



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

Responses to Consolidated Questions Posted on September 29

- 1. Is the Metropolis planning to ask Clergy-Laity Assembly (CLA) delegates to sell SIRC in November?**
No. To the contrary, the vote at the CLA will ask parishes for a financial contribution to help ensure SIRC can meet its financial obligations allowing it to depend less on fundraisers. Over the long run, the Metropolis will continue to engage its clergy and faithful in dialogue to prayerfully discern the future of SIRC, a process that will require several months of dialogue.
- 2. Has the decision to sell SIRC already been made?**
No. The Metropolis believes firmly that the decision to sell, keep, or develop SIRC will be revealed through the prayerful discernment of our mission and God's desire for our Church today and for future generations. To help achieve this end, the Metropolis will encourage a robust, transparent, and honest dialogue with and among its clergy and laity.
- 3. While the future of SIRC is discussed, will there be any impact on Fanari?**
No. The Metropolis of Chicago remains committed to Fanari now and forever. Fanari Camp (Summer, Fall, Winter, Lenten) will take place at SIRC for the foreseeable future.



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Metropolis of Chicago SIRC Discernment Process FAQs

FAQs will be updated as new questions are received.

1. **What announcement did the Metropolis make about the St Iakovos Retreat Center (SIRC) on August 12?**

The Metropolis of Chicago began a dialogue with its parishes about how to address the upcoming maturity of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center's (SIRC) mortgage debt. When the loan matures in October 2027, the balance will be about \$2.3 million. The borrower is Saint Iakovos Retreat Center, Inc., a Wisconsin non-stock corporation. There are no guarantors for the debt, and the loan is collateralized by the property. Because usage (rental) fees alone do not cover both operating costs and debt servicing, SIRC must rely on contributions and fundraising to close the funding gap.

In response, His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael has launched a Metropolis-wide discernment process to determine SIRC's future. This process is open, inclusive, and transparent, engaging parishes to find a permanent solution to SIRC's financial challenges and to support the ministries operating on the property.

2. **His Eminence mentioned that the discernment process will be guided by our Metropolis' purpose, mission, vision, and core values. What are these and how were they established?**

In 2022, our Metropolis began a year-long process of prayerful reflection involving clergy, Metropolis Council members, Philoptochos leaders, parish council leaders, and the SIRC Board. This collaboration led to the adoption of our purpose, mission, vision, and core values, announced at the 2023 Clergy-Laity Assembly. These now serve as our compass for every major decision:

- **Why We Exist:** "To share unconditionally Christ's love and mercy with the world."
- **Mission:** "The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago seeks to bring all people to Christ."
- **Vision:** "Unity in Christ has deepened our relationships with family, friends, and neighbors. We are a growing Church that bears fruit in the world."
- **Core Values:** Christ-Centered, Humility, Love, Service, Candor, Adaptability.

These statements are more than words on paper. They help ensure that every decision we make moves us toward faithfulness in our calling and fruitfulness in our work. They also will be invaluable tools in the discernment process.

3. **Is the discernment process about SIRC's finances?**

The discernment process regarding the Saint Iakovos Retreat Center (SIRC) is not solely about its finances. While the \$2.3 million debt and operational challenges are significant, this process is fundamentally about reflecting on our purpose, mission, vision, and values as the Body of Christ. It's an opportunity to pause, unite as a community, and ensure that our decisions align with our sacred calling to bring all people to Christ, rather than reducing SIRC to a financial asset or focusing only on debt repayment.



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4. When will the discernment process conclude?

The Metropolis's objective is to conclude the discernment process with a discussion and vote at the Clergy-Laity Assembly on November 5–6.

5. How did the Metropolis of Chicago come into ownership of SIRC?

In 2006, the Metropolis of Chicago acquired property in Kansasville, Wisconsin, establishing SIRC after delegates at a Clergy-Laity Assembly voted to authorize its purchase.

6. Does the Metropolis of Chicago want to maintain ownership of SIRC?

As an ecclesiastical body of 58 parishes, the Metropolis must make this decision collectively through engagement, dialogue, and prayer. Above all, the Metropolis desires that this process be driven by our Christ-centered mission, vision, and values.

7. I thought parishes provided mandatory financial support to the SIRC each year. Is that still the case?

In 2019, after discussions with parish leaders, His Eminence ended the mandatory annual “13th assessment” that required parishes to fund SIRC. Since then, parishes have been encouraged to contribute voluntarily according to their means.

8. How did the elimination of the mandatory annual SIRC assessment impact SIRC finances?

Ending the mandatory assessment led to a drop in funding. While the assessment once brought in about \$215,000 annually (peaking in 2013), voluntary contributions since 2019 have averaged about \$55,000 per year, excluding the COVID years of 2020 and 2021.

9. How many parishes are currently utilizing SIRC?

Since 2015, 19 of our 58 parishes—about one-third—have used SIRC for ministries and programs. In addition, SIRC is home to Fanari Camp, whose participants include at least one camper from nearly all Metropolis parishes.

10. Is the Metropolis planning to sell SIRC?

A decision to sell SIRC requires a majority vote by parishes represented at a Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly. The current discernment process is focused on determining whether parishes have the will and capacity to make SIRC financially self-sustaining, or whether the Metropolis should divest.

11. Is there a plan to improve the facilities and amenities of SIRC?

Yes, but improvements depend on long-term financial viability. In 2018, a review identified strengths and challenges, leading to a [long-term vision](#) for development and marketing. In 2025, a financial report was prepared to assess the center's condition. These plans can only move forward once SIRC is on solid financial footing.

12. Was SIRC's financial condition known in previous years?

Yes. Both SIRC and the Metropolis undergo annual independent audits, conducted since 2019. All reports are available at www.chicago.goarch.org/sircdiscernment.



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13. Have additional steps been taken to shore up the financial condition of SIRC?

The Metropolis has enlisted a steward with expertise in institutional financial sustainability to evaluate SIRC's long-term viability. Additionally, the Metropolis continues to be SIRC's largest user through Fanari Camp. Finally, the Metropolis forgave a loan amount of \$373,000 to SIRC, allowing it to move forward with land acquisition and realize its vision.

14. Given its financial condition, what support is needed to make SIRC viable?

SIRC's debt payments and operating costs currently exceed its usage (rental) fee income. This current financial reality makes it difficult for SIRC to cover expenses, maintain facilities, and grow. In the final analysis, paying off the debt is essential. If parishes provide additional financial support to retire the debt sooner, SIRC could redirect resources to upkeep, improvements, and expansion through normal fees and achievable fundraising goals.

15. Does the Metropolis of Chicago have a long-term funding solution for SIRC?

Identifying a permanent funding model—and deciding on the future ownership of SIRC—is the focus of the current discernment process. The Metropolis will uphold the decision that emerges from this process.

16. Does the Metropolis intend to relocate Fanari Camp? Can Fanari Camps be held at a more cost-effective location?

As long as the Metropolis owns SIRC, there are no plans to relocate Fanari Camp.