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**Report to the 21st Regular Sobor of the UOC of the USA**

**October 19, 2016**

Слава Ісусу Христу! Glory to Jesus Christ!

Today's UOL is a testament to the foresight of its founders who in 1946 saw the need to establish an enduring link between the individual members of its parishes and the greater spiritual family of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA (UOC of the USA) as a whole. The UOL provides the organizational structure to pool the resources and talents of its members to achieve more in service to the Church on a national scale than they could do individually or only at a local level.

Our path for the future continues to move toward the goals set forth by the Vision for 2020 developed at the 63rd Annual UOL Convention in 2010. These goals are to:

* Establish a strong UOL chapter or UOL presence in every parish of the UOC of the USA
* Develop and implement programs to train effective, Christ-centered lay leaders of the UOC of the USA and her parishes
* Support our Hierarchs and clergy by continuing to nurture, promote and fund vocations, as well as provide assistance to those who have been chosen to serve our Holy Orthodox Church
* Become the guiding force in establishing a new Pan-Orthodox organization
* Create and continue to sponsor activities that incorporate Faith, Fellowship, and Fun
* Develop opportunities to encourage more active participation and contribution by all members of our chapters, parishes, and communities according to their God-given talents
* Conduct Christian outreach programs for education, evangelization, and service and for humanitarian assistance to our parishes and communities

**CONVENTIONS**

Every July, Ukrainian Orthodox League members from across the country gather for an annual convention hosted by one of the local chapters. At every UOL Convention, attendees form social bonds beyond the boundaries of their individual parishes. Convention delegates lay the groundwork for the League for the upcoming year and grow through religious and social events. They meet and get to know our Hierarchs, become aware of their priorities in leading the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and benefit from their spiritual guidance as directly expressed during Convention meetings and events. Attendees get to know the clergy from other UOC of the USA parishes, and vice versa.

Since the 20th Regular Sobor, conventions have been held at: the UOC of USA Metropolia Center, South Bound Brook, NJ (2014); Assumption of the Virgin Mary Parish, Northampton, PA (2015); and Holy Ghost Parish, Coatesville, PA (2016). We look forward to gathering once again on July 26-30, 2017 in Woonsocket, RI for the 70th Annual UOL Convention hosted by the St. Michael chapter and parish. As always, everyone is welcome to be a part of this spiritually renewing event.

Of the proceeds from a Convention, 20% is allocated to support the Junior UOL and 10% is rebated to the host chapter. The 67th Annual UOL convention in 2014 was organized by the members of several surrounding chapters of the Metropolia Center. The UOL donated the 10% Chapter rebate for the 2014 Convention to St. Sophia Seminary, completing a multi-year pledge to raise $10,000 for the Seminary.

The table below compares attendance at the 2016 Convention with that of the previous three Conventions. The Northampton Convention was held over a four-day period; the other Conventions listed were five-day events.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Location | Clergy | Seniors | Juniors | Pre-Juniors | Total |
| 2016 | Coatesville | 10 | 72 | 16 | 3 | 101 |
| 2015 | Northampton | 6 | 74 | 22 | 4 | 106 |
| 2014 | S Bound Brook | 13 | 63 | 21 | 3 | 100 |
| 2013 | Parma | 12 | 93 | 25 | 4 | 134 |

At the 2016 Convention in Coatesville, the daily sessions were evenly divided between UOL business sessions and extended presentations with group discussions focusing on spiritual renewal and growth. Dr. Natalie Bilynsky and V. Rev. Anthony Perkins explored how an understanding of the psychological stages of life can be applied to the ministry of our League and in our own personal lives. Bill Marianes gave an engaging and dynamic keynote address about "Living in H.D. - Being a Hero and Disciple of Jesus Christ." Heartfelt pastoral addresses by our two Hierarchs contributed to what was universally acknowledged as a unique and very spiritually rewarding Convention experience.

Each year the UOL organizes a charitable service project in conjunction with the Annual Convention. In 2014, Convention attendees assembled and distributed bag lunches to the poor in Newark, NJ under the auspices of Bridges Outreach, a charity that annually provides over 100,000 such lunches in the New York and New Jersey area. For the 2016 Convention in Coatesville, the UOL collected 184 "cuddle blankets" for orphans in Ukraine, personal grooming products for women veterans in the Mary E. Walker House, and 106 pounds of crayons for children in hospitals.

UOL Conventions also incorporate Ukrainian cultural events and displays into their programs. One of the social highlights of the 2014 Convention was the Friday evening Ukrainian cultural event, at which delegates were instructed in traditional Ukrainian village folk dancing. At the 2015 Convention, Very Rev. Bazyl Zawierucha and Michael Kapeluck presented an educational workshop on iconography. At the 2016 Convention, Dr. Michael Andrec of the Ukrainian Historical and Educational Center of New Jersey described the Ukrainian Church Records Project, which is an effort to preserve church records throughout the UOC of the USA in digital format; the UOL pledged its support to assist with this ambitious project.

The UOL offers complimentary Senior Registration Packets (one per parish) to individuals interested in attending the Convention in order to better understand the UOL and the variety of activities and programs in which it is involved. Eligible individuals would be from parishes which do not have a UOL Chapter and who have not previously attended a UOL Convention.

For 2015 in Northampton and 2016 in Coatesville, Convention preparations by the UOL included steps taken to comply with the newly enacted Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL). The CPSL requires volunteers who provide care, supervision, guidance or control of children and have regular and repeated contact with children to undergo comprehensive criminal and child abuse background checks.

**COMMISSIONS**

***Christian Caregiving and Missions***

This Commission is responsible for Christ-centered outreach to all people by providing information and assistance to Chapters in establishing outreach programs as well as establishing national and international missions. This Commission works in close coordination with the Consistory’s Office of Missions and Christian Charity.

Each November this commission sponsors the Thanksgiving Tithing project. The UOL donated the $1000 proceeds from the 2013 Thanksgiving Tithing Project to Pokrova Parish in Philadelphia which suffered a terrible fire in August, 2013. This was in addition to a $2000 donation from the UOL's general operating budget presented to the Pokrova Parish at the 20th Regular Sobor in October, 2013. In 2014 and 2015, the Christian Caregiving and Missions Commission encouraged local UOL chapters to support food banks, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters in their local communities at Thanksgiving.

In February of each year, the Commission in conjunction with the Junior UOL organizes the "Souper Bowl Sunday" project to benefit St. Andrew Society and its soup kitchens in Ukraine. From 2014-2016 the Souper Bowl Sunday project netted over $18,000 for St. Andrew Society, compared to the nearly $12,000 raised in the previous three years. More than $60,000 has been raised over the last ten years through this annual event.

In 2014, the UOL and the entire world witnessed with sadness the suffering brought about by the tragic events on the Maidan in Kyiv and by the war in Ukraine. In response to an urgent appeal from our Hierarchs for prayers for Ukraine and for donations to help the injured, the UOL was among the first to offer support, immediately contributing over $7000 to the Consistory's humanitarian aid fund.

***Vocations and Clergy Support***

The Vocations and Clergy Support Commission encourages and supports those individuals pursuing priestly vocations. The Commission is responsible for the administration of the Metropolitan John Scholarship Fund (MJSF) which awards scholarships and continuing education grants to seminarians and clergy of our Church. In May, 2015 at a banquet celebrating the unification of St. Mary Protectress and St. Vladimir Parishes, the Pokrova Parish remembered the League by presenting the UOL with a donation of $30,000 to the MJSF. This very generous donation, along with other funds raised from individual and chapter donations, enabled the UOL to award over $27,000 in Metropolitan John Scholarships during 2014-2016.

By unanimous consent, the delegates to the 69th UOL Convention held in July in Coatesville, PA resolved to repay the $16,000 loan that was taken by the Seminary to purchase a 12-passenger van to be used as transportation for the seminarians of St. Sophia's. The UOL National Executive Board (NEB) decided to pay off the loan immediately using UOL general funds so as not to incur any additional interest charges, and to also immediately launch a National Fund Drive to replenish the UOL accounts. Donations for the Van Fund #SSSVan can be sent to the UOL Financial Secretary or entered online via the UOL Paypal account at uol.orthodoxws.com/donate.html.

***Education***

This Commission annually sponsors the UOL Essay Contest with age-appropriate topics based on the theme of the upcoming Convention. The Contest is open to all members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, and the winners are announced at the Annual UOL Conventions. In 2014 there were 141 entries, in 2015 there were 132 entries, and in 2016 there were 94 entries from throughout the Archdiocese.

The Education Commission sponsors two annual Lenten Retreats, one in Eastern PA, the other in the Western PA/Ohio region. The Lenten Retreats are open to all members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and any interested individuals. These popular retreats are always wonderful opportunities for spiritual rejuvenation and growth during Great Lent. In 2016, a total of approximately 140 individuals attended these day-long events. In 2017, Lenten Retreats will be held Saturday March 18 (Villa Maria, PA) and April 1 (Bethlehem, PA).

In 2015, the UOL organized a new Psalter Reading Project: "Praying Our Way Through Great Lent." 52 people representing 15 parishes from across 9 deaneries participated in teams to read a different Kathisma of the Psalter each day for 20 days. As a result, the entire Psalter was read collectively each day, and by everyone by the end of the 20-day project. In 2016, the Great Lent Project included 57 participants from 22 parishes, representing eight UOC of USA deaneries, and even attracting some participants from Canadian, Greek, and Antiochian Archdiocese. Building on this success, the UOL has instituted a series of similar programs, such as "Praying Our Way Together Through Dormition Lent" this past August.

***Ways and Means***

The Ways and Means Commission serves to help raise funds to cover the operating expenses of the Ukrainian Orthodox League. One of its projects has been the reprinting and the sale of the "ABC’s of My Church" booklets. These books that describe for children the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Holy Communion have been widely distributed and are being used as a tool in aiding the education of First Holy Confession classes. The Hymns of the Eastern Orthodox Church booklets are also available for sale at $5 a copy.

The Annual Fund Drive and Tribute Fund are also two programs that help raise funds for the Ukrainian Orthodox League. In addition, the UOL has coordinated and staffed the parking and ribbon sales at the Metropolia Center in South Bound Brook, NJ during the St. Thomas Weekend Pilgrimage. Over the last three years, the UOL collected over $6500 from the sale of commemorative ribbons, of which approximately $2700 was allocated to the Metropolitan John Scholarship Fund and $3800 was donated to St. Sophia Seminary to support professional staffing and curriculum resources for its students.

In 2015, the UOC of USA's Investment Committee engaged the services of a financial advisory firm to manage the church's investments. The UOL NEB voted to transfer a portion of the League's funds from Vanguard mutual fund accounts to the UOC of USA's diversified portfolio so that the UOL could benefit from the same professional investment services. This should improve the performance of the UOL's cash reserves over the long term while mitigating market risk.

***Youth***

The Youth Commission works to establish programs that strengthen the future of our Church - its youth. This is primarily done through the Junior UOL. The Junior UOL allows the youth of the UOC of USA to gain a greater love for God through a strengthened commitment to the Church, and provides opportunities for training future leaders of our Church and her parishes. The Youth Commission also offers Pre-Junior religious education and activities at the Annual UOL Convention. Each year the UOL donates $3000 to the summer encampments at All Saints Camp, as well as $500 to the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, which is the official campus ministry of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA.

***Public Relations***

The UOL Bulletin, published seven times per year, is the official publication of the UOL and remains the most important mechanism for regular communication with the members of the League. In addition to the Bulletin, the UOL uses direct mailings, its website *uol.orthodoxws.com*, its Facebook page *facebook.com/uolusa*, and periodic emails to keep members informed about the UOL.

**COMMITTEES**

***Lynn Sawchuk-Sharon Kuzbyt Scholarship Fund***

Since its establishment in 1975, this Committee annually awards scholarship monies to deserving UOL members who are pursuing higher education. Scholarships are awarded for academics and for service to the UOL. Recipients are announced at the Annual UOL Conventions. Over the last three years, the UOL awarded over $6300 in LSSK scholarships.

***Awards***

The Very Reverend Protopresbyter Stephen Hallick–Holutiak Senior UOL Recognition Award recognizes a lay member of the League for their accomplishments in furthering the aims and goals of the League. During 2014-2016, Senior UOL Recognition Awards were presented at the Convention to Carol Bentley of Coatesville, PA; Michael Woloschak of Youngstown, OH; and Daniel Gulak of Maplewood, NJ. The Senior UOL Chapter Achievement Award is presented to the Senior Chapter that has shown the greatest achievement in terms of accomplishing the aims and purposes of the UOL during a one-year period of time. Senior Chapter Achievement Awards were presented to Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Northampton, PA (2014); St. Demetrius, Carteret, NJ (2015); and St. Vladimir, Philadelphia, PA (2016).

***Holodomor Commemoration***

In 2013, UOL members were among those commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Ukrainian Holodomor Famine Genocide at a memorial service in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. In memory of those who perished in the Holodomor, the UOL collected $250 in donations for City Harvest, an organization in New York City that provides daily meals for thousands of families.

In November, 2015 the Ukrainian community came together in Washington, DC to dedicate a permanent memorial to the victims of the Holodomor Famine-Genocide. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and members of the Ukrainian Orthodox League played central roles in establishing this memorial. Daria Pishko Komichak, a long-standing UOL member currently serving on the UOL's National Executive Board, has been the Executive Secretary of the U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor-Genocide Awareness 1932-33 since its inception in 2006. The Committee is comprised of representatives from more than 20 Ukrainian-American organizations across the United States. It is through the tireless and selfless efforts of this Committee that this prominent memorial became a reality. The January 2016 issue of the UOL Bulletin contains numerous articles by Senior and Junior UOL members describing the significance of the memorial and their participation in the events surrounding its dedication.

***Membership and Chapter Development***

The Senior Ukrainian Orthodox League currently has 436 non-clergy members of which 41 are "members-at-large" who do not belong to a local chapter. Of the 14 chapters, the largest is St. Vladimir in Philadelphia with 80 members.

The Membership and Chapter Development Committee developed a written survey to gauge impressions of the UOL throughout the UOC of USA. Attendees at the October 2014 Annual Clergy Conference at the Metropolia Center in South Bound Brook and at the Great Lenten Retreats in March 2015 in Bethlehem, PA and Villa Maria, PA participated in the survey. In June 2015 additional surveys were submitted by individuals through their local UOL chapters. All surveys were conducted anonymously. A review of the 137 surveys completed yielded the following comparisons:

Most (that is, at least 50%) of everyone surveyed agreed with many very positive statements about the UOL, such as: "The National UOL is essential to the well-being of the UOC of USA," "Over the years, the National UOL had done a lot of good for the UOC of USA," "The National UOL is more than a social organization," "The National UOL is the training ground for the future leaders of the UOC of USA," "The National UOL supports the clergy & seminarians of the UOC of USA," and "Our local UOL chapter supports the objectives of my parish."

Most UOL lay members surveyed agreed, but most clergy surveyed did not agree or were unsure that: "The National UOL is just as important and relevant now as it was 30 years ago," and "The National UOL is essential to the well-being of my parish." In contrast with the clergy respondents, most UOL lay members did not believe that: "Money donated to the National UOL can better be used for the needs of my parish." As compared with UOL lay members, a significantly smaller percentage of the clergy believed: "The National UOL is receptive of constructive criticism," "Our local UOL chapter supports other organizations within my parish," "Our local UOL chapter is very receptive and welcoming of new members," and "Our local UOL chapter is more than a social organization." Almost no one surveyed believed that: "Our local UOL chapter is a financial burden on my parish."

These and other similar statistics provide valuable insight into how the UOL might extend its ministry to the 80% of Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA parishes that have no local UOL Chapter presence and how the UOL might improve its standing among parishes that do have local chapters. To be effective, the UOL's initiatives must address the needs of the entire Archdiocese. As a national organization, the UOL should leverage existing UOL organizational structures to cross parish lines and broaden participation. We look to be more hands-on “project” oriented rather than just passive “event” oriented, and we need to involve more members and parishioners in the planning and execution of whatever we propose. By encouraging participation and expanding individual involvement, the UOL can contribute to improving the health and vitality of the overall Church.

The importance of a strong Ukrainian Orthodox League to the overall well-being of the UOC of USA is apparent. In an article in the October 2015 issue of the UOL Bulletin, the editor Natalie Bilynsky noted that "the UOL is a unique organization within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of USA that creates bridges between parishes." She went on to observe: "Often when I speak to individuals about forming a UOL chapter, they respond, 'we do so much in our church there is no room for another organization.' When I hear this response, I challenge them to think about what organizations we have that connect you with other parishes…Another common statement I hear is 'we want an organization for our youth, a junior UOL, but not a senior chapter.' Somehow the thought is that Ukrainian Orthodox Christians need to connect with others when young but as adults we do not.”

As an organization, the UOL connects us to the larger Church family beyond our local parish boundaries. It encourages continual involvement in the life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, both nationally and locally. A primary part of the UOL's mission is to educate and train the next generation of our youth in the Orthodox faith and to become good stewards of the Church. To realize our potential, we must maintain the trust that has been placed in us by the Church.

We hope and pray that all members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA will join us to further our work for our Holy Orthodox Church and her faithful. With God's blessing, and with an eye toward the future while building upon the past, the Ukrainian Orthodox League will remain a vital ministry of the UOC of the USA that is "Dedicated to our Church - Devoted to its Youth."

In Christ's Love,

Michael J. Komichak

Immediate Past-President