

October 28, 2007 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

Official Membership is currently **125** adult members and **37** children—**TOTAL 162** (down 10 from 172 total members on the 2006 Census)

Our new parish census for "2007" shows a **net loss of 4 adult members**.

Our **catechumen** and inquirers currently are: **four (4)**: Patricia Sensor, Mary-Anne Farrell, Jaysen Eisengrein, and David Windsor

Baptisms were **two (2)**: Infant Meskel Kiflemariam (07/14/07), Infant Alexander Tekie (09/01/07),

Chrismations were **two (2)**: Jennifer (Geneieve) Capparuccini (12/02/06), Robert (Romanos) Barbarita (12/02/06)

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

Weddings: Robert and Jennifer Barbarita (01/21/07—by Fr. Andrew J. Anderson). Jon and Laura Whalen (04/28/07).

Deaths and Funerals: **(two)**, Elizabeth Gregory (05/26/07, Infant Katerina Hristova (09/26/07) "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

Our 2006-2007 **Sunday School** year began in September, with 36 students in four classes. Again, it was a superb year, with excellent teachers who were very well prepared for their classes. (The senior class even has held special classes on an occasional Friday evening.)

In June, the weeklong 2007 **Vacation Bible School (VBS)** movie-making event was again a smash hit—thank God. All the students again enjoyed producing their fourth home-made movie, this time entitled "Soul Wars: Episode Three – The Throne Wars" – comparing the life of the Prophet David with that of King Saul. Reader Paul Scott again returned to help Fr. Andrew produce and film the movie. Thanks to the crew of volunteers.

The **Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF)** The club had a very active year, led by Basil and Cindy Peck, OCF lay advisors, and Stephen Brasowski, OCF President 2006-07. A highlight was the Fall 2007 regional OCF conference/retreat, led by V. Rev. Peter Gillquist (Sept. 21-23), held on the Univ. of Delaware campus, and hosted by our local OCF chapter. 63 participants came to hear Fr. Peter. Students came from 13 area universities, representing 7 OCF chapters. (see their separate report)

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**: Our Sisterhood sponsored a retreat this year with Fr. John Behr as our speaker which had about 60 participants. We hope to have one again next spring.

Library Devolopment 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

This year **“The Basics of Orthodoxy”** class returned to its usual schedule, being supplemented with individual **tutorials** for inquirers and potential converts.

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.

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.

Capital Campaign

Our three-year **“EXPANDING HORIZONS: Building for God's Kingdom”** Capital Stewardship Campaign reached its third year mark this past May 2007. By national fund-raising standards, **it has been very successful!** Praise God! Over 92% of pledged funds have been received to date. Over \$374,000 was pledged, and already over \$345,000 has been received and placed into our Building Fund. Thanks to all who have given!

During 2007, James Riley, Co-Chair of the Building Committee, **continued** the fund-raising efforts with the **second pledge drive**, for our **future mortgage**. These **“yellow card”** pledges now 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. Thanks to all for their stewardship and generosity!

Council President Rashid Elia stated at our July 15, 2007 Special Parish Meeting (in which we all unanimously agreed to take \$500,000 in loans) that we still need to lower the total expenses and increase the total income. He made the suggestion that parishioners **voluntarily continue offering additional payments** to the building fund (***at their former Capital Campaign pledge level***) for the next six months--until the end of the year. This will help solve some of our limitations and provide us with a financial cushion. Parishioners also have **the other option** of beginning immediately to **pay their monthly “yellow card” mortgage pledges**. This also will help build up a financial cushion. If parishioners start paying their mortgage pledges up front, rather than waiting until the mortgage loan funds are received when we build next spring, this will reduce the actual final amount of the mortgage funds that will be needed from the bank when the time comes to pay the contractors.

Building Committee (see separate report)

Much good has transpired over the past year. Many people came together. We all worked hard to follow the guidance of our Bishop TIKHON who had previously urged us to embrace a modest project. Throughout this past year, the Building Committee and Parish Council helped **unite** the parish behind a limited scope project based upon a realistic budget that we believe that we can afford (based on a second round of pledging—with the famous yellow cards). Therefore, on July 16, 2007, our Bishop TIKHON gave his blessing and permission for us to construct the 4,300 sq. ft. Social Hall on the north side of the church. He also approved our decision to take the \$500,000 in loans. This past September 30, 2007, Bishop TIKHON came to Wilmington and planted a large wooden cross on the property where we hope to build, inspiring us with faith and hope to see the completed project next year, 2008, Lord willing.

OCMC Missions

The parish is financially supporting the entire year's salary of an African Orthodox clergymen: \$600. The Sisterhood is generously supporting another African Orthodox priest for \$600. Thanks, ladies!

Project Mexico

For a fifth year in a row, someone from our parish has joined Project Mexico's efforts to build a modest, sturdy little home for a very needy family. This past summer, Melissa Riley again went.

Perogie Bakers

Our well-trained group of perogie bakers worked very hard preparing for the November 2006 Bazaar, which raised \$3,830 for kitchen equipment for the new building. Currently the group is hard at work preparing for the November 2007 Bazaar. Thank you, Pierogie Bakers!

Communication

Our Parish Newsletter—"St. Michael's Communicator"—only had a few special issues this year. We are 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 every three weeks, and recently, due to increased interest in learning more pieces, the frequency of practices will increase. 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 \$232.00 in coins for missions in their Lenten **OCMC coin boxes**. In addition, the Parish Council has approved of the distribution of coin boxes for spare change for the Building Program. These will be distributed soon.

Christmas Giving Opportunities

This past 2006 Nativity Fast we donated to:

- 1) St. Tikhon's Seminary in the form of canned and boxed foodstuffs.
- 2) Several needy families received Thanksgiving baskets.
- 3) Sunday School students raised funds for the OCA Christmas Stocking Drive.
- 4) We also did the "adopt-family" project for Christmas of 2006.

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 Nights**, we also enjoyed **Blue Rocks baseball game** this summer. Parishioners attended the St. Tikhon's 2007 **Monastery Pilgrimage**. Our **Christmas Sunday School Play** was enjoyed by all.

Bishop TIKHON's Annual Pastoral Visit

This past September 29-30, 2007, we were blessed to have a pastoral visit to our parish by our hierarch, His Grace Bishop TIKHON. The bishop arrived on Saturday afternoon and met the Parish Council before Vespers. After Vespers there was a dinner at the hotel restaurant, open to all the parish, everyone paying for his or her own meal. The highlight of the weekend was a special prayer service following the Sunday Divine Liturgy during which the Bishop blessed and planted a wooden cross marking the spot of the future new building. He also blessed the grounds on which we hope to build next year, Lord willing. In an effort by the bishop to offer us a "low-budget" visit with "less stress" on choir and altar boys, Bishop TIKHON arranged to visit us without a deacon and did not do a full hierarchical service. We also saved money by not having an expensive Banquet at a hotel, but instead, the entire parish sprang into action and prepared a delicious luncheon in the parish hall on Sunday. Thanks goes to all who cooked, cleaned, served, sang, or had some role to play in the bishop's visit.

Annual Parish Picnic

Based on the success of our 2006 Parish Picnic, this past September 2007 we again took the Fall Picnic off-premises to Delcastle Park. Again, it was extremely successful! Lots of parishioners came. We also held a Picnic to launch Summer in our own church's backyard woods in June. It too was lots of fun!

The new Brotherhood (see separate report)

Our new "Brotherhood Organization" increased its list of activities. Well done, Men!

The Sisterhood (see separate report)

The ladies of the parish continue to be of most valuable service to the community. To their list of regular activities, this year they organized and sponsored a parish Lenten Retreat. The Sisterhood's Altar Guild's current project is to prepare Green Altar clothes for Pentecost. Their chief source of funds is the Fall sale of Baklava. Please help collect orders! Well done, Ladies!

The Volunteer Drive

Volunteers are needed: for Parish Council, the Building and Grounds Committee, and the K.I.T. "Keeping In Touch" Outreach committee. Also, the "*Communicator*" newsletter needs a new editor, the Sunday School needs a coordinator, and a coordinator is needed for the Church Cleaners.

Office Projects

No new "**Members and Friends Directory**" has been issued recently, though one is being prepared.

The Parish Council purchased a well-known **management software package, Quick Books** for Non-Profits, which it hopes to begin to utilize in the New 2008 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

Thanks to Stefan Stankov for waxing our floor. We had about 20 individuals come and rake leaves last fall, restoring the natural beauty of our backyard. Over the summer, 23 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 volunteer service to flower beds and bushes. Thanks, all!

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

A set of large Festal Icons was donated by the Anderson family in memory of Matushka Isabel Anderson. New library books and many other icons were donated, plus the cross for the lawn. (Thanks, donors! Apologies if anyone's gift was missed.)

By God's Grace, since October 2006, 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

