

2020 Diocesan Assembly – Philadelphia Deanery Report

The Philadelphia Deanery of our Diocese is comprised of nine parishes, all with full-time clergy assigned to them. Our parishes actively participate in the life of the Orthodox Church in our area. This past year a parish of our Deanery, St. Michael's in Wilmington, DE, hosted the Sunday of Orthodoxy celebration and the Church of Holy Assumption hosted one of the Lenten Vespers services. In September the clergy and their families gathered for a Deanery picnic and had a wonderful time in fellowship.

Below are the reports from each parish in the Deanery.

St. Mark's Orthodox Church, Wrightstown, PA

Our growth as a parish continues this year with new members and new structures, actual and others under discussion. In January we paid off our mortgage, which was burned at our annual Parish Picnic following Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Eminence, Archbishop Mark in June. Present at the event was one of the signatories of that mortgage, the Parish Warden at the time, Myron Sedor. Additional members of the group of parishioners who were involved in the construction of our church were also in attendance to mark this milestone in our parish life. Prior to the mortgage burning and picnic, His Eminence blessed the icon Shrine to the Theotokos (Pokrov/Protection) built by John Yates as his Eagle Scout project. This is part of a meditation path which is a permanent feature of our grounds and the first step in the physical growth of the parish, with our building committee examining the options for new construction. While progress on that has been slower than anticipated this year due to circumstances beyond our control, we have been blessed with several large donations for the project. A complete report on our progress will be made to the Parish Meeting at the end of January.

The building committee took a field trip to Holy Apostles in Mechanicsburg and Christ the Saviour in Harrisburg to gain insight, obtain information and establish relationships that will assist us as we move forward. We are very grateful to both parishes for their hospitality and assistance.

During 2019 St. Mark's continued its program of liturgical and educational life, offering a full schedule of festal services throughout the year, Lenten and Advent Retreats, Bible, topical and book study programs for adults, Sunday school for middle and high schoolers and a preschool church school that met on designated weekday mornings throughout the year. Additionally, a youth retreat was held for church schoolers in August. We also continue our relationship with the Wrightstown Food Cupboard, which provides 150 holiday baskets at Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and during the summer, in addition to maintaining a food pantry for the needy throughout the year. Our Church School has been the leader in finding worthy projects in the community for us to support with both financial and other support. We welcomed a presentation from Orthodox Christian Charities this year and at Christmas this year we sent greetings and care packages to a group of servicemen and women in Afghanistan who have a connection to the parish.

The coming year will include the development of a stewardship program, the continuation of our building process and the development of our spiritual life through prayer, education and service.

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Coatesville, PA

The following is a brief summary of the events of our parish in 2019. We added five new members to our parish. We had our annual fundraiser at the Strawberry Festival in June where we provided gyros for many customers while enjoying a fun time of fellowship. We also raised funds by selling Christmas and Pascal breads. As a parish, we went to the Sight and Sounds Theater in Lancaster to see the play "Jesus," meeting before-hand at a local restaurant for dinner with about half of our parishioners attending. On Sunday December 8th, we had our St. Nicholas day Liturgy and dinner. All in all, it was a good year!

St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church, Wilmington, DE

The parish of the Archangel Michael in Wilmington, DE has been blessed with a year filled with growth and opportunity. A few highlights of 2019 include the following: This past year St. Michael's welcomed eleven new faithful through baptism and/or chrismation. The parish hosted Dr. Phillip Mamalakis (March 22 & 23, 2019) for our annual Lenten parish retreat. The parish also continues to be active in ministry to the community through "Family Promise", feeding and hosting homeless from the Wilmington area. We additionally cooperate with local Orthodox clergy to host and support the University of Delaware OCF. In 2019 the parish also accomplished a complete dome renovation project with new siding and windows for the church.

We are thankful for the blessing of the past year and look forward to the next.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Catasauqua, PA

It has been a year of change for Holy Trinity. After much soul searching the parish decided to make one last major effort to grow the parish and ensure the long-term survival of the parish. In June we invited Fr. Tim Hasenecz to be our full-time priest. The summer was spent planning our path forward. This fall we had an Akathist to celebrate our Pochaev Mother of God Icon. We have also started monthly Bible studies. We are now in a position to move forward in the coming year with the Grace of God and the intercession of the Mother of God.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Pottstown, PA

Church School- Under the direction of Mrs. Kristina Carter, 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. In addition, the children put on the annual Yolka under the direction of Protodeacon Peter Skoog. The parish gave scholarships to 4 students this year to attend St. Tikhon's Camp in the

summer. One of our students was presented the Chi-Rho award for Scouting by Father John.

Spiritual Growth- Our children continue to participate in Children's Sunday's the first Sunday of each month- singing several hymns under the direction of Mrs. Kristina Carter, reading the Epistle and participating in the Great Entrance. Father John continues to have Bible study during coffee hour the last Sunday of each month. A Book Study was held during Lent at Protodeacon Peter's house once a week. Our parish welcomed Father Timothy Hojnicky during Advent. He celebrated an Instructional Liturgy which was well received by parishioners and the community.

Outreach- We continue to participate in the Pottstown Cluster- feeding of the homeless. This year we also teamed up with the Pottstown Cluster for another collection during Thanksgiving. 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. We also took a collection during Lent to help support one of our Seminarians.

Fundraisers- We held our 3 major fundraisers- Annual Spring Bazaar, Fall Bazaar and Christmas Cookie Walk, in addition to other small fresh pirogue sales. 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 Orthodox Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Liturgical Life: A busy year for the life of the parish with our regular active liturgical schedule and one baptism and two marriages. We hosted our Archbishop twice this year including ordaining our new Deacon Michael and new subdeacon Daniel.

Church Education: We have made the change to weekly church school for our younger folks. Our bimonthly church school days continue. Our monthly adult bible study remains very popular with 15-20 in attendance. Our monthly adult Ed classes one Sunday each monthly has been more sporadic.

Charity work: This year our charity work and donations have reached a new plateau. With our regular year contributions, one of the hosts of the Philadelphia Orthodox Golf Tournament, participating in the annual collection for the Philadelphia school district back packs for students, and three major projects for this Advent.....over \$1900 for St, Herman's Seminary in Kodak, donated homemade afghans to a local Hospice and 42 packages for the Homeless Veterans' shelter along with regular food donations.

Church building: We are in the midst of major repairs and renovation and have devoted much personal work by many parishioners.

St. Herman of Alaska, Gradyville, PA

St. Herman's Church in Glen Mills. Pa. Has had a wonderfully busy year with Baptisms, Weddings, Chrismations and the welcoming of many new parishioners. We had a successful Tea this year in May 2019 and a great Mother's Day brunch attended by many. During the year we have hosted students from Villanova University along with

faculty members who were eager to learn about the Orthodox faith. Many of our parishioners participated in the annual Memorial Day pilgrimage to our Monastery. In July our young adults including Katya Hubiak and David Drobish successfully coordinated the Summer Camp at St. Tikhon's along with many other volunteers from our parish. Father John, our pastor, again gave tours to the many campers.

In November 2019 we again assisted Father John in setting up the exhibit at Villanova University on the theme, "In Our Time" which featured numerous Orthodox Christian items as well as those of the Oriental Orthodox Church and Eastern traditions. This exhibit was also dedicated to Father Richard Canulli, who fell asleep in the Lord this past year, unexpectedly. Father Richard was a great friend of St. Herman's Church and many of our faithful attended his funeral.

This year we had the most successful Festival in our history, surpassing all previous years. Thousands of visitors toured our Church and were given tours throughout the entire three days. On December 8, 2019 His Eminence visited our Church and tonsured two new readers, Alexander Nescott and David Drobish, after which he blessed Alexander to wear the orarion.

Throughout the year our Charity Committee has conducted numerous projects including Souper Bowl Sunday Food Drive. Breakfast Mission collections, Animal Shelter Drive, Military Service projects, etc. Which have been greatly appreciated by those we endeavor to help.

All in all we have had a very spiritually rewarding year in our many endeavors to share the joy of our Orthodox Christian faith throughout Delaware and Chester counties. May God continue to grant us the strength as we persevere in our Mission. Glory to God for all things!

St. Stephen Orthodox Cathedral, Philadelphia, PA

The year 2019 was marked with the celebration of the 45th anniversary of St. Stephen Cathedral. His Eminence, Archbishop Mark, joined the clergy and the faithful of our parish on Sunday, September 29 for the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and the festive banquet following the service. This event was a true highlight of the year, as we celebrated the life of our community, remembered the founders of the parish and looked forward to the future of St. Stephen's. At this event Deacon George Zlatkowski was elevated into the rank of a Protodeacon and Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk received an award of Palitza.

Another important event in the life of our parish during the past year was ordination of Reader Nathan Clauson into Holy Diaconate. Father Deacon Nathan graduated from St. Tikhon's Diaconal Formation Program and has been very helpful in many aspects of the life of the parish, especially in providing catechetical instructions to those seeking entrance into the Orthodox Faith. Now he added another responsibility of serving the altar of our parish and we are very blessed by his dedication.

St. Stephen's continues its mission to the Russian-speaking population of North-East Philadelphia and neighboring counties. At this point the members of the Russian-speaking part of our parish, under the leadership of Fr. Nikolai Gulin, are discerning if they are able to start a mission parish of our Diocese that will be ministering to the recent immigrant population of the area.

Our Cathedral continues to have active Sunday school program. We held a Vacation Church School for the children in July. We are also blessed by the dedication of our parent committee who organizes monthly youth activities that allow children to create a greater bond with each other and to learn more about the Orthodox Faith. Also, once a month our children read the Hours and participate in the youth choir that sings part of the Liturgy.

On November 2 our parish held our annual Food Festival. Many from the neighborhood came to try our home-made food, as well as to see the church and learn more about the Orthodox Faith. On Saturday Dec 7, St. Stephen's hosted a lecture by Fr. Dan Skvir on his work as an Orthodox Chaplain in Princeton University and dedicating many years to the OCF ministry for the Orthodox Christian students. Our parishioners also organized a number of events in 2019 that attracted participation of the faithful from other parishes in the area. One such event was the Novogodny Ball in January. Another one was a Golf Tournament in September for the benefit of St. Tikhon's Camp.

Every month the parishioners of St. Stephen contribute to various charities and charitable projects. Among the opportunities last year was providing gifts of love for Seminarian families, supporting a soup kitchen for the poor and homeless of Philadelphia and ordering new altar covers and vestments for Novo-Divevo monastery in NY.