



# THE NEWS FROM ST. NEKTARIOS

## A BLESSING BOTH WAYS

Winter 2024 - 25

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By the time this is published, we clergy of St. Nektarios Church will have recently concluded our Theophany home and business blessings for the 2025 year. Over the course of nearly two months, we will have driven hundreds of miles, collectively, and likewise spent many hours in the homes and businesses of our faithful.

This custom of the Church is indispensable to the bonding of the Body of Christ. Whether it happens once in the lifetime of a parishioner, or annually, this type of visit does so much to make us a tighter-knit community of faith.

*From the perspective of us clergy, consider this:*

We get to experience your commute. This in and of itself can be an eye-opening and humbling experience of the effort you make to come to services and to volunteer.

We get to see where and how you live.

We get to sit and speak with you outside the brief and formal context of worship or meetings.

We often get to break bread with you, experiencing your generosity and favorite (and sometimes experimental!) dishes, entering into this even more intimate family space, often to lively discussion.

On the note of family, we get to interact with spouses and/or children in the comfort of their own home. Conversely, we also get to enter into places where the loss of a spouse, parent, or child hangs heavy in the air.

We get a sense of who you are, what you love, what challenges you face, what ways you may be able or wish to serve the parish or greater community.

We may be able to connect you with others that can assist with a need, or who have need you can meet.

We hear your pains and joys, and are able to bring the

message of Christ into your home, and see also how you live it out there.

We get to meet and interact with spouses and children who are distant from the Church, or not of the Orthodox faith. It can challenge preconceptions, and sometimes opens or draws them to the Church.

We can gently advise on tense or delicate matters, and sometimes help resolve misunderstandings.

*When we priest carry . . . the Holy Water blessed . . . at Theophany, we extend the glorification and manifestation of God into the world.*

Those who have had their homes blessed, or can read the above and use their imaginations, can perhaps see how these encounters are experienced by the faithful.

*From the side of the faithful; a few to consider:*

Children get to see the priest in their homes. They get to carry their icons through the house, show the priest their room and their toys, laugh and giggle as they continually get splashed with Holy Water, and see their little space get sanctified. They do not see church the same the next time they attend.

Parents get to see their children interact in this way with their priests.

Those who live alone are able to have company.

The faithful get to tell their story, and see everyday things afresh through the lens not only of a guest but of their spiritual leaders: holy icons, family photos (both serious and silly!), arts and crafts, pieces of furniture, evidence of hobbies and interests, renovations or even problems with the home, their

**Fr. Andreas G. Houpos**

cherished pets, and so on.

Often neighbors see the priest entering and/or leaving the home, which in its own way is a type of witness of our faith to the world.

Parishioners are able to speak more comfortably about ministry needs and challenges, or to ask questions about stewardship and other ways the community might need support.

These and countless other benefits arise from this sacred tradition. When we priests carry to the homes and businesses of the faithful the Holy Water blessed at the great feast of Theophany, we extend that glorification and manifestation of God into the world.

The church comes to your home, and your home becomes a little church. Your home solidifies its identity as an outpost of our parish in the neighborhoods and towns, and we clergy carry back to the parish, in our hearts and minds, the experiences, gifts, and needs of the faithful, augmenting what we aim to offer in ministry.

The same water in which new souls were received into the Church by Holy Baptism now **blessees their and others' homes.** Refreshing our collective memory of the great gift of Baptism, it serves to strengthen both the reality and our perception of our unity in Christ, reinvigorating our sense of Communion with him and with one another.

I know I speak not only for myself, but for Fr. Panayiotis: this year, as with every year, it has been an honor and a true blessing to cross the thresholds of your homes, and to leave them drenched in the light and love of Christ. We, too, come away blessed, brightened by your love and faith, marveling at what God has wrought through his saving gifts of grace. ❖



# In the Spotlight



## Shrine to St. John the Baptist

At our Vacation Church Camp earlier this summer, a small shrine to St. John the Baptist was placed in our parish courtyard to be visible and particularly accessible to children, who especially love to play and explore there Sundays after Divine Liturgy. Already, **they're doing what comes naturally: venerating the saint, praying, and leaving little offerings at the shrine.**

One of our young adults noticed that even wildlife seem to be stopping in from time to time, to pay respects, writing in a message:

*"Deer, raccoon, and possum prints in front of the icon of St. John the Forerunner outside. Very beautiful to see that they visit as well."*



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

# 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 Emmanouel 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 Seth

## Congratulations and best wishes

To Shannen & David Sherrill on the birth & 40th day blessing of Norelle and Levi's sister, Annabelle

To Alyssa Weber & Keanan Stoner on the birth & 40th day blessing of Milo's brother, Jack Theodore

To Jane & Chris Weber on the birth & 40th day blessing of their daughter, Elinor "Ellie"

To Megan and Hank Hanegraaff on the birth & 40th day blessing of their daughter, Isabel

To Maria and Mitchell Pernal on the birth & 40th day blessing of Nicholas and Alexander's brother, Peter

To Matina and Dimitrios Batziakas on the 40th day blessing of their daughter, Georgina (Nektaria)

To Peyton and Zach Poston on the baptism of their son, Noah

and to his godparents, Rachel Kokenes and Nick J. Miller

To Donna Yarmosh on her chrismation and to her sponsor, Tessa Dunn

To Autumn Yarmosh and David Sullivan on their baptisms and

to their sponsors, Maryann Zitsos and Peter Reinhart

To Lilian Evans on her chrismation and to her sponsor, Stavroula Couchell

To Volodymyr, Evgeniia, Varvara, Tykhon & Simon Kartaiev on their chrismation/baptisms and to

their sponsors, Svitlana & Michael Dixon, Caroline Mellekas, Ariadne & Bryan Steel

and Maria & Daniel Siragusa

To Aidan Blanks on his baptism and to his sponsor, Zack Hair

To Marcia Erwin on her baptism and to her sponsor, Despina Gallis

To Megan Hanegraaff on her chrismation and to her sponsor, Christina Herron

To Brandon Poehlman on his baptism and to his sponsor, Jim Keown

To Adnan Nasr on his baptism and to his sponsor, Michael Azar

To Giovanni Gonzales on his baptism and to his sponsor, George Pexos

To Jeff Meendering on his baptism and to his sponsor, George Bacogeorge

To Brooke & Nicholas Isaac on the baptism of their daughter, Windsor Elle and to her sponsor, Crystal Isaac

and for the blessing of their marriage in the Orthodox church and to their sponsor, Crystal Isaac

To Julianne and Steven Rossman on the baptism of Nora's brother,

Nicholas David and to his sponsor, Stephanie Rook

To Renner St. John on her baptism and to her sponsor, Bess Vrettos

To Marcia Erwin and Mike Burgan on their marriage and to their sponsors, Chris Mortis & Despina Gallis

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

To the family of His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos of Albania for his repose

To the Stouzas family for the repose of Presbytera Paula's, husband,

Rev. Protospesbyter Fr. Dionysios (Dennis) Strouzas

To the family of Archpriest John Maxwell for his repose

To the Koinis, Hazlehurst & Veronie families for the repose of Sophia and Ted Koinis' mother,

Eftilia (Effie) Koinis

To the Peroulas, Hines, Balaouras and Rigas families for the repose of Tina's husband, John

To the family of George Tsouroudiakakis for his repose

To the Dounis family for the repose of Vasilios' wife, Panagiota

To the Batshon and Hanania families for the repose of Rasha's husband, Maurice

To the Nixon and Psillos families for the repose of Spero's mother, Margaret Nixon

To the Pakuris and Pappas families for the repose of Kathy Pakuris

To the Wassef family on the repose for Lula's sister, Evone Bichara.

To the Kastriches family for the repose of Angie's husband, James

To the Kofinas and Anderson families for the repose of Bessie "Bett" Anderson Kofinas

To the family of Maria Pappas on her repose

To Pauline Blehi on the repose of her mother, Margaret

To the Despo family on the repose of Stamie's father, Bill Giallourakis

## In Appreciation

To Diane Gilbert and Copy Cat Printing for printing the newsletter

# Enthronement of His eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos



Congratulations to His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos on his enthronement on January 25, 2025  
Photos courtesy of Dimitrios Panagos - Orthodox Observer

# Parish Council



The evening of Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, our elected 2025 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, the meeting was called to order and executive officers were elected. The newly formed Parish Council conducted its first regular meeting of the year on January 30<sup>th</sup>. ❖

### 2025 PARISH COUNCIL

- Chris Mortis *President*
- Andrew McCullough *Vice President*
- Elie Azar *Treasurer*
- David Hanegraaff *Assistant Treasurer*
- Gene Borowski *Secretary*
- Manal Choueiri *Assistant Secretary*
- George Bacogeorge
- Zackery Hair
- Kathryn Mason
- Peter Reinhart
- Patrick Taylor

### AFFIRMATION

**“I do solemnly affirm that I will uphold the dogma, teaching, traditions, holy canons, discipline, worship, and moral principles of the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as the Charter and Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and that I will fulfill faithfully and sincerely the duties and obligations required of a member of the Parish Council.**

**So help me God.”**

# 2024 Financial Overview and highlights

## All Funds — Total Income and Expenses

Fund	Income	Expenses	Profit/Loss
Operating	\$ 1,333,687.39	\$ 1,326,200.82	\$ 7,486.57
Building	\$ 696,617.06	\$ 79,291.86	\$ 617,325.20
Dedicated	\$ 401,043.83	\$ 341,178.89	\$ 59,864.94
Iconography	\$ 14,334.25	\$ 5,119.74	\$ 9,214.51
St. Nicholas Benevolence Fund	\$ 13,442.56	\$ 27,870.97	\$ (14,428.41)
Narrow Path Bookstore	\$ 27,032.39	\$ 23,165.20	\$ 3,867.19
Greek School	\$ 30,152.36	\$ 24,448.30	\$ 5,704.06
Church Mouse K-n-k Store	\$ 19,217.53	\$ 41,248.04	\$ (22,030.51)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,535,527.37</b>	<b>\$1,868,523.82</b>	<b>\$667,003.55</b>

### General Operating Fund

#### Total Offerings exceeded \$1,333,000

**Income:** We surpassed by 4% our income goal of \$1,282,000 established through our 2024 financial plan; and exceeded 2023 by about \$96K and 8%.

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.

**Stewardship:** Stewardship makes up 79% of our total operating income. We had 567 pledges totaling over \$952K. We exceeded our pledges and received over \$1,048,000. This is 15% over 2023 offerings. Most of our stewards completed or exceeded their pledges. We almost reached our \$1,050,000 budget goal.

**Expenses:** Our total actual expenses of \$1,325,000+ exceeded our budgeted financial plan by 3.9%. We had a net income of \$8K. We drew from our unrestricted Discretionary Savings Fund twice in the year and repaid all as of 12/31/24.

**Inter-fund Transfer:** We did recognize one receivable as income for the Earning Retention Credit approved by the IRS in the amount of \$27,654.81. The check was issued by the IRS in fall of 2024 and lost in the mail. The request to replace the check is in process. Per the bylaws, a short term Inter-fund transfer was made from the Building Fund to the Operating Account. This will be repaid when the replacement is received. There are no other outstanding transfers.

### St. Nektarios Philoptochos

Not included in this financial packet are the funds managed by the Philoptochos Chapter Board. It is, however, the recipient of our member and donor's generosity. The chapter distributed over \$59K in 2024.

### Building Fund

Almost \$700K cash was received which, includes \$238K in interest. We are earning over 4% interest.

Net cash flow brought our cash balance to \$5.7 million.

In 2024 we had \$79K in expenses and an increase in the Construction in Progress Asset by \$250K from disbursements for soft construction costs and the first phase improvements to the Spiritual Life Center.

We have 188 pledges in the **Building For Generations** campaign of \$5.9 million plus 80 unpledged donations of \$90K. There is \$1.5 million in outstanding balances. The campaign is ongoing to build our new Ministry Center and renovate the Spiritual Life Center.

### Other Donor Restricted or Church Designated Funds

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

- ◆ **Dedicated Fund** — \$401K received — 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, Crisis Assistance and more (see detail listing more than 35 Designated funds)
- ◆ **St. Nicholas Benevolence Fund** — \$13K received with expenses covered by prior year surpluses
- ◆ **Iconography, Greek Language, Bookstore, Church Mouse Store** track other specialized ministry activity. Note that the Church Mouse Store distributed donations in 2024 from surpluses earned in 2023 and 2024.

Full packets are available at church for review and will be presented at the next Parish Assembly

# Honoring Our Veterans

Sunday, November 10th, (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. May God bless all of you for your service.

Special thanks go to Peter Keretsis, leader of the Military Ministry, and to Ron Drobonick for the work they put into setting up the display each year; to the hospitality team; to Linda Borowski, Welcome Team leader; and to Madalina Lowen, Philoptochos President, for presenting 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. ❖



# Archons Pilgrimage of Discovery Presentation



The community had the great opportunity to hear from Eliana Davis about her experience as one of the 2024 Pilgrimage of Discovery recipients during Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup> Fellowship Coffee Hour. This

annual program is a 7-day, all-expense paid, religious and cultural annual summer journey to Constantinople, awarded by the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Eliana was among Orthodox Christian young adults from across America. They connected with their ancestral religious roots. Participants deepened their Orthodox faith through a curated, guided experience, exploring holy sites, and much more. Eliana is pictured above with His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. She offered an engaging presentation on how this immersive journey created a lasting impact on her identity, faith, family, and community. Several of our local Archons who were in attendance were able to comment on the impact this program has on the Patriarchate and its current conditions in Constantinople. You may take a few **minutes and scan the QR code to watch highlights of Eliana's pilgrimage.** ❖



# St. Nektarios 5K Walk/run

## TAKING STEPS OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

On November 18th, our parishioners, neighbors and friends set out for an early morning walk/run, for 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 for the Walk/Run. Individual and organization/business sponsors provided financial gifts. In kind sponsors donated supplies and refreshments well appreciated by the participants as they recovered from the 5K.

The funds raised help homeless women and children by providing access to free healthcare, nurturing pre- and post-maternity environment, and resources for vocational training with a goal of self-sufficiency. Recipients have received medication, braces, medically necessitated shoes, clothing, furniture, transportation, food, among other items. On January 12th, the 5K committee presented Shelter Health Services and St. Hermione Home each with \$15,000. This was supplemented by the donations from the online platform which also distributed \$4,158.45. for St. Hermione Home and \$1,893.23 for Shelter Health Services.

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.** ❖



## 5K

Our Taking Steps 5K team was at the Charlotte Around the Crown 10K Expo to promote our charity walk/run. We had over 500 to sign up on that day. ❖



## Thank You from Fr. Paul



St. Hermione Home and Shelter Health Services take this opportunity to express their deep gratitude to the precious community of **St Nektarios... whose 5k Race Team... led by the indefatigable Kholoud and her faithful co-workers ...once again presented St Hermione Home and Shelter Health Services with generous checks.. to directly and immediately help the homeless and homeless sick...living in our midst.** (Pictured here is the January 12th check presentation.)

Fr. Paul Tshakis

# Philoptochos Christmas Brunch



25TH ANNIVERSARY  
BRUNCH RAISES \$25K  
TO BENEFIT  
CHARLOTTE RESCUE MISSION

St. Nektarios Philoptochos, held its 25th annual Christmas brunch "Angel of Hope" event to raise funds and awareness of this year's chosen charity, The Charlotte Rescue Mission.

Our event was filled with joy and Christmas cheer as members, friends and special guests of Philoptochos gathered for brunch at Providence Country Club on December 7th. As everyone checked in, they got to inspect the "Grand Tree" which was the grand prize of the raffle. Ten \$100 bills tied in Christmas bows adorned a nine inch table décor tree. The annual event showcases a silent auction, table centerpieces auction, fashion show, raffles, and guest speakers. With a fun twist, we had beautiful ladies and handsome men models for this year's fashion show. Fashions were provided by two local boutiques; Fab'rik and Urbane South.

Charlotte Rescue Mission's representative, Mr. Evan Bohnen and a program survivor gave witness to how supporting this organization truly changes the lives of people suffering from addictions. It was very powerful and you could hear a pin drop when the survivor captured everyone's attention describing her journey into and from addiction and homelessness. It is so meaningful during this time of year to know that everyone's generosity and contributions to CRM truly impact lives.

Longtime friends, members and families gathered to make this event meaningful and special. A special thanks to Fr. Andreas Houpos for his closing remarks at the event and yearly support of Philoptochos, as well as the outstanding Co-Chairs of the event, John and Madalina Lowen, the brunch committee, Mrs. Irene Politis (our Philoptochos Metropolis President), Philoptochos board and volunteers who made this occasion possible. We are excited to announce that \$25,000 was raised and distributed in January to Charlotte Rescue Mission. Thank you to everyone for your support.

Renee' Keretsis



Brunch Committee:

Mila Anderson, Helen Bakos, Katherine Cestrone, Missy Davis, Maria Diamantis, Dee Drobonick, Thalia Fergione, Michaelina Franks, Phyllis Gianakopoulos, Katya Homyakova, Kellie Karavokiros, Michelle Kash, Renee Keretsis, Kristy Kleto, Evelyn Klund, Sharon Koutroumpis, Deidre Lepkowski, Ana Levantis, John Lowen, Madalina Lowen, Christine Malatras, Christina Melissaris, Stephanie Scolinos, Nia Tefakis, and Bessie Vrettos



Grand Money Tree winner, Jim Keown

Thank you to our Models pictured in two photos above



# Month Long Celebration of the Nativity

## Christmas on the Plaza

We welcomed the month of December in anticipation of our Lord's Nativity on the eve of the feast of St. Nicholas with Vespers, Family Night, Missions Outreach, and our annual Tree Lighting.

During Vespers, we gathered to pray and sing hymns to God and in honor of St. Nicholas. Our little ones learned about this great saint's generosity and deep love for God and neighbor. The Fathers blessed our children's own offering of socks collected for the St. Hermione Home.

We then packed our hall with a burst of family fun starting with the Missions Dinner. We were moved by hearing from Tim Klund, Missy Davis and Kate Caltis about outreach opportunities around the world so that we may emulate the work of St. Nicholas. After dinner we retreated outside in anticipation of the countdown to light the plaza tree. The children's excitement filled the air with the arrival of our own St. Nicholas.

There were carols sung on the courtyard by Fr. Andreas, our choir and some family members while we sipped hot apple cider. The air was crisp and we returned to the warmth of the fellowship hall to sing more carols, have a little more food and to hang angel ornaments on the tree from the Zoe Ministry. All who attended had an enjoyable time and were inspired to set their sights on the "Reason for the Season."

## Feast day of St. Nicholas

During the Divine Liturgy on December 6<sup>th</sup>, we learned the true story of St. Nicholas. We also wished "many years!" to Nolan ("Nicholas") thanking him for his 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!

## Philoptochos Brunch

On December 7<sup>th</sup> Philoptochos held their 25<sup>th</sup> annual Brunch which benefitted Charlotte Rescue Mission and heard the moving testimony from a survivor of CRM's ministry and learned how they helped change her life.





# Month Long Celebration of the Nativity

## Adult Religious Education

On Thursdays, December 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, Gerry Clonaris of our Adult Religious Education Ministry offered an informative two-part presentation on the Nativity of our Lord. We learned many rare facts about the Nativity as he sorted through folklore of the season and the true account of the Nativity.

We continued the month with the daily Divine Liturgies that had begun on November 15 for the



Nativity Fast offering us the opportunity for a deeper liturgical life with prayer and blessings during this holy season.

## Living Icon of the Nativity By our Catechism students

On Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> our youth catechism students presented an interpretation of the story of our salvation, based on the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos, making a beautiful living icon of our Lord's Nativity.



## Christmas Services

On December 24<sup>th</sup>, the Divine Liturgy, the Vespers service for the feast, in which we heard the powerful prophetic and evangelical readings and hymns, set forth the meaning of this momentous event. We reconvened Wednesday morning for Matins, followed by the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, the Eucharistic celebration of the feast proper, which ended the Nativity Fast and inaugurated the Dodekaemeron, the twelve days of Christmas. ❖



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



Pictured above: Sam Herron, whose mother, Grace Monk, received the coin for the Music Ministry of which Sam is the leader

Our New Year's Day tradition at St. Nektarios includes the blessing and cutting of the **Vasilopita (St. Basil's Bread)** following Divine Liturgy. Members of our ministry groups came forward to receive for their ministry, eagerly looking for the coin and blessing. May God show special blessings to our Music Ministry represented by Grace Monk, who received the coin this year.

According to tradition, in the 4th century a band of pirates stole from the townspeople. St. Basil retrieved the items from the pirates. A dispute arose as to who owned which items. In order to resolve the dispute, St. Basil commissioned women to bake bread placing the items into the dough before baking. The legend says that as each person was given a portion of bread, his or her own items were received back in that portion. Thank you to Ritsa Neary who baked our Vasilopita following in this tradition.

Fr. Andreas distributed slices to the following representative of each ministry group:

- Costa Vrettos (Patriarch Bartholomew)
- Gerry Clonaris (Archbishop Elpidophoros )
- Evelyn Klund (Metropolitan Sevastianos)
- Gene Borowski (Parish Council)
- Sharon Koutroumpis (Staff)
- Nataliya Sussman (Administrative Support)
- Maryann Zitsos (Adult Religious Education)
- Andrew Asimos (Altar Support)
- Zack Hair (Bookstore)
- Julie Milich (Endowment)
- Christina Herron (Family Spaces)
- Mike Dixon (Fund Development)
- Gus Steel (Greek Language School)
- Sandy Capousis (Hospitality)
- Dennis Kokenes (HUMS)
- Ana Levantis (Life and Family)
- Jacob Leatherman (Liturgical)
- Tyler Hahn (Men's Group)**

- Maria Siragusa (Missions and Philanthropy)
- Grace Monk (Music Ministry)
- Presbytera Meredyth Houpos (Outdoor Ministry)
- Susan Reinhart (Outreach and Welcoming)
- Deidre Lepkowski (Philoptochos)
- Marko Milich (Facility Management)
- Jimmy Clonaris (Safety & Security)
- Emily Hahn (St. Hermione Home)
- Sara Levantis (St. Phoebe Ministry)
- Kathryn Mason (St. Panteleimon School)
- Ariadne Steel (St. Sophia School)
- Caroline Mellekas (Young Adult Ministry)
- Steve Panteliadis (Young at Heart)
- Micah Hahn (Youth Ministries)
- Ritsa Neary (Special Recognition by Fr. Andreas for baking the vasilopita)

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

# Baptisms on the Feast of Theophany

**Καλό μήνα!**  
**Blessings to all for this new year.**

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



# Greek Language School

Our Greek language learners participated in a very special representation of the Nativity of Christ by reciting poems, chanting the Apolytikion of Christ's Nativity, and singing children's songs **during a festive Christmas program held at our parish's Spiritual Life Center** on December 20, 2024. Congratulations to 44 of our 48 students who participated and gave an amazing performance! We are so proud of you!

Heartfelt thanks to our Proΰstamenos, Protopresbyter, Father Andreas Houpos, and Father Paul Tсахakis, our dedicated teachers namely, Presbytera Lea Tсахakis, Catherine Giles, Katerina Coker, and Sophia Shinas, and our youth Director, Caroline Mellekas, for supporting us before or during this event. Thank you to my dear friend, Helen Giles, for her invaluable advice and encouragement! We are grateful to Chris Mortis for assisting us with the audio technical equipment. A great big thank you to Mr. Dimitrios Andritsogiannis for purchasing 3 new microphones for us to use during student performances! We were deeply touched by anonymous donors who offered a generous donation toward the purchase of Christmas materials promoting language learning in our young learners.

We are grateful to the Chaudhary family, the Lewis family, the Mingo family, the Katsanos family and the Housiadas family who graciously volunteered to organize, sponsor, and prepare the delicious Lenten meal we enjoyed that night! We warmly thank Kim Tzefos, Maria Mortis, and Vickie Wixon as well as all the parents, grandparents, and staff members who offered the scrumptious desserts we enjoyed, helped with set-up / clean-up of the hall, prepared the meal in the kitchen, helped with stage decorations/props, took photos/videos, or assisted our learners to dress in costume inside the classrooms. A great big thank you to our Office Administrator, Evelyn Klund, and our Facilities Manager, Marko Milich, for overseeing the reconfiguration of the hall and cleaning up of the stage in preparation for this program. We would also like to thank Mary Dresser, Louisa Kleto, Vasi Digkas, and Maria Kleto for the delicious vasilopitas we cut in our classrooms on January 17<sup>th</sup> to welcome the New Year 2025! We wish everyone a Happy New Year filled with good health and joy! Wishing continued success to our Greek Language students in their studies in the New Year!

Anastasia Konidaris Holevas

Πιστοί στο πνεύμα των Χριστουγέννων, της αγάπης, της αλληλεγγύης και της εθελοντικής συνεισφοράς ιερείς, δάσκαλοι, γονείς κι ενορίτες συνέβαλαν ώστε η εκδήλωση αυτή να μας μείνει αξέχαστη! 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 ας φωτίζει τη ζωή μας αυτή τη Νέα Χρονιά!

**Pictured right:**

Our Greek Language Students Christmas program

**Pictured lower right (5 photos)**

Cutting the Vasilopita for the new year



# Scout Pack and Den 490 2024 Events



**From Common Market:** "We love to see Students Serve! Many thanks to our new friend and local Boy Scout Vasili Poulos who hosted a food drive in his neighborhood and collected 488 pounds of nonperishables AND \$188. Way to



Above: Scout Recognition Ceremony



Left and above: The Weeblos and Arrow of Lights were honored to have Dr. Tommy Kakouras discuss First Aid and what to do in certain emergencies.



**Above:** Bell Scout Camp

Above left: Cub Scouts hike while learning to calculate & map their distance and time. Thankful the weather held out for us to explore the Enchanted Forest (Purser-Hulsey Park and Trails)!



Above and left: Exciting day for Lambros and Xander at Boy Scout Day Camp completing their Aviation Merit Badge. They had no clue they would be actually flying the plane ("future pilots" in the making)



Above: Bobcat Awards and traditional Face Painting



**Eagle Scout project at Socrates Academy**

Above and left: Scouts Camp-out at North Carolina Transportation Museum and earning their Railroad Badge

# Introducing Family Spaces

We're making an effort to better support our families in worship. Thanks to the initiative and vision of some mothers of our community, secondary spaces in our house of worship have been transforming to better accommodate and serve our littlest ones and their families. Look for these spaces to continue to evolve and improve, with the addition of new accommodations in coming months.



**Dubbed "Family Spaces", they will allow children or families** to regroup when a temporary escape or break from the main worship space is needed.



These spaces and those who use them will be supported by our Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, who has been coordinating the efforts. Our working group had a meeting to review plans towards action.

Many thanks to our Family Spaces Ministry, Youth Director, and other staff who have helped with this project!



Please keep your eyes open for a wish list and drive for donations to help refresh, furnish, and supply these spaces. May the spaces be blessed! ❖

# Young Adult Ministry

Blessings for the New Year!

On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, we enjoyed catching up with some of our youngest young adults, who are home from college for winter break. We enjoyed fellowship and a meal together to start the new year.



We pray for their strength and protection as they continue to acquire the mind of Christ in the course of their studies. ❖



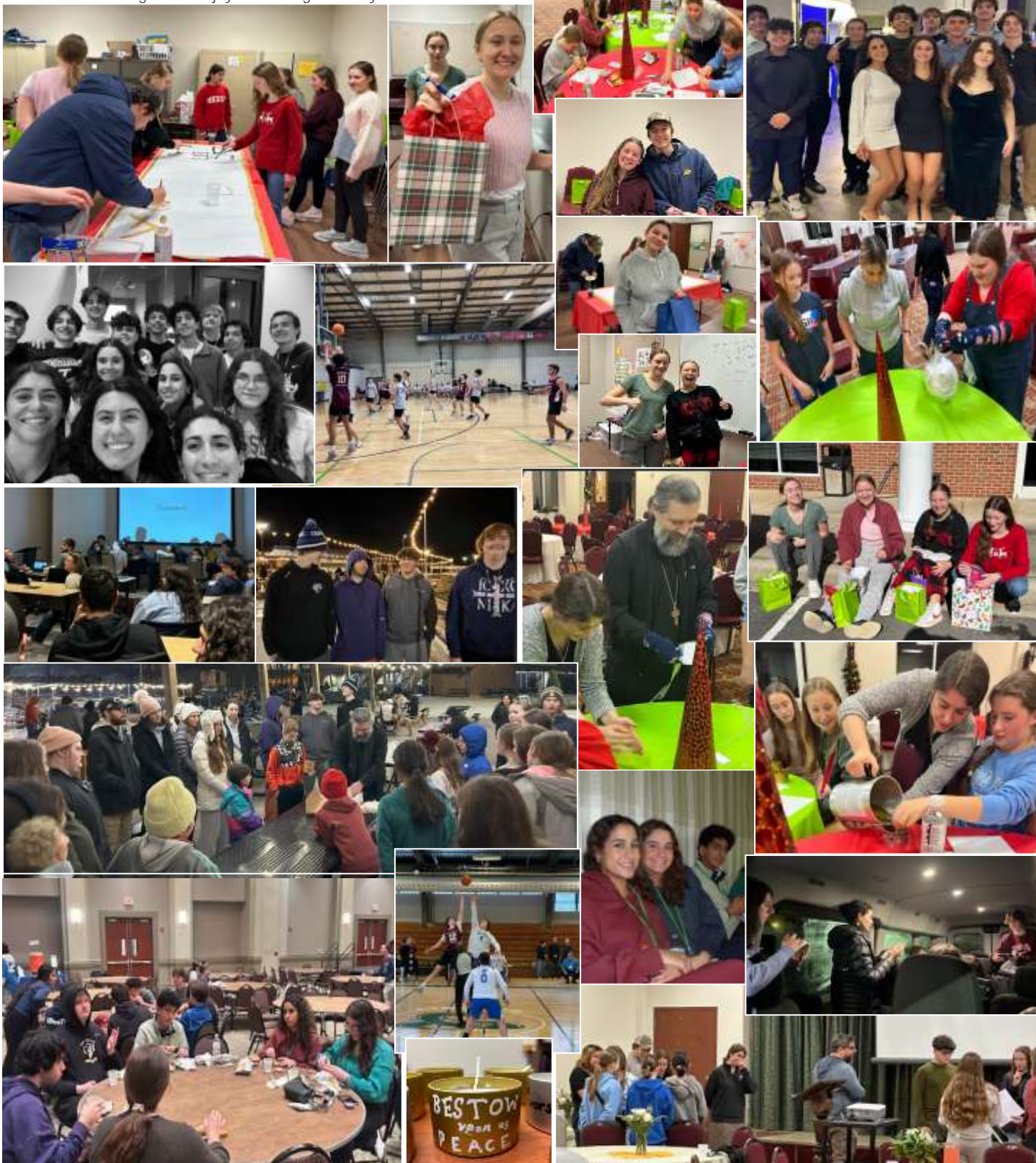
A Special Thank you goes out to Sharon and George Koutroumpis who created a delicious potato bar for our Young Adult Ministry members on December 11<sup>th</sup>.



# Youth Ministries

Youth Ministries both closed the old year and welcomed the new one in fellowship and fun! In December 2024, we enjoyed a GOYA Christmas gift exchange, making candles, singing at a nursing home, and finally, attending the Winter Youth Rally in Atlanta. In these last days of 2024, GOYA participated in basketball, Bible Bowl, and activities with youth all across the Metropolis of Atlanta. Come 2025, we shared Vasilopita to reign in the new year at the Whitewater Center for ice skating fun. In the weeks following we've enjoyed learning about Byzantine Music

from Sam Herron; making stromboli; serving at Samaritan's Feet with the Missions and Philanthropy; playing basketball in the local Queen City Classic; resuming family nights, and a home school co-op trip to the monastery. We look forward to sharing more memories with you this spring! ❖



# Youth Ministries



# Beyond St. Nektarios

Fr. Andreas joined area clergy for Vespers for the feast of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, at the eponymous parish in Mooresville and we offered the Divine Liturgy here in our Holy Unmercenaries side chapel, which prominently includes an icon of St. Luke.

His feast, October 18, resonates in the life of our parish. In 1998, it was the date of our first Divine Liturgy, held in the cafeteria of South Charlotte Middle School, presided over by Fr. Steve, our parish's founding priest.

In 2020, it was the first liturgy celebrated here by Fr. Andreas, who took the helm in the wake of Fr. Steve's retirement.

For more stories like this, and to reminisce or learn about our community, consider purchasing a copy of our history, published as part of last year's 25th Anniversary celebrations. It is available in our bookstore.

May St. Luke continue to intercede for us!



## 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](mailto:office@stnektarios.org)

Website: [www.stnektarios.org](http://www.stnektarios.org)

5108 Kuykendall Rd. Charlotte, NC 28270

## Clergy

Father Andreas Houpos, Proistamenos

Mobile: 980-333-9563

Email: [fr.andreas@stnektarios.org](mailto:fr.andreas@stnektarios.org)

Father Steve Dalber, Pastor Emeritus

Mobile: 704-451-6524

Email: [frdalber@stnektarios.org](mailto:frdalber@stnektarios.org)

Father Paul Tsahakis, Presbyter

Mobile: (704) 608-1112

Email: [fritsahakis@stnektarios.org](mailto:fritsahakis@stnektarios.org)

## Parish Staff

Parish Administrator - Evelyn Klund  
Administration Staff

Silva Awaimrin, Kim Braswell,

Sofia Nicolopoulos, Sharon Koutroumpis

Director of Youth and Young Adults -

Caroline Mellekas

Facility Manager - Marko Milich

Sexton - Jim Keown

Protopsaltis - Sam Herron

## 2025 Parish Council

President: Chris Mortis

Vice President: Andrew McCullough

Treasurer: Elie Azar

Assist. Treasurer: David Hanegraaff

Secretary: Gene Borowski

Assist. Secretary: Manal Choueiri

Members: George Bacogeorge, Zack Hair,

Kathryn Mason, Peter Reinhart,

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](mailto: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

## UPCOMING DEADLINE

Newsletter & Bulletin Due Dates:

Information Due: March 21, 2025

Published: April 2025