

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIocese OF THE MIDWEST 46TH DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 1-3, 2007
CLEVELAND , OHIO

MICHIGAN DEANERY
VERY REVEREND ANDREW YAVORNITZKY - DEAN

Our Michigan Deanery is characterized by considerably more pan-Orthodox activity and interaction than by deanery activities. In the pan-Orthodox arena our deanery faithful and clergy, as well as the faithful and clergy of the ethnic O.C.A. parishes are always at the forefront. The Council of Orthodox Christian Churches (C.O.C.C.), under the auspices of the Orthodox Clergy Association of Metropolitan Detroit, organizes a host of activities which include: combined Lenten Sunday Vespers, St. Nicholas Feast day Vespers and Nativity choral concert, O.C.E.C. education workshops, music/choral workshops, seminarian scholarships, and retired clergy and widowed Matushki financial aid. The Orthodox Christian Women of Michigan, also under the umbrella of the C.O.C.C. operates a food shelf program, monthly speakers evenings and an annual retreat at the Monastery of the Holy Dormition in Rives Junction (Romanian O.C.A.), This past January a number of deanery faithful attended an Orthodox-Anglican forum hosted by Archbishop NATHANIEL at St. Andrew House Center for Orthodox Christian Studies, and deanery members are active in the local chapter of The Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black. Faithful in our westernmost parishes in Jackson and Albion also engage in similar common activities with regional parishes and at the Monastery of the Holy Dormition.

Fr. Joshua Frigerio at **Holy Ascension in Albion, MI** is leading renewal efforts at our smallest and most remote parish. Renovations – refinishing the flooring, basement remodeling and the creation of Church school rooms, several new icons, exterior spruce ups – are regularly occurring to present a pleasing environment to the growing number of students and families from nearby small colleges who are discovering the Church through O.C.F. outreach. Fr. Joshua is the parish’s first resident pastor in decades. This fall one of the parishioners, a former professor at Hillsdale College, is beginning seminary studies.

Last year it was reported that **Holy Transfiguration in Livonia, MI** was by far our deanery’s largest parish. It still is, but it is also the parish most affected by the economic downturns in the auto industry. Fr. Michael Matsko reports that nearly two dozen parishioners have relocated in the past year. Nevertheless, education, (faithful are exploring the possibility of an Orthodox Christian school, witness (food service to the needy and other local alms projects), development (additional iconography in the temple), the founding of a new FOCA youth chapter, and an on-going capital program for upgrading and maintenance to the older facilities are some of the noteworthy activities this past year. Fr. Deacon Jacob Frimenko marks his 10th year of diaconal ministry at the parish this year.

Fr. Lev Kopestiansky and **Holy Trinity in Detroit, MI** had photos of their Forgiveness Sunday Divine Liturgy featured in a Detroit Free Press article about “How Orthodox

Prepare for Great Lent”. Various charitable outreach activities – Christmas Stocking project, Detroit Rescue Mission, “Souper Bowl Sunday” charity luncheon, and shut in visitations – are ways in which the Church school children are encouraged to interact with seniors in the parish. Some upgrading and sprucing up in the church hall has made for a very pleasant social environment. Fr. Lev and Matushka Vicki serve on the C.O.C.C. music committee. Vicki also conducts the pan-Orthodox choir.

In May, faithful from throughout Michigan gathered with Archbishops JOB and NATHANIEL at **St. Demetrius in Jackson, MI** for the blessing of the new iconostasis. As the first fruits of major renovation, the work has inspired the faithful to continue with additional wall frescoes in the sanctuary and nave. The blessing and open house received a lot of local print and broadcast media attention, and the wire photos were published across the entire state. Fr. Dusan Koprivica was elevated to Archpriest during the Archbishop’s visit. During the 2006 Feast day celebration the parish hosted Archbishop Puhalo for a retreat on icons. The Archbishop also met with the local OCF and Orthodox Women in Healing Ministries. Annual participation in the local cancer Relay for Life and Buddy Walk for Downs syndrome, and a youth group feed the hungry project in conjunction with a heterodox youth group were also parish ministry projects. Plans are being made for the parish’s 50th anniversary in 2008.

A donation of 180 chairs from a local funeral director was just the boost **St. Mark in Rochester, MI** needed to begin a capital campaign and continue with the work of adorning the temple built in 2000. This past lent the interior walls were finished with drywall to prepare for icons. Iconography for the dome is being written, iconostasis, furniture and additional wall frescoes will follow. OCMC Agape canisters were the church school Lenten alms project, and the parish annually supports a missionary through the SAMP program. Parish wide Lenten alms went to Project Mexico and orphanages in Romania and Guatemala. An annual Red Cross blood drive, food service for a homeless temporary housing program, Christmas day caroling at the nursing home which served as the first meeting place, area Church World Services CROP Walk, support of the local Neighborhood House (a multi-denominational social care provider), vacation Church school, and some good time socializing at the parish picnic and Tigers baseball game round out a pretty busy year. Fr. Andrew Yavornitzky is the parish rector.

Ss. Peter and Paul in Detroit, MI, the deanery cathedral parish, has finally received the permits needed to enjoy its newly renovated hall. Numerous fund-raising projects have been undertaken in order to supplement the parish income to meet expenses. Recently neighborhood gangs have increased their “tagging” of both the hall and the church with their graffiti, an unsightly and annoying burden to the financially struggling parish. Outreach activity continues by housing the Vista Nueva Head Start program and by providing an after school homework ministry to neighborhood children. Fr. Michael Simerick reported for the May 9, 2007 Diocesan Council meeting that: “Due to the change of policy of our Diocese in terms of not following the mandate of His Eminence Archbishop JOB and insisting upon a full investigation of all wrongdoings perpetrated against our Church and to prove or disprove the accusations, our cathedral parish will

curtail all diocesan assessment commitments until we return to the policy of seeking the full truth.” The Cathedral will celebrate its 100th anniversary in November.

Respectfully,
V. Rev. Andrew Yavornitzky