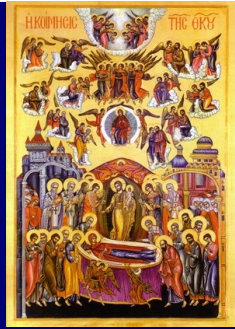


CHURCH STAFF

- **Parish Priest:** Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- **Parish Council President:** Jim (Demetrios) Katsihtis
- **Philoptochos President:** Maria Molzahn
- **Sunday School Directors:** Susu Saba
- **Greek School:** Ilektra Kolokouri
- **Choir Director:** George Tzougros

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

December Calendar	2
Parish Council Update	3
Focus on Philoptochos	4 - 5
Youth Corner	6
Community News	7
Parish Fliers	8-15



Wonder Worker

DECEMBER 2023

THE UNFOLDING MYSTERY

For Christians around the world, Christmas marks the joyous celebration of Jesus Christ's birth. But for the faithful of the Greek Orthodox Church, this event transcends mere festivity. It becomes a window into the profound mystery of the Incarnation, where God, in His infinite love, bridges the chasm between the divine and human realms.

Unlike Western traditions that often focus on the Nativity scene itself, our theology delves deeper, emphasizing the theological implications of Christ's birth. This perspective finds its roots in the writings of the early Church Fathers, who saw the Incarnation as a pivotal moment in salvation history.

One central concept is theosis, meaning "divinization." Through Christ's birth, humanity is not simply offered redemption from sin, but the potential to participate in the divine nature itself. This transformative process begins with the Nativity, where God becomes fully human, allowing humanity to partake in His divinity.

Another key theme is kenosis, the "self-emptying" of God. In his divine love, Christ willingly relinquishes His heavenly glory and embraces the limitations of human existence. This act of humility shatters the barrier between Creator and creation, paving the way for reconciliation and communion with God.

Our Church's theology also emphasizes the role of the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary. Her unwavering faith and obedience made her the vessel through which God entered the world. She is not merely a passive bystander, but an active participant in the divine plan, demonstrating the vital role of human cooperation in God's work.

The liturgical celebrations surrounding Christmas further illuminate its theological significance. Advent, the preparatory period leading up to the Nativity, is a time of introspection and spiritual preparation. Through fasting, prayer, and acts of charity, believers purify themselves to receive the coming Christ.

Christmas Eve, known as "Holy Night" in Orthodox tradition, culminates in the joyous vigil service and Divine Liturgy. The chanting of hymns, the reading of scriptures, and the sharing of Holy Communion all serve to re-enact the Nativity and draw the faithful into the mystery of God's self-revelation.

Christmas Day itself is not just a celebration of Christ's birth, but an ongoing encounter with the divine. The faithful continue to participate in liturgies, engage in acts of love and service, and contemplate the profound implications of the Incarnation.

Christmas for us is not merely a historical event relegated to the past. It is a dynamic, unfolding mystery that continues to shape their lives and their understanding of God. It is a reminder that the divine is not distant and aloof, but intimately present, offering humanity the transformative possibility of becoming partakers in the very life of God.

As we celebrate this holy season, let us open our hearts to the profound mystery of the Incarnation. Let us, like the Theotokos, embrace God's invitation to participate in His divine plan. And may the light of Christ, born anew in our hearts, illuminate our path towards theosis, the ultimate fulfillment of our human potential.

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>31</p> <p>Sunday After the Nativity</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>No Sunday School or Greek School</p>					<p>1</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted)</p> <p>Ethiopian Service</p>
<p>3</p> <p>14th Sunday of Matthew</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Sunday School/Greek School</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Fast Day</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Fast Day</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <p>Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy</p> <p>No Adult Religious Education Class</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Fast Day</p> <p>Philoptochos Baking Day</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Women's Spiritual Meeting Via Zoom</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <p>Philoptochos Packag- ing Day</p> <p>5:30 p.m. Youth Night Ginger- bread House Making</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted)</p> <p>8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Philoptochos Bake Sale</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted)</p> <p>10th Sunday of Luke</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Sunday School Greek School</p> <p>Parish Council Election Saint Nicholas Luncheon</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Fast Day</p> <p>Parish Outing to Milwaukee Bucks for Greek Heritage Night</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Fast Day</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Fast Day</p> <p>8:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class via Zoom</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted)</p> <p>Russian Mission Service</p> <p>Ethiopian Service</p>
<p>17</p> <p>Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted)</p> <p>11th Sunday of Luke</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Sunday School & Greek School Christmas Pro- gram</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Fast Day</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Fast Day</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Educa- tion Class</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Fast Day</p> <p>8:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class via Zoom</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted)</p>
<p>24</p> <p>Fast Day (Wine & Oil Permitted)</p> <p>Christmas Eve Sunday before Nativity</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>No Sunday School or Greek School</p> <p>4:00 p.m. Great Vespers for the Nativity</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Nativity of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Fast Free Day</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Fast Free Day</p>	<p>30</p>

The Parish Council Update June/July 2023

Officers: Jim Katsiitis, President; Christy Chappell-Belkin, Vice President; Bruce Hansen, Secretary; Scott Storck, Treasurer; Niko Papadopoulos, Assistant Treasurer

Members: , Conn Choles, Carol Griskavich, Nick Helser, Bill Margetis, Maria Molzahn, Mike Smith.

How marvelous is our Lord's love for us that He would condescend to become like one of His creatures to save us and to restore us into communion with Him! We pray that you all have a blessed Nativity. Christ is born! Glorify Him!

GreekFest+

The GreekFest+ accounting is almost finalized, and we had a record year with an estimated net profit \$39,604! Thank you again to Father Christodoulos, our GreekFest Co-Chairpersons Maria Katsaros-Molzahn and Christy Chappell-Belkin, and to all who volunteered to make GreekFest+ such a success and so much fun! We are looking forward to enjoying and sharing authentic food and culture, fellowship and our faith with the community again next year.

Bucks Greek Night

This year's Milwaukee Bucks Greek Night is on Monday December 11. We hope you can join this fun event. Please see the bulletin for information regarding tickets. Due to lack of interest in a bus, we will not have a group bus this year.

Fall General Assembly

The Fall General Assembly took place on Sunday November 5th following the Divine Liturgy. The 2024 proposed budget passed unanimously. The date for the Parish Council elections was set for December 10th. The Election Committee will be made up of Maria Heide, Patrick Molzahn and Beth Fatsis who were all nominated and accepted. In addition, Beth, Patrick and Jenny Glatch were nominated and accepted to be on the Audit Committee for the audit of the 2023 financials.

Parish Council Elections and St. Nicholas Luncheon

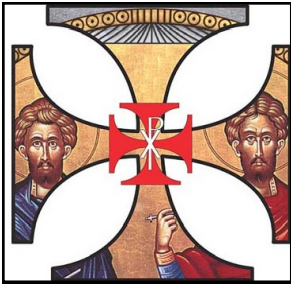
Please join us after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday December 10th for our Parish Council elections and for the annual St. Nicholas luncheon.

Roof Project & Matching Fund

We recently replaced our aged, failing roof to protect our sanctuary and the beautiful, precious iconography on our ceilings and walls written by David Giffey. Please consider donating to help us cover as much of the cost as possible. Through a generous parishioner, each donation will be matched up to the first \$15,000!

Parish Council Vacancy

We have a vacancy on the Parish Council. Please prayerfully consider becoming a member and offering your time and talent back to our Lord. We need both general help as well as special skillsets. If you feel called, please contact Fr. Christodoulos or a Parish Council member by December 3rd for more information and opportunities about running for election.



FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

Philoptochos Forward

Philoptochos Forward, December, 2023

The feast of the Nativity is quickly approaching and with it opportunities for family gatherings and celebrations of the birth of our Lord and Savior. As we reflect on our many blessings I can't but marvel at the amazing support for our Philoptochos. Along with a dedicated group of members, we have a phenomenal patronage of our church and greater Madison community. While the sale isn't officially closed at this writing, current sale numbers suggest that we will maintain our strong giving tradition for this year.

So far this fall, we donated to national and international obligations (including Holy Cross/Holy College, the Retired Clergy Fund, the National Philoptochos Emergency Fund, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate). We have supported the Goodman Center in their campaign to provide Thanksgiving meals to local families. And we've added to the goodwill of our own church community. Together, we are moving mountains.

Going forward, we will be celebrating the tradition *St. Basil Luncheon on Sunday, January 14*. Fittingly, the proceeds from this celebration support our Archdiocese's St. Basil Academy. A school and home for Orthodox youth in honor of St. Basil the Great (330-379 A.D.). Among the many accomplishments and teachings attributed to St. Basil, his philanthropy serves as a lesson for us all. As he instructed us:

"It befits those who possess sound judgment to recognize that they have received wealth as a stewardship, and not for their own enjoyment; thus, when they are parted from it, they rejoice as those who relinquish what is not really theirs, instead of becoming downcast like those who are stripped of their own," (https://orthodoxwiki.org/Basil_the_Great).

Wishing everyone a blessed Nativity Feast, Merry Christmas, and Happy and Healthy New Year.

Maria Molzahn (mariaandpatrick@gmail.com)

Upcoming Dates to Remember:

Help needed:

Baklava Baking	alikisage@gmail.com pcameron110@gmail.com	12/7	9 am - 3 pm
Prep/Packaging	maria.heide@wisc.edu	12/7	4 - 8 pm
Prep/Packaging	maria.heide@wisc.edu	12/8 lunch provided	9:30 - 12:30; 1 - 4; and 4 - 8 pm
Pick-Up	maria.heide@wisc.edu	12/9	8:30 am - 1:00 pm

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, 12/21 via ZOOM.

Save the Date: February 24, 2024 Greek Glendi!



The Ladies' Philoptochos Society Assumption Greek Orthodox Church 2023 Membership Drive

We invite you to join us and share in our philanthropic mission. Through your stewardships and our various fundraisers, we can donate to many worthy causes helping people in need locally, nationally, and internationally. Locally we donate our resources and Philoptochos power to several organizations on a regular basis, and to special hardship situations as needs are presented to us. Nationally and internationally we support the philanthropic programs of our Metropolis Philoptochos and our National Philoptochos.

We need you to join us in this most important mission. If you haven't already updated your Philoptochos membership, please do so now. While the minimum requirement for membership is \$22.00, all those proceeds go to support our National and Metropolis levels with their projects. Any money donated beyond the \$22.00 will go to our local Philanthropy Fund activities and other chapter obligations.

We hope that you will join us as a member and as a volunteer. Whether you attend regular meetings, volunteer to help with our activities, or would like to support our work with your stewardship, you will be a **valued** Philoptochos member. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please complete the form below and submit it with your 2023 stewardship payment, by **February 28, 2023**. Checks should be made payable to "Philoptochos" and please write *membership* in the memo section. The mailing address is below. Thank you!

NAME	
ADDRESS	
PHONE	
EMAIL	

I am interested in helping with the following project(s) and please include me!

Vasilopita Luncheon (January)		Baklava Plus Sale (Sept. – Nov.)	
Mid – Winter Luncheon (February)		Maintaining the Church Hall/Kitchen	
Greek Independence Day Dinner		Cooking for Homeless Shelter	
Koulourakia baking (Holy Week)		Baking Breads for Special Dinners	
Spring/Easter bake sale		Coffee Hour Hostess	
Greek Fest Bake Sale (drive by pick up or onsite)		Prosforon (Holy Bread) baking	
Reception for Assumption Feast Aug 14		Bucket Brigade (church cleaning)	
Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, and/or Memorial Services (if requested)		Operation Classroom	

My Stewardship payment of \$_____ is enclosed (check #_____).

Please note: \$15.00 goes to National Philoptochos, \$5.00 to the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos, and \$2.00 to the Bishop's Fund. We ask for a minimum pledge of \$22.00.

Please return to **Beth Fatsis (1215 E Johnson St, Madison, WI 53703)**
or drop it in the Philoptochos mailbox at Church.

Thank you for your generous time and support!

YOUTH CORNER



Happy December Sunday school families,
As we enter the month of December there are many things happening for Sunday school.
Please mark your calendars!

1. Starting the month of December, we will be collecting food items for the River Food Pantry. The last day to donate will be on **Sunday December 17th**. You can leave your donated items by the front door of the church entrance. As a church community we can make a difference for those in need the most.
2. **Friday December 8th from 5:30-8pm** is our annual gingerbread family night! Please join us for some fun gingerbread house decorating! There will be food and yummy sweets with hot cocoa!
3. **Sunday December 17th** will be the Sunday school and Greek school Christmas pageant. The pageant will take place after Liturgy in the church. Parents please practice with your children the songs and poems they will sing and read for that day. We encourage children to wear the colors green and red for the Christmas spirit.
4. On **Friday December 22nd** we will host our first Christmas pajama movie night starting at 5:30-8pm - if the weather permits. There will be popcorn, cookies, and hot cocoa! Children are encouraged to wear their cozy Christmas pajamas and bring their comfy blankets as they watch a fun Christmas movie together!
5. There will be no **Sunday school on December 24th and December 31st** for Christmas break. Classes will resume on **January 7th**.

We wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the spirit of Christmas and the beginning of the new year bring you all more love, joy, and good health!

In Christ,
Susu Akkawi
Director of Sunday school

COMMUNITY NEWS

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: Will be held on Tuesday, December 19th at 7:00 p.m.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEETING: Our next Philoptochos meeting will be on Thursday, December 21st via Zoom.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS: A.R.E. classes have begun. We are reading the book "Words of the Heart" about the life and teachings Gerondissa Makrina Vassopoulou. Classes are on Wednesday's at 11:00 a.m. for in person classes and On Thursday's at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join us.

ROOF REPLACEMENT CAPITAL CAMPAIGN MATCHING DRIVE: We are blessed to have an anonymous donors who has offered to match up to \$15,000 for the roof replacement. The Roof will run around \$35,000 and we would like to get it completely covered through donations. Currently we have gathered almost half. If you are interested in giving a donation for the roof put "Roof Donation" on the memo line of the check or mark it on the envelope. Together we can get this project finished and fully funded.

CHRISTMAS CARD: Each year, our Church prepares a Christmas card that is mailed to our entire community. Your participation through our Church Christmas Card will not only convey your warmest and personal regards, but also frees you from mailing personal cards to many families. This is savings to you and a benefit for our parish. To include your name on this year's Christmas card please complete the flyer that has been emailed to you and included in the bulletin, or you can pick one up at the candle stand in the Church. Please return completed forms and payment to the church no later then December 11th.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS: Elections will take place Sunday, December 10th immediately following the Divine Liturgy. If you are interested in running for the parish council please talk to either Fr. Christodoulos or any member of the parish council for more details. We need more people willing to undertake the leadership of our parish and doing the Lord's work.

YOUTH NEWS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON: Starting the month of December, we will be collecting food items for the River Food Pantry. The last day to donate will be on Sunday December 17th. You can leave your donated items by the front door of the church entrance. As a church community we can make a difference for those in need the most.

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STEWARDSHIP 2024 APPEAL: At our Stewardship meeting, we have discussed the changes at Assumption. The church is in constant transition, and our aim is to anticipate the time, talent, and treasure needs of our community. We need to combine the Strengths of our heritage, our Orthodox Tradition, and our faith in God to encourage what we do now & toward the future. The Church needs the involvement of you and me, & with the Help of God, to shape our programs to meet the needs of our community & to reach out to others, outside of our community. Please volunteer this year your time and talents, for the good of the church. Nearly every committee has need of the talents and time of leaders & contributors.

FAMILY YOUTH NIGHT: Gingerbread House Making: On Friday, December 8th from 5:30pm-8pm in the church hall. Please join us for some family fun decorating gingerbread houses in the church hall from 5:30 pm-8 pm. There will be food and yummy sweets and hot cocoa!

READERS WANTED: We are looking for people who would like to serve as readers for the Epistle Reading on Sundays starting January 2024. We will have a meeting after church on Sunday, December 17th. We will meet in the church following the Christmas Program. If you are interested in joining the ranks please attend the meeting or reach out to Fr. Christodoulos.



SAVE THE DATE!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

**JOIN US FOR OUR
ANNUAL VASILOPITA
MEAL**

AND

**CELEBRATION OF OUR
NONAGENARIANS**

**MORE INFO WILL BE
COMING SOON!**

SAVE THE DATE

Get Ready for “Opa!”

Saturday, February 24, 2024

Philoptochos Dinner-Dance

Your sponsorship will be very helpful to the success of our Dinner dance. You can advertise you business, memorials for your loved ones etc.

Deadline February 10th.

Please mail us your information to:

The Philoptochos Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

Attn: Elene Patenaude

For more information, email alikisage@gmail.com





2023 Annual Community Christmas Card

**We are now accepting names to be submitted for the
2023 Community Christmas Card**

In order for our Christmas Card to be successful, we need your cooperation. Please approach your family and friends who may not be aware of this program, to see if they would like to be a part of our Family Christmas Card.

*****Deadline*****

Monday, December 11th, 2023

Please use this form and send it along with your donation

Free Will Offering but suggested donation is \$25. Please send to:

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

11 N. Seventh Street

Madison, WI 53704

Please print your name below, clearly and EXACTLY as it should appear in the card.

Name: _____

**May the forthcoming Christmas Season bring to you and your family
the Lord's blessings of Joy and Good Health!**

Thank you for your support of our Assumption Church.

2024 Parish outing to the Madison Capitol's Hockey Team



On Saturday, February 17th, 2024 we will have a Parish Outing to the Madison Capitol's Hockey Game vs the Youngstown Phantoms

This year we have one of the Suites reserved for the church. This means we will only have 30 tickets available. We are still finalizing the price and will have it available soon.

Tickets will be available from Fr. Christodoulos.

Join us for what is sure to be a great night of fun & fellowship. It is also a bobblehead night so get there early

SAVE THE DATES

Assumption Sunday school 2023-2024 events

Mark your calendars for the different events happening throughout the school year!

- Sep 9-10 (Sat & Sun): Greek Fest+
- Sep 17 (Sun): First day of Sunday School
- Oct 15 (Sun): Pumpkin Patch and Corn Maze Outing
- Nov 10 (Fri): Prosfhora Night
- Nov 26 (Sun): Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 8 (Fri): Gingerbread Night
- Dec 17 (Sun): Christmas Pageant
- Dec 22 (Fri): Christmas Movie Night
- Dec 24 & Dec 31 (Sun): Christmas Break
- Jan 14 (Sun): Winter Tubing Outing
- Feb 4 (Sun): Bowling Night
- Mar 14 (Thur): SkyZone Night
- Mar 31 (Sun): Spring Break
- Apr 27 (Sat): Lazarus Family Retreat
- Apr 28 (Sun): Palm Sunday - No Classes
- May 5 (Sun): Egg Hunt after Easter Agapi Church service - No Classes
- May 19 (Sun): Last day of Sunday School
- June 2 (Sun): Graduate Sunday



Assumption Christmas To-Do List



River Food Drive Donations
Dec 1st - Dec 17th



Family Gingerbread Night
Dec 8th 5:30pm - 8pm



Decorate Church Christmas Tree
Dec 10th during class



Christmas Pageant
Dec 17th after Liturgy



Christmas Movie Night
Dec 22nd 5:30pm - 8pm




No Sunday School Dec 24th



No Sunday School Dec 31st



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society
Metropolis of Chicago

Philanthropy Fund

Christmas Wish List 2023

Every single day, life presents you
with opportunities to help
someone in need,
take that challenge today!

Please mail your donations to:

Wanita Loupakos
121 Ruffled Feathers Drive
Lemont, Illinois 60439

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BLESSING OF THE WATERS OF LAKE MONONA



Join the Orthodox Communities of Assumption, Saints Cyril & Methodius & Saint Ignatius in coming together for a Blessing of Lake Monona.

We will be gathering on Sunday, January 7th at Brittingham Park at 829 W. Washington Ave in Madison. Service will begin at 1:30 p.m. If the ice thickness is sufficient we will be just off shore on Monona Bay.

This a wonderful blessing not only for our communities but also for the entire Madison Area.

When: Sunday, January 7th,
2023 at 1:30 p.m.

Where: Brittingham Park on
Lake Monona. 829 W. Washington
Ave. Madison, WI



Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

111 N 7th Street

Madison, WI 53704-4904

Phone: 608-244-1001 Fax: 608-244-1565

Email: office@agocwi.org



Maintenance Help

Our Maintenance Committee needs your help. If you can help with handywork or be available to meet with contractors/servicer providers, please see or contact Mike Smith or John Soloninka.

Stewardship

If you haven't already, please return your Stewardship form and continue to pray for, and generously support, our parish. Your stewardship helps support our worship, ministries, youth programs and facility expenses. Our goal is for stewardship to cover our operating expenses without the need for fundraisers. Please help us reach that goal. And please consider joining the Stewardship Committee to provide input and help us grow and engage our stewards in a life in Christ.

Next Parish Council Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 19th at 7:00PM. Parish Council meetings will typically be scheduled on the third Tuesday of the month.

On behalf of the Parish Council,

Jim

407-408-3096

jkatsihtis@gmail.com