



Orthodox Church in America
Diocese of New York and New Jersey
Department of Youth Ministry

2022 Diocesan Assembly Report

Your Eminence, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

This report highlights what the Department of Youth Ministry has accomplished this past year, our online presence, my involvement in cross-jurisdictional initiatives, and goals for the year ahead.

Undertakings

- **Altar Servers Retreat: November 20, 2021 at Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne NJ**
 - Organized by Fr. David Cowan, discussions focused on (1) Potential Ways of Serving: Altar Server, Reader, Blessed Sub-Deacon and (2) Services of Ordination to the Ranks of Clergy.
 - **Attendance:** Nearly 50 altar servers, clergy, and faithful
 - Event recap [here](#)

- **Diocesan Teen Socials: December 11, 2021 and February 19, 2022**
 - Many thanks to Matushka Dennise Kraus for coordinating two Teen Socials for middle school and high school students this past year with the goal of reconnecting our Youth to our churches and to each other. Each get-together was sponsored by a parish in each deanery and was responsible for hosting a service activity, dinner, Vespers, and Zoom sessions between all the host parishes so the teens could socialize together. Archbishop Michael was able to join them either in-person or virtually for Q&A. Many thanks to Holy Trinity Church (Elmira Heights, NY), Holy Trinity Church (East Meadow, NY), SS. Peter & Paul Church (Herkimer, NY), and Christ the Saviour Church (Paramus, NJ) for hosting! Write-ups were featured following the socials on our diocesan website [here](#) and [here](#).

- **Honoring our Graduates**
 - The accomplishments and photos of high school and college graduates from our diocese were featured in the Spring/Summer 2022 [digital edition](#) of *Jacob's Well*. This continues to be a highlight for parents, parishes, and students. May God grant them many blessed years!
 - Moving forward, I request that JW's submission deadlines are communicated to all Diocesan Department Chairs so that content like this can be collated and shared with more notice.

- **20th All-American Council Youth Program: July 18-22, 2022 in Baltimore, MD**
 - **Attendance:** 3 Participants, 3 Staff Volunteers
 - **Parishes Represented:** Paramus, Trenton, Whitestone, NYC Cathedral, Elmira Heights

- **Diocesan Youth Day: August 20, 2022 at TreEscape Adventure Park in Vernon, NJ**
 - **73 in Attendance:** 40 Youth, 33 Adults
 - **Parishes Represented:** Paramus, Trenton, Whitestone, NYC Cathedral, Elmira Heights, Jersey City, Paramus, Randolph, South River, Trenton, Wappingers Falls, Pearl River, Oneonta, NYC-CTS, Shirley, Diocese of Eastern PA (Old Forge), Moscow Patriarchate (Singac), ROCOR (Wayne), Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA (Clifton)
 - The new location and activity was well-received. Video recap was filmed, edited, and produced by Matthew Ortiz on YouTube [here](#).
- **Mountain Men's Respite: October 21-23, 2022 at Cedar River Campsites in Indian Lake, NY**
 - This event was organized by Gregory Fedorchak and Delbert Clement due to interest from Teen Week at St. Andrew's Camp this past summer. It was open to all high school aged young men and older. Fr. Martin Kraus, Youth Department Chaplain, lead a discussion on how to acquire peace in the midst of chaos. The retreat was co-sponsored by St. Andrew's and our Department.
 - **12 Participants with 7 Diocesan Parish Represented:** Trenton, Wayne, Brooklyn (St. Nino Mission), Woodside, Elmira Heights, Syracuse, Rochester
- **Fall Teen Retreat: November 18-20, 2022 at Camp Ramapo in Rhinebeck, NY**
 - **Registration is open until November 7th.** We currently have **9 teens** registered from Elmira Heights, Wappingers Falls, Yonkers, Randolph, the Albanian Archdiocese, Moscow Patriarchate, and Greek Archdiocese.
 - **In addition to myself and Fr. Martin,** we have 2 female chaperones registered and 2 male chaperones registered. As in years past, Janet Neis-Drobish will direct the choir.
 - **The event will not be postponed!** We committed 15 participants to Camp Ramapo (their minimum for a group rate), which includes adult chaperones, so we will meet our number. Please continue to encourage participation.

Online Presence

Our Department continues to have a presence on the platforms listed below; click the links if you wish to view the pages, **and follow us**. Parishes are welcome to send announcements for youth events that their parish is hosting and submit photos to be featured. Please feel free to email any of the above to me at nynjocayouth@gmail.com.

- **Facebook:** 817 followers
- **Instagram:** 568 followers
- **YouTube:** 11 subscribers, 13 videos and various recordings from past events
- **Youth Department Website:** Our website was launched in August 2016 and could use some updating. It is currently hosted on Wix.com with a Premium Plan (Business Unlimited), a two-year subscription costing \$244, which expires November 10, 2023. If anyone in the diocese has web design experience and is interested in helping with this, please contact me—I am open to all suggestions, including other platforms.

Beyond Our Diocese

22nd Annual Youth & Camper Worker Conference

The **Orthodox Church in America** hosted this [annual conference](#) at Antiochian Village Conference Center in Bolivar, PA from February 3-5, 2022. It was sponsored by the OCA and coordinated by myself and Fr. David Subu from the OCA's Romanian Episcopate, as we both continue to sit on [The Orthodox Youth Directors in North America \(ONYDA\)](#). I am grateful to those from our diocese who attended and actively participated: Matushka Tamara Cowan, Kristy Zaitseva, Daria York, and Delbert Clement.

Registration for the 23rd Annual Conference is now open and will be held at St. Stephen's Retreat Center in Titusville, Florida from January 25-28, 2023. More information can be found [here](#). People need not be an official "youth worker" or "camp worker" to attend, so if you have an interest in ministering to our young people, I encourage you to join us.

Goals for Remainder of 2022 and 2023

- **Host a successful Fall Teen Retreat** November 18-20th at Camp Ramapo.
- **Host a Lenten Teen Retreat** during the Great Fast.
- **Altar Servers Retreat** TBD by Diocesan Council
- **Return of a Girls' Retreat** in Fall 2023.
- **Showcase 2023 Graduates** in Spring/Summer 2023 Jacob's Well.
- **Youth Day** in August 2023.

Closing

I am excited to be moving forward with a full calendar of events coming out of the pandemic. I ask that all clergy and lay leaders promote and encourage attendance at upcoming events in your weekly announcements, bulletins, social media pages, and by having 1:1 conversations with parents, guardians, and your young people. If we want our youth to remain in the church, one of the ways we are showing that we care about them is by offering activities for Orthodox Christian fellowship and prayer—but this responsibility or task cannot be done without support from our Diocesan family.

I [temporarily] relocated to Chicago this past August. With Archbishop Michael's blessing, I will continue to serve as the Youth Department Chairperson, planning events from afar and traveling back to our Diocese to be present with our young people as scheduled. It continues to be my joy to serve the church in this capacity, helping our young people grow in their faith through worship, witness, service, and fellowship.

Many thanks to Archbishop Michael for his continued support, guidance, and active participation not only in the planning stages of our events, but also for his presence at all events. I also extend my gratitude to Fr. Martin Kraus, Department Chaplain, for being a wonderful spiritual father to our young people when we are gathered together; Ms. Janet Drobish-Neis for directing the choir at retreats; and the many volunteers, chaperones, and parents who support me in this ministry.

Respectfully submitted,



Danielle Geeza
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*"The youth are not only the future of our Church, but they are also the present."
-Archbishop Michael*