

DIAKONIA

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA



Spring 2013

Featuring the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America



*His Beatitude, The Most Blessed
Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch
and All the East
May God Grant our Master and Chief
Shepherd Many Years!*



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

☞ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ☞

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP
Founder

The Most Reverend
Archbishop JOSEPH
Overseeing Hierarch

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Antiochian Women's Prayer

*In the Name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
O Christ our God, we are all pledged to
serve Thee with our whole being.
Help us to continue to work for Thee
through our Church, without seeking praise,
without seeking personal gain,
without judging others, without a feeling that
we have worked hard enough
and now must allow ourselves rest.
Give us strength to do what is right and
help us to go on striving and to remember
that activities are not the main thing in life.
The most important thing is to have
our hearts directed and attuned to Thee.
Amen.*

DIAKONIA is a Newsletter of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women, an organization of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and is published quarterly in the months of September, December, March and June.

For archived issues of DIAKONIA, go to:
<http://www.antiochian.org/AW-DIAKONIA>

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES:

Deadlines

- Please submit your articles by the first of the month prior to the month of publication so we can be sure they are included.

To submit articles, e-mail as an attachment to your diocesan Public Relations Director or to:
lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net

Submission Details

- Please include your name and the phone number where you can be contacted for questions.

Content

- All articles must be of interest to or regarding NAB, Diocesan or local Antiochian Women.
- All articles may be edited for length and clarity.

In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the
The Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

In each of the next seven issues, we will highlight one of the Dioceses. We encourage everyone however, to submit news and articles from all Antiochian parishes of North America for publication in every issue so we may keep in touch with each other.

What is DIAKONIA

The word **DIAKONIA** is a Greek word meaning *Service*, usually pertaining to service in the Church. The purpose of the Antiochian Women's organization is primarily spirituality and humanitarian service. In the words of our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP it is **"Theology in Action"**.



*“Rejoice, O full of Grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women!”
But when she saw the angel, Mary was perplexed at his word and considered what
kind of greeting this might be.*

On the Feast of the Annunciation

God the Word is conceived and becomes man by the Holy Spirit and the all-pure Virgin. The mystery of salvation, the cancellation of the curse, the setting up of the Ladder from heaven to earth, the investment of the living Ark takes place on this great feast of Annunciation. The feast draws into view, and is fulfilled on March 25. Mary saw the angel and in all humility she listened and pondered. She makes no wild display, no sudden outburst. The Virgin is full of prayer and her heart keeps silence before the declaration of the angel. She conceives the Life within her through receiving the implanted Logos “through the ear” as St Proklos (5th century) said in his homily on this mystery. God weaves the woof of divinity into the warp of humanity. God becomes man and the Virgin Mother holds silence, as she keeps the mystery stored up for its manifestation in its time.

Our Lady was perplexed. Her mind could not hold this new category: the mingling of motherhood and virginity cannot be grasped. “How shall I conceive who am a virgin-maid?” (Canon of Annunciation, 1st Ode, 3rd troparion). But she does not judge nor settle for something inadequate. “She considered what kind of greeting this might be.” The Virgin teaches us through her silence; she instructs the children of the Church by her reticence and repose. She does not talk much but rather she “considers.” We may well learn from her good example in all things. When something new and different confronts us, how often we begin chatting with one another as we try to smash meaning out of it! We do violence with our speech, we do not take the time needed for reflection, for prayer, for sorting things out. We do not pause to “consider.”

There is more for us to learn from this great feast. We call it “Annunciation”—this suggests the verb, “to announce.” Something important is announced: the angelic greeting, “Hail, Mary, full of grace!” But the English name of the feast does not convey nearly enough. In the original Greek it is the Feast of

Evangelism! The Gospel is announced, not just any annunciation but a very special and unique one. The performative word, the word becoming deed, the word as WORD, as ACTION! God enters the human race as one of us. He who encompasses the universe will be encompassed in the womb and be born in time.

Mary is silent. The “Ark with a soul” as the feast proclaims it (9th katavasia) harbors the Life Himself! She is the fulfillment of the type shown in the ancient Ark of the Testimony which Moses had built according to God’s command. In the old order, they built a box of wood and covered it with pure gold, inside and out. This represented the presence of God; it was the Mercy Seat. Now in the new order, types are completed with substance: the immaculate Virgin is the “ark with a soul” made like us as human (the wood) and filled with God (the gold). She is silent, but her life speaks of holiness and purity.

In the Old Testament, the Ark was treated with great care and in all seriousness. The Bible gives one account which shows this seriousness. Once, when King David began to rule, when the Ark was being transferred from Gibeon to Jerusalem, it was placed in a wagon and drawn by Uzzah and his sons. It shook in its path and Uzzah “reached out and steadied it with his hand” (2 Kgdms 6:6) and he died! He was bold and overstepped his bounds, taking into his hands that which did not belong to him. The Ark then came into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. Would he die as well, before the Presence of the Lord? No; for the Ark stayed there “for three months... and the Lord blessed all his house”! What was the difference? The first man died due to arrogance; the second was blessed due to humility.

“Let not the hand of the uninitiated touch the Ark-with-a-soul”! (9th katavasia of the Feast) Mary receives the implanted Logos, the fire of the divinity, but she is blessed—“all generations shall call me



blessed.” She has no arrogance. She keeps silence and “considers all these things.” Later, after the presentation of her new-born Son in the Temple of God, Mary heard the prophecies of Symeon and Anna, and she “pondered all these things in her heart.” In the Orthodox Church, we keep the inner traditions in humility, the holy in silence, pondering all with humble hearts.

So, we can draw lessons and wisdom for the right ordering of our lives. Let us live in prayer as the Theotokos does. Let us speak less. Indeed, let us hold our tongues and ponder everything in silence. We should be in fear lest we sin with our tongue. There is a proverb: “Words fitly spoken are like apples of gold in pitchers of silver.” Gold and silver are valuable due to their rarity. Are our words rarities? Isn’t it true that we talk too much and so water everything down? We make commitments too quickly and find we do not perform them: “do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not say in the presence of God, “it

was a mistake.” Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the works of your hands?” (Eccl 5:5) Uzzah arrogantly reached out his hand and touched the Ark and died bodily; we arrogantly reach out with our tongue and defile the mystery of silence and die spiritually. St James teaches us, “the man who controls his tongue is a perfect man, who holds the whole body in check.”

Often we speak about fasting when we start Great Lent. We become concerned about diet and food and how to manage the Fast. But what about holding our tongue? Would it not be a better strategy to pray more, speak less, listen more, and attend to “the weightier matters of the law?” By so doing we will find ourselves in the company of our all-pure Lady and ready to obey the opening of the Mystery of Evangelism as it discloses itself to us. Let the atmosphere around us be one of a pregnant silence in the midst of which the wordless Word may sound forth in a holy way of life.

Message from the Diocesan Antiochian Women President

Deana Bottei

DOWAMA is one of the largest dioceses of our Archdiocese, but that doesn’t mean that we are strangers. In fact, when we gather together it is just the opposite....we are one very large family, even though many of us only see each other once or twice a year. It is such a comfort and a blessing to be a part of this wonderful diocese, not to mention part of an outstanding group of women! I would like to share my journey and what it means to me to be an Antiochian Woman.

As a parish we began attending Parish Life Conferences when I was in high school and still a member of Teen SOYO. Since we lived so far North in the diocese, though, we weren’t close to many of the other teens. It was difficult to be part of a group with which we felt little connection. The love for our church was still there, however, and we continued to travel to Parish Life Conferences.

An invitation was extended when I was just out of college to be a part of my local chapter of the Antiochian Women, thus beginning my involvement. I was aware of the organization; however, I had never attended a regional/diocesan meeting. I had no idea how many women were actually a part of this organization or the good works that they do for the Archdiocese. Since my Bachelor’s Degree is Mass Communications-Public Relations, the president of our local chapter asked me

four years ago to consider filling the open Public Relations Director position on the diocesan board, and I accepted.

I was immediately welcomed by the Antiochian Women of the diocese with open arms and hearts. What an amazing feeling to finally feel at home within the diocese! The fact that I was one of the two youngest members of the DOWAMA Antiochian Women made no difference at all. It was overwhelmingly incredible to be so fully accepted by a group of women.

When I took over two years ago as President of the DOWAMA diocese, I began attending archdiocesan meetings and acceptance took on a whole new level. Meeting women from all over the country who share the same passions as me is enchanting. This involvement has brought me experiences I never imagined, having the opportunity to meet so many fascinating bishops, priests, and women. Our time together is never long enough.

To each of you who have helped shape my journey thus far, and who will continue to be a part of my extended family over many, many years (God willing!) I say thank you. It is because of all of you that I have found another home in our church.

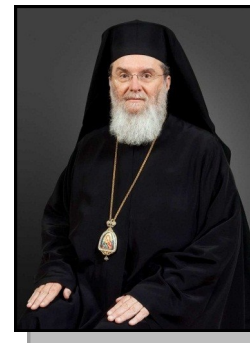




The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese OF NORTH AMERICA

Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

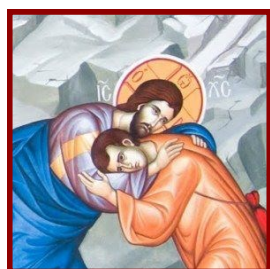
1559 North Woodlawn Street * Wichita, KS 67208-2429 USA
Telephone (316) 687-3169 * Fax (316) 636-5628 * Email: BpBasil@aol.com



Dear Sisters in Christ, the Officers and Members of the Antiochian Women of North America:

Blessings and greetings to you, your families and your congregations in the Name of the Lord Christ. As we make ready to enter into the “bright sadness” of the Great Fast on Pure Monday, March 17th, our Holy Church offers us an opportunity to ease ourselves into this “Springtime of the soul” through several preparatory weeks.

The first week of this preparatory period, which is totally fast-free, has been inaugurated, at least since the twelfth-century, by the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (Lk 18:10-14); we learn from this Parable the importance of repentance combined with humility.



The second week starts with the Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32) and is followed by a week during which we observe the usual fast on Wednesday and Friday; the Gospel theme for this week teaches us that our God is a patient and loving Father who is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

The third preparatory week begins with the Sunday of the Last Judgment (Mt 25: 31-46), also known as Meat Fare Sunday since during the week which follows we begin abstaining from meat — but we may eat eggs, cheese and other dairy products on every day (including Wednesday and Friday); this week we are reminded to imitate our heavenly Father



who “executeth judgment for the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment” (Deut 10:18).

The fourth and final day of pre-Lent is Forgiveness or Cheese Fare Sunday when we begin our fast from eggs, cheese and all dairy products; the Gospel message is clear: “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses” (Matt 6:14,15). So it is that we “begin the Fast with joy,” in humility and repentance, showing mercy to all, forgiving and being forgiven. Have a good Fast and a glorious Pascha!



In Christ,

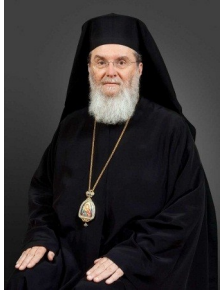
+ Bishop Basil

† Bishop Basil

Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

Introducing The 2011 - 2013 Board of Antiochian Women Of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

The Right Reverend Bishop BASIL - Diocesan Bishop



BISHOP BASIL was born in Monessen, PA on November 26, 1948, the only son and eldest of three children of William and Genevieve Essey. He was baptized on April 17, 1949 at St Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Monessen and raised at St Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Monessen. His Grace received his primary and secondary education in the public schools of Monessen, and in 1970 he received his B.A. in Psychology from California State University of Pennsylvania in California, PA. He entered St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, NY in 1970, from which he received his M.Div. in 1973 and, in 2010, was awarded a D.D. *honoris causa*. From 1973 until 1975 he served as pastoral assistant at St George Church in Detroit, MI and from 1975 until 1986 he served as the first director of the Archdiocese's Department of Youth Affairs with offices at the main chancery of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America in Englewood, NJ. While working in that capacity, he served as instructor of Contemporary Byzantine Chant at St Vladimir's Seminary from 1980 until 1986; in 2010 the Seminary's Board of Trustees established the Bishop Basil Program in Byzantine Liturgical Music, a concentrated course of study in Byzantine chant. During 1986 and 1987 he resided at the St John of Damascus Patriarchal Institute of Theology at the Balamand Monastery of the Dormition in the al-Koura region of north Lebanon where he studied, taught and did research and translations for The Liturgikon: The Book of Divine Services for the Priest and Deacon which was published by the Archdiocese's *Antakya Press* in 1989 (reprinted in 1994 and 2010).

Bishop BASIL was tonsured a reader by the late Metropolitan ANTONY (Bashir) at St Michael Church in Monessen on October 27, 1964, and ordained to the subdiaconate and diaconate by Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba) at St Ignatius of Antioch Church at the Antiochian Village in Bolivar, PA on September 30, 1979. On January 27, 1980 he was ordained to the priesthood by Metropolitan PHILIP at St Anthony Church in Bergenfield, NJ and on October 9, 1988 was elevated to the dignity of archimandrite by Metropolitan Philip at St George Church in Wichita, KS. From July 1, 1987 until his consecration to the episcopacy in 1992, he served as priest at St George Church in Wichita, KS. During his pastorate the new church temple was erected, consecrated and elevated to the

status of Cathedral on April 21, 1991. He received monastic tonsure to the Lesser Schema at the Patriarchal Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist in Tolleshunt Knight by Maldon, Essex, England, during the night between January 19 and 20, 2003 by the monastery's abbot, Archimandrite KYRILL. His Grace was nominated for bishop (auxiliary to Metropolitan PHILIP) by the General Assembly of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America on July 26, 1991, and was elected to the episcopacy (with the titular see of Enfeh al-Koura in north Lebanon) by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of the Great City-of-God Antioch and all the East on November 14, 1991. He was consecrated to the episcopacy on May 31, 1992 at St George Cathedral in Wichita, KS by Metropolitan PHILIP of the Archdiocese of North America, Metropolitan ELIAS (Audi) of the Archdiocese of Beirut, Bishop ANTOUN (Khoury) titular bishop of Seleucia and auxiliary of the Archdiocese of North America, and the late Archbishop MICHAEL (Shaheen) of Toledo, OH, auxiliary of the Archdiocese of North America. From 1992 until 1995 he resided at the Los Angeles Chancery, and in September 1995 he took up residence at the Wichita Chancery. By a decision of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate dated October 9, 2003, His Grace became a diocesan bishop and, since his enthronement on December 15, 2004, bears the title of Bishop of Wichita and the Diocese of Mid-America.

Bishop BASIL co-chaired the Joint OCA-Antiochian Canonization Commission which led to the glorification of Bishop RAPHAEL (Hawaweeny) of Brooklyn on May 29, 2000. His Grace oversaw the publication of the book containing St Raphael's *Vita*, Akolouthia and Akathist (*Antakya Press* 2000), arranged the hymnography for St Raphael to Byzantine melodies, and directed the Clergy Brotherhood Choir which recorded an audio CD of the hymns for the feast of St Raphael (*Antakya Press* 2001). In November 2002 His Grace headed the delegation from the Archdiocese of North America which met in Geneva, Switzerland with the delegation from the Patriarchate of Antioch to reach agreement on the basic principles of Self-Rule for the Archdiocese of North America. In May 2010 he was elected Secretary of the Assembly of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America.

His Grace, The Right Reverend Bishop BASIL resides at the Chancery of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America located at 1559 North Woodlawn Boulevard – Wichita, KS 67208-2429. The Diocesan Cathedral of St George is located at 7515 East 13th Street at Broadmoor – Wichita, KS 67206-1223.

Rev. Christopher Morris - Spiritual Advisor



Fr. Christopher hails from central Kansas. His home parish is All Saints Orthodox Church in Salina, Kansas.

Fr. Christopher received a Bachelor of Arts from Bethel College in 1996, a Master of Fine Arts degree from Kansas State University in 2001, and a Master of Divinity degree from St. Tikhon's Seminary in 2006. Fr. Christopher also attended St. Herman Seminary in Kodiak, Alaska.

Fr. Christopher was ordained to the holy priesthood in February of 2006 by His Grace Bishop BASIL at St. Tikhon's Monastery during his final year of seminary. While attending seminary, he was attached to St. Mary's parish in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Following his graduation, Fr. Christopher was blessed to return to his home diocese of Wichita and Mid-America and the omophorion of His Grace Bishop BASIL. Currently, he is serving as pastor of St. George Orthodox Church in Kearney, Nebraska, our archdiocese's 5th oldest parish, founded by St. Raphael of Brooklyn in 1904.

Fr. Christopher is married to Kh. Anastasia. They have 3 children—Gabriella, Juliana, and Joseph.

Deana Bottei - President



As a lifelong resident of Sioux City, Iowa, I am blessed and grateful to be a part of DOWAMA; to have the opportunity to travel to some of the most wonderful places. My amazing husband of almost one year, Edward – who I met at church, supports me and keeps me sane with all of my involvements. For the past five years I have worked full-time as the school secretary at a local middle school.

I am a lifelong member of St. Thomas Orthodox Church in Sioux City, where I currently serve as our Sunday School superintendent as well as the teacher of our first and second grade classroom. My church involvement includes being a member of our choir for the past 19 years, the director of our choir for the past 18 months, and a member of our Antiochian Women's group for the past 10 years. My commitment to the DOWAMA began almost four years ago when I took on the position of Public Relations Coordinator. Two years later I was elected to serve as the President of our great diocese. Serving the church is one of my greatest passions.

I am mom to a beautiful seven year-old daughter, Sadie, who is one of my other great passions. She is in second grade this year and learns something new in school every day. Sadie keeps me on my toes, as she is active and curious. This year Sadie has joined Girl Scouts and I

serve as her troop leader. Sadie also recently began violin lessons (taking after her mom!) and is really enjoying learning the instrument.

In the little spare time that I have, I love to read and do crossword puzzles. During the summer we spend lots of time outside, riding our bikes and swimming in our pool. When the cold Iowa winter takes its toll we spend our time indoors, cuddled up watching a good movie, playing with our two puppies or having a family game night.

Sherrie Massad - Vice President/NAB Project



St. Elijah Church in Oklahoma City, OK is my home parish, where I converted to Orthodoxy 32 years ago. Through the love and encouragement of the late Susu Morrow, I became involved in the work and sisterhood of the Antiochian Women, and with our church children's ministry. I have served the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America as Religious Coordinator, and am in my second term as Vice-president. Locally I have served on our Antiochian Women's chapter in several positions, including President, Vice-president, and Sunshine Coordinator.

I have especially loved working with the children of our parish for many years by teaching Sunday School, Vacation Bible school, and being the Nursery coordinator. It was a special honor to be involved with the inception of the St. Elijah Mom's Day Out program, and serving on the MDO Board as Facilities Coordinator and Recording Secretary. I also enjoy being a member of the choir, and working at our annual Mediterranean Food Festival and Bake Sale.

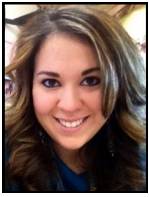
My husband Jeff and I have been married for 30 years. I was raised in the Southern Baptist church and had never heard of Orthodoxy until Jeff and I began dating in high school. During our dating years (and despite my attempts to convert Jeff to the Baptist faith), I came to love the Orthodox Church and soon became a convert. We have been blessed with four wonderful children: Erich, Alexandra, Sophia, and Samia. I am also humbly blessed with many godchildren, and to have been a sponsor for several adults who have embraced the faith.

Before we had children I worked for the Hertz Corporation for 13 years, in the field as a trainer and at the corporate level as Manager of the Policies and Procedures department. Since then, I've had the best job as a stay-at-home Mom, home-educating our children for ten years, and was involved in leadership of our local home school support groups.

It's truly an honor to be a part of this wonderful organization of women who serve so unselfishly. May

God continue to bless the efforts of the Antiochian Women as we serve Him.

Jaclyn Al-Hanna - Recording Secretary



I am 26 years old and was born and raised in the sun city of El Paso, Texas. I am the daughter of Nizar and Linda Al-Hanna and the eldest of two siblings, my sister Jehan Al-Hanna and my brother Joseph Al-Hanna. One of my life goals was to have a promising career which would not only bring much contentment to me but happiness to others. As I grew older, I discovered that what made me feel good inside was helping children, especially after I spent two years as a tutor in order to help children who were struggling academically in school. I wanted to touch many lives and knew that this could be achieved by becoming a teacher. I have now been teaching kindergarten for three years at Mesita Elementary School in El Paso, TX. I graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso with a Bachelor in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Education and am now pursuing my Masters Degree in Educational Technology.

I believe a woman's strength should be spent serving the Lord. As found in Proverbs 31:25, "strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in the time to come". It also says in Proverbs 31:17, "She girded her loins with strength, and strengthened her arms". As a young girl, I participated in Sunday School through which I learned about my faith and participated in functions such as our annual May Festival. My parents ensured that I attended church so that I would have a strong foundation in the faith. As time passed, and I entered my late teen years, ready to step into early adulthood, I found myself in the darkest point in my faith so that my church life became almost nonexistent. It was in the Fall of 2006, that I experienced my renewal of my church life as an Orthodox Christian at St. George Orthodox Church in El Paso, TX. I committed my life to follow Christ's words and teachings. "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken" (Psalm 62:1-2). I have been blessed with my mentor, Laila Ferris, who has guided me through the path to my involvement at my local parish to the Diocesan level. I began teaching Sunday school, in 2007, to children from ages 3-4 years old and am presently teaching 6th and 7th graders. I have deeply enjoyed teaching our faith to our youth. I also believe that it was through the grace of God that I was reunited with a friend from my childhood in the church, and found not only friendship, but love. Seven years later, not only are we still together, but engaged to be married.

In 2009, I was asked to serve as the Recording Secretary for my local Antiochian Women's chapter. I wholeheartedly accepted this task. I attended my very first meeting of the Antiochian Women, at the Antiochian Village, in February, 2010, and was in awe of the love and support the women have for each other as well as for their hard work and commitment to their faith, the organization and those in need. I was also privileged to become the Recording Secretary of the Antiochian Women for the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America. Being one of the youngest members of the Antiochian Women, I also had the honor and pleasure of being a part of their membership/recruitment DVD, "Yes, We Do". I have been blessed with immense support and love of the Antiochian Women which has strengthened my desire to continue to pursue an active life within, and for, the organization. I hope to further inspire young women of my age to become active members of the Antiochian Women in their parish, their Diocese, and at the North American level.

I would like to close with this verse which I feel speaks to my life experiences and the direction I have chosen to travel: "How all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the Church, and in Christ Jesus, through all generations for ever and ever. Amen". (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Jane Harakal - Treasurer



I have been Orthodox since 1994 and really love this church. I am the mother of 4 grown children, Grandmother of 8, and great grandmother of 7, and the oldest living child of my parents 9 children. I've been a widow since 1995.

Right now I am treasurer of our local women's group, St. Sophia, and serve wherever needed. Also, much of my time is spent serving as an officer in the several charitable organizations to which I belong. I love being a part of the DOWAMA women, and encourage women to become active in their own Diocese and church.

Public Relations - Vacant

Randa Stevens - Religious Coordinator



I was born in Beirut, Lebanon on January 7, 1958, but my family soon moved to Damascus, Syria where I spent most of early childhood. I attended Lycee Francais French elementary school where we were immersed into French language curriculum.

After elementary, my family moved back to Jounieh, Lebanon where I finished my early education at Sacred Heart school. My father passed away when I was 17

during the civil war in 1976. I attended College Centrale des Moines, where I studied Philosophy. Subsequently, I became a flight attendant with Middle East Airlines and Saudi Airlines where I worked in a supervisory position until I immigrated to the United States with my mother, brothers, and sister.

Upon our arrival in the U.S.A., we lived in Oklahoma City where I remained until meeting the man that would become my husband, Gene Stevens, at my first National Archdiocese Convention in Boston. We got married and lived in Wichita, KS during the nineteen years of our marriage. God blessed us with our three children; Nathalie (studied Business Administration, married Stephen Salloum and now resides in Canada), Theodora (obtaining Doctorate in Physical Therapy), and Gabriel (studying Business Administration).

Since 1986, I have been an active member of St. Mary Church where I have served on the parish council, president of the Antiochian Women's chapter of St. Mary's for three years, Sunday School director for six years, Sunday School teacher for twenty years, fundraising volunteer for fourteen years, and until recently, as the vice president for the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid America for four years. I also volunteered for summer camps at the Antiochian Village.

Since studying Interior Decorating twenty seven years ago, I have loved to decorate for church banquets. As a part time job while being a full time mother, I have been a beauty consultant with Mary Kay. However, my passion has been to do some translations of St. Raphael's works from Arabic to English and working on translating a French book (Le Liban son role civilisateur) to English.

I am in my fifth year of remission from cancer and thankful every day that God has extended my life. The doctors have testified that my remission as being miraculous. I pray for my continuation to accomplish everything according to God's will and that everything I do may be for the Glory of God.

Sherry Abraham - Product Sales Coordinator



I belong to St. George Cathedral in Wichita, KS. I have held several positions for the Antiochian Women throughout the years. I served as President, Vice President, and Secretary of the St. George Cathedral Guild. In the Southwest Region (now the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America), I served as Vice President, President for two terms, Treasurer for two terms, and Secretary. I have been the DOWAMA Product Sales Coordinator since 2001. On the North American Board, I have served as Secretary,

Humanitarian for two terms, and am currently serving my third term as NAB Treasurer.

In addition to my church activities, I am also a member of the Bona Dea Club, a ladies' social club in Wichita, and have served as President, Vice President, and Secretary of that group. I am currently the Corresponding Secretary. I also volunteer at Music Theatre of Wichita and am a member of the Music Theatre Guild. I have served as Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer on the Music Theatre Guild Board, and am currently Chairman of the Social Committee.

I was born and raised in Woodward, OK. I graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education. Shortly after I graduated from OSU, I married Don Abraham and moved to Wichita. We had two beautiful daughters. Don and I owned and operated Ali Baba Bakery for 19 years. We specialized in pita bread, but eventually made over 100 different varieties of breads. I worked full time at the bakery with Don until he was diagnosed with cancer in 1994. At that time, we sold the bakery. We also worked on the weekends with Don's family in their steak house for many years. Don passed away February 28, 1995.

In November, 2003, I married Mark Morrow. Mark belongs to St. Elijah Church in Oklahoma City, OK. Our wonderful blended family consists of two sons, three daughters, two son-in-laws, two daughter-in-laws, five beautiful granddaughters, and three adorable grandsons. Mark and I maintained both of our homes when we got married, and we split our time between Wichita and Oklahoma City. So I have now become active at St. Elijah Church in Oklahoma City, as well as St. George Cathedral.

I have enjoyed serving the Antiochian Women very much, and feel very blessed to be a part of this wonderful organization. I will always cherish the many friends I have made throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Jamie Isaac - Humanitarian Coordinator

No photo or biography available.

Paula Snider - Membership/Missions

No photo or biography available.

Winona Nava - Immediate Past President

No photo or biography available.

DO ICONS REALLY MATTER?

By the late Archpriest Peter E. Gillquist

From the WORD magazine, February 1990 page 10-11

Shortly after we moved to Santa Barbara, California, we re-decorated the house, painting the living room and papering the dining room. As we moved the table and chairs back into the dining area, along with the antique hutch that lined up against the west wall, I began to ponder what should go on the wall opposite the hutch. The space was somewhat limited.

Wait a minute, I thought to myself That's the east wall. Let me find an icon of Christ and another of Mary for either side of the window.

From early times Christians would establish an "icon corner" in their homes, preferably using a corner on the east wall — east being the traditionally biblical direction from which the Son of Righteousness would appear at His second advent. Though this would technically not be an icon corner, I did want to establish the Lord's presence in our dining room.

As I mounted those two images of Christ and His Mother the following day, I also hung a small presence light, a votive candle in a holder, over the icon of Christ — for He is the light of the world. From that time on, we would light the candle during mealtimes when the family gathered around the table for dinner.

GUESTS CAME TO CALL

A few months later, a good friend who heads a Christian writer's guild, called to say that he and his wife, would be in Santa Barbara in a few weeks to conduct an evening seminar for local writers. Would Marilyn and I care to join them for the meeting? "Yes," I told Norm. "And why don't you come early and have dinner with us here at the house beforehand?"

Norm and Ginny are the refreshing kind of evangelical Christians who have a knack of majoring in commitment to Jesus Christ and minoring in just about everything else. Thus when daughter Tern lit the presence light under the icon of Christ just before they arrived my worry factor rose only a percentage point or two.

It wasn't till a half hour later when I was praying the prayer of thanksgiving for our food that I realized I had another potential disturbance ahead. There was a split second to decide what to do.

For quite some time, we as a family had adopted the ancient Orthodox practice of making the sign of the

cross at the close of our prayers — including prayers at the table. My six children would think me strange to chicken out now, especially since I taught them the New Testament urges us to glory in the cross. Thus, we all eight made the sign of the cross together as I closed my prayer in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I hoped my Protestant guests would not be offended.

As dinner was winding down and some of the children were helping Mom clear the table for dessert, Norm said, "Do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions?"

"Not at all," I replied, knowing exactly what they would be — and also believing that he would be far more gracious in asking them than I would have been before our odyssey to Orthodoxy began.

"First, tell us about the picture of Christ here above my chair, the one with the candle before it."

"It's called an icon," I said. "Icon is the Greek word for image. An icon is like a window to heaven — you look at His icon and you catch a glimpse of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It's painted in a not-quite-realistic style because it serves to open the heavenly realm to earthly people like us. Also that heavenly appearance helps guard us against any sort of worship of the image itself, instead of worshipping the Lord."

"But what about the biblical warning against images — is that not a problem?" Norm asked.

"The warnings, of course, are against false images. The Second Commandment instructs us that golden calves and the like are out. But you'll recall that in Exodus 26 just six chapters after God gave us the Ten Commandments — including the one against graven images — He gave specific orders that images of the angelic cherubim be sewn into the curtains of the tabernacle. 'Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains woven of fine linen thread, and blue and purple and scarlet yarn; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them' (Exodus 26:1 NKJV).

"Orthodox Christians over the centuries have maintained an incredible awareness that Christ is always present with us," I continued. "And that's one way that icons are a help. Icons do not make Christ present; they rather show us that He is. They are an aid to help us set our minds on things above, not on earthly things. I for one need all that sort of help I can get!"



“Then I noticed as you prayed you all made the sign of the Cross,” Norm said.

“You weren’t supposed to be looking!” I kidded. I went on to explain how the early Christians, and those who have followed the Lord to this day, used the symbol of the Cross of Christ on church buildings interior and exterior, on the altar, later on their Bibles and actually on themselves. I mentioned how St. Paul wrote, “But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14 NKJV).

“Is there a danger of this kind of thing ever becoming a rabbit’s foot, a good luck charm?” Norm asked.

“Absolutely. I recall as a kid when the Lakers played basketball in Minneapolis. A couple of the players who had a penchant for collecting fouls would invariably step up to the free throw line, catch the ball from the official, cross themselves and then take the shot. Why they crossed themselves then, I cannot say. But the gesture bothered me. Was it just for good luck?

“Years later, now that I have become comfortable with using the sign of the cross, I’ve given serious thought to why signing oneself before a free throw was troublesome. I think it’s clear. Jesus Christ did not die for free-throw percentages. Or for batting averages or total yardage. He died for our sins. And what a privilege is ours as His disciples to apply to ourselves the reality of His cross by signing ourselves with that weapon of peace, asking Him to guard us from sin and the works of the deceiver.”

THINKING IN PICTURES

I sometimes feel, now that I’m Orthodox, that for the first time in my life I have consciously begun to surrender my eyegate to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In fact, I wonder if I hadn’t tried without realizing it to keep all my senses from being impacted by the Holy Spirit, save the sense of hearing. For indeed I knew that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. But it was a hearing that often took place in a room consisting of four bare walls and a pulpit.

“But,” the skeptic may ask, “how can pictures change anything? All they are, after all, is paint and canvas.” My reply? If images do not matter, why is it the Lord told Israel to ditch the golden calf? Why are we

instructed to set nothing evil before our eyes? Why do millions of Christian people vocally oppose the spread of pornographic material? Why did the Communists fight to get crosses out of Poland’s schools? And is it my imagination, or does the ACLU seem to throw a temper tantrum every time a manger scene goes up on a courthouse lawn? Of course images matter!

Now, as an Orthodox Christian with the icons front and center in the Church, it is the most natural thing in the world to look at Christ while I’m praying to Him. Eye contact with Jesus Christ keys my mind on Him as I pray, realizing that one day we will see Him face to face.

Perhaps the greatest reality that the icons of Christ and His saints bring to me is to say boldly and clearly in graphic form, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). The icons tell us that the heavenly stadium is filled, and that those witnesses have us surrounded!

For worship is a procession to the throne of God. It is we on earth who join the saints and angels in paying homage to the Triune God. They do not join our procession so much as we enter into theirs. For it is we who come “to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly (or festal gathering) and Church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the Spirits of righteous men made perfect to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant . . .” (Heb. 12:22-24).

The icons enliven our imaginations with a holy replica of this host, bringing this celestial company visibly into our churches and our homes, reminding us that all of this is really taking place around us. It is as though we’re “walking onto the set” of God’s eternal promise, participating with heaven in the majesty of His divine drama.

For that, icons really matter.

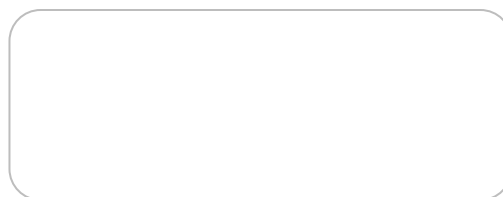


The Feast of Orthodoxy (also known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy or the Triumph of Orthodoxy) is celebrated on the first Sunday of Great Lent (six Sundays before Pascha) in the liturgical calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Feast is kept in memory of the final defeat of Iconoclasm and the restoration of the icons to the churches. This year, the Sunday of Orthodoxy is on Sunday, March 24. and Pascha is on Sunday, May 5, 2013.



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

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A REMINDER TO DIOCESAN PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORS:

All articles, news from parishes, photos, bios and messages are due the first of the month PRIOR to the month of publication. Please collect and email them to lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net according to the schedule below:

The following items are needed to highlight your diocese:

1. Bios and photos from your Diocesan Bishop, Spiritual Advisor and Board Members.
2. Messages from your Diocesan Bishop, Spiritual Advisor and President.
3. Photos and news articles from the diocese or parishes.
4. Notices of diocesan gatherings, retreats, conferences, etc.

	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board	September 2011	Done ✓
2	Diocese of New York and Washington, D.C., Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic	December 2011	Done ✓
3	Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and the Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest	March 2012	Done ✓
4	Diocese of Miami and the Southeast	June 2012	Done ✓
5	Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate NY	September 2012	Done ✓
6	Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest	December 2012	Done ✓
7	Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America	March 2013	Done ✓
8	Diocese of Worcester and New England	June 2013	May 1, 2013

To ensure publication
in the next issue,
please submit your
news and articles by
this date.