

Overview

The year of 2016 was a year of transition in many aspects of the Communications Department. Traffic to the Diocesan website saw record numbers during many months and the threshold of 10,000 visitors is to be expected from now on and not just a pleasant surprise.

The Diocesan Magazine, *Your Diocese Alive in Christ*, underwent a major change to the format. Due to these changes, only 2 issues were produced. This is an ongoing transformation, and the new year should find the magazine back on track.

www.doepa.org

The Diocesan website saw over 10,000 visitors in the months of May, August, October and November. The closest the site had ever come to that number was March of 2014, when His Beatitude TIKHON was elected Metropolitan. The numbers had hovered around 8,000 visitors until May 2016, and then they rose steadily until reaching the 10,000 point. This is a significant accomplishment, and should serve as impetus to put the website to good use. There are some decisions to be made moving forward, which will be addressed later in this report.

As mentioned in past reports if ONE PERCENT of viewers are people who are searching for a faith, the number indicates a possible ONE HUNDRED seekers. How often does one get to speak to one hundred potential converts to Orthodoxy?

His Eminence has requested that the “Announcements” section of the website focus more on our faith, education, liturgical activities and not so much on food sales, bazaars and the like. Please use your parish website, parish Facebook page, Diocesan Facebook page and local news media to spread the word, but submit any special services, classes, seminars and so forth to the Diocese. Those who use Facebook will actually be notified of your event.

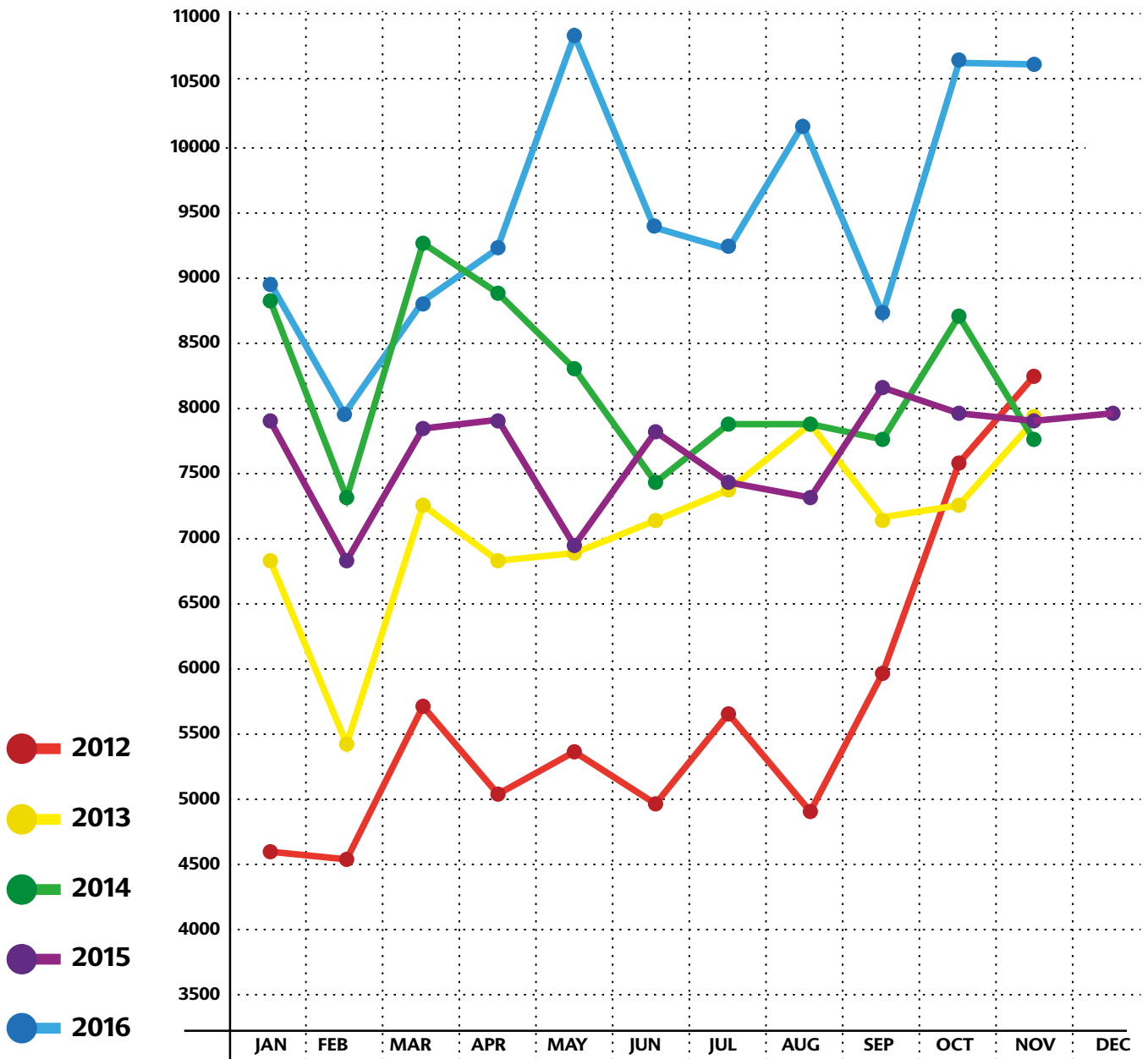
Another issue is the quality of the images sent. The Communications department realizes that not every parish has a resident photographer or expensive equipment to take photos. However, it is respectfully requested that parishes send the LARGEST, highest quality photos they can. There is a noticeable difference between photos shot with a traditional camera and those shot with a cell phone. Please take the time and make the effort to get a reasonably good photo. If there is a group involved, please get a group shot. PLEASE DO NOT EDIT, CROP or get “ARTSY” with photos (no instagram effects, coloration, odd cropping.) We have striven to develop a “brand” for the website, meaning it has a certain look and feel. Think of it as your community newspaper, and submit accordingly. Again, the OCA requirements are being followed here. Blurry photos will not be posted on the website or *Alive in Christ* as it takes away from the professional appearance of our website and publication.

The website is updated weekly, if not daily. The home page is being put to good use with a variety of issues important to the Diocese featured there.

News submissions took a dip this year – last year we saw a total of 293 stories submitted, this year brought 216. Announcements rose, with 57 submitted.

Website Statistics Comparison 2012 - 2016

Visitors Per Month



Parishes submitting news items this year:

Alden Station

Berwick

Bethlehem

Dundaff

Edwardsville

Frackville

Gradyville

Harrisburg

Jermyn

Lopez

Lykens

Mechanicsburg

Minersville

Mount Carmel

Nanticoke

Old Forge

Olyphant (Both All Saints and Saint Nicholas)

Philadelphia (Assumption)

Pottstown

Simpson

Stroudsburg

Uniondale

Wilkes-Barre (Holy Resurrection Cathedral and Holy Trinity)

Williamsport

That is just about 2/3 of the parishes in the Diocese. HOWEVER, many of these parishes submitted one story and were never heard from again. It is important to realize that publicizing your parish is a major part of “sustaining the mission.” It is a way to let the public know what you are up to, and show that you are active and do good works. It is imperative that your parish makes publicity and specifically the internet a key part of your parish life.

The design of the website is in dire need of a revamp. This has been mentioned in past reports, but this year finds the Diocese at a cross-roads. We have the traffic, and we have style and regular updates. However, the general layout and navigation of the site is cumbersome. Furthermore, with advances in technology, Google now indexes sites based on their mobile architecture. A site will not be indexed (it will not appear if one does a Google search) if it is not optimized for mobile devices. Our site is – sort of. Doing the new “site check-up” tool shows that we need to be better. Coupled with the confusing architecture of the site, it is time to do a major revamp, clean up and organize everything, fill in those missing blanks, and get rid of areas that are under utilized or not utilized at all. This merits further discussion but is very important – we have the traffic, we need to make the website more usable.

Facebook/Social Media

We have a Facebook page but it has been a gray area for years. We currently do not utilize the Facebook page at all. We could look into things like twitter or Instagram if desired, but the Facebook page is a key. We need to think of Facebook like a newspaper – with the exception that news is shared easily and quickly to a worldwide audience. A decision or action should be taken on this as we are missing opportunities to easily spread good news.

Alive in Christ

Diocesan Magazine

As mentioned in the opening statement, the Diocesan Magazine is undergoing a significant change. The new direction is as follows:

Article by the bishop – obviously bishop’s choice of topic but given Abp. Mark’s biblical education, a word study article of 1-2 pages would be good.

Article on Evangelism – alternate between “how to’s” and historic perspective, mission stories.

Article on Stewardship – Again, have both theological and practical, along with testimonials, whether from parishes or individuals.

Article on Prayer/Spiritual Life – something that speaks to the struggles of our church members in terms of prayer and Christian life, ascetic disciplines, but also the fruits of those disciplines.

Feature article on different parish –

Feature article on young person/s activity – beyond retreats, etc.

Feature article on senior person/s activity – other than wedding anniversaries.

Feature on priest/clergy activity.

These features can be as brief or extensive as the material (both quality and quantity) suggests.

This is a strong direction with great vision. However, we are at the mercy of writers and contributors, of which there are few. We have borrowed a few articles from the OCA website, and been blessed to receive a few great articles. However, it is always a chore to get these articles. There must be members of the Diocese who would be willing to write a one page article, we need participation from any who are able.

Issues Going Forward

There are two issues for which action needs to be taken, sooner rather than later. The first is the re-design and optimization of the website, which is currently difficult to navigate, and not perfectly optimized for mobile devices and therefore Google indexing. Facebook presence is also tied into this as we do not use this media at all currently and should make every effort to utilize it.

The second issue is the new direction for the Diocesan magazine, which will require articles to be submitted. The new plan is aggressive and meaningful, and can be accomplished with participation. The word needs to get out to the Diocese, and those who are able need to participate.

Conclusion

The Communications Department continues to spread the message of the Diocese. The results can be seen in record numbers of visitors to the website and much positive feedback regarding the magazine. We have come a long way in five years and there is still much to be done. It is good to see the amount of parishes participating; all need to be more regular with this. The website is updated frequently with the goings-on of the Diocese, but it needs more timely and helpful information. The Diocesan magazine has evolved, with more articles and information to go along with the photos. The core belief of the Communications Department is to spread the word, create excitement and interest, and make people sit up, take notice, and want to get involved in the Orthodox Faith along with the good works that are happening. Be a part of it! Share your good news! Do you have a parish website? Parish Facebook? Or a Parish Communications Coordinator? These are all important parts of a healthy parish. Please feel free to contact me by email or phone with any questions.

Yours in Christ

Aric Gingo
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Communications