

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: HIS GRACE, BISHOP JOHN ABDALAH holds a Doctor of Ministry degree in Pastoral Care from Pittsburgh Theological School, a Master of Divinity from St. Vladimir's Seminary, a Master's equivalency certificate in Pastoral Counseling from Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts. Throughout Seminary and following his studies, he also studied Arabic.

Bishop John is a clinical member of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. He taught Pastoral Counseling in the graduate program at the St. John of Damascus Institute at the Balamand in Lebanon. For 33 years, he served as a priest of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America; he has been Dean of St. George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for the past 16 of those years. Before that, he served 16 years in New Kensington, and one year in Little Falls.

Additionally, Bishop John has also edited *The Word* magazine, has been the Spiritual Advisor for the Antiochian Women, and has served as Dean of the Western Pennsylvania clergy and churches for many years. Bishop John also served for nearly ten years as NAC Spiritual Advisor for the Fellowship of St. John the Divine, and he teaches Priestly Formation for the Antiochian House of Studies, while mentoring the full-time seminarians in the Antiochian House of Studies programs.

Married to Joanne Josephs until her repose on May 25, 2008, Bishop John is the father of Gregory (wife Diana) of Phoenix, Arizona, Joseph of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Maria of Westboro, Massachusetts. He grew up at St. George Orthodox Church in Boston and has two siblings, Ernest of Westwood, Massachusetts and Khouria Janet Shadid of Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

On Sunday, December 11, 2011, Bishop John was consecrated as Auxiliary of the Diocese of Worcester and New England, 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. Bishop John's namesday is September 26 (St. John the Theologian).

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. 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. In July 2018 Mareena was invited as the Guest Conductor for the 14th Annual International Festival of the Aegean on the Island of Syros, as well as Athens Greece. In Spring 2020 Maestra Boosamra Ball will debut as a Guest Conductor in Carnegie Hall, where she will conduct Schubert's Mass in G. As 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. This past December she celebrated 40 years of service with a beautiful Gala Concert featuring soloists from across the Archdiocese. She 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. All three of her children have sung in her various choirs.

DEACON JOHN (RASSEM) EL MASSIH was born and raised in Anfeh, Lebanon, where he studied Byzantine chant under the renowned teacher Fr. Nicholas Malek. He received his certification at 18. After immigrating to the United States, he enrolled in the Hellenic College of Holy Cross, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies and a Masters in Divinity. During his time at there, Deacon John continued to study Byzantine Chant under Photios Ketzetzis and Dr. Grammenos Karanos. He was a key member of the school's Saint Romanos the Melodist Choir, the Antiochian Archdiocesan Choir, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Choir, and the Choir of St. Mark. He served as a guest lecturer at the Crossroads Program for Hellenic College from 2007 to 2012. In 2009, he directed a CD project entitled "The Voice of the Lord: Selected Hymns from the Feast of Theophany." He served as the protopsalti of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Boston, Massachusetts until being assigned as an assistant and chanter for His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP in June of 2013. In March 2017, he was ordained to the Diaconate and currently serves Metropolitan JOSEPH, an assignment that includes leading and directing the Antiochian Archdiocesan Choir and teaching Byzantine music at Saint Vladimir's Seminary. In addition to his teaching at St. Vladimir's, Deacon John teaches classes on Byzantine music for the Antiochian Village summer camp in Pennsylvania.

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. 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. She also had the honor of developing two presentations with Master Iconographer, Kh. Erin Mary Kimmett on "Iconography and Hymnography; the Language of Our Prayer" on the topics of Holy Week and Great and Holy Pascha. Since 2012 she has been the administrator of the Youth Music Ministry Program and from 2013-16 the Coordinator for the West Coast Sacred Music Institute. Chris has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and is Food Service Director for the Catholic Diocese of Wichita. Her "music education" is a composite of thirty plus years attending Sacred Music Institutes and studying the technique, styles and passion of those teachers, directors and mentors. She is married to Warren Farha, owner of Eighth Day Books and they have 3 married children and 4 grandchildren.

AMY HOGG chants at St. George Antiochian Cathedral in Pittsburgh, PA. In 2011, after a varied teaching career in which she taught bilingual kindergarten, Spanish reading, first grade, and Suzuki Piano, she began an indepth study of Byzantine chant. Amy has been guided in her study of Byzantine chant by Dr. Stephen Esper, Richard Barrett, Samuel Herron and Dr. Nicholas Giannoukakis. Amy chants with the Byzantine Choir of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh and studies voice with Dr. Kimberly Steinhauer, president of Estill Voice International. Amy has a performer's certificate in Byzantine music from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, is a member of the board of the St. John of Damascus Society, and is the co-host of the AFM podcast, A Sacrifice of Praise. Amy is the founder of Byzantine Beginnings, a chant curriculum that blends the best practices from other fields of education with the theory and praxis of Byzantine chant by using visual and concrete models, cooperative games, and ear training exercises. She loves teaching people who have struggled to learn to chant through other methods and offers two eight-week online courses, with plans to expand to more courses in the coming year.

CHRISTOPHER HOLWEY has been playing the piano since 1964 and chanting in the Church since 1981, and is 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 also served as Chairman of the Sacred Music Department for the Antiochian Archdiocese from 2006-2015 and as Midwest Regional Choir Director in the early 1980's. He recently completed the massive task of typesetting, proofing and updating Kazan's *Matins* and *Menaion* Byzantine Projects, and continues to typeset and organize the online library and coordinate with the Liturgics Department to produce the Online Liturgical Guide.

PAUL JABARA has served as Chairman of the Sacred Music Department for the Antiochian Archdiocese since his appointment by Metropolitan JOSEPH in 2015. He 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 has been music director at St-George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Montréal for over thirty years. 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.

In addition to being the Chairman of the Department of Sacred Music, Paul 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 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.

DR. NICHOLAS J. JONES 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), where he is also the choir director. 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), a BA in Chanting from Aigaleo Conservatory in Athens, Greece, 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 has taken 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 10 years, and is the webmaster of ByzantineChant.org. He is currently on two CD's with the Byzantine Choir of St. George Cathedral, with more to come, God willing.

DR. ZHANNA LEHMANN has been working with choirs for over 20 years. She started her musical career after graduation from the Kazan State Conservatory in Russia (the city where St. Raphael of Brooklyn worked and taught Arabic at the Kazan Theological Academy). Upon completion of her education at the Conservatory, Zhanna was an instructor and assistant principal for a Music School in her hometown of Dimitrovgrad, Russia. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Illinois and teaches at the Music Academy of the University. She is the founder and director of the Illinois Orthodox Choir, a choral group open to singers of all faiths in Champaign-Urbana, IL. The Illinois Orthodox Choir is committed to spreading the beauty of Orthodox music to the general public and has performed in a variety of settings. She is a choir director and chanter at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Urbana, IL. Dr. Lehmann offers choral and conducting workshops for church choirs and choir directors.

KH. NANCY HANNA LONG has been directing choirs and chanting in Orthodox churches for over 35 years. After graduating from The Ohio State University with Bachelor degrees in Voice Performance and Music Education, she moved to Pittsburgh and sang for many years in the Pittsburgh Opera Chorus and the professional core of the Mendelssohn Choir, performing multiple solos with Pittsburgh Opera, the Pittsburgh Symphony, and other local organizations. Kh. Nancy is now the assistant director of the Pan-Orthodox Choir of Pittsburgh and chants at her home parish of St. Elias in New Castle, PA, where her husband, Father Kevin Gregory, is pastor. She especially enjoys mentoring aspiring Orthodox choir directors, helping them to become independent and confident. At the Sacred Music Institute, Kh. Nancy has taught many classes, including Pitch-Giving, Vocal Technique, and Western Music Theory.

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 twenty years ago, and shortly thereafter she began studying Byzantine chant, where she found her deepest passion. She has been protopsalti of Holy Cross in Linthicum, Maryland for over ten years, has sung on several albums, and was featured in an episode of Religion and Ethics Newsweekly focusing on Byzantine chant. 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 over 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 2012, Charles was appointed Sacred Music Director for the Diocese of Worcester and New England.

DANIELLE PRONTKA 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 where she is the choir director and has been the Events Chairperson for the 2013 Archdiocese Convention, and numerous galas. Her professional engagements include performances with the South Arkansas and Shreveport Symphonies, conductor of the Memorial Orchestras, the Highlands Orchestra and the Virtuosi of Houston. She has conducted the musicals 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. Danielle is a guest clinician and conductor across Texas. 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 the SBISD District Teacher of the Year.

THE VERY REV. FR. MARK SAHADY graduated from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey with a Bachelor of Music Education, and later earned a Masters of Divinity and a Master of Arts in Liturgical Music from St. Vladimir's Seminary. He earned a third Master's in Military Arts at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. He directed choirs at St. Vladimir's Seminary; St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, New York; St. Stephen Church, South Plainfield, New Jersey; and Holy Ghost OCA Church, Ambridge, Pennsylvania and then became a priest. As an Air Force Chaplain, Fr. Mark served at Orthodox churches and missions all over the USA and in Europe, Middle East and Japan. After serving the Life-Giving Font Greek Orthodox Convent in Dunlap, CA, he was asked by Metropolitan Philip to retire from the Air Force and serve St. Thekla Convent in Arabic, English and Greek. Fr. Mark produced a weekly radio broadcast called "Orthodoxy Speaks" in the Brownsville-Pittsburgh area, published an Orthodox music book for Vespers, Matins & Liturgy and also compiled the service music booklet for the Paraklesis to the Theotokos used throughout North America. He has delivered numerous lectures and taught workshops on Orthodox chant and choral music and beginning Arabic. He is presently the Assistant Pastor at St George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Cicero, IL