

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

Mission Planting Grant Requirements

For Jan-Dec 2026 Period

Due September 29, 2025

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Orthodox Church in America's Department of Evangelization coordinates and administers the review and selection of mission communities requesting to participate in the annual OCA Church Planting Grant Program.

Applications are to be prepared by the mission community seeking to participate in the Program. Before submission to the Department, they must be **pre-approved** by the Diocesan Bishop responsible for the existing or proposed mission community.

Funding is limited and the grant process is extremely competitive.

GRANT ASSISTANCE AMOUNT

For first year grant recipients, a total maximum annual gift of up to \$40,000 is sent to Church Planting Grant communities in equal monthly installments. The grant funding period is for one year with the possibility of reapplication for a three-year maximum, to be reviewed annually by the Department, the Diocese and the mission community. The total maximum annual gift for continuing Church Planting Grant communities is \$32,000 and \$24,000 for 2nd and 3rd year recipients respectively for a total of \$96,000 over the three-year period of the grant.

The primary purpose of the Church Planting Grant is to facilitate *the ministry of a full-time parish priest in mission communities*. When not burdened by secular employment, a full-time priest-in-residence is able to devote his time fully to building up and expanding the work and witness of the mission community.

Once the Application is prepared by the mission community, approved by the Diocesan Bishop, presented and preliminarily approved by the Department, an annual budget mutually agreed upon by the mission community and the Department must be established. Then, the final recommendation is made to the Metropolitan Council and a blessing is sought from the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America.

Since the Church Planting Grant is offered for the sake of having a full-time priest-in-residence, the utmost consideration is given to the priest's salary and benefits remuneration. Funds pledged by the mission, by the mission's Diocese, assisting parishes, or other sources can be included when the budget is being developed.

QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for an OCA Church Planting Grant the following conditions must be met:

Mission Qualifications

- Preference will be given to missions that are less than three years old with approximately 50 pledging adult members.
- The Church Planting Grant funds are to be used *solely to stipend the salary and benefits of a full-time priest, and must include contributions to the OCA's pension fund.*
- A participating mission must *set yearly growth goals* as part of their monthly reporting process.
- Financial stability and growth, as a general rule, is found in communities which ground their stewardship vision and practice in the Biblical Tithes.
- All missions participating in the Church Planting Grant Program must participate in regional seminars and workshops offered or recommended by the Department.
- If the diocese of the applicant mission does not have standardized mission by-laws, they will be provided by the OCA's Department of Evangelization.
- The mission must be presented with and sign the Church Planting Grant Contract (found in this packet and completed prior to finalization of the Grant). Failure to adhere to contract will risk termination of Grant.
- Missions receiving the grant understand and accept that with the blessing of the grant comes a responsibility of love and gratitude to the wider church. As such missions may be called upon to offer their experiences to others. Additionally, the mission priest may be called upon to teach or to bear witness to the parish's growth in other parishes or missions.

Mission Priest Qualifications

- The mission priest is prohibited from working outside the parish while he is receiving a Church Planting Grant.
- The mission priest must be supervised by a mentor priest of the OCA's Department of Evangelization and may be guided as well by a mentor appointed by the Diocesan bishop. The Diocesan mentor priest must be identified to the Chair of the OCA's Department of Evangelization, and be mutually agreed upon by the Diocesan bishop and the Chairman before a mission can qualify.
- The mission priest must supply *monthly* mission reports to his Diocesan bishop, mentor priest, Diocesan Dean (or Diocesan Mission Director), the Chancellor of the

Orthodox Church in America, and the Project Lead of the OCA Department of Evangelization. Reporting forms are provided and are available in this packet.

- The mission priest must be interviewed by one member of the Department and one member of his local Diocese. A set of basic profile questions may be asked. Consultation with the local bishop on the interview results may be shared before any final decision is made.
- The Mission Priest may be asked to assist in various Departmental ministries, including mentoring other grant recipients following one's own graduation from the grant.

TERMINATION OF GRANT FUNDING

Grant funding will cease when it is demonstrated that any of the following actions have taken place:

- The annual funding limit has been reached.
- Failure to adhere to any of the criteria in the contract (provided in packet).
- Upon the recommendation of this Department and or the Diocesan bishop.
- Insufficient funds from this Department.
- Failure to adhere to the standards and bylaws of the Orthodox Church in America.

PROCEDURE

- Ask your Hierarch's blessing to apply.
- Prepare your application and all appropriate documentation.
- Submit your application to your Hierarch for his WRITTEN approval. He signs the end of your application.
- Once you have obtained the written blessing of your Hierarch, send the full application and all attachments, in PDF format, to Fr Thomas Soroka at tsoroka@oca.org.

Late applications are not customarily accepted.

All applications will be reviewed, and recommendations will be made to the Holy Synod of Bishops for their approval at their Fall meeting. Blessed recommendations are submitted to the Metropolitan Council for Funding.

Notifications of approval are normally given in November or early December, and begin in the following January.

Diocese _____

Parish Name _____

Parish City, State _____

APPLICATION Church Planting Grant

Date: _____

General Information

Name of the Mission _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Year Founded: _____

Priest: _____ Other Clergy: _____

Deanery: _____

Membership Statistics

Number of Adults at Founding: _____

Number of Children at Founding: _____

Number of Adults This Year: _____

Number of Children this Year: _____

Average Attendance at Liturgy: _____ *if the pandemic has affected your attendance, please note.

Attendance at Last Pascha: _____

Realistic approximation of membership next year: _____

Realistic approximation of membership next three years: _____

Did the mission hold an annual meeting? _____ Please enclose the report if so.

Is the Mission legally incorporated? _____ What year? _____ (If yes, enclose copy)

Does the Mission have an approved set of Bylaws? _____

What year were they adopted? _____ (If yes, enclose copy)

Does the Mission have Federal and State Tax ID? _____(If yes enclose copies)
Does the mission have insurance that cover liability and property? _____

From whom? _____

Does the Mission have a formal Metric Book? _____ Seal? _____

Does the Mission have an elected council? _____ Number on council? _____ Do they have specific responsibilities? _____

List their names and positions:

Is your Mission Council committed to the Biblical Tithe as the minimum standard of Christian Giving? YES/NO/WILLING.

Does the Mission have a choir director? _____ Number in choir? _____
Name of the Choir Director (if applicable)

Does the Mission have any other clerical ranks? (Deacons, Subdeacons, Readers)

Does the Mission have a Church School Program? _____ Average Attendance? _____ Name of Church School Coordinator: _____ (pre-pandemic)

Does the Mission have an Adult Education Program? _____ Average Attendance? _____ (pre-pandemic)
Please list other organizations that the Mission has in place.

Please list any organizations that the Mission supports?

Please list any methods the Mission is using in outreach and evangelization to the community?

Is there a formal catechumen program for the mission?

Is there a mentor priest assigned to the mission?

Name and parish: _____

Worship Space

Services are currently held in:

- Private Home
- Rented Facility
- Church Building Owned by Mission
- Building Owned by Mission
- Vacant Land Owned by Mission

Monthly Rent/Mortgage: \$ _____

Briefly explain the current worship set-up including liturgical items (send pictures):

Is there a sign on the worship space and does it indicate when services are held?

Is this space shared with other groups? Is there a set-up and take down required? By whom?

Where are classes and social functions held?

Is there an icon of the Mission's patron Feast or Saint at the facility? _____

Is there a monthly newsletter? _____ A weekly bulletin? _____

website? _____ Website address _____

Has the mission been listed on the OCA website and is the information up-to-date?

Is there a library?

Is there a bookstore/kiosk?

Is there information available for inquirers about the Orthodox Church that can be handed out?

Are there service books available?

Is there music for the congregation to follow available?

Clergy

Married: _____ Wife's Name: _____

Does the wife have outside employment: _____

Type: _____

Children: _____ Names and Ages:

Total Annual Clergy Package: \$ _____

Monthly Stipend provided by Mission: \$ _____

Other Church sources: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Health Insurance?	Monthly Cost: _____	Who pays: _____
Life Insurance?	Monthly Cost: _____	Who pays: _____
Pension?:	Monthly Cost: _____	Who pays: _____
Travel stipend?	Monthly Cost: _____	Who pays: _____
Social Security?	Monthly Cost: _____	Who pays: _____
Other taxes?	Monthly Cost: _____	Who pays: _____

Residence for a priest:

Rented

Owned by Mission

Owned by Priest

Monthly Rent/mortgage: \$ _____

Other regular monthly expenses?

Is the priest dependent on the wife's salary for continued ministry?

Mission's Financial Health

(Please send previous year's budget and next year's anticipated budget)

Income (per month)

Stewardship	_____
Collection	_____
Fund-Raising	_____
Deanery Stipend	_____
Diocese Stipend	_____
OCA Stipend	_____
Building Fund	_____
Donations	_____
Other Accounts or Funds	_____
Other Income	_____
Total:	_____

Expenses (per month)

Priest's Stipend	_____
Rent/Mortgage	_____
Utilities	_____
Insurance	_____
Operation	_____
Diocese Assessments	_____
OCA Assessments	_____
Other Expenses	_____

Total:	_____

Total Assets

Real Estate	_____
Fixed (Endowments, etc)	_____
Liquid (Checking, Savings, etc)	_____
Other (please indicate)	_____

Total:	_____

Liabilities

Mortgage Balance	_____
Personal Loans	_____
Bonds (public or private)	_____
Other (indicate)	_____
Total:	_____

Local Planting Grant Participation

The Planting Grant is a MATCHING GRANT. The mission (ideally) and/or the Diocese and/or Deanery and/or other outside sources may provide the matching amount. Please indicate the quantity and source(s) of the Mission's matching portion.

Reminder: *the Grant and the Mission's Matching portion are to be used solely for the proper compensation of a full-time parish priest.*

Mission: _____
Diocese: _____
Deanery: _____
Other: (indicate) _____
Total: _____

Please use this space for any additional comments, unique circumstances, etc:

DESCRIBE YOUR MISSION (the People, your location, your identity). How have you come together? How is your location suited to growth? What makes your mission tick? Why is this the time to apply for this grant in the life of your mission?

DESCRIBE YOUR MISSION'S APPROACH TO:
A. EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH

B. STEWARDSHIP

Mission Vital Signs

Please highlight or mark those details in each column which describe your mission.

Category Name	# of People at Liturgy	# of People in Committed Core	Shared Vision	Building/Property	Clergy and Liturgical Life	Financial Components	Leadership Structures
Synaxis	<5	2+	Low	Home	No Clergy/Mother Parish Support	None or minimal	1 Person
Core Group	8-10	3-4	Developing	Home or Rented Space	Occasional/Readers Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diocesan Policy • Shared Experiences • Total Pledges are \$300-\$400/month • Reserve=\$0 	1-2 Persons
Mission Station I	20	5+	Vision Defined	Lease Building	Supply Priest celebrating weekly or bi-weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diocesan Policy • Operating Budget • Total Pledges are \$600-\$900/month • In Reserve=\$10,000 	Core Group and Supply Priest
Mission Station II	15-20 Families	7+	Vision/Mission Defined	Lease Building and/or Own Property	Regular Priest celebrating weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diocesan Policy • Operating Budget • Total Pledges are \$1,200-\$1,500/month • Reserve=\$20,000 	Priest and Selected Council
Mission I	25 Families (or 50 People)	10+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving Vision and Mission • Goals Defined 	Develop Property	Priest assigned with regular weekly services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Assessment • Operating Budget • Other Funds • Total Pledges are \$2,500-3,000/month • Reserve=\$30,000 	Priest and Elected Parish Council and Programs
Mission II	30-35 Families	15+	Vision, Mission, and Goals Implemented	Build Hall and Own Property	Resident Priest with full Liturgical cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Assessment • Operating Budget • Total Pledges are \$5,000/month • Priest Salary • Reserve=\$40,000 	Priest and Elected Parish Council with Subcommittees
Parish	50 Families	10+	Ongoing Vision Renewal	Temple Built	Priest and/or other clergy and full schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Assessment • Operating Budget • Self-Supporting 	Priest and Elected Parish Council with Subcommittees

Emailing Procedure

Please enclose all request reports and information via Email.
Send a copy to your Diocesan Hierarch for his WRITTEN approval.

HIERARCHICAL BLESSING:

With my signature I give my blessing and support for this mission to be considered for the Planting Grant of the Orthodox Church in America.

_____Approved Diocesan Bishop _____

_____Not Approved Date: _____

Comments:

PARISH AGREEMENT/COMMITMENT:

With our signatures, we indicate our gratitude for this opportunity, and our willingness to serve as growing examples of Missionary work in our local setting. We understand and agree to our above-mentioned responsibilities, and we are committed, individually and as a mission, to Biblical Stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasure, to the Glory of God and the up-building of our mission. With God as our helper, we shall lead by example in our tithing and serving.

	Print	Sign
Priest	_____	_____
Council 1	_____	_____
Council 2	_____	_____
Council 3	_____	_____
Council 4	_____	_____
Council 5	_____	_____

Upon His approval, please forward it to the Chair of the Department of Evangelization of the Orthodox Church in America for consideration.

A copy should be sent to the Diocesan Bishop, Chancellor of the Diocese, Dean, and Diocesan Mission Director. _____

EMAIL APPLICATION AND ALL DOCUMENTS IN PDF FORMAT TO:

Fr. Justin Patterson jpatterson@oca.org

For Departmental Use Only

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

_____ Recommended

Department Project Lead _____

_____ Not Recommended

Date: _____

RATIONALE: