



GREEK ORTHODOX  
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

# WELCOME TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

*A Guidebook for Parish Council Members Serving  
Communities of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

# WELCOME TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

## IN TRIBUTE...

**T**o the untold numbers of dedicated clergy & laity whose devoted efforts and sacrifices over the decades have helped establish, strengthen, and maintain the parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.



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## WELCOME TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

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For further resources for the Parish Council Ministry, please go to: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org)

## Archpastoral Message



### Beloved Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils:

I give thanks to God for each of you and for your commitment to the sacred task of serving our Lord and your brothers and sisters in Christ in the work of ministry. You have been chosen by your respective communities to an office that is essential to the mission of the Church in sharing the love of God and the truth of the Gospel. In addition, in an act of faith you have expressed your willingness to offer your time and abilities for the spiritual growth and well-being of your parish, for the salvation of souls, and ultimately, for the kingdom of God and His glory.

It is a joy for me on behalf of our Holy Eparchial Synod to commend to you this new resource, *Welcome to the Parish Council: A Guidebook for Parish Council Members Serving Communities of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*. Prepared under the guidance and direction of our Holy Synod, this book focuses on the meaning and significance of being a parish council member. The book also emphasizes the importance of living our Orthodox Christian Faith, understanding the history and structure of our Church, and having a “ministry-oriented” mindset. The quality, message, and information of this new text will make it a valuable guide both for those who have been recently elected to a parish council and for those who have served faithfully for many years.

The pages that follow will affirm that the nature of the office you hold is rooted in the ministry of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Our Lord emphasized to His disciples the priority of love when He said to them, “*Love one another as I have loved you*” (John 15:12). His Apostles shared and affirmed this ministry of love in word and deed as they established and nurtured communities of faith. As stewards of your parish, you are called to continue this sacred mission of building up the Body of Christ in a way that reveals your love for God and your love for His people. Further, the ministry of our Lord and His disciples was one of prayer. Communion with God through worship and prayer is our most sacred calling as Christians. It is also the foundation of the wisdom, attitudes, and perspectives you will need to serve your community. Through your continuous participation in the divine services of the Church and through regular prayer, you will have the strength and guidance you need to join with your fellow parishioners and council members in seeking the will of God. As a parish council member it is through love and prayer that you will be further equipped to help your parish fulfill the vital and sacred mission of the Church which is *to reach out and to gather God’s people to His home*.

Together as laity, clergy, and hierarchs, our greatest concern is the spiritual well-being and growth of each parish, and it is together in Christ that we will accomplish this sacred work of building parishes of faith and love. May our good and gracious Lord bless you with His divine strength and wisdom in your service. As we labor together for His glory and His kingdom, may we do so in a manner that offers a genuine witness of our love for God, for our Orthodox Christian Faith, and for one another, so that all will know that the blessed life of peace and joy in Christ is known and experienced in the community of believers.

With paternal love in Christ,

*Archbishop Demetrios of America*

+DEMETRIOS  
Archbishop of America

# What is a Parish Council?



Meeting of the Holy Eparchial Synod (October 2008).

A Parish Council is the administrative body of a Church community elected by its stewards for the purpose of working together with the Parish Priest or Proistamenos in fulfilling the mission and goals of that particular community.

This brief description of the local governing body of a Parish also explains a fundamental aspect of the structure of the Orthodox Church. Both clergy and laity are the “People of God,” who seek by the grace of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the mission entrusted to them to live and proclaim the Holy Gospel and the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Historically, clergy and laity have worked together in dealing with matters of the Church’s life. The Parish Council is an example of the synergy of clergy and laity; it is a vehicle for implementing the ongoing mission of the Church and planning the necessary strategies, policies, procedures, and activities that

will enable the Parish to move forward in accomplishing God’s work.

As a member of the Parish Council, it is important to remember that you have been elected to serve a special ministry which requires total love, loyalty, and dedication to Christ and His Church. You are now an official representative of the Church and thus are expected to exert every effort to exemplify its sacred character and spirit. Upon election to this trusted office, you assumed three basic obligations which will help guide you in your ministry:

1. To understand, live by, and uphold the tenets, teachings, and traditions of the Greek Orthodox Church;
2. To understand and abide by the GOAA Regulations (formerly known as the UPR) as set forth by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America through the Clergy-Laity Congresses.

3. To live by and uphold your oath of office by utilizing your God-given time, talents, and treasures for the spiritual progress and advancement of your parish.

You attested to this publicly before the congregation of your parish when the following affirmation of office was administered to you by your parish priest (and to which you affixed your signature):

*“I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly affirm that I will uphold the dogma, teaching, traditions, holy canons, worship and moral principles of the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as the Charter and Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and that I will faithfully and sincerely fulfill the duties and obligations required of a member of the Parish Council. So help me, God.”*

## The Ministry of the Parish Council

### Christ-Centered Servant Leadership

Parish Council members serve as role models for parishioners and must take their ministry very seriously. They should lead by example by attending Church and parish events, and regularly participating in the sacramental life of the Church. By doing so, they will have a powerful effect on the overall life of the community. If Parish Council members treat everyone with love and respect, as Christ loves us, then parishioners will do likewise.

The Council members must practice servant leadership by identifying and examining the ministry needs of the

parishioners and taking the necessary steps to meet those needs, whether through the improvement and expansion of existing ministries or through the creation of new ones.

### Responsibilities and Roles

The most important responsibility of the Parish Council is to assist the Parish Priest in the administration of the ministries of the Parish (*GOAA Regulations 29:1A*). Some of the principal roles employed by effective Parish Councils include, but are not limited to, planning, developing, organizing, and implementing stewardship programs and various educational ministries of the Church; reporting and



A group of young adults, participants in the Real Break to Constantinople, restores a gravesite (May 2009).



communicating to the parishioners the work and ministries of the Church at the Metropolis and Archdiocesan levels; and recruiting and training others for further service. The Parish Council must also abide by Local, State, and Federal statutes applicable to the Parish and by the GOAA Regulations.

In all things, Council members should imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, who “came not to be served but to serve” (*Matthew 20:28*). The entire focus of the Parish Council must be to serve the needs of the faithful and to spread the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## Mentoring and Succession

Within the Parish Council, there are two very important activities needed to continue developing the leadership of its members. The first is to enhance leadership skills through the mentoring of

competent leaders. In order to assist new members as they assume their positions and ministries within the Parish Council, the more experienced members should aid, guide, and encourage these new members to assume their responsibilities. The second is the development of a systematic succession strategy in which each ministry has a chairperson and an assistant (who will eventually become the next chairperson).

The role that you assume as a member of your Parish Council is best understood when the Parish is viewed as an integral part of the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” that we confess in the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed at every Liturgy.

Misunderstandings can occur when the Church is looked upon purely from a merely local or parochial point of view. To be sure, the needs of the local Parish

are the most immediate concern of the Parish Council. To see only this is to fail to comprehend the role of the Parish in the overall life and structure of the Church at the Metropolis and Archdiocesan levels. It would be like a family member showing no interest in or responsibility for the problems and needs of other members of the family.

According to St. Paul, the Church is the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27), and the pillar and foundation of the Truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Without this basic understanding the Parish can

easily be reduced to little more than an organizational center or administrative structure, a kind of religious business enterprise, instead of being a Holy and Divine Eucharistic community, called to be *in* the world, but ultimately not *of* the world, a community that is set apart from all other organizations and bodies in our secularized society.

Let us now briefly review the role of the Church in its basic form as the Body of Christ, the holy vessel of the Faith, for which both clergy and laity are responsible.

## What Is the Greek Orthodox Church?

It is important to understand that the Church was established by our Lord Jesus Christ (*Matthew 16:18*), empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-40) and built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles (Ephesians 2:20). St. Paul preached the Gospel and established Churches in Athens, Corinth, Philippi, Berea, and Thessaloniki. Everything we do in the life of our Church is to be based upon the premise that we are the Church of the New Testament in the twenty-first century.

In his book *The Orthodox Church*, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware has written that Orthodox Christians have a palpable “sense of living continuity with the Church of ancient times” and that “this idea of living continuity is summed up for the Orthodox in the one word, Tradition.” To an Orthodox Christian, Tradition “is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church” —

the Holy Spirit whom Christ promised would lead His disciples “into all truth” (John 16:13) — and concretely this “means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers; it means the canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons — in fact, the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, spirituality and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages.”<sup>1</sup>

## The Relationship between Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition

*Holy Scripture* is comprised of the writings of both the New and the Old Testaments. The New Testament reveals the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ, and His sacred teachings that we

<sup>1</sup> Ware, Timothy, *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin Books, 1997, page 196.



Participants in the CrossRoad Program with Fr. Nicholas Triantafyllou, HC/HC president, and seminarians, in front of the Holy Cross Chapel (September 2008).



are charged to follow. The Old Testament contains the prophecies and writings of the Prophets that foretold the coming of Christ, the Messiah. It therefore serves as an introduction to the revelation of Jesus Christ and the saving message of the New Testament.

**Holy Tradition**, of which Holy Scripture is a part, includes the writings, teachings, and witness of the Apostles, Saints, Confessors, Martyrs, and Fathers of the Church and her liturgical and sacramental traditions throughout the ages, the oral tradition of the early Church and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. All of this collective wisdom and experience through the centuries are ours to draw from as resources in exercising leadership within the Parish.

## Other aspects of Holy Tradition are expressed by:

### The Creed:

Formulated by the first two Ecumenical Councils in the fourth century, this brief statement of belief contains the Church's doctrinal truths to which we adhere as Orthodox Christians.

Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit officiating the Holy Sacrament of Baptism along with Frs. (l. to r.): Stratton Dorozenski, George Athanas, Teodor Petrutii.



It consists of the twelve articles of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which is recited at each Divine Liturgy.

### The Sacraments:



Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh anointing JOY Campers

"There are special experiences in our corporate life as Orthodox Christians when the perception of God's presence, grace, and actions is heightened and celebrated. We call these events of the Church Holy Sacraments. Traditionally, the Sacraments have been known as the Mysteries of the Orthodox Church. This description emphasizes that in these special events of the Church, God



Archbishop Demetrios of America ordaining Deacon Theofanis Papantonis to the Holy Priesthood, at St. Nicholas Church in Flushing, New York (September 2007).

discloses Himself through the prayers and actions of His people by the power, operation and descent of the Holy Spirit.

Not only do the Sacraments disclose and reveal God to us, but they also serve to make us receptive to God. All the Sacraments affect our personal relationship to God and to one another. The Holy Spirit works through the Sacraments. He leads us to Christ who unites us with the Father.

By participating in the Sacraments, we grow closer to God as we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This process of deification — or theosis, as it is known in Orthodoxy — takes place not in isolation from others, but within the context of a believing Eucharistic community.

Although the Sacraments are addressed to each of us by name, they are experiences which involve the entire Church."<sup>2</sup>

### The Church's Liturgical Calendar:

The Church Calendar begins on September 1<sup>st</sup> and ends August 31<sup>st</sup>. Each day is sacred for the Orthodox Christian. The Church commemorates at least one event in the life of Christ, the Theotokos, a Saint or sacred event each day of the year. There are, however, a number of major feast days observed annually. Of these, our Lord's Resurrection or Holy Pascha is the most important festal celebration.

<sup>2</sup> FitzGerald, Thomas, "The Sacraments," [www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7105](http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7105) (Accessed March 2010).



## Major Feast Days of the Church

In addition to the festal celebration of the patron saint/s of the particular parish and other saints, all parishes celebrate the following feasts of our Lord and the Theotokos:

The Nativity of the Theotokos - - - - -	September 8
The Exaltation of the Holy Cross - - - - -	September 14
The Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple - - - -	November 21
Christmas (The Nativity of Jesus Christ) - - - - -	December 25
Epiphany (The Baptism of Christ) - - - - -	January 6
The Presentation of Christ in the Temple - - - - -	February 2
The Annunciation of the Theotokos - - - - -	March 25
The Resurrection of our Lord (Holy Pascha) - - - - -	<i>Date different every year</i>
The Ascension of Christ (40 days after Holy Pascha) - - - - -	<i>Date different every year</i>
Pentecost (50 days after Holy Pascha) - - - -	<i>Date different every year</i>
The Transfiguration of Christ - - - - -	August 6
The Dormition of the Theotokos - - - - -	August 15

### The Divine Liturgy:

The central worship service of the Church is the Divine Liturgy which is celebrated each Sunday morning and on Feast Days. During the Liturgy, we are united with Jesus Christ and with each other through the Sacrament of Holy Communion (the Eucharist).

### The Holy Icons:

As Metropolitan Kallistos Ware has written, "The Tradition of the Church is expressed not only through words, not only through the actions and gestures used in worship, but also through art — through the line and color of the Holy Icons."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ware, Timothy, *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin Books, 1997, page 206.

The art of the icon is not merely a painting in the modern secular sense. It is best described as the offering of a spiritual vision. It is one of the means that the Church employs to teach and celebrate our faith in Jesus Christ as well as to share the witness of His Saints through the centuries.

### Ecumenism:

Orthodoxy is a major force in the universal ecumenical movement as exemplified in the 1920 encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which called for dialogue of love and cooperation among the various Christian communities in programs of education, philanthropy, and social endeavors, insofar as this is consistent with Orthodox theology.



Metropolitan Iakovos of Chicago lights the candle of this young parishioner during the Pascha Agape Service at St. Demetrios Church in Chicago (May 2008).



Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver at Lamentations, Assumption Cathedral, Denver (June 2009).

Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco presents a palm cross to a little boy at the end of the Service at St. John the Baptist Church in Las Vegas (May 2008).



# How is the Church Governed?

The Orthodox Church is governed by procedures in which both clergy and laity have a voice in determining policies and programs. On the Metropolitan level, a Clergy-Laity Assembly comprised of clergy and lay delegates from all parishes in a given Metropolis, convenes at least once biennially for the purpose of developing programs and policies of common concern for the Metropolis (*GOAA Regulations 11:1*). On the Archdiocesan level, the Clergy-Laity Congress is the highest administrative and legislative body of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese which is also convened biennially. The Congress is concerned with all matters outside of dogmatic and canonical issues which affect the life, mission, growth, and unity of the Archdiocese (*GOAA Regulations 4:1*).



At the Synaxis of the Heads of Orthodox Churches at the Phanar, with His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew presiding (October 2008).

Decisions of the Clergy-Laity Congress, upon approval by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, are implemented by the Archdiocese.

**The Archdiocese functions on four administrative levels:**

## I. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is an Eparchy (an ecclesiastical district or province) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Patriarchate is the source from which the Archdiocese receives its administrative authority, spiritual leadership and the supply of Holy Chrism. It is located in Constantinople (in what is now Istanbul, Turkey) and is governed by the Holy and Sacred Synod, headed by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch.



His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with members of the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Archdiocesan Council at the organization's fall meeting in New York (November 2009).

## II. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

The Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese is comprised of the Archbishop who serves as its President and the Metropolitans who are its members. The Holy Eparchial Synod is the ecclesiastical body which directs and governs the Archdiocese.

The Archdiocese functions under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and coordinates the work and ministries of the Metropolises and the Direct Archdiocesan District. It is governed in accordance with the Faith, Tradition, and Holy Canons of the Church along with the provisions of the Charter, the Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (known as the GOAA), and the decisions of the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Clergy-Laity Congress. Through its various departments and offices, the Archdiocese serves both the needs of the Metropolises and parishes. It functions under the leadership of the Archbishop, the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Archdiocesan Council (which is comprised of both clergy and lay representatives from each Metropolis).



National Philoptochos Society Board members gather for business meetings the day before the medical fund luncheon (November 2009).





The opening session of the 39<sup>th</sup> Clergy-Laity Congress in Washington D.C. (July 2008).



National Oratorical Festival in the Twin Cities – Minneapolis/St. Paul (June 2009).



Metropolitan Methodios of Boston watches Livia Sintros teaching children how to make koulourakia, at the Transfiguration Church in Lowell, MA, (September 2008).

### III. The Metropolis

The Metropolis is an ecclesiastical district/area of the Archdiocese, headed by its respective Metropolitan, who is a member of the Holy Eparchial Synod. The Metropolitans in their Metropolises and the Archbishop in the Direct Archdiocesan District are assisted in their ministry by the Local Metropolis and District Councils. These Councils are advisory and consultative bodies to the Metropolitan and Archbishop and are concerned with the life and growth of the Metropolis, its ministries, institutions and finances (*GOAA Regulations 12:1*).

### IV. The Parish

The Parish is the local Eucharistic community, in which faithful Orthodox Christians gather together to hear the Good News of the Resurrection of Christ and live the sacramental life of the Church. It is the place where God's People are spiritually nourished in order to live more fully as Christians and engage in the mission which Christ has given us: to share His Gospel with one and all and to serve those in need. The Parish functions administratively under the leadership of the Parish Priest who is assisted by the Parish Council, with the guidance and supervision of the Metropolitan or Archbishop.

Each Parish is governed in accordance with the teachings of Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition, the Holy Canons of the Church, the Regulations of the Archdiocese

Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta invited clergy to attend a convocation at the Diakonia Retreat Center of the Metropolis in Salem, SC (January 2009).



Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey with participants in the New Jersey Clergy-Laity Assembly (June 2008).



Basketball players of the Metropolis of Denver praying before their game (March 2010).

Participants in the 30<sup>th</sup> Archdiocese District Olympics in Brentwood, NY (June 2008).



Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco (center) surrounded by campers and staff at St. Nicholas Ranch Summer Camp (September 2008).





The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Holy Eparchial Synod

Clergy-Laity Congress

Archdiocese Council



# DEPARTMENTS & MINISTRIES

Advisory Committee on Science & Technology	Archives	Benefits Committee	Church & Society	Communications	Education Office / Direct Archdiocesan District
GOTelecom	Greek Education	Information Technologies	Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations	Internet Ministries	Marriage & Family
Orthodox Observer	Outreach & Evangelism	Parish Development	Philanthropy	Press Office, News & Media Relations	Public Affairs
Finance	Registry	Religious Education	Stewardship	Youth & Young Adult Ministries	

# INSTITUTIONS

Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity	Hellenic College & Holy Cross School of Theology	Saint Basil Academy
St. Michael's Home	St. Photios National Shrine	

# AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Ladies Philoptochos Society	Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate	Faith: An Endowment for Orthodoxy & Hellenism	Archdiocesan Presbyters Council	Leadership 100
National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians	National Sisterhood of Presvyteres	Hellenic Cultural Center	Orthodox Chaplains	Retired Clergy Association

# ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Assembly of Orthodox Bishops	National Council of Churches	World Council of Churches	Special Committees & Commissions
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# METROPOLISES

(In alphabetical order)  
1 Direct Archdiocesan District  
8 Metropolises of the Archdiocese each headed by a Metropolitan & a Metropolis Council  
Parishes Number as of June 2010

<b>Direct Archdiocesan District</b> Greater New York, Upstate New York, Long Island, Western Connecticut, Washington D.C., & Bahamas <b>66 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of Atlanta</b> Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina & some parishes in Louisiana & Tennessee. <b>71 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of Boston</b> Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont & some parishes in Connecticut. <b>63 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of Chicago</b> Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri (except Kansas City), & some parishes in Indiana. <b>58 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of Denver</b> Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wyoming, 1 in Missouri & 1 in Louisiana. <b>48 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of Detroit</b> Michigan, Arkansas and Kentucky, and some parishes in Indiana, Ohio, Upper New York and Tennessee. <b>47 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of New Jersey</b> New Jersey, Greater Philadelphia, Delaware, Maryland & Virginia. <b>55 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of Pittsburgh</b> Pennsylvania (except Greater Philadelphia), West Virginia & parishes in Ohio, except Dayton, Toledo, Middletown, Cincinnati & Springfield. <b>52 Parishes</b>	<b>Metropolis of San Francisco</b> California, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii & Alaska. <b>67 Parishes</b>
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and the decisions of both the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese. The elected members of the Parish Council, together with the Parish Priest, are responsible for the welfare of the Parish in keeping it faithful to its mission. On the Parish level, the Parish Council is accountable to the General Assembly, which consists of all faithful stewards who are able to participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Ultimately, the Priest and Parish Council are accountable to their local Hierarchy.

Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco & Fr. Leo Scheffe at the groundbreaking ceremony for a new Church of the Holy Transfiguration parish in Anchorage, Alaska, assisted by two altar boys (August 2009).



Archbishop Demetrios of America consecrates new Annunciation Church for oldest Connecticut Parish. From left: Archimandrite Sebastian Skordallos, Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, Deacon Nathaniel Symeonides, Archdeacon Panteleimon (December 2008).



Fifty-nine boys, the largest group to dive for the cross at one time, gather outside of St. Nicholas Cathedral, prior to the 102<sup>nd</sup> Tarpon Springs Epiphany Celebration (January 2008).



Second graders at St. Demetrios Cathedral Parochial School in Astoria, NY, performing on the holiday classic, "The Nutcracker," at the school's Christmas program (December 2008).



## What Are The GOAA Regulations Under Which Our Parishes Function?

In Holy Scripture St. Paul wrote that in the life of the Church "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The GOAA Regulations of the Archdiocese (formerly known as UPR), have evolved over the years in order to provide the structure and guidelines necessary to better meet parish needs. They are based on the Canon Law of the Church, the Charter granted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as well as American laws governing non-profit organizations and churches.

The Regulations clearly set out the best and most appropriate ways for the Parish to operate, addressing almost every situation a Parish will encounter. For example, they provide guidelines for making major decisions such as buying, selling, and mortgaging Parish property.

They also allow each individual Parish the flexibility to identify and address its own unique needs through the creation of local Parish bylaws. Such local bylaws must not conflict with the GOAA Regulations and are subject to the approval of the local Hierarchy in order to take effect.

For detailed descriptions of Church governance, policies and procedures please refer to the Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOAA), available at the Archdiocese website:

[www.goarch.org/en/archdiocese/documents/](http://www.goarch.org/en/archdiocese/documents/)

### Disclosure Policy

A Disclosure Policy has been adopted by the Clergy-Laity Congress and approved by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

All members of the Archdiocesan Council, the Metropolis Councils, and the Parish Councils are entrusted with responsibilities which affect the whole Archdiocese. Therefore, it is important that all Council Members honor that trust. This requires honesty, integrity, competence, and care in managing the affairs of the Archdiocese.

Council Members shall, by virtue of their position and while serving in their capacity, act only in the best interest of the Archdiocese. A conflict of interest may exist when the interests or concerns of any Council Member or a Council Member's immediate family or any organization to which a Council Member has a duty, may be seen as competing or conflicting with the interests or concerns of the Archdiocese.

At the first meeting of the Council commencing a new term, (or soon thereafter), each Council Member shall state in writing, any formal affiliation as well as membership he or she has with religious entities, professional organizations, public interest groups, political organizations or business enterprises, which might give rise to a possible conflict of interest (e.g., owner, officer, director, employee, etc.). A new Council Member shall be advised of the Policy upon undertaking the duties of his/her office.



## Dispute Resolution Procedures

The Clergy-Laity Congress has also established and adopted Dispute Resolution Procedures that are a part of the GOAA Regulations.

The Holy Scriptures teach us that when disputes arise among the members of the faith family, they should not be tried by the civil courts, but rather resolved within the faith community.

*When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous instead of taking it before the saints?... In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you (I Corinthians 6:7).*

*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, just as Christ forgave you, so should you also forgive. And with all these things have love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ govern*

*your heart; for that end, you are called in One Body; and be thankful to Christ (Colossians 3:13-15).*

In all disputes that involve ecclesiastical, theological, canonical, Church governance, or Church property issues and the life of the Parish or Church community, each Parish and Party shall adhere to the established Dispute Resolution Procedures. These procedures include mechanisms for resolving grievances and mediating conflicts, providing an ultimate process for the disposition of disputes. These Dispute Resolution Procedures do not displace the Holy Canons and Traditions of the Church, but rather serve as a critical adjunct authority, providing a sole and exclusive remedy for the resolution of disputes, thereby preserving the peace in the Church.

The Dispute Resolution Procedures are posted on the website of the Archdiocese: [www.goarch.org/archdiocese/documents](http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/documents).

## What Is The Relationship Between The Priest And The Parish Council?

The Parish Priest is the representative of the local Hierarchy in the Parish and as such heads and administers the Parish. As the spiritual leader of the Parish, his priestly duties consist in shepherding the Parish entrusted to his care, directing its orderly life, preserving its unity, and keeping it faithful to its divine purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ (GOAA Regulations 17:1). He and the members of the Parish Council are together responsible for the administration of the Parish.

The following pastoral and theological guidelines should govern the working relationship of the Priest and the Parish Council:

### Synergy

The Parish Council is comprised of the Parish Priest and the elected (or in some cases appointed) members of the Parish in good standing. Clergy and laity, working together for God's glory, best exemplify "the unity of the faith and the



Greek Fire Relief Fund Committee members discuss further aid to victims of August 2007 fires. With Archbishop Demetrios of America, (fr. l. to r.), Ely Papadeas, Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, Andrew Natsios, Michael Jaharis, Peter Kikis, & Georgia Skeadas. (September 2007)

communion of the Holy Spirit" described in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. Their working together is a liturgy, from the Greek words meaning: "people and work/task." According to Orthodox Theology and Canon Law, a priest cannot celebrate the Divine Liturgy without the laity. Indeed, the very gift of his priesthood exists not for himself, but for the sake of the laity. Likewise, the laity cannot celebrate a Divine Liturgy without a canonically ordained Priest. There is a synergy—a cooperation of clergy and laity which is expressed liturgically—which must also govern every aspect of the Parish's life, including administration.

All persons have their own personality, gifts, and talents which they are urged to contribute like instruments in a symphony orchestra, all playing harmoniously and

thus making a beautiful melody unto the Lord. This will only happen when we ask the question: "What is in the best interest of the Parish and the spiritual growth of its Parishioners?" The financial and administrative issues of the Parish should never be separated from the life and mission of the Church.

For the Parish Council to demonstrate leadership and be effective, both Parish Council members and the Priest must be supportive of each other's ministry. The Priest is trained in Theology which includes the study of Dogmatics, Scripture, Church History, Canon Law, Liturgy, and Pastoral Care, as well as Parish Administration. By virtue of his ordination and canonical assignment by the Metropolitan, he heads and administers the Parish (GOAA Regulations 17:1) and is entrusted

with the spiritual care of his parishioners. Parish Council members are elected to assist the Priest in serving and ministering to God's People. They bring a wealth of knowledge, gifts, and talents that the priest should utilize for the purpose and mission of the Church.

***"Parish Council members  
are elected to assist  
the Priest in serving and  
ministering to God's People."***

The Parish is the Body of Christ, the local Eucharistic community, and the Parish Council should reflect this reality through their work. St. Paul, speaking about the ministry of both clergy and laity, says: *"All of you, then, are Christ's Body, and each one of you is a part of it. In the Church, then, God has appointed first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues"* (1 Corinthians 12:27-28).

***A word must be added about a misconception*** that occurred in the early years of our Archdiocese. It was believed that a Parish should be administered by a so-called "division of duties," i.e. the priest should take care of all "religious matters," and the parish council should handle "everything else." The Parish Council cannot implement a secularized business model to handle the life, work, and ministry of the Church, as this takes away from focusing on Christ's mission. This division of parish life into "spiritual" and "secular" spheres is not valid in Orthodoxy. Regardless if the subject is fundraising, publicity, or administration, spiritual values must underlie all decisions and policies.

***For this very reason, a program of continuing adult education*** for laity should be an important part of every Parish. When Orthodox Christians become acquainted with the apostolic teaching, theology, history, and Tradition of the Church, their depth of spiritual commitment increases, and their understanding of Christian leadership and stewardship is rewarded with new insight. Basic decisions are then made based upon a common love and understanding of the Church and Her mission in which both the Priest and the Parish Council share.

***When love and mutual respect between the Priest and the members*** of the Parish Council flow unreservedly, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished. The laity must look to their Priest for leadership and spiritual direction, and the Priest in turn must value the experience and leadership of the laity in areas where they are knowledgeable. If a disagreement over the interpretation of policy should occur, the matter is referred to the Metropolitan (or the Archbishop for the Direct Archdiocesan District) for consideration and final decision. Fortunately, such instances are exceptions compared to the harmony and progress that occur when the spirit of Christian love and goodwill prevail.

***Note:*** If there is more than one priest assigned to a parish, only the *Proistamenos* is officially a member of the Parish Council. It is suggested, however, that other parish clergy participate in meetings of the Parish Council so that they may become familiarized with the work and ministry of the Council. This is also recommended since the functions and decisions of the Parish Council are directly related to ministries coordinated by parish clergy.

## Ministry-Oriented Leadership



Fordham University President Joseph McShane greets His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at a gathering of Orthodox Christian Fellowship students enrolled at the school (November 2009).

Because it is engaged in providing Christ-centered servant leadership, the Parish Council as a leadership team and administrative body should be "ministry-oriented." What does this mean? The very term *administration* is an old Latin word that can literally be translated as "towards ministry" or "towards service." Every activity and administrative decision of the Parish Council should encourage and facilitate ministry in the Parish.

The Parish Council should identify necessary ministries, functions, and events that will enable the life of the Parish to flourish in a spiritually healthy way. These can be further organized into related groups of ministries, i.e., youth and Christian education, mission and outreach, stewardship and fundraising,

Greek education and cultural activities, etc. It is recommended that the number of ministry groupings should be equal to the number of Parish Council members minus the president and the treasurer.

In order to provide stability and uniformity to the ongoing work of the parish from year to year, these ministries may be defined in the local Parish bylaws.

The responsibility of overseeing the ministries of the Parish lies with the Parish Council. In the beginning of each year, the Priest, together with the newly elected Parish Council president, assigns each Parish Council member to a particular ministry according to his/her abilities, talents, and preferences. It then becomes the responsibility of that Council member to oversee the assigned





Fordham University Lecture with Archbishop Demetrios of America. From left, Dr. George Demacopoulos, Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey, Michael & Mary Jaharis, President Fr. Joseph McShane S.J., Fr. Stanley Harakas, Metropolitans Methodios of Boston and Nicholas of Detroit, Bishop Savas of Troas and Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou (March 2009).

ministry and report to the Council. Ideally, the Parish Council members act as overseers and coordinators and seek the involvement of other parishioners to chair and staff the ministries.

These individuals are chosen in consultation with the priest and the parish council president. As part of their responsibilities, the Parish Council members will bring any issues of funding to the Council, assist in developing leadership, recruit other members to the ministry, and recognize the work of

those parishioners who contributed in specific ministries.

### Welcoming Committee

One vital ministry that the Council should not overlook is the “Welcoming Committee” whose goal is to create a warm and welcoming culture in the community. This will greatly enhance the way that visitors are received into the church, inactive members are contacted, and new members are added into the Body of Christ. All members should feel welcomed, appreciated, and valued as part of the family.



Metropolitan Methodios of Boston (center top) with participants in the Boston Metropolis Camp (March 2010).

## The Process of Making Decisions

All meetings of the Parish Council should start and end with a prayer and a brief Spiritual message given by the Priest, thus setting a spiritual tone for the deliberations of the Council.

The practice of a consensus model of decision-making has been adopted by some of our parishes. This practice is based on St. Paul’s counsel to the ancient Church in Philippi: as Christians, we are to “be of one mind, having the same love and being in full accord,” each person, in humility, “looking not to your own interests, but to the interests of others” (*Philippians 2:2-4*).

The many benefits of a consensus agreement exceed those of a decision based on a “yes” or “no” vote. Specifically, decisions made by consensus are shown to increase levels of participation, effectiveness, and sustain commitment. They enhance parish culture and sense of community and reduce costs of time and resources. While *Robert’s Rules of Order* works by ensuring speed and efficiency through a majority rule by vote, decision by consensus seeks to

have everybody support the decision that needs to be made. Moreover, this process builds the sense of unity in a community rather than simply voting for or against something. Most importantly, making a decision in consensus involves “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (*Ephesians 4:3*), inviting the Holy Spirit to guide the Parish Council in making the best possible decisions.

One good example of a consensus decision model at work is in the deliberation of a jury where all members must reach a unanimous decision. For the purposes of a Parish Council, a consensus decision model is to be preferred because it encourages opposing sides to reach out and understand each other, make a sincere effort to find common ground, and arrive at a solution based on the principles of our faith. It requires openness, trust, and a commitment to be united as a Council.

If the Parish Council is united, the Parish will be united; but if the Council is divided, then division will spread to the entire Parish.

## Stewards of God’s Church

God has entrusted us with His Church. The Parish Council is entrusted with the administration of the local Parish. As Parish Council members, we should always remember that we are not the owners, but rather the stewards of our Church. The Parish with all its property, resources and people, belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are entrusted with the ministry of Christ in our local Parish, and are accountable as its stewards to our Church

Hierarchs, and ultimately to the Lord.

We should remember that in addition to attending the regular meetings of the Parish Council, we should attend the Divine Liturgy not only on Sundays, but also on the feast days of our Church. We should participate in the sacramental life of the Church, practice prayer daily, and be examples in giving of our time, talents, and resources for the work of the Lord.

## The President & the Parish Council

The officers of the Parish Council, especially the president, must carry the burden of many demands and obligations. Such officers are called upon to be administrators, personnel directors, financial overseers, but above all, mature Christians. Much can be achieved, when the Priest, Parish Council president, and Parish Council members think, act, and work “in one mind and in one heart.”

It is imperative to note that the Parish Council president is the chairman of the Parish Council and **not** the president of the parish community. The president does not govern the parish, but rather he/she facilitates the works of the Council. The judicious president will be a good listener and avoid hasty decisions. When in doubt as to what decision to make, the president will seek to discern the answer

***“It is imperative to note that the Parish Council president is the chairman of the Parish Council and not the president of the parish community.”***

by prayerfully asking this foundational question: “What course of action will best serve the overall welfare and progress of our parish?” In drawing up the agenda for Parish Council meetings and General Assemblies, the Parish Council president should always consult with the Parish Priest.

In order to better serve the Church, the Parish Council president should conduct meetings in such a way that decisions are

made based on consensus as noted earlier. Consensus does not mean unanimous agreement, but rather that Parish Council members can live with the decision, strategy, approach, etc., that is being proposed, and support it publicly. It is crucial for the Parish Council president to remain objective during discussions. His or her job is to run the meetings in such a way as to facilitate decision-making by the whole Council. The President should not use the office to push his or her own ideas through. To this end, it is customary and beneficial for Presidents of Parish Councils not to cast a vote, except when his or her vote would change the outcome of the question (by either breaking a tie vote or making one). The President must be the moderator of discussions, endeavoring to allow both sides to be heard, and ensuring that even unpopular opinions are allowed opportunity for expression

There may be times when votes must be taken due to the requirement of the GOAA Regulations (sale or purchase of property, approval of contracts etc.), or when there is not sufficient time to reach consensus on a decision that must be made immediately. However, advance planning should always be made to avoid such situations if at all possible.

Above all, in pursuing the high duties of this office, the Parish Council president should seek to open his/her heart to the Holy Spirit and the guidance of our Lord Jesus Christ. This, of course, applies to all members of the Parish Council in their trusted and respected roles as elected leaders of their Parish.

## The Parish & the Parish Council

### The Role of Transparency in a Parish

In order to combat the spread of rumors and misinformation, the Parish Council must be transparent in its operations and strive to maintain a culture of respect, peace, love, and unity.

It must openly share information regarding plans, decisions, and finances with the rest of the community in order to keep everyone well-informed on the administrative aspects of Parish life.

Specifically, the Parish Council should inform parishioners of any decisions that will impact the Community, such as plans regarding facilities, ministries, and personnel changes. Financial reports on the income and expenditures of the Church must be given on a regular basis.

The Parish Council can communicate this information in a variety of ways: during meetings, after church services, through the internet and printed material.

The effort of the Parish Council to remain transparent and keep parishioners informed greatly contributes to the well-being of the Church.

### Creating a Culture of Gratitude

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances – for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It is important to create a culture of gratitude when conducting the duties and managing the ministries of the Church, creating a sense

of community, service, and love for one another. This is done by showing thanks and appreciation for what others have given, whether it is through one’s actions or by publicly thanking a person or group of people, or simply taking people aside and thanking them for all their work and contributions within the Parish.

In such a way, a culture of gratitude is created where the entire Parish is united in service to the Church. Making people feel obligated, guilty, or excluded has no place in a Church that is trying to foster a culture of gratitude.

Examples of a culture of gratitude are seen throughout the life and history of the Church. St. Paul expressed his gratitude very passionately to God for calling him to salvation, to a new life in service to the Church (1 Timothy 1:12-14). We can learn from the example that St. Paul set for us, which is to live and work for God passionately in love and thanksgiving.

We give thanks to God for His blessings during the Liturgy, before meals, and for the gifts He has bestowed upon us. It is through this model that we can create a culture of gratitude within the Parish. This culture begins when we teach our children to say “please” and “thank you” and to respect and love one another. We also teach each other when we show our gratitude to one another. Only by the participation of the entire Parish can this culture be fostered where the Spirit of God is allowed to freely move and influence us.



## How Does the Parish Relate to the Metropolis and to the Archdiocese?



President George W. Bush joins the Metropolitan Youth Choir of the Direct Archdiocesan District, under the direction of Maria Kolevas, and Archbishop Demetrios of America for a photo following their performance at the Greek Independence Day celebration in the East Room of the White House (March 2008).

The relationship of a Parish to its Metropolis or to the Direct Archdiocesan District is both spiritual and administrative. Each Metropolitan or the Archbishop is not only its spiritual leader, but is also its administrative leader and represents the Holy Eparchial Synod and the Archdiocese to the Parishes in his Metropolis or Direct Archdiocesan District. In reality, he is the Spiritual Father of the community, but, because it is impossible for him to be ever-present in all the Parishes of his Metropolis or District, he appoints a Proistamenos (senior or head priest) to oversee the overall programs of the local parish in his place. The priest refers back to his Metropolitan or Archbishop for guidance and he is accountable to him.

The Proistamenos is an extension of the office of the Metropolitan or Archbishop and never should be thought of as an employee of the parish.

The Archbishop or Metropolitan offers counsel and direction, interprets Church policy, and assists his parishes in the fulfillment of their ministries through the appropriate departments of the Archdiocese. He also oversees the transfer of priests, both leaving and entering his Metropolis, as well as visiting clergy and, in his Episcopal capacity, ordains worthy candidates to the diaconate and the priesthood with the consent of the Holy Eparchial Synod. The Parish looks to the Metropolitan as a source of spiritual fatherhood and leadership, and also to his counsel, which is based upon his years of experience and service to the Church.

The central headquarters of the Archdiocese are located in the Archdiocesan Offices, at 8-10 East 79th Street, in New York City. The Office of the Archbishop, the Chancellor, and nearly all administrative offices of the national Church are

located there. While most Parish matters are referred to the Metropolis office, there are others that, due to their nature, are served through the central offices of the Archdiocese: e.g., the payment of Parish financial obligations, clergy insurance and pension programs, educational materials for Catechism schools and Greek schools, and direction in Church policy on many ecumenical, social, and public matters. The Archdiocese provides a host of materials, advice, speakers, and counseling that are referred to or channeled through the Metropolis office.

The Parish Council should promote an understanding of the Archdiocese as a whole. Its members should therefore seek to understand and speak often about the ministries of the Metropolis and the Archdiocese. The Parish Council also addresses the importance of the local Parish to participate in Metropolis, District, and national activities, and the need to fulfill the Parish's financial obligation towards the Archdiocese.

We also must not neglect to speak about the ministry, work, and plight of our Mother Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.



The central headquarters of the Archdiocese.

## How Do the National Ministries & Institutions of the Archdiocese Assist the Parish in Accomplishing its Ministries at the Local Level?

The following National Ministries of our Archdiocese, together with the many Ministries of our Metropolises, provide great resources to our parishes. They may also serve as a guide for the establishment of ministries and committees on the Parish level:

a) Youth b) Religious Education c) Stewardship d) Outreach & Evangelism e) Finance f) Greek Education g) Communications h) Marriage & Family Life (including inter-Christian and inter-Faith Marriages) i) Parish Development j) Worship k) Philanthropy & many more. These Archdiocesan Departments and many other resources on the teaching and practice of our faith may be found on the web at [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org).



These National Ministries are only a few examples that can serve as a guide for the establishment of Ministry Committees on the parish level. Yet each Parish is unique and may have particular areas of interest and need that can be served by special committees dealing with such interests. In the final analysis, it is the responsibility of each Parish to develop and administer its own programs that best suit the needs of its people and the community in which it is located.

## Archdiocesan Institutions



Seminarians wearing their new crosses are joined by Archbishop Demetrios of America, HC/HC president, Fr. Nicholas Triantafilou, and Holy Cross Dean, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Fitzgerald (September 2008).

### Hellenic College & Holy Cross School of Theology

**H**ellenic College is the only fully accredited, four-year liberal arts college in the Americas that is centered on our Orthodox Christian beliefs and enriched by the ideals of a Hellenic classical education. Hellenic College confers the Bachelor of Arts degree in the areas of classics, religious studies, elementary education, human development, literature, and history and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

**H**oly Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology is the seminary and theological graduate school that trains future priests and lay leaders for the Church in America and around the world.

It confers the Master of Divinity and the Master of Theological Studies as well as the Master of Theology. The majority of clergy now serving the communities of the Greek Orthodox Church in America are graduates of Holy Cross and, as such, this institution is absolutely vital to the life of the Church. Founded in 1937 in Pomfret, CT the school was moved to its present 52-acre campus in Brookline, MA in 1948. Holy Cross is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. The school is also recognized by Greece as equivalent to the Schools of Theology of Athens and Thessaloniki.

50 Goddard Ave., Brookline, MA 02445, Tel. (617) 731-3500 [www.hchc.edu](http://www.hchc.edu)

### Saint Basil Academy



His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America distributes gifts to the eagerly waiting children of Saint Basil's Academy (January 2010).

**S**aint Basil Academy is a licensed, residential child-care center located in Garrison, NY for Greek Orthodox orphans, children of chronically ill or destitute parents, or children from broken homes.

The Academy operates twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to serve each child's spiritual, emotional, and material needs.

The residences, school, chapel, library, gymnasium, and administration building are located on 260 wooded acres on the Hudson River opposite West Point, the United States Military Academy.

The Academy has been a special project of the Philoptochos Society, and proceeds from the parish Vasilopita observance each January are earmarked for the Academy. Other organizations, especially the Order of AHEPA, have been major sources of assistance.

79 Saint Basil Road, Garrison, NY 10524, Tel. (845) 424-3500 [www.stbasil.goarch.org](http://www.stbasil.goarch.org)

### St. Michael's Home

St. Michael's Home is a ministry that has served countless Greek Orthodox elderly in the fifty years since its founding. The Home is a New York State Department of Health certified, adult residential care facility that specifically serves a Greek Orthodox constituency. It is a non-profit entity that covers its expenses entirely through boarding fees and donations. The facility is currently home to sixty senior citizens. While most residents are from the NY/NJ/CT metropolitan area, there are a number of residents that come from as faraway as the Midwest, and due to increased demands to meet the growing needs of the senior community, St. Michael's is actively pursuing plans for expansion, to increase both capacity and the level of care provided.

3 Lehman Terrace, Yonkers, NY 10705, Tel. (914) 476-3374 [www.stmichaelshome.org](http://www.stmichaelshome.org)



Archbishop Demetrios of America along with the Director of St. Michael's Home, Bishop Andonios of Phasiane at a banquet for the residents & the staff with Bishop Philotheos of Meloa (December 2009).



## Saint Photios National Shrine



The Saint Photios Shrine, is located in Saint Augustine, Florida, and is dedicated to the memory of the first Greek colonists, to arrive in the New World in the vicinity of present-day Saint Augustine in 1768. It includes exhibits, a beautiful chapel, and a gift shop.

The Shrine honors the first colony of Greeks who settled in the New World, and it seeks to preserve, enhance, and

promote the ethnic and cultural traditions of Greek heritage.

41 Saint George Street, P.O. Box 1960, Saint Augustine, FL 32085, Tel. (904) 829-8205 [www.stphotios.com](http://www.stphotios.com)

The Archdiocese also supports ministries previously under **SCOPA** (the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas), related ministries in the areas of missions, humanitarian aid and philanthropy, prison ministry, campus ministry, radio, etc. For further information please see the SCOPA official website: [www.scoba.us](http://www.scoba.us).



Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, Archbishop Demetrios of America, & Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta dedicating the new OCMC Administrative & Training Center. Also pictured are OCMC President Clifford Argue & Archdeacon Panteleimon Papadopoulos (2009).

## Stewardship



The scope and effectiveness of Parish ministries depend on the involvement and generous financial support of the faithful. This calls for the Parish Council to be the catalyst for greater involvement of the stewards of the parish, facilitating their loving

Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh conversing with pre-school children of the Three Hierarchs School of Orthodox Studies (T.H.E.O.S).



and the Archdiocese should be proportionate according to the needs of the Church so that the Gospel of Christ may be spread to the world.

The income of the Parish, Metropolis and Archdiocese is derived largely from the individual Parish stewardship offerings given by each Church member. Parishes vary in the manner in which they determine and collect their financial obligations. However, the amount paid by each individual to his/her Parish includes his/her obligation to the Archdiocese. The financial obligations of stewardship are not a tax on parishioners, but are rather our response to God's love and mercy and the gifts

response in supporting the work of the Lord and the ministries of the Church.

Our membership in the Church begins with the sacrament of Baptism. As we grow and mature, we are expected to assume an active role as stewards within the life of the Church.

The Parish is primarily financed through the stewardship offerings of its parishioners. As Christians, we are called to "excel in the grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7). These words are still a challenge to us today! In accordance with the ancient biblical principle of the tithe (Genesis 14:20; Malachi 3:10), stewardship is recommended to be 10% of a parishioner's income to help support the Parish and its ministries. It is also recommended that the Parish's financial obligations to its respective Metropolis

He bestows upon us. Stewardship, then, is not an obligation in the sense that it is something external to us, something that is imposed on us; rather, we know that God has poured forth His love and His Spirit into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and that as believers we are to be "rich in good works, generous and willing to share" (1 Timothy 6:18). It is a privilege which should be fulfilled cheerfully and gratefully. New means of financing the programs of the Church are constantly being studied and explored by the Archdiocese at the biennial Clergy-Laity Congresses.

The question is often asked, "How does the Archdiocese utilize its income?" To provide Parish leaders with some insight as to how these funds are dispersed please visit: [www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/finance/](http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/finance/)

## Epilogue...

Serving on the Parish Council is a sacred trust. It carries with it responsibility not only for the mounting demands being made upon our Parishes, but also for the unending stream of challenges being faced by the Church Universal.

The leadership team that directs each Parish is the Priest and the Parish Council. We could go further and say that just as the Parish is a team, so is the entire Church a team working toward the goals set forth by our Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and eternal leader, Jesus Christ. Finally, at an even deeper level, we are all interconnected as members of Christ's own Body, His Church. St. Paul writes:

*For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as He chose. If all were a*

*simple organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body (1 Corinthians 12:14-20).*

So it is with our Holy Orthodox Church. We are one body, the Body of Christ, working toward unity of purpose and action... as individuals, as Parishes, as Metropolises, and as an Archdiocese, always under the divine leadership of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.

As a member of the Parish Council, you must "do everything for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). You are called to continue the work of Christ in service to others. Above all, this must be kept in mind when undertaking your responsibilities and making decisions that affect the life of the Parish and the Archdiocese. In following the work of those who came before us, the Parish Council member must lead by example and embody the virtues of humility and temperance. He/she must have a sense of peace, love, and understanding for his/her brethren. This is the responsibility of a Parish Council member: to act faithfully as a steward of Christ's Church for His glory, for the betterment of the Church and the salvation of the world.

## A PRAYER FOR THE OPENING OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

**O** Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, as You sent the Holy Spirit upon Your disciples and apostles on the day of Pentecost, pour forth Your Holy Spirit into our hearts so that as members of the Parish Council we may discern and do Your will in all things, praising Your most holy and magnificent Name by our every word and action.

**For You are our sanctification and to You do we offer glory, thanksgiving and worship, together with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.**

**Amen.**







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