

Metropolis of Chicago Begins Prayerful Discernment with Parishes to Shape the Future of the Saint Iakovos Retreat Center

Lombard, IL, August 12, 2025 – The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, under the leadership of His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael, is embarking on a prayerful, mission-centered discernment process to ensure that every ministry and resource of the Metropolis—including the Saint Iakovos Retreat Center (SIRC) in Kansasville, Wisconsin—serves the Church’s singular calling: to bring all people to Christ and live according to His teachings.

In a letter distributed to all parishes, His Eminence urged clergy and faithful to see this moment as far more than a financial or property challenge. “Let us be clear: this discernment process cannot and must not be reduced to simply figuring out how to pay off a debt or how to make use of a piece of property,” said Metropolitan Nathanael.

“These challenges present us with something far greater: an opportunity to pause, to take a clear-eyed look at ourselves, and to ask whether we are living faithfully according to our purpose, mission, vision, and values. The opportunity before us is not simply to solve a financial problem, but to ensure that our decisions advance the sacred mission entrusted to us and also present us as members of the Body of Christ,” he said.

While honoring SIRC as a place of ministry, community, and spiritual growth, the Metropolis will work with parishes to address the financial realities surrounding it with honesty and transparency. SIRC’s \$2.3 million debt—the Metropolis’ single largest financial liability—comes due in 2027 and may create adverse financial conditions. To meet this challenge faithfully, the Metropolis will unite clergy, faithful, and friends in a process of prayerful, mission-driven decision-making.

The process will include:

- **Formation of a SIRC Working Group** – Financial experts will assess long-term capital needs and sustainability.
- **Virtual Town Halls** – Opportunities to share information, answer questions, and gather perspectives from across the Metropolis.
- **Parish Leadership Engagement** – Parish treasurers and presidents will help develop a responsible budget that includes support for SIRC.
- **Evaluation of Parish Commitment** – Parishes will assess their ability to contribute to a special assessment over the next two-year budget period.
- **Exploration of Fanari Camp Options** – A dedicated team will explore alternative sites and partnerships if SIRC is no longer available.
- **Transparent Reporting** – Findings and recommendations will be shared with the entire Metropolis, culminating in discussions at the November 2025 Clergy-Laity Assembly.

Since his enthronement in 2018, Metropolitan Nathanael has sought to honor the vision of those who built SIRC while resisting calls to view it solely as a financial asset. Despite strategic improvements and ongoing support—including more than \$373,000 in direct debt forgiveness—the facility continues to operate at a deficit, with only one-third of parishes regularly using it since 2015.

The Metropolis remains committed to Fanari Camp and its mission to form youth in faith, hope, and love. “Owning, developing, and maintaining property is not our mission; nurturing our youth in Christ is,” His Eminence emphasized. “Whatever path we choose, the sacred work of our youth ministries will continue.”

The Metropolis invites all stewards, supporters, and friends to take part in the discernment process through prayer, dialogue, and partnership. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Metropolis of Chicago is confident it can navigate this challenge and emerge stronger, united, and faithful to its sacred calling.

For more information and updates, visit www.chicago.goarch.org/sircdiscernment.

About the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Tracing its roots back to the early 1920s, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago is the bishopric of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, northern Indiana, and central Missouri, consisting of 58 parishes and two monastic communities. The Metropolis is one of nine eparchies in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and is presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago. The general offices of the Metropolis are temporarily located in Lombard, Illinois. For more information and to get involved, visit our [Metropolis website](#) and/or sign up to receive [Metropolis news](#). For further information, contact the Metropolis of Chicago at: contactus@chicagometropolis.org or 312-736-2280.

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