



St. Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church

313 Dividend Drive, Suite 210
Peachtree City, Georgia 30269

Phone: (770) 347-PRAY (7729)

Website: www.saintchristopherhoc.org

Very Rev. Fr. George Tsahakis, Pastor
Stephen Sarantis, President, Parish Council
Jackie Sarantis, Office Administrator

Pastoral Message from Fr. George, September 24, 2025



Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

*As we reflect on the Sunday after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross,
we hear the Lord's solemn call:*

***"Whoever wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take
up his cross, and follow Me." (Mark 8:34)***

This is not a metaphor. It is a spiritual reality. As St. Theophan the Recluse reminds us, “It is impossible to follow the Crucified Lord without a cross.” Every true Christian carries one—not as a burden to be avoided, but as a path to transformation.

St. Theophan, a 19th-century Russian Orthodox bishop and spiritual writer, lived much of his life in solitude, dedicating himself to prayer and reflection. Though withdrawn from the world, his insights continue to guide generations of faithful. He taught that the Christian life is inseparable from struggle—that the cross is not an exception, but the very sign of authentic discipleship. He wrote, “Rejoice, feeling the cross on yourself, for this is a sign that you are following the Lord, the path of salvation to paradise.”

Our parishioners know this truth intimately. We have walked through seasons of hardship—some visible, others hidden in the quiet corners of our hearts. We have faced challenges that tested our faith, our unity, and our endurance. And yet, by God’s grace, we have not only endured—we have grown stronger, more compassionate, more faithful.

The cross we carry is not merely suffering—it is the daily struggle to live according to Christ’s commandments in a world that often resists them. It is the inconvenience of choosing love over indifference, truth over comfort, humility over pride. It is the sorrow of repentance, the pain of healing, the courage of forgiveness.

St. Theophan compares this journey to a patient undergoing surgery—painful, yes, but necessary for healing. He speaks of the

Christian as one escaping captivity, fighting a strong enemy. These are not easy images, but they are true. And they remind us that the cross is not a punishment—it is a sign that we are on the path of salvation.

So let us rejoice—not in the suffering itself, but in what it signifies: that we are following Christ. That we are being refined. That we are being prepared for paradise.

*And here is the mystery: when we carry our crosses faithfully, something beautiful happens. Others begin to see—not just our struggle, but the light that shines through it. As Christ said, **"Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."***

(Matthew 5:16)

This is our calling as a parish family. To be a community where the light of Christ shines through our wounds, our perseverance, our love. To be a place where others can look and say, "God is truly among them."

So let us continue to carry our crosses—not with despair, but with hope. Not alone, but together. And let us remember: a little patience, a little faith... and the crowns await.

To our Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the Cross for our salvation, be all glory, honor, and worship, now and forever. Amen.

The spiritual call to "take up your cross and follow Christ" (Mark 8:34) is a central tenet in Orthodox theology and iconography.



Just as the sun in this image refuses to be hidden, so too must our faith refuse to be silenced. We are not called to be passive observers of suffering—we are called to be bearers of light. To speak truth with love. To act with compassion. To forgive when it's hardest. To hope when it seems foolish.

Today's world tests our resolve. Whether it's economic instability, cultural polarization, personal loss, or the quiet battles of anxiety and doubt, we are constantly called to stand firm. Holy Scripture reminds us: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." — John 1:5



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

September 27, 2025

To all in attendance at

The National Philoptochos Society's Children's Medical Luncheon in Atlanta, Georgia

With heartfelt joy and deep gratitude to Almighty God, I welcome each of you to this sacred gathering of love, compassion, and healing. Your presence here today is a testament to the enduring commitment of our Orthodox Christian community to care for the most vulnerable among us—our children in medical need.

We give thanks to God for the incredible and lifesaving impact this ministry has had on countless young lives. Through your generosity and prayers, hope has been restored, healing has been offered, and Christ's love has been made manifest.

We are especially blessed by the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, who serves as Chair of the National Philoptochos Society, and His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos, its devoted Spiritual Advisor. Their spiritual guidance and pastoral care inspire us all.

I extend sincere appreciation to Mrs. Debbie George, National Philoptochos President, whose faithful stewardship continues to elevate the mission of Philoptochos across our Archdiocese. We also are grateful to Mrs. Irene Politis, President of the Metropolis of Atlanta Philoptochos Board, whose dedication and love have helped bring this event to life in our beloved city. Her outstanding leadership and heartfelt dedication to organizing this year's Children's Medical Luncheon have blessed our Metropolis and uplifted its tireless ministry to serve all in need.

Together with His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos of Atlanta, our clergy and laity are honored to host this blessed luncheon. It is a joy to welcome you to Atlanta, where the spirit of fellowship and service shines brightly.

For me personally, as Chancellor of the Metropolis of Atlanta, this experience has been unforgettable. To witness the generosity, love, and faith of our Philoptochos sisters from across the country and their generous supporters is to behold the living Gospel in action.

Thanks be to God for the healing, hope, and joy this ministry brings to our children and their families. May He continue to bless and guide all who serve in His name.

With gratitude and love in Christ,

Fr. George Tsahakis

Chancellor, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta

2480 Clairmont Road, NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30329 Telephone: 404-634-9345 Fax: 404-634-2471
Web: www.atlmetropolis.org E-mail: info@atlmetropolis.org

A Reflection of Gratitude for Our Church Musicians

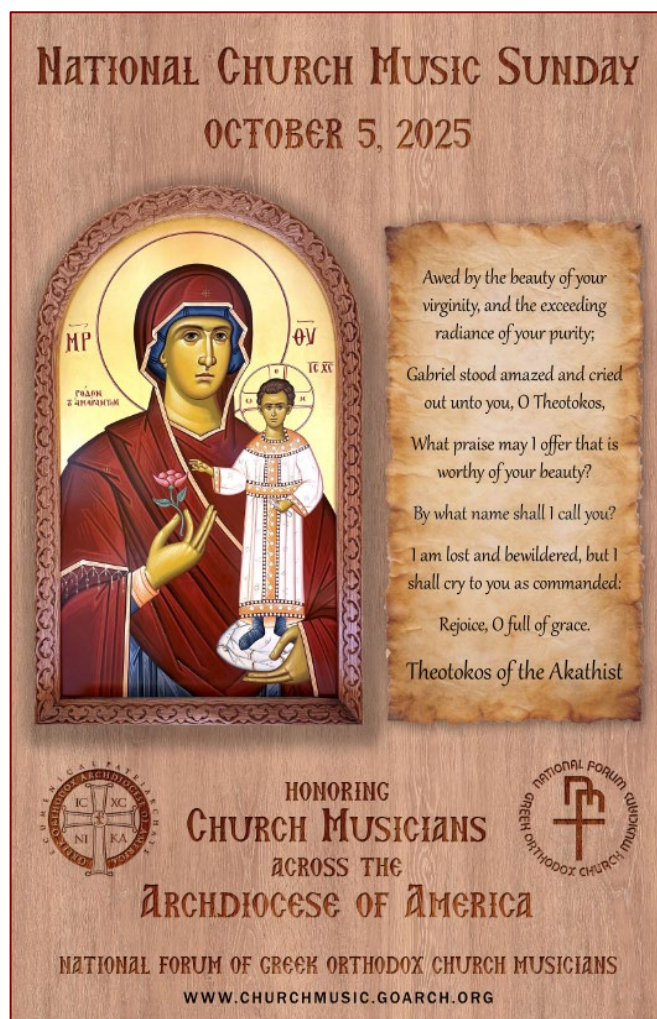
Sunday, October 5th is National Church Music Sunday. We will pause to honor the choirs and chantors of our Greek Orthodox parishes—those faithful servants whose voices lift our hearts and souls toward heaven. Their ministry is not confined to the liturgy alone; it is shaped in quiet hours of preparation, rehearsals, and prayerful study.

Though often unseen, their

dedication transforms our worship into a living hymn of praise.

Through their voices, the beauty of Orthodox hymnology becomes not just heard, but felt—stirring the soul, inspiring reverence, and drawing us closer to Christ.

We invite all parishioners to join us on Sunday, October 5th as we honor these devoted musicians who make singing praises to the Lord both inspiring and heartfelt.



On a personal note, I recall how my parents insisted I learn piano and organ as a child. At the time, I didn't fully understand their insistence—but those music lessons became invaluable. They helped me internalize the hymns and melodies of our Church and ultimately prepared me to serve as a Greek Orthodox Priest. Music was not just an art—it was a spiritual foundation.

To all parents who encourage their children to learn music: thank you. Your efforts plant seeds that will blossom into service for the Church. Whether in the choir, at the chantor's stand, or in the sanctuary, these musical gifts enrich our worship and strengthen our faith community.

To our church musicians: thank you for your tireless devotion, your love of sacred music, and your commitment to making every service a heartfelt offering to the Lord. Your work is a blessing to us all.

A Final Note of Inspiration – Let us remember St. Romanos the Melodist, the patron saint of church musicians. Once mocked for his lack of musical talent, Romanos received a divine gift through a vision of the Theotokos, who gave him a scroll to eat. Upon awakening, he sang his first hymn—"On the Nativity"—with

profound beauty and grace. From that moment, he composed hundreds of hymns that still echo through our liturgical life today.

Join Us Often with Your Family

Saturday, September 27th

11:00 20th Children's Medical Luncheon
(Philoptochos)



Sunday, September 28th – 1st Sunday of St. Luke

8:00 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy

10:30 Prescription Recycling Opportunity

10:45 Religious Education Classes

12:00 Let's EAT! At Broadway Diner

Saturday, October 4th – Philoptochos Fall Pastry Sale

8:30 Koulourakia

Sunday, October 5 – 2nd Sunday of St. Luke & National Church Music Sunday

8:00 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy

10:45 Religious Education Classes

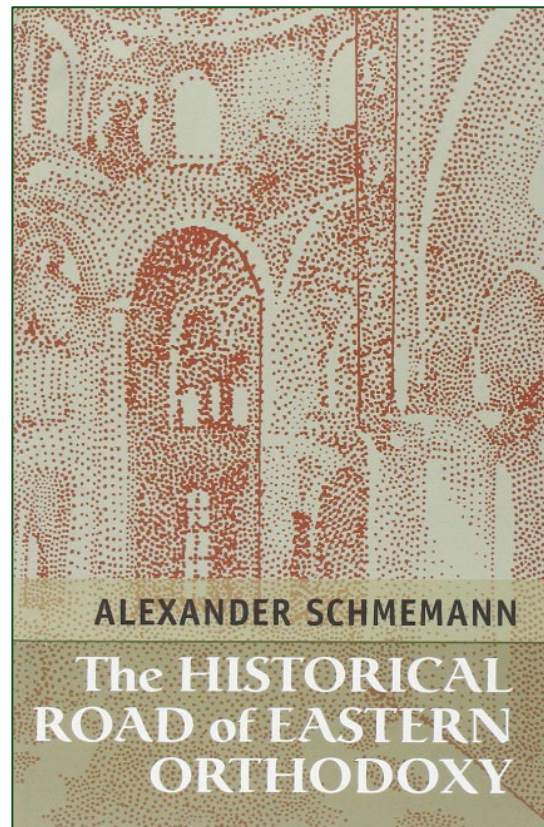
Adult Religious Education Update:

Fr. George thanks our parishioners for attending our weekly classes. He invites all adults to join us. We have been reviewing the first chapter of *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. He sets the foundation for understanding the development of the Orthodox Church by exploring its roots in the early Christian community and its transformation within the Roman Empire.

Fr. Schmemmann begins by emphasizing that Christianity was not born in a vacuum—it emerged within the historical, cultural, and religious context of the Roman world. He highlights how the early Church was shaped by both Jewish tradition and Hellenistic civilization, creating a unique synthesis that would define its theological and liturgical character. The chapter underscores the radical nature of the Christian message: the proclamation of Christ as the incarnate Son of God, which redefined human history and identity.

A central theme is the Church's self-understanding as the Body of Christ—a living, sacramental community rather than a mere institution. This Sunday, we will review Fr. Schmemmann's discussion of how this ecclesial identity was challenged and refined as Christianity moved from persecution to imperial favor, especially after Constantine's conversion. The shift from a marginal sect to a state-supported religion brought both opportunities and tensions, as the Church navigated its mission within a changing political and cultural landscape.

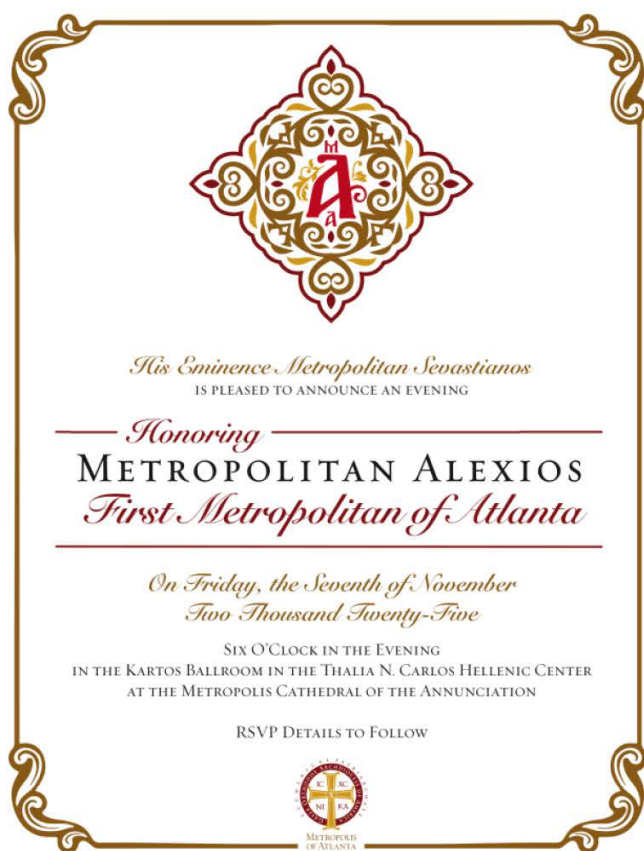
Overall, the chapter invites us to see Orthodoxy not just as a static tradition, but as a dynamic historical journey—one that begins with the apostolic witness and continues through centuries of transformation, always rooted in the mystery of Christ and the life of the Church.





GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ



September 18, 2025

To the Reverend Clergy, the Parish Council Presidents, Philoptochos Sisters, and all the Faithful of the Metropolis of Atlanta:

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we prepare to welcome the coming Fall season, I am proud to announce an exciting and worthy opportunity: an evening to celebrate our Former Metropolitan of Atlanta, Alexios, on **Friday, November 7, 2025, at 6 PM at The Kartos Ballroom in the Thalia N. Carlos Hellenic Center of the Metropolis Cathedral of the Annunciation. (RSVP details to follow.)**

That evening will feature live testimony from our Metropolis co-workers, sharing heartfelt reflections on the profound impact that Metropolitan Alexios's

leadership and love have had on each of us—both personally and collectively. It will be a night of gratitude, remembrance, and celebration of a legacy that continues to inspire. We hope you will join us.

Knowing that our beloved Geronda's humility prefers his Metropolis family not to make him the center of attention, it is only fitting that this evening's celebration highlights one of His Eminence's most enduring legacies, the ministry he loves, which was renamed in his honor: the Metropolitan Alexios Diakonia Retreat Center. Among our first Metropolitan's many accomplishments, the DRC is a living testament to his vision, faith, and tireless dedication to nurturing the spiritual lives of generations, young and old alike, through the beauty of God's natural creation.

The crown jewel of His Eminence's vision for the DRC is a place of worship dedicated to our Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. His Eminence understood that that dedication of this church to the Panagia Vimatarissa--the patron of his Athonite spiritual home, Vatopedi, would forever bond generations to their DRC. Already, we have seen the first fruits of His Eminence's dream, as our St. Stephen's Campers worship in the Chapel, and where couples have wed, or have had their children baptized.

By supporting His Eminence's joyful dream to see the completion of the Panagia Chapel in the very near future, we not only express our love and gratitude for his many years of tireless service, but we also help ensure that this ministry continues to bear fruit in the lives of countless faithful.

For this reason, I challenge each community, each family, and each faithful individual to do their part and demonstrate their love for His Eminence, by showing their support for his vision. Let us work to complete the mission he faithfully began by raising the \$500,000 we are lacking to complete the Panagia Chapel. With God's help—and the unwavering support of our Metropolis family, parishes, and clergy—we will fulfill this sacred task and complete the legacy of our beloved retired Metropolitan Alexios.

To that end, please note the following sponsorship opportunities that will ensure our families and parishes can contribute as they are able:

Patron
\$1,000

Silver
\$2,500

Gold
\$5,000

Benefactor
\$10,000

Grand Benefactor
\$25,000

I pray that your Metropolis can count on the participation of all our parishes to honor the work and the far-reaching vision of our first Metropolitan.

In the love and service of our Lord



+Metropolitan Sevastianos of Atlanta



His Eminence
Sevastianos, Metropolitan of Atlanta
requests the pleasure of your company
at the Twenty Eighth Annual

Archangel Michael
F E A S T & H O N O R S

Saturday/Sunday
November 8-9, 2025
Atlanta, Georgia

Please join us in celebrating the Patron
Saint of our Metropolis and the lives of
all honorees chosen by their respective
Parishes to receive this Honor
for the year 2025.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2025

5:00 PM

Great Vespers

*Metropolis Cathedral of the Annunciation
Atlanta, Georgia*

7:00 PM

The Archangel Michael Honors Banquet and Program

*The Kartos Ballroom
Thalia N. Carlos Hellenic Center
Metropolis Cathedral of the Annunciation
(Reception beginning at 6:00 PM)
Reservations must be booked by October 17, 2025
Reservations can be made online only
www.atlmetropolisevents.org*

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2025

9:30 AM

Archangel Michael Honors Archieratical Divine Liturgy

*Metropolis Cathedral of the Annunciation
Atlanta, Georgia
Photo immediately after Divine Liturgy of all Honorees
Fellowship Following - Carlos Hall*

Accommodations at: Atlanta Marriott Northeast/Emory Area

*2000 Century Boulevard, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30345
404-325-0000*

*Special Group Rate:
\$149.00 booked by October 17, 2025
"Archangel Michael Weekend 2025"*

**RESERVATIONS CAN BE MADE FOR BANQUET AND HOTEL BY
VISITING: WWW.ATLMETROPOLISEVENTS.ORG**

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

I invite you to prayerfully consider reading the following article I recently received titled *Why Should You Serve on the Parish Council*. Within our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the *Uniform Parish Regulations* affirm the Parish Council as a vital ministry—one

that supports the spiritual, administrative, and communal life of the Church. Serving on the Parish Council is not merely a task or obligation; it is a sacred calling to stewardship, leadership, and service in the Body of Christ.

This ministry is open to all faithful parishioners who feel called to offer their time and talents for the good of our parish. Whether you have served before or are discerning for the first time, I encourage you to read the article and reflect on how God may be inviting you to participate more deeply in the life of the Church. May the Holy Spirit guide your heart as you consider this opportunity to serve Christ and His Church with love, humility, and dedication.

PARISH COUNCIL

Why Should You Serve on the Parish Council?

Fr Jim Kordaris

What will you say when someone offers to nominate you to serve on the parish council? Why would anyone take time to sit through monthly meetings, in addition to the likely committee work that it would entail?

WHY NOT?

It is best to start with the reasons *not* to serve on the parish council. Don't join the parish council to build your resume. Don't join the parish council to network for your business or career. Don't join the parish council because you want your opinions to be heard. We don't serve the Church in order to get something (*it's not about us*). In serving, we give ourselves in service to Jesus Christ and his Church, always pointing to Him and giving glory in all things to Him. We offer our gifts, talents, education, training, and experience to make our local parish a truly welcoming spiritual home for all, leading people to Jesus Christ.

WHY?

What is the purpose of the Church? What is our calling? What is our *Why*? Our purpose in serving the Church comes from the final instructions—the Great Commission—of

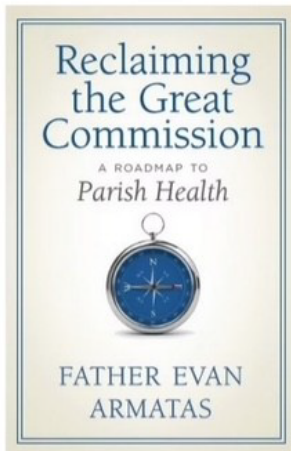
Jesus as He was leaving His disciples at His Ascension. As with anyone's last words, Jesus left his disciples – and us – with the most important thing that He wants us to do: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (MT25:32). Then He promised to be with us forever.

THE CALLING TO SERVE

The calling to serve on the Parish Council is a calling to serve God, His Church and your fellow parishioners. For a few years, you will offer your time in order that others may worship freely. You will welcome, assist, fix, organize, evaluate, implement, and cooperate, in service to your church. Most of all, you will love. You will love God. You will love those with whom you serve. You will love those who enter the doors of your church – those you know and those who may enter for the first time.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY/FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Should the parish council be filled with experienced, long-term members or is a fresh perspective needed? The answer is *both*. We need our long-time members who, along with our priest, provide institutional memory and continuity. We also need new members to bring fresh eyes to our situation and to offer new solutions. This requires mutual respect for what each brings to the parish council.



RESISTANCE TO CHANGE (SABOTAGE?)

Resistance to change is the greatest impediment to church growth. We need to be open to new ideas and allow for change. “That’s the way we’ve always done it” and “We’ve never done it like that before” are not the basis for good decision-making. We have all heard the saying, “doing the same thing and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity.” In the words of Fr Evan Armatas, “We need to change without changing the unchangeable” (*Reclaiming the Great Commission*, Ancient Faith Press). Resistance to change in its worst form can actually be called sabotage.

Rather than resisting change, some may actually sabotage new ways of doing things.

THE CHURCH EXISTS FOR ONE PURPOSE ONLY

Are we in the business of staying in business or are we leading people to Christ? The Church exists to bring people to salvation in Jesus Christ. If we carry out this leadership ministry correctly, engaging people in the life of the church, stewardship will thrive naturally as a result.

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON CHURCH LEADERSHIP

“The most basic task of the Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full for the benefit of all.” St. John Chrysostom is telling us that, as leaders, we need to know our people – their skills, talents, interests and abilities – and engage them in the life of the church. He concludes that only a person who can do this is fit to lead the Church.

SUGGESTED READING:

***Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger** is a book on church leadership that uses the explorers Lewis and Clark as a metaphor for church leadership. Lewis and Clark were looking for a waterway to the Pacific but found nothing but mountains. They found that what lay ahead of them was nothing like what they left behind them. They had to leave behind their canoes and paddles and find new navigational tools. The same is true in church leadership. What lies ahead is very different from what we leave behind us.



***Reclaiming the Great Commission* by Fr Evan Armatas**

In his book on Orthodox Christian parish leadership, Fr Evan Armatas guides parish leaders in re-thinking their role for developing a healthy parish. Fr. Evan reminds us to see our parish with fresh eyes, discerning and removing impediments, while providing opportunities for growth in the faith. Reclaiming the Great Commission is something God does with all of us – clergy and laity – together. Immensely readable, practical, and

inspiring, this book from Fr. Evan guides leaders to create healthy parishes that are engaging, welcoming, serving, teaching, and growing.

CONCLUSION

Article 24, Section 1 of the Parish Regulations states, “To serve on a Parish Council is a ministry and all those who serve are called to represent Christ and the Orthodox Faith to all whom they meet in all aspects of life.” May your ministry be blessed, so that when you have completed your time of service on the parish council, others will be inspired to build upon your excellent work.

Fr Jim Kordaris serves the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America as Director of Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism, and leads the parish of St George in Kingston, New York. Fr Jim has BA and MBA degrees from the University of Minnesota, and received his MDiv from Holy Cross. Prior to attending Holy Cross School of Theology, Fr Jim served the parish of St Mary's (Kimisis) in Minneapolis in many capacities, including Parish Council President, Treasurer, Stewardship Chair, Festival Co-Chair, Bible Study Leader, Camp Counselor and more.

GOA Dept of Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism | Greek Orthodox Archdiocese 8
East Seventy-Ninth Street | New York, NY 10075 US

I also want to take this moment to express my deep gratitude to those who have served the Parish Council in years past, and to those who are currently serving. Our Council consists of nine lay members, each serving three-year terms, alongside myself. Their faithful service, dedication, and spiritual leadership are dear to my heart. I value them immensely as my co-workers in the Vineyard of Christ, laboring together to nurture and guide our parish community. May their example inspire others to consider this ministry with prayerful discernment and joyful commitment. - +Fr. George Tsahakis

