

Parish Development Ministry Report

Joseph Kormos Archdiocesan Assembly, 2023

The following is a summary of 2023 efforts.

2023 Parish Development Forum

The largest Parish Development Forum took place at Holy Trinity Church in Parma OH from July 13-15. There were 13 registrants from eight parishes in the Archdiocese.

Factors behind the strong attendance and positive reaction included an attractive location (many Cleveland parishes), strong support from host parish, many parishes sending multiple representatives including the priest and the motivation for post Covid gathering .



Positive Reaction

The Forum evaluation survey yielded a median overall score of 9 out of 10. A few comments are included in the box nearby.

An attendee on staff of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of SF has shared materials with parish reps throughout their Metropolis.

New Approaches

A number of new tactics were tried which proved successful including an early registration deadline, significant time for break-out sessions to discuss clearly defined future oriented topics and assigned, experienced, facilitators to guide these discussions.

Forum Feedback

"I want to thank you for a very informative forum last week. I truly learned a lot and I am looking forward to the next one." **Priest, PA**

"This conference is the best actual conference I have been to in terms of helping parishes grow and become healthier. You have done a really tremendous job with the parish development forum. I am working on starting something like it for Texas." **Priest**

"Seven participants from our [parish's] Mission and Outreach group went to the 10th Annual Parish Development Forum in Parma. An absolutely incredible time was had by all! The hospitality was outstanding. The education was an 11/10. The entire program was worth more than we could have anticipated!" **No. Ohio Parish**

Orthodox Convert Survey

One highlight of the session was sharing with attendees the summary of the [2023 Orthodox Convert Survey](#) which seemed to be very well received. Survey responses were received from 773 persons.

Parish Council Training

An advisory team to develop materials to help Archdiocesan parish councils to fulfill a leadership role within their parish has been formed. The team includes His Eminence, the Chancellor, Fathers Gresh and Parker, Alexis Parshook and Ray Steeb.

A pilot session -- *to inspire councils to improve -- and to provide some tools and good practices for doing so* - will be held on Saturday October 7 at St. John the Baptist Church, New Kensington. Council members from four parishes will attend.

The session will cover 1) the critical role of Parish Councils 2) Fundamentals of Parish Councils – purpose, role, expectations, fiduciary responsibilities; 3) efficient council meetings and good practices 4) financial practice basics.

Based on reaction to the pilot decisions will be made on content, and delivery of future sessions.

(More info in appendix of this report.)

Parish Pulse Newsletters

Since October 2022 the Parish Pulse email newsletter has been published seven times.

Articles have included:

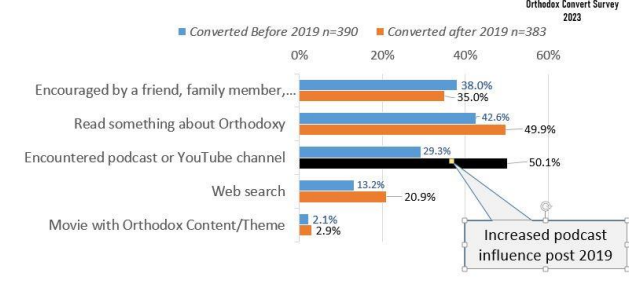
- Your Parish Gift Acceptance Policy
- Ways to Increase Faithful Giving
- Building parish Awareness with Facebook
- Parishes as Vessels of Ministry
- Review your Parish website
- Stewardship Practices Update
- Why Consider Our Parish Future: Looking Backward to Look Forward
- Parish Revitalization: Simple and Hard
- Orthodox Convert Survey Summary
- Parish Budget: Why Do That?

We encourage submitting names/emails addresses of parishioners and clergy for subscribing to this publication. This can be done here (<https://www.ocadwpa.org/newsletter>) or by contacting joekormos1@gmail.com .

Parish Visits/Workshops

We are available to work individually with parishes on particular projects. These can be via online meetings, parish visits or ongoing telephone/email interaction. Topics might include: stewardship, vision and planning; parish administration; leadership; outreach and evangelization and others.

How did you become acquainted with the Orthodox faith?



In Summary

A decent summary of *the point* of the Parish Development Ministry is:

<p>Moving From: Being Parishes Hallmarked by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Banquets & anniversaries• Youth camps• Bake sales & fund raising• Parish dues• Sunday Liturgy (only)• Ministry? --unknown• Parish Vision? – taking care of ‘ours’• The fallacy that all is well	<p>Moving to: A Brighter Future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our parish is a living organism: Parishes can grow; Any parish can become healthy if it truly desires to do so.• <u>You are responsible</u> for your parish’s health; Work on one thing at a time.• Laity have a responsibility to <i>know</i> and <i>live</i> their faith• Ministry: <i>the Liturgy after the Liturgy</i>• Pay priests according to reasonable standards.• Don’t accept mediocrity• Priest can’t & shouldn’t <i>do everything</i>.• Stewardship based on personal Generosity and Gratitude• ‘Parish future’ conversations – Facing facts; what do we want to be like?• Attitude of “We’re not ‘diaspora’. We’re here to stay. ‘So, what do we intend to accomplish here?’”
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Appendix: Parish Council Effectiveness Training Fundamentals

Why?

Parish council is the key leadership body in the parish>> Better parish councils lead to healthier parishes. ♦ Archdiocese has no official parish council expectations/training. ♦ PC member's understanding of the PC is often a combination of possibly inappropriate secular experience, an inherited parish culture, observance of previous generation's (often not exemplary) behavior; and possibly a poor understanding of the parish as the body of Christ.

Project Goals

Improve *Effectiveness* of Parish Councils in the Archdiocese.

- Improve clergy- laity collaboration
- Improve parish understanding of the PC.>> convince parish's best people to serve on PC.
- . Think beyond short term. Important over urgent.
- Understand/consider marginal opinions.
- Improve meeting productivity -better results/less time
- Behave as body of Christ.

Parish Council Member Qualities

1. *Model a good Orthodox Christian life* -- Come to church Sundays, feasts days, vespers. Humble.
2. *Generous Personal Stewardship* - time; talent; treasure;
3. *Eldership* --Not "new"; known and respected. a person who people will follow and trust.
4. *Promote Peace and Trust* -- build an atmosphere of calmness and hope but not deadness and somnolence.
5. *Two Way Communicators* -- Communicate plans decisions, actions to parish. Seek feedback from parish. Seek multiple diverse perspectives.
6. *Commitment* - sense of duty, commitment, honor and excellence. Vote the "mission" not short term needs.
7. *Discernment* -- Express a forward vision of what the parish should/can become. Place needs of the parish as body of Christ ahead of their own desires.
8. *Team work* --build healthy overall PC collaboration; work to build consensus. Willing to compromise.

Parish Council Purpose: PC is...

a shared leadership body co-responsible, under the rector's guidance, for the health & vibrancy of the parish. Working together they are stewards of the parish's ability to fulfill its total mission. In addition to overseeing the parish's God given resources, the council must discern priorities, drive action and enliven vital parish ministries.

Parish Council Characteristics

1. Everything in parish –building and ministries - belongs to Christ. PC is entrusted with its stewardship.
2. PC stands *in the stead* of parish community & under guidance of the priest shares responsibility for overall health of parish.
3. PC is NOT solely involved with the material/ "temporal" aspects of the church. Priest NOT solely involved with "spiritual".
4. Priest, by virtue of his delegated role from the bishop, is leader of the parish & parish council. Priest, at his choice, may run parish council & parish meetings.
5. Priest fully participates in PC discussions and decisions; has final approval of decisions.
6. The priest is appointed by the Hierarchy. He does not *work for* the parish council.
7. Consensus, whenever possible, is the desired approach to decision making. This is critical to *shared responsibility*.
8. In cases of disagreement a route of appeal to dean, chancellor, hierarchy is available.

Parish Council Primary Tasks

Oversight of Resources/Admin – budgets; facilities; safety/risk; establish policies

Planning & Vision – Establish mission; Synthesize opportunities/challenges; discern priorities; articulate vision; communicate to from parish; leader develop't.

Stimulate/Empower Ministry – initiate new ministries; link to vision; define target outcomes; structure parish to empower ministry.