

**Report to the 50th Diocesan Assembly of the
Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania
January 18, 2014, Bethlehem, PA
Report of the Dean, Philadelphia Deanery**

Officers:

Dean: Fr. James Weremedic
Vice-Dean: Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk
Secretary: Fr. Jason Franchak
Treasurer: Fr .Dn. George Zlatkowski

We started our year as deanery by honoring our immediate past dean Hieromonk Fr. David Mahaffey on January 29th. Deanery clergy along with their spouses and children wished Archimandrite David (Mahaffey) Bishop-elect of the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska a fond farewell at a dinner celebration at The Primesteak House in Bethlehem, PA, where he was presented with an icon of St. Bebe. His Grace, Bishop Mark and Chancellor, Fr. John Kowalczyk joined us in this celebration.

In addition to our quarterly deanery meetings (3/11/13, 7/28/13, 10/20/13), we will meet again on 1/9/14. We also participated in events and meetings with the Philadelphia Brotherhood.

His Grace, Bp. Mark led us in prayer on Orthodoxy Sunday. Lenten Mission services were held at St. Herman's, Gradyville and Holy Trinity, Pottstown. Bridegroom Matin's was held at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Philadelphia.

St. Stephen's Cathedral was the host church for fellowship and educational opportunities this year. In addition to a clergy family picnic, a presentation on Prison Ministry was held in August. An Akathist to St. Herman and a lecture on the use of Social Media in spreading the Gospel presented by the Fr. Andrew Damick were also held.

The Diocese welcomed two new clergy members and their families. Fr. Ian Shipley and his family relocated to Bethlehem. Fr. Stephen Miller and his family relocated to Coatesville.

The Diocese plans for 2014 include a youth social gathering at a local ball game and a summer clergy family fellowship picnic. We will continue our discussion on starting a mission parish in the deanery. We will strive to maintain our regular meetings and continue our traditional events that include the St. Herman's Akathist and lecture, our Lenten Mission services and our participation in the Philadelphia Brotherhood.

2014 LENTEN MISSION SCHEDULE – All Services 4PM

March 9 – Orthodox Sunday – St. Thomas, Cherry Hill, NJ

March 16 – St. Herman of Alaska, Gradyville, Pa

March 23 – Ss. Peter and Paul, Wilmington, DE

March 30 – St. Michael, 4th & Fairmount, Philadelphia, Pa

April 6 – Assumption Parish, 28th and Snyder, Philadelphia, Pa

April 13 – Bridegroom Matins, St. Stephen Cathedral, Philadelphia, Pa

Under the guidance of our Diocesan Hierarchy, Administration, Clergy and Faithful, the deanery continues to minister within our respective parishes and communities bringing us closer to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted,

Yours in Christ,

Fr. James Weremedic

Dean, Philadelphia Deanery and Rector of St. Michael the Archangel

Parish Events:

St. Herman of Alaska, Gradyville - celebrated their 40th anniversary during the weekend of Dec 7-8, 2013 with His Grace Bishop Mark, Administrator of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania presiding at the Great Vespers Service and at the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Highlight of the celebration was the visit of the myrrh gushing icon of St. Anna brought by Archimandrite Athanasy from St. Tikhon's Monastery. A grand banquet was held at La Locanda restaurant in Newtown Square, Pa attended by many distinguished guests parishioners and friends of our parish. We give thanks for the past forty years and pray that almighty God will continue to bless our parish and the Orthodox Church in America!

St. Nicholas, Philadelphia - This year St. Nicholas and St. Michael's Churches re-instituted the Great Jordan Water Blessing between churches; this past year it was at St. Michaels Church who also hosted a dinner, and this coming year on Jan. 19th it will be at St. Nicholas who hosts the dinner.

St. Nicholas sponsored the Sunday of Orthodoxy Lenten Mission for the OCA Philadelphia Deanery and the Greater Philadelphia Orthodox Brotherhood, with the classic luncheon that followed.

Katherine Kariouk again arranged the program for the Sunday School Yolka and Program, including St. Nicholas as an annual event.

During Great Lent St. Nicks Boutique sponsored its Annual Egg-Stravaganza with sales of thousands of decorated eggs and other Easter related articles on display.

St. Nick's Sportsmen's Club held their Potato Pancake Dinner, their Annual Crabfest, and other incidental fundraisers during the year.

The Annual Parish Picnic was held on the North Lawn with wonders of Russian Music foods and refreshments.

The Sisterhood of the Pokrova held their Annual St. Nicholas Dinner, and other minor fund raising events during the year. Their membership now included mostly younger members.

We had two in-Parish retreats featuring the miraculous Iveron Icon from Hawaii, and St. Anne with Father Athanasy. The support for our Annual Parish St. Nicholas Dinner continues to grow, trending to the days of old by fabulous participation.

Each Sunday an individual or family volunteers to provide a luncheon for those who come to church. It provides an excellent opportunity to see family and friends at least once a week for talk and fellowship. The proceeds add much to help cover the expenses of a Downtown City Parish.

St. Nicholas continues their charitable works for Great Lent, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and others as we see need. Usually these are done on the confidential basis worked through the priest and deacon, funded by individuals and parish as needed.

You can expect the full range of services at St. Nicholas, with a choir of professional quality. The average parishioner drives 32 miles to get to the church, and the quality we provide must be worth their time, investment and efforts, because they must drive past many other Orthodox Churches before they get to 7th and Brown.

The parish always continues excellent maintenance and upkeep of the facilities, as the church is going on 200 years old and is in constant repair. The parishioners are fully aware of these needs and continue funding these needs. They are proud of their inheritance and what they have in the City of Philadelphia, anxious to remain where they are even with the trend of a small congregation, and they will continue to protect what is their tremendous investment and accomplishment, from any encroachment from the evil ones and outside predators and influences.

St. Mark, Wrightstown - During the past year St. Mark's has had several major improvements to the physical plant. A restored rectory, new flooring and carpeting in the Church, cleaning/restoring the wood facade of the church along with the installation of a new icon above the main door.

Ethnic Food sales were held during Great Lent and Advent in addition to participation in Bristol Days, an annual community festival in Bristol, Pa where we sold food and answered questions about our Church. The annual sale of Pysanky also took place on Western Palm Sunday.

The ongoing Scrip Program for fundraising grew significantly due to sustained encouragement and increased participation.

Spiritually the parish was nourished by a very full schedule of services made possible by our dedicated troika of choir directors. A Lenten Retreat was held in April focused on the teachings of St. Nikolai of Zhica and an Advent Retreat offered by Fr. Alexander Golubov on the theme of a sustainable faith was held in December.

A weekly Akathist is offered on Wednesday mornings, followed by Adult Education, and a monthly discussion group on Orthodoxy in the Public Square were begun during the year.

The parish became a member of the Wrightstown Food Cupboard, an interdenominational and longstanding community outreach to the hungry in Bucks County. Additionally, prison ministry to those in the County Prison, in cooperation with Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Church in Doylestown became a regular part of parish life.

His Grace Bishop Mark visited in June, presiding at Great Vespers and serving the Divine Liturgy, at the conclusion of which he blessed the refurbished temple, inside and out. A parish dinner followed the services. In the Fall Chaplain Patrick Tutella visited and made a presentation on the work of Orthodox Christian Prison Ministries.

St. Nicholas, Bethlehem - In the last year our parish has been in a time of transition. Archimandrite David Mahaffey bid farewell to the parish in order to assume his new responsibilities as Bishop elect of the Diocese of Alaska. Fr. Ian Shipley and his family came in July and are now establishing themselves here at St. Nicholas. We have recently formed a Parish Revitalization Committee which has met twice to discuss ways the parish can reach out to visitors and be pro-active about interior and exterior growth. Another significant event in the life of our parish has been the blessing of our Domes, which were recently restored in gold-leaf through the generosity of Paul Chernay. A special event was held to give thanks for this visible manifestation of the Faith. We had a successful Russian Days festival due to the hard work of our Parish Council and other parishioners, who every year dedicate their time and talents to this sacrificial labor. In the last year we have had 6 baptisms, 1 Chrismation, and 1 Wedding.

St. Stephen Cathedral, Philadelphia - This past year there were a number of successful events that were held at St. Stephen Cathedral. Among them we need to highlight Vacation Church School that was took place for three days in late August. Over 35 children participated and we were joined by families from neighboring parish of St. Peter and Paul of the Albanian Archdiocese. At the request of OCPM we hosted a training session on the Prison Ministry that can be lead by both clergy and laypeople in our area. In December we had a wonderful opportunity to listen to Fr. Andrew Damick to join us for the Annual St. Herman Lecture and to talk about the use of Social media networks from the perspective of Orthodox Christianity. We continue to have regular Sunday Divine Liturgy in Church Slavonic as our outreach to the local Russian-speaking community. We also have a number of inquirer's who are learning more about the Orthodox Faith. This communing year, on September 28, 2014, our parish will be celebrating their 40th anniversary of the consecration of the church building and we hope that the faithful of other parishes will be able to join us to mark this special occasion.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Catholic Church, Catasauqua - held its annual church meeting on October 28, 2013. At this meeting, activities over the past year were briefly reviewed as were items we are looking to do in the future. The highlights are as follows.

President Jim O'Brien encouraged everyone to bring guests to church each week and to look outward to friends and family who may not have a church home. We would like to do everything possible to grow our church from its current number.

Over the past year, we were fortunate to complete our dome restoration project. It took many years of fund raising, but we now are seeing the results. The gold domes look beautiful! We held a celebration event on September 22nd which was well attended and truly enjoyed by all. It was a catered event and the food was delicious! The local *Catasauqua Press* was present, took photos, and a nice write up appeared in the paper shortly thereafter. A copy is attached. They also wrote a separate article on Father Tim and a copy is attached as well.

We reviewed the work we completed in the past year under the plan of action established at our 2012 Annual Meeting. In addition to the completion of the domes, the front doors were painted and our air conditioning was repaired. The basement windows are in need of replacing and possibly the basement will be repainted. This will be our next project in accordance with our plan of action.

We decided to begin holding a regular coffee hour at least one Sunday each month. It was decided by those in attendance to hold it the first Sunday of each month. Of course, we may hold social hours more often as we are able.

Council members and Trustees elected to serve for the 2014 term were:

President:	Jim O'Brien
Vice President:	Suzanne Cressman
Treasurer:	Andrew Brusko
Financial Secretary:	Kip Fedetz
Recording Secretary:	Nina Bagshaw
Trustees:	Sonya Gerhard, Joann Yurconic and James Kelly
Auditors:	Ed Bachert, Sherri Fedetz and Michael Harahus

Discussion was held on ways to grow the church. One suggestion was reaching out to our parishioners for suggestions and comments, what can we do to attract new parishioners, etc. The website was also discussed and possible improvements to attract new members. Council will follow up on both of these ideas.

Earlier this year, we held a Paska bake sale as well as a kielbasa sale. Both were held in April prior to Paska and were a success. We were blessed with many helpers who came out to roll, bake and sell! In addition, we are currently in the middle of our kiffle fund raiser. The final baking and sale day is Monday, December 16th. We have baked several days prior, and, based on the number of kiffles ordered, this will be a success too. Our Holy Trinity family enjoys working together throughout the year.

Sunday, December 1st, was a busy day at our church. After church services, we had a social hour with a light lenten meal followed by the "hanging of the greens." The church and Christmas tree was decorated and are beautiful! Many parishioners stayed to enjoy the fellowship and to sing a few Christmas Carols.

We are looking forward to the blessed Christmas holidays and will be holding Christmas Eve services as well as Divine Liturgy on Christmas morning.

Assumption of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church, Philadelphia - Among a number of parish goals, a central one remains outreach to our local neighborhood. To this end, ours was a busy year. We welcomed in July the diocesan mission team to our parish. For a week, young adults and adults from a number of diocesan parishes helped to repair our aging church. Moreover, they helped our parish with local outreach. As an effect of their hard work, people from our neighborhood have been visiting our parish and Fr. Matthew baptized a young man,

who lives just around the corner from our church. This baptism is in addition to the baptism of a young woman from the neighborhood, who was baptized over a year ago.

In October, our parish celebrated its 100th anniversary. Thank you to all the clergy and faithful, who have been praying for us and who sent their regards on behalf of our anniversary.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Pottstown -

Metrical Records:

Baptisms: 3
Chrismations: 3
Catechumens: 1
Inquirers: 0
Marriages: 1
Deaths: 0
New parishioners: 3

Events:

Pottstown Cluster (soup kitchen): We fed the hungry in Pottstown every 5th Friday of the month (four times a year).
Started monthly Charitable outreach: collected money for Mary's House for pregnant women; 4 Thanksgiving baskets given to local families;
Hosted Episcopal Search Committee meeting
Talk given by Fr. Martin Browne on PHIM
Hosted Talk on Financial Accountability given by Fr. Martin Browne and Bishop Mark
Talk given by Fr. Athanasy of St. Tikhon's Monastery followed by Public veneration of The Myrrh-streaming Icon of St. Anna. Collection donated to St. Tikhon's Brotherhood.

Fundraisers:

Spring Bazaar, Fall Bazaar, Cookie Sale

Education:

3 Sunday-school classes weekly; ~25 kids enrolled in Sunday school
2 25-week catechumen class completed, 1 ongoing
1 25-week Premarital Class completed
Informal instruction done during coffee hour

Liturgical:

Wednesday Matins, Sunday Matins, Nocturnes, Small Compline with Akathist to St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre done weekly. More week-day liturgies done throughout the year.
All Feast day services (Vespers, Matins, Liturgy) completed
3 Archpastoral visits from Bishop Mark (1 lenten vespers, Bridegroom Matins, 1 Hierarchical Liturgy)
In Lent: 2 weekly Presanctified Liturgies and full Holy Week Schedule (1-2 services per day).

Miscellaneous:

New Air Handler System put in Attic of Church
Church interior painted with new stenciling and boarder-work completed
New floor tile in Church hall kitchen
Collecting bids to address Church foundation issues
Currently rewriting bylaws for Bishop's approval

St. Michael the Archangel, Wilmington - Our Lenten retreat held on April 13th was led by Mother Christophora and Mother Barbara, Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City. The topic was "Spiritual Growth through Hospitality and Prayer". A joint Fall Retreat with the OCF, University of Delaware; Ss. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church; and St. Michael the

Archangel was held on October 10, 11 and 12, 2013 with Fr. Jason Kappanadze as our speaker. Fr. Jason presented on the theme “Where is the Wise Man?”

St. Michael’s hosted the Confirmation Classes from Summit United Methodist Church and Mt. Pisgah Union American Methodist Episcopal Church for Vespers on Saturday, April 20, 2013. Fr. James spoke with the group following the Vesper Service on the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church. Subsequently, Fr. James went to Mt. Pisgah UAME Church (one of the oldest Black churches in the State of Delaware) to speak on Orthodoxy as part of their 200th Anniversary celebration. Fr. James is also scheduled to meet with both parishes early in 2014.

The Wilmington Area Orthodox Churches (St. Michael’s, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church and Ss. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Orthodox Church) joined together in Ministering to the OCF. During Great Lent, joint Presanctified Liturgies were held. On June 30, 2013, the Inaugural Wilmington Area Pan Orthodox Divine Liturgy and Picnic at Lums Park State Park was held. At the Wilmington Area Joint Orthodox Divine Liturgy the \$1,020.00 collection, was donated to the Ronald McDonald House of Delaware. A joint Vacation Bible School (VBS) was held at Ss. Peter and Paul.

Our library received donations of over 100 books, including books for our Children’s library. The Great Synaxis Lives of Saints series has been in our library reference section, and now these donated books can now be checked out. The Bookstore plans to give newly chrismated/baptized families a prayer book on those occasions as a welcome gift from St. Michael’s. A new Gospel Book, donated in memory of Onufry Zabinko, was blessed on April 13, 2013. A permanent Church sign visible from Kirkwood Highway was blessed on April 28, 2013.

Church School began on September 7, with Vespers attended by our Students and Teachers and on September 8 we held a Molieben for the Beginning of the Instruction of Children and first session of Church School. We are blessed with many children being born or converting into the Faith. This year we have 4 classes for 15 children.

In an effort to look outside our parish and support others in our community, we held several fund raising events. Our Lenten food collection went to the Delaware Food Bank. A gift card collection was held to benefit the Jersey Shore areas devastated by Hurricane Sandy. Our “Sandy” Ministry also included our parish children. Toward this end, during our lessons, we discussed helping others through charitable acts. After an abbreviated lesson, the children helped raise some money for “Sandy’s” victims by selling treats at coffee hour – 25 cents for a small desert. Every little bit helped the victims, but the lesson was priceless.

A Silent Auction/ Dinner was held in October and we held our annual Fall Festival in November. The church volunteers and supporters helped make both of these events a success. Our annual parish-wide Holy Supper on Christmas Eve is now approaching the five year mark! Each year we have seen a growth in number of families participating.

In 2014, we will participate in “Family Promise”, a network of churches and synagogues in Wilmington, De that host homeless families for a week at a time. Since we do not have the facilities to house these families, we are joining with St. Philips Lutheran Church; supporting their host weeks by providing dinners, comfort and companionship 3 or 4 weeks per year.

We are making plans to celebrate our 100th anniversary on Sunday, November 8, 2015.