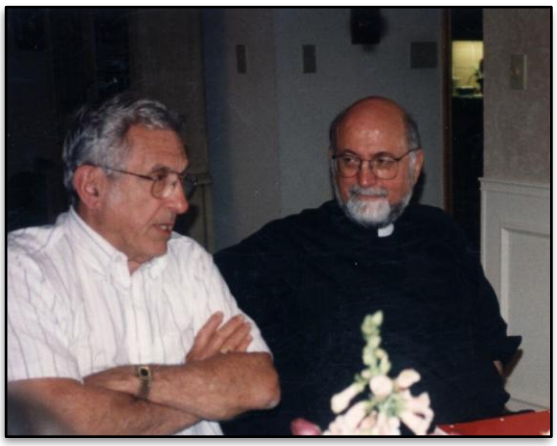
Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church. Parish History (1985-2025)

In August 1985, Reverend Nicholas C. Triantafilou, Proistamenos of Annunciation Cathedral in Houston, Texas, came to Austin to meet with a handful of Greek Orthodox families with the inclination toward starting the first Greek Orthodox Church in the growing State Capital area.

On November 10, 1985, Fr. Nicholas offered the first Divine Liturgy at Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church with 36 people attending.

His Grace, Bishop ANTHIMOS of Denver visited Austin on December 9, 1985, and gave his blessing to proceed with the new parish – with this the Greek Orthodox Church of Austin was born. It was three years later when, at the recommendation of Father Nick, the membership of the new community voted to officially name the church The Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church (celebrating its feast day on August 6).



Beginning in February 1986, the small parish began using St. George's Episcopal Church for Divine Liturgy Services twice monthly. Ministry teams were appointed in April 1986 (with the Ladies Philoptochos Society being established November 9, 1991). When Father Nick assumed the position of the Archdiocese Vicar General on September 1, 1987, he continued to serve the Austin parish on the weekends with the approval of the Archdiocese. For the next 5 1/2 years the church met every Sunday morning in the Parish Hall of Resurrection Episcopal Church.

In 1990, the official Charter was issued for Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church.

As time passed and the parish grew, it became clear that a permanent church home was needed. With the goal of buying property to build a permanent place of worship, the community began searching for property. In order to raise funds for this substantial goal, the parish participated with a Greek Souvlaki and Baklava Booth in five consecutive Austin Pecan Street Festivals, beginning in the fall of 1987. In addition, the parish established a number of other fundraising activities, including monthly luncheons, which continue to the present day.

Finally, on June 21, 1990, after evaluating over 100 properties, the small parish purchased 4.2 acres located at 414 St. Stephens School Road – one of the highest hilltops in Travis County. One year later, the first of several outdoor Divine Liturgies were held on the property. The slab for the church facilities, named Mt. Tabor Hall by the Parish Assembly on May 12, 1991 was poured in October, 1992. On April 4, 1993 the parish held its first Divine Liturgy at the new facilities. The facilities contained a fellowship hall, which would serve as the church, a kitchen, offices and classrooms.

After eleven years of ministry to the parish of Transfiguration, Reverend Nicholas Triantafilou was reassigned to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Due to the growth in parish membership to over a 120 pledging families, the parish council realized the need to request a full time priest. For eight months, while awaiting assignment for a permanent priest, the parish continued to hold Sunday morning services with visiting priests.

Effective July 1, 1997, His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH of Denver assigned Reverend Jordan G. Brown as Transfiguration's first full time priest. Previously, Father Jordan served as the assistant priest at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Dallas, Texas, for almost four years. With full time pastoral presence, a broader spectrum of ministries, including weekday worship services, were offered.

In December 1997, a needs assessment was conducted to determine the direction of future development for the Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church. The parish community was growing and with proper planning, future needs could be addressed. The parish was financially secure and physical expansion was feasible. The study resulted in a recommendation to the Parish Assembly to construct a traditional Byzantine-style church. The parish membership voted to accept the recommendation and the desire and goal to construct a Byzantine style church was fueled.

Over the next five years the members worked hard seeking individual contributions and pledges along with initiating many fundraising activities that slowly helped transform the vision of building a church into a reality. The parishioners initiated an effort to pay off the remainder of the mortgage from the construction of Mt. Tabor Hall. They accomplished this goal on January 15, 1998, demonstrating the maturity of the parish and its readiness to build the new sanctuary.

In early May 2003, the foundation for the new Sanctuary was poured and the parish celebrated with a "blessing of the foundation" ceremony, placing holy objects and the name of all members at the time inside an area of the foundation located under the future altar. Construction work continued throughout the year. Icons, written by the Byzantine Iconographer Diamantis Cassis, were installed into the iconostasis. In January 2004 the parish celebrated a Thyranoixia (Door Opening) Ceremony with His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH officiating. A banquet was held that evening at the Barton Creek Country Club.

Iconographer Leonidas Diamantopoulos was chosen to write the iconography for the Sanctuary. The first phase of Sanctuary iconography, including the Platytera, the Dormition of the Theotokos, the Hierarchs, and the major feasts in the life of Christ were installed in the Sanctuary in September 2006.

The parish remained active during the challenging years of planning and construction of the new Sanctuary. In February 2002, the parish hosted the GOYA Basketball Tournament for the Denver Diocese. Many retreats were held at the parish with special guest speakers. With the National Clergy Conference held in Lakeway, Texas in October

2005, Transfiguration parish hosted an Archbishop Pastoral Visit. His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS, His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH, His Grace Bishop SAVAS and many clergy from around the U.S. celebrated Vespers followed by a community dinner.

In August 2009, after 12 years of service, Reverend Jordan Brown was reassigned to Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Houston, Texas.

Reverend Michael Lambakis, assistant priest at Annunciation, was appointed by His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH to serve as the new Proistamenos of Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church, effective January 1, 2010. In the spring of 2010, Annunciation lost its Proistamenos. After much deliberation, His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH of Denver decided to send Fr. Michael back to Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral to serve as their Proistamenos.

In late August 2010, His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH assigned Reverend Father Vasileios Flegas to be the new Proistamenos at Transfiguration. He arrived with Presvytera Stella and their daughter, Nikoletta.

Father Vasileios had been the assistant priest and youth director at the Assumption Cathedral in Denver, Colorado. He had also directed activities in the Information Technology and Internet Ministries Departments for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in New York City. For years prior to

entering the priesthood, he was a research biologist. Father Vasileios was ordained to the Diaconate on November 21, 2004, the Feast of the Entrance of the Holy Theotokos, and to the priesthood on Palm Sunday, 2006.

In 2011, the community improved the sanctuary with the installation of new pews, and launched the Dome Iconography project, which was completed in 2012. Iconographer Leonidas Diamantopoulos returned to install the icon of Christ Pantocrator in the dome, surrounded by the angelic liturgy, the prophets and the evangelists. In addition, this project funded numerous improvements to the sound and lighting in the sanctuary.

In the Spring of 2012, Transfiguration hosted the Metropolis of Denver Oratorical Festival, welcoming speakers from parishes throughout the Metropolis for an unforgettable weekend.
Also in 2012, in response to the growing number of students enrolled in the Sunday School, the parish funded the conversion of existing attic space into formal classrooms by installing traditional framed walls and windowed doors, creating five beautiful classrooms, as well as two ample supply closets (for the Sunday School and the Greek School).

Transfiguration hosted the national Pan-Orthodox Youth Workers Conference in January of 2013. Representatives from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops, and youth ministry and camp leaders gathered from around the nation to hear inspiring speakers and to come together to spark new ideas.

In 2013, a group of parishioners spearheaded an effort to pay off the remainder of the parish mortgage. Their quick success was a testimony to the parish's dedication to maturing toward the consecration of the church.

In October of 2014, Transfiguration hosted the Orthodox Young Professionals Conference, welcoming young Orthodox professionals from around the nation. This conference would inspire similar conferences throughout the nation.

By 2015, the parish was flourishing, as evidenced by its growing ministries, including: Choral, Philoptochos, Religious Education for Adults and Children, Greek Folk Dance, Greek School, Encore, Young Adult organizations, Orthodox Christian Fellowship, GOYA and JOY/HOPE — all ministries experienced great growth and joy.

The Transfiguration Philoptochos has sponsored many good works, supporting projects in the local and international Orthodox community, as well as offering financial assistance to secular organizations, such as Austin-area schools serving children with special needs. Their work has been highlighted at national Philoptochos conventions.

In addition, the parish has played an ongoing role in the local Mobile Loaves and Fishes effort, in which parishes throughout the metropolitan area have come together to minister to the homeless and the hungry.

Transfiguration has sent parishioners to the far reaches of Tanzania on medical mission trips, and supports a family's mission work in Albania. Our OCF chapter members have participated in many Real Break programs, traveling to support Hogar Rafael Ayau, an Orthodox orphanage in Guatemala, and to help restore Orthodox sites in Constantinople (Istanbul).

The youth of Transfiguration participate in the larger GOYA endeavors of our Metropolis, attending regional retreats and the annual Camp Emmanuel in New Mexico. The parish sends a large contingent of teens and their parents and grandparents to the Metropolis Basketball Tournament every January, where the generations mix for loving fellowship and good clean fun.
Every year, a dozen Transfiguration teens participate in our Oratorical Festival, and the parish sends the highest ranking speakers to the Metropolis Oratorical Festival, which Transfiguration has twice hosted.

Transfiguration was the first parish to host a Be the Bee Retreat, led by Steven Christofouro of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and Ancient Faith Ministries video podcast of the same name. The parish has been a great supporter of this program, and parishioners have become contributors to Ancient Faith Ministries by producing podcasts and writing books.

Most importantly, the parish teens are involved in charitable works throughout the year. We host an annual YES (Youth Equipped to Serve) trip, in which members of FOCUS North America lead our students in a journey to see Austin as God sees the city, finding Christ in every person on every street. Every year, the GOYA youths help to serve a city-wide Thanksgiving feast for those who are hungry, and return to make and serve lunches to the homeless community on the Saturday before Christmas.

In 2015, His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH of Denver announced his intent to consecrate Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church, prompting the parish to immediately embark on projects to complete the sanctuary and facilities for this important celebration. Central to these preparations was the construction of a suitable processional walkway at the Parish which was completed in 2016 in the months leading up to the formal Consecration on November 5. The construction of this *"processional walk-around"* was a liturgical requirement for the Consecration ceremony. During this service, His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH of Denver leads a procession that must circle the exterior of the church building three times while carrying Holy Relics. This movement signifies taking possession of the building for God, a feat that was not previously possible as the church lacked a paved path around the entire perimeter of the sanctuary.

The walkway represented the final *"completion"* of the Temple. While TGOC's sanctuary had been in use since 2004, an Orthodox Consecration serves as the final *"baptism"* of the building. By finishing the grounds and iconography in 2016, the Parish was able to present the church in its most complete and beautiful state for its formal dedication.

The Consecration of Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church (TGOC) on November 5, 2016, was a landmark event that officially *"baptized"* the building as a permanent house of God. This multi-day spiritual celebration, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan ISAIAH of Denver, represented the culmination of a three-year *"sprint"* that began after the parish retired its mortgage in 2013. The process commenced on the evening of Friday, November 4, when the Metropolitan arrived with a gold reliquary containing the Holy Relics of Saint Panteleimon, Saint Kyrikos, and the Fathers Martyred at Daou Pentelis. These relics were placed on a Paten and left on the Altar overnight, signifying the saints watching over the church before their permanent interment the following day. The use of the newly built walkway was central to the Saturday morning service. Following the Orthros, the Metropolitan led the clergy and faithful in a triple procession around the exterior of the building. This *"walk-around"* symbolized a spiritual takeover, claiming the structure entirely for Christ. At each circuit, the procession stopped at the front doors for Gospel readings, culminating in a dramatic moment where the Metropolitan struck the closed doors with his staff, chanting from Psalm 24 to command the gates to open for the King of Glory. Once inside, the focus shifted to the *"Baptism of the Altar,"* where the Holy Relics were sealed into the Altar Table alongside a Scroll of Names representing the parish founders, donors, and loved ones. This seal was made with a mixture of hot wax and mastic to represent the burial spices of Christ, followed by a ritual washing of the Altar with soap, wine, and Holy Chrism. To finish the rite, the Altar was wrapped

in a permanent white linen shroud called the Katasarkion, and the Metropolitan used a long reed to anoint the four walls and the icons of the sanctuary, transforming the physical structure into a consecrated temple.

The 2016 Consecration left a legacy through both spiritual and tangible tokens. By placing the Scroll of Names into the Altar's foundation, the community ensured that their families would be remembered in every Divine Liturgy performed at TGOC for generations to come. To mark the day, parishioners received commemorative icons and *"Filakto";* small pieces of the linen used during the service—allowing them to carry a blessing from this *"once-in-a-lifetime"* event back into their homes. For Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church, the day marked the definitive transition from a construction project to a holy landmark for the city of Austin.

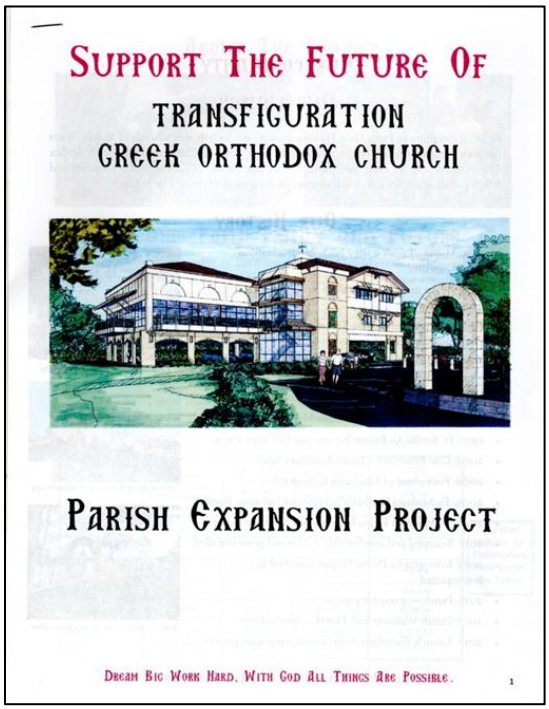
This important undertaking was managed by several specialized teams under the spiritual guidance of Father Vasileios Flegas. The Consecration Committee oversaw two years of planning and fundraising, while the Altar and Vestment Team prepared the sacred linens and liturgical tools. Simultaneously, the Hospitality Team coordinated a Grand Consecration Banquet for visiting dignitaries, and the Education Team ensured the congregation understood the theology behind the rites through special curricula. The physical beauty of the sanctuary was also finalized for the event; the iconography program, featuring the traditional Byzantine "reverse perspective" and gold-leaf backgrounds, reached a new milestone with the completion of the Platytera and the Pantocrator.

Consecration Teams: Agape Choir, Altar Servers, Children's Art Show, Youth Activities, and Lessons, Chanters, Consecration Favor, Consecration Service Book, Education and Promotion, Events Coordinator, Friday Night Welcome and Committee, Thank-you Reception, Grand Banquet, Grand Banquet Favor, Grand Banquet Reflections, Liturgical and Sanctuary, Metropolitan's Sunday Luncheon, Mount Tabor Hall Refresh, Parish Grounds, Parish Wide Retreats, Processional Walkway, Refreshments After Friday Night Festal Vespers, Scroll of Names, Tents and Parking, Transfiguration Church Bulletin, Video and Commemorative Album., Web Presence and Social Media

The Consecration was an important landmark in the life of our wonderful Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church. Having reached this milestone, we turned our attention to the future. Our youth programs are growing at an astonishing rate, and in order to keep up with this growth, we are already planning the construction of an education and administration building, which will be part of a larger vision for future development of the Transfiguration campus to include new banquet/ fellowship hall facilities with a commercial kitchen, space for ministry meeting rooms and offices, and increased parking capacity.

A Parish Expansion Project Building Committee was formed in 2017. The committee worked closely with the Parish Council and operated under the spiritual guidance of Father Vasileios Flegas. The Building Committee Fundraising Members were Father Vasileios, George Gianakopoulos, John Stegos and Bill Robertson. During project implementation construction with Duke Garwood Architects and BEC Austin the members were Father Vasileios, George Gianakopoulos, John Stegos, Bill Robertson, Elton Stewart, Presvytera Stella Flegas,, Carol Willman, and Jack Gatlin.

Duke Garwood Architects were asked to produce concept architectural plans for a new Mount Tabor Hall. The concept drawings were communicated in Parish Assembly meetings, and communications to all Parishioners.



The Building Committee hosted "town hall" meetings, held gatherings and conducted surveys to gather important input from parishioners on parish needs. The theme was: "Building Faith, Family and A Future". The project identified seven needs for Parishioners now and in the future.

1: Sunday School classrooms to accommodate more than 200 students.
2: Banquet Hall with a capacity of over 300 people, for Weddings, Baptism, Gala events.
3: Parish Kitchen, commercial-standard kitchen, including pantry, prep, cooking, and cleanup areas.
4: Offices and workrooms for our ministries that foster faith and belonging.
5: New sources of income for our Church through banquet hall rentals;
6: Continued use of the existing Mount Tabor Hall and base parking during construction.
7: Long-term parking relief by repurposing Mount Tabor Hall.

Fundraising for our Parish Expansion began in 2018. This parishioner-led initiative identified the need for expanded facilities to support the growing parish (over 300 families), including classrooms, a banquet hall, kitchen, and ministry spaces. Early efforts focused on conceptual planning, community input through town halls and surveys, and building momentum for pledges and donations. Key fundraising mechanisms included profits from Austin Greek Festival, Parish Anniversary Gala, Greek Gold Day, Parish Luncheons, and funds set aside from operating budget mortgage accrual.

On May 19, 2022: The Parish General Assembly unanimously approved the TGOC campus expansion project, including two specific motions for the MTCC (Phase 1): authorization for the Parish Council to secure a $3.0 million loan to enable groundbreaking in June 2022. This marked the primary approval to proceed with construction and financing for the new community center.

On October 22, 2023: The Parish General Assembly unanimously approved Phase 2 of the project: repurposing the existing Mount Tabor Hall space to create increased parking

BEC Austin served as the general contractor for the Mount Tabor Community Center in the parish expansion at Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church (Phase 1). Their scope included executing the full construction process based on the designs provided by the architect, Duke C. Garwood Architects, Inc. Key elements constructed under their management were: Banquet and activity hall, Classrooms, Meeting/conference rooms, Kitchen, Supporting spaces such as offices, workrooms, and balconies.

On October 27-28, 2024, Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church in Austin, Texas, celebrated a major milestone in its campus expansion with the ribbon cutting for the new Mount Tabor Community Center (MTCC) and the ceremonial raising and blessing of the cross atop the building. His Eminence Metropolitan Constantine of Denver presided over the events, climbing to bless the MTCC cross at the MTCC.

This joyful occasion highlighted the parish's faithful progress and commitment to building community under God's blessing. The completion of the Mount Tabor Community Center stands as a testament to our parish's enduring faith, providing a sacred space for fellowship and the preservation of our heritage for generations to come

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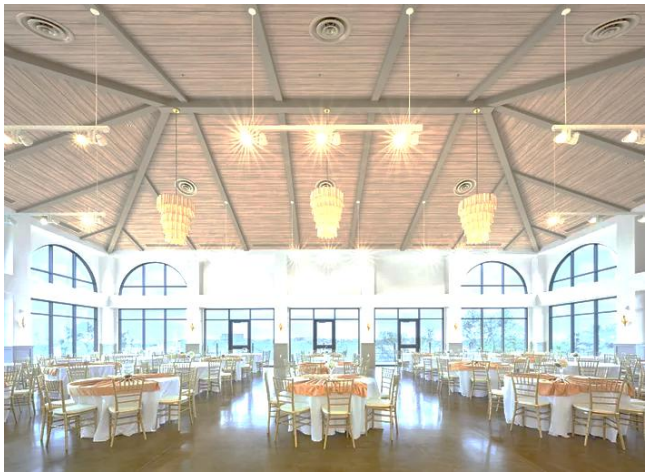
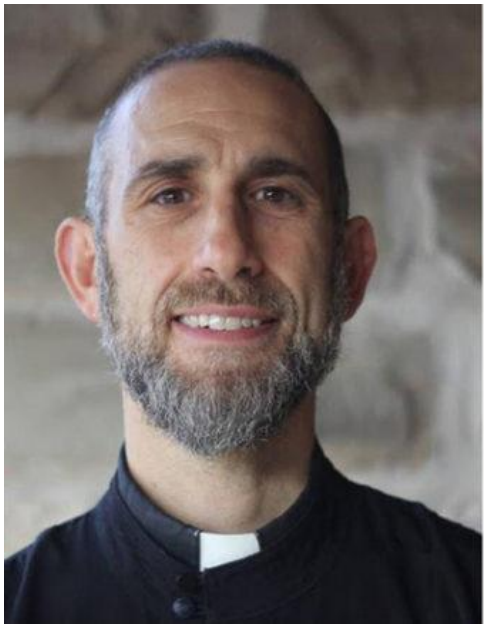
- Has 12 classrooms and meeting rooms to ensure the religious education of our children, our future, and adults.
- Our new Banquet Hall in the community center is 4,200 sq. ft. and can accommodate 280-300 people. We can host events such as our church gala, baptisms, wedding receptions, gatherings, large and small meetings, and other celebrations. There is also the possibility for parochial schools and other organizations to use the classrooms.
- Our new 620 sq. ft. parish kitchen, complete with pantry, prep, cook, and clean-up areas, meets commercial kitchen standards and requirements.
- The need for parking has expanded as our Church has grown. We currently have marked parking spaces. We appreciate being allowed to park vehicles on the military base every Sunday, and for our Special Event Services. Our Phase II construction plan includes demolishing the current Mt. Tabor Hall and adding 60 striped surface parking spaces.
- The New Parish Hall has new administrative facilities for Clergy, Parish ministries, the bookstore, meeting rooms, and storage.
- In the long term, we will maximize property space utilization to support future decades for our Parish with a Recreation Center and Parking Structure, while expanding Orthodoxy in Austin.



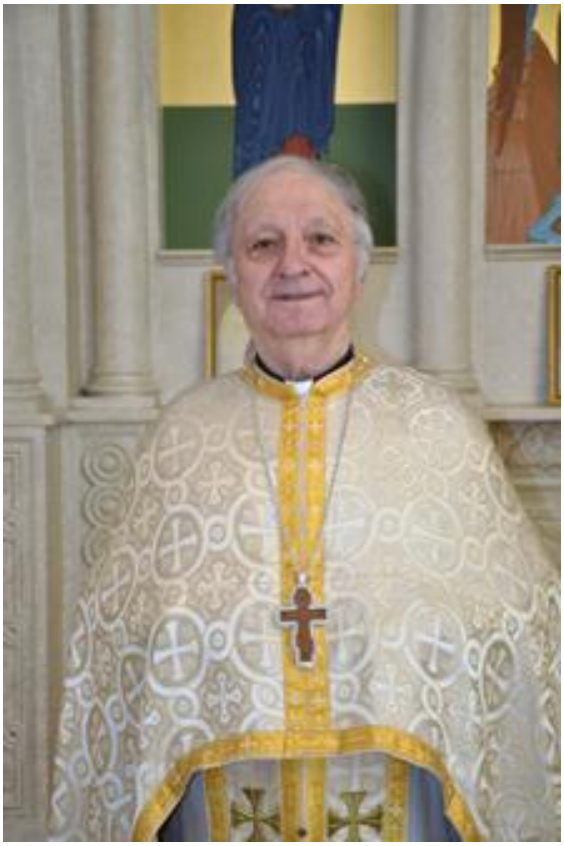
Growing the Ministry and Clergy: As the physical Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church campus of the parish matured, spiritual leadership grew in parallel to nurture the expanding community.



In 2018, the parish welcomed **Deacon Salvatore M. Fazio**, expanding the diaconate and bolstering pastoral care for parishioners., Deacon Sal is a guest speaker, organizer, and supporter of diaconate retreats and events to strengthen diaconate fellowship in communities throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

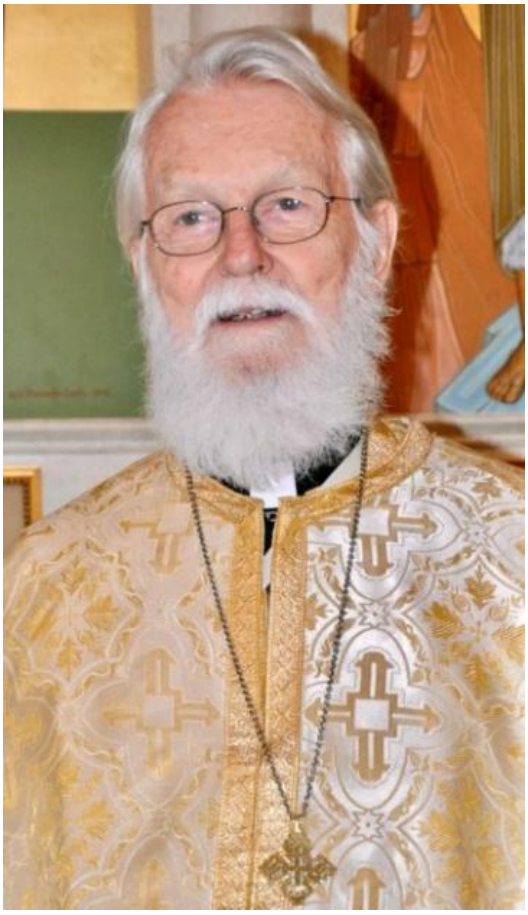
Father George Bithos brings a rich and varied background to his ministry at Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church in Austin. After a 28-year career as a reconstructive dentist, he pursued advanced theological study and earned a PhD in Orthodox Theology and Byzantine History from the University of Durham. Before his ordination as Priest, he served faithfully as a deacon, and his commitment to service also extended into statewide advocacy as the Independent Ombudsman for Texas State Supported Living Centers. On September 20, 2020, he was ordained to the Holy Priesthood and appointed Assistant Priest at Transfiguration, where he has become known for his engaging "Orthodox 101" classes—the parish's primary educational path for catechumens. These candid, accessible sessions offer a comprehensive foundation in the Orthodox Faith, exploring the Church Year, the Holy Sacraments, the Ecumenical Councils, and the role of the Theotokos, forming the spiritual basis that helps integrate seekers into the lived experience of the Church. Many of his teachings are shared through his Orthodox Praxis blog for wider parish access.

In 2023, the parish celebrated further growth in its clergy with the ordinations of **Deacon Stephen Dow** and **Deacon Haralambos (Earl) Ryburn** to the Holy Diaconate on March 5, during services presided over by Fr. Vasileios Flegas with His Grace Bishop Constantine of Sassima in attendance—an important milestone that strengthened the liturgical life of Transfiguration, as the presence of two deacons allows the parish to serve more fully, support its priests more effectively, and enrich the worship experience for the entire community.



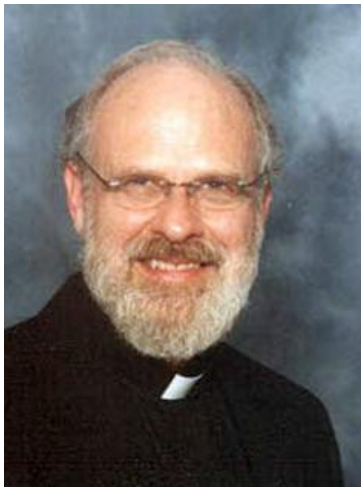
In Memorium: The Reverend Father Teodor Bita (1941–2017) is remembered with deep affection as a stabilizing and compassionate presence within the Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church community. Throughout his years in the Austin area, Father Bita provided vital liturgical leadership, particularly during the parish's transitional periods between presiding priests in the late 1990s and 2000s. Though he resided in nearby Manor, his ministry was defined by a tireless commitment to the sacramental life of the faithful, regardless of his official assignment. A humble servant, he was renowned for his "bedside ministry," frequently visiting the sick and elderly to offer the Eucharist and comfort. His enduring connection to the parish was poignantly marked on November 30, 2017, when the community gathered at Transfiguration for his funeral to honor a life dedicated to the Lord's vineyard. Reverend Teodor (Theodore) Bita passed away on November 24, 2017, at the age of 76. He was a resident of Manor, Texas, at the time of his death and was a deeply respected figure within the Greek Orthodox community.

In Memoriam: Reverend Father David Eckley (April 5, 1932 – November 14, 2022) "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:23). Reverend Father David Eckley stands as one of the most cherished "sons of the parish" in the history of Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church (TGOC). A dedicated lay leader alongside his wife, Presvytera Vasiliki, he was a cornerstone of the parish during its formative "pioneer" years, embodying volunteerism and helping build the spiritual foundation that culminated in the 2016 Consecration. His ordination to the priesthood represented a profound fruit of the community's prayers—the first generation of leadership to rise from TGOC's pews to the Holy Altar. At the November 2016 Consecration, Father David returned to his home parish to assist His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah and Father Vasileios Flegas in the sacred rites, serving as a living bridge between the parish's founders and its future. Later, he carried the "Light of the Transfiguration" to found and lead St. John the Forerunner Greek Orthodox Mission in San Marcos, Texas, with the same humility, kindness, and missionary zeal he cultivated at TGOC. Remembered for his quiet strength, gifted teaching, and profound love, Father Eckley's life remains a lasting testament that the true calling of our parish is to transfigure souls and send forth laborers into the Lord's Vineyard.



Altar Servers at Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church have grown significantly in recent years, as more boys and young men are drawn into the life of the Holy Altar through strong mentorship, structured training, and a parish culture that encourages youth participation in worship. This expansion reflects both the needs of our vibrant, active parish and the desire of young people to serve more deeply, strengthening the beauty, order, and reverence of the divine services while forming future leaders rooted in the rhythm and spirituality of Orthodox life.

Father Dan Suciu: A beloved spiritual father and frequent guest of Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church, Father Dan Suciu is cherished by our community for his profound Romanian heritage and his "Theology of Hope." A living testament to the miraculous, Father Dan's life changed forever following an extraordinary healing in Europe—a physical restoration from a critical illness that left medical professionals without explanation and his own faith deeply forged in the fire of divine mercy. His retreats and sermons are characterized by a rare spiritual authority and a "heart-to-heart" delivery that has led many in our parish toward a deeper, more personal encounter with Christ. We are profoundly grateful for his ministry and pray that God grants him many more years of service to the Holy Church.



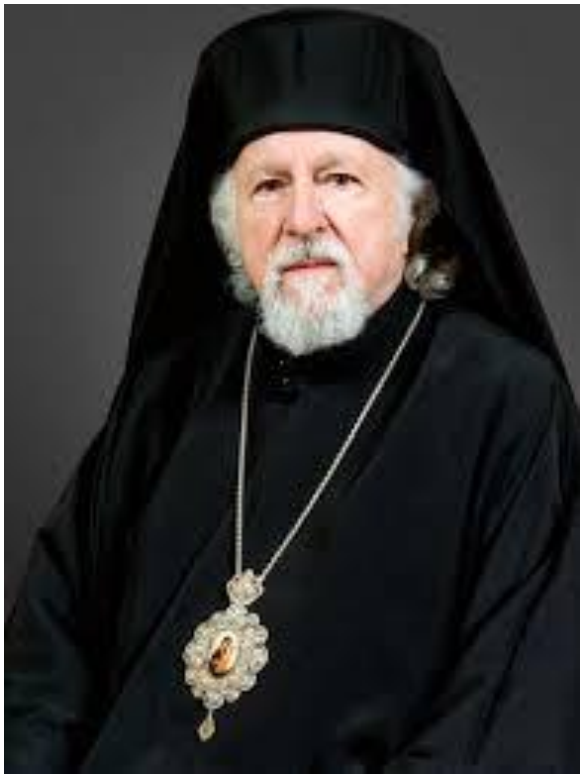
Father Brendan Pelphrey assists regularly in the liturgical life of Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church, serving at the altar alongside the parish clergy. His participation includes supporting the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and other sacramental services as needed. Drawing on his long pastoral and academic background, he also contributes to the parish's teaching and formation efforts. His presence offers steady support to the community's worship and educational ministries.

Father Maximos Constas, a distinguished monk of the Monastery of Simonopetra on Mount Athos and Professor of Patristics at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, is a cherished friend and frequent guest of our parish. Formerly a professor at Harvard Divinity School, Father Maximos brings a unique synthesis of profound academic scholarship and the lived spiritual wisdom of the Holy Mountain to his teachings. Our community has been deeply enriched by his regular visits for liturgical retreats, where his insights into the Philokalia and the prayer of the heart offer a transformative "window into the divine." His presence continues to be a vital source of spiritual renewal and theological depth for the faithful of Transfiguration.

Official Announcement: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Metropolis of Denver

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America joyfully announces the election and enthronement of His **Eminence Metropolitan Constantine of Denver**, following the retirement of His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah, who faithfully shepherded the Metropolis for more than three decades. Metropolitan Isaiah's resignation was accepted by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on March 23, 2024, after 32 years of devoted leadership in Denver and 38 years of hierarchical service. He has been granted the honorary title Metropolitan of Lystra and now resides at Holy Archangels Monastery in Kendalia, Texas.

Upon the recommendation of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the Holy and Sacred Synod of Constantinople elected Bishop Constantine of Sassima as the new Metropolitan of Denver on May 17, 2024. Metropolitan Constantine previously served as Auxiliary Bishop under Metropolitan Isaiah and has traveled extensively throughout the Metropolis, becoming well acquainted with its 49 parishes across 13 states. His Enthronement took place on June 22, 2024, at the Metropolis Cathedral of the Assumption in Denver, with Archbishop Elpidophoros presiding.



We give thanks to God for Metropolitan ISAIAH's decades of pastoral care and ask the faithful to join in prayer for Metropolitan Constantine as he begins his arch pastoral ministry in the largest geographic Metropolis of the Archdiocese. ……..

Metropolitan ISAIAH of Denver served as a hierarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for 38 years and led the Metropolis of Denver for 32 of those years, overseeing one of the largest geographic regions of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he entered Holy Cross Seminary in 1954 after distinguished service in the U.S. Marine Corps, was ordained a deacon and then a priest in 1962, and went on to serve in parishes, theological education, and administrative leadership before his election to the episcopacy in 1986. He became Bishop of Denver in 1992 and later its Metropolitan, guiding the Metropolis with pastoral steadiness and deep commitment until his resignation was accepted by the Holy Synod on March 23, 2024.

Annual Austin Greek Festival - Memorial Weekend (Friday through Sunday):

It's like visiting Santorini without the airfare. Greek Food, Greek Dancing, and Greek Drinks, served by no other than Captain Ouzo. Professional Greek band flown in from Greece. Gyros, Pastitsio (Greek Lasagna), Lamb, Saganaki (Greek Flaming Cheese), Tyropita (Cheese wrapped in Filo), Dolmades (grape leaf wrapped seasoned rice), Spanakopita (Spinach and Cheese wrapped in Filo), Souvlaki (Shish kabab), Greek French Fries, Greek Salad, Greek Ice Cream (same as American) and of course, Baklava and all the other Greek pastries. Enjoy an Ouzorita (Greek frozen drink like a margarita), Greek Beer (Mythos), Greek Wine, and all your usual non-alcoholic drinks. Let your kids play in the jumpy house. Take a guided tour of the sanctuary and learn about Greek Orthodox Christianity. Do all this while enjoying the beautiful views of Texas Hill Country and Downtown Austin from atop the highest hill in Travis County as the usual gentle breeze keeps you comfortable.

After the inaugural 2019 event, the festival resumed in 2021 and continued annually, each year adding refinements in layout, menu variety, and opportunities for visitors to experience Greek music, dance, and Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church hospitality. These festivals are an important expression of community life, offering guests a taste of Greek tradition while strengthening connections across Austin. Throughout these years, proceeds were directed toward the Mount Tabor Community Center project, making the festival a key contributor to the parish's long-term educational and ministry goals.

Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church Our Sunday School Program

Sunday School Director Elissa Bjeletich Davis reports that, by the end of 2025, Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church's (TGOC) Sunday School program continues to thrive and grow vibrantly. The parish has 159 registered students, with actual attendance averaging roughly 200 each week. Happily, the program warmly welcomes not only baptized Orthodox children but also seekers, catechumens, and others interested in exploring the faith. Classes are structured across eight levels, with the following official registration numbers (though real attendance often exceeds these figures in many groups): Preschool (19 students), Kindergarten (10), 1st Grade (16), 2nd Grade (9), 3rd/4th Grade combined (21), 5th Grade (14), Middle School (30), and High School (40).

In response to requests from the college-aged population, the parish is currently organizing an additional class to meet their needs and provide continued spiritual formation. Since the opening of the new building, the classrooms have proven exceptionally well-suited to the program's demands. Even when classes occasionally swell to more than 40 students, the spaces accommodate everyone comfortably thanks to the strategic and flexible furniture choices made by the design team, led by teacher Carol Willmann. The Sunday School is supported by a dedicated staff of 16 regular teachers and three substitutes. The program features an excellent parish-wide curriculum that guides students through the Old and New Testaments, sharing the profound wisdom of the Church Fathers and the traditional Orthodox interpretation of familiar Bible stories. Weekly handouts are provided to parents, enabling families to extend the lessons into the home, reinforce children's understanding, and spark meaningful conversations about the faith.

This curriculum is offered free to the parish, having been developed by the Sunday School Director in collaboration with Fr. Evan Armatas and St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Loveland, Colorado. All students are welcome—registered or not, baptized Orthodox or not—with the goal of removing every possible obstacle to participation. The Sunday School team believes the most powerful way to teach about our loving God is to love the children as He does, welcoming them with open arms into a nurturing and inclusive environment.

Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church: Philoptochos Society

The **Ladies Philoptochos Society** (Greek for "Friends of the Poor") is the philanthropic heart of Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church. During 2025, membership is 88. Operating as a local chapter of the National Philoptochos Society—the largest Christian women's philanthropic organization in the United States—the chapter is dedicated to the preservation of the Orthodox family and the fulfillment of the Church's charitable mission.

The Philoptochos Charter

The chapter operates under a national mandate to "promote charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes" through:

- **Almsgiving:** Providing direct financial and material aid to the poor, the destitute, the hungry, and the aged.
- **Crisis Response:** Offering immediate assistance to victims of disasters, illness, or personal tragedy.
- **Parish Support:** Strengthening the spiritual life of the local parish through fellowship and service.
- **Preservation of Faith:** Fostering a deep commitment to the teachings of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Key Ministries & Outreach

The Transfiguration chapter implements its charter through various local, national, and international initiatives.

- Social Welfare; Supporting local Austin food banks, homeless shelters, and women's protective services.
- National Projects: Contributing to the Hellenic College Holy Cross Scholarship fund and Saint Basil Academy.
- Health & Wellness: Fundraising for pediatric cancer research, autism awareness, and cardiac health initiatives.
- Ecumenical Patriarchate: Providing support for the spiritual center of Orthodox Christianity and its global missions.
- Emergency Aid: Organizing clothing drives, "Go-Kits" for foster children, and relief funds for international disaster victims.

Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church
Parish Ministries
Discover, Connect, Belong

Educational Ministries

Orthodoxy 101
AHEPA
Bible Bowl
Biblical Liturgical Greek
Modern Greek School
Greek Dance
Oratorical Festival
Sunday School

Liturgical Service Ministries

Acolytes
Agape Choir
Chanters
Prosphora Ministry
Transfiguration Adult Choir
Ushers
Youth Epistle Readers

Holistic Wellness

Bringing Your Brokenness
Women's Prayer Ministry
Acoustic Music Ministry
Prayer Shawl Ministry

Outreach & Cultural Ministries

Austin Greek Festival
Encore
Greek Golf Day
Men's Fellowship
Mobile Loaves and Fishes
Orthodox College Fellowship (OCF)
Philoptochos
Women's Fellowship
Young Professionals

Youth Activities

TGOC Tykes
HOPE/JOY
GOYA
GOYA Basketball
Camp St. Nicholas