

# 2023 Beyond 50 Plan Review -January Word

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The 2024 New Year marks the 55th Anniversary of Nativity of Christ and the final year of the Beyond 50 Plan. It's been an inspirational journey with wonderful accomplishments every year. In 2023, nearly \$45,000 has been released from the Beyond 50 restricted funds to enhance and support the diverse and uplifting ministries of our Parish. Each Beyond 50 Plan goal continues to receive inspirational progress.

## Initiate New Church Membership Strategies: Community Engagement/City of Novato

### Community Engagement

In June, Fr. John participated in the Marin Interfaith Council ["Ask Me Anything"](#) series and spoke about our Orthodox faith and NOC parish.



After our Marin Greek Festival, 10 individuals signed up for a four-week discussion series about the faith where

inquirers continued their journey to Orthodoxy.

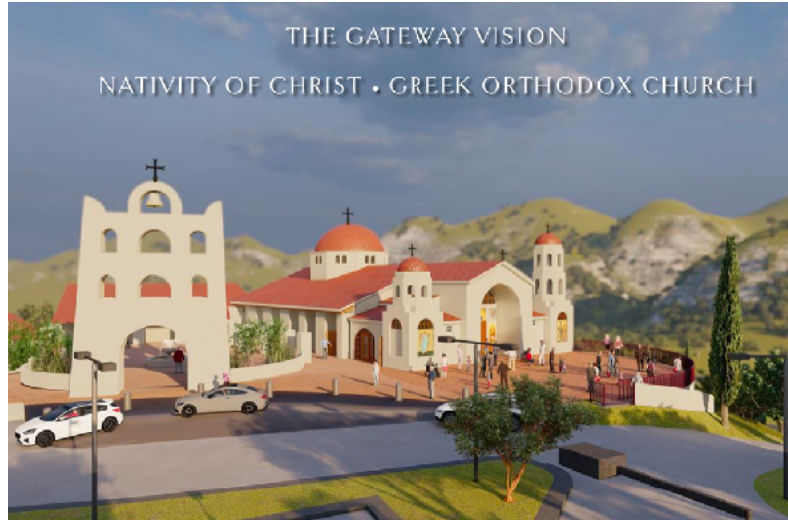
Susan Siefkas and Floretta Burrows hosted a table at the Holiday Bazaar to speak to individuals curious about our faith.



### City of Novato

In 2023, Christ Kamages and his team at CJK studios have continued to dedicate numerous hours on every aspect of these major projects of the Beyond 50 Plan. The most time and energy has been to make significant progress with the City of Novato and our Design Review Process. Our design was officially approved in September and we will soon be submitting the required Master Plan & Precise Development Plan.

Through the generosity of our stewards and donors, roughly \$23,000 has been spent in 2023 for city fees,



civil, geotechnical, traffic, and structural engineers. This of course does not include the estimated \$???? in architectural fees that have been graciously donated by Christ and Pat Kamages.

With all of these expenditures, we still have a remaining \$75,000 allocated for our Narthex Project with stewards who continue to give of their treasure to insure the completion of this project. By the summer of 2024, we hope to have received approval from the Novato City Council so we can properly prepare plans to submit for building permits.

## Expand and Support Existing Ministry: Ministries Director

In October of 2023, Eleni Kelley was hired as our new Ministries Director on a part-time bases. She has brought tremendous energy and structure to new ministries with weekly gatherings for families, women, men, and our youth. Through this established line-item on our Parish budget, we're grateful for our stewards to ensure our ministries are alive and vibrant.



# 2023 Beyond 50 -January Word

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## Increase and Expand Financial Resources: Nativity of Christ Preschool



Another responsibility of the Ministries Director has been to initiate the opening of a Nativity of

Christ Preschool. We are currently in the process of becoming a licensed child after-care program and hope to open our Preschool in the Fall of 2024. Through the donations to the Beyond 50 Plan, roughly \$16,000 has been released from Beyond 50 restricted general funds to prepare our classrooms with the furniture and materials needed for our preschoolers.

## Increase Service to Poor and Needy: Sack Meals

For four years Nativity has been making sack meals for St. Vincent De Paul on a monthly basis. 1,200 sack meals were made in 2023 alone, making our grand total nearly 6,000 sack meals over the past 4 years! We're grateful to our donors who have provided the \$8,000 needed to make these meals. We thank Elaine Chyrklund and Mary Kay Stratigos for spearheading this effort and Cheryl Messner for her previous leadership.

## Improve and Enhance Existing Facilities: Accessibility



In November of 2023, a Beyond 50 Workshop Presentation Video was displayed ([also available on YouTube](#)) to

give an update and receive feedback about our capital projects. Accessibility continues to be a major priority for stewards and we continue to pursue service to our faithful in this capacity.

## In Closing

It continues to be an inspirational reflection on every year of our Beyond 50 Plan and 2023 was no exception. As our Parish enters the last year of our original Plan, it will indeed be exciting and ultimately fulfilling to reflect upon all that has been accomplished through an ambitious vision and the hard work of the faithful.



# NOC Preschool - Beyond 50 -February 2024

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“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” – Proverbs 22:6

As the Beyond 50 Plan begun in 2019, our Parish strived to accomplish many objectives to improve and enhance our Nativity of Christ community as a whole. One of the ways we envisioned making our Parish strong and vibrant is through a preschool. With the hiring of Eleni Kelly as our Ministries Director and the knowledge of Daphne Cummings and Fran Corcoran, much progress has been made to making this a reality.

In the month of February, we anticipate receiving approval to become an officially licensed child care center. Upon this approval, we will immediately begin to engage our community about the Nativity of Christ Preschool through a new website, postcards, social media, flyers, and large signage in public areas.



**NATIVITY OF CHRIST  
PRESCHOOL**

On Sunday, February 25, prior to our Parish Assembly,

we hope to have our first ever tour of the Nativity of Christ Preschool for the stewards of our community. It is our prayer that this new ministry will serve our Nativity families to further connect them with our faith and community life. The search for a qualified teacher will begin in March.

Opening a preschool is no small endeavor and continued gratitude is expressed to all those who have financially contributed to the Beyond 50 Plan. It is through these funds that roughly \$18,000 has been spent for the needed fencing, materials, furniture, licensing fees and safety upgrades.

As our Parish embarks on this exciting new endeavor, may the Holy Spirit continue to guide and direct our paths in the direction that leads us to eternal salvation. May we always feel strengthened to start our children off on the way that they should go that they may never turn from it.




# Beyond 50- March 2024

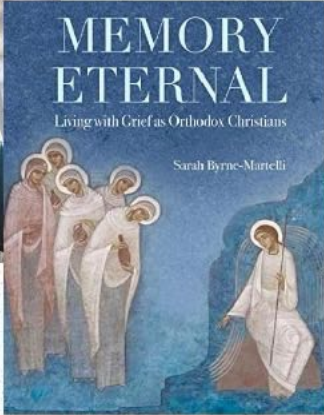
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Grief connects us as a human race and even more intimately through our faith in the Resurrected Lord. Grief can be a tool to connect, engage, and grow in faith and fellowship, which is why Nativity is proud to host this year's Lenten Retreat with Sarah Byrne-Martelli. Please make every effort to join us April 13 and April 14. See more details below!

Joy Comes in  
the Mourning  
Living with Grief as Orthodox Women



Sarah  
BYRNE - MARTELLI




1st Annual  
Lenten Womens Retreat

SATURDAY, APRIL 13TH 2024  
9:30AM WELCOME  
10:00AM PRESENTATION  
12:00PM LUNCH/MEET & GREET


REGISTER WITH [EKELLEY@NATIVITYOFCHRIST.ORG](mailto:EKELLEY@NATIVITYOFCHRIST.ORG). TICKETS \$20

NATIVITY OF CHRIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
1110 HIGHLAND DRIVE, NOVATO CA 94949

Fear not:  
Encountering Christ  
in our suffering  
Join Us as We Continue Our Discussion  
with Guest Speaker:



Sarah  
BYRNE -  
MARTELLI



Community Invite

SUNDAY, APRIL 14TH 2024  
AFTER CHURCH SERVICE  
NOON - 2:00PM  
ALL ARE WELCOME

NATIVITY OF CHRIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
1110 HIGHLAND DRIVE, NOVATO CA 94949

## About Sarah

Sarah is an Orthodox Christian board certified chaplain and bereavement counselor, and has served in acute care and hospice since 2002. She currently serves as the Chaplain for the [Massachusetts General Hospital Division of Palliative Care](#). She is also a [Cambia Sojourns Scholar Leader](#), and devotes half of her time to spiritual care research.

She is endorsed by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese and board certified, with subspecialty certification in hospice and palliative care, by the Association of Professional Chaplains/Board Certification Commission Inc. She is also the Secretary of the Board of the [Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology, and Religion](#).


She attends [St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church](#) in Cambridge, MA, with her husband, Dr. Peter Martelli, and son Rafael. She holds a Doctor of Ministry from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School, and a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Religion from Haverford College.

# Beyond 50- April 2024

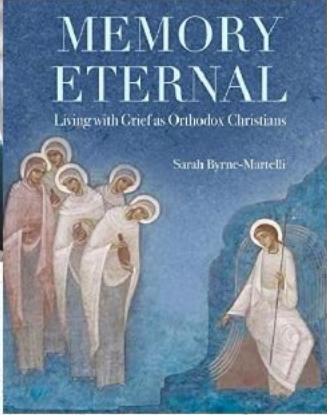
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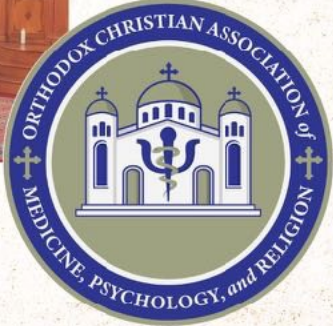
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## Fear Not: Encouraging Christ in our Suffering Sarah Byrne-Martelli Lenten Presentation

On Sunday, April 14, Sarah Byrne-Martelli encouraged us to encounter Christ in our suffering through three major areas:

### 1. ACTIVELY TURNING TOWARDS GOD IN OUR SUFFERING

“Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me receive my sight.” And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God.” – Luke 18:40-43.

In our suffering, do we turn away, or towards God? Christ is constantly asking us what do we want Him to do for us and we must tell him!

### 2. PRAY WITH DEEEP HUMILITY

“Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Phil 4:6-7.

“Cast all your anxieties on him for He cares about you.” – 1 Peter 5:7

We can communicate our desires, anxieties, and stresses to God through prayer. We can best understand our true prayer life by approaching Christ with humility as he is the holder and creator of all. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves and we seek Him in our hearts through our love for Him.

### 3. PRACTICE CARING FOR OTHERS

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

“...And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” Matthew 25:35-36;40

Caring and being attentive to others in their suffering can begin to heal the wounds we find in our own suffering. Our natural disposition as a human race calls us to attend to others in need which is truly being a witness to the person of Jesus Christ.



Toad sat and did nothing.

Frog sat with him.



### LEARN TO BE STILL. LEARN TO BE SILENT.

We are called to be still and keep silence as Orthodox Christians and this discipline will greatly support us in our grief and struggles. In the words of St. Mark the Ascetic: “The intellect cannot be still unless the body is still also; and the wall between them cannot be demolished without stillness and prayer.”

Inner stillness goes beyond silence to purify the heart and issue in pure prayer. That purification involves the entire body, because body and soul, like mind and heart, are ultimately inseparable.

# Beyond 50- June/July 2024

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Nativity of Christ expresses its sincere gratitude to **Antonis Construction Building and Painting** for donating all the labor to paint the exterior of our large hall. It was a much needed improvement that continues to fulfill the many goals of our Beyond 50 Plan. Our community is blessed with picturesque grounds and dedicated stewards who continue ensure our facilities reflect our love for God.

Before



After



# *Beyond 50: NOC Preschool - August 2024*

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One of the ambitious goals of the Beyond 50 Plan was to open a Nativity of Christ Preschool. Over the last several years, we've worked towards achieving this dream by transforming our facilities to provide a safe learning environment to cultivate the learning experience of our preschoolers.

Through the hard work of our Advisory Committee (Eleni Kelley, Daphne Cummings, Fran Corcoran, and Kathy Marshall) a thorough search for a teacher/director was initiated and it is with tremendous excitement that we announce the hiring of Angelina Susmani!

**REGISTRATION  
NOW OPEN**

LICENSE #214908667

**NOCPreschool.org**

**415-883-4138**



**NATIVITY OF CHRIST  
PRESCHOOL**

Angelina was baptized and raised at Nativity of Christ and we're grateful to have her lead our Preschool as we welcome our new students for the first day of school on Monday, August 26.

With Angelina's leadership, the Nativity of Christ Preschool will be able to accomplish its many goals: to encourage emotional and social learning for our children, to cultivate the faith from the earliest of ages, to offer a needed service to the local community, and to further promote our Orthodox Christian presence to Marin County. Welcome Angelina!

## ***Nativity Preschool Teacher/Director***

Angelina Susmani earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Sonoma State University. With over 12 years of experience working with children in various capacities, including classroom teaching and administrative roles, she has developed a deep understanding of child development and effective teaching strategies. Angelina's passion for building strong relationships with her students and families is evident in her approach to education, as she strives to create a supportive, safe and nurturing environment where each child can thrive. She adapts learning to each individual child's needs and is committed to providing personalized and engaging educational experiences that inspire a love for learning. Angelina's experience in administration has equipped her with strong organizational and leadership skills, allowing her to effectively manage classrooms and educational programs. With a genuine love for working with children and a dedication to helping each child reach their full potential, Angelina is a valuable addition to our Nativity of Christ Preschool.





# Beyond 50: NOC Preschool - September 2024

*Connect • Engage • Grow*

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." - Matthew 19:14

On Sunday, August 25, Fr. John recognized the incredible Nativity of Christ Advisory Committee for their hours of dedication and commitment to help establish the Nativity of Christ Preschool. Flowers and an icon depicting Christ having all the children were gifted as a token of the community's appreciation.

Daphne Cummings began the licensing process in 2021 and worked diligently to ensure all the necessary paperwork was completed in anticipation of its submittal. Upon the hiring of Eleni Kelley as Ministries Director in 2023, she reignited the licensing process and served as the engine to propel this initiative forward. In this process, Fran Corcoran and Kathy Marshall offered invaluable knowledge and experience to complement the early stages of a program in its infancy with tremendous potential.

In June of 2024, after a thorough search of qualified candidates, the Advisory Committee unanimously recommended to the Parish Council the hiring of Angelina Susmani. Born and raised as a parishioner of Nativity of Christ, Angelina brings youthfulness and experience as she completed 12 years at the preschool at North Marin Community Services. It is no coincidence that North Marin Community Services was also our 2024 Marin Greek Festival Charity Partner! Truly another example of God working through our Parish to accomplish this worthy goal.

On Monday, August 26, we began our Nativity of Christ Preschool and pray that it continues to be a worthy endeavor for our Parish and the greater community. We are grateful to the donors of the Beyond 50 Plan where roughly \$20,000 has been allocated to startup costs: furniture, facility enhancements, materials, and other items were all possible through donations of the Beyond 50 Plan.

It is our hope that the faithful of this Parish continue to promote the NOC Preschool to the entire community by reminding them that NOC Preschool:

- Is open to ALL children from 2 - 5 years old, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:30 am - 3:00 pm.
- Accepts state funding and vouchers supplements.
- Has open enrollment and will accept new students at anytime!

We again extend our gratitude to Fr. John, the Parish Council, the Advisory Committee, the donors of the Beyond 50 Plan and the entire Nativity of Christ community for making this dream a reality!



# *Beyond 50: Men's Retreat - October 2024*

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## Sons Of Nativity MEN'S MINISTRY

IS HOSTING AN EVENING MEN'S RETREAT

# Getting Love Right

THE ORTHODOX PATH  
TO LIFE-GIVING RELATIONSHIPS

An authentic connection with Christ nurtures our ability and desire to cultivate genuine, life-giving relationships. This interactive retreat will offer scriptural insights and integrate them with healthy relationship principles.

**Presenter: George Papageorge, LMFT**

Marriage & Family Therapist ~ Family Wellness Ministry Director

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2024**

**Dinner 6:30 pm • Presentation 7 pm**

George is Director of the Family Wellness Ministry of our Metropolis of San Francisco. As a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist for the past 35 years as well as professor of family therapy at Santa Clara University, George offers insights and practical relationship skills from evidenced based psychology and integrates it with the riches of our Christ centered Orthodox faith.



**"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" Proverbs 27:17**

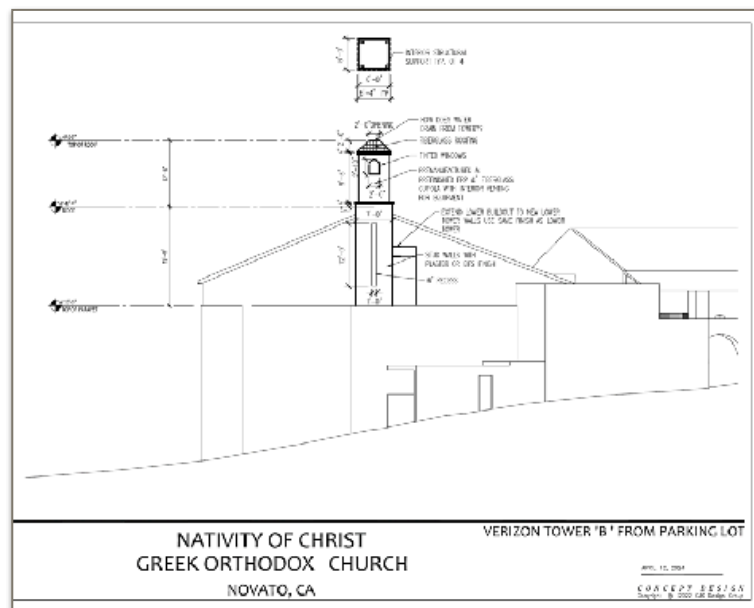
**IRONMEN - Men's Ministry of the Metropolis of San Francisco**

## New Cell Phone Antennas at Nativity of Christ

On Sunday, October 20, the Parish Assembly was informed that, in the coming months, construction will begin on our campus for a fourth and final cell phone provider, Verizon. Currently there are antennas for AT&T, T-Mobile, and Dish. Given our hilltop location, the height of our buildings offers a prime location for cell phone carriers to maximize coverage for their customers. Residents, businesses, and first responders have all benefited from the improved service provided by the antennas on our campus. In return, Nativity of Christ (NOC) receives monthly rental income from each carrier.

## Where will the new Verizon antennas be installed?

Each carrier's antennas are strategically placed to face east, south, and west. Verizon will install antennas on the east wall of the large hall and the west wall of the church. Additionally, the cupola on the large hall will be heightened and its architecture will be slightly altered to accommodate the new antennas facing south. Additional enclosures will be placed on the church and the large hall to accommodate the new antennas facing east and west.



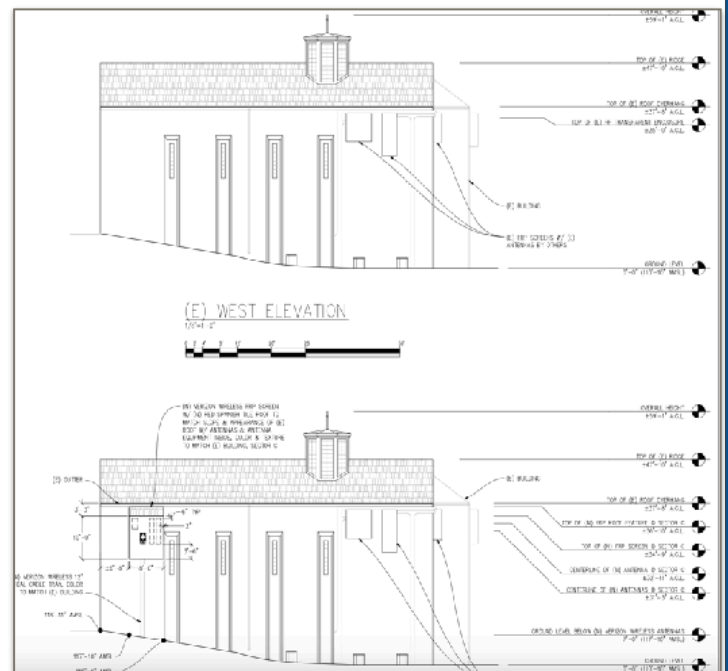
## Do the cell phone antennas pose any health concern?

Health and safety of our community remain our top priority. Over the years, we've been informed and assured, that the type of radiation being emitted from these antennas (radio frequency, or RF, radiation) is a type of non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation. This is similar to the radiation emitted by radio and television broadcast signals and considered not harmful to human tissue at typical exposure levels. Additionally, it is well documented that the antennas emit radiation directionally, towards the horizon, and not towards common spaces of our campus.

The Parish Council is also pursuing a professional to measure radio frequencies on our campus to ensure that these measurements do not exceed federal limits. The Assembly was also reminded that a parishioner performed a thorough, researched report prior to the installation of the original antennas in the early 2000s.

## Are the cell phone antennas our largest source of revenue?

No. Our Parish's primary source of income remains the stewardship of our parishioners.



# Beyond 50 Goal: Develop and Increase Financial Resources

Connect • Engage • Grow

November 2024

With contributions exceeding \$300,000 annually, stewardship is a greater source of revenue than both the Marin Greek Festival and the cell phone antennas combined. Nativity of Christ is blessed with its stewards who continue to support the operating budget and ministries of our Parish.

## How has NOC used the revenue from the cell phone antennas?

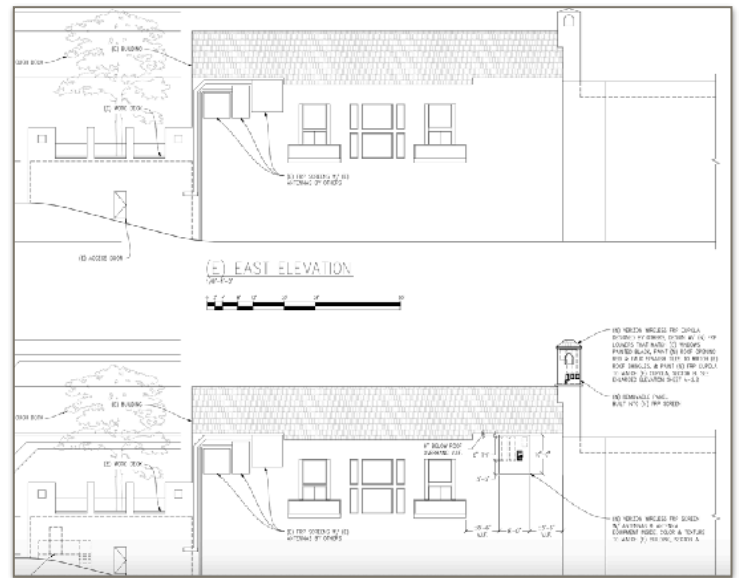
Our community has been blessed over these past 20 years to receive this additional source of income. The revenue from these antennas has not only ensured our financial stability over the years, but also enabled us to purchase a Parish Home and retire its mortgage just six years after its purchase. A Ministries Director and generous giving towards philanthropic organizations are additional examples of how we've been able to allocate these funds.

## How will the additional Verizon revenue be allocated?

This additional, anticipated revenue was not incorporated into the 2025 operating budget. The Parish Council is discussing its future purpose and will report back to the Parish Assembly in the Spring.

## Thank You

Securing the lease agreements of these cell phone tower contracts is complex and demands a great deal of time. NOC has greatly benefited from previous leadership securing this source of revenue but we extend our deepest gratitude to Kim Daifotis and Steve Rouman who have spent countless hours negotiating with Verizon and their representatives these last several years. May God continue to bless us as we serve His Holy Name!



## What's our progress with the City of Novato for the Narthex Gateway?

**October 2023** - The City of Novato informed Nativity of Christ that a more detailed submittal will be needed in the form of a Master Plan and Precise Development Plan.

**November 2023 - September 2024** - CJK performed the requirements listed for the Master Plan and Precise Development Plan. Examples: Zoning/Planning Applications, traffic information, geological hazard map, site and grading plans, landscape architectural renderings, a biological cultural report, and much more.

**November 2024** - Nativity awaits confirmation from the City of Novato that our Master Plan and Precise Development Plan is complete so our submission can begin its process of approval by the Planning Commission and the Novato City Council.