

## **PRESIDENTS MESSAGE**

### **MID YEAR REPORT INCLUDING GENERAL ASSEMBLY SUMMARY**

*Instead of my presidents message I am presenting a mid year report for your review.*

#### **Introduction**

First I would like to apologize to the community for the delay of this Cathedral News issue. I felt it important to replace my message with a report and summary from the General Assembly due to the fact that of the 1300 plus parishioners of our cathedral 56 (which represents less than 1%) attended the Assembly.

#### **President Mid Year Report**

##### **Summary Overview**

*For those of you who do not have the stamina to read beyond the next few paragraphs, the following is a report summary.*

We have had a very successful first half by first assessing the needs of our cathedral, establishing attainable goals and then plans to accomplish these goals. We have been very pleased with the information gathered from the respective committees and organizations. We have put forth aggressive programs including hiring a young second full time priest or deacon, the establishment of the building committee for the new community center and the focus on Stewardship funding the operating budget of the cathedral. We have had several functions and events at our facility recognizing that we have simply outgrown its effective use and until additional facility resources are available, we will need to be proactive in addressing the scheduled use of our cathedral. We have added two new ministries and will work on strengthening those that already exist.

We are working on two major fronts. The first is managing and increasing the resources of our existing facility. The second is setting an aggressive project to build additional resources for the near future. This is a daunting task, and we look forward to your support and help. *(For those of you so inclined please read on for further details.)*

#### **Main Body**

At the beginning of the year we created Short and Long Term goals. The Short Term goals were established to address the immediate needs of the cathedral. These included improving cathedral communications, the plan and hiring of a full time second priest or deacon, sponsoring new outreach ministries, lowering the deficit along with presenting a plan to increase stewardship 30% by year end.

Our Long Term goals set a guideline of where we should be in five and ten years. These Long Term goals included; the building and completion of a New Youth / Senior Community Center within five years, funding the operating budget of the cathedral entirely from stewardship, increase the Endowment Fund by 50%, the elimination of all fees, and the weekly collection to be dedicated to outreach programs and charity.

#### **Communications, Needs and Outreach**

In order to understand the needs of our cathedral community, it was clear that we needed to better understand the needs of each organization and group. Therefore members of the parish council and your president attended each meeting and function held by each group, committee and organization. This exercise was invaluable as it not only provided direct insight to the needs of each ministry, but it also exposed the number of different organizations that are directly and indirectly affiliated with our cathedral. In addition, we immediately recognized that our community is made up of extremely talented individuals who as ambassadors represent our cathedral with excellence!

During this period, it also became increasingly apparent that our cathedral facilities are being over utilized. The first half of the year was packed full with several functions and events. Compared to the last two years we nearly doubled the use of the facilities. I have joked that the auditorium resembled the activity at the Fleet Center during a typical winter season---you know how they setup for the Bruins in the morning, the Celtics in the afternoon and Muppets On Ice for the next day! At times the transition from one event to the next strained our resources, but with wonderful volunteers and help from the GOYA each event was successful albeit taxing.

Just to give you a glimpse the following are just a few of the events held at the cathedral over the last six months: *Stavros Bellos Dedication Luncheon, Philoptochos Vasilopita, Philoptochos Membership Tea, Greek School Brunch, Grecian Festival Kickoff Dinner, Stewardship Fellowship Exposition, Sunday of Orthodoxy Luncheon, March 25<sup>th</sup> Greek School Program, Sunday School Graduation, Mediterranean Wine Festival, Godparents Day Luncheon, Greek School Graduation, Pre-school Graduation, Grecian Festival 2004.* This list does not include the countless, coffee hours, basketball practices, committee meetings, council meetings, dance classes, choir practices, dances, and other uses of our facility!

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Although some of the coordination of our facility is routine, especially those dealing with the liturgical services, it is clear with some things we tend be more reactive than proactive in addressing the needs of certain groups. Some of this is due to the fact that each organization has individual agenda's, schedules, and purposes that in some cases conflicts with the schedules of other groups. And as we begin to look forward to the next year and the year to follow, it is abundantly clear that the demands on our existing facility will grow at an exponential pace.

#### Communications Solutions Short Term and Long Term

In order to effectively address the communication and the scheduling demands of our facility we will be hosting a "Community Luncheon" in late September or early October inviting representatives of all the organizations, groups and committees of our cathedral. The direct purpose of this gathering is to establish the annual calendar so that we may avoid scheduling conflicts going forward. Additionally we will use this opportunity to get to know the needs of each organization, as well as, fielding suggestions and ideas on how we may better serve our community.

Moreover, along with posting the calendar in the cathedral news, we will be posting the annual calendar on the web site, as well as on the bulletin board outside the cathedral office.

The **Long Term** solution should be no mystery. We need to expand our facility not only to serve the existing needs of our community, but also to serve the untapped services that a community of our size and breath should be providing its members. To that end your president and the parish council have established a building committee that will be made up of 15 members, 10 members from the community at large and no more than 5 members from the parish council. This committee will be populated by the end of June and have its first meeting in July. Further information, details and agenda's regarding this committee will be available in the August/September Issue of the Cathedral News.

#### New Ministries

In the first six months we added two new ministries to the list. The newly formed **Saint Spyridon Cathedral Dance Groups** under the direction of Dino Charalmaledes, with ages that range from pre-school age all the way to Thirty Something's. They have made incredible strides in a very short period of time and have set the foundation that is the best of our Hellenic Heritage.

**Little Angels Playgroup** under the direction of Sarah Kyriazis and Zoe Paleologos was just recently formed and has been extremely successful bringing together mothers with children from 4 years of age and under. They have had several meetings and playgroups. This is where are community begins!

#### Need for a Second Full Time Priest or Deacon

Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Cathedral serves the City of Worcester and all its surrounding towns. We are the second largest Cathedral in New England. Across the country a community of our size typically has two full time priests and one deacon to assist the needs of the entire community. One clergy cannot perform the task of addressing the Herculean needs of our cathedral and we could have run the risk of placing excessive burden on Father Dean who has been a cornerstone of this cathedral for the last 23 years. As a result, Father Dean, your president and the parish council determined that the time has come to begin actively looking into hiring a young enthusiastic priest or deacon on a full time basis. We set out a plan and as you will see in the General Assembly summary unanimously approved the filling of this position.

The long term impact of bringing on a young full time second priest is that we can begin to proactively address the growing needs of our cathedral. The youth, the elderly and all the members in between will begin to enjoy energized clergy with the **time** to creatively work with our ministries. This is a huge milestone in the history of our cathedral. First, we as a community have begun to recognize that we must invest in the future by providing the necessary resources to support our members. Second, we have realized that we can no longer stand idle while watching the burning fires of others grow dim through exhaustion.

#### Stewardship, Deficit and Elimination of services if funds are not raised!

At the beginning of the year and during my previous two years on the parish council, we have wrestled with the topic regarding the individual stewardship contribution at Saint Spyridon. Most know the problem exists, which is, compared to other cathedrals of our size and compared to other denominations, with all else being equal our stewardship contributions are at least half of those at other communities.

We have made great strides in the last six months to inform and educate our parishioners on the need to increase stewardship. But first we needed to establish a suggested pledge amount for those who were seeking some guidance or a starting point. Remember stewardship is what you can give from your heart, it has no limits. We determined that for families \$475.00 and for senior couples / individuals \$325.00 would be our suggested pledge. This was derived from dividing the operating budget by the number of families. We know that there are those who are on fixed incomes and may find it difficult to reach the suggested pledge, we also know that there are those who can contribute much more and will give in kind. To all I say, stewardship is the opportunity to privately express ourselves to our faith and our church.

The reality is that up to now, our stewardship contributions have averaged less than \$200.00 per family. At that rate we would not be able to provide the services that are expected of our cathedral; such as this newsletter, keeping the cathedral clean, satisfying the maintenance needs of a 50 year old facility, managing the accounts, etc, etc, etc.. All of these would be eliminated without increased stewardship. However, I am very pleased by the response from many of you who have realized that, as best expressed by one parishioner that said he will be giving much more, "We cannot expect to support this beautiful facility from the loose change that collects in our pockets!"

### **General Assembly Summary**

We had a very successful General Assembly. Although I personally was disappointed by the turnout! If only 1% of the community makes the decisions for the whole body, this will mean 1300 people loose their chance to speak and be heard!

Nevertheless, we passed three very important motions and all were passed unanimously. The first was to authorize the parish council and appropriate the funds to hire a second full time priest. Second, we have established a Youth/Senior Community Center Building Fund. The proceeds from the Wine festival as well as individual contributions shall be placed into this fund. Last the General Assembly approved a By-Law making the General Assembly quorum no less the 50 parishioners in good standing.

The 2003 Treasurers Report was audited, accepted and approved unanimously as well. A copy of the 2003 report will be available at the office upon request.

### **Final Comments:**

I know some of you may feel this mid year report is somewhat lengthy and detailed--- if you made it this far, I congratulate you. Believe it or not, this is the abridged version! However, I strongly believe information is the key to understanding! I have mentioned too many of you, either through my messages or in person, that we are at a very pivotal period in the history of our cathedral. We need to immediately address the day to day financial short falls; while at the same time aggressively address the growing needs of our community. Quite frankly, at times it is difficult to contemplate the dichotomy of this situation. However, your parish council, and president will endeavor to perceive!

*Final Note:* Upon occasion, I will receive---how shall I put it---ah yes---a "passionate critique"---from a parishioner describing at length what is wrong with our cathedral. I listen to each of these, "passionate critiques" because it is without a doubt one way of better understanding our community. But almost to the occasion, I find it ironic that those who provide the most "passionate of critiques" when asked if they have made their stewardship pledge; the "passion" seems to disintegrate from the "critique.... In one instance an individual actually asked what stewardship was!

At the assembly I showed a picture of a glass half filled with a clear liquid. I said an optimist sees the glass as half full, the pessimist sees it half empty. However, when we as Hellenes see this glass, we ask what is in the glass; Water or Ouzo, and if it is Ouzo, from what village, who drank the other half and how come he did not offer some to me? I mention this cute little quip, simply to illustrate what is beautiful about our heritage---that is our incredible ability to question, analyze and critique all that is around us. We are a people of action as well...usually at the last minute; when deadlines are upon us and time is running short...does this sound at all familiar? We have an ancient history that has bred modern democracy, the roots of modern international language and the foundation of our Christian beliefs.

To say we as a people will fall short of the responsibility of providing for our annual needs, as well as, for the needs of future generations...well simply does not understand from where we came!

With love and with great thanks to all of those who help day after day....

*William Kiritsy; President*