

## **Archbishop Elpidophoros, St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess Discuss Participation of Women in the Church**



In November 2022, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America welcomed Carrie Frederick Frost, PhD; Kyra P. Limberakis, MTS; and Archons Cary J. Limberakis, DMD, and George E. Demacopoulos, PhD, to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese for a candid discussion on expanding the participation of women in the Church.

During the meeting, they discussed the theology and historical existence of deaconesses in Orthodoxy, as well as the importance of further developing the role of women and girls in the life of the contemporary Church. His Eminence suggested their greater involvement in liturgical processions in parish communities and Metropolis summer camps, and he expressed his hope that educational programming, like the Archons' 2019 symposium on the Female Diaconate, would continue across the country, especially at Metropolis Local Assemblies and future Clergy-Laity Congresses. Both the Archbishop and the group looked forward to the opportunity to continue the discussion moving forward.

This first meeting came after a long postponement as a result of pandemic

restrictions. In fact, in March 2019, the three scholars had participated in an Archon Symposium spearheaded by Dr. Cary Limberakis, entitled: “Reviving the Female Diaconate in the Orthodox Church: Has the Time Come?” The Symposium touched upon some of the work of the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess, for which Dr. Frost is a board member, Ms. Limberakis a former board member, and Dr. Limberakis an advisory board member. Drawing its name from a reference in Paul 16, the Center works toward the restoration of the female diaconate on the basis of Scripture, Church history and Orthodox tradition, and the needs of the faithful today.

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