



# Notable Notes

The Electronic Newsletter of the Southeastern Federation of Greek Orthodox  
Choirs and Musicians —February 2011

click on <http://www.sfgocm.org/news>

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## Our next conference is: Charlotte, July 19, 20, 21 and 22, 2012

Greetings from Charlotte, North Carolina! The community of Holy Trinity Cathedral is excited about hosting the 36th Annual SFGOCM Choir Conference to be held from July 19–22, 2012. The conference packets will be coming out shortly but, in the meantime, the Conference Committee wanted me to pass on some vital information:

1) The arrangement of the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated this year is by Constantine "Dean" Limberakis. Dean sent copies of his music to the host community, which will be handling the shipment to other Federation choirs. The music costs \$15, plus shipping, and can be ordered by contacting me by phone at 704–813–7129 or via email at [lucy\\_38@hotmail.com](mailto:lucy_38@hotmail.com). There are also instructional CDs available for each voice part at an approximate cost of \$4 each as well as CDs of the Limberakis arrangement as performed during the Boston Federation's Choir Conference in 2010. Those are being sold for \$14 including shipping. If interested in either of these CDs, please ask me when contacting me about your music books and I can give you additional details on how to order.

2) As you may be aware, the Democratic National Convention will be held in Charlotte over Labor Day weekend. While this did not impact our conference directly, indirectly it has affected hotel availability and the size of our room block. The conference hotel, The DoubleTree by Hilton Charlotte, gave us a great rate (\$95 plus tax) but did not block as many rooms as we requested. Please consider reserving your rooms early, as the hotel's cancellation policy is quite lenient – you can cancel as late as 24 hours before date of arrival without penalty. If all the rooms are reserved, they will increase our block as long as they still have rooms available. The room rate will be honored from Sunday, July 15 through Thursday, July 26. [Click here to be connected to the SFGOCM personalized reservations link.](#)

3) Registration fees are anticipated to be \$140 for adults and \$65 for youth if postmarked by June 30, 2012. The Scholarship 100 Fund will, again, be partially subsidizing the youth registrations to encourage participation, and the price above takes into account that subsidy. The Youth Activities Committee has been looking into different activities the kids might enjoy when they're not busy learning the music. It promises to be great fun!

Look for the Conference Packets with complete conference information to be coming out in March.

See you all in Charlotte!

Lucy Zapsas

SFGOCM President



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### Inspiring links

1) Some of us are vehemently against the use of vernacular in our Divine Liturgy. This link is from the choir in Mexico City chanting the Divine Liturgy in Spanish: [Click here for the YouTube Link to hear it!](#)

If you speak any Spanish at all, you will know what is being chanted.

2) [Click here to see a history of the Orthodox Church in Russia, the horrors that they suffered for our faith and the new world of Orthodoxy.](#)

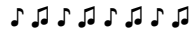
3) [Click here for a link to axios-music.com to hear renditions of some of our best-known composers.](#)

Leon Karahalios



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## What can be done for the future of our choirs?

As our choirs age, very few young folks are coming along to pick up the baton and run with it. Those who attended the wonderful conference in Spartanburg last summer were thrilled with the children's choir, the best (in my meaningless opinion) ever. Is it because the Orthodox in the Bible Belt have to remain faithful in order to be accepted by society and they therefore maintain our traditions and pass it on to their kids?

In the non-Bible Belt parts of our Metropolis, it is nearly impossible to get men or boys interested in the choirs. For younger men and teens, it seems that there is a negative societal stigma attached to the concept. Maybe they'll go caroling with the GOYA because it is a party, but most assuredly NOT commit to singing in the choir. They have other things to do which do not involve something that may be equated with a gentle side of their personalities. Are these problems due to the influx of a separate language group which does not integrate into mainstream American society? Or, alternatively but not necessarily separately, are our youth being somewhat assimilated into another foreign culture and don't want to seem doubly *weird*. "Weird"??? When I moved to Miami, I was horrified to find out that I am lumped into the group called "Anglos". Really? The proudly Hellenic son of Grigorios Giwrgos Karahalios and Vassiliki Hadjimanolakis from Πημποντυ, στην Μασαχουσεταις ("Pimponti stin Masahousetis" or "Peabody, Massachusetts") is an *Anglo*?

Shouldn't it be enough to teach the younger generations the calming, endorphin-producing joys of our mystical church through chant and prayer? Have we tried hard enough to instill the wonders of our beliefs into the kids and now their kids? When my nephew married a Roman Catholic, her parents were absolutely thrilled that their daughter would be marrying a churchgoer as opposed to some agnostic or renegade. Many of you know Sam and Lauren from their years at the Diakonia Center, where they were distant from a physical church but studied and learned by themselves in the serenity of the woods. Sam was raised in the church because his father, my older brother, was raised in the church as were most of our ancestors for over a millenium.

My other brother's kids were raised Roman Catholic and only one of the three practices and that is only because he married a good Catholic girl.

Did you know that the president of the Florida Atheists for many years was named Christos Christoforos? How is that possible? His very name is meaningless to him.

During the years hidden in the mists of time called "the 1950's", we had a choir of over 20 kids plus an adult choir, serving two liturgies, a practice which continues today, albeit under younger and very capable hands. At 12, with no parental prompting or prodding, I joined the choir and, except for a dozen or so years after college when I had to work Sundays, I continued. I'm sure many of the readers of this can tell a similar story.

One of the choirs in South Florida, long a model choir with lots of participation and expertly guided, is down to one snowbird man besides the director. At my own parish, I was the only man for many years but now we have some sporadic men who show up, dedicated, but not always there.

Even at my home choir in Massachusetts, just to show that this is not just a southern problem, my cousin's nieces, who took voice training in high school, would *never* sing in the church choir, even though the director, recently retired after over 50 years of directing, was well known for getting kids to participate. It just wasn't *cool*.

What is the problem? The problems are many. Again, societally among the much younger generations, especially those in high school, is that it is not macho or cool to be going to choir practice or even church on a Sunday, as so many of their peers have been raised by non-practicing Christians—in-name-only. Even among the Orthodox of any national origins the kids of those age and their parents have been reduced most often to C&E ("Christmas & Easter") Orthodox.

While we remain God's planet, it seems to me that it is incumbent upon us to pass our rich history on to those that follow us. Orthodoxy is not easy, although we may think so. Years ago I found a story of how Rowan Williams, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, found "true believers" for the first time when his pastor took him to a Russian liturgy. All I could find is what follows:

*The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, has revealed how his first encounter with God was not at an Anglican or even a Roman Catholic service but at a Mass of the Russian Orthodox Church.*

*Dr Williams was only 14 when his local Anglican curate took him along to an Orthodox Mass in Swansea celebrated by a visiting Russian*

*Although his long journey of faith Williams said the Russian*

*began at his "mother's knee", Dr Orthodox Mass was one of only*



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*two moments in his teenage years when he met the “living God”.*

*Dr Williams' encounter with Orthodoxy came when he was living with his parents in a modest house in Oystermouth on the western edge of the bay in Swansea.*

*In response to questions at a conference, Dr Williams described how strong the impact of the Mass was on him. “I found myself that evening kneeling at prayer in tears and feeling that I'd been taken somewhere new.*

*“I had to change, I had to grow, I had to repent. I had to let that reality become more real for me,” he said. The future leader of the Church of England and primus inter pares of the Anglican Communion grew up in a Christian household but started out with his family in the dominant Welsh non-conformist Presbyterian tradition.*

*When he was 11 the family moved and became members of the Anglican Church in Wales. Welsh Anglicans, particularly in South Wales, have long a tradition of “high” Anglo-Catholic worship.*

*To a highly intelligent, devout teenage boy, however, even their elaborate incense-perfumed rituals would have seemed tame by comparison with the three-hour Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom as celebrated weekly in Orthodox churches worldwide.*

*Dr Williams said: “When I came away, I felt I had seen glory and praise for the first time. I felt I had seen and heard people who were behaving as if God were real.”*

*I came away with the sense of absolute objectivity and majesty and beauty of God which I have never forgotten. If people worshipped like this, I felt God must be a great deal more real (than) even I have learnt him so far.”*

In the original article that I read years ago, he was quoted as saying that he would have converted to Orthodoxy, but it was “too difficult”. Of course, it is highly improbable and impractical that we would be able to pass this on to those who follow us. However, be inspired by that and the next paragraph.

An excellent friend of mine, a scholar of cultured Parisian origins and birth, is retired and commutes across the Atlantic to visit his 99 year old mother and attend to the affairs of the estate, tag-teaming with his brother who does the same from Washington.

When he, born Catholic but practicing agnostic, is in Paris, his soul is crushed by the horrors of his mother's condition, the grayness of the city, the doubts that he will ever be able to return to Paris after she is gone. So, what does this clinical agnostic do? He attends the liturgy at St. Alexandre Nevsky Russian Orthodox cathedral in Paris and *weeps like a child* at the soaring expressions of love of and for God in our liturgy as interpreted by the great Russian composers. He leaves shattered but uplifted.

There is a Russian church in Miami whose choir does not allow people OVER 35 to sing.

I continually beg for your participation in our publications, yet I am getting less and less, making our publications slimmer and slimmer. How can we expect our faith to thrive without your energetic participation in mentoring your children and grandchildren and in the continuation of our music ministry?

What are we doing wrong?

Please respond to [Leonk@bellsouth.net](mailto:Leonk@bellsouth.net)

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