

Strategic Plan for the Orthodox Church in America:

A Comprehensive Action Plan for the Next Decade

Version 6.1

December 20, 2011

(Updated to reflect the inputs of the 16th All
American Council)

DRAFT

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the Body of Christ, the Orthodox Church in America is committed to bringing the Gospel to all the people of North America –embracing all languages, cultures and races. This is Christ’s commandment to “Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that [He has commanded us]” (Mt. 28:19-20).

This Strategic Plan for the Orthodox Church in America is a guide to help the Church in better fulfilling this mission in North America.

This Working Draft of a Strategic Plan is presented by the Strategic Planning Committee of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America. The Strategic Planning Committee was commissioned by the Metropolitan Council and the Holy Synod of Bishops to facilitate the creation of a strategic plan for the Orthodox Church in America that would capture its vision and top-level goals for the near future (taken to be the next decade). It must be emphasized that this is a living document and will continue to evolve to better address the needs of the Church. To accomplish this commission, the Strategic Planning Committee has been using a conciliar process, reaching out to all levels of the Church for their input – beginning with the Metropolitan and the Holy Synod, then the Metropolitan Council, the Departments Heads of the Church, the Seminaries, the Diocesan Assemblies, Church-wide Working Groups, internet postings on oca.org, and interviews in *The Orthodox Church* and on *Ancient Faith Radio*. Most recently, the Strategic Plan was the focus of the 16th All American Council (AAC) held in Seattle Washington from Oct. 31 – Nov. 4, 2011. Four of the eight AAC sessions focused in whole or in part on the Strategic Plan. This included 10 parallel Workshops, one on each of the ten major goals, in which more than 500 delegates and observers continued to develop and refine the plan. In its final session, the AAC voted overwhelming to implement the general directions of the Strategic Plan with the understanding that some of the details will naturally evolve with time and circumstance.

As a result of all this feedback, the Strategic Plan has undergone two major revisions. The first reflected the strong input from the Diocesan Assemblies during the fall of 2010 that the Plan should focus on priorities for ministries in the Church and not on organizational change. The second, during the fall of 2011, reflected the AAC’s continued development of top priority ministries and the identification of initial projects in each of these ministries. Both of these major revisions are captured in this current draft.

This current version of the Strategic Plan is intended to address all aspects of the Church's life, ranging from internal spiritual growth to mission and outreach to all. Specifically it addresses three critical questions:

1. Who are we and where are we going?
2. What should our ministry priorities be for the coming decade?
3. How do the Central Administration, the dioceses, the deaneries, the parishes and the individual parishioners work together to establish and continue these ministry priorities?

It is important to ask and answer these questions so we can be "that faithful and wise steward" (Lk. 12.42) called to watch over God's household in North America.

This Strategic Plan does not reflect traditional corporate strategic plans with numbers, statistics, membership numbers or budgets. The Church is not an institution. It is a sacramental mystery that unites us to Christ to transform our lives and by our witness to transform those around us. It is this inner spiritual transformation and the resulting efforts to reach out to others that are the focus of this Plan. If we follow Christ in this, then everything will follow.

2. IDENTITY AND DIRECTIONS

WHO ARE WE?

The Orthodox Church in America is a local autocephalous (self governing) Church of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church established by Jesus Christ and faithfully transmitted through Her Scriptures, worship and prayer life and the teachings of the Holy Fathers. The Church makes known the Kingdom of God which, while yet to come, is already among us and which is supremely proclaimed and revealed in the Divine Liturgy. It is in this Eucharistic celebration that the gathering of bishops, priests, deacons and laity are transformed by the Holy Spirit into the living body of Christ. Within this Eucharistic context the Orthodox Church in America strives to be both hierarchical, with authority rooted in mutual love, and conciliar, with clergy and laity working together for the life of the world and its salvation.

The Church's North American mission began in 1794 when the first Orthodox monks arrived in Alaska to bring the Gospel to the Native people. This mission to "Go and make disciples" must always be our mission. The Gospel is spread throughout North America in a conciliar Church that includes bishops, priests, deacons, and laity working together to plan for the future. This conciliarity is part of the heritage the Orthodox Church in America received from its mother Church, the Russian Orthodox Church and the church council of 1917-1918. In 1970, the Russian Orthodox Church granted us self-governance (autocephaly) in a document called the *Tomos of Autocephaly*.

In reflecting on the intervening 40 years since we have been granted autocephaly, the Holy Synod of Bishops has affirmed the following principles:

- “1. We understand ourselves to be an indigenous, multi-ethnic, missionary Church, laboring to bring Orthodox Christianity to all citizens of this continent.
2. We affirm that our historical reality derives from the Russian Orthodox Church and that we have humbly received and faithfully maintain the inheritance of the Russian Mission of 1794, the Diocese of Kamchatka, the Kurile and Aleutian Islands in 1840; the Diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska in 1870 and its relocation to San Francisco in 1872; the Diocese of the Aleutians and North America in 1900 and its relocation to New York in 1905; and the Autocephaly of 1970.
3. As directed by the *Tomos*, we live as other self-governing Churches do: electing our own bishops and Primate, without confirmation by any other Synod, maintaining inter-Church relationships with all other Churches; and consecrating our own chrism.
4. As envisioned in the *Tomos*, we believe that the autocephaly given to us will be fully realized when the promise of Orthodox unity in North America is fulfilled, and the

Orthodox Church in America together with all the Orthodox faithful in North America become one united Autocephalous Church of America, recognized by all other Orthodox Churches.

5. We commit ourselves to work within the Episcopal Assembly in order to realize the goal of unity.”

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

As we move into the future, we will focus on:

- Internal spiritual renewal and growth, so that we may radiate the life in Christ and be seen and known by all those around us. They will see that we live in peace, joy, and the love of the Lord;
- Reaching out to others to fulfill the Savior’s commandment to love one another as He has loved us (Jn. 13:34) as we draw near to the other who is hungry, thirsty, naked or in prison (Mt. 25); and
- Actively cooperating and participating in the formation and establishment of a fully united territorial and autocephalous Orthodox Church in North America, embracing all Orthodox Christians, with one Synod of Bishops.

In doing so, we will be guided by:

- The belief that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is lived and conveyed by the Church through the Holy Spirit. The Church is the living body of Christ and its life and Tradition continue to develop in and through the Holy Spirit.
- The belief that the Church administers itself by the irreducible principle of hierarchy/conciliarity rooted in the Holy Trinity, which involves the participation of its entire people to the highest degree possible and which manifests itself in love, obedience, trust, integrity, sacrifice, humility, and commitment.
- The belief that all men and women are created in the image of God, each with their own unique gifts to be used for the greater glory of God and the building up of His Holy Church.
- The belief that God created the world in all its goodness and that as a result of sin it has fallen. Through the incarnation of God the Word, Christ is restoring creation to its proper relation to Himself.
- The belief that its unity is expressed through the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful and through the participation of the faithful in the sacramental life of the Church.
- The belief that the membership of the Church is multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual and that members of Christ’s Body are, as the Apostle Paul, prepared to be “all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:22), so that “Christ can be all and in all” (Col.3:11).
- The belief that missionary and charitable works are essential to the life of the Church.

- The belief that the spiritual fruit of an ascetic life of all the faithful contributes to the building up of life in the Church.
- The belief that both monasticism and ‘life in, but not of, the world’ are integral parts of the life of the Church.
- The belief that the work of the Church should be conducted in an open and transparent manner in accordance with the highest ethical and moral precepts, the civil laws of the land within which it exists, and with the consent of its people.

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3. OUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Guided by this understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ and the mission to bring the Gospel to all the people of North America, we must ask: Are we responding to this calling? How are we using our skills and talents to the greater glory of God? We need to review our strengths and our weaknesses. We need to determine what opportunities lay before us and what threats stand in the way of doing Christ's work successfully in the future. In a two-day brainstorming session, the Strategic Planning Committee identified more than 50 such strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The most important ones are summarized below.

STRENGTHS:

- Fullness of the Orthodox faith, with its scriptural, liturgical and sacramental life; the teaching of the Church fathers and the commitment, piety and holiness of our forefathers in the faith which stand as examples for us to follow;
- Focus on evangelizing the people of North America as witnessed by the Church's history in the earliest days in Alaska and active missionary outreach in its dioceses today;
- Conciliarity of its Church life with bishops, priests and laity contributing to the essential tasks of decision-making.

WEAKNESSES:

- Lack of unified, dynamic and effective leadership. Lack of leadership and management skills at all levels of the Church— resulting in isolation, disjointed work, lack of accountability, and no unified and energizing vision;
- Lack of a true culture of stewardship: e.g. caring for our priests, our needy parishioners and our established parishes; teaching and nurturing a culture of giving and tithing; cultivation of major donors and endowments; encouraging the many talented members already in our Church to use their skills and talents;
- The major reduction in the funding of Church-wide ministries such as Pastoral Life and Outreach, Education and Christian Witness and Humanitarian Aid.
- An inability to understand and effectively address how we are influenced by the non-Orthodox culture in which we live.
- Lack of administrative unity amongst the Orthodox in North America

OPPORTUNITIES

- More North Americans than ever before looking for meaning and spirituality in their lives, including Orthodox immigrants, Christians from outside the Orthodox Church, as well as those looking for solutions in New Age spiritualism and elsewhere;

- Better utilization of the untapped, or underutilized resources given to us by God: re-energized clergy; male and female seminary graduates; talented, lay volunteers with a broad range of skills; and new technologies that enable more effective communications and offer distance learning possibilities;
- Historic opportunity to achieve Orthodox unity in North America, allowing us to more effectively witness to Christ and to reach out to others.

THREATS

- The secular culture that has impacted our Church life. This culture promotes a social gospel that sees no need for the ascetic life. Instead it focuses on life here on earth rather than on eternal life in the Kingdom of God. It also has a tendency to place science and religion in opposition to one another. To the extent that this secular culture is reflected in the Church, the Church risks losing its authentic voice.
- That all of us will proceed with 'business as usual' – not refocusing our lives on Christ – and not zealously witnessing to the Gospel in North America;
- Looking inward in our parishes and dioceses, and forgetting to witness in outreach to those around us. Allowing ourselves to be disheartened and discouraged by this otherwise a healthy review process and forgetting to repent of, our sins and failures.

4. TOP LEVEL GOALS AND INTERMEDIATE STEPS FOR ATTAINING THEM

Fully recognizing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as given above, what should the Orthodox Church in America's major goals be in the coming decade? Given its commitment to bringing the Gospel to all the people of North America, its overarching goal should be on witnessing to the Gospel at all levels – within the local community, in the greater Church, and in the world – and providing the resources to do so. Within that overarching goal, we have identified ten top level goals:

1. Develop Christ-centered, healthy growing parishes
2. Revitalize our diocese-parish relationships
3. More fully involve our high school and college age members in the life of the Church
4. Improve the leadership and management skills at all levels in the Church
5. Establish a vision for theological education for the Orthodox Church in America
6. Provide for continuing education of clergy and laity
7. Nurture strong inter-Orthodox relations
8. Transition to a sounder way of funding the Church
9. Better equip our Church for the ministry of Evangelization
10. Address contemporary cultural/moral/social issues

These goals, some of the intermediate steps to attaining, and promising initial 'first steps', are summarized below. This summary reflects the inputs of more than 500 delegates and observers from the 16th All American Council in November of 2011. As we proceed with the implementation of this Plan, many of the specific action steps will be tailored to the specific needs, talents and resources of individual parishes, deaneries and dioceses.

WITNESSING TO THE KINGDOM – WITHIN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Goal 1: Develop Christ-centered, Healthy and Growing Parishes

It is in the parish, here in the celebration of the Eucharist that we become the Body of Christ and are equipped with all that is necessary to work out our own personal salvation, in and through

Christ, and to bring this salvation to the world. Much work has already been done by the Departments of the Orthodox Church in America on making healthy parishes healthier and on renewing ailing parishes. Available Orthodox Church in America materials include handbooks, best practices, studies of past All American Councils, and the outcomes of the 2010 Orthodox Church in America Parish Ministries Conference.

Several models for parish growth and development have been developed, including the Parish Renewal model used by the Diocese of the Mid-West (<http://www.midwestdiocese.org/parishhealth.html>) and the Natural Church Development model (<http://oncd.us>). Both these models have criteria for evaluating the health of your parish and for identifying steps to make it healthier. Before any truly effective actions plans can be developed, a parish must be willing to undertake an honest evaluation of their current parish life and be willing to change even though this will be hard and painful. Our Church leadership must provide active support for this change, including: training priests and laypeople in turnaround ministry; providing regional resources for coaching priests and parishes through a program of renewal and change; recognizing the need to close parishes and transfer their priests when truly necessary; and holding priests and parishes accountable in their efforts to strengthen their communities.

Some representative objectives and action steps in building healthier parishes are given below. Each parish's circumstance should dictate specific actions to be taken.

Objective 1: Commit ourselves to a Gospel-centered vision in our parishes.

- Build on the biblical studies of parish vision (13th All American Council Study by Fr. Thomas Hopko). We are the “living stones” (1Pt. 2:4-8) being built into a spiritual house to be a royal priesthood.
- Conduct classes for the reaffirmation of one's faith
- Develop the mind-set that “the parish is the place to learn to minister to the world”
- (See also the Bible Study objective from the All American Council given below)

Objective 2: Celebrate vibrant worship.

- Prepare a unified Liturgical text.
- Educate and train people in the: “Liturgical Arts”: music, reading, rubrics, the “why” of worship.
- Develop turnaround ministry teams (clergy and laity) available to stay at parishes in severe decline and rebuild internal ministries (choir directors/cantors, etc.) or to serve as “visiting advisors”

Objective 3: Provide tools to help with parish development and revitalization.

- Dioceses and/or the Orthodox Church in America should agree on an inventory and improvement model and provide the necessary training.
- Regularly offer Parish Health Conferences similar to the Orthodox Church in America Parish Ministries Conference.
- Provide training for facilitators who can assist parishes in intentional efforts to strengthen their life in Christ; and identify a few successful programs that provide hope and confidence for others.
- Provide basic parish materials for conducting meetings, stewardship, inclusivity, outreach and other subjects related to growth and development.

Objective 3: Provide opportunities for the development of lay leadership.

- Develop a mind-set of inclusion
- Help priest to delegate and mentor
- Identify skills needed for parish growth, conduct/maintain parishioners' skill database, match one with the other
- Institute Parish Council term limits to bring in new people
- Build a corp of lay mentors throughout the Diocese
- Train laity and clergy in skills and approaches necessary to develop rapport with youth and young adults
- Identify gifted individuals through planned lay development activities and utilize them in parish, Diocesan and Central Administration leadership roles.
- The identified individuals can prepare short videos for the Orthodox Church in America website, focusing on topics in their area of expertise or they can serve as trainers, experienced consultants and visiting advisors.
- (See also the Lay Development objective from the All American Council given below)

Objective 4: Develop a sense of authentic community.

- Part of a parish's self understanding is its own history. Tell the story of the parish and the Orthodox Church in America through oral histories: how those raised in the Church have made the faith their own and how those who have converted to Orthodoxy have made their journey.
- Make sure to utilize those histories as lessons for parish growth, rather than for "closing the doors".

Objective 5: Support personal and family formation.

- Much of Christian formation occurs in the home, 'the little church' (St. John Chrysostom). Support this formation through developing appropriate materials (e.g. revised version of *The Orthodox Faith Series*, with workbook, audio-book, and vital shorts in You Tube format to be available by the end of 2012).

- Organize and sponsor local/regional Orthodox Family Formation conferences, targeting three conferences in 2012 and seven conferences in 2013.
- (See also Youth/Young Adult Objective from the All American Council given below.)

Objective 6: Active Service to Others.

- Create a parish stewardship program based on proportional giving/tithing.
- Reach out to help those most in the need in the community: visit the sick, feed the hungry, and clothe the naked (Mt. 25).
- Utilize unique skills of parishioners (medical, dental, legal, etc.) to assist those in need.
- Many parishes are already successfully engaged in community activities. Each diocese should inventory these efforts and develop a “best practices” set of approaches.
- Provide for/seek internal or external grants for seed money for projects.
- Partner mission parishes with older parishes.

The Workshops at the 16th All American Council identified four promising *initial* projects that can be readily undertaken and will contribute significantly to parish development:

Local Bible Study Groups: The underlying idea is to evangelize through building personal relationships and friendships. Thus the Bible Studies are best conducted in neighborhood homes or coffee shops. They should be non-threatening or open-ended studies on various subjects and/or other books (e.g. doctrine, fellowship, personal stories, testimonials, etc.) They can be Bible Study Groups or Story Groups or a combination of both.

The required resources are:

- Food
- Discussion materials (Bibles, other books)
- Slides, DVD, computer

The basic implementation steps are to:

- Identify the most appropriate groups
- Have the parish priest initially lead and oversee the groups, while training appropriate lay leaders
- Meet in homes, coffee shops and similar venues.

Lay Development: Developing and empowering lay leaders is an important element in parish development. It provides people with an improved sense of “ownership” and shared responsibility in parish life. It enables the church to reach out to more people than the priest can by himself. The more participants involved, the better the outcomes and the greater the number of activities. There is a broad array of talent in parishioners, but often it is largely unknown and

therefore untapped. To fully successful in lay development one will have to further develop the skills of the priest as a delegator and mentor.

Required Resources:

- Chancery to collect and publish parish success stories on OCA website
- Subject matter expert exchanges
- Database to match skills with needs
- Volunteers

Action Steps:

- Create an atmosphere of empowerment
- Look for and capitalize on opportunities to “bring some in”
- Delegating
- Mentoring
- Job planning

How to Achieve:

- Ensure priest’s buy-in, commitment and active participation
- Clarify how the parish will grow.
- Identify tasks and skills necessary for growth
- Inventory parish skill base
- Actively ask for help/participation
- Planned turn over in parish leadership positions

Monastic Interactions: Closer interactions between monasteries and parishes can enrich the lives of both. Monastics can provide parishes with further education, guidance on spiritual formation and praxis, examples of personal revelation, additional service opportunities and better knowledge of another vocation in the Church. The parishes can further support the monasteries with their prayers, financial as well as with other resources, and work jointly on various service projects.

Required Resources:

- Funding
- Volunteers
- Commitment

Action Steps:

- Monastic ambassador/presence in every parish
- Parish pilgrimages

- Freewill offering on or near Feast Day of monastery
- Communication to create database of skilled workers

How to Achieve:

- Communication
- Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer
- Services clearinghouse (e.g. “Luba’s List”)
- Budget funds to support monastic products

Youth and College Outreach: focuses on more fully involving our Orthodox youth in the life of the Church and on attracting young people to Orthodoxy. This will be done in coordination with the goal on Youth and Young Adults.

Required Resources:

- People: young people and others who can connect with the target population
- Materials: a basic, customizable presentation, pamphlets, parish bulletin inserts
- Media: email, social media

Action Steps:

- Provide channels/venues for young people to connect with Orthodoxy
- Identify college-bound youth, provide Orthodox network and follow-up

How to Achieve:

- Service retreats
- Food pantries
- Outings
- Speaking venues
- Lunches
- Coffee meetings
- Intra-Orthodox networking with youth: e.g. youth Sundays, youth retreats (connect with monastery?), summer camps, youth participation in the Liturgy: singing, reading the Epistle, serving in the altar.

Goal 2: Revitalize our Diocesan-Parish Relationships

The Fathers’ vision of the Church is a bishop surrounded by his clergy and his people, united in Christ, and ministering to the particular needs of a given geographical area. This assumes and requires an intimate relationship between the bishop, his clergy and the people. All too often, the ‘demands of the day’ and geographical distances, have led to less than desired interactions and

parishes and their clergy can develop a sense of isolation, of being on their own. To overcome this, we recommend much more frequent interaction at all levels – clergy-to-clergy and bishop-clergy-lay – both through simple fellowship gatherings around the Altar table and through participation in diocesan level outreach ministries.

The Orthodox Church in America's efforts in this area in the past has been mixed. Clergy brotherhood meetings have proven to be very successful in a number of dioceses, with the degree of success dependent upon the support of the Hierarch. Orthodox Church in America Departments provide support and resources to priests, but the effectiveness of these programs alone at avoiding burnout and alienation is questionable. Visits from diocesan bishops are always welcomed by parishioners – but tend to be more formal and so are met with some amount of trepidation and anxiety. Most outreach ministries appear to be initiated by the parish itself and not at the diocesan level.

Some key objectives and action steps that might further contribute to revitalize diocesan-parish relationships include:

Objective 1: Re-energize the clergy brotherhood. (*Holy Synod of Bishops and individual diocesan hierarch, 2012 and ongoing*)

- Establish ongoing face to face gathering of clergy (beyond the formal meetings) as a fundamental principle of diocesan life. The building up of the brotherhood should be a natural occurrence and not forced. Every effort should be made to make these gatherings a joy to attend.
- When clergy don't participate in the opportunities for building brotherhood, for whatever reason, the Bishop/Chancellor/Dean needs to encourage (strongly) their participation.
- Include clergy wives and families in social gatherings and retreats.
- Have diocesan chancellors and deans formalize a clergy mentoring network of individuals with special counseling skills; develop standards for mentors under the careful observation of the bishop.
- Establish a mutually supportive environment in which clergy are eager to help each other. Overcome the generational gap among clergy that seems to impede brotherhood in some regions.
- Begin 'twinning' parishes with similar issues and opportunities, as well as twinning new parishes with mature parishes.

Objective 2: Improve bishop-clergy-laity relationships. (*Diocesan hierarchs in cooperation with deans, rectors and parish council presidents, 2012 and on-going*).

- Establish the development of a closer relationship of trust between bishop, clergy and laity as a fundamental principle of diocesan life.

- Diocesan hierarchs should consider less formal hierarchical parish visitations, spending a weekend or a few days mid-week with a parish, without extensive preparations and fanfare, including family picnics during the summer with attention to the hierarch's interaction with all age groups.
- Meetings that deal with normal administrative concerns (e.g. Diocesan Assembly or Diocesan Council meetings) should not count as substitutes for spiritual and human gatherings of clergy.
- There is a need to break down the barriers with mutual exchange of churchly concerns. These relationships can be further strengthened through joint service projects and through deanery/diocesan gatherings of special ministries.
- Mentors are needed at all levels of church life; for new families in the parish, for new priests in the diocese, for new representatives on Diocesan and Metropolitan Councils.
- Help the All American Council discover the voice of our Dioceses, whether by representation or arrangement of representatives around their Bishop.
- Help to improve the communications within and between Dioceses.
- Invite OCA parishes from ethnic dioceses who share the same geographic area to join in deanery and diocesan events.

Objective 3: Develop diocesan-level outreach ministries. *(Parish priests in collaboration with the Department of Institutional Ministry, Office of Chaplains, and Department of Christian Service and Humanitarian Aid, 2012 and ongoing)*

- Seek to incorporate lay people into pastoral visitations (e.g. homes, hospitals, hospices, end-of-life vigil, etc.). The parish priest plays a central role in this – but can be aided by the Compassion-in-Action ministry model being developed by the Central Administration and by the experience of our institutional and military chaplains. Clergy and lay working together to personally reach out on an individual basis to those in need will both strengthen the clergy-lay bond and transform both the care-giver and receiver.
- In parallel, diocese may want to consider establishing one or more 'grass-roots' diocesan ministry networks to:
 - (1) Grow grass-roots projects, starting with small simple ministries and building upon success to address more complex ministries.
 - (2) Encourage/promote youth projects beyond the parish to the deanery and the diocese.
 - (3) Encourage cross-generational interaction within the Diocese, an important part of the household of faith, but especially focused on youth and the elderly. This interaction would encourage the development and sharing of interests, outreach ministry, talents and gifts of both generations.
 - (4) Assess and encourage the gifts of laity in the parish for parish ministry and then determine how that may overflow into the Diocese [skill surveys from OCA Resource Handbook that can inform a Deanery or Diocesan Directory of gifts/skills/talents].

(5) Consider establishing a major pioneer project as a model for others (e.g., housing for the elderly using federal grant funds). To aid in these matters, the Department of Christian Service and Humanitarian Aid should update and re-publicize the Orthodox Church in America's Resource Handbook with a target re-release date of spring 2012.

There is a viewpoint that the large, sometimes expansive, geographical size of most dioceses impedes all objectives of this overall Goal. Presently, most of these objectives depend rather on participation with other Orthodox jurisdictions on a city-wide or regional basis. If the restructuring of OCA dioceses were to be considered by the Holy Synod of Bishops (OCA Statute Article VI, Section 2a), anticipation of future decisions of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America in this regard may be wise.

The Workshops at the 16th All American Council identified two promising *initial* projects that can be readily undertaken and will contribute significantly to Diocesan Revitalization:

Project 1: Diocesan Resource Bank

Through the electronic collection of data and the updating of information on a continuing basis, the Diocesan Resource Bank will provide a "one-stop-shop" of who our people are in an individual diocese based on both their parish ministry interests and experience and their secular employment. The information will facilitate communication, consultation and collaboration within the diocese and with the whole church.

The Resource Bank requires skilled IT individuals to work on development and updates (with user-friendly wikis and google.doc). As dioceses begin to establish their Resource Banks, a consulting "expert" can help across the OCA in achieving conformity in data collection while still allowing for diocesan adaptation of style and content. Most valuable for the success of the project will be the encouragement and support of the diocesan hierarchs, chancellors and deans to see the project through to completion.

The initial steps in designing a Diocesan Resource Bank will be for the Implementation Team's project group to, first, identify a person(s) who can develop the form of the tool, create the prototype and informational matrix, and populate the tool. Existing OCA and diocesan data base information should be investigated. Second, general protocols for security and privacy concerns need to be considered and researched. Third, policies on the use of a Resource Bank need to be determined by individual dioceses.

Project 2: Orthodox "Youthbook"

The Orthodox "Youthbook" will be a web based resource for implementing projects to foster cross-generational interactions among our diocesan youth and the elderly. It is intended to

encourage the development and sharing of interests, outreach ministries, talents and gifts of both generations. The website planning and implementation will be carried out by representatives of both age groups. Depending on their talents and interests, the youth and elderly may serve as diocesan webmasters and content contributors.

The initial steps in designing an Orthodox “Youthbook” will be for the Implementation Team’s project group to find a diocese willing to initiate a pilot program. Talented persons from both age groups will be located. Potential funding needs will be assessed. Everyone involved will spread the word.

Goal # 3: More Fully Involve Our High School and College Age Members in the Life of the Church

If we want our young people to continue to grow in their faith, then we have to do a better job in connecting Christ and His Church to all aspects of their lives. They need a place where they can experience community and be with somebody who loves them. The Church needs to better address the contemporary cultural and moral issues they encounter, to challenge them to change the world in the name of Christ and to provide opportunities for them to socialize and bond with Orthodox of their own age.

In accomplishing this, our model should be one of building relationships between the youth and our Lord, the Church (including the Saints and the clergy and laity in their own parishes), other Orthodox youth, and their ‘neighbors’ as Christ defines them. These relationships are built through worship/prayer, fellowship, education and service. It is these four elements that lead to true Christian witness. Events are held (and need to be held) to develop these relationships. They need to be held regularly and they need to allow adequate time for people to interact so that these relationships can develop and deepen as time goes by.

From 1994-2005, the Orthodox Church in America had a full time Youth Minister, developed age appropriate discussion guides on a variety of topics, and had plans to bring youth together through regional, diocesan and Church-wide gatherings. Currently, the Department of Youth, Young Adults and Campus Ministries is headed by a part-time Youth Minister. Many important resources already exist, including a good selection of pan-Orthodox study materials, a number of successful Orthodox summer camps, and the expansion of OCF campus ministries to more than 300 campuses. The single biggest remaining need is the engagement and training of youth workers in creating youth welcoming environments and in talking with and relating to our youth in terms and context they understand. We also need to do a better job of identifying the real needs of our youth and not just projecting what they need. Once identified, these needs should be matched against available resources and any gaps filled. We also need to reinstitute national

and/or regional youth gatherings. Accomplishing all of these objectives will require a full time Youth Minister.

Some goals that can help us more fully integrate our high school and college age members into the life of the Church include:

Objective 1: Better engagement and training of youth workers. *(Training materials will be developed at the central administration level - Department of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry – with inputs from diocesan youth leaders; dioceses will customize, deploy and apply this training locally, 2012-2014)*

- Develop training in creating age appropriate environments and communications, including role playing exercises.
- Make this training available through a variety of means (web-postings, You-Tube videos, and webinars) for dioceses to customize to their own use.
- Develop a Youth Workers Coaching Team.
- Develop the written training materials by Dec. 2012; develop and pilot test videos, webinars, etc. it at least two dioceses by Jun. 2013; deploy these to/with/through all dioceses by Jun 2014.

Objective 2: Make available the needed subject material resources. *(Department of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry will lead the development of the resources; dioceses and local parishes will tailor the model curricula to their particular needs, 2012-2013)*

- Identify the real needs of youth by asking them directly through inputs from parish youth groups and through the Orthodox Church in America Facebook page (2012).
- Develop, pilot test, and make available model curricula for addressing these needs (2013).

Objective 3: Implement periodic regional or Church-wide youth gathering. *(Department of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry, 2012 and on-going)*

- Target the first such gathering(s) for the summer of 2012, while taking care to avoid conflict with summer camps and other activities.
- The periodicity and format of these gatherings is yet to be worked out.

Objective 4: Encourage ministering to college student. *(All levels, 2012 and on going)*

- The Central Administration should actively support the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, providing its share of the financial costs.
- Diocesan bishops should encourage their priests to participate in, or establish, Orthodox Christian Fellowships.
- Priests should help their college-bound students ‘plug into’ a parish near their college and should reach out to college students in their area.

Objective 5: Reinstitute a full-time, paid, Orthodox Church in America Youth Director.

(Central Administration, 2012)

- Provide funding for a full time Orthodox Church in America Youth Director to work closely with diocesan youth directors in meeting the above needs. Such a Church-wide Youth Director can come from amongst the diocesan youth directors and the position, can in fact, be shared with that of a diocesan Youth Director.
- Provide travel funding for the diocesan Youth Directors to bring them together in meeting at least once per year.

The workshops at the 16th All American Council identified five potential projects that might be a good first step in accomplishing the goal of more completely connecting our youth to Christ and His Holy Church. These projects focused on connections at all levels. The participants were very interested in extending across regional and jurisdictional boundaries. We feel very strongly that technology can be used effectively to achieve the goal of more connections at a minimal cost.

Project #1: Create a viral outreach network

- Create a Facebook, Google+ and/or YouTube presence
- Increase communication for youth and young adults who often feel disconnected.
- Potential to be global
- Appeal to young adults in their preferred format
- They will be comfortable with spiritual cultural matters in their format
- Facilitate communication between youth and clergy
- A place to communicate stories, prayers, links.
- Monthly webcast with a bishop about contemporary issues
- Promotional Video
- Possibility of expanding the Wonder Blog into a dialogue

Project #2: Build an organization within the Church that focuses on Youth

- Encourage every diocese to establish a grass roots level organization that facilitates local youth connections.
- Deanery or local facilitator on the ground in each diocese. The facilitator makes contacts within each area parish.
- Each diocese names a youth liaison that helps coordinate resources to the local facilitator. The working group believed that the position should emphasize pulling together existing resources, not necessarily writing new material.

- The territorial Church reestablishes the Youth Director position. The Church-wide director could come from the diocesan youth directors. The group did not completely define this position.

Project #3: Implement periodic diocesan and regional gatherings

- Using the local organization with each diocese, plan for and execute local events
- Could be spiritual development, guest speakers, fun events, service focused, Scouting merit badge work or others
- Youth leadership works in collaboration with diocesan liaison and/or local facilitator to coordinate
- Encourage local youth to take an active role in planning and execution. The important part is to give our youth more opportunity to gather more often.

Project #4: Outreach/Service Camps/Events

- Using local resources develop opportunities for youth to engage in the work of the community.
- Utilize OCF members if available to work alongside parish teens and youth to facilitate a stronger bond between youth of all ages
- Create opportunities for youth-organized and youth-led service events
- The work groups felt it is essential that the OCA contribute financial support to OCF in the amount of \$10,000 this year. The understanding is that there is a need support to work of this national ministry by participating fully at all levels, including financial.

Project #5: Youth Ministry – Youth within our parish

- Allow and encourage youth to take an active role in the liturgical life of the parish
- Put youth on the regular rotation of epistle readers, greeters, etc
- Establish the expectation that it is normal and expected for our youth to have an active role in the ministry of the Church, e.g. Youth Sundays, singing, epistle readers, serving in the altar.

WITNESS TO THE KINGDOM – IN THE ‘GREATER’ CHURCH

Goal # 4: Improve the leadership and management skills at all levels in the Church

Leadership and management skills are critical to the good stewardship of the household of the Church be it a bishop leading his diocese, a priest his parish, or a lay person his or her particular ministry. While some individuals may possess these skills in both innate and learned capacities, most would benefit from access to various processes, tools, and training materials.

There actually exists a wealth of leadership and management training materials, courses and efforts within the Chancery, its dioceses and seminaries – as well as in other Orthodox jurisdictions and other Christian and non-Christian institutions. However there is no consistency in the offerings of training and resources across the Orthodox Church in America. In addition, criticism of past efforts have included phrases like “too much theory, too little praxis”, “too corporate, we’re not a business”, “out of date fads”, and that these “practices are not modeled by those in authority nor expected from those under authority”. There has also been positive feedback on certain aspects of leadership and management skills training in the Orthodox Church in America that we should capitalize on. These include: peer mentoring (e.g. between bishops, between priests, between lay leaders); parish assignments and internships for seminarians and the suggestion to offer similar ‘training experiences’ to future potential bishops, chancellors, abbots, deans, etc.; the desire for seminaries to be more regularly involved in the continuing education of *current* bishops, chancellors, priests, lay leaders, etc. and the desire to use existing gatherings of clergy and laity (e.g. deanery meetings, diocesan assemblies, All American Councils) for continuing education and training of clergy and laity.

In this iteration of the draft Strategic Plan, the work of the Leadership and Management Skills Working Group has been further modified by the inputs of the 36 people that attended the workshop on the topic at the 16th All American Council. The direction remains the same, but the plan has been enriched with further detail, more “flesh on the bones”. The following objectives to improve leadership and management skills at all levels of the Church are being proposed. They are to assist our leaders, from bishops to clergy to lay leaders, in guiding our members, managing our Church life and presenting and realizing a unified and energized vision. The broad objectives are intended to be performed in a sequential order so that the information gathered at each step will lay the foundation for the steps that follow. The workshop identified projects that individuals are willing to take on. These projects are specific actions that are to be delivered under Objective 6. They are not sequential – they can be done in parallel.

Objective 1: Define “leadership” and “management” terms within an Orthodox Christian context.

- Review the various definitions of leadership and management that exist, adopt one for each for our use so as to promote a common vocabulary.
- Adopt a list of skills that fall within each term of “leadership” and “management” that would be relevant to the Church life at each level, (i.e. Chancery, diocese, parish, hierarchs, clergy, and laity). Do this considering:
 - Accountability through spiritual father and/or confessor
 - Correlation with Liturgical aspects of Church
 - Current leadership and management challenges in the Church
 - That individuals are gifted in different ways including spiritual gifts

- How best to identify leaders

Objective 2: Assemble existing leadership and management skills training resources.

- Gather relevant training materials, exemplar processes and best practices from throughout the Orthodox Church in America, other Orthodox jurisdictions, other Christian institutions and universities, as appropriate.
- Compare these against the skill sets identified in Objective 1 and perform a gap analysis to determine if any additional materials need to be researched or developed.

Objective 3: Present a summary report to the Holy Synod for their approval and direction.

Objective 4: Develop an Orthodox Church in America leadership and management skills training plan.

- Select the most appropriate training materials, exemplar processes and best practices to be offered throughout the Orthodox Church in America.
- Develop materials where they are lacking.
- Determine appropriate delivery methods (e.g. in person training classes, online webinars or seminars) balancing cost effectiveness and educational benefit.
- Develop an assessment tool to help determine individual and group training needs and to assist in selection of appropriate training materials and methods.
- Create evaluation tools to gather feedback on the training and to assess skill level growth so as to assess the effectiveness of the program.
- Coordinate projects developed at the 16th AAC and others that may be conceived to minimize duplication of effort.
- Create a communication plan for sharing this throughout the Orthodox Church in America.

Objective 5: Seek the approval and direction of the Holy Synod.

Objective 6: Communicate, disseminate, and implement the training plan.

- Communicate the plan throughout the Church
- Conduct the following projects as determined by the participants at the 16th AAC:
 - Develop and implement web-based training delivery mechanism for skills training and success story sharing (AAC Project A) – *coordinate with work being done on Goal 1 Objective 4 to avoid duplication of effort*
 - Develop and implement priest skills assessment and mentorship methodology (AAC Project B)
 - Develop and implement system for greater communication between Bishops and parishes in his diocese (AAC Project C) – *coordinate with work being done on Goal 2 Objective 2 to avoid duplication of effort*

- Develop and implement accountability structure for priests (AAC Project D)
- Develop and implement Standard Operating Procedures for parishes (i.e. financial management processes, record keeping, etc. (AAC 5th highest ranked project)

The AAC workshop identified 10 projects that could be done with 90% of the votes cast for the top five (those listed above). Rough project plans were created for the top four which provided initial answers to these questions: (1) what the project is to achieve? (2) how it will be achieved? (3) what resources are needed? and (4) what are the desired action steps? A summary of this work is provided below. The name of the project lead is identified in brackets following the title.

Project A – Web-based Training and Success Story Sharing.

Project A will develop a web-based tool for disseminating information and education on the topic of leadership and management. It will be a vehicle for low cost delivery of training as well as for sharing of successes as an encouragement to others. The project will require web designers, financial resources, and content. The project team typically won't develop content – that will come from others – but will need to solicit it, have it approved, and provide the technology needed to satisfactorily deliver it to audiences in parishes, dioceses, and beyond. The technology will have to enable two-way communication so that parishes and dioceses can provide their success stories for the encouragement and education of all. It is envisioned that this would be the primary communication vehicle for Leadership and Management Skills Training in the OCA.

Project B – Skills Assessment and Mentoring for Priests

Project B will attempt to smooth the transition from seminary to full parish life for graduates. It will provide the resources to help new priests deal with problems. Key components would be the development and implementation of a skills assessment tool, the provision of a cadre of experienced priests to perform the function of mentors, and a mechanism for overseeing the process. Collaboration with seminaries, diocesan chancellors and parishes with new priests will be essential to match skills improvements needed with expectations.

Project C – System for Greater Communication Between a Bishop and His Parishes

Project C wants to put in place a system that will make the Bishop more visible to his parishes. It will provide a vehicle for more frequent communication from the Bishop to his parishes and for the parishes to talk about their needs to their Shepherd. It is expected that this would be of value in all dioceses, but will be especially useful in those diocese with large geographical areas.

Project D – Accountability System for Priests

Project D seeks to provide a safety net for spiritual development and spiritual healing for priests and parishes. It intends to encourage participation in support and scaffolding activities (e.g. confession, spiritual directors, mentoring, buddy system, counseling, therapy, etc.). It will create a system where priests report how they are achieving “health” (e.g. feeding their own spiritual development, addressing their own issues). This project will start with the creation of a task force which will draw on expertise of church leaders leading to a plan to be submitted to the Holy Synod for approval and subsequent implementation in dioceses under the oversight of the Diocesan Bishop.

Project E – Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Parishes

Parishes and dioceses would benefit from the codification of standard ways of doing things like managing finances, acquiring insurance, protecting against sexual misconduct, financial and committee reports to the parish, parish council and ruling bishop, reporting to the authorities responsible for charitable organization status, completing internal audits/reviews, developing bylaws, and many more. This project would develop a framework in which parishes could tailor specific standard operating procedures (SOPs) to fit the specific needs of their parish and/or diocese. The framework would include a typical set of procedures with sections flagged that could be modified or replaced as required. A master set of SOPs would be posted as a Word document on the OCA website with downloadable capability for individual diocese and/or parish use. Training sessions on the SOPs could also be created for web-training purposes to provide additional narrative on how to implement and/or customize specific procedures.

Goal 5: Establish a Common Vision for Theological Education for the Orthodox Church in America

Among the pressing concerns of our Church is the need to further the work of our theological seminaries. For our Church to face the challenges of preaching the Gospel in the lands of North America it must possess the guidance of excellent pastors and leaders who provide their leadership as wise and faithful stewards of Christ’s holy flock. Our Church’s seminary communities are given the honored task of training and forming those who dedicate their lives in this service. As we move through the next decade we can focus on several objectives that will help strengthen the lives of our Church’s three seminary communities.

Objective 1: Develop a fully supported seminary internship program for the Orthodox Church in America. (*Board of Theological Education, Metropolitan, and Central Administration, 2012-2014*)

- Conduct a ‘lessons learned’ from the previous Church-wide Seminary Internship Program: What worked? What didn’t work? What has changed since then? How can the program be improved?
- Based on those ‘lessons learned’ develop a proposal for a new, improved, Church-wide Seminary Internship Program. Identify the key features of this program: e.g. how it relates to and complements the current practice of seminarian parish assignments’; how parishes and seminarians will be selected and matched; what are the program goals and metrics). (*Board of Theological Education*)
- Develop a funding strategy and public relations campaign
- Present the program plan, funding strategy, and proposed public relations campaign to the Metropolitan Council for their approval.
- Begin the new Seminary Internship Program (Central Administration)

Objective 2: Develop a common vision of theological education for the Orthodox Church in America. (*Board of Theological Education, 2012*)

- Produce a working paper on a Common Vision for Theological Education for the Orthodox Church in America to be distributed to Members of the Holy Synod of Bishops and Administrators and Faculty of St. Tikhon’s, St. Vladimir’s, and St. Herman’s Theological Seminaries.
- Organize and sponsor a conference of Hierarchs, Seminary Administrators, Trustees and Faculty to discuss the subject of a common vision for theological education for the Orthodox Church in America.
- From the discussions of the conference, produce an initial draft of a Common Vision for Theological Education and distribute it to the Holy Synod and the three seminary communities for their comment and review.
- Revise the draft and upon attaining approval of the Holy Synod of Bishops publish and distribute it to the broader Church.

Objective 3: Establish a set of hallmarks (i.e. foundational institutional characteristics) to be embodied in the seminary communities of the Orthodox Church in America, as well as a set of core competencies (i.e. a proficient ability or expertise in completing a task or serving a particular function) to be embodied in our Church’s seminary graduates. (*Board of Theological Education, 2013*)

- Develop a survey instrument focused on collecting data concerning the pastoral needs of dioceses and parishes of the Orthodox Church in America.

- Distribute the survey to dioceses and parishes by March 2013 and based on the results develop a draft set of Seminary Hallmarks and Core Competencies to be submitted to the Holy Synod and to the administrations of the three seminaries for review, comment and revision.
- Make those revisions and submit to the Holy Synod for their approval

Objective 4: In light of the common vision, hallmarks and competencies establish a comprehensive approach for seminary recruitment, funding and placement. (*Board of Theological Education, 2014*)

- Establish a committee chaired by a member of the Holy Synod and composed of Seminary Deans and Development and Recruitment officers charged with developing a comprehensive plan for recruitment, funding, and placement.

The subsequent implementation of this goal will be the responsibility of the Board of Theological Education (BTE).

Goal # 6: Provide for Continuing Education of Clergy and Laity

Require and enable continuing education of our clergy: Our clergy would benefit greatly from the opportunity for continued spiritual growth and renewal and the chances to extend their pastoral skills. With the exception of military and institutional chaplains, present and past continuing education efforts are mostly ad-hoc in nature and depend upon the passion, will and continuing dedication of individuals. Unless this continuing education is required, it may get deferred by the many urgent daily cares. Curricula, courses and resources need to be developed or identified.

Some possible objectives that would enable this are:

Objective 1: Obtain a clear mandate from the Holy Synod to require and enable their clergy's continuing education. (*Holy Synod, Winter 2011 and ongoing*)

- Assess the pastoral characteristics that make a “Good Pastor”.
- Assess educational and support needs of clergy during the “clergy life cycle”.
- Include funding for continuing education in clergy compensation.
- Work to remove a culture of fear that often inhibits clergy from recognizing and expressing their own weaknesses and needs for continuing education and growth.

Objective 2: Create and fund an Office of Continuing Education that reports to the HolySynod. (*Holy Synod, Winter of 2011 and on-going*)

- Carry out needs assessment for clergy and lay education. (*CE Office and Implementation Team, 2012*)
- Assemble a ranked database of existing materials and programs in relations to potential continuing education projects, reviewed and assess by a team of experts. (*CE Office and Implementation Team, 2012*)
- Develop continuing education programs for pastoral ministry at both the academic and practical levels.
- Evaluate existing and past local programs as possible models; develop new programs as needed.
- Work with seminaries on continuing educations programs, especially distance education.
- Take the initiative in working with member Churches of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops for cost-effective sharing of resources.
- Promote the creation of diocesan-level offices for effective delivery of services to clergy and laity in local settings.
- Publish a “Field Manual” for clergy, using the experiences of working clergy. (*CE Office and Implementation Team, 2012*)

Objective 3: Draw upon the experience of present and retired military chaplains in the area of pastoral ministry and continuing education thereof. (*Office of Continuing Education and Department of Military/VA Chaplaincies plus coordination with Institutional Chaplaincies, Spring, 2012*)

- Develop a database of training qualifications that Chaplains have and link to various departments as needs for those skills arise.
- Encourage use of Chaplains to “train the trainers” on suicide prevention, alcohol and drug counseling and to conduct workshops on response to needs of military families and those affected by war (both military and non-military).
- Find ways to boost the role of chaplains in the delivery of continuing education.

Objective 4: Draw upon the experience of other professions in the areas of design and delivery of professional continuing education. (*Office of Continuing Education, Spring 2012 and on-going*)

Equip lay people for ministries: The Church is full of untapped talent just waiting to be called to perform the work of Christ. We need to recognize that talent, define the job, provide the training, and empower the person to do the job. While the Orthodox Church in America Departments have significant information and training available in this area, they have been hampered by a lack of funding. Various conferences, retreats, and courses have been held, but no

formal program exists to address these in an intentional way. Some possible objectives for better equipping our lay ministries include:

Objective 5: Establish diocesan-based ministry boards that would facilitate and support vital lay ministry work at all levels of Church life. (*Dioceses, on-going*)

Objective 6: Establish a formal system of networking among laity who have special qualifications. (*Department of Christian Witness and Humanitarian Aid and Diocesan LayMinistry Boards, ongoing*)

Objective 7: Develop a syllabus for continuing education of laity which draws on the experiences contained in the Resource Handbook and the Ministry Conferences. (*Office of Continuing Education, Spring 2012*)

Objective 8: Standardize Deaconal Preparation programs.

Objective 9: Identify topics for lay and clergy education.

- Help with rubrics for isolated parishes
- History and Tradition
- Training for leaders of Orthodox Bible Study
- Prayer, liturgics, theology/dogmatics

Provide cross-cultural training for all: We live in a land and times of many cultures: not just ethnic, but young and old, poor and rich. Before we can effectively minister to them, we need to understand them ‘where they are’ and be sympathetic and responsive to their issues and problems, just as our early missionaries did with native Alaskans. Possible objectives include:

Objective 10: Develop a general, introductory, cross training workshop. (*Office of Continuing Education and Implementation Team, Fall 2012*)

Objective 11: Encourage “pioneer” efforts at understanding and ministering to different cultures (e.g. youth, Hispanics, African-American, elderly). (*Office of Continuing Education in conjunction with other Departments, on-going*).

- Work with existing pioneers, e.g. OCF, Mexico, Fr. Berry, Fr. Oleksa, et. al. to determine needs and successful strategies.
- Develop necessary infrastructure: curriculum materials, videos, literature, translations, guides to cross cultural understanding.

The Continuing Education Workshops of the 16th All American Council identified the following four projects as promising initial steps toward developing the broader Continuing Education Programs outlined above:

1. Conducting a needs assessment for clergy and lay education
2. Assembling a ranked database of materials and programs
3. Publishing a "Field Manual" for clergy
4. Develop a general cross-cultural training workshop

Goal #7: Nurture strong inter-Orthodox relations

The Orthodox Church in North America is strongly committed to actively participating and cooperating with our sister Orthodox Churches to establish pan-Orthodox unity in North America. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America recently stated that “As envisioned in the *Tomos*, we believe that the autocephaly given to us will be fully realized when the promise of Orthodox unity in North America is fulfilled, and the Orthodox Church in America together with all the Orthodox faithful in North America become one united Autocephalous Church of America, recognized by all other Orthodox Churches.”

For the past several decades, much of this move toward pan-Orthodox unity has occurred through the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA), through inter-Orthodox organizations such as the Orthodox Christian Laity and by agencies like the International] Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) and Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). In addition to local and regional Clergy Brotherhoods, “Grass-roots” collaborations amongst parishes, laity and clergy at the local and regional level can also be found, especially in larger municipalities. In 2009, the world-wide Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference established what has become the Assembly of Bishops of North America and Central America to address work toward pan-Orthodox unity in their territories. The Assembly has as its goals: i) the promotion and accomplishment of Church unity in North and Central America; ii) the strengthening of the common pastoral ministry to all the Orthodox faithful of this region; and iii) a common witness by the Church to all those outside her.

We, the Orthodox Church in America, are strongly committed to both the formal efforts of the Assembly of Bishops and to the less formal, local and regional ‘grass roots’ efforts.

For the formal efforts, we recommend:

- Actively supporting the Assembly of Bishops process, through our Territorial, Diocesan and Parish communications and by introducing a petition into our Liturgy for the Holy Spirit to guide it in accomplishing its goals.

- Clearly communicate the gifts that the OCA brings to this process – its emphasis on hierarchical conciliarity and on our mission to all the peoples of North America, whatever their backgrounds – while still recognizing the gifts that the other Orthodox Churches also bring to this process.

At the less formal, local and regional levels, the participants at the 16th All American Council identified these promising initial steps:

Create a Web-based calendar of Orthodox services and events: Such a calendar would establish pan-Orthodox awareness, enable networking, and encourage people to visit other Orthodox parishes and build personal relationships. One example of such a web-based calendar may be found at: <http://www.orthodoxsandiego.org>

Steps in accomplishing this include:

- Identify groups of pan-Orthodox clergy in city/region;
- Encourage those clergy and laity to establish/support a local/regional web calendar;
- Purchase domain name and make domain search-engine visible;
- Construct a web-site (need either paid or volunteer web-master);
- Recruit participating clergy (or their designees) to timely and accurately submit all relevant calendar information at least monthly (weekly) to webmaster;
- Prompt posting to site; publicize the calendar (list site in all church bulletins, link to other social media such as Facebook or Twitter).

Increase cross jurisdictional events, groups, and organizations:

- Youth, college, and young adults (singles);
- Camps,
- Recreational sports leagues;
- Philanthropic/service-oriented events (charity fund raising, caroling, working at soup kitchens).

Encourage clergy interactions and exchanges:

- Encourage bishops to bless cross-jurisdictional supply clergy and “altar-exchanges”.
- Hold joint Pre-sanctified Liturgy; Sunday Lenten “Mission” Vespers, and Sunday of Orthodoxy services
- Concelebrate on feast days;
- Compile local directory of canonical clergy;
- Establish and encourage local clergy brotherhoods;
- Conduct joint clergy wives retreats;
- Preach about North American saints;
- Invite a miraculous icon to tour your area.

Develop an expanded rubrics book: This will enable a more cohesive, integrated liturgical cycle inclusive of saints of all nationalities represented in the OCA. It will lead to a greater awareness of the diversity of traditions amongst all OCA dioceses and episcopates as well as contribute to a more welcoming and recognizable experience for the faithful of other jurisdictions visiting our parishes.

Goal # 8: Transition to a sounder way of funding the Church

The growth of the Church at all levels can only happen with adequate funding. Adequate funding can only be possible through continued prayer and effort for the development of tithing and proportional giving. The underlying biblical principle is clear: those who have been blessed with more should give more. The Church's ideal model still remains the 'widow's mite' (Mk. 12.42). The Orthodox Church in America has been working on this transition for more than a decade now, with three All American Councils – the 12th (Pittsburgh, 1999), the 13th (Orlando, 2002) and the 14th (Toronto, 2005) – devoting a significant part of their time to taking the first major step on the road to proportionate giving – the so called 'fair share' giving in which each diocese is responsible for a pro-rated portion of the central Church's budget. As part of this transition, the central administration of the Orthodox Church in America has committed to keeping its core budget level for the near future approximately constant at about \$2.7M per year. Most of this core budget is spent on administrative expenses: salaries of the Metropolitan, officers and staff; upkeep of property; legal and other administrative expenses; external affairs and travel. Less than 10% is spent on the outreach ministries of the Church. Until recently, a significant portion of the budget for outreach ministries has come from the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards (FOS), which was started in 1980 explicitly to fund outreach ministries. By the year 2000, FOS was providing roughly \$300,000 per year to support these ministries – but with the recent financial troubles, this figure has fallen dramatically.

Therefore if we are to reach out even more in bringing Orthodoxy to all of North America and in caring for our needy brothers and sisters, we need to continue on the path toward sounder ways of providing adequate funding for the Church. There appears to be broad agreement to work towards a transition to proportional giving for funding the work of the central administration. Some would like the transition to be very rapid, indeed precipitous, while others are willing to tolerate a more measured pace. On balance, the need for some form of stable and reasonable transition period is recognized, while taking into full account the financial needs of the central administration's activities in support of the Church, together with the availability of other financial sources and/ or opportunities to reduce expenses. As well, there is recognition that tithing needs to be more extensively accepted and in fact actively encouraged as the fundamental way to fund the basic needs of the Church, firstly at the parish level, then the diocesan level and finally the central administration. In addition, the seeking and acquisition of major gifts

is a reasonable way to obtain funds for major ministries in the Church, particularly those on a diocesan or central level. To that end, we recommend two major objectives:

Objective 1: Continue the transition towards tithing and proportional giving at all levels of the Church. (*Ad-hoc Committee on Finance in coordination with diocesan financial officers and MC Finance and Financial Development Committees; 2012-20XX*)

The above objective has been supported by a resolution of the 16th All American Council. The majority of diocesan leaders also appear supportive of this transition in principle – but each diocese finds itself in a different set of circumstances and has a different timescale for making the transition. Some recommended actions are:

- Have diocesan hierarchs affirm a transition to proportionate giving as a goal and to develop a plan and timescale for their particular diocese to make that transition.
- Freeze the diocesan contributions to the central administration budget at their current levels for XX years, so as to allow each diocese to make the transition over to proportionate giving on their own timescale but no later than 20XX.
- Consider the following possible transition program
 - Principle: people tithe 10% of income (“gross” or “net”? --and with what “exclusions” for the “net” basis?) to parish; parish tithes 10% of revenues to Diocese; Diocese sends 50% (or other appropriate percentage) of revenue to the central administration
 - 2013: Initiate tithing from parishes to Diocese and proportionate giving to the central administration -- assessment reduced to \$75. The fundamental question is the revenue basis for tithing from the parish, similar to that for individuals – should there be exclusion for “restricted” funds, e.g., parish building projects, larger fellowship hall, gold cupola, etc or should the tithe be based on gross 100% revenues?
 - 2014: Follow through with full tithing to all dioceses and proportionate giving to the central administration – assessment reduced to \$50
 - 2015: Eliminate assessments in 2015 – only tithing.
- Institute an OCA-wide educational program with the following objectives
 - Achieve spiritual growth and church financial stability
 - Promote better understanding of proportional giving
 - Provide biblical teaching, challenges, and guidelines – to be spearheaded by the Parish Rector and supported enthusiastically by the Diocesan Bishop
 - Central administration to provide materials, pamphlets, etc
- Develop a financial plan for the central administration to ensure required tasks are accomplished, taking into account various transition possibilities.

Objective 2: Pursue other sources of funding for more fully funding the outreach ministries of the Church and other Church needs. (*Financial Development Committee in cooperation with volunteer workgroups, 2012 and on-going*)

- Articulate a compelling vision and plan for outreach ministries of which hopefully this Strategic Plan is a major step. (*Strategic Planning Committee with Church-wide input*)

- Follow up on 16th All American Council's call for the Orthodox Church in America to actively pursue additional funding sources for supporting these ministries. Possible funding sources include a reinvigorated Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards program, a major donors program and the creation and funding of a matching grants program – that might provide 'matching fund' for particularly compelling parish and diocesan outreach efforts. (*16th All American Council, Nov., 2011*)
- Develop and implement a plan to pursue these new funding sources. (*Financial Development Committee*)

Since the 16th All American Council passed a resolution initiating the transition to proportional giving, the implementation of this Funding Goal will now become the responsibility of the Metropolitan Council's Finance Committee.

WITNESSING TO THE KINGDOM – IN THE WORLD

Goal # 9: Better equip our Church for the ministry of Evangelization

In His Great Commission, Christ directs us to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19-20). The Orthodox Church stands at an unprecedented opportunity for doing such evangelization. After centuries of oppression, persecution, and destruction from non-Orthodox ideologies, the Orthodox Church has struggled and survived as one church worldwide to continue as a viable Christian witness in the world today. In fact, Protestants/Evangelicals are publishing articles asking “Will the 21st century be the Orthodox Century?” (Christianity Today 12/2006).

But are we prepared to carry out this mission? From 1980 to 2000 the Orthodox Church in America's population declined 6-9%, while the U.S. population increased by 24%. From 2000 to now, the Orthodox Church in America has experienced growth from Protestant and Catholic converts – so that in 2006 the majority of the students at St. Tikhon's were converts to Orthodoxy. There is growth in the Church, but it is mainly of believers from other traditions and as a result of the sovereign work of God, without much Orthodox effort. What can we do to better equip the Orthodox Church in America in order that we can be faithful to our sacred evangelistic tradition of bringing Christ to all?

Some objectives for better equipping the clergy and the faithful for the work of evangelization are:

Objective 1: Make evangelization a priority.

- Seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
- Church leaders should identify those with an evangelistic calling and gift and use them to empower and equip others.
- Include evangelism training in the seminaries.
- Identify and train the laity for witness and evangelization.

Objective 2: Hold annual Holy Spirit Orthodox Conferences (Evangelism):

- Since the Holy Spirit is key to evangelism, hold an annual conference in each diocese of the Orthodox Church in America with various speakers emphasizing inspiration, information, individual prayer and ministry.

Objective 3: Hold evangelism/mission seminars in seminaries.

- Host annual/bi-annual seminars at each Orthodox seminary for students and clergy with both Orthodox and non-Orthodox specialists in evangelism and missionary outreach.

Objective 4: Actively participate in the missionary activities of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

- Encourage teams of clergy and laity to travel to foreign and domestic places to attend evangelism conferences and to participate in actual hands-on mission outreach.

One important element of this call for evangelization is the planting of new missions and communities in North America. Numerous past All American Councils have addressed The Church as Mission (1975), Church Growth (1983), Evangelization (1986), The Parish Community (2002) and part of “Our Future and Church” (2005) focused on the “Evangelizing of North America”. Between 1990 and 2000 the Orthodox Church in America opened 44 new missions. From 2000 to 2010 it opened over 50 additional new missions. One of the most successful programs within the Orthodox Church in America over the past 15 years has been the Church Planting Grant program. Many of these missions and parishes are among the more vibrant and flourishing churches within the Orthodox Church in America. In its earliest years the program funded as many as 5 or 6 new mission plants at a time. With recent events within the Church and the subsequent lack of funding this has decreased to a low of one mission in 2010. Presently four missions are being funded. But perhaps even more important than this lack of funding, is a lack of Episcopal oversight and local involvement, whether from the local dean, an assigned mentor, or local established parishes sponsoring new missions.

Some possible objectives for achieving a more robust and vibrant mission planting effort are:

Objective 5: The dioceses and/or Orthodox Church in America need to make a commitment.

- Establish clear cut goals, e.g. the establishment of mission and parish churches in all metropolitan areas of 300,000 or more in the U.S. and Canada.
- Provide a budget over the next ten years to address this that includes increasing Church Planting Grants to a minimum of 10 per year.
- In conjunction with the seminaries, provide regular training and oversight for grant recipients.

Objective 6: Reorganize Mission Planting within the Orthodox Church in America's Department of Evangelization.

- Identify proven mission planters from each diocese to work with the department to share information, experience, and organize mission plants.

Objective 7: Identify the top 100 prospective new locations.

- Help those responsible for missions at the diocesan level to identify the top 100 prospective new locations for missions and develop plans to reach them.

Objective 8: Rethink policies for forming and funding mission plants.

- As long as organization and funding comes mainly from the Orthodox Church in America's central administration, there will not be an effective and cohesive church planting effort throughout the Orthodox Church in America. Emphasis needs to be put on local organizations and funding. With local funding comes accountability.

Objective 9: Work with the seminaries to identify promising mission planters.

- Shift emphasis from mission priests to mission planting teams including priests, choir directors, catechists, etc.
- Coordinate amongst the seminaries and the dioceses to find the best placement for these mission planters.
- Establish a mission planting program which would provide on-going and continuing education for mission planters.

The emerging consensus from the Evangelization Workshops at the 16th All American Council was that the key foundational step for all this was the need for laity as well as clergy to be able to articulate the Orthodox faith in the context of varying North American cultures.

- To this end, a 6-week training program was envisioned which can ultimately be delivered on a deanery by deanery basis. The Diocese of the Midwest has already pioneered a program along somewhat similar lines. Focus would entail both internal and external evangelism.
- A handbook of resources was also envisioned as a means of collecting and disseminating information available and continuing to train workers in the field.

GOALS and MILESTONES:

Preparation:

6 Months

- Identify effective evangelism workers and programs in the field. Enlist their support and cooperation.
- Inventory of existing programs and materials can be collected and readied for **on-line** distribution by July 1. (This would form the rudiments of the Handbook.)

12 Months

- Training module developed by December 2012.

Implementation:

18 Months

- First training sessions scheduled and held in selected deaneries.

24 Months

- Additional training sessions scheduled and held.

Follow-up:

30-36 Months

- Continued supervision and coaching of existing deanery teams.
- Additional training sessions scheduled and held.

COST:

There will be minimal costs during the first 12 months, since much of this information is available on-line.

During implementation phase, costs will be primarily related to trainers' travel expenses and honoraria, as well as local site costs.

Follow-up phase will entail primarily phone expense for supervision and coaching, plus honoraria for coaches.

Key to the success and effectiveness of such work will necessitate the active support, encouragement, and participation of the hierarchy.

Goal #10: Address contemporary cultural/moral/social issues:

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to reflect our life in Christ in how we reach out to the world around us. The society around us is confronted by a multitude of issues including beginning and end of life issues; social justice issues involving poverty and the growing inequality between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'; the understanding and role of human sexuality; the belief that all values are relative, protection of the environment, and many more issues. One important way of witnessing to Christ is by how we bring our faith to address such current issues – not only what we teach but what we actually do as Orthodox Christians. In this goal we initially focus on the family of issues related to the 'sacredness of life' – from beginning of life issues through human sexuality to end of life issues. These can be powerfully viewed as 'the sacrament of the human body'. With time, we will expand to other issues.

Cultivate a 'sacredness of life' culture in the Church and in the world by witness of the Church: all of life – from the moment of our conception to our falling asleep in the Lord -- is a gift from God and, as such, is beautiful and sacred. The Church has taken some significant steps to witness to this truth – including position papers; designation of Sanctity of Life Sunday and the associated March for Life; and the formation of organizations to deal with the tragedy of abortions, to provide meaningful alternatives to abortions; and to help counsel and support abortion survivors. Possible next steps include:

Objective 1: Develop a collection of prayers for use at appropriate services and in our personal lives.

Objective 2: Encourage and support those who are doing sacredness of life work.

Organizations such as Zoe for Life, Martha and Mary House, Orthodox Christians for Life, and

crisis pregnancy centers are addressing the tragedy of abortion, providing meaningful alternatives, and supporting the survivors of abortion. We need to use appropriate venues to make these groups known.

Objective 3: Compile resources for teachings on issues of bio-ethics. In its initial phase, this would compile appropriate resources and disseminate them through the OCA website – but the ultimate goal here is to go beyond providing the resources to actually, albeit gradually, articulating a comprehensive authentically Orthodox vision of life. This project would lead to a means for people to ask questions and receive answers from trusted, qualified, representatives of our Church’s teachings.

Objective 4: Train personnel to educate and encourage witness to the Church’s teachings on moral issues and sponsor regional workshops. Provide conferences – both virtual and live – to reach out broadly. Possibilities include a series of regional gatherings on various topics around the theme of “The Sacrament of the Human Body” and a series of workshops to provide pastoral support in dealing with and teaching sexual issues around the theme of “Sexuality – It’s Not Just About Sex”.

Objective 5: Engage young people in the Church to participate in the development and achievement of objectives 1 through 4. Use their expertise in modern venues of communication.

The strongest need, as expressed by the participants in the Workshops at the 16th All American Council is to “**Tackle the Elephants in the Room**”, i.e. the issues of human sexuality, abortion and end of life issues. There is an urgent need to develop programs at three levels:

- to assist clergy and laity to help parents in speaking to their children on these subjects;
- to counsel young adults concerned with these issues
- to provide pastors a safe place to openly speak to each other regarding these issues without fear or judgment