

PHILADELPHIA DEANERY REPORT FOR DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY 2018

During the past year we held a number of Deanery-wide events. Holy Trinity in Pottstown, St. Mark's in Wrightstown and St. Herman of Alaska in Gradyville hosted Lenten Deanery Vespers. St. Stephen's Cathedral hosted for the first time a Deanery service of Unction on Holy Wednesday presided by His Eminence, Archbishop Mark. The Philadelphia Deanery also hosted a lecture by Fr. Reardon (sponsored by the Diocese) on the Orthodox understanding of Atonement. In September the clergy and their families gathered for the Deanery picnic and had a wonderful time in fellowship.

Below are the reports from each parish in the Deanery.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Catasauqua, PA

2017 was a good year for Holy Trinity. For the first time in many years we have an increase in members! While the increase is small we are optimistic we are starting to turn the corner and grow. At the end of the year we conducted a parish survey of present and former parish members as well as friends. The results overwhelmingly showed us our strengths and showed several areas for improvement. We are presently evaluating the information we received and starting to chart a path forward based on the survey results.

St Herman's Orthodox Church, Gradyville, PA

This past year 2017 was one of the most exciting and eventful years in our parish history. January began with the feasts of the Circumcision and Epiphany with the Great Blessing of water and, of course, our annual children's Yolka or Christmas pageant. The month of February was filled with the set up of the exhibition entitled, *Blood and Soul*, commemorating the Russian Revolution and the election of St Patriarch Tikhon as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. This exhibit was opened with a solemn Panikhida or Memorial Service with His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon as celebrant with numerous clergy from both the diocese and Brotherhood of Philadelphia. Choirs from both St Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's Seminaries sang the responses. Special videos of the opening, tours and narrative of the 6-month long exhibition were made and are on Villanova's websites and YouTube.

We also had several baptisms during this month as well as our annual Maslenitsa or Cheesefare Dinner preceding the beginning of Great Lent. Father John also participated in the annual diocesan clergy retreat held at our neighbors facility in Ashton, PA.

March and April were filled with special lenten services leading us to the Feast of Feasts, Pascha. One of the highlights was the Mission Service held at our Church on April 4, 2017 with 20 priests and a church overflowing with the faithful.

During the month of May we continued our parish activities with our successful Tea to a sold-out crowd. During these months our St Catherine of Alexandria Literary Society

was holding weekly online group discussions hosted by our Protodeacon Joseph Edwards. Father John and parishioners helped in the preparation of the Museum and Repository at St. Tikhon's Monastery for the annual pilgrimage, the weekend of May 29th, 2017.

June was opened with the Great Feast of Pentecost after which we took a parish photo in front of our Church with an overflowing crowd..July and August , our parish continued our many projects including our Kitchen remodeling as well as our tremendously-successful parish picnic.

September and October were filled with weddings and baptisms and preparation workshops in anticipation of our annual Parish Festival Nov. 10, 11 and 12, 2017. This year our parish hosted the Hawaiian Iveron Icon as well as the Romanov Feodorovskaya Mother of God during the full three days, with thousands of people attending the special services that were held before these miracle-working icons.

On December 9-10, 2017 we greeted our Archbishop Mark and the celebration of our Patronal Feastday of St. Herman of Alaska as well as the 30th anniversary of our pastor, Father John and Matushka Eugenia Perich's 30th anniversary at St. Herman's Church arriving September 15th, 1987. Archpriest John Perich was awarded the Silver Cross of St. Innocent from Holy Synod in addition to a gramota and award to both Father John and Matushka Eugenia on their 30th anniversary at St. Herman's Church. Additionally, the same day was marked with the ordination to the Holy Diaconate of Deacon Steven Orr on Dec. 10, 2017 and the award of Deacon Gregory Hubiak of the Double Orarion. The month and year concluded with the joyous Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are extremely grateful to our Archpastor, Archbishop Mark, our pastor Father John, our deacons, choir director, choir members, Sunday School teachers and students, Women's Sisterhood, Men's Brotherhood, Youth, Ilaasi Senior's and all parishioners for their untiring efforts on our behalf.

GLORY TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!

St. Mark's Orthodox Church, Wrightstown, PA

During 2017 St. Mark's Orthodox Church engaged in a variety of educational, outreach and spiritual enrichment activities as well as taking tentative steps towards a parish plant development project.

Ongoing educational programs on living an Orthodox life in the Public Square continued throughout the year as did the Mirrors of Truth forum which continues to examine scientific developments from the perspective of Orthodox faith. Both of these meet monthly. Additionally, in the third quarter of the year, a weekly discussion group on the psalms began following the weekly Wednesday Akathist service.

Parish Retreats were held during Great Lent and Advent, one on the challenging experience of forgiving during Great Lent offered by Father Martin, and another on

practical advice for living the Christian life from some of the Desert Mothers and Fathers, offered by Father David Mezynski of St. Vladimir's Seminary.

Parish outreach continued in our ongoing participation in the Wrightstown Food Cupboard and Prison Ministry at the Bucks County Jail in conjunction with Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Doylestown. The Food Cupboard collection is a weekly feature of our parish life, as is the prison ministry. Additionally we undertook special outreach programs through our tithing of our Parish Fundraisers and special Lenten and Advent efforts. The Pascha Food Sale was tithed to our local county Veterans office with a presentation at the end of Sunday Liturgy from the director, who made us aware of the needs and opportunities for helping veterans. During Great Lent, the Church School offered a breakfast and collected donations for Bethana which provides duffel bags for young people in foster care. Over 50 duffel bags were provided through the \$1200 collected by the Church School, who were assisted in decorating the bags by 18 local homeschool families who also received a presentation on Orthodox Christianity following the decoration/pizza party that was held on Bright Monday following Divine Liturgy.

In the fall we had a Back-to-School Drive to provide needy youth with school supplies, sneakers and a cash donation to Philadelphia Youth Service, Inc. which helps homeless teens. A Veterans Day recognition program was presented by the Church School during a special luncheon, which was provided by the Church School and Sisterhood. The parish also provided funds for over one hundred Thanksgiving Meals to the Sunday Breakfast Mission in Philadelphia, while Church School collected donations for and packed 51 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. Christmas also saw the parish choir and church school sing at the local retirement facility, The Birches, for the second year. And the Church School year included a mini one-day camp that offered a variety of educational and entertaining experiences for the younger members of the parish.

We welcomed Fr. Chad Hatfield in December to speak about the mission and needs of St. Vladimir's Seminary, and look forward to a visit from Fr. Steven Voytovich in this year to do likewise regarding St. Tikhon's Seminary. As part of the Philadelphia Orthodox Brotherhood, St. Mark's hosted a Lenten Mission Vespers for the first time in many years, as well as participating in the Blessing of the Waters at Boathouse Row in Philadelphia last January. We also hosted the Diocesan Council, Clergy Peer Learning Group and Clergy Wives Peer Learning Group. During Holy Week, His Eminence Archbishop Mark joined us for Presanctified Liturgy, and then returned in June for a weekend visit that included meetings with various parish ministries, including the Sisterhood and Church School, and recognized couples celebrating major wedding anniversaries in 2017, which included 45, 40, 35, 30, 25, 20 and 10-year anniversaries.

As the year drew to a close, the parish council agreed to the presentation of a proposal for physical expansion, drawn up after consultation with the Parish Development Committee, to the local township board for initial reaction. The presentation went forth and was favorably received. Following that meeting, the process began for formal approval. The proposal includes expanding the current church and the building of a multipurpose

building that would provide Hall space, greater in size and accessibility, church school space and a parish office. The schematic will be presented to the parish meeting at the end of January. We had one funeral, three weddings and five baptisms.

Archangel Michael Orthodox Church Wilmington, DE

Thanks be to God, that it is plain to see that there is abundant life here at St. Michael's. Our Parish Family has continued to share in fellowship and love in Christ through Vacation Church School, Little Angels, Thursday Study, Potlucks, small group fellowship, and the celebration and participation in the Holy Mysteries. We continue as God wills laboring for the Kingdom. Below is a brief snapshot into our 2017 activities.

Preschool/Primary/Teen Sunday Church School
Adult Education Thursday Mornings
Basics of Orthodoxy Class
Little Angels (Weekly Pre-school prayer/play group)
Vacation Church School 2017
Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) University of Delaware
Visit from Diocesan Hierarch: Holy Tuesday, April 11th, 2017
Sensory Prayer Garden (Children and Parents)
Potluck Dinners after Presanctified Liturgy
Fall Party
Men's Morning Breakfast
New Year's Eve fellowship
Parish Holy Supper
Parish Picnic
St. Tikhon's Golf Outing
Lenten Retreat with Frederica Mathewes-Green
Small Group Study (Women's Study)
Family Promise
Collection for Women's Prison
Collection for Veterans
Fr John Nightingale Collection
Supplying Food Pantry/Gas/Acme Card for those in need.

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Coatesville, PA

The priest conducted a catechumen class and received one new member into our congregation.

A successful lenten cycle consisting of services during the first week of lent, services during Holy week and the weeks of lent in between.

Our 100 Year Anniversary Celebration Liturgy and dinner with His Eminence Archbishop Mark attending was held on October 15, 2017.

St. Nicholas Day Liturgy and dinner was held on December 3, 2017.

Fundraisers this year were Christmas and Pascha breads for sale.

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, Bethlehem, PA

Revitalization Committee

- *Completed church-wide survey*
- *Formed Focus Groups: Active Service; Greeters Committee; Communications*

Events:

- *Held 4 very successful Fish Dinners open to Public during Great Lent*
- *Halupki Dinner open to public*
- *Christmas Bazaar open to public*
- *Christmas Choir Concert open to public*
- *Yolka*
- *Choir visits to shut-ins at Christmas*

Parish By-Laws revised in accordance with Diocesan requirements

Charitable Contributions to:

- *3 Seminarians at St. Tikhon's*
- *Fr. John Nightingale*
- *Hurricane Relief through IOCC*
- *Veterans Assistance*
- *Parishioners in Need*
- *Sunday School Giving Tree –anonymous gifts to people in County in need and some parishioners in need*
- *Allentown Soup Kitchen donations plus volunteers weekly*
- *Allentown Rescue Mission*

Other:

- *Gas Conversion Completed for Kitchen and Hall (from Oil)*
- *Rectory Renovations done (overdue)*
- *Refabricated Holy Water Font previously donated by parish family*
- *Installed new brass railings on Ambo to assist elderly priests*

St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral, Philadelphia, PA

This past year St. Stephen's Cathedral hosted a number of Deanery-wide events in which our parishioners played an active role. On Holy Wednesday priests and laity from a number of parishes joined His Eminence Archbishop Mark in the celebration of the service of Holy Unction. This was the first time when this celebration involved a number of priests and we hope that this becomes an important yearly service of our Deanery. Our Cathedral was a sight of one of the Diocesan lectures by Fr. Patrick Reardon. This lecture drew many attendees, a number of whom were not Orthodox but were very

interested in Fr. Reardon's prospective on the Orthodox understanding of how God saves us.

Our parishioners, especially Matushka Margarite Zlatkowski, had an active role in organizing our first Golf outing "Two Holies and a Saint." This successful event brought parishioners and friends from four OCA churches in our area. The proceeds from the outing (\$1000) benefited St. Tikhon's Seminary. There is already a date set for this year's event and many are looking forward to it.

This past November our Annual Food Festival was another success enjoyed by many from the local community. As always, some of those who attended were invited for the tour of the church and the chapel which stimulated interesting discussion as visitors were asking questions about the faith and tradition of the Orthodox Church. In July our parishioners also enjoyed Parish Picnic.

Our Sunday School program continues to be very active with many children participating in 6 different classes. In March children participated in the Lenten project with various crafts and discussion. Annual Vacation Church School took place in August and included preparing food to help local Orthodox charity, Twelve Baskets, to feed the homeless. In December a number of our Sunday School families enjoyed a trip to Sight and Sound Theater in Lancaster for a play about the Nativity of Christ. This year is also marked by an organization of Parent's Club, a group of families who desire to be more involved in the work and support of our Sunday School.

We continue to beautify our church and this year we were blessed with the donation of two new candle stands that were custom made to match the interior of our Cathedral. We also continue special outreach to the Russian-speaking Community of North-East Philadelphia. Besides providing church services in Slavonic and encouraging the fellowship among the new immigrants from the countries of former Soviet Union, we are actively working on identifying whether there is a possibility to help establish a new parish of the Diocese of Eastern PA with specific mission of outreach to this community. Finally, just a couple of weeks ago our local FOCA chapter once again held the annual Novogodny Ball. This marked 81 years of this tradition of Orthodox people, especially youth, from many parishes in Philadelphia area and from other places coming together to enjoy this special event. This year the coordination of this event was undertaken by the younger generation of our parishioners: Andre and Alex Cox and they did a wonderful job of organizing the Novogodny. Many are looking forward to many years of this local tradition.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Pottstown PA

Church School- Under the direction of Protodeacon Peter Skoog, our church school program continues to thrive. The children have performed multiple plays throughout the year depicting various feasts with the guide of Ms. Anna Marie Black. Three of our 2nd grade students received the sacrament of confession this past year for the first time and one of them also was awarded the St. George Medal for Scouting by Father Jason

Franchak after completing the required program. The parish started a scholarship program for any student wishing to attend one of the many Orthodox Camps and had 5 students take part in that program, 2 went to St. Tikhon's Camp and 3 went to St. Andrew's Camp. We honored 4 graduates this year as well.

Spiritual Growth- We hosted several speakers this year, Father Andrew Damick and Dr. Albert Rossi, for a Lenten and Advent retreat respectively. We were honored to host a Mission Vespers during Lent this year. A weekly book study was held during Lent at the home of our Protodeacon and recently Bible Study during coffee hour on the last Sunday of each month began. Starting back in September we held our first monthly children's participation Liturgy. The youth sang one of the hymns under the direction of Deacon John Black, as well as participated in the Great Entrance. Each month a different one of our youth also read the Epistle during this special Sunday service. The parish started a Study Bible program, supplementing half the cost for any parishioner wanting a new Study Bible. This past December, we celebrated the ordination of Deacon John Black to the Diaconate.

Outreach- We continue to participate in the Pottstown Cluster- feeding of the homeless. The parish supported two parishioners who ran for team IOCC in the Ohio marathon in support of Hurricane relief. We took collections for several other relief projects and once again held our Christmas food drive, which supports local families in the Pottsgrove School District.

Fundraisers- We held 2 fresh pirogie sales, along with our other 3 major fundraisers- Annual Spring Bazaar, Fall Bazaar and Christmas Cookie Walk. These serve as a crucial part of our fellowship as many parishioners come week after week for many months preparing for all of these events and truly do share a special time with each other.

Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Our parish had a busy and fruitful year with two Baptisms and one funeral. We have had a large number of regular visitors at Vespers and have two potential catechumens. Our services are well attended especially during the summer months.

Our parish has donated both time and funds to a number of charities this year including the annual FOCUS drive for supplies to local schools.

Our parish hall is now being rented to a local Presbyterian parish. We have been very active in maintaining our property and preparing for the future.

It has been a great joy for us to have two regular monthly adult education classes and now a monthly children's class.