



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

OFFICE OF IONIAN VILLAGE

OFFICE OF IONIAN VILLAGE REPORT TO THE 43RD BIENNIAL CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS

OVERVIEW

Ionian Village is the Summer Camping Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The Mission of Ionian Village is to enrich the lives of its participants by bringing campers and staff into close contact with their Orthodox faith and Hellenic heritage. Ionian Village provides the opportunity for young people of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to foster a life-long appreciation and love of Greece, Orthodoxy, and Hellenism.

This important Mission is accomplished by providing a safe and fun environment in which campers and staff can fully immerse themselves in our rich Greek heritage, experience the vibrancy of our Greek Orthodox traditions, and learn to lead Christ-centered lives. Ionian Village participants travel across Greece, venerate the relics of the Saints, walk in the footsteps of the Apostles, and visit significant sites of Greek history and culture. At the end of each program, the campers, staff and clergy return home with strengthened faith, life-long friendships based on Christian love, and an expanded appreciation for the Orthodox Church and Greek culture.

CURRENT PROGRESS

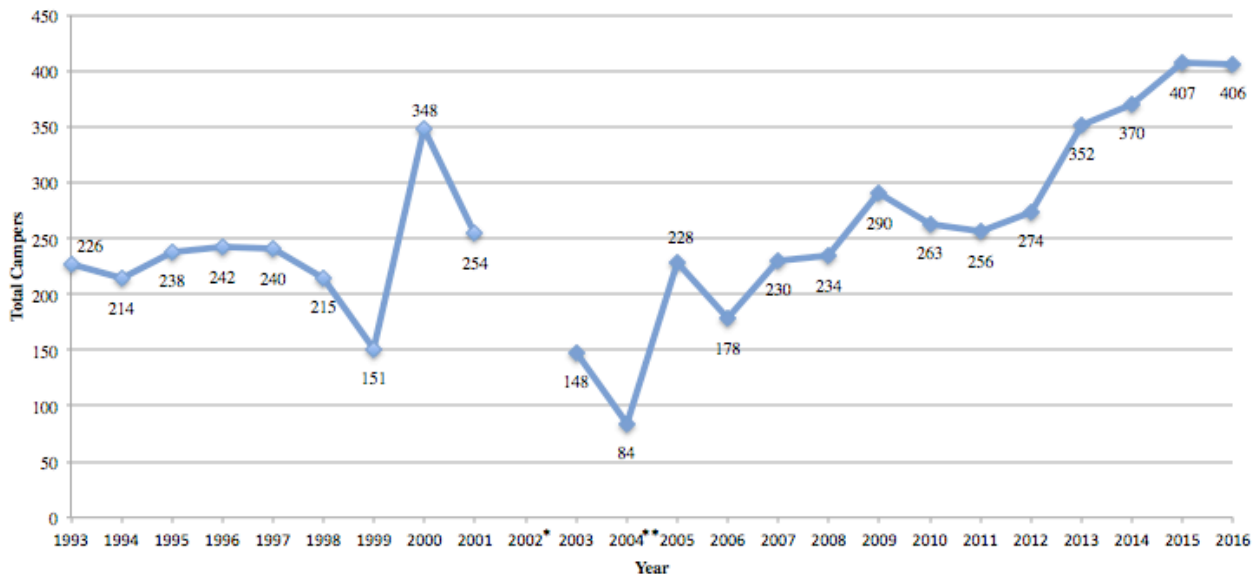
Ionian Village is in a constant state of growth and development. Since the last Clergy Laity Congress, there have been several substantial ameliorations to both the physical and programmatic aspects of Ionian Village, including:

1. GROWING REGISTRATION NUMBERS

Ionian Village continues to attract large numbers of campers eager for new friendships and a unique life-changing Orthodox experience. Each summer the camp continues to gather approximately 350-400 campers. Over the past five years, Ionian Village has experienced 43% growth in registration numbers over the previous five year.

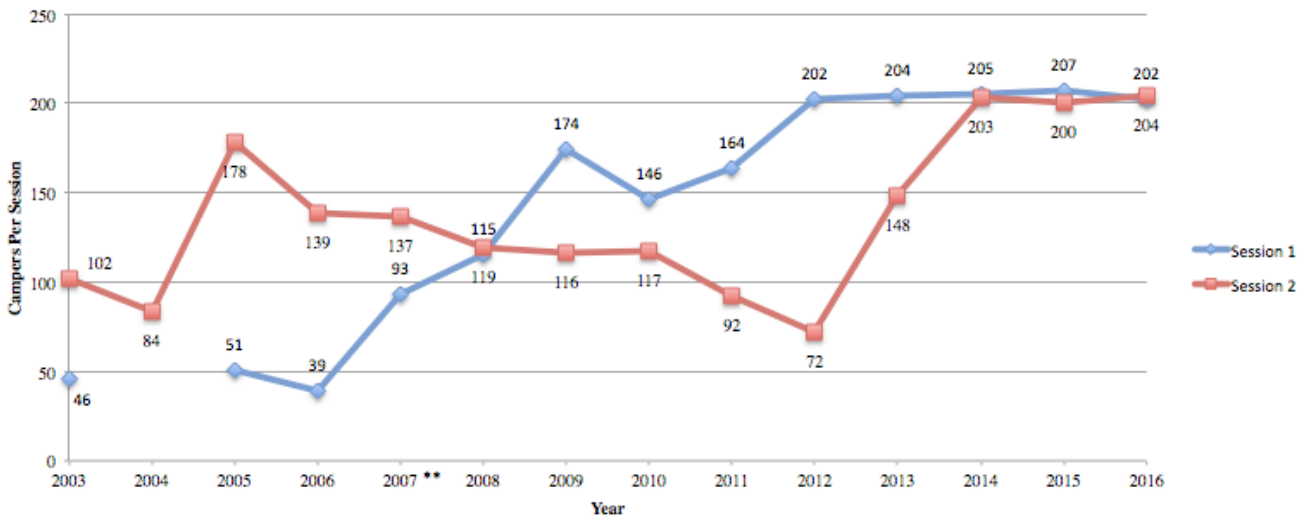
Much of this can be attributed to shifting the dates of the program to accommodate earlier start dates for many colleges, schools, and sports programs. After conversations with parents and campers, program dates were changed to the current schedule. This shift resulted in a 100% increase in Session Two campers from 2012 to 2013 and reaching full capacity of 200 in 2015.

Summer Camp Participants (1993-2016)



2016 Registration Numbers as of May 2016
 * Camp was not held in 2002 due to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks
 ** Only one session was held in 2004 due to low registration numbers

Participants Per Summer Camp Session (2003 - 2016)



2016 Registration Numbers as of May 2016
 * Only one session was held in 2004 due to low registration numbers
 ** 2007 marks the first summer where sessions were not separated based on age
 Numbers for individual sessions are not available prior to 2003.

2. INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE STAFF SELECTION

Ionian Village continues to attract Staff Members from all over the country and is becoming increasingly competitive, as more young adults are eager to share their talents with our youth. Applicants are required to submit a 90-second video creatively describing who they are and why they want to be on Staff at Ionian Village. This new aspect of the Staff Application inspires many fun, exciting and creative videos that allows the review committee to see a unique side of each applicant that does not always come across in a paper application. Each summer, the staff is comprised of a diverse group of talented young adults who bring a plethora of experience and ideas. Most importantly, they bring a sincere desire to minister to our youth that truly enriches the Ionian Village program.

3. FAITH ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Through the generosity and support of the FAITH Endowment, Ionian Village has been able to continue providing life-transforming experiences to those young campers that otherwise would not be able to financially afford to participate. In the past two years, the FAITH Endowment has distributed over 100 full or partial travel grants to worthy applicants, totaling over \$260,000. The entire family of Ionian Village alumni and most importantly those prospective campers in need thank the FAITH Endowment for their continued generosity.

4. STAFF ORIENTATION REVAMPING

Prior to the arrival of the campers each summer, the carefully selected Staff Members participate in an eight-day long Orientation to make sure that they are fully and adequately prepared for the unique and important task at hand of ministering to and caring for the campers throughout their travels with Ionian Village. Over the past few years, the Orientation program has been completely revamped to include new cutting edge Staff training techniques and team-building activities. While the new Orientation program is certainly more fun, exciting and invigorating for the Staff Members participating, at its core is the underlying need to fully prepare our Staff for the experience that lies ahead. By incorporating new techniques and by re-evaluating each summer, we can be sure that our Staff Members are ready to provide a safe, secure, and supportive environment for our campers.

5. SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY

This program, ministering to Young Adults ages 19-24, invites participants to travel in a small group under the guidance of both a resident member of the Clergy and a representative of the Office of Ionian Village. For the past two years, Spiritual Odyssey has traveled to the Ionian Village campgrounds, where a concentrated version of our longer summer camp program is held. In conjunction with their travels, ongoing conversations and daily devotionals are held to encourage the young participants to identify with the things they are seeing and to connect personally with their own faith.

6. IONIAN VILLAGE RENOVATION PROJECT

The renovation of the Ionian Village property in Greece has continued over the past two years with the intention of bringing the campsite up to date with current EU and American Camping Association standards.

IONIAN VILLAGE SECURITY FENCE

This past spring, a fence was built to add to the security of camp. Thanks to a generous donor and the foresight of the Archbishop, the fence has been completed for Summer 2016 to keep our campers safe.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Walkways that were cracked and crumbling around some of the cabins have been replaced in order to provide a safer environment for the campers. In addition, several smaller projects have occurred around campus to improve both the aesthetic beauty and safety of the camp environment for campers and Staff.

7. IONIAN VILLAGE ON-THE-GO

Inspired by a 2007 directive of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios to “find ways of making Ionian Village more accessible for participants from low and middle income families and increase the promotion of the Ionian Village program,” the *IV On-the-Go* program was established in 2013. This traveling retreat program aims to recreate the Ionian Village experience here in America. By using seasoned former young adult staff members across the country to facilitate a unique “day-at-camp” program, participants are able to get a taste of the Ionian Village experience. *IV On-the-Go* offers a new resource to our parishes and youth ministry programs and serves the dual purpose of continuing to engage the young adults who have served the camp, all while responding to His Eminence’s desire to increase the accessibility and promotion of the Ionian Village program here in America.

The Office is incredibly thankful to each of the hosting Metropolitans for opening their Metropolises and allowing this program to occur and, in many occasions, encouraging us to return. In 2015, The Office of Ionian Village received a \$30,000 grant from Leadership 100 that made the program completely free of charge to participating parishes. In the past two years, *IV On-the-Go* has visited 14 parishes and youth events across the Archdiocese. Each year, several parishes request retreats that are not able to be held due to scheduling, but needless to say the program is in very high demand.

Overall, we were able to take our Ionian Village program to an additional 325 young people, many of whom may not be able to afford the summer program, and many who did not previously know about Ionian Village.

8. IONIAN VILLAGE ALUMNI PROJECT

In the Fall of 2011, the Ionian Village Alumni Project was launched, with the goal of establishing a network of our 16,000-plus alumni. Since its launch, hundreds of alumni have responded using our online information form found at www.ionianvillage.org/alumni. Along with the Alumni Project, the first Ionian Village Alumni Newsletter was created: *The Golden Bridge*. The title references Archbishop Iakovos’ vision of a “golden bridge” between Greece and America for the young people within our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. This is the vision with which Ionian Village was founded. The first edition was published in March of 2012 and has been published once a year, with the aim of uniting our alumni and providing a central way to keep them updated about the progress of the camp. Currently, over 3,500 people have registered with the Alumni Project. In Fall 2016, we launched the “Planting the Future” campaign in hopes of raising money to plant new pines at Ionian Village. So far we have raised close to \$5,000 for the campaign.

MOVING FORWARD

In the coming years, Ionian Village will continue to grow and expand its ministries in order to offer the widest range of possibilities for its participants. In addition to that, the work to the physical plant will continue. Future projects and areas of growth include:

1. IONIAN VILLAGE RENOVATION PROJECT

Renovations to the camp will continue over the next two years. The campsite, being over 40 years old is still in need of a lot of updating. While the cabins and most infrastructure have been updated during Phases One and Two, the goal now is to evaluate the overall layout of the camp to ensure that we are both maximizing usage as well as meeting the growing needs of the camp. In addition to these evaluations, there are several big projects that must be completed over the next two years to bring the camp fully up to date including a full update of the infrastructure of the camp as well as major renovations to the Onassis Center, the Clergy Housing Complex and the camper bathroom facilities.

2. ONGOING PROGRAMMATIC DEVELOPMENT

Ionian Village will continue to review and evaluate every aspect of its programs each summer in order to constantly meet the ever-changing needs of our young campers. With the constant barrage of stimulations and temptations in the lives of our Orthodox young people ever growing, the need of Ionian Village to remain relevant for its campers is of utmost importance. We must continue to both adapt to our campers' needs and interests as well as to remain a timeless and real experience of Orthodoxy. This is a very fine line to walk. Through ongoing reflections on the summer program and on campers' individual experiences, Ionian Village will be able to meet this important calling and continue its life-transforming work for those campers who participate.

3. IONIAN VILLAGE ALUMNI PROJECT

Over the next few years, the Office of Ionian Village will continue to promote and expand the Alumni Project. The long-term goal of the Alumni Project is to follow the model of many university alumni networks in order to establish a comprehensive network through which alumni can reconnect with each other and host local events, outings, or even fundraisers. The connection of many of our alumni to the Ionian Village program is incredibly strong. Although so often Ionian Village is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, by promoting fellowship among our alumni the important ministry provided by Ionian Village can continue to flourish here in America. This past year, we held two successful alumni events. Our Alumni Brunch in Washington, D.C. had over 100 attendees while our Alumni Staff Lenten Getaway in Chicago, Illinois had over 60 former staff members who served from 2009-2015.

4. EVALUATION OF EXPENSES & FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES

The expense of running the Ionian Village program unfortunately continues to grow each year, especially as the cost of airfare to Greece gets higher. The Office of Ionian Village will evaluate the financial needs of the program, as well as outside factors such as renovations and other projects in order to determine the most appropriate and efficient way to raise money in order to cover these growing expenses. There are so many people that have been positively affected by Ionian Village and are looking for ways to give back to this unique ministry within our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. Through outreach programs such as the Alumni Project and through localized fundraising events, the fundraising goals that will be established will be able to be met.

5. EXPANSION OF SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY PROGRAMS

Just as Ionian Village must continue to evaluate its programs to remain relevant in the lives of its campers, it also must consider other methods of ministry. With the recent success of the Spiritual Odyssey program for young adults, it is clear that the demand for such programs exists within our Orthodox young adult community. Over the next few years, Ionian Village hopes to expand its Spiritual Odyssey offerings to be able to reach more young adults each summer and, eventually, begin leading pilgrimages and perhaps even volunteer-based trips throughout the calendar year. Ionian Village was created as a bridge between the Greek Orthodox faithful of our beloved Archdiocese and the centers of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in Greece and the Mediterranean. Moving into the future, by expanding its programs, Ionian Village will be able to be this important bridge not only for our teenage campers, but also for others within our Archdiocese needing to reconnect with their Orthodox faith in a tangible way.

6. IV ON-THE GO

After the overwhelming success of the program's pilot year, we look forward to expanding the IV On-the-Go ministry over the next few years to reach as many young people and as many parishes as possible. Parishes across the country are already inquiring about dates for the 2016-2017 school year, indicating that this will be another full year for this new ministry. IV On-the-Go will continue to reach these young people at no cost to the hosting parish by continuing to utilize former and present Ionian Village Staff Members as unpaid volunteers.

IN GRATITUDE

The Office of Ionian Village would like to thank all the members of the Archdiocesan Council and this Clergy Laity Congress for their tireless and constant support of this most important ministry. Especially, we would like to thank the members of the Youth Committee of the Archdiocesan Council which include our Chairman Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, our Vice Chairperson Elaine Jaharis, as well as Rev. Fr. Theodore Barbas, Rev. Fr. Nicholas Louh, Rev. Fr. John Vlahos, Rev. Fr. Luke Melackrinos, Rev. Fr. Dean Panagos, Teddy Germanakos, Peter J. Pappas, Dr. Gregory G. Papadeas, Tom Kanelos, Jim Gabriel, Sophia Henry and Drake Behrakis.

In addition, we would like to thank our co-workers in the Youth Ministry vineyard, The Office of Youth And Young Adult Ministries led by Steve Christoforou for their vision and enhancement of youth ministry over the past two years, as well as their constant support of our beloved Archdiocesan camping ministry and all our programs.

Lastly, The Office of Ionian Village would like to thank His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and all of the Hierarchs of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America for their constant love and support of this historical institution of the Archdiocese.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fr. Evagoras Constantinides
Director of Ionian Village