

# THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## Twenty Years: How Far Have We Come?

by Fr. John Reeves

In May 1995, I first visited State College to do a workshop on church growth for the Holy Trinity Mission Station. It was an interesting case study: A group of 16 individuals had signed a note at the bank to purchase a building. They were applying for a church planting grant that was being offered by the Orthodox Church in America, which would enable them to have the services of a full-time priest for the first time. To qualify, the nascent community would have to be willing to become a self-supporting parish by the end of the grant's three-year term.

I was not an entirely disinterested party. Within nine months, my family and I left the sub-tropics of south Texas and headed north to a snowy central Pennsylvania. We didn't look back.

Now fast forward 20 years:

- From that intrepid group of 16 adults, we've grown to a community of more than 200, with 130 "official" members and 65 children.
- An initial annual budget of \$22,000 has multiplied more than ten-fold (1,000%) to \$274,500, with 19% of the budget given away each year to charity and missions.



**THEN & NOW:** Fr. John receives into the Church on Holy Saturday the first (1999) and most recent (2015) groups of adult converts.

- The median stewardship donation from our 84 households is now \$2,275 per year per family.
- The original building, purchased for \$115,000 in 1993, was extensively remodeled in 2006.
- Our average Sunday attendance (ASA) is 142, with services in two locations—State College and Beaver Springs. An average of 65 attend Vespers!
- Eleven vocations to the clergy or monastic life have been raised.
- With our recently acquired Trinity House, plus the Chapel of the Holy Spirit's property in Snyder County, and our cash reserves, our parish's total assets are now more than \$1 million.

(continued, see FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK, next page)

**HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
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State College, PA 16801  
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## Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS	SERVERS
June 7	POTLUCK	B. Roberts and E. Miranda	H. Torbic and S. Stevens	Team A
June 14	H. Torbic and M. Thompson*	J. Fryncko and M. Fedkin	M. Fedkin and B. Haupt	Team B
June 21	J. Fryncko and K. Cattell*	M. Thompson and J. Houser	M. Stevens and G. Cattell	Team A
June 28	B. Roberts and J. Cadman*	L. Radomsky and M. Radomsky	R. Patel and S. Stevens	Team B
July 5	E. Files and D. Patel	A. Swisher and D. Swisher	TBD	Team A
July 12	A. Swisher and C. Swisher	B. Roberts and E. Miranda	TBD	Team B

\* Denotes Fast  
Team A: A. Miranda, N. Pelikan, S. Olegnyk, D. Stickle, J. Torbic, and J. Swisher. Captains: D. Torbic, Ja. Stickle, and K. Kuchberyayy  
Team B: J. Cadman, C. Legaspi, N. McFarland, B. Olegnyk, S. Patel, and L. Torbic.

■ FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK

## Twenty Years and Counting... (from page 1)

And God has done it all!

Now, let's ask ourselves a question: What if God works in us over the next 20 years as He has during the past 20 years? What will that mean? What will that require of us? In the next 5, the next 10, the next 15 years? Can't see that far? Can't count that high?

Remember, as always, when God is in charge, the sky's the limit. So, all I can say is "Let's go for it." If we give Him all the credit, all the glory, we know we have no laurels to rest on and no time to waste. ■

— Fr. John

### CHS to Break Ground this Month

All are invited to join Fr. John and the faithful of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in breaking ground at their new temple's location on N. Kern St. in Beavertown this Sunday, June 28 at 12:30 p.m.. The ceremony follows the 10 a.m. Divine Liturgy at the MACC (67 Elm St., Beaver Springs) and continues with a light lunch reception at Dn. David Smith's home.

### The Women's Ministry is Active!

Building on recent successes like the study led by Laura Rush last spring and the Bright Monday Brunch in April where sixteen women attended, the Women's Ministry has been busy planning future events. On Thursday, July 16 from 6-8 p.m., there will be a picnic for all the ladies of the parish at the home of Leslyn Radomsky. Mka. Linda's book study returns for six sessions on alternating Thursdays beginning September 10, and the popular annual "Women's Night Out" and "Coffee and Tea" socials will take place on October 5 and November 14, respectively. Be sure to mark your calendars and email [women@holyltrinity-oca.org](mailto:women@holyltrinity-oca.org) for more information.

■ NEWS & NOTES

## By Land, by Sea, by Air, and through Space...

The Gospels, four icons, crosses, and a relic of the True Cross circle above the earth 16 times a day, housed aboard the International Space Station (ISS). According to the space program's spiritual advisor, Fr. Job Talats, many astronauts have converted from atheism to Orthodoxy in recent years and often bring icons and relics with them. He said, "the cosmonauts call me before they exit the spaceship to walk in Space, asking for my prayers and blessings. [One commander] had read the entire Bible during the entire length of his flight. During the last hours of their flight we kept in touch regularly, discussing theological matters such as how God created the world, why He created it that way, how the Saints comprehended the nature of the Universe."



Photo Credit: <http://www.johnsamihopoulos.com>

### Eighth Anniversary of the Repose of Archbishop Kyrill

Archbishop Melchisedek invites you to join him at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City in commemorating Archbishop Kyrill's 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of repose on Wednesday, June 17. Vespers will be served in the monastery church beginning at 5 p.m. with a graveside Panikhida immediately following. A meal will then be served in the monastery refectory.

And—mark this well—our children will only think that protest worthwhile if we have taken pains to teach them that the Church and her confession are important in the first place. Teach your children by precept and example that church is an optional extra and you teach them that protesting the world's values is the folly of fools.

Churches which are doctrine-lite, or which define themselves with a ten or twelve point doctrinal statement, or which portray themselves as a nice, fun

supplement to the more important things of life, are rather like the little pig who built his house of straw. When the wolf blows, the house will simply vanish in the wind. For Christians to continue to protest the world in the public square, they need first to be deeply and seriously grounded in the historic, doctrinal, and elaborate Christian faith. A faith built on Wikipedia articles or reducible to 140 characters points to no lasting city. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article originally appeared on firstthings.com and is reprinted here with the publisher's permission.*

■ ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

## Is Hell Really a "Separation from God"?

by Abbot Tryphon

*All Merciful Savior Monastery — Vashon Island, Washington*

St. John of Damascus says: "and you should also know this, that God does not punish anybody in the world to come, but each person makes himself capable of participation in God. Participation in God is joy; non-participation in Him is hell."

So, according to St. John of Damascus, hell is a creation of created beings and especially of the devil. In the familiar description of hell in the Gospel as "the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (*Matt. 25:41*), the dative (rendered in English as "for the devil") should rather be read as a dative of causal agency ("by the devil")!

No council universally recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Churches has formulated doctrine on hell, so there is no official doctrine to which all the faithful are bound. Beliefs concerning the nature and duration of hell are considered *theologoumena*, or theological opinions, rather than dogmas of the Church.

However, the Orthodox Church teaches that there is no created place of divine absence, for this presence

is experienced either as torment or as paradise, depending on the spiritual state of a person dwelling with God. Several Orthodox theologians do describe hell as separation from God, but only in the sense of being out of fellowship or loving communion.

Archimandrite Sophrony of Essex spoke of "the hell of separation from God". And Paul Evdokimov stated: "Hell is nothing else but separation of man from God, his autonomy excluding him from the place where God is present." According to Theodore Stylianopoulos, "Hell is a spiritual state of separation from God and inability to experience the love of God, while being conscious of the ultimate deprivation of it as punishment."

Orthodoxy, contrary to Roman and Protestant teaching, emphasizes the mystery of God in His pre-eternal transcendence and maintain a tradition of apophatic theology, while the scholastic approach of the West tends to be downplayed or viewed as subordinate. Thus, there is no single "official" teaching of the Church apart from apostolic doctrine received and, when necessary, defined by Ecumenical Councils. ■

# A Christian Faith that Survives

by Carl R. Trueman

As the revolution in the understanding of human identity and its concomitant reordering of the hierarchy of moral goods proceeds apace... we are being once more made conscious of what was obvious to first-century Christians: the fundamental difference that exists between the city of man and the city of God.

To borrow a phrase from [Former U.S. Secretary of State] Dean Acheson, we have lost an empire and have yet to find a role. The loss of status is sudden and deep, a shock no doubt to the naive who did not realize that, hey, the world does not like being told that man is not the measure of all things.

The [Christian academics and churchmen] who thought their status would always give them a place at the cultural table are discovering to their horror that those who perhaps simply rolled their eyes at belief in the Resurrection are somewhat less indulgent when it comes to dissent over identity politics. In a public square dominated by emotive polarization of opinion, policed by the pitchfork wielding mobs of pop culture, and increasingly refereed by the law courts rather than the ballot box, places at the table are by invitation only. And guess what? Christians are no longer on the guest list.

So what is to be done? I would suggest simply this: That the Church is to continue to confess her faith and to do so faithfully. This is not a call for cultural capitulation, for the Church's act of confession has always had a twofold aspect. First, it is catechetical and connected to the discipling of those within her bounds. Second, it is polemical because her very

insistence on the truth of Christianity and of the kingship of Christ necessarily involves public repudiation of all other pretenders to the throne. Those who are deeply grounded in their Christian identity by their churches on a Sunday will think more clearly about how to respond to the challenges they face Monday to Saturday.

I suspect in the coming years the temptation will be to focus on the latter, on protest, as we fight in the public square for freedom of religion. Yet we must not allow the immediacy of the public problem to blind us to the critical importance of proper teaching for those within the Church. The redefinition of human identity which we are witnessing today is so comprehensive in its scope that Christians need something equally comprehensive if they are to be able to hold fast their confession.

*Our children will only think [defending their Faith] is worthwhile if we have taken pains to teach them that the Church and her confession are important in the first place.*

### VBS 2015 Information

*This year's Vacation Bible School (VBS) theme is "The Armor of God." Throughout the week there will be services, crafts, activities, and games that will reinforce the Christian themes found throughout St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.*

*VBS will be conducted June 15-19 from 5:15 p.m. until 8 p.m. for children entering Pre-K (one year before enrolling in Kindergarten) through the sixth grade in Fall 2014. Each day will begin with dinner. Parents are also encouraged to attend Daily Vespers and pray with their children on the Wednesday of VBS week, beginning at the special time at 5 p.m.*

*To register, simply go to [holytrinity-oca.org](http://holytrinity-oca.org) and fill out the online form. If you have any questions, see Dn. Mark or email [dnmark@holytrinity-oca.org](mailto:dnmark@holytrinity-oca.org).*

## HTOC Resolution Aims to Identify and Prevent Abuse

STATE COLLEGE — Holy Trinity's Parish Council—with consultation from religion and sociology expert and parishioner Dr. Jennifer McClure, and with the blessing of Archbishop Melchisedek—has submitted a resolution to the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council (AAC) in Atlanta, GA, which will take place July 20-24. The resolution is designed to bring the issue of spiritual abuse to the Church's attention. If approved, it requests the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America to develop a system that identifies the warning signs of spiritual abuse, cares for those damaged by it, and prevents future occurrences.

According to David Johnson and Jeff Van Vonderen whose studies served as the foundation of the resolution, spiritual abuse occurs whenever someone uses clerical authority to manipulate, intimidate, or silence people, while he distances himself from healthy accountability, denies any wrongdoing, and frames himself as the victim. Researchers have found that spiritual abuse often precedes financial and sexual misconduct, which have been the focus of the Church's central administration over the past decade. By addressing the root cause of such misconduct, the OCA can take significant steps in ensuring that its parishes are healthy and safe.

Many people who experience spiritual abuse leave the church and cannot fathom trusting God or church leaders again. Those who stay in the church often experience difficulty during services, due to intrusive memories, flashbacks, and panic attacks.

The full text of the resolution is as follows: **"Be it resolved that the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America requests that: the**

Holy Synod recognize that there are spiritual forms of misconduct, not just financial and sexual; and the Holy Synod oversee Church-wide education on spiritual abuse by developing guidelines on: 1) how to identify spiritual abuse; 2) how to address spiritual abuse; 3) how to prevent spiritual abuse; 4) how to minister to people who have been spiritually abused by their clergy. These guidelines should be developed, agreed upon and implemented within the next triennium."

## Final Draft of the Proposed Revised OCA Statute Released

SYOSSET, NY [*via oca.org*] — The final draft of the revised Statute of the Orthodox Church in America is now available online at <http://18aac.oca.org>. The proposed text of the new Statute was finalized at a meeting held at Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, Michigan, which took place in April. It has the full blessing of the Holy Synod of Bishops.

"The revised Statute is an extension of a historical trajectory in the life of our Church—that is, our evolution from a diocese of the Russian Church to a freestanding, autonomous, independent, comprehensive and autocephalous national Church, a goal which all of us share," said Statute Revision Task Force member Judge E. R. Lanier. He added that the revised Statute holds fast to that which is good in the old Statute, but has necessary changes and improvements that recognize, support, and implement a movement toward a "more proactive stance for the dioceses and parishes of the Church."

If you have any questions regarding the revised statute or any of the proposed resolutions, direct them to the Parish Council or Holy Trinity's delegates to the AAC: Fr. John Reeves and Dn. Alexander Cadman.

# Holy Trinity Calendar

All events take place at 119 South Sparks Street in State College, unless where noted.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31 <b>PENTECOST</b> Festal Matins, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am "Kneeling" Vespers of Pentecost, 11:45am Annual Parish Picnic/Patronal Feast 1pm-4pm @ <i>Holmes-Foster Park</i>	June 1 <b>Day of the Holy Spirit</b> Divine Liturgy, 8am (Hours, 7:40am) Young Adult Potluck/ Cookout/Campfire, 6pm @ 4817 W. Whitehall Rd.	2 Clergy Staff Meeting, 11:45am	3 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	4 Raising Orthodox Christian Kids (R.O.C.K.) "Thursdays in the Park," 10am-12pm @ <i>Dalevue Park, State College</i> Parish Council Executive Committee Mtg., 6pm	5	6 Baby Shower for Megan Leathers, 2pm-4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
7 <b>All Saints Sunday</b> Matins, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am Parish Potluck, 12pm	8	9 Homeless Ministry, 4pm @ <i>Centre House, 217 E. Nittany Ave.</i>	10 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	11 Raising Orthodox Christian Kids (R.O.C.K.) "Thursdays in the Park," 10am-12pm @ <i>Kaywood Park, Boalsburg</i>	12	13 Ministry Leader Appreciation Luncheon and Meeting, 10am-1pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
14 <b>All Saints of America</b> Matins, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	15 <b>Vacation Bible School (VBS) Begins.</b> Theme: "The Armor of God," 5:15pm-8pm	16 Vacation Bible School, 5:15pm-8pm	17 Vespers/Confessions, 5pm Vacation Bible School, 5:15pm-8pm Vespers/Memorial for Abp. Kyrill, 5pm @ <i>Transfig. Monastery, Ellwood City</i>	18 Raising Orthodox Christian Kids (R.O.C.K.) "Thursdays in the Park," 10am-12pm @ <i>Tallyrand Park, Bellefonte</i> Vacation Bible School, 5:15pm-8pm	19 Vacation Bible School, 5:15pm-8pm	20 Men's Fellowship Breakfast, 9am Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
21 Matins, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	22 Future Nursery/Preschool Classroom Planning Meeting, 3:30pm	23 Clergy Staff Meeting, 11:45am Great Vespers, 7pm	24 <b>Nativity of St. John the Forerunner</b> Divine Liturgy, 8am (Hours, 7:40am)	25 Raising Orthodox Christian Kids (R.O.C.K.) "Thursdays in the Park," 10am-12pm @ <i>Sunset Park, Overlook Heights</i>	26	27 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
28 Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Chapel of the Holy Spirit Groundbreaking Ceremony and Light Lunch, 12:30pm @ <i>145 N. Kern St., Beavertown</i> Great Vespers, 7pm	29 <b>HOLY APOSTLES SS. PETER AND PAUL</b> Divine Liturgy, 8am (Hours, 7:40am)	30	July 1 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	2 Raising Orthodox Christian Kids (R.O.C.K.) "Thursdays in the Park," 10am-12pm @ <i>Spring Creek Park, Houseville</i>	3	4 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
5 Matins, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	6	7	8 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	9 Raising Orthodox Christian Kids "Thursdays in the Park," 10am-12pm @ <i>Tusseyview Park, State College</i>	10	11 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions

# Chapel Calendar

All events take place at the Middlecreek Area Community Center (MACC), 67 Elm St. in Beaver Springs., unless where noted.

Saturday 6 Vespers, 6pm	<b>Sunday 21</b> Hours, 9:40am Obednitsa with Holy Communion, 10am
<b>Sunday 7</b> Hours, 9:40am Obednitsa with Holy Communion, 10am	Tuesday 23 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm @ <i>Lyter Home (845 Center Ave., Beaver Springs)</i>
Book Study: "The Tools of Spiritual Warfare," 12:45pm @ <i>Smith Home (350 Old Orchard Dr., Beavertown)</i>	<b>Sunday 28</b> Confessions, 9am Hours, 9:40am Divine Liturgy, 10am Groundbreaking Ceremony, 12:30pm @ <i>Chapel of the Holy Spirit Building Site (145 N. Kern, Beavertown)</i>
Tuesday 9 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm @ <i>Lyter Home (845 Center Ave., Beaver Springs)</i>	<b>Sunday 14</b> Hours, 9:40am Obednitsa with Holy Communion, 10am Book Study: "The Tools of Spiritual Warfare," 12:45pm @ <i>Smith Home (350 Old Orchard Dr., Beavertown)</i>
<b>Sunday 14</b> Hours, 9:40am Obednitsa with Holy Communion, 10am Book Study: "The Tools of Spiritual Warfare," 12:45pm @ <i>Smith Home (350 Old Orchard Dr., Beavertown)</i>	Tuesday 30 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm @ <i>Lyter Home</i>
Saturday July 4 Vespers, 6pm	<b>Sunday 5</b> Hours, 9:40am Obednitsa with Holy Communion, 10am Book Study, 12:45pm @ <i>Smith Home (350 Old Orchard Dr., Beavertown)</i>
Tuesday 16 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm @ <i>Lyter Home (845 Center Ave., Beaver Springs)</i>	Saturday 20 Vespers, 6pm

June 2015