



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

REPORT TO THE 41ST BIENNIAL CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS

CHOSEN AND APPOINTED BY GOD TO BEAR FRUIT

“Chosen and appointed by God to go and bear fruit,” leads us to consider how we fulfill the commission we have received from Him. He has chosen and appointed us (John 15:16) to go to all who need the saving and transforming presence of Christ and to bear fruit by offering a witness of divine grace, by strengthening faith, and by guiding others into a sustained and growing relationship with Him.

We also know that our appointment by God to go and bear fruit consists in promoting the absolute truth of the Gospel. As we are seeking to bear fruit in the lives of others, we are not only sharing the necessity of faith, but simultaneously we are helping others to see and embrace God’s truth.

Archbishop Demetrios of America

The Department of Communications is committed to fulfilling the theme of the 41st Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress by undertaking the following projects and by using of all methods of Communications available, including speech, text, radio, internet and television and social media to bring the faithful and non-faithful to our true Orthodox Faith.

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.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS – 2010 - 2012

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.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos – Presiding Hierarch

Mr. Clifford Argue – Chairman

Mr. John Catsimatidis

Mr. George Demos

Mr. Andrew Manatos

Mr. John Metaxas

Ms. Haeda Mihaltses

Mr. Gregory Pappas

Mr. Paul Sogotis

Mr. Mark Stavropoulos

STAFF

Ms. Marissa P. Costidis

Mr. Jim Golding

Mr. Stavros Papagermanos

INITIATIVES & PROJECTS

COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

In response to a directive from a Communications Audit undertaken in 2007, the Department has initiated the following and continues to work towards putting into action the suggestions of the audit.

- 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 develop a travel protocol for visits of the Archbishop to events – in consultation with the Office of the Archbishop
- 5- Updated and streamlined our distribution lists
- 6- Increased our distribution lists in fax and email
- 7- Increased our mailing list for the national newspaper, *Orthodox Observer*
- 8- Found ways to cut costs of production for the Orthodox Observer while maintaining an active production schedule

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. 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. The task of updating the mailing list falls on the Communications and Information Technology Departments. Research is being conducted to streamline this to an automated task.

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 merged list now has over 17,000 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.

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 2012 over 175,000 calendars were sold to more than 400 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 are printed and mailed annually to parishes around the country for distribution to their faithful and families.

NEWS RELEASES

From June 1, 2010 to June 1, 2012 the Department of Communications has distributed more than 335 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.

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.

Since 9-11 the Department worked closely with the team working on the rebuilding of St. Nicholas Church at Ground Zero. During the past two years, staff received and directed hundreds of emails and phone calls from media outlets worldwide. Fr. Mark Arey, spokesman, appeared on television programs and on radio and in print. Staff responded to questions from Greek press on this issue. The Department also worked to endure media coverage of the St. Nicholas Feast Fay service at Ground Zero to maintain press interest.

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.

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.

Specifically, the Department worked with the Metropolis of Pittsburgh staff to ensure that the Enthronement of Metropolitan Savas was recorded and broadcast live over the internet. Hundreds were able to log in to watch both the Enthronement Service and the Divine Liturgy the next day.

ORTHODOX OBSERVER

Publishing ten issues a year continues to be a primary communication medium for the Archdiocese. The newspaper has been actively pursuing hiring a salesperson to sell advertising. A number of salespeople have been tried, but the results have been unsuccessful. Other income streams are also being evaluated and researched. A 10% saving has been realized on the printing of the newspaper due to aggressive negotiations by staff. Additionally, requests for donations continue to be printed in the newspaper monthly. PLEASE SUPPORT THE ORTHODOX OBSERVER.

CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESSES 2010 & 2012

The Department had an active role in the dissemination of information and directs all of the audio visual needs for the Clergy Laity Congresses. Communications staff produce and distribute 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 receive a copy.

PUBLISHING

Staff has worked closely with the Office of the Office of the Archbishop to coordinate the publication of Archbishop Demetrios' latest book title, Speaking to God.

MEMBERSHIPS

Marissa Costidis serves on the Membership Board of Odyssey 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