the Pan-Hellenic Union of New Haven was Gregory Kypriotelis, followed in the next decade, by Costas Pandajis, Gregory Kypriotelis, Christos Koutsoheris, Harry Cocolas, Christos Psychogios and Pandajis, Louis Atnes, Emanuel Cocolas and Frank Pandajis, who would all hold the position.

As the composition of our community changed from a colony of single men to a settlement of young families, the spiritual needs of the Greek Orthodox community increased and priests from other locations visited New Haven. On occasions when the parish house was not available services were held at numerous other locations.

Reverend Thomas Daniels was the first priest to travel to the area on a regular basis and tend the spiritual needs of the Greek Orthodox community in New Haven. He did this from 1916 to 1919. Beginning in 1918 efforts were made to enroll members in order to establish a formal community parish.

A formal request for an assignment of a permanent priest, was made in a letter from Alexander Efthimiades, John Jenetopoulos, P. Koulofatos, A. Ftimiades, John Jenetopoulos, P. Koutsoheris, Eftimes, to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, dated October 12, 1919. A reply from the Archdiocese was received, stating that there were certain conditions that needed to be met before this could happen. Our community's response, translated into English, is reproduced in the next column.
In 1919, the parish of Saint Barbara was officially established. Reverend Thomas Daniels was assigned to the community as its first Parish Priest. In 1921, the Ladies Society, The Progress, was organized. A Greek School was also established that same year.

In 1922-23 the Saint Barbara parish was ministered by Reverend Michael Skopelites, who was also assisting the parish of Waterbury at that time. During this time the congregation made arrangements with the Syrian Orthodox Community in New Haven to allow us to hold our Liturgical Services in their church located on Kossuth Street. The Syrian community did not have a priest at the time, so for approximately two years the service was celebrated in Greek with the Psalti William Basel, with Lavrentios Pappas chanting the hymns in Greek, and the Syrian Choir chanting the responses in Aramaic.

Fundraising efforts began in 1923, to purchase a building which would serve as a permanent home for the Saint Barbara community. And the former Second Advent Christian Church, located at 109 Beers Street, was purchased for $8,000, for this purpose. The structure, originally a barn, needed extensive repairs. Parishioners came together to accomplish this task. The congregation did not however, wait until the church was completed, but rather, almost immediately began to hold weekly services there.

On May 10, 1924 the Parish Council President Demetrios Comninos, wrote to the Archdiocese to request that Reverend P. Manoliades be assigned to minister to the community in New Haven. In response to the Archdiocese's request for statistical information concerning our community it was reported that the parish consisted of "90 families, 100 community members."

Reverend Manoliades was assigned to the parish on May 24, 1924 and remained until September 6, 1924 at which time he was replaced by Reverend John Aslanides. Father Aslanides was the first priest to keep complete and accurate records and the first sacrament recorded in the church registry was the wedding of Miss Amelia Daniel to Mr. Kostas Klarides on September 7, 1924. The first recorded baptisms were those of George Anastasion (Christos Koutsoheris, godfather) and Marianthe Psathas (Savas Anastasion, godfather) on October 5, 1924.

Father Aslanides, who served our community until 1929, was one of the twenty-six charter members of the local chapter of AHEPA #98 which was established in 1926. That same year the parish also sponsored a play in Dorscht Hall on Crown Street which was well received and expressed their Greek heritage.

Reverend Evangelos Triantafilides was assigned to lead our parish on August 1, 1929. The entire Triantafilides family actively served our community and in 1930 the first Sunday School was organized by Presvytera Triantafilides. The Triantafilides children were also very active in church activities. Mary and Lillian were members of our first choir and Nicholas was an Altar Boy. In addition, Father Triantafilides is fondly remembered as the priest who reorganized the structure of the church and who "brought order to it."

A play, written by Reverend Triantafilides was presented at the Hejaz Grotto Theater in 1936. This play, which starred local talent, succeeded in raising over $1,000. Also, during Father Triantafilides' tenure in New Haven, an article appeared in the New Haven Register on Sunday, April 13, 1930. The subject of the article, reproduced on the following two pages, was a "resume of life" in our community.

Reverend John Andreadis guided our community from October 9, 1937 to May 22, 1938. He was succeeded by Reverend George Nicolaides, from November 15, 1938 to July 20, 1939.
GREEKS MAKE WORTHWHILE CONTRIBUTION TO CITY'S LIFE

Community is Young, But Has Achieved Prominence in Some Fields

Greece, land of ancient Hellenia, is the fatherland of more than 1,800 New Haven residents, many of whom have contributed much to the business life of the city, and who besides participating in a number of fields of endeavor, excel in at least one, that of restaurant operation.

Beyond all question, the modern Greeks lead all other nationality groups in the realm of eating houses and sweet emporiums. Dozens of restaurants in the Elm City are owned and operated by them. Some of these are classed among the leading establishments of their kind in the city and together they furnish employment for a majority of the male members of their race.

CELEBRATED INDEPENDENCE

Some indication of the important place held by the Greek Community in this city was shown Thursday night when the New Haven Chapter 58, Order of the Ahepa, a Greek-American organization held a banquet in a hotel on the upper floor with scores of prominent Hellenic attenders. Men of note in the public life of both city and State were present.

The banquet was held to commemorate the centenary of Hellenic independence, an anniversary of an event ever strengthening the persons of Hellenic lineage means perhaps even more than the event itself. Independence means that the people have control of their own action and are able to do what they think they must in order to survive and maintain their liberty. And for nearly four centuries the land of ancient Hellenia groaned under political and religious servitude. When in 1821 the struggle for independence began, their cause seemed hopeless. After maintaining, single-handed, the contest for several years other European nations including France, Great Britain and Russia intervened and it is the centenary of renewed national existence that people of the Hellenic race are now observing.

It is a significant fact that leading American statesmen have given their American statements of that period, 100 years ago, including both Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, were in thorough sympathy (as shown by orations in the Senate of the United States regarding the heroic struggle of the Hellenes to regain their ancient political and religious autonomy).

COMMUNITY STILL YOUNG

The New Haven Greek community is of comparatively recent origin. The first of the pioneers arrived here only about 40 years ago when, at the close of the 19th century, they had the fear of the New World, and a few of the number who migrated to America found their way to the Elm City. Probably one of the first of the Greeks to arrive here was Christos J. Hiris who operates a paint store in Congress Avenue. He is looked upon as the first of the Greeks to settle in New Haven, and in the 40 years that he has lived here he has become well known and favorable known and has won a good measure of success in his business.

A few of the Greeks who settled in New Haven entered the fruit and confectionery business, but the enterprising spirit of the Greeks and the energy with which the success is the most success is the restaurant. For some reason the Greek restaurant has proved very popular almost wherever and whenever established. These restaurants have grown in number and in size and naturally this increase has attracted more and more Greeks to New Haven either to start new eating houses or to ensure work in those already established. The Greeks are a peaceable and law abiding race and are proud of their history which goes back to the very dawn of civilization. A devout and religious nature the Greeks, soon after their arrival in New Haven, established their religious center in which they might carry on the worship of God in the manner to which they had long been accustomed.

FOUNDED THEIR CHURCH

In the earlier days of the Greek community here the Greeks worshipped on every other Sunday in the little Syrian Orthodox Catholic Church of St. George at 17 Kosuth Street, sharing services with the Syrian Catholics. Later on, however, as the community grew in size, larger space became necessary and a committee was named to find larger church quarters. About that time the Advent Christian denomination had secured larger quarters at Shelton Avenue and Division Street, and its old home in Beers Street, near Elm was available. This church building was purchased from the Adventists in 1924 and redecorated St. Barbara's. The first services were held in the new church on Easter Sunday (Orthodox calendar) in 1924.

The parish grew under the guidance of Father John A. Atlantis, who remained here until about six months ago when he went to a church in Rhode Island. The present rector of the church is Rev. G. Triantafylidis. A Sunday school conducted each Sunday morning for the young people.

One of the leading organizations of the church is the Ladies' Progressive Society of which Mrs. Christos G. Herbesides is president. This organization cares on welfare and charitable work besides also acting as a sort of alumni to the church and takes care of other important activities. A notable event in the recent history of the Greek Orthodox church here was the visit in February of Bishop John, head of the Hellenic church in Boston and who is head of the Greek Orthodox churches in this district. At the time Bishop John came to officiate at the Feast of Pentecost and baptized 700 and 800 Greeks crowded the church on that special occasion.

AHEPA

The leading Greek organization in the Ahepa, an exclusively Greek-American organization whose full name is the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, is composed of the society have been established, throughout the country in communities where there are sizable Greek populations. Membership of the society numbers nearly 15, 000 and more. The society numbers nearly 15, 000 and more. The society has secured small numbers of members have reached important places in business life. Nor have they neglected the professions, as one of the city's well known physicians, Dr. John Yaris, is one of their number.

PROCLAMATORY

Four of the larger restaurants in the city are owned and operated by Greeks. The Presto is one of these, its owner is Frank Patsilias, one of the best known Greek-Americans in New Haven. Carson's Restaurant in Church Street is another, its proprietors are the three Carson brothers, Peter, Nicholaos and James Carson. Chili's Restaurant in Church Street is still another popular Greek eating house and its proprietor is Hess Chils. The Stately Restaurant in upper Chapel Street is operated by Harry Y Chamos.

In addition to these large central restaurants there are a number of smaller eating houses maintained by Greeks. William Milonas operates two of these, Peri Cofias is another of the well known small restaurant owners. The Traffic Lounge and Restaurant in Meadow Street near South Orange is operated by George Boukas. The Cummings brothers in State Street have long been in the confectionery and ice cream business, and before occupying their present location were established for a number of years in Chapin Street between Orange and State Streets. Alex Kegelis has a candy establishment in State Street, and another well known Greek candy merchant is John Jopetopulos in Elm Place.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Besbessides are shown in their restaurant.
On April 18, 1939 a meeting was held in the basement of the Beers Street church to discuss the fact that facilities for Greek language classes would no longer be available from the City of New Haven. It was decided that a building committee would be appointed to locate a new and larger church. A property was located by said committee, at 56 Dwight Street and purchased for $10,000, on November 21, 1939. Between the time the Building Committee was established and the final papers were signed, for the purchase of the property at 56 Dwight Street, a new priest, Reverend Christos Papachristou, was assigned to our community. Father Christos is given much of the credit for the fundraising which was done during this period.

On March 16, 1940 a fire destroyed the Beers Street church, the cause of which was defective wiring. Father Christos guided the community through this tragedy as well as the adjustment to two temporary locations, and with the building and consecration of the Dwight Street church. Archbishop Athenagoras, later Ecumenical Patriarch, visited our community on Friday, March 29, 1940, to view the damaged structure and to consult with community leaders on a future course of action.

During this transition period, Reverend Papachristou continued to serve on the building and fundraising committee and, together with the committee, met with Archbishop Athenagoras and Bishop Kavadas to discuss the building of a new church. Bishop Kavadas was very influential in the design of the Dwight Street church.

A second piece of property was purchased on June 1, 1940. This property, located at 48 Dwight Street and adjacent to the first piece, had a small house standing upon it. In June of that same year the committee awarded a contract to demolish this structure. The new church was built upon this site.

In June of 1941 the Jack A. Halprin Company, Inc., submitted a bid for the construction of our new church. Architect Charles Abramowitz was retained to draw plans and specifications for the church, and in November of 1941 a building contract agreement was entered into with the Halprin Company - Savas Anastasion, John Pappas, and Milton Psathas.

December 7, 1941 is a day that will live in the memory of Americans for many years to come. For our parishioners this day has a double significance. It is the day that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the day of placing the cornerstone was awarded to Mrs. Peter Daniel. In the cornerstone was placed the names of the Building Committee, donors, Parish Council members and other information. Between the time of the cornerstone laying and the consecration, in 1943, our community was deeply involved in the Greek War Relief Effort; the Ahepa War Bond Drive; and with numerous other war relief efforts.

The new church was completed on September 20, 1943. Archbishop Athenagoras officiated at the consecration services for our new church on October 10, 1943. The Archbishop was assisted by Reverend Papachristou and numerous other clergymen. Hymns were sung by the combined choirs of the Greek Orthodox Seminary in Pomfret and Saint Barbara.

Reverend C. Papachristou was the priest during the transition from the Beers Street location to the Dwight Street location, and in the interim, when services were held at Christ Church and Saint Thomas Episcopal Church. Father Papachristou is well remembered as a very industrious priest who personally collected much of the money raised for the building of the Church. While in New Haven he arranged for the first signing of a proclamation of Greek Independence Day and for the Greek flag to be flown from the City Hall.

On September 10, 1946 Father James Christon was assigned to tend to the spiritual needs of the growing community. Reverend James Christon was a dynamic leader, particularly devoted to the youth. And while he served our community all of the youth groups experienced an extremely active time. Under his guidance the first Greek American Youth of Orthodoxy (G.A.Y.O) was formed; the 1950 Church Dinner was distinguished by the presence of Bishop E. Tsoukalas; a summer day camp was begun; a series of Friday night movies was presented; a concert featuring Vaughn Monroe was sponsored; Boy and Girl Scout troops were organized; the Sunday School was re-organized, and the children also enjoyed their first Easter Egg Hunt and first annual excursion. In addition, $1,000 was raised for audio-visual aids; monthly Family Nights were held; membership dues were raised plus the monodollarion; Miss
Sophia Chaltas was employed as the first full-time, paid church secretary; and our community participated in the first city census sponsored by the Council of Churches.

Father James was the first priest to deliver sermons in English because he felt that “all are entitled to hear and understand the word of God” (there were about 50-60 families in the community who, although Greek Orthodox, understood only their native tongue, Turkish. Most however, understood some English). A policy was established whereby the church was open for fifteen minutes each morning to accommodate the approximately 50 students who would stop at the church on their way to school. Father Christon was also very involved outside of the Greek community and was often called upon to lecture to various groups.

Father James would be succeeded by Father George Kerames who was ordained and assigned to the Saint Barbara community on January 28, 1951. Father Kerames served our community for 31 years.

In 1952, a second parcel of land was purchased on Dwight Street and in 1959 a third parcel. Both were donated to the Church by C. Koutsoheris. A fourth property at 66 Dwight Street was purchased and a “Burn the Mortgage” fund drive was started.

When the parish celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1969 there were 434 member families and 243 students in the Sunday School program. A referendum held on June 5, 1969 indicated that the community wanted to relocate, and in 1970 the Parish Council appointed a Building Committee, chaired by Bill Contaxis, charging them with the responsibility of locating and purchasing a property. A separate building fund was established to set aside monies for this project. The committee researched various properties in many towns including New Haven, Hamden and Orange and reported their findings at numerous General Assemblies from 1970-1977. In 1976, Alex Alexiades was appointed Chairman of the Building Committee and in 1977, with the approval of the General Assembly a parcel of property was purchased for $120,000 at 480 Racebrook Road in Orange.

The following years were very busy ones for the Building Committee and the Parish Council as they completed the necessary steps leading to the construction of a new church, including securing special use permits, speaking to the neighbors bordering the new property, selecting an architect, deciding on a design, contracting a builder, arranging financing and selling the Dwight Street property. Julian K. Jastremsky, A.I.A. was chosen as the Architect of the new Church.

It was also during this time that the Saint Barbara parish moved from “annual dues” to adopt a “Fair Share Pledge” system, with Harry Pappas serving as the newly formed Stewardship Committee Chairman.

In 1981, the first Odyssey Festival was held at Lighthouse Point, the week after Labor Day, to help raise funds to build the new Church.

In 1982, Father George retired and Reverend Mark B. Arey was assigned to the parish. Father Mark was a young and energetic priest who brought a sense of energy to the growing parish, invigorating many of the youth programs.

In September 1983 Father William Kehayes was assigned to the parish. Father Bill was instrumental in the parish’s move from Dwight Street to Racebrook Road in Orange. It was under his guidance that a building program raised $1,000,000 to construct a new Church edifice at 480 Racebrook Road in Orange.

On September 14, 1984, a major step was taken when Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America celebrated the ground breaking ceremony at the site of the new church on 480 Racebrook Road. It was also during this time that George Anastasion was appointed the Vice Chairman of the Building Committee.
On July 16, 1985, with His Grace Bishop Athenagoras presiding, the General Assembly voted to proceed with the construction of new church buildings at 480 Racebrook Road. A $2.6 million contract was signed with Kapetan Construction Company following a bidding process. Construction of the new church started later that month while the property on Dwight Street was sold to Ebenezer Chapel, Inc. in November.

For historical accuracy it should be noted that while the majority of parishioners were overwhelmingly in favor of the move from New Haven to Orange, there was a segment which was not. And the community did undergo a period of turbulence during this time. On the December 28, 1986, the last service and de-consecration, was held at the Dwight Street Church.

The official Thyraniexia (opening of the doors ceremony) of the Racebrook Road location, took place on December 3, 1987.

The parish continued to establish itself in the Town of Orange, with the 1987 Odyssey Festival being the first to be held on the Church grounds on Racebrook Road. In 1995, the Saint Barbara community played host to the Greek and Cypriot Delegations to the World Special Olympics that were held at Yale University, with our parish hosting and holding various events for the Special Olympians and their families.

The Service of the Opening of the Doors - December 3, 1987

Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America blesses Deacon Peter J. Orfanakos on the day of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood. Fr. Peter is flanked by his father and brother and the children of the Saint Barbara parish.

On July 21, 1996, Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America visited the Saint Barbara Parish and ordained then Deacon Peter J. Orfanakos, who had served as His Eminence’s Deacon since 1993 to the Holy Priesthood. Also present that day was Mr. Panagiotis Theodore Angelopoulos, the Great Benefactor and Great Logothetes of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Father Peter and Presbytera Vangie, accompanied by their son, John-Peter Iakovos, would begin ministering to the Saint Barbara community, on September 1, 1996.

Father Peter, working together with the lay leadership of the community, brought a renewed sense of growth to the parish, building on many of the ministries that had already existed, in addition to new initiatives to assist the faithful in their understanding of the faith. One such new initiative was the Saint Barbara Summer Day Camp which was established in 1997. The program, which was designed by both Presbytera Vangie and Father Peter, focused on creating a healthy, safe, Orthodox learning environment for campers and counselors, as well as encouraging camp staff development on a parish-wide level. The five-day one-week program would run for 21 years ministering to 1,945 campers (ages 4-14); 678 counselors (ages 14-18); and 781 adult staff members, prior to becoming the one-day 12 hour Saint Barbara Super Camp in 2018.
With the parish experiencing more growth and involvement from parishioners with a continuing growing list of ministries, it was becoming obvious to parish leadership that the parish was beginning to outgrow the auxiliary facilities. In the Fall of 1997 the parish undertook a three-year fund drive, titled “Saint Barbara 2000,” which sought to eliminate all debt of the parish and construct an education center, social hall and gymnasium. The fund drive was successful in the sense that it eliminated the $1,000,000 still left on the mortgage from the construction of the Church. It also helped seed a building fund that would grow to help with a planned future expansion of infrastructure.

Over the course of the next decade the parish would continue to grow, not just in membership, but in participation and the varied amount of ministries available to parishioners of all ages, assisting them on their path towards salvation. The parish itself would also become the first in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to live stream all of its liturgical services via the Internet, beginning in 2001, with hundreds of thousands of unique visitors, joining us in prayer.

The parish was also very involved in hosting various metropolis-wide events for teens, young adults and choir members that brought about a renewed sense of growth to various ministries outside the walls of the Church.

To meet an ever-growing need, the parish General Assembly in 2008 approved the Master Plan Expansion Project. Building commenced and concluded in 2009, with the completion of the education center, industrial kitchen and foundation of the gymnasium. It was also in 2009 that the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox parish in Ansonia officially merged with the Saint Barbara community, assisting both Father Peter and Father Joel. Father Steven had just recently retired from 58 years of ministry and moved to the area to be close to his family.

The parish continues to expand its ministry programs, enhancing the opportunities for the adults of our parish with the establishment of the Mustard Seed Faith Group in 2014; the Grief and Wellness Group in 2015; and the IXIOY2 Reading Group in 2017.

In 2017, the Saint Barbara Young Adults are selected from a large pool of applicants to be one of fourteen Orthodox Parishes in the United States to take part in the Telos Project. The project is spearheaded by the Office of Vocation & Ministry at HCHC and funded by a generous grant by Lilly Endowment Inc. The initiative seeks to assist Orthodox Christian parishes in developing new ministries with young adults ages 23-29, and will take place over the course of a five-year period.

In the Fall of 2018, as part of the centennial celebration of the parish, the community held events honoring various milestones including: couples married 50 years or more; parishioners who have served in the armed forces of America; teacher volunteers; and a Christmas Concert. These celebrations continued into 2019 and included a weekend of festivities that featured a Centennial Gala Event; the celebration of the Archieratical Divine Liturgy officiated by Archbishop Elpidophoros of America; and a luncheon that highlighted the younger members of the community and their vision for the continued growth of the parish.

CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH

The Consecration is the service of sanctification and solemn dedication of a building for use as a church. It is a special service which “changes” an ordinary building into the House of God. Like the Baptism of a child or the ordination of a priest, this change takes place through the Grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. The consecration of a church is a complex service that is filled with profound symbolism and many biblical elements and references. The Consecration is different from and usually takes place a while (sometimes years) after, the blessing of the ground and the church’s formal opening for worship (Thryanoixia). The Consecration service of the Saint Barbara Church in Orange took place on Sunday, October 9, 1994 and was celebrated by Bishop Alexios, the current Metropolitan of Atlanta.

On the night before the Consecration, the Altar was cleared. Everything was removed, including the covering, so that the altar stood bare and ready. The Hierarch entered the Church, carrying the relics of three Holy Martyrs in a little box called a ‘reliquary’. The Reliquary was placed on a Paten, which is the gold disks or round plate that holds the bread for Holy Communion, and placed on the Altar Table (where it would remain overnight accompanied by a Vigil Light). His Grace then led the congregation in the celebration of the Great Vespers Service, which included a short prayer service honoring the memory of the Holy Martyrs.

The following morning Saint Barbara parishioners gathered in the Church for the celebration of the Orthros Service. The Hierarch entered the Church and proceeded to the altar, where the Vigil Light remained lit in front of the relics of three Holy Martyrs.

At the conclusion of the Orthros, Bishop Alexios began the service of Consecration with the following exclamation: “Blessed is our God, always now and forever, and unto the ages of ages.” He then recited a prayer to the Holy Martyrs, asking them to pray for us and for God to give us grace, so that we might become more like...
them. He censed the relics and then raised them up. The faithful then processed out of the Church building: first the icon of Saint Barbara, then the acolytes (altar boys), the Chanters, the Choir, the Priests in order of seniority with the most senior carrying the Holy Gospel, the Bishop carrying the Holy Relics upon the Paten, followed by all of the people of the parish.

Many symbolic actions took place during the Consecration Service:

1. The Three Processions around the Church Building. Those in attendance processed with the Hierarch and the Holy Relics around the church three times. By circling the Church three times, we delineated a border around the building, and declared that this Church is set apart for God. This tradition is as ancient as Joshua’s Battle of Jericho. God promised the city of Jericho to His people, though at the time it was occupied by other people. The chief captain of the host of the Lord, a great angel, took back this territory, consecrating it to our Lord. During the Consecration Service the faithful processed as Joshua and His people did, circling the walls of the Church and declaring the land for God.

2. The Entrance into the Church
Following the third procession around the Church, the Hierarch pounded on the doors of the Church, so “that the King of Glory may enter in.” The dialogue that followed is taken from Psalm 24.

His Grace, raising His Hierarchical staff (Ravdos), knocked on the doors of the Church and said: “Lift up your gates you rulers; and be lifted up you eternal gates, and the king of glory will enter.” From inside the Church and behind the closed doors a voice answered, “Who is this king of glory?” The Bishop replied, “The Lord mighty and powerful, the Lord powerful in war. Lift up your gates you rulers; and be lifted up you eternal gates, and the king of glory will enter.” Again, the voice asked, “Who is this king of glory?” and the Bishop answered, “The Lord mighty and powerful, the Lord powerful in war. Lift up your gates you rulers; and be lifted up you eternal gates, and the king of glory will enter.” A third time the voice asked, “Who is this king of glory?” and the Bishop replied, “The Lord of powers, he is the king of glory.”

At the third answer the Hierarch once again lifted the Holy Relics from the table and made the sign of the Cross with them three times before the closed doors. The doors were then unlocked, and everyone present processed into the Church.

3. The Placing of, and Sealing of, the Holy Relics in the Altar Table.
As everyone entered the Church, Bishop Alexios carried the Holy Relics to the Altar, where they were carefully placed into a hollowed out area in the Holy Altar Table. The first Altars in the Early Church were the tombs of the Holy Martyrs as the early Christians secretly celebrated the liturgy over their bones. We continue this tradition and place the bones of martyrs in the Holy Altar during the Consecration Service. Bishop Alexios placed the relics of Saint Panteleimon (Feastday July 27), Saint Kyrikos (Feastday July 15) and Saint Boniface (Feast Day June 5), into the Altar of the Saint Barbara Parish. Together with Saint Barbara, these Saints are our parish’s personal patrons and protectors, interceding on our behalf before the Lord.

Together with the Saints’ Holy Relics, a Scroll listing the names of all those who pledged as Consecration Godparents and their loved ones was sealed in the Holy Altar forever. These names included the names of our community’s founding fathers and mothers and all the names that were offered in memory of loved ones.

The Consecration is the “Baptism” of a Church, and in it each of us reaffirms our own Baptism, our own dying and living with Christ. Therefore, on the day of Consecration, the Church allowed all to be “entombed” with our Lord through the interment of the names of our loved ones, past and present, living (Church Militant) and dead (Church Triumphant).

The Bishop then poured Holy Chrism over the Relics and Scroll to symbolize the union between our Lord and His Martyrs. Over the Holy Relics, he poured a wax/mastic which contained similar sweet-smelling spices that were used by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to anoint the Body of Christ for His burial. The Hierarch then applied a marble lid over the area and sealed it permanently. In this manner the Holy Altar table represents the entombed Body of our Lord.
4. The Washing and Anointing of the Altar Table.
The Bishop's robes were then covered with a simple white linen tunic called the Savanon, which represents both a baptismal garment and the shroud in which our Lord was buried, as he prepared to clean the Altar Table. He was given three bars of soap and a basin of water, which he blessed to make it Holy Water (much like the blessing of waters in Baptism).

As he cleaned, he chanted, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice.”

After the Altar Table was cleaned, he marked the sign of the cross in water over it three times (as when a person is immersed into the water three times in Baptism). He then made the sign of the cross with Holy Chrism over the Altar three times, calling out each time, “Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!” (as when a person is Chrismated.) Psalm 132 was then read, which reminds us that when Aaron was chosen by the Lord and anointed, the oil flowed over him and into his beard!

5. The Placing of the new Altar Coverings and other Holy Articles on the Holy Table.
In each of the four corners of the Altar Table a cloth with the icons of the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) was then placed and sealed with wax. They are in each of the four corners of the Altar Table, just as they are in the four corners of our dome.

The Holy Altar was then covered with a new white cloth — like the new white garment which is worn by the newly illumined (freshly Baptized & Chrismated person), and then with an outer cloth as well. As the Altar was enrobed, Psalm 92 was read: “The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed, he is girded with strength. Yea, the world is established; it shall never be moved; thy throne is established from of old; thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice, the floods lift up their roaring. Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty! Thy decrees are very sure; holiness befits thy house, O LORD, for evermore.”

The Bishop then censed the Holy Altar and the Church. He then chrismated the icons and the building; carrying a reed to the tip of which has been bound a sponge dipped in Holy Chrism. He drew the monogram of Christ in the apse of the Sanctuary, on the four columns and on the lintel of the door of the Church on the inside.

6. The Lighting of the Vigil Light.
Finally, at the conclusion of the Consecration service, Bishop Alexios brought to all the faithful the Vigil Light from the Holy Altar. This light reminds us of the unfailing light of our Transfigured Christ in His Holy Resurrection (and of the candle that a newly Baptized & Chrismated person carries). Each congregant then had an opportunity to offer a drop of oil to the holy vigil lamp.

6. The first Divine Liturgy in the newly consecrated Church.
After all present offered a drop of oil to the Vigil Light, the celebration of the Divine Liturgy commenced.

The relics of the following three Saints were placed into the Holy Altar Table at Saint Barbara Church in Orange, Connecticut during the Consecration Service.

Saint Panteleimon the Great Martyr and Healer [Feast Day - July 27] was born in the city of Nicomedia into the family of the illustrious pagan Eustorgius, and he was named Pantoleon. His mother Saint Euboula (March 30) was a Christian. She wanted to raise her son in the Christian Faith, but she died when the future martyr was just a young child. His father sent Pantoleon to a pagan school, after which the young man studied medicine at Nicomedia under the renowned physician Euphrosynus. Pantoleon came to the attention of the emperor Maximian (284-305), who wished to appoint him as royal physician when he finished his schooling.
After this miracle, Panteleimon was baptized by Saint Hermolaus with the name Panteleimon (meaning “all-merciful”).

Speaking with Eustorgius, Saint Panteleimon prepared him to accept Christianity. When the father saw how his son healed a blind man by invoking Jesus Christ, he then believed in Christ and was baptized by Saint Hermolaus together with the man whose sight was restored.

After the death of his father, Saint Panteleimon dedicated his life to the suffering, the sick, the unfortunate and the needy. He treated all those who turned to him without charge, healing them in the name of Jesus Christ. He visited those held captive in prison. These were usually Christians, and he healed them of their wounds. In a short time, reports of the charitable physician spread throughout the city. Forsaking the other doctors, the inhabitants began to turn only to Saint Panteleimon.

Envious doctors told the emperor that Saint Panteleimon was healing Christian prisoners. Maximian urged the saint to refuse the charge by offering sacrifice to idols. Saint Panteleimon confessed himself a Christian, and suggested that a sick person, for whom the doctors held out no hope, should be brought before the emperor. Then, the doctors could invoke their gods, and Panteleimon would pray to his God to heal the man. A man paralyzed for many years was brought in, and pagan priests who knew the art of medicine invoked their gods without success. Then, before the very eyes of the emperor, the saint healed the paralytic by calling on the name of Jesus Christ. The ferocious Maximian executed the healed man, and gave Saint Panteleimon over to fierce torture.

The Lord appeared to the saint and strengthened him before his sufferings. They subjected the Great Martyr Panteleimon from a tree and scraped him with iron hooks, burned him with fire and then stretched him on the rack, threw him into a cauldron of boiling tar, and cast him into the sea with a stone around his neck. Throughout these tortures the martyr remained unhurt and denounced the emperor.

At this time the priests Hermolaus, Hermippus and Hermocrates were brought before the court of the pagans. All three confessed their faith in the Savior and were beheaded (Feast Day - July 26).

By order of the emperor they brought the Great Martyr Panteleimon to the circus to be devoured by wild beasts. The animals, however, came up to him and licked his feet. The spectators began to shout, “Great is the God of the Christians!” The enraged Maximian ordered the soldiers to stab with the sword anyone who glorified Christ, and to cut off the head of the Great Martyr Panteleimon.

Hearing the Voice, the soldiers fell down on their knees before the holy martyr and begged forgiveness. They refused to continue with the execution, but Saint Panteleimon told them to fulfill the emperor’s command, because otherwise they would have no share with him in the future life. The soldiers tearfully took their leave of the saint with a kiss.

When the saint was beheaded, the olive tree to which the saint was tied became covered with fruit. Many who were present at the execution believed in Christ. The saint’s body was thrown into a fire, but remained unharmed and was buried by Christians. Saint Panteleimon’s servants Laurence, Bassos and Probus witnessed his execution and heard the Voice from Heaven. They recorded the life, the sufferings and death of the saint.

Portions of the holy relics of the Great Martyr Panteleimon were distributed throughout all the Christian world. His venerable head is now located at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon on Mount Athos.

Saint Kyrikos (Cyricus) the Martyr [Feast Day - July 15] was the three-year-old son of Saint Julitta, a Christian woman who was born into the high nobility of Iconium. She became a widow at a young age and renounced a second marriage in order to live in piety, together with her son. When Dometian, governor of Lycaonia, began to furiously apply the edicts of general persecution of the Christians sent by Diocletian (304), she sought refuge in Seleucia, preferring to renounce all her possessions and know the hardship of harsh exile rather than deny Christ.
Caressed him and tried to embrace. Alexander took him in his arms from her, gave him to the others, having taken her weeping. She was tied her and flogged her while taking her to torture. The torturers Christian! The furious governor Julitta simply replied: “I am a Christian!”

Interrogated about her identity, Julitta simply replied: “I am a Christian!” But she found in this town even greater agitation, as Alexander, the Emperor’s envoy had produced a reign of terror there by torturing and mercilessly putting to death all who would not submit to the edicts. She then left for Tarsus in Cilicia with her son and two handmaids. However, she found the tyrant there. Informed of the presence of this noble refugee, Alexander arrested her and had her appear before his tribunal. Her body and that of Saint Kyrikos were thrown over the marble staircase that led to the tribunal. The holy child’s skull was broken, and he immediately gave his soul into God’s keeping, sanctifying the ground with his blood and carrying off to heaven the crown of valiant athletes of piety.

Saint Julitta was filled with divine joy and thanked the Lord for having open the gates of glory to her son. Taken before the governor she proclaimed that no suffering would succeed in overcoming her love for God and that the tortures would, on the contrary, allow her to join her dear son. She was tortured further before she was beheaded.

Hymns from the Vespers of Saints Kyrikos & Julitta

With the body of but a child, and the mind of a perfect man, you did shame the tyrant of weak and childish mind, O Martyr Kyrikos, showing manly courage; because of which, he most roughy dashed you down at his judgement seat, killing you, yet betrothing you to the life that is ageless, unto which you did ascend completely covered with your own blood warm upon you still. As a fruit-laden vine made ripe with the Good Spirit’s watering, glorious Julitta, you now have offered up him that sprang forth from your womb, your young Kyrikos sacrificed when he truly was pressed out in the wine-press of martyrdom; with him, you have mixed and have poured out the wine of sweet compunction, making glad the hearts of all them that keep your feast-day with fervent faith.

But she found in this town even greater agitation, as Alexander, the Emperor’s envoy had produced a reign of terror there by torturing and mercilessly putting to death all who would not submit to the edicts. She then left for Tarsus in Cilicia with her son and two handmaids. However, she found the tyrant there. Informed of the presence of this noble refugee, Alexander arrested her and had her appear before his tribunal, her son in her arms. The servants were able to escape and followed the unfolding events from a hiding spot nearby. Julitta simply replied: “I am a Christian!” The furious governor had her put to torture. The torturers tied her and flogged her while others, having taken her weeping baby from her, gave him to the governor. Alexander took him in his arms and, placing him on his knees, caressed him and tried to embrace him, saying in a gentle voice: “Let this sorceress go, and come to me, your father. I will make you my son and the heir to all my riches, and you will live a peaceful life without any cares.” Kyrikos turned to look at his mother, who was in torment, and repulsed the advances of the tyrant, beating him with his tiny fists and scratching him. Crying out: “I too am a Christian!”, he kicked the tyrant in the ribs. Alexander let out a cry of pain and in fury, grabbed the child by the foot and hurled him over the marble staircase that led to the tribunal. The holy child’s skull was broken, and he immediately gave his soul into God’s keeping, sanctifying the ground with his blood and carrying off to heaven the crown of valiant athletes of piety.

Saint Julitta was filled with divine joy and thanked the Lord for having open the gates of glory to her son. Taken before the governor she proclaimed that no suffering would succeed in overcoming her love for God and that the tortures would, on the contrary, allow her to join her dear son. She was tortured further before she was beheaded.

Her body and that of Saint Kyrikos were thrown into the ditch reserved for those condemned as common felons. On the following night however, Saint Julitta’s two handmaids came to take the precious relics and buried them in a cave in the area. During the reign of Saint Constantine, one of these women, who had survived, revealed where the relics were hidden. Saint Kyrikos is often depicted in icons as a child pointing to the wound on his head.

Saint Boniface [Feast Day - June 5] was born in 673 in Crediton at the western edge of Wessex, one of the kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy. He entered a monastery and to travel about and preach the Good News. In 719 he would travel to Germany and begin his missionary work with the people of the area who were still mostly pagan. In 722 he was elevated to the rank of Bishop. Boniface attended the Diet of Wurzburg and was elevated to the rank of Bishop. Boniface gained a resounding victory over the pagans by felling an oak tree sacred to the god Thor, whom the idolaters venerated as a god of war. In 742 he founded the Monastery of Gritzlar, near the present-day town of Fritzlar in northern Hesse. Boniface used the wood from the sacred tree to build a church, beside which he founded the Monastery of Fritzlar, near the present-day town of Fritzlar in northern Hesse. He later established the first Diocese in Germany. The felling of Thor’s Oak is commonly regarded as the beginning of German Christianization. He is considered the Apostle of the Germans and was martyred on June 5, 754.

Hymns from the Vespers of Saint Boniface

The ranks of angels in heaven were filled with joy, O Boniface, when, wearing the blood of your martyrdom like a wedding garment, you did enter the bridal chamber of the Lord of hosts; and they raised their voices in acclamation when you did take your rightful place before the throne on high.

You did blossom like a lily amid the tares and weeds of heathen lands, O Boniface, and did emit the sweet fragrance of the Christian Faith, which filled all who inhaled it with love for the Lord; wherefore, He plucked you from the soil of this earth, and planted you among the gardens of His mansions on high.

When the sword of the slayer clove your sacred head in twain, it dealt a mortal blow to polytheism in Frisia; and your valiant death, truly Christian, instilled life and hope in the newly-enlightened people of God. Wherefore, as you were in every way well-pleasing to your Master, He has caused abundant grace to shine forth from your holy relics.

Like a fountain full of vivifying waters, pouring forth streams to quench the thirst of the pious, your tomb gives forth torrents of miracles, to heal the sickness of men’s souls and bodies. And the spring which arises at the place of your martyrdom likewise cures ailments and infirmities, that in full health the faithful may cry out to the Most High: Wondrous are You in Your saints, O Lord!

Apolytikion of Saint Boniface

O holy Boniface, hieromartyr and equal of the apostles, godly scion of England, boast of Germany, praise of France and glory of Holland! Arrayed in vestments dyed red in the blood of thy sacrifice, intercede with boldness before the throne of the King of all, that He pacify all the nations and visit our souls with great mercy.