



DEAR FRIENDS

St. John Greek Orthodox Church, Sterling Heights, Michigan

Summer 2026

Dear Parish Family and Friends,

It is such a blessing to write to you for the first time in the summer edition of our "Dear Friends" newsletter. As I thought about what I was going to offer you in this short note, I thought about two things.

First, I thought about the name of the newsletter: "Dear Friends." I reflected on the importance of friendship and what friends mean to us. In Ecclesiastes, we read:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."

Part of friendship is the help and support we receive from those who are our friends. As the author of Ecclesiastes reminds us, having a friend with whom we can share the workload is very important. Having a friend to help us in times of need is also essential to living a successful life and growing on our spiritual journey.

The other idea I thought about was how friendly and welcoming everyone has been to me and my family. I realized very quickly that I have many partners here who are willing to share the ministry work load. People have offered their time to me and my family. Many of you have offered your help so that we do not feel like we are alone. As a Christ-centered parish, this is who we are. We are family and friends.

As we continue through the summer and look forward to a wonderful year of ministry, I look forward to strengthening our friendships. I look forward to sharing the work that Christ has set before us with you. I also look forward to meeting you, getting to know you, and becoming friends.

May our Lord, who calls us His friends, continue to bless each and every one of you.

In Christ,

Father Larry

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."

(Ecclesiastes 4:9–10)

Ministry Leaders

Clergy:

Fr. Larry Legakis
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)

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Dr. Nicholas Papakonstantinou

John Patouhas

Spiro Pliakos (Treasurer)

Chris Shafkalis

Larry Stavrou

Nick Souris

Dr. Ted Tangalos

Dennis Theodorou (Secretary)

Birth

Nicolas and Jordan Cardaris - Girl

Babies are a gift from God !

Baptisms

Sunday, June 7, 2026

Anastasia Penelope daughter of
Stephon McRae and Vasiliki DiMaggio

Saturday, July 11, 2026

Niya daughter of
George Zotos and Nirvigna Anam

Saturday, July 11, 2026

Giovanni Paul son of Gage and Alexis(Pallis) Mazzetti

Sunday, July 12, 2026

Niko son of Blake McGinty and Nikolana Zimmerman

Wedding

Sunday, June 27, 2026

Chris Polyzois and Francesca Schena



*Prayers and Condolences
to the family and friends of*

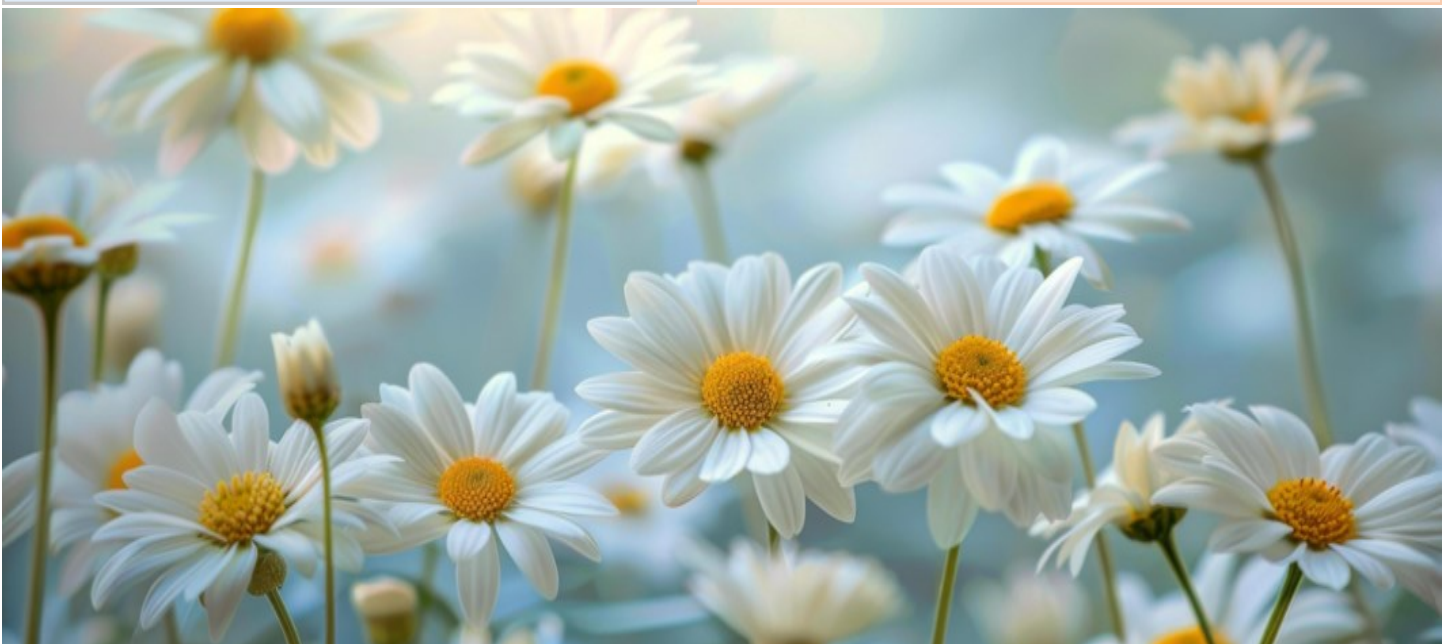
+George Fronimos

+ Athanasios Psilidis

+ Clara Ermanni



May their memory be eternal!



High School Graduates



Christos Baros

Chris graduated from Stoney Creek High School and will be attending Michigan State University in the fall. He is planning to major in economics and pursue a career in business. Chris is grateful to the St John's family for helping nurture his love of Christ.

I am a 2026 graduate of Dakota High School, and this fall I will be attending Oakland University to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing through the direct-admit nursing program. Throughout high school, I was proud to maintain Honor Roll status all four years while balancing academics, leadership, and community service.

During high school, I was involved in HOSA, National Honor Society, Key Club, Best Buddies, French National Honor Society, Women's Empowerment, and GOYA, where I served as a board member. I also completed over 130 volunteer hours at a local hospital, gaining hands-on experience in the ICU, Emergency Department, Observation, and Surgical Pre/Post units. Those experiences strengthened my passion for healthcare and confirmed that nursing is the career I want to pursue.

Outside of school, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, traveling, and staying connected to my Greek community. Helping others has always been important to me, and I hope to continue making a positive impact wherever I go.

After college, my goal is to become a registered nurse and eventually specialize as an aesthetic nurse. I am so grateful for the love, support, and encouragement I have received from my family, friends, teachers, and mentors, and I can't wait to see what the future holds.



Angeliki Mantis



Katerina Mantis

My name is Katerina Mantis and I just graduated from Dakota High School. I enjoyed being involved in basketball and DECA. I am grateful for the friendships, memories, and experiences I made throughout high school. This fall, I plan to attend Oakland University to study business and work toward a career in sales. Thank you to my family, friends, teachers, and coaches for supporting me every step of the way.

Hi, I'm Christos, and I'm a 2026 Stoney Creek High School graduate. I'm excited to begin the next chapter of my life at Oakland University this fall where I'll be majoring in Business Management with a minor in Marketing while also exploring my interest in Finance.

Throughout high school, I was grateful to play Varsity tennis, where I learned the value of hard work, discipline, and teamwork. I was also involved in Key Club and Investment Club. These experiences helped me grow as a leader and strengthened my interest in business and serving others.

More than any accomplishment, my faith and my family are what keep me grounded. God has guided me every step of the way, and I'm thankful for the love and support of my family, who have always encouraged me to work hard, stay humble, and trust in Him. I'm looking forward to learning, growing, and seeing where my path leads me.

I'm grateful to God for His guidance and thankful for my family, friends, teachers, coaches, and my St. John's church family for helping shape the person I am today.



Christos Grigoris Marselis



Alexandros Rinaldi

My name is Alex Rinaldi, and I am a graduate of Eisenhower High School. During high school, I played for the Eisenhower soccer team and was honored to earn MAC All-Academics Team recognition for my achievements in both athletics and academics.

It was also during high school that my passion for my Greek heritage truly began to grow. I taught myself how to read, write, and speak Greek, and I discovered a deep love for Greek dancing. Learning more about my culture has become one of the most meaningful parts of my life, and I look forward to continuing that journey.

This fall, I will be attending Eastern Michigan University to major in Aviation, where I will pursue my dream of becoming a pilot. My ultimate goal is to fly routes to Greece, allowing me to pursue my dream career while staying close to my Greek culture. Hopefully one day you'll see me as the pilot on one of your trips to Greece!

I am grateful for the support of my family, friends, and this community, and I look forward to the opportunities and adventures that lie ahead.

Hi! My name is Ava Papastamatis, and I'm an incoming freshman at Michigan State University, where I'll be majoring in Communicative Sciences and Disorders. I attended the Utica Center for Science and Industry and Eisenhower. I also played basketball in highschool. I enjoy working out, reading and spending time with my family in Greece.



Ava Papastamatis



Chrisovalantis Thomas

Chrisovalantis Thomas is a 2026 graduate of Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School, where he graduated as Salutatorian of his class. Throughout high school, he was actively involved in leadership, service, and extracurricular activities.

Chrisovalantis served as Student Council Vice President for one year and Student Council President for three years. He also founded both the Mock Trial Club and the Random Acts of Kindness Club. As Attorney Captain of the Mock Trial team, he led Cardinal Mooney to a 6th-place finish at the 2025 Michigan Mock Trial State Finals and to the 2026 Michigan Mock Trial State Championship round, where the team finished as State Runner-Up. He was also a member of the National Honor Society and served on its Environmental Committee.

Outside of school, Chrisovalantis worked at Subway while gaining valuable healthcare experience by observing and assisting an orthopedic surgeon. These experiences strengthened his passion for medicine, leadership, and serving others.

This fall, Chrisovalantis will attend Wayne State University as an Honors College student, majoring in Biological Sciences on the pre-medical track. He hopes to become a physician and use his education, leadership, and faith to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026!

We are so proud of all your accomplishments and wish you the best in this next chapter of your life!

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 Diaconate 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

Summer is halfway over and hope all is well with you and your families.

Many of the committee chairpersons have already begun to start planning events for the 2026-2027 Ecclesiastical year.

Our first meeting will be Monday, September 14th @6:30 p.m. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend.

If you are currently on a coffee group and cannot continue or would like to join a coffee group, please reach out to your group captain or contact Theodora Kalfa-Bremer @586-344-6718.

Genesis 8:22 – “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

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

Stay Active. Stay Healthy. Stay Ready.

As we settle into the summer months, I hope everyone is enjoying time with family, friends, vacations, and making memories. While it's important to relax and recharge, I also want to encourage all of our young athletes to stay active over the next few months.

You don't have to be in a gym to become a better athlete. Ride your bike, swim, shoot baskets in the driveway, play soccer at the park, go for walks or runs, lift weights, or simply spend more time outside. Every bit of activity helps build strength, confidence, discipline, and healthy habits that will benefit you both on and off the court.

Remember, the best athletes aren't made during the season, they're made in the months leading up to it.

Before we know it, November will be here, and that means another exciting OYAA Basketball season at St. John's. We can't wait to welcome everyone back to the gym for another year of competition, friendships, and growing together as teammates.

Whether you're returning or thinking about playing for the first time, now is the perfect time to start getting ready.

November also brings one of the biggest weekends of the year for our parish hosted by our GOYA. That's right, Holiday Hoops! This tournament has become a tradition that brings together families, friends, alumni, and parishes from across the Midwest for an incredible weekend of basketball and fellowship. It's a celebration of our youth, our faith, and our community. For anyone that is interested in being a part of the organization of that weekend, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, stay safe, and remember that every day is an opportunity to become a little stronger, faster and in better health.

We're looking forward to seeing everyone back in the coming weeks.

Dennis Theodorou
Athletic Director
St. John's Greek Orthodox Church

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.





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

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irons, golf bag, and range finder

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STJOHNGOC.NET/2026-GOLF-OUTING



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FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT:
Spiro Pliakos
248-872-4382
pliakos.spiro7@gmail.com

Congratulations to Chris Pliakos who made a hole in one during this summer's St. John Golf League!

*If you interested in joining our weekly 9 hole
golf league for the summer of 2027, please
reach out to Billy Caruso (810)-523-2494*



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Reasons you should consider
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¼ page	\$200
½ page	\$300
Full Page	\$600

*4 issues per year

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publications that
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