

2016 CLERGY CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Fr. Nicholas Solak, Coordinator

In an endeavor to provide opportunities for our clergy to enhance their knowledge and continue their education, the following clergy continuing education programs were held for our clergy along with two additional workshops for clergy and parish officers.

March 10-11 – Franciscan Center.

Fr. Joseph Morris, Abbot at St. Gregory of Palamas Monastery, Hayesville, OH Spoke on *Prayer* and on *The Priesthood and the Family*.

March 21 – Fr. Chad Hatfield spoke at the Diocesan Center about *Sacerdotal Living and Renewal*.

June 2 – Church Mutual Workshop at Holy Trinity Church, Pottstown

An expert was flown in from Church Mutual Insurance Company to speak about Officers, Directors, and Trustees Coverage and the need for cyber liability coverage and the point that protection of the Officers is in direct correlation to following the parish by-law and the Statute of the O.C.A.

June 21-23 – St. Tikhon's Seminary Clergy Retreat. Various speaks on the Topic: *Our Youth: A Precious Portion of Today's Church Community in Great Need of Attention*.

September 22 – Christ the Saviour, Harrisburg.

Viewed the movie SPOTLIGHT, documenting the investigation that exposed clergy sexual misconduct in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boston. Fr. Martin Browne facilitated a discussion around the plight of the various victims of sexual abuse and the systemic issues surrounding it. Importance of not simply protecting the Church from financial consequences but more importantly protecting the innocence of our youth and faithful.

October 17-20 – Coffee with Sister Vassa Tour – Arranged by Father Stephen Vernak. Sister Vassa spoke to various parishes on topics ranging from *Sharing the Gospel in the Age of the Internet*, *Contemporary Challenges in pursuing Vocations*, *Keeping Christ in Orthodoxy*, and *Scripture in Orthodox Liturgy and Everyday Life*.

October 29 – St. Nicholas, Bethlehem - Church Mutual Workshop
and

November 5 – Holy Trinity, Wilkes-Barre- Church Mutual Workshop

Presentation on our being stewards of the parish and how it is important to know what one may or may not do and still be covered by your insurance carrier.

Still Waters in the midst of Ministry's Raging Currents. An ongoing education program from the Pastoral Institute's Clergy-in-Kairos program, www.pastoralinstitute.org

H.O.P.E. PROGRAM

The Clergy Peer Learning Program – HOPE – has completed its first year. At present, 20 priests and 8 priest wives are participating in our program. Our Diocese has 8 priests and 6 wives participating in the program. The other priests in the program belong to the OCA's

Diocese of New York and New Jersey, Western Pennsylvania, Albanian Archdiocese, the Greek Archdiocese, the Antiochian Archdiocese and the Serbian Archdiocese ... nicely reflecting the pan-Orthodox character of the program.

During the year, I've made HOPE presentations to the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. The Diocese of the Midwest and the Diocese of the West have scheduled a presentation on Clergy Peer Learning at their annual assemblies. Further, I have had several meetings with clergy leaders in the Greek Archdiocese and invited several of their priests to our Fall facilitators training at Saint Tikhon's monastery in September. They have already started 3 clergy peer learning groups with the intention of expanding quickly in the coming years.

Clergy peer learning groups present an exciting opportunity to approach the challenges of parish ministry in new ways. By engaging learning, resources and support in the context of peer groups, our priests can find greater personal health and greater strength and creativity to meet the opportunities in parish ministry.

Clergy peer learning groups hold promise to make our good parish priests better parish priests - and in the challenging context of our day that is a welcomed promise. Better parish priests equals healthier and more vitalized parishes. Clergy peer groups bring priests together to take charge and responsibility for their own theological learning. Under the guidance of trained facilitators, these peer groups will not only strengthen theological learning, but will also nurture pastoral and personal growth.

Parish ministry is demanding and increasingly complicated in today's context. Clergy peer groups regularly brings priests together to take charge of their learning, build strong and supportive relationships, and share experiences from their good pastoral work. These clergy peer groups are guided by trained facilitators prepared to direct groups in open and respectful conversations that lead to healthy clergy relationships and good development in pastoral work.

The Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania is excited to implement clergy peer groups in our Diocese. The Diocese is committed to providing the best facilitators for these groups and the financial resources and administrative support to help them be successful. Eager participants will find the focus these groups offer on practical and theological challenges and the peer support they build to be a welcomed enrichment to their parish ministry.

Clergy wives play a vital role in the health of our parishes. Their contribution to the health of our parishes cannot be overstated. Peer learning groups made up of clergy wives and facilitated by trained and experienced facilitators will provide much needed care to our clergy families and, in turn, strengthen our parishes. Supporting these groups affirms the value of our clergy families in general and the good sacrifice of our clergy wives in particular. It's necessary we support their spiritual, emotional, and social growth.

Finally, I was recently interviewed by Dr. Rossi on his "Becoming a Healing Presence" podcast on Ancient Faith Radio about Clergy Peer Learning. That interview can be found at:

http://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/healingpresence/clergy_peer_learning_groups_an_interview_with_fr._nicholas_solak