

St. Nicholas Orthodox Times

[Http://www.stnicholas-oca.org](http://www.stnicholas-oca.org)

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Summer 2009

Editor's Corner

This year has been a busy time at our Parish. We have had many events and celebrations, which we have enjoyed and look forward to. We are continually looking at ways to improve our buildings and grounds at St. Nicholas. Keeping that in mind, improvement requires dedication, planning, hard work and finances. Over the next couple of months, you will see and hear about plans for modernizing our facilities. Your input and suggestions are important.

One of the ways we can generate funds to help with our renovation project is our **Annual Parish Picnic**. This year it will be held on **September 20, 2009, at the Rotary Pavilion, Clever Recreation Park, Clever Road in Robinson Township**. As in the past, Divine Liturgy will take place at the pavilion at 10 a.m. and the picnic will follow. Details of the picnic are now being worked on. Sign-up sheets will be posted in the Church Hall. We need your help (time and donations) to make this picnic a huge success!

Rector's Report by Fr. Thomas Soroka

As we celebrate the consecration of our new bishop for the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek, it is a good time to reflect on the purpose and structure of our Church.

As Orthodox Christians, we are firmly convinced that our faith, revealed to the world by our Lord, Jesus Christ, is not found in earthly organizations and structures. The world has many such social groups which can, in a certain way, satisfy our need for human interaction and relationships. However, to this end, the Church is not a human organization. The Church is life as it was created to be by God, in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is not a human organization; it is the divine life of God among His people.

However, the Church also, from the very earliest of times, has had organization. It has structures and

officers and authorities and members, all of whom work harmoniously together as witnesses to the revelation of the eternal mystery of the redemption of all things in Christ. Jesus chose 12 men in whom He entrusted this revelation and power, and they, in turn, preached this gospel to the ends of the earth, establishing communities everywhere they went. Those communities also had structures, since the apostles set aside certain men (and in the case of the office of deacon, also some women) to lead these communities. The New Testament epistles are replete with references to bishops, presbyters, and deacons, who were both leaders and servants to their flocks. Their task was, and still is today, to teach, preach, heal, exhort, forgive, and manifest the Kingdom of God within their local communities.

Since we have a new bishop, let us keep in mind that the bishop is not simply some distant administrator that comes for a visit to his local parish on a particular Sunday, never to be heard from again. Rather, the bishop is the one who unifies all of us. Now to be sure, the bishop is indeed the overseer, since the word in Greek for bishop, episcopos, when it is broken down literally means over (epi) and see (scopos). But even more so, he is the one who is charged with maintaining the purity of our faith, teaching us pure doctrine from an unpolluted well. He is the one who is the source of our integrity, our legitimacy, as Orthodox Christians. He is our unique and tangible connection to Christ's Apostles. On the altar lays a particular piece of cloth called the antimins which essentially is our permission to function as a Church. Without it, we cannot celebrate the Divine Liturgy. He is the one who assigns a priest to a parish, and that priest becomes the bishop's representative, standing at the head of the community, leading her in the absence of the bishop. The bishop is the one who provides the Holy Chrism to us, and through this Chrism, the gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon everyone who is baptized and calls on the name of the Lord.

Besides the scriptures, much of our understanding about the office of bishop comes from writings that date from about the same time as the New Testament, especially from St Ignatius of Antioch,

who was a disciple of St John the Theologian. While St Ignatius has been maligned by some, even lately by one or two lone voices in the Orthodox Church (!) as promoting a so-called monarchical episcopacy (where the bishop seemingly functioned within the Church with king-like power), this is a completely misleading, if not a downright Protestant, understanding of St Ignatius and of the Church itself. St Ignatius is not developing a new post-New Testament episcopacy, he is teaching it as it was entrusted to him by the apostles. He wrote this about the structure of the Church:

"See that you all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as you would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." (St Ignatius to Smyrna, 8).

So, let us gather around our new bishop, His Grace, Melchisedek. He is truly our Father in Christ and the head of this archdiocese. He is our shepherd, the one who leads and corrects. The bishop, who brings Christ to us, brings us new hope for a new day and a renewed sense of mission in the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh. In our new bishop, we have an opportunity to once again be united in oneness of mind, faith, and purpose. Many years to His Grace, Bishop Melchisedek!

President's Report by Nathan Graff

In only about my fifth year as a member of St Nicholas and fourth year on Parish Council, I must say, I've seen a lot. I've met a lot of great people. I've also said good-bye to a lot of great people too; whether they moved away or departed to the Lord. Through all of this, one thing has always remained: a strong, loving St Nicholas community. All of us want to see this community keep its loving character and grow stronger week by week, year by year.

Although we all want to continue to be part of a growing, loving church community, like most things, this requires work. Beginning in 2002, in the midst

of a cross-road, St Nicholas made a decision to stay at its current location instead of move. We started buying up property (e.g., the parking lot) around the premises. Then, in 2007-2008, the church's sorely needed dome restoration project began and was completed. This project invested significant funds into the building, the result of which is a beautiful exterior to our church. In late 2007, Parish Council made an appeal to all members to consider what was important to them about updating the remainder of the building and facilities. Many people responded by writing down their wants and needs and submitted these to the Parish Council. After collecting and evaluating all of these, in 2008, Council began working with an architectural firm that came highly recommended by a number of our parishioners. Some initial conceptual designs were made by the firm and discussed amongst Council. Some of the key features of the renovation concepts included restrooms in the church, internal stairs, a remodeled kitchen, and an elevator/lift. This year, work has continued on this project. A Renovation Committee open to any and all parishioners interested (notification made in bulletins and in the church hall posting) was formed early in the year and will have met twice at the issuance of this Newsletter. Significant progress in the conceptual design is expected this year, with the hopes of proposing a concept or two to the Parish before the year's end.

The church has been making progress in other ways and will continue to make such progress. The old "Candy Store" (building next to the rectory) was purchased based on a vote made at the Annual Parish Meeting last January. Also, Parish Council is looking to pave the parking lot and fix the retaining wall in the back of the church. We realize some work needs to be done to improve the front of the church (e.g., the stairs) and will perform maintenance as necessary, but most of the conceptual designs being worked on involve renovating the front side of the church. Don't worry, we won't forget air-conditioning either.

Some may ask, "I thought the important thing was to have a strong, loving community. What does all this construction work have to do with that? Shouldn't we be focusing on personal relationships, not the church building?" To this, Christ may have the best response "These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." (Matthew

23:23) Or, "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? (Luke 11:11). The point here is that, there is a desire from many in the Parish to have modern-day church building facilities. Indeed, had the church been constructed in the early 1800's and everyone taken a negative attitude to updating, we would be using outhouses instead of restrooms and not even have electricity yet! The first community who constructed the church building equipped it with the best available at the time, and what this community wants to do is in the same spirit. More importantly, it is the loving thing to do to give to those around you what they need. Equipping our facilities with bathrooms interior to the church means our visitors don't have to be sent out into the cold or rain to find the bathrooms we sometimes forget to unlock; or, having interior steps means that on snowy or icy days, people are safer. Having an elevator means those who struggle with stairs or are physically unable to use them don't have to hurt themselves getting into our church. I could go on, but the point is that we want to keep our parishioners safe, we want to be hospitable to visitors, and we don't just want to show people we love them by talking to them nicely. We want to show them we love them by our actions too.

The majority of parishioners understand the importance of the work described above, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), and that there is no better place to give than to the Church. We do have a loving community who are committed to caring for one another: this is the reason I came to St Nicholas. What has really happened is that we have kind of let things slip just a little bit year after year, making necessary minor updates, but never tackling any of the major ones. Although we have some funds saved away from the past, we will definitely need to raise funds for the projects/renovation we will want to work on. Aside from considering how you will support the church financially in the future, I also ask that everyone consider where else you might be able to contribute. Maybe it is as simple as sparing some time to build a mutual supportive friendship at the church, or maybe you can help with the Church School, maintenance, or advertising. Also, please considering signing up for one of the Committees and letting the chair know that you're interested in helping out. Every day is a new opportunity to do something more, something different. Let these summer days remind us that each day can be

brighter than the next depending on how we chose to live them.

In the love of Christ,
Nathan Graff

R Club Report by Charles A. Wasilko, Chapter President

A few Sundays ago, the Pittsburgh District of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America enjoyed a dinner cruise outing on the Gateway Clipper Fleet. We were blessed with perfect weather, good food and great fellowship as we sailed our three rivers in Pittsburgh. The proceeds of the event benefited the FOCA Seminarian Support Program, which is a national FOCA program. The guest of honor was Archimandrite Melchisedek, the newly consecrated Bishop of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. Everyone had a good time and lasting good memories.

The McKees Rocks R Club also wishes to thank everyone that supported our recent Easter candy sale. Doris Wasilko again chaired the sale which is the club's only fund raising event for the year.

The National FOCA convention will be held next year right here in Pittsburgh, and various members of our club have been attending pre-convention planning meetings. Charles Wasilko will chair the ticket sales, Doris Wasilko is chairing the Sunday Dance, and Mat. Nancy Mell will be co-chairing the Thursday Open House along with Lorrie Nescott of Allison Park. This year's convention, by the way, is going to be held in Hartford, Connecticut, over Labor Day weekend.

The Pittsburgh District FOCA will hold its summer picnic/meeting this coming July 12 at Weirton.

Choir Report by Doris Wasilko, Choir Director

Members of the St. Nicholas choir held a "going away" party for one of its faithful members, Helene Krenitsky, on Saturday, June 20th. Helene will be leaving St. Nicholas parish and will be entering the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City at the end of July. The party was graciously hosted by fellow choir member, Helen

Billak Henry, at her beautiful home. Besides the use of her home, the choir also wishes to thank Helen for the preparation of the delicious meal!

The choir took up a collection and presented a monetary donation of \$750 to the Monastery in Helene's name.

Throughout the evening, voices were raised in song - along with glasses raised in toasts. Helene was a very dedicated member of the choir and parish for the last 4 years. She was a tremendous asset to our church community and she will be greatly missed.

We are all certain that Helene will become a wonderful nun and a welcome addition to the Monastery of the Transfiguration. We at St. Nicholas wish her every success!

Sisterhood News By Melissa Westling, Sisterhood President

As usual, the first half of any given year is always exciting for our Sisterhood. We have had so many wonderful events so far and are looking forward to the fall and winter schedule. I offer humble thanks to all of those that have sponsored a coffee hour (or two) this year. The list of names would be too long to mention, but we are so appreciative of your time and efforts. We believe that our Coffee Hour is an integral part of fellowship following Liturgy. A special "thank you" to Tom Robes and the entire Brotherhood on their generous donation to the Sisterhood from the Mother's Day Luncheon collection!

In January, election of officers was held. The office of President and Treasurer were retained by Melissa Westling and Mat. Nancy Mell, respectively. Although we have no active Vice/Co-President or Secretary, our organization seems to be running smoothly. Committee Chairpersons are Marsha Wasilko for Kitchen Up-Keep, Leslie Wokutch for Charity Work, Helen Billak-Henry and her daughter, Sasha for Grounds Beautification, Melissa Graff for Coffee Hour & Wednesday Evening Lenten Dinner Sign-Ups and Mat. Nancy Mell for Church Linens.

Our Annual Blini Dinner was held on Sunday, March 1st. Marina Petrov hosted the event with

much praise. A masquerade themed room arranged by Marsha Wasilko provided a festive atmosphere. Instead of selling tickets in advance, we collected "at the door", \$5.00 for adults and \$2.00 for children under 12. Many thanks to those who prepared such delicious homemade dishes and desserts and to those who donated their time as well.

As with many of our Lenten seasons, we celebrated "back-to-back" events! On Saturday April 4th, we were fortunate enough to have the Bishop visit us during Vespers. Mat. Joni Soroka and Lois Fuller planned a light dinner reception including delicious homemade soups, salad and bread, while Marsha Wasilko made sure our hall looked inviting. Then, on Sunday, April 5th, the Sisterhood sponsored the Mission Service Dinner. A simple meal was prepared and served that Sunday after the Vesper Service. Soups, salads and bread provided everyone with enough to eat while enjoying fellowship with visitors and guests!

The Lazarus Saturday Breakfast, held on Saturday, April 11th, brought together a happy group that enjoyed a new recipe for French toast along with other morning favorites. Almost all of the parishioners then stayed awhile longer to prepare the pussy willow branches and palms for Liturgy the next day, as the Church School children enjoyed the day's lessons. Needless to say, everyone had a great time!

To everyone's great joy, we celebrated Helen Cobb's 101st Birthday on Sunday, April 12th. We kept the event simple this year, due the proximity of Pascha. Cake, balloons and an exuberant round of "Happy Birthday" gave our dear Helen a wonderful surprise.

Our Father's Day Luncheon honored the many devoted family men in our parish. A "Pot Luck Picnic" provided more than enough for all. The red, white and blue theme gave a great look to the hall. Many thanks to all the ladies for pitching in on short notice and to Marsha Wasilko and Michelle Bittner for the festive décor!

Our annual Bake Sale will be announced soon as the original date was postponed. The Sisterhood also looks forward to the Annual Picnic on September 20th and helping in any way we can!

I apologize to anyone whose name I have failed to mention. I am truly privileged to be your President and so grateful for the great guidance I have been given. MY MOST SINCERE THANKS TO ALL OF YOU!!!

Young Adult Group – By Melissa Graff

The demographics of the Young Adult Group are changing with many couples adding new additions to their families. This has made it more of a challenge to solidify events. The group still joined together on two occasions. One for a pre-Lenten dinner and a Bright Week cook out. The latter was held at St. George Antiochian Church in Oakland with Orthodox Christians from several different churches. It was a fantastic way to continue the Paschal celebration.

As the year continues, the Young Adult Group is looking to complete a service project and possibly some family oriented activities. All suggestions are welcome.

Membership Report by Sandi Tirpak

Thanks to Yuri Chtchourakov for all the time he has given us with his trusty camera. And a big thank you to all who graciously participated. We should have our new Church Directory shortly. A draft (thanks to Kristie Mertz) will be available for address corrections, additions, email addresses, etc.

Articles about our church and parish life are periodically placed in the Suburban Gazette and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Keep your eye out for them.

St. Nick's Corner - By Marsha Wasilko, Co-Manager

T-shirt weather is here once again and St. Nick's Corner is the place to purchase your St. Nicholas Church tee. The shirts are available in turquoise, forest green and dark red in adult sizes small, medium, large, X large, XX large and XXX large. Sample shirts are on display at St. Nick's Corner. Get yours today!

We also have a nice selection of books in our showcase. We recently received an order of

various titles including prayer books and books for children and teens. You might consider purchasing a book and donating it to our parish library.

St. Nick's Corner offers a wide variety of items such as icons, key chains, bookmarks, bumper stickers, jewelry items, music tapes/CD's, car visor clips, kitchen hand towels, greeting cards, and more! Thank you to Helen Billak Henry who donated a lovely matroshka doll to our inventory.

Stop by our showcase and check out the latest merchandise. Please see Michelle Bittner or Marsha Wasilko for assistance.

Please Remember Our Shut-Ins

Mr. John Chromchak
Coraopolis Towers, Apt. #608
951 First Avenue
Coraopolis, PA 15108

Ms. Jennie Levitske
2803 Cathy Street
Library, PA 15129

Mrs. Olga Novak
1212 Termon Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Mrs. Mary Paoletti
22 Grant Avenue
Bellevue, PA 15202

Mrs. Elena Pozdniakow
Lexington Court, Apt #49
Imperial, PA 15126

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Puskar
813 Sixth Avenue
Coraopolis, PA 15108

Mrs. Mary Skobil
Coraopolis Towers, Apt. 410
951 First Avenue
Coraopolis, PA 15108

Mrs. Ann Solesha
9350 Babcock Blvd., Apt. 112
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Mr. Michael Soroka

221 Westminster Drive
Coraopolis, PA 15108

A card or a note will brighten up their day! Please remember them in your prayers.

No Experience Necessary!

Get your delicious hoagies and wraps here! Contact Michelle Bittner at 412 771-0176. Hoagie and wraps make a great quick dinner! We can always use extra orders and help on the assembly line!

Transitions

This section will be dedicated to announcing birthdays, wedding news, anniversaries, baptisms, funerals, and new members. If we've overlooked anyone, we apologize. Please let us know and we'll include you in the next issue.

Vaughn Joshua Hollowood was born on December 28, 2008. Proud parents are Julianne and Jeff Hollowood. Congratulations to the Hollowood and Yewisiak families!

On April 21, Adelaide Eckert was born to proud parents, Nadia and Chris Eckert. Adelaide was 7 lbs 3 oz Congratulations to Nadia, Chris and brother Brody!

John and Carol Kowalcheck have become proud grandparents recently. Adam Keith Kowalcheck was born on June 25 at 9:36 a.m. He weighed in at 6 lbs and 10 oz and was 20 ½ inches long. The proud grandparents reported, "He has a full head of black hair and the Kowalcheck crooked little fingers!" Adam is the son of Nora and Dan Kowalcheck. Congratulations to the Kowalcheck family!

April 18, 2009, marked the Christmation of Marlene Ramsey. May God grant her many years!

April 25, 2008, Mary Hughes and Frank Kutnansky were united in Holy Matrimony in our church. Congratulations and best wishes on their new life together!

A long-time member of our church community, Dorothy Zyroll fell asleep in the Lord on July 9, 2009. Memory eternal! Our condolences go out to the Zyroll and Bevington families!

We would like to wish everyone (children and adults) who celebrate birthdays in July, August and September happy birthday and may God grant you many years:

Stephen Pituch	July 3
Mary Sherba	July 5
Marina Petrov	July 9
Carol Kowalcheck	July 18
John Kowalcheck	July 20
Alan Tooch	July 21
Nicholas Yurkowski	July 24
Rhonda Verelst	July 28
Matushka Joni	July 29
Rachel Kowalcheck	August 1
Nancy Pravlochak	August 15
Tatiana Chtchourakov	August 18
Christoph Mertz	August 22
Natalie Soroka	August 22
Roman Petrov	August 23
Matthew Yurkowski	August 29
Igor Jourin	September 3
Olga Noskov	September 3
Daniel Kowalcheck	September 5
Annaliese Mertz	September 10
Mia Pravlochak	September 11
John Pravlochak	September 17
Paul Braham	September 19
Garnette Kerchum	September 22
Alexander Noskov	September 27

We have quite a number of anniversaries to report:

John & Melissa Westling	July 2
Vladimir & Marina Petrov	July 29
Christoph & Kristie Mertz	August 2
John & Valentina Barsom	August 12
Paul & Helen Henry	August 17
Peter & Garnette Kerchum	August 18
Olga & Andrew Kasnot	August 30
Nathan & Melissa Graff	September 4
John & Rhonda Pravlochak	September 8

May God continue to bless them with health, wealth and happy memories!

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church
Rev. Thomas Soroka, Rector
Rev. Deacon Joseph Mell
Ms. Doris M. Wasilko, Choir Director
Mrs. Michelle Bittner, Editor

2009 Church Council

Nathan Graff President
John Kowalcheck Vice President
Charles A. Wasilko Treasurer
Nick Kowalcheck Financial Secretary
Michelle Bittner Recording Secretary

Council Members

Paul Fuller
Steve Meno
Sandi Tirpak
Donya Yewisiak

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Schedule of Summer Services

Divine Liturgy

Sunday Morning 9:30 a.m.

Confessions Heard

Sunday Morning 8:45 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Great Vespers and Holy Days

Saturday Evenings

Confessions 4:30 pm.

Great Vespers – Saturdays - 5:00 p.m.

Daily Vespers Wednesday 6:30 p.m.**

Bible Study Wednesday 7 p.m.

Divine Liturgy during the week – 9:30 a.m/6 p.m.

Great Vespers during the week 7 p.m.

**check the website calendar at www.stnicholas-oca.org and weekly bulletins for exact dates.