

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Enthusiasm Builds in Beavertown

“One of the oldest churches in America—and the world—has finally reached into rural Snyder County.” So began an article in Snyder County’s local newspaper, *The Daily Item*, last month. (Copies are posted on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall.) The reporter, having spoken with Reader David Smith, Michael and Beth Mitchell, Fr. John, and me, described the enthusiasm accompanying the establishment of an Orthodox Christian community in an area that has never (to our knowledge, anyway) had one before.

Indeed, the excitement is building, for, as the article explains, the faithful at the Chapel of the Holy Spirit hope to have a real Orthodox temple within a year. While several options are currently under consideration, the Chapel community, with the support of the Holy Trinity Parish Council, has decided to make an offer for a property in Beavertown near to where we currently hold services.

The parcel is about .55 acres in size, located in the borough of Beavertown (with municipal water and sewer), only one block off U.S. Hwy. 522 [with] large amounts of street parking in the immediate vicinity. With an all-cash offer, it is our hope that we could begin planning for construction immediately after closing the sale.

Is this “the one”? We don’t know; only God does. The seller must first accept our offer. If he does, then our hard work really begins...

The possibility that a permanent Orthodox presence would be realized in Snyder County this year is an exciting one. Even if this particular opportunity is not the one our gracious God has in mind for us, we know He has plans.

I ask each of you here at Holy Trinity to undertake the spiritual work of prayer in support of this outreach you yourselves planted. May God bless all of us as we devote ourselves to sharing the abundance of salvation in Christ with those who’ve not yet had the chance to hear about it in Snyder County.

— Fr. Basil

■ SOCIAL OUTREACH Good News from Matthew 25

by Melody Thompson

Thank you to everyone at Holy Trinity who made our *Matthew 25* appeals so successful this Lent. As a parish we collected fifteen bags of clothing for the St. Vincent de Paul Society; approximately ten boxes of food for the Food Bank of the State College Area; and 22 Wal-Mart and Target gift cards so residents of Centre House (an emergency shelter operated by Housing Transitions) can buy necessities. In addition, an amazing 500 quarters (a total of \$125) were donated for the residents’ laundry needs. If you missed an opportunity to give, *Matthew 25* accepts cash donations year round to fund our parish’s community social outreach.

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Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeters	Altar Servers*
May 8	Mat. Dea Biberdorf and Mat. Kelly Oleynik	Megan Leathers and David Swisher	Team A
May 15	Karen Cattell and Diana Van Duin	Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda	Team B
May 22	Mat. Jennifer Cadman and Megan Leathers	Leslyn and Mark Radomsky	Team A
May 29	Melody Thompson and Jean Miranda	Melody Thompson and Mark Fedkin	Team B
June 5	Judy Fryncko and Holly Torbic	Megan Leathers and David Swisher	Team A
June 12	Bob Schrauf and Leslyn Radomsky	Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda	Team B

* Team A: C. Doty, N. Fedkin, M. Haupt, A. Miranda, S. Oleynik, and Jo. Stickers
Team B: J. Cattell, M. Doty, P. Doty, J. Miranda, S. Peifkan, and Je. Stickers.

■ SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP It's a Wrap! by Dn. Mark Oleynik

On Sunday May 22, our Sunday School will conclude the school year. As always the primary objective was to provide weekly instruction on the faith, teachings, and traditions of the Church. In some of the classrooms this was accomplished through the reading and discussion of various Bible stories and festal events while in the other classes there was deeper review of Church practices and discussion of how Orthodox Christians can profess their faith in words and deeds.

Of course, the students were kept busy with an array of extracurricular activities including such things as creating processional banners, attendance at the winter retreat at the Antiochian Village, presenting a Christmas play, hosting the SOUP-er Sunday Charity Luncheon, sled riding at Slab Cabin Park, an icon procession, the Pascha Preparation Workshop on Lazarus Saturday, and an Easter Egg Hunt!

Many thanks to the teachers for their offerings of time and talent, and to the parents and students for their thirst for the Word of God. (In case you are wondering, Sunday School resumes on September 11, 2011.) ■

Extra "Scoop"

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL UPDATE

Following the Divine Liturgy (Day of the Holy Spirit) on June 13, we will begin our annual weeklong VBS for children ages 3-14. Our theme this year is "Fruits of the Spirit" and it will take place in the midst of Trinity Week (the week following Pentecost). The success of our VBS is dependent on staff of volunteers (hint to parents and teens!). Information will be sent to all parents and will be posted on the Web and Parish Hall bulletin board. See Dn. Mark with any questions.

"When God Created Teachers"

*When God created teachers,
He gave us special friends
To help us understand His world
And truly comprehend
The beauty and the wonder
Of everything we see,
And become a better person
With each discovery.*

*When God created teachers,
He gave us special guides
To show us ways in which to grow
So we can all decide
How to live and how to do
What's right instead of wrong,
To lead us so that we can lead
And learn how to be strong.*

*Why God created teachers,
In His wisdom and His grace,
Was to help us learn to make our world*

A better, wiser place.



Sunday School students decorate Pysanky eggs with the guidance of Caryl Strauss during the Pascha Workshop.

Photo Credit: Dn. Mark Oleynik

Resurrection so that man could be re-united with his Creator.

"I find my way through the darkness towards the inner chamber in which I fall on my knees. Here I say certain prayers that have been handed down to us through the centuries and, having said them, I wait. Sometimes I may wait a few minutes, but normally the miracle happens immediately after I have said the prayers. From the core of the very stone on which Jesus lay an indefinable light pours forth. It usually has a blue tint, but the color may change and take many different hues. It cannot be described in human terms.

"The light rises out of the stone as mist may rise out of a lake—it almost looks as if the stone is covered by a moist cloud, but it is light... The light does not burn—I have never had my beard burnt in all the sixteen years I have been Patriarch in Jerusalem and have received the Holy Fire. The light is of a different consistency than normal fire that burns in an oil lamp.

"At a certain point the light rises and forms a column in which the fire is of a different nature, so that I am able to light my candles from it. When I thus have received the flame on my candles, I...give the flame to all people present in the Church..."

"The miracle touches me just as deeply every single year. Every time it is another step towards conversion for me. For me personally it is of great comfort to consider Christ's faithfulness towards us, which he displays by giving us the holy flame every year in spite of our human frailties and failures... It makes the resurrection of Christ present to us as if he had died only a few years ago."

While the patriarch is inside the chapel kneeling in front of the stone, there is darkness but far from silence outside. One hears a rather loud mumbling, and the atmosphere is very tense. When the Patriarch comes out with the two

candles lit and shinning brightly in the darkness, a roar of jubilee resounds in the Church, comparable only to a goal at a soccer-match.

The miracle is not confined to what actually happens inside the little tomb, where the Patriarch prays. What may be even more significant, is that the blue light is reported to appear and be active outside the tomb. Every year many believers claim that this miraculous light ignites candles, which they hold in their hands, of its own initiative. All in the church wait with candles in the hope that they may ignite spontaneously. Often closed oil lamps take fire by themselves before the eyes of the pilgrims. The blue flame is seen to move in different places in the Church. A number of signed testimonies by pilgrims, whose candles lit spontaneously, attest to the validity of these ignitions. The person who experiences the miracle from a close distance by having the fire on the candle or seeing the blue light usually leaves Jerusalem changed, and for everyone having attended the ceremony, there is always a "before and after" the miracle of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Niels Christian Hvidt, born 1969, is Associate Professor at the Research Unit of Health, Man and Society at the Institute of Public Health at the University of Southern Denmark.*

For the Record

BAPTISMS

- **Jay (Benjamin), Laura, Joelle, and Julia Rush** (sponsored by Dn. Mark and Mat. Kelly Oleynik), **Virginia Anthony, Anne (Mary) Cramer, and Dimitri Vaughn** (sponsored by Gregory and Ruth Cattell), baptized Holy Saturday, April 23.

BIRTH

- **Heidi Elizabeth**, daughter of Andre and Megan Wagner, 7 lbs. 2 oz., 17½ inches, born April 30.

AWARDS

- **Shane Stevens**, named top senior by the Penn State Department of Chemistry, April 12.

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

The Miracle of the Holy Fire by Niels Christian Hvidt

“The Miracle of the Holy Fire” (in Orthodox Churches) is known as “the greatest of all Christian miracles.” It takes place every single year, on the same time, in the same manner, and on the same spot. No other miracle is known to occur so regularly and for such an extensive period of time. The miracle happens in Jerusalem, the holiest place on earth for millions of believers. Theologians, historians and archaeologists consider this church to contain both Golgotha, the little hill on which Jesus was crucified, as well as the “new tomb” close to Golgotha that received his dead body, and the same spot from which he rose from the dead...

The ceremony surrounding the “Holy Fire” is one of the oldest unbroken Christian ceremonies in the world. From the Fourth Century to our own time, sources recall this awe-inspiring event. From these sources it becomes clear that the miracle has been celebrated on the same spot, on the same feast day, and in the same liturgical way.

The miracle occurs every year on the Orthodox “Holy and Great Sabbath-Saturday”... Pilgrims camp around the tomb, waiting from Holy Friday afternoon in anticipation of the wonder on Holy Saturday... It is not possible to follow the events inside the tomb, so I asked the [late] patriarch [DIODORUS of Jerusalem (†2000)], about [it]:

“I believe it to be no coincidence that the Holy Fire comes on exactly this spot. In *Matthew 28:3*, it says that when Christ rose from the dead, an angel came, dressed all in a fearful light. I believe that the striking light that enveloped the angel at the Lord’s Resurrection is the same light that appears miraculously. Christ wants to remind us that His Resurrection is a reality and not just a myth; He really came to the world in order to give the necessary sacrifice through His Death and



Photo Credit: Abir Sultan / EPA via photoblog.msnbc.msn.com.

The view from inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem as light spreads the Tomb of Christ on April 23, 2011.

“Nothing Half-Naked”

*I recall seeing a sign outside St. Nectarios's Monastery in Aegina, Greece. Advising pilgrims about attire, the sign read in English “Nothing Half-Naked.” At the entrance, there were obligatory wraps for female **and male** tourists who had ventured there without being forewarned about what this meant.*

With winter virtually over for a few months here in Happy Valley, it might be worthwhile to revisit what would be inappropriate attire to wear to Holy Trinity (at any time): halter-tops—or other revealing blouses/shirts—and shorts on anyone over ten years of age. If women need to wear slacks to church, they must be loose fitting (as opposed to formfitting); otherwise, skirts should cover the knee.

These are minimal standards of modesty to underscore the holiness of worship and to keep from distracting others in prayer. After all, when we worship, we stand before the King in all His Glory and He should be the only One on our minds. Our attire needs to reflect that “we get it”, so, “nothing half-naked,” at a minimum. Thanks!

— Fr. John

Coffee Hour Ministry Seeking Volunteer Coordinator

If you have a knack for organization, prayerfully consider serving as Coffee Hour Coordinator. This ministry head is responsible for creating and maintaining a schedule of volunteers who take turns hosting our fellowship time in the Parish Hall on Sundays following the Divine Liturgy. New and returning hosts are also being sought for the next rotation that begins in July. Volunteers assist this valuable ministry by complementing bagels provided by the parish with light snacks and refreshments, as well as cleaning up afterwards. If you are interested, complete the form located on the Ministries page on the new holytrinity-oca.org.

Thank You, Chocolate Lovers

Thank you to those who supported the Gertrude Hawks fundraiser for Sunday School special projects and field trips. Almost \$1,300 in purchases and donations netted nearly \$700 to the program.

■ NEWS & NOTES

The Orthodox Church Beyond Our Parish

CHRISTINA SEMON BEGINS SECOND TERM OF MISSIONARY SERVICE

MOLDOVA – Following the successful completion of her first term in Romania, OCMC missionary Christina Semon began the next phase of her missionary service in the Republic of Moldova last month. Building on the experiences and skills she acquired during two years of working with children and teens (organizing summer camps and working with abandoned children at the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center in Cluj-Napoca), Christina will partner with Fr. Ioan Cristea to establish an Moldovan youth program.

Christina expressed heartfelt thanks to Holy Trinity and all the parishes she had an opportunity to visit while preparing for her prior

Playgroup Returns This Month

Beginning this month, area moms, dads, and caregivers will meet Thursdays (excepting Holy Days and VBS week), from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, alternating locations between Spring Creek Park (first, third, and fifth Thursdays) and Holmes-Foster Park (second and fourth), respectively. A part of Holy Trinity’s *Raising Orthodox Christian Kids* (ROCK) ministry, “Thursdays in the Park” is an open playgroup: Please tell all your friends with kids if you think they might want to join. No RSVP is necessary; simply come when you want.

Congratulations, Graduates

Join us in celebrating the achievements of our graduates this month. Nicholas Reeves will receive a Doctorate in Music Ed. from the Manhattan School of Music and Willis (Mark) Mwangola will receive a Masters degree from Penn State. Also graduating from Penn State with a Bachelor’s degree are Lara Haluszczak, Marina Johnson, Samuel Leathers, and Shane Stevens. **Many years!**

assignment. You can visit her webpage at <http://csemon.ocmc.org> to see photos taken on her journey and to read more.

ORTHODOX CAMP SEEKS STAFF AND COUNSELORS FOR SUMMER SEASON

JEWELL, NEW YORK – Saint Andrew’s Camp here is seeking talented Orthodox Christians of all ages (18+) for paid staff roles for the 2011 season. Male and female counselors with varying skill sets, including lifeguarding, sports, art or music instruction, and religious education. Positions are for the entire duration of the camping program (July 10-August 6), plus one preparation week before the opening of camp, for a total of 5 weeks. Applications are available for download at standrewscamp.com.