

Overview

The year of 2017 was a banner year for the Communications Department. Traffic to the Diocesan website saw record numbers during many months and the threshold of 10,000 was not only met - it was smashed. Monthly visitors typically number well over 15,000 and 20,000 is probably not far off. This is a far cry from the high of 8,310 reported in the Communications Department's first report to the Diocese in 2013.

The Diocesan Magazine, *Your Diocese Alive in Christ*, underwent a major change to the format. The "yearbook" type of format in which news stories from the website were repeated in print was transitioned to a more meaningful format with articles dealing with our faith in a practical manner. Many thanks to Fr. Martin Browne who has been tireless in his pursuit of these articles, both writing them and gaining permission from other authors to use their work. Three issues were completed with the 4th in progress at the time of writing this report.

www.doepa.org

The Diocesan website saw over 10,000 visitors during every month of 2017. In fact, the LOWEST number of monthly visitors was in February, with 10,004 visitors. The last five months of the year, visits totaled well over 15,000 per month, with November NEARLY reaching 20,000 (19,260). In layman's terms, what this all means is the website is getting a lot of daily and monthly traffic and views which is a good thing. Using the statistics for November, if only ONE HALF of ONE PERCENT (.05%) of viewers are people who are searching for a faith, the number indicates a possible NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY THREE seekers. How often does one get to speak to nearly one thousand potential converts to Orthodoxy?

The website is updated at least weekly, but during busy times it may be updated daily. An important change was made this year due to the many notable deaths that were reported. If a very notable event occurs, the featured story will reflect this event only for a period of one day. That is - all other news items will stop appearing on the main web page for a day to give the notable event its' due. The news items will reappear after the one day period.

News items are posted as they are received - that is, if many news items are submitted, the first one received will appear first. ALL news items are staggered to appear at different days during the week. This keeps the website fresh. There have been many questions about this during the year. Submissions (unless needing approval from His Eminence) are ALL posted. They may be delayed if I am away from my office, but they will all eventually appear - but again, they will be staggered in order of receipt. ALL news items stay featured for a period of three weeks. There is an algorithm that will bump items out of the rotation if there are too many (common around major feasts).

The great jump in visitors has prompted a close look at the architecture of the website. It is obvious that the website is in need of an overhaul, in look, but especially in the organization of information. This re-design was approved by the Diocesan Council in September, and the heavy lifting of the redesign will commence in 2018. Look for a well organized, leaner website with information easier to access.

A continuing 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. Furthermore, a writeup of at LEAST the information who, what, where, and when is required. With potentially 35 parishes submitting info, it is not feasible for the Communications department to research and write each news item.

News submissions increased slightly with 241. Announcements fell, with 49 submitted.

The capacity of the website server was reached this year - we filled our allowed space of 10 gigabytes. The intent is to use the website as a repository of the history of the Diocese, and storing all photos and news there. Due to the original contract, there was never a fee for the website from Orthodox Web Solutions (OWS). However, due to the capacity being met, it was necessary to buy more space resulting in a yearly fee from OWS.

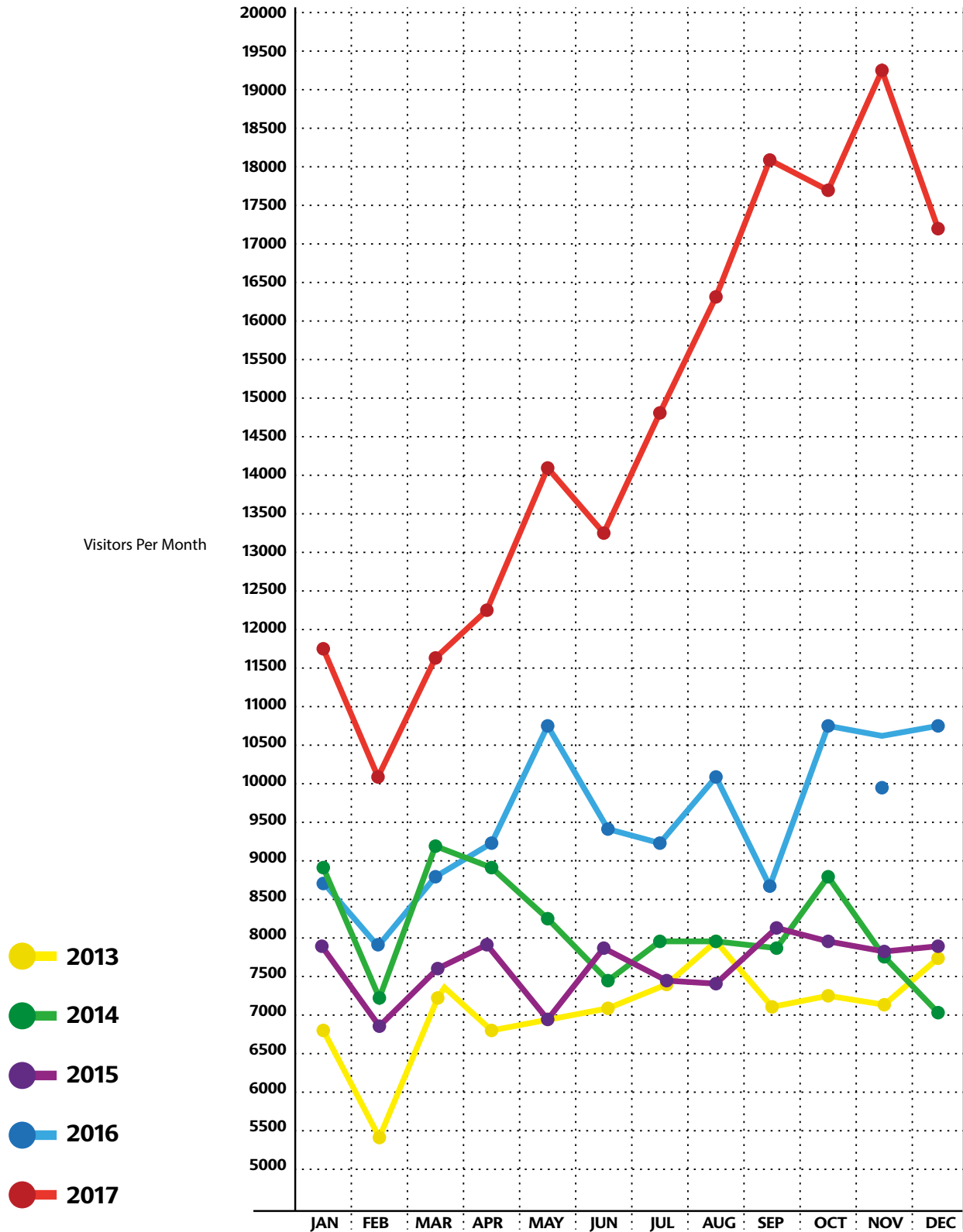
Parishes submitting news items this year:

Berwick
Bethlehem
Coaldale
Coatesville
Dundaff
Edwardsville
Harrisburg
Jermyn
Lopez
Lykens
Mechanicsburg
Mount Carmel
Nanticoke
Old Forge
Olyphant (Both All Saints and Saint Nicholas)
Philadelphia (Assumption & Stephens)
Pottstown
Simpson
Stroudsburg
Uniondale
Villanova
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.

One last area that needs to be considered is video - it is simply the way things are going, especially with youth. We have the capability to add video galleries, it is not used at all, and should be made a priority.

Website Statistics Comparison 2013 - 2017



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

As mentioned in the opening statement, the Diocesan Magazine has undergone a significant change. The new direction was discussed in depth in last year's report.

We have produced three issues this year, the fourth under production as this report is being written

Issues Going Forward

The main issue this year will be revamping the design and architecture of the Diocesan website. This will take time and thoughtfulness but should be completed by the end of the year.

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
Assistant to the Archbishop
Communications