



Orthodox Church in America
Archdiocese of Pittsburgh
Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church
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Right Reverend Bishop Melchisedek

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Legacy Parish Assistance Program Report
October 2023

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.

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.

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. Despite problems with crime, blight and generational poverty - to which no community in this region is immune- the city is being renewed by the opening of several

new businesses, development in family-owned housing, and the educational, cultural and historical amenities of nearby Greensburg and the Laurel Highlands.

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.

Metrics since 2022 (last year’s report):

Baptisms: 4; Adult Chrismations: 3; Crownings: 1; Funerals: 1.

Archpriest Michael Senyo
Rector