



OFFICE OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT ACTIVITIES  
Diocese of Philadelphia & Eastern Pennsylvania  
325 North Walnut St  
Bath, PA 18014

January 2020

Your Eminence, Very Reverend Fathers, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Master Bless!

Glory to Jesus Christ!

On February 8-9, 2019, over thirty teenagers from the Diocese of Eastern PA, Diocese of Western PA, and the Greek Archdiocese attended the Winter Youth Retreat held at Christ the Savior in Harrisburg, sponsored by the Diocese of Eastern PA. Fr. Stephen Vernak, parish priest at Christ the Saviour, opened the retreat on with prayers and introduced Ms. Shelley Brooks, Director of the Women's Mission at Bethesda Mission, to speak on her experiences that brought her to her director role and to give some background on who our participants would be completing a service project for. Following Ms. Brooks' introduction of Bethesda Mission, our participants prepared a meal of salad, soup, fruit salad, and Jell-O, along with a craft project with candy, for residents of the Women's Mission at Bethesda Mission. The next morning after morning prayers and breakfast, we welcomed our guest speaker and retreat leader, Steven Christoforou, the Director of Youth & Young Adult Activities in the Greek Archdiocese. Steven led four sessions throughout the day for our participants: Beginning to Pray, Being Present for Others, Lifting Others in Prayer, and a Q&A/Wrap Up session. Through these sessions, our participants were able to learn about opening themselves up to the presence of God and connect with God despite our world of distractions, learn to be more present for others through the simple act of listening, and learn to pray with and for others. The final session ended and our participants attended Vespers at Christ the Saviour church which concluded the Winter Youth Retreat.

From July 9 through 11, 2019, ninety-five campers, ranging in age from seven through eighteen, and over 40 counselors, from the Dioceses of Eastern PA, Western PA, New York/New Jersey, South, New England, OCA Stavropegial, Greek Archdiocese, ROCOR, Ukrainian Church, and Romanian Episcopate attended the annual St. Tikhon's Summer Camp at St. Tikhon's Monastery and Seminary, sponsored by the Diocese of Eastern PA. Our theme for camp this year was "Living Things Both Small and Great" which focused on plants and animals in the Bible, specifically those that point towards Christ. Throughout the week, our campers and counselors alike attended morning prayers followed by breakfast in the trapeza. Campers then attended their morning religious education sessions which focused on the daily theme relating to the theme of the week. Campers then participated in two recreation sessions which included a rotation of iconography, swimming, field games, boating and fishing, ethnic dancing, and arts and crafts, prior to going to lunch. Lunch and a quick siesta came next, followed by the afternoon religious education session, which would continue on from the morning daily theme. Campers participated in another two recreation sessions and then had dinner. Dinner was followed by a variety of fun evening activities which included a camp carnival, s'mores campfire, a movie night, and special field games. Campers and counselors would then go to evening prayers, followed

by a snack and story time before campers got ready for bed. The week was concluded by campers attending Vespers and then Divine Liturgy in St. Tikhon's Monastery Church.

On November 9, 2019, we were blessed to be able to hold a second teen retreat for the year. Over 31 teens from the Diocese of Eastern PA, Greek Archdiocese, and Antiochian Diocese attended the Pan-Orthodox Teen Retreat hosted at Christ the Saviour Church in Harrisburg, sponsored by the Diocese of Eastern PA. The theme for this retreat was "I will fear no evil: A Christian Approach to Fear, Anxiety, and Depression". Fr. Stephen Vernak, parish priest at Christ the Saviour, opened the retreat with prayer and introduced our guest speaker, Dr. Al Rossi, Pastoral Theology professor at St. Vladimir's Seminary. Dr. Rossi used interactive video, music, and PowerPoint presentations while having the participants write the key points on index cards and called on willing participants to share with the entire group. The day began with name learning "ice-breakers" and the discussions and presentations were broken up with short breaks, small group tasks, lunch, and some recess time. Our participants attended Vespers at Christ the Saviour Church which concluded the Pan-Orthodox Teen Retreat.

We had been in the process of planning a Winter Teen Retreat for February 2020, however, our accommodations fell through and we had to cancel our plans for a February retreat. With God's help, we will be back on track to host a Winter Teen Retreat in the early months of 2021. We are also currently in the process of planning for St. Tikhon's Summer Camp 2020, which will be held July 5-11, 2020. We can't wait to see all our returning and new campers and retreat participants in our upcoming events!

If anyone has ideas or suggestions for future department activities, please contact us at: [info@sttikhonscamp.org](mailto:info@sttikhonscamp.org).

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Co-Directors of Youth & Young Adult Activities