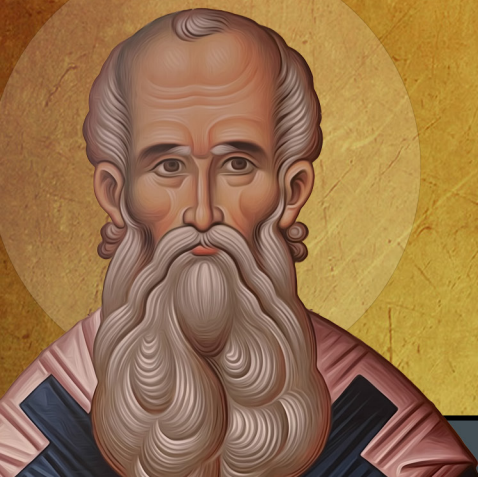




THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

SEPTEMBER 2025



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

September marks the start of a new ecclesiastical and ministry year at St. Athanasios—a time to renew our commitment to the mission Christ has given us: “That all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.”

This renewal is more than a change of season or a return to routine. It is an opportunity to re-engage with the life of the Church and to open ourselves to the transforming work of God. Each of our ministries—Sunday School, Philoptochos, choir, Bible studies, youth groups, outreach, and more—exists for one purpose: to help us grow in Christ and to share His love with the world.

Our ministries are not just about serving others; they are about being shaped by Christ as we serve. The Sunday School teacher grows in faith while teaching. The choir member deepens prayer through song. The outreach volunteer sees Christ in the face of a neighbor in need. In giving, we receive; in serving, we are changed.

I hope the parishioner testimonies we’ve been hearing at the end of the Divine Liturgy have been a blessing to you. They are more than stories—they are living witnesses to the ways God is working in our midst. Through them, we see that our ministries are not simply “good works,” but encounters with the living Christ that bring healing, strength, and joy.

As we begin this new year, I invite you to take a step deeper into parish life. Join a ministry you’ve never tried before. Return to one you’ve missed. Offer your gifts, your prayers, and your presence. Together, let us continue building a parish where the love of Christ is experienced, shared, and lived out—so that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.



BIBLE STUDY PODCASTS

WITH FR. PANAGIOTIS



**SCAN
TO LISTEN**

BIBLE STUDY

Join our Bible Study this Fall as we explore 1 Corinthians. Sessions are at 11am on the following dates:

9/24	11/12
10/1	11/19
10/15	12/3
10/29	



**SAINT
ATHANASIOS**



MEMORIALS

Nancy Gladis (5 Years)

Spiros Mavrogiannis (5 Years)

BAPTISMS

Panagiotis John Stepien

Son of Patrick and Evangelia Stepien

PARISH COUNCIL

Finance Committee: Our finance committee along with our treasurers have begun working on our 2026 budget and are refining our line items in more detail so that we are able to track and manage the budget for effectively. We have also asked our ministry leaders to provide a budget for their prospective ministry so that we can provide the appropriate resources that are needed. The parish council will present the budget to the parish at the fall general assembly.

New Ministry Year: We are excited to get back into full swing with our ministries. September 1st begins our ecclesiastical new year. Lots of exciting events and ministries are set to begin. Sunday School, Joy, Jr. Goya, GOYA, Choir, Men's Group, Philoptochos, Bible Study, AGAPE, Church New Year Picnic, & Aurora Greek Festival just to name a few. Please check your emails, our website, The Champion, parish calendar, & weekly bulletins for more information and dates on all of our Saint Athanasios ministries and events. We have a lot to offer for all age groups.

Church New Year Picnic: We will have our picnic on Sunday September 7th. There will be food, fun and games for all. This is an opportunity for all of us to come together in fellowship. It also is a time to meet and welcome our new parishioners. Looking forward to seeing everyone there!

Aurora Greek Fest: The fest will take place September 19th-21st. Please be on the lookout for literature and emails with information about the festival. Sponsorship opportunities are available. There are lots of new and exciting additions to the fall fest. This event is fun and rewarding and at the same time is a perfect example of how to give your time and talent. Consider donating a gyro cone for \$150. Any way you can contribute will be so appreciated. Please contact our church office, Tracey Collins, or Frank Demas if you are interested in volunteering or sponsoring.

"Your Own from Your Own" Our stewardship and capital campaign committees have been continuing to educate and communicate the parish throughout the summer months on our progress. We are making strides towards our goals. We ask if you have not pledged yet for your 2025 stewardship and capital campaign that you please pray about it and pledge from your heart. Thank you to everyone who has made their pledges as well as your time and talents you give to our beloved St. Athanasios.

Ceiling Painting: The ceiling painting project has been completed and went according to schedule. Thank to all of those who helped set up and put away the temporary chairs to allow seating for the Saturday & Sunday services while the pews were removed. It was good to see all of the volunteers step up to help out when the church was in need. Your time was very appreciated.

Wishing all of you a blessed month!

"That all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth."

Brian McAnally
Parish Council President



ST. ATHANASIOS CHURCH NEW YEAR PICNIC

Join us on
September 7th
Following Divine Liturgy

All Are Welcome!



St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church 60th Anniversary Dinner

*Join us for an Evening Celebrating Yesterday,
Today & Tomorrow!*

**Sunday, October 19, 2025
5:00 PM**

Stonebridge Country Club

2705 Stonebridge Blvd, Aurora, IL 60502

Pack your passport of cherished moments, bring your good cheer, and join us for this meaningful celebration of six decades of community, love, and Orthodox faith! Together, we will honor our founders, celebrate our shared journey, and look forward to the future of our vibrant church family!

Tickets

Adults: \$100

Children (12 & Under): \$25

Please note: Tickets are limited — **Reserve Early!**

Use the QR code to purchase your tickets online or to make a donation. You can also make your reservation at 630-851-6106.



www.saintathanasios.com

HONORING
THE PAST

CELEBRATING
THE PRESENT

EMBRACING
THE FUTURE



SEPT 19-21

LOCATION

SAINT ATHANASIOS
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
1855 EAST FIFTH AVE
AURORA IL

CARRY OUT

CATERING
630.851.6106

A portion of the proceeds
will go to **Naperville Responds**
www.napervilleresponds.org



LIVE MUSIC

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

FEST TIMES

NOON TO 9 PM
(FRIDAY & SATURDAY)

NOON TO 7 PM
(SUNDAY)

NEW THIS FESTIVAL

VENDORS
RAFFLE WALK
DESSERT OPTIONS
VEGGIE DINNER OPTION



www.auroragreekfest.com

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

I hope you and your loved ones are all well and that you had a great summer. For many of us, September is the beginning of the school year and another step in our children's long journey from kindergarten to senior year graduation. A journey that is filled with long days and a lot of hard work.

As a community, we are in our own long journey, Phase Two of the Capital Campaign. As we talked about, our Phase Two goal, **in addition to us meeting our stewardship and other budget goals, is to raise an extra \$125,000 per year for the next several years.** Yes, it will be challenging, but we must try so we can secure the financial stability of our church. As of the beginning of September, we have met approximately 47% of this year's goal. We are a bit behind, but I feel confident that our fund-raising goal is within reach.

The school year is not all work. It has an occasional celebration as well. In the same way, our community has something to celebrate as well. As we voted at the Spring General Assembly, we will be completing the first of our four Capital Campaign projects, the comprehensive landscape renovation.

To all that made this possible through their generosity – Thank You!

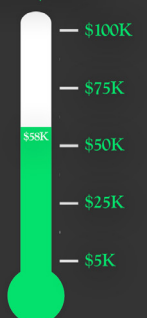
As we go through the rest of the year, I encourage you to take the time and visit our web site to find out how you can support the Capital Campaign. Let's work together to strengthen Saint Athanasios for future generations.

Thank you,

Phil Nassos & Mike Tsimouris
Capital Campaign Committee

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN PHASE II BUILDING & GROUNDS

GOAL \$125K



SCAN TO
LEARN MORE

PARISH CALENDAR

All services are live streamed on our YouTube Channel.

Orthros begins at 8:30am with Divine Liturgy following at 9:30am (unless otherwise noted below)

Monday, September 1

Divine Liturgy - Indiction (Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year)

Wednesday, September 3

7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Saturday, September 6

11am Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, September 7

Divine Liturgy - Sunday before Holy Cross

First day of Sunday School

11am Church Picnic

Monday, September 8th

Divine Liturgy - Nativity of the Theotokos

6:30 pm Jr GOYA Meeting

September 11

11am Agape Meeting

6pm Men's Group Kick off BBQ

Saturday, September 13th

11am Philoptochos Fall Kickoff Luncheon

7pm - Vespers - Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

7560 Archer Rd, Justice, IL 60458

Saturday, September 14th

Divine Liturgy - Exaltation of the Holy Cross

11:30 am JOY Meeting

Monday, September 16th

7pm - Vespers - St Sophia & Her Three Daughters

St Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

525 Church Rd., Elgin, IL 60123

Tuesday, September 17th

9am Divine Liturgy - Saints Sophia, Faith, Hope & Love

St Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

525 Church Rd., Elgin, IL 60123

September 19-21

12 pm Aurora Greek Fest

Sunday, September 21

Divine Liturgy - Sunday after Holy Cross

Tuesday, September 23

7pm Discover Orthodoxy

Wednesday, September 24

11am Bible Study

Thursday, September 25

6:30 pm GOYA Kick Off Night

Friday, September 26

Divine Liturgy - Falling Asleep of St John the Theologian

Sunday, September 28th

Divine Liturgy - 1st Sunday of Luke

11:30 am Choir Monthly Rehearsal

DISCOVER ORTHODOXY

Classes start at 7pm on the following dates:

9/23	12/9
10/14	12/23
10/28	1/13
11/11	1/20
11/25	2/10

COFFEE HOUR

Help to promote fellowship, community, and friendship following the Divine Liturgy by hosting Coffee-hour. Consider hosting Coffee Hour for occasions such as Memorials, Namedays, Birthdays, 40-day Blessings, etc - or no occasion needed! For more information and to sign up to host a Coffee Hour, please call the office.

We are looking to expand our Coffee Hour Ministry. If you are interested in joining, please reach out to the office.



FOOD PANTRY



Thank you to everyone who generously donated food to our Pantry! Your contributions make a real difference in the lives of our community members who need it most. We are so grateful for your kindness & support.
2024 total - 691lbs of Food!

Please donate food that is Healing to the Hungry - Lean Proteins (Saturated Fats), No Sodium, Low Sugar Fruits, Whole Grain Items. No dented cans or open packaged foods. Expired food can not be accepted. This month's request is:

Canned Meat/Fish, Chili, and Stew

Please contact Betty Roussos at bettyroussos@yahoo.com with any questions.

PHILOPTOCHOS

Welcome Back! Philoptochos is looking forward to another year of helping the community. Mutual Ground, which serves victims of domestic and sexual violence and substance abuse in our area, is our philanthropy focus for the coming year. We hope to have someone from the organization come speak to us in the coming weeks.

In August we participated in the metropolis' Feed the Hungry program at Annunciation Cathedral. We assembled and distributed 143 lunches.

We are excited to partner with OC Allen School to collect educational games as part of Operation Classroom. We will have a collection bin next to the food pantry bin through September 7. Please contact Nicole Gross with questions.

All women of the church are welcome to join us at to our fall kickoff, Mezze and Membership on Saturday, September 13th at noon in St. Matthew Hall.

Our Fall Promenade fundraiser will coincide with the Aurora Food Fest. We have gathered about 20 gifts from which to choose! Tickets are 3 for \$10. Proceeds will benefit Naperville Responds and Mutual Ground of Aurora. Please come check it out when you visit the Food Fest!

Sue Manos
Philoptochos President



Brought to you by St. Athanasios Philoptochos

OPERATION CLASSROOM



We're excited to partner with OC Allen Elementary School in Aurora, IL (District 131) to bring joy, learning, and connection to students and families through educational games and activities!

Items will be donated in the middle of September.
Every donation helps inspire learning and build stronger family bonds. Thank you for being part of this mission!

How You Can Help:	Donations:
1. Purchase new items directly from our Amazon Wish List	📍 Location: Drop off items in St. Matthew Hall in Operation Classroom Bin (next to Food Pantry bin)
OR	📅 Deadline: September 7th
2. Buy your own new family-friendly educational games or activities	❓ Questions? Contact Nicole Gross at nkgross56@gmail.com
Examples include: puzzles, board games, STEM activity sets, etc.	

STEWARDSHIP

Understanding Stewardship Data: Strengthening Our Church's Future Part 3

Every month the Stewardship Committee shares information and data with you regarding our 2025 Stewardship Campaign. This month we are going to change things a bit. Yes ... we are still going to share some data with you, but then we are going to ask you for your input. By getting your input, we can help drive change and progress within our Stewardship program.

Topic 1:

When we introduced our 2025 Stewardship program in late 2024, we presented a 2025 goal that was 15% greater than our 2024 Stewardship level. This was our first step in the journey to achieving Stewardship Independence. Through the end of July, 61 or 26% of the Pledged 2025 Stewards have increased their commitment over 2024.

Question:

Why haven't more Stewards increased their year-over-year pledge in 2025? Besides financial limitations, what other barriers exist that prevent Stewards from increasing their pledge?

Topic 2:

About 60 of the 2024 Stewards have not yet made their 2025 commitment. When we ask them why they have not yet made their commitment, the answer is typically "we make our commitment late in the year and pay it then".

Question:

What prevents Stewards from making their commitment when the program is kicked-off and pay it when they want to? Also, are there other reasons why they have not made their 2025 commitment?

Please let us know your thoughts regarding these questions by either contacting one of the Stewardship Committee Members directly or sending an email to stewardship@saintathanasios.com so we can drive progress towards our future Stewardship Vision.

As we have said many times before, Stewardship is the lifeblood of our Parish, ensuring that ministries thrive, our mission expands, and our church remains a source of faith and community.

In His Service,
The St. Athanasios Stewardship Committee
Pete Nassos, Elli Koulos, & Jim Kuncil



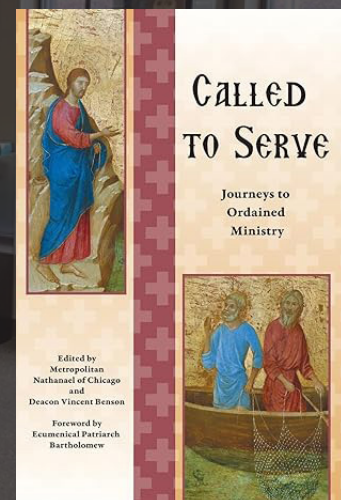
dahlia
weddings and baptisms

dahliawb.com
630.596.6826

**Weddings
Baptisms
Christmas
Easter**

BOOK STORE

Stop by our Bookstore to purchase, "Called to Serve: Journeys to Ordained Ministry," edited by our Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago and Deacon Vincent Benson. This book is the first of its kind that reveals 40 personal stories from clergy about their calling to the priesthood. The content shows how our priests, ordained to spread God's word, are also human and humble in how they decided on their spiritual pathway. This book is also a positive resource for any young men who may be considering a life of service to becoming an Orthodox priest and is the start of a series that will feature other titles in the future.



MEN'S GROUP

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry.

For those of you that may not be familiar with us, we are a Group of Orthodox friends who gather to share their experiences about life, their philosophies, values and ideas. We meet to provide charity, support, mentoring and build fellowship among the Orthodox community of men in the western suburbs.

Welcome Back Dinner

Come join us for dinner on Thursday, September 11th at church. This will be a great opportunity to catch up with friends, meet new members and learn about our upcoming activities.

Aurora Greek Fest

Volunteers are needed to prep and cook at the Aurora Greek Fest – September 19-21. Please consider your time to help make this festival a success!

Food Pantry

Each month, our church collection of donated food needs to be delivered to local food pantries. We need volunteers to transport our donations. If you are interested, please contact us for more information

You can like and follow our Facebook page by searching for "Men's Group of St Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church"

If anyone is interested in learning more about the Men's Group, please contact Spiro Hountalas (naperspike@aol.com), Peter Metrou (pnmetrou@gmail.com), Bill Collins (bctc@sbcglobal.net) or Nick Dagiantis (ndagiantis@gmail.com).



Icon Adornment

Workshops to learn the process of adorning the icons throughout Lent, including Holy Week and the Kouvouklion on Holy Friday.

**9/12 3:30 pm
10/18 11am
12/23 1pm**

**Contact Sherry at
marina.h14grk@gmail.com**





JOY

OCT. 10, 2025 | 6:00 - 7:30 PM

JOY Meeting—At Church. RSVP in the Band App.



JR GOYA

OCT. 6, 2025 | 6:30 - 8 PM

Join us for Board Game Night at Bardwell Residences in Aurora! RSVP & details in the Band App.

GOYA

OCT. 9, 2025 | 6:30 - 8 PM

GOYA Meeting — At Church. RSVP in the Band App.

OCT. 18, 2025 | 10:00 AM - 12 PM

Joint Jr. GOYA and GOYA Pumpkin Patch outing from 10am to 12pm. More information/location to follow in the BAND app.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH



WALKING WITH THE SAINTS

Join us this Fall for Soul Sisters & Men's Group, gathering to be inspired by the lives of the saints. Each session will include prayer, discussion, and fellowship as we discover how these holy men and women can guide our own walk with Christ. Meetings: 7:00pm - 8:30pm in St. Matthew Hall.

SOUL SISTERS

10/9 (Saint Maria of Paris)

11/13

12/11

1/8 - Combined w/ Men's Group

2/12

**SCAN TO
REGISTER**



MEN'S GROUP

10/2

11/6

12/4

1/8 - Combined w/ Soul Sisters

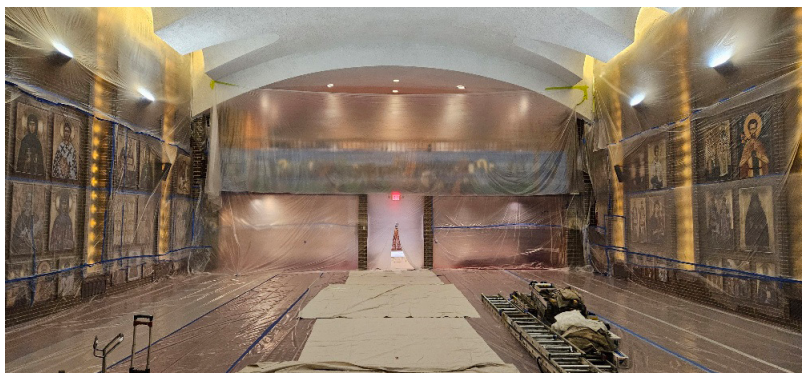
2/5

**SCAN TO
REGISTER**



BUILDING & GROUNDS

The water stain that occurred in the ceiling of the nave in late January from a leak in the roof drain pipe has been painted. After a long process of inspections, paperwork and having to schedule around Lent & Easter the work was completed in July over a 2 week period. The entire ceiling was painted from the altar to the choir loft. Thank you to all that assisted in the project and especially to those that helped to move chairs when the pews were removed to allow for seating that was needed for the Saturday and Sunday services the first week of the project.



Gyros Drive
We Need Your Help!

Donate a Gyro Cone
\$150 Per Cone
37 Cone Goal!

Contact Tracey for donations at
AuroraGreekFest@saintathanasios.com
or call 630.643.0023



AGAPE MINISTRY



Join us on September 11th at 11am for our Kickoff meeting! All seniors of St Athanasios are welcome. We will be having lunch, socializing, and playing BINGO and other games.

Contact Samantha Dulles for questions.
312.504.4448



“My mother Δημητρά’s Faith was in her heart! She didn’t have to be demonstrative. In my mind, I have this picture of Mom always praying for us-- teaching my two brothers and I to be anonymous philanthropists. This is how I model and live my Greek Orthodox Faith, feeling it quietly. Now, I am praying and doing the same for my three kids and six grandchildren. Keeping our Faith! I want to be a better person becoming as spiritually strong as I can.”

- Rose Pagonis

by Penny Panayiota Deligiannis

Long before Taylor Swift ever existed, Rose Pagonis, since the age of 17, exuded boldness wearing her signature red lipstick and still rocks it today. **“Mom had Alzheimer’s experiencing memory loss for 14 years!”**, revealed Rose. **“Everybody told us to keep it quiet when we found out Mom had Alzheimer’s. I did the opposite. I told everyone!”** Volunteering for the Alzheimer’s Association for 25 years as a Community Educator, Rose’s driven compassionate fiery spirit is fully displayed when speaking at libraries and Zoom providing a ‘Program for Caregivers and Its Impact on Caregivers.’ **“I’m passionate about it!”** she emphasizes. **“Throughout the region, people are calling for support because it’s anonymous. The Ten Signs of Alzheimer’s. It’s prevalent!”**

“In 1985, (brother) John dated and married a girl (Irene Vlahos) in Aurora of all places! Driving from Chicago, it seemed like forever. Work brought my family to Naperville in 1989. In 1990, we joined Saint Athanasios...different from our previous good parish where everybody was very Greek. Saint Athanasios felt like a family. Everybody knew each other. A bit more progressive, Fr. Chris Constantinides mostly spoke English. Those early years, my kids and I loved being at church 5-6 times per week seeing our respective friends. JOY. GOYA. Attending church as families. Apollo Dance Troupe. Connecting with people. Staying in touch. Fun Greek School and New Year’s Eve dances. My adult kids and grandchildren love attending Saint Athanasios’ Divine Liturgies with their cousins. (Son) Alex met Chrissie in Sunday School becoming sweethearts. Since she was young, Chrissie felt like my daughter. As our kids grew up together, I made friends...now, grandchildren are growing up together. I’m hoping to live to see them grow in their Faith!”

+MARSHALL’S ETERNAL LOVE FOR HIS BEAUTIFUL ROSE AND FAMILY

“When (daughter) Diane was in 8 th grade, she asked parishioner Marshall Finch to take me out,” Rose humorously confessed. **“After three months of spending time with my entire family, Marshall asked if we could go out on our own. I was 37 years old when I met him. With Marshall, I was friends. My father +George told me, ‘This is something you should take seriously.’ Marshall was the kindest human being, possessing the most integrity of anybody I have ever known. It was natural. Very organic. Marshall was wonderful with my kids. A unique relationship! I would never have gone to look for him. My parents adored him. 15 years married to Marshall! I never asked him to convert. He wanted to convert. Marshall expressed, ‘I am going to convert for our family so when we attend church together, we’ll be in church together as one family!’** He loved this parish so much becoming very involved.”

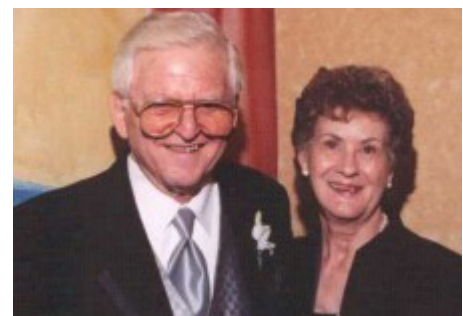
Rose reflected, **“I’ve had my share of setbacks and have faults. Feeling so much gratitude for the goodness and Grace I have in my life! God has been so good to my family. I love growing older with my two brothers and sisters-in-law. Blessed beyond measure! We are strong because of the love and support of my +parents and family.”**



Rose Pagonis

In the late 1960s, +JIM AND MARTHA LESIOTIS moved to Montgomery, Illinois, joined Saint Athanasios and became lifelong members! Martha, +Jim’s beloved wife for 57 years, joyfully recalled, **“I met Jim in church in Rockford. He was a very kind, nice Greek Orthodox man and good-looking, too! We made so many friends at Saint Athanasios who are still friends visiting and enjoying each other’s homes and company, going out with many people. . . Harry and Ruby Kontos, Camation Kouvavas. Jim was happy to go to church! A hard-working family man protective of our children Teresa, John and Nancy, Jim started his own business owning “JL Produce” for 39 years—driving daily to Chicago at 2:00 am to purchase produce in bulk and deliver to Greek restaurants by 2:00 pm. Serving as parish council president (1970), Jim started selling raffle tickets for Saint Athanasios’ Greek Festivals asking all of his clients to buy one ticket to support the parish. In return, clients wanted favors from him.”**

Without fanfare, +Jim, Martha, parishioner friends George and Stella Simios and others quietly labored because they love God and our Church. At the peak of his decades-long volunteer efforts during each Greek Food Festival, +Jim was selling 150+ raffle tickets X \$100 (USD) per ticket = raising \$15,000 (USD) in critically-needed income to support Saint Athanasios! +Jim accomplished something most of us would find incredibly difficult to do. Are you willing to ask every work colleague to donate to Saint Athanasios?



Jim and Martha Lesiotis



MODERN STEAKHOUSE WITH A GREEK ACCENT.

Beyond our delicious line-up of Prime Steaks, Chops, and Seafood, we offer an authentic selection of Greek Specialties, including Whole Oven Roasted Branzino, Lamb Racks & Greek Potatoes, Classic Pastitsio, and much more. Check out the **Greek Classics** on our menu for all your favorite Mediterranean flavors.

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SEPTEMBER 2025

ECCLESIASTICAL
NEW YEAR



A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



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