What a blessing! ❖

STORM DRAINAGE FIELD CLEAN-UP



PARKING LOT SIGNAGE



February 13th saw the restoration and reconfiguration of some often overlooked, but important, signage on our campus. With hundreds of faithful in attendance on any given Sunday, and at other times, we need to have accessibility in mind, both for those with mobility limitations, and for first responders in the event of emergencies. Please take note of the markings, and let's all do our part to remember their role. ❖

LIFE-GIVING SPRING



On February 14, 2024 dedicated committee members surveyed the state of our Garden of the Life-Giving Spring, in anticipation of its rejuvenation and the renewal of its dedication later this year, God willing. 2024 marks the tenth anniversary of its establishment. This feature of our sacred campus attracts our faithful and also friends from the surrounding neighborhood throughout the week. ❖

DIVINE SERVICES

ST. PHOTINE AND ST. PORPHYRIOS OF GAZA

On February 26th, we were blessed to offer the divine services in honor of St. Photine and of St. Porphyrios of Gaza, the latter also as a sign of Christian solidarity with our brothers and sisters in harm's way at his eponymous church in Gaza. We were joined by iconographer and chanter George Mamatsios, who gifted us myrrh from the relics of St. Demetrios of Thessalonike, with which our faithful in attendance were able to be anointed. Glory to God! ❖



BLESSING OF THE WATER

Καλό μήνα! Blessings for the month of March! The month of Spring. The month of the Incarnation of the Word. The month the Fast begins. May these moments of renewal, cosmic and divine, bring us to true Life. ❖



SATURDAY OF SOULS

On Saturday of Souls, we memorialized our loved ones who have finished the course of this life, with all its blessings and trials, successes and failures, joys and sorrows. May the Lord God remember them in his mercy and strengthen us to have faith in him, to repent of our errant ways, so as to be welcomed into the life to come with mercy and joy. ❖



GREEK LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Our Preparatory level students were busy in January creating their very own vasilopitas out of play dough! Presbytera Lea Tсахakis brought gold coins for them to insert into their St. Basil special cakes! Happy New Year 2024!



We thank Presbytera Lea for donating vasilopitas baked at church for all the students of our school. The coin of the vasilopita cut in Presbytera Lea's class was found in

Panayia's portion. We pray that the All-Holy Mother of God keeps us under her protection. Ο Παναγιώτης βρήκε το φλουρί στην τάξη της κυρίας Βιβής! Pete Wixon found the vasilopita coin in the delicious allergen-free and vegan vasilopita that Mrs. Vivian Pitsikoulis-Karampourniotis baked with love for her Novice-Low Level IA students. Happy New Year to Pete and all our students!

Η κα. Σοφία Σχοινά έφτιαξε λαχταριστή βασιλόπιτα την οποία και μοίρασε στους μαθητές της τάξης της! Η μαθήτριά, Όντρι Μέισον βρήκε το φλουρί! Mrs. Sophia Shinas made a delicious vasilopita that she shared with her students! Audrey Mason found the vasilopita coin in the Novice-Low Level IB class!



Τιμάμε τους Τρεις Ιεράρχες και

γιορτάζουμε την «Ημέρα των Ελληνικών Γραμμάτων» μέσω δραστηριοτήτων που ασκούν τα παιδιά στην ανάγνωση και τη γραφή. We honor the Holy Three Hierarchs

and we celebrate the "Day of the Hellenic Letters" through activities that allow our children to practice reading and writing in Greek in fun and engaging ways. Presbytera Lea's and Mrs. Vivian's students write their names or other words using Wikki stix and magnetic letters. Learning can be so much fun!

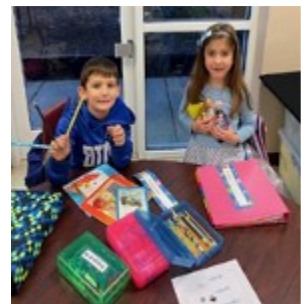
Μετράμε τρένα, βιβλία, μολύβια, τσάντες, κούκλες, γόμες, μπάλες και τετράδια στα ελληνικά! We are counting trains, books, pencils, backpacks, dolls, erasers, balls, and notebooks in Greek! The use of authentic realia and art activities and the participation of Mrs. Anastasia Holevas' students in communicative activities help the children acquire vocabulary in a natural, hands-on setting.

Ξεκίνησαν κιόλας οι προετοιμασίες για το Πάσχα; Ναι! Όλα τα παιδιά της κοινότητάς μας και όχι μόνο θα μπορούν να αγοράσουν μια από τις πανέμορφες πασαχαλινές λαμπάδες! Μαθαίνουμε ότι η



νέα αυτή απασχόληση αρέσει πολύ στις μανούλες μας και στα μεγαλύτερα μας αδέρφια! Οι λαμπάδες έχουν ήδη ξεκινήσει να πωλούνται τις Κυριακές

μετά το τέλος της θείας λειτουργίας στην ενορία μας. Ένα μεγάλο ευχαριστώ στους γονείς που στηρίζουν



τα παιδιά τους και το διδακτικό μας έργο! The preparations for our Holy Pascha have already begun? Yes! All the children of our parish will have the opportunity to purchase one of these beautiful Easter candles! This creative new activity seems to be especially appealing to our moms and older siblings! The Easter candles are being sold on Sundays following the Divine Liturgy at our SLC hall. A great big thank you to all the parents who support their children and our educational efforts through fundraising events!

Anastasia Holevas



YOUTH MINISTRIES

ST. PHOEBE MINISTRY

Our St. Phoebe ministry has been busy this year already. Did you know that babies can go through hundreds of diapers per month? The St. Phoebe Ministry answered to this need through offering their morning in service at the NC Diaper Bank. Together, the girls and their mothers wrapped 14,250 diapers, enough to cover 285 babies for an entire month.

In February our girls enjoyed a Lenten Retreat at Elatos Park with leader Christina Bonderer and guest speaker, Kabee Kokenes. ❖



BOY SCOUT TROOP 490

Our Scouts, Troop and Pack 490, were invited up to the Solea on Sunday, February 4th for a blessing in recognition of Scout Sunday. As Sunday's Gospel (Matt. 22:35-46) instructed us all to heed Christ's greatest commandments - of God and love of neighbor.

The scouting program has continually exemplified this ongoing response to Christ's call. Over the years, a number of Eagle Scout projects have benefitted and brought beauty to our parish buildings and grounds. Most recently, in service to our local community, the scouts poured their efforts into successful food drive, "Scouting for Food". We look forward to supporting their continued efforts for God's glory! ❖

YOUTH MINISTRIES

ST. PANTELEIMON HOME SCHOOL

A central part of formation for Orthodox Christians is the realm of liturgical experience and tradition. Sober liturgical awareness and literacy translates to openness to the experience of God in our lives—in the Sacraments, in Scripture, and in the lives of the Saints—and cultivates the Orthodox Christian ethos and mindset, which is not stifled by lifeless, legalistic rigorism nor cheapened by sentimental, worldly innovation.



Above: St. Panteleimon Homeschool Co-Op learning about the symbolism and significance of vestments last month

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Below:

St. Panteleimon Homeschool Co-Op stamping prosphoron bread dough with some of our homeschool co-op children. Hands-on learning makes an impression.



Youth processing with their holy icons during the Sunday of Orthodoxy 2024



Above: GOYA engaging in a theological session on Love of Neighbor



Above photos and below: JOY/HOPE First Friday fun



FINANCIAL MATTERS

An Act of Worship

God gave us his love – do we multiply it or do we keep it for ourselves?
 God gave us the Gospel – do we multiply it or do we keep it for ourselves?
 God gave us the Church – do we multiply it or do we keep it for ourselves?

Our gift to God and His Church is a sacred act, a form of worship, and a response to all his blessings in our life -- our bodies, our family, the environment, our time, our faith, our neighbor.

*Stewardship is our spirituality in action, our faith in action, our theology in action.
 Stewardship is personal – between Jesus and us – an expression of love and commitment.
 A response to all that He has given us.*

Some day we will stand before God and show Him what we did with all that He entrusted to us. If we have been faithful stewards of our gifts, He will say,

**“Well done, good and faithful servant.
 Enter into the joy of your Lord.”**

So You Know . . .

January 1 through March 27, 2024
 Operating Income and Expense Report

Stewardship Received	\$ 242,698
Other Income Received	45,905
Total Income	\$ 288,603
Total Expenses (paid and accrued)	\$ 296,464
Net Income	\$ -7,861

✓ Check your Pledges

Please review your offering report to make sure your stewardship pledge has been posted accurately.

Per our February stewardship letter to our 2023 stewards — unless we heard from you by March 15, our office automatically renewed your 2023 total stewardship offerings as your 2024 pledge.

Please let the office staff know of any corrections that are needed.



OUR 2024 STEWARDSHIP GOAL TO FUEL OUR MINISTRIES IS \$1,050,000

AS OF MARCH 27, WE HAVE RECEIVED \$878,576 IN PLEDGES

**WE HAVE REACHED 84% OF OUR GOAL!
 GLORY TO GOD**

\$171,000 LEFT TO GO

**OUR CHALLENGE:
 KEEPING OUR CASH FLOW STEADY AND ON TRACK THROUGH THE YEAR**

Consider:

- ◆ We are one-fourth through the year. Is your stewardship pledge one-fourth completed?
- ◆ Become a steward if you have not already done so.
- ◆ Review our monthly giving as a percent of our annual income. See the chart below. Are we using our income appropriately in the advancement of our Lord's Kingdom?
- ◆ Are we giving God His share?
- ◆ Would you like to increase your pledge? Just notify the church office with your adjusted amount

		MONTHLY GIVING BY PERCENT					
		2%	6%	8%	10%	12%	
A	\$20,000	\$33	\$100	\$133	\$167	\$200	
	\$25,000	\$42	\$125	\$167	\$208	\$250	
	\$30,000	\$50	\$150	\$200	\$250	\$300	
	\$40,000	\$67	\$200	\$267	\$333	\$400	
	\$50,000	\$83	\$250	\$333	\$417	\$500	
	\$75,000	\$125	\$375	\$500	\$625	\$750	
	\$100,000	\$167	\$500	\$667	\$833	\$1,000	
	I	\$150,000	\$250	\$750	\$1,000	\$1,250	\$1,500
		\$200,000	\$333	\$1,000	\$1,333	\$1,667	\$2,000
		\$250,000	\$417	\$1,250	\$1,667	\$2,083	\$2,500
\$300,000		\$500	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$2,500	\$3,000	
\$400,000		\$667	\$2,000	\$2,667	\$3,333	\$4,000	
N	\$500,000	\$833	\$2,500	\$3,333	\$4,167	\$5,000	

FINANCIAL MATTERS

SUPER STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

As a show of appreciation, members of our Parish Council and Stewardship Committee hosted brunch on February 4th. Through the generosity of our stewards, we surpassed \$907,000 in offerings received in 2023. Stewardship grew by 6% over 2022 offerings. Further, the \$907,000 made up 73% of our total operating income of \$1,238,326; again an all-time record.

The commitment and steadfastness of our stewards has provided the foundation for our ministries, which strive to multiply Christ's saving work. In 2023 we were able to add valuable staff members who are enriching our worship, enhancing our youth and young adult programs, and managing the sacred property in our care. ❖



STEWARDSHIP AT WORK: COME AND LEARN



What is stewardship? This was discussed at the first Come and Learn session held on March 3rd. This Stewardship forum offers members of the community a casual opportunity to ask questions on how stewardship works.



We thank those who attended and contributed to the ongoing prayer, conversation, and work to ensure, with God's help, that our parish can acquire and utilize the resources necessary to carry out the Lord's work here beyond. Until the next session, you may contact a member of the Parish Council, Stewardship Committee or Administrative staff with questions. ❖



BUILDING FOR GENERATIONS

**Your Generosity:
Investing in our Future
2024 Report to February
Parish Assembly**



- ◆ **\$1.4 million Cash Received** which brought cash balance to **\$5.5 million**
- ◆ We are earning 4.5% interest.
- ◆ Funds came from 185 **Building For Generations** pledges of \$5.9 million plus 60+ unpledged donations. There is \$1.6 million in outstanding balances.
- ◆ The fundraising campaign is ongoing to build our new Ministry Center and renovate the Spiritual Life Center.
- ◆ Sam Boulmetis appointed Construction Committee Chair
- ◆ Initial work to renovate certain parts of the office area approved by the Parish Council
- ◆ Meeting held with prospective contractors
- ◆ Progress drawings available by the bookstore



ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Our Women's Bible Study of Genesis concluded on February 29th. That morning, our Women's Bible Study met and that evening our Open study met at 7:00 p.m. concluding our study of this holy book, as we prepare to enter the Great Fast. During the course of the Fast, the Church universal will be invited to read from this book as part of the lectionary, as a means of preparing us for both repentance and the gracious glory of our salvation in Jesus Christ. ❖



BIBLE STUDY DINNER

On Thursday evening, March 7th, participants in this year's Bible Study and their families gathered for a Palestinian-themed meal offered by Salma Qushair with truly Abrahamic hospitality, to mark the end of our study of the holy book of Genesis. God fed us with his Word these last several months, preparing us now for the journey of fasting and recollection of our sacred origins, a journey towards restoration of God's image in us, a journey led by the incarnate Word himself. May we follow him in faith, and be renewed! ❖



BEYOND ST. NEKTARIOS

Myers Park Methodist Church visits St. Nektarios

Thursday, February 8th, we welcomed members of Meyers Park Methodist Church to our worship space, to learn about iconography. We thank God for their interest, and thank them for their reverent attention and thoughtful questions during the wide-ranging, 2.5 hour visit.



Nancy Watson posted this on our Facebook page:

“St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church. - What a wonderful afternoon with Fr. Andreas Houpos and Sexton, Jim Keown of St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church! Their gracious hospitality and kindness only added to the beauty of their temple and of their faith. To paraphrase N.T. Wright, beauty IS the most effective form of evangelism; by it we are drawn to the Source of all beauty. ❖

THE FENEČKI BISERI ENSEMBLE FROM SERBIA

We were blessed on February 13th to welcome as pilgrims the Fenečki Biseri Ensemble from Serbia, as they begin a tour of the USA. They wished to pay their respects to St. Nektarios and receive his blessing. They blessed our temple with their beautiful voices, so look for a post with a brief sample of their offering. Special thanks to our own Kim Clewell for documenting the visit with photos and video, as she does so many other moments in the life of our parish. ❖



Fr. Andreas' article Continued from page 1

himself, take up his cross, and follow me," and "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light".

In a show of its divine wisdom and parental love, the Church calls us to attention, to consider this and focus on it together. We collectively strive to be unbound from the things and habits that have crept in and made us sluggish in spirit and in body, the things of which we have not denied ourselves and that have perhaps led us to lay down our cross for a time, the things that make our life full of stuff, but not abundant in spirit.

And so, just as a gymnasium makes available to us the tools and space to realize the potential of a fit and active life, the Church invites all its blessed members to see the highest possibilities for exercise (askesis, asceticism), to excel in virtue and holiness, those markers of spiritual health. And just as a newcomer to physical exercise—even if motivated and committed—cannot at once take on an advanced program for risk of injury or despair, or both, those "exercising" in the Church will not necessarily be able to quickly or easily attain to those things noted above.

The Church does not leave us to go these things alone, but rather to have communal support, encouragement, patience, and guidance. To this latter point, it is important that no one take on more than he or she can bear—and certainly not impose such things on others. As with all things, we learn through trial and error. But it is prudent to ask advice of more experienced and seasoned peers, and to bring dilemmas, concerns, and weaknesses to parish clergy for guidance and counsel. The aim of fasting is not to injure us, but to destroy the grip that passions and temptations have on us.

As we embark on this journey of fasting, we do well to remember that its true essence lies not in mere dietary restrictions, but in the transformation of our hearts and minds. Embrace the deeper fast, one that curtails not only our physical appetites but also our spiritual weaknesses. May this sacred season be a time of renewal and purification, as we draw nearer to God, experiencing the abundance of his grace and love for us all. ❖

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

Email: office@stnektarios.org

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5108 Kuykendall Rd. Charlotte, NC 28270

Clergy

Father Andreas Houpos, Proistamenos

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Father Steve Dalber, Pastor Emeritus

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Father Paul Tsahakis, Presbyter

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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, Patrick Taylor

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

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: April 16, 2024

Published: April 23, 2024