

Report For the 2017 Archdiocesan Assembly, from the
Saint Sophia Orthodox Christian Academy, Johnstown (Johnstown-Altoona [Eastern]Deanery)

The Saint Sophia's Orthodox Christian Academy of Greater Johnstown began the 2017-2018 school year on August 30. The school presently offers elementary education through grade 8 programs, and also a pre-school division. The school began operations on September 11, 2001; and at the close of the 2009-10 school year, Saint Sophia's had "graduated" its first class of students who had begun with Kindergarten, and ended up at grade 8. Since then, more such "graduations" have occurred, by the grace of God. The school address is: 111 Alberta Ave., Johnstown, PA 15905 (814-255-4377).

St. Sophia's meets on the site of the St. Mary's (Antiochian) Orthodox Church, (Alberta Ave., Johnstown). Students have the opportunity to study in a church setting, including a cycle of daily prayer, "church days" as well as then the celebration of the feast days; and the keeping of the fasting days and seasons. Included in the school program as well: students are learning to chant the Services and prayers; and they are introduced to activities involving the giving of oneself (as examples: spending time as a group making visits to local nursing homes, or at one of the local food pantries). St. Sophia's is continuing to explore plans to serve as an expanded Learning Center and Academy, seeking to offer special programs for pre-school and pre-pre-school aged children.

In its staffing, the school has a large percentage presence from the Johnstown-Altoona Deanery (Eastern Deanery), and particularly from Saint John's Parish: Matushka Faith Johnson (Saint John's) serves as a member of the School Council, and as Curriculum Supervising Teacher, and as Teacher for the upper-grade (elementary) students; Deborah Wentz (Saint John's) serves as Pre-School and primary Teacher; Patricia Fedorko (St. Michael's, Portage) serves as a member of the School Council, as also does Father George Johnson (Saint John's). In its make-up, Saint Sophia's as well reflects the participation of the Orthodox Parishes of the greater Johnstown area. The combined enrollment for the previous school year was 21.

Saint Sophia's has, more recently, found itself troubled by the economic difficulties that can affect private, church-related schools. Beyond the limited tuition amounts which can be received from students, Saint Sophia's then relies **solely** on donations from Parishes and individuals to meet the expenses of operation; and this is a difficult challenge. We sincerely thank the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh who, in the current year, has graciously made a substantive contribution to the work at St. Sophia's; also, Saint Sophia's extends its grateful thanks to the Igumen Patrick (Carpenter) and the St. Mary's Parish (Southside Pittsburgh), for its consistent and on-going caring and support for our school operation. As well, we in advance thank all those who would see fit to support these efforts for what is the only Orthodox school within the territory of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh.

[Forwarded by Fr George Johnson, St. John the Baptist, Johnstown (Conemaugh)]