Hello to all,

I hope that the fall air finds you all outside enjoying life and all it has to offer. I’m sorry that I was not able to be present at the Greek concert held in Astoria in May, but I heard all had a wonderful time!

We are now planning our Christmas Concert to be held December 9, 2007 at 3:00 p.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Paul in Hempstead. Please keep this date open! Many other exciting projects are being discussed for the Federation’s 2007-2008 Calendar.

I hope you all had a very nice summer vacation and that you have come back full of enthusiasm for the coming year.

All my best wishes,
Marcelle Wheeler

Federation Visits Saint Michael’s Home

Over the Christmas holiday season, a small group of Archdiocesan District Federation members traveled to Saint Michael’s Home in Yonkers, NY and sang at the Divine Liturgy, with Mike Papantoniou conducting. After the service and during the coffee hour we were able to visit with the residents and to sing Christmas carols. They let us know how much they appreciated our visit, and when we saw the joy on their faces, we were especially happy that we had come. It was a beautiful, spirit-filled experience.
Our Annual Conference this year was held for the very first time at The Church of the Holy Resurrection in Brookville (formerly Glen Cove), NY the weekend of February 17th & 18th. We appreciated the gracious hospitality of Fr. Manny Gratsias, the Holy Resurrection parish and choir members who warmly welcomed us on Saturday with a wonderful breakfast buffet.

Many topics were discussed at the Federation meeting, including two major Federation events: the Greek Concert and the Christmas Concert. Past President Harry Pappas, who represented our Federation at the National Forum meetings during the Clergy-Laity Congress in July 2006, presented his report to the membership. Harry reported that copies of our Federation Focus were distributed to members of the National Forum and that our newsletter was very well received. He further stated that this conference was the best-organized Clergy-Laity he had attended, and that these conferences give him great insight into the workings of our church and, in particular, the music of the Church.

The election was held for the new Board that will serve for one year, starting on July 1st. The following officers were elected: President Marcelle Wheeler, Vice President Stella Kalos, Treasurer Anna Dounelis, Recording Secretary Peggy Stylianos, and Public Relations Officer Maria Felix. The position of Corresponding Secretary was not filled. Also continuing in their positions will be Librarian Stephanie Pavlidis and Youth Choir Liaison Georgia Kaufman.

We enjoyed a sumptuous luncheon buffet (absolutely delicious!) provided by our gracious hosts, followed by a rehearsal for Sunday’s service. Then, our Host Speaker Fr. Manny shared some thoughts on the early years of the Church in Constantinople and discussed the book “Through Their Own Eyes” written by an Eastern rite priest. The presentation was most informative. That evening, a Dinner Get-Together, organized by Georgia Kaufman (Thank you!) was held at the Greenvale Townhouse Restaurant, and everyone that attended had a great time!

On Sunday, the community of Holy Resurrection and our Federation were honored by the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios who presided at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Fifty voices, from seven Federation Church choirs including Roslyn’s Youth Choir, joined to praise God under the direction of Jim Pappas, Resurrection’s Choir Director.

At the conclusion of the service, the Choir Member of the Year award was presented to Constantine Gajdjis, Choir Director of Saints Catherine & George Church in Astoria, NY, followed by a lovely reception in the community center.

The conference provided us with many opportunities to share and talk with Federation church musicians from the participating NY and CT parishes, and as always it was inspiring to be part of the Federation Conference Choir, with each of us dressed in our own Church choir robes. If you weren’t able to attend this year, I encourage you to be present next year. Don’t miss a chance to enjoy an educational and fun-filled weekend. Once again, we thank Fr. Manny and the entire Holy Resurrection community for a most memorable weekend!

By Anna Dounelis
Annual Archdiocesan District Federation Conference 2007
CHOIR KEY NOTES

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL, Roslyn, NY
Great Expectations: choir member Soprano Jennifer Borut is expecting her third child... at any moment! Our choir members are becoming grandparents, too! Helen Frangopoulos, Irene Mallis and Maria Felix!
On a sad note, Soprano Christina Lyon lost her mother Josephine Madaio. The choir chanted at her 40-day memorial service on June 10, 2007. Eternal Be Her Memory!
Our youngest member Maria Eleni Zollo became a black belt in February and is working hard to achieve her first-degree black belt in traditional Karate in August.
We wish everyone a safe and healthy summer break!
Submitted by Choir Director Zoe Zollo

CHURCH OF THE HOLY RESURRECTION, Brookville, NY
Alleluia! Our parish proudly hosted on President’s Day weekend the Annual Conference of the Archdiocesan District Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians. Saturday was meeting and conference day while on Sunday many representatives of District parish choirs joined our choir to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. An amazing offering of praise! They are shown here surrounding Archbishop Demetrios who presided at the Liturgy. This was the first time our parish hosted the conference in our 31-year history. The old church was too small!
From “Kainonia,” the newsletter of The Church of the Holy Resurrection, June 2007

HOLY TRINITY, Hicksville, NY
A lot of exciting things have been happening within our choir family! Our Choir Director Leah Pappas and Choir Member Jerry Monias announced their engagement with plans for a wedding in the fall!
Wedding Congratulations to Chrisoula & Dennis Kourkoumelis’ daughter Irene, Jerry’s daughter Effie, Anna & John Douvelis’ son Harris and Sophia & John Hatzigeorgiadis’ daughter Penelope!
New Baby Congratulations to our Organist Stacy Svolos & husband Ody on the birth of their 3rd child, a beautiful little girl! Congratulations to Elizabeth & Stelios Zannikos who were blessed with a 2nd granddaughter, Chrisoula & Dennis on the birth of a little granddaughter, and Anna & John who were gifted with three more grandchildren this year, two boys and a girl!
This year we had all sorts of celebrations... a real milestone for Terri & Spiro Macris who celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary! ...and Irene Kapareliotis’ Graduation Party, her Associates Degree and plan to continue her studies in Mechanical Engineering!
(Hickville Continued)

Perastika to our members who had surgeries and are on their way to recovery… Vasso Patrikis, Dimitris Fonias, Terri Macris, Manny Papadakis and John Dounelis, our Past Parish President and choir supporter.

This January, for the 2nd year in a row, a group of 12 choir members, family and friends vacationed together, this time on a 7-night Western Caribbean Cruise! Everyone had a fabulous time and hope to travel together again next year.

We were sad to say good-bye to Irene’s mother Sevasti, who recently returned to Greece after an extended visit. She was with us on the cruise and at many gatherings this year and will always be a part of our choir family!

Submitted by Choir Member Terri Macris

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, Blue Point, NY

We will be hosting our 1st ever Choir Camp. The ages are from 6 - 18. $50.00 per child for 1 week to be held 08/20/2007 - 08/24/2007. Drinks and snacks will be available as well as music to take home at the end of our camp. Each camper will be asked to come back the 1st Sunday of choir to help us praise God. They will also learn a piece of music for Christmas as well as Holy Week and Easter. There is nothing more beautiful than an Angel’s voice praising God!

Submitted by Choir Director Marcelle Wheeler

SAINT PARASKEVI, Greenlawn, NY

"I kali mera ap to proi fenete!" The good day from the morning shows. This popular Greek saying appropriately describes our choir. We have had many good days since we last met in the Focus and we hope that you have, too.

Fotios Nicholas Kontoglou, the most famous modern hagiographer writes in his “The Appearance of Spring: The Fragrance of the Resurrection”, that his “mind rejoices at every moment with the works of chanting and hagiography, and from within those, sees and hears and smells the beautiful and pleasing things of creation. It hears the deepest voice of nature... you experience everything as celebrating with the angels because of Christ’s Resurrection.” We need but to listen to the sounds of music in nature, for like church choirs they can bring people closer to God.

Our choir, under Director Mike, strives to achieve this quality continuously. We have remained busy and involved since we last met in the Focus, whether it is participating in the Sunday Liturgy, or other wonderful activities in which we had the pleasure of sharing.

Many of our members enjoyed the camaraderie at the Federation’s Fall Social. A good time was had by all, and they are looking forward to the next such event.

December 2006 we were back at Huntington Hospital with bells on as promised in December 2005, when we couldn’t achieve our annual mission of Christmas caroling due to an illness that was circulating in the hospital. This time it was “mission accomplished” with Director Mike and choir members and their families spreading Christmas cheer for the 34th consecutive year.

As usual, choir members, along with Director Mike, also found themselves at Holy Trinity, Hicksville, rehearsing for the Federation’s secular concert, “Immortal Greek Melodies.” Those of us who were unable to participate enjoyed a wonderful evening at this event, which included greeting choir friends from everywhere.

This year our choir has continued to grow. We have welcomed new members with their talented voices to our “family”, and have had young voices join us at times also. Hopefully they are future choir members in the making!

Currently we are practicing for a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy which will be celebrated on Sunday, June 3rd with His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios officiating. The occasion is the 50th anniversary of St. Paraskevi and also of our choir. The St. Paraskevi Choir was founded in December 1956 by Miss Lydia Koureli. Throughout these fifty years our choir has grown and flourished under talented directors and dedicated members to its current twenty-five person membership, presently directed by Michael Papantoniou. The choir is a ministry which “imitates on earth the choirs of angels chanting around the throne of God, so that people may better experience the grace of God”.

Nothing elevates the soul, nothing gives it wings as a liturgical hymn does. —St. John Chrysostom.

On that note, we would like to wish you all a great summer! Stay well and we’ll see you on a Sunday and/or at a special Choir Federation event!!

Submitted by Choir Member Fay Pavlidis

TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST, Mattituck, NY

May 13 the choir of the Transfiguration of Christ of Mattituck of L.I. started to sing. James Talas is our choir director and organist since the opening of the church over 30 years ago. We have 15 regular members. Many choir members from other churches come to sing with us during the summer.

We wish to thank Susan Cardinale of Jamesport of Long Island who so graciously offered to have the music printed free of charge for the Federation’s “Immortal Greek Melodies” Concert that took place at the Stathakion Cultural Center in Astoria on Saturday May 5th 2007.

Submitted by Choir Member Vasso Patrikis
YOUTH CHOIRS...“In Harmony”...

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL, Roslyn, NY

In ice, hail and blinding snow, nineteen devoted youth choir members weathered the storm and came to church to sing the Heretismi Service on Friday evening March 16, 2007. At the service, talented sisters Stacy Anagnostopoulos and Crystal Anagnostopoulos melodiously chanted the Aspile as everyone listened attentively. The choir attendance that evening was a testament to their commitment.

Through the years, our choir has had several two sister combinations who have been choir members at the same time. This year, we are graced with a triple blessing comprised of the wonderful sister trio of Maryann, Christina and Demetra Vlahos. These exceptional sisters are giving and caring young ladies who are always punctual and considerate of their responsibilities to choir.

Parental support is crucial to the success of a youth choir and at Archangel Michael Church we are fortunate to have parents who instill the value of being part of youth choir. Heartfelt gratitude is to be extended to our dedicated youth choir members and their parents who drive them back and forth to Wednesday rehearsals and every Sunday to the early morning first service.

This past March, our youth choir members had the privilege of celebrating a Hierarchical Liturgy with his Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and His Grace Bishop Savas of Troas at the Archdiocesan District Choir Federation Conference. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios commented how beautiful it is to see the adult and youth choir members singing the liturgy together side by side. Marcelle Wheeler, President of the Archdiocesan District Choir Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians, is a strong advocate for youth involvement. Under her reign and for the first time in Archdiocesan District Federation history, a youth choir performed at the Federation Concert and was included in the Conference Liturgy.

The four talented organists who serve our church are - Eleni Rodopoulos Kaufman, Christina Lipinski, Kris George Kaufman and our newest organist Alexia Skiadas. It has truly been a pleasure to train these extraordinary young people who are the promise of the future.

On May 6, 2007, the Byzantine Youth Choir of Archangel Michael of Roslyn celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. Eleftherios in New York City with His Grace Bishop Philotheos of Meloa and Reverend Father Nicholas Soteropoulos. The voices of the choir sounded angelic! Renee Lascarides delivered the Epistle Reading and Alexa Vasilakos lead the ensemble in the recitation of The Nicene Creed in Greek. We appreciated the gracious welcome by Father Nicholas and the St. Eleftherios community. After the liturgy, we enjoyed a lovely reception. A delicious lamb luncheon was served with live musicians serenading us with beautiful Greek melodies.

We have three high school seniors in our teen division who will be graduating this June. They have given so much of their time to choir and should be commended for their outstanding dedication to our church’s worship services. Congratulations to TERESA GOGAS, ZEFIE NIKOLIS, & KATERINA SKIADAS - Ke Se Anotera!

We were thrilled with the exciting Broadway musical theatre production of Mary Poppins on our Choir Theatre Trip. We spent a wonderful day together. At this time, we are looking forward to a fun-filled afternoon at our Annual Choir Pool Party set for June 30, 2007.

Our Youth Hold The Key To The Future Of Orthodoxy and every endeavor is being made to pass the Light of our Faith to the next generation of Greek Orthodox Christians. It is our desire to continue to empower our children with the tools they need to preserve the rich musical heritage of the Orthodox faith and lead us forward into the future.

Have a DIVINE summer! With Faith & With Love… Submitted by Byzantine Youth Choir Director Georgia Kaufman

HOLY TRINITY, Hicksville, NY

It has been another successful year here in Hicksville. We started off with many new voices, and as the year progressed, the choir as a whole has become stronger. We had many performances, starting with a Christmas Eve service. Our final performance was on Sunday, June 10th, as the children sang the Divine Liturgy. Other performances include the liturgy for the Saturday of Lazarus service and the service on Good Friday. The children also took part in singing with the Greek school students during the celebration of OXI day as well as the Christmas carols and the Kalanda on January 7th. I would like to congratulate all the graduates of our youth choir: Michelle Dimitrakakis, Eleni Makris, George Marinakos, and Billy Pilavas. It was a pleasure having them in our choir. Their voices will be missed, but hopefully they will be joining our senior choir next year. Have a wonderful summer!

Submitted by Junior Choir Director Stacy Svolos
What is the National Forum?

The National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians is the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan ministry responsible for liturgical music activities and the development, support, and recognition of church musicians. Chartered in 1976 as an auxiliary of the Archdiocese, the National Forum serves as the liaison among local church musicians, metropolitan church music federations, and the Archdiocese. It also serves as the gathering place for church musicians to discuss issues related to liturgical music and to formulate needed responses. The eight metropolitan church music federations together form the foundation of the National Forum.

The National Forum has three major areas of focus:
1. Support for choirs, providing resources and activities related to improving the quality of choirs and choral music in the Church
2. Support for liturgical music programs in the parishes, including liturgical music education and support for the clergy’s liturgical music needs
3. Support for chanters and the preservation of Byzantine Chant


Immortal Greek Melodies Concert a Success!

By Anna Dounelis

When Greeks gather together, they sing and dance! You can’t separate Greeks from their music… it stirs their hearts and souls, and as they raise their voices in song their feet begin to tap and their hands to clap to the beat!

Therefore, when it was suggested that the Federation present another Greek concert, under the direction of Constantine Gajdjis, many responded with excitement and enthusiasm. Those who weren’t available to sing in the Immortal Greek Melodies Concert supported the program by attending or donated their time and talent to help create a beautiful and unforgettable event. The result, after many months of practice and preparation, was a resounding success! The chorus performed to a sold-out audience that expressed their appreciation for the music and songs with thunderous applause and cries for more!

Congratulations to everyone who participated on Saturday, May 5, 2007 at the Stathakion in Astoria, and our most sincere appreciation to Costas who did a fantastic job, as always! Not only did he prepare the music for the concert, conduct and sing, but he also sold ads to help offset concert expenses. We also appreciated the efforts of Stella Kalos who was in charge of tickets at the concert, and thank Joanna Bartolomeo for designing the admission tickets, Anna Dounelis for preparing the flyers, and Katia Zallas, Federation member and President of the Hellenic Music Foundation, for the concert program.

2007 Choir Member of the Year Award

Congratulations
Constantine Gajdjis

The Choir Member of the Year Award is an award created by the Archdiocesan District Federation to recognize the dedicated service of an individual choir member.

This year the recipient of this honor is one of our most dedicated church musicians, Constantine Gajdjis. In addition to being an extremely talented tenor, he is choir director of Saints Catherine & George Church in Astoria, NY, has directed our Federation’s three Greek Concerts and has served as a conductor in Federation Christmas concerts. Congratulations, Costas!
A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU…

I wish to thank everyone who has assisted and supported me with my Public Relations responsibilities during these last years. In particular, Marcelle, Terri Macris, Angela Arettines, Fay Pavlidis, and most especially my daughter Joanna Bartolomeo, an exceptionally gifted graphic designer. Although not a choir member, Joanna graciously donated to the Federation many hours of her time and talent over the last four years by working hand-in-hand with me on each FEDERATION FOCUS issue. Joanna created flyers, programs and admission tickets for our two Great Musical Hits of Greece concerts, the Christmas 2005 Concert and CD cover, postcards, order forms, as well as admission tickets for this year’s Immortal Greek Melodies concert. Her assistance has truly been invaluable. She did not want me to sing her praises, but I wanted you all to know of her contributions to the Federation.

CHURCH MUSIC CDs

PREPARE THE FEAST: MUSIC FROM THE DIVINE LITURGY

The music is sung by the choir of the Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church, with Kevin Lawrence, its conductor. This recording contains multiple versions of hymns sung during each Divine Liturgy, as well as beloved feast day hymns in Greek and English settings by the conductor. The CD was professionally recorded in cooperation with the Southeastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians. The cost of the CD is $15.00 plus postage. All proceeds from sale of the CD are donated to the Dormition Choir Fund. You may order it from: Toula Chininis, SEFGOCM Librarian, 1600 Clement Court Greensboro, SC 27410, E-mail: la@bellsouth.net or Kevin Lawrence, E-mail: KJLawrence@aol.com, Phone: 336 784-5128

CELEBRATIONS OF MUSIC: CHRISTMAS CONCERT 2005

The Commemorative Recording of The Archdiocesan District Federation’s Christmas Concert 2005 featuring our talented soloists, musicans and youth choir members singing Church hymns and popular Christmas carols. Limited copies are still available. 2-CD Set Christmas Concert 2005 - $20.00, plus $6.00 shipping & handling. To purchase contact Anna Dounelis (516) 293-3354 or e-mail: kalimera@optonline.net.

SAINT ROMANOS THE MELODIST…

Commemorated October 1

Saint Romanos, the patron of church musicians, had a rather mediocre voice, but his pure and simple heart was filled with love for God, and to assist as deacon at church services gave him great joy. The saintly Patriarch Euthemios loved Romanos for his many virtues, and paid him the same wage as those singers who were more educated and talented. Saint Romanos was to lead the singing at the All-night Vigil before Our Lord’s Nativity. He entreated the Mother of God to help him. She appeared to him in a dream, handed him a scroll and said, “Here, eat this.” Romanos did so and awoke, overcome with joy and the lingering presence of the heavenly visitor. When Saint Romanos began to sing at the Vigil the entire congregation listened in wonder at the profound theology and clear, sonorous voice that issued forth. Later, Saint Romanos told the patriarch about his vision, and the singers who had ridiculed him prostrated themselves in repentance and humbly asked the Saint’s forgiveness.

SAINT KASSIANE…

Commemorated September 7

At the beginning of his reign, Emperor Theophilos saw in the brilliant and beautiful Kassiane a likely candidate to become his bride, but did not want her to exceed him in intellect. Looking at Kassiane, the Emperor stated, “From woman came the worst in the world” (meaning Eve and her original sin). Kassiane calmly replied, “From woman also came the best” (referring to the Virgin Mary who bore the Son of God). The issue was settled then and there, but Kassiane did not consider it a rejection. She was now free to unite herself to Christ, as she had desired to become a nun from an early age. Kassiane established herself as a hymnographer of the highest caliber. Her hymns were so beautiful that they were brought to the attention of the Church Fathers of the day, all of whom acknowledged her gift and encouraged her to compose hymns lofty enough to suit the occasion, the most famous of which is her familiar hymn sung during Holy Week and which bears her name as the “Hymn of Kassiane.”

CHOIR HUMOR…

How many choir directors does it take to change a light bulb?

Nobody knows. Nobody ever watches the choir director!

What is the difference between a terrorist and a choir director?

You can negotiate with a terrorist.
FEDERATION FOCUS
Volume 6 • No. 2 • Spring/Summer 2007

EXECUTIVE BOARD
2007-2008
MARCELLE WHEELER
President
STELLA KALOS
Vice President
PEGGY STYLIANOS
Recording Secretary
ANNA DOUNELIS
Treasurer
MARIA FELIX
Public Relations Officer
STEPHANIE PAVLIDIS
Librarian
GEORGIA KAUFMAN
Youth Choir Liaison

http://archdistrict.churchmusic.goarch.org/