



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Friday, 15 September 2024
Martyrs Gurias, Samonas & Habib
№. 171

ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE
ON DIOCESAN DEPARTMENTS PLAN & GOALS

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest,

The Lord bless you!

After Our Lord's Resurrection, He commanded the Apostles to make disciples of all nations, promising to be with them until the end of the age (*St Matthew 28:18-20*). This Great Commission has been passed down through the ages as generations of Orthodox Christians bore witness to the Gospel message of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today, it is our common responsibility within the territory of the Diocese of the Midwest to fulfill Our Lord's command. Since becoming your Archbishop, I have listened and observed during parish visits, taking account of what you need to be the Church and make disciples, while seeing many wonderful examples of how the Holy Spirit is at work in our parish communities.

I have met seniors, youth, families, and individuals in parishes small and large, all filled with the desire to grow closer to Our Lord. I have encountered both lifelong and newly-Chrismated Orthodox, all being cared for by our clergy. I am grateful that all of you daily accept the call to take up your Cross and follow Christ, and especially I give thanks to Almighty God for the desire of so many to be faithful Orthodox Christians in today's uncertain world.

For this reason, our Diocese has invested considerable time and resources over the past year to prepare the organizational plan which was adopted during the 63rd Annual Diocesan Assembly this past October. The vision and goal of this plan is to build upon the work of those who have gone before us, while leveraging the talents, skills, knowledge, and experiences of today's diocesan membership to grow the Faith in our vast diocesan territory. We can now leverage technology for new resources and to collaborate virtually, effectively reaching across the breadth of our Diocese to provide the spiritual resources and programs necessary to fulfill the Great Commission in every parish and monastic community.

Our organizational plan is grounded in Scripture and begins with our newly adopted diocesan mission statement:

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*Uniting the faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest to discover a Christ-centered life,
welcoming all to worship and live in the Orthodox Christian Faith.*

This mission statement defines the focus of our new diocesan organizational plan, including the establishment of new departments for Evangelization, Christian Education, Christian Service & Humanitarian Aid, Liturgical Practice, Communications, and Clergy & Clergy Family Life.

This mission statement is also a call for each of us to recommit to our role of being bearers of Christ in our daily lives. By living in this way, we all fulfill the Great Commission, showing those around us the joy and radiance of following Jesus Christ in the fullness of the Orthodox Faith.

As you prepare for the beginning of the Nativity Fast, I encourage you to find renewed focus in anticipation of the coming of Our Lord, and to gather in your parish communities for discussion and reflection that will identify:

- 1) how your parish is successful in living out the Great Commission; and
- 2) where there are opportunities to do more, or simply begin anew.

By organizing such informal gatherings during this season, we can turn from the hustle and bustle of our consumer-driven society and focus again on the majesty and innocence of the Incarnation of Our Savior. We can also give serious consideration to how our parishes can be places where members and seekers can encounter the divine.

When you gather to complete this [self-assessment for your parish](#), I encourage you to identify things that are working well, opportunities for improvement, and ideas for growing closer to Jesus Christ. Use the self-assessment to identify what your parish has set forth as goals, projects, activities, and service ministries. **Please complete this form by Monday, Dec. 16, and submit it online.**

Our Diocesan Chancellor, Archpriest Herman Kincaid, will gather your insights and ideas, sharing them with the directors of our new departments. Beginning in January 2025, these departmental directors will commence working with their teams to connect parishes with individuals who are able to develop the resources needed in our communities.

In the coming weeks, our diocesan website will be updated to feature information about each department, the newly appointed directors, and how to contact them. They will rely on the information you share—both the successes and the opportunities—to begin assembling teams drawn from parishes across the Diocese to work collaboratively and wisely to build up the Body of Christ together by the work of ministry (*Ephesians 4:12*).

The clergy in each parish should also ensure that the contact information for your ministry leaders is up to date and on file with the Diocese, so that our departments can effectively communicate with parish leaders responsible for music, church school, mission and outreach, and charitable programs in your parishes. Please update this information [through the reporting website](#), or [forward to the Diocesan Chancery](#).

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As Orthodox Christians of the Diocese of the Midwest, we are called to follow the example of the Apostles who gathered in council together (*Acts 15:28-29*), like them identifying the work set before us, and then putting our faith into action by being witnesses in our local communities (*Acts 14:21-22*).

The fields are white for harvest in the Diocese of the Midwest, and I firmly believe that Our Lord is inviting us to accept the call to be His witnesses—from the Dakotas to the Great Lakes, and from the Plains to the Ohio River Valley.

I pray that you will be inspired and motivated by what I have shared here, and that working together to enliven the Orthodox Faith in our parishes and in our local communities, one day we may hear Our Lord say: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (*St Matthew 25:21*).

Invoking God’s blessings upon our efforts, I remain,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DANIEL
Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest