

# GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

## DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES

## Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries Report to the 40th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress

#### **National Department**

The mission of the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries is to coordinate the youth and young adult ministries of the national church in collaboration with Metropolis Directors; by providing standardized resources and training, this unified national ministry team enables youth workers, young people, and their families to better understand and fully experience the Orthodox Christian Faith.

#### **Staff**

Reverend Fr. Mark A. Leondis, National Director Christina Meares, Coordinator of Child & Youth Protection, National Projects Ceena Varghese, Resource Coordinator

## **Archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team**

The Department coordinates the Archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team, which is made up of the National Department and each Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. The team meets bi-annually to share ideas, discuss pertinent youth ministry information, and coordinate national and regional youth and young adult projects and programs.

Rev. Mark A. Leondis, Archdiocesan Department

Ms. Christina Meares, Ceena Varghese, Archdiocesan Department

Rev. Dn. Paul Zaharas, Metropolis of Denver

Mr. Chris Avramopoulos, Metropolis of Chicago

Ms. Eva Kokinos, Metropolis of Detroit

Ms. Rhea Ballas, Metropolis of Pittsburgh

Mr. George Tomczewski, Metropolis of New Jersey

Mr. Dino Pappas, Metropolis of Boston

Presbytera Marilese Mars, Metropolis of Atlanta

Dn. Niko Bekris, Metropolis of San Francisco

Rev. Dn. Evagoras Constantinides, Direct Archdiocesan District

Rev. Jason Roll, Ionian Village

#### **Archdiocese Council Youth Committee**

Presiding Hierarch: His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver Chairman: Fr. Theodore Barbas, Mr. Theodore Germanakos

Members:

Rev. Fr. Jon Magoulias

Rev. Fr. Michael Kouremetis

Dr. Antoine Harovas

Elaine Jaharis

Peter J. Pappas

Dr. Greg Papadeas

George Anderson

Alexander Mailis II

Maria Alwin

## **Campus Ministry (Orthodox Christian Fellowship)**

The Department works closely with Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF). OCF assists thousands of Orthodox college students each year to experience their Faith through the annual College Conference, Real Break Service Trips, their advanced and innovative website (www.ocf.net), and the Witness, the official campus ministry newsletter written by, and for, the students. His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah is the Hierarchical Overseer of Orthodox Christian Fellowship. It is important to note that OCF is the only campus ministry effort sanctioned by our Archdiocese and parishes should support no other. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese faithful who serve on the Board of Directors: Chairman – Fr. Mark Leondis; Vice-Chairman -- Dn. Paul Zaharas; Treasurer – Pat Crossan. Board Members -- Mr. Nick Furris, Mr. Jim Gianakis. Presbytera Shyla Hadzellis serves as the Development Director. Regional Chaplains: Fr. George Gartelos, Fr. Nicholas Hadzellis, Fr. Anthony Salzman.

For a 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year, Fr. Leondis lead a Real Break Team to Constantinople. This year's Real Break assisted in renovating a cemetery that had been desecrated over the years in the Chalcedon region. The team stayed in the Phanar district and the Ecumenical Patriarchate was their home base. The team had the opportunity to spend a great amount of time with His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew – a true blessing for all.

#### Young Adult Ministry: National Awareness Campaign

The Archdiocese Youth Ministry Team, along with the Archdiocese Council Youth Committee, has embraced a National Young Adult Ministry Campaign, entitled, "Find them, Greet them, Love them." Part of this awareness is to immerse the parishes with this vision of inclusivity, welcoming and embracing for our young adults. In January of 2010, each parish of our Archdiocese received posters and materials in regard to this campaign.

The following programs have been developed:

"10 for 10" in 2010, we offer 10 service projects throughout the Archdiocese (at least one in each Metropolis/Direct Archdiocesan District.)

Metropolis of Chicago (Collecting IOCC Health Kits)

Metropolis of Pittsburgh (Inner City Outreach)

Metropolis of Boston (Walk for Hunger)

Metropolis of Chicago (Walk/Run for Nurses for Newborns)

May 2

May 15

Metropolis of San Francisco (Inner City Outreach)
Metropolis of Atlanta (Habitat for Humanity/New Orleans)
Metropolis of Denver (Renovating a cemetery)
Metropolis of New Jersey (Outreach programs in each region)
Metropolis of Detroit (Ann Arbor, MI)
Direct Archdiocesan District

August 7 September 24-26 October 29-31 Fall 2010 December 4 **Not Scheduled** 

Information on our website (www.youngadult.goarch.org) includes: **Annual Retreat** at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, **Young Adult Pilgrimage** to Jerusalem, How to **Create a Young Adult Ministry** Resource for the local parish, **Parish Ministry Profiles** of Successful Young Adult Ministries, Young Adult Ministry Patron Saint and Prayer.

## Young Adult Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

In May of 2010, 37 participants of the 5th National Young Adult Pilgrimage experienced a once in a lifetime trip to the Holy Lands (Jerusalem and Mount Sinai). His Grace Bishop Savas of Troas and Fr. Mark Leondis, once again lead the pilgrimage to sites of great historical and spiritual significance to all Orthodox Christians. Highlights of the trip were a visit to St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, a private audience with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III and assisting in a Patriarchal Divine Liturgy at the Holy Sepulcher for the Feast of Pentecost.

#### 10 for 10 Parishes Visited

Each Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries has visited or will visit 10 parishes in their Metropolis to help revitalize or create a new young adult ministry. Parish names will be listed online at www.youngadult.goarch.org.

### **Youth Worker Training**

The Department works closely with the youth offices of the Antiochian Christian Orthodox Archdiocese, the Orthodox Church in America, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the United States of America to coordinate the Orthodox Camping and Youth Worker Conference. These inter-Orthodox Conferences offer training and education to provide an invaluable asset to those working with our young people. Last year's conference took place in Washington DC in January 2010, hosted by the Ukrainian Church. Plans are underway for this year's Conference to take place in January 2011.

## Youth Protection Manual: Keeping our Children Safe at Camps and Retreats

Responding to the charge from His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and the Holy Eparchial Synod, the Department has created and implemented a standardized process to properly screen all those who work with young people at camps and metropolis-sponsored retreats. The Youth Protection Manual for Camps and Metropolis Retreats was disseminated to every camp program and metropolis youth office throughout the Archdiocese in order to ensure uniformity in the selection, screening, and evaluation of youth workers.

The YPM includes materials for background and reference checks, staff requirements, staff precautions, reporting procedures, as well as forms and applications (parental release forms, medical and insurance forms, incident report forms, interview scripts, voluntary disclosure forms, performance evaluation forms etc.). In April 2010, the YPM was updated with a staff re-application, Social Networking Policy and a new online training was instituted for each staff member serving at a summer camp.

#### **Youth Ministry and Theological Associations**

Fr. Leondis serves as a member of the International Association for the study of Youth Ministry, as well as the Association of Youth Ministry Educators. Both of these associations support and develop youth ministry standards and current research and trends. Additionally, Fr. Leondis was asked to host a conference for Roman Catholic, Episcopalian and Eastern Orthodox Youth Ministers, which will take place in the Fall of 2010.

## Office of Camping Ministries

Established in 2000 by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, the mission of the Office of Camping Ministries is to provide Christ-centered direction and unity for the camping programs of our Archdiocese. The Office of Camping Ministries is not only responsible for creating, coordinating, and distributing standardized resources and training sessions for camp directors and staff, but also setting appropriate standards for camp operation to ensure program quality and safety. These standardized resources adhere to American Camping Association (ACA) standards, so as to encourage each of our camping programs towards ACA accreditation.

## **Resources from the Department**

The Department is charged with equipping parishes across the Archdiocese with resources necessary to effectively minister to our young people. Creating relevant and updated youth ministry resources for the local parish youth worker is of the utmost importance to our ultimate goal. All resources are posted online for free and available through hard copy through the Department of Religious Education or Orthodox Marketplace. The Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries offers the following youth ministry resources:

## **Email Ministry**

The Department utilizes email list-servs to offer tools, training, inspiration, as well as event updates to youth workers, parents, young adults, college students, and camp directors. For example, our Youth Worker Pulse provides resources, ideas, and activities for both parents and youth workers. Sent weekly via email to over 1,500 youth workers, the information offers support for youth ministry following the monthly themes of The Planner. Archived Youth Worker Pulse issues can be found online at www.youth.goarch.org.

#### The Challenge

The Challenge is the monthly youth and young adult ministry supplement of the Orthodox Observer. Addressing the results from a recent study about the *Challenge Newsletter* (monthly youth ministry supplement in the Observer), the Department has re-formatted this resource. The Challenge now focuses on relevant issues young people are dealing with in smaller sections with questions for discussion. The themes for each Challenge will correlate with the monthly themes derived from the Archdiocese's yearly theme (Come and See). The Department will work with parish youth workers to utilize this resource for GOYA meetings.

The Planner: Orthodox Daily Calendar and Resource Guide

Our Department for over 25 years has published the Planner. The 2010-2011 Ecclesiastical Planner, themed "Come and See" is an invaluable resource which includes daily Epistle and Gospel readings, fast days, prayers, saints of the day, and inspiration from the Fathers. The Planner follows the Ecclesiastical (church) year beginning in September and ending in August. This year's Planner was available for sale by May 15.

The Teen Video Series Complete DVD Set (DVD and resource guide)

This series addresses difficult issues that young people face daily and can be used with teenagers, families, parents and youth workers. Each DVD features hierarchs, clergy, professionals, and teenagers discussing the topic at hand, and also include a special Parent/Youth Worker Section. The resource books contain vital statistics, additional information pertaining to the topic, as well as youth group sessions and retreats to assist both clergy and youth workers. The DVD includes: Teen Violence: Fight the Good Fight, Sexual Purity: Mind, Body, and Substance Abuse: Our Kids are Not Immune.

#### Guidelines

Ministry guidelines include information on starting and sustaining a ministry and will assist parish programming. The following Guidelines have been updated and revised, and were mailed to each parish in June of 2006: GOYA Ministry Guidelines, Young Adult Ministry Guidelines, JOY Ministry Guidelines, HOPE Ministry Guidelines.

#### Sessions and Retreats

As always, the Department regularly posts sessions and retreats for the parish youth worker on their website, www.youth.goarch.org (for youth workers/sessions and retreats).

## Ministry Curriculum

In response to the needs of the faithful youth workers of our Archdiocese, the Department has developed various curricula for our ministries. Each curriculum binder provides complete session plans that follow the cycle of the Ecclesiastical Year. Youth Workers will enjoy age-appropriate projects and activities in complete outline form with objectives, discussion prompts, questions, activities, resources, and ideas. Available curricula include: JOY Curriculum Year 1 and 2 and GOYA Curriculum Year 1 and 2. Hard copies are available for purchase through the Department.

#### **New Youth Ministry Website**

Working with the Department of Internet Ministries and Enfold Systems and funded by a grant from Leadership 100, the Department is completing the New Website. The Department will launch a three tier fully functional website geared toward youth workers, young adults and young people. This web site will not only provide necessary Orthodox youth ministry resources, but also offer young people a venue to research and learn more about their Orthodox faith.

A **National GOYA and Young Adult Ministry Facebook page** has been created that provides community, updates, news and information for teenagers and young adults across the country with an increasing 3,000 "friends."

**The Ladder: Online blog** from the department is written for youth workers which touches on pop culture and current trends. Additionally, we offer live coverage with our travel blogs and national programs.

#### **Into the Desert: A 40-Day Lenten Journey**

The Department concluded the "Into the Desert" 40-day blog during Great Lent. This blog was geared toward young people, but available for all Orthodox Christians. Each day the Director posted the saints of the day, scriptural readings, an inspirational quote from the fathers, as well as a daily challenge. The blog was very well received by young people and families alike. The Department will work with Internet Ministries and Stewardship, Outreach and Evangelism for 2011, to build upon its success. We even received word that various GOYA ministries followed the journey together as a community.

## **Challenges and Closing Remarks**

The Department has defined its growth by not only serving as a "sounding board" to the many parents, priests, youth workers, youth, and young adults who often call for advice and suggestions, but also by the creation of resources and training for the local youth worker in the fundamental aspects of Orthodox Youth Ministry. **We believe that our national success begins on the parish level**, however, our greatest challenge seems to be effectively disseminating our information and resources to our target audiences: the parish youth worker, parents, and young people.

As the average tenure for a parish youth director is less than three years (and even shorter for parish youth workers), it is difficult for our Department to maintain an updated youth worker database. We challenge the priests, youth workers, and parents throughout the Archdiocese to properly disseminate our resources to the appropriate people: hang our Department posters in a visible place, take advantage of our pre-made bulletin inserts, make use of The Challenge newsletter to spark discussion with young people, utilize our online sessions related to our monthly theme, subscribe to the Youth Worker Pulse, encourage those who work with young people to attend Youth Worker trainings offered on a regional, Metropolis, and Archdiocesan level, and most importantly, continue to be an incarnated presence in your young peoples lives.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reverend Fr. Mark A. Leondis, Archdiocesan Director Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries