



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE ^{OF} AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

REPORT TO THE 43ST BIENNIAL CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS

“You are the Voice of Christ in a Changing World.” The theme of the 2016 Clergy-Laity Congress affirms our vital mission in this world, as we have been sent by Christ to proclaim the Gospel, to share truth in love, to be His voice. Our Lord said to His disciples, and He continues to say to us today, *As the Father has sent me, so I send you* (John 20:21). *You are the light of the world* (Matthew 5:14).

Archbishop Demetrios of America

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Communications is committed to fulfilling the mandate of Christ to proclaim the Gospel. The Department continues to work diligently, with limited staffing and resources. The Department continues to develop project that will bring the faithful, and those of all faith and no faith, to understand our true Orthodox Faith. It is our responsibility to use all media – television, radio – press – social media, etc. to help Orthodox Christianity reach people of all faiths and no faith. The Department of Communications continues to coordinate the work and planning of the communications offices of the Archdiocese and their office directors, including the Office of News and Information, GOTELECOM, and the *Orthodox Observer*. In addition, we work with the Department of Internet Ministries to review news content and spotlight information for the web site.

The Department of Communications continues its efforts to enhance communication at all levels, which will assist the Hierarchs, clergy, parishes, departments, organizations, institutions, and programs in receiving and communicating information in timely and effective ways. This is critical to the growth and support of every area of the life of the Church.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS – 2014 - 2016

At the present time, the Department of Communications has a vital role in the following basic areas:

1. Communicating efficiently the scope of the ministry and activity of the Archdiocese to all people associated with the Archdiocese, to adherents of the Orthodox Christian faith, to the leadership and members of other religious bodies, to members of the media, to public officials, and to academic leaders on national and international levels;
2. Assisting the work of the Archbishop through coordinated planning and communication of his vision and goals for the Archdiocese;
3. Developing, evaluating, and modifying a continuous plan for communicating the work of the Hierarchs, Metropolises, parishes, departments, organizations, institutions, and programs of the Archdiocese.
4. Providing technical and resource assistance to all of the above to enhance and coordinate their communication and work of their ministry.
5. Initiating, developing and maintaining contacts within the secular media in order to best portray the faith and mission of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE - The staff of the Department is grateful for the dedicated leadership of Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, Chairman, and Mr. Cliff Argue, Communications Committee Co-Chairman, who tirelessly offer their expertise and guidance to the Department's Ministries. Additional committee members include Rev. Fr. Constantine Botsis, Rev. Fr. Michael Kallaur, John Catsimatides, George Demos, John Metaxas, Haeda Mihaltses, Mike Manatos and Paul Sogotis. Staff Members are: Coordinator of the Department and Managing Director of GOTelecom Marissa Costidis, News & Information Officer and Director of the Press Office, News & Media Relations Stavros Papagermanos, Editor of the *Orthodox Observer* Jim Golding, Senior Producer/Director for GOTelecom Nicholas J. Furriss, Administrative Assistant Stavroula Savelidis, *Orthodox Observer* Greek Section Editor/Production Eleftherios Pissalidis, *Orthodox Observer* Graphic Artist Abel Montoya and Administrative Assistant Soula Podaras.

INITIATIVES & PROJECTS – SINCE JULY 2014

HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH – JUNE 2016

Staff is assisting with any tasks in accordance with the request of the official press office of this historic meeting taking place in June 2016. News releases and photos will be disseminated from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese as well as official releases from the Council Press Office.

ST. NICHOLAS NATIONAL SHRINE AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER – CONTINUING

Staff continues to work and assist the committee with communication needs and dissemination of releases and information. In October 2014 staff worked on the Ground-blessing ceremony securing many media, newspapers and television coverage, for promotion of the event.

HISTORIC MEETING OF ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW AND POPE FRANCIS IN JERUSALEM – MAY 2014

Communications staff participated in the communications efforts of the historic meeting of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Francis in Jerusalem. They identified photos, coordinated and distributed press releases, maintained data bases and maintained listing of news clipping releases sent by outside press and media.

LISTSERVS

Responding to a directive from the Communications Committee, the GOA listservs are continuously updated and adjusted as the need arises. Listservs are used for emailing communiqué from the Archdiocese only.

PARISH ECCLESIASTICAL CALENDARS

2004 was the first year the Archdiocese designed and offered to our parishes a full-color ecclesiastical calendar that listed the Saints (in Greek and English), Feast Days, Scripture readings, and fasting guidelines for the year, as well as beautiful color icons for each month and hymns (in Greek and English) for the feast or saint indicated. For the year 2016 over 155,000 calendars were sold to more than 375 parishes.

Beginning with the 2017 Calendar orders will be taken only online, reducing confusion and streamlining the process. We are aiming to increase the use of this site for Orthodox specific printing including

pocket calendars, notecards, envelopes, etc. Please visit our booth at the Clergy-Laity Congress for more detailed information.

POCKET CALENDAR

The Communications Department designs and produces the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Pocket Calendar. Over 350,000 Calendars are printed and mailed annually to parishes around the country for distribution to their faithful and families.

NEWS RELEASES

From June 1, 2014 to June 1, 2016 the Department of Communications has distributed more than 250 Communiqués (Encyclicals and/or News Releases in both English and Greek). Releases are distributed by fax, listserv and posted on our website, depending on content and target audience.

NEWS CLIPPING SERVICE

Staff has streamlined the method that it receives news clippings by engaging a new firm and combining media contacts and news clipping. This new system will offer many opportunities for cataloging and identifying the media that is covering our faith.

RESPONDING TO SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

The Department of Communications had disseminated information regarding the relief response to events and crises around the world. We continue to disseminate information in response to events that affect both Orthodox Christians and non-Orthodox Christians worldwide.

Since 9-11 the Department worked closely with the team working on the rebuilding of St. Nicholas Church at Ground Zero. We continuously receive requests, on all topics, for information from media outlets worldwide, answer the requests and direct them to experts on these issues.

THE YEARBOOK

The Annual Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is published each year. The book is compiled and edited by staff of the Department. The Yearbook is posted online during the first week of January and printed copies are mailed to the Metropolises, staff, parishes and chapels, institutions and organizations, retired clergy, government leaders, consulates and embassies, media – both Orthodox and non-Orthodox and Greek and non-Greek, Greek American Day schools and to interested individuals and organizations. Comments have and continue to be extremely favorable, particularly from the media who appreciate the immense amount of material and resources contained in the book.

STEWARDS LISTING/MAILING LIST

Staff works daily to maintain the Orthodox Observer mailing list. Our national mailing list is approximately 155,000 stewards whose addresses change often. The department has the responsibility of maintaining this database and detailed research is being conducted to streamline this to an automated task where parishes have the ability and responsibility to add and correct the addresses of their stewards.

It is our fervent belief that our mailing list goes well beyond parish membership. Our goal is to increase the number of people, making them members of our community. A primary use of the list will be to increase the number of households receiving the Orthodox Observer.

PARISHES

Many of our smaller communities are not receiving information in a timely manner. It is our ongoing goal to establish a means of contact so that all clergy and parishes will receive information from the Archdiocese and their Metropolises as it is issued, in order to effectively use the resources of the Archdiocese and its ministries. We urge all parishes and clergy to actively use their assigned parish and clergy email addresses.

DEPARTMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS

The Department continues distributing information from the Departments, Organizations, and Institutions; so that it will have an ever-expanding knowledge of the extent of the work at all levels of the Archdiocese in order that information is integrated into all types of communication. Additionally, the Department has been working with organizations and Metropolises to assist them in communicating to their lists and interested parties.

ORTHODOX OBSERVER

Publishing ten issues a year continues to be a primary communication medium for the Archdiocese. The newspaper has been actively pursuing hiring a salesperson to sell advertising. A number of salespeople have been tried, but the results have been unsuccessful. A 10% saving has been realized on the printing of the newspaper due to aggressive negotiations by staff and we continue to research for the best value for printing of this critical medium. We solicit advertisements and donations. If you, or anyone you know, would like to advertise, please contact the Department

CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESSES

The Department has an active role in the dissemination of information and directs all of the audiovisual needs for the Clergy Laity Congresses.

MEMBERSHIPS

Marissa Costidis serves on the Membership Board of Odyssey and is a member of the Religious Communicators Council attending meetings and conferences throughout the year.

CONCLUSION

Our Church has wonderful opportunities to show our faith to the world. But this it must be a unified effort, from all parts of United States and abroad. Media outlets need news that affects them locally. Parishes and faithful are encouraged to contact the office for support and guidance.

The work of the Department of Communications is varied and complicated as it includes contacts within our communities and faithful but also to a broader general audience. Our work must be completed and distributed in a timely manner, which will assist in facilitating and increasing awareness of the ministries of our Archdiocese, Metropolises, Parishes, Institutions, Organizations and Departments. It is critical that our work be filtered down and carried out to all faithful across the country.

It is also important that we communicate with secular media, with our content and the goal of our efforts always directly linked to the Church and the Gospel message.

Respectfully Submitted, Marissa P. Costidis, Coordinator - Department of Communications