



THE ORTHODOX ORACLE

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church
Greensboro, NC
DECEMBER 2025

OUR VISION: FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY.

DECEMBER 2025

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Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST!

**Christmas *tis* the season to open our hearts and minds towards God,
as he brings us the greatest gift of all — our Savior.**

Wishing everyone a blessed Nativity!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Sarantis P. Loulakis

Office Hours:

Mon – Fri 9:00am – 1:00pm

Sunday Church Worship

8:55am Orthros

10:05am Divine Liturgy

Weekly Services 9:00 – 10:30am

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2025 Parish Council:

John McQueary – President

Shadi Zeidan – Vice-President

Madalina Body – Treasurer

MaryAnn Contogiannis – Asst.

Treasurer

Brandon Covey – Secretary

Members:

Joy Daskalakis, James Cropper,

Mike Dolianitis, Pete Graham,

Michael James, Martin Ross,

Shane Rivers

Dormition Church Website

www.dormition.nc.goarch.org

Metropolis of Atlanta Website

atlmopolis.org

Archdiocese Website

www.goarch.org

ORGANIZATION & MINISTRIES CONTACTS

AHEPA – Demetri Dascalakis

Altar Servers Ministry – Matthew Beckett

Bible Study Ministry – Fr. Sarantis Loulakis

Music Ministry – Fr. Sarantis Loulakis, Michelle Gilliam

Camp - Stephen's Summer Camp

St. Stephen's Summer Camp - Greek Orthodox Metropolis of

Atlanta - Atlanta, GA (atlmopolis.org)

Cantors/Music – Michelle Gilliam (Rhonda)

Dance Group (s) – Barbara Vaughan, Mary Ann

Contogiannis, Emily Mihelich, Erin Blindenbacher

Daughters of Penelope – Su Peterson

Orthodox Fellowship (50+) – Maria Cropper

Greensboro Urban Ministry – Shane Rivers

Greek Festival - Shadi Zeidan

Narthex Ministry - Terry Kokenes

Myrrh-bearers Ministry – Brittany Beckett

Youth Ministry – Matthew Beckett (Director)

Church Beautification - Chris Mandaleris

Philoptochos – Nicki Smith, President

GOYA – Abeer Ma'ayeh, Liaison-Matthew Beckett

Youth Director - Matthew Beckett

Stewardship – Pete Graham

Sunday School – Madalina Body

Website Ministry - Martin Ross



Ministry Prayer

Heavenly Father!

We praise You for Your church. For the way You place us to work together to spread the Gospel love of Jesus Christ. The calling to pour out Your love on others is humbling and fulfilling. Your plan is perfect, and we are all a part of it. Thank You for the church we serve in. We know it's no accident that You have placed us here: even in moments of boredom or fatigue, we know that when we seek to hear Your voice above all others, we will find reassurance and encouragement. Amen!

A SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

Fr. Sarantis P. Loulakis

My beloved spiritual **Family of Dormition of the Theotokos**. I greet all of you and yours with abundance of joy and with the intercessions and blessings of most **Holy Theotokos**, our Patron Saint. **A blessed Nativity to all of you!**

Christ is born! Glorify Him! So begins the well-known and triumphant hymns of Christmas which command all of us to jubilantly celebrate and **“rejoice in the Lord”**.

In the Vesperal Liturgy of Christmas Eve, which we celebrate every year in our beloved church of Dormition of the Theotokos, we read in the Prophecy of Isaiah that **“the Lord God is with us”** (Isaiah 8:10). Of course, not “with us” metaphorically in our hearts, or “with us” symbolically in our minds, but God Himself physically is “with us”

– We are in the **Kairos “moment”** taking on the human body with all its challenges and frailties and walking the Earth with us. On Christmas, we celebrate the pre-eternal God who created all things, whom even the highest Archangels cannot bear to look at, choosing to be born in a humble manger and being “with us” until the ages **for the salvation of the world!**

Let us all pause to carefully reflect on what this means; we have no choice but to be amazed and wonder at the glory of God. The Church hymns describe **the miracle of Christmas as being that Christ**, “the exact Image of the Father”, took “the form of a servant” and “undergoes no change”. **At Christmas, Christ “remained what He was, true God; and He took up what he was not, becoming human in His love for humanity”**. What a miracle – the celebration of celebrations!

But what is the significance of God being with us on Earth?

St John Chrysostom explains that “Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side, all things merge”. Things of the Earth become heavenly, and the feast of Christmas becomes the tuning point of our redemption and renewal. Through Christ becoming man, we ourselves might become like God. Thus, the Saint explains, in the message of Christmas “the

power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked... truth has been brought back... a heavenly way of life has been implanted on the earth”.

We remember not just a historic event two millennia ago. Instead, the Church hymns proclaim in the present tense: **“Christ is born; glorify Him! Christ is come from heaven; go and meet Him”**. Christmas is also the celebration of Christ's re-birth in our hearts

today. Christ remains with us now, meaning that nothing in this earthly life can trouble us (for “If God is for us, who can be against us” – Romans 8:31).

And so, we must ask: “what shall we offer you, O Christ, because you have appeared on earth as a man for our sakes?” (Nativity Vespers).

Christ does not need our materialistic presents or our large gatherings; instead, the best gift of Christ we can offer is a “broken and humbled heart” (Psalm 50:19) full of repentance and the desire to renew ourselves in His love.

And, as St John Chrysostom says: **“Since therefore all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice. I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival. But I take my part... holding in my arms the cradle of Christ. For this is all my hope, this my life, this my salvation, this my pipe, my harp. And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels, sing: “Glory to God in the Highest; and with the shepherds: and on earth peace to men of good will.”**

May the miracle of our Lord's Nativity fill all our hearts with love for Him so that He may be born into all our hearts, and may He grant us a very blessed and merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

With paternal and pastoral love in Christ! Amen!



THE 2025 DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS
COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD &
POINSETTIAS FOR THE CHURCH



SHARE YOUR CHRISTMAS and HOLIDAY GREETINGS

You are invited to join the Community Christmas Card and help us to decorate our beautiful church for the upcoming Christmas Season by purchasing a poinsettia. The poinsettia proceeds to benefit summer camp for GOYAns at Diakonia Retreat Center.

Please specify your choice and enclose your donation with this form and support the **CHURCH YOUTH MINISTRIES** with your donation.

1. **CHRISTMAS CARD** Donation: \$25 ____
2. **POINSETTIAS** Donation: 1@ \$25, ____ 2@ \$50 ____ 3@ \$75 ____ 4@ \$100 ____

Please write below your name(s) as you wish to appear on the Christmas Card and mail / drop it to the office or email it click [here](mailto:office@dormition.nc.goarch.org) or office@dormition.nc.goarch.org

By **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2025.**

Sponsor's Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

_____"

(Above write the names as you wish to appear on the card)

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church

Check Total amount: \$_____

THANK YOU!

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will!

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church
Parish Council Elections

Greensboro, NC December 7, 2025 12:00PM-12:30PM

Instructions:

Please mark an X or a check mark next to the nominees (listed in alphabetical order) for whom you would like to vote for Parish Council. You may vote for a maximum of 4 of the nominees, a minimum of 1, or any number between 1 to 4. Any ballots with votes for more than 4 nominees will be disqualified.

- ___ Ted Angeles
- ___ Brandon Covey
- ___ Austin Davis
- ___ Julia Macovei
- ___ Ellen Scaturchio

SAMPLE

BALLOT
☐

Glory to God in all Things!

Ladies Philoptochos Gift Market & Pastry Sale
November 15, 2025



Questions & Answers

Why is Holy Tradition important and How Does it Relate to Scripture?

The foundation of the church and its practices is Christ and Holy Tradition, which refers to the teachings and practices of the early Christian Church were passed down through a combination of written and oral traditions. The early church did not have a universally recognized canon of New Testament books, **but the Apostles insisted that their followers hold true to the traditions they taught**, which is now known as Holy Tradition. It was several hundred years before there was a common collection of books used in the early churches that we now know as the New Testament.

In the growth of the early church the Apostles insisted that the followers hold true to the tradition they taught. "I commend you because you remember me in everything and **maintain the traditions** even as I have delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:2). "So then, brethren, stand firm and **hold to the traditions** which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess. 2:15). Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in **accord with the tradition** that you received from us" (2 Thess. 3:6).

The Orthodox Church has always preserved the **original teachings of the Apostles** through the continuity of its practices, liturgies, sacraments, and writings of the early Church Fathers, in addition to the New Testament. There is a serious error that is inherent in many churches that came from an innovation introduced by Martin Luther, Sola Scriptura or Scripture Alone. This is the belief that scripture alone is the final authority for Christian faith and practice. They will often challenge Orthodox Christians when we talk about our faith saying, "*Where do you find this in Scripture?*" **Their view of the church is limited to a book.** They rejected Holy Tradition that was not recorded in the books and letters of the New Testament. In a sense they whitewashed the richness and completeness of the faith established in the early Church. The Orthodox Church has maintained this full richness based on Holy Tradition. It gives us the completeness of the faith as the Apostles taught. Holy Tradition includes, in addition to the New Testament, the results of the **Ecumenical Councils** defending the nature of Christ, the liturgies and sacramental practices practiced since the earliest days of the Church, hymns, iconography and writings of the early Church Fathers. **Nothing of Holy**



Tradition is contrary to Holy Scripture. With it we have the fullness of Christian Faith based on continual practices of the Orthodox Church from the time of the Apostles.

The Bible is an important part of Holy Tradition, and the Gospels give us the story of Jesus which is the basis of our Trinitarian faith. The official Bible for the Church is the Greek Bible (1904 text of the Ecumenical Patriarchate), and the Orthodox Study Bible that uses the **New King James Version** is recommended for general reading. However, I don't suggest that you read it analytically as Protestants do, but rather prayerfully and with the help of the interpretations handed down through the Church Fathers. **It is recommended to read The New Testament as a story written by eyewitnesses without trying to determine doctrine, as doctrines included in the Creed.** Reading the Bible prayerfully every day and letting it speak to one's soul builds faith, which leads to receiving God's grace that is nourished by the sacramental life in the Church and ascetic practices like prayer and fasting. St. John Chrysostom, in his 2nd Homily on the Gospel of Matthew, encouraged believers to approach Scripture with a prayerful attitude, saying: "***If we wish to understand the meaning of Holy Scripture, we must pray for the help of the Holy Spirit, who will guide us into all truth.***"

Remember that the **New Testament was written by faithful men who were eyewitnesses and God inspired.** Analysis as you read may turn the story into something akin to studying a text book on philosophy where you seek to extrapolate hidden meanings or use logic to compose arguments and innovations. **If you come across something you don't understand or find hard to believe as you read, do not doubt, but instead assume that you are not yet ready to grasp the full meaning or reality of that event.** Overtime more and more will be revealed through your reading. If you choose to engage in a Bible study

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Questions & Answers

(Continued from Page 6)

group, it should be under the guidance of Orthodox clergy within the context of a local parish and with full respect of Holy Tradition. It's important to be wary of other kinds of social oriented study groups. If for business reasons it's important to participate in such groups, be sure to take your Orthodox Study Bible with you so you can share the interpretations provided by our Church Fathers. It's best to avoid such social oriented groups. If there are no Orthodox clergy available then choose a study group with careful discernment. Bible study should be primarily oriented to discussions about how to apply Scripture to our daily life and our full participation in the Holy Tradition of the Church. **Keep in mind that the Church is founded on Holy Tradition that is the living and dynamic transmission of the teachings and practices of the Church from generation to generation beginning with Apostolic times. Holy Tradition ensures the continuity, unity, and vitality of the Church's teachings, practices, and worship.**



FROM OUR FARM —
→ TO YOUR DOOR

SCAN ME



Support a local Orthodox Family owned farm

Pasture-raised meats, eggs, and seasonal produce—grown through regenerative farming practices.

Convenient online ordering & local delivery available

Bundle boxes & bulk options available

Use promo code ORTHODOX10 FOR 10%
OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER

www.marymelfarm.com

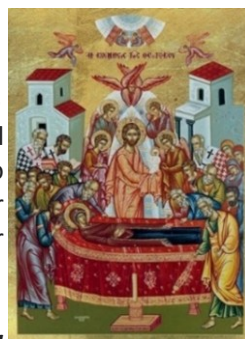
Thanksgiving Blessing Bags

The Ladies Philoptochos would like to thank you all for your generous support and efforts to make our "Sharing our Blessings at Thanksgiving" project a great success! **We assembled 60 Blessing Bags which were donated to the Greensboro Police Department.** They will distribute them to local families in need so they can enjoy a Thanksgiving meal. Thank you for your donations and help in assembling the bags. We look forward to growing this ministry next year!



SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH CORNER

Christ is born! *Glorify Him*. A blessed Feast of Nativity to all of our families and youth. As we celebrate with one another, family, and friends I pray that Christ our King and God bless you all with a healthy and joyous celebration of Christmas. As well, I want to say a special thank you to all of the members of our community who have helped us host another year of events for our youth. We could not do what we do without your service and faithfulness to our parish and our youth ministry. Merry Christmas and Καλά Χριστούγεννα to all!



But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God... for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace. (The Prophet Micah)

YOUTH NEWS AND UPDATES

12/13 Youth Christmas Party – A special thank you to all of our students and families who helped host and participate in this year's Christmas Party. It has been a wonderful 2025 and our students ended it in style with a final play rehearsal, food, drinks, deserts, and games.

12/14 Youth Nativity Play – On Sunday 12/14, we hosted our 2025 Nativity Play. Please congratulate all of our students for their hard work and participation learning their lines and their parts. A special thank you as well to those who helped host the play this year; Niveen, Maureen, Allison, Erin, and Emily. Below is the cast from this year's play.

2025 Nativity Play Participants

- Mary – Violette Hanna
- Gabriel – Leo Blindenbacher
- Elizabeth – Evangeline Beckett
- Joseph the Betrothed – John “Γιάννης” Riso
- Angels – Juliette Hanna, Effie Mihelich, Marianne Koko, Emelia Beckett, Angelia Knight, Laken Call, Astrid Yandle, & Athena Stanton
- Shepherds – Gus Blindenbacher, Zoe Mihelich, Sovee Rizkallah, William Knight
- Wise Men – Jonathan, Saleem Zeidan, Ephraim McQueary, and Leo Stanton
- Innkeepers – John Constantine Covey, Lilas Kattan, Lilia Kattan, and Max Yandle
- Sheep – Vincent Putnam, Mia Wakileh, Makary Koko

- Narrators – Anya Irwin, Samuel Beckett, Susannah Rivers, David Melom, Reina Zeidan, Christina Kattan, Aiden Body, Richard Knight, Zoe Langley, Nabeel Kassis, and Sophia Kattan
- Carols Lead Singer – Allison Covey & Christina Kattan

DECEMBER SUNDAY SCHOOL DATES

- December 7, 2025 – Sunday School
- December 14, 2025 – **No Sunday School**
* Christmas Pageant
- December 21, 2025 – Sunday School
- December 28, 2025 – **No Sunday School**

UPCOMING JANUARY YOUTH EVENTS

- Theophany
- Three Holy Hierarch Essays (4-5th Graders)

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

ACOLYTES: We have spots available to serve. Please contact Father Sarantis or Matthew Beckett if your son is interested.

Myrrh-bearers: We are in need of girls to participate in our Myrrh-bearers Ministry. Please contact Father, Brittany Beckett, or Matthew Beckett to serve in this ministry.





Ladies Philoptochos Christmas Social

Sunday, December 7, 2 PM
at the Cullers
5507 Mecklenburg Road
(Sedgefield Area)

RSVP by December 3
to Nicki at

Philoptochosdot@gmail.com

Or click this link

[RSVP online HERE!](#)

Bring your spouse or
a church friend who might
like to join
Ladies Philoptochos
in the New Year!



Dear Church Family,

Our sincerest gratitude to everyone who offered their time, talents, and stewardship to make our **Winter Gift and Pastry Sale** such a success! A very special thank you to **Nora** and **Elaine** for taking on the responsibility of, and doing a wonderful job with, leading the pastry sale fundraisers this year!

Another special thank you to **Erin Blindenbacher, Emily Michelich, and Christa Graham** for coordinating our **Sharing Our Blessings at Thanksgiving** Ministry, and to all the parishioners who contributed!

On Sunday, January 12th we will host our annual **Vasilopita Luncheon and Auction**. Lunch to be prepared by **David Valavanis**. Volunteer **bakers are needed for Vasilopitas to be cut in church and Vasilopitas to be auctioned**. If you wish to bake a Vasilopita to be cut in church or auctioned, please contact **Kiki Tarasidis** at kikitarasidis@yahoo.com or **Catherine Stuman** at 336-392-4264 or ccstuman@yahoo.com.

2026 Membership Drive begins **January 4th**. We look forward to welcoming back our 2024 members and would love to welcome new members too! It is also time to **renew your Philoptochos Membership**. The dues for **2026 have not changed and are still \$30**. You may see us in the Fellowship hall after church, mail a check made payable to **"Ladies Philoptochos" (with dues in the memo line)** to **Gwen Varsamis, 808 Rollingwood Drive, Greensboro, NC 27410**. You can also drop your check by the church and place it in the Philoptochos mailbox. If you prefer, you may register online here: [Membership Form - Google Forms](#)

Serving Our Community

Our Christmas Project for Children and Families in Need begins **now through December 15th**. We are **collecting \$25 Walmart gift cards or monetary donations to purchase Walmart gift cards**. The school social worker, guidance counselor, and other staff members will then determine how to distribute these gift cards among their neediest families and recent arrivals this holiday. During the week, you may bring gift cards to the church office to be placed in our Philoptochos mailbox or on Sundays, you may give them to **Lula Culler** or **Catherine Stuman**. Please do not mail gift cards. **We ask that you attach a gift receipt or the activation receipt which also shows the amount of your donated card**. If making a monetary donation, please make your check payable to Philoptochos with **"Christmas Project"** on the memo line. If you have any questions, please contact **Catherine Stuman**, cell # 336-392-4264, or through email to ccstuman@yahoo.com.

Our Food Bank needs your support to restock so we may help more families this winter. **Always of great need** are the following items: **canned meats, chili, soups, beans, vegetables, fruits, pastas (14–16-ounce size), and boxed cereal, rice, and pasta or dried beans, rice, noodles**. If you wish to donate, but are not able to shop, you may make a check out to Philoptochos and specify, **"food bank"** and we will shop on your behalf. Checks may be given to **Gwen Varsamis, Catherine Stuman, or Maria Mandaleris** on Sundays.

Upcoming Events:

12.7.25-Philoptochos Christmas Party at 2pm at **Lula Cullers** house. Please RSVP by **December 3rd**. See bulletin for more information.

12.14.25-Nativity Play by our Youth: The play will take place after church in the Fellowship Hall. **Volunteers for Coffee Hour set up and clean up are needed**.

12.15.25- Deadline for Christmas Gift Cards for Families in need (details above)

1.11.26- Vasilopita Auction and Luncheon (details above)

Pre-Lenten Retreat with Father Barnabas Powell. You can register online or **See Regina** during Fellowship hour. Tickets open up to the general public on **December 7th**.

Your Philoptochos Board wishes our members and church family a very Merry Christmas and a safe and happy holiday. **Christ is Born, Glorify Him!**

2025 STEWARDS

Fr Sarantis & Pr. Norma Loulakis
John & Katherine McQueary
Sophia Agapion
Irene Agapion-Martinez
George & Janette Ajlouny
Theodore Angeles
Cecelia Antahades
Michelle & Fred Akbary
Joseph & Stella Ambrosio
Mubarak Angelo & Samira Elikoua
Steve & Polly Anton
John Bakatsias
Brittany & Matthew Beckett
Bob Benson
Tasos & Jamie Bilonis
Najwah Bishara
Jack & Shannon Bishara
Kris & Erin Blindenbacher
Madalina Body
Brad Caplanides
Nikolaos & Stavroula Chantzantonou
Maria & Carl Colozzi
Elizabeth Contogiannis
Mary Ann Contogiannis
Brandon & Allison Covey
Maria & James Cropper
Lula & Hamp Culler
Demetri & Joy Dascalakis
Soteria Dascalakis
Austin & Laura Davis
Charles DePoortere
Nikolaos & Alexandra Diamandis
Mike Dolianitis
Andrew & Alexandra Ellen
Aphrodite & Alexandra Faza
Mary Fiouris
Juliana Ganim
Brier & Elaine Gay
Clarke & Michelle Gilliam
Pete Graham
Scott & Christa Graham
Victor & Caroline Handila
Maher & Niveen Hanna
Violet Hanna
James & Anastasia Hartigan
Gregory Hathcock
Ike & Cindy Hatzisavvas
Trevor & Olympia Hensley
Marie Hudak
Vasilios & Theodora Katsis
Sana Kattan
Ira & Robin Knight
Terry Kokenes
Mubarak & Marsa Koko
Angelo & Elizabeth Kontoulas
Bill & Ava Koronis
Manoli Krinos
Gregory & Eleni Kuhn
Elena Listermann-Vierling
Abeer Maayeh & Jareer Kassiss
Anastasia & Liem Mach
Eugenia Macovei
Julia Ann Macovei
Joanne Macropoulos
Khaled & Louisa Makhoulouf
Chris & Maria Mandaleris
Elias Matar

Vickie Matsakides
Laura McLeod
Lampros & Dorothy Megremis
Marc & Lula Melisko
Hal & Cecelia Melom
Eddie & Maria Merrell
Sam & Emily Mihelich
Brenda Miller
Michael Miller
Christian & Camelia Moraru
Mike Morfessis & Lilyan Schmitz
James & Panyota Mott
Samer & Rania Mushahwar
Nicholas & Hollis Oberlies
George & Susan Orfanedes
Anastasia & Demetrios
Papadopoulos
Peter Pappas
Will & Mary Parnell
Michael & Courtney Paschal
Michael & Nina Pasick
Vasiliki Patterson
Tom & Teresea Piner
Elaine Potts
Peter & Phyllis Poulos
Maria Pradetto
George & Jenny Ragsdale
Regina Reese
Shane & Katie Rivers
Martin Ross
Minerva Ross
Barbara & Panagiotos Sabanis
Ardele Sakellaris
Ellen Scaturchio
Demetra Schermerhorn
Tom Schermerhorn & Theodora Vaporis
Natalya Shelkova & Andrew Irwin
Bernadette Shepherd
Roger & Celia Sims
Jimmy & Linda Sipsis
Eduard Shakhnazarov
Cory & Nectaria Smith
Mikhail & Ginah Soufia
Noah Sublett
Christina & George Stanton
Heidi & Ralph Stucki
Catherine & Jim Stuman
Eskandar & Donya Surena
Kiki & Kirk Tarasidis
Maria Thanos
Arthur Toompas
Zack & Sheila Touloupas
Eleni Triantis Harrison
Theodore Triantis
Voula Tselides
David Valavanis
Brad & Paula VanLaningham
Yianni & Effie Varitimidis
Kimmon & Gwen Varsamis
Philip Vavalides
Spencer & Ellen Wright
John & Joana Xipolitas
Marshall & Patricia Yandle
Shadi and Maureen Zeidan
Nora Zirps

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My Fellow Faithful Parishioners,

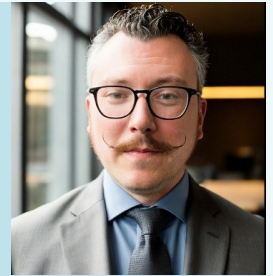
Καλά Χριστούγεννα

عيد ميلاد مجيد

С Рождеством

Crăciun fericit

Merry Christmas!



As we enter the sacred and joy-filled month of December, I greet you with warm wishes for a blessed Nativity season. This time of year is filled with anticipation; not only for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but also for the light, peace, and renewal that His coming brings to our hearts and homes.

The Church calls us to use this season as a time of reflection, fasting, prayer, and generosity. Amid the busyness of the world around us, let us be intentional in preparing room in our hearts for the coming of the Christ Child. I encourage all of you to participate in as many of the Advent services as possible, find time for quiet prayer, and look for ways to bless those around you, especially those in need.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I want to thank each and every one of you for your continued faith, generosity, and involvement in parish life throughout this year. 2025 has brought both blessings and challenges, and I am so proud of how our community has responded with unity, hope, and strength.

As we approach the end of the calendar year, I gently remind those who have not yet fulfilled their 2025 stewardship pledge to please do so. Your giving is vital for us to meet our annual budget and maintain the ministries, staff, and operations that serve our entire parish family. If you haven't yet submitted a pledge for 2026 yet, I encourage you to do so as soon as possible.

Looking to the year ahead, 2026 will be a time for further reflection, planning, and action as we continue discussions on the future growth of our parish facilities and ministries. Your input and participation remain essential as we move forward in faith.

As December 25 draws near, I pray that the joy of Christ's birth fills your homes with peace and hope. Let us come together to celebrate the Nativity of Christ with grateful hearts, rejoicing in the Light that no darkness can overcome.

On behalf of the entire Parish Council, I wish you and your families a blessed and joyful Christmas and a peaceful start to the New Year.

With love in Christ,

John McQueary
President, Parish Council



STEWARDSHIP BLESSINGS

The Spirit of Stewardship: The Gifts of the Magi

The **Gifts of the Magi** icon presents the Wise Men offering gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child. These wealthy scholars and priests of the East endured numerous dangers and **traveled great distances to offer their treasures to Christ**, the New Born King. What a beautiful and **meaningful example of stewardship** they set for all future generations, helping us to understand the blessing of properly using and sharing God's gifts.

To begin with, **the Magi represent a sincere desire to seek after God**, searching through science, nature, and their cultural traditions to communicate with their Creator and discover His will for them, even when it was something so unexpected. **Imagine their long**, arduous journey, possibly a 1500-mile expedition from Persia to Bethlehem, over mountains and deserts, a journey that took many months. **What faith, determination and sacrifice they must have had.** They surely faced questions and skepticism at the start.

During their journey, unexpected challenges and discouraging setbacks would have been commonplace. Yet they persevered. **They overcame the difficult trials and tests of their journey** and persisted in their search for God's truth. **When they finally met the Christ Child, they bowed down in worship. They offered Jesus the most precious of their gifts.**

Even when the journey surprisingly took them beyond the king's palace in Jerusalem to the insignificant village of Bethlehem, they went forward in faith. In humility they approached the Christ Child to worship Him and offer the best of their gifts - gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Story of the Magi is not simply acute part of Christmas, **but it represents central characters who model a path of faith and stewardship worthy of imitation.** In connection with this inspiring story of the Magi, we can also reflect on St. John Chrysostom's words: **"The rich man is not the one**



who has much, but the one who gives much. For what one gives away, he keeps for all eternity."

Each of us is called to function as a proper and good steward of these gifts. Ultimately, whatever we have isn't ours! All is God's, and we are simply caretakers of His riches. As we learn to generously give of ourselves, of our time, talents and treasure, we only increase our wealth and make eternal investments. **Christian Stewardship is all about becoming good caretakers of all that God has given us.** Think about all that God has given us – our health, our family, our opportunities in life, our intelligence, our talents. God has given each of us special and unique gifts. And through Holy Scripture, He teaches us all that we have is a loan. He lends everything to us and reminds us that **one day He will ask us to give a detailed accounting of what we have done with the gifts He has given us.** How have we used our time, our talents, and our treasure? Have we used them in a self-centered way or God-glorifying ways? Archbishop Anastasios of Albania has noted that "we find ourselves by offering ourselves." Have we learned the blessedness of generously giving to others of all we have?

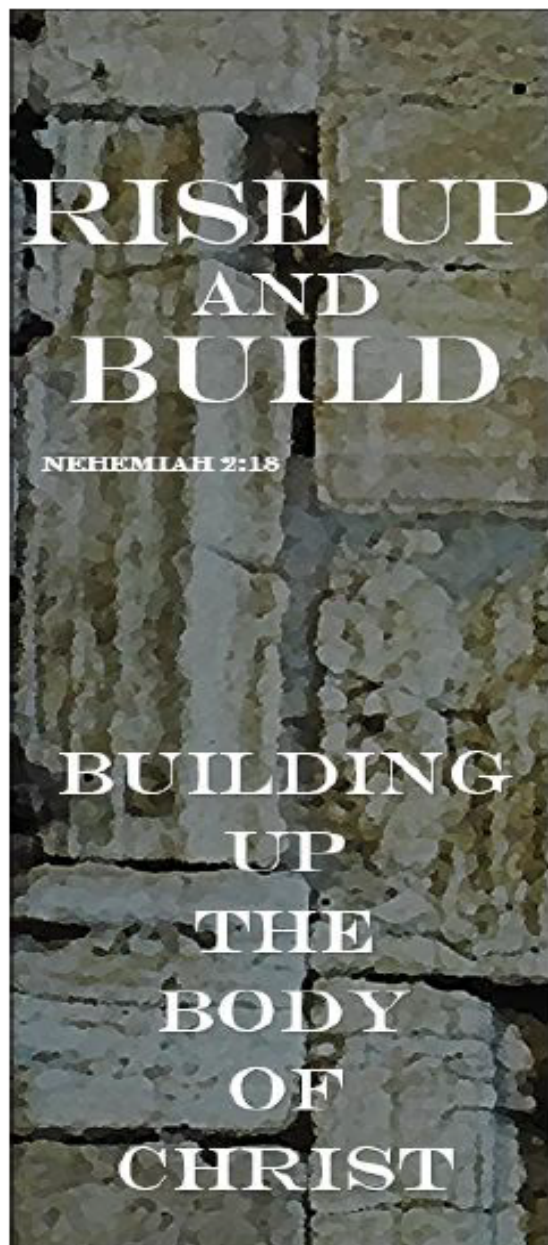
The Gifts of the Magi and the words of St. John Chrysostom help clarify our understanding of Christian Stewardship and what it means to function as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

Let us prayerfully complete the Stewardship Pledge sent to you late in January and return it to the church office with your heart's offering. May the Lord bless you with His abundance blessings! **Merry Christmas!**

GIVE ON LINE

The Stewardship Committee.

2026 Stewardship Campaign



RISE UP AND BUILD: Building Up the Body of Christ

Next year's stewardship theme, "*Rise Up and Build: Building Up the Body of Christ*," is inspired by the words of Nehemiah (2:19). In the Book of Nehemiah, the people of God are called to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem—not only as a physical project, but as a renewal of faith, unity, and purpose. Their story reminds us that true building begins in the heart.

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to this same work. Stewardship is not only about bricks and mortar; it is about strengthening the spiritual foundation of our lives and our parish. Through our faith, our prayers, our service, and our giving, we join together in building up the Body of Christ—here and now, in our own community.

This message holds special meaning for our parish as we look toward our own plans for building expansion. Just as Nehemiah rallied the people to rise and rebuild, we too are called to come together in faith—to dream, to give, and to build for the generations to come. With grateful hearts and willing hands, let us *rise up and build*, trusting that the same God who guided Nehemiah will guide and bless our work today.

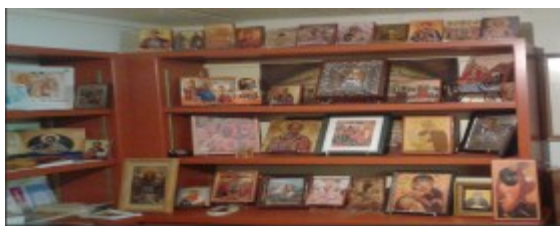
We invite all parishioners to learn more about our upcoming stewardship campaign and building plans at the **Parish Assembly on November 9th**. Together, let us take the next faithful step in building up the Body of Christ—both in spirit and in the life of our parish.

— *The Stewardship Committee*



BOOKSTORE

Open on Sundays - **COME & SEE!**
in the Fellowship Hallway



WORSHIP LIFE / DECEMBER 2025 LITURGICAL CALENDAR

- **Thursday, December 4th** – St. Barbara / Orthros: 9:00 am **Divine Liturgy:** 9:30+ am
(Also for St. Savva & St. Nicholas & St. John of Damascus)
- **Sunday, December 7st** - 10th Sunday of Luke / Orthros: 8:55 am **Divine Liturgy:** 10:00+ am
- **Friday, December 12th** – St. Spyridon / Orthros: 9:00 am **Divine Liturgy:** 9:30+ am
- **Sunday, December 14th** - 11th Sunday of Luke / Orthros: 8:55 am **Divine Liturgy:** 10:00+ am
- **Sunday, December 21st** - Sunday Before Nativity / Orthros: 8:55 am **Divine Liturgy:** 10:00+ am
- **Wednesday, December 24th** – Christmas Eve – **CHRISTMAS SERVICE** / St. Basil Vespers **Divine Liturgy @ 6pm – 8pm**
- **Sunday, December 28th** - Sunday after Nativity / Orthros: 8:55 am **Divine Liturgy:** 10:00+am



Weekday Liturgies . . .
In addition to the regular Sunday services please make note of the following weekday services for the month of December. Unless otherwise indicated, the Weekly Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:00 am & most likely will finish by 10:30am+



Pre-Lenten Retreat with Father Barnabas Powell

(From Sts. Raphael, Nicholas and Irene Greek Orthodox Church in Cummings, GA)



**Saturday, January 31st
9:00a–3:00p**

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek
Orthodox Church

Click below to Register: ↘

**[Registration - Pre-Lenten Retreat with
Father Barnabas Powell](#)**

**“Be watchful–Be Sober:
St. Paul’s Wisdom for Spiritual
Maturity.”**

Pre-Lenten Retreat with Fr Barnabas Powell

- Saturday, January 31st from 9a–3p
- Registration October 12 – December 7
- Cost – \$35 per adult

Registration Form

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IF ATTENDING THE RETREAT.

REGISTRATION COST IS **\$35 PER ADULT** PERSON, LUNCH INCLUDED.

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO ‘PHILOPTOCHOS.’

REGISTRATION IS OCT. 12–Dec. 7

NAME(S):

BEST EMAIL ADDRESS FOR CONTACT:

☐ CHECK THIS BOX IF YOU NEED CHILDSITTING SERVICE FOR YOUR CHILD (CHILDREN)
AND LIST THE NAME(S) OF YOUR CHILD (CHILDREN):

DIVINE LITURGY

What is the Small Entrance in the Divine Liturgy?

At this point of the service you will see the altar boys coming out of the north door with candles or lanterns and following them **the priest and the deacon carrying the Gospel book. This is called the small entrance.** When you see this, **you are being joined with a multitude of angels** visually represented by the altar boys candles. Then, together with these angelic hosts, we welcome the Lord's entrance into the world and into our hearts.

Historically the Divine Liturgy began with the entrance of the Gospel book which was kept in a separate room or vault in the portico of the church, which contained all the valuables that were to be used in the Church during the Services. Amongst these valuables, of course, was the Book of the Gospels "**Evangelion.**" This room or vault was known as the "Skevofilakion", a composite Greek word meaning the guarding-place of the implements or articles. These books were also hand copied and very valuable. This was changed in the 7th century, and the Gospel was kept on the altar, signifying a more secure period for the Church.

The deacon carries the Gospel in a way that covers his face. This represents the coming of the Lord. The Priest recites the following prayer:

O Master, Lord our God, Who hast appointed in Heaven legions and Hosts of Angels and Archangels for the service of Thy Glory, grant that with our entrance there may be an entrance of Holy Angels serving with us and glorifying Thy goodness; for to Thee are due all glory, honor, and worship; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and forever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen."

During the Divine Liturgy we are joined with a multitude of angels who come down from Heaven who participate with us in the celebration. This is just like they came to Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. Saint John Chrysostom testifies to this He says, "The had gathered around me escorting me to the small entrance. And something more awesome: I was deemed worthy to be carried up and to be offered their help to perform the Entrance: Next, I saw them surrendering the Holy Table, bowing their heads with great respect then again standing in silence and at times chanting liturgical hymns together with the chanters, escorting them in such melody..."

Facing the Sanctuary, the Priest blesses and says: *Blessed is the Entrance of Thy Saints: always, now and forever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.*

At the completion of the resurrection hymn for this day the deacon raises the Gospel and says,

Wisdom, Let us stand aright.

The congregation sings, *O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, Save us, O Son of God who rose from the dead, to You we sing: Alleluia*

The deacon then places the Gospel on the Altar, **on top of the Holy Antimension. Wisdom refers to the Gospel book, which is Jesus Christ, who is the true wisdom.** The phrase "stand aright" refers to the faithful. It is as if we are saying like at the time of the nativity of Christ, Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. **Those in attendance can live in the miracle of angelic presence. They can be captured in the ecstasy of the soul.** Following, the Resurrection hymn is sung along with hymns for the saint honored that day and the proper hymn or Kontakion for that feast period or day.

Special Appeal

Ephraim's Story

Ephraim McQueary is an extraordinary 11-year-old boy who has faced more challenges in his young life than most do in a lifetime. Diagnosed with autism and a rare genetic condition that affects his stomach and digestion, Ephraim's days are often marked by severe pain and discomfort. During flare-ups, his condition can leave him unable to eat normally, requiring him to receive vital nutrition through a G-tube. Yet through it all, he continues to show incredible courage, a desire to help others, and a joyful spirit that lights up every room he enters.

Despite his strength, the constant changes and medical hurdles have taken a toll on Ephraim's daily life. Simple activities that most children take for granted such as walking long distances, handling loud or crowded environments, or managing sudden sensory overload can become overwhelming or even impossible. **After careful evaluation, his doctors have recommended and prescribed a trained service dog to support him.** This service dog will not only help with his mobility during painful GI flare-ups but will also provide the grounding, comfort, and sensory regulation Ephraim needs to navigate the world more independently and confidently. *The cost of training and providing a specialized service dog is significant, and our family cannot do it alone.*

We are reaching out to our church community, friends, and anyone moved by Ephraim's story to help make this life-changing companion a reality for him. Every donation, no matter the size, brings us one step closer to giving Ephraim the comfort, safety, and independence he deserves. With your support, we can help him experience more days filled with laughter instead of pain and hope instead of uncertainty.

Thank you for helping us make a lasting difference in Ephraim's life. Together, we can give him the gift of a loyal friend and the freedom to live more fully each day.



The QR code goes directly to Ephraim's page at 4 Paws for Ability where you can give online. Checks should be made out to 4 Paws for Ability, with Ephraim McQueary in the memo line.

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

How do our sins affect our knowledge of God? Insights from Saint Symeon

Saint Symeon, a significant figure in Eastern Orthodox theology, teaches that our sins erect a barrier between us and God, impeding our spiritual connection with Him. This barrier, he explains, can only be surmounted through **persistent repentance**. While this barrier exists, Symeon asserts, "It cuts us off from the light, leaving us to grope in darkness."

We must know ourselves before we can expect to know God who is so incomparably superior to us.

Symeon says, For to speak about God and divine things without illumination, while deprived of the Holy Spirit, simply shows our ignorance—and rightly so, for if we knew ourselves accurately, we would never reckon ourselves worthy to look at heaven to see the light of the world, not even to walk on earth; instead we would run to bury ourselves under the dirt.

According to Saint Symeon, **those who speak of God with pride**, lacking the Holy Spirit's guidance, engage in pseudo-theology, relying solely on worldly wisdom. The Scriptures affirm that wisdom belongs to God alone, and as fallible beings, we all need repentance and heartfelt confession. This journey involves seeking a spiritual mentor who can guide us towards a sincere confession before God. Symeon's vision of repentance encompasses trust in one's spiritual mentor, obedience in daily tasks, care for others, and following the teachings of Jesus Christ. **True repentance, he suggests, dispels ignorance and fosters a deeper understanding of God.** "Becoming rich in the communion of our faith" is achieved through repentance, which purifies us and invites the Holy Spirit's illumination.

This journey of spiritual growth takes place within the Church and aligns with the teachings of Holy Scripture. It is a humble path, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Saint Symeon warns against following unenlightened preachers. He advises avoiding those who have not been spiritually purified and who lack a deep, mystical understanding of God's commandments. He references biblical examples like Elijah, who was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11), and Jesus, who ascended with a host of angels, to illustrate the need for divine assistance in elevating our minds to understand heavenly mysteries. We should adhere to the teachings of the Apostles and be wary of those who rely solely on philosophy and intellectual arguments, as their understanding is limited.

Symeon concludes with a vision of spiritual fulfillment: "There lies the tranquil abode of incorruptible life, the joyful gathering of those who celebrate in the Spirit. To them be all glory, honor, and adoration, now and forever, and through the ages." This is the ultimate destination for those who walk the path of humility and spiritual insight.

Reference: <https://maksimologija.org/2020/11/16/st-symeon-the-new-theologian-theological-discourse-2/>



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP



The Dormition Men's Fellowship Group

is now hosting weekly book club discussions along with other events to help men grow not just in fellowship but spiritually as well.

Anyone interested in joining should reach out to: Shane Rivers, Shadi Zeidan, John McQueary or Martin Ross for more information.

NOTE: A printed Orthodox Oracle of the month can be found in the Narthex throughout the month.

If you wish to have a copy sent to you, we ask that you call the church office and we will send you one in the mail. Thank you for being a Steward of Dormition of the Theotokos church!



Church Office Note.....

You may visit or call the office **Monday—Friday from 9:00am—1:00pm.**

Fr. Sarantis will be in the office Monday & Thursday from 10am-2pm, Tuesday from 12pm—4pm & 4pm—6pm by appointment only for confessions and Wednesday from 12—7:30pm extending the office hours. You may also schedule a pastoral appointment with him at any time at home or at the office at your convenience.

Although on Fridays Fr. Sarantis is not in the office one may freely and at any time during the week communicate DIRECTLY with him via phone at (516) 526-1475, text or email at patersarantis@yahoo.com.

All calls & texts not answered before 7pm due to obvious reasons will be answered as soon as possible on the same day. All calls and texts after 7pm will be screened and they will be answered according to their urgency, so there may be time to respond to the day's emails, which they are ONLY checked 3 times a day (morning, noon and after 7pm) and they will be answered accordingly in order within 24 hours. We thank you for understanding!

IMPORTANT: For ALL emergencies ALWAYS CALL, do not text or email. GOD BLESS YOU!

HOSPITAL VISITATION POLICY

If you would like Fr. Sarantis to visit you in the hospital, please call him or have a family member call. Fr. Sarantis will not go unless he is asked by the family. This is in compliance with both HIPAA and patient privacy.





COMMUNITY NEWS



Stewardship Year begins on January 1st and concludes on December 31st. We ask that you do not delay to complete the card and return it to the church office to join the **"Dormition of the Theotokos' Stewardship Ministry for 2026"** so that we can grow and become a stronger Church and minister to the people of God. The Church needs the support of its members year-round. Please consider giving as a way of showing your support and love to the Church. As you already know it costs thousands of dollars a month to operate the Church with the monthly utility and maintenance bills and salaries. **Please consider giving as much as your heart tells you to give – a little more than last year. You do not need to make your payment all at once. You can give quarterly, monthly, or weekly,** which makes it very easy and affordable. Electronic payment has also been set up for those who would like to use it. Thank you!

THANK YOU! Thank you to all for sponsoring Coffee Hours in the month of November: **The Knight & Potts Family, The Parish Assembly, The Ross Family, The Soufia Family, and The Friends of Philip Vavalides.** THANK YOU!

BAPTISMS: **Tasos & Jamie Bilonis: The servants of God, Maria Lynn Bilonis & Matthaïos Anastasios Bilonis,** were received into the Holy Orthodox Church through the mystery of Baptism on **Saturday, November 29.** The Sponsors were **Athanasios & Ioanna Limberopoulos** from South Bend, Indiana. **May God grant them many years!**

WEDDINGS: We are pleased to announce the marriage of **Amani Soufia** to **Stefan Novak** on **November 8, 2025.** We are also pleased to announce the marriage of **Ellen Trastelis** to **Spencer Wright** on **November 22, 2025.** We congratulate them on their accomplishments individually and as a couple! **Na zisete!**

A Reminder: God's House/Our Responsibility! We have been offering the **"God's House/Our Responsibility"** message to the students of our Church School, but that lesson is not just for kids! Please remember that every corner of the building - in the Church or not - is a part of God's house. **And we are the good stewards God has blessed to take care of it. So remember:**

- **When you use it, leave it as you found it (or better!)**
- **If you create or see trash, pick it up and throw it away.**
- **Be gentle! Careful not to dent and knick things up.**
- **Treat the place better than you own...it's God's!**

So whether that means clean it up, put it away, put it back, lock it up, wipe it off, close it or throw it away, don't give away the honor of taking care of God's house to someone else: do it yourself! Leave it as you found it or better, because when we moved in we committed to keeping the entire place in "Like New" condition. Only you can help make that happen. Thank you, good and faithful stewards of Christ!



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THE NATIVITY FAST (NOVEMBER 15–DECEMBER 24)



DID YOU KNOW?

Department of Religious Education (DRE)



The Nativity Fast

Did you know Christmas in the Orthodox Church is preceded by a 40-day spiritual journey?

In the Orthodox Church, the Nativity Fast (also called the Christmas Fast or Advent) is a sacred season of preparation and reflection, beginning each year on November 15. Just like Great Lent prepares us for Pascha, this fast prepares our hearts for the Birth of Christ.

This 40-day fast invites us into repentance, prayer, and almsgiving, while also practicing fasting — abstaining from meat, dairy, and other foods — depending on local custom and spiritual guidance. But fasting is never just about food. It's about softening the heart, slowing down, and making room for Christ to be born within us.

The Church Fathers teach us that fasting and feasting go hand in hand. The more we empty ourselves in humility, the more fully we can receive the joy of the Feast of the Nativity.

The church services, hymns, and readings during this time help us enter into the mystery of the Incarnation: that God became man, taking on flesh to redeem the world.

As St. John Chrysostom teaches, "Behold a new and wondrous mystery: my ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn... Today He who is, is born."

While the world rushes into decorations and noise, the Church calls us to a quiet joy, a time of expectation and hope. The cave of Bethlehem becomes a mirror for the soul: have we made room for Christ to be born in us?

Let this season be one of watchfulness, gentleness, and longing for the Light that has come into the world.

Send us your questions at: religioused@goarch.org or call Fr. Sarantis

Follow us    @goarchDRE

Subscribe at: religioused.goarch.org



**GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA**
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ORTHODOX ORACLE SPONSORS ...

Now that the ORTHODOX ORACLE has expanded to 20 pages, it provides a good opportunity for one to sponsor an ad for your business, friend's business or simply honoring a family member. Please seek out one of the Parish Council Members for assistance to become a sponsor or call the church office.

We thank our sponsors and we hope that you support them!

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- ◆ Supporter
- ◆ Half page
- ◆ Full page
- ◆ Inside Cover



Attention Organizations:

- In order to sustain proper emailing dates the *Cutoff Day* to submit your article for your organization is the **22nd** of the month. Printing and emailing the Orthodox Oracle is on or about the **28th** of the month.
- Email is the default contact type, but listings can be changed by text or phone if preferred. Email any changes to the Church Office at office@dormition.nc.goarch.org. It is the organization's responsibility to inform Jackie of any updates to your listing.

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NARTHEX and Welcome MINISTRY meets soon. Be part of it!

What *YOU* Can Do to Help Visitors Feel Welcome

Have you noticed new faces? We've had many visitors stop by lately. Some are Orthodox and visiting from other Parishes, some are returning to Orthodoxy after a long time away, and some are coming to check out Orthodoxy for the very first time. No matter how they come to us, let's make sure we say Hello!



"Welcome! I don't believe we've met yet. My name is (your name)" is a great start. Offer to walk with them to the Coffee Social. A personal connection goes far!

*"To be a welcoming community sharing
Christ's love through faith and service."*