

Desert Springs

September 2025

Volume 10

Issue 8



Newsletter of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral

1973 E. Maryland Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85016

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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

www.SanFran.goarch.org

Archdiocese Website

www.goarch.org

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- **All Saints Camp** — Fr. Jacob/George Miller: info@allsaintscamparizona.org
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- **Desert Diamonds (50+)** — Julie Karoutas: juliekaroutas@gmail.com
- **Epistle Readers** — Jill Leach: jill.leach@hotmail.com
- **FOCUS Phoenix Ministry Project** — Chris Lopez: lop62@gmail.com, Georgia Lipane: glipane@gmail.com
- **Greek Festival** — Nick Kretsedemas: nick.kretsedemas@chilis.com, Angelo Pestrivas: angelopestrivas@msn.com
- **Greek School** — Irene Mackos: eirinie@gmail.com
- **Hellenic Museum** — Bessie Hotis: call 602-953-1913
- **Little Lambs** — Deborah Harrison: 14dharrison@gmail.com
- **Living Orthodox** — Mary Pardhe: livingorthodoxministry@gmail.com
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- **Narthex Intake** — Kristen Vasilarakos: kristen.vasilarakos@outlook.com
- **OPA** — Anthony Miaoulis: anthony.miaoulis@gmail.com
- **Oratorical Festival** — Chris Francis: battersbox7@yahoo.com, Nick Petsas: npetsas@outlook.com
- **Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF/18-25 year olds)** — Aleksandar "Speedy" Lučić: alucic@ocf.net
- **Parish Council** — Jim Manelis: jmanelis@aol.com
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- **Wedding Coordinator** — Patty Ladas: pattyladas@gmail.com

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

Lifelong Learning

An alarming statistic was noted this week about Americans' reading habits. In the 20 years between 2000 and 2020, citizens who read for pleasure dropped 40% with now only 16% of the populace reading at all, whether books, magazines, e-books, or internet content, hence the rise of the uninformed social media expert.

And yet, intellectual curiosity remains the hallmark of an active mind and a zest for life. When we stop learning, content that we have learned enough, we stop growing and begin atrophying. The philosopher Vernon Howard once wrote *"Always walk through life as if you have something new to learn and you will."* If this is true in the mundane world, it is particularly so in our spiritual pursuits.

Learning about God defies all convention as we approach the ultimately unknowable. You may hear the word *"ineffable"* used in our hymnology which means *"too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words."* And yet, know God we must! How then is this achieved? St. Paul outlines the methodology for us in his letter to the faithful in Philippi; *"...that I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death,"* suggesting that such knowledge is experiential and not solely academic.

And inasmuch as our salvation precisely rests upon knowing God, e.g., *"depart from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you,"* (Matt. 7:23) this is something we ignore or avoid to our peril. How, then is such knowledge acquired? The task may seem daunting with 2,000 years of collected Orthodox wisdom to explore and our overemphasis on the academic model rendering the entire enterprise quite unappealing.

Enter *Catechism*, from the Greek word *κατηχέω*, which means *"to instruct orally"* in the ancient Socratic method of imparting knowledge by dialogue. At first blush, lifelong Orthodox Christians may blanch at the prospect of catechism,



retorting *"I've been Orthodox my entire life! What more do I need to learn?"* But, as stated above, knowing some things about God, is in not equivalent to *knowing God person to person* which is an eternal process.

Over the years, faithful parish members have positively remarked upon how much new members know about the Orthodox faith, having been required to undergo catechism, to which I've always wanted to reply *"Aaand...? Might such catechism not also benefit you?"* As lifelong learners, we are never satisfied with whatever knowledge we may have already acquired and, outside of catechism, precious little opportunities exist to acquire more knowledge.

St. Paul once wrote to his spiritual son, St. Timothy; *"Study to show yourself approved before God, a worker who has no cause to be ashamed,"* and we need not be ashamed so long as we continue to study. Our Catechism this year is themed *"Learning to live an Orthodox life,"* and will focus on the practical application of the faith and principles of the ancient Church.

You, as lifelong parishioners, may not be able to participate in every class but can certainly participate in some of them. I pray that you will choose to join the 50 catechumens seeking to enter Holy Orthodoxy already enrolled in the course. The classes will begin on Saturday, 9/6, at 3:30PM. I hope to see you there!

Let's Meet Our Parishioner Neighbors!

Lynn & Bill Graham



Bill is a Phoenix native and was raised in the Methodist Church. He worked in the printed wiring board industry for well over 20 years, but when Honeywell moved all their board manufacturing to Mexico, Bill entered the banking business and retired from Wells Fargo in 2020. Lynn is from Minnesota, was raised Lutheran and arrived in Phoenix via California with her four-year-old daughter in 1974. Lynn has an accounting degree and, wanting to get out of the corporate world, was hired by Holy Trinity Cathedral as their office manager/bookkeeper in 1998. She retired from Holy Trinity the end of 2010 but was rehired two more times to finally retire in 2017. She continued as a volunteer training new office help until the arrival of office manager Heidi Bass, allowing her to retire permanently.

Being disillusioned with mainline Protestantism both Bill and Lynn attended various non-denominational churches and met at a Vineyard church where they married in 1992. Moving on to another non-denominational church, they connected with a couple who were old friends of Lynn's from Minnesota. There they all took a Bible class studying church history and the early Church Fathers which then got them all interested in studying Orthodoxy. The four of them continued studying Orthodoxy together for a number of years, leading to their friends being chrismated and the man entering St. Tikhon Seminary and being ordained an Orthodox priest, and Lynn and Bill being chrismated at Holy Trinity Cathedral with Bette Maniatis as their godmother in 2005.

While studying Orthodoxy, Lynn and her Minnesota friend became interested in iconography. Her friend studied under iconographer Phil Zimmerman and passed her knowledge on to Lynn. In 2012 Lynn was blessed by OCA Archbishop Nathaniel as an iconographer. She has written many icons, including a 2-year commissioned work for an Orthodox Church of four 16x20 icons of the Four Evangelists. She continues to do commissioned work and is currently instructing Justen Merk of HTC in iconography.

If you haven't met us yet, please stop us after Liturgy and introduce yourselves. We'd love to get to know you!

Kim & Alec Miller



Hello, we are Alec and Kim and we just started attending Holy Trinity about a year ago and had the blessing of being Chrismated in June of this year. We were both born and raised in Phoenix and were married in 2014. Alec currently does motion design as freelance and for his company Royals and Rogues and Kim runs a book repair company called Phoenix Book Restoration.

We decided to attend Holy Trinity after many years of difficult suffering and feeling dry spiritually at the church we were attending at the time. Our first visit we felt like we had found a new home when we were immediately welcomed in and prayed over by both Father Alexander and Father Apostolos. We have loved getting to know everyone here surrounded by this new family. Please introduce yourselves to us if you see us around.

Stewardship

By Sandy Meris



2025 THEME:

“Your Own From Your Own”

Holy Trinity Cathedral “Why Statement”:

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

FALL COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT TAKES US OFF CAMPUS!

Help us fill Emergency Food Boxes for St. Mary’s Food Bank

Join us on Saturday, November 22nd from 12-2pm at St. Mary’s Food Bank to help fill Emergency Food Boxes for people in need. We have **50 slots** and we will soon send out a link to register to attend this project.

WHEN?: Saturday, November 22, 2025, noon-2pm

WHERE?: St. Mary’s Food Bank Volunteer Center, 2804 N. 29th Avenue

HOW?: Sign Up through the link that will be available soon

Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as soon.

Isaiah 58:10



ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY SUNDAY IS IN THE BOOKS

Thank you to all of our ministries for taking the time to set up tables, share information and welcome parishioners to join. We had an incredible turnout for our annual Ministry Sunday. Thanks to all who participated.

SUMMER COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT A HUGE SUCCESS!!

Thank you to all who contributed to our Summer Community Outreach Project in June by donating cases of water and non-perishable food items for St. Vincent de Paul. Due to everyone’s efforts we collected hundreds of pounds of food and clean drinking water to children and families in need.



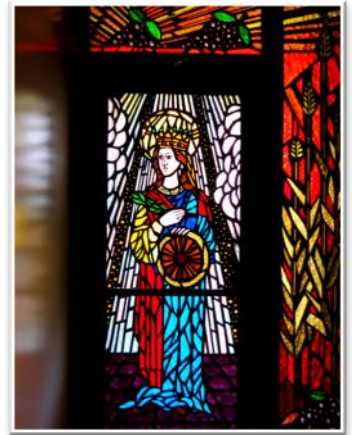
**THE SOCIETY OF
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL**

FEED. CLOTHE. HOUSE. HEAL.



Holy Trinity's St. Katherine Philoptochos

Kristen Vasilarakos, President



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



**We meet next on Thursday, September 11, 2025
at 6:00pm**

**in the Cathedral for the Blessing of the Waters,
then we will go to the Lounge of the
Speros Community Center for the meeting.**



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.



Tuesday Coffee Group

We will resume on **September 9th!**



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.

Come hang out if you can!



Excerpt from the Metropolis Summer Newsletter:

Chapter President Kristen Vasilarakos states how meaningful it is for "the chapter to have a stake in Metropolis and National causes in addition to our numerous local and parish events and missions. We offer various fund-raising events and sales throughout the year, with the philosophy of what comes in, goes out. We are continually trying new ways of doing things along with the traditional way of doing things, offering social and colorful media with photos to catch the attention of potential new members and to re-invigorate our seasoned members. It's a work in progress to continually build on our strong foundation but a worthy one. We are thankful that our Board and our membership choose to uphold the intent of those dedicated foremothers. We fully embrace the Mission Statement of the National Philoptochos: Through Christ, we serve."

St. Nectarios Books & Beyond

Submitted by Rita Papaspyrou

stnectariosphx@gmail.com

September is here, and again marks the beginning of a new Ecclesiastical Year!

September Holy Days:

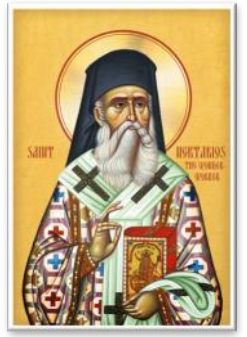
September 8: Nativity of the Theotokos – It is appropriate that the first great feast of the liturgical year brings us into the presence of the Blessed Mother of God, the highest example of human holiness!

September 14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross – At this second of the great feasts we encounter the Holy Cross, which reminds us that Christ suffered His Passion and was crucified for our salvation because of His love for us. We are reminded to

“bear our own Cross [the ones He gives us, our human trials, which are one of the aspects of the Cross of Christ] and follow Him.”

Yet the Orthodox Church focuses upon the empty Cross, rather than a crucifix, because although Christ allowed Himself to be crucified for our sakes He also Resurrected Himself to remind us of His promise of Life Everlasting through Him.

September 26: Falling Asleep of St. John the Theologian (Evangelist) – St. John authored his Gospel in Ephesus and wrote Revelation while exiled in Patmos. Tradition has it that he died in Ephesus around 104 A.D., at over the age of 100 years. He is also remembered on May 8.



Fall Catechism and Bible Study

Our Catechism and Bible Study classes are commencing soon! Bible Study on the Book of Romans has begun with Fr. Alexander in the Chapel and on Zoom and is open to all every Wednesday after Paraklesis! Fr. Apostolos will begin Catechism on **Saturday, September 6 at 3:30pm** in the Cathedral. This is open to all (and encouraged!) but is necessary for those looking to convert.



Retired Men's Coffee Group

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!



Celebration Committee



On the first Sunday of each month, the Celebration Committee organizes a potluck 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!

The August Celebration Sunday was a wonderful celebration of birthdays and a wedding! We celebrated Mary Lou Mastorakos' 97th birthday, Else Paletsos' 95th birthday, Bill Miller's 90th birthday along with Justen and Virginia Merk's Orthodox wedding. In honor of the Dormition, the hall was decorated with white and blue with gold accents. The centerpieces were tiny nests.

If you want to support the ministry, either through funding or time, please let us know!

For donations, please visit <https://bit.ly/HTphxCC> or put "Celebration Committee" on the memo line of checks made out to the Cathedral. **To volunteer**, email htcphxevents@gmail.com and/or talk to Terri Alexon or Mary Pardhe!

Communal Cooking Event

For the August Celebration Sunday, the Communal Cooking crew led by Phillip Panagiotoglou served ziti with tomato sauce, Greek salad, tabouli salad, vegetable rice, watermelon, cookies, and cake (vegan and non-vegan).

If you are interested in helping out or joining us for future cooking events, please email htcphxevents@gmail.com. In addition, please feel free to bring a dish to share!



Living Orthodox Young Adult Ministry

Living Orthodox is a national, pan-Orthodox ministry that is building a community of young adults (18-30s) who are striving to grow in and connect with their faith. Sign up at <https://bit.ly/LOconnect> for our email/SMS lists!

OCMC Retreat: "Called to Serve: Living the Liturgy After the Liturgy"

Over the summer, we've been preparing for the OCMC retreat that will be held on September 13th at Holy Trinity! This event, co-hosted by OCMC and OCF, will be open to all ages. The morning sessions will include a keynote presentation by Fr. Stephanos Ritsi, panel discussions, small-group discussions and a group lunch. The evening session is a family night with a service project, youth activity, adult reception, and community dinner. Following dinner, we'll be showing the movie "American Orthodox".

RSVP Link: www.ocmc.org/phoenix-retreat


Please RSVP as soon as possible to reserve your place! Due to generous donations, attendance at the retreat (9 – 4:30 pm) is only \$15. The evening family event (4:30 – 8:30 pm) is free to attend, but RSVPs are needed.

About the keynote speaker: Fr. Ritsi is the OCMC Mission Center Interim Missionary Director). A graduate of the University of Florida and Holy Cross School of Theology, he spent ten years in Albania assisting the rebuilding of the Orthodox Church, where he served in youth ministry, the

Archbishop's office, and as a lecturer after completing his PhD at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki. In 2023, he returned to St. Augustine, Florida, with his two sons, Moses and Athan.

"American Orthodox" Movie Synopsis: Travel to California's coastal Fort Ross, where an icon mysteriously washed ashore, sparking a legacy of faith. Encounter St. Peter the Aleut, a Native



**ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
MISSION CENTER**

SAVE THE DATE

Called to Serve


Living the Liturgy After the Liturgy

Saturday, September 13, 2025

Part I - Keynote and Discussions from 9am to 4:30pm
Part II - Vespers at 5pm; Missions Adventure for Kids & Reception for Adults at 6pm; Dinner & a Movie at 7pm


Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral
1973 E Maryland, Phoenix, AZ 85016

**With Mission Center Interim Missionary Director,
Fr. Stephanos Ritsi, PhD**






Fr. Stephanos Ritsi, son of Fr. Martin and Pres. Renee Ritsi, was born in Boston and raised in missionary service in Kenya and Albania. A graduate of the University of Florida and Holy Cross School of Theology, he spent ten years in Albania assisting the rebuilding of the Orthodox Church, where he served in youth ministry, the Archbishop's office, and as a lecturer after completing his PhD at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki. His thesis has been published in Greek with an English edition forthcoming. In 2023 he returned to St. Augustine, Florida, with his two sons, Moses and Athan, and now serves as Interim Missionary Director of OCMC.

For questions email Parish Engagement Coordinator, Anastasia Barksdale at a.barksdale@ocmc.org or Mary Pardhe at livingorthodoxministry@gmail.com



\$15 Per Person for the Retreat
FREE Will Offering for Dinner & Movie
Support Orthodox Missions with a donation on our registration link.
www.ocmc.org/phoenix-retreat

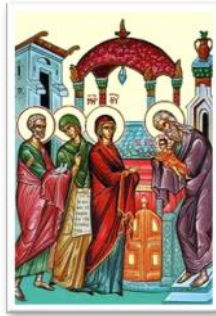


www.ocmc.org

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



08/27/2025

Jonathan

Son of Katerina Froumis-Lonati and Dakota Lonati
God's Blessings be upon him.

Living Orthodox Young Adult Ministry, continued

American saint who courageously planted the seeds of Orthodoxy and gave his life as a martyr. Through the lives of early saints, this evocative film reveals the hidden stories and sacred connections that continue to shape America's spiritual landscape.

Visit <https://orthochristian.com/170403.html> for more details!

RSVP Link: www.ocmc.org/phoenix-retreat

On September 14th, all young adults (18-30s) are invited to Assumption Church at 12:30 pm for lunch and a special meet-and-greet with Fr. Ritsi. Please email livingorthodoxministry@gmail.com if you have any questions.

To be informed of upcoming events, 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.



Sunday School 2025/2026

Students will go to the following rooms following dismissal prayer:

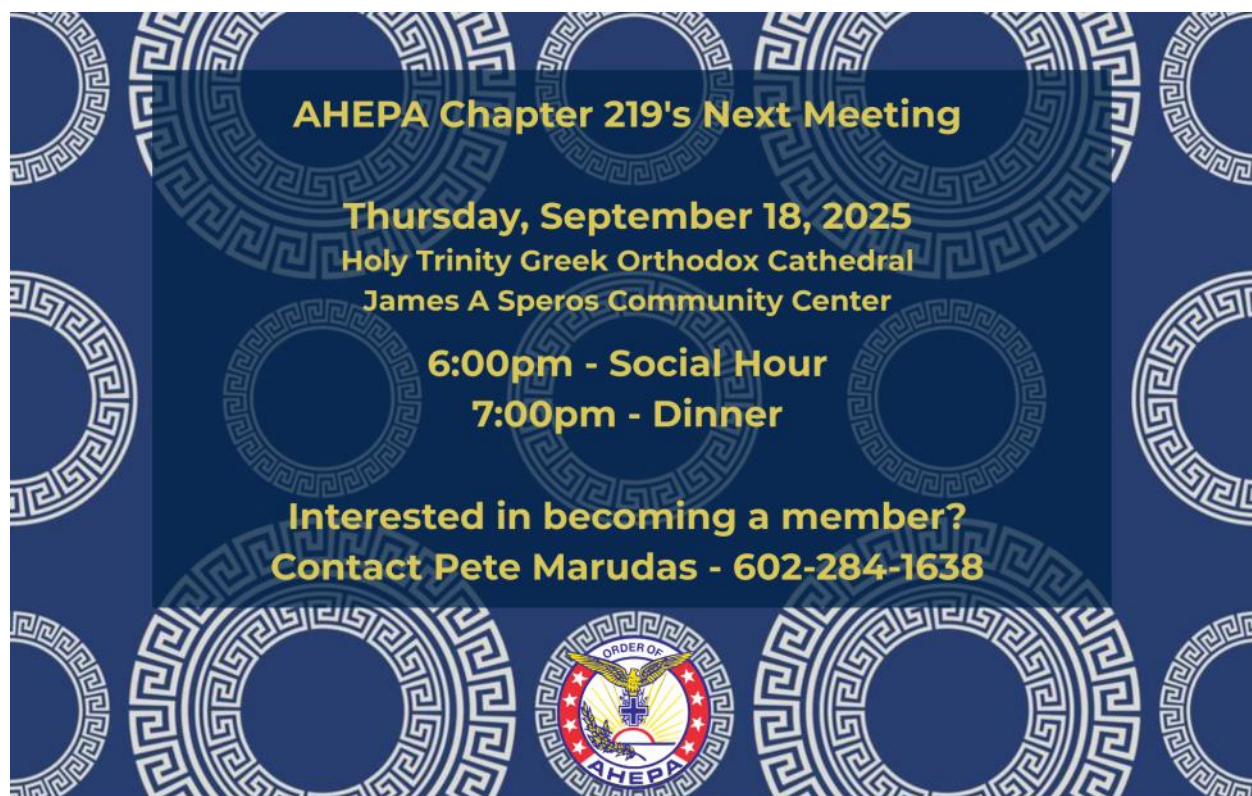
- **PreK/K:** Small Hall - Community Center Meeting Room
- **Grades 1-4:** GOYA Room
- **Grades 5-8:** Chapel
- **Grades 9-10:** Conference Room

Youth Ministry

God's Corner at Coffee Hour: Used in conjunction with the Pre-K/K class for Sunday School, this corner is available most Sundays for our little ones to play in and learn together. For any questions or if you're interested in helping, please contact Mara Contes at mara.contes18@gmail.com.



AHEPA Chapter 219



Coffee Socials Following Sunday Liturgies

The August Coffee Socials were sponsored by Sunday School and 4F.



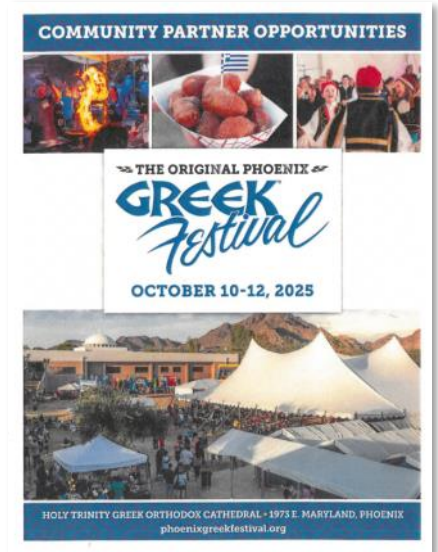
THANK YOU!



2025 Greek Festival

Mark your calendars for our annual Greek Festival happening October 10, 11 & 12. Watch for weekly emails with festival needs including, baking, set-up, volunteering and updates. Contact the front office with questions.

Do you or your family and friends own a business? Would you like to be a sponsor of the 2025 Original Phoenix Greek Festival. This cherished tradition draws 10,000+ guests for a weekend of food, music, dancing, and fellowship, while raising vital funds for our church—contact Anna Panagiotakopoulos at anna.panna10@gmail.com or 602-469-8676 to learn more about sponsorship opportunities



Dance



Well-attended informational meeting on August 10

Welcome back to Greek Dance for the 2025/2026 Season!

Greek dance practice is underway! The first few practices are free for anyone looking to see it's a good fit, and registration is due by August 31st! Please see the link below to register and reach out to Niko Panagiotakopoulos at holytrinityphoenixdance@gmail.com with any questions! As a reminder, anyone interested in FDF must participate in Greek Festival dance as well! We look forward to seeing you August 10th! [Register here!](#)

Liturgical Services will continue to be
live streamed
by Father Apostolos
and Father Alexander.

All services can be found on the **Home**
Page of the Cathedral's website
www.holytrinityphx.org,
in addition to the continued postings on
our Facebook page.



Desert Springs Issues Available to Our Seniors

or the computer-challenged!

In an effort to reach our whole Parish Community with Cathedral news, issues of the Desert Springs will be available for **FREE** to those in our community who do not own or use a computer, tablet, or smart phone or would prefer to read the news in hard-copy print. Submit names to the Church Office or text Kristen at 602-332-8809.

Desert Springs Subscription

Enjoy **color** copies of Holy Trinity Cathedral's *Desert Springs* delivered to you!

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, ST, Zip: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Return this form to the Church Office or
contact Kristen at 602-332-8809

HTC on Facebook

The page offers news of our Parish Community, in addition to
offering links to videos of our services.

[Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral—Phoenix, AZ](https://www.facebook.com/HolyTrinityGreekOrthodoxCathedralPhoenixAZ)



THE ORIGINAL PHOENIX

GREEK Festival

OCTOBER 10-12, 2025

GREEK FOOD, MUSIC, DANCING & MORE

FRIDAY, OCT. 10
3pm - 10pm

SATURDAY, OCT. 11
11am - 10pm

SUNDAY, OCT. 12
11am - 6pm

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL
1973 E. Maryland, Phoenix | phoenixgreekfestival.org

@originalphxgreekfest

f OriginalPhoenixGreekFestival

ADMISSION

\$5.00 - for an entire day of fun

Children under 12 free

Seniors over 60 free entry on:

- Friday 3:00 - 5:00pm
- Saturday 11:00am - 3:00pm

*No pets permitted (service dogs excluded)



PARKING

FREE Parking at
Charles Schwab -
24th St. & Lincoln
Shuttles every 15 minutes

\$10.00 to park in
church parking lot



EAT . DANCE . SHOP . PLAY

Authentic Greek Food • Homemade Pastries • Taverna with Greek Beer & Wines
Greek Dancing • Live Greek Music • Art, Jewelry & More • Village Market
Hellenic Museum of Phoenix • Cathedral Tours • Children's Rides & Activities

THE LONGEST-RUNNING AND LARGEST ORIGINAL GREEK FESTIVAL IN THE VALLEY