

## October 25, 2009 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. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 (the deadline for the 2010 Census) was **143** adult members and **38** children—**TOTAL 181** (up 11 from 170 total members on the 2009 Census)

**Our new Parish Census for "2010"** shows a **gain of 12 adult members**, and a decrease of one child.

Our **Catechumen** is Susan Grant (of Dover).

**Infant Baptisms** were **two (2)**: Mary Ariam Tekie (02-07-09); Makayla Helene Hines (06-13-09)

**Adult Baptisms** were **one (1)**: Daniel Riddle (04-11-09)

**Chrismations - three (3)**: Silvana Poletaev (04-11-09); Jeffrey Kendall (04-11-09); Theodore Tabah (06-10-09)

**Other members** joined the parish by transfer or were re-united to the Chalice by Holy Confession.

**Weddings** were **two (2)**: Jeffrey & Ruth Kendall (07-18-09); Daniel & Carolyn Kroeker (07-19-09)

**Deaths and Funerals** were **three (3)**: Odette Habash (02-27-09); Theodore Tabah (07-25-09); infant Ashton Hunter (09-21-09) "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**, both in person and on the telephone. Shut-ins were visited and were brought Holy Communion. In addition, Fr. Andrew was recently elected Secretary of the O.C.A. Philadelphia Deanery.

### Education & Youth Ministries

The 2008-2009 Sunday School year was well run by three very committed and well-prepared teachers, with 39 students. Our 2008-2009 **Sunday School** year began this past September, with 27 students in four classes. We enjoyed the year-end Sunday School play on the life of St. Paul, in June 2009.

In June, the weeklong 2009 **Vacation Bible School (VBS)** movie-making event was again a lot of fun. 22 students participated, with more attending each day as the week progressed. The students again enjoyed producing their sixth home-made movie, this time entitled "Soul Wars: Episode One -- To Boldly Go" – describing the Creation and the Fall and the life of Patriarch Abraham. It was a "Scott-Carey-Scott" production as Reader Paul Scott and Fr. Andrew [Scott] Anderson were joined again by Christopher Carey Jr. to produce the movie. This year the movie will be 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 Joanna Carey, OCF President 2008-09. The club meets on the Univ of Del campus (in Paul's Chapel) each Sunday night for fellowship and spiritual discussion. A highlight was the **Fall 2008 regional OCF retreat**, led by Fr. Justin Matthews and Orthodox singer/songwriter Ron Moore on the weekend of Oct. 3-5<sup>th</sup>, 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. The **third annual U of D OCF retreat** was held Oct. 16-18, 2009, with talks led by His Grace Bishop TIKHON and Dr. Paul Witek. His Beatitude, Metropolitan JONAH, has promised to come lead the 4th Annual Retreat in the Fall of 2010.

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 **third** year in a row, our Sisterhood sponsored a Lenten retreat this past year with a fine retreat led by Fr. John Nehrebecki, accompanied by his wife, Matushka Eugenia

**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**

The Thursday evening "**The Basics of Orthodoxy**" class was supplemented by a second **Catechism Class** on Wednesday afternoon, but now has returned to the Thursday-only schedule. 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 in downtown Wilmington.

### **Dover Outreach**

A Bible Study/Spiritual Discussion Group meets in Helen McNally's home in Harrington once a month. Fr. Andrew gives Holy Communion to Helen at the same time. This group has welcomed the start of **St. Nicholas Orthodox mission parish in Dover**, 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 encourages and totally supports Fr. Hutnick's endeavors in Dover. Cheryl & Ed Zabowski and Tom & Sylvia Holt are the main lay leaders in the Dover mission effort.

### **Greeters' Committee**

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**

In 2007 our parish voted to adopt a **pledging system** in order to support its annual **operating budget**, using Green-colored cards. However, it was made clear to all that the financial support for the Bishop and Metropolitan's offices (via the **Annual Assessment**) is to be paid separately, over-and-above the Green Card pledge. Quarterly Assessment **envelopes** have been distributed to help encourage everyone to pay their Assessments. Now that construction has begun, the mortgage has been built into the 2010 budget. Parishioners who made yellow or white card **mortgage pledges** towards paying off the mortgage, are urged to **start paying monthly** on those commitments as well. Several families have already been paying on their mortgage pledges all throughout this year, adding up to \$30,000 for the Building Program for this past year alone. Thank you!

### **Mortgage Loan**

The Parish has received the **RBO** (Russian Brotherhood Organization) **mortgage loan of \$500,000**, at 6% fixed for 20 years. Over 20 parishioners and friends of St. Michael's bought RBO life insurance policies to satisfy the RBO's loan requirement: that we start a Wilmington RBO chapter with 20 members. The RBO's rate was better than any bank's rate and has **saved the parish about \$60,000** in interest charges alone. The monthly mortgage payment will be **\$3,582.16**. Of course, we will have to pay more in gas and electric and insurance for the new hall --possibly \$800 additional per month. (\$800 plus \$3582 = \$4382, which is near our target of \$4333.)

### **Building Committee** (see separate report)

Lots and lots of work. Lots and lots of patience. Lots and lots for which to give thanks to God! Thank God... We finally received our County site plan approval, signed a contract with ICS, were given a top-notch ICS Project Manager, and recently submitted architectural drawings for the building permit. Stakes were placed on Sept. 14, the Feast of the Cross, and the clearing of the land followed. The builder, Integrated Construction Services (ICS) hopes to have the building completed by the end of March 2010, good weather permitting.

**Silent Auction**

Led by Paula Flynn and the Fund-raising Committee, we decided to encourage donations to our Building Program from the general public via a **Silent Auction and Dinner Dance** which was held at Cavalier's Country Club on Friday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The committee worked hard to organize a fine event, which raised **\$14,936.73** in profit! Over 60 lots of items were available for auction! Great effort!

**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, we donated towards OCMC missionary **Miss Christine Semon**, who is the second long-term OCMC missionary from our own Diocese of Eastern PA. We have "adopted" her as "our" missionary to distant lands and prayerfully and financially support her efforts.

**Project Mexico**

After five consecutive years of St. Michael parishioner participation in Project Mexico's efforts to build homes for the very poor in Mexico, for a second year in a row, we had no participants. Maybe next year.

**Pierogie People**

The Pierogie makers have been working extremely hard over the years to raise the money to outfit the **entire kitchen** of our new social hall with **all the new appliances, steel tables, sinks**, etc.! Over **\$20,000** has been raised by them for this effort. A down payment on the new appliances has been made. Fantastic job! Currently the group is hard at work preparing for the November 2009 Pierogie Take-Out Sale. There will be too much construction for a full-blown festival. In the past, the Pierogie People have also used their funds to purchase items such as the black Divine Liturgy books, the wooden kiot (frame) for the St. Alexis icon, and other gifts. Thank you, folks!

**Communication** Check out: [www.stmichael-delaware-oca.org](http://www.stmichael-delaware-oca.org), managed by Michael and Nino Sensor. This helps replace our vacant Parish Newsletter—"St. Michael's Communicator"—which needs a volunteer editor.

**Choir Practice** The choir's hard work is a real blessing to all who come and worship God at St. Michael's. Learning the wedding music last year paid off, as the choir sang this year for two more weddings. This Fall, 2009, assistant director Paula Daubert has started a **youth choir** of young girls. They rehearse twice a month.

**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 2008 Nativity Fast the Sisterhood "adopted" a needy family (from outside the parish) for Christmas of 2008. A second family (this one Orthodox) was also privately surprised by Christmas gifts from the parish as well.

**Special Parish Events**

The Sisterhood and Brotherhood throughout the year held a 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 2009 **Monastery Pilgrimage**. Our **Christmas Play** was enjoyed by all.

**Bishop TIKHON's Annual Pastoral Visit**

This past Sunday, Oct. 18, 2009, His Grace Bishop TIKHON visited St. Michael's and conducted a hierarchical Divine Liturgy. The new youth choir sang for him a special "Eis Polla". The national leaders of the RBO were on hand to formally present to the bishop and our parish the \$500,000 mortgage. On top of this, the UofD OCF held their annual retreat and were with us for the Vespers and the Liturgy. Thanks to the Choirs, Sisterhood and

Brotherhood for their support of this event. Thanks goes to all who cooked, cleaned, served, sang, or had some role to play in the bishop's visit.

**Missionary Visit**-- On Oct. 10 & 11, 2009, Fr. Daniel Byantoro gave several inspiring presentations on the Orthodox Church in Indonesia. His visit was in conjunction with the new Philadelphia Fall Lecture series.

### **Lenten Mission Vespers**

On Sunday, March 29, 2009, for a second year in a row, our parish hosted the Mission Vespers Service. The choir, led by director James Carpenter, practiced long and hard and did a great job, as worshippers from Orthodox parishes in Wilmington and the greater Philly area (of all jurisdictions) came to St. Michael's for the service. Thank you to the Sisterhood and to all who cooked and cleaned and sang!

### **Annual Parish Picnic**

We launched summer with a fine Summer Parish Picnic in our own beautiful church backyard. We ended the summer with a parish photo and fall picnic (mostly in-doors due to wet ground). Lots of folks attended the picnics and enjoyed each other's company. We appreciate photographer Gina Sinovich who takes our annual photo!

### **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**

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. They do great luncheons and offer to help with funeral repast meals. Their chief source of funds is the Fall sale of Baklava. Please help collect orders! Well done, Ladies!

### **Office Projects**

Fr. Andrew now uses a Microsoft Access data base for the church membership address information. This program has streamlined the production of the "**Members and Friends Directory**". A new one was issued this past January 2009. Another one will be issued in the New Year, 2010, Lord willing. 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 utilized.

### **Buildings and Grounds**

Over the summer, many parishioners took turns cutting the church's grass. Ned and Pearl Minnich with Tom Sulpizi served as coordinators of the grass-cutters. Peter and Elizabeth Melnik continued their loving service to flower beds. Thanks to them and to all who took turns cutting!

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

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

By God's Grace, since October 2009, 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 picnics, 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 to help the poor. **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*