

January 2026
Volume 11
Issue 1

Desert Springs



Newsletter of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral
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Rev. Alexander Eliades

Rev. Deacon John Thrasher

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Monday–Friday, 9:00am–3:00pm

Sunday Worship

8:00am Orthros

9:30am Divine Liturgy

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The 25th of each month

Sunday Bulletin Deadline

Wednesdays, 12 noon

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Vice President: Sandy Annos

Treasurer: Emil Ellis

Secretary: Andi Fourlis

Connie Contes, Charlie DeMoss,
Alexander Harding, Art Kostaras,
Jill Leach, Niko Panagiotakopoulos,
Chris Petroulakis, John Schneider

Holy Trinity Cathedral

www.holytrinityphx.org

Metropolis of San Francisco

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Archdiocese Website

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Attention Organizations: Please check the listings on this page and confirm that the information is correct. Email is the default contact type, but listings can be changed to text or phone if preferred. Email any changes to both the Office at manager@holytrinityphx.org and Kristen at kristen.vasilarakos@outlook.com. **It is the organization's responsibility** to inform Heidi or Kristen of any updates to your listing.

A Message from Father Apostolos

"On the 12th Day of Christmas, my true love gave to me..."

not 12 drummers drumming, but the **Holy Feast of Epiphany!** Orthodox Christians, having kept the Nativity Fast in preparation for Christmas, enjoy these 12 days as a fast-free period of festal celebration between the two feast days with Epiphany seen as the fulfillment of and direct application of Christmas.

In the Feast of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem, we witnessed the Pre-eternal Word of the Father become a newborn babe, thereby uniting all of creation with Himself and, through Him, to the Godhead. Jesus emptied Himself of the eternal glory He shared with the Father in order to become the God-Man, the bridge that reconnects creation with its creator. Christmas is the celebration of the rescue mission God undertook to recall us to Himself!



And in the Feast of Epiphany, we witness the heavenly acknowledgement of the Christ as the Son of God and One of the Holy Trinity when, as Jesus descended into the waters of the Jordan River at the hands of St. John the Baptist, the voice of the Father spoke from Heaven that Jesus was His beloved Son and as the Holy Spirit descended and alighted upon Him, as the festal hymn denotes *"the worship of the Trinity was revealed."*

The hymns of the Feast of Epiphany recall the prophetic words of Psalm 77 which read, *"the waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee and were afraid, the depths also were troubled,"* that is, the primordial element of water as the precondition for life, recognized The Creator as Jesus descended into its depths. This prophecy is depicted in the icon of the Epiphany with the flow of the water reversing its course, an annual miracle which is manifested every year when the Patriarch of Jerusalem throws a wooden cross into the Jordan whereupon the rivers reverses its course for a short period of time.



And it is in this season that the waters of the world are blessed in Orthodox Churches in the services of the "Blessing of the Waters," the Small Blessing on the Eve of Epiphany on the 5th and the Great Blessing on the 6th, the only difference between the two being a single prayer. Here, we bless, that is, we consecrate and dedicate to the service of God, the entire Church building and all the faithful Orthodox gathered to observe the feast.

This blessing is then taken into the homes of all the faithful as we bless our families, homes, businesses, automobiles, and every material aspect of our lives. Holy Water is distributed in little bottles to Orthodox families to keep in our homes of which we partake for health of soul and body, thereby making sacred that which before was mundane and ordinary.

The annual rite of house blessings imputes to the faithful much more than a veneer of luck, good fortune, or the warding off of illness, disease, danger, and calamity. The sacraments of the Orthodox Church are not magical, nor are they talismans of good fortune. They, instead, connote a vibrant and transformative union and relationship between the One who blesses and the ones who receive the blessing.

How, then, can we fully embrace these provided blessings in the year ahead? Perhaps in the mindfulness that *"every good and perfect gift comes down from Thee, the Father of Light"* as we pray at the end of every Divine Liturgy. Perhaps by dedicating the New Year, now consecrated by the sacred waters, to the service of God in our homes and weekly priorities. One would not knowingly suffer profane activities, thoughts, and words to sully those interior spaces once sanctified by the holy waters.

*Fr. Apostolos' Message continued on page 4
Desert Springs January 2026*

Holy Epiphany reminds us that we do not, and as Orthodox Christians *must not*, live only for ourselves. All that we are and possess belongs to God and we are and can only be stewards of the blessings, material and immaterial, "the Giver" entrusts to us. This sacralization of life at the beginning of each New Year orients the faithful

toward the Heavenly Kingdom as our journey through the New Year commences. May we then calibrate our lives, synchronize our schedules, align our priorities, and consecrate our goals toward the successful completion of this journey!

Rev. Protopresbyter **Apostolos Hill** | Dean

Let's Meet Our Parishioner Neighbors!

Greg Lizanich



Originally from the Cleveland, Ohio area, Greg studied business management at The Ohio State University. Upon graduation, Greg joined his family who had relocated to Phoenix. He has worked in the insurance industry for more than 27 years handling Workers Compensation litigation

management at Travelers Insurance. He then worked for Hospice of the Valley in office and clinical data management, eventually taking early retirement. However, Greg continues to volunteer with Hospice and several community groups.

In his spare time, Greg enjoys watching sports and is a huge Buckeye fan, of course, and Steelers too! Time permitting, he also enjoys tennis, swimming, skiing, working out and running (with three completed marathons to his credit)! He is also the biggest "I Love Lucy" fan!

Greg was also a member of the Phoenix Suns "Dancing Dads" performing at the Suns games at least once a month for five seasons. They have also taken part in the Dupree Dance Competition, Glendale Glitters and other special and charitable events. A major highlight was in December 2015 when the Dads were contacted by America's Got Talent to audition, where they eventually made it to the second preliminary round!

Greg has been a member of Holy Trinity and the choir for nearly 36 years. He also served on the Parish Council for two consecutive terms as assistant treasurer, and also was a youth advisor, on the Stewardship Committee, dance group, and Festival church tours.

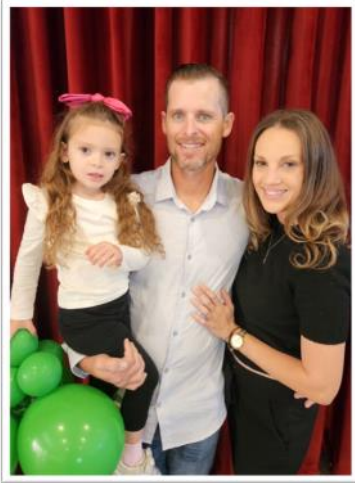
Musically, Greg studied piano privately with Marilyn Wheaton, as well as choral directing under Dr. Tikey Zes and former choir director Kristen Bruskas. He also studied Byzantine chant with Protopsaltis George Duvall. Currently, he is the Assistant Choir Director and serves on the choir board as treasurer.

Most importantly, Greg is both excited and overwhelmed by the significant growth of Holy Trinity in recent years and being part of it. Over the last few years he has been honored and humbled to sponsor several Catechumens into the church: Zane Cups (John), Emanuel Corrales, Gerald Vaughn (Justinian), Jordano Sessions (John) and Kaleb Hammler (Nicholas). Greg feels truly blessed with the love and support these relationships provide with the journey in the Orthodox Faith and highly encourages others to take part in this beautiful ministry.



Let's Meet Our Parishioner Neighbors!

The Leahy Family



We are Patrick and Tia (short for Stamatia), and our hearts could not be more full since the arrival of our beautiful daughter, Maria (now 3), our most precious blessing from God. Maria has filled our lives with joy, love, laughter, and gratitude every single day. She is a sweet, curious, and joyful little

girl who lights up every room she enters.

I was born and raised in Montreal, Canada, with both of my parents being Greek Orthodox. My upbringing was shaped by Greek culture, cherished traditions, and the Greek Orthodox faith. I met my wonderful husband, Patrick, while on a business trip to New York. At the time, I was working as an executive in sales for an international swimwear company, and Patrick was working as a steel erector, making a quick one-day stop in New York on his way to Pennsylvania for work. It was truly God's plan for our paths to cross, and from that moment forward we have been inseparable. Patrick was born in Arizona and raised between Oregon and Arizona, developing a love for the outdoors in Oregon and a passion for riding in Arizona. His life has always been grounded in a strong faith in God.

We were married on August 31, 2019, at my home church, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, in Laval, Canada, and later moved to Arizona. After moving to Arizona, I found my path in project management, and in time embraced my most meaningful role as a stay-at-home mother. Since Maria's arrival, my heart has been devoted to her, while Patrick continues his work now as a carpenter. Moving so far from my family was difficult, as we have always been very close, and I expressed to Patrick how important it was for me to find a Greek Orthodox church here in Arizona. With his love and support, we found Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, where we were welcomed with warmth and open arms, and immediately felt at home. Since 2021, we have been blessed to worship here and be part of this extraordinary and loving community.

God blessed us with the greatest gift of all, our beloved daughter, Maria. She was baptized back home in Canada at the same church where Patrick and I were married, making it especially meaningful for us. It is fundamental to us that Maria grows up with a strong faith in God, deeply connected to the spiritual life and traditions of the Orthodox Church. We cherish sharing our Greek heritage, language, and traditions with her while also embracing our life here in Arizona. We pray that God continues to guide and protect her throughout her life.

We are very grateful to God for his countless blessings and for the love, support, and friendships we have found within this beautiful community.

House Blessings

House blessings for the New Year will start after Holy Theophany on **January 6th** by appointment. Please call the office or Fr. Apostolos or Fr. Alexander individually to make an appointment. Deadline to call for a house blessing by **Jan 21**.

Office: 602-264-7863



Project Mexico Group— June 11-17, 2026

We're excited again to offer a group to go down to Project Mexico to build a house for those in need, stationed out of St. Innocent Orphanage. Please let Fr. Alexander know if you're interested! Open to High School and above who are able to do manual labor.

Stewardship

By Sandy Meris

2026 Theme: “Rise Up and Build” Building the Body of Christ - Nehemiah 2:18



Holy Trinity Cathedral “Why Statement”:

“To be a welcoming community, sharing Christ’s love through faith and service.”

HAPPY AND BLESSED 2026 TO ALL OF OUR HOLY TRINITY PARISHIONERS!!

What a truly blessed and amazing year 2025 was for Holy Trinity. We saw beautiful growth with dozens of Baptisms and Chrismations and new Stewards who joined our Cathedral family. Our pews are full on Sundays, Coffee Hours are bustling and our ministries are growing. We had a successful festival!

Stewardship 2026 is off to a great start. So far we have more than \$280,000 pledged. So, we are more than half way to our budgeted goal of \$560,000.

We thank every single Steward who generously gave their time, talent and treasure in 2025 and we thank you in advance for becoming a 2026 Steward in good standing. What does it mean to be a “Steward in good standing”? It means you have filled out a 2026 pledge card and made a financial contribution toward that pledge and is necessary in order to vote in a parish assembly, hold a leadership position in a ministry, baptize someone, get married, or even run for the Parish Council.

ONLINE GIVING IN 2026

Are you using ShelbyNext for your online giving? This quick and easy online payment portal is the best and most efficient way to make your stewardship payments.

Reasons to use ShelbyNext:

- It is fully customizable to give via credit card or directly from your checking account.
- You set your own payment schedule. Weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, one annual payment...its your choice!
- Never get behind on payments. No more “catching up” at the end of the year.

- Much easier to track your payments - log on any time to make changes, increase/decrease pledge, check your payment progress.
- ShelbyNext also houses Holy Trinity’s church database so it works seamlessly for the office staff.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING TO THE GIVING TREE

Huge, heartfelt thanks to all our parishioners who donated to Central Arizona Shelter Services (CASS). Together we raised \$1,685 in cash and gift cards. CASS provides emergency shelter along with supportive services like case management, housing assistance and a food pantry to help people achieve stability. Your generous gifts help make those suffering feel a little relief during a difficult time.

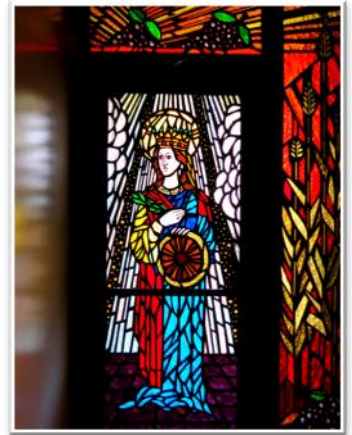
Stewardship Sunday

December 7, 2025



Holy Trinity's St. Katherine Philoptochos

Kristen Vasilarakos, President



St. Katherine faceted glass icon in the south wing of the Narthex.



Next Meeting: Thursday, January 8, 2026, 6:00 pm
AFFCF—360 E Coronado Rd



Check in on a Parishioner—Circle of Angels

Do you have a family member or friend who has not been able to come to church lately? Please let us know! Call or Text Julie at 850-225-4978.



December Meeting

Saturday, December 6, 2025



[View More Photos](#)

December Bake Sale

Saturday, December 14, 2025



[View More Photos](#)

Coffee Social Outside the Cathedral

December 28, 2025

Full-sized photos link
on page 12.



Scholarship Application

Applications available in the Narthex

St. Katherine's Philoptochos of Holy Trinity Cathedral 2026 Scholarship Application

St. Katherine's Philoptochos is pleased to announce we will be offering three one thousand dollar (\$1000) scholarships to Holy Trinity students attending college in fall of 2026. Listed below are the application requirements.

1. Student and/or family must be a current steward, in good standing, of Holy Trinity Cathedral
2. High school students must have graduated in the spring of 2026 and attending college in the fall of 2026
3. Current college students may apply as a "continuing student" or "graduate student". A student may not apply more than twice.
4. Applicants must submit:
 - A copy of 2025 -26 transcripts
 - College acceptance letter
 - A resume including school, church and community activities

APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 15th

If you have any questions or would like to contribute to our scholarships Fund, please contact a member of the scholarship committee. Georgana Frieh 602-300-0016. Scholarships may also be mailed to: Philoptochos Scholarship, 1973 E. Maryland, Phoenix, AZ 85016. Email completed form to: gfrieh@gmail.com

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY & ZIP _____
PHONE & EMAIL _____
HIGH SCHOOL – COLLEGE (presently attending) _____
COLLEGE ACCEPTED TO: _____
GPA _____ Signature _____

December Baking

Photos from Thursday, December 11, 2025



[View More Photos](#)



Tuesday Coffee Group

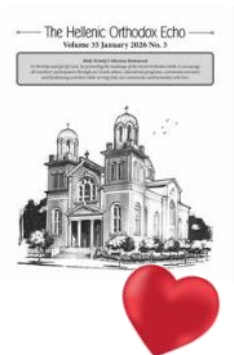


For those with a flexible schedule:

Join us for coffee and talk. Included within the social are activities related to Philoptochos' **Circle of Angels**, other chapter support, sometimes church office support, and just plain hanging out with friends.



Circle of Angel's member Laurel Charnas Schiller's home church of Holy Trinity in Toledo, Ohio contributed blankets for our baby abundance here at Holy Trinity in Phoenix! Their ministry, Warm Hands to Warm Hearts, included this notice in their bulletin:



In addition to lap blankets, our ministry offers **baby blankets** to our youngest Holy Trinity precious ones. Our dedicated baby blanket maker has us so well stocked that we were blessed to make a donation to an Orthodox church in Arizona. **After hearing of their need, we offered 17 baby blankets to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Phoenix, Arizona.** This is the home church of Laurel and Todd Schiller who also attend our cathedral part time as well. They delivered the blankets with love from us. **What a joy to know that we have shared love and warmth with precious ones across the country who belong to our greater Orthodox church family!**

Philoptochos Coins for Missions

Thank you to our community for the pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and bills: we collected **\$155.00** for our continued missions!

Thank you!



Toy Donations

Philoptochos members brought unwrapped toys to our December meeting and passed them to OPA President Anthony Miaoulis for their **4F** event and distribution.



Christmas Eve Orthros

December 24, 2025



[View Full-Sized Photos](#)

Communion

December 21, 2025

[View More Photos](#)



Bible Study

Join us **Wednesdays** after Paraklesis for Bible Study on the Book of Romans with Father Alexander in the Chapel and on Zoom. Bible Study is open to all.

Learning to Live an Orthodox Life

The Fall semester of catechism is held on **Saturdays from 3:30-4:30pm**. This year's theme is "Learning to live an Orthodox life" with an emphasis on the practical application of the Orthodox faith to our daily lives. Class is open to all Cathedral members. Contact Father Apostolos to register.



Dr. Sophia Isaac, Dr. Anastasia Psomiadi, Fr. Alexander Eliades, Stavros Terry Stavridis, Christine Bakavelou

Seminar

Sunday, December 21, 2025

"1919-23: From Paris to Smyrna and beyond"

We invite you to join us to remember and reflect on the **Christian Genocide**

SUNDAY DEC 21st
12:30pm – 1:30pm

Location: **Holy Trinity Cathedral**
1973 E Maryland Ave, Phoenix, AZ
Community Hall, Small Hall

Brought to you by:



For more information: Email to Christinasbakavelou.com

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Stavros Terry Stavridis
Public Speaker,
Freelance Writer,
Historian

REFLECTIONS PANEL



Fr. Alexander Eliades
Presbyter,
Holy Trinity Cathedral
Phoenix



Dr. Sophia Isaac
Author,
Career Consultant
VP Seyfo Center AZ



Dr. Anastasia Psomiadi
#1 Best-Selling Author,
Academic Lecturer,
Founder APSON

FACILITATOR

Christina Bakavelou
Global Business Leader
Orthodox Parents Association Treasurer



Youth Ministry

4F Night

Join us **Saturday, January 10, 4:30-8pm** for an evening of Faith, Fellowship, Fun and Food. All of our youth from Grades 1-12 are invited to join us for this great night. Keep an eye out for registration.

God's Corner at Coffee Hour

This corner is available every Sunday for our little ones to play in and learn together. If you're interested in helping, please contact Mara Contes at mara.contes18@gmail.com.



Sr. GOYA

December 19, 2025

Sr. Goya Christmas Party hosted by the Ruboyianes Family.



Sunday School

Following dismissal prayer, students go to:

- PreK/K: Small Hall - Community Center Meeting Room
- Grades 1-4: GOYA Room
- Grades 5-8: Chapel
- Grades 9-10: Conference Room

If you are interested in being a part of the Sunday School ministry, please email htphxsundayschool@gmail.com or text 602-705-3172 to see how you can help.

Altar Photos

December 21, 2025



[View More Photos](#)

Festival Leadership Recognition

December 14, 2025



THANK YOU!

Coffee Socials Following Sunday Liturgies

The December Coffee Socials were sponsored by **Stewardship, the Celebration Committee, and Philoptochos.**



[Full-Sized Photos from the 3rd and 4th Sundays](#)



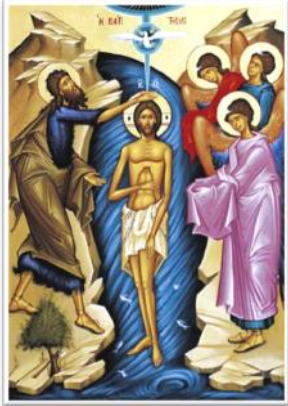
[Full-Sized Photos from Stewardship Sunday](#)

St. Nectarios Books & Beyond

Submitted by Rita Papaspyrou

stnectariosphx@gmail.com

The month of January gives us the opportunity to celebrate the Feast of Holy Theophany.



In the East, the Nativity of Christ was celebrated together with Epiphany of January 6th, while in the West, the Nativity was celebrated before Epiphany became known to them. It is important to stress that, contrary to what is written in some places, Theophany is NOT the birth of the Church.

The Church has always existed since the beginning of times. The Church is God and since God has always existed, so has the Church.

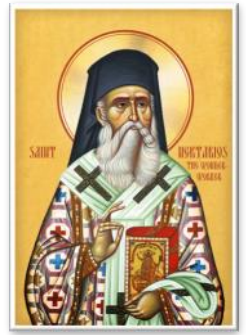
The term Theophany and Epiphany is used interchangeably. Theophany is a Greek word. 'Theophania', (Theos - God; phaneia - manifestation) means in literal translation, "Manifestation of God". The literal meaning of Epiphany (Epi - above; phaneia - manifestation) is "Manifestation from above".

The Orthodox Church has defined the Epiphany of the Holy Trinity as the appearance of God during Christ's baptism in the Jordan River. It is the beginning of Christ's official dedication to His Divine Mission in the presence and manifestation of the Triune God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus and the one chosen by God to proclaim His coming, was preaching in the wilderness and was baptizing all who would respond to his message calling for repentance. As he was doing this, John was directing the people toward the one who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. Initially, John would not do this, saying that Jesus should

baptize him. Jesus said to John, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness (3:15). John consented and baptized Jesus.



When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens opened suddenly, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. The Bible records that the Spirit descended like a dove and alighted on him. When this happened, a voice came from heaven and said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with Whom I am well pleased." This was the voice of God the Father.

Christ's baptism in the Jordan was "theophany," a manifestation of God to the world, because it was the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. It was also a "theophany" in that the world was granted a revelation of the Holy Trinity. All three Persons were made manifest together: the Father testified from on high to the divine Sonship of Jesus; the Son received His Father's testimony; and the Spirit was seen in the form of a dove, descending from the Father and resting upon the Son.

Theophany represents our redemption from darkness and illumination by the light of the knowledge of God. This is why it is also referred to as the Feast of Lights, the Lights which illuminates our conscience and our Christian way of life. "I am the Light", Jesus said. The Church celebrates on this day the illumination of the world by the light of Christ.

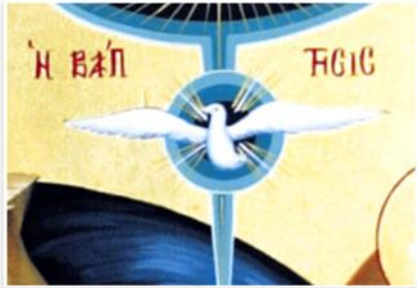
As Orthodox Christians, let us always walk upright in the Light of Christ!

Icon of the Feast

The Icon of the Feast of Theophany tells the story from the Gospels in images and color. On the left side of the icon we see John the Baptist who is dressed in camel's hair and has the appearance of one who lives in the wilderness. His arms are outstretched, showing an attitude of prayer and

St. Nectarios Books & Beyond

reverence, but also directing others to Christ. With his right hand he is conducting the baptism.



The Heavens open, the voice of the Father is heard, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descends upon Christ.



In the center of the icon is Christ being baptized in the Jordan. He is standing in the water wearing a waistcloth, and with His right hand

He is blessing the waters of the Jordan. Above His head is the Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon Him. At the top of the icon, a semicircle depicts the opening of the Heavens and the voice of the Father.



Angels of the Lord gathered on the shore of the Jordan River give praises to Christ.



An angel of the Lord receives Christ as He comes out of the water.



Catechumen Chrismations

December 7, 2025



Ensuring a Safe Worship Environment

To help keep our parish community safe and at peace during worship, you will notice we have a uniformed police officer on duty each Sunday. This presence is new for our church. It is simply one more way we care for one another and ensure that all who come to pray, serve, and gather here may do so in a secure environment.

Our Church Family

40 Day Blessings

"One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." Psalm 27:4



12/07/2025

Markella, daughter of Presvytera Laura & Father Alexander Eliades

God's Blessings be upon her.

Emmanouela, daughter of Grigoria Athanasaki & Tony Batista

God's Blessings be upon her.

Chrismations

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Galatians 3:27



12/07/2025

Sage Domme

Kaleb Hammler

Carolyn Perez

Alexa Semann

Eddie Semann

Edward Semann

Victoria Semann

Santiago Valles

God's Blessings be upon them.

Funeral

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6



12/06/2025

Bill DeMoss

May his memory be eternal.

Retired Men's Coffee

Calling all retired gentlemen! Join us for a weekly coffee group beginning Thursday, June 12th at 10:00 am in the church office conference room.



Meet us each Thursday morning for a cup of coffee and some fellowship. No agenda, just an opportunity for some fellowship and good conversation. Hope to see you there!

40-Day Blessings Photos



[View More Photos](#)



Celebration Committee

Let's Celebrate!

On the first Sunday of each month, the Celebration Committee organizes a luncheon during coffee hour to celebrate all the special events in parishioners' lives and birthdays that take place in that month. Please join us every month to celebrate!

In December, the Celebration Committee hosted our last celebration of 2025 and our largest one to date! We celebrated the baptisms of Lenore Cohen, Jordano Sessions, and Tytan (Anastasios) Vasilarakos; the chrismations of Sage Domme,

Kaleb Hammler, Carolyn Perez, and Santiago Valles; the 40-day blessings of Athena Karoutas and Emmanouela Batista; and the wedding of Jordano and Christy Sessions. The hall was decorated with Christmas colors with handmade balloon ornaments for table centerpieces, an 8ft balloon arch, and mylar balloon decorations!

If you want to join the committee, please email htcphxevents@gmail.com and/or talk to **Terri Alexon** or **Mary Pardhe**!



Monthly Communal Cooking Event

[View Full-Sized Photos](#)

For the December Celebration Sunday, the Communal Cooking crew led by Phillip Panagiotoglou served pasta with shrimp sauce, Greek salad, cake, and fruits. If you are interested in helping out or joining us for future cooking events, please email htcphxevents@gmail.com.

January Birthdays

Wish them a Happy Birthday!



Baptism Invite

January 24, 2026



Vote Counting

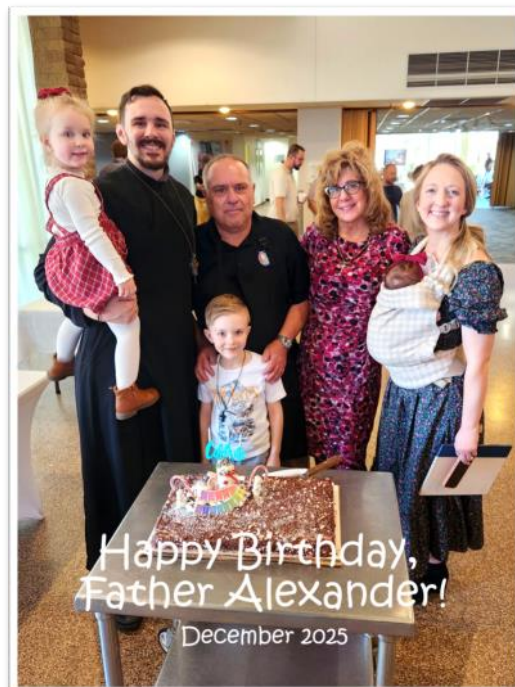
Celebrated December 14, 2025



Angie, Donna, Jennifer, Lynn, & Heidi

Happy Birthday!

Celebrated December 21, 2025



Desert Springs January 2026

Living Orthodox Young Adult Ministry

Living Orthodox 2025 Impact Summary

In 2025, Living Orthodox continued building the pan-Orthodox community in Arizona while expanding our national partnerships, service outreach, and support for young adult and adult ministry.

Reach & Community Engagement

- Welcomed **175+ young adults** across potlucks, fellowships, and educational events.
- Launched a new ministry arm, under the leadership of Amanda Mikhail, to better serve **adults ages 30–45**, expanding our mission beyond the young adult demographic.
- Expanded our digital community through a new WhatsApp group and a growing Instagram presence of **300+ followers**.

National Mission Partnerships

- Deepened collaboration with the Orthodox Christian Missions Center (OCMC) through two major mission initiatives:
- Hosted **Fr. James Retelas**, OCMC Mission Center Development Officer, for a three-day visit across three parishes and an OCF meeting, reaching **300+ attendees** through information sessions and a fundraising dinner.
- Co-hosted an **intergenerational missions retreat and family night** with OCMC representatives Fr. Stephanos Ritsi, Mission Center Interim Missionary Director, and Anastasia Pamela Barksdale, Parish Engagement Coordinator. The event was a collaboration between Living Orthodox, OCMC, and OCF and drew over **100 participants from 3 states and 8 parishes**. It featured **eight ministry leaders** on panel discussions, was **the first event that attracted out-of-state attendees**, and included **our first-ever family night** with a “Youth on a Mission: Travel the World” children’s program.

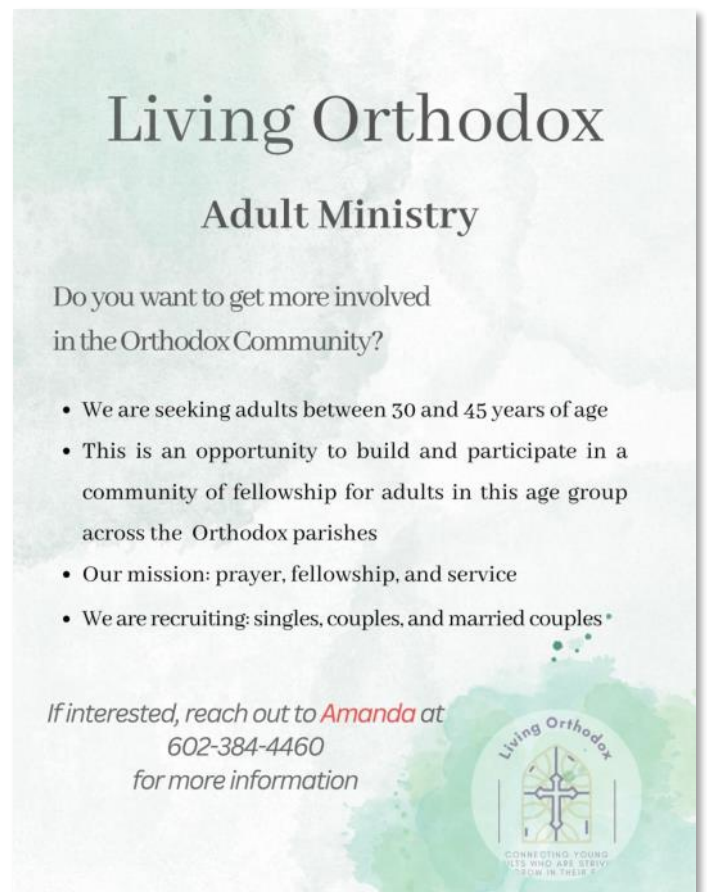
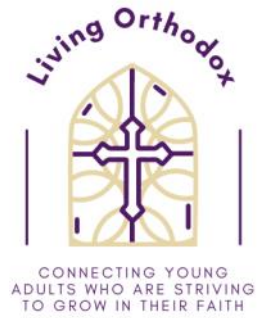
Community

- In partnership with **FOCUS**, we organized two large service projects, preparing:

- **175+ care bags and backpacks** for those experiencing homelessness.
- **96 gift bags** for family shelters and children in need.

Supporting Leaders & Ministries

- Continued strengthening Orthodox young adult ministry statewide through:
- Communication support for parish leaders
- A shared events calendar
- Pan-Orthodox promotion of ministry opportunities



Living Orthodox Young Adult Ministry

Christmas Party

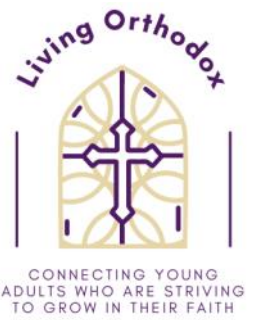
In December, we hosted our 3rd annual Christmas party in collaboration with the ASU OCF chapter! We had a wonderful turnout with representation from five parishes. Both the young adult and adult groups were in attendance along with OCF students and children of Living Orthodox families.

Our service project, in collaboration with FOCUS Phoenix, packed 48 backpacks with a hat/gloves/scarf set, thermal socks, hand cream, lip balm, hand warmers, band-aids, hygiene kits, and a snack. We also packed 96 gift bags for children in the Vista Colina family shelter. Each bag contained a stuffed animal, bubble wand, Christmas-themed stationary, wooden peg toys, candy canes, and other small items. Thanks to Holy Trinity's ministry support, OPA's loan of storage space in their room, and Chris Lopez' coordination of delivering the finished bags, every child at Vista Colina had a Christmas gift this year and numerous people experiencing homelessness received essential winter supplies.

The Christmas party also included a bonfire, a fun white elephant gift exchange, and a delicious potluck dinner! It was a beautiful time of community and a lovely way to wrap up our 2025 events.

To be informed of upcoming events in the young adult or adult ministries, please follow us on Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/living_orthodox_ministry/) or sign up for our email newsletter (<https://bit.ly/LOconnect>).

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about Living Orthodox, please email us at livingorthodoxministry@gmail.com! You can also visit <https://linktr.ee/livingorthodox> for links to our social media.



[View Full-Sized Photos](#)



AHEPA Chapter 219



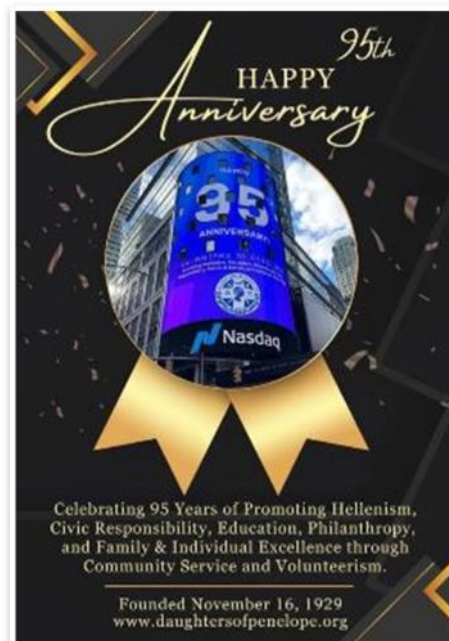
Daughters of Penelope Chapter 432

Happy New Year from Helenos Chapter #432 Daughters of Penelope

Located here at Holy Trinity, we meet the 3rd Thursday of the month from September through June.

We are beginning our 2026 membership year and would love to include you as a new member. The Daughters of Penelope (DOP), an affiliate of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), is an International Women's Organization, and the largest of Hellenic descent. It was founded by Alexandra Apostolides on November 16, 1929, in San Francisco, California. The DOP's accomplishments are quite remarkable. It has strengthened the status of women in society, sheltered the elderly and abused, educated the youth, promoted Hellenic heritage, raised funds for the needy, medical research, and much more.

Helenos Chapter of District 20 hold amazing events to raise funds and awareness for their various causes. Our District Project for 2025-2026 is Water by Women, who strive to provide clean water for God's thirsty



children. They believe that every child, everywhere, should be drinking clean water. Learn more at WaterbyWomen.org

Part of your membership will include your children participating in our District 20 AHEPA Scholarship Foundation. The Foundation has been providing our children with educational opportunities for over 60 years. The Foundation provided five (5) Post Graduate Grants and thirty-three (33) Undergraduate Scholarships at the 2025 District Convention in May 2025.

Learn more about the District’s Scholarship at <https://ahepadistrict20.org/Scholarship>



Hosting Coffee Hour to Celebrate Daughters of Penelope 95th Anniversary



Guest Speaker and Luncheon Fundraiser for Water By Women



Fundraiser supporting The 29:11 Project



Socials at the Wrigley Mansion and Murder Mystery Dinner Show at The Old Spaghetti Factory



Fundraiser for Project Linus

Come Join Us!

Submitted By: Cynthia Bekiaris, Helenos Chapter President
Daughters of Penelope, District 20

Christmas Pageant

December 21, 2025



[View More Photos](#)

