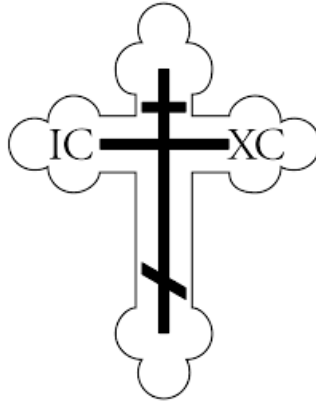


2022 General Parish Meeting
Youth and Outreach and General Ministries Report
Antiochian Orthodox Basilica of St. Mary
Celebrating 50 years of service!





2022 General Parish Assembly Report
Youth and Pastoral Outreach and General Ministries
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- **Altar Servers**

The Altar boy ministry works weekly with boys age 9 and up. They have maintained their service throughout the pandemic, while following social distancing guidelines.

Contact: Haitham Fakhouri • Email: Haitham@pickbold.com



- **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)**

The Montessori-based form of children's religious education, called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, resumed sessions in the fall of 2021 for parishioners on Monday evenings and for the Basilica of St. Mary Montessori Academy students on Tuesday mornings. The Monday classes are open to children ages 3-6, and have about 8 students. Classes will continue through the end of the school year in May 2022.

Contact: Viki Tarazi and Kim Freij • Email: cgsstmary@yahoo.com



• Camp St. Mary

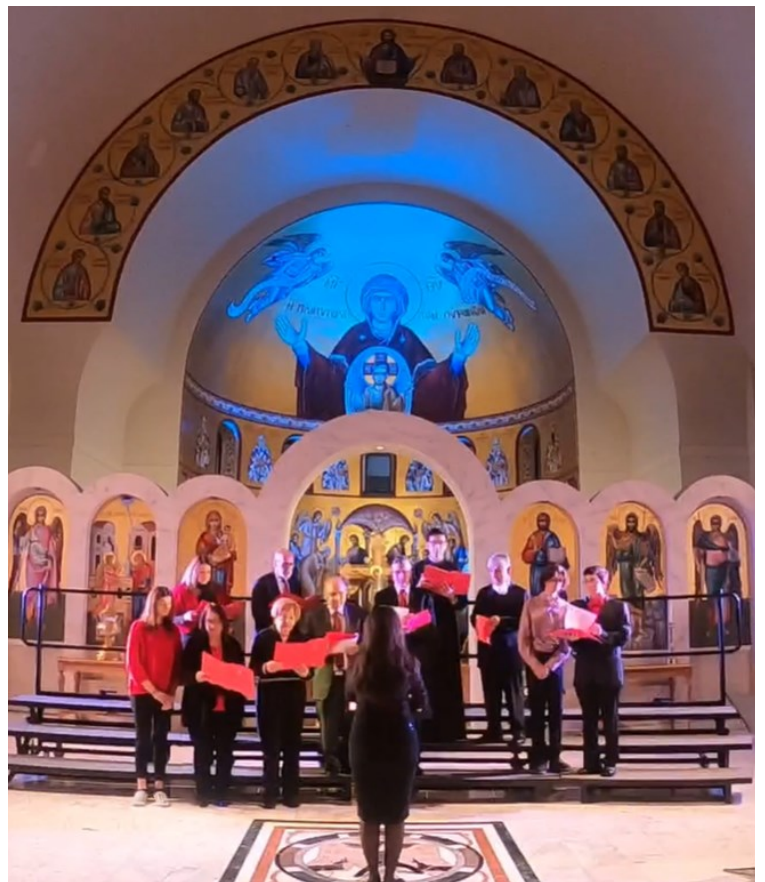
The long held tradition of Camp St. Mary was able to resume this summer after a year-long hiatus due to Covid. For many of the kids, this was their first time together after a long, difficult year apart. Everyone was eager for faith and fellowship with attendance often reaching 80 kids each week over seven weeks. With all of the tragedy surrounding us, we knew it was appropriate to pick a theme that reflected that God’s love was still prevailing. Our theme was: “God’s Love is an Ocean Without Bottom or Shore,” based upon Psalm 103:11-12, “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Our Christian education lessons followed the lives of the prophets and the ways that their lives exemplified God’s prevailing love in the darkest of times. Thanks to this year’s Camp St. Mary directors, John Shaheen and Issa Hosari for their hard work and all volunteer counselors and parents, as well as the generous sponsors. **Contact: Sonya Kassis • Email: skassis@tbosm.com**



• Choir

Due to the COVID circumstances we are experiencing, many of the singers in our choir are unable to join any more, but we were lucky enough to have dedicated people who are willing to help, including young teens who used to sing with the kids choir in the past. The choir was blessed this year to participate in the Pan-orthodox Christmas concert at the Greek Cathedral of the Annunciation in downtown Detroit as part of the COCC (Council of Orthodox Christian Churches of Metro Detroit) We are always looking for more singers. If you love singing hymns of the Orthodox Church please consider joining us in the choir.

Contact: Melanie Makool, Director • Email: melamaheer@hotmail.com



• Church School

The church school is the foundation of all our youth programs at the Basilica. We were able to resume in-person instruction as of Fall 2021, following recommended Covid guidelines, thanks to the diligence and dedication of our volunteer teachers. All of our virtual educational programming from 2020 is still available on our online platforms. We encourage all our families to take advantage of the many online resources available to them, as well as sending your children to church school. It is only through the support of dedicated people that we are able to teach your children some of the most valuable things they will ever learn. A foundation built on our Holy Orthodox Faith, grounded in Jesus Christ will never crumble. Thank you to all the parents who have taken on the added responsibility of teaching your children all throughout the pandemic. Thanks to Father George and Father Jim for their constant guidance and love. Glory to God for all things!

Contact: Sonya Kassis, Parish Ministries Coordinator • Email: skassis@tbosm.com

2021-2022 Church School Teachers:

Kindergarten: Mrs. Abeer Mallouhi

1st and 2nd Grade: Mrs. Hiba Kakish and Ms. Rachel Ansara

3rd and 4th Grade: Mrs. Maria Ashkar and Mrs. Rozanna Ansara

5th-7th grade: Mr. Osama Nunu, Mrs. Sabrina Hanna-Saras, and Mr. John Shaheen

8th grade-High School: Mr. Michael Ansara and Mr. Joseph Nicolas



• Ladies Society

The circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic caused the cancelation of several events usually planned and executed by the Ladies Society. However, some events still took place, including the Wine Tasting, Christmas Potluck and monthly meetings. The Ladies Society is also responsible for Christmas decorations and other fundraisers.

Contact: Saada Matta, President • Email: saadamatta@comcast.net



• Media and Communications

Website

The website is updated regularly with news and events as they happen. For 2021, we had 14,739 people visit the site, of which 14,466 were considered new visitors. Because of the lack of news and events, traffic was focused on Facebook and Instagram.

Social Media

Our Facebook page currently has 4,852 people liking the page with 5,933 followers. Instagram has 1,098 followers. The YouTube channel has also seen increased usage for those watching the monthly Family Church School Videos. Thanks also to Bianca Bouzas for her work in photographing several events, and in filming and editing most of our non-liturgical video content in 2021, including Holy Week videos, summer programs and more. Another big thank you to Ramzi Bargouth for his work in filming the services every Sunday, as well as our new bi-monthly Bible Study series.

Contact: Haitham Fakhouri • Email: Haitham@pickbold.com

• Daughters of St. Mary/ St. Paisios Bible Study Group

The focus of this ministry is to nourish our souls with the word of God. During the pandemic we continued our weekly Bible Study in Arabic for adults, virtually, using Zoom. We meet online every Thursday at 7:00 pm. Anyone can join. We are currently studying the Book of Acts.

We had a retreat in the fall at the Arabian Ansara Ranch in Northville. Thank you to Michael Ansara who hosted this retreat. More than 50 people attended. The topic was “Create within Me a Pure Heart, O God”. It is so good that families get together to study the word of God, chant and rejoice in the Lord. We would like to invite anyone who likes to study the word of God to join us.



Contact: Osama Nunu, osamanunu@yahoo.com or Nahla Imseeh , nala.msee@gmail.com



• Journey Through the Bible

On October 29th, a group of St. Mary’s theologians met to implement an on-going English Bible study group. This group is to mirror the successful Arabic bible study group with the help of both laity and clergy teachers.

The first session occurred on Tuesday January 4th with the first topic titled “Ask Abouna” with Fr. George about the Gospel of Matthew. The second presentation that evening was by Christopher Holway on Theophany.

St Mary’s English bible study group will be called, “Journey through the Bible” and will be meeting live every other Tuesday from 7:00- 8:30pm in the Activity Center. Zoom attendance is available for everyone, and all sessions are recorded. We are very blessed at St. Mary’s to have so many degreed theologians who are willing to share their deep interest in the scripture with the entire church.

Each session will consist of two parts: The first part will be a chapter by chapter reading and discussion of the New King James Version of the bible and the second session will be about scripture in the life of the church. This will be an on-going program that will have new teachers each and every quarter and always a fresh discussion.

Please contact Sonya about a Zoom link and check our website for a listing of meeting days and time. Please come and join our journey through the bible.

Contact: Michael K. Pagani A.P.,MTh • Email: michaelpagani50@gmail.com

• Men's Fellowship

The Men's ministry of St. Mary has met four times this year after last year's COVID concerns. The first meeting was well attended with outing to Comerica Park in September. Fathers and sons enjoyed gathering in an outdoor setting. This sparked further interest in maintaining monthly gatherings.

Our next event was on October 14th for an evening of prayers, cigars and guided discussion. Of importance to all the men was how to integrate secular responsibilities with a spiritual life. Everyone agreed to meet again to discuss what is the proper role of men in the church. We met again on December 7th to celebrate the Christmas season. Then again on January 20th to hear Dn. Dennis speak on the important role Christian men have in cultivating the next leaders of the church, both laity and clergy. The men's group under the coordination of Haitham Fakhouri has agreed to continue to meet monthly during 2022 and grow our participation and outreach projects. This will include mentoring programs, and working with teen SOYO. We are dedicated to foster spiritual growth through fellowship and service to church.

Contact: Michael K. Pagani A.P.,MTh • Email: michaelpagani50@gmail.com



• Senior Heritage Fellowship

The members of the Senior Heritage Fellowship resumed their monthly luncheons in the summer of 2021. They held a gift raffle and luncheon for Christmas. Many members of the heritage group are also regular weekly volunteers who prepare our bulletin for mailing. Their hard work and dedication is much appreciated by the church.

Contact: Ayda Mughannem or Aida Kakish



• Basilica of St. Mary Montessori Academy (BOSMMA)



Director, Abeer Samaan

Board Members: Father James King, Suhail Abueita, Kathy Chalhoub, George Darraj, Kim Freij, Michael Khalil, Salem Samaan, Suzan Samaan, Fab Snage, Sam Sakla.

Thank you to all of our board members for their continued support of our school. Please contact the school office if you are interested in being part of the school board, as we are always inviting new members and new ideas.

Over the last two years, The Basilica of Saint Mary Montessori Academy (BOSMMA) has certainly faced challenges with COVID-19. In March of 2020, when all schools and many businesses closed, we did as well. However, with a lot of prayer and dedication from our staff, four months later, we opened up our doors for the Summer program. And since then, we have remained open and operating for the school program. We have strict guidelines, screening and safety protocols in measure, which are reviewed and revised on a weekly basis, based on the most recent information and recommendations from the CDC and MDHHS. We are grateful for our staff and families who adhere to these measures and help us maintain, to the best of our ability, a safe and clean environment for our students.

BOSMMA is growing and attracting many new students. Our current enrollment is full and we have a waiting list of anxious, prospective families. We have strong word-of-mouth referrals, and are grateful that we attract new families with our one-of-a-kind program.

As we approach the second semester of the school year, we would like to inform you that enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year will start February 1st.

Reasons to enroll in The Basilica of Saint Mary Montessori Academy:

- An opportunity to grow in a culturally diverse, faith-based program
- Orthodox religion infused education:
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd offered weekly on Tuesday for the preschool children
- Wednesday's with Father Jim for the toddler children
- Developed a great reputation that has fueled our organic growth
- Community engagement (food drive, St. Jude Trike-a-Thon)
- Flexibility in childcare

• Basilica of St. Mary Montessori Academy (BOSMMA), continued

BOSMMA Summer Camp and Camp Invention will be offered again this Summer. BOSMMA Summer Camp offers fun themes such as: Woodworking, Disney, Sports and Fitness, Science, Art and Cooking. Ages 3-12.

Camp Invention is a one week nationally certified STEM program (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math). Grades K-6th

Words cannot express the gratitude we feel for all those who have supported BOSMMA over the years. Your support is what allows this community to continue to grow and I feel fortunate to be part of such a supportive and loving community.

Ways you can help!

Plastic tops/lids: Please collect recyclable plastic lids and drop them off to the school office. Last year, we collected over 300 pounds of plastic lids and had them made into green sitting benches for our playground.

St. Jude Trike-a-Thon: Donate to our students St. Jude project (in May) and help them help sick children.

Office depot/max www.officedepot.com/givebts (School ID number 70238663)

Kroger - krogercommunityrewards.com (Organization number J1688)

Busch's - buschs.com (go to my way tab and sign up for myway)

Amazon: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7440581>



• Mother Toddler Ministry

Similar to many other programs, the Mother Toddler Ministry was, of course, affected by the COVID- 19 pandemic. We have been thankful to have many in person sessions, for as many as 15 children. When cases have spiked, we have been blessed to have Father Jim and Sonya Kassis live-stream sessions with us while we participated from home. This year we were able to have our holiday potlucks and field trips visiting the farm, cider mill, and water splash pads.

Contact: Emily Ansara and Grace Qaqish • Email: stmarymtg@gmail.com



• Teen SOYO

The Teen SOYO at the Basilica of St. Mary is one of our most active and engaged ministry program. Maintaining connections throughout 2020 and 2021, we had a strong rebound after a virtual year. We have actively met in semi-monthly retreats. Experiencing Orthodoxy through prayer, education, fasting, and fellowship. We have had retreats ranging from station day at the church (where we teach chanting, Christian ed, prayer rope, dabke lessons, and play games) to visiting Zap Zone. We have continued our annual Thanksgiving Dinner to feed the less fortunate and our blanket service project. Our mission is to help those who join us to love God and grow a strong relationship with Him.

Contact: Sonya Kassis • skassis@tbsm.com



• Vacation Church School

Vacation Church School was a hybrid version in 2021, with online and in-person activities. Thanks to curriculum developed from Orthodox Pebbles.com, the children from the church learned all about the Holy Cross, with fun online games and lessons, in person crafts, and online singalongs. Over a dozen families participated online throughout the week, and culminated in lunch on the final day. The program was open to all age groups. We pray we are able to return to a more traditional program for the summer of 2022.

Contact: Sonya Kassis • Email: skassis@tbosm.com



• Village Up North

Village Up North Day Program was a 2-day camping program held on the St. Mary Basilica campus. We brought some of our favorite camp activities right here to Livonia! With over 80 campers and 20 counselors and staff, this was our biggest year yet. All participants carefully followed Covid-19 protocols. Campers enjoyed Christian education, Matins and Vespers daily, a wilderness hike, arts and crafts, lots of sports and games, our legendary “walking tacos” cooked over an open fire, and plenty of music, chants and new friendships. Campers learned how to sing a classic song, “My Place in This World”, which was also the theme of our camp. Camp ended with our famous candle-lighting ceremony where campers ignited their new candles and contemplated their place in this world before starting the school year. Please visit www.villageupnorth.com to find out information about our plans to go back to the lake in 2022!



Contact: Tom Saba, Camp Director • Email: tom.saba@gmail.com



• Additional Events

Though 2021 proved to be a big challenge for many, it also provided creative opportunities for fellowship and ministry throughout the year. Some programs we held included:

- Volunteer Feeding days with FOCUS Detroit
- Mini-Festival and Feast Day celebration
- Food and Gift collection for the less fortunate throughout the holiday season
- Annual Thanksgiving Dinner
- Several online conferences and meetings

We thank everyone for all their efforts this year. We ask that you keep us in your prayers and that you all stay safe and healthy!