

The Promise

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

WESTFIELD ✦ NEW JERSEY



December 2025 ✦ Volume 49, Issue 8

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Be the Fourth Magi



In the great and momentous events of Christmas, among those who were the first to worship the New-born Lord after the Most Holy Theotokos, the betrothed Joseph, and the simple shepherds were the wise Magi from the East. These three Kings represent all humanity who through the centuries awaited the arrival of the Saviour.

Since the Evangelist Matthew mentions them, the Magi are honored in the Orthodox Church being depicted in their own icon of the Nativity describing their faith-filled journey and veneration of Christ. These pagan rulers, who once worshipped stars and all the celestial bodies, were taught by a lone star appearing high in the Eastern

sky to quickly journey to and reverence the Messiah. These foreigners from the East prefigure the establishment of the Church and how membership will be determined, not by ethnic lineage but by faith in Jesus Christ. The Magi teach us that Christ is the Saviour of all humanity. His power, as God, cannot be limited or directed to only one race or a select few people, but it extends itself beyond boundaries uniting all people to the eternal God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." – Galatians 3:28

Perhaps we can join forces with those three Kings from the East to become the fourth Magi in a contemporary

Christmas Services

21 Sunday before Christmas

8:15 AM Orthros

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

22 St. Anastasia

8:45 AM Orthros

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

24 8:30 AM Great Hours

10:00 AM Vespers Divine Liturgy

6:30 PM Orthros of Christmas

7:30 PM Christmas Divine Liturgy

28 Sunday after Christmas

8:15 AM Orthros

9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

sense by proclaiming the real Christmas message. I say this because presently a new form of paganism silently grips us. Regularly, we are bombarded with advertisements trying to convince us of some "magical" Christmas experience that lay within our grasp if only we purchase some specific product. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot buy our way through Christmas, for Christmas is not for sale.

Continued on page 2 ⇒

Wait for the promise of the Father



Dates in the Life of Our Church

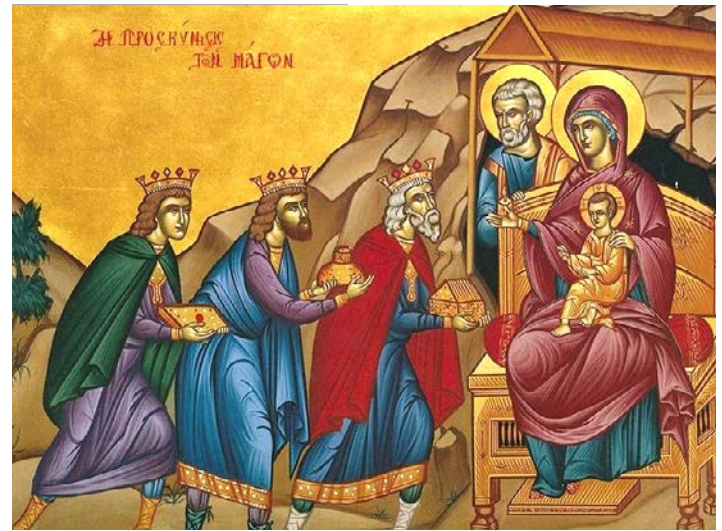
December 2025–January 2026

DECEMBER

6	St. Nicholas of Myra	21	Sunday before Christmas
	8:15 AM Orthros		8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy		9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
7	8:15 AM Orthros	22	St. Anastasia
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy		8:45 AM Orthros
	11:45 AM Parish Council Elections		9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
9	7:30 PM Parish Council	24	8:30 AM Great Hours
12	St. Spyridon		10:00 AM Vespereal Divine Liturgy
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy		6:30 PM Orthros of Christmas
14	8:15 AM Orthros		7:30 PM Christmas Divine Liturgy
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy		
17	St. Dionysios of Zakynthos	28	Sunday after Christmas
	8:45 AM Orthros		8:15 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy		9:30 AM Divine Liturgy

JANUARY

I	Naming of the Lord and St. Basil the Great	6	Holy Theophany
	8:30 AM Orthros		8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy		9:30 AM Divine Liturgy with Great Blessing of Waters
4	Sunday before Theophany	7	St. John the Baptist
	8:15 AM Orthros		8:30 AM Orthros
	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy		9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
5	Paramoni of Theophany	11	Sunday after Theophany
	8:30 AM Orthros		8:15 AM Orthros
	9:00 AM Royal Hours		9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
	10:00 AM Vespereal Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Waters		



Be the Fourth Magi

↳ *Continued from page 1*

The Nativity of our Lord is the most defining moment in the history of humankind. If there is any magic involved with Christmas it is certainly not to be found in all the items that we have purchased in the hectic days leading up to this celebration. The Christian celebration is not magical but miraculous and mysterious, as its focus is clearly on one person - the Incarnate Son of God. The Nativity story presents us with a babe, a cave, a virgin birth but never a magic wand. The Magi certainly knew the reality of this extraordinary moment in time. The intention of their journey should be our objective as well, to visit and venerate Christ the Newborn King.

The Nativity of our Lord is a great moment precipitated by divine love, when the eternal God according to His good pleasure, came down on earth to visit and be with us. The Church's mes-

sage at this time is based on these certain divine realities and does not interject fairytales or the strange and risky paths laid out by corporations and economic greed. The Church is the kindly protector and guardian of the Christmas story. She is the only one that has authority to tell the story properly, as She has kept it close to Her foundation throughout the centuries. And whether the voice of the Church is mighty or small, She possesses the one thing that has remained resolutely consistent throughout the ages. The Church possesses the truth of God's divine revelation. And the truth of Christmas is the conveying of the transcendent mystery of God's love through Jesus Christ.

Christmas allows us to rediscover and celebrate personal transformation, to accept God's love and through His love emerge reborn in this world. To be the Fourth Magi is to see with a sharp vision the Star of Bethlehem, our own personal Star, leading us to the eternal God. While beholding the purity, innocence, and dignity of God, we, like the Three Wise Men, will be moved to offer our spiritual gifts and treasures to our Lord.

Wishing you a blessed feast of the Nativity of our Lord, I remain,
In Christ,
Rev. Fr. Peter

From Westfield to the World: OCMC Mixer Celebrates 40 Years of Mission

On November 6, 2025, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Westfield hosted a special evening celebrating 40 years of worldwide mission work through the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC).

Sixty-one parishioners and friends gathered in the Bouras Center for fellowship, faith, and inspiration during the “From Westfield to the World” wine-and-cheese mixer. The evening opened with a beautiful prayer and

welcoming remarks from Fr. Peter.

OCMC Board of Trustee members Jeannie Arida, Marina Zazanis and Deb Apruzzese offered heartfelt welcome remarks to begin the evening. Featured speakers included Dan Christopoulos, OCMC Senior Development Director, who shared the organization’s mission and vision for continuing global outreach; and Janet O’Sullivan, Holy Trinity parishioner, who reflected on her recent OCMC donor trip to Kenya with joy and zeal.

Through the generosity of attendees, \$5,000 was raised to support the worldwide ministries of OCMC - helping missionaries bring the Gospel and acts of love to communities in more than 25 countries.

The evening was a joyful reminder that mission begins at home, with prayer, fellowship, and support that extend far beyond our parish.

To learn more or to support OCMC’s ministry, visit www.ocmc.org ❖



Y2AM

■ JEANNIE ARIDA AND KATHY DRIVAS

The Holy Trinity, Y2AM (Youth and Young Adult Ministry) continued the outreach ministry of sending college care packages to the parish’s college freshman. This year, there are five freshmen from Holy Trinity who received care packages to show support and love as the students prepare for their first semester final exam exams.

The care packages included a heartwarming letter from Father Peter, greeting cards from GOYANs to their friends, homemade koulourakia

baked cookies by Avi Kiriakatis. Chocolate covered pretzels by Elise Savnik, and a student prayer and an icon of Jesus Christ and numerous food items such as popcorn trail mix, granola bars, gum, Hershey bars, and much more. The boxes were filled to the brim with good wishes, and prayers from their home parish at Holy Trinity. Many ministries supported this



outreach, including the Parish Council and Philoptochos. This year marks the 10th year of the Y2AM spreading good cheer to our college freshman, so they know that their church loves and supports them always. ❖



Parish Council

Update

■ GEORGE KOUTSAFTES, PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Dear Parishioner,

On Sunday November 9, I provided an update to those in attendance at the Parish Assembly on the progress we are making towards growing our three pillars of engagement at Holy Trinity – faith, ministry and outreach, and fellowship. Below is a summary of the report.

Faith

- Church attendance has been on the rise. How do we know? Fr Peter has the prosphoro proxy. He regularly counts how many prosphoro we use for Divine Liturgy on Sunday and in the new Ecclesiastical year he has noticed an increase in the need from five to now seven.
- Second, Fr Peter has kicked off the fall edition of Theosis/Bible Study. I am thrilled to report attendance is growing further from a strong Spring showing. Where we were having 15+ attend in the Spring, now its easily over 25 and at times over 30 who participate in person or via zoom. I can't tell you how gratifying it is to see current and new parishioners coming to seek the truth and gain a better understanding and relationship with our Lord.
- Furthermore, there is a significant increase in religious book sales. Year-to-date, we have sold \$2,000 whereas for all of 2024 we sold \$1,500 – a 33% increase
- Regarding our Youth, on November 16 - 18 over 30 Goyans went to Hellenic College/Holy Cross in Boston for this year's Christ Encounter Retreat.

Ministries & Outreach

Year to Date we have committed over \$50,000 to support philanthropic organizations globally to grow and support our Orthodox faith and to help those in need in our community. Some examples of more recent commitments include:

- \$9,000 given to Philoptochos to fund their philanthropic mission, to replace what they normally would raise via an annual rummage sale which they could not execute due to a very busy summer church rental season.
- This also includes an additional \$10,000 we recently committed to GOYA, beyond the 2025 original budget, to ensure they can pursue faith-based events like the Christ Encounter Retreat. It is also to help fund important items due to the growth in the number of total GOYAan participants like increased registration costs to attend various events.

Speaking of Philoptochos, they are off to a strong start under the leadership of their new president, Kathy Maglaras. Most recently they held a Walkathon to support Mary's Place by the Sea, a wellness center for women with cancer, and they raised over \$1,900. In addition, Philoptochos in partnership with GOYA participated with a philanthropic organization, "Grow A Row", where on November 7 they went to a local NJ farm and picked over 24,000 lbs. of produce to feed almost 100,000 people. Every single ounce of the farmed food is provided to food banks and shelters to feed those in need. Close to 40 GOYAn and Philoptochos members participated.

Lastly, as we announced at the last Assembly, we have crafted a new Mission Statement for our Endowment Fund

to highlight that the primary use of funds available will be for faith-based, philanthropic outreach. In this regard, we kicked off an Outreach Strategy committee. It's comprised of Kathy Maglaras, Sophia Saketos, Penny Mavridis, Spiro Leunes, Gina Sikelis, and myself. This committee will work under the spiritual leadership and guidance of Fr Peter.

Our mission is to select a small handful of outreach initiatives that become parish wide, signature initiatives with the intent to leverage the **collective resources of all of our ministries** and your financial commitment through stewardship and ways & means. The funds from the Endowment will be there to match and be a force multiplier to funds we raise together to materially increase Holy Trinity's outreach effort.

Fellowship

We have had a number of interesting and well received programming that are driving fellowship since our last Assembly meeting.

The Cultural Committee led by Celia Kapsomera, Gina Sikelis, Peter Tarhanides, Thomas Papatomas, and Paul Pavlakos organized an engaging presentation by Vasiliki Tsigas-Fotinis, Ph.D., on "Living Beyond the Cave" – a discussion about Plato's allegory of the cave. It was a wonderful discussion about breaking the chains of perception vs reality. This was attended by over 50 people and there was a wine mixer at the end. Please look for the next Cultural event on January 15 as Holy Trinity will welcome the Consul General of Greece to our parish.

In this new Ecclesiastical year, the Fellowship Ministry, led by AJ and Lauren Karanikolas, have noted a 100% increase in engagements at the

Fellowship table. All those engaged were provided with welcome packets and were introduced to a number of parishioners. In addition, they received a Welcome email from the Fellowship Committee and were added to their email distribution list.

Due to the growth in new members, we are in the early stages of planning an event in the early part of 2026, prior to Great Lent. It will be a casual, fun event to welcome our new or prospective new members. Stay tuned for updates!

Lastly, we will be celebrating Holy Trinity's 60th Anniversary, which is a Diamond year. A diamond symbolizes the enduring strength and beauty of a long-lasting relationship – just like we have had at Holy Trinity with our Lord and with each other for the past sixty years.

A planning committee has been assembled, led by Fr Peter and have met twice already. We are excited to plan a few celebrations throughout 2026 that are befitting of this celebration. It will involve all in the Parish. We will also create a commemorative keepsake that will capture the essence of this fantastic milestone. This will be a major fund raiser for the church. We strongly encourage each of you to work on a com-

mittee and be part of our planning this fantastic celebration.

Security

In light of the changing times, we have taken the initiative to build a formal set of policies and procedures that will guide how we protect our parishioners and our beloved church. We have assembled a committee that comprises of three members of the parish council – George Colonias, John Quintinilla, and myself. And three members of our community who are trained law enforcement professionals.

This activity is a follow up to some great work done by George Colonias with the help of Jerry Savnik to apply for and obtain over \$90,000 in DHS grant which we used to install and improve our physical security and technology – eg, bollards in front / back, enhanced security system, cameras, notification systems, etc. The policies we will craft will help to guide our training and education of our paid staff and ministry leaders who are entrusted with the safety of our people, youth, and our church.

Financial Fiduciary

Per the financials in the Assembly mailer, 2025 is shaping up to be a solid

year. While Stewardship will be flat year-over-year, Ways & Means and Other Income sources were strong. As a result, we should generate positive net income for the first time in many years.

On the revenue front we had a transformation occur where we generated over \$70,000 in rental income, largely from the growth in movie and tv production occurring in NJ. In this regard, George Colonias and I have established relationships with key contractors that do work for major production studios and we have established a relationship at NJ state level. Our intent is to be visible and to attract future projects and grow this source of income. This level of income allows us to invest in faith building and ministry and outreach programs, while also being able to maintain and upgrade our beautiful facility.

In closing, the faith, ministry and outreach, and fellowship vibrancy of Holy Trinity has never been brighter. We have a high-functioning parish council to serve Fr Peter and the faith-based needs of our community, with a mission to be a cultural and outreach beacon to retain and to attract others to join in our mission. ❖



GOYA

GOYA Christ Encounter Retreat / Boston Trip/Hellenic College/Holy Cross

■ BY SOPHIA SKALKOTOS, GOYA PRESIDENT

This year, Holy Trinity offered a unique Christ Encounter Retreat, as the GOYAnS traveled to Boston. In previous years, this retreat is held at a local YMCA camp over the same period of time – Friday through Sunday.


The GOYA members with advisors spent Saturday morning, November 15 in downtown Boston walking the Freedom Trail. Fr. Peter and Presvytera (and some of our honor students in history) remarked on certain significant sights as pertaining to the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. After sightseeing and luncheon at Faneuil Hall, we visited and were given a tour of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. The tour started in the Archbishop Iakovos Museum and continued throughout the beautiful campus. At 5:00 PM our group attended Great Vespers followed by dinner at the seminar in the cafeteria. A night session was held with Fr. Peter followed by some free time and lights out at 11:00 PM. On Sunday, November 16, the group attended the Divine Liturgy back at Holy Cross. Fr. Peter served with three other priests and with Bishop Anthony Vrame who presided over the liturgy. It was exceptionally special for Fr. Peter and Presvytera Victoria since they got married at the Chapel at Holy Cross. Additionally, it was a blessing to serve the Divine Liturgy at his alma mater. Three Holy Trinity altar boys (Antoni & Minas Saketos and Nick Kelly) also served with Fr. Peter. Another blessing was celebrating the liturgy with Bishop Anthony who was Fr. Peter's Religious Education professor and Rev. Fr. Nicholas Kastanas who was his Byzantine Music professor. The Holy Cross experience ended with breakfast back in the cafeteria and then our group departed in the afternoon.

All participants had an amazing time. It was a new and welcome experience, and we are so glad to offer this opportunity to our GOYA. ❖


Get Your **GOYA FRAPPÉ**

Support our GOYA Youth and enjoy a refreshing Frappe!

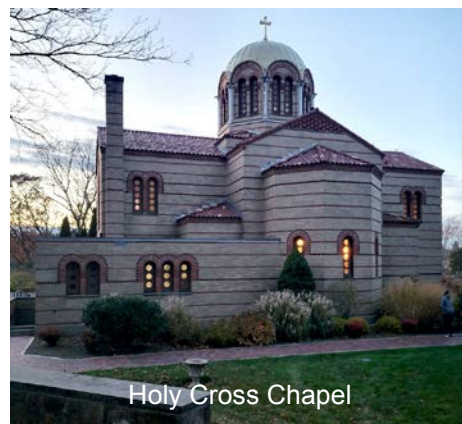
\$5 for each frappe.
Cash or Venmo (@WestfieldGOYA)



Proceeds go towards Holy Trinity's MDF trip!
MDF: Metropolis Music and Dance Festival

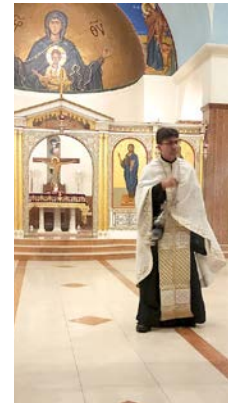


FRAPPE FOR PURCHASE AFTER LITURGY AT THE BOURAS CENTER ON:
Sunday, December 7
Sunday, December 14



Holy Cross Chapel





Fr. Peter, Presvytera Victoria & advisors with Bishop Anthony



Trinity Circle Events








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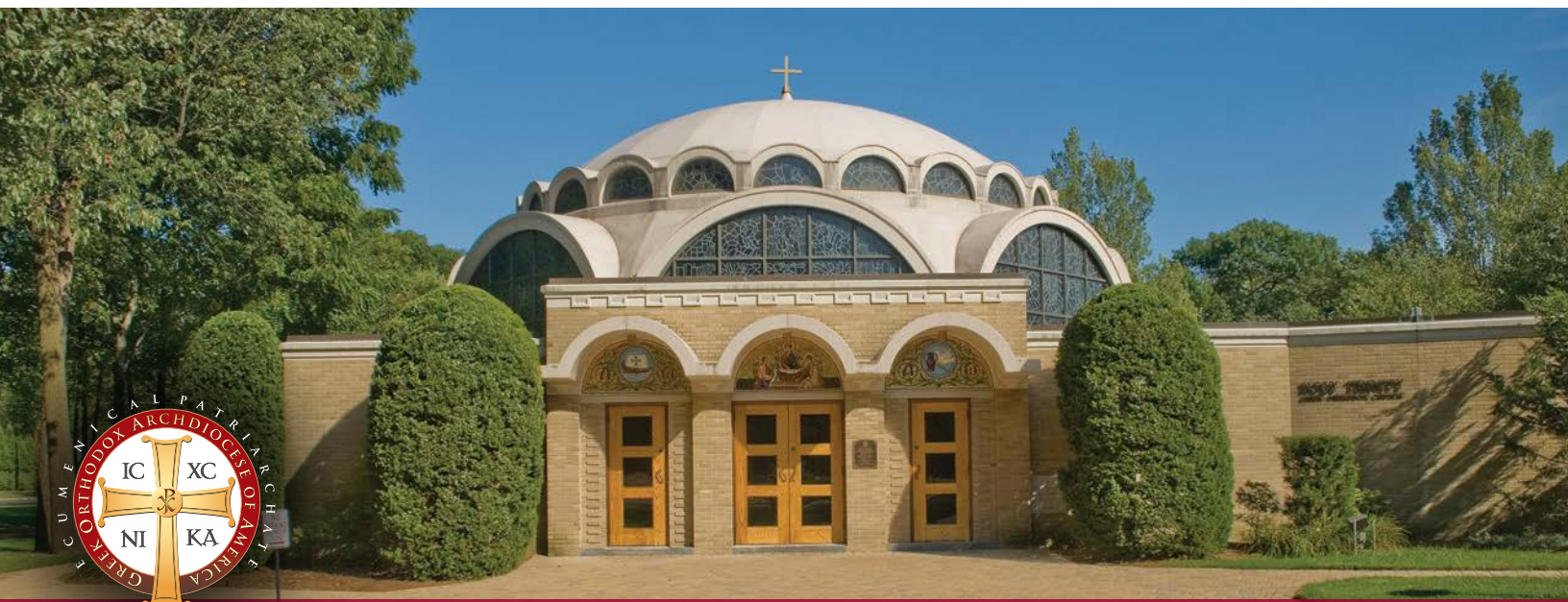
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<i>Divine Liturgy</i>	9:30 AM	9:30 AM

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