

# THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## 'Tis the Season of Divine Preparation



In November, Archbishop Melchisedek tonsured Michael Stickles (fourth from right) as reader and elevated (now) Protodeacon Alexander Cadman at Holy Trinity. His Eminence also had an opportunity to tour the Chapel of the Holy Spirit's new altar addition.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON is a season marked by a strong theme of divine preparation. All of the major feasts at this time of year mark prologues and preparatory events in the stories of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus Christ. On November 21, the young child Mary enters the Holy Temple, being mystically prepared by the Holy Spirit for her eventual role as Theotokos, the one who gives birth in time to the eternal Word of God. On Christmas Day, Christ is born, to the astonishment of angels and men. But while this is a step of immeasurable magnitude in the divine plan of salvation, it is still but a preparation for Christ's eventual ministry. The Messiah's birth at Christmas cannot be understood apart from the Cross, the Resurrection, the glorification of human nature, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the creation of the Church. Christmas, for all its glory, is still only a prelude.

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

## First Facilities Focus Group Postponed to Theophany Evening

BECAUSE OF A SCHEDULING CONFLICT, the first charrette of the Master Site Plan and Feasibility Study was postponed last month. This meeting, in which the parish's stakeholders identify limitations and map solutions, will now take place the evening of Theophany, Wednesday, January 6, at 7 p.m. in-person and via [holytrinity-oca.org/zoom](http://holytrinity-oca.org/zoom). Providentially, the delay of the focus group will not significantly affect the timing of the project, and will allow us to devote the remainder of the Nativity Fast to pray for and discern God's Will for the future of our facilities. Thank you in advance for participating. ■

## Schedules

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH  
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TELLERS		SERVERS	
December 6	K. Cattell and M. Fiori	All Servers welcome each Sunday.	
December 13	M. Anthony and M. Fedkin		
December 20	K. Cattell and D. McNulty		
December 27	G. Cattell and M. Anthony	<i>Altar Server</i> <i>Co-Captains:</i> <i>J. Cadman and S. Olegnik</i>	
January 3	K. Cattell and M. Fedkin		
January 10	G. Cattell and D. McNulty		

# Join the Saints in Preparing for Emmanuel

Following on the same theme, on January 1, Christ is circumcised in the flesh, showing his intention to keep and fulfill the Law of Moses. On January 6, the Lord is baptized, signaling his transition from private life to public ministry. And the season fully concludes on February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, when Christ is brought as a forty-day-old babe to the Temple in Jerusalem, again signaling his intention to fulfill the Law, as well as foreshadowing his glorious ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem and the heavenly Temple on the fortieth day after his Resurrection.

In all of these events, the hand of God is working; God is making preparation. Yet God is not the only actor at work, nor does he work alone. On each of these high holy days there is also a theme of human preparation as well. There is Anna raising her daughter, weaning her, telling her that she is special, and that God loves her. There is Joachim, preparing to let go of his beloved child in this life, that salvation may come to the human race. There are the magi, laying up provisions for a journey to find the king of heaven. There is Simeon, trusting in God, praying quietly in the Temple, waiting for God to fulfill his promise. There is John, dwelling in the wilderness, preaching to the people about the coming of Christ, executing his charge to “prepare the way for the Lord” (*Mk. 1:3*). Above all, there is Mary, praying, learning Scripture, making her soul a “sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,” that she may be worthy to truly become the Mother of God Most High.

With these many examples in our minds and hearts, the Church invites each of us to enter into this story anew at this time of year, asking God that Christ would be reborn in our hearts by faith. We are called at this time to make preparations, both spiritual and practical. We are called to join with the Theotokos in learning Scripture, in perfecting private prayer and prayer in the heart, and by attending to the services of the Holy Church. We are called to join the Baptist in fasting for

**THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST**

VESPERS/    Thurs., Dec. 24, 9am  
LITURGY:    (*A. Stickles, Prosphora*)

VIGIL:       Thurs., Dec. 24, 6pm  
              (*A.T. Pelikan, Litya*)  
              (*E. Loukachkina, Icon*)

LITURGY:    Wed., Dec. 25, 9am  
              (*A. Stickles, Prosphora*)



**THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD**

R. HOURS:   Tues., Jan. 5, 8am

VESPERS:    Tues., Jan. 5, 6pm  
              (*A.T. Pelikan, Litya*)  
              (*P. Doty, Icon*)

LITURGY:    Wed., Jan. 6, 9am  
              (*A. Stickles, Prosphora*)



**Additional Liturgy:**

DATE/TIME	FOR	ICON
Fri., Jan. 1, 10am	St. Basil	E. George

forty days, forsaking meat and other fine foods, so that we may spiritually partake with him in the revelation of God’s Messiah. We are called to join Simeon in his trusting humility, knowing that if we are faithful, we too will see God’s salvation in this life and in the life to come. We are called to join with the magi, putting aside all false beliefs and offering our whole lives to Christ our king. We are called to join with Joachim and with Anna, calling the Holy Virgin “blessed” at this time and marveling at the miracles God has brought about through her, most especially this Christmas miracle: the coming of Emmanuel, “God with us,” in the flesh.

So, let us resolve, brothers and sisters, to hold high the feast and to hold high the festal season, keeping the love of Christ in our hearts, rededicating ourselves to Him, and looking forward to that blessed day when we shall see Christ, the true son of Mary, “face to face” (*1 Cor. 13:12*). May the joy of this season fill our hearts, now and forever! **Christ is born!** ■

— *Fr. Ignatius*

*many things in the spiritual life, it is best to consult one’s parish priest (or spiritual father) to ask a blessing to refrain from elements of this fast. In the event of an evening liturgy (such as a Presanctified Liturgy during Lent), it is common custom in the OCA to recommend that this total fast last at least six hours before the beginning of the Liturgy. This would also be the same for those who are receiving Communion outside of a liturgical context due to infirmity or some other reason.*

- **Abstinence.** *For those who are married, sexual abstinence is expected from the end of Vespers on the night prior to the Liturgy. For those who are not married, we can leave the sentence at simply “sexual abstinence is expected.” (And if one has fallen into sexual sin, it is very important to come to Confession before seeking to commune again.).*
- **Forgiveness.** *In order to commune, we must have peace in our hearts with one another and (as far as is possible) with the whole world. In the Our Father, Christ teaches us to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” If we are filled with bitter unforgiveness, it is best if we come to Confession before communing again.*

In addition to the above, which should be seen as firm requirements for communicants, I want to make a few suggestions, which are not so firm and definite as those

above, but are nevertheless important considerations for us to think about when we prepare to come to Communion.

- **Vespers.** *The service of Vespers is a perfect way to begin preparing for Holy Communion. It marks off the time beforehand as common and the time afterward as sacred and gives us a definitive starting point for our journey toward the Divine Liturgy. Life before Vespers and life after Vespers should have a different character and quality.*
- **Other Services.** *Anything else that may be offered in between Vespers and the Liturgy, whether Compline, Matins, or the Hours can serve as a helpful preparation for us. Prayer—corporate or private—is an invaluable aid to properly receiving Communion.*
- **Other Abstinenes.** *Following Vespers, it is wise to lay aside things that are worldly or that arouse the passions. Thus, for instance, it is good to abstain from television, movies, video games, novels, and the like. Similarly, it is good to abstain from alcohol on the eve of the Liturgy, and also to try to avoid overeating or any form of gluttony.*
- **Spiritual Reading.** *In place of worldly entertainments, it is often profitable to read the Holy Scriptures or other spiritual writings on the eve of Liturgy. Such writings can certainly help us to still the passions and to focus our heart on God. ■*

## On True Worship

*[Angels and men] alike must worship the one God of gods... To this God we owe our service (“latreia” in Greek) whether in the various sacraments or in ourselves. For we are His temple, collectively and as individuals. For He condescends to dwell in the union of all and in each person. He is as great in the individual as He is in the whole body of His worshippers, for He cannot be increased in bulk or diminished by partition.*

*When we lift up our hearts to Him, our heart is His altar. We propitiate him by our priest His only Begotten Son, we*

*sacrifice blood-stained victims to Him when we fight for truth “as far as the shedding of blood.” We burn the sweetest incense to Him when we are in his sight on fire with devout and holy love. We vow to Him and offer to Him the gifts He has given us, and the gift of ourselves. And we have annual festivals and fixed days appointed and consecrated for the remembrance of His benefits, lest ingratitude and forgetfulness creep in as the years roll by. We offer to Him on the altar of the heart, the sacrifice of humility and praise; and the flame on the altar is the burning fire of charity.*

*To see Him as He can be seen and to cleave to Him, we purify ourselves from*

*every stain of sin and evil desire and we consecrate ourselves in His name. For He Himself is the source of our bliss; He Himself is the goal of all our striving. By our election of Him as our goal—or rather our re-election (for we had lost Him by neglect)... we direct our course toward Him with love so that in reaching Him we may find our rest and attain our happiness because we have achieved our fulfillment in Him. For our good, that final good about which philosophers dispute, is nothing else but to cleave to Him whose spiritual embrace... fills the intellectual soul and makes it fertile with true virtues.*

— Blessed Augustine of Hippo



## ■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

# How to Prepare for Holy Communion

by Fr. Ignatius Hunter

The idea of preparation is a key concept in Christian thought. In many of Jesus’ most familiar parables, such as the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (*Mt. 25:1-13*) or the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (*Lk. 16:19-31*), the Lord urges us to “be on guard” and to spiritually “keep awake” (*Mk. 13:33*), so that when the hour of the judgment comes on us, we may receive a reward instead of punishment. To use another of Jesus’ images, our life should be spent weaving a spiritual “wedding garment” (*Mt. 22:11-12*), so that when the end of the age comes, we may be fit to enter the eternal wedding feast.

The Lord’s instructions for how to weave this “wedding garment” are manifold: love for God and neighbor, generosity toward the poor, acts of mercy, struggle against and victory over the passions, private prayer, fasting, forgiveness of offenses, confession of true doctrine, engagement with the Scriptures, participation in corporate worship, and so forth. But among these many tools of preparedness that the Lord gives us, the sacraments are among the most important. Each sacrament calls for significant preparation beforehand, and each sacrament ideally serves as a preparation for entry into Christ’s eternal kingdom.

Now chief among the sacraments is Holy Communion, which is supposed to be the central act of a Christian’s weekly walk with God. It is a foretaste of the eternal banquet, and it is a personal union with Christ. It is not something to be approached casually, and St. Paul issues intense spiritual warnings to those who “sin willfully” and approach “the blood of the covenant... as a common thing” (*Heb. 10:26,29*), saying, “let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup, for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself” (*1 Cor. 11:28-29*).

Understanding the potential both for great spiritual benefit and great harm that exists in Communion, the Holy Fathers of the Church have passed many traditions on to us for how we should prepare to receive Communion. In what follows, I shall relate elements of their teaching, combined with what I think are some practical tips for preparation.

➤ **Pre-Communion Prayers.** *For anyone but the young child and the invalid, pre-communion prayers are a necessity before we partake. Customs vary significantly across Orthodox jurisdictions about exactly what is to be used as pre-communion prayer material, but the OCA’s standard on the matter can be found in the section “Prayers Before Holy Communion” (pp. 138–158) in the St. Tikhon’s Press book Orthodox Christian Prayers. In OCA practice, it is also common for individuals to pray “The Canon in Preparation for Holy Communion” (found in the same book), either together with the normal pre-communion prayers or at a separate time. Typically, the pre-communion prayers should be prayed either the night before one comes to commune or in the morning before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy.*

➤ **Confession.** *The Sacrament of Confession should be a regular part of a person’s preparation to receive Communion. Pastorally, I would encourage all to partake of this sacrament on a monthly basis. But, failing that, my fallback recommendation would be for all parishioners to partake around four times a year, in line with our custom of having four major fasting seasons. It is very important in preparing for Communion that we have a clean conscience that is free from any serious sins, and Confession is the place to go to be loosed from the bondage of sin.*

➤ **Fasting.** *The custom of the OCA is that we undertake a total fast in preparation for Holy Communion beginning the midnight before we plan to receive. This means no food and no drink of any kind. This fast is of course not something that is expected of young children, nursing mothers, or the infirm, but as with*

## Budget Approved, Officers Elected

During the Annual Meeting held at Holy Trinity, and simulcast to the Chapel of the Holy Spirit and [holytrinity-oca.org/zoom](https://holytrinity-oca.org/zoom), parishioners unanimously approved the 2021 Budget and elected Justin Houser, Brandon Swisher, and Anne Therese Pelikan to the Council positions of President, Vice President, and Grounds Chair, respectively. Although the budget is approximately 10 percent lower than last year because of restructuring, it significantly increases funding to missionary efforts at Penn State and Snyder County, and modestly increases support to all other ministries in preparation for their return post-pandemic.

## St. Nicholas Tree Gift Drive Begins

As with the parish’s other charitable drives during the pandemic, the St. Nicholas “Angel” Tree has been moved online to allow more to participate. To sign up, or learn more, visit [holytrinity-oca.org/angeltree/](https://holytrinity-oca.org/angeltree/) or contact (814) 231-2855. The deadline for dropping off gifts or arranging a contactless pickup through the Parish Office is Monday, December 21.

## Witness the Nativity “2020-Style”

Our Church School students will retell the story of Christ’s birth through word and song in the Parish Hall following the December 20 Liturgy. Because of our current circumstances, this year’s presentation is shortened and modified, but providentially it will allow for greater reflection on the scriptures and participation by all in attendance. Please stay and hear this beautiful story in preparation for our Lord’s Nativity!

## Typika Services Benefit Many

Paul Hovel at St. Andrew Church in Delta, Colorado, writes: “Thank you for continuing to make current Typika services available online. Our family made use of your web resource often this past spring when we were not able to attend Divine Liturgy, and now as virus cases are climbing again in Colorado, we are using it again. Your resource page is also helpful in being able to observe Feast days that fall on week-days when I must work. Thank you and God Bless you.” Paul is not alone: last month, the Typika services were downloaded more than 700 times from [holytrinity-oca.org](https://holytrinity-oca.org).

## ■ NEWS & NOTES

## In Memoriam: His Eminence Archbishop David (1952-2020)

ANCHORAGE—The Most Reverend David (Mahaffey), Archbishop of Sitka and Alaska, fell asleep in the Lord last month after losing a battle to cancer. He was the ruling hierarch here from 2014 until his repose. His Eminence was an Altoona native and converted to Orthodoxy when he was 23, faithfully serving the Church ever since. He is survived by four children and several grandchildren. Memory eternal, Vlado! ■

## For the Record

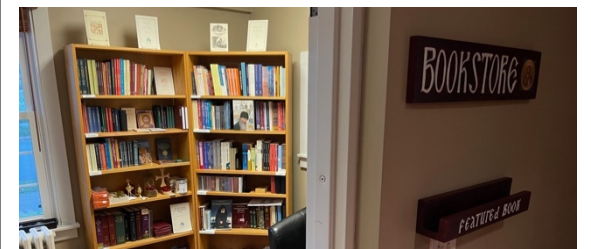
### BIRTH

➤ **Ian George Gillespie**, son of Jason and Katherine (Radomsky) Gillespie, grandson of Mark and Leslyn Radomsky, born November 4, weighing 6 lbs. and measuring 17½ inches long. **Many years!**

### YOUR GENEROSITY

➤ **The Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) at Penn State** donated \$500 (twenty-five \$20 gift cards) to the university’s Annual Thanksgiving Drive, which helped more than 500 families this year. In addition, as part of its annual tithe, the chapter also gave \$388.51 in matching funds to the National OCF.

➤ In addition to hundreds of food items donated, the **Matthew 25 Thanksgiving Drive** raised \$1,766 to provide full meals (including turkeys) and forty \$25 gift cards for 23 families (100 people). **Thank you.**



## A New Home for the Bookstore

On November 14, a crew of parishioners moved the Holy Trinity Bookstore to its new location in Trinity House. New display shelves and cases will be added before it officially opens to the public with daily hours of operation. Be sure to stop by, grab a cup of coffee, and enjoy the brighter, more inviting space! ■

# 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 Divine Liturgy, 10am <b>LIVE</b> <i>(Hours, 9:40am) or Typika @ Home</i>	30 <b>Apostle Andrew the First-Called</b>	December 1	2 Confessions, 4pm-6pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	3 Orthodox Christian Fellowship at Penn State: Virtual Christmas Party, 7pm via Zoom†	4	5 Great Vespers with <i>Evlogia</i> (Gifts) for the Children, 6pm <b>LIVE</b> Confessions, following
6 <b>St. Nicholas the Wonderworker</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <b>LIVE</b> <i>(Hours, 9:40am) or Typika @ Home</i>  MATTHEW 25 ST. NICHOLAS (ANGEL) TREE DRIVE BEGINS.	7	8	9 <b>Conception of the Theotokos</b> Confessions, 4pm-6pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm @ Parish Hall & via Zoom†	10	11	12 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm <b>LIVE</b> Confessions, following
13 <b>Sunday of the Forefathers of Christ St. Herman of Alaska</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <b>LIVE</b> <i>(Hours, 9:40am) or Typika @ Home</i>	14	15	16 Confessions, 4pm-6pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	17	18	19 Altar Society Decorating for Nativity, 4pm Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm <b>LIVE</b> Confessions, following
20 <b>Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <b>LIVE</b> <i>(Hours, 9:40am) or Typika @ Home</i> Nativity Narrative and Caroling, following @ Parish Hall Vespers, 6pm	21 MATTHEW 25 ST. NICHOLAS (ANGEL) TREE DRIVE CONCLUDES. Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	22 Confessions, 4pm-6pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	23 Confessions, 4pm-6pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	24 <b>Eve of the Nativity</b> Vespers, 6pm Nativity Vigil: Great Compline, Litya, and Matins, 6pm <b>LIVE</b>	25 <b>NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR</b> Divine Liturgy, 9am <i>(Hours 8:40am)</i> <b>LIVE</b>	26 <b>Synaxis of the Theotokos</b> Great Vespers, 6pm <b>LIVE</b> Confessions, following
27 <b>Sunday After the Nativity of Christ Protomartyr Archdeacon Stephen</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <b>LIVE</b> <i>(Hours, 9:40am) or Typika @ Home</i>	28	29	30 Vespers, 6pm	31 Great Vespers, 6pm	January 1, 2021 <b>Circumcision of our Lord St. Basil the Great</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours 9:35am)</i>	2 Great Vespers, 6pm <b>LIVE</b>
3 <b>Sunday Before the Theophany</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <b>LIVE</b> <i>(Hours, 9:40am) or Typika @ Home</i>	4	5 <b>Eve of the Theophany</b> Royal Hours, 8am Great Vespers/Litya/ Blessing of Water, 6pm	6 <b>THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR</b> Baptism of Karen Rath, 8am Divine Liturgy, following Great Vespers, 6pm K&W Facilities Focus Group @ Nave & via Zoom†	7	8	9 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm <b>LIVE</b> Confessions, following

# Chapel Calendar

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

Tuesday 1 Choir Rehearsal, 6pm	Thursday 24 <b>Eve of the Nativity</b> Vigil of the Nativity, 6pm
Saturday 5 Great Vespers with Confessions, 6pm	Friday 25 <b>NATIVITY OF OUR LORD</b> Nativity Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours 9:40am)</i>
Sunday 6 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> † Catechesis, 1:30pm via Zoom†	Saturday 26 <b>Synaxis of the Theotokos</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Great Vespers, 6pm
Tuesday 8 Choir Rehearsal, 6pm	Sunday 27 <b>Sunday After the Nativity</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> † Catechesis, 1:30pm via Zoom†
Saturday 12 Great Vespers with Confessions, 6pm	Monday 28 “Hats and Blankets for Babies” Outreach, 6:30pm
Sunday 13 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> † Catechesis, 1:30pm via Zoom†	Tuesday 29 Choir Rehearsal, 6pm
Tuesday 15 Choir Rehearsal, 6pm	Thursday 31 Great Vespers, 6pm
Saturday 19 Nativity Clean-up, 10am Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	Friday, Jan. 1, 2021 <b>St. Basil the Great</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Moleben for Civil New Year, follows
Sunday 20 <b>Sunday Before Nativity</b> Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> † Catechesis, 1:30pm via Zoom†	

† to join remotely, visit [holyltrinity-oca.org/zoom](https://holyltrinity-oca.org/zoom).

**LIVE** this service will be livestreamed on YouTube (visit [holyltrinity-oca.org/YouTube](https://holyltrinity-oca.org/YouTube)).

December 2020