PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: HIS GRACE, BISHOP ANTHONY was born on January 17, 1956 Richard Anthony Michaels on the feast day of St. Anthony the Great to parents Anthony and Gertrude Michaels and was baptized at St. Symeon the Stylite Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church in Ironwood, Michigan. His father is Lebanese and his mother is Serbian, and he has two siblings, Joanne and Craig. As a teenager in school, he was active in all varsity athletics at including his role as the starting quarterback of his football team. He received his B.A. in Literature, Science and the Arts from the University of Michigan, having a double major in History and English literature. He then attended St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York, where he earned a Master of Divinity degree and graduated as a valedictorian of his class. Besides English, he has a reading knowledge of biblical Greek and is currently studying Arabic.

His Grace taught modern philosophy at Gogebic Community College in Ironwood, Michigan, and for two years was a pastoral assistant and youth director at St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Then, along with fellow seminarian Fr. Patrick Kinder, were youth coordinators at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church in Akron, Ohio. They also toured the country giving concerts and retreats as part of the group KERYGMA. Bishop Anthony also spent two years in Nashville, Tennessee, at St. Ignatius Antiochian Orthodox Church, recording for KERYGMA with Fr. Patrick and Fr. Michael (Alan) Shanbour.

His Grace was ordained to the diaconate on September 18, 2004, and to the priesthood on September 19, 2004 at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in West St. Paul, Minnesota, under the pastorate of the Very Rev. John Khoury, and by the laying on of hands of Bishop Antoun. He served at his home parish for seven months before being assigned to lead the faithful of St. John Chrysostom Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana where he oversaw the design and construction of the church’s new facilities. On September 19, 2010, the sixth anniversary of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood, his Grace hosted Metropolitan Philip for the consecration of the new church, at which time he was elevated to the dignity of Archimandrite by the laying on of hands of the Metropolitan. He was subsequently appointed Dean of the Indiana Deanery by Metropolitan Philip.

On Sunday, December 11, 2011, Bishop Anthony was consecrated as Auxiliary of the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest, for the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. The consecration took place at the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in the Patriarchal Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand, Balamand, Lebanon. He continues his pastoral ministry in Fort Wayne, providing a consistent liturgical life for the faithful.

KH. REBECCA ALFORD is the choir director of St. Gregory the Great parish in Silver Spring, MD. She has a Bachelor’s degree with a concentration in Music Theory and a Master’s degree with a concentration in Church Music from Florida State University School of Music. She spent many years serving as organist and choirmaster in Episcopal churches before she and her husband converted to Orthodoxy twenty years ago. Since then, she has helped to provide musical resources for Western Rite parishes (see stgregoryoc.org) and writes music for small groups of singers.
MAREENA BOOSAMRA BALL, originally from Ottawa, Canada, received both a Bachelor of Music Education and a Master’s degree in vocal performance from the University of Arizona. An established singer, engagements include numerous performances with the Arizona Opera Company, the University of Arizona Opera Theatre, and the Stewart Hall Singers of Montreal. Since 2000, Mareena has been the Director of Choral Activities at Rincon/University High School in Tucson. Her award-winning choirs have traveled to New York City and have appeared at both Carnegie Hall and Riverside Church. This year Mareena took 90 students and chaperones on a 9-day tour to Ireland, Wales and England where they performed at Killkenny Castle, Stonehenge and the beautiful St. Paul’s Cathedral. A veteran of choral music in the Antiochian Orthodox Church, Mareena has been the Sacred Music Coordinator for the Western Region since 1989 as well as choral director at Holy Resurrection Antiochian Orthodox Church since 1979. She was co-editor of the “Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts” music book, directed and produced two recordings done by the Western Region; “There is Joy in Bethlehem” and “Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts”. Mrs. Boosamra Ball is married to Bill Ball and frequently performs with his band, Still Cruisin’ and the Shear DeLites. She is a mother of three, all of whom have sung in her various choirs.

RICHARD BARRETT is an Orthodox Church musician, choral singer and scholar. He is the Artistic Director of the Saint John of Damascus Society, which supports Orthodox musical education and outreach. From 2005-2012 he was the cantor and choir director at All Saints Orthodox Church in Bloomington, Indiana, and then most recently he was cantor and choir director at Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Indianapolis from 2013-2014. He has served as an invited clinician and guest cantor at Orthodox churches throughout the country, and currently is Fellow in Residence at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He sings regularly with Cappella Romana, and has also sung with the Patriarch Tikhon Choir. Previously, he has performed with ensembles such as the East/West Festival Chorale in Cincinnati, the Josquin Singers in San Francisco, Tudor Choir, and the Seattle Opera Chorus in the Pacific Northwest, and in Indiana, the Pro Arte Singers, Collegium Musicum, and the American Guild of Organists Festival Choir. He has presented scholarly papers at events such as the International Conference on Patristic Studies at the University of Oxford, the North American Patristics Society, and the Patristic Symposium of the Georges Florovsky Society at Princeton University. A Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History at Indiana University, he is completing his dissertation, titled “Civic Devotions to the Mother of God in Late Antique Constantinople”, under the direction of Deborah Deliyannis. In addition, he holds a B. Mus. in vocal performance and an M. A. in Ancient History, both from Indiana University.

DR. SAM COHLMIA, born in Beirut, Lebanon, emigrated to the United States in 1982 during the Lebanese civil war, and made his new home in Wichita, Kansas, where he attended Wichita State University, graduating with a double major in Chemistry and Mathematics. After graduating in 1989, he attended the University of Kansas School of Medicine, graduating with a doctorate in Medicine in 1993. He has been in private practice as an American board certified ophthalmologist since 1997. Being a cradle Orthodox, he has been heavily involved in the Church. He began chanting at St. George Orthodox Cathedral in Wichita in 1991, and was tonsured a Reader soon thereafter. He was later named as the Protopsaltis of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America by Bishop Basil in 2006. Beginning in 2005, he began translating the Arabic and Greek Typikon of the Great Church into English and distributing it to churches within his diocese and beyond. In 2013, he joined the archdiocesan department of Liturgies and Translation, and has been on the committee to put together and proofread the liturgical notes in English and Arabic prior to their website posting. In addition to his vast knowledge of the Typikon and the rubrics of the Church and her services, he excels in Byzantine chant, as he continues teaching Byzantine chant in his diocese during the Parish Life Conferences. In the summer of 2010, he offered an extensive advanced Byzantine chant seminar at the Sacred Music Institute. He continues to preside over the chanted services at St. George Cathedral in Wichita, where he chants in English, Arabic, and Greek.
Stephen A. Esper, M.D., M.B.A., a Pittsburgh native, received an undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh in Biochemistry as well as Molecular Biology, and subsequently went on to receive a medical degree at the same institution. He is currently a physician in the Department of Anesthesia at UPMC in Pittsburgh, PA, and recently graduated with an M.B.A. Additionally, Stephen is a professional musician, having played violin in multiple ensembles, also performing with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Esper has studied Byzantine Chant and the structure of the services for the past thirteen years under the mentorship of Peter Papadakis, member of the Dormition of the Theotokos Church in Oakmont, PA, and Protopsalti of the Metropolitanate of Pittsburgh, PA, as well as the Priest of that Church, Father Polycarp Rameus. He is knowledgeable of English, Greek, and Arabic Byzantine Notation and is currently the director of the Pittsburgh Byzantine Choir. He has chanted with the Ecumenical Patriarchal Choir in Constantinople, Turkey, at St. George Cathedral during Holy Week and Pascha, as well as other choirs throughout Greece, and counts those experiences among the greatest of his life.

Chris Farha has directed the St. George Cathedral choir in Wichita, Kansas since 1985. She is also the Sacred Music Coordinator for the Diocese of Wichita and has served in that role since 1994. She is a member of the Sacred Music Committee for the Antiochian Archdiocese and is the administrator of the Sacred Music list-serve. She was co-editor of the “Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts” music book and sang on 2 recordings done by the Western Region, “There is Joy in Bethlehem” and “Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts”. As a choir director, the pinnacle of her career was directing a 60-voice choir at the Consecration of Bishop Basil in 1992. Chris has done workshops both in her Diocese and throughout the Archdiocese. She has given several general session talks at Sacred Music Institutes, one of which was published in its entirety in the Word Magazine, entitled “Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise, O Lord: Joy and Celebration of Orthodox Liturgical Music”. Chris has a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and is Food Service Director for the Catholic Diocese of Wichita. She is married to Warren Farha, owner of Eighth Day Books and has three children.

Christopher Holwey is the outgoing Chairman of the Sacred Music Department for the Antiochian Archdiocese, having been appointed by +Metropolitan Philip in February 2006. He is also a past Midwest Regional Choir Director, serving back in the early 80s. He has been playing the piano since 1964, and chanting in the Church since 1981 (always ready to learn in both areas). He graduated from St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in 1984, and served as a priest of this Archdiocese for over 18 years. During that time, he composed and arranged various types of Orthodox music for our liturgical services. He helps to computerize our music, is currently proofing and updating Kazan’s Byzantine Projects, and oversees the Sacred Music website and our PDF Library.

Paul Jabara is the incoming Chairman of the Sacred Music Department for the Antiochian Archdiocese, having been appointed by Metropolitan Joseph in March 2015. was born in Montreal and is a graduate of McGill University. Originally a trombonist, he obtained his undergraduate degree in voice and piano and a Master's degree in choral conducting, and presently divides his time between conducting and teaching. He is celebrating thirty years as music director at St-George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Montreal. He is co-founder of the period instrument ensemble l’Orchestre de la Nouvelle France and is the founder of the Saint Cecilia Chamber Choir. Past engagements include performances with the Vancouver Symphony, Orchestra Metropolitan de Montreal, Montreal Sinfonietta, Vancouver Bach Choir, the Stewart Hall Singers and the McGill Choral Society. He was also the artistic administrator and assistant conductor of the International Opera Festival, performing Verdi’s AIDA in Montreal, Vancouver, Tokyo and Sydney Australia.
In addition to being the Coordinator of the Sacred Music Institute for the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America, Paul was recently appointed the new Chairman of the Department of Sacred Music. He is the founder and director of the Sacred Music Chamber Choir and was instrumental in establishing the Youth Music Ministry, the Sacred Music Byzantine Choir and the Young Conductor's Apprentice Program. He is also invited regularly as a guest conductor/clinician for choral workshops throughout the Archdiocese.

Deeply passionate about choral music, his love of both Orthodox Slavonic Music and Harmonized Byzantine music is strong. He was among the first to introduce Canadian audiences to the Orthodox music of Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Chesnokov, Bortniansky, Grechanninov and Kastalsky. A dynamic conductor, he brings out the very best in his singers and inspires them to achieve new levels of performance standards.

NICHOLAS J. JONES, PH. D., is a Subdeacon of the OCA and currently leads the Byzantine and Slavic chanting at the Protection of the Mother of God Orthodox Church in Falls Church, VA (in the OCA-ROEA). He was one of the lead chanters of the Byzantine Choir at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral in Pittsburgh, PA. He has a BS, MS, and PhD in Materials Science and Engineering from Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), and currently works for the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Carderock Division in Bethesda, MD as a Materials Engineer. He has taken extensive courses on Western Music theory, and, in the area of Byzantine Music, he is currently taking lessons from George Theodoridis of Washington, DC. He has also been guided by Dr. Stephen Esper, Protopsaltis Peter Papadakos and Dr. Nicholas Giannoukakis from Pittsburgh, Dn. Niphon of Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos, as well as various internet resources. He has been teaching Byzantine Notation and Theory in the Pittsburgh and Northern Virginia areas for 7 years, and is the webmaster of ByzantineChant.org. He is currently on two CDs with the Byzantine Choir of St. George Cathedral, with more to come, God willing.

EMILY LOWE holds a BA in Classical Civilizations from the Catholic University of America and an MAT in Secondary English from Loyola University Maryland. She teaches English and French at Mount de Sales Academy in Catonsville, Maryland, but her first love is music, which she has studied in some form for most of her life. She studied and performed piano throughout grade school and began singing in the church choir as a catechumen. The music of Orthodoxy helped bring her family into the church in 1996, and shortly thereafter she began studying Byzantine chant, where she found her deepest passion. She has been protopsalti of Holy Cross in Linthicum, Maryland since 2005, where she has been blessed to instruct several dozen chanters over the years. She is exceedingly grateful for the encouragement, inspiration and challenges offered by her mentors over the years, many of whom are here this weekend!

CHARLES MARGE has been the Head Chanter at St. Mary’s Orthodox Church in Cambridge, MA for 20 years and has taught Byzantine chant at the parish and diocesan level. He served for over 10 years as the Assistant Conductor of the MIT Concert Band. Charlie began studying music at an early age from his father, a well-known New York City studio musician. While studying Mathematics, Operations Research, and Management at MIT, Mr. Marge minored in Music and studied conducting from John Corley. During these years, he also studied Byzantine Chant from Bishop BASIL Essey, Rev. Alexis Kouri, the Reverend Fathers John Namie and Gregory Phelan of blessed memory. Charles founded the Boston Byzantine Choir in 1993 with the goal of making Byzantine music accessible to the English-speaking world. The choir, under his direction, has recorded several CD’s. In 2011, Charles was appointed Sacred Music Director for the Diocese of Worcester and New England.
Danielle Pronkta received a Bachelor of Arts in music performance from Northwestern State University of Louisiana. Her love of music began with the violin at the age of five, and by seven years old she was already singing with the St. George Choir. She continues to be an active member of St. George Orthodox Church, Houston and is currently the Events Chairperson for the 2013 Archdiocese Convention. Her professional engagements include performances with the South Arkansas and Shreveport Symphonies, the Memorial Orchestras, the Highlands Orchestra and the Virtuosi of Houston. She has conducted the musical Gypsy and has toured with A Night of Opera. She is the recipient of numerous awards and accolades including conducting at Carnegie Hall and Chicago’s Symphony Hall. She is a recipient of the PTA Lifetime Achievement Award and the SBISD Teacher Appreciation Award. Most recently, Danielle won the Memorial High School Teacher of the year and is a semi-finalist as the SBISD District Teacher of the Year.

Regina Roum holds a BM in Music - Vocal Performance, a BA in Communications - Public Relations-Marketing, a California Teaching Credential for Music – K-12 and a Masters in Education. Regina invented and developed a music education business, LITERACY ONSTAGE, providing enrichment programs for many Orange County schools. She also directs and produces after-school musical theater programs for ten schools throughout the year and operates a vocal studio preparing students for competitions and auditions. Regina directs the St. Andrew Orthodox Church (Riverside, CA) Children’s Choir and assists directing the Adult Choir. Regina has sung with the William Hall Chorale, Opera Chapman and Fullerton Civic Light Opera. She also serves as a member of the Sacred Music Committee for the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese. In 2013, Regina and Elizabeth Beck co-authored the TEEN CHOIR MANUALS: How to Begin and Nurture An Orthodox Christian Teen Choir Music Ministry - complete with Director’s Instructional Manual & Singer’s Companion Manual and available at www.patristicnectar.org Regina resides in Anaheim Hills, CA with her husband, Dr. James Roum. All four of their sons are currently (or have been) members of the St. Andrew Teen Choir.

The Rev. Michael Vanderhoef was ordained to the priesthood on Palm Sunday, April 20, 2008 and is the pastor of the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Madison, Wisconsin. He is also the systems librarian at the Archbishop Iakovos Library and Learning Resources Center at Hellenic College / Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School in Brookline, MA. He was an adjunct instructor of Byzantine and Western Music at Hellenic College / Holy Cross from 2003-2006. Prior to beginning his work at the seminary, he received his M.Div. from Holy Cross in the spring of 2002. He also holds an M.L.S and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Fr. Michael was an assistant choir director and chanter at his home parish, Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, Madison, WI, for several years prior to arriving at Holy Cross in 1998. He also conducted other sacred and secular choirs as guest conductor. He has lectured and conducted workshops on Byzantine Liturgical Music and is dedicated to facilitating, promoting and encouraging Byzantine Chant and its proper usage in our churches.

Nazo Zakkak, an improvising pianist from an early age, entered the jazz world and, after performing (locally and internationally) with many notables in the field, graduated with an MFA in Integrated Composition Improvisation and Technology from UC Irvine. Having also worked in the fields of ambient music, experimental music and minimalism, he turned his attention towards the spiritual music of the Orthodox Church and has been commissioned by churches and monasteries across the U.S. His works have been sung and recorded by various church and professional choirs.