

KEYNOTES



November 2007

President's Message

The 2007-2008 SFGOCM Executive Board Members and Committee chairmen are:

<u>President</u>	John Mitchell of St. John Greek Orthodox Church, Tampa, FL;
<u>Vice President</u>	Margaret Sarafoglu of Saint Sophia Cathedral, Miami, FL;
<u>Secretary</u>	Kathy Chapekis of St. Mark, Boca Raton, FL;
<u>Treasurer</u>	Nick Mermigas of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Charlotte, NC;
<u>Immediate Past President</u>	Mary Zervos of Holy Trinity, Charleston, SC;
<u>Librarian</u>	Toula Chininis of Dormition of Theotokos, Greensboro, NC.

The committee chairmen are:

<u>Kevin Lawrence Liturgy Book</u>	Toula Chininis;
<u>Music Selection & Scholarship 100</u>	Dr. Phillip Thevas of Holy Trinity, Charlotte, NC;
<u>Patriarch Athenagoras</u>	Dr. Joanna Hill of St. Nicholas Cathedral, Tarpon Springs, FL;
<u>Keynotes/Notable Notes Editor</u>	Leon Karahalidis of Saint Sophia Cathedral, Miami, FL.

On behalf of the 2006-2007 Executive board I would like to say how honored we are to have been elected to serve another term. We ask for your continued support and hope we can meet or exceed your expectations.

The annual choir conference was hosted by St. Paul of Savannah, GA in July. Our sincere gratitude is extended to Father Vasil Mihai, Jim Pethis and their committee for another successful conference filled with good friends, fond memories and beautiful music. All who attended the Divine Liturgy on Conference Sunday can confirm that conductor Chris Kypros and the 100+ member choir achieved the main objective of the conference that is to offer praises to Our Lord in an inspiring manner. All who participated in the conference should shortly be receiving their copy of the CD recording of the liturgy.

St. George Greek Orthodox Church in New Port Richey, FL will be hosting the 32nd Annual Choir Conference on July 24 - 27, 2008. Once detail plans are finalized all parishes will be receiving conference information. This will mark the first time that St. George in New Port Richey has hosted the annual choir conference.

At the recent National Forum meeting in Brookline, MA., the participants were privileged to engage in a lengthy and productive exchange with Metropolitan Methodios regarding the English translation of our liturgical hymns. We were amazed to learn that currently there are no standard approved translations of our liturgical hymns. We also took a tour of the Iakovos Memorial Room at the Archbishop Iakovos Library. All the Federation Presidents were given copies of the current lists of Psalti and Choir Directors in their respective Metropolises. These lists will also be published by the National Forum in our annual "Liturgical Guide Book". I ask all choir directors to verify the information published in the "Liturgical Guide Book" for your respective parishes. Any updates or corrections should be noted and sent to our Vice President Margaret Sarafoglu.

At the annual business meeting in Savannah, Dr. Joanna Hill announced that anyone in the federation who is interested is welcome to come to Tarpon Springs to sing the liturgy of Kevin Lawrence at the annual Epiphany Celebration on January 6th 2008. Depending on the interest shown we could make this a 2 day mini conference. Please let Dr. Hill know as soon as possible if you are planning to attend so the necessary arrangements can be made.

Reminder that shortly all parishes will be receiving requests for updating their choir rosters and church musicians information. Please make an effort to respond via your respective district supervisors to our membership chairman Margaret Sarafoglu.

Continue to support our monthly publications by sending any information relating to your parish activities (no matter how simple you may think they are) to Leon Karahalidis.

Faithfully,

John Mitchell



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"Old" Versus "New" In Orthodox Liturgical Music

By Rev. Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis, Protopresbyter

I want to begin this column by thanking the hundreds of people who give of their time and their talent to sing God's praises in the church. There is a petition in some of the liturgical services which offers: "Again we pray for those who bear offerings and do good works in this holy and sacred church, those who serve, AND THOSE WHO SING in it, and those who are here awaiting the great and rich mercy that comes from You." Each time I offer this petition, I think of the many people who sing in the choir and who are the chanters in our churches across our country.

I am periodically asked to write in this publication regarding issues of importance to Orthodox Church choirs. I have enjoyed a wonderful relationship with my choir in Tampa where I currently serve and in Asheville, NC, where I used to serve. I have been asked in this issue to comment on the subject of "old" versus "new" music in the liturgical life of the church. I have been asked to comment on the following, offered to me by one of the members of the choir federation:

"For my part, I dearly love the old forms and love to hear an old psalti croak his way through the Divine Liturgy. However, as a musician I also love the newer forms (like Kypros) and adding Russian and other music. As someone who never heard Christos Anesti in English until I was 45, despite the fact that it is squeezed into the melody, I feel that vernacular is the only way to preserve the Faith for future generations. I could not imagine all English and rather enjoyed the mystery of the incomprehensible."

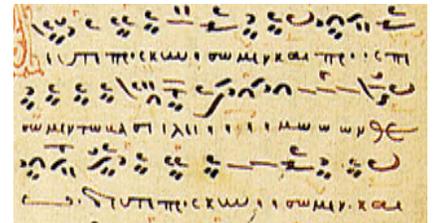
Anyone who sings in a choir is familiar with the eight modes or tones of Byzantine Music. (I am not an expert in Russian liturgical music, as our musical tradition is inherited from Byzantine ancestry so I cannot comment regarding Russian or other Orthodox musical traditions, only our own Byzantine Tradition). The eight tones rotate on an every eight-week basis and the Resurrectional Apolytikion sung before the Small Entrance always clues us in to which tone it is that particular week. Every Greek Orthodox hymn fits into one of these musical motifs.

I am not a musical scholar, but from my understanding of the history of Byzantine music, the eight musical tones pre-date Christianity. They were part of the musical make-up of Ancient Greece. Actually, truth be told, there are four true tones, with four plagal tones that are related to them. When a musical tradition began to be developed in the early centuries of Orthodoxy, the composers utilized the musical motifs already known to the people, the 8 tones of antiquity, which are now the 8 tones of Byzantine Music. (When Orthodoxy was taken to the Slavic countries, its music was adapted into already established Slavonic musical motifs.)

We can debate how difficult it is to sing in the 8 Traditional Byzantine tones. Some think they are very difficult, others pick them up quite easily. It is also important to remember that Traditional Byzantine music is not sung in a four-part harmony, but in unison, with a portion of the "choir" holding the "ison" or base note. The Russian Orthodox Church has a completely different music tradition and Western Christianity something entirely different.

Greek Orthodox hymns set to a four-part harmony are an invention of the 20th century. In order to get Traditional hymns into a form familiar to contemporary America, composers took and continue to take traditional hymns and adapt them into four-part harmonies. Some hymns add parts exclusive to each voice. For instance, in the hymn of our parish, "Mnimi dikaion" (Hymn of St. John the Baptist), in the version sung in Tampa, only the men sing the first half of this hymn in tenor and bass voices, with sopranos and altos only singing the second half of the hymn.

In trying to make something that wasn't traditionally sung as a four-part harmony into one, "modernism" has crept into Orthodoxy. Some hymns are "pretty close" to how they were traditionally written-i.e. the Doxology which most churches sing closely resembles the Doxology of the third tone-while other hymns take a significant departure from the original-a careful examination of the hymn "Ti Ipermacho" will reveal that accents on many words have changed to accommodate the modern musical setting. (This is hard to explain in a written article, but ask a musician who knows both Byzantine and Western notation to sing this hymn both ways and you will see marked differences. This is true for many hymns.)



The psalti, in many churches, is seen as "the old man who croaks his way through Orthros." That is because in many churches, the Psalti is old, and is not musically trained. Even when the Psalti is trained and is good, most often he is singing solo for an hour, and anyone, I don't care how good your voice is, sounds "old" after they've been chanting for an hour. Thus it is seen as a "relief" when the choir comes in and sings in a more "modern, less droning" way. (Unfortunately, there are many choir also which are untrained and do not practice and I've heard a "droning" choir in various parishes I have visited). If you've ever heard a choir of Psaltes singing properly, you would know how beautiful traditional Byzantine chanting is. Because such a thing doesn't exist in most parishes, most people have a disdain for Traditional Byzantine Chanting. Get a CD of the monks of Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos chanting Agne Parthene and you'll think you are listening to a choir of angels. They sing in the "traditional" Byzantine way, in unison with some holding the ison. The solo chanter is only in existence because there are a lack of trained chanters in our parishes. Go to the Seminary in Brookline, MA, and you will see a "choir" of chanters singing together at every Divine Service.



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Also, because many of our chanters are unable (and in some cases, sadly, unwilling), to sing in English and chant exclusively in Greek, there is also the stereotype of “I have no idea what the chanter is doing,” and hence it is not pleasurable to the ear. Fortunately, the chanters in my parish chant in English, and chanting, whether it be a Paraklesis or a funeral, sound beautiful in English. When I came to my present parish and started chanting in English, it really unlocked a door for so many people who had been faithful worshippers but were really not clued in to what was being said in the services. I remember the first time we chanted “Makaria I Odos” at a funeral in English (“Blessed ever be the way you travel on this day, for there is prepared for you, a place of everlasting rest”) and people commented how beautiful it was. In fact, the comment was, that hymn makes the funeral not seem so sad. The first time I heard my choir sing “Ti Ipermacho” in English, I got goosebumps, that’s how moving it was.

I guess this is the point where I’ll address the issue of language. It has always been the history of the Orthodox Church for its services to be celebrated in the vernacular of the country in which they are being celebrated. In the United States, the language we use is English. It’s okay to hold onto some Greek for the benefit of those who do not speak English, or to keep some Greek to remember our heritage—I mean it wouldn’t feel like Easter if we didn’t sing Christos Anesti in Greek—but as we look to the future of our church in America—the overwhelming majority of marriages Greek with non-Greek, the overwhelming majority of congregants who DO NOT speak Greek, we have to ask ourselves, who is served by beautiful musical arrangement sung in Greek? Are we more concerned with holding on to the past, or looking to the future? Musicians such as Fr. Evagoras Constantinides Fr. Konstantine Mendrinou, and Fr. Seraphim Dedes, among others, are proof that you can compose hymns in English and still have them in their traditional Byzantine tones.

Because in modern understanding, we separate liturgy from all the other services, (this is not correct), we then look to sing in “new tones” (tunes) different than the “old ones” we hear in the Orthros. This is faulty understanding. The 8 tones that are part of Vespers and Orthros extend into all the services of the church. When the priest says, “Sophia. Orthoi.” and sings “Defte Proskenesomen. . .” at the small entrance, this is ALWAYS in second tone. The hymn “Meta ton Agion” which is chanted at a memorial service is ALWAYS sung in tone 8 (also known as plagal 4). Christos Anesti is always sung in tone five (plagal 1). It is NEVER OKAY to take a hymn like “Meta ton Agion” or “Christos Anesti” and re-compose it in a different musical motif, or tone. So when a composer sits down to compose some new rendition of a traditional hymn, that person must adhere to Traditional Byzantine music motifs in its composition.

There are certain hymns that the church refers to as “Ideomela” literally translated as “your own melody.” The Hymn of Kassiane is an example of this. There are probably dozens of compositions of this hymn in existence. Each one, however, has the characteristic of Byzantine tone Plagal 4 (or tone 8) because this is the tone the original was composed in. So even though composers may elongate certain sections or perhaps shorten others, a proper composition of this hymn cannot depart from the musical motif of Tone Plagal Four and be

considered legitimate. Same thing with the Cherubic Hymn—There are probably hundreds of compositions of the Cherubic Hymn in existence, some slower, some faster, but each one that is legitimate must follow the motifs of one of the 8 tones. Making the Cherubic Hymn sound like “Amazing Grace,” might be pleasing to the ear, but it would not be Orthodox.

I recently celebrated a Divine Liturgy where, from Agios o Theos until the end was celebrated exclusively in the third tone—meaning I did the petitions in the third tone and the chanter (who happened to be a visiting priest) offered the responses and hymns in the third tone. Divine Liturgy can be celebrated in all eight tones, and yet most parishes celebrate liturgy in the same tone each week. It’s plagal fourth (or tone 8) from the beginning up to the Great Entrance, with plagal one (or tone 5) from the Great Entrance until after the consecration, returning to plagal four for the remainder. Some churches, like mine in Tampa, do plagal one (or tone 5), throughout the Liturgy. Most churches, mine included, insert a mish-mash of hymns in other tones by different composers “for variety.” If someone was really up for the challenge, compose liturgies in each tone, and have each choir learn liturgy in each of the eight musical motifs. Rather than create music that is different for the sake of being new and different, why not return to our Tradition and work on transcribing music in some of the tones that are heard only in monasteries.

I am a musician, as well as a priest. I play the piano, organ and anything with keys on it. I’ve served as a chanter, sung in a choir and now am a priest. I also enjoy all kinds of music, even religious music that is not Orthodox. At the summer camp I direct, one of the priests, who is an avid guitar player, leads the campers in “traditional” religious campfire songs. They are mostly Protestant praise songs or contemporary Christian songs you hear on the radio. He sings them well. The campers sing along with them. Throughout the week even, we hear kids singing the songs spontaneously at meals. I even sing some of them in the car year round. However, while a song like “Father I Adore You,” or “I Can Only Imagine,” or “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God,” sounds great around the campfire, it would sound totally inappropriate in an Orthodox Church. If musical composers are going to write hymns that deviate from Traditional Orthodox hymnology, and sound “western,” I would say that this is not appropriate. I have heard some choral arrangements in Orthodox Churches that do not sound very Orthodox, by composers who are lauded by the choirs who sing these arrangements. Since I enjoy music, especially church music, I keep up with various publications and track down CDs of “newly composed” liturgical arrangements and listen to them. I guess one word that scares me, in referring to new liturgical compositions, is the word “innovative.” Innovation seems to be at odds with Tradition. We are not a church of liturgical innovation but universal tradition. Perhaps the mark of whether music is acceptable is to take it to Greece or another Orthodox Country that utilizes Byzantine music and see if the people there like it.

As for “old” versus “new” music, my opinion is that each piece of liturgical music must fit into one of the 8 recognizable Byzantine tones, with the



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characteristics, dominant notes and motifs that are recognized in each respective tone. There are other hymns written by contemporary composers that do not sound Byzantine at all and while these might be acceptable for a choral concert, they really are not appropriate for the Divine Liturgy. One other comment on choral composition—maybe it's just a pet peeve of mine—but the music must be singable by members of the congregation. If I sang in the choir, I wouldn't sing soprano. My voice is probably a high tenor. But I can sing the version of the Doxology sung by my choir in its entirety by myself in the car, or I can sing along with them during the service. If a version of a hymn is so complicated that it cannot be sung by the congregation, we have really missed the mark. A four part harmony adds a richness but shouldn't replace the essence of a hymn or the ability of those in the congregation to sing along with a hymn.

The purpose of a choir is to lead the congregation in the responses of the service, not to perform or be a leading act as if the worship service was some kind of a play. Worship is an act of corporate unity, a congregation singing and worshipping God in unity, not in parts. (Actually, the only "parts" if you will to the service are for the clergy and the laity). So, I leave you with words of encouragement—please continue your faithful service of leading the congregation in worship. Learn to chant in the language which best serves the people of your church and in a way that encourages them to sing with you. As for those who compose music or choirs who enjoy new musical compositions, make sure that they fit into one of the 8 Traditional Byzantine music motifs.

Each of us is a steward. A steward is temporary caretaker of something. That means that we take care of something temporarily, knowing that one day we will pass it on to someone else. This is true with our stewardship to the choir of God's church. No one will sing in the choir forever, because no one will live forever. You will sing in the choir for a finite amount of time and then you will turn the choir loft over to the ones who will come after you. Will you hand them the Tradition of Byzantine Chanting that our church has used for its 2000 year history? Or will it be a new Tradition of music that deviates from that which we received? As stewards, it is our duty to safeguard and take care of something, to build up something without fundamentally changing, to pass along something sacred we inherited without putting our own stamp on it.

As I wrote at the outset, I am grateful for the work of my choir and chanters in Tampa and for the spirit that inspires each of you to give of your time and talent to the musical ministry in your parish. May God continue to bless each of you and grant you years of health and joy to chant His praises.

+Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis is the priest of St. John Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, FL and is director of St. Stephen's Summer Camp for the Metropolis of Atlanta.

Notable links

The Archdiocesan Federation Choir of New York under the direction of Constantine Gajdjis has recorded their concert at the Stathakion Cultural Center in Astoria, New York on May 5th, 2007. The Hellenic Music Foundation, a non-profit organization, has produced a CD of this performance titled "Immortal Greek Melodies" which contains some of the most

beautiful folk songs and songs of the Golden Age of the 60's accompanied by an orchestra consisting of bouzouki, violin, keyboard and drums.

Featured soloists: Katia Zallas, soprano and Constantine Gajdjis, tenor.

It is a beautiful and enjoyable collection of 23 songs which represents the rich Greek musical heritage and is highly recommended for those who wish to become acquainted with this phase of the Greek culture.

The cost of the CD is \$20.00 ea. incl. S&H and may be ordered through the Hellenic Music Foundation. Proceeds will go towards benefiting the Hellenic Music Foundation's Scholarship Fund.

Please make your check payable to: Hellenic Music Foundation and mail to: P.O.Box 2336, Astoria, NY 11102.

For further information call: (917) 371-1588 or visit the HMF website at <http://www.HellenicMusic.org>

Parish Notes (from those who did not respond — please be sure to contact leonk@bellsouth.net for the next edition of **Keynotes and Notable Notes**, our new monthly newsletter, for upcoming events and news from your parish—remembering that the cutoff dates are always the 15th of the month before publication))



Save the Date!

For a weekend with Chris Kypros and the *Liturgy of Peace* in Tampa the weekend of Feb. 22,24, 2008. Chris will be there to conduct it. We'd like as many as possible to be with us. More info will follow next month. Thanks.

Artie Palios

From our Hosts for the 2007 Conference at St. Paul's in



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Savannah, Georgia

Dear Members of the SFGOCM,

It is a privilege for me to update you with some aspects of the 31st Annual Choir Conference of the Southeastern Federation of the Greek Orthodox Choirs and Musicians, held in Savannah, GA, July 26 to 29, 2007.

You may know that our parish was very excited about hosting the Conference in this anniversary year (100th Anniversary of St. Paul's) and started the preparations well in 2006, and worked closely with the appointed chairman of the Choir Conference. Unfortunately, because of some very serious health problems in his family, the chairman had to resign in the middle of the preparations.



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You may imagine how distressed our people were when they realized that we have to change the chairman well into the preparations for the Choir Conference; in a stormy Parish Council we heard people voicing their unflinching support for the Choir Conference and also, people asking to give up the project and to focus only on the 100th Anniversary.

It is my experience that in time of crisis the best in the people will come out. As no member of our choir offered as him(her)self as chair, Mr. Jim Pethis, a member of the Parish Council offered to chair the Choir Conference. What is extraordinary is that Jim never sang in the choir, never participated in a Choir Conference and though, managed to chair one of the best Conferences of the SFGOCM (based on the testimonies of our guests)!

How can that be possible? There were many factors which contributed to the success of the Conference and Jim was able to make the most out of them. As a civil engineer, Jim knows how to plan and optimize resources; as a member of the Parish Council he knows how to turn a difficulty into an opportunity; as a Savannahian he knows that hospitality and warmth are the sweet ingredients of success; as a parishioner of St. Paul's he could do nothing less than the best; as a faithful man he knows that music is intrinsic part of the Orthodox worship.

Then, like the yeast in the dough, all those things were augmented by the continuous and skilled advice from the Board of the SFGOCM and especially from its President, Mr. John Mitchell (with whom Jim exchanged e-mails in the middle of the night!), the extraordinary dedication of the composer, Mr. Chris Zervos, of the director of combined choirs, Mr. Christopher Kypros, of the director of the Teens/Youth Choir, Dr. Z. JoAnna Hill, of the clinician, Mrs. Evey Simon, the dedication of the choir members from 23 parishes of the Federation, and lastly, the work of our parishioners who felt blessed to have so many wonderful people as dear guests.

The crowning of the Choir Conference was the singing of the Divine Liturgy in our warm and beautiful church. His Grace Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos presided with joy and passion over the services and as a good shepherd gave us not only a testimony of his love for the Lord but also of the wisdom of the Fathers through a memorable sermon.

One of the last tasks of the Choir Conference is the mailing of the recorded Divine Liturgy to all choir participants, family members and guests who are anxiously awaiting delivery of their copies, delivery scheduled for late October.

Looking back, it seems that the worries about hosting two extraordinary events at only one month apart were not justified; however, I know that the fire is hardening the steel and that the trial is making the Christian. Surely, this parish proved another time that when we are working together there are no limits to our accomplishments.

With much appreciation for your work in God's vineyard,

Fr. Vasile Mihai, Parish Priest



From the choir of St. Paul's, Savannah, Georgia

We want to thank all of you who came to Savannah for the Choir Conference this summer. We hope you enjoyed it as much as we enjoyed having you visit our beautiful city.

Continuing our celebration of the 100 anniversary of our church and parish, we just had another very successful Greek Festival this past weekend. The record breaking crowd enjoyed food, music, and dancing on a beautiful fall weekend.

In December, our choir will once again take part in the Tri-Church Christmas Festival for the year together with neighboring churches, Bull Street Baptist and St. Paul's Lutheran Church. This melding of the voices of the three choirs puts the whole community in the mood for Christmas. The churches take turns hosting the reception after the concert, always held on St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church steps. All three churches are open for tours after the refreshments.

Bess Chappas, a long time choir member and retired teacher and media specialist, has recently authored a children's book, "Kiki and the Red Shoes", based on an incident in her life when she was a child in Greece. To learn more about the book, go to www.SavannahStorySpinners.com

Bess Chappas



From the choir of Annunciation Cathedral, Atlanta, GA

The Annunciation Cathedral Choir of Atlanta, GA celebrated the 95th birthday of Mr. Demetrius T. Papageorge, a tenor in the choir, on Sunday, September 16, 2007. He has been a member of the choir since 1931 (76 years)! . He continues to sing in the choir today. For a brief period in the early history of the Cathedral Choir he also served as Choir Director. Mr. Papageorge was recognized at the end of the Divine Liturgy by Reverend Father George Alexson, Dean of the Annunciation



Cathedral, who presented him with the Archbishop Iakovos Memorial Choir Service Award, for his many years of service to the choir. Mr. Papageorge also sang the Se Innoumen hymn that



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day as a solo. Coffee hour was in his honor, and the entire congregation sang 'Happy Birthday' led by the choir. Also present were his wife Chrysanthy, his daughters, a granddaughter, and many friends. Hronia Polla to Demetri Papageorge!

Other news of the Choir- The Choir sang at the Atlanta Greek Festival on October 5th and October 6th. This has become an annual tradition of the Choir. Both concerts took place in the Cathedral and were well attended by many of the festival guests. Some of the hymns performed included I Parthenos Simeron, Ti Ipermacho, Se Imnoumen, Enite, Soma Christou, O Angelos Evoa, and Christos Anesti. A brief explanation of each hymn, along with some historical information about our Orthodox faith was provided by Constantine Kokenes on Friday evening and by Andrew Ekonomou on Saturday evening.

Christina Polizos



St. George, New Port Richey, Florida

Since September 6th, our choir has been having joint rehearsals with St. Nicholas Choir in Tarpon Springs, in addition to the regular rehearsals at St. George. Since our parish has many seasonal members, it was not possible for our choir to begin singing until October 21st. We thank our sister church, St. Nicholas, for helping us get a jump start on the music. If you are planning to attend Epiphany services, you



will be proud to see our choir members participating. Also, if you are ever vacationing on the West Coast of Florida, do join us!

Happy Thanksgiving to all from St. George Choir

Bless this House

Bless this house, O Lord we pray,
 Make it safe by night and day . . .
 Bless these walls so firm and stout,
 Keeping want and trouble out . . .
 Bless the roof and chimneys tall,
 Let thy peace lie overall . . .
 Bless this door that it may prove,
 Ever open,
 To joy and love . . .
 Bless these windows shining bright,
 Letting in God's Heavenly light,
 Bless the hearth, the painting there,
 With smoke ascending like a prayer!
 Bless the folk who dwell within,
 Keep them pure and free from sin . . .
 Bless us all that we may be,
 Fit O Lord to dwell with thee . . .

Bless us all that one day we may dwell,
 O Lord! With Thee!

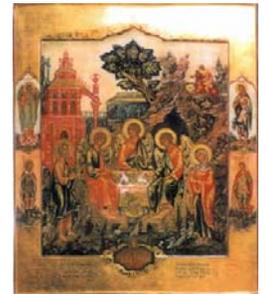
Words and Music by Helen Taylor and May H. Morgan (a.k.a. Brahe), 1927.

Tina Wilson



From the Choir Loft at Holy Trinity Raleigh, NC:

Holy Trinity Choir in Raleigh wishes to welcome the following new members who have joined our choir this year:



Chuck Schmidt (bass), Toulia Capetanos (soprano), and Maria Frangakis (soprano). We also wish to welcome two of the youngest members of our choir family, Demitroula Nicholas (born January 4) and Jace Andrew Kohl (born June 14). Thankfully, our choir loft is very accomodating with a Graco Playard and plenty of honorary Yia Yias and Theas. We wish our new members many years!

Even though many of us were not able to attend this year's conference in Savannah, our thoughts were with all of you, dear friends. We hope to be able to send our usual 8-10 participants next year as we look forward to our new host city New Port Richey providing a wonderful weekend.

Wishing you all a happy Thanksgiving and a blessed Christmas and New Year,

Director of Choirs

Elia Nicholas



From the Choir Loft at Holy Trinity, Charleston, South Carolina

Summer found us scattered hither and yon, vacationing, visiting family or just doing very little. It was a HOT one!!!

We would like to congratulate Savannah for a terrific conference in July. It was wonderful seeing old friends and meeting new ones-all with a common cause, making a joyful noise unto the Lord.



Christopher Kypros conducted the choir in his inimitable fashion, inspiring the best and least of us to sing to our full potential. His talented accompanist, Chris J. Zervos, played his beautiful arrangement of the Liturgy. We were truly privileged to have two talented composers directing us during the conference.



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Locally, we are gearing up for the fall season. We continue to share our Sunday duties with our Youth Choir, Men's Choir and Mixed Choir. We're planning our annual luncheon for November 4th which is always a fun get together and a time to introduce the new members in the choir. We have two new members, Monica Stepanek and Margie Kratsos. It is always a blessing to have new members join us.

We have new "winter" choir robes in a lovely red fabric. It's been years since we've had "new clothes" so we feel pretty cool in our new outfits. The robes were donated anonymously and we are grateful for this generosity. We are also grateful to our director, Ross Magoulas; organist, Mary Perry; and Toula Latto, who does whatever is necessary.

Lucy Spell



From the Choir Loft at St. Sofia, Miami, Florida:

We were glad to get back to choir after a long summer. Weddings, surgeries, work schedules and being "up north" precluded some of us from attending the Conference in Savannah. Those who did go, however, enjoyed the parish, the music, the city and the director.



Our Athena Lantz Guillen had another baby daughter, Ariana, in October and Dorothea Lantz, Athena's sister, is now married to lucky Elias Pappas from Lamia, central Greece.



South Florida's guest for 66 days, Archbishop Christodoulos of Greece, could not receive the liver that was found for him because it was found that the cancer had spread.

He made several excursions to visit nearby churches and had visitations from many notables

including Archbishop Dimitrios and former Florida governor Jebb Bush and invited journalists to speak with them in the apartment where he has been staying since August 18.

Notably, he was visited by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, at a private home in Miami.

His Holiness Karekin II, aware of His Beatitude's failing health, expressed his desire to visit him. Taking time out from his pastoral visits to his parishes as part of his 18 city, 14-state Pontifical Visit to the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), the Catholicos of All Armenians paid



a personal visit to his friend and collaborator, Archbishop Christodoulos earlier this morning in Miami.

His Beatitude Archbishop Christodoulos expressed his sincere pleasure in receiving His Holiness Karekin II, who was accompanied in the personal visit by His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese.

His Holiness Karekin II and His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian were joined by the Greek Consul General to Tampa, His Excellency Andreas Psycharis, two Bishops from the Greek Orthodox Church, His Eminence Metropolitan Theologos of Serres and Bishop Theoklitos of Vresthena, and the Chancellor to His Beatitude, the Reverend Thomas Synodinos and several assistants.

An associate of the Archbishop said that views were exchanged during the meeting on the question of Cyprus, the issue concerning the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and the role of the Church in serious social matters.

Archbishop Christodoulos celebrated his Name Day on Sunday, October 21 at Saint Sophia Cathedral in Miami, where he received the greetings of the parishioners and many friends. Metropolitan Theoklitos of Vresthenes presided over the liturgy with the help of Metropolitan Pavlos of Servion and Kozanes (Exarch of Western Macedonia), Metropolitan Theologos of Serron and Nigritis (exarch of all of Macedonia), Metropolitan Pavlos of Dramas and exarch of Macedonia) as well as Archimandrite Epiphanius Economou (representative of the Synod and Typos Magazine and public relationships and secretary), Chancellor Protopresbyter Thomas Synadenos, Hieromonachos Iakovos of Symonopetra in Mt. Athos, and representing our Archbishop Dimitrios of America was Metropolitan Iakovos of the Metropolis of Chicago.

His Beatitude returned to Athens at noon on Friday, October 26, after staying for 70 days in Miami.

The Archbishop was welcomed at Athens airport throngs of the faithful, dignitaries and clergy.

Speaking on his arrival in Athens, Archbishop Christodoulos said that "I have returned to my Ithaca and am with you once again, with the people who have loved me so much and whom I have loved."



The Archbishop plans to officiate at a Divine Liturgy on October 28 commemorating "Ohi Day".

He said that as of Monday the first phase of therapy advised for him by doctors will begin.

"I feel very well and according to my internal disposition I will preoccupy myself with the issues of the Church's administration and with my duties. With the support of all, God will provide what is best. I hope so," he added.



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After the official reception, the Primate of the Greek Church headed for his home in the Athens suburb of Psychiko where he was welcomed by crowds of wellwishers.

“I have returned to continue the struggle that I have started. I have the support of all of Hellenism (*not in the least, Floridian philoxenia*) in this struggle of mine. I thank all of you for your feelings towards me, that give me courage to continue a struggle that is difficult. I hope, however, that I will win it. I wish to thank all, starting from the Greek government which went out of its way and secured for me all the necessary facilities in Miami. Then the Hierarchy, the Holy Clergy and all the pious people who expressed their interest with their letters and their wishes,” he said.

Leon Karahalos



***From the Choir loft at Holy Trinity Cathedral
Charlotte, North Carolina***

Greetings to all from the Queen City!

Our choir has been quite busy since beginning the new Ecclesiastical year this past August. After our summer hiatus, the choir sang at the first Sunday Liturgy following the Dormition of the Theotokos and will continue now on a weekly basis until after Pentecost. They sang for the 30th Annual Yiasou Greek Festival of Charlotte held in early September. This year, the choir performed a formal concert on the Saturday afternoon of the Festival. The 40 minute program featured hymns from the Liturgy as well as selected hymns from Holy Week and Pascha. In addition, there were brief explanations of the hymns by our clergy. Members of the audience also had a detailed paper program to follow along which gave translations and historical references to the performed pieces. Publicized as a featured event of the Festival, it was well attended by over 250 people. The following day, after singing for Liturgy, the Choir performed the National Anthems of the United States and Greece as well as an abbreviated Doxology for the closing ceremony of the Festival which was attended by the Mayor of Charlotte.

Since then, the choir has been busy continuing to rehearse and refine the Zervos Liturgy of which we sing some portions of our weekly Liturgy. The Cathedral is fortunate to have 2 priests and thereby offers 2 bilingual Liturgies per Sunday.... one predominantly in English and one predominantly in Greek. The Choir sings for both these services but on alternating weeks--one Sunday, the early service, the next Sunday, the late service, and so forth. We have found the Zervos arrangements most useful in trying to interweave the English and Greek languages into the Liturgy.



As October draws to a close, we will begin serious work on our Annual Christmas Festival Concert which will be Sunday, December 16 at 6:00 PM this year. It will be held, as in previous years, in conjunction with the Sunday School Christmas Pageant. This year will feature sacred hymns and

classical masterworks from the Eastern and Western traditions as well as a group of ‘Carols from Around the World.’ If you happen to be in Charlotte that weekend, please join us for this annual holiday event.

I think that just about wraps it up for now from Charlotte. Let me also say what an honor it continues to be to serve with such an enthusiastic and wonderful group.

Best wishes to all for a wonderful 2007-2008 Ecclesiastical Year.

Philip Thevaos, Music Director



***From the Choir Loft at St. Catherine, West Palm Beach,
Florida:***

St. Catherine’s Choir continues a pattern of singing a different Liturgy almost every Sunday. There are so many talented composers who have created personal interpretations of our beautiful Greek Orthodox Liturgy. We started out the beginning of September with Kypros, followed by the Traditional Red Book, and Raptis. Other liturgies likely to be performed include Bogdanos, Maragos, Despie and Cardiasmenos.

On Sunday, September 9th, the choir honored Eirene “Rene” Wertz, our organist of many years, who this year was a recipient of the Patriarch Athenagoras I Award established by the National Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs. The annual award is presented to outstanding musicians in each of the Metropolis in the United States and announced at the various Choir Federation Conferences.



The recognition is not only for talent as a musician but for leadership and dedication demonstrated through service in the music ministry to community. Not only has “Rene” served diligently at St. Catherine’s, she has also been tapped to be guest organist at several past federation conferences. In addition, she served as chairman of the federation choir conference held here in 1986. Since Rene was not able to attend this year’s conference in Savannah, members who were present accepted on her behalf and the award was formally presented to her in church by T.A. “Doc” Aliapoulios, our choir director, who, with his wife Donna, prepared and presented the application to the Athenagoras selection committee. “Doc” and Donna are previous recipients of this distinguished honor.

“Rene” has been a member of our choir since 1980, first as a singer in the alto section, then as assistant organist and later as organist following Mary Ann Zapetis’ retirement from that position. She continues in that role and often serves as director, as well. Before moving to this area “Rene” lived in St. Louis, MO. and attended The Assumption Church, where her mother served as choir organist. “Rene” started singing at about age 12 and when her Mother passed away, Rene took over as organist. In addition to her musical talents, Rene operates her own business firm, which often requires her to travel and be away at



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times. Congratulations Rene - St. Catherine's is very proud of you!

Four members of our choir attended the above-mentioned federation convention held in Savannah: Mary Andrews, Amelia Fabro, Mary Maniotis and Bessie Petrou.

In observance of National Church Music Sunday, St. Catherine's Choir, Cantors and Sunday School Music Teachers were recognized and honored on Sunday, October 14th following the Divine Liturgy.

Father Andrew Maginas presented Choir Director T.A. "Doc" Aliapoulios, Organist Eirene "Rene" Wertz, and Choir Members with laminated icons of St. Romanos The Melodist, considered one of the great hymnologists of the Orthodox faith.

Icons were also presented to our Cantors who serve year-round with great dedication and to our Sunday School teachers who have been instructing our future choir members in learning to sing some of the liturgical hymns. We hear they will be ready to sing during a service soon and we look forward to their debut! These talented teachers, and their protégées are to be commended. All of the above also received a special issue of "Musica," which is published periodically by the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Musicians.

In a touching moment, our Choir Director walked to the front church pew and presented Mrs. Zoe Cicalo an icon in remembrance of her late husband Nick Cicalo. The day marked the one-year memorial service for Nick, who was a loyal and dedicated choir member for many years. We miss his voice, but even more so his presence in the bass section.

The choir continues to meet for rehearsals twice a month and has possible plans for a Christmas program as well as performing in A Capella groups. We look forward to the return of our talented "Snowbirds" who help us to expand not only our numbers but also our sound during the winter months

Maria Sempepos



From the Choir of the Only Greek Orthodox St. Mark's church in the Western Hemisphere

My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing and make music with all my soul. Psalm 108:1-3

Every Sunday, the dedicated members of the St. Mark Choir truly sing praises to the Lord with all their souls. Twenty members strong, there is room in the loft for the choir to double or even triple in number. Over the years, the choir has evolved from being dependant on the organ to singing the liturgy a cappella.

This year, the St. Mark community enthusiastically welcomes a new director, Dr. Nick Kaleel. In addition to being a dentist, Dr. Kaleel has a broad musical background that goes back to his high school years. An accomplished pipe organist, he turned down a lucrative offer to be the organist at a local church. His mother insisted that he not abandon his own church, so



instead, he became the choir director at St. Mark Antiochian Orthodox Church in Wheeling, West Virginia. He served his home town choir until 1971 when he left to go to dental school. Later, in 1985, he moved to Florida and became the director of the St. Mary's Orthodox Church in West Palm Beach, Florida. Finally, in 1998, he started coming occasionally to St. Mark Greek Orthodox Church and became a member in 2003. As choir director, Nick hopes to "build upon the wonderful choir that we have and enhance it to match the beauty of our St. Mark sanctuary." He also wants to encourage the youth of our church to join the choir on Sundays and has the aspiration of beginning a separate youth choir.

Many dedicated members of our choir have been singing every Sunday for years. Cleanthe Criticos, is our choir veteran. She was one of the original St. Mark choir members when the church was founded in 1981. In her eighties, she still



manages to climb up the stairs of our sanctuary to the choir loft. Barbara Marino is our miracle member. After a fight with cancer, she is back with us singing as strong as ever. Other members, like Eileen Averkiou, sing in professional choirs. Eileen is a soprano in the Nova Singers of Davie, Florida and has performed with the group in New York and will soon be taking a "singing" tour of Europe. Alto, Kathy Chapekis, another veteran member, serves as secretary of the Southeastern Choir Federation and this summer, plans to go with Metropolitan Alexios and a choir federation group to sing in the churches and monasteries of Greece. She encourages anyone interested to join her to send an E-mail to Kathy@fau.edu. Several members also serve as chanters, Art Poly, Greg Ganoff, Ted Gallas, Susan Breno, Sophia Christakis and our beloved brother, Mickey Maros, who is now chanting is heaven. When necessary, Sophia Christakis serves as our assistant choir director. We also have several singing "couples" - Jim and Helen Ballerano, Solon and Marsha Christ, Harry and Toula Diamantis, Ted and Mina Gallas and parent/child combos, Maria Jula with daughter, Stevie McQueen, Sophia Christakis with daughter, Barbara and last but not least, our director, Nick, his brother and their children.

The St. Mark choir is always looking for new voices. We have a wonderful group and together enjoy various activities such as singing in the yearly Palm Beach Epiphany service, Christmas caroling to our shut-ins, and participating in the St. Mark Christmas pageant and yearly choir conferences. In 1999, we hosted the Southeast Federation Conference and hope to do so again in the future.

In closing, please keep one of our tenors, Greg Ganoff, in your prayers so that he recovers from two brain surgeries returns to health soon.

Kathy Chapekis



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Greetings from Tarpon Springs, Florida, the Epiphany City!

Well, Savannah did it again! They hosted a very enjoyable and rewarding conference last July. We thoroughly enjoyed our time there and having Chris Kypros direct us made it all the more inspiring. Way to go Savannah!



This year the Tampa Bay area choirs were again privileged to have two of the three Patriarch Athenagoras Medals awarded to two community members. The first recipient is Father James Roussakis, Presbyter of Holy Trinity in Clearwater.

It was a great honor that I was also awarded the Medal and it was a privilege to be presented to the congregation by Father John Bociu after liturgy at St Nicholas Cathedral on October 7, National Church Music Sunday. It is both a humbling and elating experience to be chosen recipient of this prestigious award and I thank the Federation for its confidence in my ability to make a difference in the choir/musicians' cause.

Our annual picnic is scheduled for Sunday, November 11. We didn't have one last year and are looking forward to relaxing and enjoying each others company and the delicious food our gourmet choir members bring. And with luck, the weather will cooperate and be cool and pleasant so that we can enjoy the day.

Our youth choir will be performing at the tree-lighting ceremony in December at Helen Ellis Hospital in Tarpon Springs. They will sing both Greek and English Christmas carols. The junior choir is growing and young singers are being groomed to be ready to join the adult choir in the future. Their tutelage is supervised by Fr. John Bociu and choir director, Dr. JoAnna Hill.



Our Christmas program will consist of spiritual plays and a pageant that will be performed by our young children. The choir will also sing Christmas carols on Christmas Day after the liturgy.

New Years and Epiphany are also on our calendar of events. We will sing on New Years Day, as we always do. We have an Artoclasia for the living choir members and their families.

We have started practicing Kevin Lawrence for Epiphany and have included the choir from St. George of New Port Richey in our practices. St. George will be hosting the 2008 Conference and this is a good chance to become acquainted with the workings of conference preparations.

Epiphany will be celebrated on January 6 which falls on Sunday this year. A great many people are expected to attend. The liturgy will end with the parade to Spring Bayou and the tossing of the cross into the water to be retrieved by one of many young Greek boys who participate. These events mark the end

of our holiday season and the beginning of the New Year, which we hope will be happy, healthy and prosperous for all.

We will be sending a letter out to the Federation President inviting all of our SFGOCM choir members to come join us on Epiphany this year. We will be having practice on January 4th & 5th in the cathedral. We invite all of you to join us! Stay tuned for more details...

With the holidays soon to be upon us, let us take a moment from our busy schedules and preparations to remember the men and women who are laying down their lives for us to be able to enjoy peaceful, joyous holidays. When you join your loved ones at your Thanksgiving and Christmas tables, say a prayer for those who are fighting in a foreign land, and for those who have sustained injuries that will require them to adjust their lives to compensate for those injuries. Give a special prayer to those who have given the ultimate sacrifice and the families they have left behind. This is the least we can do for them.

The St. Nicholas Cathedral choir wishes you and yours a Happy and Healthy Christmas and a joyful and peaceful New Year. May the Lord's blessing be with you and your family throughout the year.

Billie Spirides



From the Choir of St. Katherine's in Melbourne, Florida

Greetings from the St. Katherine's Choir of Melbourne. Our new priest Father Demetri Tsigas came from San Diego, California near the end of last year with his Presbyteria Eleni and their two young sons Jordan and Jonathon. Father is very supportive and appreciative of the choir, and we get along beautifully.

Our choir has been busy reorganizing after many of our members are away for the summer. The Senior choir director is Rea Kalessa, our organist is Peggy Muradov, and the choir is under the supervision of Father Demetri. Slowly we have been adding more English responses to the service, and after the Orthros some of our chanters, John Sirounis, Dan Kennedy, and Stephen Komon, are coming and joining the choir singing. After 3 years, our beautiful Junior choir is being reactivated by Valerie Karas. We are all looking forward to their joining in the church liturgies once again. We are hoping to work up a Christmas program along with the Junior choir.



On October 14, we had a trisagion for our departed choir members. Mercini Serounis made the loaves of bread for the Artoclasia for our living members. The choir sponsored a beautiful buffet in the parish hall after church service for our community. Our St. Sophia Philoptohos members also helped, and the Parish Council provided the sheet cake. The

Archbishop Iakovos Awards were presented to our choir members and chanters.



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We would also like to inform you about our organist's daughter, 14 year old Esther Muradov who is an extraordinary violinist. She comes from a gifted family, her mother Peggy is a music teacher with a degree from Moscow, and her father is a sculptor and Russian folk singer. Last May our Choir along with the St. Sophia Philoptohos sponsored a fantastic Fundraiser Luncheon for Esther, who performed a lovely mini violin concert. Her father Nick also graced us singing his Russian folk songs. The funds collected went to help with her expenses in participating in the International Grand Prix Music Competitions in Sicily this summer. Esther placed second and will perform along with the other winners on a tour of Northeastern Universities this coming spring with the final performance at Carnegie Hall!

We extend our best wishes to all of the Choir Federation members for a blessed Holiday Season and much happiness in the New Year.

Sylvia Demopoulos

From around the Archdiocese

The Eastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians presented a gala concert as a Musical Tribute to Presvytera Anna Gallos on September 30, 2006 at Kraushaar Auditorium Goucher College, Towson, MD. The music presented shows how varied her works are, from church hymns, organ music, motets to folk songs. A CD was made of the concert and is now available. If you would like to purchase one please send \$15.00 to Maria Keritsis, 9030 Kings Crown Road, Richmond, VA 23236.



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FEDERATION CHOIR TRIP TO GREECE

As you may remember, His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios has recently been encouraging the federation to organize a choir tour to Greece. We have accepted this challenge and have now begun making plans for this trip. We have confirmed with His Eminence a departure date of Thursday, June 5th, 2008, and a return on Monday, June 16th.

Traveling with His Eminence, we will be singing the divine liturgy at the church of St. Andrew in Patras, and also presenting a concert there. In addition we will visit Kalavryta, Zachynthos, Olympia, Delphos, and Meteora, presenting concerts of sacred and folk music. We will also sing the divine liturgy at a church in Athens.

While the cost of the trip cannot be confirmed at this date, based on this year's costs, plane fare will be approximately \$1000 to \$1200 per person, and the cost of lodging, food and local transportation is estimated to be approximately \$1000 per person. The federation will make every effort to keep travel costs low; for example, we are exploring the possibility of staying in homes while in Patras.

The core of the choir will be members of the Dormition choir from Greensboro, NC and the Orthodox Youth Choir of Tampa Bay, groups which were awarded gold medals in the Metropolis 2006 and 2007 Hellenic Dance Festival choir competitions. The group will be directed jointly by Kevin Lawrence and Joanne Kambouris. We are sure to have room for additional singers from around the Metropolis, especially tenors and basses. Since it is important to have some idea of how many are interested in taking part in this adventure, we ask you to fill out the brief survey and return it by the end this month.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Toula Chininis
336-288-7968
2LA@bellsouth.net

CHOIR TRIP SURVEY

Name _____

Address _____

E-Mail _____

Phone _____

Federation Choir Conference (years participated) _____

Voice Part _____

Any musical training in voice _____

Any musical training in an instrument _____

Member of church choir (years) _____

Please submit survey only if you are truly committed towards this trip. Selection may be based on auditions and choir director's recommendations.