

## Commission on Missions and Evangelism Archpriest Jonathan Ivanoff, Coordinator

Commission members (by deanery): NYS: Archpriest Alexey Karlgut, Priest Matthew Markewich, Will Warner; NJ: Archpriest Gary Breton, Priest Gregory White, Priest Samuel Davis; NYC: Archpriest Wiaczeslaw Krawczuk, Priest Martin Kraus, Mark Vassilakis

Please note: All information contained in this report is current as of October 25, 2018

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop +Michael, the Commission on Mission and Evangelism has been tasked with the following three charges, a three-prong strategy for diocesan growth and health:

1. **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. It was also agreed that, going forward, no future mission would be established without immediate and adequate diocesan financial support for its assigned clergy.

*Status:*

- **St. Innocent of Alaska, Oneonta, NY:** Recent articles in the October, 2018 issue of *Jacob's Well* and the late late September, 2018 issue of *Beyond the Plateau* have both highlighted the latest news and information about mission life. Again this year the idea of applying for an OCA Church Planting Grant (CPG) was discussed, but the mission is not yet in a position to apply for this until its stewardship matches the amount now being received by the diocese. Current, a more focused and directed stewardship program is in place and being promoted with initially positive results. I visited them in October of this year.
- **St. Olympia, Potsdam, NY:** The assignment of Fr. Peter Irfan last year has allowed weekly (rather than bi-weekly) services and a fuller liturgical cycle with weekly Saturday vespers and other services to move forward. I hope to visit the mission before the end of 2018.
- **St. Simon, New Brunswick, NJ:** The diocese's newest mission plant received her first priest with the ordination of Deacon Samuel Davis to the Holy Priesthood earlier this year. Father Samuel is also continuing his studies for the M.Div. at St. Tikhon's Seminary. Growth in attendance and stewardship will dictate the timing for an application in the future for the CPG. The mission continues her rental at a Ukrainian Catholic Church. Outreach continued this year with the second annual Akathist to the African Saints in September and a Symposium in October on the Reformation and Orthodoxy. The mission's focus on the minority communities in and around New Brunswick make their vision and mission of outreach and evangelism unique not only in our diocese but in the entire OCA.
- **Holy Apostles, Lansing, NY:** Recent articles in the October, 2018 issue of *Jacob's Well* and the late October, 2018 issue of *Beyond the Plateau* have both highlighted the latest news and information about mission life. Holy Apostles' chief strategic goal now lies in the identification, purchase, and development of a permanent home that will get them out of their current rental and into their own facilities. I visited them in October of this year.
- Subsequent to a soon-to-be-completed Commission teleconference, a meeting of all Diocesan mission clergy will be scheduled at a place and time suitable to all involved.

2. **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 offered as a revitalization tool, but while some parishes have requested information in the past year, it and the other resources offered are severely 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](mailto: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.
  - All and any of such work done in a parish of this Diocese is free of any charge, including travel costs.
3. **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.

*Status:*

- Again this year as in last, I reached out to the clergy and lay who form the Commission's membership to begin the process of regular quarterly or at least bi-yearly teleconferences to discuss the work of the Commission. This call will hopefully take place before Thanksgiving 2018.
- The Commission portion of the diocesan website has been re-worked and links and resources added to better serve the missionary and evangelical needs of the diocese. More work needs to be done and more added, which will be an on-going effort.
- Interest and receptivity among the non-Orthodox in Orthodox evangelical outreach continues to wax and wane. Last year's and this year's Akathist held at St. Simon's in New Brunswick brought a large number of Black and White Pentecostal and other pastors to the service, some of whom have expressed interest in further contact, information, and discussion. However, this is certainly a deep pool that needs to be explored further and also explored more aggressively and completely. The Commission will take this up as an important agenda item on their next series of calls. As of the writing of this report, the fall Symposium on the Reformation has not yet taken place, so attendance and interest cannot at this point be properly gauged.

Respectfully submitted,  
Archpriest Jonathan Ivanoff