Beloved friends,

As we celebrate today the great feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, it gives me great joy to write and express how truly excited I am that you are a part of our Metropolis of Chicago Strategic Planning Team (SPT). I very much look forward to thanking you in person during our incredible strategic planning retreat, scheduled for November 2-4, 2018. This will truly be a historic event for our blessed Metropolis as we begin to shape our future work.

During the retreat, we will reach consensus on our metropolis Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Statement of Why, Core Values, Mission, Vision and Strategic Areas of Focus. We will also break into smaller “Task Forces” as a way to prepare our specific Strategic Goals and the necessary Action Plans for achieving them.

By now, you should have received an email and letter with the final SPT Advance Assignments. In case you do not have this, the form can be found here: http://stewardshipcalling.com/chicago-metropolis-strategic-plan/. Please remember that we must have your SPT Advance Assignments completed and submitted to SWOT@chicago.goarch.org by no later than September 21, 2018.

Below is a general outline of the retreat:

**Location:** Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church (2501 S. Wolf Rd, Westchester, IL 60154).

**Friday, November 2\(^{nd}\) 6:00 PM - 11:00 PM**

- **Dinner:** Optional dinner at the Church at 6:00 p.m.
- **Commencement:** We begin our work promptly at 6:30 p.m.
- **Conclusion:** Our work for the day will end approximately 11:00 p.m.

**Saturday, November 3\(^{rd}\) 8:30 AM - 9:45 PM**

- **Breakfast:** Optional continental breakfast at 8:30 a.m.
- **Commencement:** We begin our work promptly at 9:00 a.m.
- **Lunch & Dinner:** Lunch and dinner will be served at the Church. There is no need to bring any food unless you have special dietary restriction or food allergies.
Sunday November 4th  1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

- **Divine Liturgy**: There will be a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning.
- **Lunch**: After the Divine Liturgy, we will have lunch at 1:00 p.m.
- **Commencement**: The final sessions will begin promptly at 1:30 p.m.
- **Conclusion**: We expect to finish our work by 5:00 p.m.

As you can see, there is a lot to be done. This is why it is vital that we stay focused, remain engaged, and efficiently use time. The good news is that our proven process will allow us to complete all of this incredible work together in the time allotted, rendering you an integral part of our Metropolis’ future.

While you committed to full engagement when you signed up to be a part of the SPT, if a conflict has since developed and you must now withdraw or if you cannot participate for the entire retreat, please email our volunteer facilitator Bill Marianes at Bill@stewardshipcalling.com.

For those of you who are traveling from out of town, the Holy Apostles parish has secured the extraordinarily favorable rate of only $119 a night at the nearby Marriott Residence Inn, Oakbrook, IL. If you wish to reserve a room for Friday and Saturday nights, please use this special link: www.bit.ly/SPThotel (this URL is case sensitive).

If you prefer to make your reservation by phone, please call (800) 581-2853 and reserve under: "Holy Apostles Church group block at the Marriott Residence Inn in Oak Brook Illinois." Calling this general Marriott number will likely take longer than reserving online. Regardless of how you reserve your room, you **must book by October 12th** to take advantage of this substantially reduced rate.

Thanking you for your generous commitment of your time and talent, I remain

+ Metropolitan Nathanael

+ Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago
Rules of Engagement for Strategic Planning Retreats

1. We will stay on schedule (unless modified by the Facilitator, who is OZ).

2. Titles, rank, position and roles of participants are left outside the room. During the retreat, everyone is equal (except OZ – see rule 1).

3. We will speak and interact confidentially. There can be NO repercussions for anything said. (“What happens in our meetings stays in our meeting”).

4. Ask questions if you don’t understand, because no idea or question is dumb (unless it has already been asked and answered).

5. Tangential/side issues will be parked.

6. No texting/emailing/tweeting/Facebooking/ private conversation/phone calls.

7. All decisions will be made by consensus. We will not be voting. Majority does not rule. Consensus will prevail.

8. Bill’s 3 Bucket Rule applies. Bucket 1 = things we control; Bucket 2 = things we can influence; Bucket 3 = things we can’t do anything about. We will focus on Bucket 1 and 2 issues and spend no time on Bucket 3 issues.

9. Everyone MUST participate. (“get in the game, or stay home”)

10. Be honest and “no spin.” No party lines. Think about what will really make a difference in the Church, and not just what you want. It’s about Christ’s church, not you.

11. No defensiveness. Disagree agreeably. Listen carefully before you object or agree. (“Seek first to understand, and then to be understood.”)

12. Absolutely NO “Discussion Killers.” (e.g., “we tried that once,” “it won’t work,” “you don’t know what you’re talking about,” etc.) Be positive/encouraging.

13. Think strategically, creatively and outside the box. Think long (not short) term

14. Speak precisely and make your point succinctly. (Save the long, funny or personal stories for personal time.)

15. We are all members of the Body of Christ, our Holy Orthodox Church and made in the image and likeness of God. Let’s interact with each other as if we were interacting with our Father Creator. Let us treat one another with love and respect and allow the Holy Spirit to participate freely.