

## CHURCH STAFF

- Parish Priest: Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- Parish Council President: Jim (Demetrios) Katsikitis
- Philoptochos President: Eleni Giakoumopoulos
- Sunday School Directors: Susu Saba & Peli Galiti
- Greek School: Ilektra Kolokouri
- Choir Director: George Tzougros



# The Message

SEPTEMBER 2020

## AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH

As another Ecclesiastical New Year dawns, we celebrate one of the Church's holiest days, the Elevation of the Holy Cross (September 14). Many Orthodox Christians hold Saint Helen in a high regard. Saint Helen, played an instrumental role in the Elevation of the Holy Cross. She took it upon herself at a very advanced age to travel to the Holy Land where she discovered many of the sites we hold as Holy today.

Among her discoveries were the True Cross, and the tomb of our Lord. Saint Helen never let anything get in the way of her service to the church, and can serve as an example to all of us in how to dedicate our lives to Christ. We can all ask ourselves, are we doing what we can for Christ? Are we offering God both our time and resources in proportion to our means? Many look at the church and believe the only thing they can offer is money. While money is needed, our time is equally valuable to the church.

There are numerous opportunities to serve Christ through service, and everyone is unique in what they can offer. Our Church cannot flourish without volunteers and is always looking for people with good intentions. For one, Christ calls us to be an example to our youth, yet many parishes in our Archdiocese are lacking committed youth workers. As a result, we find some of our youth slipping through the cracks. In many churches we find a lackluster attitude about Sunday School. Clergy often find themselves having to go out to recruit people to teach. Fortunately, those that do volunteer their time almost always make wonderful teachers and find the experience rewarding.

But, we need to ask ourselves; do we want our children going off to college with little to no understanding of their faith? Yet, without committed youth workers and the resulting youth programs, that is likely to happen. In the college years, young adults find themselves bombarded by false teachings and people telling them things contrary to their faith; without a firm foundation and knowledge of their faith, these young people lack the tools to fight off the assaults. Some of these young people therefore decide to ignore their faith, because they lack the knowledge to defend it. Youth work is certainly not for everyone, but we all have talents that we can offer to God. Therefore, let us all keep the example of Saint Helen before us and not wait to be asked to help the Church with something, but let's take the initiative to come out and volunteer to help. God Bless!

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+Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos

# What wondrous gifts our God has given us!

## Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

September 14

+ In the 20th year of his reign (326), the Emperor

Constantine sent his mother, the pious empress St. Helen, to Jerusalem to find the site of Christ's Holy Sepulchre and Holy Cross.

+ Relying upon the oral tradition of the faithful, St. Helen found the precious Cross together with the two crosses of the thieves

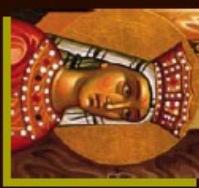
crucified with our Lord.

+ Fragrant, flowering basil, the flower of royalty, indicated where the Cross was to be found.

+ Patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem witnessed as a dying woman was healed by venerating the Holy Cross, and as a man was raised from the dead by the touch of the Holy Cross.

+ He is shown reverently lifting the Most Holy Cross for all to see and venerate.

+ We celebrate this discovery every year as we praise God Who used an instrument of shame and torture to overcome death and bring salvation and eternal life.



+ In the background of the icon is a structure that represents the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem.

+ This church was constructed and dedicated by Emperor Constantine on the holy sites of Jerusalem.

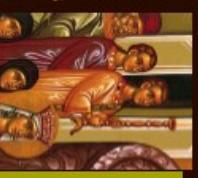
+ Those who are shown giving veneration to the Holy Cross include a broad cross-section of the faithful from Jerusalem.

+ Deacons hold candlesticks to each side of the Holy Cross.

+ A second bishop can be identified by the crosses on his vestments.

+ Two chanters or readers stand in the foreground, wearing pointed hats that were traditional for them at the time.

+ Lay people in various garments, as well as monastics in black veils, are among the many who come to reverence the Precious and Life-Saving Cross.



## What can we give back?

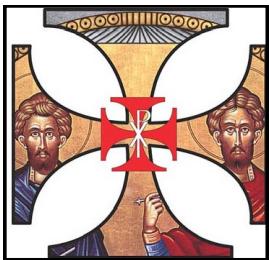


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Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
Office of Parish Development  
[www.development.goarch.org](http://www.development.goarch.org)

(847)825-1432

## September 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1  7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	2 Strict Fast  6:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class	3	4	5
6  13 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew 8:45 a.m. Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	7  Nativity of the Theotokos  9:00 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy	8  Strict Fast  Virtual National Clergy/Laity Congress  No Adult Religious Education this week due to Clergy Laity	9  Virtual National Clergy/Laity Congress	10	11 Strict Fast	12
13  Sunday before Holy Cross 8:45 a.m. Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy  First day of Sunday School beginning at 12:30 p.m. on Zoom.	14 Strict Fast  Elevation of the Holy Cross  9:00 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy with procession of the Cross	15	16 Strict Fast  6:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class	17	18 Strict Fast	19 Greek School Begins Virtually TBD
20  Sunday after Holy Cross 8:45 a.m. Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy  12:30 p.m. Sunday School	21	22	23 Strict Fast  Conception of Saint John the Baptist  9:00 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy  6:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class	24	25 Strict Fast	26 Greek School TBD
27  1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Luke 8:45 a.m. Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy  12:30 p.m. Sunday School	28	29	30 Strict Fast  6:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class			



# FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

**President, Eleni Giakoumopoulos, [lenagiak@gmail.com](mailto:lenagiak@gmail.com)  
608-556-8186**

**Vice President: Maria Molzahn, Secretary: Sue Soloninka, Treasurer: Maria Heide,  
Asst. Treasurer: Jenny Glatch, Corresponding Secretary: Nancy Briamis, Asst. Corresponding Secretary: Kathie Fafalios**

Our sincere wishes for you and your loved ones to be healthy and safe during this challenging time. Thank you for all your support in the work we do. We are #PhiloStrong because of the support of this amazing community!!

## **CHAPTER ACTIVITIES:**

### **CHAPTER MEETINGS:**

All Chapter and Board meetings will be conducted virtually. All chapter members look for calendar invites to the meetings in early September. Contact Lena G ([lenagiak@gmail.com](mailto:lenagiak@gmail.com)) if you have any questions.

### **PHILOPTOCHOS VIRTUAL BAKE SALE:**

Thank you to all members of the church community who purchased items online for the Mini Bake Sale. Pick up of items ran smoothly on August 29-30. We received a small number of orders, but this mini-bake sale was a great trial run for us.

We are excited to offer this opportunity to our AGOC family and the greater community again in November for our chapter's fall fundraiser: Baklava Plus Sale.

Thank you to Maria Heide, Maria Molzahn, Lainey Skoumbouris, Athena Daniolos, Nancy Briamis, Sue Soloninka and John Soloninka and Lena G who helped with the bake sale (from online and website administration, to delivery to packaging and clean up).

More information coming soon in our next newsletter for the November fundraiser.

### **MASKs MATTER:**

The chapter has become involved in the Metropolis humanitarian initiative Masks Matter. The goal for the Metropolis is to sew and distribute 10,000 masks by December 31 to non- first responders (ie. caregivers, other hospital workers, grocery store clerks, and parishioners). If anyone is interested in becoming involved, you may contact Nancy Briamis ([nbriamis@gmail.com](mailto:nbriamis@gmail.com)).

## **NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS:**

The 2020 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention was held virtually on August 21-22, 2020. Lena Giakoumopoulos and Maria Molzahn participated for our chapter, along with more than 550 delegates and observers.

It's truly inspirational to know that we are part of a network of 25,000 women across the country in more than 400 chapters. And even more inspiring is to see all the major accomplishments/work being done. In her President's Report, Maria Logus stated that \$4,000,000 in grants have been distributed since 2018.

Other committee reports were provided on the Emergency Fund, Public Relations team, Social Services team, Operation Classroom, and Young Philanthropists.

## **FEED THE HUNGRY:**

Our National President Maria Logus, seeing the tremendous success of our previous goals, had set a goal to reach 1.5 million meals from July 2018 until the next Biennial Convention in 2020. During the recent convention, it was announced that all the chapters from around the country have surpassed this and the total meals served reached **2,161,073!!!**

The Metropolis of Chicago topped all the other Metropolises nationwide to be NUMBER ONE in serving the MOST MEALS in Feed the Hungry Program as announced at the 2020 Biennial National Convention. Our chapter, along with all the other in the Metropolis of Chicago served/prepared **562,839** total number of meals from 7/1/2018 to 7/31/2020.

## **METROPOLIS:**

There are 58 parishes in the Metropolis of Chicago. If you wish to contribute directly to the Metropolis of Chicago COVID-19 Parish Relief Fund, you can do so online, send a check or via text message. More information is available here: <https://chicago.goarch.org/donate>.

**River Food Pantry - Nancy Briamis, nbriamis@gmail.com**

There are many ways you can support The River Food Pantry.

**FOOD:** Each week, The River serves over 1,000 Dane County families with free groceries, personal care items, and meals. The River needs your help to keep the shelves stocked with a variety of items.

**FUNDS:** Over 95 cents of every dollar you give to The River goes directly to the people we serve. We spend your donation on food and services for clients and on costs to keep the pantry running, such as rent, utilities, and vehicles. We take pride in keeping our costs low and acting as good stewards of your donations on behalf of our thousands of clients.

**COMMUNITY PARTNER:** Major investments from foundations and corporate sponsors have enabled The River Food Pantry to continue to provide Dane County residents struggling to put food on their table a safe and welcoming place.

# **Sunday School**

**Co-Directors: Seham Akkawi, [sususaba@yahoo.com](mailto:sususaba@yahoo.com),**

**Peli Galiti, [Co-pegaliti@gmail.com](mailto:Co-pegaliti@gmail.com),**

**Spiritual Advisor: Fr. Christodoulos, [frchristos@gmail.com](mailto:frchristos@gmail.com)**

As many of you know the Sunday School this year will begin Virtually on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. We want to make this experience good for all our Students and their parents. This is why we ask all parents of children in Sunday School to fill out the survey and registration link. We are trying to see what times work best for all our parents so we can utilize this for all our Sunday School families.

In the survey it is asking a few basic questions about times and the practical aspects of all our families as well as a form to be able to register your children for Sunday School. So please fill out the form and register your children to save us the time of having to call to get everyone registered.

Here is the link for the survey and registration. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RH3NVX3>

You can find us on facebook: [www.facebook.com/agocwi.SpiritualLearningCntr/](https://www.facebook.com/agocwi.SpiritualLearningCntr/) and our temporary webpage: <https://sites.google.com/site/assumptiongocsundayschool/home>

## **GREEK SCHOOL**

**Elektra Kolokouri, [ilektra.kol@gmail.com](mailto:ilektra.kol@gmail.com)**

Greek school will hold zoom lessons every Saturday starting September 19th, time TBD. Students who would like to enroll please contact me via email.

If you need information about Greek school please e-mail me or talk to me at church.

## **CHURCH WEBSITE**

**Lainey Skoumbouris, [laney0220@yahoo.com](mailto:laney0220@yahoo.com)**

The church website is set-up for private login to access the monthly newsletters and are meant for Church members only, not the public. Church members can read the newsletter on the website, but you must create an account before you can view it. Log onto the website and click on "Newsletter" on the side-bar <http://www.agocwi.org/registration-required/>, or "login" on the main menu <http://www.agocwi.org/login/>; it will direct you to sign up. If you need help, have questions or something isn't working in the registration contact me.

## **Assumption Cookbook Project**

In the meantime, it seems prudent for us to develop alternate fundraising plans. As a parish community, we can use this crisis as an opportunity and strategically pause to assess how else we can celebrate our shared cultures as Orthodox Christians who find a spiritual home in the Greek Orthodox Church. In that spirit, please help us to create an Assumption cookbook to share stories and bits of our traditions. This will allow our shared and unique cultures and histories to live on, and can be a way we can raise money for the church without social gathering. Here is how you can help: Please start gathering your recipes, your stories, and your photos. In the coming weeks, we will put together a cookbook committee. If you are interested in joining this committee, please let Maria Schirmer Devitt know (especially if you have graphic design or publishing experience).

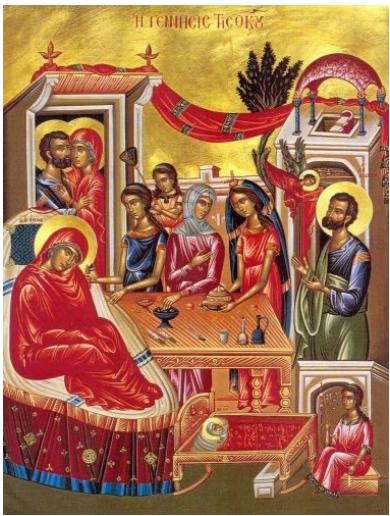
## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **J and M Home Helpers**

**AGOC's handymen, John and Mike, will do minor home repairs and maintenance for \$25/hour, with the money for their work being donated to the church.**



**Call Mike at (608) 516-9188 and John at (608) 575-1014 today!**



**THE NATIVITY OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE MOTHER OF GOD & EVER-VIRGIN MARY:** The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary: The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born at a time when people had reached such a degree of moral decay that it seemed altogether impossible to restore them. People often said that God must come into the world to restore faith and not permit the ruin of mankind.

The Son of God chose to take on human nature for the salvation of mankind, and chose as His Mother the All-Pure Virgin Mary, who alone was worthy to give birth to the Source of purity and holiness.

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary is celebrated by the Church as a day of universal joy. Within the context of the Old and the New Testaments, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was born on this radiant day, having been chosen before the ages by Divine Providence to bring about the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. She is revealed as the Mother of the Savior of the World, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born in the small city of Galilee, Nazareth. Her parents were Righteous Joachim of the tribe of the Prophet-King David, and Anna from the tribe of the First Priest Aaron. The couple was without child, since Saint Anna was barren.

Having reached old age, Joachim and Anna did not lose hope in God's mercy. They had strong faith that for God everything is possible, and that He would be able to overcome the barrenness of Anna even in her old age, as He had once overcame the barrenness of Sarah, spouse of the Patriarch Abraham. Saints Joachim and Anna vowed to dedicate the child which the Lord might give them, to the service of God in the Temple.

Childlessness was considered among the Hebrew nation as a Divine punishment for sin, and therefore the righteous Saints Joachim and Anna had to endure abuse from their own countrymen. On one of the feast-days at the Temple in Jerusalem the elderly Joachim brought his sacrifice to offer to God, but the High Priest would not accept it, considering him to be unworthy since he was childless.

Saint Joachim in deep grief went into the wilderness, and there he prayed with tears to the Lord for a child. Saint Anna wept bitterly when she learned what had happened at the Jerusalem Temple. Never once did she complain against the Lord, but rather she prayed to ask God's mercy on her family.

The Lord fulfilled her petitions when the pious couple had attained to extreme old age and prepared themselves by virtuous life for a sublime calling: to be the parents of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the future Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Archangel Gabriel brought Joachim and Anna the joyous message that their prayers were heard by God, and of them would be born a most blessed daughter Mary, through Whom would come the Salvation of all the World.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary surpassed in purity and virtue not only all mankind, but also the angels. She was manifest as the living Temple of God, so the Church sings in its festal hymns: "the East Gate... bringing Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls" (2nd Stikhera on "Lord, I Have Cried", Tone 6).

The Nativity of the Theotokos marks the change of the times when the great and comforting promises of God for the salvation of the human race from slavery to the devil are about to be fulfilled. This event has brought to earth the grace of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of Truth, piety, virtue and everlasting life. The Theotokos is revealed to all of us by grace as a merciful Intercessor and Mother, to Whom we have recourse with filial devotion.



## THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE PRECIOUS & LIFE-GIVING CROSS:

**CROSS:** The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross of the Lord: The pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind. The Emperor Hadrian (117-138) gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Lord, and to build a temple of the pagan goddess Venus and a statue of Jupiter.

Pagans gathered at this place and offered sacrifice to idols there. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian sacred remains, the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This took place under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) after his victory in the year 312 over Maxentius, ruler of the Western part of the Roman empire, and over Licinius, ruler of its Eastern part. In the year 323 Constantine became the sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire.

In 313 he had issued the Edict of Milan, by which the Christian religion was legalized and the persecutions against Christians in the Western half of the empire were stopped. The ruler Licinius, although he had signed the Edict of Milan to oblige Constantine, still fanatically continued the persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the 313 Edict of toleration extend also to the Eastern part of the empire. The Holy Equal of the Apostles Emperor Constantine, having gained victory over his enemies in three wars with God's assistance, had seen in the heavens the Sign of the Cross, and written beneath: "By this you shall conquer."

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, Saint Constantine sent his mother, the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to Saint Macarius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and the statues in Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful.

Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by the name of Jude who stated that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. They demolished the pagan temple and, after praying, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body (March 6).

In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Savior was crucified, Patriarch Macarius alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead one, he came to life. Having beheld the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found.

Christians came in a huge throng to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching Saint Macarius to elevate the Cross, so that even those far off might reverently contemplate it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders raised up the Holy Cross, and the people, saying "Lord have mercy," reverently prostrated before the Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Life-Creating Cross another miracle took place: a grievously sick woman, beneath the shadow of the Holy Cross, was healed instantly. The elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Cyriacus and afterwards was consecrated Bishop of Jerusalem.

During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ (see October 28). The holy empress Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Savior, building more than 80 churches, at Bethlehem the birthplace of Christ, and on the Mount of Olives where the Lord ascended to Heaven, and at Gethsemane where the Savior prayed before His sufferings and where the Mother of God was buried after her death.

Saint Helen took part of the Life-Creating Wood and nails with her to Constantinople. The holy emperor Constantine gave orders to build at Jerusalem a majestic and spacious church in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, also including under its roof the Life-Giving Tomb of the Lord and Golgotha. The temple was constructed in about ten years. Saint Helen did not survive until the dedication of the temple, she died in the year 327. The church was consecrated on September 13, 335. On the following day, September 14, the festal celebration of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross was established.

Another event connected to the Cross of the Lord is remembered also on this day: its return to Jerusalem from Persia after a fourteen year captivity. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Phocas (602-610) the Persian emperor Khosroes II in a war against the Greeks defeated the Greek army, plundered Jerusalem and captured both the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord and the Holy Patriarch Zachariah (609-633).

The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years and only under the emperor Heraclius (610-641), who with the help of God defeated Khosroes and concluded peace with his successor and son Syroes, was the Cross of the Lord returned to the Christians.

With great solemnity the Life-creating Cross was transferred to Jerusalem. Emperor Heraclius in imperial crown and royal purple carried the Cross of Christ into the temple of the Resurrection. With the emperor went Patriarch Zacharias. At the gates by which they ascended Golgotha, the emperor suddenly stopped and was not able to proceed farther. The holy Patriarch explained to the emperor that an angel of the Lord was blocking his way. The emperor was told to remove his royal trappings and to walk barefoot, since He Who bore the Cross for the salvation of the world from sin had made His way to Golgotha in all humility. Then Heraclius donned plain garb, and without further hindrance, carried the Cross of Christ into the church.

In a sermon on the Exaltation of the Cross, Saint Andrew of Crete (July 4) says: "The Cross is exalted, and everything true gathers together, the Cross is exalted, and the city makes solemn, and the people celebrate the feast".



# KIDS CORNER

## BIBLE WORD SEARCH!

BASIC WORDS OF THE BIBLE

G	E	N	T	I	L	E	B	I	B	L	E	D
O	B	A	A	B	R	T	J	E	M	D	I	I
D	P	I	I	E	S	I	M	N	I	P	B	N
T	E	M	P	T	A	T	I	O	N	J	A	H
H	R	P	S	H	L	H	R	P	I	E	P	O
E	S	R	A	L	V	E	A	N	S	R	T	L
F	E	A	C	E	A	H	C	A	T	U	I	Y
A	C	Y	R	H	T	O	L	Z	R	S	Z	S
T	U	E	I	E	I	L	E	A	Y	A	E	P
H	T	I	F	M	O	Y	J	R	H	L	N	I
E	E	S	I	N	N	A	J	E	W	E	H	R
R	W	E	C	L	F	A	I	T	H	M	L	I
B	S	J	E	S	U	S	C	H	R	I	S	T

JESUS CHRIST

SALVATION

JEW

GENTILE

HOLY SPIRIT

GOD THE FATHER

PERSECUTE

PRAY

TITHE

MINISTRY

BIBLE

HOLY

SACRIFICE

FAITH

MIRACLE

NAZARETH

BETHLEHEM

JERUSALEM

BAPTIZE

TEMPTATION

SIN

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## 2020 Matching Funds Drive Progress Report

Thank you to all the donors who have contributed to the Matching Funds Drive!

We have received **\$12,500** to date, which will be matched by a generous Parishioner!

The Matching Fund Drive ends on October 15. Please help us reach our goal. Thank you!

Contributions to date:

\$12,500

Matching Funds to date:

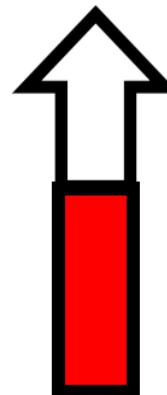
\$12,500

**Total Raised to date:**

**\$25,000**

Goal:

\$40,000



62.5% of Goal