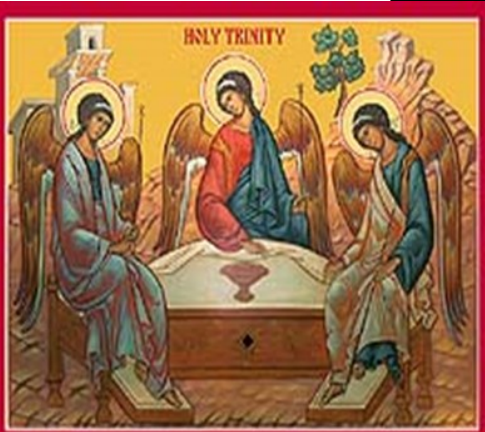




THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOXY

Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania
Orthodox Church in America
Summer 2024 Edition



On the Eighth Sunday from Holy Pascha, We Celebrate The Holy Pentecost.

**With mighty wind, in form Like tongues of fire
Christ gives God's Spirit Now to the Apostles.
Spirit on this great day on fishers poured.**

This feast we also took from the Hebrew Bible; for just as they celebrate Pentecost, honoring the number seven, and that when they had passed through fifty days from Pascha they received the Law, so we too as we celebrate for fifty days after Pascha receive the all-holy Spirit, who gives laws and guides into all truth and lays down what is pleasing to God.

Note that there are three Feasts among the Hebrews, Pascha, Pentecost and Tabernacles. They keep Pascha to commemorate the crossing of the Red Sea - for word Pascha means 'crossing'. While this same feast showed our crossing and ascent from the darkness of sin towards Paradise.

They celebrated Pentecost in commemoration of their suffering in the wilderness, and how they were brought through many afflictions in the land of promise, for then they enjoyed fruit, corn and wine. And it showed our misery through unbelief and our entry into the Church; for then we also receive communion of the Body and Blood of the Master. Some say that this is the reason that Pentecost is celebrated by the Hebrews. Others however say that it is honor of the fifty days that Moses fasted and received the Law written by God. At the same time they commemorate the sacrifice to the calf and the other things which Moses performed, ascending and descending the Mount. Differently it was thought that Pentecost was observed by the Hebrews because of honor for the number seven, as has been said; for this number multiplied by itself makes fifty days less one. The honor of the Pentecostal fifty is not only in days but in years, from which was born the Jubilee among them; for this happens when years are multiplied seven times. Then they leave the ground unsown and give relief to animals and they allow bought slaves to leave.

The third feast is that of Tabernacles, celebrated after the harvest, that is to say five months after Pascha. It was established to commemorate the day when Moses first fixed the Tabernacle that had been revealed on Mount Sinai through a cloud and which had been constructed by the master craftsman Beseleël. For they would make tabernacles and celebrate this feast, living in the fields and giving thanks to God, and they would bring in the fruits of their own labours. And it seem that it was for this that David entitled the Psalms For the wine vats. This was a type of our resurrection from the dead, when our earthly tabernacles are dissolved and put together again and we shall enjoy the fruits of our own labors and keep festival in eternal tabernacles.

It is to be noted that on this day, when Pentecost was completed, the Holy Spirit came to dwell upon the Disciples. But since it seemed good to the holy Fathers to divide the feasts, because of the greatness of the all-holy and life-giving Spirit, because the Spirit is one of the holy Trinity, source of life, so we too will say tomorrow how the holy Spirit came to dwell.



FROM THE DESK OF ARCHBISHOP MELCHISEDEK

Trampling down Death by Death

On the night of Pascha, after the Paschal procession and the proclamation of our Lord's Resurrection, we re-enter the Church triumphantly singing the Paschal Troparion: "Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death...". As we re-enter the brightly lit Church – which had been, to that point, shrouded in darkness – the hymns and prayers we are singing especially emphasize the "trampling down death by death." At the same time, the Icon of the Feast, which is carried into the Church and placed in the center of the Church for veneration, shows our Lord descending into hell and taking people by the hand to pull them out of the clutches of the defeated Satan (the one who divides). At the end of the Matins, and leading to the beginning of the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Paschal Sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read. The literary center of that sermon proclaims that "hell took a body, and met God face to face." At virtually any level at which one might care to ponder these words, it becomes apparent that the crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ is not a mere matter of bodily resuscitation. Neither is it simply a mere matter of legal acquittal – even though, from some 'points of view' it may seem to be so – nor is it merely a matter of giving 'satisfaction' to a justifiably angry God. Rather, it is the climax of the history of a God Who not only created everything – and created it good – Who not only created the human being in His image and likeness, but goes on to demonstrate what He was willing to do to restore that creation when it disobeyed Him. He not only restores that creation to Himself, but He restores, in His own person, that 'image and likeness' which were damaged by the disobedience of Adam and Eve. It is the story of a God who became part of His creation not only to take it back, to reestablish it by adoption through His grace, but – in an incomprehensible manner – to become 'small' enough to undergo death in order to enter into hell (Hades, the 'headquarters' of the dominion of death) to overthrow its power in order to restore His creation to the Kingdom of Heaven for which He intended it. Keeping in mind the Biblical warnings that our God is a "Consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29) we recall the words of Met. Antony (Bloom) of Sourouzh: "... when the Son of God became the Son of Man, when the Word of God became flesh, when Jesus came into the world, who being truly man, could put His hand on the man's shoulders without destroying the man by the fire of divine touch, and who could without blasphemy and sacrilege, put His hand on the shoulder of God without being destroyed." So, we rejoice in our restoration "in Christ" but we also – remembering that that our God is a consuming fire – must be careful not to forget that it is our calling as human beings to become truly alive with the fire of Christ's grace and love and to spread that flame and all that it enlightens through God's creation.



Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

**ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH
AND WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA**

OFFICIAL CHANGES

KOPCHA, ARCHPRIEST JOHN, is released from his duties as Rector of St. Andrew Church, Mingo Junction, OH, and is granted retirement effective October 1, 2023. He is attached in retirement to the Holy Altar at the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA.

MATYCHAK, ARCHPRIEST ANDREW, is released from his duties as Rector of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Altoona, PA, and Holy Ascension Church, Colver, PA, and is granted retirement effective December 1, 2023. He is attached in retirement to the Holy Altar at the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA.

PETERSON, ARCHPRIEST GREGORY, is released from his duties as Rector of Holy Trinity Church, Charleroi, PA, and is granted retirement effective January 1, 2024. He is attached in retirement to the Holy Altar at the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA.

RABICHOW, DEACON JOSEPH, reposed in the Lord January 22, 2024. +MEMORY ETERNAL!+

SCHULTZ, SUBDEACON JOHN, was ordained to the Holy Diaconate at the St. Nicholas Church, Weirton, WV, on December 16, 2023, by His Eminence, Archbishop MELCHISEDEK. He is attached to the Holy Altar at the St. Nicholas Church, Weirton, WV.

Approved for distribution:

Archpriest William J. Evansky
Chancellor

Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania
Orthodox Church in America
(14 April 2024)

Parish Council Development Initiative

By Joseph Kormos Parish Development Ministry

Recognizing the important role that the parish councils and the priest play in moving their parish forward to a bright, Christ-centered future, the Archdiocesan Council for the Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania has initiated a **Parish Council Development Initiative**. In deciding to begin this effort the Council realized that Parish councils had in the past received scant guidelines about their role and expectations. As a result it is reasonable to believe that improvements are necessary and possible.

The purpose of this effort is to equip parish council members - new and experienced – with new tools, practices and mindsets to strengthen their ability to meet the challenges facing parishes.

Workshops will bring together cohorts of four to six parish councils generally on a Saturday morning. Over time, these sessions will cover councils from most parishes.

The first such workshop session was held in late January at St. John the Baptist Church in New Kensington PA. Over 30 council members and clergy from four parishes were in attendance.

Parish Council Purpose

One of the challenges in updating parish council practices is the need to clarify exactly what the *proper* role of the parish council should be. For many, the PC is seen as the business/administrative ministry of the parish. In considering the question of “role” an advisory team appointed by the Archdiocesan Council provided a more comprehensive definition:

The Parish Council is a shared leadership body co-responsible, under the rector’s guidance, for the health and vibrancy of the parish. Working together they are stewards of the parish’s ability to fulfill its total mission. In addition to overseeing the parish’s God given resources, the council must discern priorities, drive action and enliven vital parish ministries.

The Parish Council has three basic tasks:

Oversight of Resources & Administration

Budgets; facilities; safety/risk; establish policies.

Planning & Vision

Establish mission; synthesize opportunities & challenges; discern priorities; articulate practical vision; communicate to/from parish; drive action; encourage leader development.

Stimulating & Empowering Ministry

Initiate new ministries and prune non-productive ministries; link these to vision and define target outcomes; structure parish to empower ministry without micromanagement.

“In our rampantly secular world churches of all types are facing moral, secular, cultural and legal headwinds. Our busy, mobile society is not friendly to ‘Sunday’ – or most anything Christian.

The parish council of 2024 does not face the same situations as the parish councils of 1980 or ‘90. Early parish councils were shaped by the conflicting forces of congregationalism and clericalism. Today’s parishes face new difficult issues -- as well as great opportunity. New skills are needed and expected - thinking with a longer time horizon and embracing a broader set of topics. Collaboration between parish councils and clergy is clearly more important than 5, 10 or 20 years ago.

Continued on page 5

Parish Council Development Initiative

Continued from page 4

Asking the Right Questions

As part of this workshop Parish Council members are encouraged to evaluate their efforts and *"ask the right questions."*

Among those questions: *Are we satisfied with...*

Our sense of mission and our efforts to fulfill that mission as a Christian community?

Our vision of the future - what we desire our parish to look and be like in (e.g.) 3, 5 or 10 years? Is our aim too low?

How well we've identified the key opportunities and challenges facing our parish and expressing related specific goals.

What proportion of our council efforts go beyond short term fire-fighting?

The collaborative nature of clergy/laity cooperation and assessing and avoiding pastoral overload and burnout?

Our ministry to the local community/ neighborhood?

Our methods and content of outward looking communication to those seeking Christ?

Our efforts to build generosity toward Christ's church. Or, are we afraid to teach and 'ask' for commitments?

Our budget and time investment in children and youth? In adult education? In leadership and ministry development?

Are we *giving parishioners what they want* – or urging them to seek a new, better life in Christ?



Attendees at the first Parish Council workshop.

Good Practices

Workshop attendees are offered over a dozen tips and good practices, of varying effort and complexity that can help their parish council to increase its productivity and effectiveness. At the conclusion of the session each Parish Council meets as a group to select one or two new ideas they will try.

Of the four parish councils present at the initial pilot session the following good practices were among those selected:

The use of a **Consent Agenda** to offload basic quick decisions from the discussion portion of the council meeting.

Creation of a **Three Year Vision Budget** to help surface the assumptions behind parish planning and to encourage longer term thinking?

The use of occasional **Town Hall** style parish gatherings to encourage dialogue, surface ideas and to establish a context for new parish practices.

To include a '**Pastoral Matters**' segment at each parish council meeting to remind council members that they have a pastoral role. Included might be a review of new members or inquirers who made need attention from PC members.

If you have questions or feedback you can contact Joseph Kormos Parish Development Ministry leader at 513.518.5878 or jooekor-mos1@gmail.com.

Open questions invite conversation before a decision. Nothing prepares a congregation more for change than one or more opportunities to talk about the future."

Dan Hotchkiss; "Governance and Ministry"

Legacy Parish Assistance Program Report SS. Cyril and Methodius Church. Jeanette PA

The renewal and continued work toward a stable and flourishing parish has been sustained since last year's report. This Apostolic and missionary vision has been gained through a growing stewardship base and monthly financial assistance from the Archdiocese through the Legacy Parish Assistance Program (LPAP).



This renewal is built upon a foundation of consistent and orderly celebration of the divine services, which began with the training of competent servers, readers and singers through regular classes and practices. This work has produced good fruit, as our choir and corps of servers and readers has grown. The faithful come from near and far to attend our services and classes, and the keeping of the cycles of the Liturgical seasons has been crucial to this renewal and in drawing new people into the Faith. The choir has grown with singers trained from within the parish, together with the good willed assistance of others from our diocesan parishes. The building of a good choir has been a source of great joy, not only prayerfully enhancing the celebration of the divine services, but has also inspired greater participation in "congregational" type of singing, especially of the Liturgy. This enables more of the community, especially newcomers, to more intensely experience Orthodox worship and celebration. Singing is lead from the Kliros and not from the loft.



Following the liturgy, we have Trapeza/luncheon every Sunday and often following major feasts. It has become well-known that all are welcome to our Sunday meals: neighbors, friends, relatives, inquirers, one and all. We ask no fee, and preparation, serving and clean-up is a labor of love and mercy within our community. On occasion, we might gather at a local restaurant for a meal, fellowship and discussion. An atmosphere of welcoming and the sharing of people's stories and journeys have helped with our growth in meeting folks from all "walks of life" and other religious and life experiences. Our parishioners love to share their stories of their journey to the Faith, which makes inquirers and visitors feel comfortable instead of being "visitors."

We continue to welcome our Deanery clergy for services, meetings and luncheons, as well as other clergy from within our Diocesan Church. We are very grateful for those who consistently show their love and support in spreading the word regarding the potentials of LPAP. Our Archbishop pays at least two annual visits, which are a great joy and consolation to our community and obviously are a great joy for Him personally. Our beloved retired clergy, Father George Yatsko and Father Samuel Smolic and Matushka Marsha, continue to be a part of our community life. We are grateful to them for their support and pray for their good health and continued service to our community and the Archdiocese.



Continued on Page 7

Legacy Parish Assistance Program Report

SS. Cyril and Methodius Church. Jeanette PA

Continued from page 6

With a number of converts to the faith, most emphasis is placed on adult education, which informally takes place after Matins each Tuesday and Thursday, and at designated times during the year, especially during the Fall/Nativity Fast period. This year's course will be "Against Modern Heresies." The course has been revised and updated, and will be offered again in a new format. Parishioners are also encouraged to attend functions at local Orthodox parishes and within the Archdiocese and Deanery as they are announced.



Having a very small number of school age youth, but not lacking young adults with children, Matushka Susanne assists families with "home schooling" in the faith --- providing religious education materials and support. Father Michael instructs all catechumens and inquirers on a one-to-one basis. Matushka Susanne also assists the catechumens in learning the routines and nuances of the parish. Our devoted subdeacons assist in the training of Altar Servitors and Readers. Our choir practices regularly, including a "warm up" prior to Sunday liturgies and major

services. The growth of a quality bookstore and library continues. Books and other items for the use of parishioners and inquirers are stocked in the Kiosk in the Church vestibule. Our library is located in the Church Hall.

The cleanliness, safety, security, and good order of the temple, hall and grounds are a continual concern and receive the needed attention. While the location of the parish within the city of Jeannette is not anyone's idea of Paradise, it is where we are and where we shall remain. We cooperate with fire, police, and code enforcement officers to help maintain our neighborhood's "quality of life." Our city and our immediate neighborhood have improved greatly over the last year. We cooperate with county redevelopment and city efforts to tear down abandoned buildings in the neighborhood, and we have learned that the abandoned building next to the Church and rectory will be demolished shortly. Our hope is to work with the city to provide needed additional parking and green space. A comfortable, clean children's area for education and ' breaks' progresses as we are blessed with more infants and small children, with a view of completing a renovation of our basement hall in the future. As we discern ways to reach out effectively to our immediate neighborhood, it becomes obvious that an updated hall will help facilitate that difficult work.



Our widely-acclaimed website is updated consistently, including the weekly print bulletin (jeannetteorthodox.org). The Facebook page is updated nearly every day with news and photos, and enjoys a following both nationally and internationally.

Continued on page 8

Legacy Parish Assistance Program Report

SS. Cyril and Methodius Church. Jeannette PA

Continued from page 7

Community presence:

The Fall Festival in Jeannette provides us with the opportunity to outreach, sell food and offer literature and an opportunity to meet Father Michael and our people. Open Door Sundays were held last September, but didn't generate much buzz. Our summer "Burger Bash" was initially planned as an outreach to the neighbors around the parish, and has begun to see some positive results. We continue to explore more opportunities via the plentiful community festivals in the Laurel Highlands, not to simply see them as "fundraisers", but as opportunities to be a presence in these growing communities of Westmoreland County. The parish picnic at Twin Lakes Park has grown each year.



The parish cemetery is well maintained and is an asset to the community and not a cause for drama and anxiety. Other than grave-digging, all work is accomplished by volunteers.

Needs and Prospects:

Continual infrastructure updates and repairs on an old building have slowed our vision in planning for long term financial stability. Roof leaks and damage to the ceiling of Church have, hopefully, been abated and repaired, mostly using in-house talents and muscle. Eventually, the need for money and contract work overwhelms such good will. Over time as the parish grows, we strive to be more proactive regarding maintenance than reactive, so as not to be constantly hoping against emergencies. Accessibility for the elderly and disabled is very problematic and somehow has to be rectified, despite having an aged building. Increased parking space is needed.

The parish is drawing from Greensburg, Monroeville, Export, Murrysville, Latrobe and Ligonier. Real growth and stability must be a patient process, and it is apparent that the transitional period which began during the covid episode is in a sense, complete. The LPAP has been absolutely essential in growing the Orthodox Christian mission and witness here in Jeannette and Westmoreland County with its financial support. Vision supported and upheld by financial help.

Financial stability is a concern, especially considering the present economic realities related to domestic and social instability and international affairs. That noted, our weekly income has consistently increased. Continued stewardship education and supportive incentives, such as the LPAP and careful management of our gifts, are helping to establish a stable financial footing for the community. More hard work lies ahead, as we grow to understand that not "expecting" other people's money -- but offering the first and the finest -- is the foundation upon which to build a solid Orthodox community.

The Orthodox Christian Community of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Jeannette extends its gratitude to our Archbishop, our Chancellor, supportive clergy, and the faithful of this Archdiocese who initiated this program, and who continue to support it. All of us involved in the administrative portion of this program understand that this is a work-in-progress, yet it has progressed confidently and steadily. Great and perhaps even incredible things have been accomplished for Christ and His Church here in Jeannette, and we are blessed to be establishing a base and a level of expectation for the future of this enlightened and visionary program. By God's mercy, we continue to be ever forward and upward in our shared mission to see this community thrive. Come and See.

Growth and Development in Somerset County



On Forgiveness Sunday, 17 March 2024, Vladyka Melchisedek made an Arch-pastoral visit to Holy Assumption Orthodox Church in Central City. Weekend services were well attended, and a fasting appropriate social followed Divine Liturgy. We were blessed to begin the Great Fast with our Archpastor, and were equally pleased to share the news of progress in our Somerset County Parishes.

During the Nativity Season, a young inquirer, Morgan, was formally enrolled as a Catechumen, and will be received into the faith this Holy Saturday. Her daughter, Ellie is still discerning her own spiritual path, but we are blessed to have her worship with us.



In our parish of Ss. Peter & Paul in Pine Hill (Berlin), Tim and his young family recently returned to the area, and worship regularly at our chapel. We are also blessed to have a young adult, Kyle, who has expressed interest in the Catechumenate. An icon procession was held with our youth on The Sunday of Orthodoxy.

In other news, Fr. Elijah, his family, and a representative from the Somerset churches recently attended the inaugural liturgy of the Antiochian Orthodox Mission of Cumberland, Maryland. Both Archbishop Melchisedek and Bishop Thomas blessed this participation, and the Somerset Churches have built up a good report with their new neighbors to the South. We wish them many years!

Back home, the Altar Society and Parishioners of Holy Assumption are working hard to complete our current project, new roof for the church.

The goal is to complete the whole project before Fall!



Finally, Fr. Elijah will be part of an Interfaith Roundtable hosted by Pennsylvania Highlands Community College, where Father is employed as an adjunct instructor in the Humanities Department. The event will witness to our Orthodox presence in the local community.



Glory to God for a busy spring season, and for all things!

LIFE AT ST. ANDREW CHURCH, LYNDORA PA



Saint Andrew Orthodox Church in Lyndora participated in the Christmas Gifts for Nursing Home Patients at the Lowery Place (an assisted living facility in Butler, PA). All patients were very happy to receive the presents they requested and more on the Christmas gifts for patients tree. The Church Committee got together after a committee meeting for a picture.



Blessing of the Waters took place at Lake Arthur, Moraine State Park, in Butler, PA. It was scheduled for January 14, but due to inclement weather, it was changed to February 18. Coffee and cookies were available for parishioners of the Lyndora Saint Andrew Orthodox Church and guests who were there. Special thank you's go out to Fr. Michael Sochka for leading us in the Blessing of the Waters.

LIFE AT INTERCESSION OF THE VIRGIN CHURCH, CARNEGIE PA

Kicked off summer with a picnic in the Church garden to celebrate our Sunday school class of 2024 graduation



On the Holy Pascha we wish Many years to our beloved Archpriest George York on his 46th Anniversary of Ordination to The Holy Priesthood and to our beloved Choir Directress Rebecca Danchenko on her Birthday!

**May God Keep them and
Grant them Many Blessed Years!**



Social Media Outreach at St Nicholas in McKees Rocks

In the age of the internet, communication has drastically changed. Gone are the days of newspaper ads and the Yellow Pages. St Nicholas Church in McKees Rocks has been at the Forefront of using the internet and social media to drive parish growth and awareness of the Orthodox faith. Today, even the use of websites has evolved. Although websites are still an important part of an internet presence (“If you don’t have a website, you don’t exist!”), social media channels as well as established Orthodox media providers are the go-to way to showcase the good things happening in a church community.

By far the most well-known and respected provider of Orthodox internet media is Ancient Faith Ministries. Ancient Faith began as an internet streaming radio station, created by former Christian radio executive, John Maddex, called Ancient Faith Radio, in 2004. Since then, it has grown to become the world’s largest, most influential, and respected provider of Orthodox media in English, now known as Ancient Faith Ministries. They publish hundreds of popular-level books, host hundreds of podcasts about Orthodoxy, and have expanded to video for both children and a burgeoning ministry called Ancient Faith Films for high-quality film production.

St Nicholas Church became a very early partner of Ancient Faith Radio, taking up a collection in 2006 to produce the first, and now longest-running, daily podcast on AFR, called, “The Path.” Narrated by Fr Thomas Soroka, The Path provides, in audio format, the appointed daily reading according to the church’s calendar, followed by commentary by the Fathers. It has become a weekday staple for English listeners around the world. Fr Thomas’ sermons podcast, called “Sermons at St Nicholas,” is also one of the longest continuously running podcasts, hosted by AFR since 2008.

Since those early days, Ancient Faith expanded into live call-in streaming radio, as well as three streaming stations that provide music and teaching, 24-hours a day. Fr Thomas now hosts the popular show, “Ancient Faith Today Live,” every Tuesday evening at 9:00 pm ET. The show discusses many issues of interest to Orthodox Christians, some are even difficult or controversial.



Additionally, biblical scholar and member of St Nicholas in McKees Rocks, Dr Edith Humphrey, hosts her own podcast called, “A Lamp for Today,” which explores in an Orthodox manner, Old Testament texts illumined by the writings of the Church Fathers, liturgical texts, and of course, the New Testament.

St Nicholas is a proud supporter and promoter of Ancient Faith Ministries. You can find a wealth of helpful and reliable

media at ancientfaith.com.

(Pictured is a remote show of Ancient Faith Today Live featuring participants in the Orthodox Volunteer Corps ministry.)



ARCHDIOCESAN DAY AT THE PITTSBURGH PIRATES

50 Orthodox Christians from around the Archdiocese before
Bright Friday's Pirates Game against the Chicago Cubs.



CHURCH SCHOOL CLASSES ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH MCKEES ROCKS, PA

ST. TIKHONS SEMINARY VISITS ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY CATHEDRAL



Positive Qualities of Selected Home Parish: Orthodox Convert Survey

