

FRACKVILLE + DEANERY

2018 Diocesan Assembly – Frackville Deanery Report

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, *Dean* + Priest Stephen Vernak, *Assistant Dean* + Archpriest John Onofrey, *Secretary/Treasurer*

The Frackville Deanery is comprised of ten parishes which are all serviced regularly by either assigned clergy or visiting clergy. There was a lot of transition this past summer. Fr. Michael Hatrak retired, and moved to Western Pennsylvania. We thank Fr. Michael and Mat. Valeria for their many years of service to the diocese, and wish them Many Years! Fr. John Edward was transferred to Pottstown, and Fr. Ignatius Hunter soon was assigned to Mt. Carmel. Fr. James Weremedic was transferred from Bethlehem to St. Mary's in Coaldale. This past December Fr. Seraphim Reynolds was ordained to the Holy Priesthood and was assigned Acting Rector of Holy Ascension in Lykens, and was named Administrator of Sts. Peter & Paul in Minersville, where he also began to serve regularly. We especially thank Fr. Michael Evans and Fr. James Chuta for filling in where needed throughout the year.

Our Deanery brotherhood meets twice a year to discuss matters of the deanery and to encourage fellowship among the brethren. We had Lenten Mission Vespers throughout the Deanery with His Eminence, our Archbishop Mark, present when he was available. We still face the normal challenges facing the region. Holy Trinity McAdoo, and St. Mary's in St. Clair are without resident priests, yet having services as supply priests are available. Below are submitted reports from the respective parishes to give a snap shot into the life of each community.

St. Mary's Church: Coaldale, PA (1909) - www.stmarysnativity.org

Archpriest James Weremedic, Rector

Archpriest Paul Ropitsky, Attached

We were blessed to welcome Fr. James Weremedic as our permanent priest for our parish. Full cycle of services returned as well as few new traditional services started. We thank Fr. Paul Ropitsky and Fr. Michael Evans for their support during the absence of a Rector.

Highlights during the past year: We held our Patron Saint Dinner in September at Capriotti's in McAdoo. Every Sunday after Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour was held in the Church Hall with coffee, soda, food, and fellowship. Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries were recognized and celebrated. Each month the Good Samaritans sent cards and sometimes gifts to the Shut-ins. Our Bi-monthly Parish Newsletters were mailed to over 150 members and friends. Also, we mail to our Shut-Ins the weekly bulletins. These communications are long standing at St. Mary's and are continuing through the efforts of several parishioners. Held two successful Fish Dinners, during March and December, two Yard Sales, a Summer-Time Picnic, a Tail-Gate Party and a Basket Bingo. Collected Boyer's Rebates and Redner's Tapes for Building Fund. Donations were made to the Hurricane Relief Effort, through direct contributions and to the IOCC. We also made donations to the OCMC, Agia Sophia, a seminarian at St. Tikhon's, Fr. George Volkovinsky, and the Fr. John Nightingale Appeal. Two local non-profit organizations also received donations: Panther Valley Summer Food Program and Coaldale CHOSE.

Holy Ascension Church: Frackville, PA (1915) - www.haoca.org

Archpriest James Jadick, Rector

Holy Ascension Parish continue to support our college students with contact via e-mail and phone. A bi-monthly newsletter for all members of the parish is done by me with the emphasis on noteworthy church events and historical background of our faith. Our choir is now under the direction of Andrew Rudenko. Even though a high school student, he has willingly been leading the choir for services. We have adopted a "total parish" concept for education which incorporates both children and adults in varying topics which stimulates open discussion and enhancement of their Orthodox faith. Weekly bulletin inserts encourage discussion and offer opportunity for members to learn at their own discretion. Encourages feedback for discussion. Parish outreach to local community via food banks and participation at various community events: Pumpkin Festival, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, etc. We have taken the significant responsibility of assisting one of our own members with a financial crisis. The parish council has approved a large loan so that their home may be secured. This event has since been completed and all monies returned to the church. And of course we are still in the process of paying off our mortgage for the new front entrance and elevator. Continued projects such as: pierogies, holiday cookie sales, bread and paska sales, food festival have become community wide "events" for our parish. All have grown significantly!

Christ the Saviour Church: Harrisburg, PA (1963) - www.christthesaviourhbg.org

Priest Stephen Vernak, Rector

Archpriest Daniel Ressetar, Pastor Emeritus

Below are some highlights from the life of our community in 2017:

From Thursday, January 26 - Friday, January 27 we hosted His Eminence Archbishop Mark and the clergy and faithful from throughout the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern PA. The spirit of the Diocesan Assembly was peaceful, the liturgical services were beautiful, and the hospitality was gracious and delicious! Many thanks to all our parishioners who offered their time and talents in hosting this important event! On Sunday, March 12th (St. Gregory Palamas), we welcomed the St. Tikhon Seminary Mission Choir. The choir sang beautifully under the direction of Benedict Sheehan. Third year seminarian Fr. Mikel Hill delivered a wonderful homily, encouraging us in our Lenten struggle! On Sunday, March 26th we celebrated Fr. Daniel Ressetars 90th Birthday (actual date March 27th). Our parish surprised him with a new set of red vestments, and held a luncheon in his honor at Fellowship. May God bless Fr. Dan with continued peace, prosperity, and good health as he continues to serve our parish, and the Church - even as he officially becomes a nonagenarian! Mnogaya Lyeta! Following Divine Liturgy on Palm Sunday, April 9th the we were treated to our first Paschal Play entitled "Our Risen Lord". The extensive production was a labor of love amongst the talented parishioners of our community. A special thanks to our director Angie DiFlorio, and all of the cast and crew! Bravo! On Saturday, April 29th the Holy Fire, which miraculously emerges from the Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem each Pascha, continues to be distributed to parishes throughout N. America (and all over the world), and was received by our parish before Vespers. On Saturday, April 29th over 20 members of our parish participated in a community service day with "Rebuilding Together Harrisburg" On Saturday, June 17th the Miraculous, Myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos from Honolulu, Hawaii once again visited our parish, and was greeted by the faithful clergy and laity from the greater Harrisburg Orthodox Churches.

We welcomed Fr. Theodore Jurewicz back to our parish (June 13 - July 2) to continue working on our temple iconography. This visit saw the completion of the Angelic Liturgy icons, which are located immediately outside the iconostasis, in the nave of the church. On Sunday, August 20 our parish community bid a fond farewell to Rdr. James, Alison (Elizabeth), and Madeleine Latimer. Rdr. James has been our choir director the past four years, and under his directorship our choir has flourished, and with it, the spiritual atmosphere of our parish. The Latimer's began attending St. Tikhon Seminary in the fall. May God grant them many blessed years!

On Sunday, August 27 our community welcomed our new choir director, Rdr. Christopher Rakowski and his wife Martha. They are both graduates of St. Vladimir Seminary. Christopher brings over 20 years of directing

experience, and both he and Martha are quickly becoming woven into the fabric of our parish family. On Tuesday, September 19th we hosted the renowned Konevets Quartet from St. Petersburg, Russia for a concert of sacred and folk music. Our faithful and guests enjoyed a beautiful concert, and time of fellowship that followed. On Sunday, October 22nd we participated in our 2nd Annual Ministry Faire. The event was held immediately following Divine Liturgy in the Fellowship Hall, and featured the various ministry opportunities that serve Christ, His Church, and our local community. On Tuesday, October 24th we welcomed well known author and theologian Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon. His lecture was part of series delivered in the Diocese of Eastern PA, and was focused on an Orthodox understanding of the Atonement. On Wednesday, November 22nd (the eve of Thanksgiving) we welcomed His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, as well as clergy and faithful from our local Orthodox churches to offer the Akathist "Glory to God for All Things". This Pan-Orthodox event is held annually, and rotates between each of our Harrisburg area parishes. On Sunday, December 10th at fellowship our parish held its annual Nativity Pageant. This years pageant was entitled "The Miraculous Birth". We are thankful to our dedicated teachers, parents, and students who make such a wonderful effort each year - edifying and entertaining all of us!

On Sunday, December 17th we welcomed His Eminence Archbishop Mark to set-aside three of our faithful for service to Christ's Holy Church. At the conclusion of the Hours, James Kushlan was tonsured a reader; and Rdrs. Peter (Scott) Staller and John Shingara were ordained as Subdeacons. During the Liturgy Subdeacon Peter (Scott) Staller was ordained to the Holy Diaconate - Axios! We ask God's blessing and "Many Years" upon our newly ordained, and their families. We give thanks to Almighty God for raising up these vocations to serve our parish home!

Holy Ascension Church: Lykens, PA (1912)

Fr. Seraphim Reynolds, Acting Rector

Holy Ascension received a great blessing with the ordination of Fr. Seraphim Reynolds, who is now assigned as Acting Rector. Now that a priest is in residence, two Divine Liturgies will be served each month (2nd and 4th Sundays), and also additional services for the faithful. 20 souls are on the Parish roll (up 5 from last year), and we have anywhere from 18-35 on any given Sunday.

Holy Trinity Church: McAdoo, PA (1910)

Served by Diocesan Clergy

Holy Trinity continues to be served twice a month by diocesan clergy. The faithful have committed to building up the community through food sales for financial stability and in charitable giving. McAdoo is a warm and welcoming community and you are welcome to join them on a Sunday!

Holy Apostles Mission: Mechanicsburg, PA (2004) - www.holyapostleschurch.org

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, Rector

Baptisms: 10

Chrismation: 6

Catechumens: 5

Weddings: 2

Parish Funerals: 2

Parish Vocations: 2 (Reader & Priest)

The New Year brought us a special event: Jake Kurtz's Eagle Scout project ceremony (he constructed our new Altar Table) was hosted in our Church. Not only that, but we had two Eagle Scouts! Adam Minarich had his Eagle Scout ceremony (he built the patio next to the founding cross) in late April!

Nathan Jekel was tonsured a reader when Archbishop Mark visited right before Great Lent began. He also bestowed Diocesan Gramotas on the Building Committee members for their work in the Building Project. His Eminence returned for Holy Saturday services and blessed the new cemetery cross.

Pascha is always wonderful, but to be able to serve it in the new building was especially meaningful, and beautiful beyond description! The choir was absolutely on point! A special blessing was the gift of the Holy Fire from Jerusalem which still burns in our Church. Christ is risen! On May 6, Fr. Chad Hatfield, from St. Vladimir's Seminary visited the parish with Protodeacon Gregory Hatrak (Memory Eternal! +7/1/17) and gave an excellent talk on "Mary, Mysteries, and Mission." We had a great turnout, and were thankful for our speaker who made time to come to us despite his incredibly busy schedule. Parking lot lights were installed that we did "in house." The security and elegant external illumination that they provide are wonderful. They look great!

One of the strangest things of this year was waiting to have funds released...because grass had to grow. Through the ingenuity and sweat equity of our parishioners this was accomplished and the township released that money right around the time we sold the old building. Glory to God! That was such a weight off our shoulders as other comparable properties in that very complex have been on the market for YEARS. Miracles abound!

We were blessed with a whirlwind mortgage reduction campaign where for a short time we had a generous offering of matching funds toward the reduction of our mortgage. Thank you to all who supported it while it was offered!

This year's Vacation Church School (June 19-21) was a real blessing as we could use the new building for the first time (a constant sentiment). Our wonderful team did an outstanding job presenting the theme: "Science Lab: Discovering the Parables of Christ." A fun end educational was had by both children and teachers alike! The summer also had a new shed put on the property and a playground for the kids. We rejoice at our well-manicured and inviting property. It really is coming together!

St. Katherine's Homeschool Co-op started in September with over 30 students! Our able parishioners serve as teachers to this new and exciting ministry. Church School opened this year with a parish lesson, as we served a "teaching Liturgy" where Father explained the Proskomedia service, and in lieu of a sermon, explained important points of the Liturgy.

Another highlight of the year was the completion of our beautiful Iconostas and the visit of the Archbishop to bless it! It was constructed by Fr. Joseph Toroney, and the icons were painted by St. Tikhon's resident Master Iconographer, Ivan Rumiantsev. We are very thankful for a very generous anonymous donation to get things started, and the many parishioners' and friends' donations that went towards paying for the project.

The greatest and most rewarding of all the events of the year was the ordination of our Fr. Seraphim to the Holy Priesthood, by His Eminence, Archbishop Mark, on Christmas Eve – Axios! Fr. Seraphim will now be serving both the Lykens and Minersville Parishes. We will miss him, but know he will do well serving the faithful in these communities. We wish him Many Years of fruitful service in the Lord's vineyard.

Thank you all for sharing in our joy with us! Glory to God for all things!

SS. Peter and Paul Church: Minersville, PA (1910)

Fr. Seraphim Reynolds, Administrator

With the retirement of Fr. Michael Hatrak this past June, the parish was vacant for most of the year due to a lack of available clergy. Fr. Seraphim Reynolds began to serve the folks here at Sts. Peter & Paul on Dec 31, with a tentative schedule of two Divine Liturgies a month (1st and 3rd Sundays). The people have a desire to grow, and are reaching out to the local community. According to the Parish Council, Sunday attendance averages 20-25.

St. Michael Church, Mount Carmel, PA (1907) - www.stmichaelsorthodoxchurch.org

Fr. Ignatius Hunter, Acting Rector

2017 was a year both of continuity and change at St. Michael's. Many of the ministries of the parish remained the same, but there were also significant changes, not least of which was the change of rector in July.

Speaking first of continuity, St. Michael's continued helping local aid organizations this year; most notably by providing non-perishable food donations and occasional cash donations to the local food banks and to God's Chuck Wagon, a mobile soup kitchen. The parish also continued to help the Lower Anthracite United Way assist children in the area by collecting back packs and school supplies. We held a "Community Soup Day" in January and a free-to-the-public Veterans Breakfast in November.

Additionally, we continued outreach to Serenity Gardens, a local nursing home. On the first Saturday of every month, the parish celebrated Great Vespers at the home with a number of residents. Additionally, for Mother's Day and Father's Day, we provided carnations to all residents and nursing home workers. In September, we held a cook-out for the residents and served over 100 hamburgers and hotdogs. For Veterans Day, the parish wrote out cards for every resident that served their country. For Christmas, the parish wrote out Christmas cards, baked cookies, and sang Christmas carols following Saturday Vespers.

Our pierogie project ran throughout the year, excluding the summer months. In addition to being an excellent fundraiser, it is also a wonderful community activity which brings many people from the local area together. We stand very much in awe of our neighbors' love for us as they assist us with this project.

Fr. John continued his Adult Education classes on the last Sunday of each month during the Coffee Hour after Sunday liturgy. He explored the differences between Orthodoxy and other forms of Christianity such as Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism. Fr. Ignatius followed him in this, exploring Calvinism and Pentecostalism, among others. Additionally, the parish ran a Youth Education Program from January to June.

In terms of change, the parish has tended toward expanding its offering of liturgical services in 2017. Fr. John reintroduced the Great Canon of St. Andrew and weekly Presanctified Liturgies during Great Lent and Fr. Ignatius introduced weekly Wednesday night vespers in August. In September, the parish began attempting an outreach to the Danville area by holding vespers services once a month at Geisinger Medical Center. Very few non-parishioners attended these services, and they were discontinued after November. Fr. Ignatius also began the custom of serving lityas as a part of the Great Vespers on the eves of feast days.

In November, Fr. Ignatius introduced a series of Bible studies which followed after Wednesday vespers. These studies attracted a significant number of non-parishioners. Other significant events which occurred in the life of the parish include the following: On Holy Thursday, April 13th, His Eminence, Archbishop Mark celebrated Matins for Holy Friday with the Reading of the Passion Gospels. Fr. John concelebrated. In May, the men in the parish had a Women's Appreciation breakfast where they prepared and served breakfast to all the women in attendance following Divine Liturgy. In June, a parish picnic was held at Knoebel's and families were provided tickets for rides. On July 16th, Archbishop Mark celebrated Divine Liturgy at St. Michael's. Afterward, we held the annual parish cookout. It was well attended. In September, we held a Moleben for MCA High School Football Team. In December, the parish held its fifth annual Christmas Sing-A-Long. Parishioners also wrote out Nativity cards for the sick, for friends of the parish, and for those who had not been attending services.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church: Saint Clair, PA (1911)

Served by Diocesan Clergy

The parish of Holy Assumption in St. Clair continues to have Sunday services with visiting clergy, and Typica with Reader Gregory Sagan when no supply priests are available. Church members are grateful that they have the opportunity to attend the Divine Services and receive the Holy Mysteries. The parish has started a fledgling outreach program including a Facebook page with a growing audience which is regularly updated, and the broadcast of Scripture readings and homilies during the services on Facebook Live. There has not been any recent growth, but the Church's administration is optimistic with the outreach, and the encouragement of parishioners to be ministers of the Gospel among their friends and neighbors.

St. Herman of Alaska Church: Shillington, PA (1973)

Archpriest John Onofrey, Rector

As St. Herman's Church in Shillington begins its forty-fifth year, we are pleased to report that 2017, was a very successful year. The parish is led by Fr. John & Matushka Stephanie Onofrey who have served St. Herman's for thirty-two years. We also enjoy spiritual guidance and inspiration from Fr. Michael & Pani Anne Marie Slovesko, and Fr. James & Presbyteria Angela Laliberte, who in retirement, have been additional blessings to the parish. We also enjoy having Fr. Joseph Toroney and Fr. Stephen Janos, as priests attached to our parish. Fr. John and the Church serve Orthodox Christians that reside in five counties in Southeastern PA. Although we have lost a few members over the past few years (marriage, job replacement, parish transfer, death), we are happy to report for 2017, we have an increase in our membership from 103 Adults and 22 Children, 125 Souls for 2017, to 109 Adults and 27 Children or 136 Souls for 2018. We are also very pleased to report that two of our Members, Daniel & Tabita Valentine, are presently residing near St. Tikhon's Seminary, where Seminarian Daniel is enrolled.

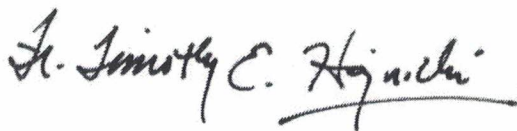
St. Herman's Church, along with its full cycle of Divine services, is also very busy participating in Diocesan and Frackville Deanery services, celebrations and events, as well as local Pan-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Community events. The parish welcomed with great joy two pastoral visitations by His Eminence, Archbishop MARK, during Holy Week, at all Holy Friday Divine Services, and on the weekend of October 7-8. During both visitations, His Eminence had cordial and fruitful interaction with the faithful.

Financially speaking, St. Herman's Church in Shillington had another successful year. Parishioner donations and tithing have been very positive, and our Church was able to maintain its 10 percent Tithing Level to the Diocese. This financial stability was maintained despite the challenges of escalating expenses, increasing Health Insurance premiums and future Building maintenance concerns. Although we are limited in our resources, the parish does its very best of going beyond its doors, with outreach programs. St. Herman's consistently supports St. Tikhon's Seminary and Monastery, Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Convent) in Ellwood City, as well as the IOCC, OCMC, and local charities, a Group Home in Berks County and needy families in the Lancaster-Lebanon County areas.

A very important aspect of life at St. Herman's Church in Shillington is Parishioner Fellowship and Agape. Every Sunday following the Liturgy, the Church Hall is filled with great food and fellowship. This togetherness and parishioner unity has been augmented and enhanced by the Agape Meal after the Paschal Celebration, our annual Parish Family Picnic, the Pre-Advent Harvest Dinner, the St. Nicholas Sisterhood Dinner, Theophany Eve Holy Supper, as well as parish projects, and yes, Pierogie and Ethnic Food Sales. An important area of our parish is Religious Education, this has been a very difficult struggle. Every Sunday during the school year, St. Herman's has classes for three age groups of our Children and an Adult Discussion Group with Fr. John. We also continue to offer Bible Study a few evenings each month. Attendance and participation for these programs could be better, however we continue struggling to educate the faithful of all ages.

To conclude, Fr. John and the Faithful of St. Herman's Church in Shillington are looking forward to the challenges of the New Year of 2018. Hopefully and Prayerfully with the Blessing and help from our Lord, we will not only maintain these high standards achieved over the past forty-four years, but increase and elevate them to a level, "well pleasing to God".

Respectfully submitted,



Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, Dean