GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO
ST. IAKOVOS RETREAT CENTER INC.
A place of faith, a place of fellowship

†NATHANAEL
Metropolitan of Chicago

Ted Pappas - SIRC President (on sabbatical)

Tom Kotsinis, SIRC Interim President, Secretary

Steve Theofanous, SIRC Vice President

Peggy Papaioannou, SIRC Treasurer

Maria Costopoulos, SIRC Interim Secretary

Perry Siatis - Legal Advisor

Rev. Fr. Luke Melackrinos

Rev. Fr. Michael Arbanas

Chris Atsaves

Tom Bournias

Kathryn Gianaras

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Elaine Katzioris✝

James Lakerdas

Paul Loupakos

Eleni Sotos

Kyriaki Tsahas

March 18, 2026

Dear Supporters and Friends of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center,

The season of Great Lent is upon us, and we are filled with renewed purpose and momentum at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center (SIRC). We write to you today to share a summary of our progress and our forward-looking plan for 2026.

A Foundation of Stability and Stewardship
We are deeply grateful for the strengthened financial position following the 2025 Clergy-Laity Assembly, where SIRC was allocated $350,000 for both the 2026 and 2027 annual operating budget years. This support clarifies our remaining financial objectives: raising $150,000 in annual contribution for operations.

In addition, we have a target to retire SIRC's $2.5 million mortgage over the next five years with the "Debt Crushers" fundraising campaign. Furthermore, His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael has extended the SIRC Discernment Process for five years, allowing us the opportunity to stabilize daily operations while we further study, understand, and report to the faithful the responsibilities associated with long-term ownership of the Retreat Center.

As stewards of this sacred place, we are committed to disciplined stewardship, ensuring that every dollar is deployed responsibly to strengthen SIRC's spiritual impact for generations to come.

Our "Debt Crushers" Campaign
Our five-year "Debt Crushers" campaign to retire the SIRC mortgage is producing measurable results. Since November, we have successfully raised **$48,000** toward principal reduction. Eliminating this debt is a strategic priority, as every dollar no longer spent on mortgage servicing will be redirected toward essential programming, outreach, maintenance, and retreat excellence.

We prayerfully invite you to help us accelerate this momentum and **"crush" the remaining balance** by supporting us through this link: www.gosirc.org.

Strengthening the SIRC Experience
We seek to enhance the "SIRC experience" of our guests by hiring a key Programming Associate. This individual will be a strategic resource, helping parishes and ministries design and execute truly transformative retreats. We are encouraged that our 2026 calendar is filling quickly, and we strongly encourage any parish or organization considering a retreat to **reach out soon** to secure your preferred dates.

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Planning for Operational Excellence

In collaboration with the Metropolis Council, the SIRC Board is developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to engage professional consulting services. This initiative is a key component of our SIRC Discernment Process, equipping the Board to make better-informed decisions and maximize how the property is owned and operated. As the process unfolds, we will share insights and updates with the broader community.

We remain deeply mindful of the trust placed in us by the Metropolis, and we are working diligently to plan carefully and build systems that match the magnitude of the opportunity before us. We are honored to be the stewards of this vision and to work alongside each of you.

Over the course of the year, we will share regular updates on our progress and welcome your feedback. Thank you for your continued prayers, presence, and unwavering support.

With gratitude in Christ,

The St. Iakovos Retreat Center Board of Directors

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