

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

*Summer 2025 Renovations Project. Come and See!*



ANNUNCIATION / ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΝΟΡΙΑ

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ

*Rev. John L. Johns, Presiding Priest*



# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT. MARCH 2026

## Table of Contents

Parish Ministries Directory.....	3
A Message from Fr. John Johns.....	4
A Message from Outgoing Parish Council President Peter Gouris.....	5
The 2025 Parish Council.....	6
The 2026 Parish Council.....	6
Parish Communications.....	6
2025 General Assemblies Summary.....	6
Stewardship.....	7
2025 Financial Summary.....	9
Parish Vital Statistics and Sacraments.....	11
Summer 2025 Phase 1 Renovations Project.....	12
Parish Life: The Council of Ministries.....	14
Annunciation Prayer Partners.....	15
The Annunciation Parent Teacher Organization – PTO.....	15
Catechism School.....	17
Annunciation Greek School.....	18
Greek Orthodox Youth of America – GOYA.....	21
HOPE & JOY Youth.....	23
Philoptochos Society “Nausica”.....	25
Homeless Ministry.....	30
Matthew 25 Ministry.....	31
Young at Heart Ministry.....	32
The Annunciation Choir.....	33
International Orthodox Christian Charities – IOCC.....	34
The Annunciation Resource Center.....	35
Spiritual Life Ministry.....	36
The OPA Festival.....	37

# Parish Ministries Directory

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Altar Servers, **Nicholas Economopoulos**, [pegasipa@aol.com](mailto:pegasipa@aol.com)

Annunciation Prayer Partners, **Olga McHugh**, [prayerpartners@anngoc.org](mailto:prayerpartners@anngoc.org)

Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

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Cantors and Readers, **George Dalagelis**, [office@anngoc.org](mailto:office@anngoc.org)

Catechism School, **Jacinda Ojeda**, [catechism@anngoc.org](mailto:catechism@anngoc.org)

Choir, **Jim Papacostas**, [jjcempapa@aol.com](mailto:jjcempapa@aol.com)

Council of Ministries, **Peter Gouris**, [pgouris@vanguardcleaning.com](mailto:pgouris@vanguardcleaning.com)

Council of Youth Ministries, **Afrodite Patounas**, [ymc@anngoc.org](mailto:ymc@anngoc.org)

Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve -FOCUS,

**Apostolos Fisfis**, [paulfisfis@mac.com](mailto:paulfisfis@mac.com)

GOYA Youth, **Sofia Bougioukas**, [goya@anngoc.org](mailto:goya@anngoc.org)

Greek Folk Dance, **Afrodite Patounas**, [ymc@anngoc.org](mailto:ymc@anngoc.org)

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Homeless Ministry, **Angela Godshall**, [godshalla@aol.com](mailto:godshalla@aol.com)

HOPE-JOY Youth, **Afrodite Patounas**, [ymc@anngoc.org](mailto:ymc@anngoc.org)

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Little Apostles Ministry, **Connie Laspee**, [catechism@anngoc.org](mailto:catechism@anngoc.org)

Matthew 25 Ministry, **Sophia Penning**, [sophiagreekgirl@gmail.com](mailto:sophiagreekgirl@gmail.com)

Narthex Duty and Ushers, **Peter Gouris**, [pgouris@vanguardcleaning.com](mailto:pgouris@vanguardcleaning.com)

OPA Festival, **Chris Papadeas**, [chrispapadeas@gmail.com](mailto:chrispapadeas@gmail.com)

Parents and Teachers Organization, **Despina Papadeas**, [pto@anngoc.org](mailto:pto@anngoc.org)

Parish Council, **Anthony Limberakis**, [anthony@limberakis.com](mailto:anthony@limberakis.com)

Parish Directory, **Joann Markou**, [jmarkou53@gmail.com](mailto:jmarkou53@gmail.com)

Philoptochos Society "Nausica", **Cathy Avgiris**, [cathyavgiris@gmail.com](mailto:cathyavgiris@gmail.com)

Resource Center, **Jane Papacostas**, [jjcempapa@aol.com](mailto:jjcempapa@aol.com)

Spiritual Life Ministry, **Barbara Louridas**, [barbaralouridas@gmail.com](mailto:barbaralouridas@gmail.com)

Stewardship Committee, **Apostolos Fisfis**, [paulfisfis@mac.com](mailto:paulfisfis@mac.com)

Young-at-Heart (65+) Ministry, **Diane Saphos**, [dsaphos@msn.com](mailto:dsaphos@msn.com)

# A Message from Fr. John Johns

*Dear Friends and my Annunciation Family,*

**Some years can feel routine. Others can feel like a quiet turning point. 2025 has unequivocally been a turning point. Not because everything was easy. It wasn't. Not because all challenges vanished. They didn't. But because something steadier has taken root among us: a deeper maturity, a clearer identity, and a stronger sense that we are not just maintaining a parish but becoming one.**

As classrooms were rebuilt, ministries strengthened, and plans made for our 125th anniversary, I found myself returning to the words of the Apostle Paul: "Let all things be done for building up" (1 Corinthians 14:26). In Greek, the word he uses literally means "house-building." That is what this year has truly been about. Not just building walls but building people. Not only improving facilities, but also strengthening faith.

I have watched our stewards give more intentionally, not out of pressure but out of conviction. I have watched our Philoptochos serve boldly and generously. I have watched our Homeless Ministry and Matthew 25 extend Christ's mercy through concrete acts of care. I have watched our youth learn and engage more deeply with the faith and our Orthodox traditions, pray through Holy Week with sincerity and depth, and offer almsgiving alongside these ministries. I have watched parishioners step forward, not out of obligation, but out of love. That is real growth.

As we approach 125 years as a parish, we are honoring the sacrifices of those who came before us and embracing the responsibility of building up those who will come after us. The answer lies in unity. In stewardship born from gratitude. In participation rooted in belonging. In prayer, coming from humility. In rising and building together, patiently and faithfully.

Thank you for your trust and sacrifice. It's a privilege to serve this community, and I am deeply grateful for the faith that resides here. Let us move forward confidently, trusting the Psalmist's words: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1). With Him as our foundation, our future is secure.

Sincerely in Christ,



Rev. Fr. John Johns,

*Presiding Priest*

# A Message from Outgoing Parish Council President Peter Gouris

*Dear Beloved Family and Friends of Annunciation/Evangelismos,*

**The Church exists for one reason only: to bring people to salvation in Jesus Christ. We are blessed with a loving Church community and vibrant ministries that extend good works and lead people to salvation in Jesus Christ.**

This year's 2026 Stewardship theme, "Let us rise up and build", has special importance for our community.

First, we hope this message raises awareness of true biblical stewardship, encouraging everyone to meet our community's needs with our God-given time, talent, and treasure. With this shared commitment, our Church can expand her ministries, deepen her spirituality, and continue to welcome and nurture new members of our parish family. To support these efforts, our 2026 operating budget is set at \$622,000, averaging about \$1,800 per family annually.

Our stewardship offerings cover 60% of our annual budget. We hope to meet all community needs by 2026 with a \$1,800 annual pledge (\$150/month per family). More on stewardship is in this report.

Second, in 2025, we completed Phase I of our facilities upgrade, renovating the Hellenic Education Center with new classrooms, restrooms, and offices. We demolished interior walls, upgraded the space, added storage, improved functionality, and ensured safety. Thanks to Dean Dalson for leading this project with dedication. Ministry leaders expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the work. More details will follow in this report.

My prayer is that we take heed to "Let us rise up and build" and give generously to our Church home, with regard to both sustaining stewardship and completing the remaining fundraising for the Phase I capital campaign.

**2026 is a year of celebrations!** Our country will commemorate its 250th anniversary (semi-quincentennial), celebrating 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. The nation has prospered through God's grace and the hard work of immigrants who refused to see failure as an option. In 2026, our Parish will celebrate its 125th anniversary as the first Greek Orthodox Church in Philadelphia and the sixth oldest in the United States. Our community has flourished thanks to God's grace and

the dedication of our ancestors, who believed in success and focused on raising their families close to their church.

Our ministries will host various celebratory activities and events monthly, leading up to our Grand Gala on October 10th. We hope you'll be able to attend all the events with your families!

Finally, enjoy this 2025 Annual Report marking our 8th year of reporting to you in this rich, detailed manner. We publish this Annual Report to accomplish two goals: to provide a clear, transparent overview of our Parish's condition, and to celebrate the many good works of our Community. Together, let us pray for all of God's blessings in the next 125 years of our Community's life.

## The 2025 Parish Council

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peter Gouris, <i>President</i></li><li>• Anthony Vlahos, <i>Vice President</i></li><li>• Chris Papadeas, <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President</i></li><li>• Anthony Limberakis, <i>Secretary</i></li><li>• Demetrios Papakirk, <i>Treasurer</i></li><li>• Panagiotis Giannoumis, <i>Assistant Treasurer</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chris Fifis</li><li>• Apostolos Fisfis</li><li>• Ioannis Fisfis</li><li>• Panagiotis Kyriakou</li><li>• Afrodite Patounas</li></ul> |
|---|---|

## The 2026 Parish Council

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anthony Limberakis, <i>President</i></li><li>• Peter Gouris, <i>Vice President</i></li><li>• Chris Papadeas, <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President</i></li><li>• Ioannis Fisfis, <i>Secretary</i></li><li>• Demetrios Papakirk, <i>Treasurer</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apostolos Fisfis</li><li>• Yanni Grigorakakis</li><li>• Afrodite Patounas</li><li>• Demetrios Staurinos</li><li>• Panayiotis Zografakis</li></ul> |
|---|---|

## Parish Communications

- **450 registered households on our active mailing list. 300 of them are supporting stewards.**
- **28+ active ministries & committees.**
- **Weekly e-bulletin sent to 930 email addresses.**
- **Weekly paper bulletin mailed to 35 shut-ins.**
- **2,650 Facebook followers.**

# 2025 General Assemblies Summary

*By Parish Council President Anthony Limberakis*

**In 2025, our parish held three General Assembly meetings—Spring, June's Special, and Fall—to review operations, address financial and facility needs, and approve key decisions for community growth.**

## **Spring General Assembly – March 9, 2025**

- The Pastoral vision highlighted ministry vitality and preparation for the 125th Anniversary.
- The financial review noted decreased operating income, increased expenses, and a small deficit, which was mitigated by grants.
- 2025 Budget approved, including increased stewardship goals and expense adjustments.
- Capital Improvements Phase I was reviewed with a target completion in August 2025.

## **Special General Assembly – June 2025**

- Presentation and review of Capital Project Phase I, including timelines, scope, and funding.
- Extensive Q&A regarding HVAC, safety codes, beautification, water leakage, and zoning considerations.
- Capital Project Phase I was unanimously approved.

## **Fall General Assembly – October 12, 2025**

- The Pastoral report emphasized the need for increased stewardship to offset the parish's operating deficit.
- The President's report celebrated the vibrancy of ministry, youth engagement, and the nearing completion of Phase I renovations.
- The treasurer's report highlighted increased expenses, strong festival revenue, and a projected surplus.
- Preliminary 2026 budget approved with stewardship and revenue increases.

## **Major Actions Across All Meetings**

- Approval of 2025 Budget.
- Unanimous approval of Capital Project Phase I.
- Approval of Preliminary 2026 Budget.

# Stewardship

*By Stewardship Committee Chairman Apostolus Fisfis*

As we reflect on our stewardship journey, we recall the sacred words of the Divine Liturgy: “Thine own of Thine own.” These words express the true essence of stewardship—that everything we have is a gift from God, and our offerings are a return of His blessings conveyed with gratitude and love.

## 2025 Stewardship Overview

In 2025, 286 stewards pledged \$327,280 and contributed \$333,929, exceeding their pledge. Stewardship accounted for 57.6% of our \$580,000 budget, up from 55% in 2024, indicating a deeper understanding of sacrificial giving. Our average pledge rose to \$1,144, with the median around \$700, reflecting strong generosity and growth potential. Notably, 80% of stewards met or exceeded their pledges, demonstrating their commitment to the Church.

## Pledge Fulfillment Summary – 2025

- Paid Pledge in Full: 121 stewards — \$145,084
- Paid More Than Pledged: 109 stewards — \$141,516 (+\$23,620)
- Paid Less Than Pledged: 56 stewards — \$47,329 (-\$16,971)
- Total: 286 stewards — \$333,929 (+\$6,649)

## A Growing Culture of Commitment

We thank the 157 households that pledged \$1,000+ and 61 that contributed \$2,000+, laying a strong foundation for our parish. Despite fewer stewards, overall giving rose, indicating deeper commitment and intentional stewardship. This movement shows stewardship is about spiritual growth, not just financial goals. It strengthens faith, deepens Church involvement, and supports ministries that spread the Gospel.

## Stewardship Giving by Pledge Level – 2025

- \$5,000+: 9 stewards
- \$3,000–\$5,000: 18 stewards
- \$2,000–\$3,000: 34 stewards
- \$1,000–\$2,000: 96 stewards
- \$500–\$1,000: 71 stewards
- Under \$500: 58 stewards
- Total: 286 stewards

## Rising Up to Build

Inspired by Nehemiah's call to "Rise up and build," we understand that stewardship is a shared duty. Just as the people of Jerusalem worked together to rebuild the walls, we are called to strengthen the Body of Christ through prayer, worship, service, and generosity. Stewardship is about offering ourselves to God, not just "how much is needed." When we give from our blessings, God multiplies those gifts for His Church's life.

## Looking Ahead: A Whole-Life Commitment

Looking ahead, our financial and spiritual goal is clear. If every stewardship household contributed \$1,800 each year, our parish could cover 100% of its operating budget through stewardship alone. This would enable us to move beyond reliance on fundraising and dedicate more focus to our ministries, outreach, and parish growth.

This goal is more than just a financial milestone; it is a spiritual calling. Stewardship is a lifelong response to God's blessings. It encourages us to give not only from our resources but also our time and talents in service, and to stay faithful in our participation in the Divine Liturgy.

### ***Our vision is that every parishioner will:***

- Participate regularly in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church
- Offer their unique gifts in at least one ministry
- Grow toward proportional and sacrificial giving

### ***Sustained and faithful giving***

As we grow in stewardship, we emphasize consistent giving. Faithful stewardship is strengthened by steady offerings year-round. We encourage all stewards to set up recurring gifts via our Vanco program or their bank's bill pay. Regular giving provides stability, helps us meet obligations, plan effectively, and focus on ministry rather than short-term financial concerns.

## Gratitude

We sincerely thank every steward for your love, sacrifice, and dedication. Your generosity supports our parish and enables us to worship together, help those in need, and spread the Gospel. May we continue to offer back to God "Your own from Your own," trusting that He will bless and multiply our gifts.

# 2025 Financial Summary

*By Treasurer Demetrios Papakirk*

**Despite weaker-than-expected operating income and a higher operating deficit, the strength of fundraising, festival performance, and other activity revenues produced an overall surplus for the year of almost \$12.7K!**

From an operating standpoint, our income was almost flat compared with 2024 and \$42,000 below plan. Stewardship was \$18,000 higher than in 2024, as we continue to ask the community to support us to reduce our dependence on fundraisers such as OPA. Other donations were down by about \$19,000 compared with 2024. While our operating expenses increased by about \$11,000 from 2024, this was below the inflation rate, and we managed our activities so that we spent \$5,000 less than we had budgeted for 2025. Our resulting Operating Deficit was \$133,415, an increase of \$10,700 from 2024.

Other Church Activities Net Income was \$37,500 higher than in 2024 and \$49,000 higher than our 2025 budget expectation. In February 2025, we received the final \$14,700 in government COVID-19 relief grants we had applied for in 2023, covering expenses paid in 2020 and 2021. The OPA! Festival reported a record profit of \$104,000, thanks to enhanced venues, marketing, and generous donors who covered significant festival expenses. Our Greek School is at full enrollment and is financially self-sustaining.

**Annunciation / Evangelismos  
Summary Balance Sheet  
as of December 31, 2025**

		12/31/2025		
<b>Current Assets</b>			<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
Unrestricted Cash Accounts	\$	148,882	Accounts Payable	\$ 50
Restricted - 50th Anniversary Campaign		146,612		
Restricted - Ministries		17,773	<b>Long term liabilities</b>	
Investment Account - Operating Reserves		35,422	CARES Act Loans	141,312
Investment Account - Capital Restricted		252,276	S-T Loan Financing	447,500
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<u>600,966</u>	Capital Loan - UNIVEST	<u>898,818</u>
			<b>Total Church Liabilities</b>	<u>1,487,681</u>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>				
Land & Buildings		1,612,040		
Capital Improvements		2,773,352		
Accumulated Depreciation		<u>(855,536)</u>		
Net Book Value		<u>1,917,815</u>		
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>		<u>3,529,855</u>	<b>Total Church Equity</b>	<u>2,643,140</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b><u>4,130,821</u></b>	<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Equity</b>	<b><u>\$4,130,821</u></b>

We continued to support our Ministries and make charitable contributions to our communities: \$8,200 through Matthew 25 to address food insecurity and \$10,000 through our Youth Ministries to support the Music & Dance Festival of the Metropolis of New Jersey. Significantly, we contributed \$10,000 to the Patriarch Bartholomew Endowment Fund for the fourth year, made possible by a generous restricted donation. Finally, we added \$4,800 to our Operating Reserve account.

	<u>Actual</u> <u>2025</u>	<u>Budget</u> <u>2025</u>	<u>Variance</u> <u>to Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>2024</u>	<u>Variance to</u> <u>Prior Year</u>
<b>Operating Income</b>					
Stewardship	\$ 342,905	\$ 353,000	\$ (10,095)	\$ 324,548	\$ 18,357
Candles	59,870	67,200	(7,330)	58,922	948
Trays	-	-	-	-	-
Unrestricted Donations	22,868	43,400	(20,532)	36,437	(13,569)
Memorials	11,241	15,000	(3,759)	16,855	(5,614)
<b>Total Operating Income</b>	<b>\$ 436,884</b>	<b>\$ 478,600</b>	<b>\$ (41,716)</b>	<b>\$ 436,763</b>	<b>\$ 121</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>					
Archdiocese and Metropolis commitments	\$ 79,951	\$ 70,600	\$ (9,351)	\$ 79,910	\$ (41)
Ecclesiastical	12,715	11,800	(915)	11,403	(1,312)
Ministries/Youth Programs	9,955	11,000	1,045	2,779	(7,176)
Outreach Ministries/Missions	11,114	21,000	9,886	16,400	5,286
Administrative Expenses	90,620	78,700	(11,920)	82,901	(7,719)
Salaries and Benefits	336,091	351,500	15,409	337,333	1,242
Maintenance and Repair	40,566	41,400	834	39,452	(1,114)
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 581,012</b>	<b>\$ 586,000</b>	<b>\$ 4,988</b>	<b>\$ 570,178</b>	<b>\$ (10,834)</b>
<b>Net Church Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ (144,128)</b>	<b>\$ (107,400)</b>	<b>\$ (36,728)</b>	<b>\$ (133,415)</b>	<b>\$ (10,713)</b>
<b>Other Church Activities P&amp;L</b>					
Banquet Hall Rental, net	\$ 16,088	\$ 19,949	\$ (3,861)	\$ 16,381	\$ (293)
OPA Festival, net	104,160	84,400	19,760	59,276	44,884
Other Fundraising Activities, net	11,004	6,045	4,959	11,240	(236)
Greek School, net	11,947	0	11,947	6,968	4,979
Interest & dividends	8,305	7,500	805	7,720	585
Other Miscellaneous	10,078	(5,694)	15,772	22,511	(12,433)
Reserves	(4,800)	(4,800)	-	(4,800)	-
<b>Total Other Church Activities</b>	<b>\$ 156,782</b>	<b>\$ 107,400</b>	<b>\$ 49,382</b>	<b>\$ 119,297</b>	<b>\$ 37,485</b>
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ 12,654</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>	<b>\$ 12,654</b>	<b>\$ (14,118)</b>	<b>\$ 26,772</b>

## OVERVIEW OF ALL SOURCES OF MONIES IN AND OUT

MONEY IN			MONEY OUT		
STEWARDSHIP	\$ 342,905	44.5%	SALARIES	\$ 260,838	34.4%
OPA FESTIVAL	\$ 182,227	23.7%	OPA FESTIVAL	\$ 106,586	14.1%
CANDLES	\$ 59,870	7.8%	BENEFITS & TAXES	\$ 75,253	9.9%
GREEK SCHOOL TUITION	\$ 49,333	6.4%	ARCHDIOCESE	\$ 68,104	9.0%
OTHER FUNDRAISERS	\$ 30,959	4.0%	GREEK SCHOOL	\$ 37,386	4.9%
OPA JOURNAL	\$ 28,519	3.7%	UTILITIES	\$ 32,269	4.3%
HALL RENTALS	\$ 19,231	2.5%	OUTDOOR SERVICES	\$ 27,171	3.6%
DONATIONS GENERAL	\$ 16,782	2.2%	INDOOR SERVICES	\$ 25,025	3.3%
COVID GRANTS	\$ 14,666	1.9%	OTHER FUNDRAISERS	\$ 19,955	2.6%
MEMORIAL DONATIONS	\$ 11,241	1.5%	REPAIRS	\$ 13,395	1.8%
INTEREST & DIVIDENDS	\$ 8,305	1.1%	ECCLESIASTICAL	\$ 12,715	1.7%
DONATIONS MINISTRIES	\$ 5,589	0.7%	METROPOLIS	\$ 11,847	1.6%
SPECIAL TRAYS	\$ 497	0.1%	INSURANCE	\$ 11,388	1.5%
			OUTREACH MINISTRIES	\$ 11,114	1.5%
			SUPPLIES	\$ 10,186	1.3%
			CREDIT CARD & BANK FEES	\$ 8,360	1.1%
			CONTRIBUTION RESERVES	\$ 4,800	0.6%
			ALL OTHER	\$ 21,078	2.8%
<b>TOTAL MONEY IN</b>			<b>TOTAL MONEY OUT</b>		
	<b>\$ 770,124</b>			<b>\$ 757,470</b>	
			<b>NET SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)</b>		
				<b>\$ 12,654</b>	

## Parish Vital Statistics and Sacraments

	2022	2023	2024	2025
<i><b>Births</b></i>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>
<i><b>Baptisms</b></i>	<b>16</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
<i><b>Chrismations</b></i>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<i><b>Weddings</b></i>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<i><b>Funerals</b></i>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>

# Summer 2025 Phase 1 Renovations Project

*By Renovations Project Manager Dean Dalson*

**Our beloved Annunciation is our spiritual home, and like any home, it needs upkeep and updates.** Our beautiful Byzantine-style Church was originally built in the late 1960s to early 1970s, with the Church Thyronaxia taking place in 1972. Over the years, several projects have improved the facilities, including the addition of the Conference Room/Library in the 1980s, the creation of the courtyard and the expansion of the front parking lot in the early 2000s, the replacement of the heating and air conditioning systems in 2018, and the completion of various roofing projects. Recognizing the need to modernize our facilities, in the early 2020s, we developed a multi-phase master plan of improvements based on key priorities from our 2018 Master Planning study.

1. Improve accessibility, including an elevator to the Social Hall, upgraded bathrooms, and access to the facility.
2. Expand the kitchen and improve the Social Hall.
3. Improve classrooms.
4. Create additional storage space.

We planned the work in phases so that early renovations would enable future ones and stay within budget and construction time limits.



Construction of the New Main Entrance



Sunday September 28, 2025  
Grand Opening

**Phase 1** - Classrooms and upstairs bathrooms, new entranceway and kitchen stairs, and new storage space.

**Phase 2** - Church Beautification, to include iconography and other improvements.

**Phase 3** - A new addition to include an elevator, new downstairs bathrooms, and expansion of the kitchen.

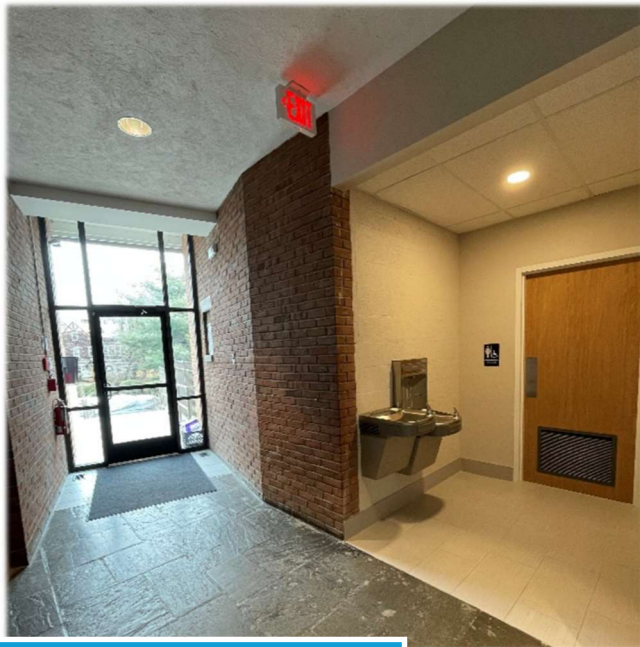
In June 2025, we began Phase 1, and in just over three months, we completely renovated the classroom level, including new walls, windows, ceilings, floors, lighting, heating, air conditioning, TVs, and furniture. We created a new main entrance and a staircase to the kitchen to make room for larger, accessible bathrooms. We built a new workspace for Philoptochos and added extra storage.



Old Library



New Conference Room



Old Side Entrance and Bathrooms vs. New Main Entrance and Bathrooms

In the Church, we repaired plaster, installed LED lighting, and painted all walls. We also installed new security systems, including cameras, and upgraded the offices. Outside, we made handicapped-accessible walkways and seating areas and repaved the back parking lot.

On September 28, 2025, we hosted a Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting ceremony to officially inaugurate the new space.

I want to thank everyone for their patience during construction, especially Jacinda Ojeda (Sunday School), Debbie Sourias (Greek School), and Patra Karidas for their help in designing the beautiful improvements, along with Chris Papadeas for designing and installing the internet and security systems.

## Parish Life: The Council of Ministries

*By Council of Ministries Coordinator  
Peter Gouris*

**The Council of Ministries continues its role by assisting in coordinating and communicating activities among various ministries, our Parish Council, and the community.** COM quarterly meetings serve as a communication channel, supporting ministries and helping the community reach its goals. Our faith teaches us to live in community with one another. COM's goal is to strengthen each ministry and our church community.

As our community and ministries grow, we observe increased use of our newly renovated facilities. Therefore, detailed planning has been completed to ensure proper calendar coordination, facilities and storage management, and more security.

Looking across our community, we see every ministry providing their best and led by dedicated ministry leaders.

This year, each ministry is developing special plans for our Church Community's upcoming 125th-anniversary celebration.

As you review this report, you'll see all the outstanding work being done, especially by our youth and outreach ministries. *"Well done, good and faithful servant!"*

## Annunciation Prayer Partners

*By Ministry Leader Olga McHugh*



**Annunciation Prayer Partners (APP) is a ministry that started in January 2025, with the first list of those in need of prayer sent to our Prayer Partners on January 21, 2025.** An up-to-date list is sent to our Partners via email weekly. Currently, there are 12 Prayer Partners led by Fr. John and George. Over the course of 2025, we have prayed for 81 people. Prayer requests range from health and spiritual needs to guidance during decisions, strength in daily conflicts, and expressions of gratitude and healing. Names are typically kept on our current list for about 3 to 4 months unless a longer period is requested. Names can also be resubmitted.

The idea of forming a prayer group came from a discussion during the November 2024 Nativity Retreat. Anyone can join APP, especially those faithful parish members who cannot participate in other Church ministries due to distance or health issues. To support our

outreach, the APP Ministry only needs your time to say a prayer at home or anywhere in a quiet place for a few minutes. We welcome anyone who wants to join us in prayer.

We collect the names of those in need of prayer by filling out a form on the Annunciation Prayer Partner Ministry page of the parish website. Paper prayer request forms are also available in the narthex and can be submitted to the church office. All requests are kept confidential. Including the reason for the prayer request is optional.

If you're interested in joining Annunciation Prayer Partners to pray for others, please contact Olga McHugh at [prayerpartners@anngoc.org](mailto:prayerpartners@anngoc.org) or the Church Office at [office@anngoc.org](mailto:office@anngoc.org).

## The Annunciation Parent Teacher Organization – PTO

*By Ministry Leader Debbie Papadeas*

**In 2025, the Youth Ministry and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) of Annunciation Evangelismos Orthodox Church continued collaborating to support and enhance the spiritual and social lives of our parish youth.**



Youth Christmas Party

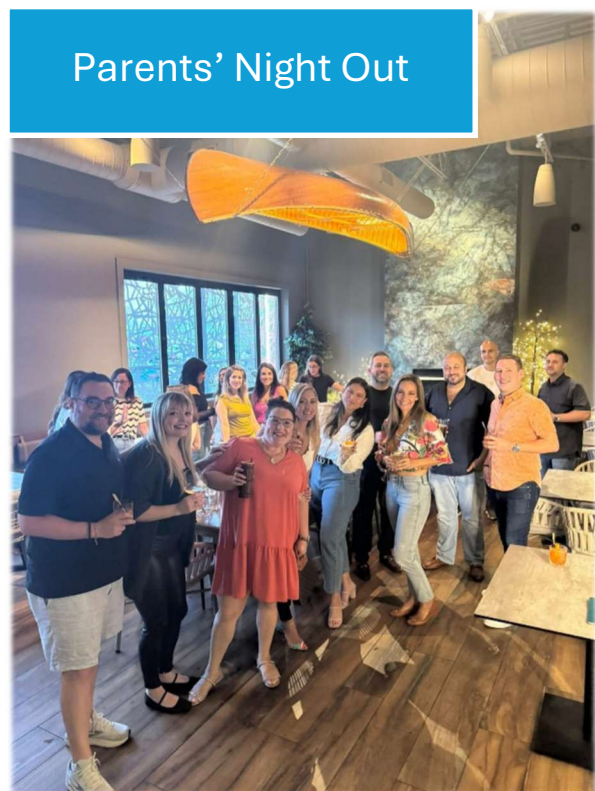
A primary focus this year has been preparing for the upcoming Music & Dance Festival. Our GOYA Medaklides and JOY Kymatakia dancers have dedicated many hours to rehearsals, fostering teamwork, discipline, and pride in their Orthodox faith and heritage. Through fundraising efforts, the PTO has purchased new dance costumes and performance items and has helped cover festival-related expenses for our youth and advisors.

Throughout the year, the PTO has supported parish youth ministries by identifying needs and raising funds through events like our first-ever PTO Parents Night Out in September, the Poinsettia Fundraiser, Vasilopita and Bake Sale, Luminary Sale for Holy Friday, Palms and Pancakes, Pascha Tsoureki Sale, and our annual Designer Bag Event on April 18, 2026. These events provide vital financial support while fostering fellowship and

engagement within our parish community.

Spiritual growth and fellowship remain central to our mission. Our PTO Youth Christmas Party brought families together for crafts, games, and a visit from Santa. Godparents Sunday on February 1, 2026, featured a coffee hour buffet celebrating the special bond between spiritual parents and their godchildren. Hope and JOY youth also participated in activities that fostered teamwork and deepened their understanding of their faith.

Our Youth Ministry and PTO together remain dedicated to helping our youth strengthen their Orthodox faith and



engage actively in our parish community.

The PTO Board for 2024-2025 consists of Despina Papadeas, Kate Limberakis, Sophia Karazounias, Irene Kalogrias, and Vicky Pavlou.

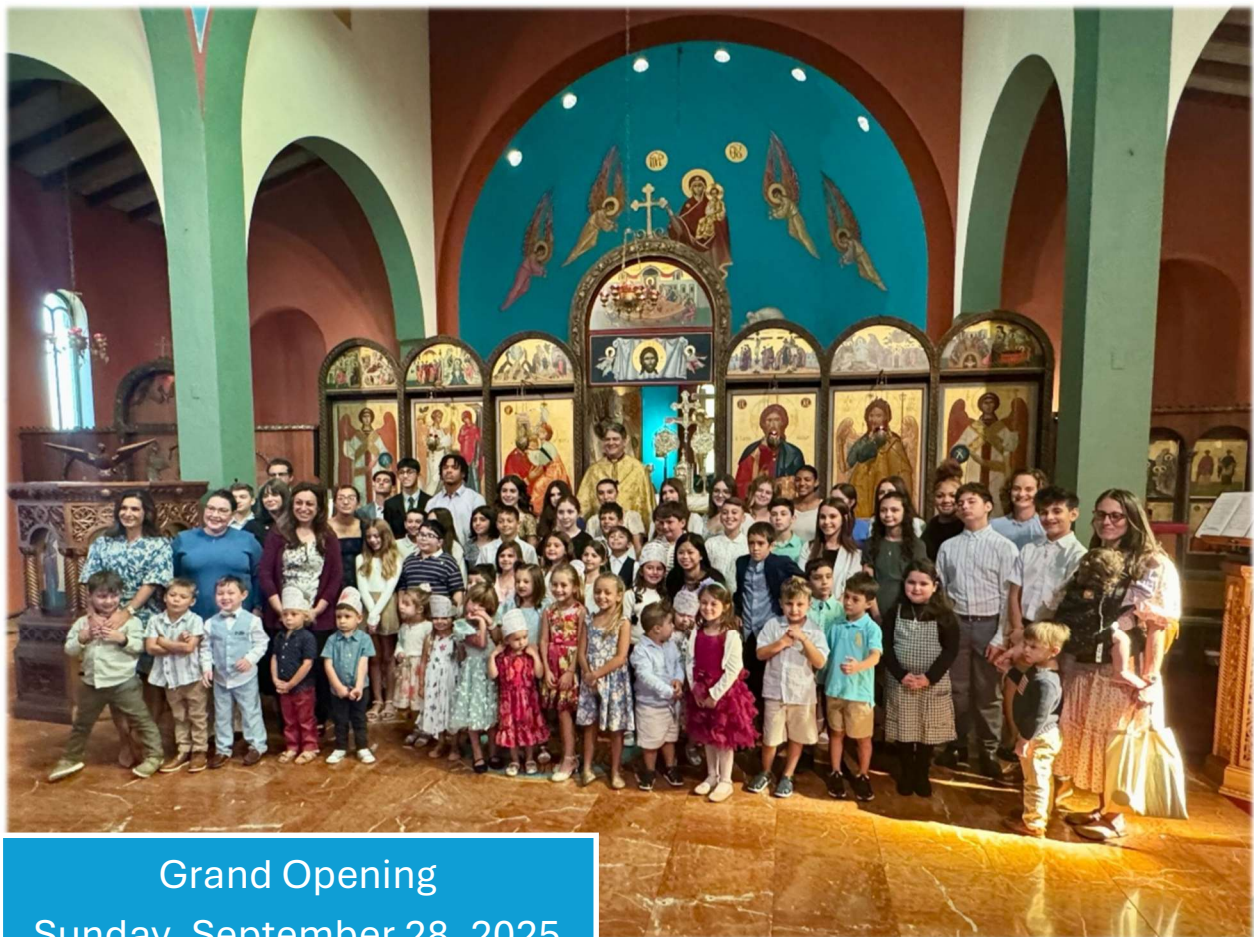
## Catechism School

*By Ministry Leader Jacinda Ojeda*

**Catechism School had a very exciting year with the renovation of our classroom wing.** Our students have been able to learn in a brighter,

welcoming, and more comfortable space. With the new technology in each classroom, our teachers have been able to incorporate multimedia presentations into their lessons, making their lessons more modern and impactful.

For the 2025-2026 school year, we saw 111 student registrations. Of particular note is the Little Apostles “grown-up and me” class for toddlers, which has become increasingly popular. Every week, the classroom is bursting with joyful noise as children listen to stories, do crafts, and make their very first church friends. The increased



Grand Opening  
Sunday, September 28, 2025

attendance is an excellent indicator that the future of Catechism is bright!



Kindergarten Class

The biggest event of the year was the Holy Friday youth retreat, which drew a record 46 students. After gathering with Father John around the cross, children rotated through lessons focused on important figures in Christ’s crucifixion. It was a beautiful, spiritual day made possible by our many GOYA and parent volunteers.

Of course, the retreat is just one of many special events that Catechism hosted outside of regular lessons. Each class had the opportunity to meet individually with Father John as part of our “Ask Father” series. Students also participated in “Archon Sunday” with lessons about the Ecumenical Patriarchate, worked with the Homeless Ministry to fill Agape bags, and collaborated with the choir to present our annual Nativity Pageant. Several times throughout the year, they put faith

into practice by participating in processions and special services.



Middle School

The overarching theme of 2025 has been the love and support of our community for the faithful education of our youth. We are very grateful to church leadership and the ongoing generosity of parishioners for the renovation of our classroom spaces. And of course, thank you to our dedicated teachers and helpers, and to all the members of our parish for uplifting this important ministry.

## Annunciation Greek School

*By Ministry Leader Debbie Sourias*

**Learning fosters creativity, which leads to thinking; thinking generates knowledge, and knowledge makes you great!** On our Greek learning journey, students explore, through learning a second language, the pursuit of their cultural and spiritual values.



New Classrooms!

### Newly Renovated Classrooms

The recent classroom renovation has positively impacted our Greek school community by improving the space and enhancing support for language learning, cultural education, and student involvement. Adding modern furnishings, better lighting, and advanced technology boosts student focus and participation. Audiovisual

tools aid pronunciation, listening, and exposure to Greek music, literature, and culture, making lessons more engaging and immersive, deepening students' connection to the Greek language and heritage.

Enhanced storage and organization of textbooks, artifacts, and resources streamlines lesson prep and maximizes instructional time. Teachers deliver structured, engaging lessons, and students enjoy a welcoming, inspiring classroom.

### Youth Program (Ages 4-12):

We are pleased to announce that we have 70 students enrolled for the 2025-26 academic year and have hired 8 teachers, one for each level.



OXI Day Celebration



To promote academic skills, our school has implemented the following initiatives:

1. We had 16 students at the DELVAL Greek Letters Day Celebration with Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, and we are thrilled to participate again!
2. We celebrated OXI DAY with the entire school learning hymns, poems, and songs honoring the brave, and studying the Greek national anthem as early as PreK.
3. KALANDA is a joyful celebration where participants learn carols and assign roles to students, providing them with the chance to explore their boundaries of active role-playing in Greek.
4. Students have been learning Greek, doing activities beyond textbooks, and taking on roles as veterinarians or chefs.
5. We introduced a practical learning program where students had their first lesson, visited four key areas in Greece, and collected items from various places. The goal was to familiarize students with Greece's diversity beyond Athens by linking

language to visual and cultural contexts. This helps students associate regions with unique foods, traditions, or landmarks, creating a real “tour” of Greece and using language as a tool for exploration.

6. “We strongly believe that entertaining activities like these help our students build on their vocabulary by placing them in a more relaxed environment.”
7. Mystery Readers: We invite family members and active students to participate as mystery readers to boost reading skills, strengthen home-school bonds, and show students that adults enjoy reading, inspiring them.



Penn Museum Trip

8. In 2025, we had five graduating students who excelled in Greek and participated in all youth activities. We celebrated by visiting the Penn Museum's Greek wing and organizing a scavenger hunt to test their learning.

### Adult Program (Ages 18+)

Our adult program has 27 students across Beginner I, Beginner II, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. Mrs. D. Afthinou teaches the classes via Zoom. These students come from New Jersey, North Pennsylvania, New York, Missouri, Oregon, and Florida. Students at the Advanced level will have the opportunity to graduate by taking the Ellinomathia test this May.

### The Future of our Greek School

Three graduating seniors enrolled in the level 7 program, with the opportunity to continue their education with us, while we anticipate adding a level 8 and an Ellinomathea I program. Our 7th level will focus on in-depth lessons about Greek history, culture, and faith. Our Ellinomathea Program will be open to all young adults ages 13-17 with basic Greek knowledge who want to become certified bilingual. This certification will benefit their college applications, and the credits will count toward their scholarships.

## Greek Orthodox Youth of America – GOYA

*By GOYA Advisor Sofia Bougioukas*

**The fall of 2025 welcomed 33 GOYANs with new officers: President, Panteli Sourias; Vice President, Maria Makrasis; Treasurer, Marko Papakirk; and Secretary, Melina Bougioukas.**

### Outreach Projects

GOYA collaborated with our parish's Homeless Ministry and Matthew 25 to help those in need. 332 pairs of socks were collected during the month of "Socktober" to fill AGAPE bags and to be given to the disadvantaged in the community. In November, GOYA also



Ambassador  
Awards Banquet

donated staple baking items to Seeds of Hope. As part of a new ongoing service project with FOCUS PHILADELPHIA, our GOYANs served 50 warm meals and snacks to those in need in the Norristown area.

## Music & Dance Festival (MDF)

In March 2025, our GOYANs participated in the Metropolis of New Jersey's inaugural MDF as the newly renamed dance troupe Meraklides. We also took



## Fellowship & Fun

GOYANs gather throughout the year for meetings, folk dance practice and performances, Fridays with Father, basketball practice/games, and monthly coffee fellowship hours. Our GOYANs enjoyed some amusement at THRILLZ, gathered for a Friendsgiving Feast, and had a Christmas Party in the city. They helped with PTO's Designer Bag Event and Christmas Party and assisted with the Nativity Pageant and Good Friday Retreat.

part in the Liturgical Choir. After months of practice, our dancers showcased traditional Macedonian dances. Their performance earned them third place.

## Sights and Sounds

In March, our GOYANs displayed their God-given talents at Sights & Sounds at Holy Trinity in Egg Harbor, NJ. As a group, they participated in choral speaking, performed an American play, and sang the Mamma Mia! version of



## Sights and Sounds Youth Arts Festival

duets. Many various forms of beautiful artwork were also submitted. Our GOYA youth brought home 12 awards. We look forward to Sights & Sounds 2026 on March 21st.

### Fundraisers

Here are two fundraisers from 2025 we wanted to highlight:

Luminaries - With support from our PTO, our GOYA youth benefit from the sale of luminaries displayed on Good Friday. We plan to make them again this year for our parishioners.

GOYA Bake Sale - GOYANS took on fundraising, raising over \$700 to benefit the ministry.

## HOPE & JOY Youth

*By Ministry Leader Effie Patounas*

**The HOPE-JOY ministry remains a place where faith comes alive for our children in kindergarten through 6th grade.** Throughout the year, our gatherings have centered on worship, service, fellowship, and learning—helping our youth grow not only in



## Dive for The Cross

knowledge but also in love for Christ and one another.



Learning How to Make Koliva

Our children experienced the beauty and depth of our faith in meaningful ways. From learning the sacred tradition of koliva and remembering our loved ones with hope in the Resurrection, to spending all of Holy Friday immersed in prayer—from the Royal Hours through evening Matins—they were invited to step fully into the life of the Church. Celebrating Theophany with our own “Dive for the Cross” brought joy and excitement while reinforcing the meaning of Christ’s Baptism.

Service continues to be woven into who we are. This year, our youth collected

grab-and-go food items for local college students experiencing homelessness, learning that faith calls us to care for others in tangible ways.

Fellowship remains at the heart of HOPE-JOY. Whether gathering for a faith-based movie night, sharing a potluck meal, planting “kindness” through lessons on the Golden Rule, or ending evenings with music and dancing, our children are building friendships rooted in Christ and in our parish community.



Plant Kindness, Harvest Joy

Looking ahead, we are especially excited that Annunciation will host the DVYC Bible Bowl, welcoming neighboring parishes for a day of Scripture, learning, and fellowship.

With sincere gratitude to Father John, our Philoptochos, PTO, and devoted parents, we thank God for another joyful and blessed year.

## Philoptochos Society “Nausica”

*By Philoptochos President  
Cathy Avgiris*

**The mission of Philoptochos is to assist the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the elderly, the sick, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the disabled, victims of disasters, both locally and worldwide.** We aim to promote the charitable and philanthropic goals of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, uphold our Orthodox Christian faith and traditions, and pass them on to future generations.

Our efforts each year are all organized around our mission and our pillars of support.

### Focus on Children:

We helped Cole Manor Elementary with supplies for their comfort closet and restocked Baldi Middle School's closet, one of the schools we initially supported.



Throughout 2025, we supported **The SuperHero Project** with a \$2,500

donation for the 3rd Angel Eye Camera, which enables live streaming and secure messaging to foster bonding and involve parents in NICU care.

*“What a great surprise when I opened my mailbox and saw the GENEROUS check from the Ladies Philoptochos Nausica. This is amazing. SuperHero Project just committed \$200,000 to Temple NICU to purchase cameras. This will go directly to this! Thank you! I am honored. Kelly Gallagher, Founder, The SuperHero Project.”*

Our 3rd annual Koliva and Coco event, in partnership with youth ministries, brought

children and parents together to learn how to prepare Koliva to remember loved ones. Kids carefully



made bowls of koliva with love and brought them to church, along with the names of loved ones, for the Saturday of Souls liturgy on February 22. This activity is meaningful for Philoptochos to pass on faith traditions to the next generation!

We continued our partnership with youth ministries by holding our 2nd



### Focus on Feeding the Hungry:

In addition to *Caring for Friends*, for whom we have prepared and delivered meals to the

Lazarakia on the Saturday of Lazarus. Children learned about Lazarus and the symbolism behind Lazarakia. The smell of cloves and cinnamon filled the kitchen as our little bakers baked and enjoyed their work!

### Focus on Helping the Poor and the Destitute:

*The Wardrobe's* mission is to boost clients' confidence and motivation with professional clothing and support, helping them leave public welfare and achieve financial independence. Over 20 bags of clothing and accessories were donated.

This past year, we supported eight veteran families at the *Coatesville VA Center* by donating essential items for Christmas, including coats, a toddler bed, hats, gloves, puzzles, and arts and crafts. The children, aged 2 to 14, were truly impacted.

homebound, in 2025, we added *FOCUS, North America*, a national Orthodox Christian organization. FOCUS unites churches and community partners to meet neighbors' needs by providing food, clothing, understanding, and shelter. It embodies Philoxenia—offering open-arm hospitality to those in need.



Our members joined other chapters at Saint Luke's on March 29 for ***Rise Against Hunger***, helping prepare over 17,000 meal packages for needy families worldwide.

### **Focus on Caring for the Sick and the Homebound:**



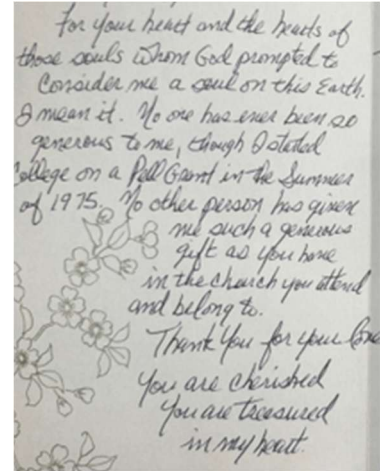
Cooking for Ronald McDonald House residents at Erie House is a cherished Philoptochos tradition eagerly awaited by the residents. We proudly support the comfort and hope the House offers to families on their children's medical journey.

### **Philanthropy and Agape in Action:**

Members of our chapter joined other chapters of the Metropolis of New Jersey on a visit to the future site of St. Michael's Home. To meet the growing needs and numbers of the elderly, St. Michael's began an expansion project to

relocate to a new facility in Uniondale, NY. We were honored to present our \$1,000 donation for this expansion during our visit.

When the call goes out to help our neighbors and fellow Orthodox Christians who were impacted by the devastating fires in California, we do not hesitate to respond! We donated \$1,000 to support victims of the Los Angeles fire.



When a young family faces a devastating car accident, leaving parents unable to work, we send gift cards to support them. Over \$2,000 in gift cards were given to community members in need. We do this out of love and concern, not for recognition. A stranger sending a



heartfelt thank-you makes it even more meaningful.

Children in our area lack gifts for Christmas. Little Santa Big Shop helps low-income families by offering free, donation-based shopping for their children. We hope our donations eased families' stress.

Our primary fundraising event is Bid-N-Buy, themed 'Passport to the World' this year. We highlighted the destinations we explored, generated funds to support our mission, and had a great time! Thanks to Mrs. Maria McNally, our Bid-N-Buy chair, and the whole team, for organizing a wonderful evening of community and enjoyment.

In 2025, we welcomed two new members to our Philoptochos board and said goodbye to two members who have been part of our team and chose to step down. Thank you, Marianne Marmarou and Angela Vlahos, for all you've done for our chapter over the years. We look forward to seeing you back on our board! We also welcome Christine Ferello and Eugenia Giannoumis to our board and are excited to work with you!

*Pictured (left to right): Vaso Trifonidis, Eugenia Giannoumis, Maria Grigorakakis, Demetra Pithis, Dora Mikroulis, Stella Fisfis, Cathy Avgiris, Diane Saphos, Stella Nikolopoulos, Maria Mountis, Patra Karidas, Virginia Markos, Maria Skoutelas, and Maria McNally. Not pictured: Christine Ferello, Joyce Gutchigian, Maria Kolokithias, Georgianne Pogas, and Kathy Verros.*



Philanthropy is the love of humanity. Philoptochos Nausica exemplifies true philanthropia through serving humanity. This love, or agape, is shown in our charity efforts, commitments, and projects, as well as in the various programs we run annually. As we approach 2026 and the 100th anniversary of our service, we plan to continue our Trinity of Good Works. Thanks to our members, sponsors, and friends—your support makes our work possible.

Our Philoptochos Nausica has supported the following organizations and ministries with \$40,000 in 2025.

Aid for Greece and Cyprus  
American Heart Association  
Autism Cares Foundation  
Breathing Room Foundation  
Cancer and Other Major Illnesses Fund  
Caring For Friends  
Children's Crisis Center  
Children's Medical Fund Luncheon  
Coatesville Veterans Center  
Cole Manor Elementary School  
CrossRoads at Hellenic College  
Face to Face Germantown  
FOCUS NA  
Giving Tuesday – National Philoptochos  
Grands Stepping UP  
Holy Cross/Hellenic College  
Holy Protection Monastery  
International Orthodox Christian Center (IOCC)  
Lenape Valley Foundation  
Little Santa Big Shop  
Local Fire Departments  
Metropolis of NJ Christmas Gift Appeal

Metropolis of NJ Music and Dance Festival  
Metropolis of NJ Social Services Fund  
Metropolis of NJ Schools of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Fund  
Mud Girls Studio  
National Forum of Church Musicians  
National Philoptochos Ecumenical Patriarchate Fund  
National Philoptochos Eldercare Fund  
National Philoptochos Emergency Fund  
National Philoptochos General Medical Fund  
National Philoptochos Light of the Cross Sponsorship  
National Philoptochos Social Services  
National Philoptochos Sisterhood of Presvyteres  
OCF Campus Ministry  
Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF)  
Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC)  
Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry  
Orthodox Volunteer Corp  
Rise Against Hunger  
Ronald McDonald House – Erie  
Ronald McDonald House – Greek Division  
Safe Harbor Program –  
Jefferson/Abington Hospital  
Shoes that Fit  
Special Olympics  
St. Basil's Academy  
St. Basil's Academy Experience Fund  
St. Michael's Home  
St. Photios Shrine  
St. Mary of Egypt  
Sisterhood of Saint Basil  
SuperHero Project  
Support a Mission Priest (SAMP)  
Support of California Fire Relief Fund  
The Wardrobe  
UNICEF  
Walking with Christ  
Zoe for Life

## Homeless Ministry

*By Ministry Leader Angela Godshall*

***“And the crowds asked Jesus, ‘What then should we do?’ In reply, He said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’”***  
(Luke 3:10-11)

### **What is the Annunciation Homeless Ministry?**

The Annunciation Homeless Ministry is you. It’s every one of us. It’s all of us together, each one sharing their God-given talents and gifts in whatever way and wherever possible. It’s giving your time, talent, or treasure. It’s donating food, water, or a few essentials, such as socks, gloves, and hats. It’s lending a hand to help fill our AGAPE bags or sharing a few moments of your time and heart as you offer an AGAPE bag to someone in need.

By the grace of God, on February 28, 2025, our parish ministry marked 17 years of serving and ministering to our neighbors in need. As an extension of the ministry of Jesus Christ, our ministry strives to answer the call to reach out to others, alleviate suffering, promote dignity, and instill self-sufficiency for those experiencing homelessness in our community.



2025 was a year of transition for our Annunciation Homeless Ministry and, in some ways, a year of letting go and trusting in God’s plan. Just as one of our goals in working with each of our church ministries was realized over the years, another goal of sharing our ministry work with as many other Orthodox churches in our area as possible was realized through FOCUS, N.A.

Although our ministry may look a little different from a year ago, we are filled with gratitude and hope. By sharing His love, we continue to experience miracles, joy, and the presence of God in profound ways.

*May it be blessed.*

## Matthew 25 Ministry

*By Ministry Leader Lisa Trivelis*

**Our mission is to share Christ's love with neighbors in need.** Our message and purpose remain constant; we are dedicated to serving our community and living out our faith. We aim to raise awareness about local food insecurity through our service. We fulfill scripture by partnering and supporting our community, contributing monthly to Seeds of Hope and the Somerton Interfaith Food Pantry, and donating to the Mattie Dixon Food Pantry when possible. These partnerships bring hope, nourishment, and practical support to those in need.



This year, we hosted successful **Turkey and Meat Drives**, highlighting our commitment to service and community. Our efforts provided enough food to fill

an 18,000-gallon pool, symbolizing our community's generosity. It was an impressive amount of meat, eggs, butter, cheese, soup, cereal, baking goods, and other food items.



Our **Angel Tree** project touched many families this year. We collaborated with Gina Giannoumis and John B Stetson Middle School to provide gifts, uniforms, and gift cards to some students. We sponsored two families, meeting them in person and via video, watching children enjoy their gifts. **Maddie Dixon** was excited to receive over 45 hand-selected toys. We also provided gloves, socks, and underwear.

Throughout the year, we often get unplanned requests from after-school clubs and community members for urgent needs. We review our budget and, if funds are available, support reputable organizations that align with our mission.

Each February, the Matthew 25 Ministry joins a community project, organized by member Christine Ferello. We volunteered at **Manna on Main**, working with staff to prepare food for distribution, aligning with our mission.



Our ministry relies heavily on donations, which are essential for purchasing necessary supplies. Although we receive some funding from the parish council and the annual budget, most of our funding comes from individual contributions. Our community consistently supports major projects, and we appreciate our stewards and parishioners, including those who regularly read bulletins. As expenses increase, we pray that our parish remains committed so we can continue serving effectively. We are grateful to Father John, George, and Mitch for their help in enhancing communications

## Young at Heart Ministry

*By Ministry Leader Susan Gouris*

**Young @ Heart Ministry provides fellowship opportunities for those 65 and older in our community.**

The Group hosts social events following weekday Divine Liturgies throughout the year.



Our “Welcome Back” was on October 23rd, the feast of Iakovos (James) the Apostle. Jim Papacostas spoke to us about cybersecurity, and it was well-received! Friday, November 21st, we offered a coffee hour after the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. Our Christmas luncheon and caroling were held on December 4th, the Feast of St. Barbara the Great Martyr. We also held a coffee hour on February 10th for the Feast of Hieromartyr Haralambos. As part of our speaker series this year, on May 21st for Holy Ascension, Anna Penning and Jonathan Limberakis will speak to our group about dental hygiene.



All of our activities are promoted in the weekly bulletin. We invite and encourage all 65ish parishioners to attend and be part of our fellowship.

## The Annunciation Choir

*By Ministry Leader Jim Papacostas*

### New Music

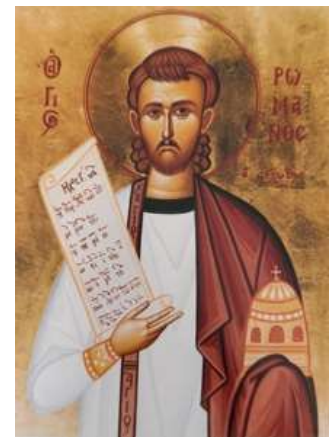
The National Forum of Greek Orthodox Musicians, the Archdiocesan ministry overseeing choral activities, is our resource for a wonderful collection of liturgical music. This past year, the choir was pleased to add some beautiful musical harmonies to the Sunday service. The three compositions below,

by Archdiocesan composer Tikey Zes, were included in our musical rotation.

- One is Holy/Is Ayios in D Major.
- Praise the Lord/Enite Ton Kyrion in D Major.
- Let our Mouths Be filled with Your Praise. (Mode II tone)

On Palm Sunday 2025, we reintroduced a Cherubic Hymn by composer S. Spathis, which our choir performed many years ago. This year, in time for Palm Sunday, we

look forward to featuring a Cherubic Hymn composed by Nicholas Roubanis, performed in both Greek and English.



### Ongoing Efforts

Throughout the year, we practice many seasonal and feast-day hymns, especially during Lent and Advent, as well as on Palm Sunday, Easter, and Pentecost. In December, we collaborated with the Sunday School for the Christmas pageant. This year, a Sunday school student played violin for "Silent Night." Thanks to Georgio Pavlou, our first guest student musician, and to Jacinda Ojeda and the teachers for a fantastic pageant.

Stay tuned: we're working with the Parish Council to reconfigure the choir area for more space.

### Most importantly...

We trust that our musical ministry helps make church attendance a worshipful experience. The choir is an enthusiastic and dedicated group of volunteers who treasure the Greek Orthodox Church's rich and beautiful musical tradition in America. Our organist, Emma Lokmer, joining us for a second year, has a master's degree from the Temple Boyer College of Music graduate school.

We always welcome additional voices. If you sing in your school choir, college choir, rock band, or if you are just naturally musically inclined, please join us!

It's so easy to join. Your commitment is at most one rehearsal every other Wednesday evening, and you can even join us for just part of the Liturgy if that works best for you. Don't hesitate to contact Jim Papacostas (email: [jjcempapa@aol.com](mailto:jjcempapa@aol.com) or text: 215-669-1839).

## International Orthodox Christian Charities – IOCC

*By Ministry Leader Susan Gouris*

**Annunciation once again took a leadership role in preparing, financially supporting, and participating in the 14th Annual IOCC Benefit Banquet hosted by the Greater Philadelphia IOCC Committee.**



This year's event generated over \$150,000 in total revenue from sponsorships, ticket sales, donations, and a silent auction. With numerous public and private grants, IOCC can

multiply each dollar raised by 7 and keep its administrative and marketing costs below 10%!

Thanks to your generosity, IOCC responded swiftly to urgent needs worldwide in 2025. It expanded emergency relief in the Holy Land with food, water, hygiene supplies, infant care, and medical aid for conflict-affected families. In the U.S., IOCC supported disaster survivors with emotional and spiritual care after the Los Angeles County wildfires and engaged in long-term recovery in Tennessee and Florida affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, while also responding to flooding in Alaska.

Your support worldwide helped address humanitarian challenges. IOCC provided nutrition and health services to vulnerable families in Lebanon during the crisis and delivered food and aid to refugees and struggling households in Greece and beyond. Your generosity brought hope, healing, and dignity in 2025!

Founded in 1992, IOCC is a humanitarian organization helping those affected by political upheaval, war, famine, disasters, and tragedies by providing food, shelter, economic self-sufficiency, and hope. Assistance is based on need and benefits for orphans, refugees, displaced people, the elderly, school children, families, and people with



disabilities, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. Thanks to caring donors, over \$830 million in aid has been distributed over 31 years following events such as the Ukraine war, earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, the Beirut explosions, floods in the U.S., wildfires in Greece and California, hurricanes in Louisiana and the Carolinas, and earthquakes in Haiti.

## The Annunciation Resource Center

*By Ministry Leader Jane Papacostas*

**The Annunciation Resource Center continues to offer a wide variety of Orthodox Christian books, icons, devotional items (prayer ropes, incense, incense burners, candles, and charcoal), and greeting cards for all ages.**

Looking to increase your knowledge of Orthodox Christian history, theology, spirituality, or the lives of the saints? Stop by and see our selection! We are happy to order whatever you're looking for if we don't have it in stock. As a convenience, the Resource Center can now process credit card sales.



Popular new items this year are the Snuggly Dolls created by Draw Near Designs, a business started by two Orthodox Christian mothers who seek to encourage children “to find God in every moment, every day.”

In 2025, as we have in the past, the Resource Center donated a basket of children's books to the annual International Orthodox Christian

Charities (IOCC) fundraiser held by the Philadelphia IOCC Committee.



We continue to support the Spiritual Life Committee's retreats by ordering and selling speaker recommendations for their books. *Renewing You* by Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh and Dr. Roxanne Louh was a top seller this year at the fall retreat. We also collaborate with the Ladies Philoptochos Society to locate and purchase greeting cards and books for the gift bags given to families at the 40-Day Mother & Baby Blessing service.

## Spiritual Life Ministry

*By Ministry Leader Barbara Louridas*

**The mission of the Spiritual Life Ministry is to nurture the spiritual lives and development of adult parishioners through Church**

**education, Bible studies, retreats (Advent and Lenten), prayer, and fellowship.**

For more than 30 years, the spiritual life ministry has consistently offered world-class Orthodox lecturers, including: +The Rev. Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko, Dean of Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary; Father John Chryssavgis, Theological Advisor to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew; and Rev. Dr. Frank Marangos, former National Director of Religious Education and Executive Director of Communications for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

This past November, we continued this high standard by welcoming Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh, priest, author, and speaker from St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church in Jacksonville, FL. Rev. Dr. Nicholas spoke on a most relevant topic: Going All In, Deepening Your Faith, Strengthening Our Family – Living Your Purpose.

The retreat was a wonderful event. Fr. Louh spoke to us as if we were sitting at his kitchen table, offering us a personal Bible study. The discussion was lively, interactive, and funny. During the short breaks, Fr. Louh had a chance to sign copies of his books for everyone. It was a day that all who attended appreciated. The Spiritual Life organizers even had a chance to break bread with Fr. Louh the

night before and to have a small-group personal discussion.

## The OPA Festival

*By OPA Chairperson Chris Papadeas*

**The OPA Festival at Annunciation Evangelismos Greek Orthodox Church in Elkins Park is more than a weekend celebration.** It is a gathering that reflects the heart of our parish. Guided by our message, “Where Community and Culture Come Together,” the festival brings together parishioners, neighbors, families, and friends in a shared experience of faith, heritage, and fellowship.



Throughout the weekend, visitors enjoy authentic Greek food, music, and cultural traditions in a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere. We also welcome vendors who offer authentic Greek goods, including gifts, jewelry, specialty items, and traditional snacks, allowing

guests to take a piece of the culture home with them. The festival creates meaningful opportunities for parishioners to work together, reconnect, and strengthen relationships within our church community. It also opens our doors to the broader community, inviting guests who may be experiencing our parish for the first time.



The OPA Festival continues to serve as a welcoming space for all. It is a place where faith is visible, culture is celebrated, and our community grows stronger together.

A special part of the festival is the participation of neighboring Orthodox churches, who join us in fellowship and friendship. Their presence, including youth dance groups and parish representatives, reflects the unity of our faith community and reinforces the bonds we share across parishes. These collaborations help nurture connections among our youth and encourage ongoing relationships within the wider Orthodox community.











GREEK ORTHODOX  
METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

*OUR MISSION is to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, sanctify the faithful through the liturgy and Holy Sacraments, grow the church by welcoming new members, live the Orthodox Christian faith, and serve humanity through Christ-centered ministries.*

*OUR VISION is to be a loving, caring, and welcoming Christian community where everyone belongs and grows in the Orthodox Christian Faith through worship, witness, fellowship, and service to others.*

**GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

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