



**MOUNT ATHOS FOUNDATION of AMERICA**  
**Newsletter 1 -- December 5, 2019**

**Robert W. Allison, President**

Dear Friends,

This is our first official newsletter since MAFA was incorporated by our American membership of the Friends of Mount Athos and successfully obtained its 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service on April 30, 2018.

Within this short period of time, we have been very active. During the course of the past few months the need for this Foundation has suddenly become very evident as a result of an **emergency appeal from Grigoriou Monastery following a fire at the Monastery on July 9<sup>th</sup>** and receipt of our **first proposal for a grant-funded project** (from the Monastery of Simonopetra). More on these below.

In 2018, with very limited resources, we issued our first **scholarships** for \$1,000 to two promising young scholars to support research on Mount Athos. We also provided over \$2,000 in support of the **Axion Estin Appeal by the Friends of Mount Athos**. That was a small part of the total cost of the restoring of the Axion Estin cell, but a significant first step for us. We also created an impressive website designed by Dionne Katinas of Designs by Dionne, who continues to work with us as our website grows ([www.mountathosfoundation.org](http://www.mountathosfoundation.org)). Now, in 2019, we have issued a second pair of scholarships, and have taken initiatives on behalf of the two monasteries mentioned above. I have attached pages with descriptions of the scholarship projects and the Monastery initiatives, and you will soon also find this information on the MAFA website.

**Expanded Board of Directors.** The amount of work required of our Board of Directors as we began to carry out our mission made it clear that we needed to enlarge the Board to handle it all, and so we did. We also created a **Volunteer Corps**, consisting of people who have volunteered to assist our Board and its committees. I have attached a list of our Board members and our working committees, and invite you to contact me if you feel you can help MAFA in any way.

**MAFA Needs.** (1) Most urgently, we are seeking a **new Board member – a man or woman with some fundraising experience and inspired by reverence for the Holy Mountain or for its historical and cultural heritage** – to serve on the Board of Directors as a member of our Development Committee. The capability to successfully raise funds to support needs of the Holy Community and the monasteries on the Mount Athos is central to MAFA's mission, and the urgency of the need is demonstrated by the requests already coming in, including the two identified above. (2) In addition, **we are in need of a CPA** who would be willing to serve MAFA on a *pro bono* basis as a member of our Volunteer Corps (all MAFA positions are voluntary).

On June 7, we formalized our cooperative relationship with the **Mount Athos Center – Agioretiki Estia (AE) of Thessaloniki, Greece** (<https://www.agioritikiestia.gr/el/>). Chris

Mellen of the MAFA Executive Committee and AE director, Anastasios Ntouros, signed an official memorandum of cooperation between the two organizations that we developed together. MAFA has enjoyed an excellent working relationship with AE for over a year. AE provided superb logistical support for our first scholarship winner, assuring a successful outcome to his project. The Mount Athos Center is distributing our MAFA informational brochure at its store in Thessaloniki and at the Pilgrim's Bureau offices, so that American pilgrims desirous of a way to "give back" can learn about MAFA. We look forward to a long future of cooperation and collaboration. The Center is now listed on our website's "Friends & Links" page, and its future events will be announced on our website. (A PDF copy of our brochure is attached with this newsletter.)

**Creating & Sponsoring Events for the U.S.** We hope our cooperation with the Mount Athos Center will bring to the U.S. some of the exhibitions and events developed or sponsored by the A.E., to contribute to the cultural enrichment of communities and Orthodox parishes across the U.S. A central mission of MAFA is to "foster study, understanding, and appreciation of the history, religious culture, arts, architecture, natural history, and literature of the monasteries and monastic dependencies of Mount Athos." Our website will soon be expanded, as mentioned above, to include announcements of A.E. publications and events, which we expect to be of great interest to our followers in the U.S. and everyone who has an interest in the Holy Mountain.

#### **Roads & Footpaths Feasibility Study for Simonopetra Monastery**

At our third quarterly 2019 Board meeting on July 11, the Board voted – pending receipt of a formal proposal consistent with MAFA's procedures and mission – to support a proposal by Simonopetra Monastery for a feasibility study entitled, "Study for the improvement of road drivability between Daphne and the Holy Monastery of Simonos Petras and Restoration of the Old Footpaths Along this Route." The significance of this project for MAFA is preservation and enhancement of the ancient footpaths so important to pilgrims. The project is about (a) designing an improved vehicular access road that is safer and easier to drive, and (b) restoring the ancient footpaths used by pilgrims where they have been damaged by the present roadway, and minimizing the impact of vehicular road crossings on the footpaths. The project, to be conducted in cooperation with the FoMA Footpaths team, will probably take place in 2022. A summary description of the Simonopetra project is attached.

#### **Emergency Appeal for Grigoriou Monastery**

Shortly after our July 11 Board meeting, we learned that on July 9 a fire broke out in the generator building of Grigoriou Monastery, causing over \$450,000 in damage. You can read about it in the attached page about the Grigoriou Emergency Appeal. Please look at the MAFA website page for this Emergency Appeal (<https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/appeals/>). We hope you will consider a generous donation to support the rebuilding, which is creating a heavy burden on the Monastery of Grigoriou.

#### **MAFA Name Day**

At our July 11 meeting, the Board voted to adopt as its name day November 21<sup>st</sup>, the Feast Day of the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Orthodox Church. It is especially appropriate to have a name day related to the Theotokos since Mount Athos is dedicated to the Mother of God and traditionally known as the Garden of the Panagia. Also, it has a special significance for

monasticism; like the young Mary who turns away from her parents to dedicate herself to the service of God, monks turn away from their families to follow their monastic calling. We envision this date as an occasion for celebration of MAFA's work dedicated to the service of the Holy Mountain. It will also work well as the occasion for our first annual fund drive in 2020, since November 21<sup>st</sup> occurs toward the end of the year, when many people are starting to think about donations, and before the Christmas season. The Board felt, however, that if MAFA should adopt a representative icon, it should be a more generic icon of the Panagia, or perhaps a version of the well-known icon of the Panagia of the Holy Mountain.

### **Thank you to the MAFA Board of Directors**

MAFA is blessed with a wonderful Board of Directors. (See the attached list.) They have been hard working, imaginative, and creative in bringing this Foundation into existence, and have accomplished more than anyone could have expected in such a short time. Now I am pleased to announce that another of our Board members has issued a matching grant challenge to everyone who reveres the Holy Mountain. The first \$8,000 in contributions to our **Emergency Grigoriou Monastery Appeal** will be matched, doubling the impact of those donations. (Please see the attached page regarding this Grigoriou Monastery Emergency Appeal; donations can be made at any time via the MAFA website, <https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/donate/>)

Similarly, after the Board voted to contribute \$5,000 from MAFA funds to the **Simonopetra Road and Footpaths Feasibility Study** described above, another Board member donated the remaining funds needed to carry out the project, whose total cost is projected to be 10,000 Euros (\$11,200).

MAFA was created to provide a way to "give back" to the Holy Mountain. FoMA members, pilgrims and many others who have benefitted over the years from the hospitality and spiritual sustenance of the Athonite monasteries have expressed, in their communications with FoMA's membership secretaries, their interest in "giving back." The projects described above are our first emergency appeal and our first project grant. We hope you will respond generously to the emergency appeal (<https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/donate/>). And, if you can help us in any way to spread the word about this appeal, or if you are interested in serving in our Volunteer Corps, please contact us at [info@mountathosfoundation.org](mailto:info@mountathosfoundation.org).

### **Attachments:**

1. Scholarship Projects Descriptions
2. MAFA Board of Directors & Committees
3. PDF version of MAFA promotional brochure
4. The Simonopetra Project (Road & Footpaths Feasibility Study)
5. The Grigoriou Monastery Emergency Appeal