NEWSLETTER 8 – April, 2024

Transitions
The new year began with the election of new members of the Executive Committee of the Mount Athos Foundation of America:

President:	Chris Mellen
Vice President:	Jon Swarts
Secretary:	Jim Peters
Treasurer:	Roger McHaney
Registered Agent:	Wade Kolb

After six years of dedicated service, founding President and co-founder, **Bob Allison**, stepped down from the presidency, having promised his family that he would do so when he reached age 80. He will remain an active member of MAFA's Board, as President Emeritus, working with our new president, **Chris Mellen**. Chris, also a co-founder of MAFA, has been very active on the Executive Committee, serving most recently as secretary and chairing several committees, including our Mount Athos Liaison and Website Committees. **Jon Swarts**, after serving as Exhibits Coordinator and on the Budget Committee, now joins the Executive Committee as our new Vice President. **Jim Peters,** also a co-founder, will continue serving on the Executive Committee as Secretary. **Dominic Solly**, who is joining the Executive Committee for the first time, is take over the position of Treasurer when **Roger McHaney** retires from that position at the end of 2024. Like our first president, Roger will continue as a regular member of the Board of Directors.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that **Anastasia Merkel** has joined MAFA's Board of Directors, and is now serving as our new Exhibits Coordinator. Many readers will remember Anna's inspiring talk at the opening events for our first exhibition. She brings amazing energy and know-how to this position, and is already bringing to fruition the vision shared by MAFA and the Mount Athos Center in Thessaloniki, of a traveling exhibition program that would enhance the awareness and understanding of the Holy Mountain throughout the United States.

We are delighted to welcome these new members of the Board and the Executive Committee. This foundation is fortunate in having experienced and effective new leadership to continue our progress and carry its mission into the future. These transitions are occurring at an important time in the history of this foundation – a moment when, thanks to generous donations from old and new supporters – we are for the first time in a position to establish investment accounts that will contribute to our regular annual income.

Exhibitions
Our first exhibition, ***Mount Athos the Ark of Orthodoxy***, has left the Maliotis Cultural Center, after being on display there for 18 months, to begin its career as a traveling exhibition. We are extremely grateful to the Maliotis Center for its tremendous support. Its first traveling venue is the St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Williamsburg, Virginia, where it opened for a 2-month showing on March 1. It coincided with the Clergy-Laity Congress of the Metropolis of New Jersey, which was convened there in early March.

Our second exhibition, ***Mount Athos & Meteora 1929: Princeton's Hidden Treasure***, is already in the works. A 3-way collaboration of MAFA, The Mount Athos Center in Thessaloniki, and Princeton University, it is scheduled to open for a 3-month showing on Friday, September 27, 2024 at the Maliotis Cultural Center at Hellenic College/Holy Cross, Brookline, Massachusetts. MAFA will be announcing details of the opening events later. Following its stay at the Maliotis Center, it will be moving to New York City in early 2025.

To host one of MAFA's traveling exhibitions at your venue, please contact exhibits@mountathosfoundation.org

Athos Pilgrimage
Two members of MAFA's Board – Jim Peters, then Vice President and Konstantinos Dolmas, Liaison Officer for Greece and Mount Athos – participated in a pilgrimage organized by Archbishop Elpidophoros, bringing back rave reviews to the MAFA Board. Jim introduced his fellow pilgrims to MAFA and Konstantinos, who is both an art historian and a scholar of Athonite archival history and the history of its manuscript libraries, contributed a running commentary for the pilgrims regarding the sights and monasteries that they visited. We look forward to providing MAFA expertise for future pilgrimages.

Image: MAFA vice president, Jim Peters, stands on an upper balcony at Stavronikita during the 2023 pilgrimage. Beside him is one of the bells studied by MAFA's 2018 scholarship winner, Alexander Rodriguez Suarez.

Mount Athos Friends Worldwide – Ouranoupolis Conference
MAFA will be participating in a one-day conference of Friends of Mount Athos organizations to be held at Ouranoupolis on June 3rd. The purpose of the conference is to enable the various national Friends of Athos organizations to become directly acquainted with each other to enhance our effectiveness in supporting the Holy Mountain. MAFA will be represented at the conference by our co-founder and legal counsel, **Wade Kolb** and by **Konstantinos Dolmas**, MAFA's Liaison Officer for Greece and Mount Athos. Wade will give a presentation about MAFA at the conference.

The Holy Mountain
MAFA has initiated a program for ongoing financial support for **Karakalou Monastery**, made possible thanks to a generous private donation. We have also served as the facilitator for a bequest to **Dionysiou Monastery** that involved negotiating a very complex challenge to the validity of the bequest. Over the course of our first 6 years of existence, MAFA has become very effective at facilitating major contributions from donors and bequests. MAFA has also reached out to the **Cell of the Archangels**, a dependency of **Stavronikita Monastery**, which suffered a devastating fire in October.

Travel Scholarships & Grants.
In December, MAFA issued a scholarship to **Professor Vanessa de Obaldia** to support the publication of Athonite and Latin Catholic Ottoman archival collections. She will conduct research in Athens at the Institute of Historical Research, at the *metochion* of **Simonopetra Monastery,** and at other libraries and museums. Her project has three objectives: an exhibition, presentation, and publication of Ottoman-era documents from the Simonopetra Monastery. For more information on this project, see: https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/scholarship-winners/

At our April meeting, MAFA approved a grant of $5,000 to the **Princeton University Department of Art & Archaeology** to support a one-month residential fellowship for a young scholar. The recipient will undertake research at Princeton University on the graphic art and architectural collections related to Mount Athos held in Princeton University Library and in the Department of Art and Archaeology. It is part of a larger $68,135 project entitled *Connecting Histories: The Princeton and Mount Athos Legacy*. This project, like our upcoming second exhibition, represents a continuation of our collaboration with Princeton University regarding the newly discovered films and photographs related to Mount Athos.

GIVING. If you would like to support a MAFA appeal, or help MAFA in building its Mount Athos Emergency Aid Fund or its Architectural and Ecological Conservation Fund, please visit our Giving page – https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/donate/ – and click on that "DONATE" button, or help us find donors who themselves would be interested in contributing to one of these endowed funds. If you would like to see our Legacy Giving Guide, please visit https://www.mountathosfoundation.org/legacy-giving/