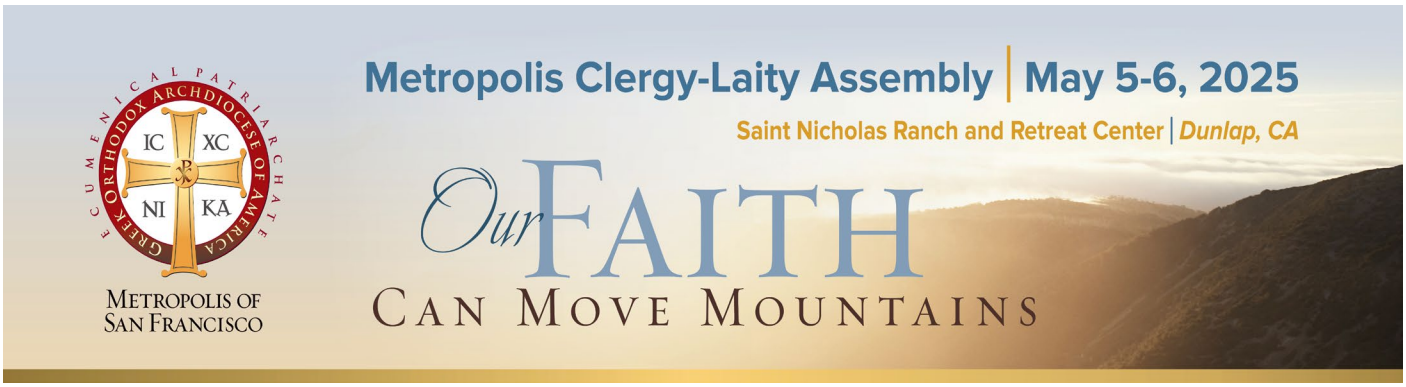
MINUTES



Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!
Αληθώς Ανέστη! Truly He is Risen!

Monday, May 5, 2025

Convening of Assembly — **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco**

Opening Prayer Service — **His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America**

Designation of Presiding Officer and Secretary — **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco**

Motion passed unanimously, made by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and seconded by Father Michael Prevas, to designate Archdeacon Justin Bosl to serve as the Presiding Officer of the Assembly and Judge Connie Contes (ret.) to serve as the Secretary of the Assembly.

Archpastoral Message — **His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America**

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros expresses his joy at being with us again in person for this Assembly, which celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Archpastoral ministry of his Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos. Between Metropolitan Gerasimos and Bishop Anthony of blessed memory, these two Hierarchs have bestowed God-loving service to the faithful of this vast Metropolis for nearly half a century. He prays for the continued blessings and for many years for Metropolitan Gerasimos.

This Clergy Laity Assembly has gathered to acclaim and consider the power of Faith that can move mountains. The Lord spoke of such faith twice in the Gospels, once comparing it to the size of a mustard seed and once challenging His Disciples to dig deeper into their own hearts to find a way beyond doubt. He challenges us to enter the most profound recesses of our hearts, and there discover His perfect will for our lives, and our capacities for love and forgiveness that are the essential character of a true life in the Spirit. For what is impossible for human beings, is possible for God!

MINUTES

Keynote Address **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco**
Celebrating 20 Years of Ministry

Metropolitan Gerasimos presents to the Archbishop a check in the amount of $110,000 in collected donations from San Francisco parishioners and Philoptochos chapters for the people victimized by the Los Angeles area fires. He also presents a check to the Archbishop in the amount of $10,000 in honor of the Archbishop's six-year anniversary of his enthronement as our Archbishop. He extends a sincere welcome to His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, whose presence is a tangible reminder of the unity of our Metropolis with the Archdiocese and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Guided by His stewardship over the last six years, our Church has realized the historic completion of Saint Nicholas Church and Shrine at Ground Zero, steadfast attention to the Archdiocese Pension Plan and the Archdiocesan Youth Summer Camp Scholarship Fund, and vital focus on strengthening Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

Our Metropolis also is proud to be a member of the Bartholomew Foundation. We are especially grateful to our devoted Archons who continue to protect the Future of Faith. We look forward to welcoming His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the United States this September as he receives the Templeton Prize for his prophetic voice regarding humanity's sacred responsibility for creation. This upcoming visit will once again affirm the spiritual and historic bonds we share with the Mother Church, founded on our faith and shared Orthodox tradition as well as our sacred heritage.

Metropolitan Gerasimos welcomes everyone to the Assembly and pauses to remember our good friend and co-worker Michael Pappas of blessed memory, former Executive Director of Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center for 17 years, who fell asleep in the Lord last June. May his memory be eternal.

As he pondered the theme of this Assembly, Metropolitan Gerasimos reflected on his life and ministry and was reminded of so many instances over the past 46 years of ordained ministry where he faced the mountains placed before him. He recalls the beautiful passage from the Gospel of Matthew where the Lord encourages us to have faith as a mustard seed to move mountains. It is this faith we must possess deep within ourselves to realize the most profound impact on the growth of the Orthodox faith. We also need this depth of faith to help us integrate our seekers into the life of our parishes. We need to welcome and embrace with love those who are first time visitors no matter where they are in their relationship with the Lord.

He gives thanks to God for allowing him to stand upon the foundation laid by his predecessors. Every Hierarch who has served on the west coast was a true shepherd. Bishop Anthony of blessed memory especially comes to mind. He was a visionary leader who guided this Metropolis for 25 years and bestowed a tremendous legacy that he continues to cultivate and fulfill for the Glory of God. He also has been blessed with a tremendous co-worker, the former Metropolis Council Vice-President Theofanis Economidis who served this Metropolis for over 30 years. His tireless dedication and unwavering faith has been instrumental in the growth and vision of our Metropolis.

At the time of his Enthronement, Metropolitan Gerasimos identified three essential area of ministry: the wellness of clergy and lay families, continuing education of our clergy, and the development of lay leadership. These areas expanded over the years to include more than a dozen ministries, each one a vital thread in the vibrant tapestry of our Metropolis. These areas formed the vision for the inaugural Metropolis Strategic Plan, launched in 2012 to grow the Church in faith and engagement. The more recent resurgence of the Young Adult League Conferences is also an example of how our Metropolis has responded to a ministry void for this crucial

age group. Now, six years later, YAL is thriving not only within our Metropolis but throughout our Archdiocese.

As we now revisit the Strategic Plan, we want to hear from you to get your impressions, to obtain your constructive feedback, and to share new ideas for consideration as we shape the next 20 years and beyond in this Holy Metropolis.

We are also learning from our vicariates within our Metropolis serving diverse cultural communities that are integral to the fullness of our Church. The Orthodox Church is universal, inclusive, and ever-expanding through the love of Christ. In embracing this growing diversity, we are not compromising our identity. We are fulfilling our mission. We are becoming more fully who we are called to be: the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Our Missions and Evangelism Ministry has been inspired by the teachings of Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos, of Tirana and All-Albania, of blessed memory who wisely observed that the Church must be mission oriented if it truly wants to be called a "Church." Given the growth that is now taking place with those embracing Orthodoxy, this Ministry has become even more relevant for our parishes. We also look to the example of the more recent saints of our faith: Saint Porphyrios, Saint Paisios and Saint Sophrony who evangelized people through their personal holiness and unwavering love for Christ. Their witness reminds us that evangelism is about authentic relationships, one soul encountering another, one moment of grace at a time. The Saints demonstrate the most powerful form of evangelism: to embody the Gospel so deeply that others are drawn not to us, but to Christ who lives in us.

In June, our Metropolis will host the Growing Orthodoxy Evangelism Conference, providing an opportunity to equip clergy and lay leaders with practical strategies for spreading the Gospel in our communities. It is up to each of us to become evangelists and share our faith as did the Apostles in the early church. Our task is to bring God to the people and the people to God, to "breathe Christ" into all we do and all we offer, and to proclaim the Good News in the languages and contexts of today.

These 20 years together is not "my" anniversary to celebrate as your Metropolitan. It is the work of our entire Metropolis family, blessed and guided by God who has made all this possible. Our world has been transformed and we, as the body of Christ, have adapted to these new realities while remaining faithful and creatively striving to hold fast to our faith and way of life. We have worked to build of the Body of Christ through the life of our parishes, and this work will forever be ongoing.

His Eminence thanks us for giving him this opportunity to be a servant of the Lord. He prays that he may always be worthy of this calling. To Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Introduction of Keynote Speaker **Archdeacon Justin Bosl**

Our Faith Can Move Mountains *(Part 1)* **Rev. Fr. Martin Ritsi, Executive Director, OCMC**

Fr. Martin Ritsi reflects on being born here, being raised here and being ordained here. It is his honor to be home in California at Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center.

He reminisces about riding his motorcycle as a young man, contemplating the verse, and praying to move Saddleback Mountain.

MINUTES

He provides examples of mountains that have been moved.

Turkana Riverbed Fills – a desert area where white people are not common. In the middle of a drought, they prayed for rain. They had to push the tents and car out of the path of the flowing waterway. An amazing miracle in the middle of the desert, which happened six years in a row. They went back to the area to baptize approximately 100 people. They prayed for rain in which to baptize the people, which was provided.

He tells the story of the young man whose mother told him that his father was leaving the family. They faced much hardship, pain and hurt. Ten years later, that young man was at the bedside of his father with whom he had a restored relationship, which is another way of mountains that have been moved.

In the mission field, he has learned so much about what is happening at home as well as abroad. We are in the midst of an intense life and death situation to spread the Gospel as directed by the Lord.

Orthodox missionaries faced many challenges in Kenya, Albania and Congo. They had to ask themselves if they were ready to sacrifice their lives or the life of one of their children. They faced dangerous situations. Yet, the Orthodox missionaries stayed when others left.

In his overseas missionary experience, he cannot recall baptizing less than 50 people on any occasion, and often hundreds of people. So he is not concerned about issues arising due to the influx of seekers to the Churches in America. Often, mission clergy did not have the resources to return to catechized areas. So the people had to organize into a limited number of Churches. Seven villages became ten Churches. In Tanzania, local clergy were able to establish many Churches.

“Our Faith is having an impact.” He tells of a woman in a communist country and a Muslim man who first spoke to God. The funeral of His All Holiness Archbishop Anastasios was attended by all of the hierarchs and dignitaries of the autocephalous areas of the Greek Orthodox Church. The Church in Albania built schools, hospitals and churches. One reporter wrote, “He won.”

In Kenya, a woman named Rebecca saw people under a tree who said they were Orthodox missionaries. She became Orthodox, and it changed her relationship with her husband and her community. She also was able to stop drinking.

He conducts a visualization exercise to imagine a world without Christ-chaos, danger, darkness and ungraceful death. He and Father James Retelas conduct an exercise about “Your Faith Story.” Each of our neighbors has an amazing story to share. Bringing Christ to the world begins with knowing the Lord’s impact at our fingertips. We will explore the role of the laity in sharing the faith with others.

Acquire the Spirit of Peace and a thousand will be saved. – St. Seraphim
It involves going to your neighbor and sharing your faith. It is not wrong to want to bring people to Christ. It is essential to our faith that we are the messengers of what we have experienced. We must do more than open the doors of our Churches. We must seek the seekers.

Do we have an attitude of wanting to share Christ? What we have is a treasure to be shared. There are so many people who do not have Christ fervently in their lives. If we want to be able to reach others, there is no technique to learn. It is our attitude to tear down obstacles. If you are from a parish that is not engaging, we have resources to help. It is important to create a non-judgmental space where people can be real. Welcome

teams in the Narthex are essential. Coffee hour is like a second Liturgy. Seekers are sharing by bringing others to the Churches. Engaging people with similar people. Church tours during Festivals is another ministry.

The core to the life and destiny of the Church is to find people and share our faith. How do we assimilate people? More to come tomorrow.

Introduction of Eva Konstantakos — **Archon George Psefteas on behalf of the Archdiocesan Council Youth Committee**

National Youth and Young Adult Ministries — **Eva Konstantakos, National Director Youth & Young Adult Ministries**

The Archdiocese and the Metropolises are working together to serve and support youth. Her experiences in these activities as she was growing up allowed her to find her calling. These ministries and resources are not just downloads but life-changing experiences. Parish Ministry Resources include the Y2AM ministry plan: a year-long program including prayers. This ministry also provides a social media series. Engage & Equip Newsletter also is published.
Effective Christian ministry has identified five essential practices to help youth address daily challenges. ECM level 1 online courses offer a self-paced program. Level 2 helps parish teams develop a one-year ministry plan. ECM Watch Club is similar to a book club. One session is set up for west coast time.
Let's get more people involved in ECM cohort programs.
Camping Ministries include 21 camps across the country in addition to Ionian Village. Approximately 5,000 youth are served each summer. Each Metropolis receives grant money from Leadership 100 to make camp more affordable to more youth. Camping Curriculum can be modified to parish day camps. 340 campers enrolled in Ionian Village this summer. Camp involves safety, God and fun. None of the Youth and Young Adult events can occur without compliance with the Youth Safety policy and process.

Group Assembly Photo
Great Vespers at the Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring
Group Clergy Photo
Dinner, followed by Ministry Pavilion – Outdoor Reception
Beauty First Films Screening: Amphilochios: Saint of Patmos (Optional) — **Saint Peter Conference Room**

Conclusion of Day 1

<u>Tuesday, May 6, 2025</u>

Hierarchical Divine Liturgy | Twenty-One Year Memorial for +His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony — **Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring**

Continuation of Assembly

Opening Prayer and Remarks — **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco**

Metropolitan Gerasimos asks the Lord to strengthen our Faith, inspire our conversations, and unite us in His love so that our work may bear lasting fruit for His Holy Church.

MINUTES

He welcomes us to the second day of the Clergy Laity gathering. He expresses his heartfelt gratitude for the presence of our Archbishop at yesterday's gathering. He recognizes the presence of Dr. Demetrios Katos, President of Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He also recognizes Archon Tom Stefanopoulos, a legendary benefactor of the Ranch and the Monastery and the father of Metropolis Council member Dio Stefanopoulos.

He urges us to press forward today with faith and commitment rooted in prayer, grounded in the Gospel, and awakened by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. To move mountains is not simply to witness miracles but to step forward with steadfastness, to act, to build, to plant seed of renewal, to carry one another's burdens, and to trust that the Lord will do what we cannot. He encourages us to speak with honesty and listen with love and together with God's help we can move mountains.

Metropolis Philoptochos **Jeannie Ranglas, Metropolis Philoptochos President**

President Ranglas highlights two premier ministries of the Metropolis Philoptochos:

Kids 'N' Cancer, Camp Agape Ministry, is dedicated to providing support for children afflicted with cancer and their families. The Metropolis Philoptochos oversees four Camp Agape programs: St. Nicholas Ranch, Arizona, Portland and San Diego. This year's Kids 'n' Cancer Agape celebration raised $400,000. It is a beloved and blessed ministry.

HCHC Light the Path Ministry supports the Bishop Anthony Philoptochos Student Aid Endowment Fund and is a vital source of support for the nearly 40 seminarians and students of this Metropolis attending Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, seven of whom will be graduating this month. The November 17, 2024 luncheon raised over $220,000 to benefit these seminarians and students. She takes a moment to ask all those present who benefited from this Ministry while attending HCHC to stand and be recognized.

She also reports on the March 25 Greek Heritage night at the Los Angeles Kings hockey game, hosted by the Greek Consul General of Los Angeles, the Honorable Christina Valassopoulou. More than 500 people attended. Half-time entertainment included youth Greek dancing on the ice to "Zorba the Greek" and His Grace riding the Zamboni. Fundraising proceeds from this inaugural event benefited the Kids 'n' Cancer ministry of the Metropolis Philoptochos.

She reviews the Social Services Ministry of the Metropolis Philoptochos including relief to fire and disaster victims, those encountering crisis or in a less fortunate position, youth programs including FDF and YAL, the Ranch, and women's health and wellness issues. She emphasizes that Philoptochos women have faith and move mountains. She encourages us with St. Paul's inspired words to "Let all that you do, be done in love."

Approval of Minutes of the 2024 Clergy-Laity Assembly **Archdeacon Justin Bosl**

Motion passes, made by Father John Hondros and seconded by Father Niko Bekris, to approve the Minutes of the 2024 Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly.

MINUTES

Report of Metropolis Council **Archon Isidoros Garifalakis, Metropolis Council Vice President**

Vice President Archon Garifalakis remembers our former Ranch Executive Director Michael Pappas who passed away last June after a brief illness. May his memory be eternal!

He offers his gratitude to Metropolitan Gerasimos for the trust he has placed in him and for the opportunity of leadership to grow and improve our Metropolis. On this 20th anniversary year of the Enthronement of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, he asks everyone to join him in exclaiming AXIOS to His Eminence for his truly worthy work as our Metropolitan and for the continued support of his leadership and ministry.

Metropolis Council meets two to three times each year, and the Executive Committee meets monthly. We are careful in managing the finances of the Metropolis, both the contributions of the faithful and the expenses of our Metropolis. We also work very hard to raise money through donations including from our Faith Forward program. Before arriving at the Assembly, we received a link to all the reports from our committees, ministries and staff. This information is provided to each of us because of its relevancy and importance. Please be ambassadors by sharing this information with fellow parishioners and encouraging them to make the most of the wonderful available resources.

He announces that the Metropolis Gala will be held on Saturday, October 11 in Anaheim, California. George and Vickie Demos and Gig and Kathleen Kryriacou will co-chair this beautiful event, celebrating our ministries and honoring the extraordinary leadership of two distinguished stewards, Nikiforos and Georgia Valaskantjis.

Metropolis 2024 Financial Report **Michael Syrengelas, Treasurer**

Actual/Budget Report:

Revenues are 7% higher than budget primarily due to unbudgeted revenue sharing from the Archdiocese as part of the 2024 Clergy Laity Congress, partially offset by lower than budgeted Faith Forward and Ministry revenues.
Operating & Administrative Expenses are 4% below budget. primarily due to lower than budgeted payroll and lower Ministry expenses, partially offset by higher Gifts expenses to HCHC and Office costs (Archdiocesan IT allocation).
Overall, the Metropolis has a net increase in net assets from operations of $226K for the year.
Net expenditures for self-funded and Strategic Plan Ministries were within 1% of budget with no notable exceptions.

Statement of Financial Activities:

Key message is that overall, the Metropolis is experiencing a net decrease in Net Assets of ~$229K for the full year. The 2024 Gala account spend on Ministry funding, inclusive of payroll, was ~$498K.
The primary drivers for the overall decrease in Net Assets are:
-the absence of a 2024 Gala and the Metropolis YAL Conference due to the National YAL Conference.
-the absence of Gala expenses and lower YAL conference expenses from the prior year.
-higher overall payroll expenses due to a new position in the youth office and a temporary position in the Chancellor's office.
-unanticipated 2024 CLC sharing received from the Archdiocese.

MINUTES

Statement of Financial Position:

Total Assets have decreased by ~$244K from the beginning of the year, largely reflecting the depletion of our bank accounts to fund our Strategic Plan ministries and to support the Ranch throughout the year.
Ranch receivable has increased by $188,581 from year-end 2023. The Metropolis Council through its Executive Committee and the Ranch Board are working on a plan in 2025 to recover these funds, in whole or in part.
Total Liabilities have decreased by ~$15K from the beginning of the year with no notable drivers.

Statement of Cash Flows:

Cash balances have decreased by $201,421 from the beginning of the year, largely to fund our Strategic Plan Ministries.

Review and Approval of 2025 Metropolis Budget Archon George Psefteas, Finance Committee Chair

Archon Psefteas explains that the proposed 2025 Operating, Administrative and Program Budget follows best practices principles and is a zero-based, bottom up budgeting process with input sought from all Ministry and Department leaders. The Executive Committee reviewed, discussed and endorsed the budget to the full Metropolis Council, which reviewed, discussed and endorsed the budget to the Clergy-Laity Assembly for discussion and approval. The Metropolis has been following the presented budget "as if approved" in managing the administrative and operating needs of the Metropolis as of January 1, 2025.

The format reflects a non-profit format that stays true to US GAAP and is a subset of the full Statement of Activities.

Revenues are 5% higher than the prior year budget and 2% lower than the prior year actual results. Primary fixed source of revenue comes from Archdiocese sharing based upon the Total Commitment payments made by all parishes in the Metropolis. 25% is returned to the Metropolis provided that the full budget is met at the Archdiocesan level. Any excess amount is subject to a sharing program.

Unrestricted donations primarily include funds raised by the annual Faith Forward program which has a remaining target of ~$385K. In March, we had a one-time Faith Forward donation of $125K without any donor restrictions.

Operating & Administrative Expenses reflect an increase in revenues. Budgeted expenses are 5% higher than in the prior budget year and 9% higher than the prior year actual results. The main drivers for the increases are increased legal fees, reduction in (shifting of) general payroll to reflect elimination of one position as of January 2025 and elimination of a second position as of July 2025, increase in property liability insurance premiums, and increased spend from our operating budget ministries and programs over 2024, largely offset by fundraising revenues from those same ministries.

Self-funded and Gala-funded Ministries are experiencing a 19% increase over 2024 actual results and 17% increase over the 2024 budget. Notable drivers include return of the 2025 YAL Conference and payroll allocated to Strategic Plan Ministries, inclusive of Youth Office, contributes a large part of the increase.

Archon Psefteas fields questions from Assembly attendees: Fr. Michael Prevas, Fr. Christopher Flesoris, Fr. Steve Tussing (transparency of Ministry budgets through review engagement materials), and Fr. Gary Kyriacou.

Fr. Gary asks about the possibility of changing the timing of consideration of proposed budgets or moving to a fiscal year budget.

Fr. Michael Prevas (St. Nicholas, Northridge, CA) asks whether the budget for Religious Education can be increased to devote more resources to this area, including doubling the number of finalists in the Oratorical Festival and offering a minimal financial scholarship to each finalist.

Metropolitan Gerasimos notes that the National winners of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorial Festival for the last four years have been from this Metropolis. The Festival is one of the best ministries of the Archdiocese.

Dr. Eve Tibbs thinks Fr. Michael Prevas' suggestion is a wonderful idea for the 2026 Metropolis Budget.

Archdeacon Justin Bosl addresses Fr. Ted Pantels' (St. George, Palm Desert, CA) question about why the suggestion cannot be motioned into the 2025 budget.

Archon Garifalakis announces that Archon Tom Stefanopoulos has donated $25K to the Fresno community to support the growth of the Oratorical Festival.

Motion passes, made by Michael Syrengelas and seconded by Fr. Niko Bekris, to approve the 2025 Metropolis Budget.

New Business

Fr. Christopher Flesoras (St. Anna, Roseville, CA) presents a resolution, adopted by his parish, for consideration by the 2026 National Clergy-Laity Congress by its Archdiocesan Council for its 2027 budget to move from the Total Commitment expense model to a 10% total income model.

Motion to accept resolution, made by Fr. Jim Pappas and seconded by Fr. Ted Pantels.

Fr. Flesoras fields questions from members of the Assembly. Discussion and comments ensue.

Archon Psefteas explains that while not perfect, the current Total Commitment expense model is the fairest way of sharing at this time than an income or revenue model based upon stewardship, which may well cause creative budgeting of income.

Motion does not pass.

Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center **Archdeacon Justin Bosl, Ranch Board President**

Stefan Metrakos, Executive Director introduces himself and asks first-time attendees to raise their hand. He notes that the Ranch navigated the immense loss of Executive Director Michael Pappas and a change in leadership during a very busy 2024 year. The Ranch has a great legacy. Yet, he is confident that the Ranch's brightest days are ahead of us.

Mission of the Ranch is to bring people closer to Christ through hospitality, beauty and connection. Vision for the Ranch is a place that brings holiness to our world, where all get to experience the beauty of God's creation, and the power of community.

MINUTES

Five key focus areas:

1. We can significantly improve the guest experience in low-investment ways.
-Online room booking
-Revamped cleaning/maintenance
-Improved landscaping
-New furniture – January 2025
-Poolside upgrades -
-Water filling stations
-Front desk area
-Fitness center
-Trail expansion
-Enhanced lakeshore

2. Increased profitability is necessary and realistic. Focusing on increasing revenue with lower costs. Improve fill rate, diversify revenue channels, and reduce cost to serve. Offer RV and tent camping solutions.

3. All non-profit retreat centers rely on donations to cover a portion of operating expenses.

4. We need a new approach to fundraising: a structured plan, year-round effort, marketing, outreaches, large donor cultivation process and reporting/data.
New fundraising tiers:
Trailblazer - $50K
Pioneer - $25K
Pathfinder - $10K
Steward - $5K
Ranch Hand - $2,500
Shepherd - $1,500

5. Our facilities can and should expand in a sustainable manner. Site Plan Development. Founders Pavilion – new large, covered pavilion. Anticipated to be completed by the end of 2026.

Stefan Metrakos closes with the challenge of "Let's get to work."

Fr. Gary Kyriacou on behalf of FDF offers to donate one water filling station contingent upon the remaining water filling stations being donated by the end of the day.
Kristina Reynolds and Dr. Hera Blazer from St. Demetrios Church, Concord, CA donate the second water filling station.
St. Demetrios, Tuscon, AZ donates the third water filling station.
Metropolis Philoptochos donates the fourth water filling station for the Philoptochos lodge.
St. Sophia Cathedral, Los Angeles donates the fifth water filling station in honor of Frs. John Bakas and Gary Kyriacou.

MINUTES

Hellenic College Holy Cross School of Theology **Dr. Demetrios Katos, President**

Dr. Katos shows a brief introductory video. He shares an update that enrollment is at its highest level since the pandemic. Enrollment of new seminarians is outpacing seminarian graduates. New online Masters programs are offered in Master of Theology (ThM) and Master of Theological Studies (MTS). A total of 281 students enrolled in a course or degree or certificate program. Approximately half are part-time students who have never set foot on the campus. Students are from all over the country. It is a vibrant eucharistic community. HCHC is opening more undergraduate degrees through the Boston College Pathways. The School is envisioning the future and strengthening our parishes by developing Christian servant leaders. The goal is educating priests to lead their parishes by providing rigorous theological education, spiritual and character formation in an Orthodox community, relevant pastoral curriculum, dynamic parish leadership, and hands-on training in parishes.

Equipping Lay leaders for ministry and service in the following areas:
-pastoral assistants
-youth ministers
-therapists and counselors
-social workers
-hospital chaplains
-non-profit, volunteer and entrepreneurial leaders
-catechists, aid workers, religious educators

Continuing education offerings in Bible studies and preaching, theology and church history, evangelism and catechism, pastoral care and counseling, parish leadership and administration, fundraising and stewardship, and practical training to strengthen parishes.

Dr. Katos closes with a quote from His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew about HCHC's bright future. Our task is to evangelize, to be Christ in our communities. Together we comprise the Body of Christ to preach the Kingdom, to feed, to heal and to bring hope to those who are in darkness. The School wants to help sustain this effort.

Parish Planned Giving **Melpomeni Murdakes, Director**
Archdiocese Office of Parish Planned Giving

Parish Planned Giving Initiative offers a timely opportunity for our parishes to strengthen long-term viability and increase support for our Orthodox Christian faith. The Initiative aligns with stewardship and capital donations. Planned Giving is the offering of the first fruits of our wealth. The value of planned giving reflects our faith and values, expands giving capacity, places agency over assets, and secures tax advantages for heirs. Tithing of 10% allows it to expand and grow and leaves 90%.
The difference with an endowment is that it leaves the principal intact and creates a dedicated fund to extraordinary philanthropy.
Value of an endowment secures principal, compounds gift value, reflects parish values, and preserves donor intent.
Planned giving presents a timely opportunity because of generational great wealth transfer.
Parishes are raising awareness through special events.
All of us are called to give annual stewardship, major gifts, and planned giving. These opportunities are complementary and not competing goals. The Lilly Institute reports that planned givers give twice as much.
Four key factors that will position your parish for success: Vision, Leadership, Plan and Fit

MINUTES

The Archdiocese Office of Parish Planned Giving offers resources including guidebooks, templates, videos and coaching, all accessible online and in person.
Remember your parish in your estate plan.

Our Faith Can Move Mountains *(Part 2)* **Rev. Fr. Martin Ritsi, Executive Director, OCMC**

Culture in the mission field: removing obstacles and embracing culture is both a challenge and a recipe for success. One of the primary messages of Pentecost is that when the Lord sent the disciples to all nations, everyone understood in their own language. In Albania, the local people wrote hymns in their own culture. In our cities, many communities are multi-cultural which can present greater difficulties. Something as simple as the sign on your Church building can send an unintentional signal. Is it possible to absorb architecture from different cultures when we build our Churches? Is it possible to incorporate and adapt religious art from different cultures in iconography? In Africa, the people simply do not stand still. Culturally, the services need a lot of movement and may even include drums in a respectful and beautiful way. Is there a music that reflects American culture? Music naturally resonates with us. Church music in India has been adapted by using tonalities that resonate with the local people.

We are very successful at ministering to the Greek Americans. But there are only so many Greek Americans in the United States. If we are going to use a foreign language, one idea is to incorporate petitions in the different languages of the local parishioners. In South Korea, the Church held a multi-cultural festival with booths and dancing in different cultures.

As we establish new mission Churches, we can do so without cultural issues from outside of the United States. Yet, large cultural groups are planting themselves within our existing Churches. What do the Guatemalan people want? How about the Chinese people? The cultural phenomenon can learn from the mission field. What is untouchable? What are some things we can we do to embrace culture? What does Orthodoxy look like when it is fully Americanized?

Fr. Ritsi entertains from Assembly attendees comments, thoughts, ideas on different ways to incorporate culture with faith. There is merit in expressing ourselves as universal Orthodox Christians first and foremost without reference to our jurisdictions and culture.

Three key aspects about the ministry of Archbishop Anastasios of Albania of blessed memory:
First, he embraced numerous cultures in Albania – Greek, Albanian and Slavic
Second, he strived for excellence in all aspects to inspire – architecture, iconography, worship, music
Third, he offered a Church that was about loving the people and their culture. Love covers all things.

Our faith is dramatically transforming our friends and neighbors, entire communities and countries. We are the emissaries entrusted with passing along our faith. No method or trick in doing so. We simply must pray and embrace others in love. Our Faith Will Move Mountains.

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos thanks Fr. Martin Ritsi for his offering to the Assembly over the last two days. He presents Fr. Ritsi with the icon of Saint Nicholas written by the sisters of the Holy Monastery of the Theotokos, the Life-Giving Spring.

MINUTES

Closing Remarks and Prayer **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco**

Metropolitan Gerasimos comments that the Assembly has been a most successful gathering not only because of the presentations, the Ministry Pavilion and every report in between, but because of the wonderful opportunity for active relationships among the attendees. He thanks Metropolis Council Vice President Archon Garifalakis, Metropolis Philoptochos President Jeannie Ranglas, Presiding Officer Archdeacon Bosl and Secretary Judge Connie Contes for their support on behalf of the Assembly. Vast resources and many thoughts have been offered. People are coming to find God and the peaceful security that only He can give, and we can give them that foundation. When you return to your parishes, don't simply give a bland report. Instead, proclaim the new era upon which we are embarking. Doors, eyes and hearts are to be opened. Those who are seeking our Faith must be given our help with open arms. There is no greater mentor than someone who has walked the Faith journey. The Orthodox Christian faith that we preach is indeed the Faith that moves mountains by calling everyone to Christ because we are one family and one Church.

May our Resurrected Lord bless you and may His Light illumine your path towards the Kingdom of God.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Adjournment

Motion passes to adjourn, made by Vanya Larsen and seconded Dimi Sakelarios.