

# A VISION FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



## MATERIAL IN PREPARATION FOR THE 16<sup>TH</sup> ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION WORKING GROUP, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

The purpose of this “Read-Ahead” is to provide participants in the All American Council (AAC) with the benefit of the initial thinking that has been done to date on this important issue in the life of the Church. It is meant as **STARTING POINT FOR YOUR OWN DISCUSSIONS AND DELIBERATIONS** and does not represent *official* Church positions. Please feel free to add to, modify, take away, correct, or challenge any of the ideas in here. It is through your collective inputs and the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we will be able to discern the best path forward in this area for the life of the Church during the next decade.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Among the pressing concerns of our Church is the need to further the work of our theological seminaries. For our Church to face the challenges of preaching the Gospel in the lands of North America it must possess the guidance of excellent pastors and leaders who provide their leadership as wise and faithful stewards of Christ's holy flock. Our Church's seminary communities are given the honored task of training and forming those who dedicate their lives in this service. As we move through the next decade we can focus on several objectives that will help strengthen the lives of our Church's three seminary communities.

To get a better initial understanding of some of the issues involved in providing the appropriate theological education for our clergy and laity the Strategic Planning Committee formed a Working Group which consisted of:

- Very Reverend Alexander Garklavs, Chairman
- Very Reverend Alexander Atty
- Very Reverend John Behr
- Very Reverend John Dunlop
- Reverend John Peck
- Deacon Irenaios Anderson
- Dr. John Barnet
- Mr. Leon Lysaght
- Dr. Paul Witek

The summary report of that Working Group is given in Section 2 below.

## 2. SUMMARY OF THE WORKING GROUP'S PROPOSED STEPS FORWARD

Through active discussion and deliberation from January through February of 2011, the working group for Theological Education wishes to submit the following as the product of its collective work. The working group believes that the following objectives and their subsequent action steps seek to address foundational issues that we face as a Church in reference to Theological Education. Our work clearly identifies the major objectives that are to be achieved within the Church by the end of 2014, and also identifies the very specific action steps that are to be completed primarily through the auspices of the Board of Theological Education in intervening years.

**OBJECTIVE I: To develop a common vision of theological education for the Orthodox Church in America<sup>1</sup>**

Action Steps for 2012

Responsibility: Board of Theological Education

- Produce a working paper on a Common Vision for Theological Education for the Orthodox Church in America by January 2012 to be distributed to Members of the Holy Synod of Bishops and Administrators and Faculty of St. Tikhon's, St. Vladimir's, and St. Herman's Theological Seminaries.
- Organize and sponsor a conference of Hierarchs, Seminary Administrators, Trustees and Faculty to be held in March 2012 at (St. Tikhon's / St. Vladimir's) to discuss the subject of a common vision for theological education for the Orthodox Church in America.
- From the discussions of the conference, produce an initial draft of a Common Vision for Theological Education by May 2012.
- Distribute the initial draft of the common vision statement to Members of the Holy Synod and the Church's three seminary communities for comment, review and discussion by mid-May 2012.
- Having received feedback from all solicited bodies, produce a final draft of the vision statement by August 2012.
- Present the final draft of the vision statement to the Holy Synod of Bishops for consideration and approval at their Fall meeting in October 2012.
- Upon approval of Holy Synod of Bishops, in November 2012 publish and distribute to the broader Church the common vision statement.

**OBJECTIVE II: To establish a set of hallmarks to be embodied in the seminary communities of the Orthodox Church in America, as well as a set of core competencies to be embodied in our Church's seminary graduates.<sup>2</sup>**

Action Steps for 2013

Responsibility: Board of Theological Education

- Develop a survey instrument by February 2013 focused on collecting data concerning the pastoral needs of dioceses and parishes of the Orthodox Church in America
- Distribute the survey to dioceses and parishes by March 2013, and receive survey results by the end of May 2013

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<sup>1</sup> While a Common Vision for Theological Education is meant to provide a common focus or common foundational perspective for theological education for the Orthodox Church in America, it is not meant to supplant or diminish the unique institutional identities of our Church's three theological institutions. Ideally, a common vision can be applied in a variety of different ways and can be embodied uniquely in the distinctive institutions of our Church.

<sup>2</sup> A hallmark is a foundational institutional feature or characteristic that is indicative of both quality and excellence. A competency is a proficient ability or expertise in completing a particular task or serving a particular function.

- Develop a draft document of Seminary Hallmarks by June 2013 to be submitted to the Holy Synod of Bishops and the administrations of St. Tikhon's, St. Vladimir's, and St. Herman's Theological Seminaries for review, comment, and revision.
- Develop a draft document of Core Competencies by July 2013 to be submitted to the Holy Synod of Bishops and the administrations of St. Tikhon's, St. Vladimir's, and St. Herman's Seminaries for review, comment, and revision.
- Obtain revisions made by the Holy Synod of Bishops and suggestions and comments made by seminary communities by Sept 2013.
- Compose final drafts of Hallmarks of Seminary Communities and Core Competencies and submit them to the Holy Synod of Bishops for approval by Fall 2013.

**OBJECTIVE III: In light of the Orthodox Church in America's accepted vision for the theological education, hallmarks for seminary communities, and core competencies for seminary graduates, to establish a comprehensive approach for seminary recruitment, funding and placement.**

Action Steps for 2014

Responsibility: Board of Theological Education

- Establish by Jan 2014 a committee chaired by a member of the Holy Synod and composed of Seminary Deans and Development and Recruitment officers charged with developing a comprehensive plan for recruitment, funding, and placement.
- Develop by June 2014 a comprehensive plan for recruitment, placement, and development.

**OBJECTIVE IV: To assist seminaries in the evaluation, assessment, and development of curricular programs in light of the Orthodox Church in America's articulated vision for theological education, set of hallmarks for seminary communities, and set of core competencies for graduates.**

Action Step for 2014

Responsibility: Board of Theological Education

- Develop a Self-Study plan by September 2014 that can be implemented by all three seminaries which focuses attention on the evaluation and assessment of curricular and extracurricular programs in light of the Common Vision for Theological Education, the Set of Hallmarks for Seminary Communities, and the Set of Core Competencies for Seminary Graduates.

**OBJECTIVE V: To develop a fully supported seminary internship program for the Orthodox Church in America.**

Action Steps for 2012-2014

Responsibility: Board of Theological Education,  
Metropolitan, OCA Central Administration

- Propose a seminary internship program as Church-wide Initiative at the All-American Council in November 2011 (Board of Theological Education).

- Delegate by January 2012 a member of the Central Administration to oversee the initial development of the seminary internship program (Metropolitan).
- Develop a funding drive by February 2012 focused on gathering wide-spread support for the seminary internship program (Central Administration).
- Begin the actual solicitation of seminarians for internship participation by April 2012 (Central Administration).
- Develop by May 2012 clear guidelines for the operation of the seminary internship programs, as well as guidelines for internship participation and assessment (Board of Theological Education).
- Commence with the seminary internship program in June 2012(OCA Central Administration).
- Develop a public relations campaign in Fall of 2012 focused on reporting the experiences and contributions of internship participants to various parish communities throughout the Orthodox Church in America (OCA Central Administration).
- Develop a second funding campaign by Jan 2013 focused on increasing support for the internship program (OCA Central Administration).
- Continue the yearly process described above for 2013 and 2014.

### 3. AND NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO INPUT!

The preceding sections have given you some initial thoughts from the Working Group on continuing education for clergy and laity. Now it will be your turn to help revise, modify, refine this goal and the top level steps to actualizing it. During the AAC you will participate in two three-hour Breakout Sessions focused on this Goal. Breakout Session I will focus on what the Church as a whole (parish, deanery, diocese, Church-wide all together) should do. Breakout Session II will focus on the specific programs/projects you and your colleagues in the room, networked together could do to advance this goal.

During Breakout Session I, you and your colleagues will be asked :

- What are the most critical things that need to be done by the Church as a whole to achieve this goal?
- To list up to four specific initiatives for achieving the goal.

During the second Breakout Session, you and your colleagues will focus on specific action steps (concrete projects or programs) that you and your colleagues, connected together in networks, can do to actualize the objectives identified in Breakout Session I. Specifically you will be asked to:

- List up to three specific programs and/or projects that we in this group should commit ourselves to. You will be asked to consider the answers with the context of “What *could* we do with the Lord’s help? What is “impossible with men but *possible with God*”?”

- For each program/project list the specifics of the program/project, i.e. what it will achieve, how will it be achieved, and what people need to be involved.