

***Diocese of New York and New Jersey
Commission on Mission and Evangelism
2016 Diocesan Assembly, Yonkers, NY***

Archpriest Jonathan Ivanoff

With the blessing and encouragement of His Grace, Bishop +Michael, the Commission on Mission and Evangelism of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey is pursuing a three-prong strategy for diocesan growth and health:

First, *a more focused and aggressive approach to mission planting that will directly involve qualifying newly planted missions for OCA Church Planting Grant [CPG] status within the first two years of the mission's founding. Beginning immediately, no future mission would be established without immediate and adequate diocesan financial support for its assigned clergy.*

Status (highlights):

- St. Innocent, Oneonta, NY: The mission did not receive the 2017 OCA CPG for which it applied, due to concerns about parish stewardship that are now being addressed. I have made one trip to Oneonta to work with the parish and will make at least two more, one in late 2016 or early 2017 and the rest throughout 2017. The mission has also recently concluded the purchase (with no loan) of a five-acre-plus parcel of land in a highly visible and trafficked area.
- St. Olympia, Potsdam: The mission continues to hold two Divine Liturgies throughout the year but now will have the support of a resident priest for the foreseeable future on-loan from the Archdiocese of Canada. The mission will be visited in 2017 with an eye toward applying for a CPG as soon as a strong program of Orthodox stewardship is in place.
- St. Simon, New Brunswick, NJ: This newest diocesan mission plant will be formerly launched in December, 2016, and will be the first all-Black mission in our diocese and certainly one of the first and few in the entire OCA. A spacious building will be rented for the next three years as the mission of roughly two-dozen adults and children gets off the ground. It's lay leader is currently enrolled in the Diaconal Formation Program in Philadelphia and has been identified as a candidate for the priesthood to serve the mission in the future. This mission will also be positioned for the CPG in 2018 for 2019.
- Two other potential mission plants are being looked at in the New York State Deanery, one in an area 45 minutes (approx.) south of Rochester, and the other in the area of Alfred. Lay leaders in these two areas have been identified and contacted; site visits have been planned for the first half of 2017.

Second, *the commission will endeavor to create and aggressively offer adequate resources for those parishes that find themselves in numerical decline. This new ministry of parish health and revitalization will feature both short-term seminars/workshops and long-term solutions and approaches to clergy and laity concerned about the decline of their parish.*

Status:

- Orthodox Natural Church Development, or ONCD (<http://oncd.us>), a pan-Orthodox parish revitalization ministry begun over 10 years ago, continues to be used by a few parishes in the diocese, but overall is underutilized, especially by parishes which presently are clearly undergoing numerical decline. Parishes should remember that Church Health Team training is free, with participating parishes only paying for the costs of training materials (about \$100-120 per team of 5 to 6 participants). Those interested in having me come to do such work with their parishes are encouraged to call or email me. If parishes can work together to host such training at the same time for their respective teams, the logistics and costs (mostly travel) shared can greatly work to your advantage. If you are interested in learning more about ONCD, please visit the website, <http://oncd.us> or contact me at frjonathan@hotmail.com.
- I can also offer parishes training and coaching in the following areas: strategic planning (parish values, vision, and mission), spiritual giftedness and spiritual gifted ministries, leadership development, small group ministries, personal and parish-wide evangelism, and strengthening interpersonal relationships within the parish.

Third, *future meetings will not only continue to flesh out the details and "next steps" to the above, but also address the general issue of evangelism within the diocese -- both of our own members as well as the evangelization of non-Orthodox persons and communities who may be interested in learning more about the Orthodox Faith and Church.*

I am delighted to report the several years of outreach to the African-American community will come to initial fruition with the official establishment of St. Simon's Mission in New Brunswick, NJ on Saturday, December 17, 2016. Information regarding the details of this blessed event will be forthcoming. One exciting prospect that has grown out of this work has been the attention it has garnered with one bishop of a Protestant parish in three locations in NJ who has become interested in Orthodoxy and has met with us on several occasions. His tri-located network of churches numbers well over 5,000. There is also another bishop in another Protestant parish to whom overtures are being made, but this process has just begun and there is little to report so far.

I am also happy to report of the interest of a second group of people centered in Monticello, NY (at the foot of the Catskills). The congregations numbers over 30 and is made up of both Black and White members. The minister of that congregation (who is also African-American) and I have been speaking for several years now (contacts with both communities were initially made via Facebook), both in-person, twice, and via phone and FB chat. His interest is sincere and he is already ready several books on Orthodox history and teaching and has asked about "next steps" toward Orthodoxy.

In 2017, it must also be noted that the **Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black** will be holding its annual Conference in Princeton, NJ. All diocesan clergy and lay leaders are GREATLY encouraged to attend this in **October, 2017**.

It is also my plan and fervent desire to completely re-do the Commission portion of the diocesan website in 2017 to better serve the missionary and evangelical needs of the diocese.

Respectfully Submitted,
Archpriest Jonathan Ivanoff