



Department Highlights of 2022 for the Diocesan Assembly

Master Bless!

Your Eminence, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At the Diocesan Assembly of 2021, our beloved Archbishop Michael gave the directive to “re-examine our Church School programs and parish youth organizations ... giving way to more personally involved methods of bringing Christ to our young people.” The generous financial support of the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors Program (DDB) has made this vision a reality with three training events: the Vacation Church School Workshops held in Syracuse (August 20), Yonkers (August 27), and Paramus (October 22).

Making memories makes a difference! Statistics show that kids who go to Christian camps, Vacation Church Schools (VCS), and similar experiential events, stay in church. The National Study of Youth and Religion has found that those who attend religious camp as teenagers or young children are significantly more likely in their young adult years to participate in shared religious activities, like group Bible studies, college religious groups and church attendance, than those who have never attended summer church camps or vacation church school programs. Indeed, those who attended religious summer camp as children were over three times more likely to remain religious five years later than those who did not attend. (Sorenson, J.: “The Lasting Impact of Christian Summer Camp”. Online: <https://buildfaith.org/lasting-impact-christian-summer-camp/>).

The key to children’s programming is the excitement it brings and the memories it leaves with the youth. Children form a connection with their Orthodox peers and the church community, thus making lifelong friendships and relationships.

The Vacation Church School Workshops which you have sponsored teach parishes, youth workers, and clergy how to effectively plan an exciting event, which can be used throughout the year, to draw in youth and families who are not regularly coming to their parishes due to the lasting effects of the pandemic, or other events that compete for our Sunday attendance. As our VCS Workshop leader, Kelly Potteiger, has said, “It is truly a parish undertaking, of a quality program that not only teaches Orthodox theology, but also instills in the youth a lifetime commitment to a relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Vacation Church School: Bringing Back Our Youth and Families

Kelly Potteiger,
VCS Trainer



Participants took home two VCS lesson plans to use in their parishes.

What's Coming up in 2023?

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS)... The Next Phase

I am pleased to announce that Ms. Olga Ptach, of Holy Trinity Church in Yonkers, will be the new Diocesan CGS Coordinator. Olga will be presenting CGS during the Laity Workshop at this year's Diocesan Assembly. I am grateful to her for taking on the leadership role in this important ministry!



With God's help and the hard work of our Catechists and numerous volunteers, our Diocese now has five working Atriums (the CGS teaching environment), the most of any diocese within the OCA. We are excited to announce that we are finally able to be trained in Level 2. **CGS LEVEL 2 Formation Training (6-9 year old curriculum) will be held at St. Tikhon's Seminary in early June 2023.**



All Diocesan members who desire to be trained will be sponsored by the DDB. At the same event, there will also be an opportunity to be trained in Level I to assist in an Atrium. This will allow us to expand our age levels in our existing Atriums and start more Atriums around the Diocese. **Please make sure to attend the CGS Workshop at Day Two of the Diocesan Assembly, Thursday, Nov. 3, to learn more about CGS!**

Vacation Church Schools & Bible Bowls

We want to give our Diocesan youth more opportunities to get to know one another. Our goal is to help geographically close parishes to partner together and hold fun events to draw their families closer. In 2023 we will focus on supporting regional Vacation Church Schools and Bible Bowls. In this effort, I am thankful to be working with Delbert Clement of Christ the Savior Parish in Ballston Lake, NY and Matushka Kathryn Karney of Holy Trinity Parish in Elmira, NY.

I am grateful to God for those priests and parishes who have hosted workshops in 2022: Father Ambrose and Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Syracuse, Father Vlad and Matushka Jeanne Zablotskyy and Holy Trinity Parish in Yonkers, and Father John Morris and Christ the Saviour Parish in Paramus, NJ. Their support is training up more people to keep our children in the Church!

Thanks be to God for our beloved Archbishop Michael, who continues to pray, support and encourage our efforts to do the work of the Lord!

Glory to God for All Things!

Respectfully submitted and with love in Christ,



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