

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church

Greensboro, NC



Youth Ministry Overview

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Letter from Father Sarantis Loulakis

Dear Beloved and Faithful of the Dormition of the Theotokos Family,

Children Are the Church!

“Fathers and mothers: Go and lead your child by the hand into the church.”

-Saint John Chrysostom

We often hear the youth of a parish being described as **“the future of the Church.”** We at the Dormition of the Theotokos Orthodox Church believe that children are the Church. We love our youth, and **their presence reflects the life of the parish**; from teenagers down to the smallest infant. From my arrival to our beloved community, I always stated that THE CHILDREN are not only the future; they are the present of the church. The present must exist before the future may arrive.

Just as you may reflect at the icon on the front cover of this manual that Christ, our Lord, commands ALL the children to come to Him and to bless them, I also humbly in His service and bountiful love **call upon all of the parents and grandparents** (as well) to make the childrens’ participation and enrollment into our Youth ministries **a priority in their lives**. I sincerely acknowledge your exceedingly busy schedule. I know you can, as I greatly trust in you.

It is for this reason that this **Youth Ministries Manual** has been created.

Within this manual you will find all the ministries that OUR church, the Dormition of the Theotokos, offers to our youth throughout the 2018-2019 ecclesiastical year. A description of each ministry, along with how **you and your family may participate is presented**. We hope that through these ministries, your family will grow closer to Christ and His Church!

St. Clement of Alexandria wrote: **“The primary lesson for life must be implanted in the soul from the *earliest age*. The primary lesson for children is to know the eternal God, the One Who gives everlasting life.”**

As WE are stewards of our children by the Grace of God, let us all be trustworthy of our given God’s Grace. May the Lord bless us ALL!

+Fr. Sarantis P. Loulakis, Presbyter

Youth Ministry Mission Statement

The mission of the Dormition of the Thoetokos Greek Orthodox Church Youth Ministry Program is to embrace the youth of our parish community and meet them where, providing opportunities for them to:

- Grow in their relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit as they grow in their Orthodox Christian faith
- Build a community with other Orthodox youth
- Learn more about their Orthodox faith
- Develop leadership abilities and strong moral character by serving others
- Have fun in a faith-filled and spiritually-enriching environment

To carry out this mission, we look to the entire church family to embrace our youth and help them grow.



Youth Ministry Contacts

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Overview of Youth Programs

Greek Orthodox Youth of America (GOYA)

Advisor: Rob Harrison

GOYA is the ministry to **the teenagers in the 7th through 12th grades**. The mission and goal of GOYA is to lead our young people into experiencing the Holy Orthodox Faith and is **based on Worship (Liturgia), Fellowship (Koinonia), Service (Diakonia) and Witness (Martyria)**. By developing a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and **becoming active sacramental members of the Church**, our young people will be equipped with the tools necessary to assist them in their journey toward salvation. GOYA meets once a month and also participates in study, social and athletic events.

Sophia Orthi (Sunday School)

Communication: Maria Colozzi

Baby & Toddler, Pre-K & First Grade, Second thru Fourth Grade, and Fifth through Eighth Grade

“With us everything should be secondary compared to our concern with children, and their upbringing in the instruction and teaching of the Lord.” -Saint John Chrysostom

Weekly Sunday school program during the school year, taking place after the children receive Holy Communion (and having heard the sermonette), with classes by age range. The philosophy of our Sunday School Program is based on a Christocentric approach, which prepares students with the principles of the Orthodox Faith, encouraging them to grow in God’s Service. Our program builds a solid foundation for the children of our community through exemplary lessons in the Teaching and Worship Practices of the Greek Orthodox Christian Faith. A curriculum for the entire year for each class (excluding Baby & Toddler) will be given to every student/parent via email at the start of the of the ministry in September. Attendance is greatly rewarded!

Ways Parents Can Help Strengthen the Foundation of Religious Education

1. Plan to be in Church when the Divine Liturgy begins at 10:00 am.
2. Be consistent. Attend Church regularly.
3. Visit the classroom and meet with the teacher to see what lessons your child is learning, so that lesson material can be re-enforced at home; ask your child if they

have any special handouts from the teacher.

4. See that your child comes to class prepared with books, homework assignments etc.

5. Practice the faith at home, observe fast days and schedule family prayer time. Children are great imitators; what they see you do, you will see them do.

6. Be realistic in setting your goals as you grow in the Faith. God will always provide more than you will ever need, but you need to be willing and ready to be called and to follow Him in every aspect of your life.

7. Do not feel alone, or overwhelmed, but turn to Him in prayer at all times. Stand Firm in Holy Tradition and Be Well In Faith.

Other Sunday School Programs:

- **Christmas Program:**

Every year, the youth of our parish present a Christmas Program on the 3rd Sunday in December to share the Nativity story - the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The Program includes scripture readings, hymns, and the Nativity story presented by Sunday school children.

The day's activities begin with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, followed by the Christmas program. Included with the program are carols sung by both the Adults and the children. Following the dismissal, fellowship continues with a festive Lenten meal. During the meal, Santa Claus arrives and gives gifts to the children.

The Christmas Program this year will be on December 16, 2018. Practices will be on the previous Sunday, December 9, and Saturday, December 15.

- **Saturday of Lazarus:**

On Saturday of Lazarus, our parish will celebrate a family day with special activities for everyone. Following the Divine Liturgy and a Lenten waffle breakfast, we engage in several activities: folding palms, decorating eggs for Pascha, decorating the church with palms, and ensuring the church grounds are ready for Holy Week.

Hellenic Dance*

Leaders

Senior OPA Dancers: Barbara Vaughn

Middle School OPA Dancers: Mary Ann Contogiannis

Junior OPA Dancers: Irene Agapion

Music, dance, and other artistic expressions reflect the real experience of a culture. Dressed in vibrant costumes, accompanied by authentic music, the OPA dancers capture the richness and elegance of traditional Greek folk dancing, while building bonds amongst each other and within the community, fostering fellowship. Greek dancing is a cornerstone of the church's annual Greek festival and other events, and all children are encouraged to participate!

Altar Program (Acolytes)

Leader: Father Sarantis

This ministry is designed for young men between the ages of 7-18, who wish to help the priest during **the Divine Liturgy** on Sundays, along with other sacred services during major Feast days. It requires a great deal of dedication on behalf of both the young men, as well as from their parents who transport them to church on Sundays. ***This is a most sacred ministry of the church.*** Acolytes are asked to arrive properly dressed (i.e. a white or light colored dress shirt, a tie, dress pants, and black dress shoes). The Divine Liturgy begins at 10 am. Acolytes should prepare themselves to receive Holy Communion as often as possible. As Christians we prepare by fasting on the appropriate days (i.e. Wednesdays and Fridays and/or throughout other festal periods) as well as limiting our thoughts, words, and actions to only those things that glorify God. We also fast completely on Sunday morning (boys under ten years of age may have some juice), not eating or drinking anything until we receive Holy Communion. Serving in the Holy Sanctuary is a privilege. These young men have shown responsibility and dedication to the Lord and His Church. The Acolytes assist the priest under the supervision. A bi-monthly 30-minute assembly TBA will be held.

Vacation Church School

Vacation Church School is a summer program to provide our Youth with a fun, enriching opportunity to connect with each other and the Church to grow in their faith during the summer break from Sunday School. Details will be announced annually in the late Spring time-frame.

Youth Sunday

Youth Sundays. On designated Sundays, we will showcase the youth of our parish, as they will have an opportunity to: prepare the prosphoro for the Liturgy, be ushers, read the Epistles, present their St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival speeches/essays/poems, host coffee fellowship, along with other surprises. This is a wonderful opportunity to show that our youth are an integral part of our parish—that the youth are our parish!

Summer Camps

- Our **St. Stephen's Summer Camp** has a rich tradition, dating back to the 1980's, and is grounded on the principals of living a true Orthodox lifestyle with twice daily liturgical services, opportunities for reflection, community living and meals, athletics, arts & crafts, and nightly social activities.

Recognized as the highlight of the summer, St Stephen's Summer Camp offers teens entering 6th through 12th grades (when school begins in the fall) an opportunity to spend a week at our Diakonia Retreat Center. Campers are only allowed to attend camp for one week.

- **Ionian Village:** Teens and young adults that participate in Ionian Village travel across Greece, venerate the relics of saints, walk in the footsteps of the Apostles, and visit significant sites of Greek history and culture. Ionian Village is a summer camping program located in Greece and operated by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Ionian Village offers its participants a unique experience that is unavailable elsewhere. At the end of the program, staff and campers return to their homes with strengthened faith and with a greater appreciation for the Church and for Greek culture and heritage.

Teens and young adults have the time of their lives while at Ionian Village. Staff and campers from across the United States form bonds and friendships at Ionian Village. Since 1970, almost 16,000 teens and young adults have experienced a 40+ year old tradition committed to building “Faith and friendships that last a lifetime.”

Ionian Village operates from a beautiful seafront campsite on western Peloponnesus in Greece on the coast of the Ionian Sea. The camp facility accommodates nearly 200 campers and 50 Staff Members in white-washed cabins and bungalows. The camp-ground was developed and built with the

intention of fostering an Orthodox Christian community and providing a Greek village experience. The facilities are centered around a traditional white-washed Chapel and include a private beach, an oversized swimming pool, shady pine forests, an amphitheater, a large hall, an open-air cafeteria, a soccer field, volleyball and tennis courts, and a basketball court.

**Description (in whole or in part) courtesy of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey*

The Y²AM Ministry Formula



Future Youth Programs

As we plan for the remainder of 2018 and look towards 2019, we are excited about the growth we are seeing in the youth community at the Dormition of the Theotokos! In order to ensure that we are providing the opportunities needed for children to continue to grow in their Orthodox faith, we will look to add all or some of the following Youth Programs as we build out the Youth Ministry:

- Little Angels Playgroup (LAP)
Ministry for infants through pre-K children (and their parents)
- Hellenic Orthodox Primary Education (HOPE)
Ministry for children in Kindergarten through 2nd grade
- Junior Orthodox Youth (JOY)
Ministry for children in 3rd through 6th grade
- Junior Choir

If you are interested in leading any of these programs (or volunteering to support them in another capacity), or have suggestions on additional programs to consider, please feel free to contact Father Sarantis or Mark Williams to discuss!



How to Volunteer

A thriving youth community **requires** the involvement of a broad base of volunteers to help lead and support the various youth programs and events. It is our deep hope that we can continue to build out a large list of volunteers, and we would gladly accept help from anyone in the community, as everyone has something to offer! If you would like to be added to the list of volunteers that we can count on, or would like to discuss taking on a leadership role within one of the programs, please reach out to either Father Sarantis or Mark Williams.

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Thank you in advance for your loving support and encouragement of our youth!

Orthodox Youth Resources & More Information

Below is a list of useful youth resources to help those in our community encourage the growth of our youth. Please let us know if you have additional resources that would benefit the community, and we will add them to the list!

Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries and Office of Camping Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	https://www.y2am.org/
Monthly plans for JOY, GOYA, etc.	https://www.y2am.org/en/ministryplan
Youth ministry guidelines for HOPE, JOY and GOYA from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	https://www.goarch.org/-/youth-ministry-guidelines
Three children's games from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to help children explore their faith while having fun	https://www.goarch.org/games
The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Resource Page on Families and Parenting	https://www.goarch.org/family
Orthodox Christian Teen Survival Guide Brochure Series	https://www.goarch.org/en/-/orthodox-christian-teen-survival-guide
Youth protection manual from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	https://www.goarch.org/-/youth-protection-manual



