

12th All-American Council – The Orthodox Church in America

Church-Wide Initiative Proposals

Seminarian Summer Internship Program

Proposal Summary

To provide seminarians with extended training on a day-to-day basis in the parish under the direction of an experienced priest to enhance their practical preparation for the priesthood and to serve as an inspiration to church members, particularly to parish youth.

Statement of Condition/Problem

Parish and pastoral experience are vital for anyone seeking ordination. Our seminaries do provide opportunities for students to get parish experience during the school year, but it is limited to Sunday visits. An increasing number of students have very little parish experience. Even those who come from established parishes rarely have the opportunity to work with the priest on a day-to-day basis. These experiences are necessary for anyone interested in the priesthood. In addition, the faithful in our parishes are in need of inspiration from others who have decided to serve God. In sharing their calling and their seminary experience, interns could have a positive impact upon the parish in general and young people in particular to encourage vocations, whether to the priesthood or other forms of ministry.

Statement of Goal/Objectives

The Seminary Internship Program will provide a concentrated parish-life experience for seminarians who have completed at least their second year of study at one of the seminaries of the Orthodox Church in America. The objectives are:

1. To provide interns with the opportunity to be mentored by an experienced pastor on a day-to-day basis for a three-month period.
2. To allow the intern to benefit from sharing with pastors the many facets of the pastor-parishioner relationship, from birth to death.
3. To require interns to accompany pastors to hospitals, nursing homes and home visits to shut-ins and to participate in all liturgical services and sacraments, give sermons, attend parish council meetings and meetings of parish organizations. To work, as well, with the choir director, coordinate or facilitate a vacation church school and to learn the administrative and financial elements of pastoral life.

4. To provide opportunities for interns to interact with members of the parish in a role similar to their role after ordination.
5. To provide interns with first-hand experiences to take back to their respective seminaries and share the lessons learned with fellow students and faculty.
6. To create a real-life experience for the seminarian that will, at the same time, provide the Church with better-trained pastors.

Proposal Plan

The Unit Coordinator of the Pastoral Life Ministries Unit in cooperation with the Office of the Chancellor will outline the characteristics and requirements for a parish and a pastor to be designated for purposes of assigning an intern. The criteria will be shared with diocesan bishops, who will take into account the makeup of the community before an intern is selected and assigned to a parish. The Diocesan Bishop and Unit Coordinator will then invite the selected pastors, along with the parish councils, and the respective seminary dean to participate in the program.

The Unit Coordinator, with the assistance of the Office of the Chancellor and the respective seminary dean, will outline the responsibilities of the intern along with the responsibilities of the pastor and the parish will be formalized in a "terms of agreement" document that all parties will sign.

The selection process within the seminaries will be outlined by the Unit Coordinator and Office of the Chancellor and the respective seminary dean. Interest in the program, personal qualities and the desire for the priestly vocation are key elements in the selection process.

Up to fifteen (15) seminarians who have completed at least their second year of seminary will be selected from among the three seminaries to participate in the internship program. The selected seminarians will be sent to parishes around the country with the exception of their respective home parishes. Married seminarians will be sent to parishes in the vicinity of their seminaries in order to alleviate the problems of moving families.

Proposal Evaluation

The Pastoral Life Unit Coordinator will develop a monthly evaluative report that interns will be required to complete and send to the Office of the OCA Chancellor, the Unit Coordinator, and to the respective seminary dean. A mechanism will be designed to receive input from parish councils and parish organizations as to the program's effectiveness.

A final summation report with an overall rating on the performance of the intern will be submitted by the respective pastor. The pastor, the intern and the seminary dean will also provide their respective critiques on the effectiveness of the program. These reports will, as well, go to the Office of the Chancellor, the Unit Coordinator and the respective dean.

Finally, the Unit Coordinator will examine the reporting and forward an overall evaluation to the Office Chancellor.

Proposal Expenditures

Seminary interns will receive a minimum of \$1000 per month, or \$3000 over the three-month period, to cover any rent or expenses. Some parishes may be interested or willing to supplement the stipend and/or offer housing.

Given a budget of \$50,000 a year, the remaining funds will be expended in developing the plan itself by defraying the expenses of meetings and travel. Payments to the interns will be made by the Orthodox Church in America.