



from Fr. Nicholas

"Heaven"

A concerned parishioner recently said to me, "Father, I just want to get into Heaven." This is expressed by many well-meaning Christians. But it raises a deeper question: What do we actually believe about salvation and Heaven?

An interesting Barna Research Group's 2022 survey reported:

"Protection from eternal condemnation for one's sins is widely considered to be earned rather than received as a free gift from God.

Half of all adults (50%) argue that anyone who "is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in Heaven."

Although that view is generally considered to be Catholic doctrine and is one of the core beliefs over which the Protestant Reformation was waged, four out of ten (40%) Protestants accept this view of salvation ensured by good deeds.

Almost half of the non-evangelical born again Christians also adopt this view, in spite of the fact that they have prayed for the forgiveness of their sins and asked Jesus Christ to be their savior – actions which they believe were the basis of their assurance of salvation.



(continued, pg. 3) (continued, page 4)

## 1700th Anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea



"The Council of Nicaea stands as a landmark in the formation of the Church's doctrinal identity and remains the model for addressing doctrinal and canonical challenges on an ecumenical level."

- His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (March 13, 2025)

#### **About the Anniversary**

The 1700th Anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea is a momentous occasion for the global Christian community, commemorating a pivotal event that defined the foundations of Christian doctrine.

This historic council in 325 AD affirmed the divinity of Christ and established the Nicene Creed, a symbol of unity for all Christians.

The anniversary celebration brings together Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants to reflect on the enduring significance of Nicaea, fostering conciliarity, dialogue, prayer, and a renewed commitment to the pursuit of Christian unity, echoing the spirit of the first ecumenical council.

On Sunday, June 1st, 2025, the Orthodox Church liturgically commemorated the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea.

#### **About the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea**

The First Council of Nicaea, also known as the first ecumenical council, occurred in 325 AD. The council was called at the request of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, who convened this gathering of hierarchs to address the heresy of Arianism, the belief that Christ as God the Son is lesser than God the Father, which would make him a created being.

With 318 bishops present from across the empire, the council decreed unequivocally that the Son is consubstantial (homoousion) with the Father and is eternally begotten from Him. These beliefs were solidified in the Nicene Creed, the final version of which was established at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD and is still used to this day in many churches ("I believe in one God, the Father the Almighty...").

The Council of Nicaea also determined a means for calculating a common day of Pascha, or Easter, attempting to unify the Church in its celebration of its most sacred holiday.

The legacy of the First Council of Nicaea remains of great significance in contemporary church life, both in its influence on fundamental Christology and ecclesiastical affairs, as well as its establishment of the importance of dialogue in addressing theological and pastoral issues.



## FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN

The next volunteer opportunity for Feed My Children is Saturday, August 9 in Aurora from 9 - 10:45 am (on the border of Naperville & Aurora). In the past, we've helped prepare meals which have been shipped to Romania, Liberia, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama.

NEXT VOLUNTEER DAY: SAT. 8/9 9 - 10:45 AM

Contact Emily Rehn at platovalentine@hotmail.com or 708.369.9365 for more details.

Apparently, large numbers of the non-evangelical born again adults believe that people have a choice of means to salvation, either the grace-alone or the salvation-through-works approaches."

What is our Orthodox Christian understanding of salvation and Heaven? In popular culture Heaven is imagined as a physical place—clouds, pearly gates, angels playing harps, St. Peter, golden streets, and white robes. These images, though vivid, are symbolic - attempting to express the inexpressible.

Heaven is the "land of the living, where night does not exist and where there is no sleep. There is no material eating and drinking – the supports of our weakness; there are no sicknesses, no pains, no medicines, no courts of law, no businesses, no crafts and no money – the subject of wars and the root of enmity. It is the land of the living, not of the dying because of sin, but of the living the true life in Christ Jesus" (St. Basil).

In contrast to some non-Orthodox teachings, which portray Hell as a separate place created solely for punishment, Orthodox Christianity understands both Heaven and Hell as relational, not spatial.

The Christian's goal is not to go to Heaven as a place but rather to grow into deepening communion with God by more fully acquiring the Holy Spirit.

This relationship begins in this life (at our Baptism) and continues forever. God does not "send" people to Heaven or Hell. The Church is a hospital for sinners that prepares us for the experience of coming into the presence of God.

Both Heaven and Hell are states of our soul. Our response to God's love determines "where" we are. God is either included or excluded from our lives. In our present lives we experience a foretaste of Heaven as we commune with God.

As Christ Himself said, "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). We experience Heaven when we commune with God in prayer, through the sacraments and serving others.

We can also experience Hell in this life. As Jesus said, "Whoever does not believe is condemned already" (John 3:18). We can be internally confused, lonely, angry and tormented. Hell is darkness.

Although the fire is illuminating, the lost experience darkness because they are spiritually blind and divine light appears as darkness. "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matthew 6:23).

St. Anthony summarizes Heaven and Hell: "Thus to say that God turns away from the wicked is like saying that the sun hides itself from the blind."

Hell is continually excluding God from our lives and results in ongoing suffering. Holiness and salvation come not simply by obeying laws, but by welcoming God's presence into our hearts and lives.

When we finally come into the Lord's presence, Heaven, the "books" of our hearts and lives will be opened and His light will reveal the book's contents.

God's Light will reveal what is truly within us: whether we are drawn to Him or shrink back in fear and shame. According to St. Isaac the Syrian, God's Divine Love that delights the righteous (those that have lived in accord with it) will also torment the unrepentant (sinners).

St. Symeon the New Theologian expressed it powerfully: "It is not so much what we believe or what we do, but what we are that will determine our future state."

With love in Christ,

+Fr. Nicholas



Philoptochos is here for you, our Holy Apostles sisters, brothers, families, and parish.

We want you to know that Philoptochos is available to help you with some of life's challenges that may arise.

Please reach out to Fr. George (<a href="mailto:frgeorge@holyapostleschurch.com">fr. Nicholas (<a href="mailto:frnicholas@holyapostleschurch.com">frnicholas@holyapostleschurch.com</a>) if you need financial help with food, utility bills, or other essential household expenses.

All requests for assistance are held in strict confidence.

The love and support of Holy Apostles and our Philoptochos Chapter are here to assist you.



## FAMILY PICNIC





## **A Very Special Day of Celebration**

On June 1 Holy Apostles celebrated Graduate Sunday along with our annual Family Picnic.

Graduates from eighth grade, high school, college and post graduate studies were honored by our clergy immediately following the Divine Liturgy.

Afterwards, the congregation exited to the big tent to enjoy a lunch that included chicken and pork souvlakia, burgers, hotdogs and all the accompaniments.

A beautiful dessert array was provided by Philoptochos in honor of our graduates.

Over 400 parishioners participated and took part. Our young people had fun with games. It was a beautiful day. Thank you to chairpersons, Mike Thiakos and Sandy Pihos, and their committees for their hard work.

Already Looking Forward to Next Summer!



# & GRADUATION



You are invited to the Holy Apostles Philoptochos Society

# Annual Membership Night

Tuesday, September 23 at 6:30 pm Modern Plate | 119 N. York Street, Elmhurst

Light dinner will be served & cash bar available

Free parking @ Schiller Parking Deck — Schiller St. & Commerce Ave. (opposite Modern Plate's back entrance)

R.S.V.P by 9/16

Call/Email: Aleka Ernst alekaernst@aol.com 630, 561,1660 Scan QR:

Online: https://www.tinyurl.com/haphilo2501

Please join our Philoptochos Chapter to continue our mission



TO CARE FOR THOSE WHO ONCE CARED FOR US IS ONE OF LIFE'S HIGHEST HONORS.

# THE HOLY APOSTLES CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP



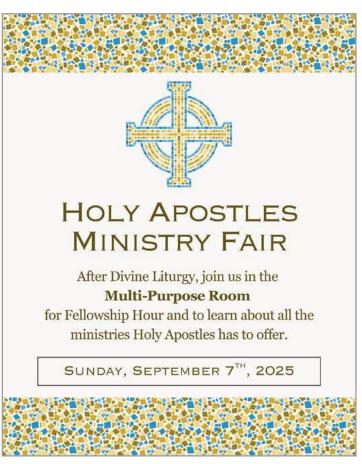
## SUMMER BREAK

We will not be meeting in June, July and August.

## Please Join Us on Tuesday, Sept. 9 | 1 PM | Philoptochos Room For Discussion & Coffee

Please contact Kathy Steffenson at <u>gksteff@gmail.com</u> or Val Dranias at <u>valdranias@aol.com</u> with any questions.

We hope that you will join us.











## **2025 Project HOPE**

Senior Visit Initiative
Pilsen Community/Chicago

The Metropolis Project HOPE Team has been encouraging parishes to visit and engage with low-income senior citizens. The request was for each parish to fill 50 HOPE bags and to also provide a team of 10 individuals to pass out the food bags and interact with the seniors.

We conducted our first visit last April. It was a truly rewarding experience and the seniors were extremely grateful for their bags of food. We have decided to schedule another visit for Friday, Septem-

ber 19th.

Here is a general idea of how the day will go:

- A bus will pick our volunteer team up at 10:15am for arrival at 11:15am at the Pilsen Satellite Center 2021 S. Morgan St., Chicago, IL 60608
- Carts will be available to load the 50 HOPE bags for transport into the center
- Opening statement from either a Pilsen Satellite Center or a HOPE representative
- Senior activity (bingo, craft) from 11:30 am -12:30 pm
- · Bag distribution by the volunteer team
- Bus return to Holy Apostles arrival around 2 pm

Food for the bags will be purchased and then our GOYANS will pack the bags on September 9th. We have decided to fill the bags with the following items:

- Pasta/Rice/Lentils/Cereal
- Canned Tuna/Canned Beans/Canned Corn/Soup (low sodium)
- Fruit Jams/Peanut Butter/Pasta Sauce/Granola Bars/Pudding Snacks

If there are any parishioners that can provide a means for us to purchase any of the above items for the bags at cost or wholesale, this would be most appreciated. Please contact Faye Adams at <a href="mailto:geofaye.adams@gmail.com">geofaye.adams@gmail.com</a>, Nicole Kubesh at <a href="mailto:nkubesh73@gmail.com">nkubesh73@gmail.com</a>, or Maria Pat at <a href="mailto:mdpatt59@comcast.net">mdpatt59@comcast.net</a>.

NEXT GOYA PACKING: Tues., Sept. 9

Friday, Sept. 19

Father George has once again graciously agreed to lead the volunteer team on this visit. We are looking for parishioners to complete our volunteer team of 10. Please consider being a part of this team.

#### Thank you for your support!



## BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING

Sunday, August 24





## Philoptochos General Meeting



Our Philoptochos General Meeting/2025-2027 Elections were held on May 20 with special guest speaker, Gail Foster, Executive Director of Poised for Success (www.poisedforsuccess.org).

This coincided with our annual May clothing drive which supports Poised for Success, a non-profit organization serving the Chicagoland area whose mission is to provide, at no charge, beautiful interview and business appropriate clothing to women who are on assistance and in the job market.

In addition to providing beautiful clothing, Gail and her volunteers, assist clients in building self-esteem, teach them soft interview skills, and refer them to other local service organizations providing job-skills training and job placement. Our new 2025-2027 Philoptochos Board took their oath of office after the meeting/elections and are looking forward to continuing our wonderful philanthropic work!













George Landoft: 3 Gold medals in swimming 11-12 Year-old team: Soccer

Stephanie Milak & Zoe Panton: Double Tennis

Zoe Panton: Singles Tennis



Kosta Vatianous: 800 meter run George Landoft: Swimming



Isabella Eliopoulos: Swimming Leo Fisher: Shotput Kosta Vatianous: 1600 meter run









## PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JUNE 2025 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

PC SECRETARY: PATTY PAPPAS; EDITED: VAL DRANIAS

The meeting was called to order by President James Maragos at 7:35 PM. The Opening Prayer was offered by Father Georgiou. Valentina Vourlos recited the Mission Statement.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

May 15, 2025 Parish Council Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve by Patty Pappas, seconded by Steven Milak, as amended with gratitude for the excellent slideshow presentation at the Spring Parish Assembly. Approved unanimously as amended.

<u>May 19, 2025 Special Parish Council Meeting Minutes (Executive Session):</u> Motion to approve by Patty Pappas, seconded by Sandra Pihos. Approved unanimously.

#### **Correspondence** - Report by Patty Pappas

- Hodges|Loizzi legal summary for pro bono work by Vanessa Clohessy.
- IOCC thank you letter for Grand Banquet donation.
- Panhellenic Scholarship Foundation Invitation.
- Thank you card from Deacon Perry & Diakonissa Pat Hamalis, Diki & John Kolimbiris for support and prayers in the wake of their father's repose.

**Ecclesiastical Report** – Father Georgiou led a reading and discussion on the life of Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durres, and All Albania, of Blessed Memory.

#### **Ministry Reports**

Finance – Lou Kafkes reported on behalf of George Antonopoulos:

- The cash position, which includes both capital and operating accounts, is equal to \$1.44 million.
- Corrections were made for some expense allocations that were paid out of the operating account, which were shifted instead to the capital account.
- May 2025 financial results were below expectations; year-to-date net revenue is \$111,000 (approximately \$25,000 below budget).
- Early payroll tax reimbursement was issued due to Father Dokos' sabbatical travel.
- Retroactive pay for Leamus janitorial services impacted May financial standing.
- Pledge reminder letters will be sent to families that have not yet made their 2025 pledge.

Stewardship – Sandra Pihos provided a report on stewardship pledges:

	STEWARDS	HIP REPORT	
Metric	MAY 2025 TYD	MAY 2024 YTD	% Change
Number of Pledges	549	569	-4%
Total Pledged	\$738,612	\$738,096	0%
Amount Collected	\$585,219	\$592,958	-1%
Median Pledge	\$600	\$600	-0%
Average Pledge	\$1,345	\$1,297	4%

- Stewardship pledges are currently stagnant, but similar to May 2024 year-to-date.
- We will work as a small team to identify and communicate parish needs.
- Planning a stewardship push in the fall with help from Chris Pepke for identification of church building needs.

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JUNE 2025 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING (continued)

#### **Building & Grounds** – Report by Chris Pepke:

- If all 2025 building and grounds projects are completed according to budget, there will be \$182,000 remaining in the capital account. In contrast, our reserve study calls for \$350,000 to be allotted annually toward building and grounds projects. Beginning in 2026, we will be short on funds for completion of needed projects.
- Anticipated 2026 project: Parking lot overhaul (\$500,000), including new curbs and lighting.
- Other upcoming projects:
  - Interior lighting for the nave, baptistry, narthex, and multi purpose room. The priority is to install lighting within the nave. A lighting design proposal for \$43,800 was submitted to the BPA for layouts in these areas.
  - Nave accessibility ramp options are under review. Options include permanent versus moveable ramps.
  - Projects completed/in progress: air duct cleaning, office remodel, monument wall and signage, interior lighting, and security camera upgrades.
  - Finance Committee to meet in July to plan funding strategy for upcoming capital needs.

#### **Ushering** – Report by Ted Dres:

- Discussed need for balanced Board presence indoors and outdoors during church picnic.
- Ushering scheduling through August is complete; the schedule will be posted in the office.
- Members were reminded to find replacements when unavailable; to notify Ted; to update the office copy.
- Announced Paraklesis for Elaine Katzioris on Friday, June 20 at 7:00 PM with coffee hour afterward.

#### **Old Business**

#### Holy Apostles Foundation - Report by James Maragos

Marketing campaign to launch in July/August, led by Foundation Board Member Joanne Volakakis.

#### Parish Picnic – Report by Mike Thiakos & Sandra Pihos

Thank you to the many volunteers that made our picnic a great success. Formal report to be presented in July once all costs have been ascertained. 420 meals were served; food and desserts were highly praised. Suggested exploring RSVP and donation format for future picnics. Peter Bell and Sandra Pihos assisted with donation collections this year.

#### Vacation Bible School – Report submitted by Nicole Voelz

40 volunteers (including juniors) participated. Athletico provided a \$5,000 donation; \$900 surplus noted. Collection was taken during carnival day for philanthropic outreach. Advocate Health donation check from the previous year was never cashed.

#### Junior Olympics – Report submitted by Nicole Voelz

48 youth participants in various sports. Many medals awarded. Thank you to our Athletic Directors for their involvement in this successful event.

#### Parish Event Financial Planning – Report by Sandra Pihos

Emphasized need for financial reports on all events. Suggested using QuickBooks for tracking expenses and income. All event chairs should submit budget-related data for future planning.

#### **Greek School** – Report by Nicole Ostendorf

Motion made by Nicole Ostendorf to rename the Holy Apostles Greek School with the official name of Holy Apostles Hellenic Academy, effective immediately. Seconded by Sandra Pihos. The motion passed unanimously. 2025/2026 enrollment: 40 students to date; registration link had technical issues.

#### Youth Worker Training - Report by Patty Pappas

There are 8 youth workers currently noncompliant with the required youth safety training. The ministry leaders were notified to enforce the 'no contact' rule until these individuals become compliant. The ministry leaders have informed us that most of these noncompliant individuals are no longer youth workers. Upon confirmation, they will be removed from the database of registered youth workers. The list changes month by month: since youth workers train at different times, training expiration dates vary from person to person.

#### **Chapel Hill Cemetery Plots** – Report by Patty Pappas

A procedural checklist has been developed to establish a clear and consistent process for the sale of remaining cemetery plots. Internal records and the computer database are currently being reviewed and updated to ensure accuracy and completeness. Since December 2023, eight cemetery plots have been sold, generating a total income of \$36,000.

#### **New Business**

#### Hearing Loop Project – Report by James Maragos

Total cost of the project: \$26,850 (Nave + MPR). The Hellenic Foundation would like to reimburse us for the nave portion of the cost, totaling \$13,350. Motion made by Steve Milak to allocate the \$13,350 in donation funds from the Hellenic Foundation to the Capital Account, seconded by Sandra Pihos. Unanimously approved. Donor recognition via website/social media only, per parish policy.

#### St. lakovos Retreat Center & Metropolis Vision Fund Donations

Proposed to create a missions budget and guidelines before making final decisions on donation requests. Discussion tabled to next meeting.

#### **Holy Apostles Feast Day Services**

6/29 at 7:00 PM – Vespers service with homily by Father Nicholas Greanias. 6/30 at 9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy.

#### Golf Outing – July 7, 2025

Location: Oak Brook Hills Hilton. Includes lunch, golf, cocktails, dinner, raffle and auction. Scramble format is designed for both golfers and non-golfers. Significant fundraiser for Holy Apostles.

#### **Parish Directory**

Team developing a proposal for a new church directory. Ginny Petru will work on its layout and design. Parishioners may submit their own photos and information without the need for a formal photo session. Will consider an in person photo session as well for those interested.

#### **5K Event Recap:**

Approximately 35 parishioners attended the event. Plans to improve promotion for next year's 5K event.

#### **Finance Committee Meetings**

Committee to begin meeting monthly starting in July. Goal: Develop a unified financial strategy and budget plan, especially for the parking lot project.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, July 17, 2025 at 7:30 PM

**Key Upcoming Dates**: Sunday, June 29 at 7:00 PM – Holy Apostles Feast Day Vespers; Monday, June 30 at 9:30 AM – Holy Apostles Feast Day Liturgy; Monday, July 7 – Golf Outing at Willow Crest Golf Club, Oak Brook Hills Hilton; Sunday, September 7 – Ministry Fair (after Liturgy); Wednesday–Thursday, November 5–6 – Metropolis of Chicago Clergy/Laity Conference

Closing Prayer: Offered by Father Georgiou. Adjournment: James Maragos officially adjourned the meeting at 9:21 PM.





## The meaning of objects held by saints in icons

BASILICA.RO



CROSS

symbolizes sacrifice and appears in the icons of martyrs



GOSPEL

points to preaching, being attributed to evangelists and hierarchs



SCROLL

indicates wisdom and is associated with prophets, apostles and venerables



CROSIER

signifies spiritual authority and it is held by hierarchs or abbots



CHURCH

is held by founders of religious establishments



ICON

represents the defenders of icons or disciples with the icon of their spiritual father



WRITING QUILL / STYLUS

points to a hymnographer or writer saint



## MEDICINE BOX

suggests the fact that the saint was a holy unmercenary



## WEAPONS

are associated with a military saint and are often accompanied by the cross

**AUGUST 2025** 

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Eri	Sat
					1 7:00 pm Paraklesis	28:30 am Westchester Food Pantry Volunteer Day 5:00 pm Vespers 6:00 pm Vespers Potluck Dinner
3 8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour	4 7:00 pm Paraklesis	<b>5</b> <b>7:00 pm</b> Great Vespers	6 Feast Day of the Transfiguration 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 7:00 pm Paraklesis	7 7:00 pm Paraklesis	8 7:00 pm Paraklesis	9 9:00 am Feed My Starving Children 5:00 pm Vespers
8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour	7:00 pm Paraklesis	7:00 pm Paraklesis 8:15 pm Parish Family/Philoptochos Service Project	13 7:00 pm Paraklesis	14 6:00 pm Bus departure for Assumption Great Vespers	15 Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	16 5:00 pm Vespers
17 8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour	18	19	<b>20</b> <b>1:00 pm</b> Bereavement Group Meeting	<b>21</b> 7:30 pm Parish Council Meeting	22	<b>23</b> <b>5:00 pm</b> Vespers
8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:15 am Back to School Blessing 11:30 am Fellowship Hour	25	26 7:00 pm Choir Federation Rehearsal 7:00 pm Philoptochos Board Meeting	<b>27</b> <b>7:00 pm</b> Parish Family Ministry Meeting	<b>28</b> <b>7:00 pm</b> Women's Book Club	29 Feast Day of Beheading of St. John the Baptist 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	30 10:00 am 5th Saturday Serve Day 5:00 pm Vespers
31 8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour						

HOLY APOSTLES GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH 2501 S. Wolf Road Westchester, IL 60154 (708) 562-2744

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#### Sacraments listed are those known at time of publication

#### **MEMORIALS**

JUNE/JULY (unknown prior to last issue publication)

**George Andrews** 

George Beshilas

John Brales

Demetra Chiganos

Peter & Angie Fikaris

**Christopher Franks** 

**Athanasios Georgalis** 

**Thomas Kachulis** 

James Karones

John Mathews

Barbara & George Pappas

Dino Pavlakos

Othon Poteres

Stefania Xristina Rahn

Stella Sigalos

**Gus Stathis** 

Jim Stathis

Mary Stathis

Demetra & George Stathopoulos

**Christos Syregelas** 

**AUGUST** 

Mary G Aravosis

Helen Busch

Anastase Christou

Theodore Christou

Michael Dorner

George Futris

Panagoula Kotsiantos

#### **BAPTISMS**

JULY

Constantine Mulligan (Adult) Sponsor: Niko Lakerdas

**AUGUST** 

Dennis, son of Nick & Vanessa Kladis

Sponsor: Christopher Wonais

Caroline, Daughter of Justin & Kelsey Halikias

Sponsor: Matt Wonais

Lina, daughter of Aristides & Katerina Labros

Sponsors: Helen Kosmas, Amy Rodriguez

Alexander, son of Anna Priftis & Michael Camarata

Sponsor: Nikos Priftis

#### **WEDDINGS**

AUGUST

Nicholas Backas & Sarah Lewis Sponsor: Zachary Backas

Jessica Burdeaux & Robert Nordli Sponsor: Christina Welbourn

#### **FUNERALS**

James Karones Penelope Leonard George Pappas