



**NATIONAL FORUM  
OF GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH MUSICIANS**  
*The musical arm of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
that strengthens and perpetuates its liturgical music*  
**Annual Report of the National Chairman**



**July 6 – 8, 2017**

**Flushing, NY**

Dear Members of the National Forum,

In 1976, the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians was chartered by +Archbishop Iakovos as the “official umbrella organization on all matters regarding ecclesiastical music for all Greek Orthodox parishes within our Archdiocese”. This year marks the 41<sup>st</sup> year of service to the music ministry of our faith. Serving as its National Chairman is an honor and humbling experience and I sincerely thank you for allowing me this opportunity to serve. Many dedicated individuals from throughout our entire Archdiocese offer their God given talents to continue the advancement of this important ministry within our Archdiocese. With the guidance and blessings of our spiritual leaders, we have had a very busy and productive year. I especially want to acknowledge and thank our Archbishop Demetrios Geron of America, the Metropolitans, the Bishops, priests and our Spiritual Advisor, Father Nicholas Bacalis, for providing the guidance, prayer and leadership that is so essential to our work.

Each year Church Music Sunday is celebrated on the day closest to the name day of St. Romanos, our patron saint. This is an opportunity for parishes to acknowledge and thank their church musicians for their dedicated service to the music ministry of our faith. Mailings announcing Church Music Sunday are sent to the clergy, Philoptochos Chapters, choir directors and Parish Councils throughout our Archdiocese informing them of the work of the National Forum and includes a beautiful poster. The poster this year was that of Saint Sophronios Patriarch of Jerusalem. The very talented George Theodossiou of Boston, MA designed and prepared the Church Music Sunday poster. We thank the many parishes, Philoptochos Chapters, choirs and individuals throughout our Archdiocese who generously contribute to our Church Music Sunday commemoration. Their generous financial support assists us in developing materials and programs for the parishes and church musicians in the Archdiocese. Twenty percent of the Church Music Sunday collection is returned to each Metropolis federation to support the work within their Metropolis.

In conjunction with the celebration of Church Music Sunday, the Years of Service pin and a letter from our Archbishop are awarded to choir directors who have served for 25 years or more. Four choir directors were honored for their service this year. Discussions are ongoing regarding the presentation of Years of Service awards for organists and chanters.

In October I attended the Archdiocesan Council meeting in New York. I participated in the Religious Education Committee meetings and also the Council meeting. While in New York attending the meetings, I had the opportunity to discuss National Forum projects with our hierarchs and church leaders.

Our Liturgical Guidebook continues to be sold through the Orthodox Marketplace of The

Department of Religious Education. Father John Maheras, Nick Maragos, Peter Vaturas and Vicki Pappas compile and edit the material for the Liturgical Guidebook. Our sincere appreciation is expressed to them for their dedicated work. Dr. Menios Karanos also serves as a consultant on the Guidebook project. This is a valuable tool which our priests, choir directors, psalti, choir members, organists and office staff have come to rely upon.

We encourage the use of the many resources available through the National Forum such as publications, lists of chant schools, leaders for Church Music Institutes, announcements and other news. These can be found on our website at <http://churchmusic.goarch.org/>.

In October the Oloi Mazi team met in Boston for a review of the pew hymnal. Our appreciation is extended to His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios for his support and hospitality. His Eminence attended the meetings of the team and worked with us in developing the melodies for the text. Father Anton Vrame has also attended our meetings and provided valuable guidance. Thank you to Dean Limberakis for serving as our Boston Liaison and making the arrangements for the meetings.

His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios, our liaison to the Holy Synod and Chairman of the Translations Committee, has been incredible in providing leadership, support and guidance to the Oloi Mazi team as it worked to complete the music for the approved text in the Greek and new English translations of the Divine Liturgy. Thank you your Eminence and thank you to team members, Vicki Pappas, chair, Kevin Lawrence, Dr. Nick Maragos, Father Chrysostomos Gilbert, Nancy Takis, Tikey Zes and Stan Takis who serves as our Scribe. We also appreciate the work of Dr. Grammenos Karanos and Father Anton Vrame for serving as consultants and guiding our work. This has been an incredible team and enough cannot be said to thank them for their work – not only the hours spent in meetings, but the time spent proofreading, on conference calls, emailing, and reviewing. A special acknowledgement is given to Stan Takis for his work in formatting and typesetting the new hymnal. This was a monumental task and Stan is to be commended for his work.

The Oloi Mazi team's work on the new pew hymnal is now completed! We have submitted our work to the Rev. Anton Vrame of the Department of Religious Education for a final review and publishing. A new pew hymnal to replace the "Green" book is expected to be published this fall. The Oloi Mazi team will continue to meet and to develop additional Kontakia, Kinonika and other frequently chanted hymns. On behalf of the National Forum, Kevin Lawrence is arranging a four part hymnal of the new pew book for use by choirs. Other composers are also working on arrangements of the newly translated Divine Liturgy. The text is copyrighted by the Archdiocese and the music is copyrighted by the National Forum.

Work is also ongoing to update the Hymn Series which will be used with the curriculum of the Department of Religious Education and will cross reference the lessons to the hymns. The revised Hymn Series includes the new text and music approved by the Holy Eparchial Synod and will offer an explanation of the hymns, the melodies that all youth should learn and relates directly to the lesson. Father Anton Vrame is working with us to incorporate the hymns in new publications of the Department of Religious Education. Father Tony, we appreciate the work that you do and the opportunity to work with you and your department. Sondra Awad is working with a youth choir to record the music for the Hymn Series.

Leadership 100, has provided generous financial support to the Forum for its work in

developing the musical arrangements for the Divine Liturgy and other services within our church, update our website, continue to develop the hymnology program in conjunction with the Department of Religious Education, develop the camp hymnal, offer training for church musicians and choir directors and expand our Youth Initiative to engage our youth with their faith. We acknowledge and thank Leadership 100 for its financial support for without it many of these projects would not be possible.

George Theodossiou continues to serve as our webmaster and keeps the information current. There are still many areas that need to be addressed and we are working to continue to update the information provided. Our sincere appreciation goes to George Theodossiou for offering his time and talents by serving as our webmaster.

In March, the annual Council of Presidents meeting was in held Richmond, VA. The presidents reviewed the progress made this year and set the agenda for this Annual Meeting. Among the discussions were ways to strengthen each Metropolis Federation, participation and hosting of Federation Conferences, topics and format for Church Music Institutes and the rising costs of participating in the Biennial Clergy Laity Congress of our Archdiocese. A National Choir/Church Musicians Conference was also discussed. The presidents shared information and exchanged ideas. Thank you presidents for making the effort to get to Richmond; Father Nicholas Bacalis and the Parish of St. Constantine & Helen for hosting; my local choir family for extending their hospitality and feeding us so well!

The Spring Archdiocesan Council meeting was held in May in Chicago. I again attended as the representative of the National Forum and participated in the Religious Education Committee meeting and the Council meeting.

In October I met with Kostas Alexis, the Financial Director for Holy Cross School of Theology to discuss the use of the Endowment the National Forum donated. Several ideas for the use of the funds were discussed and a future meeting of the Trustees was planned. The three Trustees representing the National Forum are myself, Dr. Nick Maragos and Dr. Vicki Pappas. The three Trustees for Holy Cross are Father Chris Mitropolis, Dean Jim Skedros and Kostas Alexis. In May the three Trustees from the National Forum met with Kosta Alexis in Chicago to plan the offerings which will be funded by the National Forum's Endowment. The first is planned for this fall with another scheduled in the Spring. While in Chicago I had the opportunity to discuss these offerings with Father Chris as well.

In addition to the above activities, I attended the South Eastern Federation Conference in Boca Raton, FL in July; the New England and Eastern Federation Conferences in October; the Direct Archdiocese District Conference in New York in November and the South Eastern Federation Conference in Raleigh, NC this May. By attending the Federation Conferences as your representative, I have the opportunity to discuss the role and progress of the Forum with those attending, as well as our Hierarchs and to learn from them the direction and projects that they would like for the Forum to consider in its deliberations and plans for the future. These discussions also give our Hierarchs an understanding of the projects which the Forum is already addressing.

Many of our Metropolitans are encouraging congregational participation in the worship services. The Guide to Congregational Singing which was distributed to each parish in our Holy Archdiocese last year is being used in may parishes as a guide to engage the congregation.

I also appreciate the work of our Treasurer Hope Demitry. Hope has transitioned the Forum's accounting to Quick Books and has spent numerous hours in training and transferring the accounts to the new format. A sincere thank you also to Susan Karcanes who serves as Secretary for our Annual Meeting. She does a phenomenal job in deciphering all of the discussions into a comprehensive document.

There are so many that work with dedication to our faith and music ministry and it would be impossible for me to acknowledge and thank each one. I do wish however to acknowledge our Publications Office Chair Lucy Pappadakes for taking on this responsibility and Barbara Minton who serves as Stewardship Chairman. A special note of appreciation is also extended to past National Chairman, Vicki Pappas, for her guidance, support and friendship. Vicki is always available to answer questions and to share the wisdom of her experience as past chairman. Thank you Vicki.

As you can see, this has been an extremely busy year and we have accomplished many of our goals but there is much more work ahead. There is so much that goes on behind the scenes that make these projects and events happen. To each of you who work so tirelessly to promote the music ministry of our Holy Archdiocese I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your leadership within our federations and in the work of the National Forum demonstrates the dedication, spiritual motivation and commitment to our church music ministry. God bless you for this. . Each of you is also a treasured and valued friend, responding to my requests, offering advice, assuming responsibilities to make our team such an effective one. God bless you for all that you do. I greatly appreciate and acknowledge your trust, friendship and guidance.

With God's help and yours we will continue to work to promote the goals of the National Forum. I look forward to another exciting year and want you to know that I am available and willing to assist wherever needed.

Submitted with sincere appreciation and respect,

*Maria*

Maria Keritsis

National Chairman