



Issue 4 Fall 2025

Inside this Issue

Kollyva	2
Focus on Our Community	2
Welcoming the New	3
Ecclesiastical Year	
Feast Day Services	4-5
St. Nektarios Endowment	5
Newcomer Social	6
ARE Special Presentation	6
ARE-Orthodox Film Club	7
Metropolis Catechist Conference	7
Catechumen Induction	8
St. Phoebe Ministry	8
Financials Matter	9
Youth Ministry	10-11
Greek Language School	11
Missions & Philanthropy Ministry	12-14
Outdoors Ministry	14

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

HUMILITY WILL DEFEAT THE ENEMY

Fr. Andreas G. Houpos

We are living through a season of increasingly tempestuous rhetoric and action, in many facets of our society. Vitriolic and incendiary speech expresses and propagates passionate exchanges among perceived opponents and enemies. We have come to see accusatory, deflective, and divisive speech as part of daily discourse. And suffice it to merely hint at the other salacious and banal matter that mixes and mingles with these other passions into a toxic sludge.

In an era where the now-ubiquitous presence of "social" media, "smart" devices, and artificial "intelligence" increasingly dominate our means of relating to one another and to the world more broadly, how shall we Christians attain the greatest commandment and the one like it: love of God, and love of neighbor?

St. Anthony the Great (d. 356), famously said: "I saw all the traps of the enemy spread out upon the earth and, groaning, I said: 'What can evade these things?'. And I heard a voice saying to me: 'Humility!'"

Another saint of the Egyptian desert, Makarios the Great (d.391) had a similar encounter. Having returned to his humble dwelling one day, he found the devil waiting for him, with a sickle in hand, wishing—but unable—to cut him down and exclaiming in frustration:

"I endure too much violence because of you, Makarios! I deeply desire to harm you and yet cannot. It astounds me greatly, because I do everything you do—and even more than you. You fast sometimes; I never eat. You sleep little; I never close my eyes. There is only one thing in which you surpass me."

"What is it?" asked the saint.

"Your humility," replied the devil.

These encounters deliver a comforting message in the face of overwhelming temptation. However, they also present us with a challenge, a choice, a course of action. Will we choose the path of humility? Will we trust Christ to deliver us if we but have faith and humble ourselves?

The noise of the world entices us to itself. It says, "Join the fray! Raise your voice! Be provoked, and be provocative! Indulge!" These "traps" are everywhere. If we are to evade them, we must turn to humility. But what does this look like?

Will we choose the path of humility? Will we trust Christ to deliver us if we but have faith and humble ourselves?

Contrast the spirit of the world with what we find in the writings of another great ascetic, St. John of Sinai (d. 649):

"A characteristic of those who are still progressing in blessed mourning is temperance and silence of the lips, and of those who have made progress—freedom from anger and patient endurance of injuries; and of the perfect—humility, thirst for dishonor, voluntary craving for involuntary afflictions, non-condemnation of sinners, and compassion even beyond one's strength. The first are acceptable, the second laudable; but blessed are those who hunger for hardship and thirst for dishonor, for they shall have their fill of the food that does not cloy." (The Ladder, Step 7:4)

St. John describes this "blessed mourning" as a "perennial testing of the conscience which brings about the cooling of the fire of the heart, through spiritual confession."

In other words, it is an act of inner reflection and confession. It is an assessment of one's own shortcomings and sins before assessing those of others. It is the spirit of the repentant tax collector, who "would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner!'" (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

Brothers and Sisters, the burdens of this life are great. No matter how much we may try to ease them by means of technology and entertainment and self-indulgence, they will never be truly avoidable without turning to Christ with humility. He is, after all, the one who tells us this himself:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

The yoke of Christ is the life he calls us to: fulfilling his commandments and loving one another. If we truly take on this "yoke", and if again consider the raging world, which do we truly desire for ourselves, for our families and friends? If we agree that the world is steeped in rage and confusion and hatred, let us give the final word again to St. John of Sinai, who says of humility:

"He who has taken humility as his bride is above all gentle, kind, full of compunction, sympathetic, calm, bright, compliant, inoffensive, wide awake, not indolent and (why say more?) free from passion; for the Lord remembered us in our humility, and delivered us from our enemies, and our passions and impurities." (Step 25:10)

May this be our contribution to the waves of the world. Amen.

Koli Yva Ingredients and Symbolism

Food for Thought

It is sometimes claimed that the ingredients from which kolyva is made should be nine, as many as the ranks of the Angels. Each ingredient has its own symbolism, specifically:

1. Wheat symbolizes life and resurrection, as the process of sowing and germination represents the hope of resurrection and eternal life
2. Breadcrumbs symbolize the light soil covering the body of the deceased
3. Sugar symbolizes the sweetness of Paradise and the hope that the deceased will rest in peace
4. Pomegranate is considered to be a symbol of the well-being of the dead, while the many small seeds of the fruit represent the community of the living and the deceased who remain united in the presence of Jesus Christ
5. Raisins represent Christ who is the True Vine
6. Walnuts and almonds symbolize diversity of life and rebirth. They are also considered a sign of blessing
7. Cinnamon and other spices give fragrance, which symbolizes the fragrance of the Christian spiritual life and the blessing that accompanies it at the time of one's death
8. Parsley (or spearmint) is a blessing for the repose of the deceased
9. A cross made with sugar or white candy is usually formed on the surface of the plate, symbolizing the victory of life over death and the hope of resurrection.

VISITOR WRITES

I've worshipped in many places, many faiths in many countries. While every worship service has meaning, today was something so unexpected and truly uplifting. The service was more spiritual (than religious) on every level. It felt like a family gathering, welcoming and sharing and embracing. There were no strangers, no "visitors". I felt so included, part of the whole. This is, as I understand it, true fellowship.

Though I am not Greek Orthodox, the service felt so familiar. I think Fr. Andreas had a lot to do with that. He is the real deal, authentic, sincere. I wish we could clone him in any and every worship service. His homily touched me deeply. It was reassuring, hopeful, from his heart.

And so many young children! They were wonderful and so included. It was a blessing to be a part of worship. I'm so happy! I hope this captures at least some of your truly beautiful congregation.

*Until we meet again,
Deborah Androus, friend of Theodora*

FOCUS ON OUR COMMUNITY

Celebrations, Milestones, Comfort & Support

In Our Prayers

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 Caerra Jack Phyllis KS Melton family Joanne BE Christina Stephen DG Barbara Spiro Gloria Phil & Ronnie Daniel John Michelle MP MSR Jeff Shannon Sandy Glen Tish Cheryl Brian Ella LE Paul Dina John T. John D. Terry Dorothy Erma (Hermione) Phyllis John Emmanouel Mariham Don Samara Helen Tom Debbie Hanna Chris Elliot Greg Tim Missy Chris Ashley Christian

REMEMBERING THOSE SERVING OUR COUNTRY

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

Congratulations and best wishes

APPOINTMENTS

To Archon Frank Boardman, Maestro; Archon Dr. Terry Sarantou, M.D., Hartoularios; and Archon Stephanos G. Trakas, Hartoularios on their appointment as Regional Commanders in the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of North and South Carolina Archdiocese of America

MARRIAGES

To Christina and Corey Mullis for their Orthodox wedding
To Kayla and Esteban Cavil for their Orthodox wedding
To Kseniya Lyubina and Martin Nikolov for their Orthodox wedding
To Kristen and Chad Asvestas for their Orthodox wedding
To Evgenia and Volodymyr Kartaiev on their Orthodox wedding
To Darlene and Derek Gray for their Orthodox wedding

BIRTHS, 40TH DAY BLESSINGS, BAPTISMS & CHRISMATIONS

To Trish and Lee Millsaps for the birth, 40th day blessing and baptism of Levi, Ellie and **Evangeline's sister, Lucia Scarlett**
To Michaelina and Chris Franks for the birth and 40th day blessing of their daughter, Vasiliki Zoe
To Katya and Troy Moore for the baptism of Mila and Ivan's brother, Luke Landon and to his godparent, Marina Voronina
To Emad and Julia Soliman for the birth, 40th day blessing and baptism of their daughter, Sophia Jayne and to her godparent, Gerry Clonaris
To Jon, Holly, Caroline and James Byrd for their baptisms and to their godparents, Evelyn Klund and Sam & Christina Herron
To Courtney and Jordan Zielenski for the birth, 40th day blessing and baptism of their son, Osric and to his godparent, Zachary Hair
To Larysa and Bohdan Boiko for the baptism of their son, Liam, and to his godparent, Luliia Soroka
To Danielle and Daniel Monroe for the baptism of Georgia Kate and Daniel's brother, Christian, and to his godparent, Brent Jackson
To Olga and Nicusor Cornovan for the baptism of their daughter, Emily and to the godparents, Irinas and Horia Basarabeanu and Nadejda and Alexandru Solonaru
To Brooke and Zack Hair for the birth of their son, Klaus

With Sympathy on the Repose of our beloved brothers and sisters

To the Azar family for the repose of Elie's brother, George Tanios Azar
To Maria and Chris Mortis for the repose of Chris' father, George Mortis
To Tess Sagos for the repose of her sister, Angelika Anderson
To the Kanelos family for the repose of Dean's father, Peter
To the Couchell, Bacalis, Crambes, Tsahakis, Petrou, Sistare, Kellen and Stonestreet families for the repose of Faye's husband, Pete

In appreciation and Thank You

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

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.

WELCOMING THE NEW ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR



College and Continuing Education Students

Preserve them in *true faith*
and in *righteousness*
and in *purity.*



St. Phoebe Ministry

August and September brought in the 2025-26 school year. We began this season with the Agiasmo service (blessing of the waters) and in prayer services asking our Lord for His abundant blessings, guidance, and divine protection for our students, educators, and all who serve in our ministries and academic programs. Our services and activities included:

- August 10 — Farewell and prayer service for our students heading off for college, university, vocational, and continuing education.
- August 16— St. Phoebe Kick-off Ministry Retreat at Elatos Park.
- August 24 — Blessing of our youth in grades K-12 with their backpacks in tow for the start of the new academic year.
- August 24 — Acolytes orientation to prepare for privilege and honor of service in our altar.
- September 2 — Agiasmo for St. Sophia School first day and special service in honor of their patron saint, Sophia on September 17th.
- September 11 — Agiasmo on the first weekly session of St. Panteleimon Home School
- September 12 — Agiasmo on the first weekly session of Greek Language School.
- September 14 — Beginning of Sunday Youth Catechism



The St. Sophia School



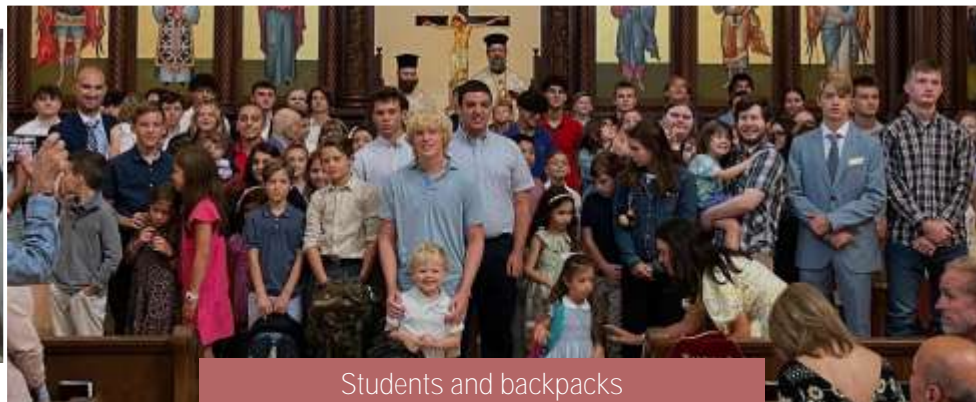
Greek Language School



Acolyte Orientation



St. Panteleimon Home School



Students and backpacks

FEAST DAY SERVICES

TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD (AUG 6TH)



On this day we read of the revelation of the uncreated Light of God by Jesus Christ, while the disciples Peter, James, and John were overshadowed by a bright cloud and heard the voice of the Father proclaiming, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him." Parishioners brought grapes to be blessed emphasizing the need for continuous spiritual fruitfulness and transformation.

May we all be filled with the divine, uncreated light of God! ❖



DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS (AUG. 15TH)



Faithful of all ages gathered for the sacred services of the Dormition of our Most-holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary. The festal koliva were prepared as an offering of our love for the Theotokos and then distributed to those present. This solemn and joyous feast was marked not only by prayer and worship, but also by fellowship, as all shared in a delicious luncheon following the service. May we and the whole world feel her sheltering and consoling love that abides in the life of her Son and our God. And may gatherings such as these remind us of an eternity that awaits those who love Christ. ❖



ST. PHANOURIOS (AUG 27TH)

We were blessed to commemorate St. Phanourios with the Divine Liturgy, followed by the blessing of the traditional phanouropites (Phanourios cakes). May the holy martyr intercede for us and help us find ourselves in Christ! ❖



ST. SOPHIA (SEPT. 17TH)



Our St. Sophia School family had a joyful time celebrating with a beautiful liturgy and a festive gathering in honor of their patron saint. We are so grateful for the blessing of our community and the example of St. Sophia's faith and wisdom guiding our school. ❖

FEAST DAY SERVICES

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS



Sunday, September 14, is the glorious day of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. It commemorates, on one hand, the finding of the True and

Precious Cross of Christ by St. Helen, mother of St. Constantine the Great, in 335 AD and, on the other, its recovery from the Persians in 629 AD.

The rites of the Church have us make a special procession of the Cross on this day, at the end of Orthros. Upon the completion of this rite, the Divine Liturgy will begin. The faithful are encouraged to continue venerating the Cross as the Divine Liturgy unfolds.

We chant "Lord, have mercy!" 530 times in the rite of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross.

What else can be said, when we stare at the instrument of death, made now Tree of Life? The sign of belonging to Christ, while exiled from the world? The armor of faith, arranged on our weakened frames? The weapon of peace, held in gnarled hands? The blessing we trace over them that curse us? The silent judge of our every thought?

Lord, have mercy!
 Lord, save your people!
 We venerate your Cross, O Christ!
 May the Precious Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ be lifted high in our hearts! ❖



ST. NEKTARIOS ENDOWMENT

2024 ANNUAL YEAR END REPORT

as presented at the September Parish Assembly



OVERVIEW

The Endowment is a 501(c)3 nonprofit created in 2017 for planned giving to benefit the Church. Amendments to the charter were approved by the Parish Assembly in 2024. The investing principal is for long-term growth and making interest income available for ministry work. Under the Charter Umbrella are two funds: the Cockinos Youth Fund and the General Fund.

The Cockinos Youth Fund was the first gift and has distribution restrictions and grant requirements. The Endowment has awarded over \$135,000 to over 100 grantees since its inception.

The Endowment created its second fund, The General Fund, in 2023 which is unrestricted in its distributions and grant requirements. The goal is to address the growing needs of our parish and its ministries. The General Fund continued to grow and welcomed additional donors in 2024. It has three areas of focus:

- Campus Improvement – repairs, maintenance, upgrades
- Church Enhancement – beautification, furniture, fixtures
- Worship Enrichment – material support, liturgical implements, continuing education

LEGACY CIRCLE – Donors are invited to join the Circle with our charter members, Dee and Frank Cockinos. Through their generosity, donors are able to leave a lasting legacy and can contribute in honor of their loved ones. The Endowment is always accepting gifts that can include:

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

20 Grants totaling \$ 28,243 were awarded in accordance with the Cockinos Youth Fund Agreement

- 8 Academic Scholarships
- Scholarships to St. Stephen's Summer Camp
- Other Beneficiaries include:
 - SN Youth Ministries
 - St. Photios Pilgrimage
 - SN Greek Language School
 - St. Sophia School
 - Missions / Child of God, Kenya
 - St. Panteleimon Home School
 - Metrolina Phoenician Club for
 - Palestinian Children's Relief Fund

Balances

Portfolio	Total Relationship Balance as of 12/31/2024	\$
A. The Cockinos Family Youth Fund Balance		
	1-Jan-24	\$ 484,107
	31-Dec-24	\$ 486,041
B. The General Fund Balance		
	1-Jan-24	\$ 21,506
	31-Dec-24	\$ 33,850

Income and Expenses for the 12 months ending 12/31/2024

Category	Amount	\$
Interest and Dividend Earned		\$ 23,214
Expenses		\$ 30,712
20 Grants	\$ 28,243	
Annual Administrative Support to St. Nektarios	\$ 1,200	
Liability Insurance	\$ 569	
Endowment Sunday	\$ 700	
Annual Management Fees		\$ 7,250

Thank you to our Committee Members
 Emile Khuri, Sam Kleto, Kathryn Kokenes, Julie Milich, Maria Mortis,
 Theodora Sexstone, and Dimitri Triantafyllides

NEWCOMER SOCIAL



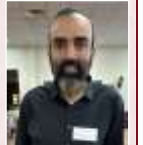
OUTREACH AND WELCOMING MINISTRY

On Friday, September 19th, we celebrated our Newcomers in the Spiritual Life Center for dinner, fellowship and browsing the bookstore. Linda Borowski and Kim Braswell greeted our Newcomers as they arrived. Fr. Andreas welcomed Newcomers to our parish, to our city and to our faith. He gave thanks for the delicious meal arranged by Evelyn Klund and prepared by Ayoub Ayoub. Thank you, Ayoub and Evelyn, for the wonderful feast and beautiful presentation.

After fellowship and a group photo, we all headed over to the sanctuary for the first Becoming Orthodox Class of the new ecclesiastical year. ❖



Dr. Christopher Lockwood and John Pladvjian were able to join us for our Newcomer Social. Afterwards Dr. Lockwood spoke at our Becoming Orthodox Class. The next day, he was our special A.R.E presenter (see below).



Adult Religious Education — Special Presentations

CHARLOTTE, NC WELCOMES DR. CHRISTOPHER LOCKWOOD

We were honored to host Dr. Lockwood for a spiritually enriching evening centered on Orthodox theology and the mystical depth of Holy Scripture.

Dr. Lockwood, a theologian in the Orthodox Church and Ph.D. graduate from



Aristotle University in Greece, has taught in the **Master's program at the University of St. Katherine** and written extensively on symbolism in the Orthodox tradition.

The evening began with his first talk. Dr. Lockwood introduced themes from his book, *Types & Symbols in the Bible*. He emphasized that Holy Scripture is not a static record but a living, mystical narrative. He shared that each believer is called to be a co-author and communicant with the **Lord, "the great Author of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).**

Following Vespers and a community dinner, he presented his second talk which explored: The Purpose and Goal of



Christian Life". He offered theological insights that invited reflection among attendees.

We give glory and thanks to God for the opportunity to learn and grow together in faith through Dr. Lockwood's teachings. ❖

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ORTHODOX FILM CLUB

Tuesday, July 29, the St. Nektarios Orthodox Film Club teamed up with Holy Trinity Cathedral to offer a screening of **"Amphilochios: Saint of Patmos"** at Charlotte's Independent Picture House. With a full house and in the presence of a relic of St. Amphilochios, the faithful took in this short but powerful presentation on the life of a contemporary holy man. Following the film, clergy took part in a discussion about the film and the topic of sanctity in our times. After the **chanting of the Saint's hymn in Greek and English**, the faithful were given an icon card and were able to venerate his relic as they exited the theater.

This marks the second recent theatrical screening of an Orthodox film in the past year, the previous one being the documentary **"Sacred Alaska"**. We hope for several such opportunities in the future.

On Sunday, August 17, The Orthodox Film Club showed the film **"Luka" (2013)**, about the life of St. Luke the Surgeon, in the St. Nektarios Spiritual Life Center. Our Orthodox Film Club hosted an intimate episode screening and discussion of the Greek TV series **"From Farasa to Heaven"**, about the life



of St. Paisios of Mt. Athos. This excellent series is the latest in a new generation of hagiographies, exploring the complexities of human relationships navigated by faith, and exposing audiences to timeless jewels of **wisdom from the Church's ascetic, familial, and liturgical piety**. St. Paisios, intercede for us! On August 26th, our Orthodox Film Club hosted an intimate episode screening and

discussion of the Greek TV series "From Farasa to Heaven", about the life of St. Paisios of Mt. Athos. This excellent series is the latest in a new generation of hagiographies, exploring the complexities of human relationships navigated by faith, and exposing audiences to **timeless jewels of wisdom from the Church's ascetic, familial, and liturgical piety**. St. Paisios, intercede for us! ❖

METROPOLIS CATECHIST CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE GOES ON THE ROAD

The Metropolis of Atlanta expanded its annual Catechist Conference, held this past August at two regional venues across the Metropolis. The conference also offered an in-person and virtual option to attend, this initiative was designed to increase accessibility and participation in catechetical training for religious educators throughout our parishes. St. Nektarios was selected as one of the venues.

We were honored to welcome three guest speakers: Dr. Albert Rossi, Ms Anastasia Stonestreet, and our own, Gerry Clonaris.

The conference prayerfully began with Fr. Andreas conducting an Agiasmos Service. Gerry Clonaris, Chairman of the Metropolis of Atlanta Religious Education Ministry, welcomed more than 80 attendees (virtual and in person) and introduced our speakers.



Ms. Anastasia Stonestreet, the morning presenter, spoke on **"The Little Monastery" Cultivating an Orthodox Approach to Youth Catechism through Hands-on Materials, Activities, Learning Spaces to Build the Faith and Phronema of Our Youth**. Her presentations included a **"field trip" to a sample classroom setting nurturing a learning environment**.

Lunch break offered time for participants to network, get to know our speakers, and share practical tools to enrich their local programs.



The afternoon speaker was Dr. Albert Rossi who presented **"Life is All About Relationships"**. This was an informative presentation addressed to the high school level students by our noted author and scholar from St. Vladimir Theological Seminary

During the closing Gerry offered thoughts about the vital role of catechists in nurturing Orthodox **Christian education, "Raising Your Value as a Catechist Teacher"**.

Brian Clonaris and James Axiotis provided excellent technical support alongside John Gretes. Caroline Mellekas served on the parish task force. Thank you to our parish volunteers preparing the refreshments and a delicious Lenten lunch; and to the parish staff in providing tireless administrative support. May our efforts be blessed. ❖



CATECHUMEN INDUCTION

Our most recent Catechumen Induction was held on Sunday, September 21st. Catechumens are inducted on a rolling basis, but these last several years we have also observed a special day to enroll several at once, while also praying for all catechumens.

A catechumen is someone who has decided they want to join the Church and puts himself or herself in the position of a student. "Catechism" (Greek κατήχησις) means "instruction by word of mouth". Our parish offers a dedicated catechetical series called "Becoming Orthodox" to this end, but it is not the only avenue of formation.

Sunday's induction ceremony consisted of a special homily by Fr. Andreas, followed by the Prayer for the Making of a Catechumen, the first of the Exorcism Prayers, the Litany for the Catechumens, and the dismissal of the catechumens to their places, followed by the remainder of the Divine Liturgy.

In recent history, those coming to the Orthodox faith largely did so through the avenue of marriage, while some also studied their way to the Church or encountered it unintentionally. Today, there is a conscious quest that has landed many at the doors of our parishes. This is a beautiful challenge that is moving us to adapt—but not to "reinvent the wheel". Rather, we find ourselves turning to the tried-and-true, centuries-old practices of the missionary Church. Naturally, there comes a saturation point at which a population is no longer considered a "mission" but is established, and the focus shifts from bringing non-



believers into the fold to perpetuating generational Christian faith among families in what has become a Christian society.

It is largely from this latter context that Orthodoxy came to our country. Now, however, its humble and quiet witness has attracted droves. We find ourselves in a transitional point of having to recover the mission-minded aspects of the Church's deep, grace-filled experience and practice.

May Christ, who commanded us to make disciples of all nations, continue to enlighten all of us to work in his desire that all might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. ❖

"Today you place your feet on a sacred and well-worn path of ineffable love and grace. We glorify God and welcome you as we, too, were once welcomed by Him. He welcomes you as you are today, knowing what it is you can become by grace."

Prayer from the Catechumen Induction

ST. PHOEBE MINISTRY

Saturday, August 16, our St. Phoebe girls' ministry gathered at nearby Elatos Park for its annual kickoff. Our St. Phoebe girls help with candles and ushering at services on Sundays, and participate regularly in philanthropic projects. In addition to fellowship and sharing in faith, the girls prepared 120 ambulatory meal bags for the Salvation Army Shelter. The Shelter, on Pratt St., is the home of Shelter Health Services, a beneficiary of our annual 5K (mark your calendar for November 22!); both are served by a number of our parishioners. ❖



FINANCIALS MATTER

TO FUND MINISTRY, OUR
2025 STEWARDSHIP GOAL IS

\$1,100,000

580 STEWARDS HAVE PLEDGED

\$1,083,139

AS OF 9/27, OFFERINGS EQUAL

\$752,527



As of Sept. 27, 2025	ACTUAL	BUDGET	%
Stewardship	\$ 752,527	\$1,100,000	68.4%
Other Income	<u>241,181</u>	<u>\$ 297,750</u>	81%
Total Income	\$ 993,708	\$1,397,750	71%
Expenses	<u>\$ 1,014,891</u>	<u>\$1,397,750</u>	72.6%
Net Income	- \$ 21,183		

Notes:

- ◆ Nine months is 75% of the year
- ◆ Income is at 71% and just short of budget by \$55,910
- ◆ Total paid (\$1,014,891) and accrued expenses (\$58,156 for 5 months Allocation) are at 75% of Budget.

REFLECTIONS ON FAITHFUL GENEROSITY

A life of faithful generosity brings about peace, joy and purpose to the giver.

It is an expression of gratitude to our Lord

It is an investment in and support of our parish's mission which is . . .

Dedicated to continue our Lord's Ministry of salvation through the proclaiming and teaching the Gospel; through Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and through loving service to God and to mankind

It is commitment to our parish 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



Ways to Give

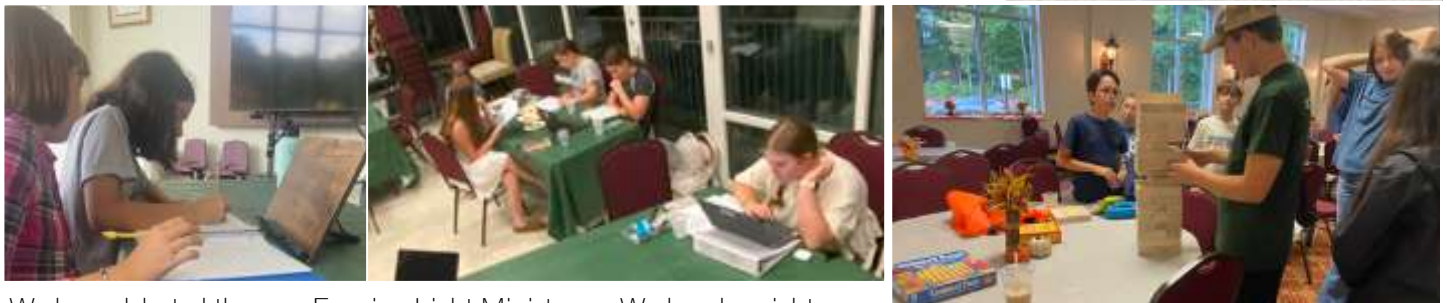
- You may make your offerings through:
- Your bill pay service,
 - Online giving with this QR code,
 - In person or by mail



YOUTH MINISTRY



Above and below: Youth Catechism is now underway with over 200 registrants! We are overjoyed to welcome so many students and seek solutions for the blessed challenge of accommodating for our rapidly growing parish. Pictured above are our largest classes, K-1, and 5-6, with nearly 40 registered students in each. Several of our classes are already combined due to limited space.



We have debuted the new Evening Light Ministry on Wednesday nights from 5:00 - 8:30PM. Youth in grades 5-12 are welcome to stay for a while or the whole evening. At 5pm we begin with a chant lesson from our Protopsaltis, Samuel Herron, followed by vespers, and open homework hall with refreshments. Come and see!

GOYA Sunday evening ministry fun!

Youth Ministry



GOYA Sunday evening ministry fun! We enjoyed a welcome back dinner earlier this month, followed by a board game night a couple weeks later.

St. Nektarios Greek Language School

We're thrilled to welcome 30 children, ages 4 to 11, to a vibrant new year rooted in faith, language, and community at our St. Nektarios Greek Language School. Our program blends tradition and creativity—teaching the Greek language and the Orthodox Christian faith through language games, chanting, role-playing, singing, dancing, crafts and even soccer!

We are proud to have a wonderful team of teachers—namely Helen and Catherine Giles, Pam Copsis, Dr. George Demakis, Caroline Mellekas, and Anastasia Holevas—who bring knowledge, dedication, genuine care, and a spirit of collaboration to everything they do. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Varvara Pasielis who stepped in as a substitute teacher



and brought vocabulary to life through a fun, kinesthetic approach that truly engaged and inspired our students on our opening day, September 12!

Lastly, we are grateful to our beloved Proistamenos, Protopresbyter Andreas G. Houpos for his unwavering support and blessings for a new school year of growth, laughter, and learning!❖



Missions and Philanthropy Ministry

“After the Guatemalan civil war, thousands of Mayan people became alienated from the Catholic Church. The Mayan people sought a new church and some of them found it . . . The Orthodox Church.” These words resonate from the OCMC documentary “THE MAYAN ORTHODOX: THE MEDICAL MISSION, a documentary on an OCMC medical mission trip in March of this year to the village of Aguacate, Guatemala.

Dr. Gus Gianakopoulos and Dr. Dennis Kokenes were key contributors to its effectiveness.

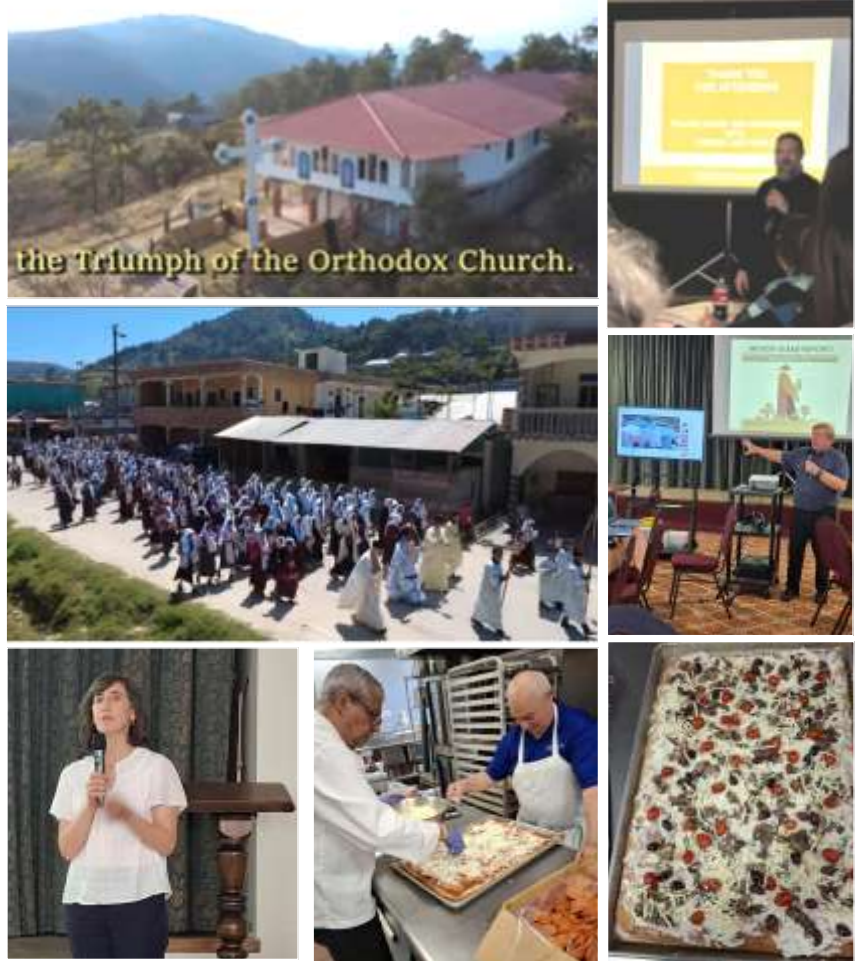
In June we held a Missions Dinner and watched the documentary. Afterward we were touched by the personal testimonies of Dennis and Gus.

Pictured here are photos from the Mission trip and some from the Missions Dinner. Thank you to Tim Klund, Missy Davis, and Kate Caltis for organizing this event and to Dr. Gus and Dr. Dennis for answering questions from the attendees. Thank you also to Chef Peter Reinhart for the delicious pizza we enjoyed during the presentation.

For those who were unable to attend, please see articles below by Dr. Dennis Kokenes and Missy Davis.



To watch the documentary please see:
The Mayan Orthodox: The Medical Mission on
www.youtube.com/watch?v=scVOSNvD9T0



Above left:

Missy Davis of the St. Nektarios Missions & Philanthropy Ministry

Above Middle:

Safwat Wassef and Peter Reinhart preparing the pizzas for the Missions Dinner



In March of 2025 Dr Gus Gianakopoulos and I were blessed with the opportunity to join a team of Orthodox Christians on a Medical Mission trip to a remote village, Aguacate Guatemala. Our team consisted of 3 MDs, Dr. Peter Pappas, an infectious disease specialist, Dr. Judy Lui, a pediatrician, and me, a gastroenterologist.

Dr Gus was the sole dentist. Dr. Pappas's wife Alexis joined as clinic support with Michael Boworth, EMT and Mission Administrator. Presbyteria Lia Chistulides and Fr. John Chakos served as translators.

Finally, Constantine Kallaur, a recent film school graduate, came along to create a documentary of the mission to promote awareness and raise support.

The team was joined by dedicated Guatemalan Clergy and seminarians who supported the clinic operation and worked tirelessly to keep us housed, fed, transported, and most importantly spiritually nourished with daily worship services.

His Grace Bishop Osios was the chief cook throughout our stay with the help of Sister Isadora. His humility and quiet service were in stark contrast to his fiery powerful



Missions and Philanthropy Ministry

sermons at the many services we attended, including the inspirational Sunday of Orthodoxy where we marched with the massive congregation around the village carrying the Sacred Icons. We must also recognize the young 16-year-old seminarian Moses who assisted Dr Gus in the dental clinic and made it possible for him to treat 120 patients!

The village is very remote and poor with no formal medical facility other than this humble clinic. The clinic is about 10 years old and represents the hard and devoted work of Fr John Chakos. Fr John has returned to the village twice a year in the spring and fall, with teams such as ours, to minister to the physical and spiritual health of the village. Through his support and sacrifice the Orthodox Church has grown in Guatemala as has the clinic. I believe the greatest evidence of success of this missionary effort is that two sisters who grew up in the village have been inspired by this medical mission to become

practitioners and are poised to take over the full-time management of the clinic.

One sister, Mati, is now a nurse, and she keeps the clinic operational all year long. This allows her to distribute medications from the small pharmacy and monitor patients with chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes.

Her sister just completed her medical degree and will join her later this year to offer year-round care to the people in their native unique dialect language and with a deep understanding of the culture of the people which will allow a real paradigm shift in the healthcare of Aguacata.

Gus and I were so fortunate to be chosen for this Medical Mission so that we could help but also witness the fruits of the Holy Spirit through the 10-year perseverance of Fr John Chakos. Through the Grace of God, the clinic will now be a true full service primary care



clinic run by her native children. Please watch this documentary to learn more about our experience. The Mayan Orthodox: The Medical Mission

In His Service,
Dennis Kokenes

Navajo Mission

From May 17–23, Ava Hunt, Emily Asvestas, and I had the privilege of participating in a YOCAMA (Young Orthodox Christian American Mission Adventures) mission trip to the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

Together with eight other volunteers from across the United States, we conducted health fairs in four different cities, offering basic health screenings that included measurements of height and weight, heart and lung assessments, blood pressure and heart rate checks, vision tests, and evaluations for pain or mobility concerns. Each day, we served between 25 to 50 individuals, many of whom expressed heartfelt gratitude for the care and attention they received.

The Navajo Nation faces considerable economic and healthcare challenges. High unemployment and poverty are widespread. While some community members work in industries such as oil and gas, many others

rely on traditional crafts like weaving and jewelry-making. Health disparities are a significant concern, with conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and addiction affecting many.

Access to healthcare is limited, and in some areas, residents live without electricity or running water. There are local and boarding schools available for secondary education. Many young people who leave the area for college do not return.

We would like to extend a special thank you to everyone who donated eyeglasses for this mission. We brought more than 100 pairs with us and were able to distribute many of them to individuals in need, making a tangible difference in their daily lives.



Missy Davis

MISSIONS AND PHILANTHROPY

On August 8, 2025, a group of St. Nektarios parishioners participated in a morning volunteer event at Nourish Up's new warehouse, located at 901 Carrier Drive, Charlotte, NC. Nourish Up was formerly known as Loaves & Fishes and Friendship Trays.

The mission of Nourish Up remains much the same as before its merger: to provide groceries, meals, and hope through a network of food pantries and meal delivery services for Mecklenburg County residents in need.

The organization feeds thousands of people each year, many facing unforeseen hardships or emergency situations. Nourish Up relies on food and financial donations to support its mission.

Our volunteer group worked on an assembly-line process to fill boxes with non-perishable food items, then load them onto pallets for distribution throughout the county. In two hours, the team had packed five pallets—a significant contribution toward feeding our neighbors in need.

St. Nektarios has been a long-time supporter of this organization in all of its previous forms, and we look forward to continuing this partnership in the future.

Please consider participating in our next group volunteer opportunity. Watch for announcements in church publications, the calendar, and the bulletin. ❖



ST. NEKTARIOS OUTDOOR MINISTRY

Saturday, September 20, our Outdoors Ministry event started at St. Luke Church in Mooresville, graciously hosted by Fr. Robert to pray the Third Hour and to receive a good word from him. From there, participants of all ages went to nearby Lake Norman State Park for a beautiful hike and social time.

We give glory and thanks to God for the diversity of his gifts and blessings! ❖



Beyond St. Nektarios

Finding His Calling Through Volunteer Service

Apr. 17, 2025 | by Cierra Ivey - Reprinted with permission

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” – Mark 16:15

Father Paul Tsahakis and his ministry volunteers have held Bible study sessions for women and children at The Salvation Army Center of Hope since 2019. During each session, he hands out small wooden crosses to anyone who would like one, reminding them that Jesus is always with them. However, [Fr.] Tsahakis didn’t start volunteering as a Greek Orthodox Priest at the Center of Hope.

He became familiar with the shelter under a different service. [Fr.] Tsahakis was a well-known orthopedic spine surgeon for 30 years before he became a full-time priest. While a surgeon, he offered free weekly orthopedic clinics to women at the shelter who had joint pain and couldn’t afford to see a specialist. However, clients sought more than an orthopedic check; they yearned for spiritual services. That’s when [Fr.] Tsahakis realized his journey to becoming a priest was greater than himself.

“When the women speak from their hearts and souls about the things that happened to them, it’s almost like a public confession,” says [Fr.] Tsahakis. “They feel very comfortable talking with me.”

The volunteer group, St. Hermione Home Ministry, attracts an average of 70 women and children every Tuesday for its Bible studies. The group provides organic fresh fruit, pizza and pastries. When available, they even bring clothing items for clients. The sessions begin with prayer, followed by a scripture reading and an interactive group discussion. The children separate and volunteers facilitate an age-appropriate session. “It’s a very engaged group,” he says. “When I ask if someone would like to comment, ten hands would go up. Many people want to express themselves.”

The group also partners with Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) to help women obtain careers. School representatives come to the shelter once a month to enroll women in their “Walk with Me” program, which allows women to get their GED and learn a vocation concurrently. With sponsorships, the program provides bus tickets for travel to and from CPCC, school supplies, and tutoring. “[The program] went from very modest, ‘let’s have a Bible study’, now to a very well-developed complex offering,” he says.

Before starting this program at the Center of Hope, [Fr.] Tsahakis did not fully understand homelessness. He knew the problem existed, but his world revolved around his work as a



surgeon, working long hours in operating rooms for days at a time. That changed when he began volunteering for The Salvation Army. He realized he could make an impact simply by showing up.

Based on surveys conducted by the ministry, there has been an improvement in anxiety and depression levels, a decrease in suicidal ideations and more women finding the strength to quit drugs thanks to the Bible study sessions.

Some women noted:
“You don’t judge us.”
“You treat us with respect.”
“You don’t force us to believe.”
“Everyone is welcome.”

And to this day, they carry their little wooden crosses, knowing that Jesus is always with them.

“Our goal is to be present and to bring Christ,” he says. “We always say, ‘they don’t need us, but everyone needs Christ.’ So, we try to empty ourselves of ourselves and make that commitment to come every week.” By showing up every Tuesday, [Fr.] Tsahakis understood something no textbook could teach—healing doesn’t happen only in hospitals. ❖

VISITORS FROM ST. FRANCIS METHODIST CHURCH

Earlier this year, our neighbors from nearby St. Francis Methodist Church visited for a guided walkthrough of our temple. Any exploration of an Orthodox place of worship is **necessarily a journey into the Church’s** theology and ethos. We thank our guests for their respectful presence and questions, and we hope they take us up on our invitation to “come and see” **Saturday Vespers.**

Openness to our neighbors in this way has exposed many denominational Christians, and non-Christians, to Orthodoxy, and we welcome the several groups who visit during the year. Sharing is part of our witness to the **world, and witnessing our visitors’ sincere and** sometimes moving experiences is a humbling reminder of the great gift and responsibility it is to be an Orthodox Christian.



Beautification of the Temple

New Chant Stands Arrive



Recently following a beautiful Divine Liturgy, members of our choir helped transport new analogia (choir stands) from the workshop of neighbor and parishioner, Mark Malatras.

Mark has made several pieces of furniture for the church over the years. These pieces are the fruit of many, many months of planning and labor and love. Co-designed with Protopsaltis, Sam Herron, and waiting now to be embellished with hand-carved icons by another parishioner, these essential pieces of church furniture are a wonderful example of stewardship and community.

May they serve the needs of the parish for many years to come! ❖



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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: Dec. 8, 2025

Published: December 15, 2025