

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Equipping our Youth to Serve



Enjoying the fruits of their labor, kids jump in one of the many piles of leaves they created by helping two families in Park Forest.

Women Set to Dedicate the New Year to God through Study, Prayer

To the women of Holy Trinity: We are about to embark upon another scripture study for the women's ministry. This year we will be reading the book of Nehemiah, which is the last in the list of what are known as the historical books of the Old Testament. The text is rich in both pragmatic and spiritual lessons which include:

- *The often-forgotten importance of place in building community and in preserving tradition;*
- *The vital role of prayer in our individual growth as Orthodox women;*

(continued, see WOMEN'S MINISTRY, next page)

THE YOUTH OF THE PARISH, encouraged by their parents, peers, and ministry leaders of the Sunday School and the Orthodox Youth Association are beginning to discover ways to give back in the mission fields near to home and beyond. Last month, more than two dozen kids of all ages spent the morning and early afternoon raking leaves in Park Forest, laying a foundation for future opportunities to come: This month, middle and high schoolers will gather at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel on Friday, December 16 at 6 p.m. to wrap gifts for the Toys for Tots charity. Looking beyond into 2017, students 13 years old and up will be able to participate in a weekend of service in a city (i.e., Washington DC, Pittsburgh, etc.) through FOCUS North America's YES program. To learn more, attend the next Parents Session on Sunday, December 11, or see Dn. Mark Oleynik, Director of Christian Education. ■

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH
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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS	SERVERS
December 4	Russian Ladies*	M. Fedkin and J. Fryncko	R. Patel and S. Stevens	Team A
December 11	A. T. Pelikan and J. Miranda*	J. Houser and M. Thompson	M. Stevens and H. Torbic	Team B
December 18	H. Torbic and M. Thompson*	J. Pettengill and S. Pettengill	G. Cartell and B. Haupt	Team A
December 25	NATIVITY (No Coffee Hour)	A. Swisher and D. Swisher**	M. Fedkin and S. Stevens	Team B
January 1	L. Rush and J. Cadman	J. Houser and M. Thompson**	R. Patel and H. Torbic	Team A
January 8	A. Legaspi and K. Cartell	E. Miranda and B. Roberts	B. Haupt and M. Stevens	Team B

* Denotes Fast

** Denotes scotch/clangs

Team A: A. Evans, N. Pelikan, D. Stickle, J. Torbic, C. Schrauf, E. Swisher, and J. Swisher. Captains: D. Torbic and S. Oleynik
Team B: J. Cadman, C. Legaspi, N. McFarland, B. Oleynik, S. Patel, and L. Torbic.

■ 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 Monday, December 5. The customary evlogia from St. Nicholas will be passed out to the Sunday School.
- **On Friday, December 9** 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 fill "ready to give" charitable bags for the homeless.
- **Vespers in preparation for the Nativity** begin Monday evening, December 19 and continue daily through December 24. 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.

■ WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Attend the Women's Bible Study this Spring *(cont. from pg. 1)*

- *The necessary action of prayer in situating us vis-a-vis one another in Orthodox community and with God;*
- *The importance of our Orthodox tradition as we live in the world and approach the world in faith, hope and love and in very real awareness of the kingdom that is not of this world;*
- *The role of suffering in our lives and in our salvation as individuals and as members of a faith community and lessons for taking that awareness with us out into the world around us; and*
- *The building of walls, the necessity for gateways, and the choices we make to go in or out through them.*

Feast Day this Month

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

R. HOURS: Friday, Dec. 23, 10am

VIGIL: Saturday, Dec. 24, 6pm
(M. Haupt, Litiya Bread)
(P. Doty, Icon)

LITURGY: Sunday, Dec. 25, 10am



- **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 partnership 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 18 to help spread Christ's love this Christmas to the poor in our area.

From the Rector's Desk,
Fr. John

Our group will meet weekly for seven Tuesday night classes beginning January 10 and ending March 7, except for February 7 and February 28. Sessions begin at 7 p.m. and will take place in the upstairs lounge of Trinity House. We will have refreshments each night. The course will lead us toward and culminate with a women's day retreat presented by Mother Christophora of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City. It will take place the Saturday of the week we finish (March 11). Mother will build on the themes of the study and teach us about prayer, laying a foundation for future ministry opportunities. Mark your calendars!

We will have more details in next month's *Trisagion*. In the meantime, consider coming to some or all of the sessions. We look forward to your presence!

— Mary Lanser

Budget Unanimously Approved

At the Parish Annual Meeting held November 13, a quorum of parishioners unanimously voted to adopt a modest growth budget for 2017 that continues to fund ministries and outreach from Holy Trinity and Trinity House in State College, and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in Beavertown. For more on the budget, see the 2016 Annual Report posted at holyltrinity-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. The meal begins at 4:30 p.m. and leads into the Vigil at 6 p.m. If you have any questions, contact Matushka Kelly Oleynik at obkellyob@hotmail.com.

Goes Great Together: Christmas Decorating and Cookie Sharing

Each Saturday before the Nativity, the Altar Society spends the morning together decorating our temple. What better way to keep the spirit of the season and day going than to follow it with the parish's annual Lenten Potluck and Christmas Cookie Exchange? Decorating begins at 10:30 a.m. and the lunch begins at 11:30 a.m. To participate in the latter, bring a minimum of four dozen homemade holiday cookies, the recipe to exchange, and your favorite Lenten dish to share (see the sign-up sheet in the Parish Hall for more information). The more people that participate, the greater the variety of cookies/recipes to take home and less holiday baking! Women: feel free to attend one or both festive fellowship opportunities!

Help Homeless Ministry Expand

Thank you to all the volunteers that made 2016 another successful year for homeless outreach by preparing and sharing a monthly meal at Centre House. Let's make it two nights a month this year! It is a great experience to share family-like time with the residents, and, if you have a family, it is also a great learning experience for the kids. If you would like to join our rotation, contact Samar Al Maalouf (samaralmaalouf@gmail.com).



Dozens Receive Complete Meals

Last month, parishioners donated a thousand dollars' worth of turkeys with all the fixings, drinks, and desserts so that 31 struggling families in our community could enjoy a complete Thanksgiving meal. It was made possible by an ongoing partnership between our Matthew 25 ministry (who collected the food) and Strawberry Fields (who distributed the food).

■ CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Families Come Together for Sports, Food, and Fellowship

The Chapel of the Holy Spirit sponsored "Family Fun Night" last month at the Middlecreek Area Community Center, enabling the facility to remain open for extra hours on a Sunday night. The event was a huge success with 20 folks coming together. Hot dogs, snacks, and drinks were provided for all in attendance. The young and young at heart worked on a Thanksgiving-themed craft displaying what they were thankful for. There was lots of activity also going on in the gym including soccer and basketball, but the main event there is always the rousing game of kickball the Chapel organizes. Most in attendance join in, have lots of fun, and get some much needed exercise. The Chapel looks forward to its next event, which will be held in the beginning of 2017.

Join us for an Advent Open House

Father David and Matushka Brenda cordially invite Chapel and Holy Trinity families to an Advent open house at their residence (140 Old Orchard Dr., Beavertown) on December 18 from 3 to 7 p.m. We hope you can take some time out of your busy schedule to join us for fellowship and to relax during this Advent time as we prepare of the coming of "the little Lord Jesus."

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

What St. Nicholas Fought For by Fr. Lawrence Farley

We can celebrate God's Birth and Baptism in the flesh this month and next because St. Nicholas and the other Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council fought against all odds to affirm the Divinity of Christ. Here's the story of how the Nicene Creed—which Orthodox Christians have stated each Christmas and every Sunday for almost 1,700 years—came into being.

Exclusion is not always wrong. Take the early part of the fourth century, for instance. Then the heresy of Arianism was spreading over the Christian world like a raging roaring disease. This was the heresy that denied that Jesus was truly divine, and asserted instead that he was a creature, created by the one true God in the same way as the angels were created. Jesus of Nazareth therefore was not God, according to the Arians, though they allowed that He was very, very important, a heavenly celebrity of sorts, but not God in any real sense. That is, He could be admired and praised, but not actually worshipped with the same worship with which the Church worshipped the Father. This last bit was very important too, for salvation consists of worshipping Jesus, in falling down before Him as did Thomas and crying to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Given the popularity of Arianism, something had to be done.

Something was done, and what was done we now call "the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea." Bishops then came from all over to the town of Nicea in 325 AD to thrash out the whole thing. It didn't take them long to conclude that Jesus was divine, and that Arius' teaching was simply wrong. But how to declare this? Arius was a slippery fellow, and there seemed to be no kind of Biblical formula or title for Christ that he could not twist and redefine for his own purposes. The Fathers therefore decided to do something

radical and unprecedented—namely, to use non-biblical phrases to describe who Christ was. They took the baptismal creed, the statement with which all catechumens had to agree in order to be baptized and be considered Christians, and inserted several phrases—phrases so clear that even someone as slippery as Arius couldn't wriggle out of them. Jesus was not only "the only-begotten Son of God," He was also "light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of the same essence as the Father, from Whom [i.e. Jesus] all things were made." These phrases stated the divinity of Christ so clearly that not even Arius could say the words without choking.

That was, of course, the point: the Creedal statement was constructed with such precision as to exclude people like Arius. In one sense the Creed was inclusive: any person anywhere, regardless of race, language, ethnicity, or colour could confess it, be that person slave or free, rich or poor. But it was also exclusive: any person who did not believe the full and perfect divinity of Jesus of Nazareth could not confess it, and thus could not be a member of the Church.

Why this insistence on exclusion? The Fathers of Nicea wanted to exclude heresy from the Church for the same reason that a doctor wants to exclude cancer from the body of his patient... Heresy will kill the soul, just as surely as cancer will kill the body. Salvation consists of exclusion — the cancer must be excluded from the body, and heresy must be excluded from the soul... [The Fathers of Nicea] were physicians of the soul, working as pastors in the front line, concerned to save the souls of the children of men. They knew that only as men fell down before Christ as God and offered their lives to Him could they find salvation. They therefore excluded the Arian error which insisted on omitting this saving spiritual prostration. They knew they lived in a world of dying men. Only by falling down before the divine Christ could those men find eternal life. ■

■ NEWS AND NOTES

Register Today for a 2017 Short-Term Mission

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL [*via ocmc.org*] — The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) needs your talents and gifts in 2017 in the mission field. Teams will serve in six different countries this coming year, including Albania, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, and Alaska. For information or to apply, visit *ocmc.org*, email *teams@ocmc.org*, or call 877-463-6784.

New Initiative Helps Partners to Visit Christ in Prison

NEW YORK CITY [*via theocpm.org*] — A new initiative from Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) enables donors to help bring the love of Christ to the incarcerated. A monthly donation of \$25.36 to their "Matthew 25:36 Fellowship" will help the ministry produce new Bibles, study books, and icons for prison chapel libraries. OCPM's goal is to enable 1,000 members to "visit Jesus in prison." To learn more about the Fellowship, visit *theocpm.org* and click on the Matthew 25:36 button.

Bishops we have been Praying for at Liturgy are Still Alive

QARA, SYRIA [*via pravmir.com*] — Mother Agnes Mariam el-Salib, superior of the St. James Monastery here, reported in October that Mets. Paul and John of Syria, who were abducted in 2013, are alive and are being held in the Daesh militant group occupied city of Raqqa. We will continue to pray for their safe return.

For the Record

ELECTION

Elected to the Parish Council for two-year terms at the 2016 Annual Meeting were **Justin Houser**, *President;* **(Samar Al Maalouf will complete his Secretary term), Jay Rush**, *Vice President;* and **Bruce Haupt**, *Grounds Chair. Thank you to Bob Roberts for serving.*

■ CAMPUS MINISTRY

Come See the Penn State OCF at the Spring Involvement Fair

Our local Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) chapter will be represented at the Penn State Spring Involvement Fair taking place on Monday, January 9, 2017 in the Alumni Hall of the Hetzel Union Building. The fair begins at 11 a.m. and lasts until 4 p.m. If you are on campus, be sure to stop by.

Penn St. OCF Designs New Website

This semester, webmaster and THON Chair Alex Listvinsky worked with fellow members of the Penn State OCF Executive Committee to create a website for the group, dramatically increasing their online presence. You can view it by following links from our website or directly at *sites.psu.edu/orthodox*.

■ SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

Students Learning the Power of Prayer through Advent Pals

Last month the Sunday School kicked off a Lenten "Prayer Pal" activity. Beginning with a discussion on they can prepare for the Nativity of Our Lord, the students were exhorted to particularly focus on their prayer life during this Lenten season. Each student has a goal to pray every day for another student assigned to him or her. That person for whom they are praying is being kept a secret, except for telling their parents. At Christmas, the students will reveal their pals to each other. Thanks for your example and your good, hard work, kids!

ADOPTION

➤ **Anna Elizabeth Van Duin**, *newborn daughter of Adri and Diana Van Duin, adopted October 17 and brought home last month. Many years!*

BIRTH

➤ **James Francis Swisher**, *son of Brandon and Corene Swisher, born November 30, measuring 8 lbs. 2.5 oz. and 21 inches. Many years!*

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
27 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	28 <i>(Trinity House Open Late for Students, 7pm-11pm)</i>	29	30 Apostle Andrew the First-Called Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	December 1 Penn State OCF: Dinner and Prayer Night, 6pm <i>@Eisenhower Chapel and 124 Pasquerilla Center</i>	2 Penn State OCF: Father's First Friday Film Series: <i>Ostrov</i> , 7pm <i>@ Atty Student Lounge, Trinity House</i>	3 Vespers, 6pm <i>(No Confessions)</i>
4 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> <i>(OYA/Jr. OYA moved to Fri. Dec. 16)</i>	5 Great Vespers with Evlogia for Children, 7pm Confessions Penn State Student Night, 8pm-11pm <i>@ Atty Student Lounge, Trinity House</i>	6 St. Nicholas the Wonderworker <i>(No Liturgy this Year)</i>	7 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Clergy Staff Meeting, 7pm	8 Penn State OCF: End-of-Semester Game Night, 6pm <i>@ Atty Student Lounge, Trinity House</i>	9 Sunday School Dinner, Christmas Caroling and Charity Activity, 5:30pm-8:30pm	10 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
11 Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Parents Session, 12pm <i>@ Trinity House Lower Level</i>	12	13 St. Herman of Alaska Homeless Ministry, 4pm <i>@ Centre House, 217 E. Nittany Ave.</i>	14 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	15	16 OYA (Orthodox Youth Association, <i>gr. 9-12</i>) and Jr. OYA (<i>gr. 5-8</i>) Monthly Outing: Wrapping Gifts for Toys for Tots, 6pm <i>@ Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel</i>	17 Men's Breakfast, 9am Altar Soc. Decor'g, 10:30am Cookie Exchange & Potluck 11:30am <i>@ Trinity House</i> Choir Rehearsal, 4pm S.S. Play Practice, 4:30pm Vespers, 6pm <i>(No Conf.)</i>
18 Sunday Before the Nativity Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Church School Christmas Play, 12pm Advent Open House, 3pm-7pm <i>@ Fr. David & Mka. Brenda's Home, 140 Old Orchard Dr., Beavertown</i>	19 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	20 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	21 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	22 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	23 Royal Hours of the Nativity of Christ, 10am Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	24 Eve of the Nativity Choir Rehearsal, 10am Holy Supper, 4:30pm Nativity Vigil: Great Vespers with Litiya and Matins, 6pm Confessions
25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	26 Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos Holy Righteous Ones: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King, and James the Lord's Brother <i>(No Liturgy this Year)</i>	27 Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen OCF College Conference <i>(through December 31)</i> <i>@ Antiochian Village</i>	28 Vespers, 5:30pm <i>(No Confessions)</i>	29	30	31 Saturday After Nativity and Before Theophany Great Vespers, 6pm <i>(No Confessions)</i>
January 1 Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great Sunday After the Nativity and Before Theophany Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	2 St. Seraphim of Sarov	3	4 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Clergy Staff Meeting, 7pm	5 Eve of the Theophany Royal Hours, 10am Great Vespers/Litiya/ Blessing of Water, 7pm	6 THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST Divine Liturgy, 9am <i>(Hours, 8:40am)</i>	7 Synaxis of St. John the Baptist <i>(No Liturgy this Year)</i> Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions

Chapel Calendar

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

Saturday 3 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions	Tuesday 20 Choir Rehearsal, 6pm
Sunday 4 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	Friday 23 <i>(Royal Hours of the Nativity, 10am @ Holy Trinity)</i>
Tuesday 6 St. Nicholas of Myra Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Saturday 24 Eve of the Nativity of Christ <i>(Holy Supper and Vigil, 4:30pm @ Holy Trinity)</i>
Sunday 11 Sunday of the Holy Forefathers of Christ Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	Sunday 25 THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>
Tuesday 13 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Tuesday 29 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm
Saturday 17 Great Vespers, 6pm	Saturday 31 Saturday After Nativity and Before Theophany Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
Sunday 18 Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Advent Open House, 3pm-7pm <i>@ Fr. David and Mka. Brenda Smith's Home, (140 Old Orchard Dr.)</i>	Sunday Jan. 1 Circumcision of Christ St. Basil the Great Sunday After the Nativity and Before Theophany Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>

December 2016