

MISSION COMMITTEE REPORT

September 2023

Submitted by Joseph Kormos

The Mission Committee has been in a transitional state in the past year awaiting new direction as to its role, efforts, make-up and fit with other Diocesan activities. As a result regular status reports from most existing missions, mission explorations and chapels have not been received by this committee.

Key focus areas of the Mission committee have been:

- Provide support for existing missions
- Identify effective locations for future mission plants
- Examine re-planting/renewal efforts associated with existing heritage/legacy parishes within the Diocese.
- Build a sense of mission in existing parishes in the diocese.
- Provide parish development support for existing parishes in the diocese.

Despite the dormancy of the *Mission Committee* some important efforts have been undertaken in the past year.

Mission Explorations

Dakotas

Working together with Fr Paul Wesche, the Dean of the Minneapolis deanery, and the clergy and the faithful of North and South Dakota, his Eminence, Archbishop Daniel, established in February 2023 a new Dakotas mission district. This new mission district will work to plan and implement ways to better serve the growing Orthodox population in these northern states. Funding is also being procured to help pay for the pastoral initiatives needed for the establishment of new parishes, missions and chapels.

Wisconsin

Fr Tom Mueller continues his work with two chapels in Waukesha and Plymouth Wisconsin. Both are under the patronage of St. Maria of Paris.

Tenth Parish Development Forum

While not an effort specifically focused on Mission communities, this report has typically included a summary of the Parish Development Forum.

The Forum is co-sponsored by the Midwest Diocese along with the Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania and the Bulgarian Diocese.

The Tenth Parish Development Forum was held "in-person" in July for the first time since summer of 2019. Host parish was Holy Trinity Church in Parma OH. Almost one hundred persons attended with 51 attendees from the Midwest Diocese.

Parish Development Forum Feedback

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

Priest, Pennsylvania

"This 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, Texas

"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!"

Midwest Diocese Parish

The Forum theme of *“Our Parish and the Future”* was developed during keynote talks and breakout discussions in three focus areas including: 1) Clergy Laity dynamics as a key to a healthy parish environment; 2) Attracting and Integrating Converts and 3) Connecting Parish Ministry with the Neighborhood.

Forum feedback is shown in the box nearby.

One important aspect of the Forum was sharing with attendees the summary of the [2023 Orthodox Convert Survey](#). Survey responses were received from 773 persons.

The Forum is conducted with active assistance from Archpriest Stephen Frase, clergy co-chair, Cathy Vrugitz and John Fedorko from Midwest Diocese parishes.

The 2023 Forum was dedicated to Archpriest Daniel Rentel of blessed memory. Fr Daniel passed away in early 2023 and was the prime inspiration for the *“Small Parish Forum”* which became the current Parish Development Forum.

