ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

November 16, 2026

Dear Parishioners:

The following is provided to assist you in the forthcoming election of six (6) members to the Parish Council of Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church. Every eligible member is urged to exercise their right to vote.

On **Sunday, December 6, 2026,** voting will start immediately after the Divine Liturgy and will end at 2:00 PM SHARP. The voting will take place in the AHEPA room at Saint Sophia Church.

1. ***List of Candidates***

Michael Christakis	Michael "Nick" Miszko	Anastasia Vasilakos
John "Yianni" Googas	Maria Mitsios Pidgeon	
Michael Koutelis	Sultana (Susie) Varvarousis	

2. ***Who is Eligible to Vote (please note that your pledge for 2026 must be 100% paid):***

   a. Husband and Wife (if both are Orthodox).
   b. Any dependent child 18 years of age or older who is a full-time student.
   c. Any single person 18 years of age or older who has made an individual stewardship commitment for 2026.
   d. The 2026 Stewardship Commitment MUST BE 100% paid in order to vote on December 6, 2026 or to receive an Absentee Ballot.
   e. New Member: Article 25, Section 5 of the Uniform Parish Regulations state as follows: *A new parishioner of the Parish may vote in the election if he/she has become a member in good standing at least three (3) months prior thereto.* To be eligible to vote, a new member MUST have made a Stewardship Commitment by September 6, 2026.

3. ***Voting Procedure***

   a. No more than six (6) eligible voters will be allowed in the voting room at any one time.
   b. You may choose up to a maximum of six (6) candidates on your ballot. Any ballot with more than six (6) choices will be deemed null and void and disqualified.

4. ***Term of Office***

   The six (6) candidates who receive the highest number of votes will be elected for a full two-year term for the period commencing January 1, 2027 and ending December 31, 2028.

5. ***Absentee Ballot***

   Article VII, Section 8, of the By-Laws of Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church state: *For the election of the Parish Council, balloting will be provided for members in good standing who are shut-ins, individuals who are away for military reserve duty, individuals who are unable to vote due to employment conflict, individuals who knowingly will be out of town, and out of town college students. Such ballot request must be submitted in writing to the Board of Elections no later than 5:00 pm on the Friday* **[Friday, December 4, 2026]** *immediately prior to elections. Such ballots must be submitted to the Board of Elections not later than the commencement of voting and shall be opened and tabulated with the ballots personally cast.* [Bracketed material added.]

Sincerely,

Chris Pappis

Chris Pappis, Chair

Election Committee: Norma Damascos, Alex Jefferson, Theo Karatzou, Andrea Papandrea, Chris Pappis
Alternates: Foti Rantzaklis, Helen Vasilakos

Enclosure: Absentee Ballot Request Form

REQUEST FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT(S) *ELECTIONS TO BE HELD ON 12/6/2026*

This is the official form to be used by families or individuals when requesting an Absentee Ballot for elections held to fill vacancies to the Parish Council of Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church.

I hereby request that I be sent an Absentee Ballot for the following reason – *please check **ONLY** those which apply to you and family members*.

Pick only **one** of following reason for each voter:

1. Homebound
2. Employment Conflict
3. College Student
4. Military Reserve Only
5. Out of Town
6. Medical

I understand that abusing this right of request knowingly will void and disqualify my ballot.

[ ] I will pick up my ballot

[ ] I want my ballot mailed

		Reason No.
1.	_____ *Print your Name* _____ *Signature* _____ *Mailing Address* _____	_____
2.	_____ *Print your Name* _____ *Signature* _____ *Mailing Address* _____	_____
3.	_____ *Print your Name* _____ *Signature* _____ *Mailing Address* _____	_____
4.	_____ *Print your Name* _____ *Signature* _____ *Mailing Address* _____	_____

Please mail to: Election Committee
c/o St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church
440 Whitehall Road
Albany, NY 12208

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

Archdiocesan District



Parish Council Biography

Name: Michael N. Christakis

Married: Yes. Married to Christa.

Number and names of children: Three daughters. Katerina (17), Victoria (15) and Anastasia (12). They are involved with Sunday School, GOYA, Greek Dance and the Maids of Athena.

Current church affiliations (AHEPA, Philoptochos, etc.):

I've had the privelege of serving as a member of the Parish Council at St. Sophia since Jan. 2021. I previously served as Financial Secretary (2022), and have served as Parish Council President since 2023. I am a member of AHEPA Chapter No. 140.

Employed (title if any and place of employment):

I have worked at the University at Albany since 1999, and have served as Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment since 2015.

Why do you want to serve on the Parish Council?

I wish to continue to serve on St. Sophia's Parish Council so that I may continue to give back to our community and help ensure its continued strength and vitality for generations to come. I want our children and future generations to share the same strong connection to our faith, culture and heritage that have shaped my life.

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

Archdiocesan District

Parish Council Biography



Name: John "Yianni" Googas

Married: Sia Googas

Number and names of children: Eoanna, 10 Years Old; Stavros, 6 Years Old

Current church affiliations (AHEPA, Philoptochos, etc.):

Board Member - St. Sophia Apartments and Holy Wisdom

Employed (title if any and place of employment):

Chief of Racing Operations, NYS Gaming Commission

Why do you want to serve on the Parish Council?

St. Sophia has offered me so much throughout my life. I am now in a place where I can give back to the community. If given the opportunity I hope to support what makes this community great and to help the Church grow so future generations are able to benefit from this Parish for many years to come.

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

Archdiocesan District



Parish Council Biography

Name: Michael Koutelis

Married: Yes - Jewelie Koutelis

Number and names of children: Two - Yanni and Alexsander

Current church affiliations (AHEPA, Philoptochos, etc.):

GOYA Advisor

Employed (title if any and place of employment):

NYS Division of the Budget - Principal Budget Examiner

Why do you want to serve on the Parish Council?

To serve God, my church and my community

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

Archdiocesan District

Parish Council Biography



Name: Michael "Nick" Miszko

Married: Yes - Panorea Miszko

Number and names of children: Evangelia Miszko (19), Chrisoula Miszko (16)

Current church affiliations (AHEPA, Philoptochos, etc.):

None - Helper for many events

Employed (title if any and place of employment):

Citizens Bank - Private Banker

Why do you want to serve on the Parish Council?

I want to give back to the community, and church along with being a good example to my children. I also want to continue building my knowledge, culture, experience in and around the Orthodox Church.

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

Archdiocesan District

Parish Council Biography



Name: Maria Mitsios Pidgeon

Married: Yes - Gregg Pidgeon

Number and names of children: Angelina (17), Antonis (12) and Leo (9)

Current church affiliations (AHEPA, Philoptochos, etc.):

Greek Dance Group - Co-Director

1st/2nd Grade Sunday School Teacher

Employed (title if any and place of employment):

University at Albany - Director of Economic Developement, Entrepreneurship, & Industry Partnerships

Why do you want to serve on the Parish Council?

As a life long parishioner at St. Sophia, and now as a parent of young children that love the church as much as I do, I am deeply vested in creating a future based on faith and community.

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

Archdiocesan District

Parish Council Biography



Name: Sultana Michael Varvarousis

Married: _____

Number and names of children: 0 children

Current church affiliations (AHEPA, Philoptochos, etc.):

Philoptochos & Daughters member

Employed (title if any and place of employment):

International HR analyst, Foreign Service, Dept. of State, DC

Masters Degree from University at Albany

Why do you want to serve on the Parish Council?

Supporting and helping to formulate and implement the churches initiatives and plans is a priority. I have been a member for over 50 years; its time to to support the church from within as a Parish Council member.

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

+ Rev. Presbyter Neofitos Sarigiannis, Proistamenos

Archdiocesan District

Parish Council Biography



Name: Anastasia Vasilakos

Married: Yes - John Rojas

Number and names of children: No Children

Current church affiliations (AHEPA, Philoptochos, etc.):

I grew up in St. Sophia. I was in the Maids of Athena, Junior Choir, Greek School and taught Sunday School for over 7 years. I have been on the Parish Council for 2 terms (4 years) and I am running for the third time.

Employed (title if any and place of employment):

I am a Branch Manager/Team Leader for Pioneer Bank in North Greenbush, NY. I have been in banking for 16 years and primarily work in the East Greenbush area.

Why do you want to serve on the Parish Council?

I find it very rewarding to use my time, talents and resources to help our community. I have spent my life at St. Sophia. My faith and the church are very important to me. Participating in maintaining the legacy of the church and ensuring the mission of the church continues for generations is important to me.