

WELCOME/INTRODUCTION

Welcome! Pastor asked me if I would talk about our timeline and especially the beginning. So, if everyone would please open their bibles to Genesis 1: 1. (Pastor says “I don’t think that we need to go that far back in time!). Our timeline is part of God’s timeline, but ours starts a couple thousand years later!

It is with gratitude and love that we welcome our St. Andrew’s family together today to celebrate the passage of another five years. Often, when we come to events such as an anniversary, we think about the milestones—the first year, the fifth year, the twentieth, the fiftieth, and now, our seventieth year.

SHOWING LOVE TO OTHERS

We’ve arrived at this day, another anniversary, but it’s not a number we celebrate. It’s each day of the past years that we must count as a blessing. We thank the Lord that each day we were able, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to bring a smile to a friend’s face , help to lighten a a dear one’s load, and give encouragement to each other - and especially that each day we were able to feel the Lord’s grace shine in our hearts even on the cloudiest of days.

SO MANY MOMENTS MAKE UP A YEAR

So many moments make up a year, let alone 70 years. How have we shown thanks to the Lord in those moments? Some days, it's true, dear brothers and sisters of St. Andrew's, we may have forgotten to give thanks. Maybe some days we experienced bitterness and sorrow in our hearts—bitterness because of broken promises, sorrow over losing loved ones, and sadness because of missed opportunities. During times like these, we may forget to think of the Lord, to acknowledge His presence, or take comfort in His love.

OTHER DAYS WE FOUND UNEXPECTED JOY

Other days, we found unexpected joy in a friend's success. Or we laughed with a brother or sister over coffee while reminiscing about past times at St. Andrew's.

Thankfully, most days, we remember to count our blessings and to praise our Maker for His generosity of spirit, and His undying love.

God's goodness, our thankful hearts and willing, humble spirits are the at heart of our church and what keeps us going.

ST. ANDREW'S HAS BEEN FAITHFULLY SERVING THE LORD...
(PASTORS, MINISTRIES)

In the 70 years that St. Andrew's has been faithfully serving the Lord, each other, and the community, the Lord has never failed us. For example, consider that over 15 pastors/leaders have shepherded our flock, and that many ministries have been created and still exist today, such as Sunday School, an outreach program that supports the needy in our congregation, youth groups, home groups, prayer groups, bible studies, women's ministries and so many more. We have established international fellowships such as the Filipino, Indonesian, and African fellowships. As an international church, where over 25 nationalities are represented, it is difficult to overstate, by the grace of God, just how many lives we have touched during the last 70 years.

SO MANY LOCATIONS!!!

This is also evidenced by the fact that God has given us the opportunity to shine His light and bear witness to the Lord's mercy and grace everywhere our congregation has met over the years!

Our people have congregated in just about every kind of building from the German church on Sina street to a seventh floor building in the center of Athens, from a location in Voula to LaVerne College in

Kifissia. Why we have even met in a school biology laboratory, a museum and a gynasium!

We've also met in a church building on Zaimi street which, in turn, led us full circle to Sina street where the downtown congregation worships regularly and from where our weekly online program is recorded. Currently, our northern congregation meets in a Greek evangelical church in Pefki.

Although the Lord's reasons may not have been obvious as to why our congregation has moved so many times, it is obvious that we willing go where the Lord leads us.

LIVING THROUGH DECADES OF MONUMENTAL EVENTS

And all the while the St. Andrews' family has been relocating from place to place, our people have lived through decades of monumental events.

During the time we have been a church, Athens has been occupied by the Nazis in World War 2, experienced a civil war, suffered through severe famine and poverty, earthquakes, wild fires. We've lived to see a new millennium, a new monetary system, 9/11, the 2004 Olympic games, and a financial crises.

COVID/PASTOR SANDRO/ONLINE CHURCH

More to date, we have lived through a worldwide epidemic that resulted worldwide lockdowns that affected us locally, forcing St. Andrews to close it's doors for the unforeseen future. It was during this unprecedented time of living through the pandemic and lockdowns, that dear pastor Sandro along with Rebecca and Simeon, bravely moved to Athens to become our pastor and we are eternally grateful. With the Lord's help, and the help of people in our congregation, we prevailed. Our doors may have been forced shut, but God's word was preached nevertheless.

Each Sunday, Pastor Sandro and Christian would perform our service and record it. That was the beginning of our online church ministry.

This just about brings us up to the present.

HONORING OUR MEMBERS

While Pastor Sandro has been here just a few short years, there are people here today and watching online that should be honored as long time members of St. Andrew's. I want to take a few moments to honor them as they have faithfully served us over the years.

1970s MEMBERS

Let's start with those who have been members since the 70's. I know of a few....namely, Lorraine Schmiede, and Karen Simopoulos. If you are here and have been a member since then, would you kindly stand or raise your hand? If you are in this group and watching online, please make a comment and tell us the year that you joined us! Let's give them a warm round of applause.!

1980s MEMBERS

Now, has anyone here or watching online been a member since the 80s? Please stand or post a comment!

1990s MEMBERS

What about the 90's?

NEW MILLENIUM MEMBERS

Do we have anyone who joined us in 2000 - 2010?

And last but not least, any one who has joined us from 2011 - 2022?

Let's all give ourselves a great, big St. Andrew's family applause!

HONORING CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Moving on, I would like anyone who has ever served on the church council to stand, as well. These godly people have been the backbone of our family. They have searched the scriptures, prayed unceasingly, and humbly asked for God's wisdom to guide our church family in ways that are pleasing to Him. Thank you, church council members, past and present!

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HAS FAITHFULLY SERVED ST. ANDREW'S FAMILY OVER THE LAST 70 YEARS

CHRISTIAN, WORSHIP TEAM, TECHNICAL TEAM, SOPHIA

And a thousand thanks to Christian and those who faithfully serve on the worship team.

Thanks to our technical team, too! Without them, we would not have online services.

Many thanks to our dear Sophia. She is the glue who keeps us all on the same page.

CLOSING/CHALLENGE TO REMEMBER THE GOOD AND ENDURE THE BAD

In closing, let's consider that tomorrow, we begin the long journey to the next milestone, the next anniversary. The question is how shall we proceed? As a congregation of friends and believers, how can we

welcome each day of the coming five years in a manner that will best please God? Let's think about how we will glorify God each day, be they good or bad, on the way to St. Andrew's 75th anniversary.

Ultimately, our hope is in the Lord. The St. Andrews family is a part God's great, big family. He saw fit to establish our family and He will not forsake us as long as we continue to look to Him, trust Him in all things and faithfully preach the Good news for the next 70 years!

Paul writes in Phillipians 1: 3 - 6, "I thank my God everytime I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day **(70 years ago)** until now, being confident that he who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete is until the day of Jesus Christ."