



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

Department of Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Report to the 45th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress

Overview of Purpose of Ministry

The Department of Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations is tasked with cultivating professional relationships with faith-based organizations, academic institutions, and NGOs. It coordinates the ecumenical and interfaith dialogues of the Archdiocese on a national level and is responsible for pan-Orthodox activities through the Office of the Chairman of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA.

Major Accomplishments & Highlights

Inter-Orthodox Relations



Pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy, Sunday of Orthodoxy 2020

- Organized meetings between His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and key Inter-Orthodox, individuals and groups including:
 - His Beatitude Patriarch Irinej of Serbia,
 - His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph of the Antiochian Archdiocese,
 - His Eminence Metropolitan Tikhon of the Orthodox Church in America,
 - His Grace Bishop Metodije of Diokleia (Montenegro);
- Participated in the OCA bilateral dialogue;
- Facilitated the participation of His Grace Bishop Apostolos of Medeia, representing His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America at the Clergy-Laity (Sobor) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the United States of America in October 2019;

- Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the U.S.A.
 - Notification: Nicholas Anton was appointed during the last Executive Committee meeting as Director of Operation of the Assembly in February 2020. He will continue to serve the GOA as Special Advisor;
 - Weekly Executive Committee meetings during the COVID-19 Pandemic,
 - Participated in the creation of COVID-19 Resource Center of the Assembly, website update, COVID-19 Task Force;
 - Preparation of an online Survey of Orthodox Christian Outreach Organizations and their response to COVID-19 for the preparation of a Directory and a Webinar Series;
 - Assembly of Bishops Statement on Feeding Lambs – unity in diversity with rollback plans;
 - Hosted a meeting of Pan-Orthodox Ministries on homelessness which resulted in the creation of an ongoing network and a mandate to create an Orthodox Volunteer Corps;
 - Continue to hold meetings of the Orthodox Christian Ministries on Homelessness Network and guide the work of the Mental Health Taskforce;
 - COVID-19 Parish Reopening Toolkit;
 - Organized a series of webinars “Love Thy Neighbor Online Series,” featuring Orthodox Christian Humanitarian Organizations, May 21, 28 and June 4, 2020 & Toolkit;
 - 1.5-hour interview with His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa, Secretary, and Nicholas Anton, Director of Operations, on Ancient Faith Radio on May 31, 2020;
 - Lilly Foundation grant application submitted for the One Church Initiative;
 - Facilitated the correspondence with the Department of State regarding the religious situation in Montenegro;
 - Revived the Joint-Commission of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Bishops;
 - Organized and Participated in the Assembly/SCOCH Christmas Concert in December 2019;
 - Organized the fall meeting of the Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation in October 2019;
 - Reignited hope in the Assembly of Bishops and scheduling, organizing and postponing the 10th Anniversary meeting;
 - Revived a number of Committees of the Assembly;
 - Began developing a research App;
 - Began a reorganization of affiliated organizations to the Assembly.

- Organized the Pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy for the Sunday of Orthodoxy at Holy Trinity Cathedral in New York in March 2020

- Organized the Spring meeting of the Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, which produced a new agreed document entitled *The Vocation and Mission of the People of God: “A Chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation,”* May 2019

Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations



Reception in Honor of H.E. Archbishop Elpidophoros organized by the New York Board of Rabbis in October 2019

- Organized meetings between His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and key Ecumenical and Interfaith individuals and groups including:
 - The New York Board of Rabbis,
 - Rabbi Noam Marans from American Jewish Committee
- Facilitated the reception in Honor of H.E. Archbishop Elpidophoros organized by the New York Board of Rabbis in October 2019
- Increase participation with the Jewish community through the New York Board of Rabbis and the American Jewish Committee on both national and local levels, especially in response to recent anti-Semitic violence
- Facilitated His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America’s participation in conferences and lectures
- Attended or sent representation to all of our ecumenical and interfaith organizations’ governing board meetings (Christian Churches Together, Christian for Middle East Peace, Creation Justice Ministries, National Council of Churches, Religions for Peace USA, World Council of Churches, etc.)
- Participated in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity organized by the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute, in January 2020
- Organized an Ecumenical Gathering with the NCC USA at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Bahamas in February 2020

- Participated in a Webinar on Church’s ministry online organized by the World Council of Churches, on April 2020
- Facilitated the National Council of Churches-World Council of Churches Relation Committee meeting, chaired by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, in May 2020
- Representation of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America at events such as Governor and Mayor Interfaith Breakfast, Rev. Paul T. Egensteiner’s Installation, etc.
- Completed the research and planning phase of the Ecumenical Guidebook project
- Appointed Co-Chair the National Council of Churches ACT to End Racism initiative
- Participated on the planning committee, presented on behalf of the Orthodox Family on racism, and moderated a young adult panel for the annual Christian Churches Together convocation
- Participated on the planning committee for the National Council of Churches Day of Remembrance and Lament marking 400 years since the first arrival of enslaved African persons at Old Point Comfort
- Presented at the Parliament of World Religions and other conferences
- Launched the National Council of Churches ACT to End Racism initiative with a special ecumenical service at St. Sophia’s Cathedral in Washington, DC
- Organized and executing the 9th meeting of the Assembly of Bishops

Church & Society



Interview Series on Racial Reconciliation

- Filmed and published [six interviews, moderated by Fr. John Chryssavgis on Racial Reconciliation with an updated resource center](#)
- Publication of [For the Life of the World. Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church](#) on the Department's webpage in 13 languages and as a [hard copy](#) through Holy Cross Press, March and June, 2020
- Work at the United Nations
 - Regular participation in the following NGO groups: The Working Group to End Homelessness, the Committee to Stop Trafficking in Human Persons, the Mining Working Group, the Committee on Migration, the Committee on Social Development, the Ecumenical Working Group, and the Major Group;
 - Established a relationship with the Permanent Mission of Malta, Samoa, and Finland and strengthened new relationships with other NGOs;
 - Attended and participated in the entirety of the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development including: representing all NGOs with one other person at the opening plenary session and facilitating all NGO statements to member states, volunteering for the Civil Society Forum and NGO networking event;
 - [“Building a Housing First Approach and Implementing Inclusive Best Practices.”](#) United Nations Side Event at the Commission for Social Development with the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN and UNANIMA International, February, 2020.
 - Increased participation in the NGO Working Group to End Homelessness as a member of the new executive committee;
 - Submitted a statement for the Commission on the Status of Women.
- [Love Thy Neighbor Event](#) on homelessness with a panel of experts and sixteen organizations, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, that directly serve the homeless population, Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, February, 2020.
- Co-hosted the 11th annual prayer service for the United Nations community.

Department's Life



- Frequent contributor to the Orthodox Christian Network
- Continue to publish monthly Department newsletter

- Created a Department Facebook Page
- Supported the COVID-19 Relief Fund Application Process
- Helped organize and participated in the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Green Attica Symposium (ecological symposium), June 2018
- Published the 4th volume in the Faith Matters Book Series entitled *The Reception of the Holy and Great Council: Reflections of Orthodox Christian Women*

Goals for the future

- Complete a first draft of the Ecumenical Guidebook
- Attend all governing board and special meetings and strengthen relationships with ecumenical and interfaith organizations
- Participate in pertinent conferences to enhance the work of the department and expand the visibility of the Archdiocese
- Increase the visibility and work of the Department through better use of social media, reshaping of our webpages and change the layout of our monthly bulletin.
- Publish a directory of humanitarian Orthodox Christian ministries in the United States
- At the United Nations, host an event at the High Level Political Forum, participate in the meetings of the General Assembly, attend meetings of the Third Committee, strengthen relationships with Permanent Missions and find innovative ways to advocate through online meetings, in addition to increasing advocacy on the protection of the environment, host online side events, and have a stronger social media presence which includes the Sustainable Development Goals
- As the co-chair of the National Council of Churches' anti-racism committee, create a strategic plan and begin to implement said plan
- Continue with the Mental Health Taskforce in assisting OCAMPR to continue working on the phases of the mental health task force's work;
- Publish the agreed upon definition of homelessness from the Orthodox Christian Ministries on Homelessness Network, continue network meetings, publish a parish guidebook to homeless ministry, provide educational materials, and work towards a national Sunday of homelessness;

- Create a board and clear plan of next steps moving forward for the Orthodox Volunteer Corps;
- Improve interfaith relations with partners, especially on the fight against antisemitism, racism and xenophobia.

Staffing



Rev. Protopresbyter Nicolas Kazarian, PhD – Director

The director is responsible for setting the priorities, leading the staff, and managing the budget of the department. He represents the Archbishop as proxy to the governing boards of the various ecumenical and interfaith organizations and contributes to the work of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America as the executive assistant to the Chair. Rev. Kazarian joined the Department on October 15, 2019.



Rev. Archdeacon John Chryssavgis, PhD - Senior Advisor and Theologian

Rev. Chryssavgis provides expertise on theological and social matters. He drafts important letters and statements and develops the relationship between the Archdiocese and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. He also represents the Orthodox Church at high-level international and local meetings.



Nicholas Anton - Special Advisor

Nicholas Anton, having been appointed as Director of Operations for the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, continues to serve the Department and Archdiocese as a Special Advisor on Inter-Orthodox and social issues.



Spyridoula Fotinis – Programs Coordinator & Special Assistant to the Director

Spyridoula handles the administrative duties of the Department as well as programs development. Her work is focused primarily at the United Nations but also covers important publications and regular communications.