

OUTREACH & EVANGELISM



Practical Steps



DEPARTMENT OF STEWARDSHIP, OUTREACH & EVANGELISM
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

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GREAT LENT, HOLY WEEK & PASCHA

With church attendance increasing over the Lenten period this is our greatest opportunity to reach out to our inactive Orthodox and to inquirers about the faith. It is time to prepare for the way in which we will reach out to these people on the fringes of our communities. Don't miss this opportunity.

Outreach Resources for Great Lent, Holy Week, Pascha & the Annunciation are available at www.Outreach.Goarch.org

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BROCHURES

- **Our Lenten Journey: *Preparing for the Passion & Resurrection of Our Lord****
- **Preparing for Confession by Fr. Jim Kordaris**
- **The Great Fast by Metropolitan Isaiah**
- **Repentance by Fr. Alexander Veronis**
- **Holy Communion: *The Gift of Eternal Life* by Fr. Alkiviadis Calivas***
- **All Things New in the Resurrection by Fr. Stanley S. Harakas**
- **Tri-Lingual Paschal Homily of St John Chrysostom**
- **Resurrection Service Handout Brochure***
- **A Lenten Study Program**

SERMONS/REFLECTIONS

- **The Incarnation: A Revolution for Freedom by Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou**
- **My Soul Magnifies the Lord by Fr. Thomas Paris**
- **God for Us: Why the Incarnation is Rational by Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou**
- **Blessed is that Servant Whom He Shall find Waiting: An Exhortation to Vigilance by Fr. William Chiganos**
- **Focus Fasting by Fr. Athanasios Demos**
- **The Precious and Life-Giving Cross by Fr. Luke Veronis**
- **Holy Friday Reflection-The Train Bridge**
- **Proclaim His Resurrection: Seven Miles with Jesus by Fr Christopher Makiej**

LENTEN & RESURRECTION WELCOME BANNERS

3'x 6' or 4'x8' / delivered in approximately 1 week

All items listed are available for download at www.outreach.goarch.org. Most items are formatted for easy printing or photocopying. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are available in color by [email request](mailto:Outreach@goarch.org) from the department at Outreach@goarch.org.

PLEASE ORDER BY EMAIL TO OUTREACH@GOARCH.ORG

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In the period from the Resurrection to Pentecost, the Sunday Epistle readings tell us of a community of believers that were so totally devoted to God that their life together was charged by the power of the Holy Spirit. They prayed and served together in true Christian fellowship, loving each other and sharing their lives with one another. Those with more shared with those who had less, and people related in ways that blurred the lines of gender, race and culture. Unbelievers coming into contact with this community of believers saw a vision of life that was so dynamic that they could not resist it. We read in Acts 2:47 that “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” This is the Church that we as Orthodox Christians claim to be.

As the visible presence of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, each parish is called to witness to those within and those outside the community of believers. If we believe that in Orthodoxy we have the fullness of the Truth, then we have the great responsibility – the Great Commission – to share it with all people. The very nature of this mission implies creative witness within society in word and in deed.

Outreach will require that we remind cradle Orthodox of the apostolic and missionary nature of the Church, encouraging them to welcome visitors, non-Orthodox spouses, inquirers and converts, and to see them as a blessing in the life of the parish. Those coming to Orthodox Christianity will grow to appreciate our historical and ancient Christian roots and will inspire others as they embrace the Orthodox Christian faith.

VISITORS

A survey found that on Easter Sunday in 1999, 12% of atheists and agnostics in America attended a Christian church service – that’s nearly one million adults. Based on this survey, we can assume that the vast majority of the unchurched, who hold to some type of belief in God, will show up at church at least once per year. The question we then must ask ourselves is, “Will we be ready for them?”

Because the Orthodox Christian worship experience is so unique – it fills the five senses – it may seem foreign to those who visit. It is important that our parishes be ready for visitors, greeting them with a sincere smile and a handshake. Remember that Zacchaeus was converted merely by Christ’s acceptance of him. Reaching out to those who enter our doors with a sincere handshake, greeting and a welcoming smile could be the most important missionary work we do. Ushers/greeters should be reminded of the importance of reaching out and making our visitors welcome. Simply put -- friendliness has eternal implications.

To avoid the awkward and embarrassing moment when a non-Orthodox visitor approaches the chalice to receive Holy Communion, a friendly word of instruction could be offered by the priest prior to saying, “With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near.” This reminder could be phrased as follows, “*We welcome all visitors and guests who are with us today. Please be aware that only Orthodox Christians in good sacramental standing in the Eastern Orthodox Church may receive Holy Communion. All others may receive the Blessed Bread (antidoron) at the conclusion of the service. May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and may He bless you through the intercessions of St. (patron saint of the parish).*”

The priest may also choose to invite those that are interested to attend Orthodox education/catechism classes at the church or to meet with him to discuss becoming full members of the Orthodox Christian Church. This information could also be included in the Sunday and mailed bulletin or newsletter.

It is suggested that the phrase “visitors are welcome” should be added to the telephone answering message and web site of the par-

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CONCLUSION

Nothing is done in the parish that is not evangelism. Outreach is not a person, a committee, a mission center or a project. Outreach is an *attitude*. Everything we do is an opportunity for outreach & evangelism. Every person, every project, every list of names offers potential for outreach. There is no limit to the time one may spend on the mission of the parish. Outreach is a person-to-person process.

ish, along with the worship schedule and simple directions to the parish.

It is suggested that visitors' names, addresses and telephone numbers be obtained using either a guest book or a **visitor card** (*a personalized visitor card is available from the Department of Outreach & Evangelism*). Prompt follow-up with visitors is critical. A personal note and/or follow-up call can increase immensely the likelihood that a visitor will return.

It is suggested that visitors and guests be greeted, given a Sunday bulletin, shown to their seats and, if possible, offered a Liturgy book to follow along with the service. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the priest may welcome guests in general or by name, inviting them for fellowship following the Divine Liturgy in the church hall. In welcoming the visitors to the parish, the priest is also setting the tone for the congregation's response and personal welcome to these new faces in the fellowship/coffee hour. To avoid embarrassing our visitors, it is suggested that they *not* be asked to stand up when their names are read. Greeters could also be stationed in the church hall to welcome guests and introduce them to others. A lapel pin or sticker may be used to identify visitors so that parishioners will know to reach out.

The church hall could be set up with a **visitors' table** which would be staffed by parishioners interested in the outreach ministry of the parish. Information on the parish, its programs, membership directory, bulletin, upcoming events, as well as brochures on Orthodoxy (available from the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism) should be available for visitors. All items that the visitor receives should include the name, address, telephone, e-mail and website of the parish, and the name of the priest. If visitors would like, they may add their names to the parish mailing list to receive bulletins, newsletters and notice of special events.

A **welcome packet** is an excellent way to share information on the parish worship schedule, ministries, programs, organizations and activities. Welcome Folders are available from the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism. The packet might include a visitor card and a letter of welcome from the priest. Additional letters from the Parish Council and Philoptochos may also be included.

Follow-up with prospective parish members should include a personal note of welcome, an invitation to worship, a schedule of upcoming services and a copy of the church bulletin. Personal contact and invitation to return has been shown to result in the greatest likelihood that visitors will return. A phone call from the priest shows the highest results, though time may not allow for this. In his place, a member of the Parish Council or Outreach Committee could make this call.

MENTORING

In keeping with the respectful and welcoming pastoral approach of our Lord, we are called to do all we can to make the non-Orthodox visitor feel welcome, respected and comfortable in our churches. One method we can employ in our churches is to develop a **mentoring program** designed to help the non-Orthodox spouse or inquirer become more comfortable with the religious traditions, cultural idiosyncrasies and social life of our communities. Contact the Department for guidance.

NON-ORTHODOX SPOUSES

Many people have come to know and accept the Orthodox faith through marriage to Orthodox Christians. This is a critical area of outreach in our parishes requiring great sensitivity and concern. Personal contact by the priest and/or the Outreach Committee can be of great assistance, suggesting appropriate reading, discussion groups, Bible studies and catechism. Resources for ministry to interfaith couples are available through a joint effort of the from the Archdiocese Center for Family Care and the Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism. Visit www.goarch.org for additional information.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

It is important that our churches welcome and provide accessibility for people with disabilities. This includes pastoral ministry, transportation assistance, and inclusion in worship activities. We should extend every effort to make our parishes physically accessible to people with disabilities through the installation of ramps where needed. Also, rather than seating individuals with wheelchairs in the front or back of the church, another approach is to have shortened pews in various locations in the nave. This allows individuals with

METHODS OF REACHING OUT TO INACTIVE ORTHODOX

An important focus of our outreach efforts is to the person who, though baptized, has put off Christ, whether by choice or by apathy. The ethnic nature of the Orthodox in America often makes it possible for these nominal Orthodox to continue to relate to the Church community. We see them at weddings, baptisms, funerals and memorial services. It is critical that creative methods be employed to bring these inactive Orthodox back to Church. It is equally critical to be prepared for these inactive Orthodox Christians when they walk through our doors.

Family Day, Godparent's Day, Father's Day and Mother's Day all provide occasions for parish events drawing inactive Orthodox Christians back to liturgy. Active parishioners are given an occasion to invite inactive family members to church in order to worship as a family. Special outreach activities could be planned for these days. All could be encouraged to prepare for and to receive Holy Communion as a family.

OUTREACH SUNDAY

In cooperation with the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society and the Center for Family Care, the Department has developed a program for a **Family Outreach Sunday** in which active members are encouraged to invite inactive family members and Orthodox Christian friends for a special day of Christian fellowship and spiritual renewal. This is modeled on successful programs carried out in the parishes throughout the Archdiocese. Rather than designating a specific Sunday, parishes are encouraged to choose a Family Outreach Sunday in November that fits the parish calendar. Visit the Outreach website or contact the Department for additional information and resources.

STEWARDSHIP

Outreach & Evangelism go hand-in-hand with Stewardship. Strongly committed Christians are strongly committed stewards. The Department of Stewardship, Outreach & Evangelism provides excellent tools for a complete parish stewardship program. Stewardship education and committed Christian giving should be constantly emphasized in the parish (www.stewardship.goarch.org). Contact the Department for stewardship resources.

outreach, such as the online Bulletin Builder, which enables a parish to quickly assemble all the components of a weekly church bulletin from one location in a matter of minutes.

Every parish in the Archdiocese spends hours producing a weekly bulletin. In almost every instance, this bulletin is simply printed and never disseminated to either the World Wide Web or email. In light of this, the Archdiocesan Department of Internet Ministries offers *Bulletin Builder* -- a web site that empowers every parish to easily assemble the various elements of a weekly bulletin and then instantly publish this bulletin to print, e-mail, and web pages simultaneously.

This web application not only streamlines the communication process but also empowers parishes to reach the widest possible audience in the most time-efficient and cost-effective manner. Bulletin Builder also serves as a nexus of communication between the Archdiocese and Metropolises to the parishes by instantly providing Archdiocesan news, pertinent messages from His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and the local Metropolitan for the bulletin. At the same time, the module will automatically provide the prescribed scriptural readings and hymnology for liturgical services, as well as access to a database of saint's lives, iconography, and wisdom sayings from the Church Fathers. This service is available to all parishes of the Archdiocese at no cost.

Recruit from among the parishioners an individual with the skills and training to oversee the parish website. This site could include all information that is distributed in bulletins, schedules, pamphlets, as well as photos, letters from the pastor and/or parish council president. Visitors to the site could be invited to submit their e-mail address in order to be included on the parish listserver to receive by e-mail the parish bulletin, newsletter, notice of special events and spiritual/catechetical information. Contact The Department of Internet Ministries at the Archdiocese or by email at *Internet@goarch.org*.

The parish web site may also be set up to receive donations electronically through various methods. Contact the Archdiocese Office of the Orthodox Software Initiative (8 E 79th Street, New York, NY 10075 phone 212-774-0273 fax 646-390-4904).

disabilities to be easily seated with friends or family. An excellent resource for ministry to people with disabilities is *The Body of Christ: A Place of Welcome for People with Disabilities* (Fr. John Chryssavgis / Light & Life Publishing). Additional resources providing guidance in welcoming and serving individuals with disabilities are available from the Department.

SIGNS

The sign for the church should be visible from the street and should be informative, including schedule of services, the name of the parish priest, and if possible the church telephone number. It would be helpful if the sign also indicated that *all are welcome*.

Tastefully designed WELCOME BANNERS are available and may be ordered from the Department of Outreach and Evangelism (www.outreach.goarch.org). Banners are available for general welcome, Great Lent, the Resurrection and during the period leading up to the Nativity.

Additional signs could indicate the main entrance (visitors often have to pull on every door until they find the open one), directions to the nursery, rest rooms, etc. – anything that would make it easier for a visitor to the parish. It may also be helpful to designate several parking spaces for visitor parking.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Ads could be placed regularly in the Saturday religion section of the local or area newspapers. These would serve as a resource to visitors and to those who have recently moved to the area, as well as a positive reinforcement of existing members' identification with their parish. Area hotels could be informed as to the presence of the church in their area with the request that this information be included in their guest information and available from their concierge desk. There is nothing more frustrating when traveling than desiring to attend Divine Liturgy and not being able to find the local Orthodox parish. It is important to realize that most common method for visitors to find the local parish is through the internet (*see section on Computer Publications & Electronic Communication*).

LOCAL PERIODICALS

Offer to periodically submit articles, commentaries and/or book re-

views to the local newspaper on religious topics of general interest. Invite reporters to cover the traditions and services of Lent, Holy Week and Pascha, offering background information on Orthodox customs and traditions of the season. Other events of which we should inform the local press would be visits of hierarchs, distinguished clergy and scholars, as well as special speakers. Press releases could be prepared for such occasions and distributed to all local or area newspapers, publications & weblogs.

BROCHURE MINISTRY

Offer parishioners, visitors and guests the opportunity to learn more about the Orthodox faith by providing educational brochures at little or no cost. Brochures on various topics are available from various Orthodox publishers and from the Department of Outreach & Evangelism (www.outreach.goarch.org).

The Department of Outreach & Evangelism provides educational brochures by prominent Orthodox clergy, designed to renew the faith of active Orthodox, reach out to inactive Orthodox and to share the Truth of Orthodoxy with those inquiring about the faith. These brochures are provided to the parishes at no cost.

We encourage all Orthodox Christians to carry out a Brochure Ministry in the parish and community, using these inviting and informative brochures to educate current, inactive and prospective church members on important aspects of the Orthodox Christian faith.

EDUCATION AS OUTREACH

Public lectures and seminars on various aspects of Orthodox Christianity may be offered on a regular basis at the church. Contact the Department of Outreach & Evangelism for suggested speakers on a variety of topics. These lectures may be advertised in the media - local newspaper, television and radio - as well as by mail to area colleges (departments of History, Religion, Philosophy, Psychology, Humanities, etc.) and churches. Lectures should be well organized and prompt. Handouts should be available in adequate amounts and when possible should have the church name, address and telephone printed on them (stickers also serve this purpose). Greeting tables should be prepared with adequate numbers of parish members to serve as greeters, and to obtain names and addresses for notification of future events. Pamphlets and brochures should be available at no

their lives from organizations wanting their participation and financial support. Though we may not want to admit it, we must compete for the time and support of our parishioners. Without their commitment of time and support, we will not have the opportunity to move them into the mainstream of parish life. Contact the Department of Internet Ministries regarding their Bulletin Builder Program which may be integrated into the parish website (see the following section on Computer Publications & Communication).

In preparing the mailed bulletin, remember that more is not necessarily better. Large bulletins filled with many pages of photocopied material with small print do not attract the eye of the reader. Well-prepared bulletins with meaningful communication from the priest and leaders of the parish serve to inform and educate. Seek individuals from the parish with the skills and training to oversee the various parish publications.

Spiritually uplifting information on our faith and traditions is important and should be offered in an inviting manner and in a length that will encourage the reader to complete the article and seek additional information on their own. Graphics, photographs, charts and even appropriate cartoons will attract the reader's eye, communicate the message and make the bulletin spiritually uplifting and inspiring.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA

Having an online presence is essential for a parish in today's world. Not only are current parishioners looking for information online, but also inactive Orthodox, those moving into the area and inquirers most often find the local Orthodox parish through its website. You will want a site that is going to inspire someone who is sitting in front of the computer to get up and visit your parish. Facebook, Twitter and other social media are being used effectively by many Orthodox Christian parishes.

Equip your parish with the basic computer hardware and software. The Archdiocese Department of Internet Ministries is able to provide free web hosting, email, listserver and web-based event calendars to parishes, saving the parish both time and money. In addition, Internet Ministries is able to provide other services that can be used for

need. Visit the Department of Outreach & Evangelism website for a checklist of items needed.

GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY

As an organization of Orthodox women, and a vital member of the body of the Church, Philoptochos is on the front lines of Outreach & Evangelism, serving the Church and the community wherever a need exists. Their activities serve to revitalize the faith of active Orthodox Christians through meaningful service, education and worship.

The local Philoptochos engages in Outreach & Evangelism, reaching out to assist the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the disabled, the victims of disaster, and to all who need the help of the Church.

A vibrant Philoptochos is an important key to a vibrant parish. Emphasis on the following areas will maintain and build upon the strengths of Philoptochos, inspiring existing members and attracting new members who seek relevant opportunities to serve the Church and the community:

- Knowledge and maturity in the Orthodox Faith, the cornerstone of the Philoptochos organization;
- Philanthropic assistance through evolving methods, both hands-on and by providing financial resources;
- Service as champion and leader in timely Orthodox issues and causes, inspiring others to learn about and uphold the Orthodox Christian Faith;
- Leadership that is able to “discern the spiritual gifts of all those under her authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full for the benefit of all” (St. John Chrysostom).

PUBLICATIONS

Carefully prepare or oversee the preparation of all parish mailings (bulletins, stewardship packets, special letters, notices, etc.). For those who rarely come to church, this will be their impression of the parish, clergy and staff. If the bulletin is poorly written, organized and formatted, the reader will assume that this is the way the parish operates. Our parishioners see professionalism in all other aspects of

cost or for a nominal cost / donation. Appropriate books should be available for sale. If the speaker has published a book, be sure that it, too, is available for sale. Suggest that he/she be available for book signing. Audio or videotape all lectures and keep copies available in the church library. If the guest speaker approves, these audio or videotapes may be sold at cost or as a fund-raiser.

IOCC COUNTRY PROGRAMS IN THE U.S.A.

Our parishioners want their church to provide them with opportunities to serve others. International Orthodox Christian Charities provides various programs to facilitate service to the community. One excellent opportunity is the IOCC Orthodox Homefront Project.

The Homefront project seeks to respond to natural and man-made disasters in the United States through local Orthodox parishes. The goal is to enhance the existing capacity of Orthodox Communities in the U.S. by working cooperatively to respond to disasters.

Contact: Dan Christopoulos 952-930-3286 DChristopoulos@iocc.org.

ECUMENICAL AND MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Be aware of local opportunities for cooperation with Orthodox Christians of other jurisdictions and Christians of other traditions at the grass roots level. These opportunities include food banks, soup kitchens, and social service agencies. Be open to the possibilities for the sharing of resources toward a common goal with Christians of other traditions. A useful resource is the booklet, *Guidelines for Orthodox Christians in Ecumenical Relations*, published by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishop of North and Central America.

Be aware of those special occasions when Christians come together for public prayer, such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January), Thanksgiving, Christmas Fast (Advent), Great Lent, or a special day of prayer called for by a national leader. The intrinsic goodness and power of these services should not be underestimated.

PARISH BOOKSTORE / BOOK TABLE / LITERATURE DISPLAY

The parish bookstore or book table and literature display are an essential tool for parish outreach and evangelism. It is a magnet for visitors interested in learning more about the faith and provide a service to existing parishioners desiring to grow in their knowledge of the faith.

People of growing faith are thirsty for knowledge. There is no shortage of excellent Orthodox Christian materials from a number of sources, including many excellent translations of classic works and many by current Orthodox theologians. These books are available from the Orthodox seminaries in America (Holy Cross Press, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, St. Tikhon's, etc.), from various Archdiocesan Departments (orthodoxmarketplace.com), as well as several excellent independent publishers and distributors (Light and Life, Ancient Faith, etc.). Visit the MINISTRY PROFILES section of the www.outreach.goarch.org site for a step-by-step guide to establishing a parish bookstore. Contact the Department for a list of suppliers and suggestions for ordering.

In conjunction with the parish bookstore, awareness may be raised through book reviews in the Sunday and mailed church bulletin or newsletter, recommendations from the pulpit – especially of books appropriate to the current cycle of worship, and parish book review groups.

Suggestion: Avoid the pitfall of too many ethnic/Greek cultural books. This feeds into the stereotype and alienates non-Greeks, giving the impression that Orthodoxy is an exclusive ethnic club.

THE PARISH FESTIVAL AS OUTREACH

The Parish Festival, by attracting large numbers of individuals to the parish, offers one of the greatest single opportunities for outreach and evangelism. Many people are curious about Orthodox Christianity and will find this a welcome opportunity to learn more about the church which they may pass by each day.

A guest book or visitor card may be used to collect names and addresses of guests in order to keep them informed of future events, such as festivals, book fairs, lectures, visits of hierarchs and dignitaries and more. Narthex/nave doors might remain open so that visitors may experience the beauty and serenity of Orthodox Christian art and architecture.

Church tours that inform visitors about the richness of the Orthodox Tradition, worship and artwork have proven to be excellent opportunities for outreach & evangelism. Volunteers should be well informed and receive guidance from the priest for leading tours of the

parish. The priest may also choose to be present or to lead church tours. A tour outline may be found at <http://www.goarch.org/en/archdiocese/departments/outreach/min-orthodoxchurch.asp>.

Festival visitors could be offered free information about Orthodox Christianity as well as the opportunity to purchase books on the Orthodox beliefs, traditions and practices (see the section on brochure ministry for additional suggestions). All free information should include the parish name, address, telephone number, parish web site and the name of the priest. Brochures and informative literature are available from the Department of Outreach & Evangelism (www.outreach.goarch.org).

Book tables, lectures, choir concerts and more could be combined with the parish festival, each of which is an excellent opportunity for outreach & evangelism.

THE PARISH COUNCIL AND MISSIONARY VISION

Plant seeds of support among members of the parish council for a missionary vision of the parish. Add outreach and evangelism to the agenda of annual planning meetings with the suggestion that the parish begin its commitment with a line item in the budget for outreach & evangelism to Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. This would support the pamphlets available on the visitor's table and in the narthex, and outreach and mission items that may be handed out from time to time to those in attendance at services and events. These funds may also be used to expand your parish mailing list to those who have become inactive. Continue to send inactive Orthodox the parish bulletin or newsletter and notice of special services and events.

Appoint an individual or team to oversee the various missions and outreach activities of the parish. Consider including a line in the budget for the invitation of speakers on designated Sundays.

CLEARINGHOUSE OF LITURGICAL ITEMS

Throughout the Archdiocese there are parishes in need of liturgical items such as censers, chalice sets, baptismal fonts, kouvouklia, and more. There are also many established parishes that have several of these items, some of which are never used. The Department is working with parishes to match up those that have with those that