

the Light



DEC 2024 / JAN 2025
NEWSLETTER

DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2025

January 29 - February 1, 2025
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA
In person - [REGISTER HERE](#)



WINTER CAMP ST. THEKLA 2025

February 14-17, 2025
Woodland Christian Camp,
Temple, GA
In person

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YOUTUBE

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

May our Lord Jesus Christ, through the upcoming feasts of His Nativity and Theophany, grant you a peaceful, joyous, and spiritually enriching end to 2024 and a blessed beginning to 2025. By His grace, our diocese continues to grow stronger as we prepare for a series of spiritually uplifting events in the first half of the new year. These include:

- **Clergy and Winter Retreats** in January
- **Winter Camp** in February
- **Lenten Retreats** for Antiochian Women, AMEN, Young Adults, and Teen SOYO in April
- The **Parish Life Conference** in June
- The summer sessions of **Camp St. Thekla** in June and July

I encourage you all to look forward to these opportunities for spiritual growth and fellowship.

For more information on these events, including details about the DOMSE Scholarship for graduating high school seniors, please visit our website at www.DOMSE.org and explore the Events section.

As we embark on the new year, I would like to reflect on the importance of self-motivation in our daily lives. True self-motivation is not merely a human endeavor; for Christians, it flows from Christ's immeasurable love for us, demonstrated in His sacrifice on the Cross for our salvation. When Christ-centered self-motivation takes root in our lives, it leads to spiritual triumph and the cultivation of God-like virtues. The saints



have always emphasized this dynamic, recognizing it as foundational to spiritual growth. Though each person's journey varies, the result remains constant: a deepening relationship with God.

In 2025, we will undoubtedly face challenges in our secular and professional lives. The distractions of technology and other worldly enticements often disguise the work of the evil one, seeking to derail our spiritual progress. Yet, technology itself is not inherently harmful; it is how we use it that determines its impact. We must take ownership of our choices and remain steadfast in our direction, much like the rudder of a ship. While the rudder does not propel the vessel forward, it determines its course. Let our rudder be Jesus Christ, guiding us with His love, and let the spiritual life of our parishes and diocese be our compass.

As we journey through the coming year, let us remain vigilant and intentional in our spiritual efforts, participating in the many events and opportunities for growth within our diocese. I look forward to seeing you all at these events and in your parishes.

May God bless you and may the Holy Trinity protect you all!

+BISHOP NICHOLAS

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Hurricane Update

Hannah Hunt | Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, West Jefferson, NC



We are now eight weeks post Helene, and winter is quickly approaching in the High Country of Western North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. We had our first snow in early October. The emergency phase of Helene has passed, and we are now in the recovery and rebuilding phase. This looks very different to many people and areas.

In Boone and West Jefferson, life seems to be fairly normal. There are still condemned buildings and rubble piles, but for the most part life is carrying on. While it is still startling to notice that a once familiar landmark is gone or altered, people are finding their way back to normal activities and work. Patience is a new catch phrase.

In the outlying rural areas, the concerns are very different. Farmers and families often live on ancestral land and dwell in generational homes. Economic realities will prevent most of these people from being able to rebuild or restore a home that was paid for before they were born. The residents of the many homes that were deemed uninhabitable due to damage by flood waters or trees, are now living in tents, cars or garages. There has been an amazing movement of generous organizations and businesses to get campers donated for these families to live in on their current property. One company donated wooden storage sheds which are being transformed into tiny home structures. In recent weeks, hundreds of Amish arrived from Pennsylvania and set to work constructing tiny homes for those in need of shelter. The needs of these people will be enduring and donations to organizations who assist them on a year-round basis are greatly appreciated. The need for propane cannisters, propane heaters, carbon monoxide detectors and firewood will be relevant this entire winter. [Foscose Home Team](#) is running a relief distribution center which they pledge to keep open all winter. They are distributing donations of food, essentials, firewood, clothing, winter coats, pet foods, etc. Our AW ladies are planning to volunteer there regularly through the cold winter months.



(continued on page 3)

(Hurricane - continued from page 2)

Travel is still taking longer due to roads being closed while being repaired, both by the DOT and Linemen restoring down cables. Sinkholes, missing and compromised shoulders, guardrails on dangerous mountain cliffides askew or missing are still cause for concern, and folks are accepting longer commutes to let the DOT fix the infrastructure. Projections for complete restoration of our damaged infrastructure vary but it is fair to estimate years when considering the number of bridges and roads that were damaged. In the rural communities, there may only be one road in. Some neighborhoods and areas are only accessible by one or two bridges, so access to them and subsequent rebuilding is a slow process. This is causing an issue for those homes in need of fuel deliveries for winter heat as the fuel trucks cannot access many homes and neighborhoods. For bridges, driveways, and culverts in need of repair on roads that are on private property or not state-maintained, [Lansing's Bridges to Recovery](#) has been doing incredible work. This is an amazing non-profit organization to send donations to.



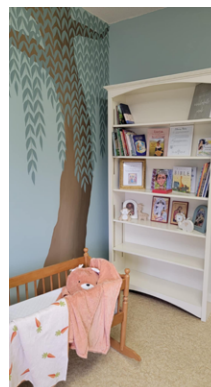
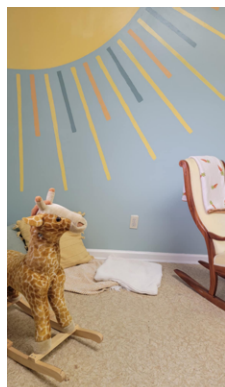
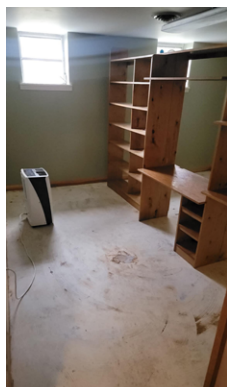
Our little church of Saints Peter and Paul, built in the 1800s, is an historic building. While the sanctuary was blessedly spared any damage, we did not completely escape the wrath of the hurricane. The steeple and roof, which were already in great need of repairs due to previous storms, received enough new damage to become a cause for great concern. A full assessment of the steeple is in the works, and the roof is being replaced this month. The estimated 30 to 40 inches of rain caused a septic overflow to flood the foyer, nursery, mother's nursing room, a side bathroom and hallway. Some of the space has been completely gutted down to the studs. We are waiting for estimates to replace the flooring. The nursery/family room has been moved into a new room, and parishioners lovingly painted the new space with beautiful murals of a sun and willow tree. The joy on the faces of our sweet children made everyone's hearts lighter.

The generosity, love, and support from so many parishes from North Carolinas and out of state has been awe-inspiring and humbling. Christ the Savior in Bluff City, Tennessee not only fed hot meals to untold numbers of people in their own area; they also sent two trucks with supplies to our area. Churches from the Raleigh/

Durham area, led by All Saints, sent several more trucks of supplies after their initial efforts. Other truckloads of supplies were sent to the area relief centers from as far away as Memphis, TN, Savannah, GA, Lewisburg, PA, and Lexington, KY. There was even a delivery of a truckload of fresh meat brought to the Ashe Food Pantry. The staggering financial donations are being managed with great care by the parish council and Deacon Andrew. Many of our own parishioners needed assistance with livelihood, furnaces, generators, HVAC systems, retaining walls, and structural damage to homes. Due to the outpouring of generosity, repairs of flood damage to the church building can be assessed and fixed speedily. In addition, the PC has been blessed with the opportunity to immediately distribute funds as needed to members of our local community, as well as to worthy organizations who are assisting those who are most vulnerable and in need.

Our single mother of five, Renee Tay, who lost everything including her vehicle, furnishings, clothing, beloved belongings, and laptop is currently in an Air BNB while awaiting her new rental in January. The out-pouring of support was unbelievable, and her family feels deep gratitude. Within a week from Helene, she received

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a donated laptop which enabled her to continue to work. She does the fundraising marketing for non-profits including being the head of marketing for the Bethlehem University Foundation, the US based non-profit that supports the only Christian university in the Holy Land. Renee says that the university is an oasis of peace for young Christian and Muslim Palestinians in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Hebron and even Gaza. She takes her work very seriously and is passionate about helping this amazing institution. The response to her personal needs and Go-Fund-Me were tremendous and has enabled her to proceed with putting her sweet family's life back together. The Ladies of Philoptochos of Saint Necktarios in Charlotte sent considerable financial aid; but also sent such thoughtful items as prayer ropes, an Orthodox Study Bible, Holy Oil and Water, and chocolate. The Antiochian Women of All Saints in Raleigh also sent special items such as icons and books, along with financial gifts and clothing. Her children were thrilled with the many gifts sent specifically to them; and have remained upbeat and resilient throughout the entire ordeal. Feeling such personalized thoughtfulness in a

time of utter loss and devastation has truly helped this family stay strong, positive, and hopeful.

With so many people displaced, or without working kitchens, there is a concern about normal life activities such as Thanksgiving Dinner and birthdays. One of our church families, who owns several local businesses including The High Country Greek, took early action in the recovery phase to feed anyone who needed a hot meal. Donations to cover the meals' costs poured in, and they fed over 500 people. In addition to the Greek café, they also own an Arcade on Main Street in Boone which they have kindly made available for displaced families in need of a space to have birthdays parties, bringing a moment of normality and joy back into the lives of so many children. From these efforts bloomed a new non-profit organization, [Greeks for Good](#). Through this non-profit, people in the community were fed a hot traditional Thanksgiving meal. Greeks for Good also distributed goody bags to local fall festivals providing treats to over 550 children. They also were able to donate 14 boxes of books to a program through Appalachian State University

which saw the books distributed to local schools. The ways for Greeks for Good to serve the community are still taking shape and have already made an enormous impact.



Another community greatly affected by the storm is the small business community. The High Country is a thriving area for small businesses; however, they rely heavily on the revenue from fall tourism. Many small business owners used their places of business as distribution centers of supplies or started their own efforts to deliver aid to those in need. Many of them were themselves suffering great loss. While many of the areas, such as West Jefferson and Blowing Rock, are open again, the financial loss is already having a huge impact. If there is a shop or restaurant that you love to visit when vacationing in the area, please call them and purchase gift cards to be used on your next visit. Buying gift cards keeps the revenue flowing and will help ensure that your favorite shop is still there the next time you come to the mountains.

In recognition of the emotional toll

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Clergy Spotlight

Fr. Philip Begley



Fr. Philip was born and raised in the heartland of America: Sioux City, Iowa. He is the son of Orthodox parents, the V. Rev. Fr. Thomas and Kh. Beth Begley. Father grew up attending services and Sunday School at St. Thomas Antiochian Orthodox church in Sioux City and quickly developed a love for the faith. In particular, he enjoyed serving as an altar boy and chanter. As he matured, Fr. Philip would often shadow his father, going with him on hospital visits and observing the various facets of ministry. This experience motivated him to pursue a theological education. After much prayer, he enrolled at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, where he earned a degree in Religious Studies, graduating Summa Cum Laude in 2009.

After earning his bachelor's degree, Fr. Philip applied for and received a scholarship from the Antiochian Archdiocese and was assigned to Holy Cross Greek School of Theology by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice blessed memory.

At Seminary, Fr. Philip met his wife, Mat. Sarah and the two were married at the Antiochian Village in August of 2010. A year later, Fr. Philip was ordained to the Diaconate, and in January of 2012, he was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by His Grace Bishop JOHN (This was the first ordination Bishop JOHN performed after his consecration to the Episcopacy). Fr. Philip then graduated with highest distinction and a Masters in Divinity, while Mat. Sarah graduated with two degrees (a ThM and a MTS).

After graduation in 2012, Fr. Philip was assigned to be the pastor of St. George Orthodox Church in Glens Falls, New York. Five years later, in 2017, he was transferred to St. Ignatius church in Franklin, TN, where he now serves as Senior Pastor.

During Fr. Philip's time at St. Ignatius, the parish has grown, and numerous ministries have been created, including a prison ministry, as well as benevolence and bereavement ministries. He and the faithful of St. Ignatius have also hosted numerous fall retreats on behalf of the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast. On September 22nd, 2024, Fr. Philip was elevated to the rank of Archpriest by His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS.

In addition to being a father of two, Fr. Philip enjoys spending time on spiritual reading. In particular, he has a love for the writings of Sts. Philaret of Moscow and Tikhon of Zadonsk. Father is also a science fiction buff and lifelong fan of Star Trek!



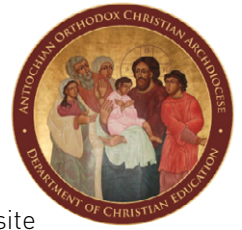


FEATURED ORGANIZATION

Christian Education

DOMSE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COORDINATOR:

Anna-Sarah Farha | St. George Church, Jacksonville, FL



Twelve Days of Christmas Devotional for Families in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition

From the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Education Ministry's Orthodox Christian Parenting WordPress site

For those of us Orthodox Christians who follow the new calendar, the feast of the Nativity is upon us! For those of us following the old calendar, it is rapidly approaching. For all of us, this is a season of celebrating Christ's humble condescension to earth for us and for our salvation. It is truly a time for celebration! And what a joy to be able to celebrate Christmas not just for one day, but for all of the twelve days of Christmas! Are you looking for ideas for your family's celebration? *Celebrating the Twelve Days of Christmas: A Family Devotional in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*, by Amanda Eve Wigglesworth, offers a variety of ideas for families to do together in the context of a family devotional time.

"After forty days of fasting and preparing for Christmas, we now begin the season of feasting! ...There is a popular Christmas song called 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' in which a suitor gives presents each day to his true love. This song was written during a time when people would exchange one small gift a day throughout all twelve days... While the song is usually seen as a nonsense song, we can also use it to remind ourselves of the gifts God gives us... It is always good to be reminded of God in everything around us, so in each devotional, we will look at the Christian meanings given to the gifts in this popular song." (p.9) The next few pages of the book go on to offer ideas of activities to do together throughout the season.

The bulk of the rest of the book walks the reader through each of the twelve days of Christmas, offering a short meditation on what is happening in our Orthodox Christian Faith on that particular day. Each meditation contains information about the feast or saint being commemorated that day; a related kontakion or troparion; and a short explanation of the Christian meanings behind both the number of the day as well as the gift offered in the song on that day of Christmas. Each day there is also a suggested related activity to do together as a family. Activities vary from Christmas caroling to making thank-you cards to crafts (i.e.: making a St. Genevieve's luminaria and coloring a "stained glass" icon) to baking vasilopita (recipe included)

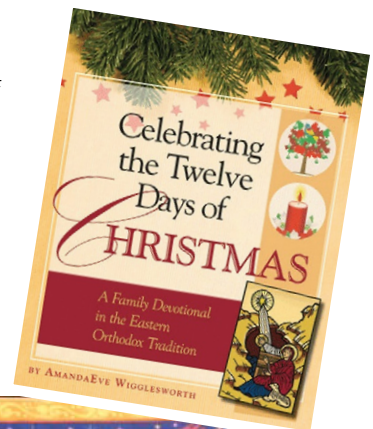
to cleaning your house to prepare for your house blessing. The book concludes with appendices such as recipes, craft directions, and a craft pattern.

Families who are interested in learning more about their faith will do well to consider adding this book to their family library. The ideas and meditations in the book are a wonderful resource. Readers may only want to read the book together as a family one time. Or it could happen that the ideas in this book become the basis on which to begin a variety of family traditions related to the twelve days of Christmas.

Regardless, the reader is sure to agree with the back cover of the book: "With hymns, stories, meditations, and activities for each day as well as suggestions for the whole season, *Celebrating the Twelve Days of Christmas* provides an invaluable resource for families looking to restore this season to its rightful place in their lives."

Christ is born! Glorify Him! May we indeed celebrate the twelve days of Christmas in reverence and joy!

Find more information about the book, including sample pages, [here](#). From Ancient Faith Publishing.





Teen SOYO

Sophia Griffith
All Saints Orthodox Church
Raleigh, NC

Hey DOMSE Teens!

Want to make a real impact on your community? This year, NAC SOYO is giving away \$5,000 in grants to SOYO groups like yours through the TRUST (Teens Responsibly Undertaking Service Together) Project.

This is your chance to step up and do something amazing for a cause you care about. Whether it's helping people in need, supporting a local shelter, or launching a project to improve your community, this grant is here to help make your ideas happen.

Last year, my parish (All Saints, Raleigh, NC) received \$500, and we used it to create meal bags for a local youth shelter. What would *your* group do with \$500 or \$1,000? The possibilities are endless, and the decision is up to YOU.

Ready to get started?
Apply for a grant today
at teensoyo.org/trust



Early Registration
Still Open

Jan 29th-30th

Clergy & Winter

Jan 29th- Feb 1st

RETREATS

Guest SPEAKERS



Fr. Nathaniel Trembley



Fr. David Bleam



Fr. Nektarios
Akkawi



Early Registration Open
Until; January 7th 2025



St. Elias Orthodox Church
Atlanta, Georgia

REGISTER NOW !

<https://domse.org/domse-clergy-winter-retreat-registration/>

(Hurricane - continued from page 4)

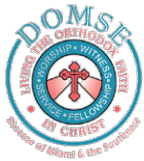
on our parishioners and local community, the Antiochian Women of Saints Peter and Paul hosted a prayer service for collective grief post Helene. We were blessed to have the prayers for Hurricane Helene prayed by Fr Gregory Matthews. Following the prayer service, we all gathered on the lawn for refreshments and much needed fellowship. It was a moment of reflection and renewal. Coming together for such a meaningful moment helped many of us regroup emotionally. In addition, a member donated vouchers for counseling sessions for any in need of a guiding hand while navigating the recovering phase.

While we are still waiting for a full-time priest, we have been blessed to be served regularly by priests who are travelling a long distance to ensure that our parish is still receiving the Sacraments and spiritual guidance during this tumultuous time. We are beyond grateful by the dedication and kindness of our visiting priests and by the constant support given to us from HIS GRACE, Bishop Nicholas.

We ask for your continued prayers and support as we help heal the High Country and rebuild together.

Diocese of Miami and the Southeast

2024, 2025, & 2026 EVENT LIST



Visit for more info: <https://domse.org/events/>

DATE	EVENT	Location
January 29 – February 1, 2025 Always the last week of January	Clergy & Winter Retreats 2025	St. Elias Atlanta, GA
February 14 – 17, 2025 Always President's Day weekend	Winter Camp 2025	CST
April 5, 2025	AMEN Lenten Retreat	Virtual
April 5, 2025	Antiochian Women Lenten Retreat	Virtual
April 5, 2025	SOYO Lenten Retreat	Virtual
April 6, 2025	YAM Lenten Retreat	Virtual
June 1 – July 1, 2025	2025 DOMSE Scholarship	Virtual
June 11 – June 14, 2025	Parish Life Conference 2025	St. George Jacksonville, FL
June 22 – June 28, 2025	Camp St. Thekla Summer Session 1	CST
June 29 - July 5, 2025	Camp St. Thekla Summer Session 2	CST
September 19 – 20, 2025 Always 3 rd weekend in September	Fall Retreat 2025	St. Ignatius Franklin, TN
November 5 – 8, 2025	AMEN Conference & Retreat 2025	Woodland Camp Temple, GA
January 28 – January 31, 2026	Clergy & Winter Retreats 2026	St. Elias Atlanta, GA
February 14 – 16, 2026	Winter Camp 2026	CST

Save The Dates!

Support Your Diocese

DONATE TO: Camp St. Thekla
DOMSE Scholarship | Antiochian Men
Antiochian Women | Young Adult Fellowship
Teen SOYO | or a General Donation

Thank You!



IF YOU HAVE ARTICLES OR SUGGESTIONS FOR
THE LIGHT NEWSLETTER, PLEASE EMAIL
THEM TO DOMSENEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM

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Sh. Shell Keim
Bishop Nicholas

the
Light

AMEN
ANTIOCHIANMEN.ORG

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN
DOMSEWOMEN
ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF DOMSE

YOUNG ADULT
DOMSE YAF

SOYO
DOMSESOYO
DOMSESOYO

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
DOMSECHRISTIANED



Theology Editor's Corner

One of the simplest ways to connect with the rhythm of the Church year, along with all of our Feasts and Saints, is to read St. Nikolai Velimirovic's *The Prologue of Ohrid* as part of our daily spiritual reading. The *Prologue* is available in two volumes and contains lives of the saints, hymns, reflections, and homilies for every day of the year; and it is especially beneficial on major Feast days when St. Nikolai's reflections and homilies explore themes from the Feast or Saint who is commemorated more directly. For instance, St. Nikolai says the following in his homily for the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord on December 25th:

Let us be content, brethren, with the knowledge that our salvation had its origin not from man or from earth, but from the greatest heights of the divine invisible world. So great is God's mercy, and so great is the dignity of man, that the Son of God Himself came down from eternity into time, from heaven to earth, from the throne of glory to the shepherd's cave, solely to save mankind, to cleanse men from sin and to return them to Paradise. *I came forth from the Father*, where I had everything, *and am come into the world*, which cannot give Me anything. The Lord was born in a cave to show that the whole world is one dark cave, which He alone can illumine. The Lord was born in Bethlehem – and Bethlehem means “the House of Bread” – to show that He is the only Bread of Life worthy of true men.

O only Lord Jesus, the Pre-eternal Son of the Living God and the Son of the Virgin Mary, enlighten us and nourish us with Thyself!

This year has been a difficult one for so many with war and the threat of violence in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, political polarization and economic uncertainty here in America, and three powerful hurricanes that came through our Diocese of Miami and the Southeast from July to October. Here on the West coast of Florida, for instance, we are just beginning to see the trash and debris get picked up that have been piled up on the sides of the streets since the end of September and Hurricane Helene. However, the Scriptures say, “The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death a light has dawned” (Matthew 4:16). And this is what we remember every year at Christmas time when the days are shortest. Our Lord Jesus Christ came into our dark world to offer us His own Light and Life in the midst of every trial. May He be our light and our living bread as we approach the Feasts of the Nativity and Theophany this year! Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Upcoming Events

JANUARY

DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2025 - In person
January 29 - February 1, 2025
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA
[REGISTER HERE](#)

FEBRUARY

WINTER CAMP ST. THEKLA 2025
In person
February 14-17, 2025
Woodland Christian Camp, Temple, GA

APRIL

AMEN LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 5, 2025; 9:00 am - 11:30 am EST
Details to come!

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 5, 2025; 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST
Details to come!

SOYO LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 5, 2025; 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm EST
Details to come!

YAM LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 6, 2025; 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm EST
Details to come!

JUNE

2025 DOMSE SCHOLARSHIPS!
June 1 - July 1, 2025 - Details to come!

DOMSE 2025 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC) - In person
June 11 - 14, 2025
St. George Orthodox Church, Jacksonville, FL
Details to come!

SEPTEMBER

DOMSE FALL RETREAT 2025 - In person
September 19 - 20, 2025
St. Ignatius Orthodox Church, Franklin, TN
Details to come!

NOVEMBER

AMEN CONFERENCE & RETREAT 2025
November 5 - 8, 2025 - In person
Woodland Christian Camp & Retreat Center, Temple, GA - Details to come!