



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Department of Communications

Report to the 40th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress

Gather My People To My Home

COME and SEE

The theme for the Clergy Laity Congress offers the Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese a unique opportunity to display and make use of all tools to bring the faithful and non-faithful to our true Orthodox Faith.

With the offices of the Department of Communications we must use all methods of Communications available including speech, text, radio, internet and television to introduce and reinforce our Orthodox Faith to all.

Introduction

The Department of Communications continues to coordinate the work and planning of the communications offices of the Archdiocese and their office directors, including the Office of News and Information, GOTELECOM, and the Orthodox Observer. In addition, the Coordinator works with the Department of Internet Ministries to review news content for the web site.

The Department of Communications continues its efforts to enhance communication at all levels, which will assist the Hierarchs, clergy, parishes, departments, organizations, institutions, and programs in receiving and communicating information in timely and effective ways. This is critical to the growth and support of every area of the life of the Church.

The Department has been able to execute its primary responsibilities and also initiate and complete new projects while working without a number of key staff people and positions.

Department of Communications – 2008 - 2010

At the present time, the Department of Communications has a vital role in the following basic areas:

1. Communicating efficiently the scope of the ministry and activity of the Archdiocese to all people associated with the Archdiocese, to adherents of the Orthodox Christian faith, to the leadership and members of other religious bodies, to members of the media, to public officials, and to academic leaders on national and international levels;
2. Assisting the work of the Archbishop through coordinated planning and communication of his vision and goals for the Archdiocese;
3. Developing, evaluating, and modifying a continuous plan for communicating the work of the Hierarchs, Metropolises, parishes, departments, organizations, institutions, and programs of the Archdiocese.
4. Providing technical and resource assistance to all of the above to enhance and coordinate their communication and work of their ministry.

5. Initiating, developing and maintaining contacts within the secular media in order to best portray the faith and mission of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Initiatives & Projects

Communications Audit

In response to a directive from the Communications Committee of the Archdiocesan Council in late 2007, the public relations consulting firm of TSD was retained to complete an Audit of the entire communications effort of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, its Ministries and Departments and its process. The results of this Audit were discussed in the Fall 2008 Meeting of the Committee. Although it is the goal of the Department to implement recommendations of the Audit, because of financial constraints the Department has begun to put into practice those that can be completed with little or no funds.

Thus far we have begun the following

- 1- Initiated weekly key staff meetings to discuss upcoming events and issues pertinent to the Communications Department
- 2- Continued to reach out to all Metropolises to gather national information for the Orthodox Observer
- 3- Continued efforts to offer more links within the Orthodox Observer articles so that the faithful can receive more information
- 4- Started discussions to initiate communications professional luncheons with His Eminence and different groups of media executive, and working journalists
- 5- Started discussions to develop a travel protocol for visits of the Archbishop to events – in consultation with the Office of the Archbishop
- 6- Updated and streamlined our distribution lists
- 7- Increases our distribution lists in fax and email

Working to fulfill the recommendations of the Audit continues to be high on our list of tasks.

Steward Listing/Mailing List

The Coordinator and staff worked closely with the Department of Administration and the Department of Information Technology on collecting steward data from all parishes for a merge of addresses with our present list. This was also a very detailed process and took more than 18 months to complete the acquisition of mailing lists. In September through December 2009 a complete merge was undertaken to combine the new mailing list with the old mailing list. In December 2009 the merge was completed and an increase in more than 42,000 names was realized. The Orthodox Observer mailing list was increased from 123,000 to 165,000 names and addresses.

We must always keep in mind that our mailing list goes well beyond parish membership and our goal must be to increase the number of people interested in our faith. A primary use of the list will be to increase the number of households receiving the Orthodox Observer.

Listserv Project

Responding to a directive from the Communications Committee, a GOA News listserv has been compiled and is now being used. This new listserv combines emails of all of the GOA hosted listservs that have given their approval to be included. As you can imagine, this was a very detail oriented project as lists had to be approved for use, received, merged and evaluated. Although there was some slight duplication, inconvenience was minimal. This merged list now has over 23,000 email addresses that can be communicated to in an instant. Use of this list is reserved for urgent communications of a national

interest and also for Friday E-bulletins. All parishes are encouraged to submit their e-mail lists so their members can receive these communications.

Visit of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to America - Fall 2009

Staff of the Department worked with the assigned Communications Director of the Visit to assure that coverage was completed, events were publicized and posted on the internet and videotaped for posting and for archival purposes. Additionally, a full media archive was researched and completed and delivered to His All Holiness.

2009 - 2010 Parish Ecclesiastical Calendars

2004 was the first year the Archdiocese designed and offered to our parishes a full-color ecclesiastical calendar that listed the Saints (in Greek and English), Feast Days, Scripture readings, and fasting guidelines for the year, as well as beautiful color icons for each month and hymns (in Greek and English) for the feast or saint indicated. For the year 2010 over 155,000 calendars were sold to more than 350 parishes.

Pocket Calendar

The Communications Department undertook the task of updating the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Pocket Calendar. A fresh look was created and over 350,000 Calendars have been printed and mailed to parishes around the country for distribution to their faithful and families.

News Releases

From June 1, 2008 to June 1, 2010 the Department of Communications has distributed more than 400 Communiqués (Encyclicals and/or News Releases in both English and Greek). Releases are distributed by fax, listserv and posted on our website, depending on content and target audience. The Department also distributes Encyclicals and Releases on behalf of SCOBA, organizations and institutions of the GOA and maintains the listservs of the Archdiocese.

Responding to Significant National and International Events

The Department of Communications had disseminated information regarding the relief response to events and crises around the world. We continue to disseminate information in response to events that affect both Orthodox Christians and non-Orthodox Christians worldwide.

The Yearbook

The Annual Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is published each year. The book is compiled and edited by staff of the Department. The Yearbook is posted online during the first week of January and printed copies are mailed to the Metropolises, staff parishes and chapels, institutions and organizations, retired clergy, government leaders, consulates and embassies, media – both Orthodox and non-Orthodox and Greek and non-Greek, Greek American Day schools and to interested individuals and organizations. Comments have and continue to be extremely favorable, particularly from the media who appreciate the immense amount of material and resources contained in the book.

Parishes

Many of our smaller communities are not receiving information in a timely manner. It is our ongoing goal to establish a means of contact so that all clergy and parishes will receive information from the Archdiocese and their Metropolises as it is issued, in order to effectively use the resources of the Archdiocese and its ministries. We urge all parishes and clergy to actively use their assigned parish and clergy email addresses. Our goal is to terminate faxing to parishes and have all of our parishes receive their communication by email. This will conserve resources, both paper and financial.

Departments, Organizations, and Institutions

The Department continues distributing information from the Departments, Organizations, and Institutions; so that it will have an ever-expanding knowledge of the extent of the work at all levels of the Archdiocese in order that information is integrated into all types of communication. Additionally, the Department has been working with organizations and Metropolises to assist them in communicating to their lists and interested parties.

Electronic Resources

Technology has aided the use of electronic resources for all aspects of communication from digital video to e-mail bulletins. Our goal is to continue to structure our electronic resources for the most effective use in terms of regular and informative communication from the Archdiocese. Some aspects of this have included programs such as the continuation of the weekly e-bulletin.

Clergy-Laity Congresses 2008 & 2010

The Department had an active role in the dissemination of information and directs all of the audio visual needs for the Clergy Laity Congresses.

40th Anniversary of Enthronement of Archbishop Demetrios

A commemorative booklet highlighting the Episcopal ministry of Archbishop Demetrios was produced. The booklet included wonderful photos and text and was distributed during events surrounding the celebrations.

Clergy-Laity Congress Journal

Communications staff produced and distributed the Journals for the Clergy Laity Congresses. The Journals are produced after the Clergy Laity Congress in order that they contain the final schedule, photos, Keynote Address of the Archbishop and articles about the Congress. All registered delegates, donors and sponsors, and members of the Archdiocesan Council received a copy.

Memberships

Marissa Costidis serves on the Membership Board of Faith and Values Media (Hallmark) and is a member of the Religious Communicators Council attending meetings and conferences throughout the year. In April 2010, Marissa P. Costidis, on behalf of staff, received five awards for work by the Department at the DeRose – Hinkhouse Memorial Awards Ceremony in Chicago.

Conclusion

The work of the Department of Communications is varied and complicated as it includes contacts within our communities and faithful but also to a broader general audience. Our work must be completed and distributed in a timely manner, which will assist in facilitating and increasing awareness of the ministries of our Archdiocese, Metropolises, Parishes, Institutions, Organizations and Departments. It is critical that our work be filtered down and carried out to all faithful across the country.

It is also important that we communicate with secular media, with our content and the goal of our efforts always directly linked to the Church and the Gospel message.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marissa P. Costidis, Coordinator - Department of Communications