



Breakout Sessions

At the 2023 Clergy-Laity Assembly, Clergy and Laity came together in breakout sessions to discuss opportunities for Metropolis growth.

The following slides contain recaps of notes, suggestions and feedback taking during the breakout sessions.



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Breakout Sessions

3: EXPAND PHILANTHROPY



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Breakout Sessions

1: DEVELOP CLERGY



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What Needs to be TRUE for our pillar to be successful?

- Reach out to youth and 25-40 age group. Know your people and reach out to them.
- Priests need to be supported so they can primarily be priests and do the things that only the priests can do. Focus more on spiritual things rather than administrative.
- Develop volunteers. Same people are always doing the work. Younger families to invest their time in the parish.
- Need for a cultural shift. Clergy need more time off. Change comes from the laypeople who will enabling the clergy. Stand by the priest. Lay Peers need to promote this culture.



What should we CONTINUE doing?

- Streaming of sermons and the church on-line presence
- Engagement with social media – marketing. Not to let our spiritual life be overcome by the image projection on social media.
- Clergy developing in the spiritual/liturgical life.
- Bringing in Speakers for fresh perspective
- Continuing education.
- Getting feedback as leaders.



What should we START doing?

- Inviting other clergy/speakers, learn from others.
- Asking the priests on what they need. “How can we support you?”
- Understand the various parishes, their size, their needs, and the daily life of the priest. Transparency of understanding what their priest’s life is like.
- Get more priests, more deacons.
- Train Lay Ministers
- Easier logistics for clergy to take vacation/time off.
- Working with priests on mental health, compassion fatigue.
- Continuing education on prayer, boundaries, leadership, stress management.
- Make it easier for people to get involved in ministry.



What should we STOP doing?

- Keeping the status quo.
- Ask too much from our clergy.
- Trying to save money at the expense of developing our clergy.
- Clergy needs time to focus on the important things.



In Closing:

- Pray for your priests.
- Priests are real people working on maintaining healthy marriages.
- Ask the PC to sponsor other parishes, to sponsor priest development.
- Listen to the priests, be spiritual so that the priest can be spiritual.
- Develop more spiritual activities for our youth.
- Equip the priest to work smarter and not harder.



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2: SUPPORT PARISHES



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NEEDS:

- Parishes need to know they are supported.
- Mutual understanding of messages
 - priest/PC/Stewards need to align message

What should we CONTINUE doing?

- Communication and Clarity – disseminate down to local parishes better and more than just email
- Make the message clear and aligned



What should we STOP doing?

- Don't do monthly meetings (stewardship, etc), move to quarterly
- Make the meetings mandatory



What should we START doing?

- Create Metropolis wide seekers/New comers group via zoom
- Combined mission/evangelism/stewardship group
- Paper copies of Metropolis news to elderly
- Liaison (not PC) to metropolis from each person
- Create/share best practices for numerous group- such as PC
- Parishes to apply for grants to help improve visibility
- Directive for top 3 charities/causes – pooling collectively our resources for greater impact
- More inclusivity outside of Chicagoland – Wisc, Iowa, etc
- Breakout sessions for EC turnover every 2 years. Past officers to support new officers (SME support)

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What should we START doing?

- Establish missions in Evangelism, best practices to align with the goal of 1400 new converts to Orthodoxy)
- Transitioning to ushers and greeters – expand to welcoming group
- Address the elderly (separate liaison) at the MC level– no email, send printed material to parishes to distribute
- GOA/MOC – we need to find new ways to communicate. Different ways to different age groups (paper, Instagram, email). Who should communicate and what. Different ways to different groups.



Other Thoughts & Ideas:

- Use a generic email for people to access MC for immediate response (bpa@chicagometropolis.org)
- HE townhalls and Parish liaison
- Director for top 3 charities, Metropolis wide (in addition to project Hope, etc)
- Past PC officers to support new PC officers and maybe a “boot camp”
- Establish purchasing power via Coop



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4: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT



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What should we START/CONTINUE doing?

- More personal Engagement
- Increase Social Media engagement and work on creating more short, shareable, key pieces of information
- Find new ways to share events/programming and updates beyond emails
- Reach out to smaller parishes or those farther away
- Find new ways to help Parishes interact with their surrounding communities

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What should we START/CONTINUE doing?

- Create and share tools for Parishes (Living Water bible study and similar programs)
- Increase awareness of programs and opportunities (Mustard Seed Fund, Strengthen Stewardship Now and Forever, Clergy Assistance etc)
- Explore additional ways that high school aged individuals (and younger) can be more engaged with the Metropolis and their parishes
- Advanced preparation for visits can lead to more press, attendees and engagement



What should we STOP doing?

- Some messaging (ie emails) are currently too long or too frequent
- The Greek language/cultural element of the church can be a barrier to entry
- Chicago Parishes are focused on - smaller/farther parishes feel like they miss out on opportunities or programs that they can't attend due to distance/not learning about them.
- Metropolis currently handles the execution of programming - consider how to standardize them and have parishes execute at their level.



What should we CONTINUE doing?

- Successes: Mustard Seed Fund, Strengthen Stewardship Now and Forever, Project HOPE, the Website, Living Water Productions, and increased transparency in accounting
- Growing the social media presence
- Website is very helpful - find additional ways to guide people to the website
- YouTube/Zoom conversations during covid were very successful, create similar programs
- HEMN is down-to-earth and very approachable - even for young children when visiting parishes
- Youth programming and interactions are really successful
 - Increase the existing Y2AM programming to continue engagement from younger generations

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Extra Thoughts/Ideas:

- Consider a programming/ministries liaison to help share updates and important information
- Consider how we can increase parish to parish communication
- Find ways to have more breakout sessions and opportunities to talk and share ideas.
- Mini CLA's or town-halls between CLA years
- Create & share a Best Practices for Parishes

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5: FUEL GROWTH



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What Needs to be TRUE for our pillar to be successful?

- Centering in spirituality ~ stewardship and tithing
 - Spiritual work at the center
 - Funds are first and foremost Christ's
 - Talk about money as part of our spiritual lives
- Understanding debt and its impact
 - Not all debt irresponsible
 - Getting comfortable with paying the debts of others
 - Understanding how that helps us focus forward
 - Clarity on intention

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What Needs to be TRUE for our pillar to be successful?

- Fundraising and festivals then become more about outreach and philanthropy
 - Welcoming visitors and giving a % of proceeds to charity
- Opportunity comes with financial freedom
- Signs of a healthy church ~ fully funded, active outreach and presence in community
- Recognize debt and focus on tithing
- Recognize some parishes without debt have critical capital needs
 - Equity of support



What Should we CONTINUE doing?

- Building trust and relationships
 - Both within and outside of our community to grow
- Know who we are and increase understanding
 - When we know more, we give more
- Philanthropy and outward acts demonstrate our lives in Christ



What Should we START doing?

- Education on giving
 - From first fruits, not remainder
 - Biblical message
 - Stewardship as an expression of faith ~ trust in God
- Invest in education
- Focus on living authentic lives in Christ
- Programs to increase sustainability
 - Not the same 6 people doing everything
- Ensuring we have infrastructure for growth
 - Equipped to welcome new converts

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What Should we START doing?

- Mindset shift ~ tools on the ground level for sustainability
 - Fund raisers for the extras
- Focus on the spirituality of our people
- Show where the money goes ~ demonstrate the impact
- Grow from a heart of Christ
 - Local philanthropy ~ share what we've been given



What Should we STOP doing?

- Focusing solely on dollars without recognizing spiritual component of giving
- Quantification of goals ~ antithetical to spirituality
 - Don't want to mechanize spirituality
- Reflect on ways we are not being as welcoming ~ language, Greek focus
- Selling old building to build new ~ expand the garden ~ sustainability



New Ideas:

- Need to energize parishes ~ particularly post-COVID
- Ministry Fairs to invite participation and engagement
- Connect personally with young adults and invite their participation
 - *"I see something in you."*
 - Invest emotionally before asking for money
- Focus on a mission mindset ~ so many starving for purpose
- Hellenic Foundation support for philanthropic initiatives
 - Matching support for parish projects

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New Ideas:

- Metropolis is the parishes
 - The presence of Orthodoxy
 - Where people meet the Church
- Be open when people come ~ power of hospitality and welcome
- New growth costs 7x more than retention ~ need to focus/balance both