Christian Education

Metropolis of San Francisco

A REPORT FOR THE CLERGY LAITY ASSEMBLY

The Ministry of Christian Formation & Religious Education in the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco serves as a hub for the dissemination of information and resources and a point of contact for parish religious educators. Since Christian formation is a lifelong process, the ministry strives to develop programs that support both adult and youth learners as well as classroom instructors and program directors. The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco currently provides resources for catechists in a variety of forms, including a robust website containing educational links, lessons, articles, lesson plans and activities for teachers and parents, regular online gatherings of catechists, and Christian Education webinars for adults. Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Paraskevè (Eve) Tibbs, Christian Education Ministry Lead

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

BE STRONG IN THE LORD
AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT
EPHESIANS 6:10

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

Metropolis Festival - May 9, 2026

The Metropolis level Oratorical Festival will take place at Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center on Saturday, May 9, 2025 at 9:00 am

National Festival - June 12-13, 20267

The National level Oratorical Festival will take place from June 12 through June 13 at Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox in Northridge, CA

Oratorical Festival Leadership Team

Aristi Contos (aristiofoz@yahoo.com)
Johanna Duterte-Carter (jduterte@sanfran.goarch.org)
Eve Tibbs (etibbs@sanfran.goarch.org

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY WEBSITES

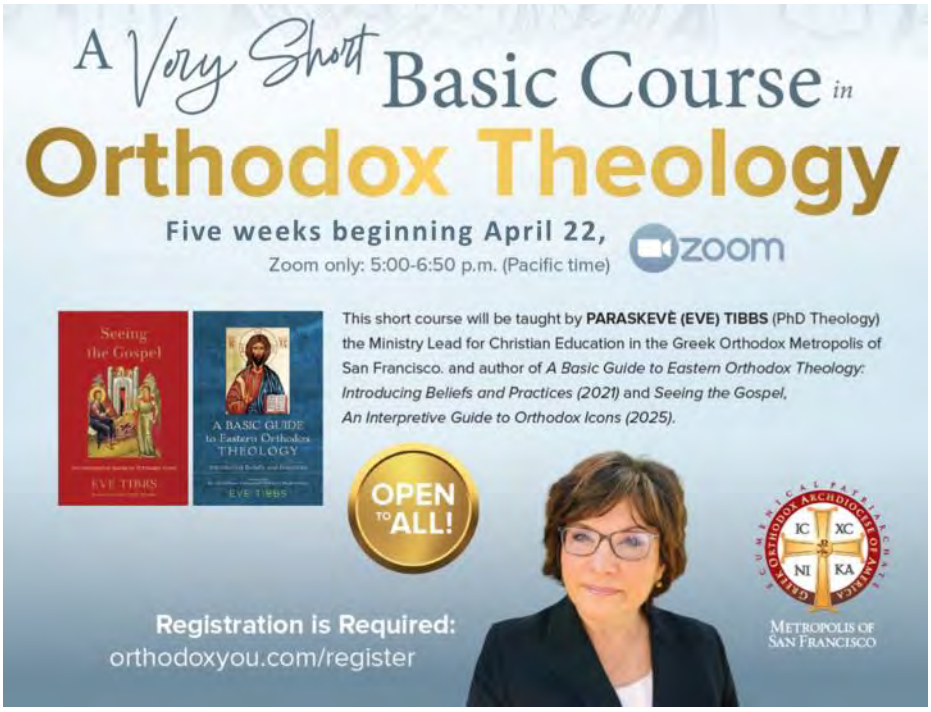
Catechetical Resources: for Parents and Teachers

https://religioused.sanfran.goarch.org

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival:

https://SForatorical.org

ONLINE THEOLOGY COURSE IN APRIL & MAY



A "***Very Short* Basic Course in Orthodox Theology"** is scheduled to take place via Zoom on five Wednesdays beginning April 22 (April 29, May 6, May 13, May 20) from 5:00-6:50 pm Pacific time. This fast moving introductory theology course is suitable for older teens and adults, with or without any previous theological background in the Orthodox Church.

Participation is free of charge, but registration is required to access the class through Zoom: **https://OrthodoxYou.com/register**

April 22: The Orthodox Christian Worldview
April 29: Early Challenges and the Rule of Faith
May 6: Created for a purpose
May 13: The Holy Trinity
May 20: Orthodox Worship

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS & CATECHISTS

Teacher-tested resources for Home and Church School

- Take-home Lessons
- Activity Pages
- Videos
- Crafts
- Lesson Plans
- Tridion and Lenten Resources



Website: ReligiousEd.sanfran.goarch.org

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

Ministry Update

Metropolis Clergy Laity Meeting
St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center
Tuesday January 27 – Wednesday January 28, 2026

Ministry: Music Ministry
Leader: Christopher Hondros
E-mail: sfchurchmusic@sanfran.goarch.org

Main activities / events completed in 2025:

- Sustain Scholarships: For the 2025 year, we awarded eight more Desby Scholarships
- Scholarship appeal: raised over $1000 to continue supporting individual church musicians with scholarships
- Presented a Holy Week Webinar, introducing church musicians in service overview and music of Holy Week.
- Had representation in both National Forum President's meeting and National Forum annual meeting.
- Ongoing – participating in helping plan the National Forum's 50th anniversary celebration beginning in 2026
- Represented the ministry at the Metropolis Gala
- Representation at Metropolis Summer Camp to teach liturgical music
- Participated in organization of National St. Romanos Music Festival
- Meeting of 2026 Desby Scholarship committee

Main activities / events planned for 2026:

- Metropolis St. Romanos Music Festival to be held in late Spring 2026
- Work with parishes to host events
- Potential webinar on the Pentecostarion
- Awarding two 2026 Desby Scholarships
- Ministry table at Metropolis Clergy Laity, and at FDF
- Attendance and participation at National Forum President's Meeting (in late March)
- Attendance and participation at National Forum Annual Meeting (before National Clergy Laity)
- Participation in the celebration of the National Forum's 50th anniversary events
- Continued participation and support of music at Metropolis Youth Summer Camp
- Consultation and workshop planning with individual parishes based on need

Additional Comments (optional):
A part of developing workshops is understanding the needs of each parish and adapting to fit. There is no “one size fits all” and constant inquiry is needed to best provide resources to each parish.

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

Metropolis Clergy Laity Assembly
St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center
January 27-28, 2025

Ministry: Clergy Continuing Education
Leader: Fr. Jerry N. Markopoulos
E-mail: frgerasimos@sntgrg.org
Cell: 541-852-0143

Main activities / events completed in 2025:

- Only a few of the Clergy Koinonia groups are meeting. The others are inactive for one reason or another.
- I have not received word back from the Metropolis regarding the proposal I submitted with regards to establishing clergy cohorts in partnership with Orthodox Christian Coaching.
- In April, I received the memorandum from the Strategic Plan Task Force that met on March 22,2025 and learned that a new vision for the Clergy Continuing Education Ministry had been formed and that new strategic initiatives were formulated. I was not included in this effort, and now I am uncertain of my continued role as ministry lead.

Main activities / events planned and first half of 2026:

- I would like to continue pursuing the establishment of Clergy Cohorts in partnership with Orthodox Christian Coaching.
- I would like to reinvigorate Clergy Koinonia groups that are inactive.
- As we are now seeing a second surge of people interested in Orthodox Christianity, and increased attendance in our parishes, there seems to be a need to address the question of how best to receive them, form them properly, and disciple them. The rapid influx has brought increased pressure on priests and significantly increase their workload. Therefore…
- Work with others to create a resource for clergy that will relieve the pressure and lessen their workload. To this end, we will design a curriculum that educates our clergy on how to receive newcomers, form them properly, and disciple them.

FDF 2026
Ministry Report

Prepared For:

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco
Metropolis Council & Clergy Laity

January 2026

SHINE

49TH ANNUAL GREEK ORTHODOX
FOLK DANCE AND CHORAL FESTIVAL
PHOENIX • ARIZONA • FEBRUARY 2026
METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO



FDF 2026 Overview

SHINE. The 49th Annual Greek Orthodox Folk Dance and Choral Festival's ("FDF") theme is "Shine!" Inspired by Christ and our Church at the center, this theme reflects the light within each of us. Throughout the weekend, our participants show how they shine in their faith, shine as a community, and shine for one another. Through faith, dance, and fellowship, we celebrate our shared culture while honoring the unique light each participant brings—expressing our true selves as Orthodox Christians, united and bright together.



FDF is scheduled to take place on **Thursday, February 12, 2026 through Sunday, February 15, 2026 at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona**. As in 2025, we again expect a record attendance with over 2,800 pre-registered participants to date, and we anticipate that number to grow with on-site registration.

Highlights

- **2026 FDF Logo:**
  The 2026 FDF logo, that you see above, was created by **Caroline Rovithi,** a conceptual & visual artist based in Athens, Greece. We are grateful for Caroline's hard work and her commitment to creating a logo for this year that reflects not only our spirit but our focus.
    - Caroline's inspiration comes from finding common ground between Phoenix and Greece, which is the sun. The sun represents light, energy, warmth, and connection, becoming a natural bridge for our culture and our faith. A further connection, reflecting FDF's Greek identity is the blue tones and meander motif, subtly woven into the design to reinforce cultural continuity and heritage.
    - We are excited to have this logo as part of our FDF 2026 weekend!



- **Registration:**
    - In 2025, FDF had **5,000+** participants throughout the whole weekend, including **3,000+** at the Awards Ceremony!
    - **For our event in 2026,** we anticipate a similar turnout. To date, we have **2,811** pre-registered participants, including 337 who will be attending FDF for the first time!
        - **215** pre-registered participants under 8 years old
        - **935** pre-registered participants between 9-17 years old
        - **1661** pre-registered participants over 18 years old

- **Competition:**
    - This year we are expecting, **112 Total Groups** from **7 States** (AZ, CA, HI, NV, IL, OR & WA).
      – **84** Dance (Division I & II) – **13** Division III Exhibition
      – **15** Choral – **0** Division IV Non-Competing Exhibition
    - There are six more competitive dance groups participating than last year!

- The Choral competition continues to grow, with five more Choral groups participating this year. We continue to rebuild our Choral participation and are on track to exceed the levels we were achieving prior to COVID-19.



- **Judge Panel:**
  - **18 Dance Judges** (5 from Greece) + **4 Costume Judges**
  - **3 Choral Judges** with long & distinguished resumes, including two Byzantine music professors from the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

- **Live Stream:**
  The FDF Live channel and viewership continues to grow year-over-year, broadcasting to and connecting those not able to physically attend FDF. Our target audience is everyone around the world who wants to experience our Greek Heritage and Culture through this ministry that we all know and love. Although we do not have numbers for FDF 2026, we expect the viewership to exceed the numbers from last year's FDF weekend detailed below:
  - **FDF 2025:** 881,520 Minutes / 81,400 Views / 23 Events / 1,134 Awards Viewers
  - **Since Inception in 2017:** 4,368 Subscribers / 95,600 Hours / 608,700 Views
  - **International Reach:** Greece, Canada, UK, Australia, Mexico & Japan

- **Ministry Collaboration:**
  FDF provides a platform for all ministries of our Metropolis and Archdiocese to advance their missions. This year, FDF will be offering vendor tables to several of our ministries, including Hellenic College and Project Mexico to name a few. FDF is also working on ways to incorporate our many summer camps within our metropolis including St. Sophia Camp, St. Nicholas Ranch, and Ionian Village.
  - The Archons & Pilgrimage of Discovery Alumni: During FDF 2026 weekend, we have coordinated a workshop hosted by the Archons and alumni of the Pilgrimage of Discovery to allow participants to learn about the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate mission and further explore educational & cultural enrichment opportunities in the Greek Orthodox Church.

- **Diakonia:**
  - This year we are excited that the Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos and the FDF Management Team are working together to partner with The Outreach Program to allow for our participants to packages dry food packets for those in need.
  - The Outreach Program is a non-profit organization that connects with organizations with volunteer engagement, such as FDF, to provide safe water, nutritious food, medical care, and education to those in need and abroad.
  - This year marked the 9th annual on-site Diakonia project (following the first one at FDF 2017). It continues to give great energy to kick off the weekend and is a highlight for all who participate.



- **Night Events:**
  - Friday & Saturday: Glendi
    - FDF's Management Team is working tirelessly to continue planning FDF 2026, we anticipate two very exciting traditional Glendia taking place during both Friday and Saturday evenings following competition.
    - During these Glendia, participants often enjoy dancing and singing throughout the night to a variety of live music from various regions and musicians, plus we are working with both DJ Gus Sverkos and DJ G Stav who we plan to incorporate between bands.
  - Sunday: Awards Ceremony & Glendi
    - Our FDF 2026 Awards Ceremony will take place in the Phoenix Convention Center, which is only a short walk from the Sheraton.
    - After the Awards Ceremony concludes, participants will again have the opportunity to dance the night away to traditional folk music performed by local musicians.
- **Workshops:**
  - We anticipate an exciting offering of workshops throughout FDF weekend. Several of these workshops are continuations of our past years success and have evolved:
    - Two interactive workshops focused on diving deeper into the history, culture, and purpose of several of our very cherished songs and dances, and how important the traditions are to so many of our church communities here at home and in Greece.
      - This includes **"Vocal Ornaments in Greek Traditional Singing**," an immersive workshop of Greek Song presented by Erini Tornesaki, one of our Choral Competition Judges.
  - A couple new workshops have been added for this year:
    - **"Lessons from Lygkistes"** led by our 2025 FDF Director's Scholarship winners inspired by the dances, stories, and traditions they experienced this summer at the 39th annual Lygkistes Dance Seminar, a two-week immersive journey throughout northern Greece.
    - An inspiring workshop for our youth, **"Made in Whose Image?,"** which will focus on exploring what it truly means to be created in the image of God.
  - The complete Workshop lineup for FDF 2026 included 12 inspiring, interactive, and powerful workshops, that will take place throughout the weekend and focus on all ages including parents.

We thank everyone for the continued support and assistance in making sure FDF 2026 is a huge success!
We can't wait to see you there!



Family Wellness ministry

GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

George Papageorge, *L.M.F.T, Director*
gpapageorge@sanfran.goarch.org
925 580-1771
Presv. Pat Tsagalakis, *Assistant Director*
ptsagalakis@sanfran.goarch.org
206 380-1862
www.familywellnessministry.org



Our Family Wellness Ministry is here to help you build stronger, more meaningful connections. Whether you are an individual, a family, or a member of the clergy, we offer the resources, training, and workshops you need to nurture healthier relationships and create deeper bonds within the family and your church community.

Ministry Programs

- "8 Dates" Relationship Enrichment
- "Ten for Ten" – for parish small groups
- "Real Life" – Parenting from the Heart
- Divorce Care and Divorce Care 4 Kids
- Parenting and Marriage Workshops
- IRONMEN: Men's Group Ministry
- Clergy Couple Confidential Counseling
- Reclaiming The Family Dinner Challenge
- Young Adult & Senior Outreach
- Grief / Bereavement Support
- Retreats & Oureach Events







Our Team

George Papageorge, M.F.T. ~ Director
gpapageorge@sanfran.goarch.org

Pres. Pat Tsagalakis ~ Assistant Director
ptsagalakis@sanfran.goarch.org

Joe Borgonia, M.F.T.
Dr, Nikki Frousakis, PhD
Fr. Vasili Hillhouse, PhD, M.Div.
Fr. John Khoury, M.Div.
Fr. Jim, M.Div. and Pres. Donna Pappas
Pres. Michelle Triant
Fr. Tom Tsagalakis, M.F.T., M.Div.

Do you have a vision for vibrant FAMILY WELLNESS MINISTRY in your parish? We provide training, workshops and retreats to help your parish grow and thrive!

familywellnessministry.org

Become a Family Wellness Ministry Ambassador



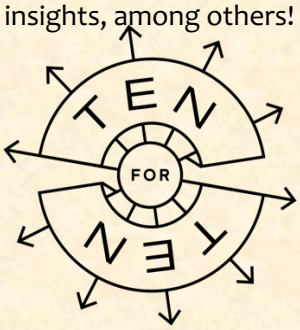
Take a moment to look at the unique needs of your parish. Are you hoping to start a small group ministry—such as a parenting group, men's or women's fellowship, couples ministry, or even specialized support like Divorce Care or Grief and Bereavement groups? These ministries create spaces for connection, healing, and growth within your community. We are here to walk alongside you, offering guidance, resources, and support every step of the way. Together, we can strengthen families and nurture wellness in your parish!

2026 Family Wellness Initiative: "Ten for Ten"

Ten for Ten

Ten for Ten is our latest Family Wellness initiative designed for both small and large group ministries. Members of our Family Wellness Ministry team present on relevant topics through a concise 10-minute video. Each video is accompanied by supplementary handouts that include quotes from Orthodox Church Fathers and Mothers, pertinent scripture verses, and questions for personal reflection and group discussion. We're excited to explore a diverse array of subjects, including parenting, family life, marriage, recovery after divorce, caring for aging parents, nurturing clergy care, and spiritual insights, among others! It will launch March 2026

Jesus says:
"I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly!"
John 10:10



IronMen
Orthodox Christian Men's Ministry

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" *Proverbs 27:17*

Throughout 2025, our commitment to cultivating Men's Ministry has made significant progress across the Metropolis. We have organized retreats, workshops, and connected in parish meetings which have been instrumental in fostering community and connection among Orthodox men. Efforts to develop small group men's ministry continues to grow providing men the opportunity to grow spiritually, learn from one another, and experience meaningful fellowship, reinforcing a strong sense of brotherhood and community.



Annunciation - San Francisco Men Men's Fellowship

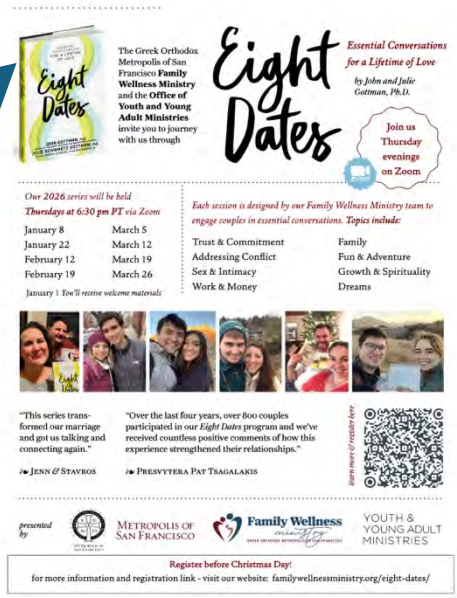


Camp Angelos Portland Men's 2025 Retreat

Eight Dates Relationship Series

Since its inception in 2019 – over 800 couples throughout the country have participated in our 8 Dates online or "Parish Edition" program.

"Great experience and wonderful discussions! Thankful for the structure of the course and the way facilitators allowed for us to share experiences and challenges in a way that helps to grow in their relationships."



2026 8 DATES

(100 + couples Registered!)

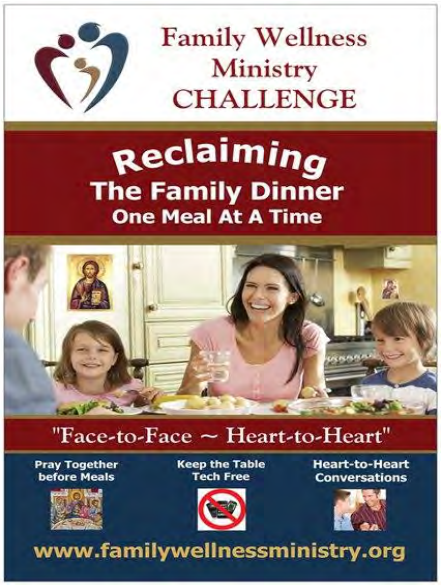
JANUARY
Jan 8 • Jan 22

FEBRUARY
Feb 5 • Feb 19

MARCH
March 5 • 12 • 19 • 26

Family Dinner Project

We are committed to reinforcing the connections that unite families. The Family Dinner Project aims to bring families together by encouraging shared meals and connective conversations. Visit our website to download interactive questions that can spark engaging conversations.



Grief Support



While everyone's response to loss is unique, people facing loss and grief will experience many of the same challenges. Grief Support Groups provides valuable connections, encouragement, and direction for those struggling with loss. Currently, Holy Apostles (Shoreline, WA) and St. George (Downey, CA) are providing Grief Support ministries. If you are interested in learning more about GriefShare and its powerful impact, resources are available. We also provide Grief ministry resources on our website.

Divorce Care

DivorceCare offers vital support to individuals navigating the challenges of divorce. This small group ministry provides a safe and understanding environment where people can find guidance and healing through practical tool and emotional support. Please contact Joe Borgonia, our Family Wellness Ministry's DivorceCare Coordinator, who can provide further information and assistance. 408. 209-1780





“Real Life” - Parenting from the Heart



"Real Life" Parenting from the Heart combines psychological research with the wisdom of Orthodox Christian teachings, offering insightful and practical content along with opportunities for interactive discussions. This program focuses on cultivating stable emotional connections, enhancing communication skills, exploring different parenting styles, and integrating authentic faith in Christ. All videos and materials are available for free on our website - providing practical tools and helpful insights to support your journey in Christ-centered parenting.

"To truly connect with your children, you must be present in their lives - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Listen to them, understand them, and let them feel your love and acceptance." + St. Porphyrios

FDF WORKSHOPS FOR TEENS/YOUNG ADULTS & PARENTS

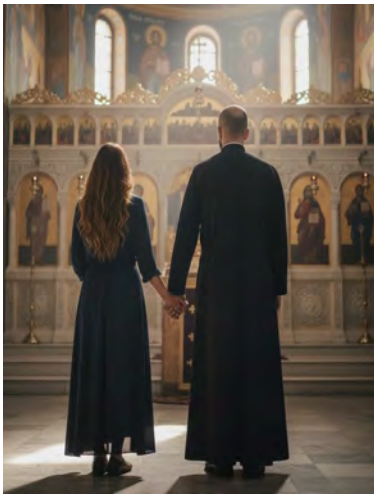
“The FDF Parenting workshops have been so engaging, fun and interesting. Thank you to all who make a difference in the Family Wellness Ministry.
- Olga Markou







CLERGY CARE



Under the spiritual guidance and steadfast encouragement of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, our team remains deeply committed to expanding our initiatives for Clergy Care. We recognize that the health of our parishes is inextricably linked to the well-being of our clergy and we are dedicated to fostering a culture of support, resilience, and healing within the Metropolis.

Confidential Clergy Counseling Support
Our Family Wellness Ministry (FWM) licensed Marriage and Family counselors are available to provide immediate, confidential counseling and support for any of our clergy facing personal crises, professional burnout, or the everyday pressures of ministry. We understand the unique challenges of the priesthood and offer a safe, non-judgmental space to navigate these complexities.

Contact Information: Please contact Fr. Vasili Hillhouse (503) 709-2989 and Fr. Tom Tsagalakis (206) 380-1865 if you would like to seek confidential counseling or learn more about the resources available to you.

Clergy / Presvyteres Support and Mentorship Programs
In our efforts to support priests and presvyteres, we continue to partner with the Archdiocese Center for Family Care providing support and fellowship through 'Peer Group Mentorship Programs' for both priests and presvyteres.

PREZ to PREZ – Presvyteres on our Family Wellness Ministry team distribute a monthly message via National Sisterhood of Presvyteres sharing scriptures, quotes, questions and thoughts to ponder relevant to lives of clergy wives.



NATIONAL SISTERHOOD OF PRESVYTERES RETREAT 2025 – San Antonio

Our Family Wellness Ministry Directors were honored to be the retreat speakers for the 2025 National Sisterhood of Presvyteres Retreat in San Antonio, Texas (October 2025)



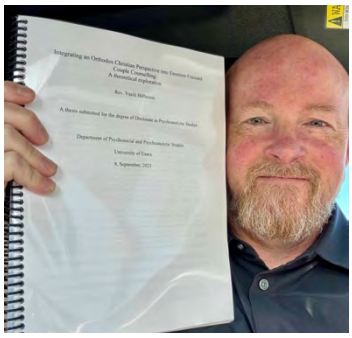




"The Church, bathed in the light of the Lord, spreads her rays over the whole world; yet there is one light which is diffused everywhere, and the unity of the body is not separated. She extends her branches over the whole earth in fruitful abundance; she extends her richly flowing streams far and wide; yet her head is one, and her source is one." **~ St. Cyprian of Carthage**

DETAILS COMING SOON FOR OUR CLERGY COUPLES RETREAT – OCTOBER 2026

CONGRATUATIONS FR. VASILI HILLHOUSE, PhD., M.Div.



Fr. Vasili Hillhouse, PhD., M.Div., our beloved Family Wellness Ministry Team member is soon receiving his Doctorate in Psychoanalytic Studies from University of Essex after completing his thesis "Integrating an Orthodox Christian Perspective into Emotion-Focused Couple Counseling" God Grant You Many Years! We are grateful to have you on our Family Wellness Ministry team!

PODCASTS

OCAMPR

We continue to be a presence at **OCAMPR** (Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology & Religion) as Family Wellness representatives Fr. Vasili Hillhouse & George Papageorge engage in important dialogue and build relationships within the mental health community.



In 2025 Our Family Wellness Ministry Director, George Papageorge was highlighted on FaithTree Resources **"Orthodox Christian Parenting Podcast"** in December 2025. Looking forward to more opportunities to come!

Pres. Pat, Assistant Director was interviewed on the **"Family Matters" Podcast f**or the special Thanksgiving edition on "Cultivating Gratitude" with Pres. Kerry Pappas – Archdiocese Center for Family Care.

Outreach to Young Adults







"As someone who has attended multiple YAL conferences across the Archdiocese, workshops led by the Family Wellness Ministry team stands out for their engaging content, positive guidance, and practical insight. They have a great way of connecting with young adults!
- Julia Pappas

Our Family Wellness Ministry remains committed to walking alongside our young adults, offering guidance through impactful workshops at Metropolis and National YAL conferences and retreats. By serving as keynote speakers at the CrossRoad Institute and CONNECT Conferences, we meet the next generation where they are—delivering life-giving presentations that bridge the gap between daily life and spiritual growth. This outreach fosters a deeper connection to Christ and provides the tools necessary to strengthen relationships within the Orthodox Christian Faith.



CrossRoad Institute 1.0 and 2.0





"George Papageorge brings all the wisdom, insight, and theological depth of the Family Wellness Ministry to inspire youth and young adults through the programs of CrossRoad Institute. This past year he taught at the Chicago and San Francisco sessions of the CrossRoad Summer Institute for high school juniors and seniors and at the new CrossRoad 2.0 for young adults - a five-day conference in Florida. At these programs, George not only presents a session, "Getting Love Right," but spends deliberate time hanging out with participants, fielding questions and encouraging their inner journey to Christ."
- Ann Bezzerides, PhD, CrossRoad Executive Director

Peace of Mind Mental Health First Aid Training



Father Jim and Pres. Donna Pappas completed their certification with the **Peace of Mind Mental Health First Aid** training presented by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of America. This training is designed for both clergy and laity to learn how to recognize signs of a mental health challenge and how to interact with a person in crisis. It is a research / evidence based internationally recognized course which also explores the connection between our Orthodox faith and mental health care.

Family Wellness ministry
GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

FAMILY WELLNESS IN ACTION 2026

www.familywellnessministry.org

A GLANCE AT FAMILY WELLNESS MINISTRY 2026 SCHEDULED EVENTS , WORKSHOPS & RETREATS

- **8 Dates – Relationship Series for Couples** *(110+ couples currently registered)*
  2026 DATES/ TOPICS

Jan 8 ~ Trust & Commitment	March 5 ~ Family
Jan 22 ~ Addressing Conflict	March 12 ~ Fun & Adventure
Feb 5 ~ Sex & Intimacy	March 19 ~ Growth & Spirituality
Feb 19 ~ Work & Money	March 26 ~ Dreams

- **Couples Retreat**, Resurrection, Castro Valley, CA "Pause, Pray & Play!" (Jan. 24, 2026)
- **Metropolis Clergy Laity Workshops,** St. Nicholas Ranch, (Jan. 27, 2026)
- **Parenting Conference**, Holy Trinity, Birmingham, AL (Jan 30-31)
- **FWM Leadership Team Retreat**, San Diego, CA (Feb. 4-7, 2026)
- **FDF Workshops for Teens/Young Adults and Parents,** Phoenix, AZ (Feb. 13-14, 2026)
- **10 for 10 Outreach Series,** launch for small groups in parishes (March 2026)
- **Youth Mental Health Symposium,** , St. Spyridon, San Diego (March 6-7, 2026)
- **FWM Lenten Retreat:** Marietta, Georgia (March 13-15, 2026)
- **Archon Retreat,** Southern California (March 16-17, 2026)
- **CrossRoad Institute: 2.0** Pompano Beach, Florida, Keynote Speaker (March 18-22, 2026)
- **National Clergy Laity Conference,** Clevland, OH (June 30-July 2, 2026) Presenters
- **CrossRoad Summer Session,** (California) July 2026
- **YAL Conference**, Workshop Leaders (Labor Day Weekend 2026)
- **FWM Parish Ambassador Training** (September 2026)
- **God Parent Sundays** (September 2026)
- **Clergy Couples Retreat** (TBA - October / November 2026)

Metropolis Clergy Laity Assembly
Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center
January 27-28, 2026

Ministry: Greek Language and Culture
Leader: Katerina Papahristou-Chiotis
E-mail: chiotiskaterina@gmail.com
Cell: 650-868-0728

Main activities / events completed in 2025:

- OXI Day Celebration / Ellinomatheia Award Certificates ***(October)***
- XMAS Carols - Celebration Program (***December)***
- Three Hierachs- Letters Day/ Vasilopita Cutting ***(January)***
- International Greek Language Day ***(February)***
- Apokriatiko Party - Traditional Carnaval (***February)***
- 25th of March Celebration ***(March)***
- Kids' & Family Movie Night (***April)***
- Ellinomatheia Exams ***(May)***
- Graduation - End of the School Year Celebration Program ***(June)***

Main activities / events completed in 2025 and planned for first half of 2026:

- OXI Day Celebration / Ellinomatheia Award Certificates ***(October)***
- Youth Greek History Tournament ***(November)***
- XMAS Carols - Celebration Program ***(December)***
- Three Hierachs- Letters Day/ Vasilopita Cutting ***(January)***
- International Greek Language Day ***(February)***
- 25th of March Celebration ***(March)***
- Apokriatiko Party - Traditional Carnaval ***(Feb./March)***
- Kids' & Family Movie Night ***(April)***

- Ellinomatheia Exams ***(May)***
- Graduation - End of the School Year Celebration Program ***(June)***

Additional Comments:

I am writing to formally propose an initiative focused on enriching our community through the systematic organization of cultural and musical gatherings with a Greek theme “Ένας Κόσμος Ελλάδα!”

I propose the creation of a series of engaging workshops designed specifically for our young people. The aim of these workshops is to provide a vibrant and interactive platform for them to discover, learn about, create, sing, travel (metaphorically), and discuss various aspects of Greece, including its rich history, enduring traditions, unique customs, captivating music, traditional dances, and timeless songs.

My primary objective with these workshops is to actively contribute to the preservation of essential elements of Greek identity within our wider community. By focusing on strengthening the Greek language, traditions, and culture, we aim to ensure that the younger generation develops a profound and lasting connection to their heritage. I am confident that these workshops will be highly beneficial in not only engaging our youth but also in fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of their Greek roots.

The aim of this initiative is to foster a deeper appreciation for Greek language and culture, providing engaging opportunities for connection and celebration.

I believe that empowering a youth group to drive these events will not only ensure their relevance and appeal to a younger demographic

but also provide valuable leadership and organizational experience for those involved.

I would greatly appreciate your thoughts on this proposal and welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have regarding its implementation.

I am eager to discuss how we can bring this initiative to fruition.

Metropolis Clergy Laity Assembly
Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center
January 27-28, 2026

Ministry: Our Greek Village

info@ourgreekvillage.com

www.ourgreekvillage.com

Our Vision
To foster an appreciation of Greek culture and the Greek Orthodox faith among youth through a creative, immersive summer camp experience.

Our Mission

- Introduce youth to Greek customs and traditions from various regions of Greece within an Orthodox Christian environment.
- Provide opportunities to learn from knowledgeable instructors in Greek dance, music, cooking, history, art, and language.
- Offer a balanced summer camp experience that includes sports, swimming, and traditional camp activities, along with evening programs such as skits, campfires, and a glendi.
- Help youth explore how faith and culture are expressed in different regions of Greece within the context of village life.
- Highlight a different region of Greece each year through themed programming and activities.
- Encourage connections between Greek heritage in the United States and contemporary life in Greece.
- Create space for youth to share their own family traditions while learning from the experiences of others.
- Support the development of friendships among youth from parishes across the Metropolis.

Greek Village is currently in currently being re-organized. We are hopeful this program will take place in June 2026. Please keep an eye out for additional information from the Metropolis about this ministry very soon!

"Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Matthew 9:38

GROW ORTHODOXY

A Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco

MISSION

To aid in and develop an Orthodox practice of evangelism and mission by opening doors, preparing soil, and casting nets for our parishes and their parishioners.

OUR TEAM



Metropolitan Gerasimos, Board President

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos leads as the president of the Missions and Evangelism Ministry with a firm commitment to equipping and lovingly challenging our parishes to actively share the faith within their local communities.



Kenny Scott, Director

Kenny Scott serves as Director of the Missions and Evangelism Ministry, helping parishes understand what evangelism looks like within an Orthodox ethos and how it can faithfully meets the needs of those seeking the Orthodox faith.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Fr. Anthony Cornett
Fr. Photios Dumont
Fr. James Kumarelas
Fr. Gerasimos Markopoulos
Fr Michael Tervo
Fr. Spyridon Rice
Dn. John Nixon
Cliff Argue
Nolan Brown
Connie Contes

~ 2025 RESOURCES AND EVENTS ~

HOW TO START A WELCOMING MINISTRY

This presentation offers a step-by-step guide to starting, strengthening, or revitalizing a welcoming ministry at your parish. Whether you're building from scratch or improving an existing effort, you'll get practical tools, ready-made templates, and real-life examples to make the process simple. It's not just about greeting at the door—it's about creating a culture of hospitality that surrounds every visitor.

HOW TO CREATE AN EVANGELISTIC WEBSITE

This session is a great opportunity to learn best practices for building a parish website that supports evangelism and clearly presents the Orthodox faith to newcomers. You'll explore how to avoid common mistakes and ensure your site invites others to learn more. Whether you're starting fresh or improving an existing site, this presentation will guide you forward. A well-crafted website helps your parish make a welcoming first impression.

2025 GROWING ORTHODOXY EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

Clergy and laity came together for the Missions and Evangelism Conference at Saint Paul Orthodox Church in Irvine, CA. The conference featured two speakers, Fr Adam Roberts and Christian Gonzalez, who inspired and challenged us over two and a half incredible days, where we were immersed in everything evangelism and walked away energized with practical, exciting ideas to share the faith in our local communities!

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL W/ FR BARNABAS POWELL AND FR JOHN FINLEY

This discussion brings together a practical vision for Orthodox evangelism with theological reflection on the Gospel in today’s world. Fr. Barnabas Powell and Fr. John Finley examine what the Gospel truly is and how its unchanging message can be lived and proclaimed in America as a genuine mission field, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities Orthodox Christians face today.

~ 2026 INITIATIVES ~

MISSION PLANTING HANDBOOK

The Mission Planting Handbook provides clear, practical guidance for clergy and lay leaders discerning and launching Orthodox mission parishes. It is grounded in Scripture, patristic wisdom, and real pastoral experience from within the Metropolis. The abbreviated edition offers an immediate, step-by-step path from idea to launch, while the comprehensive edition expands into theology, governance, finance, and long-term sustainability. Together, these resources establish a shared framework for healthy, intentional mission growth.

EVANGELISM WEEKEND SEMINARS

Evangelism Weekend Seminars bring the core content and energy of the Evangelism Conference directly into local parishes. Through short lectures and guided workshops, parishes explore what the Gospel is and how Orthodox evangelism differs from common assumptions. Each seminar culminates in a parish-specific evangelism action plan that is realistic and actionable. The goal is to help parishes move from inspiration to implementation.

PARISH MOMENTUM EVENTS

Parish Momentum Events are designed to help Orthodox parishes engage their local communities with confidence and clarity. These one- or two-day public events introduce the Orthodox faith in an accessible way while highlighting the life, worship, and ministry of the host parish. Each event includes a complete event structure, ready-to-use marketing materials, and practical follow-up tools to help guests move from initial encounter to ongoing parish involvement. The program is designed to be repeatable, scalable, and adaptable to the unique context of both mission and established parishes.

MISSION SPOTLIGHT VIDEOS

Mission Spotlight Videos tell the story of mission parishes as living, worshiping communities. These short films combine interviews, parish life, and worship to support awareness, outreach, and fundraising. Produced on a consistent quarterly schedule, they provide high-quality content for Metropolis channels and parish use. The videos help donors and seekers alike see how Orthodoxy is taking root in real communities.

~ UPCOMING EVENTS ~

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL W/ FR MARTIN RITSI AND FR JOHN PARKER

On February 24, we will continue our series by exploring foundational questions: What is the Gospel, and how is America a mission field ripe for harvest? What does faithful Orthodox participation in that mission look like today?

Fr. Martin Ritsi, former Director of the OCMC, and **Fr. John Parker**, Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, will examine the unchanging message of the Gospel and how it can be authentically lived and proclaimed within the contemporary American context, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities facing Orthodox Christians today.

REGISTER TODAY!

MEM SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- 3/3/26 - Group #1 (Pacific Northwest)
- 3/10/26 - Group #2 (Southern and Central California)
- 4/21/26 - Group #3 (Southwest)
- 4/28/26 - Group #4 (Northern California)

All meetings are via Zoom and take place at 5:30 PM PST

YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS NEEDED

The Missions and Evangelism Ministry is launching several ambitious new initiatives designed to strengthen mission parishes, equip local evangelism teams, and support the long-term growth of Orthodoxy across the Metropolis. These efforts require additional financial support beyond our current commitments in order to be viable and effective.

If missions and evangelism are close to your heart, we invite you to consider supporting this work through a monthly or annual recurring gift. Your generosity directly sustains practical resources, training, and outreach that help parishes move from vision to action. With your support, these initiatives can move forward with clarity, stability, and lasting impact.

groworthodoxy.org/donate

"Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Matthew 9:38

AMERICA IS A MISSION FIELD

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

HOW TO JOIN THE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

We are looking for people who care deeply about evangelism and want to see it grow in their parish and local community. Our goal is to create meaningful spaces for these individuals to connect, share ideas, and support one another.

Start by signing up as a member so you can receive our newsletter and stay informed about upcoming opportunities and resources.

JOIN TODAY!

Then, we ask that you join two groups:

1. Your vicariate group, so you can connect with others in your region.
2. Your parish-specific group, to collaborate with those working toward evangelism in your own community.

Below is the list of parishes in our Metropolis. Churches shown in bold have at least one active Community Members.

Please consider becoming a member today!

ALASKA

Holy Transfiguration (Anchorage)

ARIZONA

Saint Katherine (Chandler)
Holy Cross (Flagstaff)
Mission of Coolidge and Florence (Florence)
Mission of Lake Havasu City (Lake Havasu City)
Saint Haralambos (Peoria)
Holy Trinity Cathedral (Phoenix)
Saint George (Prescott)
Assumption (Scottsdale)
Saint Demetrios (Tucson)

CALIFORNIA

Saint John the Baptist (Anaheim)
Saint George (Bakersfield)
Holy Cross (Belmont)
Saint Demetrios (Camarillo)
Saints Constantine and Helen (Cardiff by-the-Sea)
Saint John the Baptist (Carmel-By-The-Sea)
Resurrection (Castro Valley)
Saint Demetrios (Concord)
Saint Nectarios (Covina)
Saint George (Downey)
Saint Gregory of Nyssa (El Cajon)
Saint Katherine (Elk Grove)
Saint Lawrence (Felton)
Saint George (Fresno)
Saints Constantine and Helen (Lancaster)
Saint Paul (Irvine)
Assumption (Long Beach)
Saint Sophia Cathedral (Los Angeles)
Annunciation (Modesto)
Saint Nicholas (Murrieta)
Cathedral of the Ascension (Oakland)
Saint Anthony (Pasadena)
Saint George (Palm Desert)
Prophet Elias (San Bernardino)
Saint Spyridon (San Diego)
Holy Trinity (San Francisco)
Annunciation Cathedral (San Francisco)
Saint Basil (San Juan Capistrano)
Saint Basil (San Jose)
Saint Nicholas (San Jose)
Saint Andrew (San Luis Obispo)
Saint Barbara (Santa Barbara)
Prophet Elias (Santa Cruz)
Saint Katherine (Redondo Beach)
Saint Anna (Roseville)
Annunciation (Sacramento)
Saint Basil (Stockton)
Saints Constantine and Helen (Vallejo)
Saint Spyridon (Upland)

HAWAII

Saints Constantine & Helen Cathedral (Honolulu)
Mission of Maui (Maui)

NEVADA

Saint John the Baptist (Las Vegas)
Saint Anthony (Reno)

OREGON

Central Oregon Mission (Bend)
Saint John the Baptist (Beaverton)
Saint George (Eugene)
Holy Trinity Cathedral (Portland)
Holy Cross Mission (Roseburg)
Holy Resurrection Mission (Salem)

WASHINGTON

Saint Sophia (Bellingham)
Saint Nectarios Mission (Pasco)
Saint Demetrios (Seattle)
Assumption (Seattle)
Holy Apostles (Shoreline)
Holy Trinity (Spokane)
Saint Nicholas (Tacoma)



Orthodox
PARISH LEADERSHIP

A Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco

"Equip Parish Leaders"

Annual Ministry Report

2025

Metropolis of San Francisco

Our WHY

Our Purpose

Support a parish's efforts in bringing people closer to Christ and fostering a connection with His Church

Our Mission

"Equip Parish Leaders"

How We Will Do This

- Develop and share materials, tools, and best practices
- Customize support to meet each parish's specific needs
- Provide ongoing consulting and advisory support
- Serve as a direct, trusted resource for parish questions

2025 at a Glance

- In 2025, requests for Orthodox Parish Leadership (OPL) support increased significantly compared to 2024, driven in part by the expanded range of services now available. From 2022 through 2024, OPL focused primarily on strategic planning, parish leadership development through seminars, and parish health and revitalization. In 2025, the ministry supported parishes and Orthodox ministries at an unprecedented level, and to meet this growing demand, OPL substantially expanded its base of support across all areas of service (see page 5).

- The OPL team remained intact for 2025 and is comprised of five current and former Parish Council Presidents, a Parish Treasurer, one Parish Council member, and an Archdiocesan Director. Together, they bring deep experience and a strong commitment to the work, enabling OPL to continue providing customized consulting support while responding effectively to an increasing volume of requests.

- Support requests now extend beyond the Metropolis of San Francisco, allowing OPL to share insights and experience across other Metropolises and Jurisdictions, while maintaining its primary focus on serving parishes within the Metropolis.

- Building on the successful inaugural "2x2" Leadership Development Pilot in 2024, a second "2x2" cohort concluded in 2025 with twelve participating parishes. This cohort generated valuable learnings and measurable parish impact.

- Additionally, the *Metropolis Monthly Webinar Series* launched its 2025 program in April, offering monthly presentations on timely parish topics and issues. The format was expanded this year to include guest speakers from across the Archdiocese, a change that was met with strong positive feedback.

2025 Highlights

By the Numbers…

51 Parishes & Ministries supported by OPL

9 *Metropolis Monthly Webinars* Conducted

525 Approximate number of attendees of 2025 *Metropolis Monthly Webinars*

1373 Total responses to 10 parish-level surveys conducted as part of 2025 "2x2" Program *(2,176 if combined with 2024 conduct)*

Consulting & Advisory Services

Over 100 Unique Offerings Provided by OPL in 2025

Capital Campaign Support (13) ↑↑↑ **(Trend to 2024)**

Financial Health (11) ↑↑↑

Leadership Development (6+1) ↑↑

Ministry Effectiveness (3) ↑

Parish Health (4+1) ↑

Planned Giving (12) ↑↑↑

Revitalization & Conflict Resolution (10+2) ↑↑

Safety & Security (2) ↑

Stewardship & Generosity (11 +3) ↑↑↑

Strategic Planning (7+4) ↑↑

Welcome Team Ministry (10) ↑↑↑

"2 x 2" Program (12) *No change*

Metropolis Monthly Webinars (9) *No Change*

Notes: Some parishes are utilizing multiple offerings
(+) indicates support provided outside of the Metropolis

Parish & Ministry Support

Parishes & Ministries Supported 2025

Metropolis of San Francisco Parishes

Annunciation, Modesto
Annunciation, Sacramento
Annunciation, San Francisco
Assumption, Scottsdale
Assumption, Seattle
Holy Apostles, Shoreline
Holy Trinity, Phoenix
Holy Trinity, Portland
Mission Parish, Florence
Prophet Elias, San Bernardino
Resurrection, Castro Valley
St. Andrew, San Luis Obispo
St. Anthony, Pasadena
St. Barbara, Santa Barbara
St. Basil, Stockton
St. Demetrios, Camarillo
St. Demetrios, Concord
St. Demetrios, Tucson
St. George, Fresno
St. George, Palm Desert
St. George, Prescott
St. Gregory of Nyssa, El Cajon
St. Haralambos, Peoria
St. John, Anaheim
St. John, Beaverton
St. John, Carmel-by-the-Sea
St. Katherine, Chandler
St. Lawrence, Felton
St. Nicholas, San Jose
St. Nicholas, Tacoma
St. Paul, Irvine
St. Sophia, Los Angeles
St. Spyridon, San Diego
Sts. Constantine & Helen, Cardiff-by-the-Sea
Sts. Constantine & Helen, Vallejo

Expanded Support

Annunciation, Milwaukee, WI
Archangel Michael, New York, NY
Archdiocese of America (Ministries)
Armenian Diocese (Eastern)
Metropolis of Atlanta
Metropolis of Boston
Metropolis of Chicago
Metropolis of San Francisco
Hellenic College/Holy Cross Seminary
Orthodox Christian Fellowship
Orthodox Ministry Services
St. Andrew, Randolph, NJ
St. Athanasius and St. Cyril Coptic Seminary
St. George, Daly City, CA
St. Nectarios, Palatine, IL
Sts. Constantine & Helen, Milwaukee, WI

"2x2" Program Overview

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil."
- Ecclesiastes 4:9

Purpose of the "2x2" Program

Equip parishes to achieve their purpose by increasing the skills and awareness of two parishioners from each of 12 parishes within the Metropolis of San Francisco in all aspects of the OPL ministry.

Learning Session Flow

Eight learning sessions are offered to the 24 participants as a group, one per month over an eight-month period. Each session will provide core content on the topic while also highlighting practical best practices that can be applied within the parish.



New For 2025: It's All About Implementation!

Based on feedback from the 2024 cohort, a new final session was added to the 2025 program to help participants develop clear parish action steps. Titled *From Insight to Intention: Applying 2x2 Tools to Your Parish's Real Needs* and grounded in the experience of a 2024 program alumnus, the early-January session will guide parish representatives in reviewing program learnings and survey results to discern what is most appropriate for their parish. This process prepares them to review priorities with their Priest and Parish Council and establish concrete action items for 2026.

2x2 LEADERSHIP Development

2025 Learning Sessions

COMPLETED

13 Topics; 8 Sessions Delivered once per month via Zoom;
Participants Received: Presentation; Session Recording; Parish Assessments

6:30 - 8:00 pm Pacific (2nd Tuesday)	Learning Session Topic	Session Leads
May 21 & 22 (5pm Pacific)	Program Orientation	OPL Team
June 10	Parish Purpose (WHY) & Parish Health	Steve Tibbs Steve Pappas
July 8	Stewardship & Culture of Generosity	Kristina Mehas
August 12	Parish Financial Health	Jim Eckstaedt
September 9	Parish Leadership	Steve Tibbs
October 14	"5 P" Ministry Effectiveness & Welcome Ministry	Peter Panagis George Ekizian
November 11	Planned Giving & Capital Campaigns	Melpo Murdakes Steve Tibbs
December 9	Parish Annual and Strategic Planning & Alignment	Dimi Sakelarios
January 12, 2026	Parish Roadmap	Steve Tibbs

Completed | Upcoming

Participation

8 Sessions, 10 Topics + Orientation

Overall participation of all 12 parishes was excellent!

- ✓ 76% overall attendance rate
- ✓ 10% better than 2024 cohort

Parish Participation

- ✓ 7 of 12 parishes attended all 8 sessions
- ✓ 1 attended 7 of 8 sessions
- ✓ 4 attended 6 of 8 sessions

Individual Participation

- ✓ 40% of participants attended at least 7 sessions
- ✓ 5 attended all 8 sessions

Participation as a Metric - What Does it Mean?

Overall, the attendance data suggests the program held genuine value for participants, as evidenced by their sustained involvement throughout the duration of the cohort.

Most participants attended the majority of sessions, with nearly half completing seven or eight of the eight sessions. This pattern reflects a high level of engagement rather than simple compliance.

Participation remained consistent across the program, including in the later months, pointing to sustained interest and commitment rather than early enthusiasm followed by drop-off.

Approximately half of the participants missed only one or two sessions, a pattern consistent with normal scheduling conflicts rather than disengagement. This also validates the program's design of having two participants per parish.

Program Outcomes

From the 2024 and 2025 "2x2" cohorts, over 500 Parish Council and Ministry Leaders from 24 parishes identified the following priority areas for their respective parishes.

(5 = highest need)

	No need	Low Importance	Moderate	Important	Very Important	Average
Leadership Development	9	16	89	174	169	4.05
Stewardship & Generosity	8	27	92	160	169	4.00
3+ Year Strategic Plan	18	32	90	148	169	3.91
Financial Health	9	32	115	141	160	3.90
Parish Council Effectiveness	17	34	107	154	145	3.82
Ministry Effectiveness	19	36	107	159	136	3.78
Annual Parish Planning	20	36	123	168	110	3.68
Capital Campaign Support	22	48	130	122	135	3.66
Overall Parish Health	25	47	113	147	125	3.66
Welcome Ministry	22	44	126	144	121	3.65
Planned (Estate) Giving	22	79	164	121	71	3.31

Initial 2025 Program Impacts for our Parishes

- 3 inquires / plans to reinvent the Parish's respective Stewardship program
- Multiple requests for Parish Council Leadership Seminars
- Numerous requests for assistance in Parish Financial Health matters
- Helped realign parish leadership perspectives by reaffirming the parish's "why" and parish priorities
- One parish will launch its Parish Strategic Plan in April, 2026
- "2x2" program findings shared with HCHC and Archdiocese Director of Ministries to support their respective plan developments

Parish Assessment Surveys

Following each Learning Session, participants were asked to conduct an assessment survey within their respective parish, based upon the Learning Content delivered during the session.



Surveys Distributed

1. Parish Needs Over the Next 18 Months
2. Leadership Attributes
3. Parish Financial Health
4. Parish Health
5. Parish Planned Giving
6. Parish WHY / Vision & Purpose
7. Strategic Plan Readiness
8. Stewardship & Generosity
9. Welcome Ministry Best Practices
10. 5Ps of Ministry Effectiveness

Survey Reports

1373 Parish-Level Surveys received from the 12 participating parishes

2176 Total survey responses to the 10 parish-level surveys, *if combined with the 2024 cohort, providing exceptional insights into the 24 participating parishes*

156 *Custom Survey Reports. As a result of their efforts, each participating parish received a custom survey report showing both their individual parish results and a composite of all 12 parishes*

2025 Metropolis Webinars

9 Webinars, each Recorded and Posted with ~ 525 attendees

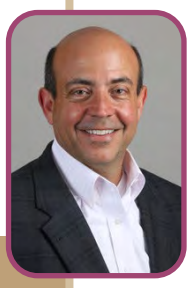
COMPLETED

Key Program Change for 2025: In addition to each main presenter (listed below), one to two guest speakers participated to share real-world best practices. This change was overwhelmingly well received.

	Monthly Webinar	Presenter
April 28	"Enhancing Leadership Capacity: Developing Current Leaders and Planning for Succession"	Steve Pappas
May 19	"Building a Theology of Leadership Rooted in Faithful Worship"	Steve Tibbs
June 16	"Becoming a Dynamic Parish Ministry: Approaches for Building, Engaging and Serving."	Peter Panagis
July 21	"Nurturing a Healthy Parish: 12 Core Attributes"	Steve Pappas
August 18	"Expanding Your Volunteer Network: Connecting the Other 80%"	Kristina Mehas
September 15	"Enhancing Parishioner Engagement Utilizing an Intergenerational Approach"	George Ekizian
October 20	"Creating the Vision: A Practical Approach to Building an Effective Parish Plan"	Melpo Murdakes
November 17	"Fostering Unity: Strategies for Aligning Goals and Managing Disagreements"	Steve Tibbs
December 15	"Synergy: Strengthening Collaboration Between the Priest, Parish Council, and Parish Ministries"	Dimi Sakelarios

Completed | Upcoming

OPL Team



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Parish Health & Revitalization;
Metropolis Monthly Webinars
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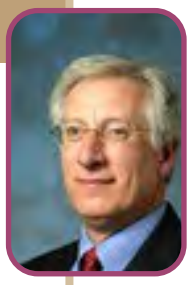
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Orthodox
PARISH LEADERSHIP

A Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco

"From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." - Ephesians 4:16

For Additional Information

Please contact any of our OPL Team Members directly or Steve Tibbs at stibbs@bluevase.com or via the Metropolis of San Francisco website at https://sanfran.goarch.org/ministries/orthodox-parish-leadership

METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

PHILOPTOCHOS

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco

Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly
Ministry in Action. * Faith in Motion.

January 27-28, 2026
Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos President's Report

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."
Galatians 6:9–10

Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, Your Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, Your Grace Bishop Ioannis, Metropolis Council Vice President Isidoros Garifalakis, Metropolis Council, Rev. Fathers and Presvyteres, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is my honor to greet you on behalf of the Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos Board today as we gather for the 2026 Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly. Our mission, deeply rooted in the principles of love, compassion, and service, remains steadfast and unwavering. I remain grateful to His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos for his spiritual guidance and blessing in support of our many endeavors to make a difference in the lives of others.

The ***49th Annual Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Folk Dance and Choral Festival*** will be held next month on February 12-15, 2026 in Phoenix, Arizona. The FDF Team and the Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos are joining together for the Diakonia and hosting the Outreach Project that will feed thousands in Phoenix area.

The ***Bishop Anthony Philoptochos Student Aid Endowment Fund*** has been a vital source of support for our seminarians and students. In the past 18 years we have offered over $2 million in financial assistance. Each year, our Light the Path Christmas Luncheon brings together our clergy and faithful for an afternoon of Christmas cheer – complete with beautiful decorations and the sights and sounds of Christmas. Light the Path was held on Sunday, November 16, 2025 at the Olympic Club in San Francisco, California. We raised over $165,000 to support the seminarians and students of the Metropolis of San Francisco at Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology (HCHC).





We are excited to have 46 seminarians and students enrolled at HCHC this school year. The Philoptochos Board will be travelling to the HCHC graduation ceremonies this May and celebrating our graduating students.

245 Valencia Street • San Francisco, CA 94103
Phone 415-431-2600 Fax 415-431-2868 Email office@sfphiloptochos.org Website sfphiloptochos.org

Gather * Renew * Refresh - The biennial Fall Spiritual Conference, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and President Jeannie Ranglas, was held at the St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center in Dunlap, CA on Sunday, October 26th through Tuesday, October 28th. Not only did every participant learn from all the exceptional speakers and enjoy the camaraderie of women who share the desire to be part of our purposeful ministry and are dedicated to its mission but also appreciated the very spiritual experience of attending meaningful Vespers services at the Holy Monastery of the Theotokos, Elections were held for the 2026-2027 Metropolis Philoptochos Board and the new Board met on January 21st to take the Affirmation of Office and elect the Executive Board.

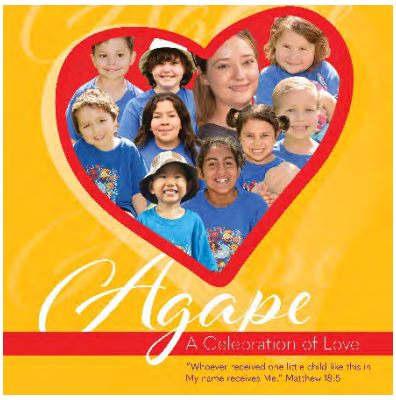


Metropolis of San Francisco Gala celebrated the vibrant ministries of the Metropolis and honored the extraordinary leadership of two distinguished stewards, Nikiforos and Georgia Valaskantjis, recipients of the 2025 Theofanis Economidis Award on Saturday, October 11, 2025. The Metropolis Philoptochos played an active role in the celebration.



The Metropolis Philoptochos partnered with the ***Young Adult League (YAL)*** at their annual conference over Labor Day weekend 2025 for their Diakonia Project. Together, we sponsored and hosted the outreach program that fed thousands in greater Seattle area.

A Kids 'N' Cancer Ministry, Camp Agape. The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos Kids 'n' Cancer – Camp Agape Ministry is dedicated to providing support for children afflicted with cancer and their families. This beloved ministry offers a compassionate and caring environment, exemplary of Christ's unconditional love, along with an opportunity to shape meaningful friendships and create precious memories. Camp Agape navigates the journey for these families with courage, compassion and unwavering support. The Metropolis Philoptochos oversees four Camp Agape programs throughout the Metropolis - San Diego, Dunlap (St. Nicholas Ranch), Arizona, and Portland.



This year, we will host our Kids 'n' Cancer Agape – A Celebration of Love on Sunday, April 19, 2026 at the Newport Beach Country Club. We look forward to seeing you in April.

Our Camp Agape Ministry hosted 2 reunion events. On January 31st the Arizona chapters will host their Camp Agape Reunion celebration. Philoptochos members will host and entertain our Camp Agape families. On December 16th Saint Spyridon Philoptochos of San Diego and the Metropolis Philoptochos hosted a Christmas party for the Camp Agape families. A delicious dinner was served, we sang Christmas Carols and there was a visit from Santa.



In May 2025, five members of the Metropolis Philoptochos Board traveled to Brookline, Massachusetts to participate in the ***Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology*** commencement festivities for our students. During our time on campus, we presented a check for over $160,000 to support the seminarians and students from our Metropolis. It is always uplifting to visit "The Holy Hill" and to share in fellowship with these wonderful men and women who are pursuing higher education at Hellenic College Holy Cross and encourage them as they pursue service to our Church.



The ***Social Services Ministry*** embodies the spirit of Philoptochos by assisting those in need of caring, kindness and compassion. The need for such a ministry is paramount to our mission as Philoptochos women touch others both financially and spiritually in a manner which provides hope and preserves dignity. Our mission is to assist those locally, throughout our Metropolis, and on a National level, who are encountering crisis or in a position that is less fortunate. The continuation of such a ministry is essential to achieving our goal. This need was pronounced during the COVID pandemic and we remain vigilant in helping now more than ever in touching hearts…. and changing lives.

The Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos Society reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to the **Ecumenical Patriarchate** through a $5,000 donation in continued support of its vital ministry. This contribution reflects the unwavering dedication of our Metropolis Philoptochos to the spiritual leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its mission to serve the Orthodox faithful worldwide, strengthen the unity of the Church, and uphold its philanthropic and pastoral efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve this beloved Metropolis of San Francisco. I, and the thousands of women represented through our Philoptochos Chapters are thankful for your support and love, and most of all, your prayers as we continue our good works in Christ.

"In the spirit of unwavering commitment and boundless compassion, may the good works of Philoptochos continue to illuminate the path of service, embodying the profound truth in giving, we receive, and in serving others through faith, hope and love."

With Love in Christ,

Jeannie Ranglas, President
Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos

St. Nicholas
RANCH AND RETREAT CENTER

2025 Ministry Report

Submitted by Stefan Metrakos
stefan@stnicholasranch.org

Overview

St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center saw continued growth and improvement in 2025, with financial and other metrics up year over year. A successful strategic planning effort led to the execution of several initiatives.

Finances

2025 saw group and event revenue up 30%, room rental revenue up 21%, and unrestricted donations up at least 10% compared to 2024. These improvements can be attributed to improved pricing, more efficient service, and the enactment of year-round fundraising as opposed to a single annual appeal.

Despite these improved metrics, we did not reach the fundraising goal approved for 2025 and continued to face headwinds related to the high cost of operating a facility of our nature. These learnings inform a new approach to operations which will come into effect beginning Q1 of this year.

Facilities Improvements

With the help of a tremendous show of support at the 2025 Metropolis of SF Clergy Laity Assembly, we installed 5 new water filling stations throughout our campus. These new additions greatly improved the operation of our Metropolis Summer Camp, Camp Agape, and all other guests while increasing our environmental sustainability.

The washed-out drainage culvert which prevented the comfortable circumvention of our beloved lake was repaired and reinforced with beautiful granite native to our property.

We received a generous donation of indoor and outdoor furniture. The outdoor furniture went to immediate use beginning in the summer. It has allowed for a revamped fire pit, lounge areas by the pool, and multiple gathering spaces in the outdoors of our campus. The indoor furniture will slowly replace the beds, desks, and side tables of our lodge rooms in 2026.

Facilities Improvements Cont.

Thanks to a donation from the Philoptochos of St. George in Fresno, we acquired two shipping containers to expand long-term storage.

We installed acoustic panels in the dining room in order to provide a more comfortable and quiet experience during meal service.

Our facilities team planted over 20 trees and dozens of shrubs throughout the facility, with some work done during our first ever Ranch Improvement Weekend, an event focuses solely on work projects to beautify our property.

The process of installing new plumbing devices to provide rapid hot water to our lodge rooms was completed this year.

Finally, right at the end of the year, we began the project of rennovating the lower conference room, the adjoining bathrooms, and creating a brand new fitness center.

Looking Forward

We anticipate 2026 to bring more impactful facilities improvements and a new operating model which will ensure our longevity for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of this beloved ministry.

With Hope in Christ,

Stefan Metrakos
Executive Director

Report to the Metropolis of San Franciso Clergy-Laity Assembly

January 27-28, 2026

St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center

Submitted by:

Archon Hon. Steven & Mrs. Stacia Counelis

YAL Conference Ministry Advisors and

Metropolis of San Francisco YAL Conference Planning Committee

Young Adults "RENEW" Faith and Fellowship at the 2025 Metropolis of San Francisco YAL Conference

With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, over 250 young adults gathered in Seattle this Labor Day Weekend for the Metropolis of San Francisco Young Adult League (YAL) Conference. Hosted at the Seattle Marriott Bellevue, the 2025 Conference offered the theme **RENEW**, offering participants the opportunity to deepen their faith, grow in fellowship, and live out the Four Pillars of YAL: Worship, Witness, Service, and Fellowship.

Keynote Speakers

Archon Dr. Peter Tarhanidis, Ph.D. M.B.A., offered Young Adults his deep insights into Orthodox Christian identity and how young adults may freely give of their time, talent and treasure to Our Lord, His Church, and our Community. As an expert in leadership development and an adjunct faculty member at Columbia University, his engaging content, entitled "***Identity in Christ: Renewal Through***

Transformative Purpose" and presentation style challenged the audience to greater reflection and action.

Rev. Fr. Tom and Presvytera Patricia Tsagalakis inspired the Young Adults to "***Authentic Connection: Renewing Relationships with Ourselves and Others***" as leaders of the Metropolis Family Wellness Team. They were warmly welcomed back by the attendees, as Father Tom and Presvytera Pat have ministered to the YAL Conference year after year with their unique spiritual and interpersonal insights that ground the attendees in an Orthodox mindset.

Service in Action

A highlight of the weekend was the large-scale Diakonia Project, sponsored by the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos to benefit **The Outreach Program**. Together, participants prepared 20,000 meals for individuals and families facing food insecurity in the local area. This initiative reflected the enduring generosity of young adults in partnership with Philoptochos and the transformative power of service when rooted in Christ.
Faith at the Center

Worship remained the heart of the weekend. Attendees joined together for Agiasmos, Orthros, Vespers, and Paraklesis, culminating in the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Seattle. The parish graciously welcomed the conference attendees.

A Celebration of Creation

Inspired by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, known as the "Green Patriarch" for his ecological ministry and receiving the **Templeton Prize**, the conference concluded with the Sunday evening Gala, themed "*Honoring Our Roots: An Evening in Creation.*" Young adults and distinguished guests celebrated the beauty and order of God's creation—both the natural world and the divine image within each person.

Archon Pilgrimage of Discovery

Hon. Steven Counelis, Archon Regional Commander (Southern California) and Dr. Gregory Papadeas, Archon Regional Commander (Denver), introduced three young adult alumni of the 2025 **Pilgrimage of Discovery**. Lenie Tsakonas, Chris Benis, and Demetra Zouzas offered their own personal and moving reflections on the impact the POD had upon their faith, their respect and love for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and newly found connection to the lives of the dwindling Orthodox Christian Community that remains under constant governmental oppression.

Also introduced were the POD Alumni Network Members who attended the Conference, and those who supported its presence at the Ministry Pavilion: 2024 POD Alumni Sophia Looney and Eliana Davis.

Ministry Pavilion

The Ministry Pavilion offers other ministries of our Church an opportunity for Outreach with the Young Adult attendees. This year the following institutions and ministries participated: Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology [HCHC], Orthodox Volunteer Corps [OVC], Orthodox Christian Network [OCN], Pilgrimage of Discovery [POD] by the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate [AEP] and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Their active support and participation in the YAL Conference enriched the Young Adults with several opportunities for service to others.

Hellenic College Holy Cross served as a premier partner and lead sponsor of the Meet & Greet networking reception on Friday afternoon, creating a powerful space for inspiration, connection, and vocational discernment. HCHC ambassadors, Anna Teodosiadis and Christos Pappademos engaged directly with young adults, offering in-depth guidance on enrollment pathways, academic programs, degrees, and the broad spectrum of formation opportunities available. Beyond information-sharing, the afternoon became a true moment of recruitment and calling—where students were invited not only to explore academic options, but to envision how their faith, leadership, and service could be shaped for the future through Orthodox Christian higher education in person at the Holy Hill or through remote learning.

On Saturday, another Meet & Greet networking reception was jointly co-sponsored by Metropolis Philoptochos and the Orthodox Volunteer Corps, uniting philanthropy and hands-on service in one powerful evening of inspiration and recruitment. The program featured dynamic presentations by Demetra Zouzas, OVC Manager of Organizational Growth, who offered compelling personal witness and detailed insight into year-long volunteer placements, intentional community living, professional development, and Orthodox spiritual formation. The presence and remarks of Metropolis Philoptochos President Jeannie Ranglas reinforced the Church's lifelong commitment to service, stewardship, and faith in action. Together, the co-sponsors created an atmosphere that went beyond information-sharing—awakening discernment, inviting young adults to see service not as a season, but as a sacred calling woven into a life of Orthodox Christian leadership.

Leadership and Gratitude

The success of this milestone conference was made possible through the leadership of Conference Advisors Archon Hon. Steven and Stacia Counelis, along with Spiritual Advisor, Rev. Father Nicholas Metrakos. Their vision, guidance, and pastoral care shaped a weekend that kept Christ at the center.

Conference Co-Chair Eva-Marie Kailas reflected on her personal journey of faith and the conference theme of renewal:

"I believe God has granted us the gift of renewal in order to reframe and reorient our lives to Christ's life. Renewal isn't a single moment—it is a daily invitation. Whether through stewardship of the Church, authentic relationships, or devotional prayer, God's light guides our hearts in the ways He knows we are able. My hope is that this weekend has given each of us the tools, insights, and connections to carry forward whatever path of renewal Christ has set before us."

Conference Co-Chair Joseph Dumont also addressed participants, sharing reflections from his own journey:

"Why renew? Why this theme…

Well to be honest, and thinking of my own life, we constantly find ourselves in a perpetual state of renewal. We pick ourselves up, get closer and then find ourselves drifting and needing to reset, recharge, and get life again. The life of being authentically who we're created to be. To worship and glorify God, and how dependent we are on Him every second of our lives, despite us being unaware most of the time because of our brokenness.

But take this to the bank, its Christ and a life in the Church that fixes that and makes us whole, and honestly over an entire lifetime of faith in practice and patient endurance. We all intrinsically know what's important and what we should be doing. And there's something special about being in the environment of YAL, where it sparks the action and encouragement of doing so."

The YAL Conference Committee expresses its agape and deepest thanks to His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco for his paternal love, spiritual guidance, and consistent presence with us.

Special thanks are extended to Conference Co-Chairs Eva-Marie Kailas and Joseph Dumont, Vice-Chair Julia Pappas, and the dedicated Executive Committee members: Katherine Anastopulos, Christina Bayouk, Anna Counelis, Alexander Grayson, Eleni Gulas, Cassiani Kateyiannis, Alex Krantz, Sophia Looney, Lucas Paris, Demetrios Pickett, Dean Sofianopoulos and Lenie Tsakonas. Their tireless work, supported by dozens of volunteers, brought the Conference to life.

The YAL Conference attendees received spiritual nourishment from our inspired Convo Breakout Speakers, who shepherded the intimate encounters which brought everyone together into community: Rev. Fr. Photios Dumont, Rev. Fr. Dean Kouldukis, Rev. Fr. James Kumarelas, Rev. Fr. Spyridon Rice, and Ms. Liza Gan. Their enriching encounters were a blessing to all attendees.

The 2025 YAL Conference was made possible, in significant part, by a generous grant from Leadership 100, whose ongoing commitment to Orthodoxy and Hellenism ensures the future of this vital ministry. Gratitude is also extended to the many donors and sponsors who contributed their time, talent, and treasure for the success of this year's gathering.

For photos, highlights, and continued updates on YAL programming, follow **@yalconference** on Instagram or contact the planning team at **registration@sfyalconference.org**.

Photo Credit: Allen Altchech Photography

Youth & Young Adult OFFICE

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES

Clergy Laity Report 2025-2026



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A MESSAGE FROM THE YOUTH OFFICE

As we look back on the past year of Youth & Young Adult Ministries in our Metropolis, we do so with sincere gratitude and renewed hope. Throughout our parishes, camps, retreats, and gatherings, we have witnessed young people and young adults encountering Christ, deepening their faith, and strengthening their connection to the life of the Church.

This year has been marked by meaningful collaboration and steady growth. From Metropolis Summer Camp and youth retreats to young adult programs and ongoing youth safety efforts, these ministries continue to serve as vital spaces for formation, fellowship, and belonging. Each initiative reflects our shared commitment to nurturing a faith that is lived, supported, and passed on with care.

We are deeply thankful for the clergy, parish leaders, parents, and volunteers who faithfully invest their time, energy, and love into this work. Their dedication makes it possible for our youth and young adults to feel seen, supported, and called to active participation in the Church.

This report offers a glimpse into the life and impact of Youth & Young Adult Ministries across the Metropolis—not only through programs and participation, but through the relationships and spiritual growth taking root among the next generation. As we move forward, we remain committed to strengthening these ministries, responding thoughtfully to emerging needs, and walking together in faith as we continue this important work in the year ahead.

Metropolis Ministry	Regional Ministry	Parish Ministry	Youth Survey









Metropolis Youth Ministry

METROPOLIS ORATORICAL FESTIVAL 2025





The 2025 Metropolis St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival took place the weekend of May 9-11, 2025, at St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center. The weekend was filled with enriching opportunities to grow in our faith, build community, and celebrate the voices of our young Orthodox faithful.

The Metropolis Finalists in each category were:

JUNIOR CATEGORY:

1st: Jack Choukalas, Holy Trinity, Phoenix, AZ

2nd: Nektarios Delis, Holy Cross, Belmont, CA

3rd: Johnny Molina, St. Nicholas, Northridge, CA

SENIOR CATEGORY:

1st: Nile Solomon, St Haralambos, Peoria, AZ

2nd: Stephen Young, St. Lawrence, Felton, CA

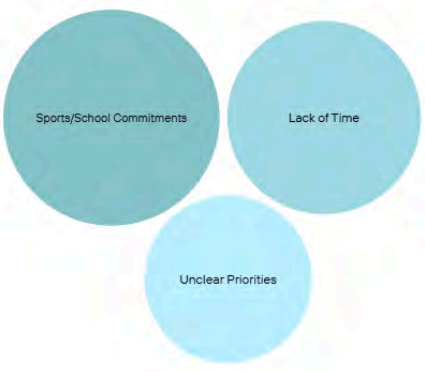
3rd: Anna Virsik, Holy Cross, Belmont, CA

What are our youth saying?

A survey was taken at FDF during Middle School and High School Workshops to understand the youth's perspective of their engagement in their Church. 26 6th-12th graders chose to answer the survey. Below are a few highlights with some key takeaways to the survey.



What Youth Love about the Church



Biggest Hurdles of Involvement

100 % of participants responded *they have someone at their parish they trust to talk to about faith, life, and their relationship with Christ.*

Key Takeaways:

1. Youth Highly Value Community – Friendship and relationships play a major role in what young people love about church.

2. Time Conflicts Are a Major Hurdle – School and sports create barriers to greater involvement, so flexible scheduling may help.

3. Strong Trust in Parish Leaders – Every respondent reported having someone they trust at their parish, a positive sign for spiritual mentorship.

METROPOLIS SUMMER CAMP 2025







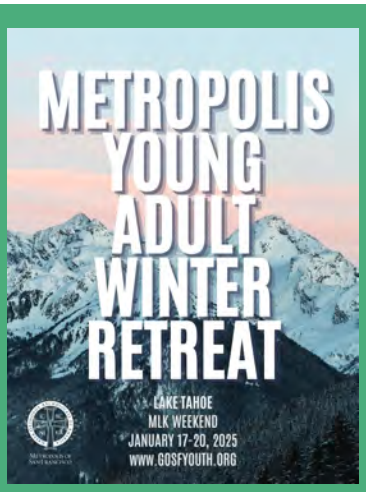
The Metropolis Summer Camp 2025 was a strong and encouraging year, reflecting continued growth in both our staffing structure and overall program. Building on the momentum of recent summers, our Metropolis Camp offered a well-rounded experience rooted in Orthodox faith, meaningful relationships, and joyful community life. Our collaboration with the St. Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center team continued to deepen, contributing to smoother operations, improved communication, and a more cohesive camp environment for campers and staff alike.

A key strength of Summer 2025 was our dedicated camp staff, whose commitment and focus on the campers played a central role in creating a safe, welcoming, and spiritually enriching experience. Clergy, counselors, and program leaders worked together to offer engaging daily programming, including a new Orthodox Life format, exciting evening activities, and all the traditional camp experiences.

As the scope and scale of the Metropolis Summer Camp continues to grow, so too does the need for a more sustainable staffing model. While our volunteer and seasonal staff remain invaluable, the increasing complexity of camp operations highlights the importance of expanding our paid camp leadership structure. Investing in a paid Camp Leadership Team would allow for greater continuity, improved training, and stronger year-round preparation, ultimately enhancing the experience for campers, families, and staff.

Looking ahead, we remain hopeful and committed to developing a paid Camp Leadership Team Internship Program that supports young adults in meaningful leadership roles while strengthening the long-term health of the camp ministry. This investment is not only about sustainability, but about intentionally forming the next generation of Orthodox leaders who will continue to serve the Church with faith, professionalism, and love.

Metropolis Young Adult Retreats



METROPOLIS YOUNG ADULT WINTER RETREAT 2025

JANUARY 17 - 20, 2025 AT GALILEE IN LAKE TAHOE, NV

The 2025 Metropolis Young Adult Winter Retreat brought together 50 young adults—the largest group since 2019—at Galilee Episcopal Camp & Retreat Center in Lake Tahoe, NV. Centered on the theme *"Be Still and Know: Listening for God's Still Small Voice,"* the weekend featured meaningful discussions, beautiful worship services led by Rev. James Kumarelas and Rev. Gabriel Cupsa, and a prayerful atmosphere enriched by fellowship. Highlights included the Blessing of the Waters, Paraklesis, the Akathist of Thanksgiving, and Divine Liturgy, along with hiking, sledding, and a lakeside campfire with s'mores.



METROPOLIS YOUNG ADULT LENTEN RETREAT 2025

MARCH 14-16, 2025 AT ST. NICHOLAS RANCH

Approximately 40 young adults gathered for the 2025 Lenten Retreat at Saint Nicholas Ranch for a weekend of prayer, service, and fellowship. Guest speaker Fr. Demetrios Swanson led engaging discussions on the retreat theme, complemented by services including the Salutations to the Theotokos, Orthros, and Divine Liturgy. Participants also visited the Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring, where they toured the grounds, assisted with a service project, and joined in Great Vespers. The weekend featured meaningful reflection, joyful connection, and creative fellowship, including an Open Mic night, games, and time in nature.



METROPOLIS YOUNG ADULT FALL RETREAT

OCTOBER 16-19, 2025 AT ST. NICHOLAS RANCH

For the second year in a row, the Young Adult Fall Retreat featured an additional day which we now call "Adventure Day" with a stunning hike in Kings Canyon National Park, offering participants a chance to connect with God's creation before diving into a weekend of spiritual growth. Centered on the theme "Glory to Thee for Every Step of My Life's Journey," the retreat included thoughtful discussions led by guest speaker Archdeacon Justin Bosl, meaningful prayer services, and time spent in service at the Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring. The weekend wrapped up with Great Vespers, a lakeside campfire and talent show, and Divine Liturgy on Sunday, leaving participants inspired, renewed, and united in faith.

Metropolis Family Winter Camp









METROPOLIS FAMILY WINTER CAMP 2025

DECEMBER 27-30, 2025 AT ST. NICHOLAS RANCH

This past year, we hosted the third annual Metropolis Family Winter Camp at our beloved Saint Nicholas Ranch & Retreat Center. It was a joyful and meaningful opportunity for families to come together, grow in faith, and be ministered to as a family unit—taking home not just memories, but also prayers, laughter, and spiritual nourishment to cherish throughout the year.

The retreat began with family introductions and a series of bonding activities to set a warm and welcoming tone for the weekend.

Sunday began with Divine Liturgy at the Monastery, followed by a family arts and crafts session, where participants created Christmas ornaments and seasonal banners together. That evening included a beautiful Family Paraklesis Service in the Heritage Center, followed by a campfire with s'mores and games and fellowship.

On Monday morning, families headed to Sequoia National Park for a fun-filled time of snow play and a snowman-building contest. The group enjoyed a picnic with hot chocolate and a hike around the General Grant Sequoia loop. The rest of the afternoon was open for relaxed family time, followed by dinner and a cozy campfire and talent show in the Faith & Heritage Center.

On our final day, families gathered for a morning prayer service in the Heritage Center, followed by breakfast and one last visit to the Monastery to assist with a work project— pulling weeds near the new chapel up on the hill. After lunch, we came together one last time to share goodbyes and express hopes of reuniting again during this special time of year.

"I wanted to say from the bottom of our hearts thank you for the time of our lives. This was the wholesome childhood experience I always wanted for my boys. This really meant a lot to us!"
— **Family Winter Camp Parent**

Regional Youth Ministry

In an effort to provide more opportunities for parish youth to meet others from nearby parishes, a few regional retreats were provided across the Metropolis. Each of these retreats included opportunities for youth to discuss topics of their faith, practice their faith through prayer and service, and time to connect with one another.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

GOYA Lenten Retreat

Fr. Chris Retelas, Fr. Tom Felactu and Fr. Matthew Jouthas along with Anna Teodosiadis, Stacia Counelis and SoCal GOYA organized a Lenten Retreat. 38 GOYAns from 7 different parishes attended a memorable weekend.

Enjoyed in the mountains of San Bernadino, GOYAns from all over southern California began with an Akathist together at St. John the Baptism in Anaheim and caravaned up to the retreat center together. It was a full weekend of outdoor activities, services, arts & crafts and time to meet one another all centered on the topic of "Take Up Your Cross".



Young Adult Leadership

A GOYA Retreat allows for youth to meet one another from different parishes while also allowing an opportunity for Young Adult involvement and leadership. This retreat also brought 7 Young Adult Counselors from 5 different parishes an opportunity to serve their community and the youth.

CENTRAL VALLEY

JOY Retreat

St. Anna in Roseville, CA hosted a JOY Retreat for the surrounding Greek Orthodox parishes. Fr. Lukas Breen along with our Metropolis Youth Office organized an afternoon full of activities, a service project, educational session and story time.

The 2nd- 5th graders started their day with making Christmas Cards to Coast Card Recruits. Fr. Lukas Breen, shared how receiving these cards can really brighten a day! Presvytera Josephine and Fr. Lukas led a very interactive lesson on the Nativity icon. Youth got the chance to insert every part of the Nativity icon on a template to learn all it's intricacies. Afterward, JOY members played some Christmas games, and ended the afternoon with story time with Presvytera Josephine, Vespers, and dinner with their families.



Parents and young(er) kids

To prioritize the spiritual life of the entire family, at the same time of the JOY Retreat, just next door, Deacon Joseph of St. Anna's in Roseville led an afternoon parent retreat for those who's kids were attending the retreat. Child care was provided for those who wanted to attend who had younger children as well. Sunday School teachers of St. Anna's organized an engaging and educational child care afternoon for them.



PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The PNW placed an emphasis on High School ministry. A Youth Council was created, along with a High School Lenten Retreat and efforts towards more events amongst multiple parishes.



Pacific Northwest Youth Council 2024-2025

9 members were chosen to represent participating parishes. Every month the Council met to discuss organizing and leading a Lenten Retreat.

St. Demetrios, Seattle- Stephen Kassab, Rena and Georgia Veleoras

Holy Apostles, Shoreline- Lucia Bury, Anthony Sitaras

Assumption, Seattle- Maximos Mehas

St. John, Beaverton- Magnolia Rush, Kaleia Rush

Holy Trinity, Portland- Iliana Geranios



Pacific Northwest Lenten Retreat

The Pacific Northwest hosted their first High School Lenten Retreat in over ten years. Guided by the new PNW Youth Council, Fr. Spyridon Rice and Fr. Paul Paris, the Lenten Retreat was home to 40 high schoolers at All Saints Camp in Raft Island, WA. High Schoolers from 7 parishes across the Northwest attended. Fr. Tom Tsagalakis led a fruitful discussion about connection – the 30 cm journey between our heart and our brain, and how important it is we connect with others. The Pacific Northwest Youth Council, made up of high schoolers from parishes across the PNW led activities like Orthodox Family Feud and Jeopardy and all participated in All Saints Camp Clean up day as a service project.





Young Adult Leadership

This retreat brought 10 Young Adult Counselors and a Nurse from 4 different parishes in the Pacific Northwest an opportunity to serve their community and the youth. Their commitment, service and love was admirable and contagious.



Pacific Northwest Youth Council 2025-2026

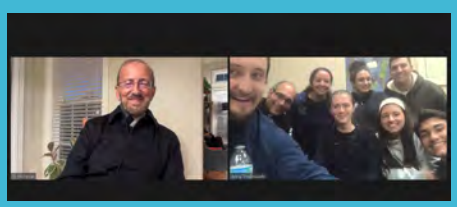
The 2025- 2026 Youth Council is halfway through their term! They had their own Leadership Retreat in December of 2025 to plan the upcoming Lenten Retreat They spent the day learn about their strengths, building team unity, discussing the needs of high schoolers and had a very special call with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos!

St. Demetrios, Seattle- Georgia Veleoras, Callista Webb

Holy Apostles, Shoreline- Anthony Sitaras

St. John, Beaverton- Magnolia Rush

Holy Trinity, Portland- Nidahl Kahl Jr., Thomas Paris, Alexa George



BAY AREA





Bay Area GOYA Lock In

Resurrection in Castro Valley and Ascension in Oakland worked together to host a GOYA Lock In. GOYAns from the Bay area attended an evening of service, activities and discussion.

Bay Area Lenten Retreat

Holy Cross in Belmont hosted another year of the Bay Area GOYA Lenten Retreat. Under the direction and leadership of Fr. Manoli Aspiotis, this retreat took place at the Marin Headlands. Middle schoolers and high schoolers from all over the Bay Area attended a beautiful weekend with the topic "Trust in the Lord", as the center. With a special visit from His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, GOYAns enjoyed services, discussions, great food, and great views of the San Francisco Bay Area.

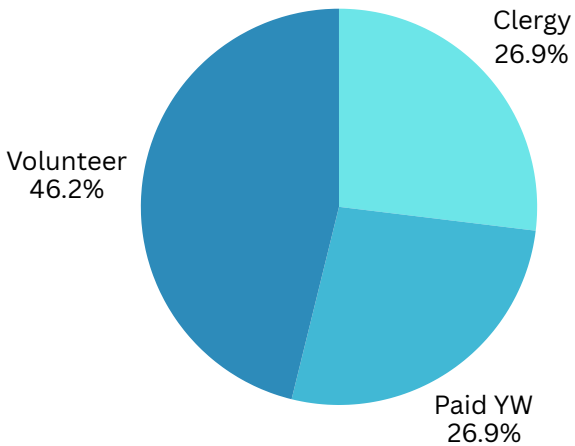
Orthodox Youth Ministry Retreat

Orthodox Youth Ministry, a Pan- Orthodox Ministry under the Assembly of Bishops, hosted an Inter-generational retreat for all Orthodox parishes in the Bay Area. Hosted by Resurrection in Castro Valley, many attended a fruitful Saturday of service and discussion. What is our ministry? Who are we in the context of the larger Church?

Parish Ministry

Who are our Youth Workers?

26 Parishes have identified dedicated parish youth workers to the Metropolis. They are a mix of volunteers, assigned clergy, and paid youth workers.



Youth Worker & Parish Support

Many Parishes have reached out hoping to receive support from the Metropolis Youth Office to strengthen their parish youth and young adult ministries.

This has resulted in:

- One on one Zoom calls to discuss the youth ministry situation at the parish and next steps
- Youth Worker Zoom Calls
- Parish Visits
- Check ins
- Suggestion of what resources to use
- Website Updates

Website Updates

Take a look at the new Parish Youth Ministry tab on www.gosfyouth.org!

Templates on framework for your ministry, an event checklist, different calendar options, a Youth Ministry Registration form template and more are all provided.



Youth Worker Meetings

Learning from each other

Youth workers from each parish are invited to our monthly meetings. Meetings have grown and are meant to build community amongst parish youth workers, discuss challenges and solutions that youth workers encounter as well as provide updates and opportunities from the region and the Metropolis that parishes can receive from. Youth workers have really enjoyed joining the calls and share that it has been really helpful to have this community. Please contact us to identify a youth worker from your parish to include them!

Connecting with other Ministries

The Youth & Young Adult Office has made efforts to keep up to date with other ministries throughout the Archdiocese.

Orthodox Youth Ministries hosts Pan- Orthodox intergenerational retreats across the country. Our Metropolis has hosted and supported 3 retreats so far and hoping to host more in more regions.

Assumption, Seattle, WA

Resurrection, Castro Valley, CA

Assumption, Scottsdale AZ

Hellenic College Holy Cross, our beloved Orthodox School of Theology has many opportunities for our youth and young adults. Below is where the Metropolis has worked with HCHC to present their opportunities to our youth this past year.

Metropolis of SF Summer Camp, St. Nicholas Ranch

Ascension Summer Camp ,Oakland

Philoptochos Light the Path Luncheon

Young Adult Winter Retreat, Lake Tahoe, NV

Family Winter Camp, St. Nicholas Ranch

YAL Conference, Seattle, WA

Folk Dance Festival ,Anaheim, CA





The Metropolis Youth & Young Adult Office is up to date with what the Archdiocese Youth Office has to offer and is in communication with Archdiocese Youth Director, Eva Konstantakos.

Effective Christian Ministry, courses to guide and encourage parishes to work toward formational youth ministry is a program through the Archdiocese that we also support and guide appropriate parishes to consider.

Project Mexico and St. Innocent Orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico provides a summer homebuilding program for Orthodox parishes and an Orthodox parish and home for orphans.

Fr. Demetrios Swanson, the presiding priest at St. Innocent was the Guest Speaker at our Lenten Young Adult Retreat. He also brought a few missionaries to the retreat to connect with our Metropolis.

We have also connected with the FORCE program, a scholarship program for those attending Project Mexico to present the opportunities the Metropolis has to offer in youth ministry and service.

Office of Youth Safety

Our primary goal for Youth Safety in 2025 was to ensure that all youth workers, parish council members, and parish employees were fully compliant by October 2025, at the start of the new ministry year. This required individuals to renew early to meet the deadline. Another major objective was for all California parishes to complete the Live Scan background checks, in accordance with state requirements.

While the Youth Safety Platform may indicate a parish is 100% compliant—for example, showing 20 out of 20 people are current—it does not account for individuals who have not yet registered in the system. Therefore, we still need to follow up with each parish individually to confirm that every altar server, sports coach, Sunday School teacher, Greek School teacher, youth event volunteer, driver, etc. is registered and fully compliant.

Looking ahead, an ongoing goal for the coming year is to continue offering regular trainings and open office hours for PYSAs (Parish Youth Safety Administrators). As this role often changes annually or biannually at the parish level, it's essential to equip PYSAs with the tools and confidence to navigate the system efficiently.

As of January 12, 2026, we currently have 2,054 out of 3,157 individuals—approximately 65%—fully registered, trained, and screened across our Metropolis. Please note: this does not include compliance data related to the California Live Scan fingerprinting requirement.



