

HOLY APOSTLES SPRING PARISH ASSEMBLY MEETING MINUTES
5/4/25 AFTER DIVINE LITURGY

1. **Opening Prayer:** Offered by Father George Dokos at 12:03 PM
2. **Election of James Maragos as Chairperson of Assembly:** by Patty Pappas, Secretary
3. **Appointment of Patty Pappas as Secretary:** by Chairperson of Assembly, James Maragos
4. **Opening Remarks:** James Maragos, Parish Council President
 - a. Encouraged both stewardship and planned giving (wills, IRA's, insurance) to support the long-term needs of the church.
 - b. A future speaker will be invited to assist with fundraising strategies.
 - c. Reported stewardship contributions in 2024 equaled \$903,216, representing a 17% increase over 2023.
 - d. Sunday School enrollment has increased, however, weekly attendance is down.
5. **Approval of Minutes:**
 - a. **Fall Parish Assembly Minutes (October 6, 2024)**
 - i. Motion to approve by Patty Pappas, seconded by Sandra Pihos. Unanimously approved.
 - b. **Approval of Minutes of Special Parish Assembly (March 16, 2025)**
 - i. Motion to approve by Patty Pappas, seconded by George Theotikos. Unanimously approved.
6. **Ecclesiastical Report:** Father George Dokos
 - a. The overall state of our spiritual life, as well as our adult and youth education programs, is very encouraging, though there is still room for growth. It takes the collective involvement of our entire community to inspire greater participation—encouraging more people to come to church, to serve, to learn, to worship, and to find joy in all that our parish offers.
 - b. In 2024, our sacramental life saw both challenges and blessings, yet we are heartened by a clear upward trend. We held 29 funerals, and joyfully celebrated 11 weddings, 38 baptisms, and 3 chrismations—welcoming a total of 41 new members into the life of the Church. Our annual goal is 50 baptisms, and we remain committed to growing and strengthening our parish family.
 - c. Christ's command is clear: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..."* Each of us is called to live as a disciple. As we go out into the world—our mission field—we are called to live our Orthodox faith in a way that radiates the love of Christ. People will notice. They'll ask, *"Why are you so joyful?"* And when they ask, let your life be the answer. Pray for God's grace, strength, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to continue His work through you.
7. **Stewardship Report:** Sandra Pihos, Vice President
 - a. A Holy Apostles stewardship trends graph dating back to 2000 reflects broader societal changes, with a noticeable decline in church investment across the country. Numerous studies confirm this trend, as individuals today have more choices and commitments than ever before. However, there is good news for our parish: we are growing. We consistently outperform national averages, and many people are inquiring about joining. We're often recognized as one of the friendliest Orthodox churches in the area—a testament to our welcoming spirit.
 - b. We have reached an all-time high in both stewardship pledges and collections. Pledges have increased by 6% in number, with a 17% increase in total dollars pledged and collected. The average pledge has risen by 10%, indicating that our message of faithful giving is resonating within our community. Currently, 76% of our operating expenses are covered through stewardship, with the remaining needs supported by various fundraising efforts and parish events.
 - c. This year has started strong, with a 5% increase in pledged amount, though from a slightly smaller group. Collections are on pace with the same time last year. The median pledge is up 17%, and the average is up 9%.

- d. Importantly, stewardship is not just about financial giving—it includes the offering of time and talent as well. This is essential to sustaining our ministries and mission. We encourage everyone to review the updated ministry booklet, which now includes four new ministries. All are encouraged to get involved and help our parish continue to flourish.

8. Treasurer's Report: George Antonopoulos, Treasurer

- a. Our financial position remains solid, thanks to the continued generosity of our parishioners through stewardship and donations. We are currently ahead of last year's first-quarter position and tracking ahead of budget overall. While pledges are slightly behind expectations, we remain optimistic about catching up in the coming months.
- b. On the expense side, we are also ahead of last year. We continue to manage expenses prudently and operate within our approved budget limits.
- c. Our cash position has continued its steady growth. We currently hold approximately **\$1.3 million**, divided between operating and capital reserves. These funds are strategically allocated, with a **60/40 split**: approximately **\$700,000 in operating cash** and **\$600,000 in capital funds**, including money market accounts to generate additional interest on idle funds.

9. Building & Grounds Report: Steve Savas, on behalf of Christopher Pepke, Parish Council

- a. The estimated cost for upcoming building projects is \$3.182 million. Major capital improvements planned for 2025 include:
 - i. Replacement of the front monument sign along Wolf Road
 - ii. Construction of a brick wall enclosure for the HVAC units
 - iii. A comprehensive overhaul of the church lighting system
- b. To move forward with the lighting project, we have interviewed two lighting designers and one designer/contractor, and are now in the process of receiving formal bids. The original cost estimate, which is now more than five years old, is no longer accurate due to rising material and labor costs.
 - i. Motion by Steve Savas to approve an increase in funding for the complete lighting project - including design fees, materials and labor, from the previously allocated \$125,000 to a new amount not to exceed \$275,000. Seconded by George Theotikos and unanimously approved by the Assembly.

10. Ministry Reports:

a. Technology: Report by Steven Milak, Parish Council

- i. A new workstation has been installed in the front office, enhancing our administrative efficiency.
- ii. We're currently troubleshooting an issue with the micro-adjuster in the nave to ensure optimal audio balance during services.
- iii. The Multipurpose Room (MPR) was successfully set up for Holy Week overflow, accommodating additional attendees with livestream access.
- iv. We are working on a grant application to receive funds for technology projects at the church.
- v. Our livestream reaches approximately 50 devices each week, thanks to the dedication of George Zurales and Jamie Fischer.
- vi. The Paschal "Anastasi" service drew over 700 views, and our Holy Apostles YouTube channel has now surpassed 1,000 subscribers.
- vii. The hearing loop system is functioning well, though use has decreased—possibly due to newer, more capable hearing aids among parishioners.

b. Youth Ministries: Report by Alexa Kakis, Youth Director

- i. This has been a great year for Youth Ministries, with growth across all age groups. Our “Tots” program, for example, has expanded from just 2 to 12 children.
- ii. The Holy Friday retreat was attended by nearly 100 children.
- iii. The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival had participation from four youths. We hope to expand the program next year.
- iv. A few youth group meetings remain this spring and are listed in the parish brochure. Families are encouraged to have their children participate.
- v. The Effective Christian Ministry (ECM) leadership team has identified five goals to help guide and grow our youth programs. Two of those goals will be implemented in the coming year, with more details to be shared soon.
- vi. We are hopeful and excited to see our youth ministry continue to grow in both numbers and spiritual depth in the year ahead.

c. Philoptochos: Report Sunday Urban, on behalf of Diane Dietz, Philoptochos President

- i. Philoptochos is the philanthropic arm of the Greek Orthodox Church, and its name means "Friends of the Poor." It is a nationwide non-profit organization with over 26,000 members and more than 400 chapters. Holy Apostles is proud to be one of the largest chapters, with 212 active members.
- ii. Parish Activities (2024):
 - a. September/December/February/April: Senior Visits
 - b. Veteran’s Artoclasia
 - c. Koukla’s Kafenio
 - d. Christmas Breakfast after the Pageant
- iii. Parish Activities (2025):
 - a. January: Vasilopita Celebration
 - b. February: Godparents Luncheon
 - c. March: Celebration of Books Reception/Lenten Dinner
 - d. April: Lambades Sales/Easter Food Sale/Holy Friday Egg Wrapping
 - e. June: Vespers and Feast Day for our Parish
- iv. Charitable Outreach (2024):
 - a. Project HOPE: Provided bags of food to those in need and recently donated \$500 to support the Hillside Food Pantry.
 - b. Operation Classroom: Helped supply local school comfort closets with essential items, including backpacks and school supplies.
 - c. September Pop-Up Kafé: Raised \$2,800 for the Greek Fire Relief Fund.
 - d. Fall Coat Drive (October): Donated over 200 coats.
 - e. Holiday Food Collection
 - f. Feed the Hungry at the Cathedral (October): Served meals to the underserved.
 - g. Fashion Show & Luncheon
 - h. Family Shelter Services Collection
 - i. Feed My Starving Children
 - j. Blanket Making Day #1
 - k. Christmas Lenten Service Project
- v. Charitable Outreach (2025):
 - a. Blanket Making Day #2

- b. Thumbuddy Special
 - c. Easter Lenten Service Project
 - d. Fifth Serve Saturday
 - e. Senior Visit Initiative
 - f. Poised for Success Clothing Drive
- vi. Major Fundraiser
 - a. Our biggest annual fundraiser is the Philoptochos Fashion Show in October. This year's event, titled "Empower Elegance: A Celebration of Women," will be chaired by Catherine Karvelas. Planning is underway, including the selection of beneficiary charities.
- viii. May 20 Meeting: Featured speaker from Poised for Success
- viii. Impact: Thanks to the generosity and dedication of our members, over \$90,000 was donated to various charitable causes in 2024.
- d. **Sunday School:** Written Report by Toni Milak, Sunday School Director
 - i. No questions asked regarding the report.
- e. **Greek School:** Report by Nicole Ostendorf, Parish Council
 - i. Nicole Ostendorf, along with Sandra Pihos and Helen Nikolas, serve as advisors in support of the Greek School program.
 - ii. This school year, the program served 88 students, with graduation scheduled for May 20th.
 - iii. Recent staffing changes include the hiring of Gigi Trulis as a permanent substitute teacher in order to provide consistent support in the classroom.
 - iv. Continued efforts are being made to grow enrollment and enhance the student experience.
 - v. Holy Apostles continues to be recognized for having one of the strongest and most respected Greek School programs in the Chicago area.
- g. **Missions Ministry:** Written Report by Peter Bell, Parish Council
 - i. No questions asked regarding the report.
- f. **Men's Ministry:** Written Report by Steven Milak, Parish Council
 - i. An upcoming Men's Ministry event will be the Leavetaking Feast, which will be hosted on May 27th.

11. Old Business:

- a. **Holy Apostles Foundation:** Written Report by Kristi Athas, Holy Apostles Foundation President
 - i. The Holy Apostles Foundation held its first official meeting, establishing itself as a standalone 501(c)(3) entity focused on supporting the long-term financial health and capital needs of the parish. The Foundation is designed to complement, not replace, stewardship, serving as a mechanism for larger-scale projects and planned giving. Stewardship is akin to making a mortgage payment on your home; the Foundation is akin to making investment savings for the future.
 - ii. Foundation Purpose: To fund long-term and capital improvement projects; not intended to support day-to-day operating costs.
 - iii. Fundraising: A strategic planning session will be held with experienced fundraiser Dave McGowan to explore future campaigns.
 - iv. Structure: The Foundation is a separate legal entity with its own EIN. IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status application (Form 1023) is pending submission.
 - v. Donation Process: Donations can currently be made via check to Holy Apostles Church, with "Foundation" in the memo line. Funds are segregated in a restricted account until a dedicated bank account is established.

- vi. Next Steps: Finalize and submit IRS paperwork; open a dedicated bank account, launch informational materials to educate parishioners on the Foundation's role and planned giving opportunities.
- vii. Closing note: Parishioners are encouraged to view the Foundation as a long-term investment in the future of Holy Apostles. While the Foundation is still in its early stages, it offers a vital opportunity for sustaining and strengthening our parish for generations to come.

12. New Business:

- a. **Election of Metropolis Clergy/Laity Delegates:** James Maragos, Chairperson of Assembly
 - i. The Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly will be held on Wednesday, November 5th and Thursday, November 6th in Rolling Meadows.
 - ii. The election of our parish delegates will take place during our next Parish Assembly in October to allow ample time for nominations and preparation.

13. Closing Prayer: Father Nicholas Georgiou

14. Adjourn:

- a. Motion to adjourn by Steve Savas. Seconded by Dranias. Unanimously approved.
- b. James Maragos officially adjourned the meeting at 1:13 PM.

In Attendance: 41 stewards

Parish Council Members Present: George Antonopoulos, Terry Chiganos, Ted Dres, James Maragos, Steven Milak, Nicole Ostendorf, Patty Pappas, Michael Parafink, Sandra Pihos, Norman Pomrening, Michael Thiakos, Nicole Voelz, Valentia Vourlos.

Fr. Nicholas Georgiou

James Maragos, Parish Council President

Patty Pappas, Parish Council Secretary