

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Now *That* was a Grand Opening!



by Dn. David Smith

After nearly seven years of praying, worshipping, catechizing, planning, envisioning, and dreaming, a new Temple has been raised to the glory of God! And above it, a golden Cross has taken its place amidst the skyline of Beavertown.

The Chapel of the Holy Spirit was packed full of worshippers and well-wishers on the weekend of October 31–November 1. Sixty souls crammed into the 24-foot by 24-foot nave on Saturday evening to experience that which can only be experienced once in the life of a parish community—a service for the Opening of the Doors (*Thyranoixia*). Presiding were Fr. Mark Meholick, Dean of the Eastern Deanery, along with Fr. John and the Deacons of Holy Trinity.

(continued, see CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, last page)

Don't Pre-Celebrate Christmas

by Fr. Andrew George

The Advent Season, which began for us on November 15, is a time for anticipating the “Good News” of the Lord’s Birth. As with all things in life, Scripture reminds us that we must be careful of being “in the world, but not of the world.” This is especially true of the celebration of Christmas...

Our Orthodox Advent tradition gives us some guidelines of which many of us perhaps are not aware. Within this 40-day preparation period, a slow progression of events and remembrances unfolds.

(continued, see ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY, next page)

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH
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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS	SERVERS
December 6	Russian Ladies*	L. Radomsky and M. Radomsky	H. Torbic and S. Stevens	Team B
December 13	A.T. Pelikan and J. Miranda*	A. Swisher and D. Swisher	M. Fedkin and B. Haupt	Team A
December 20	H. Torbic and M. Thompson*	B. Roberts and E. Miranda	M. Stevens and G. Cattell	Team B
December 27	J. Fryncko and K. Cattell	J. Fryncko and M. Fedkin	R. Patel and S. Stevens	Team A
January 3	D. Van Duin and B. Roberts	M. Thompson and J. Houser	TBD	Team B
January 10	A. Legaspi and J. Cadman	J. Pettengill and S. Pettengill	TBD	Team A
* Denotes Fast Team A: A. Miranda, N. Pelikan, D. Stickers, J. Torbic, E. Swisher and J. Swisher. Captains: D. Torbic and S. Oleynik ** Denotes switch/change Team B: J. Cadman, C. Legaspi, N. McFarland, B. Oleynik, S. Patel, and L. Torbic.				

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

Guidelines for Orthodox Advent *(cont. from page 1)*

This [slow progression towards the Nativity of Christ] is seen in the general attitude, hymnology, prayers, and fasting practices which begin to intensify on the Feast of St. Nicholas (Dec. 6), and progress through the feasts of [St. Herman (Dec. 13)] and St. Ignatius (Dec. 20) [when Holy Trinity begins celebrating Vespers daily through Christmas Eve]. The latter is specifically called “the day of preparation.” What do you think this tells us?

Add to this the tradition of the “Twelve Days of Christmas” that begins on Christmas Day, and runs to January 5, the day before Theophany, the next great feast. The “food fast” is most intense on the 12 days preceding December 25, and there is no fasting on the 12 days after Christmas, not [even] on Wednesday or Friday! Again, what do you think this tells us?

Every year there are more and more parties held during the height of the Christmas Fast, instead of during the festive period of December 25-January 5. On the day after Christmas we hear people say that Christmas is over, and the Christmas trees are out on the curb. Since they have pre-decorated and pre-celebrated and feasted, in their minds “it’s over,” when really it should just be beginning.

Therefore, I offer the following practical applications of our Orthodox theology and practice:

- **Do decorate, but don’t pre-decorate.**
Use the December 6–20 guide as a starting point.
- **Do celebrate, but don’t pre-celebrate.**
Use the December 25–January 5 timeframe for your festivities.

The Scriptures instruct us: “In all things be not like the pagans, but rather calm, joyful in praise and giving of love to glorify Christ who came for us.” Since we Christians are called to be “in the world, but not of the world,” we are to transform the world and not have the secular world transform us.

Secularism has crept into our Christmas observances. It is up to us as individuals to purify the celebration. This begins with our families, our households, doing the more proper and fitting things and teaching others to do likewise by example. I urge you to plan for a Christmas observance that will hold true to our Orthodox view and pattern for celebration. ■

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Fr. Andrew George is the pastor of Annunciation Orthodox Church in Cranston, Rhode Island. This article first appeared in Orthodox Family Life (theologic.com/oflweb).*

■ FROM THE RECTOR’S DESK

Be Filled With Joy this Nativity Season

There are several ways for you and your family to prepare for the Birth of our Redeemer—quietly, prayerfully, and intentionally redeeming time this month:

- **Children are especially encouraged to bring their parents to Great Vespers on Saturday, December 5.** *The customary evlogia from St. Nicholas will be passed out to the Sunday School.*
- **On Friday, December 4 beginning at 5:30 p.m.,** *students will spread the news of Christ’s birth by caroling in the Holmes–Foster neighborhood. Singers will depart from the church after having dinner and will return to decorate cookies for the Feast.*
- **Our St. Nicholas Tree in the narthex** *gives us the opportunity each year to see to it that needy persons in the community have Christmas gifts, in partner-*

Youth Choir to Form

Philip Graybill will be forming a youth choir for students in grades 3–8 beginning in December. He plans for them to sing the communion hymns at Liturgy once per month starting in January. As time goes on, more hymns may be added. Rehearsals will take place during Sunday School at first. If your child is interested, see Philip or email dnmark@holytrinity-oca.org.

Join Us for Holy Supper

Holy Supper is a traditional Lenten meal on Christmas Eve, the last meal of the Nativity Fast. Continue this annual parish family tradition by bringing a favorite Lenten food and sharing it with all that are present. If you have any questions, including food ideas, contact Matushka Kelly Oleynik at ohkellyoh@hotmail.com.

It’s Time for the Cookie Exchange

Women will enjoy a Christmas Cookie Exchange and Lenten potluck on Friday, December 19 at 11:30 a.m. To participate, bring a minimum of three dozen homemade holiday cookies and the recipe. A light Lenten lunch will be provided and a portion of the baked goods will be donated to Housing Transitions. See the sign up sheet in the Parish Hall to participate.

Trinity House Website to Launch

The wait is almost over! Trinity House will soon have its own dedicated website, trinityhouse-oca.org. It will list the weekly hours of the administrative offices, the Atty Student Lounge, and all the ministry events that will be hosted there. The website will launch this month, coinciding with the arrival of furnishings.

■ CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT Now *That* was a Grand Opening! *(cont. from page 1)*

The service of Great Vespers followed immediately thereafter with the evening being capped off by a fellowship hour. On Sunday morning, the first Divine Liturgy was served in the new Temple by Fr. John, along with Fr. James Chuta, a member of our extended parish family who has served and continues to serve both the Chapel and Holy Trinity from time to time.

Great support was once more abundantly evident by the attendance of parishioners from Holy Trinity! We here at the Chapel have been and are certainly blessed by all the love and support we have received over these years and know we will continue to receive from our mother church.

We thank all who supported this great undertaking and all who have continually bolstered this missionary endeavor in a multitude of ways.

The work before us has just begun, to be sure, and at times seems daunting, but with your continued prayers and love and by the great mercies of God Who has called us to these efforts the seed of the Kingdom of Heaven will be planted and the sheaves of the harvest will be reaped.

Blessed be the Name of the Lord henceforth and forevermore! ■

For the Record

ELECTION

Elected to Parish Council at the 2015 Annual Meeting were **Chuck Beechan**, Treasurer; **Justin Houser**, Secretary; and **Brian Troyan**, Facilities Chair. *We especially thank* **Ed Miranda**, **Michael Pelikan** and **Michael Stuckles** *for their many years of service.*

BAPTISMS

- **Dimitri (Jeremiah) Vaughn, III**, son of **Dimitri and Monarth Vaughn**, baptized November 14, sponsored by **Devin Reeves**. *Many years!*
- **Aves and Athena Foster**, children of **Patrick and Electra Foster**, baptized November 8, sponsored by **Panagiotis Panagos, Jr.** and **Elli Panagopoulos**. *Many years!*

■ NEWS AND NOTES

Volunteers Needed to Offer Healthcare and Education in Guatemala

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL [*via ocmc.org*] — The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) is seeking medical/dental professionals, students, and those interested in providing medical/dental care for two upcoming short-term mission teams to Guatemala. These two teams, serving April 8-17 and August 26-September 4, will offer healthcare and education to the Mayan people of Aguacate. This rural village is home to a growing community of Orthodox Christians that do not have access to basic medical/dental services. For information or to apply, visit *ocmc.org*, email *teams@ocmc.org*, or call 877-463-6784 ext. 141.

Ancient Faith Radio Contributor to Keynote Regional Advent Retreat

LANCASTER — Annunciation Orthodox Church here (64 Hershey Ave.) will host an Advent Spiritual Retreat for young adults on Saturday, December 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The theme is “Living the Mystery” and will feature well-known author and Ancient Faith Radio podcaster Fr. Stephen Freeman of St. Anne Church in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Registration is only \$10 at the door. For information, contact Fr. Hector Firoglanis at 717-394-1735 or *annunciationorthodox.org*.

Discover the Church’s Hidden Human Treasures through new Blog

SYOSSET, N.Y. [*via oca.org*] — The Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry of the Orthodox Church in America has launched a new digital project titled “Saints You Missed in Sunday School.” This project aims to highlight the continuous preaching of the Gospel throughout history in order to encourage youth towards missionary work, deeper prayer, and acts of mercy by their example. Subscribe to the blog by visiting *missed-saints.org*.

On the Paris Attacks

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist acts, social media was abuzz with messages of hope, solidarity, and prayers for the people of Paris. One notorious statement emerged and rejected prayers from the different corners of the globe: “Please don’t pray for Paris. We’ve had enough religion for one night.”

I counter this to the greatest degree I can personally muster: we do not need less religion, we need more. We need Christianity and authentic faith. We need Jesus Christ, because we need to love Him, because He is our God. We need to love those around us, those who are far from us, because they are our neighbors. Neither enmity nor hatred, but Christ [is what the world needs].

Eternal and holy, He remains. He endures. He revives, restores, comforts, and heals us when we turn to him. Christ is our peace (Eph. 2:14), the peace proclaimed far and wide. In all our struggles, in all our affliction, in all our angst, anxiety, and uncertainty about what happens in the present and what the future might bring, Christ is our peace. When we are most vulnerable and feel we are in danger of losing everything, our Lord remains with us...

Now when Paul speaks about Christ as our peace today, he is not speaking of peace as a state of quiet, personal contentment. Rather he speaks here of reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles in Christ. The resolution to their separation, alienation, and estrangement is faith in God. How are they reconciled? By faith in Christ, who “abolish[ed] in his flesh” what had separated them. He brought forward a new man, reconciling us to God through His blood and His cross. This is not merely a historical fact, or a description of a theological controversy, but exposes for us who we are in reality. We are not strangers or sojourners to the heavenly realms, and citizens of this world. No! We have access to and can be rich in the spiritual treasures, because we are “fellow citizens with the saints...members with of the household of God,” and neighbors one to another. We have been knitted and joined together as the Temple of the Living God, as the dwelling place for the God in the Spirit...

We have Christ. We have faith in Christ. We have Peace. He alone is our answer to what ails us and afflicts the world!

— FR. ALEXANDER RENTEL
Professor, St. Vladimir’s Seminary (Crestwood, NY)

What Christmas Means to Me

Three things go by the name of Christmas. One is a religious festival. This is important and obligatory for Christians; but as it can be of no interest to anyone else, I shall naturally say no more about it here. The second (it has complex historical connections with the first, but we needn’t go into them) is a popular holiday, an occasion for merry-making and hospitality. If it were my business to have a “view” on this, I should say that I much approve of merry-making. But what I approve of much more is everybody minding his own business. I see no reason why I should volunteer views as to how other people should spend their own money in their own leisure among their own friends. It is highly probable that they want my advice on such matters as little as I want theirs. But the third thing called Christmas is unfortunately everyone’s business.

I mean of course the commercial racket... [T]he reformed Scrooge ordered a turkey for his clerk; lovers sent love gifts; toys and fruit were given to children. But the idea that not only all friends but even all acquaintances should give one another presents, or at least send one

another cards, is quite modern and has been forced upon us by the shopkeepers. Neither of these circumstances is in itself a reason for condemning it. I condemn it on the following grounds.

It gives on the whole much more pain than pleasure. You have only to stay over Christmas with a family who seriously try to “keep” it (in its third, or commercial, aspect) in order to see that the thing is a nightmare. Long before December 25 everyone is worn out—physically worn out by weeks of daily struggle in overcrowded shops, mentally worn out by the effort to remember all the right recipients and to think out suitable gifts for them. They are in no trim for merrymaking, much less (if they should want to) to take part in a religious act. They look more as if there had been a long illness in the house.

Most of it is involuntary. The modern rule is that anyone can force you to give him a present by sending you a quite unprovoked present of his own. It is almost a blackmail. Who has not heard the wail of despair, and indeed of resentment, when, at the last moment, just as everyone hoped that the nuisance was over for one more year, the unwanted gift from Mrs. Busy (whom we hardly remember) flops

unwelcomed through the letter-box, and back to the dreadful shops one of us has to go?

Things are given as presents which no mortal ever bought for himself—gaudy and useless gadgets, ‘novelties’ because no one was ever fool enough to make their like before. Have we really no better use for materials and for human skill and time than to spend them on all this rubbish?

The nuisance for after all, during the racket we still have all our ordinary and necessary shopping to do, and the racket trebles the labor of it. We are told that the whole dreary business must go on because it is good for trade. It is in fact merely one annual symptom of that lunatic condition of our country, and indeed of the world, in which everyone lives by persuading everyone else to buy things. I don’t know the way out. But can it really be my duty to buy and receive masses of junk every winter just to help the shopkeepers? If the worst comes to the worst I’d sooner give them money for nothing and write it off as a charity. For nothing? Why, better for nothing than for a nuisance.

— C.S. Lewis
from God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics

ship with Strawberry Fields, a social service agency in town. Please take a tag from the tree. Each has the child’s age, sex, and Christmas wish. Bring the gift back to church by December 20 to help spread Christ’s love this Christmas to the poor in our area.

- **Vespers in preparation for the Nativity begin Sunday evening, December 20 and continue daily through December 23. Confessions will be heard following each service. The Nativity Fast is one of the four fasting periods during the church year when frequent communicants are expected to confess.**

From the Rector’s Desk,
Fr. John

Holy Days this Month

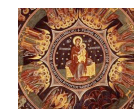


NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

R. Hours: Thursday, Dec. 24, 10am

Vigil: Thursday, Dec. 24, 6pm
(Litiya Bread: A.T. Pelikan)

Liturgy: Friday, Dec. 25, 10am
(Prospora: A. Stickle)



Synaxis of the Theotokos

Vespers: Friday, Dec. 25, 7pm

Liturgy: Saturday, Dec. 26, 10am
(Prospora: A. Stickle)

Holy Trinity Calendar

All events take place at 119 South Sparks Street in State College, unless where noted.
 Events listed at **Trinity House** take place at 123 South Sparks Street, in State College.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29 Matins, 9am <i>(No Sunday School)</i> Divine Liturgy, 10am	30 Apostle Andrew the First-Called	December 1 Adult Study Group: "Everyday Saints", 7pm	2 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	3 Penn State OCF: Dinner and Discussion, 6pm @ 122 Pasquerilla Spiritual Center	4 Sunday School Dinner, Christmas Caroling, and Cookie Decorating Night, 5:30pm-8:30pm	5 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
6 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Festal Matins/Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am Parents' Session, 12:15pm	7	8 Clergy Staff Meeting, 11:45am-1pm Homeless Ministry, 4pm @ Centre House, 217 E. Nittany Ave. Adult Study Group: "Everyday Saints", 7pm	9 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	10 Penn State OCF: End-of-Semester Game Night, 6pm @ 122 Pasquerilla Spiritual Center	11	12 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
13 Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ St. Herman of Alaska Festal Matins/Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	14	15	16 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	17	18 Christmas Cookie Exchange and Lenten Potluck, 11:30am	19 Saturday Before Nativity Men's Breakfast, 9am Altar Society Nativity Decorating, 10am Church School Christmas Play Practice, 4:30pm Great Vespers/Conf., 6pm
20 Sunday Before the Nativity Matins/Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am Annual Church School Christmas Play, 12pm Vespers, 7pm Confessions	21 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	22 Clergy Staff Meeting, 11:45am-1pm Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	23 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	24 Eve of the Nativity Royal Hours, 10am Holy Supper, 4:30pm Nativity Vigil, 6pm (Great Compline/Litiya/Matins)	25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Great Vespers, 7pm	26 Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
27 Sunday After the Nativity Protomartyr and Archdn. Stephen Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Brother of the Lord Matins, 9am <i>(No Sunday School)</i> Divine Liturgy, 10am	28 Young Adult Outing: Laser Tag and Dinner, 6pm @ What-a-Blast, 111 Sowers St., State College OCF College Conference (through December 31) @ Antiochian Village	29	30 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	31 Great Vespers, 7pm	January 1, 2016 Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Open House, 2pm-5pm @ 125 Wildernest Ln., Port Matilda (Oleynik's)	2 St. Seraphim of Sarov Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
3 Sunday Before Theophany Matins, 9am <i>(No Sunday School)</i> Divine Liturgy, 10am	4	5 Eve of the Theophany Royal Hours, 10am Great Vespers/Litiya/ Blessing of Water, 7pm	6 THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST Matins, 8am Divine Liturgy, 9am Great Vespers, 7pm	7 Synaxis of St. John the Baptist Divine Liturgy, 8am (Hours, 7:40am)	8	9 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions

Chapel Calendar

All events take place at the new building (145 North Kern Street) in Beavertown, unless where noted.

Saturday 5 Vespers, 6pm	Tuesday 22 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm
Sunday 6 St Nicholas of Myra Hours, 9:40am Obednitsa with Holy Communion, 10am Book Study: "The Tools of Spiritual Warfare," 12:30pm	Thursday 24 Eve of the Nativity Confessions, 9am Vespers/Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great for Christmas, 10am
Tuesday 8 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Friday 25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR (Hours/Divine Liturgy, 9:40am @ Holy Trinity)
Sunday 13 Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ/St. Herman Hours, 9:40am Obednitsa with Holy Communion, 10am Book Study, 12:30pm	Sunday 27 Sunday After Nativity/ Ss. Stephen, Joseph, David, and James Hours, 9:40am Divine Liturgy, 10am Book Study, 12:30pm
Tuesday 15 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Tuesday 29 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm
Saturday 19 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Saturday Jan. 2 Vespers, 6pm
Sunday 20 Sunday Before Nativity Hours, 9:40am Divine Liturgy, 10am Book Study, 12:30pm	Sunday 3 Sunday Before Theophany Hours, 9:40am Divine Liturgy, 10am Book Study, 12:30pm

December 2015