

O. N. E.

ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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Orthodox Faith at Work



Right: Participants in Holy Ghost's youth camp.

Outreach in the air at Holy Ghost, Bridgeport

Cathleen Durden

Holy Ghost Church in Bridgeport, Conn., completed a very busy few months with some important outreach programs. Its annual youth camp was held August 15-19 at the parish's Shelton Park property. The 5-day program focused on the theme of "God's Good Creation." It was a blessing to begin the summer program

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Former Youth Rally participants serving the Church

V. Rev. Steven Voytovich

As our New England Diocesan Youth Rally turns 30 years old this year, all our diocesan clergy and faithful should offer a special prayer for all those who have labored and sacrificed to make this wonderful gathering continue to happen each year! As many know, the Youth Rally used to take place at Holy Dormition Church, Cumberland,

Rallyers continued on page 6



Above: Fr. Steven Belonick stands with a representative of Griffin Hospital for a **health fair** hosted by Holy Ghost Church.

Below: Members of Holy Ghost assemble **boxes of food for Thanksgiving.**

with the celebration of the Dormition Feast and the blessing of flowers.

During the week, Father Steven Belonick, the pastor of Holy Ghost, led discussions on important plants and animals mentioned in the Bible (including hyssop, wheat, grapes, and olives) and the importance each played in salvation history. (Yes, Father was really able to find a hyssop plant!)

In addition to our regular educational program, participants visited an urban garden developed by Pivot Ministry (an alcohol and drug rehabilitation program partnering with the parish) where the children and staff witnessed the use of hydroponics to grow green vegetables and were able to enjoy some of the fruits of that garden. The children also learned how to bake Prospora and how it is used during the Divine Liturgy. At the end of the week, an excursion to the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk was scheduled where the children were able to interact with sea animals and enter the beautiful butterfly cage where thousands of colorful butterflies swarmed around them. At the Aquarium, the children also watched an IMAX movie, Natural Parks Adventure.

In October, Holy Ghost, partnering with Griffin Hospital of Derby, provided a free health fair to the local

community. The hospital supplied their mobile health resource center staffed with 3 nurses. Blood pressure screenings, diabetic A1 screenings, and educational materials were provided. In all, 31 screenings were administered to those living in the neighborhood. (One local resident's life may have been saved as a result.) Pivot Ministries provided a free lunch and children decorated pumpkins while parents received the screening.

Holy Ghost held its first annual golf tournament in October at the Connecticut Golf Club. Eight teams of four enjoyed a beautiful day of golf and delicious lunch afterwards. This was Holy Ghost's first fundraising effort of this kind in years. We hope to keep up the tradition. Most of those participating were new friends of the parish and they all looked forward to the second annual tournament this year.

The outreach efforts continued in November when members of Holy Ghost distributed 16 turkeys with all the fixings to needy families in Bridgeport. The non-profit group "Helping Hands" along with the Bridgeport Police Department facilitated in the distribution.



Right: Christmas concert at Holy Ghost, Bridgeport.

Holy Ghost concluded its 2016 outreach ministry in December by offering a free Christmas concert to the surrounding community. Over 80 members of The Fairfield University Glee Club filled the church with beautiful Christmas music. Afterwards, coffee and snacks were provided to all singers and concertgoers. We look forward to sponsoring another Christmas concert this Christmas season.

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Updates from St. Alexis, Clinton, Conn.

Rev. Steven Hosking

On August 12-13, St. Alexis held a Choral Workshop led by Mark Bailey. Mr. Bailey is both a conductor and Baroque violinist. He is founder and director of the American Baroque Orchestra and was also leader of the Yale Russian Chorus. He served 16 years on the faculty of St. Vladimir's Seminary.

The Friday session was a lecture on both the history of liturgical music and making the connection between music and liturgy by understanding the form and function of liturgical music. The Saturday session was on developing vocal skills for Orthodox Liturgical singing and a practice session of the choral singing techniques for Orthodox choirs.

The Church School students, Gabrielle, Michael and Zachary Neiss and Jonathan Cabral, under the guidance of Marlene Melesko and Carolyn Neiss, assembled 35 "Kindness Bags" and delivered them to the Clinton Police Department. The bags contained candy with a message of appreciation such as Tootsie Rolls to help "roll with the punches," and Life Savers since "you save a lot of lives."

Our annual tag sale/bake sale was held in September. Many items were donated by parishioners as well as many delicious baked goods. On Sunday, October 30, 2016, Joseph Barbera was brought into the Holy Orthodox Church through Baptism and Chrismation, during the Liturgy. Joseph's sponsor was Vincent Melesko. We all welcome Joseph and wish him "Many Years."

Vietnam War veterans John Skrobat and Vincent Melesko and Vietnam Era veteran Jim Pepitone were presented Vietnam War Veteran pins by visiting priest, Father Sergei Bouteneff. The pins were issued by the Federal Government in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.

Headed by Marlene Melesko, we collected cleaning supplies for the on-going Bucket Project. The completed buckets were then delivered to the First Congregational Church in Meriden and shipped to Church World Services where they will then distribute the kits to needy families around the world.

On January 22, Kyra Elliott was married to Roderick Seurattan by Father Steven. A reception was held afterwards at Bill Miller's Castle in Branford. **ONE +**

From the Peace Light to the Sunday of Orthodoxy at Christ the Savior



Above: Timothy Cole presents the Peace Light at Christ the Savior.

Back row: Mark Yuschak, Russell De Pace, and Father Vladimir Aleandro.

Front row: Timothy Cole (with the Peace Light) and Sasha Bondarev.

Below: The youth and teens from Christ the Savior participating in the Souper Bowl of Caring on Feb. 5 were as follows:

Front row: Cecilia Cole, Kyrill and Thea Oleynikov, Hannah Cole, Kloe and Gia Acosta, Aubreigh and Jack McGinnis.

Second row: Timothy and Sofia Cole, Alana Brockett, Mary Halvorsen, Maria Rentel, Gregory Brockett and Timothy Halvorsen.

Nicholas Yuschak, Jr.

On January 5, the Peace Light was brought to Christ the Savior, Southbury, Conn., for The Feast of Light, The Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Peace Light was observed for the second year in a row, thanks to Russell De Pace of the Boy Scouts of America.

The Peace Light began its journey in December of 2016 when nine year old Talen Ihab Misch fetched the light from the grotto in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. The light was carried in two blast proof miner's lamps on an Austrian Airlines jet from Tel Aviv, Israel to Vienna, Austria from where it was distributed at a Service of Dedication to World Scout delegations from across Europe who take it back, with a message of Peace, to their own countries. Austrian Airlines then flies the miner's lamps, containing the

Peace Light from Bethlehem to New York City.

This is the 30th year that the Peace Light was brought to Vienna, the 15th year it was brought to the United States, and the second year that it has come to Christ the Savior in Southbury. Like Pascha night, the lights and candles were lit part way through the service with the Peace Light and all in attendance held candles during the reading of the Gospel.

The following month, Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Southbury celebrated The Souper Bowl of Caring on Feb 5. The Live Wires, our Sunday School Children and the Teens joined with youth across America to fight hunger in their local communities. With the most generous donations from our parish, the youth collected monetary donations in soup pots for IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) and 22 bags of food for the Woodbury Food Bank.

Hannah Cole, a Brownie Scout working on her St. George Award collected blankets for the Dorothy Day House in Danbury, Conn. The Dorothy Day Hospitality House offers food and a place to sleep to those in need.





Above: Hannah Cole
delivered blankets to the
Dorothy Day House.

Right: Scenes from
Sunday of Orthodoxy.

From Sunday, Feb. 11-18, donations were accepted of new or gently used, twin-sized machine washable blankets to be given out to people who are homeless. In addition our teen group, under the direction of Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, spent time after Liturgy one Sunday skillfully creating double blankets from donated fleece material. A total of 33 blankets were delivered the following Sunday by Hannah Cole.

It is with great and uplifting spiritual joy that our community of Christ the Savior hosted Sunday of Orthodoxy Great Vespers of the Restoration of Icons this year. A total of 16 clergy from local parishes of the Orthodox Church in

America, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and other jurisdictions, attended that evening with many of their parishioners.

His Eminence Archbishop Nikon graciously gave a word to the faithful who were gathered in numbers exceeding our expectations! Many braved the winter cold to carry icons around the church in a procession proclaiming the sanctity of icons in Orthodox worship. A delicious Lenten meal was provided to refresh our visitors for their return home.

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Rallyers Serving the Church from I



Right: Benedict Sheehan and Chris Dresko.

Photo: Fr. Steven Voytovich

Rhode Island. More recently it has been held at St. Methodios Faith and Heritage Center, Contoocook, New Hampshire. The lives of many of our young people have been immeasurably enriched by this experience.

Recently the St. Tikhon's Seminary Mission Choir visited Holy Trinity Church in New Britain, Conn. Two former Youth Rally participants, Benedict Sheehan and Chris Dresko, saw each other for the first time in nearly twenty years, captured in this photo!

Benedict Sheehan is now the Director of Music at St. Tikhon's Seminary and Monastery. He teaches liturgical music, directs the monastery choir, has recorded liturgical music with several choirs including the Monastery Chamber Choir, and has been engaged in writing and publishing liturgical music.

Chris Dresko is the Choir Director at Holy Trinity Church, and is a Music Teacher at Xavier High School in

Middletown, Conn. Both are making a difference in the life of the church, and fathers raising their own children.

Thanks be to God that these two young people, having developed a strong friendship at the Youth Rally, experienced their Orthodox Church community caring for them and encouraging them at their young age. Today, they are actively engaged in the life of the Orthodox Church, making a difference in the lives of those that they touch through their ministry of liturgical music to elevate the celebration of divine services. May we continue to make every effort to sacrifice and labor to make a difference in our young peoples' lives today, that in due time they too may become active witnesses of our life of Christ through faith in action, empowered by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, building up a loving Orthodox Church community for generations to come. **ONE** +

Fr. Steven Voytovich is Dean of St. Tikhon's Seminary.

Have You Had *The Conversation*?

Beryl Knudsen

Have you had The Conversation? We are having it at Saint Peter and Paul Mission, Bethel, Conn.

Have you had a conversation with your loved ones about your end of life wishes? Have they told you what they want in their last months, weeks, days? This is a very difficult conversation to have. Most of us don't like talking about death or thinking about losing someone we love. However, due to the changes in medical technology and treatment, decisions often have to be made. Sometimes a patient is no longer able to make a decision and someone has to do it for them.

As a hospital chaplain I have seen the conflict and emotional trauma that happen when people have to make medical decisions for a family member or friend and they have no clue what medical interventions the person wanted or, even worse, are fighting as a family about what they think the person would have wanted.

At Saints Peter and Paul Mission in Bethel we are having this end of life conversation using Starter Kits from The Conversation Project to help us kick start our talks with our families, friends, and priest.

The Conversation Project is a national campaign to help people have the hard conversations so that end of life wishes will be communicated and respected. It was started by journalist Ellen Goodman who regretted that, despite the fact that she was very close to her mother, never asked her what was important in case she couldn't speak for herself--and then it was too late.

Recently a group of parish members met and, after an introduction and some encouragement, split into smaller groups

using the Starter Kit to answer a series of questions about their hopes for their quality of life and medical care at end of life.

Their answers to questions about what was important for them (for example, "It's important for me have my eyesight so I can see the flowers and my family members"; "I don't want to die in a hospital"; "I want a prayerful environment") all culminated in the final question in the starter kit: what are the three most important things that you want your family, friends and doctors to understand about your wishes and preferences for end-of life care. Members of the groups found the evening helpful and to their surprise, enjoyable.

One member said: "It really makes sense to think about these questions regarding the final chapter of my life while I am well and in sound mind. It is reasonable to make some decisions now about what is important to me so that I am clear and my loved ones will know what my priorities are."

Another said, "I was surprised how strongly I felt about end of life issues when faced with the questions that were posed. I think I never thought about the subject as it pertains to me."

You too can have the conversation. Visit theconversationproject.org or email me at beryl.knudsen@wchn.org with questions.

Start now: it's never too soon but soon it might be too late.

If we are afraid to talk about death can we really call ourselves Christians?

Beryl Knudsen is a chaplain at Danbury Hospital.

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Upcoming Events

May 15

July 10-14

August 7-12

Deadline for the next issue of the ONE

Vacation Church School, Three Saints, Ansonia

Diocesan Youth Rally