These changes cause us stress and engender anxiety. What role does the church have in our many transitions? Each of us is used to a particular parish, with its unique icons, architecture, music and people. Sometimes these changes are relatively slight, as when new people come into the church. Other times, the changes can be destabilizing, as when we adapt to a new parish. In both cases, the old-timers in the parish and the newly transplanted parishioners have to adjust to each other. Every time anyone comes into a family system or moves out of it, the whole family needs to adjust. This certainly applies to the parish family that one leaves, as well as the parish into which one is finding one’s place.

The adjustment is often radical, and even painful. Sometimes the person moving out of a parish held leadership positions, such as treasurer, choir director, or priest. This person moving into another parish may offer less obvious, but still significant opportunities. Sometimes the person moving out of a parish had more time on his hands, whereas the person moving into another parish may have gifts and offerings that the community hadn’t had before. Such a move can mean radical changes in both the old and new parishes. Other moves may offer less obvious, but still significant opportunities.

The reason, moving always comes with great changes. We leave familiar places, our homes, friends, neighbors and churches. People are moving around more frequently than ever before. Sometimes we move to be closer to family or friends, sometimes to find a more pleasant climate, or because of a change in employment. Regardless of the reason, moving always comes with great changes. We leave familiar places, our homes, friends, neighbors and churches.

We enjoy not having to adjust. We are comforted when we can predict how everything will be, and even how others will respond. This is true even when our relationships are problematic: we think we know what to expect. All change, however, requires work, as we constantly get new information. This is true even when people we know and have known for a long time change. We need to adjust to the spiritual and intellectual growth of others as they mature. We can find this difficult. When the people around us grow and repent, they are like new people. We need to make room for the changes. When we grow, too, our cohorts also need to adjust. God gives us opportunities to be born anew, and we all constantly change in response. If we remember that even what is most familiar is constantly changing, we can allow it to be deliberately flexible and open-minded. This will help us minimize confusion, misunderstandings and difficulties. The church is a place of multifaceted relationships. These relationships can help us, distress us, and allow us to grow in our relationship with God.

To prepare for the reception of new members at Pascha, the church prescribed a forty-day fast. This time of intense prayer and sacrifice allowed the community an opportunity to be deliberate about adjusting to new members. We all need to be born anew as the community reconstitutes itself with each new person.

This is holy and natural. It is a gift from God, but still requires work, effort, patience and kindness. Without this effort, we are not doing what we are
The Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH
The Right Reverend Bishop BASIL
The Right Reverend Bishop THOMAS
The Right Reverend Bishop ALEXANDER
The Right Reverend Bishop JOHN
The Right Reverend Bishop ANTHONY
The Right Reverend Bishop NICHOLAS

Founded in Arabic as Al Kalimat in 1905 by Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny)
Founded in English as The WORD in 1957 by Metropolitan ANTONY (Bashir)

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Convened at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel
Grand Rapids, Michigan

54th th MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION

Thursday, July 25, 2019 – 11:07 AM

I. Opening Prayer

His Eminence the Most Rev Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate, opened the General Assembly with prayer and the Troparion of Holy Pentecost.

II. Roll Call and Quorum

Upon the call of Metropolitan JOSEPH, Rev. Archdeacon Emile Sayegh, Chancellor, declared the existence of a quorum and the qualification to conduct the business of the Archdiocese. Of a possible 780 delegates, 565 were present in person or by proxy, constituting 72% of the total possible votes.

III. Introduction of North American Hierarchs

His Eminence noted the absence of His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER because of illness. He introduced Their Graces Bishop BASIL, Bishop THOMAS, Bishop JOHN, Bishop ANTHONY, and Bishop NICHOLAS. He asked for a standing ovation in recognition of their good work. His Eminence also thanked Almighty God for the good clergy of the Archdiocese.

IV. Appointment of Convention Officers

Metropolitan JOSEPH asked Archpriest Thomas Zain, Vicar General, to announce the appointment of the

Sergeants-at-Arms of the convention: Mr. Philip Saliba, Mr. Elie Haig, Ms. Carol Laham, and Mr. Karen Kinan.

V. Introduction of the Members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees

Fr. Zain acknowledged the officers of the Antiochian Archdiocese: Mr. Fawaz El-Khoury, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Ms. Mary Win-stanley-O’Connor, Esq., Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Salim Abboud, Treasurer and CFO of the Archdiocese, V. Rev. Fr. Michael Elias, Secretary of the Archdiocese, V. Rev. Fr. Timothy Ferguson, Protosyngellos, Rev. Fr. Nicholas Belcher, Episcopal Assistant, and Rev. Archdeacon Emile Sayegh, Esq., Chancellor.

Fr. Zain invited the members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees who were present to introduce themselves: Mr. Daniel J. Abraham, Mr. Edward E. Assile, Mr. Richard Ayoub, Esq., Mr. Dr. David G. Bojrah, Mr. Dan Braun, Mr. Roger David, Mr. George G. Darany (Honorary), Ms. Darlene Haddad, Dr. Elias K. Hekba, Mr. Elie J. Haig, Mr. Khalil E. Kardous, Ms. Karen Kinan, Ms. Carol Laham, Esq., Mr. Gregory H. Laham, Jr., Mr. William
VI. Minutes of the 53rd Archdiocese Convention, Hollywood, Florida, July 2017

Dr. Elias Hobeika moved to accept the Minutes of the 53rd Archdiocese Convention held in Holly-

Metropolitan JOSEPH noted in the minutes that Fr. Michael Laffoon had requested a full report on all endowment funds and how they are invested. Fr. Hobeika said it would be explained in his report to the Archdiocese Convention. Metropolitan JOSEPH also asked about the goal of increasing the maximum stipend from the Retired Clergy Housing Allowance Fund for retired clergy and widowed clergy wives. Fr. Hobeika responded that the main emphasis is now on increasing retirement savings through the new 401(k) plan.

Fr. Anthony Bahou moved to accept the line item for Continuing Pastoral Education. Fr. Thomas Zain clarified that the amount was the stipend for the former director of the St. Stephen’s Course of Studies program, but those payments have discontinued under the new structure.

Mr. Richard Power of Myrtle Beach, South Car-
olina, rose to say that he had sent a letter to Mr. Ab-
boud outlining his concern for an external audit and other issues. Mr. Abboud responded that Mr. Power had already received a response to his questions via email which he had sent earlier in the day.

Mr. Abboud asked Mr. Abboud to approve the report, and the motion passed.

Mr. Abboud recognized the work of Rev. Deacon Christian Host Parish.

The motion passed and the report was approved unanimously.

VII. Report of the Department of Finance

A. Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2019

Mr. Aboud introduced the members of the various committees and summarized each committee’s purpose and responsibilities. He emphasized that the Department still needs a communications committee in order to explain the operations of the Archdiocese with transparency. Mr. Abboud announced that his slide presentation would appear in The WORD magazine, and that Deacon Christian will post it on the archdiocesan website.

Fr. Ghattas Hajal moved to accept the report. Fr. Christopher Salamy seconded the motion.

Questions from the floor:

Fr. Michael Tassos noted Mr. Abboud’s not hav-
ing reported on an external audit. He thanked Mr. Abboud for the innumerable hours of volunteer labor he has given. He also explained that the Department has engaged an external auditor for a review of arch-
diocesan finances and procedures.

Fr. Claudia Zain expressed admiration for Mr. Abboud’s presentation and his dedicated work.

Fr. Anthony Bahou asked about the line item for Continuing Pastoral Education. Fr. Thomas Zain clarified that the amount was the stipend for the former director of the St. Stephen’s Course of Studies program, but those payments have discontinued under the new structure.

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Mr. Kardou thanked Mr. Abboud for an excel-
 lent and detailed report. He asked the Assembly to consider if parishes would be willing to pay for an external audit which could be quite expensive. He noted that the Department is building a system so that an external audit would be possible and cost-effective.

The motion passed and the report was approved unanimously.

B. Proposed Budget for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021

At the recommendation of an external auditor, the Department has begun working on a consolidat-
ed report for all the institutions of the Archdiocese in order to decide whether it is feasible and appropriate to apply Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) policy to archdiocesan finances. The Board of Trustees has established a committee to deter-
mine if it is appropriate to use GAAP principles. The adoption of those principles could have implications for the audit of all parishes or a sampling of parishes.

Fr. Abboud, CFO and Treasurer, presented the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021. He explained that the 2020 budget is conservative and flat in order to examine the departmental expenses more closely. His presentation is appended hereto.

Fr. Maximos Saikali moved to approve the Pro-
posed Budget for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021. Mr. Gregory Abdallah seconded the motion.

Discussion on the Motion:

Fr. Fouad Saba observed the absence of an amount of receipts from the Miami Convention on page 1, line C. 5. Receipts for Archdiocese Convention from Host Parish.

The motion passed as amended by Fr. Saba’s observation.

For the sake of transparency Mr. Abboud also provided an overview of the archdiocesan Balance Sheet via slide presentation.

Dr. Elias Hobeika presented the report of the In-
vestment Committee via slide presentation. He re-
ported that the committee has consolidated many accounts and has established an investment policy statement of purpose and goal for each account and endowment as well as an investment strategy. He addressed the question of Fr. Laffoon raised at the Miami Convention. He reported on all fund performances. Total assets have grown by more than $6 million, while the expense ratio for advisory fees has significantly declined.

Fr. Elias Shalhoub moved to accept the report, and Fr. Joseph Rahal seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The General Assembly adjourned at 12:58 PM

for lunch.

The General Assembly reconvened at 2:15 PM.

After the recess Mr. Abboud continued his re-
view of the policy and practice of the Department.

Technology and Policy Committee – Mr. Ab-
boud recognized the work of Rev. Deacon Christian Manasseh, Chair, and states that there needs to be enhanced development of all archdiocesan communica-
tion services.

Legacy Project – Ms. Mary Winstanley-O’Connor, Chair, is investigating an insurance program to insure potential donors so that the Antiochian Archdiocese would receive the death benefit in order to facilitate long-term stability.

Real Estate and Insurance Committee – Mr. Ed-
ward Assi, Chair, has been requesting copies of the insurance policies of all parishes and institutions of the Archdioceses in order to assure that sufficient coverage is in force; however, some churches have not yet responded.

Mr. Ellbhoury noted that not all church assets are in the name of the church. The committee has dis-
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Fr. Maximos Saikali moved to approve the Pro-
The Archdiocesan office had previously submitted electronic copies of departmental and organization reports to the parishes for review and comment. Those reports are available for viewing on the archdiocesan website.

Outgoing President of NAC Teen SOYO, Elizabeth Lengyl-Leah, presented the organization’s report.

1985 NAC Teen SOYO President, Fr. Michael Nasser, moved to accept the report. Mr. Mike Simon seconded the motion. The Assembly received the report.

Fr. Joseph Purpura, Chair, presented the report for the Department of Youth. He noted that this year NAC Teen SOYO is celebrating its 30th anniversary and shares that date with the first moon landing. New efforts include a grant for $100,000 for a parish mentoring program with a potential for three additional years.

Fr. Purpura reported that 61 orators participated in the Oratorical Festivals this year, and 57 participated last year. This year 123 teams participated in the Oratorical Festivals, and three additional years.

Fr. Purpura concluded his report by announcing that 61 orators participated in the Oratorical Festivals this year, and 57 participated last year. This year 123 teams participated in the Oratorical Festivals, and three additional years.

Fr. Joseph Purpura seconded the motion. The Assembly received the report.

There were 210 participants at the conference in Denver, Colorado, and he announced that the 2020 conference will be in Austin, Texas.

Mrs. Barbara Hebek moved to accept the report. Ms. Angela Salby seconded the motion.

Fr. Timothy Baclig noted that YAM’s predecessors had worked as a Pan-Orthodox movement to unite young people across jurisdictions.

Mr. Kal Kardoos asked how many YAM participants are attending this convention. Mr. Parr responded that at least 81 were participating on a group text, and Convention Co-Chairman Alan Abraham reported that there were at least 135 YAM registrants.

Ms. Marsha Nimr asked what happens to next age group beyond YAM, including the young married population. Mr. Elkhoury responded that Fr. Thomas Zain FTZ and others are in the process of generating programs for that demographic.

Fr. Milad Selim thanked His Eminence Metropolitan JOSPEH for the opportunity to work with the young adults, and he stressed that YAM was a movement of young adults striving to address the church’s position on current issues across jurisdictions.

Fr. Michael Nasser noted that Tuesday’s clergy meeting had the longest and most in depth discussion about the engagement of young people.

Fr. Fouad Saba strongly recommended that YAM be structured with a constitution and officers to cultivate future leaders in the Archdiocese. Mr. Parr responded that the young adults did not necessarily want officers, but it is an on-going discussion.

Metropolitan JOSPEH stressed the importance of this subject. He encouraged the faithful to be patient and to give the youth the freedom to explore and find themselves. He stated that our love and support are important and that YAM is only one tool to unite young people across jurisdictions.

For an update on a new curriculum. Ms. Carole Buleza, Chair, reported that an announcement will appear online, describing the production of new materials. Ms. Buleza is seeking approval of a proposal for a new offering which departments wanted to move forward but did not have sufficient funds. She asked if there was insufficient funding or if the Departments did not know how to make a justifiable request. Several departments outlined potential projects, and Mr. Salim Abboud assured the Assembly that there would be a continuing review of departmental functions and requirements, and that all priorities would be taken into consideration.

Mrs. Barbara Hebek moved to accept the report, and Ms. Nancy Tannaris seconded the motion.

The Assembly received the report.

Mr. Roger David, National Chairman, presented the report of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Fr. Dan Abraham moved to accept the report, and Fr. Ghatais Hajal seconded the motion.

Ms. Mary Winsten/O’Connor thanked Mr. David on behalf of the more than 2200 members of the Order and the Governing Council.

Fr. Joseph Rahal noted the Order’s on-going support of clergy and camp scholarships.

NAC Teens and officers thanked the Order for everything the Order has done.

The Assembly received the report.

Ms. Karen Kiran introduced a program called HOST (Helping Orthodox Students Thrive) with the purpose of making sure that when students leave home for college, there will be people and a place to receive them.

Fr. Christopher Salamy moved to accept the report.

Fr. Joseph Purpura seconded the motion.

Deacon Andrew Andrews suggested that HOST could dovetail with a local parish connection and OCF Chapters.

The Assembly received the report.

Questions and Comments regarding reports of departments and organizations.

Fr. Nektarios Najar asked the Department of Christian Education for an update on a new curriculum. Ms. Carole Buleza, Chair, reported that an announcement will appear online, describing the production of new materials. Ms. Buleza is seeking approval of a proposal for a new offering which would move from an informational curriculum to a spiritual and formational curriculum. There would be lessons introducing students to Teen SOYO, YES, camp counselors, and YAM, in order to help students take the next step on their journeys. She wants to publish two grade levels at a time.

Deacon Andrews noticed five reports in which Departments wanted to move forward but did not have sufficient funds. He asked if there was insufficient funding or if the Departments did not know how to make a justifiable request. Several departments outlined potential projects, and Mr. Salim Abboud assured the Assembly that there would be a continuing review of departmental functions and requirements, and that all priorities would be taken into consideration.
The Assembly adjourned at 4:05 PM, following a prayer by His Grace Bishop BASIL.

Friday, July 26, 2019, 11:00 AM

Metropolitan JOSEPH opened the session with prayer at 11:10 AM and a reading from 1 Corinthians 4:9–13.

IX. Address of Metropolitan JOSEPH to the 54th Archdiocesan Convention

The address of the Metropolitan will appear in the November 2019 issue of The Word magazine.

X. Presentation of Proposed Resolutions – Rev. Archdeacon Emile Sayegh, Chancellor and Chairman of the Department of Legal Affairs

WHEREAS St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has graciously hosted the 54th Biennial Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention at the historic Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 22–28, 2019;

AND WHEREAS the Pastor, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Nasser, and the Convention Co-Chairpersons, Allen Abraham and Kathy Abraham, together with their the entire Convention Committee, the Parish Council, and all the faithful have worked tirelessly and spared no effort to assure the success of this Convention, providing wonderful hospitality for our every need, family fellowship, and spiritual growth;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 54th Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 21–28, 2019, in unanimity and by acclamation extends to the Host Pastor and the entire Convention Committee its heartfelt thanks and appreciation for an outstanding and extraordinary convention.

RESOLUTION PLEDGING OUR SUPPORT AND LOVE TO OUR MOTHER CHURCH OF ANTIΟΧΙА

WHEREAS the hierarchs, clergy, Board of Trustees, and faithful, under the leadership of our beloved Metropolitan JOSEPH, Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, having met in General Assembly at the 54th Biennial Convention of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America on this 26th day of July, 2019, in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly conveys its heartfelt greetings and love to our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, and to the entire See of the Great Church of Antioch; and

WHEREAS the conflict in Syria has begun to wind down and the country regains its territorial integrity, we reaffirm our commitment and support to the Patriarchate in the long, hard, and difficult task of rebuilding of Syria; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly further commits its loyalty and support to His Beatitude, Patriarch JOHN X, in his ongoing efforts to resolve the canonical issue that continues between the Patriarchate of Antioch and that of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem concerning Qatar; and

WHEREAS this General Assembly offers its additional support and prayers to His Beatitude, Patriarch JOHN X, for his leadership skills and continuing efforts as the catalyst of peace in the resolution of the dispute between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and that of the Patriarchate of Moscow regarding Ukraine, where the effects of this schism are being felt on these shores and in all the Orthodox world;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this 54th Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America Convention, duly assembled at Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 22–29, 2019, in unanimity and by acclamation, commits its love, loyalty, support and prayers to our Mother Church of the Great See of Antioch and to our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, praying that Almighty God continue to guide His Beatitude as he continues his efforts to bring peace and conciliation between the Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem and between the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow. We extend our support and prayers for the rebuilding of Syria and to its people. We offer our humble prayers for the good health of Patriarch JOHN X. Many years Master!

RESOLUTION HONORING HIS Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS AND WELCOMING HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP ELPIDIPHOROS OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

WHEREAS the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of this God-protected Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America have met as the General Assembly at the 54th Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention here in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and

AND WHEREAS, since his election as Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America on August 19, 1999, His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS has served the Archdiocese, as its Primate, with faith, zeal and devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church; and

AND WHEREAS His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS has been an exemplary model in working vigorously to preserve unity among all Orthodox throughout the United States; and

AND WHEREAS His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS has also served the Church in promoting learning and the Christian formation of clergy and laity as a respected scholar, author and professor; and

AND WHEREAS His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS ended his tenure as Archbishop of America with his letter of resignation to His All Holiness Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW; and

AND WHEREAS His Eminence Archbishop ELPIDIPHOROS was elected as the new Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America on May 11, 2019, and enthroned on June 22, 2019;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this 54th Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 21–28, 2019, in unanimity and by acclamation, expresses its deep appreciation and love to His Eminence Archbishop DEMETRIOS for his twenty years of dedicated service in the vineyard of our Lord, as Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this 54th Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 21–28, 2019, in unanimity and by acclamation, offers its love and prayers for the success of His Eminence Archbishop ELPIDIPHOROS as he begins his diaconia for us to advance together as the Body of Christ and body of believers, as a united Church.

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A SYNAXIS OF ALL ORTHODOX AUTOCEPHALOUS CHURCHES BY THE EUCUMENICAL PATRIARCH

WHEREAS the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of this God-protected Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America have met as the General Assembly at the 54th Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention here in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and

AND WHEREAS, in the recent past, we have all witnessed the sorrowful and tragic situation in Ukraine concerning the unilateral actions of the Ecumenical Patriarch, which have and continue to promote permanent division among all members of the Orthodox Church; these actions represent a failure to constitute a single Orthodox Church in accordance with Her ecclesiological and canonical principles, and brings harm to Her apostolic witness; and

AND WHEREAS, as a result of these actions, the Orthodox Church of Russia broke off communion with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, and we now experience the negative effects here in the United States and Canada as the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and the
Moscow Patriarchate in North America no longer share communion with Churches under the Ecumenical Patriarchate; (examples of the unity which have been disrupted include pan-Orthodox services and participation in local Orthodox Clergy brotherhoods, and so forth; these hinder our common witness to the faithful and to the local communities in which we exist);

AND WHEREAS, as a further result of this division and disunity, schismatic clergymen from uncanonical bodies in Ukraine could begin to serve in canonical jurisdictions, thereby creating further disunity and chaos here and in other parts of the world, where we would otherwise have fraternal participation in unity;

AND WHEREAS the appearance of disunity also occurs when the Orthodox Church is reduced to one dimension of a “nationalistic distinction” (such as ethnic background, language, or affiliation), which in turn becomes the basis for the “eclesiastical” organization, thus resulting in a number of bishops claiming pastoral responsibility for the same geographic region, as if they represented separate Churches rather than the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church;

AND WHEREAS, on the basis of its historic primacy, the long-standing role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as a center in service of Orthodox unity, is to lead and coordinate by bringing together, not to act in a unilateral manner; (this primacy of honor is exercised within the context of collegiality, conciliatory and non-interference in the internal affairs of the Local Churches);

AND WHEREAS any approach for granting autocephaly must be in accordance with Orthodox ecclesiology, and consequently must respect the necessity of obtaining the prior agreement of all Orthodox Autocephalous Churches;

AND WHEREAS there is a necessity to resort to the principle of unanimity and conciliation, concerning both our common Orthodox work and our unified positions on controversial issues; (this unanimity and conciliation are true safeguards of Orthodox unity);

AND WHEREAS there is a necessity for spiritual vigilance regarding the stumbling block and snare of political entanglement, which history has shown only serves to weaken the Orthodox Church and Her united witness;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of this 54th Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 21–28, 2019, calls upon His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch, to convene a Synaxis of the Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches in order to discuss the current situation in Ukraine, to settle the issue of granting autocephaly to new Churches, to resolve wider ecclesiological issues regarding primacy, and in general to address our common problems through fraternal support, unity and participation.

RESOLUTION HONORING ST. JUDE CHILDREN’S RESEARCH HOSPITAL AND AMERICAN LEBANESE SYRIAN ASSOCIATED CHARITIES WHEREAS the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of this God-protected Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America have met as the General Assembly at the 54th Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocesan Convention here in Grand Rapids, Michigan;

AND WHEREAS, more than 80 years ago, prominent entertainer, Danny Thomas, the son of Lebanese immigrants to the United States, having early endured personal difficulties, sought refuge in prayer and made a vow to St. Jude (Thaddeus), the patron saint of lost causes, was heard saying “Show me my way in life and I will build you a shrine”;

AND WHEREAS, after successfully finding his way in life and in order to fulfill his promise and bring his vow to a reality, in 1957, Danny Thomas founded the American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities (ALSAC), whose sole mission was to help build St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, and raise funds and awareness necessary for the operation and maintenance of the Hospital;

AND WHEREAS Thomas’s vision became a reality when St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital opened its doors on February 4, 1962, today one of the world’s premiere pediatric research institutions that treats children from all walks of life, regardless of race, color, creed or family’s ability to pay;

AND WHEREAS St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital leads the way in which the world understands, treats and defeats childhood cancer and other life-threatening diseases, and whose sole mission is to save children, and to find and advance cures for pediatric cancers;

AND WHEREAS, through the direct efforts of ALSAC, and its tireless efforts and persistent fundraising and awareness programs, the financial framework to keep St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in existence has been assured for many, many years to come;

AND WHEREAS the current yearly budget of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, this year alone, exceeds one billion dollars and continues to grow, and still no patient or their family must pay for its life-saving medical treatment and services;

AND WHEREAS, for almost 60 years, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital has been a beacon of hope for countless innocent children who suffer from a myriad of diseases, and has been at the forefront of innovative and ground-breaking medical advances in the treatment of childhood cancers and other life-threatening diseases;

AND WHEREAS, for many years to come, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, with its world-acclaimed faculty and staff, will continue to advance the cause of finding cures and treatment options for children around the world, as a testament to the faith and resilience of ALSAC, its founders, benefactors, supporters and staff;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this 54th Archdiocesan Convention, duly assembled at Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 21–28, 2019, in unanimity and by acclamation, conveys its deep gratitude, love, appreciation, and respect to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, to the American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities (ALSAC), to the faculty, its many supporters, benefactors, and tire staff. We commend you and salute you for your wonderful dedication and the work you continue to do in this most worthy cause. We pray that Almighty God bless each and every one of you and that His loving hand continue to guide you in all your work.

The General Assembly approved all five resolutions by acclamation.

XI. Old Business

XII. New Business


Mr. Raed Sweiss and Ms. Carole Jazzar, Co-Chairs, Department of Convention Planning,
night plus $10 per night for parking at the Hyatt

I

the presentation for St. George Church of

a convention six years in advance. They

first time the Archdiocese was entertaining bids for

Convention – St. George Church, Cicero, Illinois

They encouraged a future bid.

as premature due to a lack of hotel space in the city.

this convention, but the committee viewed the bid

Rhode Island, had expressed interest in bidding for

Hotel.

a video presentation and announced a room rate of

Esper

Cathedral, Ms. Kweilin Nassar, and Dr.

Christopher Salamy and Sub-deacon Gregory Abdalah to

to the Archdiocese Board of Trustees.

B. Report on Bids for the 2025 Archdiocese

Convention – St. George Church, Phoenix, Arizona

Mr. Sweiss and Ms. Jazzar introduced Fr. Chris-
topher Salamy and Sub-deacon Gregory Abdalah to represent St. George Church of Phoenix. They made a video presentation and announced a room rate of $185 per night at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Hotel.

O'Hare Airport Hotel.

Fr. Joseph Purpura moved to accept the bid. Kh. Haijal seconded the motion. The Assembly accepted the bid.

D. Fr. Thomas Zain, Vicar General, announced that the Board of Trustees and the Governing Coun-
cil of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch would meet in Brooklyn, October 18–20, 2019. Events that
weekend would mark the 125th anniversary of St.
Nicholas and the 100th anniversary of its State Street
location.

E. Report of the Nominating Committee for the Board of Trustees – Archpriest Thomas Zain, Chair,
presented the slate of candidates for the Archdiocese
Board of Trustees.

Prior to elections, Metropolitan JOSEPH ap-
pointed Mr. Gregory Laham as an honorary lifetime
member of the Board of Trustees in recognition of his long-time sacrificial service to the Archdiocese. He then appointed Mr. Rami Younes to fulfill the remaining two years of Mr. Laham's full term.

Metropolitan JOSEPH appointed Mr. Fawaz Elkhoury, Mr. Mansour Rayan, Ms. Mary Wistan-
ley-O'Connor, Ms. Kelly Khouly Nagle, and Mr. James Moss to full terms on the Board of Trustees.

Fr. Joseph Purpura moved that the Secretary cast
one unanimous ballot for the submitted list of nom-
inees. Dr. Elias Hebecks seconded the motion. The
motion passed, and the Assembly elected the follow-
ing nominees to the Archdiocese Board of Trustees:
Mr. Daniel Abrahim
Mr. Edward Assile
Mr. Richard Ayoub
Mr. Dan Braun
Mr. Elie J. Hage
Ms. Darlene Haddad
Ms. Carol Laham
Mr. Douglas Skaff
Dr. George Thomas
Mr. Dimitri Zeidan

XIII. Adjournment and Closing Prayer
Fr. Ghattas Haidaj moved to adjourn the Assembly.
Fr. Demetri Darwish seconded the motion. The motion passed, and His Grace Bishop ANTHONY
closed the General Assembly with prayer at 1:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
V. Rev. Fr. Michael Ellias, Secretary
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of
North America

Fr. Estephan of St. Mary's Church in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, had expressed interest in bidding for
this convention, but the committee viewed the bid
as premature due to a lack of hotel space in the city.

They encouraged a future bid.

The Assembly accepted the bid of St. George Church of Phoenix.

C. Report on Bids for the 2025 Archdiocese
Convention – St. George Church, Cicero, Illinois

Ms. Sweiss and Ms. Jazzar announced that for the
first time the Archdiocese was entertaining bids for
a convention six years in advance. They introduced Fr. Fouad Saba and Ms. Darlene Haddad to make the presentation for St. George Church of Cicero, Illinois. They announced a room rate of $189 per night plus $10 per night for parking at the Hyatt

W

We are enjoying such gracious hospitality and peace in Christ during this holy convention, but don't forget: We are warriors! Our foes are fierce, the battle lines are drawn, and casualties piled high. America's greatest generation beat the commu-
nists on foreign shores. We won the Cold War. The
time-bomb of atheistic Marxism, however, was smacked into our society through the academy and exploded in the sexual revolution – Woodstock was fifty years ago – undermining traditional church, family, and humanity.

Marriage is mocked by divorce and debauch-
ery. Babies are avoided and aborted. We outsource
our loved ones to daycare, secular schools, nursing homes, and funeral parlors. We bring anti-Christian
media into our homes to mesmerize and catechize us. Sixty percent of our children leave the faith. Why?
Perhaps we are the salt losing its saltiness. Bir-
hops are the city hiding behind the hill. Perhaps
we are forgetting our call as “a royal priesthood, a
holy nation, a peculiar people.” Perhaps we have only
laid aside the great commission, like fishing nets, to jump into the sea and swim with the fish? Have we become too sophisticated for the Holy Fathers, allowing science

The problem is that we have lost God as the center of our lives.

Perhaps we are simply weak and weary, iso-
lated and satiated, distinguished and distracted, leaving many of our parishes bleeding, infected, and on life-
support. No wonder we are considered successful when we merely keep the doors open. No wonder we are tempted to betray the faith in shame, vanity, and laziness. No wonder we stay silent, clinging to society’s acceptance and our tax-exempt status.

Let’s stop and ask ourselves: Have we laid aside the great commission, like fishing nets, to jump into the sea and swim with the fish? Have we become too sophisticated for the Holy Fathers, allowing science

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

COURAGE IN CHRIST

(A homily given at the Archdiocesan Convention)

Archpriest Noah Bushelli

“We are warriors! Our foes are fierce, the battle lines are drawn, and casualties piled high. America’s greatest generation beat the communists on foreign shores. We won the Cold War. The time-bomb of atheistic Marxism, however, was smacked into our society through the academy and exploded in the sexual revolution – Woodstock was fifty years ago – undermining traditional church, family, and humanity. Marriage is mocked by divorce and debauchery. Babies are avoided and aborted. We outsource our loved ones to daycare, secular schools, nursing homes, and funeral parlors. We bring anti-Christian media into our homes to mesmerize and catechize us. Sixty percent of our children leave the faith. Why? Perhaps we are the salt losing its saltiness. Hrips are the city hiding behind the hill. Perhaps we are forgetting our call as "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." Perhaps we have only laid aside the great commission, like fishing nets, to jump into the sea and swim with the fish? Have we become too sophisticated for the Holy Fathers, allowing science

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
courage in Christ under the protecting veil of our Champion Leader, surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses and the heavenly hosts.

We have courage in Christ in today’s readings and saints in our Lord’s healing the bleeding woman and calling us out of isolation; in St. Paul’s reminder that, though enveloped by the world, in putting on Christ we are redeemed, liberated, adopted by God; in St. Paraskeva of Rome, who dedicated her wealth and beauty solely to God’s glory; in St. Jacob of Alaska, who overcame obstacles in language and logistics, failing health, and fellow-ministers to preach the gospel to his people.

We have courage in Christ in our convention theme (thank you, Sayidna, for your courageous leadership!), “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” This apostolic drumbeat, the very heartbeat of God, pulsing in His people’s steady march, is entrusted to us for transmission without impovision to the next generation.

We have courage in Christ to keep our churches strong:
• pulsing with prayer and repentance;
• singing with service and sacrifice;
• living in liturgy and community; and
• existing for education and evangelism.

We have courage in Christ to keep our churches strong:
• not confused about biology, but constant in the Bible;
• not in conflict over rubrics and recipes, micro-tones and bureaucracies, but cooperating to share the medicine of immortality;
• not content with institutional survival, but confident in our Savior’s promises; and
• not comfortably numb, but crucified with Christ.

We have courage in Christ because He is
• with us, receiving our repentance;
• honoring our intentions;
• inspiring our virtue; and
• crowning our success!

We have courage in Christ because He is bearing with us the hatred and persecution of Satan and his servants as we stand for truth. Our people, especially or youth, need clear, truly Orthodox examples, instructions, and boundaries, regarding life, marriage, procreation, sexuality, gender, theology, and ecclesiology.

We have courage in Christ because He is with us, purifying, illuminating, and defying us in the sacraments and asceticism. We have courage in Christ because He is with us, right now, making this convention a turning point in our service to God, leading His people in a way of life that is pleasing to Him. We have courage in Christ, knowing that He has already conquered sin, the devil, and death. We are warriors, rightly rejoicing with the saints and angels at the victory banquet of Christ our Lord.

Stop the music a moment! The war may be won, the battle over rubrics and recipes, micro-tones and structures, but our duty isn’t done. What about our brothers, the fallen, the wounded, still embattled and captive? They need us. A closing question to haunt us: I know we have courage in Christ but do I – do we – have enough love for Christ to return to the bloody battlefield with the good news of His victory? To Him be all glory forever and ever.

Archpriest Noah Bushelli
St. Philip Church, Souderton, Pennsylvania

In July of this year, His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH was an honored guest at the State Department Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, hosted by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in Washington, D.C.

Through this gathering, the State Department seeks to affirm international commitments to promote religious freedom for all, including persecuted Christians in the Middle East. There was a broad range of attendees, including over a thousand senior government representatives, religious leaders, and international organizations. This was one of the largest gatherings in the history of the State Department.

Attendants met over a two-day period to identify concrete ways to combat religious persecution and discrimination, and to ensure greater respect for freedom of religion or belief.

During his time in Washington, His Eminence also had individual meetings with Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Alex M. Azar II, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA
Office of Planning, Policy and Public Affairs

Top Left: His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH with U.S. Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo Center Left: His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH with Alex Azar, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Human Services Bottom Left: His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH attends the State Department Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, July 2019

Top Right: State Department Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, attended by His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH

Bottom Right: Ambassador Sam Brownback addressing the attendees at the State Department Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, attended by His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH

Bottom Left: His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH attends the State Department Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, hosted by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Alex Azar II, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.
Most conservative evangelicals believe that, if climate change is really a problem, God will take care of it Himself; that He will not allow His creation to be destroyed. (See https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/06/02/why-dont-christian-conservatives-worry-about-climate-change-god/?utm_term=.cb2b12bf3097). Thus, some get the idea that Christians are not concerned with climate change. As with many other areas of theology, this shows that these evangelicals really don’t know the Bible, because nothing can be further from the truth.

Before Abraham, before Noah, before the commandment concerning the Fruit of the Tree, at the very time of our creation, God gave humanity its first mandate: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over...’” (Genesis 1:26–28).

The term dominion, together with the phrase “fill the earth and subdue it,” has for centuries – especially in the Industrial Age – been interpreted by some to mean “control,” “ownership,” “mastery,” and so on. It has been thought that the earth is here for us to do with as we please. The result of this mindset? Species driven to unnatural extinction, artificial/mutant species like “killer bees,” over-farming which lead to the 1930s Dust Bowl, destroyed ecosystems, “killer smog” in Donora, Pennsylvania in 1948 and London in 1952, and climate change. This year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the catching fire of Cleveland’s Cuyahoga River, an event that finally started people thinking about...
what we are doing to the planet. During the same period, on the legendary variety show Reanen and Martin’s Laugh-In, a faux news scroll on the screen announced that water had been discovered under Lake Erie, a reference to the Lake’s cesspool condition at the time.

Had God truly reserved care for creation to Himself, would He have allowed us to cause all the damage – some irreparable, some fixable – we have already or possibly not. Or would He have, at least, mystically cleaned it all up? Definitely. But it was and is our responsibility and we abused it and continue to abuse it! It’s our mess to clean up… with His help! Just as a parent forces their child (who’s old enough to know better) who has recklessly broken something to deal with the consequences; so God the Father does the same with us, His children.

‘Dominion’ doesn’t mean ‘control’, it means ‘stewardship’, it is our realm or area of responsibility; a concept pre-Industrial Age humanity understood, and which traditional cultures, such as the Native Americans, still do. The consensus of the Church Fathers interprets the quote given above not only in terms of procreation, but also in terms of creation itself: “Be fruitful and multiply (in the fruits of the Spirit), fill the earth (with the word of God) and creation itself: (Great Litany).”

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“Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring rain, from the Lord Who makes the storm clouds, Who gives men showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation in the field” (Zechariah 10:1; cf. James 5:17–18). At the same time, we have to do things on our own to help keep creation healthy. As the holy Apostle James said in his Epistle: “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are need ed for the body, what does it profit?” (James 2:15–16). It is not enough to pray; we must also act. Laws can only go so far; what we do in our daily lives matters much more. God will help us, but the responsibility is ours. Therefore, it is every Orthodox Christians’ sacred obligation to care for creation and do what he or she can to mitigate the damage – some irreparable, some fixable – we already have? Probably not. Or would He have, at least, mystically cleaned it all up? Definitely. But it was and is our responsibility and we abused it and continue to abuse it! It’s our mess to clean up… with His help! Just as a parent forces their child (who’s old enough to know better) who has recklessly broken something to deal with the consequences; so God the Father does the same with us, His children.

Though we may go to a building in our city or a neighboring city when we go to church, something happens. As people, created in the image and after the likeness of God, the community formed within the Divine Liturgy becomes the backbone for our other communities. The Liturgy teaches us, guides us, and forms us. When we gather, we join with other communities who are gathered, grafting themselves to one another within the Body of Christ. We are called out of the world in which we live and work every day, into an alternate reality, so that, having joined the Body of Christ, we might be transformed.

The Divine Liturgy begins with the words “Blessed is the Kingdom…” recognizing that when we gather together, we join with the angels standing before the Throne of God, praising Him. Everything in the church is designed to remind us that we are standing in God’s presence. We stand in front of a throne and we bow, just like we would bow before a king. We have icons, which we call “windows into heaven,” reminding us that we join the Saints who are present with us in the Kingdom, supporting us, and praising God with us. The architecture, the music, the incense, and even the priest’s vestments, all call us into an alternate reality, where something big is happening.

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So that our bishops and all the clergy, and for the leaders of our country. We pray for the environment, that we do the same thing, though we don’t always look at it this way. We say some petitions, asking God to help us. We ask for all kinds of things: for the peace of the whole world, for the churches of God, for our bishops and all the clergy, and for the leaders of our country. We pray for the environment, that the seasons will be as they should be, and that we have the food we need. In our last petition, we pray for ourselves, asking God to “help us, save us, and have mercy on us.” After all that, we remember the Theotokos and all the saints, setting them before God as intercessors on our behalf. In other words, we ask them to put in a good word for us. Finally, we recognize that God is a good God, and that He loves us. We seem to be asking for a lot, which is why we keep repeating, “Lord, have mercy.” Following the opening eulogies, we ask the Theotokos to pray for us, and then we ask Christ, the Son of God, who is Orly-begeton, to save us. After all that, we “enter” into the Church. In the early days, the liturgy began with a procession through the city. The Gospel book was carried throughout the town and, once they got to the front door of the church, the deacon would hold up the Gospel book and say, “Wisdom! Let us attend!” Everyone would then sing, “Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ…” and then enter the church together. We see the last remnants of this when we see a bishop serve. The bishop does not enter the altar until after the singing of the Entrance Hymn – “Come, let us worship.”

Though we may go to a building in our city or a neighboring city when we go to church, something happens. As people, created in the image and after the likeness of God, the community formed within the Divine Liturgy becomes the backbone for our other communities. The Liturgy teaches us, guides us, and forms us. When we gather, we join with other communities who are gathered, grafting themselves to one another within the Body of Christ. We are called out of the world in which we live and work every day, into an alternate reality, so that, having joined the Body of Christ, we might be transformed.

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We begin with the words, “Blessed is the King- dom...,” a reminder that we enter into God’s King- dom, His time, and stand before His throne. In the ancient times, when someone was given a chance to meet the king, they would come and stand before his throne, and humbly ask him for what they need. We see this in movies and on TV all the time. We do the same thing, though we don’t always look at it this way. We say some petitions, asking God to help us. We ask for all kinds of things: for the peace of the whole world, for the churches of God, for our bishops and all the clergy, and for the leaders of our country. We pray for the environment, that the seasons will be as they should be, and that we have the food we need. In our last petition, we pray for ourselves, asking God to “help us, save us, and have mercy on us.” After all that, we remember the Theotokos and all the saints, setting them before God as intercessors on our behalf. In other words, we ask them to put in a good word for us. Finally, we recognize that God is a good God, and that He loves us. We seem to be asking for a lot, which is why we keep repeating, “Lord, have mercy.” Following the opening eulogies, we ask the Theotokos to pray for us, and then we ask Christ, the Son of God, who is Orly-begeton, to save us. After all that, we “enter” into the Church. In the early days, the liturgy began with a procession through the city. The Gospel book was carried throughout the town and, once they got to the front door of the church, the deacon would hold up the Gospel book and say, “Wisdom! Let us attend!” Everyone would then sing, “Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ…” and then enter the church together. We see the last remnants of this when we see a bishop serve. The bishop does not enter the altar until after the singing of the Entrance Hymn – “Come, let us worship.”

This hymn, “Come, let us worship,” is an invitation. There is a comma after the word come. We are invited to be a part of the community gathered together to worship God, and we have the choice to respond with “OK” or “no way!” If we belong to a community that is God’s, and ultimately we belong to God. We are His. We often don’t think of community in this way, but it’s inherent in the language that we use. What does it mean to be members of the Body of Christ? We say: “I belong to the football team”; “I belong to the math league”; “I belong to the YMCA”; and so on. If I belong to something, does that thing own me? What does this mean when we start talking about social media and those communities? We’ll look at this next month.
The topic for our Lenten retreat was “Pray, Fast, Give,” and Father Charles Baz was our leader. The liturgies, the Akathist, Vespers, Orthros, and learning from Father Charles’ teaching, all refreshed us. The retreat started off on Friday, March 29, 2019, with the beautiful Akathist to the Mother of God Service. I learned the following about the Akathist from Hieromonk Job Gumerov; this service was written in honor of the Mother of God, and was sung standing all night, from Friday to Saturday of the fifth week of Great Lent, after the Orthodox victory over the Persians and Avars, under Shah Hossnos Savor, who attacked Constantinople in 626 A.D. The imperial city had been surrounded by sea and by land. The situation was hopeless. The Mother of God gave her miraculous help and the city was saved. Out of thanksgiving for this intercession the feast of the Laudation of the Most Pure Mother of God (Saturday Akathist) was instituted. The word “rejoice,” heard repeatedly in the service, is taken from the Gospels. This is how the Archangel Gabriel greeted the Mother of God when he announced that the Messiah who would be born of her: “Rejoice, Thou art full of grace! The Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women” (Luke 1:28).

After dinner, we watched a wonderful movie called “Life is Beautiful,” an incredibly moving story about love, family, and the greatest love anyone can give. Jesus said “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). This set the tone for our retreat. We know that the greatest love in history is the love our Lord Jesus Christ showed in laying down his life for the salvation of the world. His love drives us to the three Lenten pillars of praying, fasting, and giving.

After the movie Friday evening, we gathered in the lobby and Rula Klousry (our AWE President) demonstrated how to make the koliva for Saturday’s Memorial service. It was a unique experience for many of us new to the Orthodox faith. Koliva is made for memorials for the departed. The main ingredient, wheat, brings to mind the quote from John’s Gospel: “Unless a wheat of grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).

Andrew Athanasiou’s article explains our tradition beautifully:

Koliva is boiled wheat with (depending on the recipe) a combination of some or all of the following ingredients: powdered sugar, almonds, ground walnuts, sesame seeds, cinnamon, pomegranate seeds, raisins, anise, parsley and more.

As Orthodox Christians we are awaiting the Second Coming and the General Resurrection of the dead, through Christ we have Life! But, remembering the memory of our deceased beloved ones is an opportunity to pray for the souls of the departed as well as a way to help us heal from the death.

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PRAY, FAST, GIVE

will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him (Matthew 6:5–8).

To abstain from certain foods without an increased prayer life and doing charitable works (almsgiving) is futile.

Father Charles made the following points:

• Prayer is communication and communion with God.
• The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was a man of prayer.
• The Lord instructs us and teaches us to pray.
• Whenever the disciples were in trouble or at a loss, Jesus was praying.
• Every righteous person, male or female, in the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testament, prayed.
• The Saints in heaven are in a continual state of prayer: We pray through them and they pray for us.
• We are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Father went on to teach about the two forms of prayer: communal, or community, prayers – the Church, and personal or devotional prayer – the individual in private. Both are important for the spiritual life. Father Charles explained that “you” is sometimes singular and sometimes plural in Matthew 6:5–8 and in the Lord’s Prayer; the singular “you” applies to devotional prayer, and the plural “you” to communal prayer.

The Lord says this about almsgiving:

Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you ask Him (Matthew 6:5–8).

The Saviour prays.

Jesus was praying.

Whenever the disciples were in trouble or at a loss, Jesus was praying.

The teaching of Father Charles brought about a deeper, spiritual understanding of the beautiful disciplines of our Holy Orthodox faith, as he brought together the meaning of these disciplines and the reason why Mother Church gives them to us. They are passed on for the health of our souls, so that we may know how to prepare in anticipation for the joyous moment when we meet the Lord in the ultimate, eternal Pascha in the heavenly kingdom.

All Glory be to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – The Blessed Holy Trinity!

Marina Kompasik
Religious Coordinator, Ambosser Women of the East

St. John Chrysostom writes, “Almsgiving is greater than all virtues. It places its lovers by the side of the King Himself, and justly,” and, “feeding a hungry person is better than raising someone from the dead.” The Greek word means “act of mercy.”

The Committee for Youth (“the Committee”) has drafted several initial attempts to define Orthodox youth spiritual formation. These papers can be accessed at http://www.orthodoxyouth.net/youth-workers/formation. This document summarizes those papers and is designed to present both a rationale for acting, and actionable steps and recommendations for furthering this work in a united manner.

RATIONALE

The disturbing trend of young people leaving the Church as they enter adulthood has been well documented. While there have been significant efforts to minister to youth during their teen years, as well as during college, the question remains, “What distinguishes those who remain involved in the Church from those who reject the Church, either outright, or simply by drifting away?” Although there may be any number of contributing factors, at the most basic level, the response often depends on whether or not the young person has a living, experiential relationship with Christ. Current American culture presents a unique set of challenges to youth formation that cannot be sufficiently addressed by trying to...
diverse circumstances in which our youth live. What Is Orthodox Youth Spiritual Formation? Orthodox youth spiritual formation is, broadly speaking, the growth in spiritual maturity among our young people that enables them to see themselves in Christ, and to see Christ at work in them.1 As we consider both the potential that our young people have in Christ, and the spiritual dangers that confront them, we are committed to building up young people as members of the Body of Christ.

PRACTICAL STEPS the Church Can Take to Support the Work of Orthodox Youth Spiritual Formation

1. To truly care about the salvation of our youth, and to really seek to form them as children of God – as disciples and leaders of the Church – we must take seriously that we are raising up a generation of disciples and leaders for Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church.

2. We must actively invest in the development not just of our youth, but of those ministering and supporting our youth. This includes clergy, families, youth workers, religious education instructors, and anyone else directly involved in forming our youth.

3. We can develop accessible resources that are connected across ages, jurisdictions, and programs, and that appropriately support formation of our youth. Our methods of teaching need to become “cutting edge,” and at the same time bring with them the timeless wisdom of the Church.

4. We can promote the spiritual growth of the Church overall, and foster opportunities for youth to learn from the witness of Orthodoxy in the lives of others.

5. We can regularly experience the active involvement of our bishops in the daily lives of our churches.

BROADER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Ultimately, the Church in America needs to gather her bishops, priests, and lay leaders on the archdiocesan and diocesan levels, and the parents, educators, youth workers, and young people to dive into the depths of Orthodoxy, and articulate anew – based on the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the Divine Services, the Holy Fathers and Mothers throughout history, as well as this present day – a deliberate path forward in developing an Orthodox approach to Youth Formation. This approach, current and effective, will address the unique needs and circumstances of Orthodoxy in America. This dialogue and direction should help educate youth workers. It should present concrete material on ways in which form, deeply and broadly, the identity of our young people as children of the light, working out their salvation here in North America in the Twenty-First Century.

The Committee for Youth believes that new tools and approaches to Orthodox spiritual formation are crucially needed if we are to succeed in Christ’s call to pass on the message of salvation to our youth, and to help them enter into life with Christ. Spiritual formation is not separate from youth ministry in general but is a broader description of what youth ministry has as its true aim. We fall short of the mark if we reduce youth spiritual formation to youth ministry programs. Orthodox youth spiritual formation should not be merely accidental. It should be a deliberate effort to transform lives and save souls. Our youth are either “conformed to this world,” or they are “transformed by the renewing of their minds, which can only happen as Christ is formed in them.”2 Formation of our youth, as Saint John Chrysostom reflects,3 is about choosing to be formed as a beautiful person from within. The gifts of the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)4 are essential in forming the identity of Children of God. Our task is to help form disciples who are beautiful in their identity and personhood before God and His people. It is also about developing in our youth the yearning for the very presence of the Lord – the yearning for the full establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven here and now – the yearning for the end of the nonsense of this fallen world and the restoration of the Kingdom in all places. Not in the sense of avoiding the world, but fully engaging the world as a citizen of the Kingdom.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT IS

1. to begin to define what is meant by Orthodox youth spiritual formation, and to affirm the principles which underlie it

2. to outline practical steps the Church might take to support the work of Orthodox youth spiritual formation; and

3. to provide recommendations on ways in which the Assembly might move forward to discuss our approach to Orthodox youth spiritual formation, and how we might restructure it.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We are guided by four key principles:

1. A vision of Orthodox youth spiritual formation must be theologically Orthodox. Its development and enactment need to reflect Orthodox Christianity specifically, and not simply be borrowed and repurposed from other groups.

2. Orthodox youth spiritual formation is not a singular event or activity, nor is it an individual program. Rather, it is a continuous and unified integration of our youth within the life of the Church. It is supported not only by parents, clergy, and youth ministers, but also through the entire body of the Church, on a daily basis and in all that we do.

3. Orthodox youth spiritual formation must develop the faith, knowledge, and skills of our youth to engage the world around them, to the glory of God.

4. Orthodox youth spiritual formation must include the home and, more importantly, parents. In many homes, parents may be no closer to a relationship with Christ than their children. Orthodox youth spiritual formation, therefore, must encompass the entire family.

5. A vision of Orthodox youth spiritual formation must be accessible to all members of the Church. It needs to be communicated in a language our youth can understand and be adaptable to the
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). I first read this verse on a T-shirt shop at my Junior Olympic track meet two years ago. Since then it has been one of my favorite passages of Scripture. I have competed in the junior Olympics several times and have come in second in the nation and tenth in the nation in different events. At these races, it’s traditional for competitors to get T-shirts with inspirational quotes printed on them. I chose to put, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” on my T-shirt. At that time, I interpreted the passage to mean that God could help me to overcome the challenges I face, particularly the grueling race to the finish line, and through the pain of pushing past my previous physical limits. Now, however, I know it means so much more. Philippians 4:13 is significant in my own life because it empowers me to trust in God to overcome any challenge I may face, and to help others do the same. I know that I can release all my worries and trust in the Lord, finding peace and help from God in prayer.

Furthermore, this verse helps me to know that I have the ability, the strength, to live following Christ’s example, and to inspire others to do the same. Finally, I am reminded that the Lord is always present and can help me if I simply turn to him.

Christ strengthens me through prayer by allowing me to let go of my anxiety and find peace. This idea is almost perfectly captured in Philippians 4:5–9, which reads, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Through alleviating my worry through prayer, I am strengthened by Christ, and given the ability to conquer what lies ahead of me. In the past I suffered with anxiety and OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder), I felt as though I were not truly in control of my own life; rather, the voice in my head was telling me what to do, and I was scared of what would happen if I did not comply. My fears were irrational, and deep down I knew this, but I didn’t have the strength to fight on my own. I felt as though I was falling into a dark hole, and each time I tried to climb out, I fell down deeper. When I felt as though there was no escape, I turned to God, to prayer, asking Him to give me strength. And although it was a long and difficult journey, I gained strength through prayer, and more. Philippians 4:13 is significant in my own life because it empowers me to trust in God to overcome any challenge I may face, and to help others do the same. I know that I can release all my worries and trust in the Lord, finding peace and help from God in prayer.

Another meaning of Philippians 4:13 is that Christ gives us the strength to live by His example, and the ability to inspire others to do the same. I try to do this in my own life, with the goal of making the world a better place. As a competitive athlete, it is easy to get caught up with the goal of winning, but whether I win or lose, I still try to be an example to others. Although it may seem unlikely, I have even become friends with my fiercest competitors; I am always sure to congratulate them after a great race. Whether I win or lose, I try to be a good example of sportsmanship, demonstrating the love of Christ. The more we love Christ, the more we can witness to His grace. While faith in itself is important, it doesn’t mean anything without us living the right way, too. We should live our lives following Christ’s example, trying to do good in the world, and helping others and those in need. I have volunteered at Children’s Hospital, Los Angeles, and also earned my Girl Scout Gold Award planning and running a camp for the Boys and Girls Club of Montovia. Helping children who are sick or who are in need has brought me great joy. I’ve learned you can do anything you put your mind to, but this means nothing unless you do it with love. “And all things are possible with God” (Philippians 4:13).

It is important to remember what is most important in the way you live your life, and not to get caught up in superficial or unimportant things. God gives us the strength to resist temptations and maintain our faith and love. Numerous figures throughout Scriptures and extra-biblical sources were given the strength to make ultimate sacrifices for the sake of spreading God’s word. For example, for her salvation St. Mary of Egypt was willing to spend 47 years in the desert in repentance. Not only was St. Athanasius exiled five times, and did he defend the Holy Trinity against Arianism (which denied the divinity of Christ), he struggled against emperors when the faith demanded it. On Holy Saturday we remember the three youths in the fire, who accepted a sentence to burn rather than deny their faith. Our Old Testament fathers were tortured, “had chains and imprisonment, they were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted were slain with the sword . . . .” All these, having obtained a good testimony through the faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be perfect apart from us. “We have to ask ourselves, if given the opportunity, would we do the same as the saints throughout history? This question is difficult to answer, but we must remember that Christ will give us the strength to do all things. God loves us so much that He will not abandon us, no matter what the challenge. We hope that we won’t face many of the physical challenges of our forefathers, but the psychological and social challenges of our modern world may be just as difficult. In each case, and in many ways, our lives and our actions preach the Gospel. As Francis of Assisi said, “Preach the Gospel; use words if necessary.” Lastly, Philippians 4:13 is significant in the sense that it reminds us that the Lord is always present; He is there for us when we turn to Him. In today’s society, psychologists and “wellness advisors” have developed various methods and tools to help people deal with stress. One theory that is popular right now is “mindfulness,” which is defined by dictionary.com as a mental state achieved by focusing one’s awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one’s feelings and thoughts. Rather than simply focusing on being present ourselves, however, it is so much more powerful to focus on the fact that Christ is present with us. Christ is and always will be there to give us strength through Christ.
strength when we need it: as He was for my brother when he was lost in the forest at dusk; as He was for me when I was struggling with anxiety; as He is for all of us when we struggle with the challenges of daily life. As in the “Footprints in the Sand” poem, Christ is there when we are most in need.

In the poem, there are two sets of footprints in the sand, representing Christ always walking next to the author during the course of his life. The author of the poem asks Christ why, when at the times in his life when he was most in need, there is only one set of footprints on the sand. Did Christ abandon him then? Christ responds, “My precious child... during your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.” Christ is ever present with us and we just need to remember that and trust in Him.

While on the surface Philippians 4:13 may appear to be simple and straightforward, in reality there is so much meaning behind it. It shows us that through faith in God and prayer, we have the ability to conquer all of the challenges we face. Christ gives us the strength to live in His example and to be an example to others. Further, He will grant us the strength that He gave our forefathers, to make significant and even ultimate sacrifices for the sake of spreading God’s word. Finally, the poem teaches us that thr

ORATORY

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), the official college ministry for all twelve jurisdictions of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, has named Rev. Deacon Marek Simon as Executive Director. He will begin his tenure on September 16, 2019. Dr. Marek will be formally introduced to the dozens of student leaders attending OCF’s Summer Leadership Institute being held August 14–17 at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center in Kansansville, Wisconsin.

After graduating from St. Vladimir’s Seminary in 2001, Dr. Marek has been serving at Antiochian Village Camp since 2002, where he oversees the development and advancement efforts of the camp. He also serves as supervisor of the camp’s staff and manages its team-building ropes course program. During this time, Dr. Marek remained committed to campus ministry, serving as the advisor for OCF’s Student Leadership Board from 2005–2009.

“I first learned about the scope of OCF’s work in 2002, and now I am both excited and honored to focus my efforts in hopes of advancing the mission, vision, and goals of OCF,” said Dr. Marek, speaking of his long history and bright future with OCF.

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BISHOP ALEXANDER ORDAINS NEW DEACON AT ST. ELIAS, OTTAWA

On the Third Sunday of Great Lent, March 31, 2019, His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER visited St. Elias Cathedral in Ottawa, Canada and, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, ordained Gilbert Daoura, a parishioner of St. Elias, to the holy deaconate. The new Deacon received the name Yakoub (Jacob) after the Hieromartyr Jacob of Hama-toura. The Cathedral’s Dean and Pastor, Archpriest Ghassan Haddad, alongside the Assistant Pastor Fr. Nektarios Najjar, assisted His Grace in the service.

Deacon Yakoub is married and has one daughter. Born in Tripoli, Lebanon, he graduated with a degree in Business and Computer studies from the Lebanese University and currently works at the University of Ottawa. With his wife Caty and daughter Lea, he moved to Ottawa in 2011. They have been active since in the parish life of St. Elias Cathedral. The parish held a reception in the Church hall immediately after the service to celebrate the ordination, and all the parishioners had a chance to congratulate him, his wife Caty and daughter Lea, and to wish him a long and blessed ministry in Christ’s vineyard.

We pray that the Lord may grant the new deacon and his family many years of holiness, that he may be a fruitful servant of Christ’s ministry in the parish of St. Elias and the in the city of Ottawa. Axios!

ST. MARY, PAWTUCKET, WELCOMES NEW SUB-DEACON

St. Mary Church, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, has a new sub-deacon! On Great and Holy Saturday, April 27, with His Grace Bishop JOHN presiding, Elijah (Porphyrios) Vollen-dorf was tonsured Sub-deacon at St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Sub-deacon Elijah had previously been serving alongside Father Elie Estephan as an altar server. Now the congregation at St. Mary is happy to call him Sub-deacon.

In addition to serving behind the alter, Elijah has been a Sunday School teacher and Teen SOYO adviser. “Elijah’s knowledge about Orthodoxy and excitement to teach Sunday School each week is quite outstanding,” said Sunday School student, Nicole Balbaki. “He is always there for the teens, along with all of St. Mary’s students! Elijah is very humble, patient, dedicated, and hard-working, and his dedication to the Orthodox Church reminds me of God’s work in the world.” Elijah is also the leader of the parish’s pledge program, and

FR. JOSEPH HUNEYCUTT CELEBRATES 25 YEARS A PRIEST

In addition to celebrating the major feast of Pentecost, our parish on Pentecost Sunday celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Very Reverend Fr. Joseph Huneycutt’s ordination. I was telling my thirteen-year-old son that the Huneycutt family was hosting coffee hour and offering roasted pig and the “fixin’s” to the parish community. He responded, “Why is he serving us? Why did Fr. Joseph and his family serve us? Quite simply, it was why did Fr. Joseph and his family serve us? Quite simply, it was another example that they are living icons of Christ. Their serving us was a proclamation that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). May God grant Fr. Joseph and his family many years! Many years, O Master!

Fr. Steven Ritter

Inducted into the Order of St. Ignatius by Metropolitan JOSEPH on August 8, 2019, at St. Ignatius Church Franklin, Tennessee, were Mark Ewing, Knight; Melinda Ewing, Dame; Kurt Lyke, Knight; Matthew McElyea, Knight; Kip Perkins ( upgrade) Knight Commander; Krip Perkins ( upgrade), Dame Commander; Angela Santana, Dame; and Mark Santana, Knight. Metropolitan PHILIP of blessed memory, back in 2013, currently resides in a rented warehouse, unable to serve the flock of St. James, due to his wife Caty and daughter Lea, and to wish him a long life in the vineyard.

Communities in Action

Bishop ANTONIUS came calling. Unfortunately, because of his illness at the time, His Grace was unable to serve. This time the community was treated to full-blow hierarchical Sunday services, challenging both choir and altar servers, most of whom are new to episcopal visitations!

Archpriest Steven Ritter, the parish pastor, was ably joined in concelebration by the Deacon of St. James, Anthony Bridges, and visiting Archpriests George Makhlouf and Gregory Mathewes-Green. Fr. Gregory’s attendance was made more meaningful, as his son David, whose family attends St. James, was elevated to the rank of Sub-deacon. Also tonsured to the degree of Reader was George Makhlouf and Greg Wes-Green. Fr. Greg was able to serve, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). May God grant Fr. Joseph and his family many years!

Fr. Steven Ritter

The church, believed to be the oldest in the Atlanta area.

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ST. ATHANASIUS ACADEMY OFFERS ONLINE COURSES FOR HOMESCHOOLERS

We are excited to announce that the St. Athanasius Academy is now offering online Orthodox studies for homeschooling families. For grades 6 to 8, we are offering:

- The Old Testament, with Fr. David Bibeau
- World History, with Fr. James Purdie
- English, with Fr. Fred Shaheen
- Virtues and Passions, with Fr. Michael Heningham

For high school, we are offering:

- The New Testament, with Fr. Joel Gillam
- Lives of the Saints, with Fr. Michael Heningham
- English, with Fr. Fred Shaheen

The academy is giving enrollment information with all homeschooling families. For more information, visit www.saaot.edu. Please share this information with all homeschooling families.

Fr. John Finley
A TABLE IN THE PRESENCE
RETREAT FOR ORTHODOX COMBAT VETERANS

Orthodox Christian combat veterans of OEF and OIF:

The dust remains on your boots and in your rucksacks.

Your fallen brothers remain in your hearts and minds.

Combat is a threshold that cannot be uncrossed.

Your stories are not easy to tell. Who can bear them?

BUT GOD KNOWS THEM ALL.
AND HIS LOVE FOR YOU ENDURES FOREVER.

Your Orthodox Military Chaplains
and some veteran clergy have planned a retreat.

No cost – just get to us, if you can. We’ll take care of the rest.

WE GATHER TO TALK. WE GATHER TO PRAY.
TO STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AND TO FACE GOD.

Columbus Day Weekend 2019 at the Antiochian Village

Funding provided by the Order of Saint Ignatius of Antioch
To register, contact Barli Ross at barli@antiochianvillage.org