



## Issue 5 Fall 2023

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# THE NEWS FROM ST. NEKTARIOS

## A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH ST. NEKTARIOS

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year.

I wanted to take the opportunity on behalf of Fr. Nektarios, Fr. Steve, myself, our staff, parish council members, and all of our volunteers to wish you and your family a Blessed Nativity.

May God be with you. May He bless you. May He protect you. May He encourage you and may He inspire you with love for Him and love for your neighbor.

I also wish to share this photo of his beautifully decorated icon, accompanied by the following story.

An acquaintance, who happens to be the wife of a priest, volunteered this story of a personal encounter with St. Nektarios to share with our community. It has been edited for anonymity and readability.  
+Fr. Andreas

“Back in 2013 I left my career as an MD to come serve with Father, and we had our kids. I worked nonstop on my exams to get a residency spot here. No chance! I was devastated to the point of despair.

I knocked on all doors, talked to so many people I was almost begging for them just to connect me. It was like my degree from Germany meant nothing, even though medicine there is way more advanced and getting the degree was not easy!

A few years ago, we got moved and I lost all hope. It was truly a dark time, because not only did I not match, but moving here meant

zero chances for career development.

Father came home for lunch one afternoon the first week in November, and I asked him if we had liturgy for St. Nektarios? I was already frustrated because the parish had his icon behind a door! I felt offended—why would a great saint not take a big place in a nice church? (At that point I was taking antidepressants.)

Father said, “No, they are having liturgy for St. Minas, they don't really know St. Nektarios”. I said, “What? They know Minas but not Nektarios??”. And we even



argued a bit because he didn't want to change anything in his first year at the parish! So he said, “Fine, but no one will show up and you'd have to chant!”. That night, in my sleep, I saw nuns dig up a body and put it on a table, but they had such reverence for the man! I knew it was St. Nektarios, because of the nuns and I knew about the monastery in Aegina.

His body was soft and as if he had just died. He had a big bushy

beard and soft, long fingers. I stood there amazed! He then tapped me on the shoulder and told me to look around, I saw him as if alive, in his cassock conversing with people! I woke up feeling genuinely at peace, and didn't know why until I remembered I was with St. Nektarios, but I couldn't recall details.

I sat down and said a prayer asking God that, if this was something I should remember, to bring it to me! I don't usually pay attention to dreams but this one came to me right away. I then went to search for his life details, and found the event of the translation of his relics! And it was described exactly as I saw it.

I understood he wanted to help me. I applied for a whole new line of work using my medical degree, but for clinical trials and pharma. My first application was rejected. A friend who worked for that company said I should resend it—“It will probably do nothing, but you never know”.

Later that day he texted me: “Seems like someone is at work for you! This never happens but they will call you in a bit.”

I got the job, but wanted to move on after a year, and so I asked St. Nektarios for his help. I applied for my current job on a Friday; Monday morning they called me! I had no idea what to say! When I met my new colleagues, they asked, “So, how many places did you apply? How long did it take you?”. I said, “48 hours, and one place!”. They said, “Do you have any idea how hard it is to get this job?”. I said, “I'm sure!” And guess when I got the job? November 9th!

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

We had a great blessing of having many visiting priest with us this fall season.



Fr. Constantinos and his family visited from Nafplio, Greece, hosted by Fr. Nektarios and Presbytera Ellia.

Fr. Gregory Tsikerdanos of Augusta, GA, a seminary schoolmate of Frs. Andreas and Nektarios visited and served with us.



Fr. Anastasios Yaounde joined us for our 5K and other events. Fr. Anastasios serves as the chancellor of his Metropolis in Cameroon, and is a missionary priestmonk. We welcomed him and were blessed to hear and learn from him about our brothers and sisters in Christ in Cameroon.

We were also blessed to be joined by Fr. Anastasios Athanasiou and his family of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Ambridge PA.



Joining us at our 25th Anniversary Gala, His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa and Fr. Steven and Presbytera Nicole Klund pictured with Fr. Andreas, Fr. Steve Dalber, Fr. Nektarios, Fr. Jonathan Resmini, Presb. Maria, Presb. Meredyth, and Presb. Ellia

# 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 Marihiam Helen 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

### MARRIAGES

To Megan Wrappe and Steve Kalpos on their marriage

### BIRTHS & 40TH DAY BLESSINGS

To Trish & Lee Millsaps on the birth & 40th day blessing of Levi & Ellie's siter, Evangeline Ariana  
To Eleni & Justin Gonnelli on the birth and 40th day blessing of JD & William's brother, Travis  
To Merrigrace Clewell-Helms & Silas Helms on the birth, 40th day blessing & baptism of Salem & Lively's brother, Augustine Innocent and to his godparent, Peter Keretsis  
To Alex & Ryan Hurst on the birth and 40th day blessing of their daughter, Eloise Jane  
To Christina & Corey Mullis on the birth & 40th day blessing of Corey Jr. & Ellie's brother, Theodore  
To Annie & Patrick Boruta on the birth & 40day blessing of their daughter, Sophia Annmarie  
To Bess & Brooks Whitmore on the birth & 40th day blessing of their daughter, Sophie  
To Christina & Peter Velissarios on the birth, 40th day blessing and baptism of their daughter, Theodora  
To Kristen & George Karanikas on the baptism of Mia's sister, Nora Jane and to her godparent, Ioannis Tsoulos  
To Katerina & Steven Estrada on the baptism of their son, Gabriel and to his godparent, Stathes Kotsokalis  
To Kaitlyn and Nick Davros on the 40th day blessing of Kinsley's sister, Riley

### CHRISMATIONS & BAPTISMS

To Trish and Lee Millsaps on their chrismations and to their sponsors, Betsy & Matt Joyner  
To Trish and Lee Millsap on the baptism of their children, Levi, Ellie and Evangeline and to their sponsors, Will & Marissa Davidson, Betsy & Matt Joyner and Presbytera Meredyth  
To Natalia Pasa Suvac & Gheorghe Suvac on the baptism of their daughter, Sabina and to the godparents, Nadejda and Oleg Dontu  
To Elena Ganciuc and Victor Saracuta on the baptism of their son, William and to the godparents, Veronica & Vlad Casian  
To Dina & Bill Stamoulis on the baptism of Vasiliki's sister, Chrysa and to the godparents, Dimetra and Kostandinos Hilas  
To Mariam Begheluri & Lasha Khukhua on the baptism of their son, Luca and to the godparents, Nino Jaspardize-Vashakidze and Aska Vashakidze

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

To the Metaxas family for the repose of Stavroula Metaxas  
To the Michaels family for the repose of Elaine Michaels  
To the Nicolopoulos family for the repose of Sofia's father, George  
To the Gavrillis family for the repose of George Gavrillis  
To the Crytser family for the repose of Nina's mother, Ludmila in Russia  
To the Anderson, Kastanas and Collins families for the repose of Renee, Gary, George and John Anderson's mother, Aphrodite "Aphroula" Kastanas Anderson  
To the Karagiannis family for the repose of Dina's husband and John's father, Kristoforos "Chris" Karagiannis  
To the Karres family for the repose of Andrew's mother, Demetra  
To the Wilson family for the repose of Tony's stepdad, Stephen Burns  
To the Zanakis family for the repose of Helen's husband, Steve  
To the Politis for the repose of Irene and Louie's son, Pete  
To the Longshore and Dalber families for the repose of Mary Longshore  
To the family of Sotirios "Sam" Tsilimos for his repose  
To the Nakos family for the repose of Helen's husband, Lambros Cristos Nakos  
To the Pourlos family for the repose of Nona's husband, Demetrios

### IN APPRECIATION

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

# ECCLESIASTICAL NEW YEAR BEGINS

The ecclesiastical year brings blessings, challenges and new beginnings. We offer prayer for the many starting new journeys. Pictured right are our college students and below are our grade school students returning to school and our Panteleimon Homeschool students being blessed with prayer for the new year as well as our Philoptochos board members. May the Lord bless all of their endeavors. ❖



Pictured above: College Prayer Service



Above and left:

Our catechism students being blessed before the return to school and catechism



Blessing Caleb Clewell before he returns to Greece for his academic studies at Aristotle University



Above: Affirmation of Our Ladies Philoptochos board members at the beginning of the new year



Left: Fr. Andreas blessing our homeschoolers, playground & classes  
Above: Fr. Nektarios blessing our catechism students on the 1st day



Fr. Andreas blessing the sanctuary and parishioners for the ecclesiastical new year

# ST. PANTELEIMON HOMESCHOOL

Introducing St. Panteleimon Homeschool Academy: our newest ministry supporting our families who choose home education for their children by providing an enriching, Orthodox-centered educational community. Our current offerings include science, history, art, Orthodox Studies, and Byzantine chant, and are curated for Kindergarten through middle school age children. September saw most schools back in session for the new academic year. This is also true of those who choose to home school. A number of years ago, parishioners who homeschool established a cooperative that meets once a week. Resources are pooled to teach the children about the Orthodox Faith, and include lessons from our clergy, youth director, and chanters. This year the co-op took on St. Panteleimon as its patron, and on Thursday, September 7th the students, parents/teachers, and classrooms (and playground!) were blessed for the new year. If you are interested in joining the co-op, please contact our office. Enrolment will reopen in January.

Below is a QR code linking to our 2023-2024 Registration Form. We started classes in early September; spaces are available, but limited. If interested, please contact Kathryn Baker ([pisc304@gmail.com](mailto:pisc304@gmail.com)) or Jeremiah Courter ([jeremiahcourter@gmail.com](mailto:jeremiahcourter@gmail.com))



**Above and right:**  
Learning about our faith  
**Below photos from:**  
A Day at the Lake and  
Botanical Art with  
Antonina Bonjanin



## EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

Parishioners of all ages spent loving hours preparing the flower frame for the icon of the Exaltation of the Cross in time for the festal Vespers service in the late afternoon. Today, we gathered for Matins, concluding with the procession and exaltation of the Cross, and followed by the Divine Liturgy. We extend special greetings to Fr. Steve (Stavros, "Cross") Dalber, retired proistamenos of our parish, on the occasion of his patronal feast. "We venerate your Cross, Master, and we glorify your holy resurrection!" ❖



## DISINTERMENT OF THE HOLY RELICS OF ST. NEKTARIOS

Between Vespers, Matins and Divine Liturgy, we honored our patron, St. Nektarios, on the occasion of the anniversary of the exhumation of his holy relics, of which we are so blessed to steward a portion. May Christ's grace in him ever be a source of healing of soul and body for those who come forward in faith. Glory to God! ❖



# THE BEAUTY OF HIS HOUSE

Our temple has a room with a view. It's thought of by most as a "cry room" for when our little ones could use a place to get some energy out and still be visually connected with the congregation. This is indeed an intended use and the most prevalent one on Sundays. If you have not used this room, please join other families when your child needs consolation and for the benefit of others who are worshipping in the sanctuary. The room has many times been a place for brides to prepare for weddings, and for mourning families to gather in the course of funerary rites.

The room has been overhauled through the gift of generous and conscientious stewards. If this room has been helpful or useful to you, or if you wish to support our families who have need of it, please consider a donation to the church towards helping offset the cost of furnishing the room with icons, furniture, rugs, and age-appropriate worship and learning materials ❖



THE NEW FAMILY ROOM — BEFORE AND AFTER



After one of our services, an impromptu cleaning crew assembled to prepare the church for the morning's services. "Lord, sanctify those who love the beauty of Your house. Glorify them in return by Your divine power, and forsake us not who have set our hope in You!" ❖

## PICTURED RIGHT :

Mike Scolinos spent time organizing our Lending Library in the Spiritual Life Center Breakroom downstairs. Pictured right you will see the BEFORE and AFTER photos. Take a minute to visit and browse our library the next time your are in the church office.



LENDING LIBRARY

## ST. NEKTARIOS GARDEN

One of the things our clergy are invited frequently to perform for the faithful is a house or business blessing. Having huge, healthy basil plants in our parish garden is a lovely way to offer these blessings to our faithful who might not have any growing at home. Would you want to help "grow" our garden ministry? Contact [office@stnektarios.org](mailto:office@stnektarios.org) to be added to our interest list for updates in the near future! ❖

### Pictured right:

Ben Dresser weed-eating the garden and Chris Mortis tending our bee hives



## GIVING OF YOUR TIME & TALENT

We have been blessed over the past few years by our parishioners helping to clean up our property. Thank you to Philoptochos for organizing many of these events. Thank you to those who wanted to remain anonymous that hired a company to take care of our grounds when Tim was out. Thank you to Tom Clewell for changing lights. It is not a job easily done without risks.

Many may not know but Stavroula and John Couchell completely renovated our breakroom kitchen in the Spiritual Life Center a couple of years back. Thank you to an anonymous donor who paid to have our carpet cleaned.

There are many needs and we are thankful to those who are filling them. If you would like to give of your Time and Talent, please contact Kim Braswell in the office and let her know if you have a gift you would like to share with our community. ❖



**Pictured left:** Tom Clewell changing out the lights in the sanctuary and outside.

**Above:** The renovated breakroom kitchen in the SLC.

**Right:** Stavroula and John Couchell



## FEAST DAY OF ST. PHANOURIOS



On the 27th of August, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of St. Phanourios.

Tradition says that when his original icon was found by Moslems rebuilding a fortress on the island of Rhodes, they uncovered a church. All of the icons were badly damaged but his appeared to have been painted that day. It depicted 12 scenes from his life revealing he was a martyr. The local bishop, Bishop Nilus, asked for permission to rebuild the church but was denied. Bishop Nilus went to Constantinople and there he obtained a decree allowing him to rebuild the church.

The saint's name sounds similar to the Greek verb "phanerono," which means "to reveal" or "to disclose." For this



reason, people ask for the intercessions of Saint Phanourios to help them find lost objects.

When the object is recovered, they bake a sweet bread, called "phanouropita" and share it with the poor after being blessed by a priest offering prayers for the salvation of saint's mother and sister. ❖

# YOUNG AT HEART

## September

We recognized our Young At Heart ministry board and honoured outgoing leaders Mike and Ritsa Neary on Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>. Mike and Ritsa have been dedicated leaders for many years and involved in various ministries of the church. Thank you to both of them for their many years of service to Christ and to His church. We also welcomed the new ministry chairs, Presbytera Sandy Stanar and Steve Panteliodis, who are very dedicated to this ministry and its blessed work. We look forward to many years of their leadership. May God bless them all abundantly!

At our September meeting we enjoyed a delicious meal together, celebrated birthdays and honored Fr. Steve with a special gift. ❖



Members with August and September birthdays pictured with Fr. Andreas



## October Gathering



Our Young At Heart joined by young volunteers from the Women's Bible Study packed our parish hall for a fellowship for our 25th Anniversary dinner. Fr. Steve Dalber spoke about the many miracles and stories of the love of God and neighbor, exemplified in our community in its first quarter-century. Many others

shared their own testimonies as well. At the end, we gathered for a 25th anniversary photo of the Young at Heart! The event was the first of many events that Young at Heart hopes will be the beginning of which other church ministries participate with us. ❖



Our members with October birthdays and Evelyn Klund and Fr. Steve Dalber sharing miracles and stories of our 25 years at St. Nektarios



# ST. NEKTARIOS PHILOPTOCHOS QUARTERLY UPDATE

Philoptochos kicked off early summer with President Madalina Lowen, 1st Vice President Katherine Cestrone and board member Renee Keretses attending and representing our chapter as delegates at the Metropolis of Atlanta Clergy Laity Conference in Tarpon Springs, FL. The conference was June 22nd – 25th. Thursday, June 22nd was a general session of Philoptochos chapters to hear from Irene Politis, Metropolis Philoptochos President, along with other Metropolis board members on budget and treasury reports and new structures for chapters to send in sponsorships. In addition guest speakers from HCHC, St. Photios Shrine, Prison Ministry, etc. gave insight as to how our Metropolis and local chapters collectively support all of these outstanding Orthodox ministries. There was great discussion during the general sessions on how we operate as a group.

On Friday, the general session heard more reports along with a guest speaker Mr. John Long, from Hope Villages of America – The Haven Domestic Violence Center. Mr. Long spoke about how domestic violence victims face many hardships and how difficult it is for women (abused men as well) to get out of such environments. Their services provided housing, education, tools, and job options etc. to help victims. Their services are completely voluntary and hidden from the abusers. Victims who stick with the programs will also be resourced for up to 2-3 more years outside of the group home. Mr. Long said on average it takes domestic violence victims up to 10-12 times to get out of this horrible situation.

Following the general session Philoptochos held a luncheon for all clergy/laity attendees to hear from Pamela Woody, Founder and Executive Director of Advocates Against Human Trafficking as well as Telisia Espinosa, a Regional Advocate/Mentor of More Too Life, and Open Doors. Pamela is a survivor of childhood sexual assault, adult sexual and psychological abuse and has a heart for human trafficking victims. She helps provide direct series to survivors and assists with branding beautifications. Telisia is an adult survivor of human trafficking and was born and raised in an abusive home in Miami, FL. She was sold on street corners across the country and today has been freed from this trauma and helps other commercially sexually exploited trafficked victims obtain their freedom from such horrific abuse. It was an

eye-opening and awe-inspiring time to hear from these women who have suffered such abuse but through much help, support and faith in Christ have been delivered from such evil.

Saturday, the Philoptochos was able to collectively have a packing event for the hungry. The national organization Hunger Fight had everything set up and ready to go for this amazing event. Thousands of meals were packed and distributed to children in the fight to end hunger. It was an amazing session and lots of fun to do good for those in need. Saturday's afternoon session was to



finalize any chapter and metropolis reports and to strategize in break out sessions looking into new ways to increase membership, helps those with financial needs and work closely with our communities.

July 2023: Our Operation Classroom Supply project began at the beginning of July, and we collected school supply items for Albemarle Road Elementary, a Title 1,

K-5th grades CMS school and Thomasboro Academy, a Title 1, K-8th grades CMS school. Baskets were set up in the fellowship hall to gather all kinds of school supplies for the teachers and students at each school during the entire month of July. A huge amount of supplies were collected and delivered to the schools at the beginning of August to be ready for the 2023-2024 academic year. This is an on-going yearly project done throughout each

Philoptochos chapter in the USA. It's a wonderful way to help children and teachers in underserved populations, be ready with new school supplies each new academic year. Also in July, the Philoptochos board had a planning meeting to discuss new strategies and goals for our chapter. During the July 8th session a newly written and adopted vision for our Philoptochos emerged.

Our vision statement is:

"St. Nektarios Philoptochos will provide community outreach and philanthropy in collaboration with all church ministries through efficient, effective, and international programs and activities."

We are very proud of enhancing our chapter by coming up with a new vision statement to carry us into the future through all of our members' hard work and dedication to those in need. In addition to our new vision statement, throughout the summer board meetings the new calendar of events was created and is able to be seen on the Philoptochos website.

August 2023: Planning and reservations began for the upcoming September 21st general gathering at a local restaurant.



This year it was held at the legendary Charlotte restaurant, The Open Kitchen. A caravan of cars and/or the church bus met in the church parking lot, departing by 6 pm to begin a fun evening of fellowship. In addition to this ecclesiastical calendar kick-off event for Philoptochos, plans for the Christmas brunch fundraiser has begun. It will be held at Providence Country Club on December 2nd beginning at 11 am. This event will raise monies for the Parkinson Association of the Carolinas, which assists individuals who suffer from this disease as well as support for family members. We are very excited about this upcoming event.

Renee Keretses



Above: Affirmation of our 2023-24 board

# ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

## BIBLE STUDY



## BECOMING ORTHODOX

**Pictured left:**

Fr. Nektarios led the most recent installment of our 'Becoming Orthodox' series, geared towards those inquiring about or actively in the process of joining the Orthodox Church. Longtime Orthodox Christians are just as welcome. ❖

## PRESENTATION ON ST. NEKTARIOS



Caroline Mellekas led our 'Becoming Orthodox' class, taking participants through a meditation on our origin, redemption, and life in Christ. This included being introduced to the lives and personalities of the people we call "saints"— God's holy ones — something each and everyone one of us is called to be.



# MISSIONS & PHILANTHROPY MINISTRY

## Missions Dinner

On Thursday, October 26th we gathered in the SLC for a Missions Dinner hosted by Tim Klund. Our special guest by way of Zoom was Fr. Nicholas Andruchow, Director of Project Mexico. Fr. Nicholas told us his story of their decision to go into the mission field and how he asked the Theotokos for intercessions and for specific things to happen, one of which occurred on her feast day. Fr. Nicholas was joyful and happy as he told of their journey. Thank you to Tim Klund, Missy Davis and Kate Caltis of the Missions U Philanthropy Ministry for organizing the event. Thank you to Evelyn Klund for preparing the Githeri and Peter Reinhart for preparing the focaccia with help from Safwat Wassef and Tim Klund. ❖



Githeri, a traditional Kenyan one-pot meal dish made out of corn and beans seasoned with curry powder and white pepper (made by Evelyn Klund)

For more information contact:

- **Tim Klund** - tklund@gmail.com
- **Missy Davis** - militsa@bellsouth.net
- **Kate Caltis** - kate.caltis@gmail.com

## International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)

We were pleased to host International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) on October 7<sup>th</sup> to raise awareness and funds, an evening embellished by homemade international dishes. Visit [iocc.org](http://iocc.org) to learn more about this important charity.



## Orthodox Prison Ministry



Peter Keretsis and Deacon Harry Lainis educating the community about our Prison Ministry Outreach

**Not pictured:** Jeff Clewell who has worked fervently with them for many years

## St. Nektarios Shredding Event and Blood Drive



A steady stream of cars brought donors to give life-saving blood and their documents from the past having raising \$\$\$3,000.00+ for our 2nd event of the year. Thank you to Shred Industry for donating their truck. Tim Klund and Katie Caltis would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support in making our shredding event a success.

# CATECHUMEN INDUCTION / NEWCOMER BRUNCH

We were blessed on October 15<sup>th</sup> to have our Newcomer Event coincide with our Founder's Day Celebration and our Catechumen Induction Ceremony. What a blessing for our Newcomers to be able to fellowship with our founders and to be able to learn about our early years. Members of our Welcome Ministry greeted parishioners, visitors and newcomers at the Welcome Tables under the Portico. It was Name Tag Sunday and we asked everyone to wear a name tag to get better acquainted. We inducted over twenty new catechumens, and honored the living and reposed founds of our parish and welcome Newcomers. We give glory to God for what He has given to us—new life in Christ, and a loving community stemming from it.

After Divine Liturgy, we hosted a Community Brunch to give our Newcomers an opportunity to have a casual meet and greet with Fr. Andreas and Fr. Nektarios as well as our founders. This may have been our most attended Newcomer Brunch, even topping our June gathering. We enjoyed a beautiful day!

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



Induction of our Catechumens



Members of our Welcome Team



Lindsey & Elliott Hillmann

Maria & Michael Koulouris



# CROP WALK

After a beautiful Divine Liturgy, members of our parish, among them, the St. Phoebe girls' ministry, participated in the annual Crop Walk, which aims to assist those experiencing food insecurity. We thank them for being good and loving representatives of our greater parish community in this good cause! ❖



## ST. PHOEBE MINISTRY

The St. Phoebe ministry kicked off our ecclesiastical year with a retreat at Elatos Park. Thank you to Fr. Andreas and Fr. Jonathan for leading us. Thank you to the St. Phoebe girls' mothers who also joined us. We had an enriching experience of worship, education and fellowship together.



Recently, some of our St. Phoebe girls helped sort and prepare 40 units at Baby Bundles NC, for infants in need. May the offerings of both material goods and service be blessed and multiplied in the greater community. This was also one of 25 acts of service the St. Phoebe ministry has aspired to offer, in honor of our parish's 25th anniversary.



We also participated in this year's Crop Walk for Hunger. (See photo above) Thank you to all who joined us on this lovely day. ❖



# YOUTH MINISTRY

Pictured right are photos of the first day of youth catechism for the 2023-24 year! We pray for a fruitful year for our students, parents, teachers, and other support volunteers! Our students and teachers were placed in every available space in our building. It's a blessing to see our building swell with these young people, but we need to expand and renovate our facilities to properly minister to them. Your God-inspired stewardship and building pledges are what they rely on to have an adequate learning and social environment. Let's enter the next phase of our growth with a mind to provide them the best experience possible!

Also pictured are photos of our acolyte retreat, Scout Sunday and our Joy Hope Fall Festival. ❖



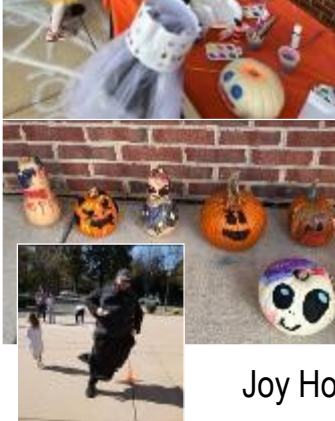
Catechism begins



Acolyte Retreat

After the Divine Liturgy on August 20th, we welcomed many of our acolytes to orientation for the upcoming new liturgical year.

We pray that God continue to bless these dedicated servants as they grow in their faith and serve Christ's Church.



Joy Hope Fall Festival (left) and Scout Sunday (above)

# GREEK LANGUAGE SCHOOL



We were so glad to meet so many of our young learners and their parents on the first day of our Greek Language Program on Friday, October 6, 2023, during our Agiasmos service at our St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church. We are so grateful to our Protopresbyter, Father Andreas Houpos who blessed us and sent us off to a great start with his enlightening remarks.

3rd, and 4th Fridays of each month, our students participate in authentic communicative activities for thirty minutes during which they are encouraged to communicate in Greek with peers and teachers. So far, our young learners have had a wonderful time learning Greek while participating in warm-up exercises and fun soccer drills outside. We thank Fr. Paul Tshakis and



Our dedicated teachers, Presbytera Lea Tshakis, Mrs. Vivian Pitsikoulis Karampourniotis, Mrs. Sophia Shinas, and Mrs. Anastasia Holevas are accompanying our 30 students on an imaginary trip to Greece in the warm embrace of our church. Their luggage is packed with the knowledge that they are eagerly transferring to the children, the respect toward each child and toward all the parents, the patience, understanding, and most of all the Christian love that encompasses them. Our learners develop their communicative skills namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the Greek language on topics related to their everyday life as well as our Orthodox Christian faith once a week online and on Friday afternoons in person through various engaging interdisciplinary lessons. On the 2nd,



Miss Caroline Mellekas for helping us with these fun activities on October 13th after which Fr. Paul offered a

study of the Greek language! Although our teachers do not cease to inspire and support our children on this



special closing prayer under a rainbow! Glory be to God! Children in all three learning levels have been enjoying speaking in Greek while playing cooperative board games! As part of their ongoing study on our beloved St. Nektarios' life, students wrote religious verses in Greek on boxes just as St. Nektarios had done on packages he was delivering in Constantinople as a 14-year-old boy.



learning journey, we do know that our students are blessed with loving

parents who support teachers' efforts and foster a home environment conducive to learning. Together we hope to engage children so that they develop critical thinking skills but also acquire new friendships along the way as they learn to cooperate, be joyful, and discover Hellenism and their Orthodox Christian Faith.

Anastasia K. Holevas

We appreciate very much the support that is given to us by all our front office staff members. We are grateful to Ms. Kim Clewell for being eager to help us design and print various materials for our studies. We also thank Mrs. Helen Giles for her invaluable guidance and our youth director Miss Caroline Mellekas for always being there to offer a helping hand.

We are so proud of the progress that all our learners are making in the



# FINANCIAL MATTERS

## THE ST. NEKTARIOS ENDOWMENT

### 2022 GRANTS AWARDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COCKINOS FUND AGREEMENT

12 Grants \$ 17,000

- ◆ 7 Academic Scholarships
- ◆ Scholarships to St. Stephen's Summer Camp
- ◆ Other Beneficiaries include: St. Photios Pilgrimage, Orthodox Christian Fellowship, Church Family Room, and Missions / Child of God, Kenya

### BACKGROUND

Charter created in 2017 for planned giving to benefit the Church

- ◆ Investing Principal for long-term growth
- ◆ Making interest income available for ministry work
- ◆ The Endowment is a 501(c)3 nonprofit.
- ◆ Under the Charter Umbrella, the Cockinos Fund was the first gift which has distribution restrictions and grant requirements. The Endowment has awarded \$104,515 since its inception.

### LEGACY CIRCLE

We have received additional gifts this year under the Charter Umbrella which do not have any donor restrictions. Legacy Circle welcomes these new donors who join Dee and Frank Cockinos who are charter members.

The Endowment is always accepting gifts which can honor loved ones and include:

*Cash, Securities, Life Insurance, Real Estate, or Qualified Retirement Plans, 401K IRA, Bequests made in donor's will or trust*

**Thank you to our Committee Members who are here to serve you**

*Emile Khuri, Sam Kleto, Julie Milich, Maria Mortis, Peter B. Pappas, Theodora Sexstone, Chair, and Dimitri Triantafyllides*

### The Cockinos Family Youth Ministry Development Fund 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

| Portfolio Balance                             |            |
|---|------------|
| ■ January 2022                                | \$ 543,043 |
| ■ December 2022                               | \$ 458,723 |
| ■ Interest and Dividend Earned                | \$ 17,896  |
| ■ Expenses                                    | \$ 18,749  |
| ■ 12 Grants                                   | \$ 17,000  |
| ■ Annual Administrative Fee to St. Nektarios  | \$ 1,200   |
| ■ Liability Insurance                         | \$ 549     |
| ■ Annual Management Fees                      | \$ 6,000   |
| ■ Managed by First Citizens Wealth Management |            |

## BUILDING FOR GENERATIONS



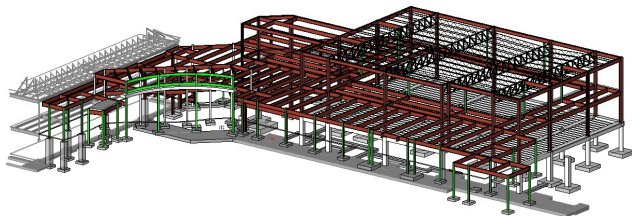
### Fundraising Update (as of 12/23)

- ◆ Received over **\$5.8 million** in pledges from **183 members**
- ◆ Over 240 pledges and gifts received toward goal of 450 pledged/participating units
- ◆ Almost **\$4.8 million** Cash on Hand
- ◆ Pledge balanced outstanding **\$2.2 million**

### REQUESTS FOR PRELIMINARY BIDS UNDERWAY.

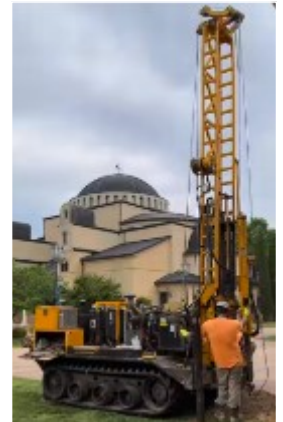
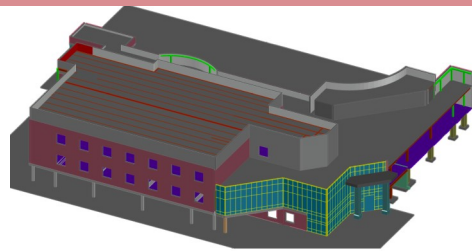
#### PLAZA LEVEL VIEW FROM CHURCH

- ◆ Connection to the Spiritual Life Center and hall on far left
- ◆ New corner glass entrance
- ◆ Bookstore beyond entrance
- ◆ Additional classrooms/meeting rooms on the right
- ◆ Gym/multipurpose room beyond classrooms

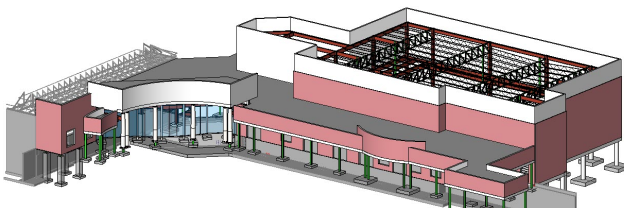


#### PARKING LOT LEVEL VIEW

- ◆ Connection to the Spiritual Life Center and existing lower level classrooms far right
- ◆ New lower level covered entrance
- ◆ Additional covered parking under gym
- ◆ Additional classrooms/meeting rooms on the left of entrance



**Pictured above**  
An important preparatory step of construction is soil sampling, to help engineers know what to expect during excavation and laying the foundation of our new Center.



### Thank You!

The year-long celebration of our parish's 25th Anniversary is coming to a close. We are grateful for 25 years of Building up the body of Christ and all the blessing along the way. We are equally grateful for you being a part of our blessed Church family. Gory to God!



# FINANCIAL MATTERS

## Operating Fund



*So You Know . . . As of November 30, 2023*

|                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Stewardship Received            | 779,322                   |
| Other Income Received           | 252,618                   |
| <b>Total Income</b>             | <b>1,032,555</b>          |
| <b>Total Expenses Paid</b>      | <b><u>\$1,053,216</u></b> |
| <b>Net Income</b>               | <b>(\$20,661)</b>         |
| Balance due to the Archdiocese  | (\$94,570)                |
| <b>\$100,542</b>                |                           |
| <b>Average Monthly Expenses</b> |                           |

*Thank you for providing  
the financial foundation for*

Worship services  
Pastoral care  
Religious education  
Youth programs  
Membership outreach Communications  
Event programing  
Hospitality  
Ministry programing  
Building facilities & property Archdiocese and  
Metropolis Stewardship

### Reminders for Year End Offerings & Taxable Deductions

We must receive your offerings or be postmarked by **December 31** to qualify as a 2023 tax deduction.

We can also receive offerings as asset transfers from **Donor Advised Funds, family trusts** and in the form of **stocks**. Please call the church office for more information.

**Required Minimum Distribution** — for those who have begun taking their RMD, you may make a charitable gift from your IRA accounts directly to our church free from federal income tax. These gifts count toward the RMD for the year of the gift. Talk to your tax advisor for more information.

### Did You Know . . .

- ◆ Our Financial Footprint includes more than the Operating Fund?
- ◆ We have multiple accounts to process funds restricted by our donors or designated by the church in order to not commingle money?
- ◆ Our building donations over \$4.8 million are in a money market savings account earning 4.50%?
- ◆ Our ministry funds are maintained and managed through a Dedicated Account ?
- ◆ We have a Discretionary Reserve Fund and a Reserve for Capital Improvements and Repairs?
- ◆ Our other accounts include St. Nicholas Altar Fund, Greek Language School, Narrow Path Bookstore, Church Mouse Resale Store, Iconography Fund, and more?
- ◆ We have established a Financial Advisory Ministry to assist the Parish Council on fiscal matters?

*To learn more, contact a member of the Parish Council or the Parish Administration Office.*

### As a Steward



◆ We move from the grace that God has bestowed upon us to gratitude and return His gifts to us with gifts to His Church and the future of Orthodox Christianity.

◆ We let our first Christmas gift be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through our sacrificial giving to our Church.

◆ May we be inspired by the Magi, to seek God, to bow down and worship him; and to offer our best to Him as a proper and good generous steward of what He has given us.

# YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Our young adult ministry enjoyed several gatherings this fall in fellowship and prayer. A paint night featuring dinner, games, and closing with the Small Compline began the season. As the weeks continued, they gathered for Axe Throwing; hiking; the Akathist of Thanksgiving & a Friendsgiving meal; a Bonfire chat about St. Porphyrios; and various other moments shared together at the 5k and Gala. In October, specifically, our young adults were invited to enjoy fellowship in the company of one another and local clergy. They heard three short presentations by Frs. Jonathan Resmini, Andreas Houpos and Christian Sisko, on faith applied practically, faith in the workplace, and the importance of relationships, respectively. We thank Holy Trinity Cathedral for organizing and sponsoring the event, and to all those from our community who took the time to attend. On Saturday, January 6th the Young Adults will kick off the new year with a party and planning ideas. ❖



# ST. NEKTARIOS OUTREACH

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed a group from Walnut Grove Christian School for a tour of our temple, introducing them to its sacred art and architecture, as well as the deep truths that produce them. The respectful group had many questions over the hour and a half spent with us, and was appreciative of what they learned. We look forward to two more groups visiting from the same school in the coming months. This is one way we are able to witness to our Orthodox faith while establishing cordial relationships with our neighbors. ❖



# ARCHANGEL MICHAEL HONOREES

In Atlanta on November 12<sup>th</sup>, our Metropolis hosted its annual Archangel Michael Feast, which honors parishioners recognized in each community for selfless, dedicated service. The event culminated in a hierarchal Divine Liturgy at Annunciation Cathedral.



Each year two recipients are chosen from each parish that represent dedication to our Lord and to our faith. Our 2023 honorees this year are Deidre Lepkowski and Joanne Azar, supported by family. Axios! ❖



# STAFF APPRECIATION LUNCHEON

In the wake of a very busy couple of months - which included two 25th Anniversary celebrations and our patronal feast, in addition to all the usual business associated with administrating our parish - and in anticipation of the beginning of the Nativity Fast, we held an informal staff appreciation brunch on November 14th, also attended by our clergy and Parish Council president. We are grateful for such dedicated and hard-working staff members.

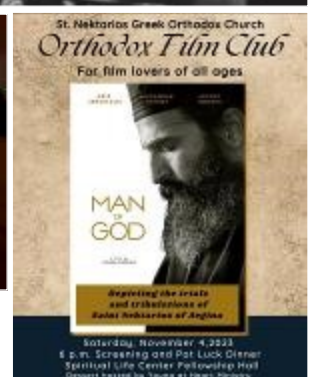


May God continue to bless and direct their work, to his glory.

+Fr. Andreas

# ORTHODOX FILM CLUB

Over the course of two evenings, our Orthodox Film Club viewed and discussed the epic film "Andrei Rublev", a dramatic rendering of the life and work of the medieval iconographer saint. "Man of God", the biographical film about our patron Saint, Nektarios of Pentapolis, on November 4 in anticipation of his feast day. This is becoming an annual event to coincide with our feast day. ❖



## Upcoming Screenings:

**Nicholas & Alexandra** Part 1: February 10 @6:00pm , Part 2: February 11 @6:00pm—\*Gerry Clonaris will be featured speaker for both parts. Snacks and drinks provided.

## Orthodox Film Club: Short Subjects - *Saint Paisios: From Farasa to Heaven*

March 2 - Episode 1 @ 6:30pm and March 23 - Final Episode @6:30pm

\*March 2nd will be an in-person viewing of the first episode followed by discussion. The plan will be for everyone to watch most of the mini-series on their own time, then we'll reconvene on March 23rd for a final viewing. Light snacks, but no dinner.

**Smyrna: My Beloved** - May 11 @6:30pm - \*Pizza and potluck. Go big.



# BEYOND ST. NEKTARIOS

## PRESBYTERAS' RETREAT

God bless our presbyteras! Presbyteras Meredyth, Presbytera Ellia, and Presbytera Lea from our parish are in Richmond, VA, attending a national retreat. We wish them, and all the presbyteras from around the country, a restful and edifying weekend in each other's company.



Did you know? "Presbytera" (πρεσβυτέρα) is the Greek word denoting the wife of a church elder (presbyteros, πρεσβύτερος). We more commonly tend to refer to presbyters as a "priest", which has come to connote their liturgical ministry, but in Greek there is a specific word for this: ἱερεύς (hierous, meaning "sacrificer"). The English word "priest" is a gradual contraction, by way of Latin, of the original Greek term presbyteros.. "Presbytera" is an honorific title for the wife of a man who has been ordained a presbyter, acknowledging both the changed status of their life among their fellow Christians, and the many sacrifices the wife will endure, and blessings that she will witness, alongside her husband. ❖



## FEAST DAY OF ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, at the gracious invitation of our sister parish, clergy and faithful from across the state gathered in Mooresville to celebrate Great Vespers for St. Luke the Evangelist at the parish that bears his name.

May our Lord, through the intercessions of the great physician, Luke, bless this community and all who visit it. Blessed feast to all! ❖



# BEYOND ST. NEKTARIOS - HOLY TRINITY

## Yiasou Festival

We congratulate the community of our mother parish, Holy Trinity Cathedral, for their festival, especially in their centennial year! A number of our parishioners work and participate in the festival each year, including several of our youth who perform in the dance troupes. ❖



## Holy Trinity Celebrates 100th Anniversary

One hundred years ago, on September 23, 1923, the Greek Orthodox Parish of Charlotte was officially organized. Today, the Cathedral and its community celebrates its centennial and growth. Beginning as a parish with only 30 families; today, the Church has a parish of over 1200 families. Congratulations and may the Lord bless you. ❖



Photo used with permission courtesy of: Helen McGinnis/Holy Trinity

# BEYOND ST. NEKTARIOS

## Clean-up at the Monastery

Some of our young adults ventured early in the morning to Panagia Prousiotissa Monastery in Troy to attend Divine Liturgy and to spend the rest of the day helping the sisterhood with a number of chores on the monastery grounds. Before trekking back to Charlotte, they were able to have some rest and refreshment, and some time to hear from Gerontissa Agne, by whose blessing the visit took place. We thank the sisters both for their hospitality and for the opportunity to serve them. Glory to God! ❖



## The Catechist Conference at the Diakonia Center

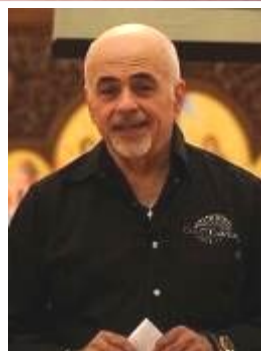


The Metropolis of Atlanta presented their inaugural Catechist Conference held September 1-3 at the Diakonia Center in Salem, SC. The conference was open to all, including catechism teachers, adult religious educators, parents and grandparents of catechism students, parish ministry team leaders and clergy.

Educators from across the metropolis gathered for the conference, initiated and led by our very own Gerry Clonaris, chairman of the Metropolis of Atlanta Religious Education Committee, Senator for Orthodoxy and Hellenism, was a featured speaker.

Participants also heard from other renowned speakers about the vocation of the Christian Educator, speaking boldly in the Lord, and working with developmental realities. May God enlighten our educators with the divine light of his pure knowledge, and bless their efforts!

The Very Reverend Fr. Anton Vrame, PhD, Professor of Religious Education, Hellenic College-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Dr. Eve Tibbs, PhD in Systematic Theology, Ministry Lead for Christian Ed, Dr. Ann Bezzerides, MDiv, PhD, Executive Director of the CrossRoad Institute and Jenny Hadad Mosher, MTh, PhD, Research and Education Design Director, Director of the Telos Project at CrossRoad Institute were among the other speakers featured. And underwritten by the St. Photios Foundation, Inc. in memory of Mary Roman. ❖



Gerry Clonaris

# Coming up in our next issue

Our Holiday Edition  
Farewell to Fr. Nektarios  
Opera Carolina  
Holidays at St. Nektarios  
Philoptochos Brunch  
5K  
A Blessed Nativity



## 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: [frtsahakis@stnektarios.org](mailto:frtsahakis@stnektarios.org)

### Parish Staff

**Parish Administrator** - Evelyn Klund

#### Administration Staff

Silva Awaimrin, Kim Braswell, Samara Clewell,

Nina Dzyak, and Sofia Nicolopoulos,

**Facility Manager** - Marko Milich

**Sexton** - Jim Keown

**Protopsaltis** - Sam Herron

### 2023 Parish Council

**President:** Despina Gallis

**Vice President:** Mike Burgan

**Treasurer:** Chris Mortis

**Assist. Treasurer:** Aka Vashakidze

**Secretary:** George Harris

**Assist. Secretary:** Manal Choueiri

**Members:** Elie Azar, Frank Bartis,

Gus Giannakopoulos, Joanne Kiser

### Philoptochos Board

**President:** Madalina Lowen

**1st Vice President:** Kathrine 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 information contact the church office.

### UPCOMING DEADLINE

**Newsletter & Bulletin Due Dates:**

**Information Due:** January 10

**Published:** January 30, 2024