

MINOAN DANCERS 30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The 30th anniversary of the Minoan Dancers was celebrated on October 29th with a dinner and, of course, a dance. Guests arriving for the festivities received gift bags containing a commemorative album, a t-shirt, mug and water bottle with the Minoans logo. The Nativity fellowship hall was decorated with the Minoan prince fresco, Minoan columns, beautiful flowers and pictures of dancers through the 30 years. The excitement was palpable as dancers and families reminisced about performances, FDFs and trips to Greece.

Three members of the clergy attended, each with different ties to the dance program: Fr. Constantine Efstathiou was the parish priest since the Minoans were created in 1986 until his retirement, Fr. Nikos Bekris grew up dancing in Seattle and performed with the Minoans in 2008, and Fr. John Kocolas, our new parish priest at Nativity, grew up dancing in Modesto.

Several guests traveled a long distance: Father Niko's father, aunt and uncle drove from Seattle, dance instructors and former FDF judges, Joe Graziosi and Nikos Savvidis came from Massachusetts and

Kavala, Greece, respectively. Also present was Julie Mushet, Executive Director of World Arts West which produces the SF Ethnic Dance Festival.

Our parish has an over 40-year tradition of Greek folk dance performing groups, first under the direction of Mrs. Alkmini Kouri Bloom, who took our groups to the first FDF in San Diego in 1976. When Mrs. Bloom moved to Greece, parents at Nativity asked Vasilis and Effie to teach and the Minoan Dancers were created. The Minoans' first performance was at the Marin Greek Festival in 1986 and their first FDF was in Anaheim in 1987. Five of the ten original Minoans attended the 30th festivities as did ten dancers from Mrs. Bloom's tenure.



*Vasilis & Effie Fourakis,
Artistic Directors*



Fr. John Kocolas, Fr Niko Bekris and Ted Simos

Through the 30 years, over 240 dancers have participated in the program, performances and fundraisers. We've traveled to FDFs in Seattle, Spokane, Phoenix and Southern California, to festivals in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Santa Cruz and four times to Greece. Dancers have met, married and baptized each other's children. Dancers are mentored to become instructors and the

current Minoan groups are mostly children and grandchildren of Minoans from the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The evening's program began after dinner with welcoming remarks by the event's co-chair, Patricia Kamages, mother of two Minoans, grandmother of three Minoans and a



Original Minoans from 1986 and their children

Minoan Dancer herself. Father John read a congratulatory letter from His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and presented an award to Minoans directors Vasilis and Effie.

Dancers Georgia Pineda and Ally Aaron recited a poem they wrote for their dance directors.



First Sweepstakes Minoans II (FDF 1999) and their children

The highlight of the evening was the first dance. Every Minoan in the room joined in, making a circle of over 80 dancers, all dancing Cretan Syrtos together as if they had not missed a rehearsal. The kefi continued through the evening with music and dancing from Crete, Thrace, Epiros, Pontos and the Islands of Greece, all accompanied by musicians who have played for the Minoans over the years.



Second Sweepstakes, Minoans III (FDf 2001)

The Minoans and the Pancretan Chapter of Marin and Sonoma offered an Artoklasia the next morning following Divine Liturgy, officiated by His Grace Bishop Apostolos. His Grace conveyed congratulations from His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and presented Vasilis and Effie with a framed Certificate of Recognition and an icon with the inscription: “In honor of your 30 years of sharing our faith, philoxenia and philotimo through the ministry of dance.”

