



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES (Y²AM)
OFFICE OF CAMPING MINISTRIES

CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS 2016
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STEVEN CHRISTOFOROU, DIRECTOR

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From the Director

Christ is in our midst!

In one sense, Y²AM is virtually unrecognizable from where we were two short years ago. Our Team is comprised of new members, offering new resources and new opportunities for youth and young adult ministry.

Yet, in a different sense, Y²AM remains what it was: a team dedicated to making God's love present in the lives of youth and young adults. The last two years have seen us develop that core vision into a series of successful projects, including both digital resources and in-person retreats and events.

Our core digital resource continues to be "Be the Bee," our weekly video series. We recently added a second series ("The Trench") as well as a podcast ("Pop Culture Coffee Hour") to our set of digital resources, on top of expanding our blog, "The Ladder."

These resources are used by parishes, camps, and families around the world. Though precise numbers are hard to come by, according to one recent Metropolis survey, over 70% of Sunday School programs use "Be the Bee" in the classroom.

Notably, we have also developed a retreat around our "Be the Bee" series. These "BeeTreats" have been our more ambitious project to date: a cross-country collaboration with the Family Care Department, FOCUS North America, Hellenic College Holy Cross Ambassadors, and St. Katherine's College Ambassadors. Our BeeTreats offer a Christ-centered day of worship, education, and inspiration for youth, parents, youth workers, and young adults. Over 1,000 people will have registered for our latest season of BeeTreats by the time we break for the summer.

Looking ahead, our goal is to maintain our current level of production without sacrificing quality for consistency. We are also preparing to develop a new series of comprehensive and integrated resource for camp, parish, and home use. Our goal is to create a cohesive ministry experience across all ages and various facets of youth and young adult ministry.

Perhaps our most challenging project is creating a new set of policies to bring our youth protection programs to the next level. These policies will apply to any and all youth work done across the Archdiocese, and will pose administrative, educational, and logistical challenges unlike anything we have experienced to date. Yet the work is necessary and, by God's grace, we shall rise to the challenge.

With love in the Risen Lord,

Steven Christoforou
Director

Y2AM's Mission

Y²AM's mission is to:

1. Make God's love present to youth and young adults;
2. Challenge and inspire them to live their relationship with Christ every day; and
3. Set the tone, standards, and vision for youth and young adult ministry across the Archdiocese.

We are a team of ministry professionals, here to help Orthodox Christian communities clearly communicate the Gospel so young people can get to know Christ.

#Y2AM #BeTheBee #LiveOrthodoxy #OrthoPost.

Goals

1. Provide parishes, camps, and families with the resources and training needed for successful youth and young adult ministry.
2. Produce the highest-quality resources at the lowest possible cost.
3. Create a safe and productive space for youth and young adult ministry through clear youth protection guidelines and strong ministry training.
4. Raise up the next generation of Orthodox Christian leaders.

Specific Objectives

One year:

- a. Launch new y2am.org website.
- b. Make critical youth protection amendments to UPR.
- c. Finalize updated Policies for the Protection of Youth and Children
- d. Begin roll-out of these Policies across the entire Archdiocese.
- e. Begin work on a comprehensive, integrated set of resources/curricula for youth and young adult ministries (for camp, parish, and home use).
- f. Host successful Youth and Camp Workers Conference in January 2017

Two years:

- a. Finalize roll-out of updated Youth Protection Policies across the Archdiocese.
- b. Establish 100% compliance with these Policies.
- c. Launch new, comprehensive, integrated youth and young adult ministries resources/curricula (for camp, parish, and home use).

Five years:

- a. Further develop digital ministry resources.
- b. Develop complementary print resources/books/ministry manuals.
- c. Develop and implement a comprehensive training and certification system for youth and young adult ministry workers.
- d. Re-launch series of annual young adult conference.

Office Space

As of November 3, 2015, our Team has been back at the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, after renting office space from Annunciation Greek Orthodox on the Upper West Side of Manhattan for several years.

Current Staff

Our staff has experienced significant changes in the past two years. As of May 20, 2016, our staff is as follows:

Steven Christoforou, Director
Christian Gonzalez, Young Adult Ministries Coordinator
Maria Pappas, Administrative Coordinator

We have also benefitted from the work of several interns, who each contributed several hours of work during the week to assist with open projects and help as needed. During the 2015-16 academic year, our three interns were Alex Kuvshinoff, Anthony Ladas, and Christos Kladeftiras.

We are currently in the process of searching for a Resources and Training Coordinator, to bring our full time staff back up to four (where it was at the last Clergy Laity Congress). We are also seeking candidates for a fifth full-time team member, a budget-neutral reallocation of currently allocated funds.

Archdiocesan Council Committee

We extend special thanks to His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, Hierarchical Chair of the Archdiocesan Council Y²AM Committee, and Mrs. Elaine Jaharis, Lay Chair of the Committee. Their leadership these past two years has helped solidify our team and lead to unprecedented collaboration and teamwork.

We also thank the members of our Committee for their hard work and dedication to this critical work: Fr. Luke Melackrinos, Fr. John Vlahos, Drake Behrakis, Greg Papadeas, Peter Pappas Jr., Jim Gabriel, Ted Germanakos, and Tom Kanelos.

Resources

- I. **New Website**
 - a. y2am.org – home page for all our offerings and resources
- II. **Retreats/Events**
 - a. Be the Bee Retreats (Beetreats) – monthly retreats offering sessions/workshops for youth, parents, youth workers, and young adults
 - b. Youth and Camp Workers Conference – annual conference organized by the various Orthodox jurisdictions on a rotation, with GOARCH hosting in January 2017
- III. **YouTube Videos (weekly)**
 - a. *Be the Bee* – finding God in everything we encounter and everyone we meet, everyday
 - b. *The Trench* – exploring how relationships with people shape who we are, and how to approach them as Orthodox Christians
- IV. **Podcasts (every two weeks)**
 - a. *Pop Culture Coffee Hour* – casual discussion of pop culture and theology
- V. **Weekly Blogs**
 - a. Tuesday – exploration of pop culture and theology
 - b. Wednesday – commenting on various young adult issues and questions
 - c. Friday – exploration of the challenges young adults face
- VI. **Scripture**
 - a. Bible in a Year – a year-long reading plan covering both the Old and New Testaments, paired with daily study questions
 - b. *ExeGenius* – annotated Sunday Gospel readings from the Triodion and Pentecostarian period, featuring patristic quotes, scriptural cross-references, and other comments and questions (available at exegenius.goarch.org)
- VII. **Initiatives**
 - a. REAL Weekend – a unified weekend across the Archdiocese dedicated to young adults working on a service project in their communities, gathering for fellowship, and assembling for worship (currently every Fall, expanding to Spring)
 - b. Orthodoxy on Tap – opportunity for catechism and discussion in a casual setting
 - c. Coffee House – a way for young adults to share their talents
- VIII. **Other Resources**
 - a. *Be the Bee* website (bethebee.goarch.org) offers each episode with study questions, related reading, and a full transcript
 - b. Daily social media presence
 - c. Weekly emails
 - d. Monthly page in *Orthodox Observer*

Camping Ministries

- I. We are grateful to Leadership 100 for again approving a \$270,000 grant to finance our camping ministry programs in 2016.

Crowdfunding

- I. Patreon.com/Y2AM
 - a. As of March 23, we are receiving \$649 per month from 23 patrons.

National Conferences

- I. Orthodox Youth and Camp Workers Conference – January 2017
 - a. The various Orthodox jurisdictions take turns hosting this annual conference, on a rotation.
 - b. We will host the 2017 Conference in Austin, TX from January 25-27.
 - c. This is our first time hosting since 2013.
 - d. OrthodoxYCC.org

Retreats and Appearances

- I. Beetreats (“Be the Bee” retreats)
 - a. Offering sessions and workshops for youth, young adults, parents, and youth workers.
 - b. A comprehensive experience bringing together Orthodox Christians of all ages, and across multiple parishes and jurisdictions, for a day of worship, education, fellowship, and service.
 - c. A collaborative effort with the GOARCH Center for Family Care, the Hellenic College Holy Cross Ambassadors Program, St. Katherine’s College, and FOCUS North America.
 - d. Incredibly popular – our biggest Beetreat (Chicago) drew 270+ people.
 - e. More information is available at bethebee.goarch.org/retreats
- II. Talks, Lectures, Etc.
 - a. Our Director, Steven Christoforou, and Young Adult Ministries Coordinator, Christian Gonzalez, are frequently called upon to offer talks, Lenten Lectures, sermons, etc.
 - b. Steven Christoforou is also often asked to Skype with parish youth groups across the country when unable to visit in person.

Youth Protection

We have given heightened focus to issues of youth protection, building on the collaborative tone set at our October Y²AM Team meetings. Fr. Evagoras Constantinides has led a sub-committee that has spearheaded efforts to update our youth protection policies and take the first steps towards Archdiocese-wide roll-out and implementation. Steven Christoforou has offered critical support in reviewing and drafting new versions of the document, and Maria Pappas has offered important administrative support.

Our goal is to submit a finalized draft to the Synod in July 2016. Pending approval at the October 2016 Synod meetings, we will then begin work training and educating the public in anticipation of Archdiocese-wide implementation in September 2017.

We are grateful to Leadership 100 for their \$45,000 grant which will help the District and Metropolises take critical steps to create the database infrastructure needed to administer this new, Archdiocese-wide youth protection system.

Collaboration

We have been working hard to develop strong and healthy working relationships within the Archdiocese through regular communication and increased collaboration and teamwork (especially the Departments of Internet Ministries, Religious Education, Family Care, and Stewardship and Outreach). Faculty and students at Hellenic College Holy Cross have been key collaborators on certain projects, especially our “ExeGenius” Gospel annotation. We’ve also developing plans to work more closely with the Office of Vocation & Ministry.

The GOA Center for Family Care has been a critical collaborator in the family workshops offering in our Beetreats, as have been FOCUS North America, Hellenic College Cross, and St. Katherine’s College.

We have also been working hard to develop strong and healthy working relationships outside of the Archdiocese, both with our counterpart departments in other Orthodox jurisdictions and with other Orthodox ministry organizations like Orthodox Christian Fellowship, IOCC, and FOCUS North America.

Needs

- I. Policies for the Protection of Youth
 - a. Though we have made progress in drafting updated policies, there will necessarily be significant efforts involved in training parishes and youth workers, maintaining and administering the system, etc.
 - b. We still believe a person dedicated to youth protection, perhaps a General Counsel given the legal sensitivity of these issues, should be retained.
 - c. A well-developed system should also positively affect the premiums and other costs our parishes face regarding their insurance policies; any development in our youth protection policies should also involve representatives of the Insurance Committee and explore possible synergies.
- II. Youth Worker Training
 - a. We believe it is imperative for us to be given the resources to develop and implement a comprehensive training and certification course for youth and young adult ministers, to ensure the depth and quality of ministry.
- III. Greater Cooperation
 - a. We need to explore ways to encourage further cooperation in youth and young adult ministries across the Archdiocese.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Steven Christoforou, Director
Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries (Y²AM)
Office of Camping Ministries