MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Federation Members,

Greetings to all church musicians and friends of MEFGOX! My name is Nicholas Bodle, your new Federation President, from St. Paul Church in North Royalton, just south of Cleveland. To give you some background, I grew up in the choir at Annunciation Cleveland where my Yiayia, Photia Boukis, served as director, and since joining St. Paul in 2010, I have served as a choir member, organist, and cantor under the enlightening tutelage of Rev. Fr. Costas Keares. Church music is a major part of my life; new arrangements, use of English, and educating our youth in our rich musical tradition are my passion.

Over three months have now passed since our Convention in Troy. It was a wonderful affair impeccably orchestrated by our friends at St. Nicholas Church. We enjoyed lots of fun, singing, and fellowship that weekend and are so grateful to our amazing hosts. More details and pictures from the Convention can be found later in this issue.

As guest organist this year, and arranger of the musical setting, I would be remiss to not give a special “Thank You” to our dynamic and talented guest conductor, Constantina Tsolainou, who brought out the best in us musically during the Convention. Her energy and wisdom made the entire weekend a truly beautiful experience culminating in a heartfelt expression of faith at the Sunday Divine Liturgy. May the “schwa” (Ə) always enrich our singing!

Looking ahead in this new year, we have three goals to keep in mind:

- Fostering more music workshops, retreats, and other events
- Expanding our use of technology and electronic media
- Increasing the involvement of youth in our music ministry

With your help and prayers, we will make these goals a reality. Ongoing education for our youth, and ourselves, must be a priority, and technology will help us to learn, enhance our skills, and become more involved, wherever we live in the vast region of MEFGOX. I look forward to working with you in this new year. May the Lord bless you in all your church music endeavors!

In Christ,

Nicholas

YOUR 2019-2020 MEFGOX BOARD

- Nicholas Bodle, President
- Barbara Minton, Vice President
- Vicki Pappas, Immediate Past President
- Elaine Charalambopoulos, Secretary
- Venetia Wurst, Assistant Secretary & Stewardship Chair
- Peter Vatsures, Treasurer
- Rev. Fr. Teodor Petrutiu and Fr. Frank Milanese, Religious Advisors
- Dan Packis, Scholarship Chair
- Chris Zervos, Continuing Education Chair
- Anna Niforos, Patrons Chair
- Cynthia Dotson, Echo Editor
For the singers who attended this year’s Convention, this article highlights some of the great memories. Multiple choirs sang together in a beautiful Liturgy while renewing our commitment to learning and strengthening our spirit with desire to sing His Praises. For those of you who have never attended a MEFGOX Convention, you may wonder - What is it all about? This year’s event located in Troy, Michigan was quite a memorable experience whose positive effects stretched long into the following months. The moment we walked through the door, the warm welcome made us feel right ‘at home’ in this parish. Genuine smiles and warm embraces greeted us; it was a yearly reunion of longtime friendships and of new ones to be created at this MEFGOX event. Everyone received awesome event bags filled with information and goodies and were served 5-star quality cuisine for each meal; all our needs were given much thought and consideration. Throughout the event we experienced: great food, laughter, prayer, new ideas, new music, singing, engaging workshops, and a view of a different church - it all added up to pride of our Orthodox heritage and a blessing for the opportunity to enrich our souls. It truly was a haven of love and worship.

CONVENTION CMI WORKSHOPS
There were four, very well-attended Church Music Institutes (CMIs) offered at this year’s Convention:

“Name That Mode: Identifying Characteristics of Our Modes” presented by Nancy Takis. She explained how the modes relate to the Apolytikia we sing on Sundays. “Tuning Your Ear” presented by Evey Simon. She offered helpful tips for finding your note and staying on pitch! “The Holy Gifts for the Holy People of God” with Father Anthony Cook and Evey Simon. Father Anthony explained why it is so important to receive Holy Communion. Evey provided us with copies of appropriate hymns to be sung during Communion. Many positive comments were received: “Totally fascinating!” “Thanks for the handouts; they’re great!” “So pleased with the content.” “Always enjoy hearing the priest’s perspective.”

2019 MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
MEFGOX’s Memorial Scholarship Trustees presented scholarships to the following students:

Victoria Martine, from Zionsville, Indiana has been a member of the Holy Trinity Carmel, Indiana church choir since around the age of fifteen. She was part of GOYA, church dance group, founder and president of the Greek club, and a GOYA basketball captain. While in high school, she was part of the chamber choir, ladies cadet choir, dinner theater program, drama club, National Honor Society, the National Spanish Honor Society, speech and debate captain, and sang the national anthem. Victoria also participated in missionary work to Mexico and Guatemala. She is currently a member of the Orthodox Christian Life program in college. Victoria is the recipient of the MEFGOX Memorial Scholarship and is attending Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

Andrew Theophanous, from Youngstown, Ohio has been an active member of St. John the Forerunner church in Boardman, Ohio since a very young age. He is not only a member of the choir, but an altar server, Oratorical Festival participant and volunteer at various parish fundraisers. In high school, Andrew plays the violin in the Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra, where they won State and National awards. In addition, Andrew is the member of the Youngstown Youth Symphony Orchestra. Andrew has earned superior rankings in various piano competitions and high rankings in music theory performances. He has even organized an Eagle Scout project at the parish. For the last 3 years, this young man has been the organist for the choir, and the last several months has played and directed the choir. Andrew is the recipient of the Georgantas Memorial Scholarship.
STEWARDSHIP ALERT
Parishes will soon be receiving notice of their 2019-2020 Stewardship. Each parish is asked to make its annual contribution to support the work of MEFGOX. In return, all church musicians of the parish – clergy, chanters, choir directors and members, and youth choir personnel – are covered. Being in good standing with annual stewardship means that a parish is eligible to apply for scholarships and continuing education grants, host CMI’s and workshops sponsored by MEFGOX, vote at meetings, hold office, and more. Be on the lookout for the Stewardship Packet, which will be mailed in November to the director, priest, and church music representative of each parish.

THE QUESTION BOX
I’m Confused: When is stewardship due?
Don’t be confused! Parishes and individuals are asked to consider several “stewardships” each year. Some are for your Metropolis and others are for national support; some ask for parish donations and others seek individual donations. Here is a handy checklist to let you know what annual requests are due when:

- OCTOBER – National: National Church Music Sunday contributions to the National Forum from the parish and/or choir
- NOVEMBER – Metropolis: Parish stewardship for MEFGOX
- NOV/DECEMBER – Metropolis: Parish and individual donations to the Detroit and Pittsburgh Metropolis’ Friends Programs
- FEBRUARY – Metropolis: Individual donations to the MEFGOX Patrons Program
- MARCH – National: Individual stewardship to the National Forum

Your generosity is needed at all these levels to support church music programs and to provide information and assistance for you!

WHAT’S HAPPENING IN 2020
Every two years, our Archdiocese convenes a national meeting, the Clergy - Laity Congress, where both priests and lay leaders from across the country gather for workshops on various Church ministries and open forums discussing Church business. Our annual Church Music Convention will play a role in this Congress, as the Convention will immediately precede this major event and we will be singing at the Divine Liturgy that officially opens the Congress. Also, members of the National Forum who will be in town for their annual meeting during the Congress will be joining us at our Convention to form an exceptional combined choir! Stay tuned for more details.

www.mefgox.org

73rd ANNUAL MEFGOX CONVENTION
SAVE THE DATE!
JUNE 25 – 28, 2020

MEET OUR 2020 CONVENTION HOSTS:
ST. PAUL GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
NORTH ROYALTON, OHIO

CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS TO FOLLOW
JUNE 28 – JULY 3, 2020

How long have YOU been involved in MEFGOX?
Tell us about your history as a church musician.
Send your story to our newsletter editor,
Cindy Dotson, at: kalliope1953@yahoo.com
Dear Parishioners,

Seven of our choir members, through the generosity of our Church Board and Community, were given the opportunity to attend the 72nd Annual Convention of the Mideastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Χορωδίες (Choirs/Church Musicians), better known as MEFGOX! Our convention was held in Troy, Michigan from July 25-28th and was simply “wonderful!”

Our host church and choir was St. Nicholas. Fr. Stratton Dorozenski (their Proistamenos) and Fr. Michael Manos helped steer the convention towards stimulating instructional workshops through the Church Music Institute. The presenters were all experts in their fields. Convention participants have long been interested in their topics and were grateful for the instruction they received.

There were also intense rehearsals. Nicholas Bodle, our accompanist for choir rehearsals in Akron, composed the musical arrangement of the Divine Liturgy for the Troy Convention and was also the convention organist. We are SO proud of Nicholas and all his outstanding accomplishments!

Constantina Tsolainou, the convention guest conductor, is a renowned talent in the field of choral directing. She also directed our Akron choir for our October 2016 St. Romanos Fall Choir Retreat. Constantina graciously accepted to direct the 72nd Convention because she wanted to honor her parents, the late John and Stephanie Tsolainos.

John Tsolainos conducted for 25 years and Stephanie Tsolainos played the organ at Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Cleveland. Both were instrumental in the founding of MEFGOX.

Though choir members were always on the go, there was still time for fun and fellowship! Being in Motown Territory, our hosts on Thursday evening held a Karaoke Jam! On Friday, we put on our “thinking caps” for Motown Trivia (our team lost!) but we had a great deal of fun!

From their welcoming of all of us to our departure, our host choir was splendid! Kudos to the local restauranteur/church caterer for his delicious dishes both beautifully prepared, presented and served! WOW! & YUM!

And lastly, the Coup De Grace came on Saturday evening at the Grand Banquet. A Welcome Invocation was delivered, “Se Imnoumen” was sung, and a moving Candlelight Remembrance Ceremony was held in honor of deceased Clergy and Choir members from all MEFGOX parishes.

The banquet from mezedes to dessert was outstanding and then the “Highlight” of the evening was held. The 2019 Patriarch Athenagoras Award.....Da-Rum-Ta-Da! Georgia Stathopoulos, of Annunciation Akron, was presented this prestigious honor! We cheered and gave her a standing ovation! She was so deserving, and we are so proud of her! “Panta Axia,” Georgia!

Sunday morning, the most important and final highlight, was the offering of Nicholas Bodle’s Divine Liturgy setting. It was beautiful, moving and glorious! We, your Annunciation Choir, left Troy on a very high “note”!!!!!!!

We thank Fr. Jerry for his encouragement and patience and our Church Board for their generosity and support.

Thank you / Efxaristo!

Your Annunciation Choir

“My heart, O God, is steadfast. I will sing and make music with all my soul.” Psalm 108:1

The Byzantine Echo
MEFGOX: Serving the Church Musicians of the Detroit & Pittsburgh Metropolises since 1948
November 2019
View many more Convention photos on Facebook! www.facebook.com/MEFGOX/photos
We have seen the true light; we have received the Heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, worshiping the undivided Trinity, for the Trinity has saved us.
BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD

2nd Mode
arr. Anna Gallos

A - men. Bles - sed be the name of the Lord, from this time

forth and to the a - ges. Bles - sed be the name of the

Lord, from this time forth and to the a - ges.