**Northwest Deanery Report 2019**

**Deanery Activities**

* Our **deanery officers** are:
	+ Fr William Evansky, Dean
	+ Fr Thomas Soroka, Associate Dean
	+ Fr Patrick Carpenter, Secretary
	+ Fr George York, Treasurer
* Fr Nikolai Breckenridge represents the archdiocese on the **Metropolitan Council**
* Fr Patrick Carpenter edits the archdiocese publication, **The Light of Orthodoxy**
* A **Lenten deanery retreat** was held for all the faithful at St Mary Church in the Southside entitled “Spiritual Self Care: Warming Up Our Parishes,” preceded by a Divine Liturgy. The speaker was Mother Christophora, Abbess of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City PA.
* Holy Assumption of St Mary Church in South Side hosts the **St Cyril of White Lake Food Pantry**
* Fr Thomas Soroka directs the **Pan-Orthodox Choir of Pittsburgh**

**Holy Ghost Church, Ambridge** holyghostoca.org **Archpriest William J. Evansky, Rector**

*Deacon Matthew Stahoviak, Attached*

*Deacon Peter Ilchuk, Attached*

* In addition to pastoral duties, Fr William continues as Archdiocesan Chancellor/ Northwest Dean / FOCA Pittsburgh District Spiritual Advisor
* Additional church leadership roles from Ambridge parish:
1. Dn. Peter Ilchuk - O.C.A. All-American Council Manager
2. Dn. Peter Ilchuk - FOCA National Convention Planning Officer
3. Mat. Danielle Ilchuk - FOCA National Executive Board Recording Secretary
4. Mat. Danielle Ilchuk - Pittsburgh District FOCA Lieutenant Governor
5. Mat. Debbie Evansky - Pittsburgh District FOCA Recording Secretary
6. Omelan Mycyk - Archdiocese of Pgh and W PA Administrative Assistant at the chancery
7. Nicole Yakich - Archdiocesan Youth Committee member
8. Joseph Lear - Pittsburgh District FOCA Auditing Committee member
9. Tanya Zehnder - Pittsburgh District FOCA Corresponding Secretary
* Church School 2019-2020 academic year has begun with 24 children enrolled (K-6th Grade)
* Parish metrical records for calendar 2018 include: (8) new members; (1) Baptism; (1) convert; (11) funerals; (1) wedding
* Parish held a successful Slavic Food Festival in October - - 27 in a row!
* Parish for the third consecutive year participated in the Ambridge Festival of Churches at the downtown borough park with a food booth and a parish “float” in the parade
* Completed religious discussion series for both current parish members and those interested in Orthodoxy called “A Journey to Fullness” on Monday nights - a new series exploring the Divine Liturgy is scheduled to begin soon
* Continued monthly “Sunday Dialogue” sessions for parish teens and adults with Fr. Bill to discuss questions about the Orthodox Faith, comparative religion studies, and current moral issues
* Continued outreach dinners at the community’s “Center for Hope” in downtown Ambridge several times this past year
* Did the annual charity “Cookie Walk” prior to the Nativity of Christ Holyday to benefit the local community food bank (“Center for Hope”)
* Distributed store gifts cards to neighborhood families with school-age children living near the church on Maplewood Avenue for the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year to purchase school supplies
* Held the annual “St. Nicholas/ Christmas Charity Dinner / Children’s Yolka Program” for the 26th consecutive year with all proceeds being donated to support Orthodox Christian programs worldwide
* Provided five camp scholarships for parish youth to attend the St. Vladimir’s FOCA Camp in nearby Ohio
* The parish’s pledge system, in lieu of the outdated “dues” system, continues to grow steadily, albeit modestly, with the Stewardship Program exceeding the $80,000.00 annual mark for the second consecutive year
* Physical plant improvements including a partial repainting of the church nave ceiling to repair water mark damage

**Intercession of the Holy Virgin Church, Carnegie
V Rev George York, Rector**

First I would like to begin by thanking the Parish Council as a whole and as individuals for their time, talents and wisdom working together in a spirit of cooperation to make this year one of the best productive years ever. I would also like to thank Becky and our choir for singing the Sunday Liturgies, all of the Lenten Services, especially Christmas and Holy Pascha and for the many Parastases at the various Funeral Homes for our dearly departed parish members. I also want to express my deep appreciation to Tammy Krajnak for her tireless efforts since I came to the parish in 1987, in the Spiritual Education of our Children; also for her dedication to make sure our church and hall are immaculately clean. A very special thank you to Steve Macesic for his weekly dedication to keep our Cross Memorial Garden and yard neat and tidy and I cannot forget those who volunteered to came on the designated Saturdays this summer to spruce up the front and side gardens and prepare for the New Garden Wall.

Parish Projects Completed for 2018/19

1. Replacement of the siding on the back dormer of the church because of storm damage
2. Cross and Memorial Gardens cleaned up and prepared for the installation of the garden wall
3. Stripping and waxing: the class room, kitchen and hall; the restoring of the vestibule entrance and front steps plus the back entrance landing and steps
4. Parish Picnic
5. Christmas Food Festival
6. Annual Parish Christmas Card
7. Angel Gift Tree
8. Parish Education Program
9. Collection of food and clothing for those in need
10. Lemonade Stand by our Sunday School students to raise funds for the Refurbishing Fund
11. Balalaika Orchestra uses our hall twice a month from September to May for practices
12. Icon Project of the installation of 3 icons completes the first phase. Participation of parishioners and friends to paint the background and vine motif around the entire perimeter of the sanctuary
13. Cheryl Kleer's yearly donation of red eggs for Easter Sunday
14. Hall water fountain replacement
15. Replacement of a large broken refrigerator with two side by side refrigerators
16. New phones with answering service for the church building

**SS Peter and Paul Church, Crossingville** orthodoxcrossingville.org **Rev. Daniel Mathewson, Rector**

Our theme this year has been taken from St. Paul's letter to the Romans Chapter 12:12-13, where he exhorts us to: Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer, contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

With these 5 small directives we have seen God working in us. First, hope- hope like faith requires a reach of our inner man upward to believe that God is working in all things and through all things. This year we have seen alot of our parish members either repose or move away. This can be very disheartening, so we hope and rejoice in that hope that God is at work. This means looking at things from the glass half full, or as I heard recently 'if your looking at the half empty part pour it into a smaller glass and it will be full'. As it turns out, by 2020 we will have 4 new infants in the parish! Hope is a change of attitude or outlook. Hope is an energy. Hope is contagious too!

Having hope then, the second directive for us is patience, and patience in tribulation. The only one who can impart patience is the Holy Spirit, patience is an attitude of comfort and hope. So, allowing the Spirit of God in you takes letting go of your perceived control. The tribulation is the hard part. When it comes we tend to have tunnel vision, we lose our hope, Peter stepping out of the boat had his eyes on Christ, but the winds and noise took away his focus. Being patient in tribulation is about our focus and our openness to the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately this hope and patience leads us to be constant in prayer. Regular attentive liturgical prayer and daily personal prayer during the week for each other and the growth of our parish has helped to bind us together, and to give us hope. We generally have 3 offered services per week, Sat. Sun. Wed. We have asked our faithful to personally pray specifically and regularly for our own faithful going through trials, and that God would bring us new members to help us to grow.

Through the steadiness of prayer and hope our parish has had three new families join our parish (with 3 baptisms) in the last year. We also during this time have put in hardwood flooring in the parish temple, removing the old carpeting, bringing a needed up lift. We also removed 6 pews to free up more space for Orthodox worship. All of this was sparked by the development of a "Design Team", and our adoption of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd education program, both of which are seeking to continue to instill the love of the beauty of God's house and the importance of our prayer to our faithful. To reach out with this attitude of prayer, at the beginning of September we had a parish booth at a local Christian music festival to give exposure to the Orthodox Faith, we asked for names to be prayed for, gave out our parish business cards and other pamphlets and prayed every two hours a short service at our booth. All in all a fantastic experience reaching hundreds with the light and hope of a True Church.

We have emphasized the need to care for the needs of the faithful and poor in our parish this year as well. All of the outward humanitarian aid a parish gives is worthless if you have not cared for your own family. So we have been looking for where and how we can help those in need in our own midst. We have done home remodels, mowed lawns, given money, calls, cards, gifts, provided food meals for the infirmed and shut-in, given rides, thank God, all to contribute to the needs of the saints.

Finally, we formed a "Hospitality Team" to help our own members and those visiting us to feel welcome and loved. This team meets monthly to plan our Coffee hour schedule and to direct the Greeters and make sure folks don't "slip through the cracks".

Overall, truly we have seen the work of the Holy Spirit in us. By serving the Lord, clinging to what is good, being kindly and affectionate with one another in brotherly love, giving honor and preference to one another, especially our elders, being diligent and fervent in spirit we know God is with us and will be with us.

Glory to God for all things!

**St Michael Church, Curtisville
V Rev Alexander Poshyvajlo, Rector**

**St Gregory Church, Homestead** stgregoryrussianchurch.org **Rev Evgeni Peykov, Rector**

Our parish has had a year of continuing trials and joys. We lost some faithful members. The highlight this year is our effort to reach out and make ourselves known to the local community. So St. Gregory has been selected for 2019 Best of Homestead Award in the Orthodox Church Category by the Homestead Award program.  Our bake sales for the last Christmas and Pascal seasons were successful.

**St Andrew Church, Lyndora** standrewlyndora.com **V Rev Andrew (Keith) Lowe, Acting Parish Administrator**

*Deacon Seraphim Truckley, Attached*

2019 has not been a go-get year for the Lyndora parish. We did after many years change our legal name to St. Andrew Orthodox Church from St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Church of Lyndora that was recorded in January, 1928. It is not a new name but one that we have used beginning as early as the late 1970's.

We also had the state of Pennsylvania change our corporate status from inactive to active.

We have discovered more of our history to record on our web site for future generations to learn more of the early beginnings of our parish. But in the year past we did not grow and is bracing for the loss of a family to North Carolina. Additionally we had two (2) deaths this year, no baptisms (and Chrismations) or marriages.

The locums of the parish is still waiting to be released by the Moscow Patriarchate to the OCA.

The parish is continuing to meets its obligations under the present archdiocesan cathedraticum system introduced in 2017 as parishioners have stepped up in their giving. Although this year's budget was impaired by the unexpected expenditure in replacing one of the church's air conditioning systems. This expense eroded a slender working financial cushion in our cheque account.

Our aging carillon system failed around 9/11 when it automatically had the bells peal and then failed to disengage them after two minutes. One of our neighbours believed that it was something that the priest did to honour to the victims of that horrific tragedy eighteen (18) years ago. So at 03:00 he was so moved that he came out and took a video of the church with the bells pealing and posted it on his YouTube account.

Having vespers on the first and third Saturdays of the month has seen a modest attendance better than it was when it was every Saturday evening. That schedule is mitigated during the Summer months. The church closed down one Sunday due to snow and a black out caused by falling trees. The church was without power for approximately forty eight (48) hours.

An additional service, an athathist, was added for 1st October for the feast of Pokrov the patroness of the sisterhood.

**St Nicholas Church, McKees Rocks** orthodoxpittsburgh.org **V Rev Thomas Soroka, Rector**

*Deacon Luke Loboda, Attached*

Our parish continues to enhance the liturgical life of our parish. We serve the “Cathedral Vigil” on Saturday evening which permits the faithful to hear the resurrectional hymns and the Matins Gospel. The parish offers daily services during the Lenten season. We also incorporate baptisms and chrismations into the Sunday Divine Liturgy so that the entire community can participate and rejoice as one family. We hope to add daily Matins on Tuesday and Thursday mornings in the near future so that we can support our parishioners with a rich liturgical life.

We continue our outreach to the community by holding monthly Community Dinners for anyone who is need, free of charge. Our attendance is usually between 25 and 50 residents near our parish in the “Bottoms” area of McKees Rocks. Each month parishioners donate the food, cook, and serve our guests. Additionally our fourth annual Community Day was attended by over 35 residents of our neighborhood after the Divine Liturgy on a July Sunday. Food, games and entertainment for the children, and church tours, enabled us to get to know our neighbors better. We also collected approximately $5,000 for two local households who lost their personal possessions due to a fire and distributed it to the residents. We also collect food for 12 Easter Baskets and gifts for children at Christmas which are distributed through the Holy Family Institute of Pittsburgh.

Once again we sponsored the annual “St Nicholas Symposium” which featured local Orthodox speakers on the topic of the Scriptures. The goal is to reach Orthodox Christians from the Pittsburgh area and inquirers to the Orthodox Faith. We encourage all parishes in the area to take advantage of this rich educational opportunity.

Our fourth annual Slavic Food Fest continued this unique outreach to the community. This festival has the primary purpose of bringing visitors into our neighborhood and our church to experience our hospitality, and God willing, be exposed to the beauty of the Orthodox faith through church tours, services, and talks. Parishioners from many ethnic backgrounds support the effort.

Our parish continues our iconography renewal project. This past year we completed almost all of the altar icons by renowned iconographer, Fr Theodore Jurewicz of Erie. The yearly iconography project will continue until the entire temple is renewed, likely into 2025.

Our Church School, which has 41 registered students, has continues the second unit of a four year curriculum, this year focusing on Epistles of the New Testament. We continue holding adult education class on the first and third Sundays of the month, taught by various teachers, and the biweekly Vespers and bible study, and a very successful Basic Orthodoxy Class attended by approximately 25 people, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox. We have also started an Orthodox Teen Fellowship group and have partnered with St Moses the Black Orthodox Church in the Hill District of Pittsburgh for opportunities for service and fellowship with our teens.

We continue our strong presence on social media and broadcasting as a main driver to seek out visitors and inquirers, through our website, Facebook, Instagram, Fr Thomas’ podcasts on Ancient Faith Radio, and his visits to the John and Kathy Show on WORD-FM.

*Our vision:* *St. Nicholas Church will strive to glorify God through Orthodox Christian worship, sincere love and care for one another, and service to those in need around us.*

**St John the Baptist Church, New Kensington** saintjohnnewken.org **Rev Nikolai Breckenridge, Rector**

*Deacon Joseph Rabickow, Jr, Attached*

St. John the Baptist Church in New Kensington has had a busy year. Fund raising events such as our two Slavic Food Festivals, Perogie making, Stuffed Cabbage Dinners, Pies, and Kolachi Rolls have been ongoing. We are in the midst of Adult Education Classes focusing on many topics related to the uniqueness of Orthodoxy in a disordered secularly spiritual culture. In addition to our regular liturgical life with Vespers on Thursday evenings at 5:30 PM, and Matins on Wednesdays at 9:00 AM, we are currently working in committee towards developing a plan for what our parish can do to reach out to the community better, both in prayer and in outreach. We are looking forward to another year focused on our spiritual lives and deepening our religious education.

**St Mary Church, Pittsburgh** stmaryorthodoxchurch.net

**Igumen Patrick (Carpenter)**

*Protodeacon Joseph Balkunowa, Attached*

*Reader Michael Daniels*

2018 through 2019 has seen St.Mary Orthodox Church continue the St. Cyril of White Lake Orthodox Food Pantry with over 30000 people served. It has seen another successful Stuffed with Love Thanksgiving Program with the Pittsburgh Police and the local Rotary Clubs with over 3500 Thanksgiving Dinners prepared and distributed.  The parish has also reached out with active support to the St.Sophia Orthodox Academy in Johnstown, to both Transfiguration Monastery and the Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos.  Our Liturgical and Outreach schedules have been slowed down by a ankle injury and surgery to Igumen Patrick, but will rebound in November and December as God blesses him with restored mobility.  Even in this time, the fall Iconography classes under Olga Foight have continued with 12 students.