



# DEAR FRIENDS

St. John Greek Orthodox Church, Sterling Heights, Michigan

Winter 2026

Dear parishioners and friends,

Fifty years ago, the founding members of our parish were preparing to sign the document that would establish St. John as a parish of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Fifty years ago, a group of families began the journey that would bring us to where we find ourselves today after a series of twists and turns - moving from one building to the next - until we found our home here on Metro Parkway in Sterling Heights.

When a parish reaches a milestone like this, there are simultaneously so many responsibilities we bear. First, to reflect on our past. Not just 50 years of history, though. We reflect on the God who created the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in them, and who gave us these great gifts to be stewards of them - to tend to them. We reflect on a God who took on flesh and walked with us, opening for us a pathway to salvation.

We reflect on our forebears, whether they came through Greece or somewhere else, who walked this journey of faith before us through the trials and tribulations of their time to arrive here in Michigan to found a parish. We remember the sacrifices they made to gather together the people and resources they needed to build this space for the future generations.

And we reflect on where we are today. A large, dynamic community full of people growing in love for Christ and in love for their neighbor. A community with so many children who participate in so many different ministries. A community that is so warm and welcoming.

But in addition to the responsibilities of reflecting on where we are and where we came from, we bear the responsibility of looking ahead and navigating the challenges and opportunities that face us in the coming years.

As we have talked about in the General Assembly meetings, our long-time, land-sharing friends at Huron Academy are coming to the end of their lease on our property. As of yet, there is still uncertainty as to what will happen with their buildings. We also find ourselves, as a community, with the beautiful problem of regularly running out of parking spaces and maxing out the capacity of our current space.

All of this said, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our parish at St. John will bring us new opportunities to consider how we will serve Christ and our neighbors over the next 50 years. The coming years will bring us to ask the question "so, what next?"

On Saturday night, May 2, exactly 50 years to the day after the signing of the Parish Charter on May 2, 1976, we will come together to celebrate. All friends and family of St. John, including our neighbors in all of our local parishes, will be invited to come and celebrate with us. This is an opportunity to gather, reflect, and begin to consider the various ways we will be able to serve God and neighbor.

May God bless the St. John parish in Sterling Heights as we celebrate 50 years!

In Christ,  
Fr. Niko

SAVE THE DATE

# 50th Anniversary



METROPOLIS  
OF DETROIT

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

STERLING HEIGHTS, MI

Family Reception Following Divine Liturgy  
St. John The Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Sunday, April 26, 2026

---

Dinner Dance  
Penna's of Sterling Heights

Saturday, May 2, 2026

From September to January)

## Births

Ernest and Donna Katsias  
Girl

Allen and Nicoletta Wrubel  
Boy

Christos and Marika Burdalas  
Girl

George and Nirvi Zotos  
Girl

Michael and Kat Stewart  
Boy

*Babies are a gift from God*

## Baptism

Saturday, November 1

Christoforos son of  
Marios and Maria Feroulis

Saturday, November 22

Athanasia daughter of  
Sotirios and Shanelle Kalliantasis



## Chrismation

Gina Marie Caughell—Christopoulos

## Prayers and Condolences to the family and friends of

+Sam Raptis

+Anthoula "Ann" Simopoulos

+Spyros Patouhas

+George Giannakos

+James Milonas

+Elizabeth Karamihas

## Weddings

October 24

Bobby Tikkanen & Theresa Munaco

Saturday, October 25

Brandon DiCicco and Mariana El-Ali

*“O Lord our God, Crown them with  
glory and with honor”*



*May their memory be eternal!*



# Ministry Leaders

**Clergy:**

Fr. Nicolaos Tzetzis  
Proistamenos

**Choir Directors:**

John Tangalos & Dr. Andy Kotsis

**Office Staff:**

Orsalia Kostakis

**Parish Council President:**

Alex Kourtesis

**Philoptochos President:**

Paulette Szajna

**Senior Citizens President:**

Nick Prantzalos

**Altar Coordinators:**

Matthew Vasilakis  
& John Sandas

**Sunday School:**

Dr. Zoy Patouhas-Gilbert  
& Dimetra Mansoor

**HOPE, JOY, & Little Angels:**

Megan Douros, Becky Patouhas, Irene Papastamatis,  
Sarah Marselis, Kat Stewart, and Maria Bastas.

**College Connection:**

Cathy Kondoleon  
& Dina Demetriou

**Greek School:**

Elli Patouhas

**GOYA President:**

Anthony Mansoor

**GOYA Advisors:**

Popi Stavrou, & Peggy Baros

**Dear Friends Publication:**

Alexia Davis, Dr. Jimmy Tangalos

# *Parish Council*

---

Julia Alexopoulos  
Ellene Balalas  
Billy Caruso (Vice President)  
George Demetriou  
Dr. Andrew Kotsis  
Dr. Steve Kotsonis  
Alex Kourtesis (President)  
Andreas Kyprianides  
Kenneth LaForest  
Dr. Nicholas Papakonstantinou  
John Patouhas  
Spiro Pliakos (Treasurer)  
Chris Shafkalis  
Larry Stavrou  
Nick Souris  
Dr. Ted Tangalos  
Dennis Theodorou (Secretary)

---

# A message from Parish Council President...

---

Dear Parishioners,

With my second term as council president coming to an end, I recently took a few minutes to reflect on the last 4+ years. When two of my fellow council members first approached me about my interest in becoming president, I will admit that I was caught off-guard. While I certainly was honored that they had confidence in me, I had never really given it any thought. Did I even know all that came with the position? Did I have the free time that I knew would be required to perform the job correctly? With the assurance and support from a few past presidents and the words of Father Nick Kyritses echoing in my head, (“have you fulfilled your obligations to the church?”), I accepted the nomination and took on the position.

During my time as president, we as a council had many challenges that we certainly had not anticipated. First, Father Nick’s retirement and the subsequent hiring of Father Niko. Followed by a visit from the Archbishop. Of course, we had the flood that caused extensive damage to the classrooms. More recently the end of the school’s lease and planning for a future with the associated loss of revenue.

While these issues have presented challenges, my fellow council members never wavered and they got to work.

I can never thank them enough for the support and tireless work that they have put in. Aside from the monthly council meetings, each one of them has put in numerous unrecognized hours, along with many countless trips to our church and made themselves available for committee meetings and phone calls. While we never seem to get everything done in the time frame we would like, I can say it was certainly not due to lack of effort.

In January we held our council elections and welcomed new member Andy Kyprianides. Recently we held our officer elections and I am certain that all will do an amazing job in their new positions. I am pleased to announce our new executive board:

- Alex Kourtesis – President
- Billy Caruso - Vice President
- Spiro Pliakos – Treasurer
- Dennis Theodorou – Secretary

In closing, thank you to all who have been of such help and support during my time as your parish council president.

Yours in Christ,  
Ken LaForest  
Parish Council President

# From the Philoptochos Corner

---

**From our family to yours, Happy New Year/Xronia Polla.**

We have been busy these last 4 months. Starting with our Window of Ribbons (recognizing all those that have or are suffering with cancer), to supporting FOCUS Detroit's hot meal plan, bagging 210 lunches for MCREST of Mt. Clemens, to a beautiful evening of fellowship making Christmas Wreathes, supporting local schools with supplies through the operation classroom drive, our annual Feather Party (where we had over 360 players), an evening at Meadowbrook for the outdoor Holiday Walk, our annual community Christmas Card, participating in the FOCUS Detroit's Adopt a Child and our Christmas Giving Tree. And hosting a beautiful light dinner after the Epiphany Day, blessing of the five loaves for St. John the Baptist, service on January 6th .

Join us January 29th for our wine/cheese social where we will be supporting Avalon Healing Center along with a few local vendors.

Congratulations to our chapter for receiving the Certificate of Merit: Growth & Expansion, having the greatest increase in Chapter membership from 2023-2024. We could not do this without YOU. Be sure to stop by our table to renew your membership or join our chapter for 2026.

In February, we will be assembling and providing toiletry bags for our local homeless along with hosting a light lunch on Godparents Sunday, February 1st , and our annual Macaronatha on February 22nd following the morning liturgy.

As the winter months kick in, we have moved our meetings to Sundays, following coffee hour. If you have not had a chance to come to our Monday evening meetings, please join us on Sunday, February 8th and March 8th .

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”. Lamentations 3:22-23

Paulette Szajna, President (734)-755-9275



# Sunday School

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) The first half of the 2025-2026 Sunday School year concluded with a truly beautiful Christmas pageant! On December 14th grades PK3-6th presented the parish with a Christmas pageant full of melodic carols, moving narration, and lovely acting. It was an event enjoyed by the teachers and students as much as the community!

We moved into 2026 with a celebration of the tradition of the Vasilopita on January 11th. The children always enjoy this event, and we are grateful to the Philoptochos for sponsoring it yearly.

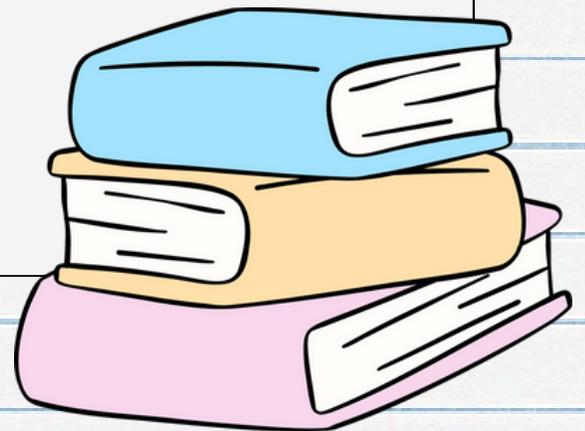
As the second half of our year moves on, we look to continue with lessons teaching the curriculum, Godparents Sunday on February 1st, our Oratorical Festival on March 8th for grades 7-12, and Great Lent, where we will once again have our Journey through Holy Week stamp book for each service.

The Sunday School will once again present the pancake breakfast following service on the Saturday of Lazarus, April 4th. We'll recognize our graduating seniors on Sunday, May 10th, which is Mother's Day and we'll conclude our year with Graduation on Sunday, May 31st, which is also Pentecost.

We appreciate the continued guidance of Father Niko, the support of the Council and Philoptochos, the dedication of our teachers, and the enthusiasm of our students and parents!

May the spirit of the Christmas holiday we just celebrated continue the rest of the year! "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, and goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:11-12)

Dr. Zoy Patouhas, Sunday School Co-director





# Greek School

## **Greek School Report – January 2026 Submitted by Elli Patouhas, Director**

The St. John Greek Afternoon School started the new school year with “Agiasmos” and Orientation on September 16, 2025. We have 50 students and 6 teachers.

Children as young as 4 years old can start Greek School. We have classes every Tuesday and Thursday in the afternoon.

Our goal is for all students to learn and to speak the Greek language and appreciate the Greek culture.

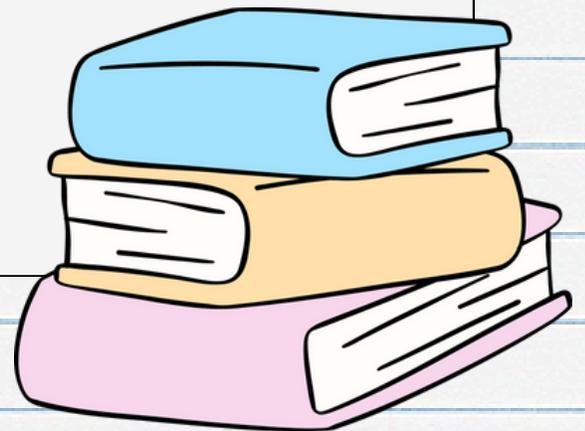
We also offer Conversational Classes for Adults and Teens: Lessons designed to provide vocabulary and grammar needed for everyday situations such as meeting people, asking questions and conducting simple business transactions. The classes are every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 6:30-7:30. 14 adults are attending!

Last October our school celebrated the “OXI” Day. The older students had an history lesson, iconography and art day and they created an ancient Greek architecture display.

In December we celebrated the Holidays with a wonderful Christmas show, the traditional Kalanda and beautiful presentations. A large turnout of relatives and friends were present to support the students!

In January, the older students will give wonderful speeches in church for the Three Hierarchs and the Greek Letters Day.

This year we will celebrate the Greek Independence Day on March 26 and we will have Graduation on Thursday, May 21.





# GOYA



“As GOYAns, we do many things to deepen our faith and build our fellowship. We are blessed to have a program to help keep us connected and bring us closer to God. In January, we all traveled to Grand Rapids to partake in the Greek Orthodox Youth Olympics, or GOYO. In March we will serve lunch at the Orthodox Detroit Outreach. We also have our monthly coffee and frappe sales, and this year we will have 4 bake sales. All donations are greatly appreciated. Also in March, we have our salutations readings on the weekly Friday services during lent. In April, we will be selling lambathes and tsourekia for the celebration of Holy Week. In May, we will be passing out flowers to mothers for Mother’s Day. We will also have our graduation car wash in May. We are grateful for the support of everyone, especially Father Niko, our advisors, and all of our hard-working parents. Thank you.” *-Anthony Mansoor, GOYA President*

# Holiday Hoops





# YOUTH BASKETBALL

---

As we move through another exciting basketball season, I want to extend a sincere thank you to our coaches—Steve Papavasiliou, Peter Koukios, John Gilbert, Adoni Kalatzis, Ken Laforest, Olga Caruso, Paula Terenzi, Thoma Papandreou, and Antwan Hall—as well as to all parents and volunteers for registering your children and committing to this year's OYAA league and basketball program. Your support and involvement are what make this program possible and meaningful.

Our basketball program is about much more than wins and losses. It is an opportunity to bring our parish families together, to teach our children the value of hard work, discipline, teamwork, and perseverance, and to create space for fellowship and shared experiences both on and off the court. These moments—practices, games, and time spent together—help strengthen not only our young athletes, but our parish community.

]Basketball is not an individual sport—it is bigger than any one player. It is, and will always be, a team game. You don't have to be the most talented player on the floor to make an impact. Sometimes impact comes from knowing your role, giving your best effort, and being a great teammate. Through basketball, our kids learn how to work together, step into leadership roles, build character, and face challenges head-on. Just as importantly, it gives them time away from screens and phones and encourages them to be present, social, and connected.

We also want to take a moment to remind families that there is a real cost and significant effort behind the scenes to run this program. Gym rentals, league registration, equipment, and logistics all require resources, and many generous volunteers give their time week after week to ensure our kids have a positive experience. This program exists because people are willing to step up, contribute, and serve.

With that in mind, we ask families to honor the commitment made at the start of the season by encouraging players to attend practices, show up for games, and support their teammates. Consistency matters—not just for skill development, but for building character, accountability, and respect for the time and effort of coaches, teammates, and volunteers.

We are grateful for what has been built over the years and believe it's important not to take it for granted. Together, we can continue to provide our children with an environment that promotes growth, faith, friendship, and a love of the game. Thank you again for being part of this season and for supporting our basketball program and parish community.

Dennis Theodorou | Athletic Director





# SENIOR CITIZENS LUNCHEON



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

# Godparents Sunday

WE INVITE ALL GODPARENTS AND GODCHILDREN  
TO CELEBRATE THE DIVINE LITURGY TOGETHER

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026**

8:45AM ORTHROS

10:00AM DIVINE LITURGY

JOIN US AFTERWARDS IN THE COMMUNITY HALL FOR LIGHT  
REFRESHMENTS, A PHOTO STATION AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO  
PARTICIPATE IN A SERVICE PROJECT TO MAKE BLESSING BAGS!

# HOPE, JOY, & LITTLE ANGELS 2025/2026 EVENTS

SEP  
28

YOUTH SUNDAY CARNIVAL

TRUNK OR TREAT

(4:15 CAR SETUP, 5PM START)

OCT  
11

NOV  
9

COFFEE HOUR CRAFTS

CHRISTMAS PARTY (5PM)

DEC  
6

FEB  
1

COFFEE HOUR CRAFTS

BOWLING

MAR  
14

APR  
1

SAT. OF LAZARUS EGG HUNT

GOOD FRIDAY EVENT

APR  
10

MAY  
3

COFFEE HOUR CRAFTS

PLAYGROUND MEETUP

JUN  
20

PLUS! FUN GAMES & SNACKS WHILE GROWN-UPS

ATTEND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FOLLOW US! REMIND APP: @STJOHNHOPE

FB: HOPE & JOY, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH CHURCH  
CHAPTER

---

# FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

---

## Meet our Organist

At the keyboard every Sunday is Tonya Levin, our incredibly talented accompanist who we are thankful and blessed to have her as part of our choir family for 27 years!

A Russian Orthodox Christian, she came to the United States in 1997 with her two sons from the Ukraine by winning a green card lottery. She left behind her family of musicians as well as a professional music career in the Ukraine, where she taught choral conducting at the Lviv Musical Pedagogical College for 9 years. With an undergraduate degree in Music Education and a Master's Degree in Choral Conducting she also served as a conductor and a piano accompanist. She comes from a family of professional musicians and educators – her brother an orchestra conductor, her sister a piano teacher and accompanist, as well as a cousin and a niece who are both concert pianists! Both her parents were teachers, her mother a high school Russian teacher for 30 years, and her father a college professor in history and humanities for over 35 years.

After arriving here to the metropolitan Detroit area with only her two young sons, and a strong European work ethic, Tonya quickly earned her teaching certificate, teaching music in the Detroit Public Schools for nearly 30 years. She married Eugene Levin in 1999, and the following year daughter Michelle was born. She is most proud of her now grown and successful children Alex, Dmitry and Michelle, and adores her three grandchildren Hyland (11), Cloud (7) and Light(5).

Tonya is not only a wonderful accompanist, but also supports the voice sections of our choir – soprano, alto, and even tenor! She has participated by singing and playing the organ in our Metropolis concerts over the years, working alongside the other choir directors and singers of our sister parishes, who have often praised her talents. We jokingly remind them that Tonya belongs to us....St John! God richly blessed our parish many years ago with this talented accompanist and dear friend at the keyboard. May God continue His blessings to Tonya, her family, and our St John Choir.



# ST JOHN ENDOWMENT FUND

## What is the St. John Endowment Fund?

The St. John Endowment Fund is an investment account overseen by a board of trustees and managed by a professional investment manager. It's a way for monetary donations from parishioners and/or organizations to financially support Church mission-related activities.

At the end of the fund fiscal year, which is September 30th, the activity is evaluated for profitability. If profitable, 50% of this income (growth) is distributed in grants for organizations, ministries, programs, or scholarships provided they meet the criteria of the Endowment Fund By-Laws. These criteria include: Church general/building fund, scholarship programs, cultural programs that expand the church's mission of Orthodox faith, Hellenic culture, and philanthropy.

The remaining 50% of the income (growth) is retained in the fund for investment and continued growth.

### · Donating to the Endowment Fund

The Monetary donations from the parishioners and/or other organizations may gift in the following ways:

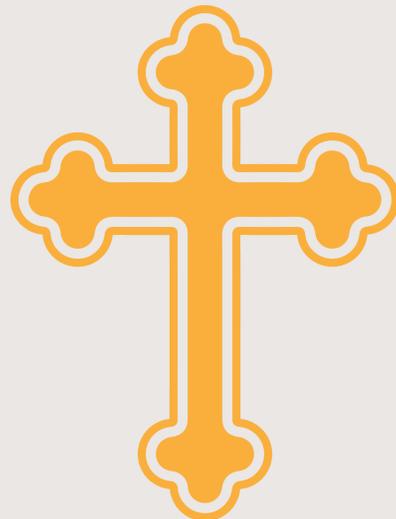
- o Bequest (will)
- o Matching Gift
- o Gift of Cash
- o Gift of securities
- o Gift of Life insurance
- o Gift of real estate
- o Qualified retirement plans
- o Charitable Gift annuity

## Grant Application Process to the Endowment Fund

The grant application is completed by a parishioner in good standing or a parish organization, then submitted to the St. John office for review by the Endowment fund board of trustees. The purpose of the application is to apply for the funds to support the program or ministry in which the parishioner is involved in. Once the Board of trustees decides on which application to approve, then the funds will be distributed accordingly.

The application can be submitted during the PRIORITY GRANT PERIOD July 1- September 30 of each year.

If funds remain available and un-spent, a second grant period known as the ROLLING GRANT PERIOD can receive applications from November 16– June 30.



# Advertise your business through St. John Dear Friends

Reasons you should consider  
advertising with St. John:

¼ page	\$200
½ page	\$300
Full Page	\$600

\*4 issues per year

Dear Friends is  
revamped with  
fresh quarterly  
publications that  
are growing in  
readership

Members and staff  
want to support  
businesses that  
support our church

Our readers trust  
that our church  
advertisers are  
honest, reliable  
businesses

You are reaching a  
family oriented  
market comprised  
predominantly of  
homeowners

Every church  
member lives in  
your community  
and is a potential  
customer

Please email us if you are interested!

Payment billed annually

 [dearfriends@stjohngoc.net](mailto:dearfriends@stjohngoc.net)

 [stjohngoc.net/advertising](http://stjohngoc.net/advertising)



# SILVER PINE MEDICAL GROUP

Multiple  
locations in  
Macomb  
County



**Better Doctors. Better Care**

[www.silverpinedocs.com](http://www.silverpinedocs.com)

586.726.4823

*Something Blue*

MICHAEL KOTSONIS  
248-990-6604

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

& VIDEOGRAPHY

[WWW.SOMETHINGBLUE-PHOTOGRAPHY.COM](http://WWW.SOMETHINGBLUE-PHOTOGRAPHY.COM)



**DIMITRIOS KOSMIDIS**

christian grothe associates

*Realtor Backed by Award Winning Experience*

**WSJ**

**CRAIN'S**  
DETROIT BUSINESS

**BEST OF**  
**HOUR**  
DETROIT

MAX  
**BROOK**  
REALTORS

*Serving the St. John's Community with  
Real Estate Guidance*

586.201.5433 | dk@cgsold.com

275 S Old Woodward Ave. Birmingham, MI 48009



**R** **REVIVE**  
DENTISTRY

**GRAND OPENING**

Your Family Dentists in Shelby Township

**Where modern dentistry meets  
compassionate care**



Dr. James Tangalos & Dr. Jessica Saikaley

**CALL TODAY**  
**586-265-2004**

**SCAN ME**

Learn More  
About Us



FAMILY-FRIENDLY APPROACH PERSONALIZED CARE ONE-STOP SMILE CARE NEW KIND OF DENTAL EXPERIENCE

***The First 100 New Patients to schedule will  
Receive an Exclusive Grand Opening Gift!***