

## His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco - Faith Forward Stewardship Reflection



Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, Saint Paul writes, “**equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.**” (Ephesians 4:12). Through the ministries of the Church, each of us is offered the possibility to grow as Orthodox Christians, to deepen our faith in Jesus Christ, and to remain connected to one another in their parishes. Our lives are multifaceted and so the ministries of our Church must strive to meet those many dimensions. Our lives today are more challenging and so our ministries must strive to help people face those challenges. Yet what motivates them is the same, our faith in Jesus Christ and our participation in His Orthodox Church and its Sacraments, and our desire to “**attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.**” (Ephesians 4:13).

To meet these many needs and challenges, our Metropolis has been a leader in developing creative ministries for our parishes and people, and not even a pandemic could hinder these efforts. Our virtual Greek Village Camp welcomed 120 youth in four full weeks of language instruction and cultural activities. The

Metropolis Stewardship ministry offered a free five-part series to equip our parishes in creating a culture of Christian stewardship, providing a deeper level of understanding of the true Christian stewardship that leads to a transformative way of living your calling as a Greek Orthodox Christian. Summer Camp created an online program to bring youth together virtually, while maintaining many of the same elements as an in-person camp experience. Our Church Music Ministry launched an online presence with over 40 instructional videos. The Young Married Couples ministry are participating in a new program to empower them as they navigate through the early years of marriage.

Our Family Wellness Ministry is implementing *The Relationship Project*, an Orthodox program from the Faithtree Resources, focusing on teens and engaging them in much-needed conversations about the church and mental health, intimacy, and what it means to be a child of God. The Metropolis purchased this curriculum for all our parishes.

Over these long months of the pandemic, there have been weekly video conferences with the clergy of the Metropolis. These began as a way to discuss matters of parish life in these trying times, but they have now expanded to become part of Continuing Education for clergy. These online meetings have strengthened the brotherhood among our clergy and edified and elevated their ministry in their parishes.

To meet the immediate needs of parishes during the pandemic, our Orthodox Parish Leadership Ministry offered significant support to Parish Councils and the many volunteers in our parishes. This ministry is now preparing to engage the next generation of parish leaders.

These are just a few examples of how our ministries have worked to build up the Body of Christ. This is the model of stewardship we want to implement throughout our Metropolis: all the members of the Body of Christ using their talents, using their gifts to build faith, to strengthen our connections to one another, and to serve and meet the needs of our communities.

The Metropolis is able to accomplish this and so much more through the generosity of our Faith Forward stewards. I am deeply grateful to the George and Judy Marcus Family Foundation for the very generous matching grant for this year's Faith Forward campaign. Their commitment to the Metropolis, combined with your support, will enable the Metropolis to sustain and expand its efforts to build up the Body of Christ.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, we are living in unprecedented times. But there is one thing that is constant – Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Metropolis of San Francisco is committed to spreading His light and His love through our ministries and all that we do together. I give thanks to God for each and every one of you, and I look forward to sharing our progress and new opportunities to move forward as faithful stewards of our Metropolis.

May God Bless You!