

**ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST 46<sup>TH</sup> DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY  
OCTOBER 1-3, 2007  
CLEVELAND , OHIO**

**KANSAS CITY  
VERY REVEREND TIMOTHY SAWCHAK – DEAN**

**Clergy and Parish changes**

- St. Michael the Archangel Church and Christ the Good Shepherd Mission in St. Louis, MO were merged effective January 28, 2007. The combined community is known as St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church and Fr. Christopher Phillips is the rector.
- Fr. Paul Gassios was released from duties as the Acting Rector of Archangel Michael Church in St. Louis and the Nativity of the Virgin Church in Desloge, MO effective January 1, 2007 and transferred to the Omophorion of Archbishop Kyrill of the Bulgarian Diocese of Toledo.
- Fr. Oliver Herbel was released from his responsibilities at the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church in Madison, IL on June 6 and granted “on loan” status to serve under the omophorion of Bishop Mark of Toledo at the Antiochian Mission in Fargo, ND. He is canonically attached to Christ the Savior Church in Chicago.

**Parish Highlights**

***St. Raphael of Brooklyn Mission—Quincy, Illinois***

*Priest Thaddeus Nielsen*

His Eminence served Divine Liturgy here for his first time on 4 November 2006 and 35 persons joined him in worship of the Holy Trinity. The first Holy Baptism and Chrismation in the Mission took place in January 2007, on the day after we walked the six blocks to the Mississippi River for the Great Blessing of Waters. On a typical Sunday we will see nine persons at Great Vespers and twenty persons at Divine Liturgy, which is usually followed by a discussion of some topic of interest and coffee fellowship.

We sent a Mission Team to the Hogar Rafael Ayau Orthodox orphanage in Guatemala City, Guatemala for a week in February 2007 and some of our members held a fund-raiser for that orphanage in June. Every month we support the Luisi family, OCMC missionaries to Albania. Some of our members made, gathered, and shipped clothing to Warm The Children, an Orthodox group that sends clothing to orphanages in Eastern European countries.

One of our families recently began serving as our representative to the St. Louis area pan-Orthodox IOCC Committee. Our members participated in our county Right-to-Life march and contributed to that local organization. We are the only Orthodox community in more than 100 miles and we ministered to an Orthodox woman who moved to our city for the last months of her earthly life.

Our men's group met monthly for fellowship and a book study. Our women's group started a small gift shop and bookstore.

Our annual budget is approximately \$42,000. We rent a store-front in the downtown area of this old river town. We are grateful for the \$950 monthly Mission grant we receive from the Diocese; the rest of our income is received from offerings of members and friends and a rummage sale. The priest-in-charge and matushka both work part-time “secular” jobs.

We have two serious inquirers at the present time. Our major obstacle to growth is that the Orthodox Church is little known in our area, so we will consider a small advertising campaign for parts of the forthcoming year. We upgraded our website ([www.orthodoxquincy.org](http://www.orthodoxquincy.org)) this past year.

Please remember us in your prayers and visit us when you travel this way.

### ***St. John of Kronstadt Church—Lincoln, Nebraska***

*Priest James Dank*

Attendance: Great Vespers - The average attendance at Great vespers is around twenty. Matins on Sunday morning is well attended. Our average attendance on Sunday Liturgy is sixty to seventy. There is a core group of parishioners who attend on Sunday, around fifty, but each week it varies with those who live out of town.

Other Services held: We have some kind of service every day. Vespers on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Tuesday and Thursday we have Matins.

Visitors: We have a steady stream of visitors at St. John’s. All are greeted by our greeter also by me before the liturgy begins. All receive a call from me and few a note.

Growth Goals: Every day I spend time at the altar praying for each member and their intentions, for all new contacts and for all who have been with us and shall be with us. I believe each person who comes through our doors God has sent to us, not only for the salvation of their souls but for the salvation of our souls as well. Our parish has fifty-six families, and over one hundred and twenty souls. Our goals at this point are to find a new church building or land that we may build. Most of our growth in the last four months has come from the immigrant population. We have had an influx of many Russians and a few Ethiopians.

Outreach: We have a new men’s group which we call the Father Arseny Society. This group is open to men of other denominations that are seeking to deepen their life in Christ. We have seven or eight who come regularly. Several of the men from other churches are all very interested in Orthodoxy.

Our bookstore coffeehouse is still a main outreach for our church. We also had a very successful series of Lenten lectures. Four of the lectures were given by men in our parish. At every lecture it was standing room only.

We have a OCF group on the UNL campus. This group meets on Monday nights after vespers. Nine people attend.

We have a food net program every Saturday. We feed fifty to sixty five family’s each week. It is staffed by members of the parish and the Fr. Arseny Society.

As previously mentioned, our parish has almost outgrown the present building. Our average attendance on Sunday is sixty-five to seventy. This is a good problem to have. We have made a little more room by removing one reader’s stand and a few other things around. But eventually our worship place will be too small. We are also out growing our parish hall. We need space for children’s Sunday school, choir practice, our library, more

parking, etc.

All our talents and God given gifts will be needed over the next year or two to meet these challenges. God gives us the grace and through His grace we must find the means to accomplish His work for the building up of His Holy Church.

***Archanges Michael & Gabriel Mission, Omaha, Nebraska***

*Priest James Dank*

Archangel's Michael and Gabriel Mission: The Mission is going well. Fr. Stephen Walenski, a retired Antiochian priest, is serving there on Sundays under my direction. He has done a marvelous job with them. I get up to visit as much as I can, and also attend their parish council meetings. Please pray for their success.

***Theotokos "Unexpected Joy" Mission—Ash Grove, Missouri***

*Priest Moses Berry*

This year to date has been filled with blessings. We now have a paved parking lot and have commissioned ten new icons for the sanctuary, which we will install, we hope, in October. The church hall is now complete, with a new paint job, finished kitchen area, and lovely watercolors of the saints on the walls.

In June, we enjoyed the first visit from our Dean, and on August 10-11, had our first visit from Archbishop JOB to our new church building. We hosted St. Thomas the Apostle parish for Divine Liturgy during this visit, and packed the church hall with around 65 people. On this weekend, we also celebrated the 80th birthday of one of our members, and will plant a tree in the churchyard, in his honor.

The parish established a website this year, with basic information. We plan to post as many photos as possible, as these are very effective on the internet.

Fr. Moses continues to be in demand as a speaker at various events around the country. Today, for example, he's going to St. Louis to speak at a Greek Orthodox church. He always balances the importance of these engagements against the needs of the parish, as we rarely have a priest able to visit and substitute for him in his absence. For this reason, he tries only to be away on week days.

Regarding membership, we lost a family to a move this past year, but have a new catechumen. Many of our folks have to travel long distances (at least an hour's drive) to get here, so their attendance may be limited to once or twice a month. Membership is basically holding steady; attendance at Sunday Divine Liturgies remains around 30 adults and children. There are around 45 -50 people (maybe more) who consider Unexpected Joy "their church," although they may come rarely and do not contribute materially to the parish.

We look forward to another year in the Lord's service.

***Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church—Madison, Illinois***  
*Archpriest Thomas Succarotte, Priest Michael Kuzara*

***Archangel Michael Church—St. Louis, Missouri***  
*Priest Christopher Phillips*

As of January 7, 2007 I began serving at St. Michael Archangel Church and ceased service at Christ the Good Shepherd. This merger came about out of necessity not by choice with the Good Shepherd folks having to give up the most for this to happen. Any time something like this happens it requires people to change and is more difficult the older we are. Yet change can be a good thing, a good medicine for all involved. Even though Good Shepherd was all converts and St. Michael's cradle Orthodox I do believe the merger can work but will take a good amount of time to accomplish.

I have buried one parishioner and one has moved out of state to live with her daughter. There are 25 adult members and five children, with four of the adult members not being able to climb the steps to the church anymore. My prayer is for a chair lift in the future. Selling the rectory will take a while to actualize because it needs some updating to make the property presentable. After this happens we will place the Good Shepherd property on the market which is presently bringing income into the church from three apartments and two storefronts.

As of July 28<sup>th</sup> we took some steps toward setting up a bookstore in the basement corner at the bottom of the steps. We will be applying for a grant to stock this endeavor but this will not actualize until mid 2008.

We only have five children yet we have made attempts for Bible School yet not very successful as of yet. Although my wife Irene taught at a week long pan-Orthodox Bible camp which is well-represented by the surrounding orthodox churches.

In terms of building the church we are at the remedial stages. I serve weekly vespers and Divine Liturgy and for feast days I serve a vesperal liturgy since I have a full time job. The Divine Liturgy is the only service that is well attended.

***Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church—Desloge, Missouri***

***Holy Trinity Church--Overland Park, Kansas***

*Priest Timothy Sawchak, Priest Christopher Rowe, Priest Michael Medis*

Work continues on the interior of the Temple in preparation for the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the parish and the Consecration of the Altar on October 5-7, 2007. The *Pantokrator* icon will be installed at the end of August, along with an icon of Christ blessing the children in the Narthex. The new icon screen and altar table will be completed prior to the Consecration in October. This icon of Christ blessing the children is in memory of Fr.

John Platko. Fr. Michael Medis is serving the Bulgarian OCA parish of St. Sophia in Lawrence, KS 4 times a month. Church School will begin in September with an enrollment of approximately 70 children. Fr. Christopher Rowe has established a Youth Group in the parish for children 6<sup>th</sup> grade through High School. The parish is active each year in our Pan-Orthodox Youth Camp (EOYC) with over 60 children and counselors participating from Holy Trinity this year.

***St. Thomas Church--Springfield, Missouri***

*Priest Andrew Moore*

***St. James the Brother of the Lord Mission—North Kansas City, Missouri***

*Archpriest Gregory Dye*

St. James, Brother of The Lord, Mission Parish held a general parish meeting January 7th, 2007 for the election of officers for the Parish Council. The meeting was chaired by Fr. Dye and attended by 90% of the Parish membership.

Elected officers: Dee Sullivan, President  
David Johnston, Vice President  
Tom Fenn, Secretary  
Sheryl Kovack, Treasurer

The Parish Council has regular monthly meetings on the first Sunday of each month after Liturgy. We have in the past few months been working on and establishing procedures necessary for appropriate Parish management.

Our Treasurer, Sheryl Kovack, has worked very hard setting up the accounting structure and presents very appropriate Treasurer's Reports each month at Parish Council meetings. We are in the process of working on a "tithing system" that we plan to put into place for 2008. In the past, parishioners simply "gave according to their abilities" each Sunday. Most are very generous; however, we all recognize the need for more planning for a budget for the Parish. We have a Building Fund established and several parishioners are planning a "Building Fund Kick-off Party" for September.

Our Secretary, Tom Fenn, keeps the Parish Council Meeting Minutes and prepares the weekly bulletins, Parish Member Directory and other correspondence.

Our Committee Chairs are as follows:

Missions: Michael Swoyer  
Long Range Planning: David Johnston  
Building and Grounds: Steve Babish  
Education: Kathy Henry  
Stewardship: Cathy O'Meara  
Communication: Tom Fenn  
Special Functions and Kitchen: Elizabeth Babish

David Johnston, Long Range Planning chair and Steve Babish, Building and Grounds chair have been working very hard to find a permanent location for our Parish. We have a lease for the storefront that we are presently using which will be up January, 2008. This location is very expensive considering that we are just renting and we desire to find a permanent location to build and become a growing parish.

**SERVICES:** Except for a Sunday of severe winter weather, we have had Liturgy every Sunday. We had a full schedule of Lenten and Pascha services that were very well attended. Father Dye is assisted in the Altar by Michael Swoyer and more recently by David Johnston when Michael cannot attend. We have one regular Acolyte and plan to use some of the younger boys in the near future. We have three Readers, headed by Steve Babish, who have become very adept at the chanting and reading.

**CHOIR:** The Choir Director finally managed to figure out the services through the wonderful OCA website and is finally able to provide the appropriate music for the choir. While we are lacking terribly in male voices, the women have been doing very well and are able to sing any of the services without severe errors. The thought of the Bishop's visit, however, has the choir director ready for a nervous breakdown.

**SPECIAL FUNCTIONS AND MONEY MAKING PROJECTS:**

Our Parish has had three bazaars in the past eighteen months. Parishioners make crafts, baked goods and offered holiday items for sale. We have a bazaar each year before Christmas, and, again in the spring before Pascha. Most important is our Perogi Kitchen. The women have regular work sessions to make Perogi for three different sale times during the year. We also make Pelmini and Strudel. Our Perogi Project was featured on the Kansas City area television program "Kansas City Live" on NBC. The host and camera crew spent an hour doing the program while the ladies made Perogi. Several of our women were interviewed; and, Elizabeth Babish explained the process on camera during broadcast of the program.

**WEBSITE:** Tom Fenn is working on a new website for our parish. Michael Swoyer is assisting him. We are looking forward to its completion.

**STEWARDSHIP:** Cathy O'Meara is planning a parish-wide Stewardship program. This was scheduled to begin in August; however, it has been delayed due to her recent illness and hospitalization. She plans to have Saturday education classes followed by Vespers at least once a month. We have planned this with Father Dye and the entire parish is looking forward to this program and Vespers.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL:** Kathy Henry started the Sunday School program last fall and has done an exceptional job. She has three teachers assisting her and has had regular Sunday school every Sunday with the exception of Christmas and Pascha.

