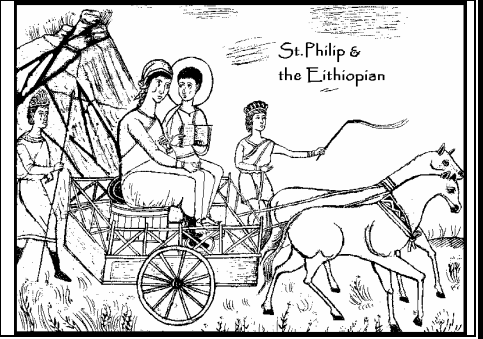


NEWS & NOTES FOR THE
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

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Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh



Church School Directors: Please distribute copies of this Newsletter to your teachers. The entire packet includes the following pages:

- ❖ Fall 2010 Newsletter
- ❖ 2010-2011 Church School Planning Calendar
- ❖ A Message from the Archdiocese Director of Religious Education
- ❖ Online Resources - 2010
- ❖ Greek Archdiocese Curriculum & Other Approved Orthodox Teaching Materials - 2010
- ❖ When Metropolitan Maximos Visits - Leaflet
- ❖ 2010 Orthodox Institute, November 4-7, Theme icons, Dr. Tony Vrame to speak
- ❖ Department of Christian Education, Orthodox Church in America - <http://dce.oca.org>

PLANS FOR THE FALL

- ❖ **August 28 - Teachers' Seminar** at St. George GOC, Huntington, WV. Area Orthodox Churches are invited.
- ❖ **September 25 - Teacher's Seminar** at Peter & Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Carnegie, PA. Area Orthodox Churches are invited. I encourage our parishes in the area to please come and take advantage of this learning opportunity.
- ❖ **October 7-9 - Clergy-Laity**
- ❖ **November 13 - Half-Day Teacher's Seminar**, Western Region, at St. Haralambos GOC, Canton, OH. More details will follow.



2011 ORATORICAL FESTIVALS

**DISTRICT FESTIVAL
SATURDAY, APRIL 9**

- West: Annunciation GOC, Cleveland
- Central: Awaiting confirmation
- East: SS Constantine & Helen GOC, Reading, PA

**METROPOLIS FESTIVAL
SATURDAY, MAY 14**

St. Nicholas Cathedral, Pittsburgh

I look forward to a great year. The Office of Religious Education has funds to purchase materials and cover travel, I am in good health, ideas are ever flowing, and I await visiting and assisting parishes and parish church schools in any way I can. May the Lord bless Metropolitan Maximos, our clergy, parishes, church schools and this education ministry. *P.M.O.*

**Dr. Tony Vrame,
Archdiocese Director
of Religious
Education**



Metropolitan Maximos has given permission to invite Dr. Vrame to our Metropolis. Before I approach one of our parishes, does your parish wish to host the Seminar?



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMISSION [REC]

The Youth Coordinator of our Metropolis has a Youth Commission to offer assistance with the Youth Calendar, basketball tournaments, summer camp and other youth activities.

After a discussion with Metropolitan Maximos, Archdeacon Ryan, & Dr. Nicholas Loutsion (Archdiocese Council, Religious Education Committee), it was determined that Religious Education would benefit from a parallel Commission. Since the appointed clergy and lay members of the Commission live throughout the Metropolis, the Commission will communicate via email and teleconferencing.

Committee members are encouraged to suggest areas of concern and interest. In the meantime, some of the areas His Eminence and I discussed are [1] Keeping to the Archdiocese Curriculum in general, [2] Teacher & Parent accountability, [3] Approving Jr and Sr High School curriculum and other teaching materials, [4] Modes of Teacher Training – webcam/u-Tube, videos, seminars, using REC members, [5] Oratorical Festival and [6] Examining the *Recommitment Program* developed by SS Constantine & Helen GOC (Cleveland) for use throughout our Metropolis.

The Metropolis will send letters of invitation to the appointed members of [REC] the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMISSION.



2010 ELEMENTARY ORATORICAL FESTIVALS

“KUDOS” to Church School Director Faye Carrig at Koimisis Tis Theotokou Church in Erie, PA for sponsoring an Elementary Oratorical Festival. The 2010 Festival took place on May 23.

Guidelines: Students younger than 7th grade receive topic suggestions & information early in May. There are no time limits. Parents or siblings can stand next to the presenter for confidence. Since each participant receives an icon, there is a registration cut-off date. Eight to ten students at Koimisis parish are eligible to participate. Over the years, 2 to 4 young people have made presentations.

“ORTHODOX YOUTH MUSIC” FACEBOOK PAGE



Interested in Youth Music for our students? Check out Orthodox Youth Music on Facebook. Look for the page with the icon of St. Romanos.

If you are not a Facebook member, you need to do this first to view the page. The free sign-up page is www.Facebook.org. Once signed up, establish your Privacy settings. [Go to the PRIVACY tab at the top of the page. Select your options.]

When you are signed up and logged in, take a look at our Youth Music page! Let us know what you think of **Orthodox Youth Music** on Facebook! Be sure to become a fan and read/add to the Wall and the Discussion topics!

Vicki Pappas,

Chairman, National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians /
pappas@indiana.ed

RESOURCES

WEBSITE www.phyllisonest.com

Have you been to my website recently? Web-master Elaine Leer, of Sinking Springs, PA, designed a new Home Page and format.

Elaine does web designing and related work for a living. She donates a large portion of her fee in order for this web ministry to exist.

God Bless You Elaine!

BOOKS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



- ❖ The Department of Religious Education sent the **NEW 2010-2011 Orthodox Christian Resource Catalogs** to all Directors and Clergy in the Archdiocese. The layout of this 69-page, is very "user-friendly." It contains over 115 new resources!
- ❖ I'm ordering (1) **Trivial Tidbits of the Major Feast Days of the Orthodox Church** [\$12.95] to use with the Feast Day cards / game, (2) **Church Fathers for Young People** [\$7.95], (3) **My Synaxarion** Ages 5-10 [\$7.00], (4) **My Warriors Saints - Illustrated Synaxarion for Children ages 7-10** [\$26.00]. As DRE for the Metropolis, I received a gratis copy of both the student and teacher's manuals of the 'zine' **A Lamp to My Feet**.
- ❖ **Journaling throughout the Liturgical Year** looks very interesting. The Description in the catalog is enticing!
- ❖ **"Zines" available for Jr & Sr High classes** are listed on the "Approved Texts" page. The latest one, **LAMP TO MY FEET**, is about the Bible. Although written for the Jr High class, don't let your high school youth miss out on this important *Information*, which helps in their *Christian Formation*.

IOCC PRAYER BOOK

Do not forget to order the *2010 IOCC PRAYER BOOK* from the Department of Religious Education. The only charge is shipping and handling. The books are free

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY VIDEO PODCASTS

<http://www.childrensministry.com/>
click onto 'Video Podcasts.'

While surfing the Children's Ministry website (non-Orthodox) for ideas and resources, I found 2-3 minute **Video Podcasts** on a variety of subjects:



- *Palm Branch Craft, (similar to our palm crosses.)*
- *Learn about "Discipline"*
- *The Blue Fish Sock Puppet*
- *Erasing Permanent Marker*
- *Sand & Rock*
- *Not Just Babysitting*
- *Church Safety*
- *How2 Follow Up (applying ideas)*
- *Quick Tip*

Let me know what you think of these podcasts.

ASCENSION GOODS

Periodically I come across a special source for Orthodox items. Ascension Goods <http://www.ascensiongoods.com>, is a source for sterling silver goods ideal for gift shops, conferences, fundraising, donor recognition and other special events. They can customize sterling silver medals from iconography, crosses and other goods. Everything is "made to order" in sterling silver, 14K or sterling with gold plating, in addition to resin inlay and mounted stones.

They have three offerings: (1) Most goods that are on the website - purchase must be 100 units or assorted units for special events or Feasts and prices can be quoted; (2) Design and cast of a new piece; (3) Redesign and Recast of a currently existing piece. Numbers 2 & 3 require a minimum purchase of 250 and weight, processes/treatments, volumes, and precious metal values determine cost.

To purchase one or two items, go to the <http://www.orthodoxmarketplace.com> Orthodox Marketplace for a selection of the crosses and rings. Compare Ascension Good's online catalog and the Marketplace.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT THE ARCHDIOCESE CLERGY-LAITY



PLENARY SESSIONS: Dr. Tony Vrame, the Archdiocese Director, reported to a Plenary Session and a Strategic Planning session. He stated,

"The central focus of the Archdiocese Department of Religious Education is communication to those who carry out the work of religious education in the parishes, using print, mail and electronic media."

- **Curriculum for Jr & Sr High students** has moved from textbooks to 'zines' [magazines]. Each 'zine' has 4-6 lessons and a Teacher guide. Five 'zines' are done; additional titles are in the making.

1. *A Lamp to My Feet: An Introduction to the Bible* [Jr High]
2. *Heaven on Earth: The Divine Liturgy* [Jr High]
3. *For to Us a Child is Born (The Incarnation)* [Jr High]
4. *Journey through Holy Week* [Jr High]
5. *Of Your Mystical Supper: The Eucharist* [Sr High]

Uses for 'Zines' include adult study groups, retreats, mail to all parishioners, place in pews, offer at the candle stand for general distributions, and sell at parish book stores.

- **Updating Elementary Materials** - I am often asked when the "Living Our Orthodox Faith" series (1989-1993 for grades K-5) will be updated. These will be digitized, edited, and redesigned with new photographs and artwork, as funds are available.
- **PRAXIS magazine** is for teachers, parents and clergy and is published three times per year for \$15. Gratis copies are sent go to the Archdiocese clergy & church school directors.
- **Electronic technology** - Facebook & email are used regularly. The listserv has 25,000 members. [Note: Dr. Vrame asked

Parish Directors to submit a list of names to the Metropolis Director. I received 25 completed lists of the 42 parishes with Church Schools.]

- **Metropolis Directors of Religious Education** are needed in each Metropolis, but the lack of funds keeps this project from going forward. (except in the Metropolis of Pittsburgh)

Dr. Vrame offered the following Recommendations to the Plenary Session

- That the Archdiocese Finance committee and the Department **review how the Department is financed** - from its sales and an allotment from the Archdiocese - in order to find ways to increase the investment being made in the production of religious education materials.
- That should the funding be available, each Metropolis explore the possibility of hiring a **Metropolis Director of Religious Education**, whether full-time or part-time, using the job description and guidelines created by the Department in 2007.
- That each Metropolis create a **"Speaker's Bureau,"** beginning with the names of its own clergy and presentation topics with which they are comfortable, then adding the names of local experts in various topics of interest to parishes.
- That every Parish **annually update the names and contact information of its Sunday Church School supervisors and teachers** to their Metropolis Religious Education Director, which will be shared with the Archdiocese Department so that the Metropolis and Department may communicate directly with supervisors and teachers.
- That every Parish begin a **regular educational program for adults**, beyond the traditional Bible Study.
- That every Parish set aside between **45 minutes to one hour per week for Sunday Church School**.
- That children attend as much of the Sunday Divine Liturgy as possible, **at least through Holy Communion**.

- That parishes that do not have "bookstores" establish one.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSIONS

Moderated by Gerry Clonaris, Archdiocese Council Religious Education Committee Chairman, the sessions included a report by Dr. Vrame, presentations by individuals from two successful parishes, and a report on the work I offer to parishes for building successful religious education programs.

.....HERE'S WHAT WORKS.....

Irene Cassis, Director of Religious Education for Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral (1100 families), shared answers to the question posed to the Sunday Church School teachers. "What do we do well at the Cathedral?" [1] AGOC offers a rich adult education program. [2] The Junior Choir - children ages Kindergarten and older sing during the Divine Liturgy. [3] Elementary Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival begins in Kindergarten, so students speak about their faith at young age. [4] Large parishes have a variety of gifted people: in-house iconographer, Holy Cross graduates, people who visit monasteries, very knowledgeable, faithful, and well read Orthodox, and Byzantine chanters, young and old who continue this Tradition. [5] A 10-week course - *Introducing the Orthodox Church, Its Faith & Life* - general introduction to understanding of the Eastern Orthodox Church's history, doctrine, Tradition, Liturgy, Iconography, etc.

[6] *Sex, God & Me* – a 4-week Teen Abstinence program. Two hours weekly for Teens (Grades 7-12) AND parents. [7] Teens (seniors) participate in the Divine Liturgy as altar servers and Epistle readers. [8] Annual Bible Bowl - Middle and high school students incorporate a book of the Bible into their classes. At year's end, their knowledge is tested using the TV Family Feud or Jeopardy format. [9] Parish council and the community are supportive and generous toward the religious education of their children and themselves. [10] Four Adult Sunday Church School classes meet

from 10:30 – 11:30 simultaneously with the Church School. [11] The Religious Education programs have an allotted budget and a legacy fund endowment for ministries at the Cathedral. Additional funding sources are available for seminars and speakers for youth and adults.

Fr. Bill Cassis, Holy Trinity-St Nicholas Church, Cincinnati, OH (not related to Irene) promotes a child-friendly parish. Since his community has a fair number of young couples with children, the parish makes it a point to welcome children to the worship services. Parents are encouraged to bring their children regularly. A basket in the Narthex is filled with "My Church Quiet Bags" that contain small books, paper, pencils, etc. the small ones can use during Liturgy when they need something to occupy them. [Go to www.phyllisonest.com for directions.] Older parishioners are encouraged to be patient with the children.

*PMO: From personal experience I can say, as children attend the Liturgy regularly, they feel comfortable, learn to participate, and learn how to behave in God's House. Yet, they are still children and will be noisy and wiggly at times. Patience will bear fruit in the end. A useful article is **Helping Our Children Grow in Faith: What They Can Do, When They Can Do It, and What Parents Can Do to Help!** 2010 Edition located on my website under "Articles on Orthodox Family Life."*



PARISH TEACHERS LISTS

- ☑ **If your parish did not submit** a list of Church School Teachers and the requested information, please do ASAP.
- ☑ **If your parish did submit, I** will send last year's Teachers Lists to the respective parishes to review and update.
- ☑ Dr. Vrame's goal is to be able to contact Teachers directly, as do I.

