

His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTHONY



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

Diocese of Toledo and  
The Midwest

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

*Midwest Diocesan Mission Council*  
**Funding Grants**

Grant funding provided by Bishop Anthony and the Mission Council shows the seriousness of mission work while recognizing the need to be flexible. Since different mission situations have different needs, therefore, we need different approaches to help make them effective.

We have had it as a slogan for the last thirty years, “*Making America Orthodox*,” yet we have done relatively little in terms of supporting this kind of mission effort. We have concentrated on gathering Orthodox Christians who live at a distance from an existing parish, providing them liturgical services until they could grow enough to support a priest to move there to service them full time. We have depended on those who are already Orthodox to reach critical thresholds of 25 and 50 families largely on their own, without a priest stationed there. This kind of mission outreach was easily sustained by the kind of monthly support from the Archdiocese and diocese, in addition to the contributions of the gathered families, to cover a priest’s travel expenses and renting a place for a few hours once a week. This kind of mission effort can grow gradually this way for years, but it would need some significant financial help later, to get into a building of their own, for a down payment or conversion costs.

We are now reaching saturation with the kind of missionary activity listed above, as evidenced by the small number of missions started in the last several years. We now have Orthodox parishes in all major cities and their suburbs, yet there are many smaller communities across America that remain without any Orthodox presence and certainly even the larger metropolitan areas that are underserved can use additional parishes.

We have a prime example in Evansville: a city of 120,000 in the southwest corner of Indiana situated at least two hours’ drive from an Orthodox parish (of any jurisdiction). Furthermore, Evansville serves as a regional center for nearly 1,000,000 through its hospitals and airport.

While people of Orthodox background resided in Evansville—and we tried to reach them in various ways when we targeted Evansville as needing a mission effort, back in 1997—we found that they had lived without the Orthodox Church being part of their lives for so long that the Orthodox Faith was no longer significant for them, or they had comfortably settled in Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. It was clear early on that a community such as this needed “real” missionary effort, which like St. Paul, targeted a city and went to take up residence there. He then began to speak about Christ to Jews and Gentiles alike — “cold calling” on them to form a new community with those who heeded the Gospel.

St. Paul was sent and equipped by the Church of Antioch for his missionary endeavors, in addition to his own labors. For us this would mean sending a missionary priest/family to a targeted community, providing for their relocation, housing and stipend for a period of several months, as the priest gets a part-time job and/or his wife secures employment. Then monthly mission funds would be able to help rent a place to worship and hold instruction. We note that enquirers will probably not be significant contributors for months, until they have studied enough and are convinced of Orthodoxy. They also

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)*

have to see that we are serious. (In Evansville, for example again, we catechized and baptized/chrisdated a number of people who later left the Church when they did not see us actually establishing a church with a building and permanent priest. It only began thriving when we arranged to send a priest there full time. Through a providential set of circumstances, that required the up-front expenses to be supplied by a mother church and individual contributions, which circumvented the usual limitations on funds and assignment of a priest—but this demonstrates the success of this model.) These parishes also will need another large infusion of assistance in getting into a building. When the mission in Evansville was able to negotiate the purchase of an existing church building that needed a great deal of renovation to become an Orthodox worship space we also organized workdays with volunteers from the area.

To be taken seriously—especially by those who do not already have an Orthodox ancestry or background—people need to see a serious level of support by the diocese/archdiocese. They want to see connectedness with the greater Church—both historically with the Church of the Apostles and tangibly with the Church globally. People not acquainted with the Orthodox Church need to see that we are not just another little storefront upstart church (or cult) based on an individual would-be preacher. This is especially true since our worship is so very different, from what they are familiar.

Our Diocesan Mission Council can fund, depending on the particular situation, things such as:

- 1) **Mission Planting Grants:** These would be used to support sending a clergyman into an area deemed ripe for an Orthodox Mission (considerable distance from existing Orthodox Parishes, stable or growing population, etc.). Support would be given for 1-2 years, with hoped-for matching funds by a Mother Parish or area parishes. Initial support ought to include moving expenses, salary, insurance for several months, or perhaps travel expenses for visiting clergy for a community that does not have an assigned priest, and stipend assistance. Assistance to establish an initial place for worship services might be included here or in the formation grant.
- 2) **Formation Grants:** Currently the mainstay of support for our missions, these financial grants would be given for an average of seven years as determined by the Bishop, typically in decreasing amounts each year.

Additionally, the Missions Council would oversee a listing of liturgical items available for donation from existing parishes, and encourage our missions to utilize this resource.

A third area of support during this phase would be a listing of Advisors/Mentors appointed by His Grace to be a resource of advice and wisdom for the Mission Priests in growing their communities. These advisors might be used for teaching, liturgical support, and establishing financial planning and reporting systems, as well as helping devise plans for overcoming obstacles as they arise. Funds from this area could be used for facilities rental, website and advertising, and other needs as well.

- 3) **Establishment Support/Special Projects:** These could be applied for at any point in the establishment of a mission, and would support non-repeating expenses, with special priority given to projects which enable further growth of the community. Things like bringing in special speakers as outreach events or travel to archdiocese sponsored training and education.
- 4) **Building Purchase Assistance:** Missions often grow to the point when larger facilities are needed, but the community lacks the capital to make the move to larger facilities. Missions would be eligible for these large-scale grants or loans only once, with the Diocese awarding them as funds are available.