



The Orthodox Church in America  
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia

February 9, 2024

## INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH

*Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

Dear to God,

Christ is in our midst! This year we ministered to 126 children at the St. Tikhon's Camp Program. Through the program our youth not only learn about their faith, have fellowship with other Orthodox youth, but have the opportunity to develop lifelong relationships. These relationships and their experience help solidify their relationship to Christ and the Church.

Our Diocesan Council wanted to help get our Camp up and going again after a two year hiatus and insure that all children of the Diocese were able to attend. This year the Diocese covered the cost for all children of the Diocese. The cost of \$360 for overnight campers and \$260 for day campers. Any camper with siblings makes it quite difficult for families with more than one child. Parents, previously decided if they could not send all their children who were age appropriate, not to send any of them. Thanks be to God, we had numerous children there for the first time! Whereas in the past, Non-Diocesan Youth outnumbered Diocesan Youth, this past year our Diocesan Youth were the majority thanks to your generosity.

As a Church we should never want any child unable to attend because of the cost. Secondly, we do not want to embarrass or humiliate parents by having to ask for assistance from their parish or the Diocese, whether it is for one child or more. We as Orthodox Christians need to invest in our youth by supporting all youth ministry fully. In some Orthodox jurisdictions parishes or organizations within the parish make sure every child can go to camp by covering the costs fully.

Statistically, 70% of our youth once going away to college or entering the workforce fall away from the Church and 2/3 of those never return. We as a Church must do a better job of caring for our youth and providing opportunities for learning, fellowship and growth in their faith. Our Camp program is an important part of addressing the problem and has also contributed to young men and women making decisions to serve the Church in various ways. They want to give back.

In order to make our camp available and accessible to all our youth within the Diocese we are asking our faithful to consider sponsoring a camper with a contribution of \$360. We also ask our parishes to consider helping to underwrite the cost of caring for our youth with an annual contribution of \$500, or a greater amount if your parish sends lots of children to camp, perhaps \$360 per camper. If we can get a commitment of \$45,000 a year through various contributions, we can offer the camp free of charge for all our children. We are also setting up a donation button on our website. You may send contributions to the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, 325 N Walnut St., Bath, PA 18014 and earmark it St Tikhon's Camp. Thank you for your generosity and concern for our youth.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

+ Mark

+ MARK (Maymon), Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

*Please post on every parish website and in every parish bulletin.*



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"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine