



THE ORTHODOX ORACLE

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church
Greensboro, NC
February 2026

OUR VISION: FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY.

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Saturday Of The Souls Saturdays ~ February 14th, 21st and 28th



*With the Saints give rest, O Christ,
to the souls of Your servants
where there is no pain, no sorrow, no sighing,
but life everlasting.
May their Memory be eternal!*

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

Orthodox Oracle Staff

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The 22nd of each month

Sunday Bulletin Deadline

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2026 Parish Council:

John McQueary – President

Shadi Zeidan – Vice-President

Madalina Body – Treasurer

MaryAnn Contogiannis – Asst.

Treasurer

Brandon Covey – Secretary

Members:

Ted Angeles, Pete Graham,

Abeer Maayeh, Julia Macovei,

Martin Ross, Shane Rivers, Ellen

Scaturchio

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 – Ian Chavez

Greek Festival - Shadi Zeidan

Narthex Ministry - Terry Kokenes & Shane Rivers

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 Dormition of the Theotokos Family,

I greet you and yours with the spirit of love and the grace of our Infant Lord Jesus Christ. Happy and blessed month of February and Holy Triodion period!

It is with much elation that I congratulate our newly elected Parish Council Executive Officers: John McQueary, President, Shadi Zeidan, Vice-President, Madalina Body, Treasurer, Mary Ann Contogiannis, Asst. Treasurer, Brandon Covey, Secretary, along with members: Ted Angeles, Pete Graham, Abeer Maayeh, Julia Macovei, Shane Rivers, Martin Ross, and Ellen Scaturchio.

We are grateful for their commitment and dedication to serve our community. May the Lord bless all them with His Wisdom and strength for their commitment and devotion. **We are grateful to James Cropper, Joy Dascalakis, and Mike Dolianitis for serving for the last three years!** Furthermore, I wish to express my cordial gratitude for your generous invitation to bless your home. It was a joy and a blessing!

This year on February 1st, we begin the pre-Lenten period called The Triodion. The whole period of the Triodion is intended to prepare us, through fasting, prayer and repentance, to accept our Savior as He "makes us ready for His Passion" and to become communicants of His Passion and Resurrection.

This period of Triodion consists of 3 weeks but 4 Sundays. The Gospel readings for the 4th Sundays challenge all of us to be prepared to live the Holy Great Lent in accordance to the teachings of the church by presenting actual scenarios of life for us to hear, see, and understand the right way living to salvation. They are all equal of value lessons to apply to ourselves.

On the second Sunday of Triodion we will hear the Gospel lesson of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). This parable shows us how to be Christians. The father in the parable has two sons, and at certain times we are one or the other. We can sometimes be like **the younger son**, who in taking his share of the inheritance **and living prodigally, is when we fall**

into sin. The solution to the problem is also shown in this parable when the son humbled himself and returned to the father. **We too must humble ourselves, repent, cease from sin, and return to our Heavenly Father.**

At other times, we can be like **the older son** who stayed with the father. He, despite remaining at home and dutifully obeying his father, **became jealous and envious because of his pride.** He showed *how little love he had for his younger brother*, when at the moment of his return after many years, his first thoughts were of **his own importance.**

The parable reminds us that we should not be jealous of those around us and we should not have pride for any reason. This can be difficult for us Christians, *especially those of us who regularly attend Church Services*, when we see people who do not conform to the same standards of behavior or dress or any other standard we might hold dear. **We are told, both here and elsewhere in the Gospels, not to judge one another. Instead,** we are called to be like the father in this parable. We are to allow people their freedom, but at the same time we **always seek their return to the fold** and rejoice when it happens. We too love all equally without judgment. **In short, we are called to imitate God by following His commandments i.e., church teachings!**

What we see in the two sons **are examples of traps to avoid on our path of imitation** and ways by which we might pick ourselves up when we fall.

May we all have a blessed Triodion season!

"Go to the Divine Liturgy, no matter what is happening to you. Every human prayer is accepted during the Liturgy. During the Liturgy, Christ Himself prays for us and offers Himself to God the Father, and the Father cannot refuse Him. Bring all your troubles, sorrows, difficulties and pleas, and present everything to the Lord, and He will hear you. Some things will come sooner, some later, but you will receive everything that is beneficial for you and not contrary to God's will." + Elder Thaddeus of Serbia

SATURDAY OF THE SOULS



On the two Saturdays before Great Lent begins and on the first Saturday of Lent, we gather as a family to remember our loved ones who have fallen asleep in the Lord. We do so to look toward Pascha, (Easter) celebrating the light and hope of the Resurrection; the destination of our Lenten journey. In the tradition of the Orthodox faith **we offer the names of our departed loved ones during the Memorial Service on these three Saturdays.** As you bring an offering of Koliva please do so by 10:00am on the day of the service. This gathering of community in worship affords us another opportunity to honor our departed loved ones keeping **their "memory eternal"**. The call to worship begins with **submitting names and is only** completed as we enter the Church to lift-up our voices and hearts together looking toward the new life in His heavenly Kingdom. May Their Memories Be Eternal!!! **Please check the box next to the date that you will bring koliva**

SATURDAY, February 14th – 1st Sat. of the Souls Div. Liturgy 9:30am – 11am



SATURDAY, February 21st – 2nd Sat. of the Souls Div. Liturgy 9:30am – 11am



SATURDAY, February 28th – 3rd Sat. of the Souls Div. Liturgy 9:30am – 11am



Commemoration List of Names (Baptismal names) of loved ones.

FAMILY NAME: _____

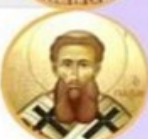
O Master Christ, set the souls of Your departed servants in the tabernacles of Your righteous, and have mercy upon us and save us, as You are the only Immortal One. Amen.

MEMORY ETERNAL! ΑΙΩΝΙΑ Η ΜΝΗΜΗ ΑΥΤΩΝ! MEMORY ETERNAL!

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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_____	_____
_____	_____

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2026

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS		THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 1st		TRIODION WEEKS Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 8th		The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 15th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY		The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare FEBRUARY 22nd FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY		Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 1st		GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 8th		ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 15th		VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS HALF WAY TO PASCHA! Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 22nd		ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent MARCH 29th		ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 5th GREAT WEEK BEGINS		GREAT AND HOLY WEEK ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 10th		GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 12th NO FASTING!		BRIGHT WEEK HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!



Apokreatiko Glendi 2026
Saturday, February 14th, 2026



Dormition of the Theotokos - Fellowship Hall

Dinner, Dancing & Surprises!

7:00 – 11:00 pm

Adults \$35.00 PRE-SALE

Students/Children \$15.00 PRE-SALE

Featuring Greek, American & Arabic music!

Wear your creative & fun costume! Prizes for best costumes!

To purchase full table tickets or to volunteer, contact Kiki Tarasidis 336-558-4759

Don't miss this event!



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 → TO YOUR DOOR**

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Thank you to our 2026 Vasilopita Church Blessing bakers Brittany Beckett, Erin Blindenbacher, Madalina Body, Lula Culler, Christa Graham, Niveen Hanna, Maria Mandaleris, Emily Michelich, Yula Mott, Presvytera Norma, Nicki Smith, Kiki Tarasidis and Elena Vierling!

Thank you to our Vasilopita Auction bakers Hedy Theavos, Minerva Ross, Maria Merrell, and Kiki Tarasidis who baked and decorated such beautiful vasilopita for the auction!

A special shout out to our very own auctioneer, Hamp Culler who always leaves us smiling!

A very special thank you to Kiki Tarasidis and David Valavanis for donating and cooking such a wonderful meal!

Congratulations to our winning bidders, Mary Ann Contogiannis, Phyllis Poulos, Niveen Hanna, Chris Mandaleris and Ian Chevez-Husch!

THANK YOU to everyone for your generous support and donations to our Vasilopita Sunday, proceeds of which, support the children of Saint Basils Academy and youth and young adult programs throughout the Archdiocese and in all Metropolises.

Upcoming Events:

- * **On February 8th** Philoptochos Chapters across the states are encouraging all members and parishioners to **WEAR RED** in support **Women's Heart Health**. Coffee Hour tray donations will be added to our donation to the Moses Cone Heart and Vascular Patient Care Fund.
- * **On February 15th** we will celebrate **Saint Philothea Sunday**. A Memorial service will be chanted for our members who have fallen asleep in the Lord.
- * **March 1-April 26: Philoptochos and Pete Harris Scholarship applications will be available in the Fellowship Hall beginning March 1st. Completed Scholarship applications with all other required information are to be returned no later than Sunday, April 26th at noon.** Electronic applications can be requested by contacting Gwen Varsamis at 336-601-6717 or email gwen.varsamis@gmail.com. High School seniors are eligible and are encouraged to apply for the Philoptochos Scholarship. The Pete Harris Scholarship application is available to any student accepted or currently enrolled in a vocational training program, a junior college, or college/university, or a post graduate student. Scholarships will be awarded on Sunday, June 7 when we celebrate Graduation Sunday and honor our Parish High School, College, and Post Graduate students in the Class of 2026
- * **Philoptochos members will host the Lenten meal on Wednesday, March 4 following the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy.** Members are encouraged to bring a Lenten dish to share with all attending.
- * **On March 15, Sunday of the Holy Cross**, all Philoptochos chapters nationwide will collect a special tray to benefit Holy Cross Seminary, their students, programs, and operational expenses. If you wish to donate by check, please make it out to Philoptochos with Holy Cross on the memo line.
- * **Saturday, March 28: Philoptochos Spring Pastry Sale and Gift Market.** More information will be included in the March Oracle.
- * **The Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos is hosting their annual Spring Spiritual Retreat March 20-22.** Additional information is available by visiting online at atlmopolis.org
- * **Plans have begun for our Graduation Sunday to be held on June 7.** We will be recognizing and honoring our parish graduating High School and College graduates in church, presenting the 2026 Philoptochos and Pete Harris Scholarships, and honoring all graduates with a special reception during Fellowship Hour. We are asking all graduates, high school, college, post graduate in the Class of 2026 or family members of graduates to please send their name, email address to Catherine Stuman (ccstuman@yahoo.com) as soon as possible so they may be contacted about this special day.

Our Philoptochos 2026 Membership Drive is underway. We welcome all women 18 years and older to join Philoptochos. During the month of February, a table will be set up to learn more about our philanthropic and charitable organization. Current members may also pay their \$35 2026 membership dues also at this time. Please see additional article regarding our Membership Drive.

All food bank donations received through February will be delivered to Blessed Table Food Pantry. Please NO GLASS JARS and always check expiration dates! They also accept personal care items, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes body and/or hand soap, toilet paper, paper towels and paper bags. Items may be left in the Fellowship Hall on or near the Giving Tree. If you are unable to shop for the items, a **monetary donation** is also appreciated, and we will shop on your behalf. **Make your check payable to Philoptochos, write "Food Bank" on the memo line of your check.**

We have an exciting and busy month ahead of us. We thank you for your continued support and participation in our various projects and events!

LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS 2026 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE



The Ladies Philoptochos Society is the largest Christian women's philanthropic organization in the United States. Our ministry reaches out to help those in need. Fund raising projects enable our chapter to support such worthy causes as Mobile Meals, Shepherd's Wheels, Orthodox Mission Priests, Disaster Relief, Saint Basil's Academy, St. Stephen's Camp, St. Barbara's Medical Ministry, school supplies and Christmas for needy families. Scholarships within our parish, special parish needs, and various other emergency and philanthropic requests also receive our support.

A table is in the Fellowship Hall for interested prospective members to ask questions and/or learn more about our many ministries. Current members may also pay their 2026 Membership dues (\$35) during this period. Another way to join Philoptochos or renew your membership is to fill out the online Google form. All the details are in this form [👉 2026 Membership Form - Google Forms](#) - it only takes a few clicks to complete this form! You may then make your 2026 membership payment via paper check, cash or credit card any Sunday in the Fellowship Hall when our Treasurer, Regina Reece, or a Board Member, is set up to receive payments. Full Membership is open to women of the Greek Orthodox faith at least 18 years old. Associate Membership is available to any non-Greek Orthodox man or woman with a Greek Orthodox spouse, or to Greek Orthodox men. Associate members shall enjoy all the privileges of membership, except the right to vote or hold office.

This is a wonderful opportunity for new friendships and fellowship and the personal satisfaction of helping those in need. Our members are warm and friendly, caring and giving, and most energetic! Whether a homemaker and mother, working part time or full time, retired, or a student, the talents you have will enhance our organization. Our many projects and various circles allow individuals to volunteer as little or as much as their schedules permit. Your membership will assure that our ministry of being "a friend to the poor ", will continue to thrive touching those in need. We extend a personal invitation to both men and women in our church community 18 years and older to join our philanthropic organization.

2026 STEWARDS

Fr Sarantis & Pr. Norma
Loulakis
John & Katherine McQueary
Ali & Michelle Akbary
Jimmy & Miranda
Anagnostopoulos
John & Lindy Bakatsias
Sarah Bassett
Jacob & Shannon Bishara
Najwah Bishara
Austin & Jessica Call
Brad Caplanides
Brandon & Allison Covey
James & Maria Cropper
Hamp & Lula Culler
Mike Dolianitis
Noelle Drollas
Andrew & Lexi Ellen
Aphrodite & Alexandra Faza
Elizabeth Gardner & Josh
Pardue
Brier & Elaine Gay
Pete Graham
Scott & Christa Graham
Violet Hanna
Eleni Triantis Harrison
Sana Kattan
Terry Kokenes
Eugenia Macovei
Julia Macovei
Chris & Maria Mandaleris
Elias & Maha Matar
Faris Matar
Lampros & Theodora
Megremis
Marc & Lula Melisko
Halvor & Cecilia Melom
Sam & Emily Mihelich
Peter Pappas
Willard & Mary Parnell
Michael & Nina Pasick
Vasiliki Patterson
Peter & Phyllis Poulos
Regina Reese
Shane & Katie Rivers
Ardele Sakellaris
Ellen Scaturchio

Cory & Nicki Smith
Ralph & Heidi Stucki
James & Catherine Stuman
Arthur Toompas
Zack & Sheila Touloupas
David Valavanis
Yianni & Effie Varitimidis
Kimmon & Gwen Varsamis
Philip Vavalides
Marshall & Patricia Yandle
Shadi and Maureen Zeidan
Nora Zirps



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Faithful Fellow Parishioners,

As we begin the month of February, we also enter the sacred and meaningful time of the Triodion, the Church's period of preparation before the start of Great Lent. Through the themes of humility, repentance, and spiritual readiness found in the Gospel readings each Sunday, the Church gently calls us to turn inward and begin examining our hearts, our habits, and our priorities.

The fast itself may not begin for a few more weeks, but now is the time to start preparing, both spiritually and practically, for the journey toward Holy Pascha. There will plenty for all of us to do, in service to our church and each other over the next weeks. I am grateful for all those who step up to help.

The Triodion reminds us that Lent doesn't simply appear on the calendar; it begins in the soul.

While this season is deeply reflective, it's also filled with opportunities for fellowship and joy. We invite you to join us for our annual Glendi celebration on Saturday, February 14. This event is a wonderful chance to enjoy food, music, and dancing together as a parish family before we enter the more somber season of Lent. Tickets are on sale now and I hope to see you there.

I also kindly remind all parishioners to please submit your 2026 stewardship card if you have not already done so. Your support is essential to the life of our parish, and every pledge is a meaningful offering to the Church.

As we continue through the Triodion and prepare to step into Lent, may we do so with open hearts and renewed commitment to prayer, repentance, and love for one another. I look forward to walking this sacred season with all of you.

With gratitude in Christ,

John McQueary
President, Parish Council
Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church



STEWARDSHIP BLESSINGS

Beloved Faithful, stewardship is not just a thing we do — rather, stewardship is at the core of who we are as disciples of Christ.

We read in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1Cor. 1:10-13) that **St. Paul urges us to keep the responsibility of sharing the Gospel as our foremost priority.** In this passage he addresses the divisions and rivalries that have cropped up in the Christian community in Corinth. **He urges the Christians there to “be united in the same mind and the same purpose,”** reminding them that it was Christ and only Christ Who was crucified for us. **We owe everything to Him.** *Our lives are therefore not about us, our egos, our personal ambitions and loyalties.* Those things cannot satisfy us, anyway. Our loyalty must be to Christ above all else and our priority must be to bring His light to everyone He puts in our path.

And there is a certain urgency that comes with the call to a stewardship way of life. We see this in our Gospel passage from Matthew, **where we find Jesus on the move. He has left Nazareth and goes to live in Capernaum, fulfilling what was said** of Him through the prophet Isaiah, as we recall from today’s first reading. “The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death, light has arisen. From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” In other words, turn away from selfishness, turn towards God and live as His disciple now — don’t wait!

Later in this same passage, **the very first disciples give us examples of a good steward’s prompt “yes” when the Lord called to them.** Our Lord sees Simon and his brother, Andrew, living an ordinary day as fishermen when He said to them, “Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.” **The two did not hesitate.** They didn’t think about themselves or how this might disrupt their business. Rather, “at once they left their nets and followed him.” **Then, Jesus called**

two more brothers, James and John. They, too, were living an ordinary day as fishermen, **working alongside their father mending nets in their boat.** Jesus called them and “immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.” They did not worry about their personal lives and how their father might react. They put our Lord and His will first and responded without hesitation. **This is the essence of a stewardship way of life** — to be always ready for the ways that our Lord is calling us to bring His light to others. It’s more than something we do — it’s who we are.

So, let us all be part of Dormition of the Theotokos stewardship team. For those who did not return to the church office the Stewardship Pledge form (SP) yet for 2026 it is remailed out again this week. The stewardship team, the Parish Council and Fr. Sarantis is lovingly request of you to consider and completing your SP form and mail / email it back to the church office. The Holy Gospel message is giving us the example let us **ALL follow it. It is EVERYONE’S responsibility!**

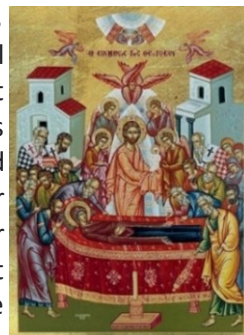
May the Lord bless you for your decision and your generosity! God bless you

The Stewardship Team



SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH CORNER

Christ is in our midst! *He is and ever shall be!* I hope everyone enjoyed a safe and joyous January. Unfortunately with all of the winter weather we missed some of the normal opportunities we have to come together, as the body of Christ, under our beloved Priest Father Sarantis to celebrate the Divine Services. I pray that as we now return to the services and begin the spiritual work of the Lenten Season that you all have good strength and courage as we struggle together with the spiritual disciplines that the church, in her wisdom, has given us. And may we all remember that they are not given to us for achievement or success but to show us where we are not like Christ, so that we may repent together and through fasting, almsgiving, and prayer we might together come to resemble more our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus.



“He who gave resurrection to the human race is the One who was led like a lamb to the slaughter. The rulers of Hades shrank from Him, and the dreadful gates were shaken and removed. Then Christ the King of glory entered, and He said to the prisoners who were in darkness, “Come out into the light and show yourselves.”” (Resurrectional Stichera For Great Vespers before the First Sunday of the Lenten Triodion)

YOUTH NEWS AND UPDATES

Three Holy Hierarchs: – Thank you to our presenters who participated in this year’s Festival. Unfortunately we winter weather this was pushed back two Sundays. Thank you again to the Sunday School teachers, parents and students who participated this year.

2026 Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival:

Topics and resources are available now from the Metropolis and the Archdiocese for this year’s SJOF. This is an extremely important event for our youth and our Metropolitan His Eminence Sevastianos is keen to see participation from each church’s youth. This year, as in year’s past, will have a Junior (7-9th Grade) and Senior (10-12th Grade Division. We will have our first meeting after the Divine Liturgy during Coffee Hour on 2/8 in the 5-7th Grade classroom.

UPCOMING FEBRUARY SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

- **February 8, 2026 – Sunday School**
 - ◊ Sunday of the Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32
- **February 15, 2026 – Sunday School**
 - ◊ Meatfare Sunday | Judgement Sunday
- **February 22, 2026 – Sunday School**
 - ◊ Cheesefare Sunday | Forgiveness Sunday
 - ◊ Sermonette Sunday for Youth

UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY

- **God Parents Spaghetti Luncheon**
 - ◊ Date is TBC here.
 - ◊ Updates to come via email.
- **February 14, 2026 - First Saturday Souls**
 - ◊ Kolyva Event To Follow The Divine Liturgy
- **February 21, 2026 - Second Saturday Souls**
- **February 23, 2026 – Clean Monday Kite Flying**
 - ◊ Family Event: Kite Flying, Compliment Service, and Meal
- **February 28, 2026 - Third Saturday Souls**

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

HELP Needed! If you would like to join a youth ministry team, please connect with Father Sarantis or Matthew Beckett. We are looking to fill ministry team positions for HOPE, JOY, and GOYA.

ACOLYTES: We have spots available to serve. Please contact Father Sarantis, Michael James, 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.



Stewardship Pie

A recipe for a spiritual life

Dormition of
the Theotokos
Greek
Orthodox
Church

Ingredients:

- Faith
- Love
- Service
- Gratitude
- Prayer
- Forgiveness
- Community
- Plus a secret ingredient

Instructions:

1. **PREHEAT YOUR HEART.** Start by opening your heart and mind to the possibilities of spiritual growth. Set your intentions for this journey.
2. **COMBINE FAITH AND LOVE** until well blended. This mixture will form the core of your spiritual pie.
3. **FOLD IN SERVICE.** This will add substance and richness, creating a pie that truly reflects your commitment to Christ and to others.
4. **STIR IN GRATITUDE.** This will elevate the flavor and remind you of all the good that God has bestowed upon you.
5. **ADD PRAYER AND FORGIVENESS.** This makes the filling light and uplifting.
6. **POUR INTO THE COMMUNITY CRUST.** The crust is made of shared experiences, laughter, and support. It's available at every Church event for free!
7. **BAKE WITH INTENT.** Place in the oven of your daily life. Keep the temperature high with passion and commitment.
8. **TOP WITH THE SECRET INGREDIENT.**

You are the secret ingredient!

As we gather to enjoy this spiritual pie, **remember that God created all of this for you.**

Your presence, participation, and commitment to our faith and this Church are what truly bringing this recipe to life. **Without you, the pie is incomplete!**

Help us fill the pie tin!

Let's come together to bake a deliciously fulfilling spiritual life, one slice at a time.

Just as God has generously given us the gifts of faith, love, service, and community, we are called to give back to Him in prayer, gratitude, and first fruits. This means supporting the mission of our parish and Christ's work.

When we give of our treasure, we acknowledge that everything we have received is a blessing generously given to us by God. By placing Him first in all aspects of our life, we create a bountiful harvest that enriches our community and deepens our spiritual lives.

Remember, when we invest in God's work, we invest in the lives of others and in our own spiritual growth. Let us be faithful stewards of what He has entrusted to us, ensuring that our pie is balanced, flavorful, and enriching!



Please prayerfully make your 2026 Pledge today

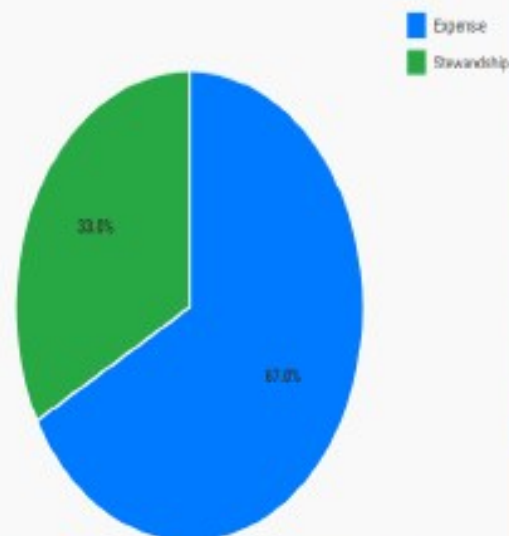
Unfortunately, our pie is
out of balance.

In 2025 Stewardship donations
covered just
33% of our total expenses.

2026 is projected to be similar.

For those who are able, increasing
your pledge by just 2% will make a
big difference.

For example, if you give \$1,000 a
year, that's just \$20 more for the
whole year; just \$2 more per
month!

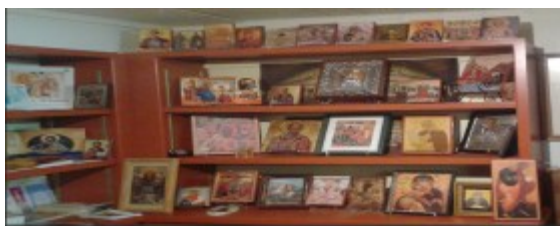


Submit your STEWARDSHIP pledge online: [Tithe.ly Giving](https://www.dormition.nc.goarch.org/tithe)



BOOKSTORE

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



WORSHIP LIFE / FEBRUARY 2026 LITURGICAL CALENDAR

- **Sunday, February 1st - Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: Triodion Begins Today** - Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- **Monday, February 2nd - The Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple** - Orthros: 9:00 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- **Sunday, February 8th - Sunday of the Prodigal Son**—Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- **Saturday, February 14th – 1st Saturday of Souls – EVERYONE BRINGS KOLIVA TO CHURCH** - Orthros: 9:00 am Divine Liturgy: 9:30+ am
- **Sunday, February 15th – Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)** Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- **Saturday, February 21st – 2nd Saturday of Souls – EVERYONE BRINGS KOLIVA TO CHURCH** - Orthros: 9:00 am Divine Liturgy: 9:30+ am
- **Sunday, February 22nd – Forgiveness Sunday - (Cheese Fare Sunday)** Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- **Monday, February 23rd – CLEAN MONDAY – FIRST DAY OF GREAT LENT**
- **Saturday, February 28th - 3rd Saturday of Souls – EVERYONE BRINGS KOLIVA TO CHURCH** - Orthros: 9:00 am Divine Liturgy: 9:30+ am



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



February 8, 2026: 4th Grade Sunday School Feast of the 3 Hierarchs
Readings, 2026 Parish Council Oath of Office
Philotochos 'Wear Red' in support of Women's Heart Health



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.



LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SPRING PASTRY SALE & GIFT MARKET

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2026
9:00 AM - 6:00 PM

COME JOIN US...

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SPANAKOPITA, TIROPITA, and MORE!
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**OUR COOKBOOK DELICIOUSLY GREEK! & OTHER ETHNIC DELIGHTS
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NATIONAL & LOCAL CHARITIES**

IN MIND OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

The Church in your House

(Phm. 1:2)



Beloved Faithful and Friends,

I would like to so much to thank all of you who have invited me to bless your home. Through my visits I pondered and wished **to make a motto** for all of us this year and the motto is **“the church in your house”**. This a phrase taken from several of Apostle Paul’s Epistles, where in the early Church, groups of Christians gathered in homes to pray and worship together and partake of Holy Communion.

Today when we think of the Church, we often think of it in the big picture senses encompassing all Christians. The expression **“the church in your house”**, brings it back from that all-encompassing image, to the everyday, to the personal. It is not just a place we come and go from whenever there is a Divine Liturgy, it is a church in our house... it is our own home as a church.

To understand what this means, we can ask ourselves what defines a church?

Firstly, we think of church buildings filled with icons, smelling of incense. We think of priests and bishops and teachings that govern everyone. We think of all the Christians baptized into the Church. When we think about this, most of us would agree that our family home does bear some similarities to this.

Our families are baptized Christians. We fill our home with icons, we light candles and burn incense. We also have rules that govern us and we set spiritual rules to help us be more vigilant. **Most of all, we try to make our home a place where God is not only present, but He rules as Lord and King.** Our homes are places where our families find sanctuary from the world we live in. The home is a place where we are nurtured and where we nurture. It is both a place of rest, **but also of spiritual struggle.** St John Chrysostom describes our home as “a tournament and an arena of virtue, so that there, being well exercised with much knowledge, we attend to those in the marketplace.” In other words, our training as Christian athletes begins in the home, or rather the church in our house, which prepares us to deal with the world, to know how to behave and respond as Christians in our studies and in our jobs.

It is well known that the family forms the foundations of a healthy and moral society. The enemy of our salvation understands this and is doing his best to destroy in our minds and hearts the sanctity of true family life.

My beloved, let us not just hang icons in our houses, but let the Saints be living members of our families and let us also become Saints. Let us not simply light candles, but ourselves becoming candles melting with love for God. Let us not just burn incense but have the scent of holiness fill our homes and our lives. Then, not only will we be more complete members of our families, but more complete members of humanity. Of course this is simply the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts. It is not at all by chance, that behind the three Great Hierarchs [St Basil, St Gregory and St John Chrysostom] were saintly mothers, saintly fathers, and saintly families. If we want the world to improve, let us first correct ourselves and our families.”

Peace be to you the reader! Amen!

TASTE DISCOVERIES

A Taste of Eternity

The religious ritual of Kollyva

The preparation of *Kollyva* is a solemn Greek Orthodox tradition, rooted deeply in theology and performed with the reverence of a liturgy. The process begins well before the memorial service, usually in the



quiet of the kitchen, where boiled wheat berries are spread onto cloth to dry. **This primary ingredient is the theological anchor of the ritual; based on scriptural passages, the wheat symbolizes the human body, which, like a seed, must be buried in the earth to rot before it can rise again in resurrection.**

Once the wheat is prepared, it is mixed with ingredients that transform the dish into a symbolic **map of life and the afterlife**. Toasted nuts, such as walnuts and almonds, are added to represent the hardness and difficulties of human existence. These are contrasted with raisins and chopped herbs like **parsley, which signify the “green pastures” and the freshness of the eternal life awaiting the soul**. Pomegranate seeds are often folded into the mixture, their jewel-like appearance representing the hidden sweetness and splendor of Paradise.

The assembly of the *Kollyva* is architectural in nature. The mixture is shaped into a smooth mound on a **platter, explicitly symbolizing the grave itself**. This dark earthen mound is then completely obscured by a thick layer of sifted **powdered sugar, representing the uncreated light of God and the purity of the soul**. Finally, cinnamon or toasted flour is used to stencil a Byzantine cross and the initials of the deceased atop the sugar.

The ritual concludes within the church nave during the memorial service. The tray is blessed by the priest, and the congregation partakes in the food. **As the faithful consume the *Kollyva*, reciting “May their memory be eternal,” the act serves as a physical communion between the living and the dead, reaffirming the belief that life, like the wheat, continues after burial.**

BIBLE STUDY

JOIN US EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING
Paraclesis service at 5:45pm, followed by Bible Study at 6:30pm.

- The **1st Wednesday** of the month will be **BIBLE STUDY**.
- The **2nd Wednesday** of the month will be **ORTHODOXY 101** for beginners and 1st year catechumen only.
- The **3rd Wednesday** of the month will be **EXPLANATION of the DIVINE LITURGY**.
- The **4th Wednesday** of the month will be **OPEN FORUM**. You bring your questions and get answers!



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 January: **The Covey Family, Philoptochos, Kiki Tarasidis & David Valavanis, and The McQueary Family.** THANK YOU!

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!

The Daughters of Penelope

will be selling pre-Lenten 'Lagana Bread,' a delicious Greek flat bread, which is like Focaccia and is traditionally served on Clean Monday, 'Kathara Deftera,' which marks the first day of Great Lent before Easter. This year Clean Monday is March 2. **Each loaf will be baked fresh locally and may be purchased for \$10 each. Pre orders ONLY are being taken beginning February 8 by contacting Effie Varitimidis at (336)299-4093 or effievariti@gmail.com by Sunday, February 22. Pick up date is Sunday, March 1 in the Church Fellowship Hall. Thank you for supporting the Daughters of Penelope, Ktimene Chapter 70, which promotes Hellenism, Education, Philanthropy and Civic Responsibility and donates to our church and many local charities.**



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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.



SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

The Three Stages Of Repentance

Repentance is the central theme of Christianity.

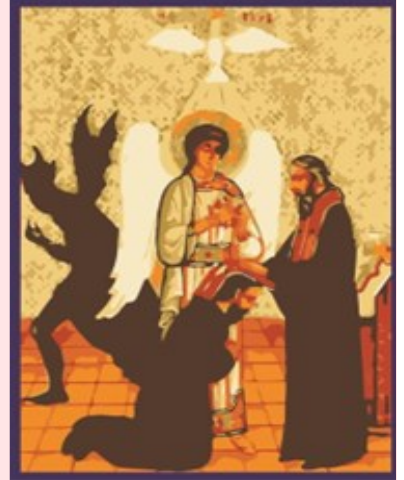
It is the teaching of St John the Forerunner in preparation for the coming of the Lord, and it is also the starting point of our Lord's teaching: **"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"** (Matt 3:2, Matt 4:17). Repentance, therefore, is in truth the beginning of the life in Christ.

What is Repentance and how are we to achieve it?

We may be assisted to understand and to undertake Repentance by breaking it down into three stages:

1. Contrition

Contrition, **the feeling of remorse and sorrow for our actions**, is a **first step** in the healing of our souls, especially when accompanied by tears. Contrition is the opening of our wounds and the clearing away so that the antiseptic can be applied. To do otherwise is to risk that the wound will fester and spread causing us great damage. However, although it is a good start, contrition is not enough. Judas, after betraying our Lord, felt deep sorrow for his actions. So sorrowful was he that he returned the blood money and went out and hanged himself. **His sorrow stopped there and did not flower into Repentance.** Peter also fell and felt sorrow, **but he did not stop there. He returned to Christ.**



2. Decision to Return

This is the core element of Repentance, the decision to turn around. In the parable of the **Prodigal Son**, this is described by the expression, **"He came to himself"** (Lk 15:17): that is, he came to his senses **and realised how far he had fallen**. He remembers the beauty of his father's house. **He does not excuse himself.** He does not blame his father or someone else for his predicament. He accepts that he is the author of his own downfall. There is no doubt that it takes real courage to repent, much more courage than it took for us to sin. **St John Chrysostom says:** "Pay attention carefully. After the sin comes the shame; courage follows repentance. Did you pay attention to what I said? Satan upsets the order; he gives the courage to sin and the shame to repentance".

3. Actions – The Fruits of Repentance

The decision to change, to abandon our former way of life, is not merely a mental exercise but must have material consequences if it is to be real. There must be a struggle to avoid falling again. In the parable of the prodigal son, this is exemplified by the journey from that foreign land back towards his father's house. **Repentance for us Orthodox is not a once off event but rather a way of being.** Since we are sinners, **and we will continue to be sinners until the end of our earthly lives**, we are called to live in a state of Repentance. The Church prays in this way when we hear our Priest calling on God with these words **"That the remainder of our lives may be spent in peace and repentance we ask of the Lord"**, and we as the people of God respond: **"Grant this our Lord"**.

May God grant us to live in a state of Repentance during this blessed Triodion and Great Lent and throughout the remaining days of our lives. Peace be to you the reader! Amen!

SLAVERY



DID YOU KNOW?

Department of Religious Education (DRE)



Did you know that the Bible mentions servitude, but never endorses slavery?

The Bible, especially the Old Testament (before Christ), talks about ancient forms of servitude, but the Church has never seen these as God's approval of slavery. Instead, the Gospel (New Testament) lays the foundation for ending all forms of dehumanization.

In the ancient world, slavery was woven into society, but the Holy Scriptures quietly undermine it at every turn. Saint Paul teaches that in Christ "there is neither slave nor free" (Gal. 3:28), making human equality a Gospel truth and not a political slogan. He sends Onesimus back to Philemon "no longer as a slave but as a beloved brother," pointing to a new way of seeing every human being: as an icon of God.

The Orthodox Church teaches that every person is created in the image and likeness of God, with infinite dignity that can never be bought, sold, or owned. For this reason, the Church condemns human trafficking, exploitation, and all modern forms of slavery as grave sins that attack the very core of what it means to be human.

Throughout history, Saints and Elders have stood up for the oppressed, protected those in need, and shared the freedom that Christ offers to everyone. Today, the Orthodox Church continues this work, urging us to pray, speak up, and take action for people whose freedom and dignity are at risk.

Christ came "to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Luke 4:18). When we stand up for someone's dignity, we join Him in His work to heal the world.

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

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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."*