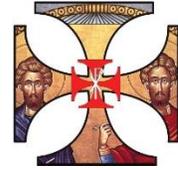


GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY, INC.
METROPOLIS PRESIDENT'S REPORT
2018-2020



METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY PHILOPTOCHOS

Eleni Constantinides, President

August 22, 2020

Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros,
Your Grace Bishop Apostolos of Medeia,
Esteemed National Philoptochos President Maria Logus,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A lot has happened in the Metropolis of New Jersey since our last National Philoptochos Biennial Convention. The saddest event for us was the passing of our beloved leader, friend and sister in Christ, Anastasia (Anne) Michals. Anne was an amazing, inspirational woman of grace and faith. The ladies of the Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos vowed to keep Anne's memory alive and continue the legacy she left behind.

A new Board was elected and His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos administered the Oath, pledged his full support, reminded us that Philoptochos is an integral part of our Holy Church and urged us to continue to help those in need with dignity, compassion and respect.

The new Board discussed and agreed that we must maintain close contact with our chapters. To accomplish this, two Regional Workshops were planned and executed. This connection and face-to-face interaction with our chapter presidents and their boards proved to be necessary and very well received. We educated our new Presidents and their Boards on matters such as our Bylaws, Procedures, the Roles and Responsibilities of the Executive Board, gave them some advice on how to increase their membership, how to conduct elections, prepare a budget and how to handle social service cases brought to their attention. We also listened extensively to what they had to say and learned that many of them face common challenges.

In our meetings we included guest speakers who spoke about Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Homelessness, Hunger, Opioid Addiction. One of our speakers is the owner of a small ceramic studio in New Jersey. She employs disadvantaged women, teaches them the making of functional ceramic art and in this manner helps them regain their self-respect while earning a salary to support themselves and their families.

At the 2018 Metropolis of New Jersey Clergy Laity Conference our Metropolitan unveiled a new awareness program entitled Metropolis Opioid Response Effort (M.O.R.E.). This inspired our chapters to invite experts on the matter of opioid addiction to visit and share with them information, facts and how to access resources to assist families whose loved ones are victims of this crisis.

Our chapters participate in the Feed the Hungry Program not only in their parishes but also in the surrounding communities. We were also glad to join the Philoptochos National team, on a few occasions, to feed the hungry in New York City.

When the Operation Classroom initiative was introduced, our chapters again rose to the occasion and we have seen some amazing results. You will be able to see some of these projects during the course of the National Philoptochos Virtual Convention.

Our very last excursion before the pandemic arrived and changed our lives in ways that we never expected or imagined was our annual visitation to Saint Michael's Home for the Aged in Yonkers, New York. We participated in the Liturgy of the Saturday of Souls led by His Grace Bishop Antonios of Phassiane, met and shared refreshments with the residents and offered our gifts to His Grace. This visit is always well attended, and our chapters look forward to it.

Then COVID-19 struck. I am sure none of us thought that it would cause such devastation and such loss of life. Free Conference Calls and Zoom Meeting became the norm and we felt a great need to remain connected through our phones, tablets, and computers. Meetings with individual chapters, regions and our Board became a weekly occurrence. And when I would hear what was happening around us, how our wonderful ladies were either making masks, arranging for food to be delivered to hospitals and to first responders, I found myself crying tears of sadness for the devastation around the world but at the same time tears of pride. I knew how blessed I am and what an honor it is to be part of this group of amazing women called Philoptochos. We cried together for those who succumbed to the illness and tried, through our Social Services program, to give much needed assistance to those who needed their mortgage, rent and utility bills paid. The greatest need was for food. It's hard to comprehend and difficult to believe, but the food pantries are emptying, people continue to be unemployed, children who were receiving their daily meals at their schools are home and parents are struggling. But people are generous, and they give freely from their hearts, and we do the best we can to help.

Our Metropolitan is constantly by our side, offering his blessings, his support, and his prayers. We owe him a great deal and pray that God will give him strength and wisdom to endure and continue to do His Work.

Like everyone else we had to cancel our Conferences and our fundraisers. However, our chapters are becoming very resourceful. They hold a lot of virtual events and try to raise funds to meet their Metropolis and National Commitments. Compared to previous years, membership is a bit on the decline, but this is to be expected.

We hope and pray that things will get better, that the virus will be contained, that we will be able to go back to our churches without wearing masks and keeping a "social distance". In the meantime, let us remain strong in our faith and pray for guidance, wisdom and strength.

Eleni Constantinides, President
Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos