



THE VOICE

CELEBRATING CHARLOTTE'S GREEK COMMUNITY NEWS AND HISTORY

H  ωνη
THE KOINOTHTOS

VOL. 87
NO. 03

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL



<https://www.facebook.com/HolyTrinityGreekOrthodoxCathedralCharlotte/>

600 EAST BLVD

CHARLOTTE, NC 28203

704-334-4771

www.htgo.org

THIRD QUARTER
2026

The 2026 Yiasou Greek Festival September 11 - 13, 2026



This year's Festival began on the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center in New York, the field in Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon building outside of Washington, DC. The Agiasmo included a Trisagion to remember those lost that day, and since.

Our Vision

With the Grace of God, to provide a loving and caring Community where all belong to Christ, through worship, sacramental life, everyday spiritual discipline, sanctification, education, witness and fellowship.

Our Mission

is to become faithful followers of Christ and thus active Greek Orthodox Christians by accepting and submitting to the Will of our Lord so that we may realize salvation and enter into the Kingdom of God.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE....

Reflections from the Pulpit 3
PC President's Commentary 4
From the Cathedral Office 4
Clergy - Laity 6-7
Yiasou Festival Pictures 8-10
Ionian Village Experience 11
Around Charlottetown 13
In Memoriam 14
Preschool 15

600 EAST BOULEVARD
CHARLOTTE, NC 28203

HOLY TRINITY
Greek Orthodox Cathedral



Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Charlotte, NC
Permit No. 871

THE EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome back.

We are pleased to update you this quarter with some interesting and important articles.

Two delegates to the 48th Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress in Cleveland, Ohio report on their experience at the four day event. Sarah Vastis and Kathy Xyrafakis offer comprehensive coverage. As they say on TV, it is "wall-to-wall" coverage on pages 6-7.

2026 High School Seniors, Maria Dernas and Evi Pappas, attended Ionian Village in Greece this summer. Each agreed to share their experience with our readers on page 11.

September around here always starts with the Yiasou Festival. While the weather was not quite as nice as most years (rain storm Saturday afternoon), that did not dampen the spirits of the volunteers who manned their stations and welcomed the Charlotte community to our East Blvd campus. You will find a few photos on pages 8-10.

Also, on page 10, don't miss an article written by ninth grader Constantine Vlachos-Mobley about the Festival. It was posted online *To Vima*, a Greek newspaper.

Rapidly approaching on Monday, October 19, and Sunday, November 1, are the Open Budget Meeting and Fall Parish Assembly, respectively. Both are very important and open to the Holy Trinity community. It is an excellent opportunity to learn more about current and long term issues and opportunities. You can listen to the presentations, ask questions, and be better informed about our Church.

Before we know it, we will be fully into the end of year holiday season. By January 1, we will recognize our veterans (November 15), observe the Nativity Fast, hold elections to select 5 Parish Council members and two Foundation trustees, and celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Don't blink, you might miss something important.

The Voice is here to serve the community. We welcome your suggestions on future topics to cover, what features you like more and which ones you like less. Email us at the address below.

Thanks for reading.

GZ

voice@htgo.org

ECCLESIASTICAL SERVICES

Friday October 23	St. Iakovos the Apostle Orthros 8:00am Divine Liturgy 9:00am
Monday October 26	St. Demetrios the Great Martyr Orthros 8:00am Divine Liturgy 9:00am
November 15	The Nativity Fast begins
Saturday November 21	Entrance of the Theotokos Orthros 7:45am Divine Liturgy 9:00am
Wednesday November 25	St. Katherine the Great Martyr Orthros 7:45am Divine Liturgy 9:00am
Monday November 30	St. Andrew the First Called Orthros 8:30am Divine Liturgy 9:30am
Friday December 25	Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Orthros 8:00am Divine Liturgy 9:00am
Friday January 1	Circumcision of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ St. Basil Orthros 7:45am Divine Liturgy 9:00am
Wednesday January 6	Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Orthros 7:45am Divine Liturgy 9:00am
OTHER EVENTS	
Monday October 19	Open Budget Meeting 6:00 pm
Sunday November 1	General Assembly after Divine Liturgy 11:30 am
Thursday-Friday November 26-27	Cathedral Office Closed
Thursday-Friday December 24-25	Cathedral Office Closed

THE VOICE

CELEBRATING CHARLOTTE'S GREEK COMMUNITY NEWS AND HISTORY

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

600 East Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28203
704-334-4771
www.htgo.org

THE VOICE STAFF:

George Zogzas, Guest Editor
Ellen Couchell, Editor
Roxanna Dimitriu, Editor
Frances Zogzas, Copy Editor
George Andrews, Business Manager

CLERGY:

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Resmini, **Dean**
Rev. Fr. Elefterios Plevrakis, **Assoc. Priest**
Rev. Fr. George Politis, **Deacon**
Rev. Fr. Jerry Hall, **Retired Priest**

CATHEDRAL STAFF:

Sarah Vastis, **Parish Administrator**
Kathy Xyrafakis, **Ministry Coordinator**
Frances Zogzas, **Financial Secretary**
George Petsas, **Facilities Coordinator**
Robert Brendle, **Dir. of Youth Ministries**
Eleni Karageorgos, **Athletics Director**
Sarah Kakouras, **Parish Receptionist**
Irina Monzolevskaya, **Organist**
Dimitri Petropoulos, **Chanter**
Angelo Tatsis, **Building Assistant**
Maria Kleto, **Preschool Co-Director**
Lisa Giotis, **Preschool Co-Director**
Olympia Koutsokalis, **Greek School Dir.**

2026 PARISH COUNCIL (term ends):

Dino M. Pappas (28) **President**
Gus A. Pappas (28) **Vice President**
Maria Diamantis (27) **Secretary**
Penelope Hefner (27) **Asst. Secretary**
Vaki Karampourniotis (26) **Treasurer**
Georgette Boukidis (26) **Asst. Treasurer**

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

George Andrews (28)
Tina Apostolopoulos (26)
Drew Dudley (28)
Hresanthe Georgopoulos (28)
Nick Goanos (27)
Constantine Moschopoulos (27)
Serafim Pistiolis (26)
Roula Skenteris (26)
Christina Skiouris (27)

THE VOICE Advertising Rates
Rates are for ads in four issues.

Rates & sizes are subject to change

Ad Size	Inside Page	Back Page
2.2" X 4.4"	\$275.00	\$300.00
4.4" X 4.4"	\$500.00	\$550.00
6.6" X 4.4"	\$750.00	\$825.00
4.4" X 8.8"	\$950.00	\$1,050.00
6.6" X 8.8"	\$1,425.00	\$1,550.00

Ad Size for portrait or landscape orientation.

We also offer assistance with ad design.

Contact George Andrews at 704.617.1603,
gandrews2018@gmail.com or send an email
to voice@htgo.org

Use **ADVERTISE** in the subject line.



Free Delivery

- 15% off the 3rd of Every Month on all Non-Prescription Items
- Drive Thru
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Six Month Supply Discount
- US Post Office

SOUTH END
2334 South Blvd
(704) 523-8608

SOUTH PARK
4501 Cameron Valley Pkwy
(704) 367-7440

www.cannonpharmacies.com

Tell our advertisers that
you saw their ad in:



To place an ad, contact
Business Manager George
Andrews at gandrews2018@gmail.com, or 704.617.1603

Next Issue:

DEADLINES:

for articles or photographs is:

Friday, December 18, 2026

Photos should be in large format
.JPEG attachment (300 dpi min.)

for advertisements is:

Monday, December 7, 2026

Email to voice@htgo.org

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PULPIT



by
Rev. Dr. Jonathan Resmini,
Dean of the Cathedral

A Kingdom of Communion

Throughout the Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ, continually speaks about the Kingdom of Heaven. He tells us that the Kingdom is at hand, teaches us to seek first the Kingdom of God, and gives us the words we pray each day: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

We often imagine the Kingdom simply as a place we hope to enter after death. But the Kingdom is also a way of existence—a life lived in communion with God and with one another. Our God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: three Persons in perfect communion, distinction without division. If the Kingdom of Heaven is communion, then its opposite is isolation. Sin separates and turns us inward, teaching us to think only in terms of “me”: my desires, my preferences, my wounds, my group, my people. Christ teaches us instead to say “we.” He does not teach us to pray “My Father,” but “Our Father.”

This is especially important for us as our own parish community grows and changes. God is doing something beautiful among us. People who did not grow up Orthodox are discovering the ancient faith of the Church. They are attending the Divine Liturgy, learning the faith, being baptized and chrismated, and seeking a deeper life in Christ. We should rejoice in this. Christ commanded His disciples to “make disciples of all nations.” The Gospel

is meant to be shared.

At the same time, we should understand why growth and change can sometimes create uncertainty. Our community did not appear yesterday. Generations before us came to this country carrying their Orthodox Christian faith, Greek language, customs, traditions, and memories. They sacrificed to build churches, establish communities, teach their children, and preserve what they had received from their parents and grandparents. When someone wonders whether that inheritance will be lost, that concern deserves to be heard.

But another experience deserves to be heard as well. Those who have recently entered the Orthodox Church sometimes wonder whether there is truly a place for them. They may love the Divine Liturgy, the Fathers, the saints, and the sacramental life of the Church, yet still wonder whether they will always be considered outsiders because their grandparents did not come from Greece.

The answer cannot be for one group to displace the other. The answer is **communion**.

Our Greek heritage is a beautiful inheritance. We should preserve it, teach it to our children, tell the stories of those who came before us, and honor the sacrifices upon which our

So perhaps the question for each of us is not, “Are they making enough room for people like me?” but rather, “Am I making room in my heart for them?”

community was built. But perhaps the greatest way to honor an inheritance is not simply to protect it, but to share it. **An inheritance becomes sterile when it is only protected; it becomes tradition when it is handed down.**

Those who come into our community more recently also have a responsibility. One does not have to become Greek in order to become Orthodox, but love asks us to become curious about the people whose community we are entering—to learn their stories and understand why a language, a festival, a dance, a meal, or a custom may carry generations of memory, sacrifice, and faith. We do not have to inherit another person’s ethnicity in order to honor their inheritance.

Those who have been here must make room at the table, and those who have newly arrived should honor the people who set the table.

Pentecost gives us a beautiful image of what this can look like. When the Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles, the people gathered in Jerusalem do not suddenly become the same. They remain different peoples, speaking different languages and coming from different places. Yet through those different languages they hear the one Gospel. The Holy Spirit does not create uniformity; He creates unity.

This is ultimately what we experience every time we gather for the Divine Liturgy. There is not a Greek Chalice and a convert Chalice, an old Holy Trinity and a new Holy Trinity. There is one Chalice, one Body, one Lord. Before we confess our common faith in the Creed, the Church commands us: “Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess...” We cannot proclaim communion with our lips while refusing communion with the person standing beside us.

So perhaps the question for each of us is not, “Are they making enough room for people like me?” but rather, **“Am I making room in my heart for them?”**

We do not have to choose between being a community that remembers where it came from and one that welcomes those whom Christ is sending to us. We can—and must—do both. Let us preserve what is beautiful, honor those who came before us, and teach our children their heritage. But let us also open our arms widely, because the faith our ancestors preserved was never given to us so that it could belong only to us. **It was preserved so that it could be proclaimed.**

May generations from now—Greek and non-Greek, those born into the Orthodox Church and those who discovered it later—stand together before the same Holy Altar, pray to the same Father, confess the same faith, and receive from the same Chalice, knowing themselves not as strangers competing for a place, but as brothers and sisters made one in Jesus Christ.

That is communion. That is the Church. And that is the Kingdom of Heaven.



Inspirational Message

The soul finds rest when it abandons anxiety and places every concern into the loving hands of God.

---St. Nektarios of Aegina

from The Orthodox Bible app



September 11, 2026: The opening of the Festival is marked by the Agiasmo. Pictured L-R: Deacon George Politis; Fr. Jonathan Resmini, and Fr. Elefterios Plevrakis.

ELAINE FAGAN
BROKER | REALTOR®
Licensed in NC & SC
Selling Greater Charlotte & Blowing Rock/Boone

704.936.6566
elaine@liveloveinvestclt.com
www.LiveLoveInvestCLT.com

Selling, Buying or just need Friendly Advice (Μιλάω Ελληνικά)

nestlewood REALTY

South 21's Super Boy Hamburger "A Meal in itself"

(704) 844-1004

THE OASIS OF THE HAMBURGER

HOURS:
Tuesday - Thursday 11:00 am - 9:00 pm
Friday - Saturday 11:00 am - 9:30 pm
*Closed Sunday & Monday

11450 E. INDEPENDENCE BLVD.
MATTHEWS, NC

PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S COMMENTARY*by Dino M. Pappas***Stewardship:
Our Shared
Responsibility**

Holy Trinity is our spiritual home. Here, we gather for worship, teach our children the Orthodox faith, support

one another during difficult times, and welcome those seeking a place in the Church. Thank you to everyone whose prayers, service, and financial support sustain our parish.

Our Lord has entrusted us to be caretakers of His Church. Stewardship is part of our spiritual journey and our grateful response to His gifts. By giving back, we sustain not only our Church but also ourselves.

Today, our general fund balance is critically low, and we are using Festival cash reserves to pay operating expenses. Restricted funds and ministry fundraising support specific purposes and cannot cover all these needs.

For years, we have grown comfortable relying on Festival income to cover the gap, despite factors outside our control. We are grateful for the countless hours our parishioners devote to the Festival. However, initial estimates put this year's gross Festival income \$150,000 below 2025. Most years, we have been able to squeak by during the lean months. In 2026, we have reached the point we have worried about for years.

Our 2026 stewardship budget is \$1,200,000. Based on giving through August, we are on pace to receive \$868,212 by year end, leaving a projected stewardship shortfall of \$331,788. Projected expenses are \$2,107,632, compared with projected income of \$1,504,727, leaving an overall deficit of \$602,905 before Festival proceeds. Assuming \$250,000 in Festival net income, the Church would still face a gap of \$352,905.

The Parish Council and parish staff are reviewing programs, adjusting participation fees, and cutting costs where appropriate. We cannot close this gap through these measures alone.

The responsibility belongs to all of us. If we, as a parish, do not support our Church, who will? Consistent stewardship is the only dependable foundation for sustaining parish life without relying on the Festival and factors outside our control. We must build a culture of giving rooted in faith, gratitude, and shared responsibility. Every contribution helps sustain our worship, teach our children, and care for our fellow parishioners.

Please consider a gift by November 1. If you already gave, consider an additional contribution and an increased ongoing commitment. If you have not yet begun, make this your first step toward annual stewardship as your circumstances allow. Regular contributions help the Church meet expenses throughout the year.

If your family is experiencing financial hardship, please reach out to our clergy so the Church can offer support.

The need is real, and it is urgent. I ask you to speak with your loved ones and pray to our Lord for the guidance, courage, discernment, and wisdom to give back to His Church.

Use the QR code below to make an online donation to Holy Trinity. Just focus your phone camera on the code and it will bring up the link to Tithe.ly.

**Stewards, Let your voice be heard!****Monday, October 19****Open Budget Meeting***Beginning at 6:00 pm***Sunday, November 1****The Fall Parish Assembly***Father C. Hall beginning at 11:30 am**Agenda will include:*

- approve the 2027 budget
- nominate candidates for Parish Council (5 seats) and the Foundation (2 seats) elections

FROM THE CATHEDRAL OFFICE*by Sarah Vastis, Parish Administrator*

In my early twenties, I was working in Nashville, Tennessee, and regularly attended Sunday Divine Liturgy, but I had one major problem: I was ALWAYS late.

Not just kind of late. Like, really late. Like, I barely made Communion, late.

Each and every Sunday, I would tell myself that this would be the week I got up earlier and made it to church on time. Yet every Sunday, Sleepy Sarah would take over my brain and tell me to hit the snooze button. Inevitably, I would arrive so late that I wouldn't even go into the nave. I would just stand in the narthex until Holy Communion and then make a quick exit to my car, embarrassed.

One blessed Sunday, I noticed an announcement in the church missal. The parish was hoping to restart its choir after a few years' hiatus. I had grown up singing in the choir with my mom, so I thought, "Maybe if I join the choir, I'll make it to church on time!" So, I joined.

Did it work, you ask? Well, for the most part (I was still just a girl in my early twenties, you know)! But something else happened that I was not expecting. Week after week, I stood beside the same people. At rehearsals, we talked. I learned their names and their stories. They learned mine. Those people introduced me to others, and more and more faces became familiar. Over time, without even realizing it, I went from a girl hiding in the narthex to one fully participating in the life of

that parish.

I think about this experience often, especially when I meet young adults and new families trying to find their place here. It can be tough! Often, the first instinct is to start a new ministry or jump into an established ministry with ideas for change.

But I wasn't thinking about any of that when I first walked into choir practice in Nashville. I wasn't looking for a leadership role or thinking about "getting involved." I was just trying to get to church on time!

Through God's grace, I found my place just by joining something that was already happening, helping where help was needed, and spending time with people I otherwise might never have known.

Looking back, I realize what a gift those choir members gave me as a young adult. I was far from home and at a stage of life when it would have been very easy to remain anonymous on Sunday mornings. Instead, they welcomed me, introduced me to others, and gave me opportunities to participate.

As a parish community, that is something worth remembering. Our young adults and new families long for invitations into the life already happening around them. Let's give them one.

And if you are still finding your place, take a chance on one of those invitations, or simply look at what is already happening around you. Find something that interests you, or a place where an extra set of hands is needed, and just show up. You never know where it might lead.

Are you a writer?
A photographer?
Skilled in the use of InDesign?

The Voice, your community publication, can benefit from your time and talent.

Email EDITOR at
voice@htgo.org to learn more.

Shop the
HOSANNA BOOKSTORE

Find books, bibles, icons,
gifts and more for adults and
children to enhance your
personal journey in our faith.



- Design & Layout
- Stationary
- Brochures
- Newsletters

(704) 529-6606**Diane Solomon Gilbert**

4612-B South Blvd.

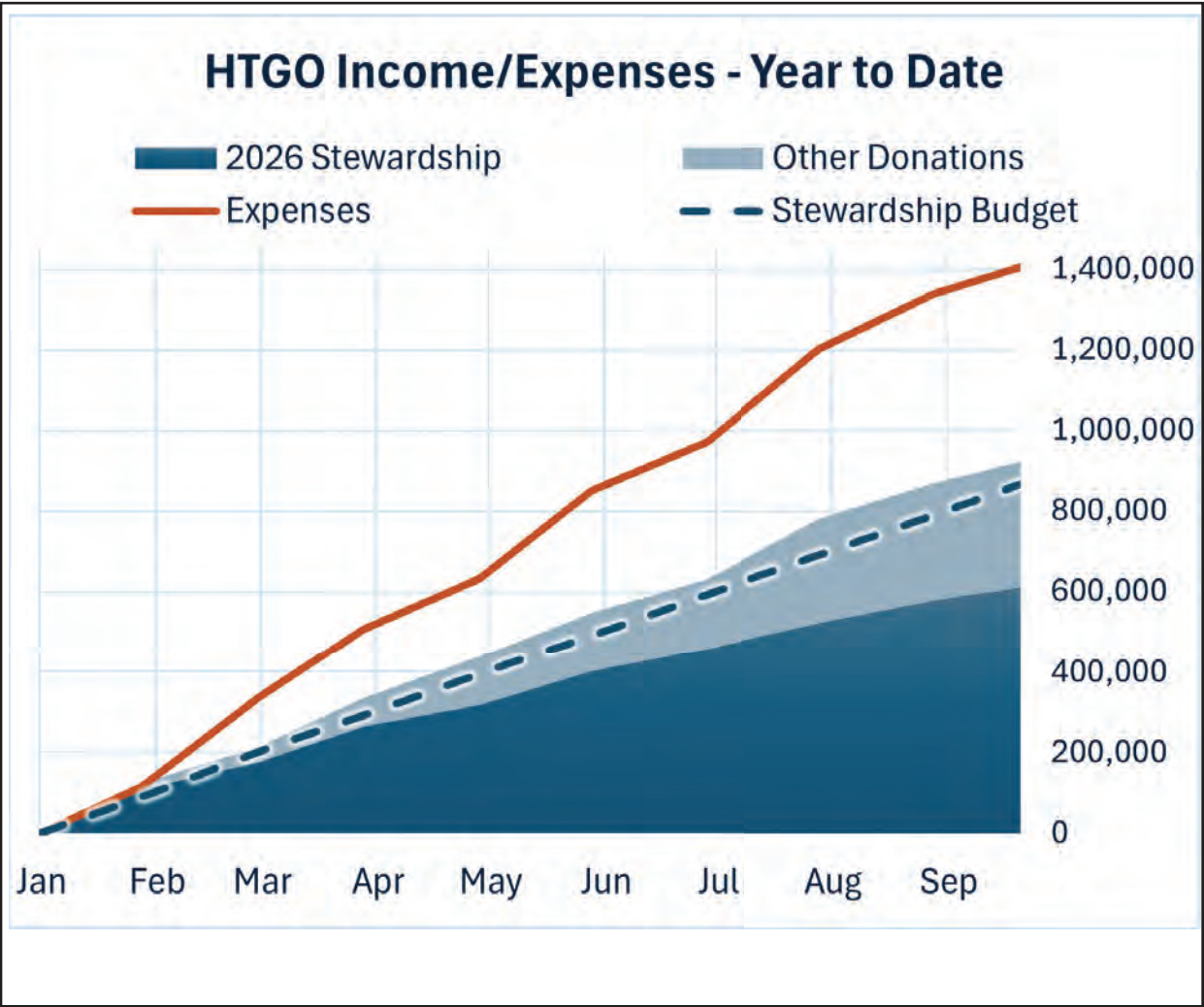
Charlotte, NC 28209

fax (704) 529-6616

info@copycatsouth.com

www.copycatsouth.com

STEWARDSHIP FINANCIAL SNAPSHOTS



STEWARDSHIP 2026		
as of 09/30/2026		
YTD Financials	2026 Total	2025 Total
Stewardship	\$621,343	\$580,023
Candles, rentals, other	\$252,316	\$188,399
Building/IRRC donations	\$188,304	\$44,319
Minus: Operating expenses	-\$1,133,655	-\$954,417
Minus: Building fund expenses	-\$301,014	-\$102,862
Net Ordinary Income (Deficit)	-\$372,706	-\$244,538

Giving Statements will be mailed soon.

Please fulfill your 2026 pledges and donations before December 30, 2026.

Join our Tithely App and consider setting up a monthly or weekly stewardship offering.

Consider covering the fees when paying through Tithely so Holy Trinity receives your full donation.

Please fill out your stewardship form available on htgo.org. Include ALL information so we can update our parishioner database and which ministries you want to participate in.

☺ Did you know that you can donate appreciated stock or part of your RMD (Required Minimum Distribution) from your IRA and save money on your taxes? This is an easy way to pay your stewardship.

Please call Frances at the Church office or email her at frances@htgo.org and she can help you with this.

EMPIRE PIZZA

EMPIRE PIZZA

Est 2009

WANNA PIZZA

THE PIE?

FRANCHISE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

READY TO START YOUR OWN EMPIRE?
empirepizzabar.com

CLERGY LAITY CONFERENCE June 29 - July 2, 2026

by Delegate Sarah Vastis

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese held its biennial Clergy-Laity Conference on June 29-July 2, 2026 in Cleveland, Ohio. Our delegation included Fr. Jonathan Resmini, Sarah Vastis, and Kathy Xyrafakis. The week consisted of worship, workshops and presentations, and networking opportunities. Evening events included opening ceremonies, dinner at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and a grand banquet at the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Cleveland. Breakout sessions began on Tuesday, June 30, and our delegation split up among the different sessions to cover as many of them as possible. Reports to follow. All official Archdiocese reports, including finance and administrative committees, can be found online at <https://www.clergylaity.org/reports>.

Strengthening Parish Leadership: Best Practices of Christ-Centered Servant Leadership for Clergy and Laity

Dr. Bill Marianes and Dr. Peter Tarhanidis presented practical leadership principles for clergy and laity serving together in the local parish. They stressed that leadership is a cooperative effort between clergy and laity and that the role of leaders is not simply to maintain the parish, but to prepare it for the future. The presenters highlighted the *Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership*: 1) model the way, 2) inspire a shared vision, 3) challenge the process, 4) enable others to act, and 5) encourage the heart. They also discussed Patrick Lencioni's *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*: 1) lack of trust, 2) fear of conflict, 3) lack of commitment, 4) avoiding accountability, and 5) inattention to results. They encouraged parishes to address conflict early rather than avoid it. Additional recommendations included clearly defining clergy and lay roles, creating succession plans for future leaders, and identifying the spiritual gifts of parishioners so they can be encouraged to use those gifts in service to the Church.

From Scarcity to Abundance: Inspiring a More Effective Culture of Stewardship and Engagement

Dr. Bill Marianes and Kristina Mehas presented stewardship as a year-round ministry of spiritual formation rather than an annual fundraising campaign. Key recommendations included:

Teach Biblical stewardship throughout the year, beginning with Holy Scripture.

Focus first on engagement by encouraging participation in Divine Liturgy, the Sacraments, Parish ministries, and volunteer opportunities.

Encourage percentage giving or tithing as a spiritual discipline rather than focusing solely on financial goals.

Build stewardship through personal relationships by visiting parishioners in their homes; hosting small group gatherings; making personal phone calls; and following up regularly with stewards.

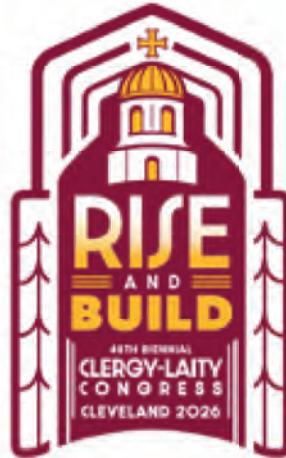
Move away from relying primarily on letters and email campaigns, recognizing that stewardship is built through personal interaction.

Research presented during the session demonstrated that greater engagement in parish life leads to increased generosity; higher volunteer participation; stronger spiritual growth.

State of the Bible: Growing Scripture Engagement in Parish Life

Dr. John Plake, Chief Innovation Officer of the American Bible Society, presented findings from the 2026 *State of the Bible* study, including new research specific to Orthodox Christians. The study found a strong correlation between regular Scripture engagement and 1) greater human flourishing, 2)

increased church engagement, 3) a stronger sense of identity, 4) greater comfort in one's faith, and 5) increased trust in others. Factors that most encourage Scripture engagement include: 1) preaching that demonstrates the transforming power of the Gospel.



2) clergy encouraging parishioners to read Scripture regularly, and 3) helping parishioners apply Scripture to everyday life.

Bible Study as a Way of Life

Rev. George Parsenios and Protopresbyter Christopher Flesoras presented practical recommendations for developing and leading effective Orthodox Bible studies. Their emphasis was that leading a Bible study begins long before the first class and requires the leader to cultivate a lifelong habit of studying Scripture. Key recommendations included:

Bible study leaders should:

Read Scripture regularly, including the daily Gospel and Epistle readings.

Read theology and Orthodox literature consistently.

Listen to podcasts and continue learning from reliable Orthodox teachers.

Keep a notebook of passages and insights that stand out during personal study.

Live a disciplined life in Christ, as spiritual growth is essential to understanding Scripture.

Structure Bible studies as a defined series (approximately six to eight sessions) with a clear beginning, end, and overall objective.

Every session should have a central theme while allowing discussion and opportunities for participants to apply Scripture to their own lives.

Use visual aids to bring the biblical world to life, including:

Maps of biblical locations.

Historical and archaeological images.

Orthodox iconography to demonstrate how the Church interprets a passage.

Incorporate small-group discussion and guided reflection questions to help participants connect personally with the text.

Interpret Scripture through the Orthodox tradition by consulting the Church Fathers and reliable Orthodox commentaries, including Fr. Lawrence Farley, the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, and the writings of Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid.

Parish 403(b) Program for Clergy & Lay Employees

Representatives of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese introduced the new Archdiocese-sponsored 403(b) Retirement Plan, available to parishes since January 1, 2026. The program is designed to provide clergy and lay employees with an additional retirement savings option and is intended to supplement, not replace, the existing Clergy Pension Plan. Key details included:

The 403(b) Plan is available to eligible W-2 employees, including clergy, lay employees, school educators, and school administrators employed by participating parishes.

Clergy participating in the 403(b) Plan must also participate in the Clergy Pension Plan.

Participation is voluntary and dependent upon each parish electing to adopt the plan.

The Archdiocese will cover:

All plan setup costs.

All administrative fees for the first three years.

After the initial three-year period:

The parish will pay a flat administrative fee of \$250 per quarter.

Participants will pay an annual \$39 participant fee.

Parishes have the option of making matching retirement contributions for their employees but are not required to do so.

Department of Religious Education (DRE)

The Department of Religious Education introduced its new K-12 National Sunday Church School Curriculum, fulfilling the commitment made at the 2024 Clergy-Laity Conference to develop a comprehensive curriculum framework. The new curriculum builds upon the Archdiocese's existing curriculum, which Holy Trinity currently uses for its Sunday School program, by providing updated lesson plans, teaching materials, and online resources.

The DRE also offered a series of workshops designed to support Sunday School teachers. Presenters, such as Dr. Tom Copulos, shared practical classroom strategies, discussed techniques for increasing student engagement and participation, and introduced additional resources available to assist teachers in planning meaningful and effective lessons.

Youth Safety in Action: Moving from Policy to a Culture of Care

Eva Konstantakos and Rhea Ballas provided an overview of the Archdiocese's Youth Safety Program and reviewed the policies designed to protect children and youth participating in parish ministries. While the session summarized the existing Youth Safety Policies, the presenters emphasized that youth safety extends beyond policy compliance and requires every parish to intentionally foster a culture of care, trust, accountability, and transparency. Key topics included:

continued on next page



Holy Trinity's representatives at the Clergy-Laity Congress in Cleveland, OH. L-R: Olga Yamalis, Kathy Xyrafakis, Fr. Jonathan Resmini, Demetra Boardman, Effie Rodriguez, and Harry T. Cavalaris.

Not pictured: Delegate Sarah Vastis

CLERGY LAITY CONFERENCE June 29- July 2, 2026

From Inquirers to Lifetime Member

by Delegate Kathy Xyrafakis

This past June, I had the blessing of attending my first-ever Clergy-Laity Conference which was held in Cleveland, Ohio. The conference offered many opportunities for prayer, fellowship, learning, and reflection. One topic that especially caught my attention was the growing number of people inquiring about the Orthodox faith and how we can better welcome and accompany them on their journey.

I learned that during the COVID pandemic, many people found themselves asking questions they may not have considered before. In a time of uncertainty, people were seeking Christ, longing for a deeper spiritual life, and searching for a faith that was not simply talked about, but lived. And where did many turn for answers? The internet. Through online Divine Liturgies, podcasts, articles, and classes, people who may never have stepped inside an Orthodox Church were introduced to the beauty and richness of Orthodoxy. For many, what began as curiosity eventually became a desire to “come and see” and we are seeing that same hunger right here at Holy Trinity.

Over the past few years, we at Holy Trinity have welcomed many inquirers. Each person comes with a different story, background, and questions. Some come from other Christian traditions, some have little or no church background, and others have been searching for Orthodoxy for years. Whatever their journey, we are grateful they have found their way to Holy Trinity.

After returning from the conference, Sarah Vastis and I spent an afternoon in a classroom brainstorming and putting our thoughts on a whiteboard and how we could better welcome and support those seeking the Orthodox faith. We then brought our ideas to an administrative meeting with Fr. Jonathan and Fr. Elefterios, where we continued the conversation and developed a process we believe will help our inquirers and catechumens grow in faith and become part of the full life of the Church.

Our process

It begins with initial contact. Whether they attend a Service or call the office, we email them an online google interest form.

The Inquirer Session is the next step and provides an opportunity to ask questions, learn more about Orthodoxy and Holy Trinity, and understand what comes next.

Those continuing their journey then

participate in required classes, attend Catechumen ministry events, and begin building relationships within the parish. As they grow in their understanding of the faith, they are also encouraged to participate in stewardship and appropriate ministries, discovering how they can offer their time and talents in service to Christ and His Church.

Along the way, Catechumens will meet with Fr. Jonathan to discuss their progress and next steps. They will also meet with me to complete the required paperwork and stewardship form while continuing their classes and participation in parish life.

The journey then moves toward Induction, which includes a formal prayer and marks an important step toward entering the Church. Finally, after a period of preparation and discernment, comes Baptism or Chrismation and entry into the fullness of life in the Orthodox Church.

The process we developed guides inquirers from initial contact through their education and preparation, while encouraging parish involvement and stewardship, ultimately leading to Baptism or Chrismation and full participation in the life of the Church.

While there are steps along the way, this is much more than a process. It is a journey of faith, formation, and

relationship. Every person who walks through our doors brings a unique story, and our responsibility is to walk alongside them through this journey. But this responsibility does not belong only to the clergy or those involved in the Catechumen ministry. It belongs to all of us! We were all new once. Someone welcomed us, answered our questions, and helped us find our place. Now we have the opportunity to do the same for others.

To all those who are inquiring about the Orthodox faith, Welcome to Holy Trinity! We are glad you are here! You do not need to know all the prayers or understand everything about the Divine Liturgy. Bring your questions, your curiosity, and your desire to know Christ more deeply. Come, see, learn, and walk with us. To our Holy Trinity family, let us continue to open our hearts and our doors to those who are seeking. May we welcome each person with the same love and hospitality that Christ has shown us.

May God bless all those who are seeking Him, guide them on their journey, and continue to bless our Holy Trinity family as we grow together in faith, love, and service to Christ and His Church.

Many blessings to all!

continued from previous page

Parish Legal Best Practices

The Parish Legal Best Practices session was led by Attorney George Tsougarakis at which he reviewed the legal responsibilities of parish leadership and emphasized that every parish functions as both a faith community and a nonprofit corporation. The presenter noted that parish governance must always follow the hierarchy of applicable state law, the Uniform Parish Regulations (UPRs), and parish bylaws, rather than relying on past practice or custom. Other key topics included:

The distinct responsibilities of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council. The Parish Priest is responsible for the spiritual life of the parish, while the Parish Council is responsible for temporal affairs, including finances, administration, personnel, and property.

The General Assembly has limited authority as defined by the UPRs and may only act during a properly noticed and convened meeting. Informal discussions or unanimous agreement outside of a meeting do not carry legal authority.

Parish Council members have three primary fiduciary duties: 1) Duty of Care: make informed decisions by reviewing financial information and asking appropriate questions before voting. 2) Duty of Loyalty: place the interests of the parish above personal or business interests. 3) Duty of Obedience: ensure the parish complies with state law, the UPRs, parish bylaws, and Archdiocesan directives.

The Metropolitan retains important oversight responsibilities, including ratifying Parish Council elections, approving certain major decisions, and ensuring parishes operate in accordance with the Archdiocese.

Major property transactions require three levels of approval: recommendation by the Parish Council, authorization by the General Assembly, and written

approval from the Metropolitan before any binding documents are executed.

Financial controls should include segregation of duties, dual signatures on checks, prompt deposits, independent audits, and ensuring no single individual controls the financial process.

All ministry bank accounts should be held in the legal name of the parish and remain under Parish Council oversight. Independent ministry accounts should not operate outside the parish’s financial reporting structure.

Ministry Reports and Plenary Session Highlights

On Behalf of All: The initiative continues to expand its efforts to ensure that children with disabilities and their families are fully included in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

Hellenic College Holy Cross: Focus has been on reducing the financial dependency on the Archdiocese. Enrollment is up, but has not yet reached the goal of 200 stated at the 2024 Clergy-Laity conference. Continuing to offer dual-credit courses for high school juniors and seniors, and an online masters program.

Leadership 100 Fund: Leadership 100 announced the appointment of a new Executive Director and reported approving more than \$6.5 million in grants during the current term, bringing total grant distributions since its founding to nearly \$88 million. The organization also outlined plans to expand membership, strengthen communications, and increase charitable giving in preparation for its 50th anniversary in 2034.

Internet Ministries: The Department highlighted continued improvements to the Archdiocese’s digital platforms, including planned upgrades to the Bulletin Builder, Daily Readings mobile app, and Online Chapel.

Greek Education: There is continued growth in teacher training, adult Greek education, digital educational resources, and national planning for Greek schools.

Archdiocesan Chancellor: The Office of the Chancellor reported continued efforts to support clergy through placement, formation, benefits administration, and record management. Since the last Clergy-Laity Congress, the Office completed the digitization of all clergy files, began digitizing parish records, awarded more than \$1 million in scholarships, and continued strengthening collaboration among the Archdiocese’s national ministries.

Ionian Village: Ionian Village reported record enrollment in its summer camp and IV Next programs, continued expansion of scholarship opportunities, and completion of major campus renovations funded through Leadership 100 grants.

Finance Committee: 2026 Proposed Budget Key Points: 1. Total Archdiocesan commitment increased by 3.2%, generally in line with inflation; 2. Annual minimum support for the Metropolises increased by \$68,143 (approximately 12%), including a \$50,000 increase in baseline funding; 3. Funding for Hellenic College Holy Cross was set at \$3.0 million, recognizing the institution’s continued progress toward increased self-funding; 4. Support for Parish and Priest Ministries increased by \$705,000 (approximately 21%), reflecting recommendations from the CARA study; 5. Additional support for the Clergy Pension Plan remains at \$1.5 million; 6. A new \$500,000 captive insurance premium was added to the budget, partially offset by a \$250,000 reduction in the contingency fund, with the goal of reducing long-term insurance costs. Motion: The Clergy Laity Congress adopts the GOA budgets for 2027 and 2028 as presented. **MOTION PASSED.**

2026 YIASOU GREEK FESTIVAL



2026 YIASOU GREEK FESTIVAL



Thank You 2026 Yiasou Festival Sponsors & Supporters



2026 YIASOU GREEK FESTIVAL



Yiasou Festival: Ένα τριήμερο γεμάτο Ελλάδα by Constantine Vlachos - Mobley

Για περισσότερες από πέντε δεκαετίες το Φεστιβάλ «Υίαςου» αποτελεί σταθερό σημείο αναφοράς για τους ομογενείς που ζουν κοντά στη Σάρλοτ, ενισχύοντας τους δεσμούς με την τοπική κοινότητα και δείχνοντας τη δύναμη του πολιτισμού να ενώνει ανθρώπους και να διδάσκει αλληλοσεβασμό.

Το «Γεια σου Φεστιβάλ» αποτελεί σήμερα ένα από τα πιο ζωντανά πολιτιστικά γεγονότα της ελληνικής ομογένειας στη Βόρεια Καρολίνα. Κάθε χρόνο, στις αρχές του φθινοπώρου, χιλιάδες επισκέπτες συγκεντρώνονται στη Σάρλοτ, για να γιορτάσουν την ελληνική παράδοση, τη γεύση, τη μουσική και φυσικά τη φιλοξενία. Η πρώτη διοργάνωση πραγματοποιήθηκε στις αρχές της δεκαετίας του 1970, όταν η ελληνορθόδοξη κοινότητα της ενορίας της Αγίας Τριάδας αποφάσισε να ανοίξει τις πόρτες της στην ευρύτερη κοινότητα, ώστε να παρουσιάσει τον πολιτισμό και την πίστη της. Από τότε, το φεστιβάλ δεν έπαψε να μεγαλώνει, εξελισσόμενο σε θεσμό που εκφράζει με τον καλύτερο τρόπο την παρουσία των Ελλήνων στις νοτιοανατολικές ΗΠΑ.

Τι περιλαμβάνει το φεστιβάλ

Το «Γεια σου Φεστιβάλ» διαρκεί τρεις ημέρες, δίνοντας την ευκαιρία σε μικρούς και μεγάλους να βιώσουν ένα ταξίδι στην Ελλάδα χωρίς να χρειαστεί να φύγουν από τη Σάρλοτ. Στο προαύλιο της εκκλησίας στήνονται υπαίθρια περίπτερα όπου σερβίρονται παραδοσιακά φαγητά – από σουβλάκι και γύρο μέχρι μπακλαβά και λουκουμάδες. Η μουσική και οι χοροί έχουν πρωταγωνιστική θέση: παραδοσιακά συγκροτήματα με χορευτές ντυμένους με φορεσιές από διάφορα μέρη της Ελλάδας παρουσιάζουν τοπικούς χορούς και παρασύρουν το κοινό να συμμετάσχει. Παράλληλα, οργανώνονται ξεναγήσεις στον ναό της Αγίας Τριάδας, όπου οι επισκέπτες μαθαίνουν για την ιστορία, την αρχιτεκτονική και τα θρησκευτικά σύμβολα της Ορθοδοξίας.

Οι αξίες που προβάλλονται

Πέρα από την καλοπέραση και τη διασκέδαση, το φεστιβάλ έχει έντονο παιδευτικό χαρακτήρα. Προβάλλονται αξίες που αποτελούν τον πυρήνα της ελληνικής ταυτότητας: η φιλοξενία, η οικογένεια, η κοινότητα, καθώς και η βαθιά σχέση με την ιστορία

και τον πολιτισμό. Η παρουσίαση της γλώσσας, της μουσικής και των παραδόσεων δείχνει τη σημασία της διατήρησης της κληρονομιάς μέσα σε ένα πολυπολιτισμικό περιβάλλον. Παράλληλα, η χαρά της προσφοράς προς τον «ξένο» ή τον μη Έλληνα επισκέπτη εκφράζει το γνωστό ελληνικό φιλότιμο.

ΔΙΑΦΗΜΙΣΗ

Ο ρόλος της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας
Κεντρικό πυλώνα στη διοργάνωση έχει η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία. Όχι μόνο ως χώρος στον οποίο φιλοξενείται το φεστιβάλ, αλλά και ως θεματοφύλακας των αξιών που μεταφέρονται στις νέες γενιές. Οι εθελοντές δεν είναι άλλοι από τα μέλη της κοινότητας, πολλές φορές οικογένειες ολόκληρες, που εργάζονται εβδομάδες πριν το άνοιγμα για να ετοιμάσουν τα φαγητά, τα περίπτερα και τις δραστηριότητες. Οι ξεναγήσεις στον ναό λειτουργούν ως «γέφυρα», για να γνωρίσει ο κόσμος την πνευματική διάσταση του ελληνικού στοιχείου, πέρα από το κοσμικό πανηγύρι. Έτσι, η εκκλησία συμβάλλει ουσιαστικά όχι μόνο στη διασκέδαση αλλά και στην κατανόηση των αξιών της Ορθοδοξίας ενταγμένων στην ελληνική παράδοση.

Πέρα από τα όρια της κοινότητας

Το «Γεια σου Φεστιβάλ» έχει πλέον γίνει πόλος έλξης για χιλιάδες επισκέπτες που δεν ανήκουν απαραίτητα στην ομογένεια. Με αυτό τον τρόπο, αποτελεί γέφυρα συνάντησης πολιτισμών: οι κάτοικοι της Σάρλοτ γνωρίζουν καλύτερα την ελληνική παράδοση, ενώ οι Έλληνες της πόλης αισθάνονται περήφανοι που μοιράζονται την κληρονομιά τους με το ευρύτερο κοινό. Είναι ένα παράδειγμα της δύναμης του πολιτισμού να ενώνει ανθρώπους, να διδάσκει αλληλοσεβασμό και να αφήνει μια κληρονομιά που ξεπερνά τις γενιές. Με λίγα λόγια, το «Γεια σου Φεστιβάλ» δεν είναι απλώς μια γιορτή φαγητού και μουσικής. Είναι μια εμπειρία που παρουσιάζει την ψυχή της Ελλάδας στο αμερικανικό κοινό και ταυτόχρονα ενδυναμώνει την ελληνική ταυτότητα στη διασπορά. Ενας ετήσιος θεσμός που θυμίζει σε όλους ότι η παράδοση δεν είναι κάτι στατικό, αλλά μια ζωντανή δύναμη που συνεχίζει να εμπνέει.

Constantine is a parishioner at Holy Trinity and a student at Socrates Academy. He wrote this article and it was posted at To Vima, an online Greek Newspaper (link below). We are printing here with his permission.

<https://www.tovima.gr/print/mathitikes-efimerides/sarlot/ena-trimero-gemato-ellada/>



MY IONIAN VILLAGE EXPERIENCE June 2026



By Maria Dermas

This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to attend Ionian Village, and I can honestly say it was the best three weeks of my life. My parents gave me this trip as my high school graduation gift. I came home with so much more than pictures and souvenirs. I left Greece with lifelong friendships, unforgettable memories, and a stronger relationship with God. Before leaving, I knew I'd get to travel throughout Greece, meet other Greek Orthodox young adults, and learn more about my faith. I had no idea how deeply this journey would change me. From the moment the adventure began, I knew it was going to be something special. My friend Evi Pappas and I stepped off the plane in Athens, loaded onto the bus, and immediately started meeting people from all over the United States and even Australia.

Our first stop was the Corinth Canal. As we continued the drive to Ionian Village, I remember looking out the bus window thinking we were in the middle of nowhere. The roads seemed deserted, and everything else looked abandoned. Then, all of a sudden, the bus drove through the gates of the camp, and it felt like we had entered paradise. Beautiful flowers, tall trees, rows of white cabins, and excited counselors welcomed us. Right then, I knew this place was going to be unlike anywhere I had ever been. The most meaningful parts were visiting castles, ancient churches, and historic monasteries. Many of these holy places housed the relics of saints, and we had the opportunity to venerate them. Being able to pray before the relics of saints whose stories I had heard throughout my life made the stories my Yiayia told me feel real.

One of my favorite churches we visited was St. Andrew Cathedral in Patras, the largest church in Greece. I was amazed by the iconography. The soft pastel colors were incredibly vibrant, covering the walls and ceilings with beautiful depictions of Bible stories and the lives of the saints. It felt like every inch of the cathedral had something to teach, and I found myself standing still, taking it all in. Seeing such beauty dedicated to glorifying God was incredible.

An unforgettable moment was standing beside the tomb of Saint Nektarios. Waiting in line to place my ear against the tomb and venerate his relics gave me time to slow down and reflect on everything I had witnessed and learned over the past few weeks.

Surrounded by the peaceful atmosphere and the other Orthodox young adults praying together, I felt an indescribable sense of peace.

I'll never forget climbing down into the underground cave where Saint Gerasimos lived and prayed for five years. Despite how small the opening was, everyone fit through it. Seeing the small stone space that he called home during that time was unbelievable. Looking at the etchings he made in the stone walls and breathing the cool, damp air inside the cave, it felt like his presence was still there. The smell, the silence, and simply knowing that a saint had lived and prayed in that very place made it one of the most powerful moments of the entire trip. Simply unforgettable.

Of course, not every memorable moment was quiet. We spent hours singing on the bus rides, laughing over inside jokes, dancing, playing games, and admiring the breathtaking Greek countryside through the windows. I remember looking around at everyone one day and thinking, "I wish this could last forever." That was the moment I realized this wasn't just a summer camp. It had become a place where my faith, my friendships, and some of my happiest memories all came together. But what made Ionian Village most special was the people. In just three weeks, we became like one big family. We spent our days exploring, praying together, laughing nonstop, dancing, and having conversations that will stay with me forever. Although we came from different states and even different countries, we were united by our shared faith. I'm so grateful for those amazing friendships.

One of the greatest blessings of the trip was getting to know Father Steven Klund, the priest at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Wilmington, the parish I will be attending while I'm in college at UNCW. Since St. Nicholas is directly across from campus, I know it will become an important part of my college life. Knowing that I'll already have a familiar face waiting to welcome me gives me so much comfort as I begin my college journey.

I'm forever grateful for this amazing opportunity. Looking back, I can't imagine a better graduation gift. Before Ionian Village, Orthodoxy was something I grew up with. After Ionian Village, it's something I want to continue living every day.

I am Evi Pappas, an incoming freshman at North Carolina State University, and I had the pleasure of spending 20 days at Ionian Village (IV) this past June. Ionian Village is a Greek Orthodox camp in Greece for Greek Orthodox kids from the United States. The kids who were eligible to go were incoming freshmen in high school to incoming freshmen in college. IV has two sessions that you can attend. I went to Session One, which was from June 16th–July 5th.

We were able to take the direct flight from Charlotte to Athens. Once we got there, we met everyone at the Athens airport. During that time, they took our phones and passports. At that time, I felt like I was being disconnected from reality for the next three weeks, which was a little scary, but I knew that I would be fine. The camp is located in Glyfa Beach, which is in the Peloponnese region of Greece. On the way to the camp, we stopped at the Corinth Canal. On the bus ride, we were told which cabins we were in. I was in Cabin Delphi.

Once we got to camp, we were welcomed by the staff and the other campers who got there a little before us, which was so fun because I got to see some of my friends who are from different cities. But I also got to meet so many new people. Once the last campers got there, we got to cheer for everyone coming in. After that, we had Vespers service, dinner, and a night activity. We also had devotional that night, which we had every night. During devotional, we talked about our feelings and how they related to our faith. In the end, that helped our cabin become closer together.

At first, I didn't know what to expect, to be honest, because what I had heard from everyone was that it was the best summer of your life. And that was really it. They say that you get closer to God but also get to meet people from all over the country, which was something that I was excited about. In my cabin, we had people from Chicago, California (LA area), Austin, Orlando, Tampa, Michigan, Connecticut, and Charlotte.

At IV, we had two types of days: travel days and camp days. On camp days, we would do rotations, swim, have

siesta (naptime), free time, and an evening activity.

When we swam, it would either be at the Olympic-size swimming pool or at the beach. We also had themed days at IV, such as Boat, Karapozi, and Frappe days, which was so fun because everything those days was themed around those things.

I loved travel days. They started really early, like 5 a.m. We would eat and get on the bus to head to our destination or dock to get on the ferry. The camp was split in half, with five cabins going to one place and the other half going to another place. Then, whatever you didn't go to the first day, you went to the next day. Some of the places we visited were Ancient Olympia, Kalavryta, Zakynthos, Kefalonia, Patras, Nafplio, and Aegina.

On those travel days, we would see churches in the area and learn about the saints' relics that they had in the churches. The relics that I thought were cool to see were the full-body saints of Saint Dionysios and Saint Gerasimos. Sometimes, we had free time on these travel days and could walk around, shop, and learn more about the area.

Every night, we would have an evening activity, which gave us some of the best nights at camp. Activities included the Olympics, Treasure Hunt, Night with God, Neon Party, White Party, Carnival, Greek Invasion, Family Feud, Pool Party, Junkyard Wars, Music Fest, and Panegyri. My favorite activity was the White Party because we all got dressed up, took pictures, and got to dance all night.

We spent the last three days in Athens. We got to see all the touristy places and go shopping at all the stores. We stayed at a hotel those nights, which was nice because we got to enjoy nice, hot showers. On the last night, we had a dance where we all got dressed up and ate a nice dinner.

If I could do this again, I would 100% do it. I had the best summer of my life, and I met so many people from all over the country that I wouldn't have met if I hadn't gone to IV. If anyone is ever considering going, you should go because you will also have the best summer, and it is worth the hype.



PHILOPTOCHOS by *Demetra Boardman***From Cleveland to Charlotte: Agia Elpis in Action**

It has been a busy and rewarding summer for Agia Elpis Philoptochos, and we are heading into the fall with an equally full calendar of service, fellowship, and outreach.

This summer, Demetra Boardman and Effie Rodriguez represented Agia Elpis at the 2026 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, held in conjunction with the Clergy-Laity Congress. This year's theme, "Rise and Build: Women Leading, Inspiring, and Impacting the World," reflected the important role Philoptochos women play in their parishes and communities.



Effie and Demetra in Cleveland

The convention brought Philoptochos sisters from across the country together to exchange ideas, learn about national ministries, and explore new ways local

chapters can make a difference. Demetra and Effie returned to Charlotte inspired by the work being done nationwide and eager to continue strengthening the ministries of Agia Elpis here at Holy Trinity.

Back in Charlotte, our focus quickly shifted to the Yiasou Greek Festival. Throughout August, our kitchen was filled with members and volunteers preparing the traditional Greek pastries that have become a festival favorite. This year's baking included koulourakia, baklava, ice cream baklava, karidopita, and our newest addition, portokalopita.

We were blessed with tremendous volunteer support during both baking and packing days. Thank you to everyone who rolled up her sleeves and helped. It takes many hands to accomplish what we do, and we could not do it without you.

September brought another special occasion as we celebrated the Nameday of Agia Elpis. Our annual Nameday Luncheon was held on September 17 at Red Rocks following Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia, with nearly 50 women gathering in fellowship. We continued the celebration on September 20 with our Agia Elpis Nameday Coffee Hour following both Liturgies.

Our outreach efforts also continue. From October through November 22, Agia Elpis will once again support



September 17, 2026: Name Day Luncheon



Classroom Central through a school supply drive. This year, we are collecting loose-leaf paper to help provide much-needed supplies for local students and

teachers. We are also looking ahead to January 26, when members will volunteer with Families Forward as part of our continuing Feed the Hungry ministry.

With festival baking behind us, it is almost time to return to the kitchen for our annual Holiday Bake Sale. Baking will take place November 16-19 beginning at 9:30 a.m. We will prepare many favorites, including koulourakia, baklava, spanakopita, tiropitakia, and pastichio. Online orders close November 6, with pickup scheduled for November 22, December 5, and December 6. Please watch the Weekly Word and November bulletin for details and volunteer opportunities.

Agia Elpis participated in Holy Trinity's Ministry Showcase on October 11, and held the October General Meeting on Tuesday, October 13.

We are especially grateful that Agia Elpis continues to grow. We now have 153 paid members, and we thank every woman who gives her time, talents, and heart to our ministry.

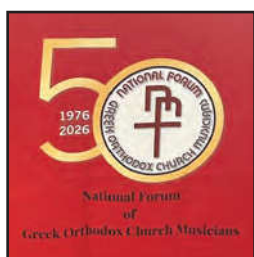
Thank you to all our members and volunteers who make this work possible. We look forward to a wonderful fall and invite all the women of Holy Trinity to join our sisterhood of faith, fellowship, and service.

Interested in joining Agia Elpis Philoptochos or learning more? Email us at agiaelpisphiloptochos@gmail.com.

FROM THE CHOIR LOFT by *Olga Yamalis*

Summertime 2026 offered some opportunities to attend various choir conferences around the nation. This year marked a special historic milestone. The National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians Ministry 50th anniversary

took place in conjunction at the 48th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress in Cleveland, OH June 28 – July 3. The National Forum is the musical arm ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America consisting of the eight choir federations in the US that strengthens and perpetuates the liturgical music in both choral and chant styles of music in our church. Guest Conductor was Costa Tsurakis of New York, NY, Guest Organist was Nicholas Bodle of North Royalton, OH, and the liturgical music consisted of a composite of liturgical composers due to the anniversary. What a milestone! Five decades of church musicians dedication, time, talent to strengthen parish life through voice. Highlights of the conference included a great patriotic opening ceremony performance with brass musicians from the Cleveland Symphony, uplifting Archierarchical Divine



Liturgy split between the National Forum choir, Archdiocesan School of Byzantine chanters and the youth, fantastic educational workshops, an evening at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, shopping at the Ministry Village Pavillion, and an unforgettable 50th Anniversary luncheon with his Eminence Archbishop Elpidophorus and all eight Metropolitans representing all eight choir federations. May God bless the National Forum for the next 50 years to continue our liturgical work through our inspiration and commitment to perpetuate this ministry for the future generation of church musicians.

Holy Trinity choir members attended the Southeastern Federation of Greek

Orthodox Church Musicians (SFGOCM) of our Atlanta Metropolis July 16-19 in West Palm Beach, FL. Guest Conductor was Chris Kypros of Norfolk VA, Guest Organist was Jim Bostaph of Newport News, VA, and the liturgical music was Chris Kypros's Liturgy of Peace. Three of Holy Trinity's choir members attended the conference: Pauline Velonis, Suzanne Velonis and Geary Mandrapilias. Highlights of this conference included fun liturgical practices, reuniting with peers and the building of more memories which all led to a most heartwarming Liturgy resonating with a beautiful music score. It is always a treat to sing Liturgy of Peace.

What is next for the Holy Trinity Choir? Our new Ecclesiastical year kicked off September 1. The choir performed twice on Saturday, September



Our participants at the National Forum. L-R Lucy Pappadakes, Olga Yamalis, Connie Ross with Clergy-Laity Delegate Sarah Vastis

12 at the Yiasou Festival. We would love for you to join us in the choir loft, all are welcome! Reach out to Olga Yamalis at olga3music@gmail.com for more information.



from the SFGOCM in West Palm Beach, FL

AROUND CHARLOTTETOWN by Kathy Xyrafakis**Bakatsias - Manikas**

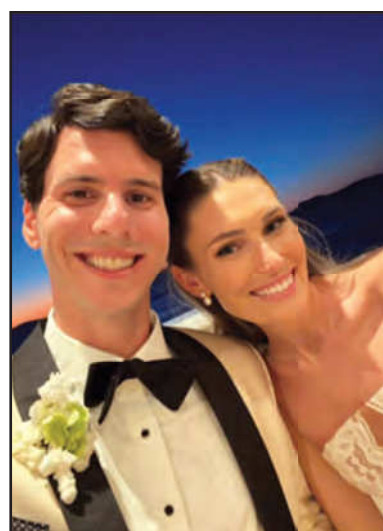
Chrisa Bakatsias and Apostolos Manikas were married on Saturday, July 18, 2026, in a ceremony at Agios Konstantinos in Fthiotidas. A reception followed at Paralia Kamena Vourla Fthiotidas. Chrisa is the daughter of Vasileios Bakatsias and Eleni Papariou. Apostolos is the son of Eleni Striva. They will honeymoon in the near future to a destination to be determined. They reside in Mount Holly, NC.

Neils - Sourlis

Sarah Neils and George Sourlis were married on Sunday, September 6, 2026. The wedding ceremony took place at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in Charleston, South Carolina. A reception followed at Cannon Green. Sarah is the daughter of Sasha and Jean Neils Strunjas and Eric and Kellie Neils. George is the son of Peter and Stephanie Sourlis. The couple honeymooned in South Africa and reside in Charlotte.

Ballas - Holevas

Gabriella Ballas and George Holevas were married on Saturday, September 19, 2026, in a ceremony at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Winston-Salem, NC. The reception was held at the Church Hall. Gabriella is the daughter of Sammy and Fay Ballas. George is the son of Jimmy and Vickie Holevas. The couple honeymooned in Nice, France and reside in Charlotte.

Powers - Haskell

Hanna Powers and John Haskell were married on Sunday, September 6, 2026, in a ceremony in Mykonos, Greece. It was followed by a reception at St John Mykonos. Hanna is the daughter of Randy Powers and Selena Epperly. John is the son of Kevin Haskell and Elaine Haskell. The couple honeymooned in Greece with stops in Naxos, Milos, and Athens. They reside in Charlotte.

Giotis - Abernathy

Despina Giotis and Andrew Abernathy were married on Saturday, June 20, 2026, at the Church of Agia Paraskevi in Milos, Greece. Despina is the daughter of Lisa and Mike Giotis. Andrew is the son of Teresa and Chuck Abernathy. The couple honeymooned on the island of Crete. They currently reside in Charlotte.

van Ettekoven - Scheeres

Samantha van Ettekoven, daughter of Henk-Jan and Lena van Ettekoven, married Felix Wolthuis Scheeres on Thursday, July 30, 2026, in the Athens Riviera in Greece. Surrounded by friends and family who traveled from around the world, the couple celebrated their wedding and reception at the beautiful Island Resort on the Athens Riviera before honeymooning in Naxos. They reside in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and hope to return to Charlotte in the future.

Attention Newlyweds and Graduates

To place your wedding or graduation announcement in *The Voice's* Around Charlottetown section, please email a photo (JPEG format) and a brief writeup to Kathy Xyrafakis (kathy@htgo.org). We will include it in an upcoming issue.

REMINDER:

Please complete and submit your Stewardship Forms. Don't delay. The information you provide is vital to developing the best future for the community.

Deadline for 2026 donations to get in your year end statement is December 30, 2026.

In Memoriam



Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." John 11:25

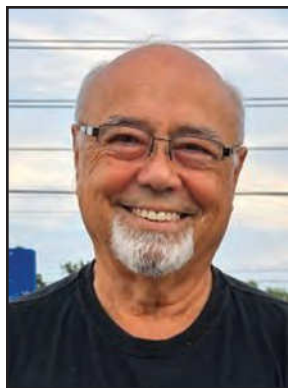


KATHERINE THEODORE CURRENCE, age 89, of Gastonia, North Carolina, passed away peacefully on Monday, August 17, 2026, surrounded by her children at Covenant Village. Born on January 22, 1937, in Greenville, South Carolina, she was the daughter of the late Peter Theodore and Christine Theodore. She is survived by her son, Petey Currence and fiancée Virginia Hicks of Columbia; daughters, Tina Early and husband Jubal of Charlotte, and Chrisie Lewis and husband Alan of Charlotte; grandchildren, Madison

Early Youngdahl and husband Bradley of Charlotte, Jubal Early and wife Aletta of Charlotte, Linton Early of Chapel Hill, Hayes Pierce of Charlotte, and Scotty Pierce of Charlotte. She was preceded in death by her parents, Peter Theodore and Christine Theodore; and her sister, Rebecca Harakas.



DENISE FELLOOS, age 70, of Charlotte, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, July 30, 2026. Born on May 8, 1956, in Charlotte, North Carolina, she was the daughter of the late Steve Pete Fellos and Tula Cavalaris Fellos. She is survived by her sisters, Pam Fellos Cook, Stephanie Fellos Holleman, and Zoe Fellos Bell; her brother, Peter Thomas Fellos; as well as her extended family and many cherished friends. She was preceded in death by her parents, Steve Pete Fellos and Tula Cavalaris Fellos; and her sister, Elaine Fellos Young.



ANASTASIOS "TASO / NICK" CHRISTOS NAKOS, age 79, passed away peacefully on September 16, 2026, in Charlotte, North Carolina, surrounded by his loving family. Born on June 1, 1947, in Vlasi, Greece, he was the son of the late Christos K. Nakos and Hariklia R. Nakos. He is survived by his beloved wife of 54 years, Eleni Nakos; his children, Ariti Stewart, Christy Gannett and husband Trey, and Dimitri Nakos and wife Emily; grandchildren, Shel Gonzalez (Felix Jr.), Karyssa Torres, Brandon Torres, Ryan Stewart, and Avery Nakos; sister-in-law, Helen Nakos; sister, Vicki Pistolis; brother, Theofanis "Ted" Nakos and wife Eva; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, extended family members, and dear friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, Christos K. Nakos and Hariklia R. Nakos; his brother, Lambros Nakos; and his brother-in-law, Bill Pistolis.



JOHN RYAN STONESTREET, age 48, passed away on August 12, 2026. Born on February 27, 1978, in Charleston, West Virginia, he was the son of Dana and Jana Stonestreet. He is survived by his wife, Anastasia Stonestreet; children, Sofia, Ariadne, and Luke Stonestreet; parents, Dana and Jana Stonestreet; sister, Joanna Stonestreet of Italy; brother, Daniel Stonestreet of Asheville; and nephew, Micah Stonestreet.

In Appreciation

The family of Anastasios Nakos would like to thank everyone for their prayers, love, cards, phone calls and support during his illness and passing. May his Memory be Eternal.

Condolences

Our condolences to Andrew Bahanovich and his wife Elissa on the passing of his mother, Mrs. Eleanor Bahanovich, in Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan. May her memory be eternal.



Kenneth W. Poe
Funeral Service

1321 Berkeley Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28204
704-641-7606 www.KennethPoeServices.com

"Dedicated to Serving the Greek Orthodox Community"



Andrew Bahanovich, Funeral Director, has faithfully served the Greek Community, while being a valued staff member of Kenneth Poe Services.



FAMILY OWNEDTraditional Burials.... Pre-Planning Available

Carolina
Funeral Service
&
Cremation Center



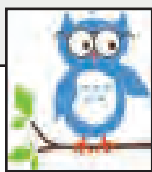
5505 Monroe Rd
Charlotte, NC 28212
704-568-0023
www.carolinafuneral.com

Dignity Afforability Simplicity

Steven Kuzma
Owner/Director

WHOOO'S IN THE NEWS AT PRESCHOOL?

by Maria Kleto and Lisa Giotis



Jesus said "Let the little children come to me" then He took them in his arms and blessed them. Mark 10: 14-16

Welcome our 2026 – 2027 preschool families. It is always exciting to see our returning preschool families and getting to know our new families. We are so happy to once again have our classrooms filled with our preschoolers' smiling faces. There are always a few tears at the beginning of each school year, but the children will soon settle into the daily routine, playing and learning with their friends.

Late August and early September our focus is on the Yiasou Greek Festival. The Play-land Beverage Booth is operated by the preschool staff and parents, and all the proceeds benefit the preschool.

The preschool opened its 2026-2027 school year on Monday, September 21st with the Open House and the Agiasmos (Blessing) led by Fr. Eleferios. Classes began on Tuesday, September 22nd. A favorite preschool session is "Our Faith with Father", a-monthly religious lesson with both Fr. Jonathan and Fr. Eleferios.

In September, students focus on



getting to know our teachers and friends, settling into the new routine, learning about the different class centers and the classroom rules. We talked about being kind to our friends, sharing and taking turns, using good manners and kind words to express our feelings. They are starting to learn about the fall season, the changing of the leaves and all the beauty of Autumn. The children also attended some of the weekday Divine Liturgies. Orthodox baptized students receive Holy Communion.

Throughout the year, we will continue to work with the children to be independent, responsible for themselves and confident in their abilities. The children are so proud of themselves every time they can accomplish a new task or master a new skill.

Our teachers put in a great deal of time and effort both inside and outside of class to prepare their lesson plans and their classrooms. They work hard to make the Preschool a warm and inviting learning environment where the children can thrive.

Our staff members for the current school year are:

Toddler Class (Mon & Wed): Kim Tatsis and Kontilo Pappas

Two-Year-Old Class (Tue & Thu): Dina Sohoritis and Georgia Harakas

Three-Year-Old Class (Mon & Thu): Lisa Giotis, Alex Tatsis (M/W), Stasy Skarlatos (T/TH) and Kim Tatis (TH)

Four-Year-Old Class (Mon thru Fri): Aggie Poulos (M-F), Irene Lowder (M-TH) and Stasy Skarlatos (F)

We wanted to say a special thank you to Matthew Spetz for making a bench and preschool sign planter box for his Eagle Scout project and to George Hodges for making and installing the preschool signage. We appreciate your donation to preschool and love how it brightens our office entrance.



Left: Agiasmos with Fr. Eleferios
Above and below: Sign Planter Box donated by Eagle Scout Matthew Spetz. Preschool Signage donated and installed by George Hodges



The Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Preschool is a religious based half day program for ages 18 months old to 4/5 years old. Our hours are from 9:15 am to 1:15 pm.

If you are interested in registering your child at the preschool, please contact one of the Co-Directors for information and class availability. We still have a few spots available in our preschool program.

Ms. Lisa Giotis 704-807-5926 and
Ms. Maria Kleto 704-564-5842
Preschool Email: preschool@htgo.org
Preschool Phone: 704-333-4961

AHEPA Marathon Chapter No. 2 Recognized



AHEPA "Chapter of the Year Award" was accepted by Brother Harry T. Cavalaris (at right) of Marathon Chapter No. 2 of Charlotte, NC during the AHEPA Family Supreme Convention in Philadelphia, PA. The presentation was made by AHEPA Supreme President E. Chris Kaitson.

AHEPA Marathon Chapter #2 was recognized as the 2026 Chapter of the Year at the AHEPA Supreme Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in July of this year. The award was in recognition of the outstanding effort and quick response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene in September 2024.

Marathon Chapter spearheaded a drive to gather and deliver provisions to the community of Asheville, NC devastated by Hurricane Helene. Aided by the Agia Elpis Ladies Philoptochos Society and Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral community, they gathered donations of winter gear, food, baby essentials, and hygiene products from parishioners and community members alike. With a \$10,000 donation from National AHEPA, specifically earmarked for winter condition supplies including wool blankets, tents, sleeping bags, winter coats, gloves, scarves, and hats. The Agia Elpis Ladies Philoptochos Society contributed by purchasing tents, kerosene heaters, propane gas stoves, batteries, and charcoal stoves. The AHEPA Chapter members loaded a commercial truck with 5,000 pounds of supplies on November 1, 2024, delivering the next morning to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Asheville. The truck was met by members of the local AHEPA chapter and church parishioners with open arms and tearful gratitude.

The AHEPA Marathon Chapter # 2 was founded on September 11, 1922, just two months after the Mother Lodge in Atlanta, Georgia. It has a long shared history with Holy Trinity. Today, there are over 100 Brothers in the Chapter, including 12 Life Members (50+ years of service), and draws from St. Nektarios and St. Luke Greek Orthodox Churches.

[NextHome]
PROVIDENCE

Let's Find Your NextHome!

Contact Me Today:
Jenny Limbanovnos | Cell: 704.299.1902
Jenny@NHProvidence.com

Good Food & Plenty Of It!

Waxhaw
704.243.2024

www.stackskitchen.com

Matthews
704.841.2025



GET SOCIAL WITH HOLY TRINITY

<https://www.facebook.com/HolyTrinityGreekOrthodoxCathedralCharlotte>


@holyltrinitycharlotte



Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral

FRIENDS, FAMILY & COMFORT FOOD!

Showmars
southern • fresh • greek

**TAKEOUT
CURBSIDE PICKUP
DELIVERY
CATERING**

DOWNLOAD APP

Showmars has served the Carolinas for over 40 years, with more than 30 locations across NC and SC.

Dimitra Tula Kourakos

ABR, CRS, CDS Lic NC & SC

REMAX EXECUTIVE

Cell: 704-641-9996
Dimitrak@gmail.com
www.sellingcharlottenow.com

RE/MAX LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT RE/MAX HALL OF FAME MEMBER PLATINUM 100%

"Let's unlock the door to a place your family can truly call home."

Agia Elpis Philoptochos

TIROPITAKIA FOR SALE

Supporting the Presb. Kathryn Constantinides Scholarship

In loving memory

Annual scholarship awarded to a graduating senior young lady

\$20 per doz. frozen rolls

A Taste of Greek Tradition Cookbook

A beautiful gift for:

- Bridal showers
- Housewarmings
- Christmas & holidays
- Hostess & thank-you gifts

A meaningful welcome gift for new parishioners and those new to Orthodox traditions.

\$20 per copy

To order, email: agiaelpisphiloptochos@gmail.com

Carolina Family Chiropractic

Move Well to Live Well!

Complete Chiropractic Care!

Noninvasive Decompression Therapy, Massage Therapy, Cold Laser & Acupuncture, Rehabilitation / Exercise Counseling

The Starting Point of Your Future

704-321-0656
carolinafamilychiropractic.com

HomeTrust Bank

1926

Empowering businesses & communities since 1926.

Business | Commercial | Personal | Mortgage

Kosta Koutsokalis
Business Banking Area Manager
NMLS ID# 2064386
6310 Fairview Rd. Charlotte, NC 28210
704.971.7029
hs.htb.com/charlotte

Member FDIC | Equal Housing Lender