

## **2016 Diocesan Assembly – Frackville Deanery Report**

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, *Dean* + Priest Stephen Vernak, *Assistant Dean* + Archpriest John Onofrey, *Secretary/Treasurer*

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The Frackville Deanery is comprised of ten parishes which are all serviced regularly by either assigned clergy or visiting clergy. We rejoice that this past year, St. Michael's in Mt. Carmel and Holy Ascension in Lykens have stabilized and have resident clergy. Our Deanery brotherhood meets quarterly to discuss matters of the deanery and to encourage fellowship among the brethren. We had four Lenten Mission Vespers throughout the Deanery with His Eminence, our Archbishop Mark, present when he was available. We also held a picnic in Minersville this past July for the Deanery clergy and their families. Below are submitted reports from the respective parishes to give a snap shot into the life of each community.

### **St. Mary's Church: Coaldale, PA (1909) - [www.stmarysnativity.org](http://www.stmarysnativity.org)**

*Priest Ignatius Gauvain, Rector*

*Archpriest Paul Ropitsky, Attached*

St. Mary's has a long tradition in Coaldale and the surrounding area dating back more than 100 years. We are a fine community with a strong commitment to each other, our sister churches, and the Orthodox faith. As with all communities, there is always room for improvement, and this year our focus will be on growing our Church. We have begun and intend to continue with initiatives to both reconnect absent members as well as reach into our area to bring new people into Orthodoxy.

We continue to have events that draw members from our area to our Church, such as a various dinners, but we have not always consciously planned how these events could be used to grow our parish. We have begun to work through how these draws can be used as entry points into Church membership.

We have begun classes on Saturday nights at 4:00 pm (an hour before Vespers) to learn the 8 tones of the Church and the structure of our services. We will also learn about the theology of the Church by studying her prayers; as we pray, we believe--so it is good to know what we pray. Everyone of all ages is welcome; please come join us if you are interested.

This educational effort is in part focused on having liturgy on Saturday mornings beginning this summer. Our hope is that this liturgy will continue to enrich our own liturgical life as well as provide an easier entry point for someone to "taste and see" Orthodoxy.

**Holy Ascension Church: Frackville, PA (1915) - [www.haoca.org](http://www.haoca.org)**

*Archpriest James Jadick, Rector*

This past year was highlighted with our 100th Anniversary Celebration. We welcomed 9 new members, and are working with 3 catechumens. We continue monthly liturgical services at the Mahanoy State Prison. We completed the refinishing of all metal work in the church, and refinished the parking lot. We revamped Church School to a Parish Education Program for both young and adults which has been better received and well attended!

**Christ the Saviour Church: Harrisburg, PA (1963) - [www.christthesaviourhbg.org](http://www.christthesaviourhbg.org)**

*Priest Stephen Vernak, Rector*

*Archpriest Daniel Ressetar, Pastor Emeritus*

On Sunday, January 18th the Orthodox parishes of Greater Harrisburg gathered at City Island Park for the 7th Annual Pan-Orthodox Great Blessing of the Susquehanna. His Grace, Bishop Mitrophan of Eastern America (Serbian Orthodox Church) was our celebrant, along with the clergy and faithful from our local Orthodox communities.

On Sunday, February 8th our parish honored our Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Each was given a special patch to celebrate their participation in Scout Sunday. Following the Divine Liturgy our community also held its Annual Meeting, reviewing the past year and discerning the Lord's will for the coming year.

On March 22nd (St. John Climacus), we welcomed the St. Tikhon Seminary Mission Choir. The choir sang beautifully and Seminary Dean, Fr. Steven Voytovich delivered a wonderful homily, encouraging us in our Lenten struggle!

From Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup> His Eminence, Archbishop Mark made an archpastoral visit: On Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup> he led our faithful in singing the beautiful Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God, and also offered his congratulations to Fr. Daniel Ressetar who celebrated his 88th birthday. On Saturday, March 28th the local clergy and their families enjoyed brunch with Archbishop Mark. Later the same afternoon, His Eminence met with our parish council. Each member had the opportunity to share about themselves, and how they serve our parish in their ministry as a council member. In the evening, following the Vespers service he spent time with the choir as they practiced for the upcoming services of Holy Week and Pascha. On Sunday, March 29th, His Eminence led the clergy and faithful at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy for the 5th Sunday of Lent. We also welcomed Protodeacon Gregory Moser from St. Mark Orthodox Church in Wrightstown, PA.

On April 12<sup>th</sup> “while it was still dark,” our community gathered for the “Feast of Feasts, and Holy Day of Holy Days” – Great and Holy Pascha. We were blessed to welcome Fr. Michael and Mat. Xenia Oleksa from Alaska!

On Sunday, May 31st, we celebrated the great and holy feast of Pentecost. We were overjoyed to receive Chrissi (Ruth) Lamb through the Sacrament of Chrismation! Following the Divine Liturgy and Kneeling Vespers of Pentecost our community enjoyed our 3rd Annual International Day. We were treated to the cuisine and aesthetic that lend to our culturally diverse community - united in the Trinity, citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven!

On Sunday, July 5th our community celebrated the 50th anniversary of Fr. Daniel and Mat. Theodora Ressetar's ministry in Harrisburg, PA. May God bless Fr. Dan and Mat. Theodora with peace, prosperity, and good health as they continue to serve our parish, and the Church in their retirement! Mnogaya Lyeta!

On Sunday July 19th, the community of Christ the Saviour had its annual vehicle blessing. We were also blessed to have Fr. Paul Fetsko, a son of our parish, from Ss. George and Alexandra Mission (Ft. Smith, Arkansas) with us for the Divine Liturgy.

From June 15th - July 4th, Cathy Bucharew, a parishioner at Christ the Saviour in Harrisburg, PA participated in an OCMC Mission Trip to Albania.

On Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> we welcomed Fr. John Ealy from Florida. At the conclusion of Liturgy we immediately celebrated the Vespers of the Elevation of the Life-Giving Cross. Following Vespers we enjoyed our annual Parish Family Picnic on the church grounds. We also recognized Carl Hisiro (manager) and our parish softball team with the League Championship trophy for the fifth consecutive season.

From Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> - Sunday October 4<sup>th</sup> we held our annual Slavic Food Fest. We welcomed hundreds of our parishioners, neighbors and friends to enjoy a "taste" of several of the many cultures that constitute our ethnically diverse community.

On Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup> the Very Rev. Abbot Tryphon of the All Merciful Saviour Monastery (Vashon Island, WA) gave the homily at the Divine Liturgy.

On Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, the V. Rev. Abbot Tryphon returned to Harrisburg. He visited Agia Sophia Coffeehouse and Bookstore, and the same afternoon he attended our weekly downtown Wednesday noon Bible Study. Following Compline, he gave a wonderful talk to over 150 parishioners and guests.

From Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> - Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup> our community welcomed our arch-pastor His Eminence Archbishop Mark. At the conclusion of the Liturgy he blessed our new street sign.

On Sunday, November 8<sup>th</sup> our parish family enjoyed its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Eritrean/Ethiopian Fellowship, hosted by members from both communities. We were blessed to share in the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of two of the many cultures that constitute our ethnically diverse parish family.

From Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> - Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> we hosted our Diocesan Youth for a Teen Spiritual Retreat entitled "Purity and Prayer", and featured Dr. Albert Rossi, Director of Field Education and professor of Pastoral Theology at St. Vladimir Seminary.

On Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> our parish Church School held its annual Nativity Program. We are thankful to our dedicated teachers, parents, and students who make such a wonderful effort each year - edifying and entertaining all of us!

### **Holy Ascension Church: Lykens, PA (1912)**

*Dn. Seraphim Reynolds, Administrator*

While a smaller parish, services are served on the second and fourth Sundays of the month by supply clergy in the area. Recently, Dn. Seraphim Reynolds and his Matushka Mary moved to Lykens and he was named Administrator of the parish. This marks the first time in many years that a clergyman has been in residence in the rectory. Efforts are being made to reintroduce the parish to the community and to welcome new members.

### **Holy Trinity Church: McAdoo, PA (1910)**

*Priest Mircea Airinei, Rector*

No report was submitted.

### **Holy Apostles Mission: Mechanicsburg, PA (2004) - [www.holyapostleschurch.org](http://www.holyapostleschurch.org)**

*Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, Rector*

*Dn. Seraphim Reynolds, Attached*

*Baptisms: 3*

*Adult Chrismation: 1*

*Catechumens: 2*

*Weddings: 2*

In May, we welcomed Dn. Mark & Mat. Elizabeth Barna who gave a wonderful presentation on “A Christian Ending” discussing traditional Orthodox Christian burial practices.

In June, our parish held our 4th Annual Vacation Church School, with the theme: “Mission Possible: Investigating the Miracles of Christ.” Some other youth activities included a Youth Charity Luncheon with the proceeds going to purchase items to assemble IOCC health kits, a St. Nicholas Day Tree Trimming Celebration and gift collection for a Home for Children, assembly of care packages for college students, participation in the Annual Diocesan Winter Teen Retreat, and a Children’s Lenten Mini-retreat.

Our Church School began again on September 13, with 5 classes and over 45 children participating! Note: We are in compliance with the current OCA policy and procedures on sexual misconduct with background clearances for all teachers and workers with our youth. As the requirements change we will be working to stay compliant with National Church and State requirements.

We continue to have our Men’s Breakfast where men of the parish gather for food and fellowship. Similarly the Orthodox Mom’s Group (lovingly referred to as the O.M.G) meets regularly for mothers and children to connect and fellowship with each other.

The biggest challenge and blessing this last year has been the building of our “Phase I” Building which is currently under construction. Seeing this come to fruition has been a great blessing and we are grateful to Almighty God for blessing the work of our hands to hopefully complete this before Holy Pascha. Please continue to keep this project in your prayers. Much is expected to take place in the coming months, and looking back and looking forward we can only say: ***Glory to God for all things!***

### **SS. Peter and Paul Church: Minersville, PA (1910)**

*V. Rev. Michael Hatrak, Rector*

Along with liturgical services our activities include a Pre-Lenten Dinner and a Thanksgiving Dinner along with holiday bake sales and participation in Minersville’s Spirit Day and Food Drive. We continue with our Charity Fund collection at the cross and donate to a different worthy cause every three months. The first three months of the year are always for the Minersville Food Drive. We also served one wedding and one funeral this past year.

### **St. Michael Church, Mount Carmel, PA (1907) - [www.stmichaelsorthodoxchurch.org](http://www.stmichaelsorthodoxchurch.org)**

*Fr. John Edward, Acting Rector*

St. Michael’s continued helping local organizations this year; most notably by providing non-perishable food donations and occasional cash donations to the local food bank. The parish also expanded its charitable outreach by collecting 39 new and lightly used coats in addition to making a cash donation to the Lower Anthracite United Way to assist children in the area.

The parish also became more active with the local nursing home (Serenity Gardens) where two parishioners reside. For Mother’s Day, pink carnations and a note were provided to all the women at the nursing home. For Veterans Day, the parish wrote out cards for every resident that served their country. For Christmas, the parish wrote out Christmas cards, baked cookies, and provided paper star ornaments to all the residents. With the assignment of Father John, the parish has also started to provide Saturday Vespers once per month at Serenity Gardens. During December, parishioners also remained after Vespers and sung several traditional Christmas carols.

Several articles were provided throughout the year to the local newspaper. The articles included highlighting the activities of prior rectors, Hierarchical visits and our St. Michael’s Day festivities. As part of the St. Michael’s Day activities, the Miracle-working Icon of St. Anna was present for veneration and an article on the Icon was featured in the

local newspaper. An article was also provided to highlight the new assignment of Father John Edward. And finally, Father John had his first article published, summarizing his sermon on forgiveness.

In November, large banners were made up that listed both living and departed veterans associated with the parish. The banners were hung outside the church, as well as, in the church hall. Invitations were sent to all regional VFW and American Legions to join us for Divine Liturgy and a breakfast on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

Our pierogie projects continue to serve as a great community activity and provide the opportunity for parishioners from several different denominations to work together and enjoy fellowship. A lunch is provided to all who join us for the project. The individuals from the community who help the parish during projects were invited to the Annual Parish Picnic and Nativity activities.

The bulletin has been used as a means to educate the faithful on aspects of the Divine Liturgy service, Orthodoxy, the Sacraments, the lives of saints, and Christian values. Visiting clergy, Father John Edward, and parishioners made a significant effort on visiting the sick and the two parishioners in the local Nursing Home.

The parish expanded the library and published a list of books on Orthodoxy that can be signed out. On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Forgiveness Sunday, we had a parish discussion on preparing for Lent and the importance of true forgiveness. On March 8<sup>th</sup>, Archbishop Mark celebrated Divine Liturgy and had a Lenten lunch with the Parish Council. On Palm Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, following Divine Liturgy, the parish had a brief discussion on Lent in Our Life from "Great Lent" Journey to Pascha by Alexander Schmemmann. The parish also made Pascha cards to send to parishioners unable to attend services and to friends of the parish. Lenten snacks and sandwiches were served. On Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, families joined us in dying eggs to hand out after services on April 12<sup>th</sup>. During the summer we recognized one high school graduate and presented to her an Icon to acknowledge her accomplishment. Following Pascha, several parishioners worked together to complete major renovations to the rectory for Father John and his family. On June 21<sup>st</sup>, His Eminence Bishop Mark celebrated Divine Liturgy and introduced Father John Edward to the parish. A lunch was served following Divine Liturgy. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, we held the second annual parish cookout. It was well attended. Starting in September, Father John conducted Bible Study on the last Sunday of each month after Divine Liturgy. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, the parish celebrated St. Michael's Day. The Miracle-working Icon of St. Anna was present for veneration and veterans were honored. On December 13<sup>th</sup> following Divine Liturgy, a short lecture entitled "Mary, Mysteries, and Missions" was given by V. Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield from St. Vladimir's Seminary to help prepare for the Nativity. On December 20<sup>th</sup>, the parish held its second annual Christmas Sing-A-Long. Parishioners also made Nativity cards that were sent to the sick, friends of the parish, and those who had not been attending services.

### **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church: Saint Clair, PA (1911)**

*Archpriest Michael Hatrak, Rector*

Weekly liturgical services. One Funeral served.

### **St. Herman of Alaska Church: Shillington, PA (1973)**

*Archpriest John Onofrey, Rector*

As we begin the New Year of 2016, we are happy to report that St. Herman's Church in Shillington continues to serve the Orthodox Faithful which reside in five counties around the Reading, PA area. Fr. John Onofrey, now in his thirty-first year as rector, is joined by retired pastors Fr. Michael and Pani Anne Marie Slovesko, and Fr. James and Presbyter Angela LaLiberte, who fully participate in the Parish life. Fr. Joseph Toroney and Fr. Stephen Janos are also attached to St. Herman's Church, and attend Divine Services on various occasions when they are not serving at other Churches. Although the parish membership has experienced a small decrease over the past few years (marriage and/or employment transfer and death) the Church still serves approximately 100 Adults and 25 Children. The parish has been blessed by a few births and the reception of a few new members and Converts. St. Herman's maintains a full Parish Liturgical Life and Schedule, and participates in all Diocesan and Deanery services, as well as, local and regional Pan-Orthodox and Ecumenical services.

In 2015, the Parish Council has been very busy not only maintaining, but upgrading the physical, financial and managerial aspects of the Parish. We are pleased to report that the parish, through generous parishioner support and council oversight has been able to fulfill its financial needs and responsibilities. New Computers and Financial Software have been purchased and installed, so that our financial stability may not only be maintained but strengthened in the future. The Council has been diligently working to prepare our Parish and its Faithful Members to transition over to the *new OCA/Diocesan Stewardship - Tithing Program*. We are happy to report that St. Herman's Church will not only maintain its monthly contribution to the Diocese (2015 Assessment amount) but increase our support for the work of THE CHURCH. The Parish BY-LAWS have been updated and the Council has been working hard to upgrade our Insurance Coverage, as well, become fully compliant with the stringent Sexual Abuse and Child Protection requirements. In 2015, the Council and Faithful have also worked very hard over the past year to maintain the Church Building, Rectory and property. Through careful financial management, Sisterhood support and parishioner donations many projects were completed. Besides the usual maintenance of our property, new appliances were purchased for the Rectory's Kitchen, the two Bathrooms were renovated, the main Living and Dining area repainted, and new Landscaping was installed.

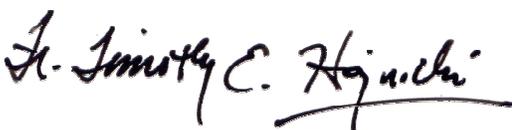
As previously stated, our parish enjoys the blessing of approximately 25 children, most of whom fully participate in our Church School, serve as Altar Boys or sing in the Choir. In 2015, the children along with our parishioners helped to raise funds, purchase and assemble, and donate approximately 100 School Supply Kits. During Advent, the children organized "*ALMS FOR PALM,*" collecting Gloves, Hats, Scarves and Socks for the Reading Children's Home. For 2016, the Parish Council will try to sponsor a few additional programs to educate the children in the faith as well as promote greater fellowship and family togetherness. It should also be noted that St. Herman's Church has a weekly Adult Lecture and Discussion Class before the Sunday Liturgy. Besides learning some of the basics of the Orthodox Faith, "*lively*" conversations concerning topical subjects and the Church are explored and discussed.

A very important component of St. Herman's Church is its Sisterhood, which includes and involves many men in its various projects and programs. Besides the weekly *Coffee-Fellowship Hours* after the Sunday Liturgy and "*Covered-Dish Meals*" ("*Feed them and they will come!*"), the Sisterhood is busy throughout the year. The seasonal Pierogie Making Sessions, Fall Rummage Sale, Food Festival and BON\*TON Community Days participation have not only kept the parish busy, but has fostered fellowship amongst our members and has provided extra funding for some important projects and charities. Besides making yearly donations to the parish, or helping to fund projects (Rectory renovation), the Sisterhood has generously supported many interests beyond St. Herman's walls. The Sisterhood regularly contributes to Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, and makes donations to various programs of the IOCC and OCMC. Every year the Sisterhood, for its St. Nicholas Dinner Program, collects gifts for families and children at a Community Home in the Reading-Berks County area.

In 2015, a major event at St. Herman's Church was the Archpastoral Visitation of Archbishop MARK in November. His Eminence not only led the parish in the Divine Services of Saturday Vespers and the Sunday Liturgy, but spent a great amount of time with faithful. During the Fellowship Hour following the Divine Liturgy the Archbishop conducted a very open and honest Q & A with the parishioners, discussing and explaining the new *Stewardship-Tithing Program*, as well as the future vision and direction of THE CHURCH, The OCA and our Diocese. In 2016, St. Herman's Church in Shillington will do its spiritual best to understand and strive towards these lofty goals.

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Respectfully submitted,



Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, *Dean*