



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Report to the 43rd Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress

Nashville, Tennessee

Archdiocese Council Committee on Religious Education: His Grace Bishop Andonios of Phasiane, Presiding Hierarchy; Mr. Gerry Clonaris, Chair; Rev. Alkiviadis Calivas; Dr. John Collis; Mr. Jim Gabriel; Mrs. Poxeni Maouris Hillier; Mrs. Maria Keritsis; Dr. Anthony Limberakis; Mrs. Aphrodite Skeadas.

Department Staff: Anton C. Vrame, Ph.D., Director; Anestis Jordanoglou, Office Manager; Aimee Cox, Curriculum Specialist; Angeliki Constantine, Project Coordinator; Maria Tiches Klonaris, Webstore Manager; Dimitra Dogias, Customer Service; Nicholas Mueller, Customer Service.

In addition: Presv. Margaret Orfanakos, National Chair, St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival.

OVERVIEW

The Department is continually creating new and revising older materials that can better serve the religious education ministries of our parishes in light of many changing realities of parish life, e.g., irregular attendance in Sunday Church school, increased combination of classes, and the need to utilize strategies of education today, e.g., greater interaction of students, cooperative work, and when possible, technology.

Communicating the work of the Department to those who carry out the ministry of religious education in the parishes continues to be a central focus. Through the use of print and mail, electronic communication and social media, the Department steadily reaches more and more people. For example, a mailing could reach as many as 5,000 addresses. The Facebook group Orthodox Christian Religious Educators has 3,700 members. We've created Facebook groups and pages for the Oratorical Festival, the Department itself, and Orthodox Marketplace to promote Archdiocese-produced resources and programs. The Department has a listserv with over 3,000 recipients. These same posts are found on the Archdiocese blog site, blogs.goarch.org, which also contains posts from other Archdiocese departments. Blog posts are receiving between 1,500-2,000 views. We cannot know how many of these pieces are being forwarded to others, being reposted in other sources, or being reprinted in parish newsletters or bulletins.

In addition, direct contact with parishes is a daily task. The Department Staff is available by telephone, via email, and visitors to the office to assist clergy, Sunday Church School supervisors, and teachers with the selection of resources and other ideas to best meet their particular program needs. Finally, the Director is often on the road, speaking at parish and Metropolis events about the work of the Department and the ministry of religious education.

Internally, the Department continues to work to become more cost-efficient, searching out the best prices and looking for new vendor relationships to produce resources at the lowest costs, while still maintaining the high quality our parishes expect. The relationship with the American Bible Society for warehousing and order fulfillment has been excellent. These efficiencies save the Department money, freeing up financial resources that can be invested in the creation of new resources.

A regular topic of discussion of the Archdiocese Council Committee for the Department is that many parishes of our Archdiocese do not use Archdiocese-created resources for their religious education programs. Despite the many excellent existing resources and the continual production of new materials, the Department estimates that between 25%-30% of our parishes will implement a new Department-produced textbook or resource. One helpful remedy was the 2011 decision of the Archdiocese Council to permit parishes to deduct the costs of their parish religious education programs from their total commitment allocation calculations, provided certain conditions are met. This decision should add an incentive to parishes to expand their religious education ministry, including the use of the many resources from the Department.

The Archdiocese Council Committee for the Department meets four to five times per year, before each Council meeting and via conference call. Lately, the Committee uses the conference calls to review the work of the Department. The meetings before the Council meeting are devoted to more “think tank” types of discussions, to brainstorm future initiatives for the Department and discuss the state of religious education work in our Archdiocese.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

Sales/Inventory/Year-End Procedures

The Department’s gross revenues from sales were \$408,957 in 2014 and \$379,394 in 2015. Sales have dropped over the years due to a number of factors, including the Department focusing on its own products over those from other vendors that are widely available elsewhere. Annually, the Department conducts a complete physical inventory. At the end of 2015, the value was \$590,999. All financial modules for Inventory, Accounts Receivable, and Accounts Payable have been closed for the years 2014 and 2015. The Department’s Statement of Activity can be found at the end of this report. This statement reflects the income and expenditures of the Department independently of those functions supported by the budgeted amounts from the Archdiocese. In other words, this Statement reflects what the Department does with the revenues it collects from its sales.

Orthodox Marketplace

On April 1, 2016, the Department began operating Orthodox Marketplace for the entire Archdiocese. A new webstore has been designed and launched. This creates “one stop online shopping” for most Archdiocese-developed resources. But we are still in a period of transition as the Department works with the various Archdiocese offices to determine what products and resources they wish to have available through Marketplace.

Warehousing and Fulfillment

In January 2016, the Department’s inventory was moved housed to a warehouse and fulfillment center in Tulsa, Oklahoma operated by the American Bible Society (ABS). *All* orders are fulfilled from this warehouse. There are no inventory items in Brookline. This has allowed the Department to speed order fulfillment times, even out shipping times, and charge more equitable shipping rates to our customers.

New Resources

Elementary Level

God Calls Us – Revised Grade 5 Textbook from the Living Our Orthodox Faith Series

Since early 2012, the Department has begun the enormous task of revising the Living Our Orthodox Faith textbook series. With funds from Leadership 100, the Department has rewritten *God Calls Us*, the fifth grade textbook of the series. The textbook has been “broken up,” transforming each unit of the book into a zine/booklet for classroom use. The essential content of Bible, Saints, and Scripture is the same. We have added material connecting this content to the experiences of the Church in more recent times. For example, in the unit devoted to the life of Christ, we have added material about the shrines in the Holy Land.

The Department has started work on a revised edition of *Growing with God*, the fourth grade textbook. This will be produced in 3 units with a teacher’s guide.

Leadership 100 has provided the Department with the funds to revise these textbooks.

High School Level

The Church: We Are One in Christ

The Department produced this new zine about the Church for high school students in 2015.

The Department is working on a new zine about the sacraments to be released in late 2016 or early 2017.

Other Resources

The Planner

The Department produces the Annual Planner over the summer. Over the last two years, the Archdiocese produced a Planner for 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. The 2016-2017 Planner is in preparation.

Christmas for our King

Working with Fr. Konstantine Mendrinov, a new Christmas pageant was published in March 2016. This pageant is not a play, but a series of readings and carols, songs, and hymns that present the Christmas story. It is ideal as an outreach tool for a parish.

PRAXIS Magazine

PRAXIS is the publication of the Department, raising issues of ministry and theology for a general reader. Articles from *PRAXIS* are often used in religious education programs, retreats, and other programs.

Since the last Clergy-Laity Congress, *PRAXIS* has published the following issues:

- Vol. 14:1 Fall 2014 – Teaching Strategies
- Vol. 14:2 Winter 2015 – Iakovos and Selma, 50th anniversary
- Vol. 14:3 Spring 2015 – Spiritual Disciplines
- Vol. 15:1-2 Fall-Winter 2016 – Speaking to Secular America
- Vol. 15:3 Spring 2016 – The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church

A copy of *PRAXIS* is mailed to every hierarch, active and retired clergyman, and Church school supervisor in our Archdiocese, nearly 2,000 copies. Back issues of *PRAXIS* are available on-line – www.issuu.com/orthodoxmarketplace

Annual Resource Catalog

The Department was producing an annual catalog. With the launch of the on-line store, the Department has ceased producing it because the same information will be available electronically. This will be a tremendous savings in costs and time needed to produce this large work. We intend to produce smaller flyers and brochures that can highlight specific items or needs.

Curriculum “Catalog”

A regular question to the Department is “Does the Archdiocese have a curriculum?” The simple answer is “Yes.” To provide more information about these resources, the Department has created a short brochure or “catalog” highlighting only textbooks, teacher’s guides, and supplements.

Maintaining the “Back List” of Existing Resources

The Department maintains a “back list” of approximately 300 items, from books to icons. In addition to producing new items, the Department keeps these items available, even if they were created decades ago, until sales have diminished substantially, newer resources have taken their place, or until no longer practical. Managing this extensive list requires a great deal of staff time. One of the biggest challenges is the need to keep pace technologically with these older materials. For example, most of these resources were created before the advent of desktop publishing and digital printing. The Department Staff is always working with

new vendors who can transfer these older products to newer technologies and must continually be in search of sources and processes to keep up with the technological changes.

Communications

The Department continues to use the Religious Education listserv, with an email on a theological, educational, or ministry-related topic every few weeks. These emails will frequently recommend appropriate resources on the topic of the email. While the number always changes, the listserv has over 3,000 recipients.

The Orthodox Christian Religious Educators Facebook group has over 3500 members. At times, this site generates considerable discussion based on questions from the members and themes or articles posted by the members.

The Department Webpage - religiously.goarch.org – is continually being updated with resources and suggestions for teachers and supervisors.

The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival Facebook group does not have much discussion, but has allowed the Department to post information, photos, etc., about the topics and the Festival itself.

The Department continues to use direct mail to its customer base, mailing catalogs and seasonal flyers.

Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival

The Department, through the leadership of National Co-chair Presvytera Margaret Orfanakos, plans and coordinates this program throughout the year. Information is located on the Department website.

- The 2015 National Festival was hosted by the Metropolis of San Francisco, June 5-7 at the St. Anthony Church in Pasadena, CA.
- The 2016 National Festival was hosted by the Metropolis of Atlanta, June 10-12 at the St. Nektarios Church in Charlotte, NC.
- The 2017 National Festival will be hosted by the Metropolis of Boston and Hellenic College-Holy Cross, June 9-11, at the Annunciation Church, Woburn, MA.
- The 2018 National Festival will be hosted by the Metropolis of Chicago.

Faith: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism provides scholarship awards every year to the finalists at the National Festival.

The Chrysostom Scholarships of Hellenic College provide scholarship funds to any Oratorical Festival participant at the parish, district, Metropolis, or National level, if they attend Hellenic College.

Increasing the number of parishes that participate in the Oratorical Festival is an ongoing goal of the Department. The table below shows the number of parishes in each Metropolis that hold a Festival and the percentage of parish participation for each Metropolis in 2014 and 2015.

Parishes Participating in the Oratorical Festival	2014	2015
Direct Archdiocese District	19	19
Atlanta Metropolis	34	40
Boston Metropolis	11	12
Chicago Metropolis	20	18
Denver Metropolis	19	19
Detroit Metropolis	22	22

New Jersey Metropolis	36	36
Pittsburgh Metropolis	20	23
San Francisco Metropolis	31	28
Total	212	217

In 2014, the Department added on-line registration of parishes and speakers for the Festival as a way to better capture information and track participation in the program. In addition, the Department added Poetry and Essays to the Festival as a way to increase participation and include young people who would prefer to express their Faith through the written word. This program did not remain at the National level, but individual Metropolises have been encouraged to include Poetry and Essays.

Teacher Training

An important topic in the Archdiocese Council Committee on Religious Education is teacher training and certification. The Department is launching a new Teacher Education and Certification Program at this Congress.

Director's Activity

The Director of the Department travels throughout the Archdiocese for workshops and presentations to Metropolis programs or parish programs.

The Director is Adjunct Associate Professor at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, teaching the introductory course in Religious Education (PAST 5301) and a new course, The Orthodox Ethos (ETH 5002) for all incoming seminarians. He continues to write and publish scholarly articles on issues of Orthodox Christian Religious Education. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Religious Education Association. The Director represents the Archdiocese to the Faith and Order Convening Table of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

The Director serves as Executive Secretary and Vice-President of the Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC), the agency for Christian Education of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to pursuing the goals described above, the following recommendations are made:

- That every Parish review the resources being used in the parish Sunday Church school program, utilizing resources produced or recommended by the Archdiocese Department of Religious Education.
- That every Parish establish a line item in its budget for Religious Education covering resources for the program (textbooks, supplements, supplies), attendance at training seminars and events, adult religious education programs such as lectures and other events.
- That every Parish annually update the names and contact information of its Sunday Church school supervisors and teachers to their Metropolis Religious Education Director, which will be shared with the Archdiocese Department so that the Metropolis and Department may communicate directly with supervisors and teachers.
- That Sunday Church School teachers participate in Teacher Training events, offered by the parish, the Metropolis, or the Archdiocese.
- That every Parish begin a regular educational program for adults.
- That every Parish hold a St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival.
- That every Parish set aside between 45 minutes to one hour per week for Sunday Church school.
- That children attend as much of the Sunday Divine Liturgy as possible, at least through Holy Communion.
- That parishes establish bookstores if they do not already have one.

**GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY AND FUND BALANCE
YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015 AND 2014**

	2015	2014
Operations		
Sales	\$379,394	\$408,967
Subscription Revenue	1,771	6,592
Income from Shipping and Handling	45,402	43,983
Cost of Goods Sold	(215,090)	(214,022)
Postage and Shipping and Handling	(50,425)	(40,337)
	\$161,052	\$205,183
GROSS PROFIT		
ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATING EXPENSES		
Advertising Expense	6,090	6,871
Bad Debt Expense	587	8
Catalog Expense	14,437	22,714
Continuing Education/ Training	440	0
Depreciation	195	112
Equipment Rental and Service Contracts	16,157	18,310
Office Expenses and Supplies	17,601	16,812
Payroll Taxes	0	295
Praxis Magazine Expense	16,326	13,505
Professional Fees	3,513	3,425
Publications Expense	11,525	15,064
St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival	5,049	4,182
Summer Institute of Religious Education	1,275	505
Travel	13,286	14,415
Warehouse Expense	13,730	14,021
Total Administrative and Operating Expenses	\$120,211	\$130,239
Excess Expenses Over Income- Operations	\$40,841	\$74,944
Other Income / Expense		
Dividend Income	298	736
Donations Received, Misc Income	50	56
Interest Expense	0	(339)
Interest Income	785	336
Leadership 100 Grant	0	80,000
Other Income	758	271
Summer Institute Income	(2,219)	(1,924)
Unrealized Gain/ Loss - Stocks on Hand	5,779	5,786
Total Other Income	5,451	84,922
Net Profit- Operating Fund	\$46,292	\$159,866
St. John Chrysostom Fundtn- Restricted Fund		
Contributions	\$15,073	\$11,826
Interest Income	2,564	2,489
Scholarships Paid	(7,500)	(20,964)
Net Profit- Restricted Fund	\$10,137	(\$6,649)
Fund Balance, beginning of year	\$1,045,770	\$854,034
Fund Balance, end of year	\$1,102,199	\$1,007,251

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
 Department of Religious Education
 Balance Sheet
 DECEMBER 31, 2015 AND 2014

	2015	2014
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash - Operating*	\$321,742	\$245,836
Cash - St. John Chrysostom Foundation - Restricted	126,455	116,318
Stocks on Hand	35,507	29,728
Accounts Receivable	110,047	122,885
Inventory-Books, net of reserve	590,999	593,451
Inventory-Display	3,292	4,023
Other Current Assets	1,795	2,126
Total Current Assets	\$1,189,837	\$1,114,367
Property and Equipment		
Office Furniture and Equipment	\$245,456	\$214,721
Leasehold Improvements	48,010	48,010
Religious Artifacts	1,000	1,000
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(261,898)	(261,730)
Net Property and Equipment	\$32,568	\$2,001
Total Assets	\$1,222,405	\$1,116,368
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	117,267	69,008
Deferred Subscription Revenue - (Praxis)	3,106	1,591
Total Liabilities	\$120,373	\$70,599
Fund Balance		
Operating Fund	1,009,995	963,870
St. John Chrysostom Foundation - Restricted Fund	92,037	81,899
Total Fund Balance	\$1,102,032	\$1,045,769
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$1,222,405	\$1,116,368

*Please note that the accumulated cash reserves are earmarked for continuing expansion of the ongoing programs of the Department and completion of the middle school and high school curriculum.