



THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDICINE, PSYCHOLOGY, AND RELIGION

OCAMPR Annual Report
Submitted to the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops

In many ways, the past 12-18 months have witnessed landmark developments for the Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology, and Religion (OCAMPR). Established over 30 years ago as a non-profit to bring together Orthodox care-providers, physicians, nurses, therapists, chaplains, pastors, etc. for interdisciplinary dialogue and fellowship, OCAMPR has long sought to assist the Church by exploring critical pastoral issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. While the opportunities for ministry for OCAMPR are numerous, we have been most successful as an organization when we have focused our limited volunteer time and finances on hosting an annual gathering of Orthodox care-providers.

As we sharpened our focus on our annual conference over the past 8 years, attendance grew from 23 attendees in 2013 to over 150 in 2019, our last in person conference prior to the pandemic.

In the past 12-18 months, however, two significant opportunities appeared that challenged our small organization. In the Fall of 2019, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops (Assembly) charged OCAMPR to establish a Mental Health Task Force to identify and address the mental health needs of the Orthodox Church. OCAMPR responded immediately and enthusiastically by reaching out to dozens of Orthodox mental health providers across the United States and Canada, under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Assembly to set up and begin the work of the Task Force.

Mental Health Task Force

OCAMPR leadership, under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Assembly, established a Steering Committee for the Task Force and created three working groups to address the immediate needs of the Church: The Directory of Therapists Working Group, The Needs Assessment Working Group, and the Resources Working Group. OCAMPR selected the leaders and staff of the three working groups under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Assembly.

Over the past 12 months the Directory working group has set up, for the Assembly, a directory of Orthodox therapists on the Assembly website. Such a directory had been a longstanding goal of OCAMPR but it was only through the vision and efforts of the Assembly that this important resource was developed.

The Needs Assessment Working Group developed a mental health needs assessment survey and, under the direction of the Executive Committee, this survey has been distributed and publicized. We are collecting data at this time.

OCAMPR Annual Report, 2021

Early in the pandemic the Resources Working Group developed a 6-part series on Orthodoxy and Mental Health.

(<https://www.assemblyofbishops.org/news/news-archive/2020/assembly-of-bishops-mental-health-task-force-premiers-mini-series>) This series represented OCAMPR's best efforts to support the Task Force and the Assembly in providing initial direct resources on mental health for the Church. This working group is waiting on the results from the Needs Assessment survey to develop a strategic plan for additional resources.

In March, 2020, as the scope of the pandemic was becoming apparent, the OCAMPR leadership shifted our limited resources from the Task Force and conference planning toward responding to the pandemic.

COVID-19 Resources for frontline workers

In March, 2020, as the scope of the pandemic became apparent, it became clear that many OCAMPR members were frontline workers facing the uncertainty and risks associated with the pandemic. OCAMPR leadership took steps to develop specific resources for frontline workers and provided the Assembly with resources to assist people in the pandemic. OCAMPR immediately revised and expanded our website and compiled and developed an assortment of various COVID-related resources for individuals, couples, families and frontline workers.

Through an initial survey to our email list and direct interviews with frontline workers, OCAMPR identified two specific ways to support frontline workers directly.

OCAMPR leadership reached out to three Orthodox monasteries who agreed to receive names and specifically offer prayers for frontline workers and their loved ones generated from a 'request for prayers' feature developed on the OCAMPR website. The response from frontline workers to this unique collaboration within the broader church was strong and positive.

OCAMPR collaborated with several clergy to send a daily scripture quote or patristic quote with a word of encouragement to anyone who requested this on our website.

Once we put these resources in place, the OCAMPR leadership returned to our core mission of hosting an annual conference of Orthodox Care providers. In light of the pandemic related restrictions to travel and gatherings, our 2020 annual conference needed to be a virtual conference.

Virtual 2020 Annual conference

The OCAMPR 2019 Annual Conference, "Christ the Measure of Wellness: Healing Mind, Body, and Soul" was a success in many ways, particularly because this was OCAMPR's first virtual conference that OCAMPR has ever attempted. The conference theme was intended to build off of and support the work of the Mental Health Task Force of the Assembly by exploring mental illness from an Orthodox perspective. This collaboration between OCAMPR and the Assembly through the Task Force reflects the vision of OCAMPR to support and build upon the work of the Assembly in those areas within the mission of OCAMPR.

OCAMPR Annual Report, 2021

The OCAMPR leadership devoted our time to learning how to host a virtual conference. Although not immune to technical glitches, the Annual Conference was well-attended and retained many of the important elements of an OCAMPR conference.

Based on our experiences from this virtual conference, OCAMPR leadership have decided to have a hybrid 2021 conference, both in person with an option to 'attend' virtually. Our resources, at this time are devoted to preparing for our 2021 annual conference, "Care in a COVID Age: Unity and Truth in Uncertain Times," in Phoenix , Arizona, November 4-6, 2021.

Typically, our limited staffing and funds are just enough to host one annual conference, including selecting speakers, soliciting workshops and papers, coordinating recordings of the conference, arranging publicity and implementing the logistics that are associated with a conference of over 150 attendees.

It was over the past 12 + months that we, as an organization, have been stretched and challenged to take some additional steps toward expanding the offerings of OCAMPR that fall within our mission.

Beyond these main events of the past 12 months, OCAMPR continues to work towards publishing and distributing our 2019 Conference proceedings as well as distributing our 2018 conference proceedings. These types of administrative details continue to remain a challenge for our volunteer organization, but we continue to work toward these goals.

In general, and in summary, OCAMPR had a remarkable year of expansion and growth beyond our traditional focus and, looking forward, we seek to expand our base of volunteers to maintain our new, ongoing support of the Mental Health Task Force.

We are deeply grateful to the work of the Assembly and the oversight the Assembly provides to OCAMPR. We remain dedicated to our mission, as an organization, and in supporting the work of the Assembly in those areas that fall within our mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip Mamalakis,
President, OCAMPR
June, 2021