

# The Light To Φως



Holy Apostles Greek  
Orthodox Church  
Loudoun County, VA

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*The bi-monthly newsletter of the Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church*

## A Message from Father George Alexson

### THE "KOIMISIS" (FALLING ASLEEP) OF THE THEOTOKOS



In the sacred books of our Orthodox Church, the Koimisis of the Theotokos, celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, is announced with these words: "On August 15 we commemorate the august Translation of our most glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary." The Synaxarion describes the circumstances surrounding the "Metastasis" (translation) of the body of the Virgin Mary, since no mention is made of this event in the Holy Gospels.

According to tradition, when our Lord wanted His mother to join Him in His Father's Kingdom, He sent the Archangel Gabriel three days prior, to announce to Mary that she would be taken from this passing life to life eternal. When the Theotokos heard this announcement she rejoiced greatly and, as was her custom, went to pray on the Mount of Olives. Thus began her preparations for life eternal.

As we note in the icon of the Koimisis, the Theotokos is surrounded by the Apostles and other faithful, while her soul, in the form of an infant, is being taken above by Christ Himself. The Apostles buried her sacred body with pious devotion in the Garden of Gethsemane. The only Apostle not present for her burial was Thomas. When he arrived in Jerusalem three days later, saddened greatly by his absence, the others took him to Gethsemane, to reverence the body of the Theotokos. It was then that they were astonished to find her tomb empty, with only the grave clothes left behind, as happened in her Son's empty tomb. The Apostles knelt and prayed at the empty tomb of our Panagia with great reverence, acknowledging that she had been "translated" from the tomb and taken up into heaven.

This "utterly unknowable" mystery (as St. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite puts it) of the alteration and incorruptibility of the Virgin's body, cannot be comprehended by us, the faithful, without the divine ray of mystical contemplation, which alone can make us capable of spiritual introspection. When thus enlightened, we are made to see not only the change and incorruptibility of the blessed Virgin's body, but that the bodies of all Christians, who aspire to live a holy life, will succeed in obtaining "theosis," which is the supreme vocation of every believer, the goal and end of every spiritually oriented human being.

For this reason, the Church sets aside the fourteen days of preparation for the celebration of the Koimisis, as days of strict fasting and prayer. With the skill of fasting, we are able to control not only what we eat but, more importantly, the passions that torment us and alienate us from purity and a life in Christ. As St. Nicodemus the Athonite reminds us, "let us create in our memory and in our heart a reservoir and dwelling place for the virtues practiced by the Theotokos. How can we achieve this? Is not the Theotokos a Virgin, a lover of virginity, purity, and chaste? Certainly! So too must we strive to imitate her in these virtues..." The art of fasting is a discipline that supports us in the restoration of our ability to exercise our free will in humble obedience to the commandments of God. Through fasting we are able to renew our baptismal purity essential for holiness, perfection, and our restoration and translation from this life to the Kingdom of heaven. Let us meet these days of preparation for the great feast of the Koimisis with thoughtfulness and pray, "Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Savior, save us.!"

Fr. George

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### Highlights:

- Annual Parish Picnic  
Sat. August 26, 12:00-3:00pm, Ashburn Farm Windmill Pavilion.  
Online sign-up and RSVP will be emailed to parishioners.





## A Message from Father George Alexson cont..

Beloved Parishioners and Friends,

On the eve of our Parish Nameday, the first in the history of our church, Great Vespers was celebrated by Fr. Constantine Pavlakos (Vicar and representative of His Eminence, Metropolitan Evangelos), Fr. Michael Kontogiorgis, Fr. Milan Sturgis, Fr. Gregory Gilbert, and our Presiding Priest, Fr. George. We were blessed with a choir of chanters under the direction of Fr. Gregory, whose beautiful chanting filled us with spiritual joy. Our faithful parishioners were joined in our celebrations by numerous visitors from sister parishes. The artoklasia for the service was prepared by Elpida Skuce; the icon of the Holy Apostles was decorated by Irene and Dwaine Thomas. The following day, Orthros and Divine Liturgy were celebrated by Fr. George and Fr. Michael with Fr. Gregory leading the chanters. With hearts filled with sacred joy and gladness, we glorify the Holy Apostles for their intercessions on behalf of our community and people. May we continue to grow and thrive with the blessing of our Lord, in whose Name we live and carry on this sacred mission.



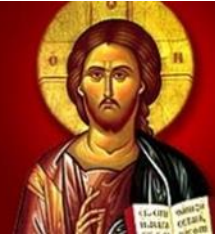
### A NOTE OF HEARTFELT THANKS

Presvytera Joanna and I extend to all our parishioners and friends our heartfelt gratitude for your prayers and assistance during her recent accident. We were deeply moved by your countless expressions of love, concern and kindness. By the grace of God, Pres. Joanna is recovering gradually and should be able soon to resume normal activities. Truly, when we "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2), their weight is so manifestly lightened that we hardly notice them. May our Lord reward you all with good health and life and, remembering your Christ-like compassion, give you joy and peace.

Fr. George and Pres. Joanna



# Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church



## Message from the Parish Council President

Another 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration has come and gone, and I pray that everyone had a safe and joyous holiday. This is the time of year when many will be traveling to various destinations for vacation, and the proverbial “Dog Days of Summer” are upon us! So, I thought I would take a moment for a quick *State of the Parish* update and hopefully provide you with a few tidbits to look forward to upon your return.

Sadly, His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos fell ill prior to his scheduled visit for our first Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church Name Day, and he was unable to attend. Please keep His Eminence in your thoughts and prayers.

Our church had another successful Vacation Church Camp in June. This year’s co-directors, Denise Lansdell and Asha Ioanou along with all of the teachers and volunteers, did an amazing job. They helped our youth learn about the Virgin Mary, our Orthodox faith and the IOCC mission, while having fun and making new friends. A special thanks to Father George for leading the children in a daily worship lesson.

Truth be told, our little Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church is doing exceedingly well. Not only has His Eminence blessed with a new name, but we now also have beautiful new signage to show the world who we are!

On the financial side, the total Stewardship collected through June is up just over 50% from the same period last year, and we have added over \$240,000 cash to our Building Fund since June, 2016. These are awesome numbers and we are truly humbled and so very thankful to our dedicated parishioners and all those who continue to support our beloved Holy Apostles.

As a result of some other very generous donations to our Altar Fund, Father George was able to order several pieces of exquisite furniture for our church to include a new Epitaphios, a candle stand, two icon stands and a Chanter’s music stand. All are being hand carved in Greece by the same company that provided similar items to St. Demetrios in Williamsburg, VA. We anticipate their safe arrival in September or early October.

Lastly, as you may have read in the recent message from our new Future Planning Committee Chairman, Tom Skuce, there are many exciting things coming our way from the reorganized FPC. Once again, our dedicated and amazing parishioners are offering up their time and talent to help grow our beautiful church. Thank you “Team Tom”, et al. Our future is bright indeed, as the good Lord, Jesus Christ guides us on our journey.

I pray that everyone has a safe and blessed Summer vacation. God willing, we will all be together again in September.

With Gratitude in Christ,

Paul Orphanides  
Parish Council President  
[paulo@novahometeam.com](mailto:paulo@novahometeam.com)



## Weekday Liturgical Schedule for August, 2017

<b>August 1</b>	<b>Beginning of Dormition Fast (strict fast)</b> 7:00 PM, Paraklesis to the Theotokos
<b>August 2</b>	7:00 PM, Paraklesis to the Theotokos
<b>August 4</b>	7:00 PM, Paraklesis to the Theotokos
<b>August 7</b>	7:00 PM, Paraklesis to the Theotokos
<b>August 9</b>	7:00 PM, Paraklesis to the Theotokos
<b>August 11</b>	7:00 PM, Paraklesis to the Theotokos
<b>August 14</b>	7:00 PM, Great Vespers for Dormition
<b>August 15</b>	<b>Koimisis (Dormition) of the Theotokos</b> 8:15 AM, Orthros; 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy
<b>August 29</b>	<b>Beheading of St. John the Baptist (strict fast)</b> 8:15 AM, Orthros; 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy





## Stewardship

My Fellow Parishioners,

I hope you are all enjoying a relaxing and lazy summer...do those exist anymore? Here's to at least some enjoyable family fun and travels during the hot summer months.

Even though things slow down this time of year, HAGOC and your Stewardship Committee do not take a break! We just completed an incredibly successful Vacation Bible School and continue to plan for our Parish Picnic.

As always, it is the stewardship and devoted support of our parishioners that allow our church not only to operate, but to plan and grow every year through the grace of God. I encourage you to ensure you have made your stewardship pledge. If you have not, please use the pledge card below, or simply send your pledge information directly to me by email.

Your Stewardship Committee's next big event is the Annual Parish Picnic scheduled for Saturday, August 26th, 12-3pm at the Ashburn Farm Windmill Pavilion. We hope to see you there!!

I thank you for your generosity, support and faith.

In God's Service,

Ron Baldinger

Chair, Stewardship Committee

[ron.baldinger@gmail.com](mailto:ron.baldinger@gmail.com)

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### 2017 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE (ALL PLEDGES JANUARY- DECEMBER 2017)

#### HOLY APOSTLES GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

In faith, prayer and sacrifice, my family and I wish to share in the support and work of the Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church. We would like to pledge the amount of

\$\_\_\_\_\_ for the year 2017 (through December 2017)

**You may pay via cash, check or online using PayPal at [www.holyapostlesgreekorthodox.org](http://www.holyapostlesgreekorthodox.org)**

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Your pledge is **strictly confidential**.



## Vacation Church Camp

Glory be to God! Our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Vacation Church Camp 2017 was, once again, a great success!

This year we had 29 campers, 22 helpers and several fantastic teachers! We were fortunate to have extra help prior to camp beginning with craft prep work and decorating the hall and classrooms so that everything was transformed into the feeling we were all traveling on the "Ark of Salvation". We learned about the four feasts of the Theotokos: Her Nativity, The Entrance into the Temple, the Annunciation, and her Dormition. Camp took place on June 12-16 from 9:30am – 12:30pm. As an added treat we had awesome Holy Apostles T-shirts that the directors decorated for each and every participant and helper!

The children started off with a worship service and lesson with Father George. Following this, they had a lesson, craft time, and music. Recess was held outside with a different game each day. Afterward, they all gathered in the sanctuary for the Missions Moment.



This year we decided to focus our Missions Moment on several countries in which the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) helps families in need. We asked campers to bring in various health and hygiene kit items. These items included such things as toothbrushes, soaps, bandaids, hand towels etc. We had a goal of creating 10 kits to send to these various countries in need. We were delighted to witness the excitement our youth had to help others. We surpassed our goal and collected 52 complete kits. The campers also donated candle money to help out the church every morning as well. We are so very proud of our Holy Apostles youth!

We ended the day with a snack and trivia "game show" to review what we learned about our Orthodox faith, facts about the Theotokos, and the feast days of the week. On Friday, all the activities, lessons and music culminated into a wonderful program. The children recited a Bible Verse, they also sang songs and liturgical hymns. Father blessed all the icons of the Sweet-kissing icons that all campers made and decorated during the week. The campers brought home many fun crafts (Ark Spinners, wind-socks, a hand-made medalion of the Theotokos). We hope that the children learned more about their Orthodox faith and created memories that will last forever. Thank you to everyone who helped with VCC this year!

Denise and Asha  
VCC Camp Directors







## Vacation Church Camp cont..



Vacation Church Camp Activities: Arts and crafts, music, learning and fun!

# Barakat

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## Sunday School, Greek School and Ellinomatheia Graduation

Congratulations to our kids on their graduation!



### Save the Date!

Annual Holy Apostles Parish Picnic  
Saturday, Aug. 26  
12:00-3:00  
Ashburn Farm Windmill Pavilion

Organized by the Stewardship Committee.  
All parishioners are invited! An online signup and RSVP will be emailed closer to the date.





## GOYA

GOYA wishes you a happy and safe summer!

We are so blessed to have had a productive and successful year! We thank all the GOYAns for their dedication and commitment to serve our Lord, His church and its community. Obviously, our deepest gratitude goes to the GOYA parents for their amazing support of all our events and to our wonderful parishioners for their encouragement and praise of our endeavors. Thanks to you all, the GOYAns were able to raise over \$2,300.00 this year through different fundraising efforts! A large portion of this money was donated to the Church Building Fund and the rest was donated to Teen Cancer America, Holy Protection Monastery (Agia Skepi) in Pennsylvania, American Diabetes Association and IOCC.



GOYAns honoring Kyria Angeliki on Mother's Day



The blessing of Graduating High School Seniors

The GOYAns honored Kyria Angeliki Maoury on the occasion of Mother's Day by offering her a symbolic handmade icon. She has always been an amazing supporter of the GOYAns and their events. She opened her home for GOYA end of the year parties and elections for many years.

On Father's Day, the GOYAns honored Deacon Harry by offering him an icon from the holy land in Jerusalem. Deacon Harry is an amazing role model for all of us and especially for our youth. He has always been there for our GOYAns to guide them, offer advice, straighten them up when needed, offer a shoulder to cry on, and to humor them with his natural wit. Thank you, Deacon Harry, for all that you do! As always, the GOYAns offered a symbolic gift to Father George on Father's Day and thanked him for his continued support of all GOYA events.

Father George offered blessings to graduating high school seniors Yanni Kouiroukidis, Angelo Dacey, Annamaria Kendrat and Mike Baldinger. We wish them all the very best as they start their new journey and hope to see them at church when they are home from college.

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, the GOYAns held their end of the year celebration and elections in Great Falls in Fairfax, Virginia. We barbequed and ate together. We thank all former GOYA Officers and wished the new officers the best of luck for 2017-2018. Here are the new officers:

**Presidents:** Lizzie Emch & Luke Kendrat

**Vice President:** Christina Kendrat

**Secretary:** Alexandros Kouiroukidis

**Treasurer:** Paris Economou

**Historian:** Millie Morris

**Public Relations:** Maria Mantalvanos

We wish all our wonderful parishioners a fantastic summer. May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and your family with good health and peace of mind and may the Panagia protect us all and light up our youth's path always.

With much love and gratitude,

Sofia Kouiroukidis

[KKouirouk@gmail.com](mailto:KKouirouk@gmail.com)





## GOYA cont..



GOYAns offering a symbolic gift on Father's Day



GOYAns preparing Mother's Day gifts



End of the year party and elections at Great Falls Park

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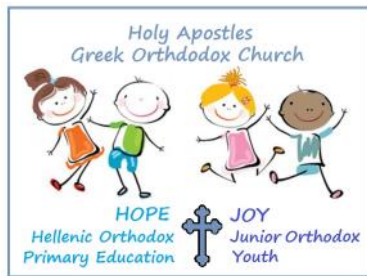
## Hope and Joy

We closed out the 2016-2017 school year with Family Game Night: we invited the children and their families to come to church for our regular monthly meeting with a board game to share and play together. We provided yummy pizza for dinner, and we talked about our plans for the summer season.

This year, through Hope & Joy, our children accomplished a lot: donating to the less fortunate, giving ministry to the needful in our community, and learning about the Orthodox faith (to name just a few things). They should be proud of these accomplishments (we certainly are!), and we truly hope they had fun, made friends, and grew in their faith along the way. We look forward to reconnecting after summer once school is back in session for a brand-new year of activities and adventures.

Wishing you His greatest blessings across the summer months,  
Ava and Ashley

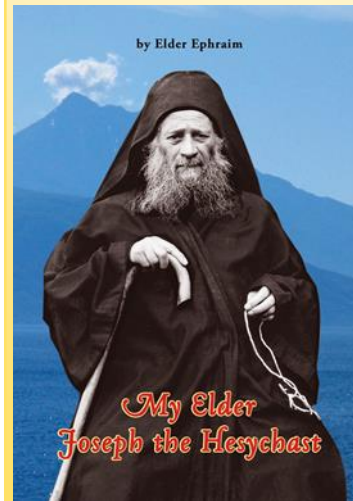
**Ashley Joiner** ([ashleydjoiner@gmail.com](mailto:ashleydjoiner@gmail.com))  
& **Ava Walter** ([avamwalter@gmail.com](mailto:avamwalter@gmail.com))



## Orthodox Book Club

Currently reading *My Elder Joseph the Hesychast* by *Elder Ephraim*.

Our Orthodox Bookclub Meetings will resume in September. We are taking in consideration who is traveling throughout the summer. Be on the lookout for our next meeting date in the church bulletin. Have a happy and



safe summer! Please let Sofia Kouiroukidis know by contacting her at [kkouirouk@gmail.com](mailto:kkouirouk@gmail.com) if you are interested to join our spiritual discussions and so that you can be notified of any changes.

Sincerely,  
Sofia Kouiroukidis

## Philoptochos

Our Holy Apostles church celebrated its first Name Day. We were honored to have many local priests from visiting parishes in Virginia and Maryland join us for the Vesper Service on June 29<sup>th</sup>. We had a small and lovely reception for all following the service. Thank you to everyone who brought delicious items to share.

We collected \$550 in gift cards to donate to the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter. Thanks to everyone for their generosity. LAWS is ever so grateful for the help we can provide by donating these gift cards. Every little bit helps women and children as they attempt to make a fresh start under difficult circumstances.

It was nice to see some new faces at our Ladies Nights in May and June. It was fun sharing time together and we look forward to more opportunities in the future. We are already in the process of gearing up for our fall activities.

Are you a Philoptochos member? Philoptochos "friend of the poor" continues to actively support our church with time and talent. Not only do we support Holy Apostles, but we support projects locally, nationally and globally. Membership is renewable annually and everyone is invited to join. You can learn about our National Philoptochos by visiting [www.Philoptochos.org](http://www.Philoptochos.org).

Stop by our bookstore. You can see and read all the amazing things available to educate, enhance and reinforce our Orthodox Faith.

Enjoy the rest of summer!

Alexis Cleveland

[apcphiloptochos@gmail.com](mailto:apcphiloptochos@gmail.com)



Clue: nativity, temple, pray, children, dormition, lord, music, games, kids - THEOTOKOS



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## AHEPA CHAPTER 542 NEWS & NOTES

Our Chapter, founded by members of our wonderful Holy Apostles parish, had a very active Spring and at the same time, helped the community in so many ways. Here's a glimpse:

On **May 21**, we joined over 1,000 Chapters and over 60,000 AHEPANS across North America to celebrate AHEPA Sunday. As one of the fastest growing Chapters in the United States, we were honored to recognize key people within our great parish community for their spectacular accomplishments by awarding **over \$5,000** and so much more. Scholarships were awarded to deserving *High School Seniors*, awards to qualifying *High School Juniors*, and medals to exceptional *Greek School* students. And, with AHEPA Chapters having helped *build, remodel, & enhance churches* for decades by raising **millions**, we were blessed to have been able to make a contribution to the HOLY APOSTLES BUILDING FUND, dedicating the *memorial service* to deceased AHEPANS, & hosting the *coffee hour*.



On **May 27**, we joined several chapters from across the Washington DC metro to participate in the 70 year old tradition to *lay wreaths* at *Arlington Cemetery* at **over 600** fallen AHEPANS gravesites. With **nearly half** of all the participants hailing **from our Chapter**, it was a humbling experience for everyone. Afterwards, several members and their families attended the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We rounded out this truly honorable experience by attending a special luncheon together at City Diner in Falls Church. Earlier that week, our own **Ron Baldinger** represented the Chapter at the national level by participating in the solemn wreath laying ceremony, also at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

On **June 9 & 10**, the Chapter was well represented and picked up 2 great awards at the District Convention in Charlotte. **Pete Margaros** was named Chapter *Secretary of the Year* and **Mike Hadjimichael** earned the *Treasurer of the Year* distinction.

On **June 12** at the Chapter monthly meeting, the **2017-18 Leadership Team** elections were held. Please congratulate the following people who will represent AHEPA in the coming year.

### OFFICERS

*President:* Pete Margaros  
*Vice President:* Chad Burke  
*Secretary:* Dave Dorn  
*Treasurer:* Alex Kangelaris

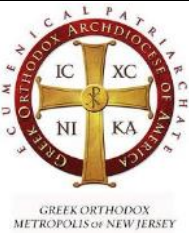
### BOARD OF GOVERNORS

*Dean Economou, Chair*  
*Vasili Fotopoulos*  
*Bill Caras*  
*Mike Hadjimichael*

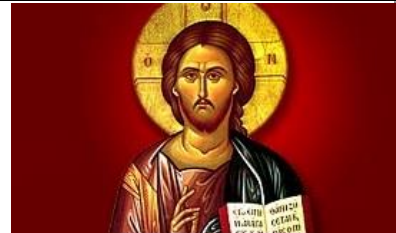
On **June 17**, the Chapter hosted the annual SUMMER SOCIAL. **Over 50 people** attended a very special event which honored outgoing President, **Dean Economou** and the rest of the Leadership Team. "It was great to spend time with many amazing people and enjoy the fellowship we shared together," said Kiki Georges.



We look forward to kicking off a new year in September so stay tuned as there are lots of new things coming. If you haven't checked us out lately, there's a lot happening. Visit us at [www.ahepa542.org](http://www.ahepa542.org) to learn more about our dynamic Chapter and apply today. You can also follow us on **Facebook** and **google+**.



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