

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA
56th Biennial Antiochian Archdiocese Convention
July 27, 2023
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LAY MINISTRY

Metropolitan Saba, Bishop Basil, Bishop John, Bishop Nicholas, Bishop Thomas, Bishop Alexander, Bishop Anthony, Reverend Clergy, brothers and sisters in Christ

Mission Statement: The Department of Lay Ministry engages Archdiocesan clergy and laity in strategic and structured conversations within seminars, consultations, and workshops that enable them to build up the Body of Christ as stewards and leaders of their Orthodox Christian dioceses, parishes, missions, and communities. Based on our Mission, the Department provides specific programs designed to deepen the spiritual lives of Orthodox Christians and Orthodox Christian parishes. The Department now offers four specific programs.

1. Since 1970, **The Enliven to Christ** retreats and workshops are presented at all Archdiocesan conventions and also are available upon request to parishes and parish life conferences. Topics for these retreats and workshops include Orthodox Christian thought on the “seven deadly sins”; the Prayer of St. Ephraim; the Lord’s Prayer; Forgiveness and Reconciliation; The Servant Leader; and others. During the pandemic our presentations were limited: One Enliven session was presented at the Diocese of Worcester and New England in July 2022; another was presented by Zoom at the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West. An Enlivening session will be presented at the convention in Phoenix.

2. **Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** Confidential consultation and interventions that focus on forgiveness and reconciliation are available upon request to pastors and parishes. The mission of this program is to teach practices that bring about the resolution of conflict through reconciliation and forgiveness. Conflict offers us an important opportunity to serve other people as stewards, grow through these practices toward a union with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 1Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4) and give glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31). This consultation continues as needed.

3. **The Program for Orthodox Christian Leadership and Parish Life Planning, Development and Growth**
This program provides workshops for pastors and parish leadership groups so that they may better understand their role as persons created in the image and likeness of God as well as their responsibilities as stewards of God’s creation and their parish communities. These workshops focus on the characteristics of Orthodox Christian parish leadership; understanding the mission of the Church – the reason the parish exists – and articulating that mission through writing the parish mission statement; the development of vision statements that specify the dreams and needs of the parish; and the writing of both short and longer-term goals to implement facets of the parish vision statement.

4. The workshop on **Spiritual Gifts** which we first presented at the Clergy Symposium 2018. This workshop guides pastors and parishioners in exploring and discernment of their own unique spiritual gifts. These gifts can then be effectively engaged in service to the parish and the larger community through the various organizations and ministry programs. By becoming deeply aware of one’s own spiritual gifts, each of us can have a place and contribute to the building up of the parish through being a steward of our gifts.

Because of the Pandemic, we were not contacted by parishes for obvious reasons. We hope to resume this ministry as soon as possible. In our work with parishes we have identified the following common

working common themes and needs: to deepen the understanding of the Faith especially for adults; approaches to Increase membership within the parish; the need to develop programs to reach the 'lapsed' and 'lost sheep' of the parish as well as programs to retain individual/family membership; Increase participation of parishioners in the liturgical life of the parish as well as other parish organizations and programs; develop financial stability and financial growth programs; approaches to leadership and steward preparation programs; ways to become a welcoming and inclusive community dedicated to mentoring all people as faithful stewards of the Church; develop programs that bring unity to the parish, its mission, its vision, and goals; develop and Implement Orthodox Christian formation programs for young people and adults; develop ministry programs to support evangelism and charitable outreach to the greater parish community.

Goals: 2023-2028

*Continue to develop the materials and methods that support parish planning and growth; *Establish within the Archdiocese site a web presence for the department; *Continue to engage parishes in workshops that assist in the development of parish statements of mission, vision, value, and goals; *Secure Archdiocese funding to support the work of the department; *Consider with the Department of Stewardship a consolidation of efforts into a new department entitled Parish Development and Sustainability; *Collaborate with the Department of Missions and Evangelism to offer workshops to newly formed mission parishes that will result in the development of statements of mission, vision, value, and goals as these mission parishes move toward full parish status; *Expand the department membership; *Collaborate with the Archbishop and Auxiliary Bishops to recruit and prepared Diocesan teams that can lead parish planning and development workshops within their respective Diocese; *Request of each Diocesan Bishop the opportunity for the Department to present at appropriate Diocesan venues on parish planning and development; *Explore inter-Orthodox jurisdictional collaboration on Orthodox Christian Leadership, Parish Planning, Development and Sustainability.

We are grateful to His Eminence Metropolitan Saba and the Hierarchs for their support of our work. We are blessed to work with the pastors and parishioners of this blessed Archdiocese. To all of you who invited us and welcomed us and who gave yourself over to the work of Christ in this world, we express our deep appreciation.

Respectfully submitted

Anthony S. Bashir, Ph.D. and Richard J. Robbat, Ph.D.