



Metropolis of Chicago takes series of actions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and provide humanitarian and parish relief

Lombard, IL, May 13, 2020 – The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago announced today a series of actions it has taken regarding the operations of the Metropolis, its participation in the nationwide response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its support of parishes and parishioners in need.

Specifically, the following actions have been agreed to and/or implemented:

The St. Iakovos Retreat Center to be repurposed into a first responder quarantine site.

Called “[Project Agape](#),” health care workers, EMT personnel, firefighters, and law enforcement officers exposed to the COVID-19 virus and required to enter a 14-day quarantine period can take residence at the [St. Iakovos Retreat Center](#) free of charge. During the 14-day time period, the Retreat Center will provide lodging and non-medical basic need services. On advice of medical professionals, the Retreat Center staff has established a safety protocol to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection and spread. Project Agape will run through June 30, 2020. Thereafter, the Retreat Center will be professionally cleaned with a level 5 cleaning and remain vacant for three weeks prior to re-opening to the general public in late summer.

The Metropolis has reduced its FY 2020 operating budget by 12 percent. The Metropolis Council has adjusted its 2020 operating budget to implement reductions totaling approximately \$152,000. The Metropolis further reports it generated an aggregate surplus in unrestricted operations of more than \$252,000 for the fiscal years 2018 and 2019. The prior years’ balanced budgets and surpluses were the result of cost cutting decisions, enhanced financial controls and administrative practices – including implementation of independent audits – and increased donations to the Metropolis over both fiscal years. The revised FY 2020 operating budget reflecting the 12 percent reduction can be accessed [HERE](#).

More than \$125,000 has been raised for the COVID-19 Parish Relief Fund. Individual donors, parishes and major gift-givers have made generous donations since the campaign launched on April 1. One hundred percent of the monies received will flow directly to parishes experiencing financial distress and will be audited as part of the Metropolis’ annual independent audit. Anyone interested in making a donation can do so by visiting our [COVID-19 Parish Relief Fund page](#).

Philoptochos ramps up mask-making campaign for humanitarian workers. The Philoptochos Society of the Metropolis of Chicago has begun a campaign to sew, assemble and distribute 10,000 cloth masks by December 31. Called “Masks Matter,” the campaign plans to donate masks to service groups engaged in humanitarian work. To date, more than 2,000 masks have been created and distributed.

The Metropolis to supply and deliver food to economically disadvantaged families in the Chicago area. Fifty families throughout the Chicago area will receive free non-contact delivered groceries on a weekly basis. The program will be based at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church on Chicago’s west side, and administered through the 26 parishes of the Chicago area. The program is made possible by the generous support of a coalition of retail businesses. The program



eventually will scale up to include a food truck, and to distribute masks, gloves, cleaning products, ready-to-eat meals and hygiene products for the homeless, among other humanitarian services.

A needs assessment on the parish level to be completed soon. The Metropolis is working closely with its 58 parishes to track funds received from the Paycheck Protection Program established by the CARES Act, as well as state and local funding sources. The Metropolis also is working to determine the financial impact on parishes resulting from the pandemic. Once the needs assessment is complete, funds raised through the COVID-19 Parish Relief Fund will be distributed to the parishes most affected by the pandemic.

Connections between employers and displaced workers are being facilitated by the Metropolis. The Metropolis is working with local employers to publicize employment opportunities and specific job postings for those who are unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, please visit our [COVID-19 Resource Center](#).

“The generous, creative and tireless energy of our community in response to the pandemic is truly humbling and inspiring. In this paschal season, these acts remind us that we can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us,” said His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael. “I am proud of the work of the faithful of the Metropolis, and pledge that, throughout this crisis, we will continue to make decisions that ultimately make the body, heart and soul of our Church stronger than we found it.”

About the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Tracing its roots back to 1923, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago is the diocese of Greek Orthodox faithful in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, northern Indiana, and southeastern Missouri, consisting of 58 parishes and two monastic communities. The Metropolis is one of nine regions in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and is presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael. The general offices of the Metropolis are temporarily located in Lombard, Illinois. For more information and to get involved, visit our [website](#), join a [Strategic Planning Team](#), sign up to receive [Metropolis news](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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