

Town Hall Meeting Summary, Action Plan, and Suggestions

On June 13, 2013 at the Federation's Summer Conference in Los Angeles, a Town Hall Meeting was convened to address the challenges facing the Federation during a time of change and over-commitment in the economic and social lives of its members and parishes. Approximately 70 members of the Federation were in attendance. The meeting was well-organized around three main questions, which were discussed in small groups and the responses reported back to the larger group moderated by then Secretary Athena Anastos. Many positive comments and suggestions were made, and Bessie Papalias ably made detailed notes of all the comments, questions, and suggestions. These notes were then distributed to the Federation board, who took several meeting sessions to carefully review them and create an action plan.

The three main questions were as follows:

- How can stewards/members of the Federation work better with priests, and other parish ministries and their leaders, to communicate the many resources that the Federation provides?
- Now that we understand the dual value of saving money and paper by cutting down on paper mailings as much as possible, how can you, as a member/steward of the Federation, help acquaint or convey this value to other church musicians in your parish?
- Can the future of the ministry survive as it is right now?

In their long deliberations and discussions, taking into consideration the valuable responses of the Town Hall Meeting, the board agreed that the ministry has a good chance of surviving if three main objectives can be met:

- First, effective communication must be present between the Federation and its stewards.
- Second, this communication must continue between the stewards and their parishes.
- Third, the Federation must continue to enlist the support of the Metropolis in the encouragement of church music and musicians through the priests of the Metropolis and its Sunday School curriculum.

The following basic action plan was devised to put these objectives into practice.

Communication Between the Federation and its Stewards

The main instrument of communication must remain the *In-Choir-Er*, which will be supplemented with shorter electronic communications through parish liaisons. However, the key to keeping all stewards and parishes informed and connected

will be the identification of a specific liaison in each parish who has the heart to take on the role of communicator between the Federation and the church musicians and the parish priest in his or her parish. (The choir director and/or parish priest have often not been the most effective communicators themselves due to the time constraints of their own parish tasks.) Regional administrators will seek to identify these members, who can distribute hard copies of the *In-Choir-Er* to local members who are not adept with or who do not have access to e-mail. The Regional Administrators will create close communication with these liaisons to inform them of resources and encourage them in making connections with the ministries and members of their own parishes.

Communication Between the Liaisons and their Parishes

Because not every parish is alike (to say the least), parish liaisons, working with their Regional Administrators, choir directors and priests, can identify local ways to encourage the recruitment of younger adults, and especially youth, in participation with choir and chant, and with making their congregations aware that we are not only a faith of words but of music.

Enlisting the Support and Resources of the Metropolis

The Federation President and board will continue to work with the Metropolitan and the Metropolis Education Director to encourage the inclusion of hymnology and awareness of the role of music in our faith through the Sunday School curriculum and in Metropolis-wide events such as the Folk Dance Federation, which now includes categories of youth choral music.

The following are suggestions that came directly from the participants of the Town Hall Meeting.

Federation Level Suggestions

Specific newly-identified liaisons as well as parish choir directors and priests should be included on e-mail messages from the Federation/

Regional concerts could be promoted and conducted (i.e. Christmas or other special occasions) and advertised through the Federation website, social media, and publications such as the *Hellenic Journal*.

Contact Saint Nicholas Ranch to see if there are programs for youth or adults the Federation might become involved with.

Send a Federation representative to the Metropolis Clergy Laity Conference.

Consider a Federation sponsored “fun” competition at FDF (such as a “You Think You Can Sing?” type contest.)

Parish Level Suggestions

These positive suggestions, again from the stewards of the Federation, are quite varied, and although some will work better in some parishes than others, all have merit and could be adapted in one way or another.

Consider having the church musicians host a table at coffee hour with information about rehearsals and the Federation.

Have the music ministry host the entire coffee hour at least once each year.

Have a “news from the loft” column in the monthly parish newsletter and monthly updates in the weekly bulletin, perhaps including the words in Greek and English to a seasonal hymn, introducing a new piece of music the congregation may begin hearing regularly, or encouraging the congregation to sing hymns they are familiar with.

Consider having a delegate to the parish council just from the music ministry.

Have the youth choir sing the liturgy once each month, quarter, or twice a year.

Promote Church Music Institutes to the entire community.

Ask the parish priest if the Doxology might be sung again at the end of the service as people are receiving the anditheron so that more people may hear it (particularly if you are singing a new English version.)