



Issue 4 Summer 2025

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OUR MISSION:

St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church is dedicated to the continuation of our **Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's** ministry of salvation through the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel; through Baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and through loving service to God and to mankind.

OUR VISION:

The community will provide a loving, caring and welcoming environment where all belong and grow in the faith through worship, service, witness, and fellowship

THE NEWS FROM ST. NEKTARIOS

BEACONS OF THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos

There are several words that might come to mind when we think of the summer season. It is reasonable to expect that the word **"light"** would factor prominently in such a list. It is, of course, the season whose solstice is marked by the longest day of the year. It is the season **of the sun's dominance, and we** feel that light and heat. It drives the familiar weather patterns of the season and it engenders the sustained growth of plants. Any number of associations with light are at their brightest and readily available during this season.

It is also true, as with most seasons, that by the end of summer we are ready for a change. As life-giving as the **sun's radiance can be, it also can** be draining. It withers the very plants it helps grow. It burns our skin. It parches the earth. It raises our electricity bills.

As summer draws to a close and we anticipate fall, we also approach the close of the current Ecclesiastical Year and the beginning of a new one. It is a time of renewed community life, catechism classes, and a host of other ministerial offerings that run in tandem with our school and work lives. Before we know it, we will be plunged into shorter and shorter—and colder—days, finding ourselves pining for the sun and its warmth.

Providentially the Church, in its sublime wisdom, closes the summer season with an intense flash of light. The final feast of the Lord on the ecclesiastical calendar is that of the Transfiguration, or Metamorphosis, of the Savior (August 6). It presents an event in which Jesus, in the presence of select disciples, ascended a high mountain and became

brighter than the sun.

As we hear in the hymns of the feast, He allowed this in part to communicate to His disciples **that His "passion was deliberate"**. In other words, it was a way of revealing to His closest followers that He is more than a man—that He is God—and that He was in complete control of all that was happening, including His death on the Cross.

The astute reader will recall that among the signs that attended **our Lord's death on the Cross was a darkening of the sky**. "It was the sixth hour, and there was darkness upon the whole earth through the ninth hour, for **the sun was eclipsed"** (Luke 23:44).

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . ."

The sixth hour is noon—the point where the sun reaches its zenith, maximizing its illuminating and warming qualities. And yet this became the darkest hour, in which the bloodied, mocked, and naked body of the god-man was suspended on the Cross, moments from giving up the spirit.

Dear reader, the Lord always knows what he is doing. He is aware of what He allows. He knows our joys and our sorrows, our accomplishments and failures, our virtues and our sins. He knows that we walk in a darkened world, with minds, hearts, souls, and bodies that the darkness pursues with voracious envy.

As we end the summer with a flash of uncreated light, the **light of the Savior's Transfiguration**, we can and must remember that, whatever befalls us in this darkened world, Christ is beyond it and has prepared a place and path for us. We were brought into His light through Holy Baptism and Chrismation, and we do well to recall these powerful words about him from the Evangelist and Theologian, John:

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the **world... to all who received Him**, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God."

I pray that all of us, in times of personal darkness, will remember and be strengthened by moments when we have been illuminated and warmed by **Christ's presence**. Moreover, may we all be beacons of that light and hope to one another and to the world. Amen.



FOCUS ON OUR COMMUNITY

Celebrations, Milestones, Comfort & Support

In Our Prayer s

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

REMEMBERING THOSE SERVING OUR COUNTRY

Thomas Seth Helene Jordan Krassimire Cristofer Nicholas Michael Constantine Zack Matthew Amanda Danielle Anton Jimmy

Congratul ations and best wishes MARRIAGES

To Melissa Fox and Michael Shalhoub for their marriage and to their sponsor, Samuel Shalhoub

To Lindsey Schmidt and Panos Rizos for their marriage and to their sponsors, Molly & Justin Carruthers

To Leila Maria Zakhem and Johnny Mawardi for their marriage and to their sponsor, George Mawardi

To Camille Beatty and Tyler Swedan for their marriage and to their sponsor, Megan Sweep

To Gabby Vitale and Andrew Vandenburg for their marriage and to their sponsor, James Stolis

To Sophia Schwartz and Tamer Alyateem for their marriage and to their sponsors, Wesam Alyateem and Nivin Alyateem

To Arianna Pexos & Giovanni Gonzales for their marriage

To Emily and Tyler Hahn for their Orthodox wedding and to their sponsors, Presbytera Meredyth Houpos and Dwayne Cogdill

To Autumn Yarmosh and David Sullivan for their Orthodox wedding and to their sponsor, Chris Mason

BIRTHS, 40TH DAY BLESSINGS, BAPTISMS & CHRISMATIONS

To Presbytera Eirini and Fr. Panayiotis for the birth and blessing of Demetra and Olympias' brother, **Vasilios Apostolos**

To Presbytera Ellia and Fr. Nektarios for the birth and blessing of **John & Peter's brother, James Elias**

To **Brianna & Daniel Elston for the birth of Elliot's twin sisters**, Elowyn Autumn and Lunaria Odette

To Alex and Ryan Hurst for the blessing of their son, Luke

To Samara & Chris Shadrack for the birth, blessing and baptism of their daughter, Isadora Veil Lee and to her godparents, Merrigrace and Silas Clewell

To Lauren and John Pamukci for the birth, blessing and baptism of their daughter, Miriam and to her godfather, Jack Pamukci

To **Katya and Troy Moore for the birth and blessing of Mila and Ivan's brother**, Luke Landon

To **Elena and Sam Burrus for the birth and blessing of Vaia & John's brother**, Constantine Watson

To **Justine and C. J. Dellinger for the birth and blessing of Henry's brother**, Theodore John

To Stefani and Radoslav Iliev for the birth and blessing of their daughter, Emma

To **Nikki and Chris Ottomanelli for the baptism of Valentina's brother Luca**, and to his godfather, Dimitrios Liapis

To Megan and Hendrik Hanegraaff for the baptism of their daughter, Isabelle and to her godparents, Emily and Dave Hanegraaf

To Tina and Conner Higgins for the birth, blessing and baptism of their daughter, Stella Rose and to the godparents, Sophia and Tamer Alyateem

To **Lindsey and Elliott Hillmann for the baptism of Noah's brother, James Oliver** and to his godparent, Mikhail Kogan

To Lindsey Schmidt for her baptism and to her sponsor, Evangelia Chaudhary

To Oxana Hendrix for the baptism of her daughter, Aurora Jacome and to her sponsor, Nadeja Boldt

To **Teresa and Stephen Truesdale for the baptism of Brynn's sister**, Emma and to her godmother, Melanie McMinn

With Sympathy on the Repose of our beloved brothers and sisters

To the Sedhom and Ayoub families for the repose of Hanna's brother, Ramzy

To the Tatsis and Shinas' families for the repose of Anastasios Tatsis

To the Bakos, Vlahos, Cestrone, Keretses, Burrus and Trimnal families for the repose of Helen's husband, Ioannis Konstantinos Bakogiannis, "John Gus"

To the family of Dan Medvid for his repose

To the Poulos, Karagounis, Kontogiorgos, Gallis, Raptis and Tsopanas families for the repose of Tommy's mother, Sotiria "Rula" Karagounis Poulos

To the Pappas, Copsis and Wright families for the repose of Kenneth Pappas

To the Constantelos family for the repose of Steve's brother, Panagiotis

To the Antone family for the repose of Michael's father, John

To the Mason family for the repose of Kathryn's brother, Elliot Baker, Jr

To the Poulos family for the repose of Jim's wife, Litsa

In appreciation and Thank You

To Diane Gilbert and Copy Cat Printing for printing the newsletter.

To our St. Nektarios Family,

Your kindness touched my heart. St. Nektarios is a blessing. I cannot thank you enough for the beautiful Pascha basket.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness and thank you to Irene who delivered the lovely basket also!!

Anita Asimos

Dear St. Nektarios Bereavement Committee,

You overwhelmed us with your kindness, efficiency and the great care you took in honoring Mom's memory. Not having to worry about those details on our end was truly a gift to us as we tried to navigate through our grief of losing Mom. The entire service and everything related to the makaria lunch were lovely and perfect. Mom would have been pleased

*The Family of Anthoula Markos Copsis
Peter, Maria, Pam, and Tim*

In Need of a clergy visit?

Please contact the office staff if you or a family member may be in need of a clergy visit in times of illness, to receive Holy Communion, and for prayers and comfort.

Do You have News for the newsletter?

If you have information or photos for the newsletter, please contact Kim Braswell in the office at ksbraswell@stnektarios.org.

In the Spotlight

HONORING OUR PRESBYTERES

We honored our Presbyteres on the National Sisterhood of Presbyteres Sunday on June 1st.

“These yokefellows of their ordained husbands bear witness to the Orthodox Faith every day — in their dealings with parishioners, in the examples set in their families, and in the mission-driven efforts they bring to the life of the local church and the Church-at-large. Therefore, on this Sunday of the Holy Fathers, may we pay homage to these precious spiritual mothers in our churches, who protect and foster the sacred traditions of the Apostles with precision and devotion. Let us honor them on local and national levels with abiding gratitude for their sacrifices and deep appreciation for their offerings and enhancements to our parishes.”

+ELPIDOPHOROS, Archbishop



Pictured left to right: Presbytera Erini, Fr. Panayiotis, Presbyter Meredyth, Fr. Andreas, Presbytera Mara Dalber, Presbytera Sandy Stanar (not pictured Presbytera Lea and Presbytera Tara)

Thank you for all you do for our parish!



CONGRATULATIONS

to Presbytera Eirini and Fr. Panayiotis who welcomed their son, Vasilios Apostolos, in June. Fr. Panayiotis and Presbytera Eirini would like to thank the community for the outpouring of love and kindness shown to them during this time.

May Vasilios be blessed.



Happy Birthday

to our Proistamenos,
Fr. Andreas
for his birthday in June!

May the Lord bless you with many years!



Congratulations

to the Newly Ordained
Father Hieromonk Savvas
Save, O Christ God, newly-ordained
Hieromonk Savvas. Axios!



A visit from Fr. Nektarios & Presbytera Ellia

We were blessed to have Fr. Nektarios and Presbytera Ellia join us while they were in Charlotte in April. Everyone was overjoyed to see them and wish them well.

We pray for God's blessings to them on the birth of their son, James Elias, who was born in June.



Picture left above: Kim Braswell, Fr. Nektarios & Presbytera Ellia

Pictured Bottom left: Jim Keown, Rhett Chapman, Fr. Nektarios, Nolan & Ioanna Atkinson

Pictured Bottom Center: Fr. Hieromonk Athanasios, Fr. Galen Wiley, Fr. Nektarios Karantonis, Fr. Andreas Houpos

MEN'S MINISTRY

Trip to the Sacred Monastery of Panagia Pammakaristos

On Saturday, July 28th, members of our Men's Group visited the Sacred Monastery of Panagia Pammakaristos, in Lawsonville, NC.

In addition to attending the divine services, the group was able to spend some time with the abbot, Fr. Nektarios.

The Men's Group meets on campus one Saturday per month, unless otherwise noted, the next time being August 23 at 4:00 PM. ❖



Adult Religious Education

A. R. E. Classes ~ History of the church

We ended our History of our Church sessions with the Fall of the Byzantine empire (Live and Virtual). Many new faces were in attendance. Covering the History of Our Church in 6 weeks is not an easy task. We are talking about 2000 years of church History. Going forward for next season the itinerary will change a bit. So for next season we will add two weeks to our program. Instead of doing a continual presentation on the History of Our Faith we will focus more on specific topics you want such as The Theotokos, The Apostles, The Invisible world. We will be going more into detail on all these topics. We will begin our series following Pascha starting on April 23rd, 2026.

Complete details will be available at our A.R.E. Kick-off Sunday following liturgy September 21st. Mark your calendars so that you can get our complete calendar and give you an idea of exactly what we all will be covering with some new topics and approaches. These presentations are perfect for our new catechumens or for those who are considering joining our faith as well as for anyone who has missed our sessions for more than three years as we are always updating all our presentations with new and interesting information.

Look for the Becoming Orthodox classes starting September 19th following the Newcomer Social. The Newcomer Social is for all newcomers to Charlotte, to the parish and to the faith. ❖



Gerry Clonaris teaching on the History of the Church



Members of our Adult Religious Education team meeting to discuss upcoming events



Book Club

We have had a tremendous turnout for our Book Club as we have been enjoying a discussion of the book, "Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives" by Elder Thaddeus as we met this summer on Thursdays.

Jesus emphasized the importance of our thoughts in his teachings, reminding us to take every thought into captivity and encouraging believers to focus on what is good and to align our thoughts with God's word, reminding us that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Make sure it is filled with good things. ❖

Young at Heart

Pretty flowers, great looking legs, yummy birthday cakes, delicious dinners, a laughter-filled room, and cleaning gloves are highlights of our spring time with Young at Heart.

With Pascha in April, the group did not have its usual gathering. But members of the group donned their cleaning gloves and offered their time and talent to clean liturgical items under the tent. The group also hosted a light breakfast on Saturday of Lazarus while members of the community made over 1000 palm crosses for Palm Sunday.

We were back to our usual gathering in May. Thank you to George Couchell and Showmars for hosting a chicken kabob dinner in memory of **George's mother, Anastasia. The group also honored our Presbyteres with a Mother's Day bouquet.**

This year in June the group honored our Mothers and Fathers. Thank you to Gary Anderson for catering our great meal. Every few years we check out the good-looking legs of our male members. **From our very subjective "applause meter," Emile Khuri won the title of best looking legs.** Congratulations to Sam Boulmetis being selected as Father of the Year. With a fortuitous mistake of preparing two flower bouquets to present the mother of the year, we selected two moms to receive this honor. Congratulations to Emerald Chiotakis and Cathlene Fisher.

Starting in July, the Board began planning for the 2025-26 ecclesiastical year. The schedule is being set with 9 monthly gatherings with speakers and activities, Bingo nights, a local holiday outing, a Holiday dance after Christmas, and an overnight trip to Wilmington for Theophany cross dive in January.

The 2025-26 Board Members are Presbyteres Sandy Stanar and Steve Panteliodis as co-chairs; Nopi Panteliodis, John and Diane Gretes, Joy Marcus, Ritsa and Mike Neary, Evelyn Klund, Ayoub Ayoub, Christala and Costa Paraskeva, and welcome to Robin Walter. There is no limit to the number of board positions, so others are welcome to volunteer. Mark your calendars for September 11th as our first gathering. See you then. ❖



Above: Members with April & May birthdays , Right: Members with June & July birthdays



Above:

In May we honored our Presbyteres Meredyth, Erini, Maria & Sandy. Our Mothers of the Year, selected in June, pictured far right were Cathlene Fisher and Emerald Chiotakis.



In June we honored our fathers. Father of the Year was Sam Boulmetis (far left)

Our best legs contest winner was Emile Khuri

Picture below:
Cleaning the liturgical items



Outreach & Welcoming ~ Newcomer Sunday



Fr. Andreas greeting Newcomers and answering questions during the brunch



We celebrated Newcomers to the parish on Sunday, June 1st. What a blessing it was to meet all of you and to welcome you as we enjoyed a special brunch together. Our Newcomers included those new to Charlotte, those new to our church and also those new to Orthodoxy.

Above and below:
Our Welcome Team, Parish Council and Hospitality Team welcoming Newcomers and serving our parishioners



You are all invited to our Newcomer Social planned for Friday night, September 19th. We will meet newcomers, enjoy fellowship and food with a chance to browse the bookstore.



For those new to the faith, the social will be followed by a Becoming Orthodox class. We hope all will be able to join us for this special night.

Olga Kuznetsova
Aurora Jacome and
Oxana Hendrix

Courtney &
River Bryant



Kim Talleur and
Sophia Lomenzo

Riley Poore and mother,
Victoria Nazzaro

If you would like more information about Orthodoxy or about our parish, please contact the St. Nektarios Church office. ❖



Matthew
Hedrick

Carly & Jeff Parker

Tatjana Talevski
Mitsa Talevski



James Imbriano

Grayson Hess

Johnathan Brinson



Marina & John
Vitale

Myriem
Benzouina

Friends, David Martinez
and Jackson Payne

Matthew Shields

Lucas Garrett

Carson Brown

Diane Columbus

Clergy-Laiety Assembly and Philoptochos conference

June 12 - Our parish's clergy and lay delegates joined others from around the Metropolis of Atlanta in the "Holy City" of Charleston, SC, for the 2025 Clergy-Laiety Assembly and Philoptochos Conference.

Thursday evening was dedicated to the grand banquet, with addresses from Metropolitan Sevastianos and special guest Archbishop Elpidophoros, and many others, on the Assembly's theme: "Faith. Family. Love."

Notable musical performances of low-country spirituals and highland bagpipe-and-drum were a special and moving component of the evening affair.



St. Nektarios Clergy-Laiety and Philoptochos Delegates left to right: Deidre Lepkowski, Madalina Lowen, Gerry Clonaris, Fr. Andreas and Presbytera Meredyth Houpos, Stavroula and John Couchell, Chris Mortis

PHILOPTOCHOS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The 2025 Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos Conference was held in June in the historic city of Charleston, SC. This year's theme was "Faith, Family, Love". Charleston Holy Trinity Philoptochos was our host.

The Conference agenda included a message from Fr. Michael Platanis, the spiritual father of the Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos, Irene Politis' president report, board introduction, treasurer's report, proposed budget presentation, CMF update, committee reports (Philanthropy, Spiritual Retreat, Special Needs Camp, Clergy Education, Scholastic Gifts, Phanouropita, Membership, Youth Ministries, Agape, Prison Ministry, and Communications), Metropolis board elections, workshops, and speaker presentations.

SPEAKERS included:

- Carl Hollister, new Director of the St. Photios National Shrine.
- Fr. Anthony on the sustained and continued growth of Orthodox Christian Fellowship Ministry.
- Dr. Demetrios Katos for Hellenic College-Holy Cross School of Theology enumerated many updates and improvements in the physical campus and technology, and impact of the programs and curriculum.
- Paula Marchman, Director of Metropolis of Atlanta Family Life Ministry introduced their newly published resources.

- Cheryl O'Donnell, executive director, of Florence Crittenton Program of SC spoke regarding the mission and goals of the incredible programs on empowering young pregnant and parenting young women and girls who are homeless or in foster care. Each delegate was asked to bring a \$25 gift card to benefit this worthy organization.

A Conference with Faith in Action:

After this beautiful speaker series, we went for a walk downtown Charleston and saw a young, beautiful soul who was pregnant and living on the streets. God allowed us the privilege to not only speak with her and hear her story but also share her information with the Florence Crittenton leaders and pray with her for that better tomorrow.

All the chapters represented at the Conference were asked to support this year's Coupon charity project with a \$50 donation. The selected Coupon charity was Grace-Based Grief Resources for Children (GGRC). GGRC has a standard kit that includes a Build-a-Bear bear, a blanket, a coloring book, and crayons. It never deviates. Our responsibility was to donate the funds to provide these kits to fire departments, burn centers/camps for kids, grief counselors/camps for kids etc. The comfort kits are given out to children experiencing trauma. The kit items were used to craft a centerpiece for the Philoptochos luncheon, allowing everyone an opportunity to see firsthand how their donations will be used. A representative from GGRC gave a presentation during the luncheon. ❖

Thank you from our Life and Family Ministry and St. Nektarios Philoptochos!

We collected essential items to assemble summer hygiene bags for individuals who are homeless and living outside the Center of Hope Women's Shelter. We gathered in the Spiritual Life Center on July 7th to assemble the bags. Thank you all for your generosity in contributing to the Center of Hope Women's Shelter and St. Hermione Home efforts in healing the whole person. May God guide our hands with every move and may our hearts spread His light of hope! If you have any questions, please contact Deidre at 704-771-8716. ❖



St. Nektarios Endowment Sunday



Sunday Youth Celebration

Endowment Scholarships were awarded and catechism teachers and seniors were recognized. Congratulations to Endowment Scholars of Distinction, Michael Choueiri and Evie Demakis and to Scholars Christopher Bacogeorge, Nicholas Kellen, Sarah Leventis, Kayla Poulas, and Nicholas Vatsis.



St. Nektarios Endowment

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. Hebrews 6:19

On June 1, the St. Nektarios Parish celebrated Endowment Sunday—a day to celebrate our youth, to award scholarships, **and to share the Endowment's achievements.** It was also a day to recognize the members of its Legacy Circle, whose generous gifts are the foundation of the Endowment.

Legacy Circle Members

The Endowment's good works began with a visionary gift by the Circle's Charter Members Dee and Frank Cockinos. Their gift supports youth 25 years and younger and now forms the Cockinos Youth Fund. New members to the Circle are Sam and Maria Kleto, Tim and Evelyn Klund, and Theodora Sexstone. Their gifts have created a new General Fund, dedicated to the growing needs of our parish and its ministries. The Legacy Circle members, and the loved ones who they choose to honor, will be remembered in perpetuity as anchors of our St. Nektarios Parish.

Cockinos Youth Fund

Since inception, the Endowment has awarded \$140,000 in grants and scholarships to over 65 individuals or organizations in four spheres:

Parish: Individual scholarships, St. Photios Pilgrimage, St. Stephen's Summer Camp, Winter Youth Rally, Orthodox Home Schools initiatives, Greek Language School, Oratorical Festival, Boy Scout Camp, St. Phoebe Ministry, St. Sophia School, Department of Youth Ministries.

Local: Augustine Literacy Project, Read Charlotte, A Child's Place National

National: Allegro Foundation, Hellenic College/ Holy Cross, St. Basil Academy

International: Child of God Kenya, Metrolina Phoenician Club for Palestine Children Relief Fund, Project Mexico, International Orthodox Christian Charities Youth Fund

General Fund

The Endowment's second fund reaches beyond our youth and concentrates on the needs of our parish. The income generated by this fund will initially focus on three areas:

Campus Improvement.... repairs, maintenance, and upgrades

Church Enhancement... iconography, liturgical gifts, furniture and fixtures

Worship Enrichment.... technology support and improvements

A Lasting Legacy

With these two funds the Endowment's goal is to help secure our parish's future and to offer parishioners an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy. The purpose is to invest the



Endowment Legacy Circle Members

Theodora Sexstone, Sam Kleto, Maria Kleto, Timira Cockinos, Dean Cockinos, Evelyn Klund, Tim Klund

gifts we receive for future growth and spend only the income generated from these gifts. The Endowment charter, approved in 2017, conforms with industry standards for charitable endowments and complies with all applicable regulations. It is a 501 (c) 3 approved organization.

For a closer look and more information, please reach out to a committee member: Emile Khuri, Sam Kleto, Kathryn Kokenes, Julie Milich, Maria Mortis, Theodora Sexstone, or Dimitri Triantafyllides. The Endowment accepts Bequests, Cash, Securities, Life Insurance, Real Estate, Qualified Retirement Plans, and Required Minimum Distributions.

For Today . . . Stewardship

For Tomorrow . . . Building for Generations

For The Future . . . The St. Nektarios Endowment

Youth Ministries ~ Vacation Church Camp

This year our Vacation Church Camp welcomed nearly 70 children to receive the fire of faith. Campers were immersed in the theme of 'fire' in the Christian life, through worship, education, fellowship, and service. We closed out the week cooling off from the physical heat with water fun and giving glory to God for having collected 864 clothing items for the homeless in Charlotte. Many thanks to our volunteers, young and old, who ignited one another with the love of Christ. ❖



Fr. Andreas makes the goal!



Youth Ministries



Oratorical Festival Finalist

This month we were blessed to be able to hear Kristina Nagorny deliver the speech that earned her third place in the National St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. Our congregation responded with thunderous applause to her meditation on the significance of repetition in the life of a Christian, particularly with respect to the Jesus prayer. May God bless her and inspire others to step forward to share their gifts in years to come. ❖



2025 Catechism Graduates and teachers

Left to right:
Anastasia Bacalis, Rebecca Courter, George Vatsis, Sara Levantis, Andrew McCullough (back),
Kayla Poulias, Nicholas Vatsis, Nicholas Kellen, Evie Demakis, Gerry Clonaris,
Missy Davis, George Demakis, Maria Demakis, Vicki Kizis, Jacob Ceffalo, Michael Choueiri



Acolytes with His Eminence Sevastianos

Greek Language School End of year program

Anchored in Joy and Faith
Sailing into Summer!

We wrapped up the school year with crafts led by Mrs. Papasaranti as well as music, games, and refreshments organized by our amazing parents and teachers. Joyfully, our students celebrated a fun and fruitful year at our St. Nektarios Greek Language School.



A heartfelt thank-you to all the incredible teachers and parents who made this year so fruitful and memorable. Your support shaped an enriching environment for our students, and we couldn't be more grateful.

With much appreciation toward Mr. Marko Millich for building our beautiful fishing boat, we climbed aboard and sang a cheerful song welcoming summertime.



Throughout the year, our faith guided every moment. We were honored by a special visit from our beloved Proistamenos, Protopresbyter, Andreas G. Houpos, who congratulated both students and teachers for their dedication, joy, and teamwork. His blessings and kind words reminded us of the deeper purpose behind our learning journey.



A special thank you to Mrs. Helen Giles, a gifted and experienced educational consultant whose creativity and dedication brought our school's website to life. Helen's work continues to connect, inform, and inspire our entire school community.

Looking Ahead: Registration is open until August 18th, and Greek classes begin on September 12th. Students across all grade levels will take part in dancing or physical activity, music, religion, and vocabulary games in addition to their language lessons this year. These sessions are crafted to boost creativity, enhance teamwork, and make learning more fun through movement and play.

We can hardly wait to welcome our learners aboard for another meaningful year!

Anastasia K. Holevas

The St. Sophia School

As we prepare to begin a new school year in September, we wanted to share a look back at the spring semester at The St. Sophia School. Our students deepened their understanding of culture and the natural world through rich, hands-on experiences — including a presentation on Native American heritage with **Melody Honeycutt, a Greek musical “petting zoo” where students explored traditional instruments, and a presentation on amphibians from a Queens University biology professor and researcher. We were also blessed by a pastoral visit from Metropolitan Sevastianos, who offered words of encouragement and love to our students and staff.**



St. Nektarios community members were integral in supporting student learning in our spring semester. The children nurtured their curiosity through volunteer-led activities like gardening with Mrs. Christie Asimos, hands-on learning about beekeeping with Mr. Chris Mortis, and story time with the Young at Heart ministry with Presbytera Sandy Stanar. Mr. Peter Reinhart and Mrs. Maryann Zitsos collaborated on an interdisciplinary writing and history unit that culminated in a student presentation on the Lost Colony of Roanoke Island. These shared experiences nurtured the intergenerational bonds within our parish, and it was truly a beautiful thing to see our students greeting their beloved volunteers at church and other community events.



We ended the year with our first Field Day and a Kindergarten Graduation ceremony. We celebrated our first graduating class of three students, and we are thrilled to share the good news that these three Kindergarteners paved the way for a full Kindergarten class of twelve students next year! Our overall student body has more than doubled for next year as families continue to seek out a school where faith, tradition, and joyful learning flourish together.



It was a year full of learning and laughter and we are so grateful, first to God and to our beloved patron saints, St. Nektarios and St. Sophia and her three daughters, to our dedicated faculty and staff, to our first families who bravely believed in the vision of an Orthodox school in our community, to the St. Nektarios community, to the office staff who have been so gracious about sharing space with us, to the priests of Holy Trinity and St. Nektarios, to our board members who put so much time and effort into guiding our school, and to our community partners in both communities who have supported the school with their time and money, particularly Showmars, who recently became our first Benefactor-Level founding donor.



We can't wait to welcome everyone back for our second year at The St. Sophia School!

Ariadne Zitsos-Steel
Head of School



Missions and Philanthropy ~ Thrift Store

Church Mouse KIT 'N' KABOODLE

Our Beginnings —

After several years of discussion, planning, contemplation, searching and with the generosity of the Peter Couchell family, St. Nektarios was finally able to open a thrift store whose purpose is to generate additional income to be distributed to charitable causes. The store, located at 9010 Monroe Rd, Charlotte NC has now been in operation since November 2019.

At first, the store was run by a paid staff manager on a six-day/week operational schedule. It was (is) a small operation and the business volume could not support payroll expenses. As a result, the board of directors decided to operate an abbreviated schedule with volunteers staffing the store. At present we have five regular parishioner volunteers manning the business hours of operation three days per week. Additional time is spent by those volunteers, and others as available to, collect, sort, price, and store items that are intended for sale. In addition, volunteers take unused or excess items to other charitable organizations for their use or sale.

Thank you to all who have donated household goods and clothing to be sold through the store and to those who have provided logistical and financial support for startup and operation tasks. Through 2024, the operation of the store has generated \$43K in donations to worthy causes. ❖



Store Managers: Helen Clonaris, Joanne Kiser, Tim Klund, Dee Drobonick, Georgia Lacman and Laurel Bacogorge



\$43,000 Distributed
To Charitable Causes Since 2021

\$13,800 Child of God

\$ 7,500 Samaritan's Purse WNC

\$ 6,000 Hopeway Foundation

\$ 5,800 Community Culinary School

\$ 4,000 Loaves & Fishes

\$ 2,400 Philoptochos

\$ 1,500 St. Nektarios Church

\$ 1,000 St. Hermione Home

\$ 1,000 Monroe Rd. Advocates

Blood Drive and Shredding Event

St Nektarios held another of its regularly occurring shredding events and also served as a donation site for the Carolina Blood Mobile bus to collect blood donations from the local community.

The shredding event was a success, generating \$2,800 in donations from people and parishioners using the services of a Shred Industry, Inc. truck that shreds documents on an industrial scale. Thanks to Bob Korkos for donating his time and truck for this Missions Ministry fund-raising event. He has done so for several years now and we greatly appreciate his generous support. Over the years the shredding event has brought in donations in excess of \$9,000. We try to schedule the event after tax filing deadline when people purge unnecessary older records. Start accumulating the documents you want to safely discard using this shredding opportunity. You can even watch your records being shred-



ded on a monitor from an internal camera of the "teeth" crunching up the documents into confetti like paper. Also thank Kate Caltis who organized the event and those who helped handle the shredded materials (see photo).

St. Nektarios has offered its parking lot and/or SLC facilities for the mobile Bloodmobile bus to collect blood here in Charlotte. This year they collected approximately 12 pints of usable blood. Sometimes a donation can not be accepted for health reasons; and some people wanting to donate are turned away due to restrictions and precautions due to minimum weight



Left to right: Evan Miller, Doug Sistare, Nick Karras, Bob Korkos and Chris Franks

requirements and foreign travel to some areas of the world. If you have given blood before, consider doing so again when next scheduled event occurs. If you have never given blood, please consider doing so. It is painless. You are supporting life-saving actions by the medical community. It only takes a few minutes of your time, and you get juice and a snack afterwards! ❖



Beyond St. Nektarios

Ordination of Deacon Matthew Wiley to the Priesthood



For the feast of Pentecost, Fr. Andreas & Pres. Meredyth joined members of the Hanegraaff family at the Nativity of the Theotokos Antiochian Orthodox Church in Hunt Valley, MD, for the ordination to the Holy Priesthood of Dn. Matthew Wiley. Fr. Matthew and Khouria (Presvytera) Christina will soon begin their first assignment in Illinois. The prayers of our St. Nektarios family go with them. Axios! Axia! ❖

Blessing of the 1st Non-stop Flight to Greece

Thursday, June 5, Fr. Jonathan (Dean of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral Charlotte) and Fr. Andreas joined parishioners and other members of the Hellenic community at Charlotte Douglas International Airport's Gate A12, to mark the inaugural flight from Charlotte to Athens. To the surprise and delight of many passengers, the gate was filled with complimentary Greek cuisine, music, traditional dances by the Cathedral's troupe, and last but not least, a blessing of the plane, crew, and passengers. It was a wonderful event and we thank parishioner Michaelina Franks for her superb coordination. ❖

"Lord, God of our Fathers, whose Spirit hovered over the face of the waters—you, who ride upon the wings of the winds, and surround your throne with myriad flying angels: preserve this aircraft, and grant to it a good and peaceful angel. Be yourself a pilot to those who pilot it, and travel with those who shall travel in it. Protect them, and grant that they may reach their destination in good health, at the intercessions of our most pure Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary; by the power of the precious and life-giving Cross; by the protection of the honorable, heavenly, noetic, bodiless Powers; of the holy, glorious Prophet and Forerunner, John the Baptist; of the holy, glorious, all-lauded Apostles; of the holy, glorious, and triumphant Martyrs; of our venerable God-bearing Fathers; of St. Nicholas of Myra, and all your saints ❖



Update on St. Hermione Home

St. Hermione Home is a sanctuary of hope and healing for single pregnant women experiencing homelessness. Rooted in the Orthodox Christian faith, our mission is to provide not only safe housing but also compassionate care and spiritual formation. More than a shelter, St. Hermione Home is a place where dignity is renewed, lives are rebuilt, and women are empowered with the tools for long-term self-sufficiency.

Opening in 2026, St. Hermione Home will offer a holistic program designed to meet the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of each woman in our care. Every resident will receive a personalized care plan, life skills training, and access to comprehensive healthcare—including high-quality prenatal and postnatal care for up to one year after birth. Within this Christ-centered and nurturing environment, mothers will find not only a safe and supportive home but also spiritual guidance and educational or vocational training to help lift them out of poverty and into a future of hope and stability.

Worship—Construction has progressed to allow the first Divine Liturgy to be held on October 30, 2024 and the first Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with His Grace, Bishop Themis of Sierra Leone held on November 4, 2024.

Currently — Not waiting for the construction to be completed, St Hermione Home volunteers serve the homeless of our area by providing free medical care, clothing and food, as well as Bible Studies and Prayer Groups through the Shelter Health Services.

Donors are invited to help open the doors of St. Hermione Home. This support will help provide welcoming bedrooms, essential kitchen equipment, comfortable common area furniture, and sacred items for the Orthodox Sanctuary—including Holy Icons.

St. Hermione Home is a 501^c(3) tax-exempt ministry. ❖



Two Ways to Support the Home
 St. Hermione Home will be the beneficiary of the 2025
 Taking Steps 5k on Nov. 22 and
 Philoptochos Christmas Brunch on Dec. 6



"Whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for Me." – Matthew 25:40

Feast of St. Paisios the Athonite

“The meaning of life is for us to be prepared for our homeland, for heaven.” — St. Paisios the Athonite

On July 12, we gathered for the divine services in commemoration of St. Paisios (d. 1994). The faithful offered a commissioned icon, flowers, sweetbread, kollyva, prosphoron, their chanting, their presence, and their prayer in *philotimo* towards the Saint and ultimately towards Christ.

Our Orthodox Film Club will be organizing a viewing and discussion schedule for the Greek television miniseries about St. Paisios in the near future. ❖



DIRECTORY

Church Office: 704-708-4669

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5108 Kuykendall Rd. Charlotte, NC 28270

Clergy

Father Andreas Houpos, Proistamenos

Mobile: 980-333-9563

Email: fr.andreas@stnektarios.org

Father Panayiotis Steele, Ephemerios

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Father Steve Dalber, Pastor Emeritus

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Email: frdalber@stnektarios.org

Father Paul Tsahakis, Presbyter

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Parish Staff

Parish Administrator - Evelyn Klund

Administration Staff

Silva Awaimrin, Kim Braswell,

Sharon Koutroumpis, Sofia Nicolopoulos

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,

Katherine Mason, Peter Reinhart,

Patrick Taylor

Philoptochos Board

President: Madalina Lowen

1st Vice President: Deidre Lepkowski

Recording Secretary: Laurel Bacogeorge

Corr. Secretary: Sharon Koutroumpis

Treasurer: Kathrine Cestrone

Ass't. Treasurer: Evelyn Klund

Members: Helen Bakos, Renee Keretses,

Janet Rogers, and Nia Tefakis

(Email: philoptochos@stnektarios.org)

SUNDAYS AT SAINT NEKTARIOS

Worship on Sundays

Matins 7:45 a.m. and

Divine Liturgy 9:15 a.m.

Fellowship Coffee:

Following Divine Liturgy

Prosphora

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

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: Sept 15, 2025

Published: October 1, 2025