

# THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## Without Vision, People Perish



The vision to glorify God by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its entirety led to the establishment of two permanent Orthodox worshipping communities, the first in each of its respective county: Holy Trinity (Centre) and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit (Synder).

### Transition Team Completes its Work, Sends to Archbishop

A TEAM OF TEN FAITHFUL, led by our dean Fr. Mark Meholic, completed the clergy profile that listed a set characteristics the next rector should have in order to ensure the continuation and advancement of the parish's mission and vision. It was delivered by Fr. Mark to His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek and Archdiocesan Chancellor Fr. William (Bill) Evansky on Tuesday, September 25.

The letter begins, "Master, bless! Thank you for taking into consideration the thoughts of the parishioners of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church to guide Your Eminence in determining the successor of Fr. John Reeves."

HOLY TRINITY WAS FOUNDED on a dream, a vision, that there could be an Orthodox Church in Happy Valley. It took courage and faith and commitment to pursue that vision. In 1993, a group of 16 intrepid souls started a building fund for a down payment, co-signed their names to a note at the bank to guarantee repayment of the balance, and bought a building at 119 S. Sparks St. It was the beginning of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church.

One might say that the rest is history. Yet, our history is composed of meeting many challenges along the way, discerning our purpose, and focusing actions to attain our goals. These are part and parcel of church development. Otherwise, our history would have been very different.

There is an axiom: "Aim at nothing and you'll surely hit it."

*(continued, see FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK, page 3)*

*(continued, see LETTER TO HIS EMINENCE, last page)*

**HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
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## Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS	SERVERS
October 7	L. Radomsky* and L. Rush	J. Pettengill and S. Pettengill	B. Haupt and M. Stickle	Team B
October 14	J. Cadman* and A. Swisher	M. Fedkin and J. Fryncko	E. Ashmore and R. Patel*	Team A
October 21	R. Schrauf and L. Georgiou*	L. Radomsky and M. Radomsky*	G. Cartell and M. Fedkin*	Team B
October 28	D. Patel* and B. & N. Troyan	E. Miranda and J. Cadman*	B. Haupt and H. Torbic	Team A
November 4	E. George and K. Oleynik	J. Cadman and J. Houser	M. Fedkin and M. Stickle*	Team B
November 11	P. Dooy and D. Van Duin	J. Pettengill and S. Pettengill	E. Ashmore and G. Cartell	Team A

\* Denotes scotch change  
 \*\* Denotes fast

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

■ FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK

## Where There is No Vision... by Fr. John Reeves

Our history is one of taking intentional steps to focus on specific people groups. In the beginning there were two: families with children, and college students. To use a hunting metaphor: You are more likely to hit the target with a rifle than with a shotgun. Direct aim, rather than a scatter shot blast will bring the best results.

This was a controversial approach for some. “Isn’t the Church for everyone?” Why yes, it is. “Shouldn’t we be open to anyone who attends?” Why yes, we should.

To choose one was not to preclude the other, as if this was a binary choice. It was Jesus who taught us this when he both sent the Church into the world to baptize all nations and at the same time said to concentrate on a specific group of people, Jews living in Jerusalem. Wait for power from on high, He said.

On Pentecost, it—or rather, the Holy Spirit—hit the disciples. They hadn’t truly understood what he meant, but they were willing to await his promise. The miraculous gift of tongues (languages) came upon barely literate fishermen, enabling them to declare the marvelous works of God to many people, from many nations. As the Church grew together in the Apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread in those early days, the Lord began adding those to the Church, such as should be saved. (*Luke 2:42*).

People were being added to the Church from Jerusalem and Judea because the Apostles were busy, preaching daily in the public arena and the Temple. The life of those early Christians commended itself to others. Later, the Gospel would be shared beyond the boundaries of Judea to Samara, and ultimately unto the ends of the earth, at least to the bounds of the Roman Empire within the Apostles’ life times.

In other words the Church grew together in Christ, in faith, and then began to grow outwardly with a



*The first group of converts at Holy Trinity (pictured above with their godparents, Fr. John, and the altar servers) were received by baptism and chrismation on Holy Saturdaay, April 10, 1999.*

single focus on mission. Yet, it did not neglect the needs of its members: widows were cared, the sick were healed, and above all, God was edified.

By first focusing on a specific group, Jews in Jerusalem who only 50 days prior had witnessed the Crucifixion of Christ, who had heard rumors of his Resurrection, and who longed for the Kingdom of God, were the prime audience to hear the Good News. You see, Jesus had it all figured out. His poor, fearful disciples and apostles had to learn this in stages.

This has been the same for Holy Trinity Church. Bit by bit, it became apparent. Worshiping together, embracing the Orthodox Faith with all of its struggles and challenges, loving one another whether we wanted to or not, all began to commend itself to others. It took three years to receive our first converts, but without focusing on the university—on OCF in particular—our history might have been very different. What began as a trickle became a steady stream of converts to the faith over the next 20 years. Yes, that’s right. We had no catechumens until 1998, and no converts until 1999. But that year only three of the nine who were baptized were students (the rest were one family with children, plus another adult).

■ NEWS & NOTES

## Registration Open for OCF’s College Conference and Spring Break Trips

BROOKLINE, MA [*via ocf.org*] — Although its eastern location filled up in 18 hours, spaces are still available for Orthodox Christian Fellowship’s (OCF) College Conference Midwest, which will take place December 27-30 at St. Iakovos Retreat Center in the greater Chicago area. Registration has also opened for Real Break 2019. Two trips correspond to PSU’s Spring Break: Albania and Romania; Dn. Alexander Cadman will co-lead students on the former. Register at *ocf.net*.

## Met. Tikhon Calls Faithful to Pray for Ukraine

SYOSSET, NY [*via oca.org*] — In an encyclical dated September 26, Metropolitan Tikhon addressed the recent developments in Ukraine and the painful historical ecclesiastical divisions that have existed there for decades. In the letter, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) affirmed their support for a Pan-Orthodox conciliar process so an authentic solution can be found to this problem. They also called upon all faithful to pray for Metropolitan Onufry and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Patriarchate of Moscow as a sign of unity for the unity that is threatened. The full letter is posted on *oca.org*.

## Icon Painting Workshop to be Held November 4-10

FRENCHVILLE, PA — Here, Mary Kay Laplante will lead a workshop in creating an icon of the Archangel Gabriel using ancient painting techniques and natural materials rich with symbolic meaning. Students will receive step-by-step instructions and all necessary materials will be provided. Previous artistic experience is not required. Contact 814-263-4855 for information on the workshop’s price and schedule; and to register.

■ TRANSITION TEAM

## Our Letter to Archbishop Melchisedek (*cont. from page 1*)

It continues: “We would be blessed beyond measure if the appointed priest is humble and gentle in the imitation of our Lord. *‘Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart...’* (Matt. 11:29).

“We would be blessed if that priest is able to serve our parish with faith, love, and commitment to our mission and vision—‘Building up the Church Beyond our Parish’ as we continue to grow and witness for Christ in the Centre Region and beyond.

“We would be blessed if he embodies our core values of Apostleship, Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Stewardship and Partnership.”

The correspondence proceeds to list 25 characteristics grouped around the headings, “Christ-centered and Humble,” “Pastoral leader,” and “Embodies our Core Values.” It concludes with a promise that the parish will “welcome the new priest, get to know him, love him, and work with him to continue” Holy Trinity’s mission. To view the full letter, visit *holytrinity-oca.org*, or request a copy from the parish office, 814-231-2855.

His Eminence is in receipt of the letter and will schedule meetings with our chancellor and dean to continue this solemn and crucial process. Please keep Archbishop Melchisedek, Frs. Bill and Mark, and especially Fr. John and the man who will succeed him in your prayers. ■

## For the Record

### BAPTISMS

➤ **Brad (Andrew) and Melissa (Xenia) Kerstetter**, were baptized September 29 by Fr. John Reeves at the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, one year after their son and daughter-in-law, **Evan (John) and Elya (Irene). Many years!**

## ■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

# Our Original Incompetency

by Fr. Stephen Freeman

There is one thing to be said about Church-shopping: you can always find a better one... Indeed, the drive for a “better Church,” a “more authentic Church,” the “true Church,” the “New Testament Church,” is little more than a game invented in America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is post-Reformation and represents the rise of Christian consumerism.

I have long thought that Orthodox Christianity comes out on the short end in this shopping effort. For some, it seems too hard, too complicated, too ethnic, too riddled with rules, too confusing and inconsistent, etc. All of those things are true. And, just when you think you’re going to like it, there’s some sort of train wreck across the world and it falls apart again.

The greatest victim in the course of the split between East and West, and later in the Reformation, was the Church itself. To a great extent, the last thing considered in all of the various iterations of doctrine was ecclesiology (the doctrine of the Church). Particularly after the Reformation, the notion that correct doctrine would produce a correct Church gained increasing acceptance. However, history has repeatedly proven this to be a false idea. No matter the corrective measures, Christianity, as [an institution], remains flawed. Apparently, allowing sinful people to be part of the Church ruins its excellence, and, even the most excellent people are revealed to be broken.

All efforts of comparison fail. Perhaps the assumptions that drive comparisons are the real problem...priests in Orthodoxy were and are more likely to believe the Creed, but even demons believe the Creed and tremble. The shared life of a common tradition is far richer in Orthodoxy (I prefer the piety of peasants and monks to the sentimentality of Anglo-Bourgeoise). However, piety easily becomes more of a “style” and a “badge” than a thing that is practiced. In short, comparisons reveal the one who does the comparing.

So why convert? I think that is a serious question and worth considering carefully. My own journey towards Orthodoxy spanned nearly 20 years. I looked at every possible angle. At its deepest level, I came to see that becoming Orthodox was a renunciation of comparisons and the empty efforts to improve the Church. It became an agreement that the Church, with all that came with it, was instituted by God for our salvation. The Church is what salvation looks like. Someone could ask, “Couldn’t that be done in any ecclesiastical setting?” My conclusion was that this was not so... [T]he endless forays towards some new, imagined excellence, were the founding ideology of the various modern ecclesiologies, [not ours]. Orthodoxy represents our original incompetence. It is the quarreling of the Corinthians, and the fiery courage of Ignatius of Antioch. It is the excess of Greeks, the soul of Russians, and dancing Ghanians.

The story of the Church is not one of progress, certainly not a progress that can be measured by worldly standards. The saints and martyrs alone serve to give evidence that the vine is still alive and fruitful. Thus, to a large extent, my conversion to Orthodoxy was a decision to cast my lot into the messiness of our original humanity, refusing to remain a part of the modern project and its attempt to improve on the work of God... I am often embarrassed by Orthodox failures, just as I am by my own, and for the same reason. However, I believe our failures are uniquely unmasked by the sublime reality of the sacraments, and the perfection of the gift we have been given. It is measured by the yardstick of the spotless bride and constantly found wanting. And this is the truth of our existence. I would not want to exist in any other manner. Before the altar of God, I stand in union with human failure throughout the ages, and in union with the infinite compassion of Christ. ■

EDITOR’S NOTE: Fr. Stephen produces the “Everywhere Present” and “Glory to God” podcasts on [ancientfaith.com](http://ancientfaith.com).

Yet, just as we read in Scripture, the same issues which beset the Church in Jerusalem, beset us and still challenge us today. It seems the Jerusalem church, in the beginning, didn’t worry about money issues. They believed, they had all things in common, and they took care of personal needs of the flock, because they were continually giving for the ministry of the church.

After a while, a man and his wife lost the vision of that Church in the Book of Acts. Yes, they were liquidating their property. They had even promised a certain amount to the Church. Trouble was, they lied. They decided that they needed to keep back for themselves. Maybe, they just thought it to be a rainy-day fund. We don’t know why they did that, but in so doing, they demonstrated a tremendous lack of commitment, i.e., Faith. The results were catastrophic for them. First the man, and then afterwards the wife, dropped dead in the presence of the Apostles because they had lied to the Church. Ouch! Scripture says that “great fear” spread throughout the whole Church.

What the story about the man and his wife teach us about giving is what our Lord taught all along. They stopped trusting that the Lord would supply their needs in the Church. Loss of vision, indeed.

Yet, the overall joy of the cheerful giver has helped create the atmosphere at Holy Trinity. We’ve had struggles with tithing, to be sure. (Before accepting my appointment, I said, “Not only do I practice tithing, I expect tithing to become the norm.”) I would both teach us and lead us towards that end because it is the godly way to support the Church. It brings a blessing to life in general, and if we want to keep that vision entrusted to us, it’s essential. It all depends.

Without vision, the people perish (*cf. Prov. 29:18*). That happened literally to that couple in the Bible and that could happen spiritually here, too. No one is immune to spiritual drift. If the vision were lost, well, let’s say, Holy Trinity would not be the same anymore.

(TO BE CONTINUED.) ■

— Fr. John

## Council Preparing 2019 Budget

The Parish Council is adopting a budget in advance of the Annual Meeting to be held at Holy Trinity on Sunday, November 11. A proposed budget will be adopted by Council at its October meeting in Trinity House and featured in the November *Trisagion*.

## Holy Trinity to Host OLLI Course

Holy Trinity is honored to once-again host the second of a three-part Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) series exploring how religious traditions help people cope with death and dying. Fr. John will participate on the panel of instructors. Classes begin on November 1 and run weekly; tuition is \$30. (OLLI membership required; participants must be 50 years or “better.”) Email [info@holytrinity-oca.org](mailto:info@holytrinity-oca.org) for details.

## Peaceful Demonstration for Life

Life Chain Sunday will be held Sunday, October 7, in State College, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Attendees are asked to gather at 1:45 p.m. at 900 West College Ave. to receive the proper signage. All are encouraged to attend and show reverence for all innocent life.

## Hungry for BBQ Chicken?

The parishioners of St. Michael’s Church in Irvona and Nativity of the Theotokos Church in Madera invite you to a Chicken BBQ Dinner on Sunday, October 14 from 12:00-2:00 p.m. The cost is \$10 per person and will include a grilled half-chicken, home-made baked beans, a baked potato, a dinner roll, and dessert. The dinner will be held at St. Michael’s, 163 Hemlock St., in Irvona (16656).

## Creating a Welcoming, Safe Place

Greeters Ministry will conduct a meeting on October 16 at 7 p.m. in Trinity House. All current greeters and those interested in partnering with them to create a more welcoming environment at Holy Trinity are encouraged to attend. Volunteers are currently being recruited for a companion ministry: a security team comprised of Council members, first responders, and other diligent parishioners, to ensure the safety of all who attend. Call 814-231-2855 for details.

# 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
30 Matins, 9am Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	October 1 <b>Protection of the Theotokos</b> Choir Rehearsal, 7pm Penn State Student Night, 7:30pm @ Trinity House Conference Room	2	3 Great Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Sunday School Teacher Meeting, 6:15pm @ Trinity House Conference Room	4 Penn State OCF Dinner and Discussion, 7pm @ 124 Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, Univ. Pk.	5 Great Vespers, 5:30pm Anniversary Choir Rehearsal, 6:15pm	<b>St. Innocent of Alaska 6</b> Hierarchical Divine Lit., 9am (Hours/Procession, 8:30am) 25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, 12pm @ Penn Stater OCF Alumni Ice Cream Social, 2pm @ Penn Stater Vespers/Confessions, 6pm
7 Matins, 9am Sunday School, 9am (All classes begin in the Parish Hall) Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Life Chain Sunday, 1:45pm-3pm @ 900 W. College, State College	8	9 Homeless Ministry, 4pm @ Centre House, 217 E. Nittany Ave. Young Adult Fellowship Potluck, Campfire, and Game Night, 5:30pm @ 4817 W. Whitehall Rd.	10 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	11 Penn State OCF: Dinner and Discussion, 7pm @ 124 Pasquerilla Center	12	13 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
14 <b>Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council</b> Matins, 9am Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	15 Choir Rehearsal, 7pm Orthodoxy 101, 7:30am @ Trinity House Conference Room	16 Greeters Ministry Meeting, 7pm @ Trinity House Conference Room	17 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	18 <b>Apostle and Evangelist Luke</b> Penn State OCF: Dinner and Discussion, 7pm @ 124 Pasquerilla Center	19 Vespers, 7pm	20 <b>Memorial Saturday—St. Demetrius</b> Divine Liturgy, 9am (Hours, 8:40am) Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
21 Matins, 9am Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	22 Orthodoxy 101, 7:30am @ Trinity House Conference Room	23 <b>Apostle James, Brother of the Lord</b>	24 Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	25 Penn State OCF: “Stay to Pray” Dinner at Holy Trinity, 6pm Great Vespers, 7pm	26 <b>St. Demetrios the Myrrhgusher</b> Divine Liturgy, 8am (Hours, 7:40am)	27 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
28 Matins, 9am Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am	29 Orthodoxy 101, 7:30am @ Trinity House Conference Room	30	31 <b>St. John (Kochurov) of Chicago</b> Vespers, 5:30pm Confessions	November 1 Penn State OCF: “Dinner on the Town” 7pm (We’ll meet at Pasquerilla and walk to Downtown.)	2	3 Archdiocesan Assembly (all day) @ Belle Vernon, PA. (Our delegation will depart 6pm from HTOC on Friday.) Reader Vespers, 6pm
4 Daylight Saving Time Ends, 2am (turn clocks back one hour)  Matins, 9am EST Sunday School, 9am EST Divine Liturgy, 10am EST	5	6	7 Great Vespers, 7pm Confessions	8 <b>Archangel Michael</b> Divine Liturgy, 8am (Hours, 7:40am) Penn State OCF: “Stump the Clergy” Night, 7pm @ 124 Pasquerilla Center	9	10 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions

# Chapel Calendar

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

Tuesday 2 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Saturday 20 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions
Saturday 6 Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with the Tonsuring of Evan Kerstetter as Reader, 9am @ Holy Trinity, State College (Hours, 8:30am) “25 Years of Ministry” Buffet Luncheon, 12pm @ Penn Stater Hotel, Innovation Pk.	<b>Sunday 21</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Fellowship and Study of the Apostolic Fathers, following
Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions	Monday 22 Women’s Knitting/ Crocheting “Hats and Blankets for Babies” Outreach, 6:30pm
<b>Sunday 7</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Fellowship and Study of the Apostolic Fathers, following	Tuesday 23 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm
Tuesday 9 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Saturday 27 Great Vespers, 6pm
Saturday 13 Great Vespers, 6pm	<b>Sunday 28</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Fellowship and Study of the Apostolic Fathers, following
<b>Sunday 14</b> <b>Fathers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Council</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Fellowship and Study of the Apostolic Fathers, following	Tuesday 30 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm
Tuesday 16 Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm	Saturday Nov. 3 Reader Vespers, 6pm

October 2018