DEAR FRIENDS

St. John Greek Orthodox Church, Sterling Heights, Michigan Spring 2026

Dear parishioners and friends,

We've come through the seasons of Pascha, Ascension and Pentecost together, and there's always a sense of melancholy I get at this time of year. It hits even harder as a parent of a now-school-aged little boy, and it hits harder as we all prepare to leave St. John and move on to St. Sophia in Syracuse, NY.

I'll get to the second two points, but there is a melancholy that sets in for me as we come through the season of Pascha. Something like half of our church year revolves around the celebration of Pascha, and we spend months preparing - in anticipation of the joy of God's defeat of death.

But somehow, when the feast has come and gone on the calendar, one by one people start to peel off for the summer. The overpacked church we have on Pascha ends up transitioning to the sparse attendance we see following Pentecost and into the summer. All of the big, celebratory hymns start to disappear and everything, for a couple months, fades into the "standard" routine.

And then, add in the transitions that come in the spring. Our Pre-schoolers graduate and get ready for Kindergarten. Elementary school children start to prepare for Middle School. Middle Schoolers get ready for High School, and our High School graduates prepare to leave the nest and head off to college or to work.

Transitions are hard, but transitions are beautiful, too. Just like Peter, James, and John couldn't stay on Mt. Tabor at the Transfiguration of Christ, neither can we stay in the seasons of our life forever. Pascha celebrations yield to a standard routine, and that routine continues until it becomes time to prepare for Pascha again.

Students can't stay in their current grades forever, and they, too, are called to move on to the next phase.

And now, Pres. Ivey, the kids and I prepare for a different kind of transition.

It has been a blessing to serve St. John for the last four years as your priest. My family has felt so welcomed here, and the kids have made so many friends as they've grown up with you all. We have made this place our home, and it is going to be sad for us to leave.

We have already started with our goodbyes. We are grateful for the reception the parish had for us to wish us the best. A number of parishioners have already left for their summer trips. We have started the process of packing. The time of transition is here.

But, just like we leave the season of Pascha, we don't take these next steps alone. Just as the Ascension is followed by the descent of the Holy Spirit, we know that God will guide us, and God will guide this beautiful community.

We know the community is in good hands because it is in God's hands. We know we, too, are in good hands, because we are in God's hands. May God bless the St. John community!

In Christ,
Fr. Niko

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)

(From January to May)

Births

Babies are a gift from God

Mihali and Lucia See - Girl

Wedding

June 3

Ioannis Tsarkos and Jennifer Liagre

50th Anniversary of Saint John

Baptism

Saturday, January 31

Eleni daughter of Christos & Marika Burdalas

Sunday, April 19

Liana daughter of Michael & Andrianna Cusumano

Saturday, April 25

Elizabeth daughter of Ernest Katsias & Donna Licavoli

Prayers and Condolences to the family and friends of

+George Kiriazis

+ John Athanas

+ Nikolaos Alexandropoulos

+Vasilios Papaefthimiou

+Panagiotis Kribis

+Jimmie Lazaris

+Konstantina (Toula) Georgakakis

+Shirley Mallus

+Sandra Koukoulas

+Robert Clark

+Margaret Stolakis

May their memory be eternal!

A message from Parish Council President...

Happy 50th anniversary to our beloved St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox church. For half a century this sacred space has stood as a beacon of faith, a home for our community, and a living testament to our enduring heritage. From the very first liturgy celebrated here, through countless baptisms, weddings, and memorials, this church has woven itself into the fabric of our lives, offering comfort in times of sorrow and joy in times of celebration. It has been a place where we've gathered not just to worship, but to strengthen the bonds that make us family.

We want to thank Father Niko Tzetzis who carried us through these last 4 years and of course our founding Father Nick Kyritses who brought St. John to the Sterling Heights area 50 years ago.

We recognized this milestone through 2 celebrations first at the St. John Hall with lunch after the Sunday service and then our big celebration at Penna's Banquet Center. They were both a great success. We had so many volunteers for both events and we want to personally thank all of them. So many people stepped up and gave their time and talent to make both events a huge success.

We want to thank Father Niko for His four years of dedication to the St. John community. He truly was a wonderful person to work with. What an endeavor it was for Him to take over a Parish as successful as St. John's.

To inherit a Parish that Has been rooted from one Priest and one direction for so many years is truly a challenge. His four-year tenure here was also brought with great blessings with the birth of His daughter.

May the Lord grant Him all the success when He returns home to Syracuse to take over the Parish He was once grew up in. This year will bring new challenges. A new Priest, a focus on Stewardship and the tearing down of the Huron academy. We will bring you updates throughout the coming months, and our new priest will be welcomed in late summer.

With new challenges comes new opportunities. St. John will continue to thrive and push through as long as we stay focus on Christ and the teachings of the Orthodox faith. For all things are possible through them that believe'. I look forward to the coming years and embrace the opportunities that come our way. This is a special Parish and it's because of the people that were here before us and the one's that will carry us through the next 50 years. May the Lord our God who is never wavering stand by St. John and bless this parish in the future.

Alex Kourtesis
Parish Council President

THANK YOU, FR. NIKO!

As we prepare to say, farewell to Fr. Niko, Presvytera Ivey, Tommy and Ellie, we would like to thank you.... our beloved Fr. Niko, especially for the countless hours devoted to our families whether in our deepest sorrows, or important sacraments, and of course our happiest celebrations . You all have become OUR family and will certainly be dearly missed. We wish you the best and and to quote you fr Niko, "We will meet at the chalice every Sunday during Divine Liturgy!"

WELCOME, FR. LARRY!

We welcome Fr. Larry Legakis, Presvytera Jenny, and their children Nicholas, Vasilia, and Lukia to St. John!

Father Larry was born in Pontiac, MI on April 26, 1977 to Paulina and Nicholas Legakis. His parents immigrated to the United States in 1974 with their oldest son Steve. Father also has a younger sister, Matina. Father Larry was raised in Royal Oak, MI where he went to elementary school, Junior High, and High School. Growing up he attended St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Bloomfield Hills, MI. In 1996 Father graduated from Royal Oak Kimball High school and enrolled in Hellenic College as a seminarian.

In May of 2000 Father Larry graduated from Hellenic College and enrolled in Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. In May of 2003 Father graduated from Holy Cross. During his time in Holy Cross Father met Jennifer Servetas who was a classmate of his. In December of 2002 they were engaged and married on November 1, 2003. In August of 2004 their first child Nicholas was born in Cincinnati, OH. In March of 2008 their daughter Vasilia was born in Louisville, KY. In October of 2012 their third child Lukia was born in Louisville, KY

In January of 2004 Father Larry was assigned by Metropolitan Nicholas as the lay assistant at Holy Trinity-St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Cincinnati, OH. On March 6, 2004 Father was ordained to the Deaconate by Metropolitan Nicholas at his home parish of St. George in Bloomfield Hills, MI. Father Larry served as a Deacon in Cincinnati until May 7, 2004 when he was ordained to priesthood by Metropolitan Nicholas in Cincinnati. Father Larry served as associate Priest in Cincinnati until March of 2006 when he was assigned to the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Louisville, KY. On July 1, 2015 Metropolitan Nicholas assigned Father Larry to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Toledo, Ohio.

Fr. Larry will be joining us at St. John later this summer with exact dates to follow.

From the Philoptochos Corner

FROM THE PHILOPTOCHOS CORNER.

Throughout the biblical text, women are depicted as vital contributors to the religious and cultural life of their communities. Whether through preparation, music, or hospitality, roles reflecting their active participation in the worship and celebration of God's faithfulness and provision. These acts of love were once again seen in the beauty of our church each day through Holy Week into Pascha. Thank you all!

Plates With a Purpose – join us May 9 th sign in 10:00 a.m., Pilates 10:30a.m. followed by brunch and fellowship. $25.00 per family with proceeds going to MCREST of Mt. Clemens.

Our Membership Drive continues with 113 new and past members. Our goal is 150! Stop by the church office or see one of the lady's serving coffee.

We are excited to have 3 delegates of our chapter attending the 2026 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention June 29 th -July 2 nd in Cleveland, OH. An opportunity to network with other Chapters Sisters and bring back the good news.

In May we will be reaching out to FOCUS HOPE of Detroit and see how we can help. If you and your family are looking to help visit https://www.focushope.edu.

'then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring
rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil.'
Deuteronomy 11:14

Yours In Christ, Paulette Szajna (734)-755-9275

ylus - 2025

Apr 2, 2026

Last Saturday, our ladies Philoptochos hosted a Pilates with a Purpose. The ladies enjoyed a morning of physical and emotional wellness. The committee paid every attention to detail from the Pilates socks with a Scripture verse to a beautiful brunch. This was a first of its kind event here at St. John and a great success. We are grateful for all those who worked hard on this event that connected ladies of all ages. Thankful also for our compassionate GOYAns who took the leftover berries, made smoothies, and along with their bake sale funds donated to the cause. The women and children at MCREST will be blessed with $2300 from this event.

Sunday School

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:17)

As we approach our Sunday School graduation on May 31, we are incredibly thankful for so many things. In an increasingly busy world, our Sunday School strives to teach our students grades PK3-12 the fundamentals of our faith and involve them more and more in our services and traditions, to truly help make Orthodoxy a way of life.

Co-directors Dimetra Mansoor and I would like to thank Father Niko for his constant guidance, and are grateful he came to us at the time he did. In a time of change and uncertainty, his positivity and energy kept our community moving forward and he was a constant supporter of our Sunday School! We wish him and his family all the best in the next chapter of their lives!

We thank our Council and Philoptochos for their support, our wonderful teachers for volunteering countless hours to religious education and caring so much about the youth, our helpful substitute teachers, our parents for encouraging our students, and our sweetest students for always being willing to learn!

Following the celebration of the Vasilopita, our year continued with many special moments where our students were present in church including the procession of the icons on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, reading during the Salutations, and during Holy Week in the altar, choir, on Good Friday as readers, helping with Easter setup, and as mirofores. Journey through Holy Week stamp book designed by Becky Patouhas which the children filled with stamps at each service they attended was a hit!
Our students had various opportunities to research and speak out their religion. Grades 7-12 had the opportunity to speak in the Oratorical Festival, 6th graders could speak in class about a favorite parable, 5th graders could speak about a Commandment, and the 4th graders could write about a saint of their choice. Please continue to encourage this thirst for knowledge!
There are no limits to what this beautiful community can do when we continue to work together!
As said in Luke 1:37 "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will succeed."

Dr. Zoy Patouhas, Sunday School Co-director

Sunday School Vasilopita

Sunday of Orthodoxy

Greek School

Greek School News
May 2026

May is here and the end of the school year is just around the corner. Since the beginning of the year the students learned Greek reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary and conversation. Special attention was given to Greek culture.

Our Greek school had some special times. The older students gave wonderful speeches in church for the Three Hierarchs and the Greek Letters Day. Congratulations to: Maya Theodorou, Konstantina Mansoor, Anthoula Stavrou, Penelope Samohin, Nikos Patouhas, Gregory Gilbert.

In March we honored our Greek Independence Day with a beautiful program of poems, songs, and dances. The children did a wonderful job. A large turnout of relatives and friends were present to support the students.

Our Greek Afternoon school will celebrate the Graduation Day on Thursday, May 21, in the afternoon. The children will present delightful songs and beautiful dances. Everybody is invited. All students will receive Certificates of Promotion. Seven students will finish the program and receive their DIPLOMA. The graduates are: Antonia Andiaris, Zoi Goutis, Konstantina Mansoor, Helena Papastamatis, Penelope Samohin, Anthoula Stavrou, and Maya Theodorou. BRAVO!

Congratulations teachers and students for a job well done!

We offer a big THANK YOU to Fr. Niko for his support and leadership throughout the year, to the parents who organize the wonderful celebrations right after the school shows, and to all the parents who bring their children to school to learn the Greek language.

We will offer again summer conversational classes in July and August. Registration forms will be available soon. Enjoy the summer everyone, and we will start again in September with another year of Greek Language and Culture.

Καλό Καλοκαίρι

Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ

Barrel and a Bottle

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 April, we sold lambades and tsourekia. In May, we have our car wash. In June, we will be going to Cedar Point as our end of the year celebration. We also have our monthly coffee and frappe sales, and this year we had 4 bake sales. All donations are greatly appreciated. We are grateful for the support of everyone, especially Father Niko, our advisors, and all of our hard-working parents. Thank you."

Holy Week

Hope Joy and Little Angels

Hope and Joy has had a busy season! If anyone is interested in being an advisor or helping run events, please reach out to Megan Douros, Becky Patouhas, or Kat Stewart! We have volunteers who have a LOT of energy to give and ones who offer help in specific ways, and both are so valuable—so don't talk yourself out of it! Reach out and let us know how you want to be involved!

Along with the rest of the parish, we are very sad to see the Tzetzis family moving away, but so happy for them to be near family again! Tommy and Ellie will be very missed by their many friends in Hope and Joy!

In February, the children made gifts for their godparents or other special people in their lives. They had lots of fun bowling together in March. Despite tough timing with school vacations, they enjoyed a great gathering for the Saturday of Lazarus—pancakes courtesy of Sunday School, egg hunt, and lots of crafts as always, with the paper flowers and red eggs being the most popular tables! This year, we had a record number of GOYAns volunteering, and we can't say enough about what they add. Not only do they reduce stress and cleanup time for advisors, but they make Hope & Joy infinitely cooler to the younger kids through their participation and enthusiasm!

On Good Friday morning, the kids made their annual mini-selves and decorated the mini-epitaphio for them to process under, and for Resurrection service, the dolls switched to holding tiny candles in celebration.

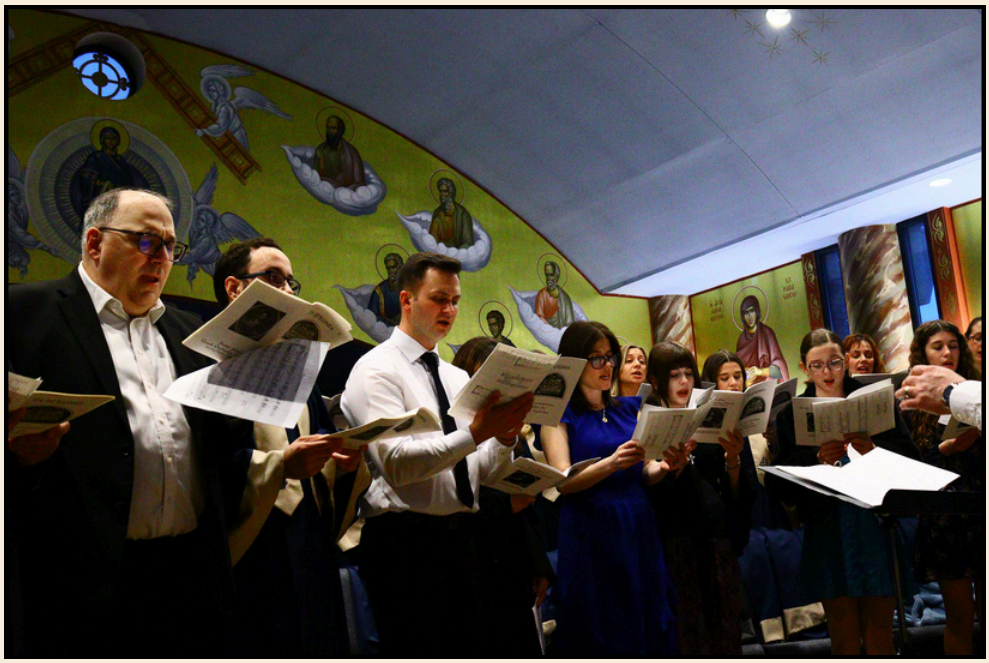
In April (and ongoing through the end of the year) we are hosting a time capsule and inviting the whole church to participate! We have different options for all ages, from babies to adults, and strongly encourage each person to fill one out. Papers are available during most coffee hours, and can be emailed for printing as well (contact Becky.patouhas@gmail.com). Once complete, the box will be sealed for 25 years, until our 75th anniversary. Our hope is that the parish of the future will treasure the words of those who are gone, and be inspired by the goals, love, and labors of the 2026 St. John community.

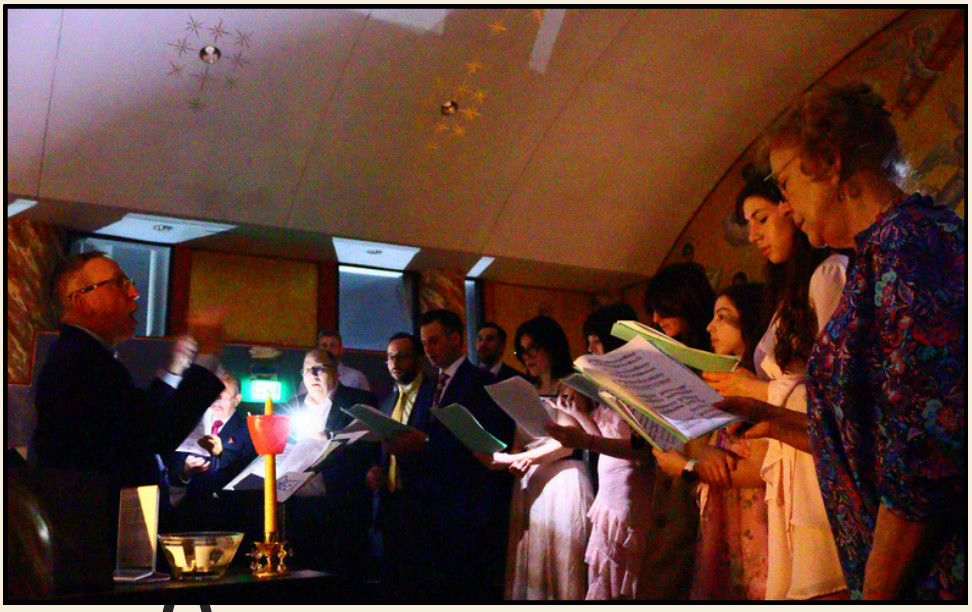
Our current bunch of Hope & Joy will be 25-37–recently graduated from college, firmly in the adult world, getting married, raising kids, working on their careers, approaching middle age. For them specifically, we see this project as an opportunity to reach out to those who may feel tired, overwhelmed, and disconnected, and invite them back to church. We want to remind them that no matter what time has passed, God's house is a place they have always belonged.

-Little Angels, Hope, & Joy Advisors

Flowers for Jesus

FROM THE CHOIR LOFT





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.

ΑΓΙΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ

ST JOHN GOLF OUTING

21ST ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2026
12:30 PM SHOTGUN START

INCLUDED

Driving range, valet, and locker room

18 Holes – Scramble format

Coney Cart at the Turn

Beer and soft drinks on the course

Greyson Apparel ($130 value)

Followed by Dinner Buffet and Awards Ceremony

CONTESTS

"Vegas Hole": Double your 50/50 tickets

Putting Contest

Longest Drive Contest

Closest to the Pin

Raffle to win a brand new set of irons, golf bag, and range finder

Many more prizes!

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