

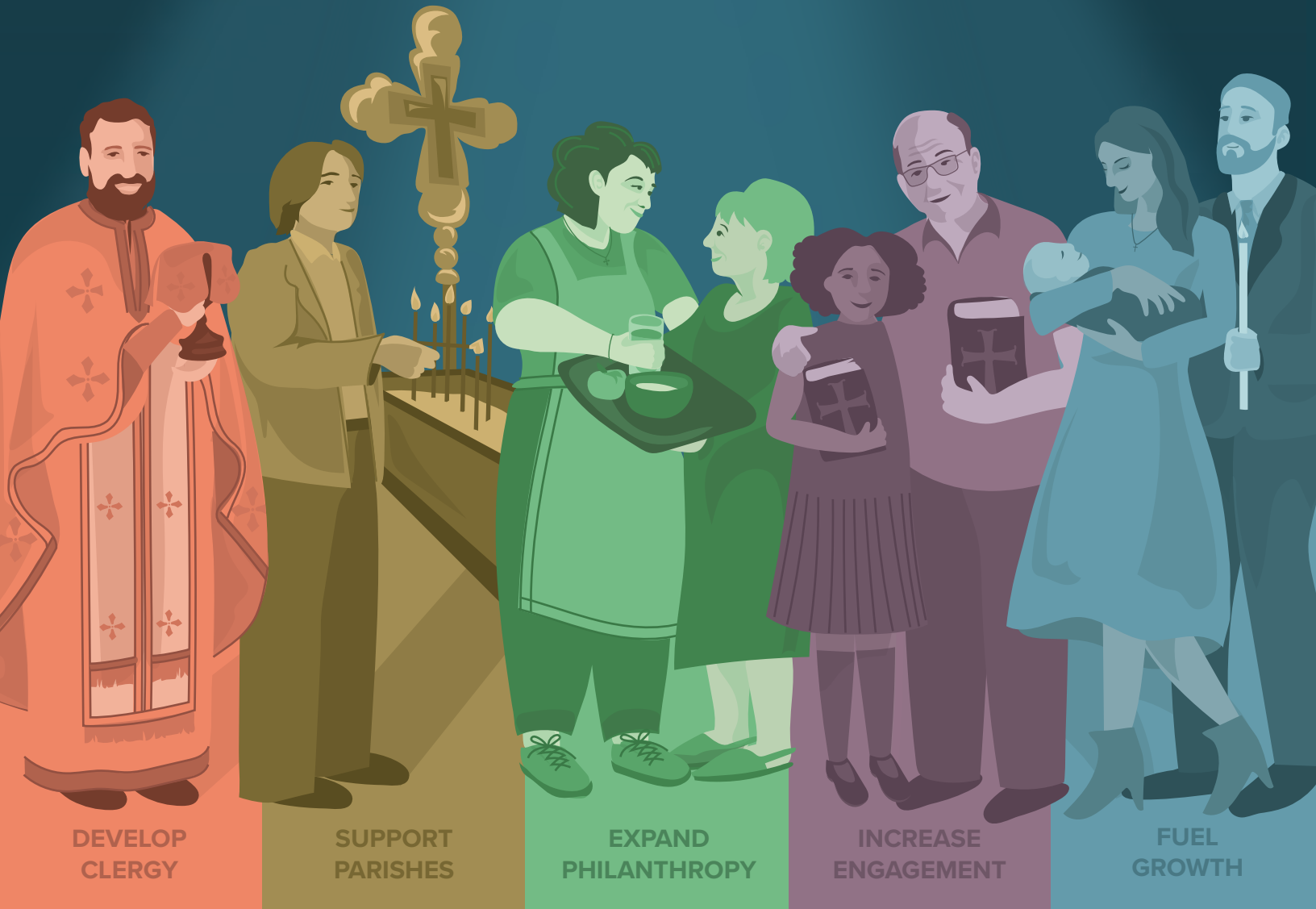


METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO 2023 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

EMBRACING OUR CHRIST-CENTERED VISION

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

John 14:16



2023 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

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THE UNITED FAITHFUL: *Our Parishes*

ILLINOIS

1. All Saints, Joliet
2. All Saints, Peoria
3. Annunciation, Kankakee
4. Annunciation, Decatur
5. Annunciation Cathedral, Chicago
6. Ascension of our Lord, Lincolnshire
7. Assumption, Homer Glen
8. Assumption, Hegewisch
9. Assumption, Chicago
10. Assumption, East Moline
11. Holy Apostles, Westchester
12. Holy Cross, Justice
13. Holy Taxiarchai & St. Haralambos, Niles
14. Holy Trinity, Schiller Park
15. St. Andrew, Chicago
16. St. Anthony, Springfield
17. St. Athanasios, Aurora
18. St. Basil, Chicago
19. St. Demetrios, Libertyville
20. St. Demetrios, Elmhurst
21. St. Demetrios, Chicago
22. St. George, DeKalb
23. St. George, Chicago
24. St. George, Rock Island

25. St. John the Baptist, Des Plaines
26. St. Nectarios, Palatine
27. St. Nicholas, Oak Lawn
28. St. Sophia, Elgin
29. St. Spyridon, Palos Heights
30. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Palos Hills
31. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Rockford
32. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Swansea
33. Sts. Peter & Paul, Glenview
34. Three Hierarchs, Champaign

INDIANA

35. St. Andrew, South Bend
36. St. Demetrios, Hammond
37. St. George, Schererville
38. St. Iakovos, Valparaiso
39. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Merrillville

IOWA

40. Holy Transfiguration, Mason City
41. Holy Trinity, Sioux City
42. St. Demetrios, Waterloo
43. St. Elias the Prophet, Dubuque
44. St. George, Des Moines
45. St. John the Baptist, Cedar Rapids

MINNESOTA

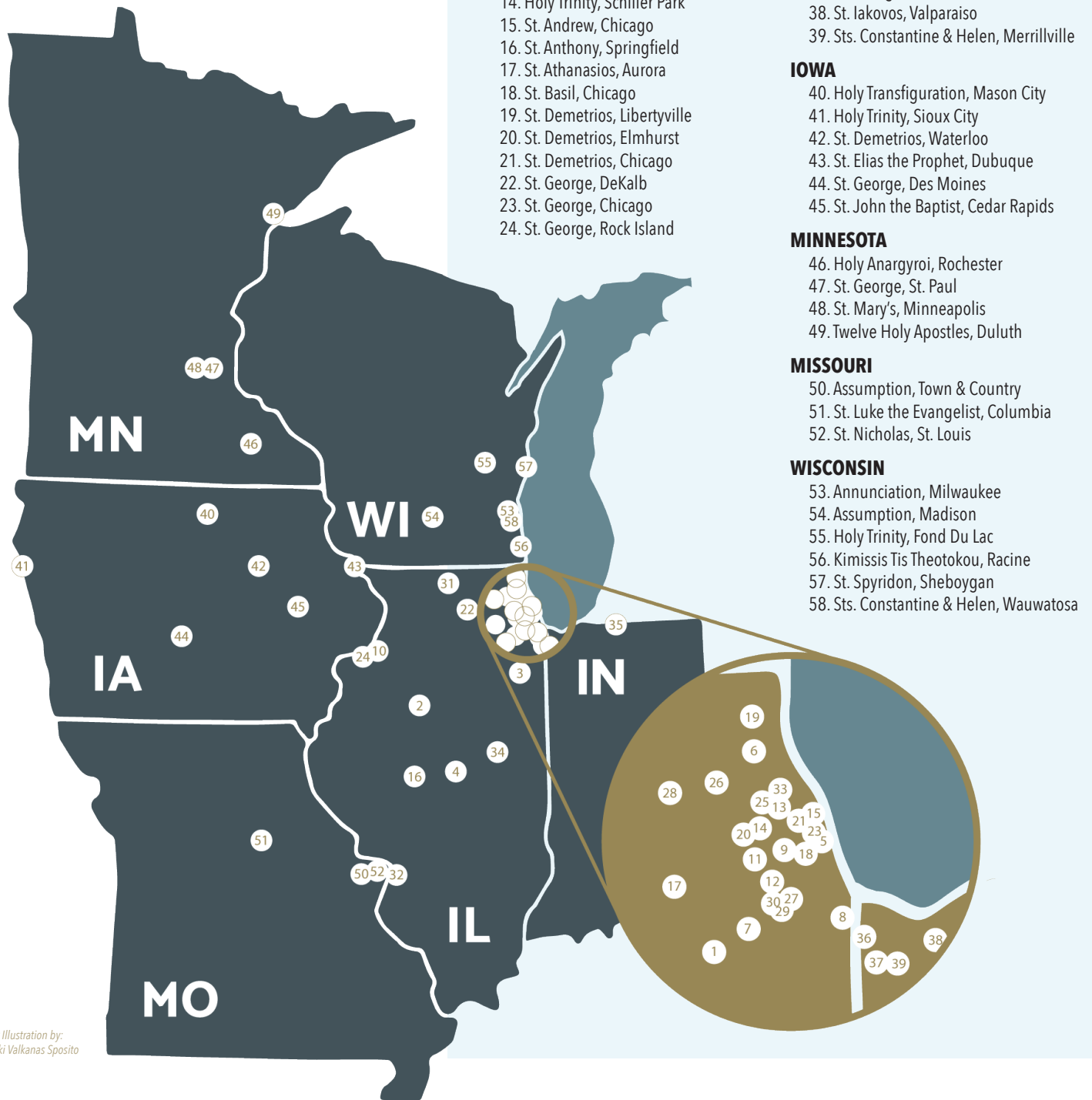
46. Holy Anargyroi, Rochester
47. St. George, St. Paul
48. St. Mary's, Minneapolis
49. Twelve Holy Apostles, Duluth

MISSOURI

50. Assumption, Town & Country
51. St. Luke the Evangelist, Columbia
52. St. Nicholas, St. Louis

WISCONSIN

53. Annunciation, Milwaukee
54. Assumption, Madison
55. Holy Trinity, Fond Du Lac
56. Kimissis Tis Theotokou, Racine
57. St. Spyridon, Sheboygan
58. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Wauwatosa



Cover Illustration by:
Vasiliki Valkanas Sposito



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."*

- John 14:6.

My dear friends and beloved Church family,

After a busy and spiritually fruitful year, I am excited to share with you the **2023 Annual Impact Report** of our Holy Metropolis of Chicago.

Most annual reports outline the previous year's financial health and related activities. Our Annual Impact Report does this, but it is also meant to do much more. Naturally, it's important to share with you the overall sacramental life and financial condition of the Metropolis of Chicago. Equally important, however, is to provide a snapshot of how the Metropolis is impacting our clergy and laity, our parishes and neighborhoods, and our faithful and faith seekers.

For this reason, I'm delighted that our 5-Year Vision for Growth is already being implemented, broadening and deepening our collective impact. Within this report, you'll get a better understanding of how we seek to grow the Church through five key priorities:

1. **Develop our Clergy** into the best spiritual fathers they can be.
2. **Support our Parishes** in their effort to share the Gospel.
3. **Expand our Philanthropy** into new areas across our communities.
4. **Enhance our Engagement** with our faith.
5. **Fuel our Growth** for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

If you'd like to learn how the Metropolis of Chicago is accomplishing these ends, and how it envisions its impact over the long-term, I invite you to read on!

It is my deep-seated belief that, through our work, we will come closer to Christ who offers direction in our lives (the way), reveals something real to us (the truth), and gives us something that is eternal (the life). These are the greatest gifts we can receive ourselves and give to others.

May God continue to grant us the courage to do His work!

With paternal love and esteem in Christ,

+NATHANAEL
Metropolitan of Chicago

THE METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO VISION FOR GROWTH

The Vision for Growth is an expression of what we want as a faith community as well as an understanding of a future that brings out the best in us and others. Through a multitude of conversations over the last two years, including in-depth interviews with several lay leaders, the Metropolis of Chicago formulated a long-term vision statement, what we call our Vision for Growth:

“Unity in Christ cultivates relationships with family, friends, and neighbors—bearing fruit for vibrant communities and a flourishing Church.”



Above all, our vision begins and is grounded in Christ. Through Christ, we are given the ability, language, and desire to share unconditional love with our family, friends, and neighbors. Relationships in Christ become the ties that bind in life, ones that directly and indirectly stabilize and strengthen our communities. When we see ourselves and others in this way, the Church grows in vigor and purpose, allowing us all to come closer to God.

To realize this end state, the Vision for Growth is supported by **five core priorities**:

- **Develop Clergy** so they are servant-leaders who lead by example
- **Support Parishes** to nourish the spiritual growth of the faithful
- **Expand Philanthropy** so our communities are centered by our churches
- **Increase Engagement** with young adults, converts, and faith seekers and encourage them to embrace of our faith
- **Fuel Growth** of parish life by eliminating debt and other liabilities that limit our potential impact

In the pages that follow, you will have the opportunity to see the ways in which the Metropolis of Chicago has already begun to implement the core priorities of our Vision for Growth.



The Metropolis of Chicago's primary focus is to bring the Vision for Growth to life through ministries, programs, services, practices, and prayers throughout 2024 and beyond. If you wish to support the Vision for Growth in some way, **please visit www.chicago.goarch.org/vision**.

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Metropolitan of Chicago



HIS GRACE BISHOP TIMOTHY OF HEXAMILION
Chancellor



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METROPOLITAN NATHANAEL**
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**HIS GRACE BISHOP TIMOTHY
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HARRY SECARAS, ESQ.



PERRY SIATIS, ESQ.

2023 INTERNS

**ELENI DALIANIS
THALIA HOLGUIN
DEAN KAZANTZIS
EMME PIANFETTI**



Images courtesy of Lex Alexander Photography

“ I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Clergy Leadership Accelerator program in 2023. It is helping me to be better organized while setting and accomplishing parish and personal goals. It also cultivates a deeper sense of unity and collaboration among my fellow clergy in the cohort.

One of the big projects it helped me accomplish was an initial presentation to the whole clergy syndesmos about stress and burnout in ministry.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Multi-Source Feedback Process (MSFP), which is beginning early in 2024, that will foster constructive input from a broad base of parish leaders and clergy. It will help me tremendously in leveraging my strengths to cultivate growth in all areas of leadership.

God bless you!



+Rev. Fr. Richard "Rick" Demetrius Andrews, Protopresbyter Saints Peter and Paul Glenview, Illinois

HIGHER CALLING: EMPOWERING PRIESTS FOR PURPOSEFUL MINISTRY

We are all very familiar with Saint Paul's quote in his Epistle to the people of Corinth: *"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"* (II Corinthians 9:7). In fact, our priests are cheerful givers. They give from the heart because they yearn for Christ. And it is largely through this giving spirit that so many of the spiritual lives of countless laypeople are sustained.

Being there for his flock in mind, body, and soul means everything to a priest. But our priests must also be supported in their needs, as well as encouraged to do better through opportunities to grow. This is precisely why the Metropolis of Chicago's *Higher Calling* program was created.

Through *Higher Calling*, our priests are afforded the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their sacred roles, support their congregations, and have a positive impact on the communities in which they live and minister. To achieve this, the Metropolis is creating and implementing several programs that ensure our priests continue to be the best spiritual fathers they can be. The Metropolis of Chicago aims to achieve this by supporting our priests in each of their roles as husbands, fa-

thers, citizens, and servants of God.

Higher Calling has been in existence for one year as of this writing and we are proud of what we've been able to accomplish in that time. I invite you to learn more about what we've done and, specifically, how you can support your priests' participation in these programs.

Fundamental to the success of *Higher Calling* is the promotion of self-care and well-being for our priests, including how to manage stress, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and seek support when needed. We also ask for their commitment to ethical conduct, integrity, and compassionate service so others are inspired to be positive influences within the communities in which they live.

From a distance, *Higher Calling* may appear as business between the Metropolis and its priests. It is so much more than that. These programs, along with the intention and importance placed behind them, exist to reflect and acknowledge the sacrificial duty that our priests freely and joyfully deliver every day. My continued prayers are that the faithful of the Metropolis do God's work to support our priests, as our priests do God's work to bring the faithful closer to Christ.

In Christ's love,

 + Bishop Timothy of Hexamilion
 Chancellor, Holy Metropolis of Chicago

SPOTLIGHT: HIGHER CALLING PROGRAM DETAILS

CLERGY SERMON RETREAT

With its inaugural session held over the summer of 2023, the **Clergy Sermon Retreat** was created to help good preachers become great preachers. The sermon retreat was the direct result of a survey of 750 parishioners seeking to understand what they found most meaningful in the liturgical experience.

Twenty priests came together for two day-long sessions that focused on strategies for strengthening sermon preparation emphasizing an approach that integrates preaching with an ongoing spiritual life. Participants also explored the biblical and rhetorical foundations for effective preaching and learned methods for soliciting quality feedback so sermons may have a meaningful impact.

Keep an eye out for information on the 2024 Clergy Sermon Retreat at:

chicago.goarch.org/clergysermonretreat

LEADERSHIP TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Two structured leadership programs were offered in 2023. These customized programs were designed to develop and enhance leadership qualities in our Priests. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge, 360 feedback, practical exercises and experiential learning, participants in the **Advanced Leadership courses** were exposed to various concepts, strategies and techniques related to effective leadership.

Both courses helped our priests become more effective and impactful leaders in their personal and professional lives. The training provided them with the necessary skills, knowledge and mindset to support their parish, their peers and their community by teaching them how to navigate challenges, inspire others and achieve goals.

CONTINUING EDUCATION & MINISTERIAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS

In support of the Vision for Growth core priority, Develop Clergy, the Metropolis of Chicago implemented a Professional Development Tuition Assistance program as well as Educational Tuition Programs.

The Professional Development/Tuition Assistance Program was created in order to promote self-development and education efforts of our clergymen by providing reimbursements for many of the expenses associated with continuing education courses. The program is open to all full-time clergy of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago who

are pursuing a degree or taking individual courses at approved/accredited institutions provided that the course of study is related to the priest's current parish or a possible future assignment.

The Educational/Tuition Assistance Program reimburses Metropolis of Chicago priests up to a maximum of \$10,000 per year for a degreed program or \$1,500 for non-degreed continuing education through an accredited program that offers growth in an area related to his current assignment or that may lead to new opportunities.

Learn more: chicago.goarch.org/tuition-assistance

** Higher Calling Program descriptions do not include all eligibility requirements or criteria. See full program scope/policies for details.

“ I am grateful to His Eminence and to the Holy Metropolis of Chicago for offering me the opportunity to participate in Leadership training. This has allowed me to learn how to work more effectively and to be more productive. As I was able to learn ways to better communicate with tools that allowed me to hold myself accountable, I quickly noticed that it was contagious to my coworkers.

Most importantly, these new skills have helped me to focus more on my own spiritual life and on the spiritual life of the parish.”



+ Rev. Father
Chrysanthos
Kerkeres
St. George,
Chicago, IL

“ My ongoing education has helped me become a more confident and well-rounded leader. There are many skills and experiences I've gained that help with not only the day-to-day life of our parish, but also improve forming long term vision and direction. I'm grateful to be able to learn in this capacity with the world-class faculty and resources. I'm looking forward to finishing my degree and offering it to the Church in whatever ways I can.”

+ Fr. John Tsikalas pursuing Master of Nonprofit Administration from Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame
St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church,
South Bend, IN



SUPPORT PARISHES

PARISH SPOTLIGHT: Holy Trinity

On December 20, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church received the Hierarchical dedication and blessing of its new location in Schiller Park. Nearly five years after the foreclosure and bankruptcy proceedings of their previous location, the parish has found its new spiritual home. Clergy and lay leaders of the Metropolis of Chicago were present to celebrate with the Holy Trinity parish.

Joining **His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael** in celebration were **His Eminence Cardinal Cupich** of the Archdiocese of Chicago, **Fr. Robert Schultz** of St. Beatrice Catholic Church, Mayor and Village President of Schiller Park **Mr. Nick Caiafa**, Schiller Park Director of Police **Mr. Thomas Fragakis**, **His Grace Bishop Timothy** of Hexamilion, **Archdeacon Vasilios Smith**, and many community members.

[Watch the recap video >>](#)



Images courtesy of Frederiksen Film



AN INTERVIEW WITH STRENGTHEN STEWARDSHIP NOW & FOREVER

The Metropolis of Chicago's *Strengthen Stewardship Now and Forever (SSNF)* program is comprised of a team of parish leaders including: **Owen Field**, **Dr. Alexandria Kalina**, **Myra Karegianes**, **Dimitris Katsamberis**, **Perry Siatis**, and **Fr. Luke Melackrinos**. The Metropolis asked the SSNF team about their work with parishes to create healthy stewardship ministries. Here is what they had to say.

QUESTION: Why should parishes be interested in SSNF?

ANSWER: Put simply, SSNF is about creating more stable and certain conditions for our faith to grow and thrive. We do this by using extensive research on stewardship best practices across faith traditions. Parishes that have implemented these best practices have grown in size and impact and have become less reliant on transactional events (e.g., summer fests).

Q: What are you most proud of with SSNF?

A: Many examples are ones where parishioners feel a deep sense of belonging and, with it, a personal sense of responsibility for their church. Most significantly, parishes who focus on welcoming, engagement, and philanthropy, as SSNF calls for, have seen increases in the number of stewards as well as stewardship giving.



METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO TO PERMANENTLY SUPPORT THE MUSTARD SEED FUND

Since 2022, the Mustard Seed Fund has been supporting parishes to test and scale promising endeavors that inspire and motivate a new generation of Orthodox Christians to participate in the Church.

Microgrants are awarded to develop and implement new or existing parish-level initiatives that advance **evangelism, welcoming and outreach**. The Metropolis of Chicago is pleased to have supported many of the creative proposals that it has received. In 2022-2023, \$37,500 was awarded to 9 parishes to fund initiatives.

Based on the strong, sustained interest throughout the Metropolis of Chicago, we are thrilled to announce that **10 percent of all**

funds raised through the Annual Vision Campaign will be devoted to supporting the Mustard Seed Fund and Project HOPE, our food security and housing assistance ministry.

While the Metropolis of Chicago maintains a broad range of invaluable ministries, the Mustard Seed Fund and Project HOPE are two of our most dynamic ministries with the potential to have the greatest impact in our communities.

To learn more about the Mustard Seed fund, how to support the program, or to submit a grant application, please visit chicago.goarch.org/mustard-seed.

Applications for the current grant cycle are due by August 1, 2024.

MUSTARD SEED FUND 2022-2023 Recipients



Annunciation, Milwaukee, WI

Outreach program for impoverished areas of Greater Milwaukee

Annunciation, Kankakee, IL

Church-based community theater troupe

St. Athanasios, Aurora, IL

Expansion of men's group ministry

St. Basil, Chicago, IL

Expansion of prison ministry

Sts. Constantine & Helen, Swansea, IL

"Spring Back to Church" outreach program

St. George, Chicago, IL

Bicycle repair class to help impoverished residents of the Chicagoland area with their transportation needs

St. George, St. Paul MN

Inter-Orthodox shared catechism program

St. George, Schererville, IN

Byzantine music youth group for girls and boys (featured in image, above)

St. Luke the Evangelist, Columbia, MO

Billboard to raise awareness of Orthodox Church

Q: Does SSNF support the Vision for Growth core priority, "Support Parishes"?

A: Definitely! In one sense, stewardship is parish ministry. But in a broader sense, stewardship is a foundational endeavor that supports all other parish ministries, services, and functions. If SSNF is done well, stewardship fades in the background and operates quietly while a parish demonstrates its support of and service to its faithful as well as to the broader community.

Q: What is the best piece of advice you'd give to a parish that is thinking about reinvigorating its stewardship?

A: Just do it! No stewardship program should be static - look for ways to reinvigorate it. Start with the heart. Work to engage more people. Look outside of your parish. Reach out to other parishes and share ideas, approaches, and - yes - frustrations. Every parish has something to offer another parish. And, remember, the SSNF team is always here to support you!

Q: What would you tell a parish that may not have the time or people to implement SSNF?

A: No program is implemented in its entirety on Day One. Be patient. Take small, successive steps. Find parishioners with an interest in growing the parish. They are out there waiting to be asked to get involved! Set modest, incremental, achievable goals. Be positive. Reach out to the SSNF team for help.

EXPAND PHILANTHROPY

SPOTLIGHT: Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos

COMPILED BY MARILYN TZAKIS, *Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos President 2019-2023*

The Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos has been busy this year! Here are just a few examples of their incredible philanthropic impact in 2023.



1. FEED THE HUNGRY PROGRAM

The Feed the Hungry Program at Annunciation Cathedral, Chicago is held weekly - this year they served over 6,200 meals! More than 26 Philoptochos Chapters participate in the Program and work with multiple organizations or individuals to sponsor hot meals. Overall, the chapters served over 300,000 meals in 2023 to various local food banks, shelters, and their parishes.

2. BLANKETS FOR BABIES

The Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos Annual Quilt-A-Thon became Blankets for Babies, hosted by Sts. Peter & Paul's Philoptochos and Youth Ministry. Many chapters hosted mini blanket-making events. The blankets help children get through treatments and surgeries and become a cherished possession for those that receive them. This year, 250 blankets were delivered to the University of Illinois Pediatric unit and local shelters in DeKalb, Illinois and in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

3. DRESS-A-GIRL AROUND THE WORLD

The event brings together Philoptochos sisters from around the Metropolis to create dresses

and pants for children in India, Kenya, and the Dominican Republic. The 2023 event was hosted by St. Basil, Chicago IL - 52 dresses and 22 pairs of pants were created and distributed as a result of their efforts.

4. NEW! KIDS HELPING KIDS

The parish of St. Mary's, Minneapolis, was invited to support Gloria's Place, the only emergency shelter in MN specifically for unaccompanied, pregnant or parenting youth (ages 15-17) and their young children, up to 3 years old, who are experiencing homelessness. Gloria's Place is a program of The Bridge for Youth.

5. ANNUAL COAT DRIVE

350 coats were collected at the 2023 St. John the Baptist, Des Plaines, IL Annual Coat Drive. All recipients were also given a bag of groceries.

6. ERNESTINE'S DAUGHTER

The Philoptochos chapter of St. Andrew Chicago donated bath towels, wash cloths, soaps, lotions, and over 300 pairs of Bombas socks to "Ernestine's Daughter" an organization helping women who have experienced violence, sexual abuse, or are survivors of human trafficking.

7. TOYS FOR TOTS

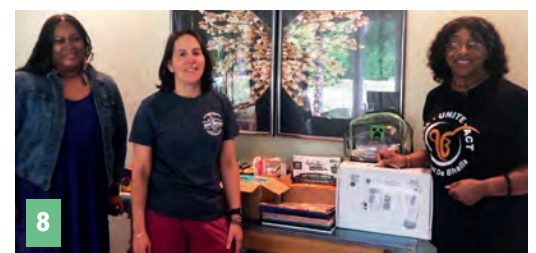
As part of the Metropolis Community Christmas Celebration, 25 "Santa Bags" of donated toys were displayed as centerpieces and later given to the Lombard Fire Department for their Toys for Tots Drive to bring joy on Christmas Day!

8. OPERATION CLASSROOM

The Philoptochos Chapter of Annunciation, Milwaukee, WI, gathered school supplies for over 50 needy students who attend Refugee Fellowship Church Ministries. Many chapters throughout the Metropolis participate in this National Initiative. In 2023, over 5000 laptops, 10,300 toiletries, and 11,400 socks and underwear were donated - impacting over 2200 students.

METROPOLIS PHILOPTOCHOS PHILANTHROPY FUND

The Metropolis Philoptochos Philanthropy fund, in partnership with the Hellenic Foundation and National Social Services Fund gave over \$71,000 in assistance towards rent, temporary housing, utilities, medical bills, and more. As of 2023, over \$400,000 in financial assistance has been given by the collective chapters fulfilling our mission.





EXPAND PHILANTHROPY



PROJECT HOPE SURPASSES ONE MILLION MEALS SERVED TO THE POOR AND VULNERABLE OF THE CHICAGO AREA

YANNI SIANIS, *Member of the METROPOLIS COUNCIL and Chair, PROJECT HOPE*

Project HOPE first began to serve people in need in January 2020. At that time, no one could have imagined that a global pandemic would change the world as we knew it. Needless to say, the future became extremely uncertain for our mission to support and care for the poor and vulnerable.

It is with faith in Christ and great gratitude that I can say Project HOPE has made a substantial impact since we first began. We were able to make a difference because we never forgot what we stand for and who we serve. As a result, we achieved a great milestone in November 2023: **delivering one million meals to people in need across the Chicago area.**

Project HOPE couldn't have achieved this milestone on its own. It needed the compassionate giving, the selfless spirit, and the desire to always do better that exists deeply in our volunteers, partners, and supporters. It is only through them that Project HOPE can say that we operate efficiently, have expanded our reach, and truly

make a difference in the lives of people we touch.

Looking ahead, Project HOPE has big dreams. In 2024, we will join forces with the **Chicago Department of Family and Support Services** to support its **Meals on Wheels program** for eligible senior citizens. We will continue to partner with **Rush University Medical Center** to find new and creative ways to address the persistent problem of food deserts in Chicago. We also plan to do more with **North Side Housing and Supportive Services**, where we've already underwritten more than 3,000 nights of housing for homeless residents seeking safety, mental health counseling, addiction services, and job placement.

Project HOPE relies on *people* -- we are extremely grateful for all the volunteers who have given their time, talents, and support towards fulfilling our mission. With additional support from the Annual Vision Campaign funds, there is no limit to what we can accomplish or the good that we can do.



By the end of December 2023, Project HOPE has reached the following achievements:

1,300,000 MEALS

Completed meal kits with shelf stable food items provided via boxes/bags

3,000 NIGHTS

Shelter provided through Northside Housing & Supportive Services

12,500 KITS

Winter accessories and other basic care necessities

Learn More:





Image courtesy of Frederiksen Film

WHO DO WE ENGAGE?

*"There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ. We were all baptized by one Holy Spirit. And so we are formed into one body."
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-13*

Just as the body has many parts, society also has many segments. All of these are important to the Metropolis of Chicago, which aims to bring meaning, purpose, and belonging to all sectors of society. This is achieved through our engagement ministries that reach a wide range of people.

Historically, the Metropolis of Chicago has taken a keen interest in cultivating the faith of youth and young adults, but we also engage the elderly, families, new converts, faith seekers, and the poor and vulnerable, among others.

The Metropolis of Chicago and the Archdiocese of America maintain and support several ministries and programs that speak to the needs and concerns of our faithful and faith seekers.

Here are just a few to explore:

INFANTS & YOUTH: Altar Servers | Fanari | Sunday school | Greek school | GOYA

YOUNG ADULTS: Lighthouse Camp | Young Adult League (YAL)

ADULTS AND SENIORS: Family Synaxis | Orthodox Roots | Mission Team Chicago

POOR AND VULNERABLE: Philoptochos | TEAM Belong | Project HOPE | Philoxenia House

ORTHODOX CONVERTS: Conversations with Converts

Together with religious education, philanthropy and outreach, our engagement ministries seek to deepen the faith and enrich the spiritual lives of participants. For a full list of all Metropolis of Chicago ministries, see pages 18-20.

INTERVIEW: Pilgrimage of Discovery with Hellena Chrones

One of the most bold and imaginative endeavors in the Archdiocese of America is the Pilgrimage of Discovery, which was first conceived, developed, and implemented in the Metropolis of Chicago. We asked co-chairs and faith leaders, **Hellena** and **Jeff Chrones**, to describe their work and its potential for young adults across the nation.



QUESTION: What is the Pilgrimage of Discovery (POD)?

ANSWER: POD is a seven-day, all-expenses paid, religious and cultural journey to Constantinople awarded to Greek Orthodox young adults across the United States. We offer a highly curated experience that allows participants to explore religious sites; visit historic places; and learn more about their faith. The trip culminates in a once-in-a-lifetime, private audience with His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Q: How did you come up with the idea for POD?

A: Originally, in 2019, POD began as an idea for a film about the Patriarchate. After much reflection and many discussions with Metropolis of Chicago Archon Regional Commanders Gus Pablecas and John Manos, we envisioned a program for Greek Orthodox Christian young adults modeled after Birthright Israel, the immensely successful 2-week heritage trip to Israel open to all Jewish young adults. After seeing the promise and potential, we excitedly got to work. In 2023, we were truly blessed to send our first 5 young adults from the Metropolis of Chicago to Constantinople.



Y2AM: A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY FOR YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

Youth and Young Adults are a key focus of initiatives to increase engagement for all who embrace the Greek Orthodox Faith. Our Youth and Young Adult Ministries (Y2AM) provide programs that offer safe and supportive environments for young people to explore and grow in their faith. Spiritual growth, community building, personal development, outreach, and evangelism are some of the benefits of our various youth programs.

In 2023, Y2AM continued to reach thousands of young people - from elementary school through young adulthood. In addition to their Fall and Winter camps, Fanari camp hosted 5 week-long sessions of summer camp that allowed hundreds of children to connect with peers who share their values and beliefs, and form relationships that can support them through life's challenges.

Some of the biggest successes of the year in-

cluded: the 2023 Junior Olympics where 1450 youth athletes representing 28 parishes competed in individual and team sports; and the Annual YAL Chicago Conference where nearly 500 young adults from over 30 states (and 2 Canadian Provinces) engaged in worship through Divine Liturgy, faith-focused talks and presentations, evening events, and a service activity with Project HOPE.

Making sure our young people feel at home in the church is particularly important as they go through their formative years and try to understand their identity and beliefs. Father Luke Melackrinis, Director of Programs and Ministries, believes these programs "play a crucial role in assisting young people in facing the challenges of growing up, strengthening their faith and relationship with Christ, and developing important life skills and values that will benefit them in adulthood."

“ YAL (the Young Adults League) is important to me because creating a secure community for our young adults, provides them with the space to discover and establish their identity within the context of Orthodox Christianity. Young adults undergo numerous changes and often feel pressured to have everything figured out. Bringing our young adults together reassures them that they are not alone -- and this sense of connection contributes to fostering their spiritual growth.

We've witnessed incredible growth in participation over the years, with thousands of energetic individuals coming together for a myriad of events. These connections extend far beyond the initial gatherings, evolving into lifelong friendships and relationships. ”

Evalina Bournias
YAL Chicago Conference Co-Chair

Q: What impact do you see POD having today on our young adults?

A: Our fundamental desire is to strengthen the faith of young adults, connect them with their religious ancestral roots, and bolster the Orthodox faith in the U.S.

We hope to instill in participants a sense of religious "πατρικό σπίτι" so they experience Constantinople in the same way they do their own "family home" with all the love and meaning associated with it. We also hope to cultivate future leaders of the Church by offering this transformative experience.

Q: What are your long-term goals for POD?

A: In the long-term, we envision a program that is seen as a kind of rite of passage for Greek Orthodox Christian young adults—one that they look forward to, experience fully, and is present in their decisions and relationships throughout life.

We also look forward to the day when as many young adults as possible are afforded this opportunity without the need to go through an application and selection process.

Q: As people of faith, what does POD mean to you?

A: We feel truly blessed and humbled to know so many brothers and sisters in Christ across the Metropolis of Chicago share our hopes for the future and are willing to work hard to realize them. Additionally, we see POD as an opportunity to edify our young adults of their ancestral religious roots and inspire them to become the future leaders of the Church. If you feel as strongly as we do, please follow us on our Instagram and Facebook pages and visit and consider making a donation via our website pilgrimageofdiscovery.org.

2023 SACRAMENTAL SNAPSHOT

DN. ANTONIOS CALASH, *Metropolis Registrar*

In last year's Annual Impact Report, data from 2022 indicated a decrease in the number of sacraments performed at our parishes compared to 2021. Some of this decline was expected, as the 2021 numbers were artificially high due to sacraments postponed due to the global pandemic in 2020. A more accurate understanding is seen in the simple moving averages ("SMA") over the past three- and five-year periods in each sacramental category. The SMAs show one to two percent decreases in all sacraments over those time periods.

In 2023, there was a slight increase in baptisms, adult baptisms, and chrismations, while weddings and funerals saw a slight decrease. The differential between baptisms and funerals is used as a basic estimate of parish growth, with the number of baptisms exceeding funerals up until 2019, indicating healthy growth in sacramental life. However, in 2020, the differential flipped, with more funerals than baptisms, and this trend continued in 2021 and 2022. This year, the number of baptisms is higher than funerals, signaling

momentary but hopeful growth. It is also worth mentioning the steady triple-digit number of chrismations over the past three years.

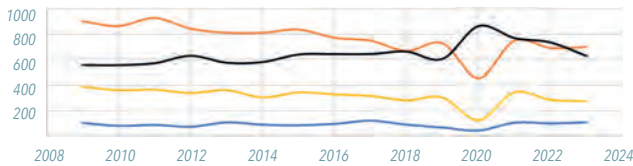
The sacramental health trendlines over the last 15 years were a primary influence behind His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael's Vision for Growth. The Metropolis of Chicago believes strongly that, by getting back to the basics and addressing five indispensable needs of the Church – developing priests into servant leaders; enhancing sacramental and spiritual life of parishes; encouraging heartfelt giving; engaging with youth, young adults, converts, and faith seekers more intentionally; and ultimately, growing our parishes and our faithful – we will positively impact the sacramental health of the Church in the Midwest.

The Metropolis of Chicago invites all clergy and laypeople to dialogue about our long-term sacramental health and also welcomes their participation in realizing the aspirations of the Vision for Growth.

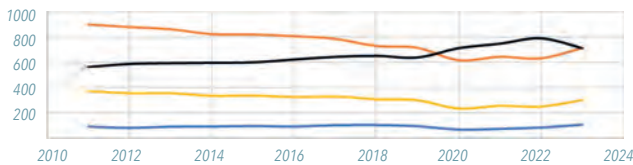
About the Annual Sacramental Health Snapshot

The Annual Sacramental Health Snapshot was developed by the Metropolis of Chicago to provide clergy and laypeople with a big picture understanding of the incidence and practice of the sacraments of Orthodox Christianity. Though there are many measures of the health and vitality of the Church, the Metropolis of Chicago focuses on the practice and prevalence of the seven sacraments given that they reveal God to us, make us more receptive to Him, and affect our relationships with each other.

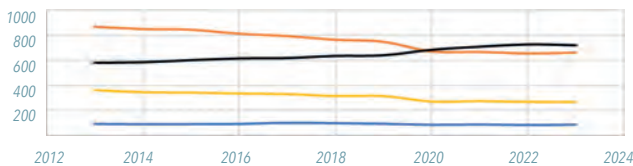
SACRAMENTS
2009 - 2023



3-YEAR SIMPLE MOVING AVERAGE
2009 - 2023



5-YEAR SIMPLE MOVING AVERAGE
2009 - 2023



— BAPTISM — CHRISMATION — WEDDINGS — FUNERALS

METROPOLIS DATA
2009 - 2023

YEAR	BAPTISM	ADULT BAPTISM	CHRISMATION	WEDDINGS	FUNERALS
2009	901		105	387	558
2010	864		81	361	557
2011	928		89	365	572
2012	843		74	339	630
2013	811		109	361	576
2014	811		91	304	581
2015	836		86	344	640
2016	771		97	328	643
2017	748		123	315	644
2018	667		91	281	663
2019*	728	48	68	303	606
2020	455	31	44	123	863
2021*	748	43	107	344	769
2022*	692	52	101	285	735
2023**	696	63	110	274	629

* Updated from the previous published

**Sacraments for the following churches are included in the records and still subject to an internal audit: Assumption, Chicago, IL; Holy Cross, Justice, IL; Holy Trinity, Schiller Park, IL; St. Nicholas, Oak Lawn, IL; SS. Constantine & Helen, Rockford, IL; St. George, Schererville, IN; Holy Trinity, Sioux City IA; and St. George, St. Paul, MN.

2023 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

TOM SIKORAL and PETER COULES, *Metropolis Co-Treasurers*

In 2023, the Metropolis of Chicago maintained its streak of solid financial performance, a testament to its commitment to financial discipline, robust internal controls, and vigilant transaction oversight. Throughout the year, the Metropolis received \$378,000 in un-restricted donations, earmarked to support strategic initiatives such as clergy and lay leadership development, religious education, and philanthropic outreach.

Continuing a trend that spans across six consecutive years, the Metropolis achieved an unrestricted operating surplus, bolstered by prudent expense management and generous contributions from individual donors. This surplus, coupled with the growth of unrestricted cash and investments, positions the Metropolis favorably to sustain and expand its programs and ministries in the future.

Notably, investments in short-term insured certificates of deposits yielded interest for the "Burton Place Funds," amounting to \$134,000, further enhancing the Metropolis's financial stability and capacity to fulfill its mission effectively. As a result of decisions made at the 2019 and

2023 Clergy-Laiety Assemblies, proceeds from interest are restricted and cannot be used to fund programs or operations.

Further, the Metropolis received an unmodified "clean audit" in 2023 from an independent audit firm, making it the fourth year in a row that the Metropolis has earned an un-modified opinion of its financial statements.

Finally, as the result of a vote by delegates at the 2023 Clergy-Laiety Assembly, the Metropolis has shifted to functional budgeting as an accounting method. Put simply, functional budgeting is a way of organizing budgets around specific "functional" areas of the Metropolis (i.e., ministries, payroll, events, etc.). As a result, Metropolis finances gain more clarity and transparency, and strategic goals are able to be better supported through ongoing planning and resource management.

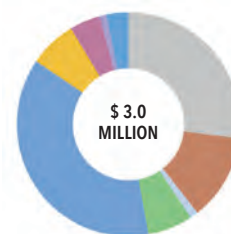
All of these outcomes did not happen randomly or by chance. They are the result of a series of decisions - including an enhanced delegation of legal and financial authority, an annualized independent audit process, the publishing of

Metropolis budgets, among others - has paved the way for Metropolis finances to be responsive and accountable to the needs, concerns, and expectations of our clergy and laity. While there is more we'd like to accomplish, these decisions have been fundamental, not only for long-term financial health, but for a Church that people want to belong to and is growing in Christ.

[View Clean Audit Opinion for 2022 Consolidated Financial Statements >>](#)

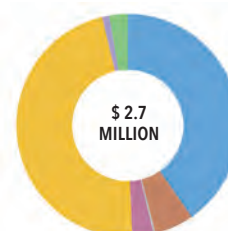


2023 REVENUES BY FUNCTION



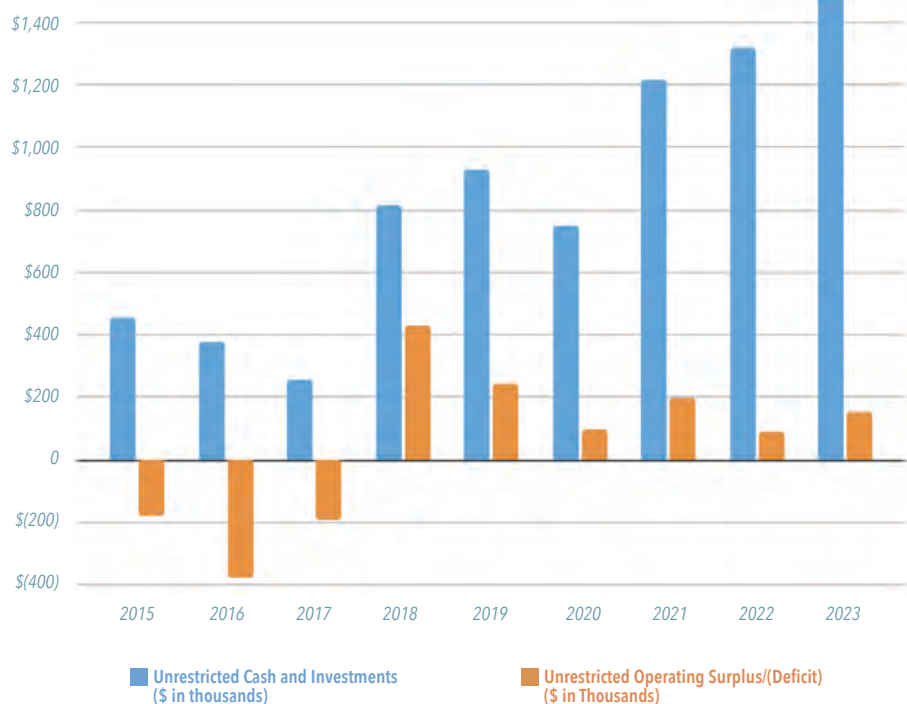
Youth Ministry and Clergy	37%
National Ministry	27%
General Donations	12%
Clergy-Laiety Assembly	7%
Registry and Other	7%
Purpose Restricted Fund Interest	4%
Purpose Restricted Donations	3%
Donor Restricted Donations	1%
Fundraisers	1%

2023 EXPENSES BY FUNCTION



Youth Min. & Clergy Dev. Expenses	47%
Operating Expenses	40%
Clergy-Laiety Assembly	6%
Other Ministries and Programs	3%
Purpose Restricted Distributions	3%
Donor Restricted Distributions	1%
Fundraising Expenses	0%

UNRESTRICTED CASH AND INVESTMENTS AND OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) 2015-2023



The outer ring of the Vision for Growth flywheel focuses on relationships:

- Familiar Relationships** that you wish to enhance
- Expanded Relationships** that you wish to foster and
- Fruits of Relationships** that you wish to enjoy

When introducing the Vision for Growth at the 2023 Clergy-Laity Assembly, His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael explained, "Centered in Christ, every one of our relationships take on a new and profound meaning and purpose. The giving and receiving of Christ's love through our relationships—with our family, with our friends, with our neighbors, with our colleagues, and with our churches—is fundamentally what successful Church life looks like."



**COMMUNITY VOICE:
Creating Connections**

Throughout the year, community members have shared memories of their participation in Metropolis or parish events, programs and volunteer efforts. These activities embody the Metropolis of Chicago Vision for Growth as people strengthen their relationships to their parishes and larger communities.

[View the full album >>](#)

Submit your photos:
chicago.goarch.org/photos





IMAGES:

1. Friendships are made through dance at the Assumption, Town & Country dance program. Some members have been performing since age 5! Submitted by Stella Afentoullis of Assumption, Town & Country, MO

2. Members of the church and larger Dubuque community have lunch together following the St. Elias Annual Crop Walk which raises funds to end hunger. Submitted by Mantea Schmid of Saint Elias the Prophet, Dubuque, IA

3. Altar boys come together at the Parish Altar Boy Guild. Submitted by Jacob Cash Baffes of Saints Constantine and Helen, Palos Hills, IL

4. Children learn the importance of outreach and philanthropy as they make salt-dough ornaments for the Homeless Shelter during the holiday season. Submitted by Presv. Evangelia March of Holy Transfiguration, Mason City, IA. Photo Credit, Fr. Nicholas March

5. Hundreds come together for Greekfest! Submitted By Matthew Stankowicz, Saint Nectarios, Palatine, IL

6. Members of the St. Athanasios community take a pilgrimage to the St. John Chrysostomos Monastery in Pleasant Prairie, WI. Submitted by Michael Koulos of Saint Athanasios, Aurora, IL. Photo Credit, John Mamalakis

7. Volunteers at Holy Trinity after rolling close to 1,000 koulourakia! Submitted By Leah Brockway, of Holy Trinity, Sioux City, IA. Photo Credit, Mary Baryo

8. The philanthropic spirit is strong at the "Filoxenia Food Pack" event where members of Sts. Constantine and Helen, Assumption Homer Glen, St Spyridon, Holy Cross and St. Nicks came together to pack food for local community members in need. Submitted by Elizabeth Christofylakis of Saints Constantine and Helen, Palos Hills, IL. Photo Credit, George Lattas

9. The adult session of the Annunciation Orthodox Life at one of their weekly meetings. Submitted by Sarah Kojis, Annunciation, Milwaukee, WI

10. People of all ages come together to dance at the Taste of Greece Festival. Submitted by Fr. Dustin Lyon of Twelve Holy Apostles, Duluth, MN



THE 2023 CLERGY-LAITY ASSEMBLY

The 2023 Metropolis of Chicago Clergy-Laity Assembly, held from October 12-13, exemplified the significance of building relationships in Christ. More than 300 attendees including clergy, laity, and friends of the Metropolis united to nurture existing relationships and foster new ones – and we are already witnessing the positive outcomes of their collaboration.

The assembly commenced with His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael's new Vision for Growth supported by 5 core priorities: Develop Clergy, Support Parishes, Expand Philanthropy, Increase Engagement, and Fuel Growth. Reaching out to his attendees, he invited them to engage in breakout sessions to identify and share how the new vision would benefit their communities.

During the biennial assembly, participants contributed, voted, and witnessed significant actions such as the election of members to the Archdiocesan Council and Metropolis Council, delegate approval

of the Metropolis operating budget, the staggering of terms for Metropolis Council members, and a more transparent budgeting method.

Inspired by where they see the Metropolis of Chicago going as a result of the Clergy-Laity Assembly, two anonymous donors stepped forward to kick-off donations towards the **Annual Vision Campaign**. When \$100K in gifts are committed, we will receive \$50K as a result of the anonymous donation. Likewise, when the next \$100K is committed, we will receive another \$50K - resulting in \$300K to support our efforts to realize our vision!

The 2023 Clergy-Laity Assembly came to a close with an extensive set of concepts and initiatives related to our operations and our new Vision for Growth. Given the receptivity of the clergy and laity, as well as their deep and abiding sense of grace, the Metropolis of Chicago joyfully looks forward to the work ahead.

Experience the 2023 Clergy-Laity Assembly!



Presentation videos, slides and additional content is available online now!

- Watch as His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael introduces the Vision for Growth
- Listen to the Mental Health Panel
- View the breakout session recap
- Look through the full event photo album
- and so much more

chicago.goarch.org/CLA-presentations

CHRISTIAN FAITH IN ACTION OUR MINISTRIES, AFFILIATES & COMMITTEES

The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago Ministries and Programs stretch across many topics that represent our communities and our Church. Our ministries are led and supported by our faithful volunteers to meet the needs, concerns, and expectations of our parish communities.

Our ministries provide the interaction and connection between our laypeople and clergy to grow spiritually in fellowship, service, and community.

METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO
**MUSTARD
SEED FUND**
Growing Our Faith for the Future



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO
ST. IAKOVOS RETREAT CENTER
A place of faith, a place of fellowship

Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: distinguished and well respected leaders of the Orthodox Christian community whose titles are bestowed by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. The Metropolis of Chicago Archons are among the most active in promoting and defending the Holy and Great Mother Church.

Building, Projects & Architecture Committee (BPA): serves our parishes through consultation and review of various improvement projects. Projects include ecclesial furnishings (including iconography and liturgical furnishings); involvement in matters of construction, environmental, zoning, land use and real estate transactions; as well as repairs and replacements of roofing, HVAC, parking lot, lighting, audio-visual installations, construction, environmental matters, and more.

Choir Federation: The aim of the Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians (Choir Federation) is to sustain the music ministries & traditions of the Orthodox faith, enhancing the

spiritual experience of our congregations.

Clergy Syndesmos: responsible for organizing various clergy retreats throughout the year while also supporting the many ministries of the Metropolis of Chicago.

Family Synaxis: the home of all family ministries for the Metropolis of Chicago faithful. This includes seasonal parenting seminars, and retreats over Labor Day weekend and during Lent.

Greek Education: focused on supporting the teaching, preservation and promotion of Greek education, Hellenic culture and history, and Orthodox tradition. Through a broad range of programs, the Department works to both educate and create opportunities for students, their families and educators.

Living Water Productions: produces original and engaging religious education content for all people. Through video, podcast, documentaries, and more, these tools help to deepen their

understanding of faith and their relationship with God and neighbors.

Martha & Mary House: offers practical, emotional, and spiritual support for expectant mothers who find themselves alone or without a good, safe home through pregnancy and childbirth.

Mission Team Chicago: supports the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) by educating the Chicago Orthodox Christian communities about the needs of other developing Orthodox communities, both at home and abroad. Mission Team Chicago also serves these communities, promotes the programs of the OCMC, and engages in fundraising.

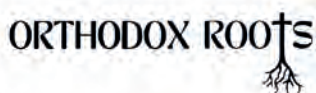
Mustard Seed Fund: a microgrant program developed to help drive parish growth through evangelism, welcoming, and outreach. 10% of Annual Vision Campaign funds received go towards supporting programs like the Mustard Seed Fund and Project HOPE. (Learn more on page 7).



Special thank you to the Hellenic Foundation Chicago. Along with other donors, the organization has supported many of the Metropolis of Chicago Ministries and Programs. Additionally, their funding has helped expand the Communications team for the Metropolis of Chicago. Learn more at www.hellenicfoundation.org.



OUR MINISTRIES, AFFILIATES & COMMITTEES



Orthodox Roots: feeds into the Family Synaxis by specifically ministering to our newlyweds, helping them navigate the key challenges of early marriage.

Philoptochos: the philanthropic heart of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, fulfills its mission to “help the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, those with disabilities, and the victims of disasters” (learn more on page 8).

Philoxenia Charities: offers free temporary housing to individuals and families visiting the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, who are in need of shelter, spiritual healing and/or comfort.

Project HOPE: The mission of Project Humanitarian Outreach and Philanthropic Engagement (HOPE) is to partner with parishes in the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago and with local networks to help provide food security and stable housing to those in need (learn more on page 9).

Pick Up Your Cross and Follow Me: is the Metropolis of Chicago’s ministry for those with special needs and their families. In addition to hosting regular events, it offers support to parishes and ministries to help them ensure inclusion for all.

Religious Education: offers resources and training for parish educators and volunteers as well as provides opportunities for youth and adults to establish a firm foundation of faith and tradition.

Saint Iakovos Retreat Center: With over 137 acres of land in Kansasville, WI, the retreat center offers a perfect setting for overnight retreats, camps, and conferences. The center regularly hosts celebrations like weddings and family reunions, corporate outings, business meetings, and youth camps. Amenities include fields and courts for athletic activities, outdoor pool, barn, walking trails and more. In 2023, the retreat center hosted over 2,500 guests, including 40 different events related to Metropolis groups, ministries and parishes.

Sisterhood of Presvyteres: promotes the spirit of Christian love among the Presvyteres of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago; provides opportunities for Presvyteres to get acquainted with one another and meet periodically to discuss mutual concerns and to develop programs for outreach.

St. John of Damascus League of Chanters: comprised of the Metropolis of Chicago chanters and assistant chanters. It aims to strengthen relationships, while cultivating them morally and spiritually. The league also helps promote the study and development of Byzantine Music.

TEAM Belong: (That Every Ability May Belong; formerly known as Inclusion Awareness Day), is a ministry designed to create a sense of belonging among Orthodox Christians with disabilities, as well their families, in their parishes. TEAM Belong’s efforts culminate every year in October when parishes designate and celebrate one Sunday of the month as Inclusion Awareness Day.



OUR MINISTRIES, AFFILIATES & COMMITTEES

Y2AM: YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES AND PROGRAMMING



NIKA HOUSE

Fanari Camp Ministries: offers youth of the Metropolis the ability to share their common faith and heritage through its offerings: Fall, Winter, & Summer Camp; and other yearly events.

YAL Chicago: the Young Adults League engages 18-35 year olds in worship, witness, service, and fellowship. YAL Chicago offers multiple events per year, including social events, retreats, and more. The largest event is the YAL conference - a fun & faith filled weekend-long event that is attended by 500+ participants each year!

Lighthouse Camp: a summer camp program that prepares highschool seniors as they enter college.

Junior Olympics: an annual multi-athletic tournament held in Palos Hills, IL. In 2023, over 3000 people participated as a coordinator, coach, volunteer or athlete - with 1450 athletes from 28 different parishes competing.

GOAL: (Greek Orthodox Athletic League) offers various sports tournaments and a Chicagoland basketball season annually for youth and young adults.

Western Regional Family Basketball Tournament: is an annual weekend tournament held for the non-Chicagoland parishes of the Metropolis of Chicago. It typically is held in MN or WI, with multiple parishes participating.

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical & Fine Arts Festival: an annual event that gathers the youth in grades 4-12 to share their art, speech, essay, poem, iconography, and vocal skills, in a formal competition of the arts.

NIKA House: The Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign offers student members a place to communicate, socialize, study and practice their faith.

St. Paul Mentorship Program: Helps college students connect and navigate the religious, social, and academic aspects of college, along with building their network.





METROPOLIS
OF CHICAGO

THE GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

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CORE VALUES

Christ-Centered
Humility
Love
Service
Candor
Adaptability

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To share unconditionally Christ's love
and mercy with the world.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Greek Orthodox Metropolis
of Chicago seeks to bring all
people to Christ.

OUR VISION

Unity in Christ cultivates
relationships with family, friends,
and neighbors—bearing fruit for
vibrant communities and a
flourishing church.

**“Unity in Christ cultivates relationships
with family, friends, and neighbors—
bearing fruit for vibrant communities
and a flourishing Church.”**

METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO
VISION FOR GROWTH



METROPOLIS
OF CHICAGO

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