

October 26, 2008 Annual Parish Meeting

Pastor's Review of the Year

Over the last 12 months, the *pastor* has been directly (and indirectly) involved in the following:

Attendance and Church Growth

Our official Membership which was submitted on Sept. 1st, 2008 (the deadline for the 2009 Census) was **131** adult members and **39** children—**TOTAL 170** (up 8 from 162 total members on the 2008 Census)

Our new Parish Census for "2009" shows a **gain of 6 adult members.**

Our **Catechumen** and **inquirers** currently are **four (4)**: Daniel Riddle, Susan Grant, Jeff Kendall, Silvana Poletaev.

Infant Baptisms were **five (5)**: infant Maura Zomut (03-17-08), infant Isabella Poletaev (04-04-08), infant Nicholas Conover (06-07-08), infant Sarah Tequabo (06-08-08), and infant Johannes Kiflemariam (09-20-08).

Adult Baptisms were **two (2)**: Suzie [Maria] Dozier (09-13-08), and Beth [Elizabeth] Struhammer (09-13-08).

Chrismation - one (1): Mary Anne Farrell (01-05-08)

Other members joined the parish by transfer or were re-united to the Chalice by Holy Confession. The Mark & Jessica [Julianna] Bunitsky family plus Mrs. Mary Varner were catechized by Fr. Andrew, however, on 07-26-08 they were joyously received into Holy Orthodoxy through Baptism and Chrismation by their relative, Fr. Peter Bunitsky, after which they became members of St. Michael's Orthodox parish.

Weddings were **three (3)**: Russell and Melissa Hines (08-17-08), Helena and Barry Barrentine (09-21-08), Matthew and Melanie Chalfant (10-12-08)

Deaths and Funerals were **three (3)**: Agnes Meginniss (02-13-08), Stanley Borowski (07-25-08), Vasily Gregory Obertyschew (09-23-08) "Memory Eternal!" Many parishioners have lost their parents, siblings, and friends over the last 12 months. Our sympathy to all!

Liturgical Services, Confessions, & Counseling

Conducted a regular liturgical cycle of the Church Year. **Confessions** and **personal counseling** time in person and on the telephone. Shut-ins were visited and were brought Holy Communion.

Education & Youth Ministries

The 2007-2008 Sunday School year was well run by three very committed and well-prepared teachers, with 29 students. Our 2008-2009 **Sunday School** year began this past September, with 39 students in four classes.

In June, the weeklong 2008 **Vacation Bible School (VBS)** movie-making event was again a lot of fun. Nearly 30 students participated, with more attending each day as the week progressed. The students again enjoyed producing their fifth home-made movie, this time entitled "Soul Wars: Episode Five –The Gentiles Strike Back" – featuring the lives of the Prophet David and the Three Holy Youths. Christopher Carey (Jr) joined the "Scott Brothers" (Reader Paul Scott and Fr. Andrew [Scott] Anderson) to help film and produce the movie. This year the movie was released on DVD format with special features. More adults came forward to fill out the various support roles, along with the crew of youth volunteers. Thank you to all who helped out!

The **Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF)** The club had another very active and successful year, led by Basil and Cindy Peck, OCF lay advisors, and Stephen Brasowski, OCF President 2007-08. The club meets on the Univ of Del campus (in Paul's Chapel) each Sunday night for fellowship and spiritual discussion. A recent highlight was the **Fall 2008 regional OCF retreat**, led by Fr. Justin Matthews and Orthodox singer/songwriter Ron Moore on the weekend of Oct. 3-5th, 2008. It was held on the Univ. of Delaware campus, and hosted by our local OCF

chapter, with 40+ participants, among whom were 30 college students who came from 11 area universities. Our active OCF group also made several away visits to other OCF events on other campuses.

During **Great Lent**, the Parish family was again invited to stay after the Friday Presanctified Liturgy for the love-meal and to hear the life of a saint. **Lenten Retreat:** For a second year in a row, our Sisterhood sponsored a Lenten retreat this past year with two nuns from the Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Ellwood City leading the retreat. I hope we can have another retreat again next spring.

Library Development Our librarian, Ellen Gundersen, together with her helpers, has done a great job in selecting books for the expanded library. Parishioners have donated books. Thanks! (**see separate report**)

Evangelism and Catechism and Bible Study

This year the Thursday evening **“The Basics of Orthodoxy”** class was supplemented by a second **Catechism Class** on Wednesday afternoon. Fr. Andrew has also been catechizing new members by providing weekly **telephone tutorials** for inquirers and potential converts who can't attend the regular classes. A **Bible Study** on Corinthians is being conducted by Fr. Andrew, and being hosted by Mrs. Mary Lewis at her residence.

Dover Outreach

The Bible Study/Spiritual Discussion Group meets in Helen McNally's home in Harrington once a month. Fr. Andrew gives Holy Communion to the Dover ladies at the same time. This group has welcomed the start of a **mission parish in the Dover area**, led by Fr. Stephen Hutnick of Ss. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church here in Wilmington. Fr. Stephen gets down to Dover to conduct the Divine Liturgy twice a month. This is an answer to the Dover group's prayer for a regular Orthodox church in their town, and Fr. Andrew totally supports Fr. Hutnick's endeavors in Dover.

Greeters Committee (see separate report)

This important committee continues to help the Service Duty volunteers in welcoming all our visitors. Visitors report that our parish welcomes them warmly. Thank you to all who reach out to the visitors and strangers who are always coming to pray with us. Remember—there is an eternal reward for this love, as Jesus said: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me...I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.”

Green Card Operating Budget pledging

Between the October 2007 Annual Meeting and its continuation on Feb. 10, 2008, our parish made a big step forward in **stewardship**. The parish voted to adopt a **pledging system** in order to support its annual **operating budget**. Parishioners responded favorably with sufficient support for the 2008 Operating Budget, which was formally adopted at the Feb. 10, 2008, Parish Meeting. However, it was made clear to all that the support for the Bishop and Metropolitan's offices (via the annual **Assessment**) was to be paid separately, over-and-above the Green Card pledge. Council President Rashid Elia distributed Quarterly Assessment envelopes to help encourage everyone to pay their Assessments. Based on the success of this first Green Card pledge, this September the Parish Council successfully solicited sufficient Green Card pledges for the 2009 Operating Budget. Praise God!

Capital Campaign

As you all know, our three-year '04-'07 “EXPANDING HORIZONS: Building for God's Kingdom” Capital Stewardship Campaign was **very successful!** Praise God! The pledges were paid! Thanks to all!

Then, during 2007, James Riley, Co-Chair of the Building Committee, **continued** the fund-raising efforts with the **second pledge drive**, for our **future mortgage**, using yellow cards. These **“Yellow Card”** pledges equal \$4,333 per month, which is enough to get another \$500,000 from the bank for a mortgage loan, plus pay for increased utilities costs in the new building. The Parish has a promised WSFS loan (up to \$400,000) plus a promised RBO (Russian Brotherhood Organization) loan of \$100,000 both waiting for us to come and get them, once the construction starts. WSFS bank recently gave us an even more favorable lending rate than their first offer.

Last year, Council President Rashid Elia challenged the parishioners – as they are willing and able – to begin immediately to **pay on their monthly “Yellow Card” mortgage pledges in an effort to build up our parish’s Building Fund cash reserves**. Jim Riley has tracked this information (constantly available in the narthex) and parishioners have generously been paying the \$4333. **Thank you!** Some folks, though, are waiting to see construction before paying on their “Yellow Card” mortgage pledges. Thank you, in advance of your payments.

Building Committee (see separate report)

The Building Committee has worked patiently as we approached the County for **variances**, which we were awarded on St. Michael's Day, 2007! This is for us a sign of our heavenly protector's care for us. Getting the long list of approvals (Health Board, DeIDOT, Fire Marshal) plus the **Civil Engineering** has consumed most of the year's time. We have just received quotes from three contractors and we need to prayerfully select one.

Silent Auction

After our parishioners made two generous rounds of pledging and donations to fund our new building's construction, we decided to encourage donations from the general public via a **Silent Auction and Dinner Dance**, to be held at Cavalier's Country Club on Friday, November 14th, 2008. Paula Flynn leads the committee which has worked hard to organize a fine event. Over 60 lots of items will be available for auction! Please help sell tickets to get out folks in support of our Building Program!

OCMC Missions

The parish is financially supporting the entire year's salary of an **African Orthodox clergymen**: \$600. Thanks! The Sisterhood is generously supporting another African Orthodox priest for \$600. Thanks, ladies! In addition, this past summer, OCMC missionary hopeful, **Miss Christine Semon**, visited our parish and gave a presentation about her upcoming missionary work in Romania. Several families and individuals pledged support for Miss Semon, who is the first long-term OCMC missionary from our own Diocese of Eastern PA. Let us adopt her as “our” missionary to distant lands and prayerfully and financially support her efforts.

Project Mexico

For the first time ever since our five consecutive years of St. Michael parishioner participation in Project Mexico's efforts to build homes for the very poor in Mexico, we had no participants. Maybe next year.

Perogie Bakers (see separate “Food Festival” report)

Our well-trained group of perogie bakers worked very hard preparing for the November 2007 Food Festival, which raised \$4,096.25 for kitchen equipment for the new building. Michael Sensor and Sasha Ressetar performed balalaika music for us. Currently the group is hard at work preparing for the November 2008 Food Festival.

Communication Our Parish Newsletter—“St. Michael's Communicator”—is still in need of a volunteer editor.

Choir Practice

The choir is doing more and more new pieces. Their hard work is **a real blessing** to all who come and worship God at St. Michael's. Regular practices have been held about every three weeks, and there is increased interest in learning more pieces. They have done well to learn the wedding music for our three 2008 weddings. In addition to James Carpenter as the Head Choir director, we now have a group of capable assistant choir leaders.

Charity Projects

Our **Good Samaritan collections** have provided much needed help in **designated Good Samaritan funds** as emergency assistance to parishioners (and to some needy families outside the parish). This is a healthy sign of Christian love within the parish family. Our Sunday School students (and adults) collected coins for missions in their Lenten **OCMC coin boxes**.

Christmas Giving Opportunities This past 2007 Nativity Fast we donated to:

- 1) Several needy families received Thanksgiving baskets.
- 2) We also did the “adopt-family” project for Christmas of 2007.

Special Parish Events

The Sisterhood and Brotherhood throughout the year held the series of delicious parish luncheons. Thank you, ladies and men. We could not do it without you all! Each **fellowship/coffee hour** indeed is a special parish event. This is a real **ministry** in which we welcome the strangers and visitors. In addition to our **Family Bowling Night**, parishioners attended the St. Tikhon's 2007 **Monastery Pilgrimage**. Our **Christmas Play** was enjoyed by all.

Bishop TIKHON's Annual Pastoral Visit and Lenten Mission Vespers

This past March 23, 2008, for Mission Vespers, His Grace Bishop TIKHON visited St. Michael's and conducted a hierarchical Lenten Vespers, a rare site these days. We had several clergy from the Clergy Brotherhood concelebrate along with a host of visiting Orthodox Christians. The Choir worked hard and did well, as did all the ladies who prepared the food. Thanks to the Sisterhood and Brotherhood for their financial support of this event. Thanks goes to all who cooked, cleaned, served, sang, or had some role to play in the bishop's visit. Hopefully, St. Michael's will host another Mission Vespers in the future.

Annual Parish Picnic

We launched summer with a fine parish picnic in our own beautiful church backyard. Rain spoiled our attempts to take the 2008 Fall Picnic off-premises to Delcastle Park. But, again, in our own backyard, it was extremely successful! Lots of parishioners attended the picnics and enjoyed each other's company.

The Brotherhood

Our "Brotherhood Organization" helped with the Bishop's visit and with the picnics and the Mother's Day luncheon. Yummy! Thanks, guys.

The Sisterhood (see separate report)

The ladies of the parish continue to be of most valuable service to the community. This year they again organized and generously sponsored a parish Lenten Retreat. Their chief source of funds is the Fall sale of Baklava. Please help collect orders! Well done, Ladies!

Office Projects

Fr. Andrew learned Microsoft Access data base. This program has streamlined the production of the "**Members and Friends Directory**". A new one was issued this past February. Another one will be issued in the New Year. Our Sunday **Bulletin** is being mailed (or emailed) to our **shut-ins** in an effort to keep them connected as part of the parish family. The **Telephone Tree** (emergency parishioner notification system) was used as needed.

Buildings and Grounds

We will need individuals to come and rake leaves this fall. Over the summer, many parishioners took turns cutting the church's grass. Susan Skomorucha served as coordinator of the grass-cutters, and her husband Alexander kept our machines in running order. Peter and Elizabeth Melnik continued their loving service to flower beds. Thanks!

Acquisitions and Gifts: Thanks to all who gave so generously.

Many icons were donated to the walls of our church in the **Icon Church Beautification project**. Thanks, donors! (Apologies if anyone's gift was missed.)

By God's Grace, since October 2007, a full cycle of regular services and feast day services have been assisted throughout the year by parishioners (and friends) who have offered to God their talents in singing, chanting, choir directing, and altar serving. Not to be overlooked are those who faithfully served cleaning, teaching classes, hosting coffee hour, doing service duty, helping with luncheons and the picnic, baking prosphora, and assisting in the one hundred and one ways required to run a parish. It takes a lot of work to be a community that prays and fellowships together. **Everyone has a vital role**. Even in the area of financial stewardship positive increases have been noted. Many folks have offered of their time, talent, and treasures to beautify the House of God and the rectory. **Thank you**, one and all, for your good efforts made out of your love for your church. May God reward each of you in His own way. **Let us all strive to continue to work together** in harmony, unity, and love for the upbuilding of Christ's Holy Church here in Wilmington. God bless you all.

Respectfully and lovingly submitted, Fr. Andrew J. Anderson, Rector

Fr. Andrew J. Anderson