

KOINONIA

The Monthly Newsletter of the Holy Trinity-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Birmingham, AL



Father Elias Reassigned

By+Fr. Paul Costopoulos

Father Elias Stevens, our Assistant Priest for 8 months, will be assuming his new assignment as pastor of the Annunciation Church in Mobile, AL, effective August 1st.

Father Elias, who despite his lack of priestly experience (he was ordained a priest in May 4, 2008 in Atlanta), is a gifted priest. He has a maturity, a commitment, and a sense of priestly decorum that few priests of his experience have. Mobile's gain is certainly our loss. He served our Community well.

I thank God for the privilege of having served with him in this Community as a fellow priest and brother in Christ.

Neither the Community nor I wanted Fr. Elias to leave. Unless the Metropolis of Atlanta had the intention—which it didn't—of leaving him here permanently, others and I knew that it was just a matter of time. What's surprising is not that he is leaving. What is surprising, and this is to Fr. Elias' credit, is the quickness with which he is leaving. He is leaving us because Metropolitan Alexios has confidence in his ability to lead and pastor a viable parish on his own.

Father Elias' gifts as preacher, teacher, youth worker, and counselor though many are not yet fully cultivated (a priest's gifts in actuality are never fully cultivated). Therefore, when I questioned the wisdom of taking Fr. Elias after only having served 8 months with us, Metropolitan Alexios in a phone conversation with me stated, "Father's leaving may not be wise. But it is necessary. Our Church has a need for good priests, and Father Elias is a good priest..." His Eminence is absolutely right. Unselfishly we in our Community must affirm the Metropolitan's decision.

To be sure! Many like me have mixed feelings about Father's leaving. On the one hand we are sad. It would have been great to have had Father to stay and serve our Community for several more years. After all he has so much to offer. On the other hand, however, we are also happy for Father Elias. Our sister parish in Mobile is a good one. We are confident and hopeful that by the grace of God and with his gifts Father Elias will do well, and that he and his family will be happy.

We are grateful to Father Elias for his service to our Community. He has been an inspiration to many. For certain he will be missed! But knowing that he is leaving behind here in Birmingham many extended family members and friends, we are optimistic and hopeful that he and Presvytera Kasandra and the children will be seen by many of us in the months and the years to come.

Thank you, Father Elias. May God bless you and your family and grant you much happiness.

CATHEDRAL NEWS NOTES

CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS

The Clergy Laity Congress/ Philoptochos Conference of our Metropolis took place on, June 11-14, in Tampa. One hundred and forty Congress Delegates and 75 Philoptochos Delegates from 55 parishes were in attendance. Father Paul was the sole representative of our Parish at the Congress. Presv. Garnette for personal reasons at the last minute was unable to attend. Irene Tracy and Georgia Dikis represented the Philoptochos.

Workshops, business meetings, worship services, luncheons/dinners, and socials were in abundance. A review of Metropolis-wide events during the past two years, and an approval of a two year Diocese budget (approx. one million dollars a year) took place.

A more detailed report on the Congress will be presented by Father Paul at the fall Parish Assembly Meeting.

CALENDAR PLANNING COMMITTEE TO HOLD MEETING

Certain Parish Council members and Ministry Leaders, Alexis Pappas, the President of Philoptochos, and Father Paul will be in attendance. The meeting will take place on Tuesday evening, August 18, 4:30 p.m. It's purpose is to put together a master calendar for the new ecclesiastical year, 2009-2010.

FAMILY NIGHT TO RECONVENE ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4TH

Circle your calendar and plan to be with us.

GREEK FESTIVAL NOTES....

Festival dates this year are September 24-26. The support of everyone is again needed. Contact Agatha Pihakis, Festival Chairperson, or Dennis Saltzman, Assistant Festival Chairperson, on how you can help... The Festival's Giving Tree is in need of your

support. See this issue of the *Koinonia* for a schedule of items needed, and suggested donations... Much cooking and preparation will take place during the month of August. The help of all is needed...

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR NEW ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR TO BEGIN

Sunday, August 16th. Parents, note the date. And be sure to register your children. The last Sunday of Summer Sunday School is Sunday, August 2nd.

TUESDAY MORNING MEN'S BIBLE STUDY TO RECONVENE

Tuesday, September 22. Join us every Tuesday morning from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. for Bible Study, discussion, prayer and fellowship. Topic of study and discussion: TBA.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY TO RECONVENE AFTER GREEK FESTIVAL

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY TOPIC TBA

Check for an announcement in one of the September Sunday Bulletins and/or in next edition of the *Koinonia*.

"DEKAPENTAUGOSTO" BEGINS ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 1

The "Dekapentaugosto" (Fifteen Days of August) begins on Saturday, August 1, and will lead up to and culminate with the Feast of the Dormition, Saturday, August 15. The "Dekapentaugosto" is a spiritual season of "preparation" (fasting, prayer and worship) for the Feast of the Dormition. The Dormition commemorates the death of the Theotokos, Mary the Mother of God.

The *Paraklesis* Service will be held every evening, 5:30 p.m., during the *Dekapentaugosto*, except Wednesday, August 5, Saturday, August 8, Friday, August 14, and Sundays, August 2 and 9. On Wednesday evening, August 5, 5:30 p.m., Vespers for the Feast of the Holy Transfiguration will be held, and Vespers for the Feast Day of the Dormition will be served on Saturday evening, August 14, 5:30 p.m.

**SPECIAL EPITAPHIOS SERVICE --
MONDAY, AUGUST 14**

Did you know that there is a special Epitaphios Service for the Dormition of the Virgin Mary? It is conducted during the Vespers Service on the Eve of the Dormition. It is a service that hymnologically and prayerfully reflects upon the death and bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Like the Epitaphios Service on Good Friday, this Epitaphios Service will include the singing of Lamentations (the melodies are the same as on Good Friday), and a procession with the Epitaphio of the Virgin Mary. Join us for this special service. It will begin at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, August 14th.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Nickey Velotas and Penny Choraitis . The two have been designated as this year's "honorees" from our Community. They will be honored, together with other designated honorees from parishes throughout our Metropolis at a special banquet that will be held on Saturday, November 7th, 7:00 p.m. at the Cathedral Center in Atlanta. Both will receive medals of recognition from Metropolitan Alexios, and both will have their photos and brief biographies included in a special commemorative album that is being published by the Metropolis. The cost of the banquet is TBA. Persons who would like to attend may make reservations by calling the church.

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

The Feast of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord annually is commemorated liturgically in the Orthodox Church on August 6th. What does the Feast Day commemorate? Why is it important? These questions and others will be answered by the excerpts from Scriptures which are referenced below:

Recall the prophecy of Daniel:

Daniel 7:13-14:

I beheld, therefore, in the vision of the night, and lo, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came even to the ancient of days: and they presented him before him. And he gave him power, and glory, and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve him: his power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away: and his kingdom that shall not be destroyed.

The Feast of the Transfiguration recalls when Moses, representing the Law, and Elias (Elijah), representing the Prophets -- two men who had special visions of God -- appear with Jesus on Mt. Tabor (Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9). There the Apostles see the Divine Uncreated Light shine forth from Our Lord, Who had told them previously that He must die and be resurrected.

Matthew 17:1-8

And after six days Jesus takes unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain apart: And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him.

And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.

And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them: and said to them, Arise, and fear not. And they lifting up their eyes saw no one but only Jesus. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.

Christ, as the Temple Who would be raised up three days after 'it' was torn down, shows that He is, indeed, He in Whom the glory dwells. As the Creed says, "Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten not created, of one essence with the Father through Whom all things are made..."

False Judaism had rejected the Messiah, and now true Judaism, represented by Moses and Elias, the Law and the Prophets, recognized and adored Him, while for the second time (the first time was at the River Jordan when Jesus was baptized) God the Father proclaimed Jesus His only-begotten and well-loved Son.

Liturgy for the Feast will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Thursday, August 6, 9:30 a.m. It will be preceded by Orthros at 8:30. Join us!

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

The month of June has made our Outreach and Evangelism Committee rather exciting. On June 7th, Despina Triantos welcomed guests from Tuscaloosa, AL and from Chicago, IL. On June 14th, Zoe Whitaker, George and Maria Dikis welcomed guests from Northport, AL and also Columbia, S.C. On June 21st, Dino Jovaras and his daughter Penny welcomed, guest from Arlington, VA, Marietta, GA and Winnipeg MB Canada. We had 3 local residence of Birmingham visit with us and we look forward to their return again. On June 28th, Teddy and Jackie Hontzas along with their four children greeted visitors and guests. We had 4, 2 from Birmingham, and 2 from Anniston, AL. What a joy to see the Hontzas Family of six, all working for the Lord!

OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

(Continued)

We have made a start towards reaching out and welcoming our guests and visitors. Toni Nordan has been at the Visitors Table after Church to further express our desire to invite our guests to worship with us again. It has been exciting to meet students who are doing their internships here in Birmingham. The Outreach and Evangelism Committee is in the process of writing them and asking them to join our Church.

Our mission statement "Gather My People to My Home" which was taken from the Clergy-Laity conference last year, is not an easy task. We presently have 23 couples who have agreed to participate in this Outreach Program. To grow further, we know that Outreach is a Person-to-Person Process. We ask all Parishioners to take part in this Outreach and Evangelism Program. Look for the Blue Crosses and welcome that Guest or Visitor. Bring a friend, invite your neighbor to worship with you, and reach out to those who are not coming to Church on a regular basis.

Again, Mark Mercer and David Kovakas have produced our Sunday Sermons on CD's. These CD's are available to shut-ins, and are a great tool for encouragement, visiting and mailing out where needed. Outreach and Evangelism will need the cooperation, assistance of every member of our Parish and will work with and thru our Priest, Parish Council, Philoptochos Society, Daughters of Penelope, Sunday School and all Church Ministries.

— Penny O. Kovakas

Greek Dance Practice



Greek Dance Practice for the 2009 Greek Festival will start August 2nd after Sunday School. We have 5 groups this year ages 4 years old to 12th grade.

If you are interested in helping or have questions, please contact Maria Johnson at 823-3152 or Evelyn Stathakes at 631-7551.

WEDDINGS

August 22

Jennifer Yearout & Andrew Smith

BAPTISMS

July 11

Benjamin, son of Betsy & Ken Lefkovits

July 18

Will, son of Brooke & John Vakakes

July 25

Ava Sophia, daughter of Maryam & Demetrios Holmes

FUNERALS

June 10

Anna Karagiannis

June 18

Charles Spanos

July 7

Billy Pappas

July 9

Gus Cosmas

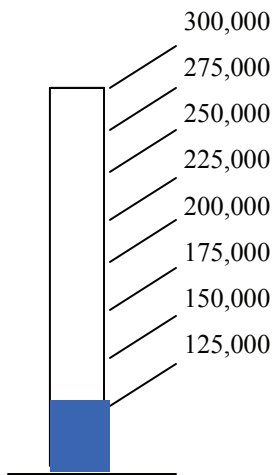
—*May Their Memory Be Eternal*—

THANK YOU

This short expression of thanks is only a fragment of our appreciation to you for your loving kindness to our family through Gus' long illness and falling asleep. We appreciate the tireless efforts of +Fr. Paul and +Fr. Elias, their prayers and compassion strengthened us when we needed it most. We thank you for your telephone calls of concern, the beautiful flowers filled with lovely fragrances that helped to calm us in our hours of uncertainty. We thank you for the delicious food you prepared that nourished us and kept us going. We thank you for your countless visits and the time you shared just being there for us. Your acts of kindness have been to numerous to count, but we thank you for each and every one.

— Georgia Cosmas & Family

BUILDING FUND REPORT



BUILDING FUND PLEDGE GOAL	\$300,000
TOTAL PLEDGES RECEIVED	\$242,895
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED AGAINST PLEDGE	\$131,250

Outstanding Loan Balance as of May 1, 2009	\$274,000
Amount paid on Principal in May	<u>6,000</u>
Loan Balance as of June 30th	<u>\$268,000</u>

Sunday School News

**Sunday School Registration
August 16th**

**Last Day of Summer Sunday School
August 2nd**

**No Sunday School
August 9**



ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLY TRINITY-HOLY CROSS GOC CALENDAR & SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

August 2009

Volunteers for the Month of August 2009

Parish Council

- 1st Sunday** Dennis Saltzman, Jimmy Cosmas, Tommy Yearout
2nd Sunday Jimmy Dikis, Steve Nickolson, E.J. Vakakes
3rd Sunday Pete Lafakis, Alex Kontos, Nick Erben
4th Sunday Agatha Pihakis, Joe Fawal, Greg Burge
5th Sunday John Balabanos, Doug Shipp, Billy Valekis

August 2
August 9
August 16
August 23
August 30

Readers

George Kustos
 Nicholas Bailey
 Cameron Grammas
 Greg Burge

Nursery

Zoeë Saltzman
NO VOLUNTEER
 Nina & Scott McCallum
 Lindsey Alsbrook
NO VOLUNTEER



Early Duty

August 2	Jimmy Cosmas
August 9	Steve Nickolson
August 16	Alex Kontos
August 23	Greg Burge
August 30	Billy Valekis
September 6	Tommy Yearout
September 13	E. J. Vakakes
September 20	Nick Erben
September 27	Agatha Pihakis

Coffee Fellowship

- August 2** Coffee Fellowship "In Memory of Mary Elizabeth Erben Fardecey"
Hosted by Carolyn Fardecey Niedermeier, Family & Friends
August 9 Irene Tracy*, Becky Kampakis, Debbie Tsimpides
August 16 Elene Baker*, Renee' Adam, Sonthe Burge
August 23 Katie Sutton*, Angela Sessions, Christina Sutton Eady, Nina McCallum
August 30 VACANT

August 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 5:30 p Small Paraklesis, Cathedral Cathedral
2 Memorial: Mary E. Erben Fardecey (40-D) Last Day of Summer School 5:30 p.m. Great Paraklesis, Cathedral	3 Firehouse Shelter 5:30 p Small Paraklesis, Cathedral	4 5:30 p.m. Great Paraklesis, Cathedral	5 5:30 p.m. Vespers Cathedral	6 8:30/9:30a "Holy Transfiguration" Cathedral	7 5:30 p.m. Great Paraklesis, Cathedral	8
9 Memorial: Billy Pappas (40-D) NO SUNDAY SCHOOL	10 5:30 p.m. Great Paraklesis, Cathedral	11 9:00 a.m. Staff Meeting 5:30 p Small Paraklesis, Cathedral	12 5:30 p.m. Great Paraklesis, Cathedral	13 5:30 p.m. Small Paraklesis, Cathedral	14 5:30 p.m. Vespers Cathedral	15 8:30/9:30a Orthros/Divine Liturgy, "Dormition of the Theotokos," Cathedral
16 Memorial: Gus Cosmas (40-D)	17	18 4:30 p.m. Calendar Meeting 6:00p.m. Parish Council Meeting	19	20	21 5:30 p.m. Wedding Rehearsal Jennifer Yearout Andrew Smith	22 5:00 p.m. Yearout/ Smith Wedding Reception: Banquet Hall
23 12:30 p.m. Gerontakis Baptism	24	25 9:00 a Staff Meeting	26	27	28	29 8:30/9:30a Orthros/Divine Liturgy, "Beheading of Saint John the Baptist" Chapel Pasticho Meat Cooking
30 Memorial: Themis Kanellopoulos (10 yr) Pasticho Meat Cooking	31					