

# O. N. E.

## ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

### Inside this issue:

Diocesan Assembly	2
New Britain Outreach	8
Fr. Fravel Farewell	9
FORCC	9
Baptism in Clinton	10
New Haven 100th	11
History of New Haven	14
Berlin, NH, 100th	17
Springfield, VT, 110th	19

**Right:** Members of the **2015 Diocesan Assembly** listen to a presentation at Holy Trinity, Willimantic, Conn.



## *A Dynamic Diocesan Assembly*

Dozens of delegates and observers gathered in a bucolic retreat center in Windham, Conn., for a particularly engaging Diocesan Assembly this October. In addition to the usual business of the diocese, we welcomed three speakers: Fr. Timothy Lowe on the history of Jerusalem, Fr. Robert Holet on stewardship, and Fr. Steven Hosking on mission.

Holy Trinity, Willimantic, hosted this year's assembly, selecting Immaculata Retreat House for the meetings on Saturday, Oct. 23, and lodging for delegates. The center received high marks from many, as a comfortable and convenient meeting

space. The assembly began in its chapel with a prayer service.

Archbishop Nikon delivered the first report of the day. He began his report with a quotation from Archbishop Anastasios of Albania: "How can we distinguish true mission from proselytism? ... For me proselytism starts when other means are used, instead of the Gospel, in order to gain followers .... you are a candle, lighted by paschal joy, and if the other wishes to take from your flame, then of course, you will not refuse him."

*Diocesan Assembly* continued on 2

## *Diocesan Assembly from I*

Archbishop Nikon commented on this summer's All-American Council. He highlighted the resolution on funding the OCA and the new Statute. Our diocesan video was well-received. Parishes need to review bylaws in response to the Statute revision; a committee has formed to assist them.

His Eminence pointed out to the assembly developments in the Policies, Standards and Procedures [PSPs] regarding sexual misconduct. He has provided all clergy with an abbreviated version which all parish council members are required to read, understand and sign.

Archbishop Nikon participated in many anniversaries this year. [Details on these are in this and previous issues of the ONE.] In his report he reviewed many other important aspects of the life of our diocese. The full text is available on our diocesan web site: < dneoca.org >.



**Above: Fr. Timothy Lowe** delivers the first presentation Friday morning on the history of Jerusalem.

**Below: Archbishop Nikon** presides at the opening Molieben.

His Eminence concluded with further remarks from Archbishop Anastasios. "It is very easy to say: 'This [missionary activity] is for monks or priests and ... I do not have any obligation to do this,' but this is a mistake. And here I insist on a theological understanding of mission: every person who is incorporated into the Church, into the mystical body of Christ, bears a responsibility for the Church.... Of course there are different ways of participating in a





**Above: The relics of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr** were present for the Assembly.

missionary effort.... For every person today there is a possibility to do missionary work. Mission is not only for priests or monks. It is for everybody. But it is also for priests and monks.”

### History of Jerusalem and Lessons for today.

V. Rev. Timothy Lowe delivered a lively history of Jerusalem later Friday morning. He began with his “text for today: ‘No one is good but God alone.’” Much violence over the ages has been done in the name of religion.

Fr. Lowe ranged from Jewish zealots in 170 BC forcing conversions, to Romans crushing the last revolt of such zealots in the 2nd century AD; from Jerusalem becoming a site of Christian pilgrimage to Muslim conquest to the Crusades; concluding with the state of Israel and Zionism.

He pointed out that Jesus Christ rejected the whole pattern of seeing Jerusalem as a religious prize. Earthly Jerusalem rejected the Gospel, while our home is the heavenly Jerusalem.

By our own time, Christians, Muslims and Jews have competing claims on Jerusalem. No one shares

sacred space there, Fr. Lowe observed. The worst example is the Holy Sepulcher.

Fr. Lowe finished by asking, “How do you not get lost in it? By turning our hearts to the Heavenly Jerusalem. No one is good but God alone. Love your neighbor and don’t get excited by religious distractions.”

### Reports

On Friday afternoon, we heard reports of many diocesan activities. A major highlight was ONE Stewards, which again surpassed its goal. Protodeacon Paul Nimchek gave thanks to the generosity and leadership of Archbishop Nikon. He acknowledged people and parishes that were examples in the diocese.

We heard from recipients of Diocesan Grants. The Three Saints Vacation Church School had its largest participation ever—52 kids. Fr. Patrick Burns described the rich and fun program. It is well loved by children up to age 15, not all Orthodox.

Fr. Walter Smith, the new rector of Nativity of the Virgin Mary, Waterbury, Conn., followed with a description of their prayer garden. It is a community project to attract

visitors to spend time in prayer and meditation. It has brought the parish together to work on something in common. They designed it with symbolic inspirations from Christian tradition. Thus far, they have cleared the ground, planted trees and laid topsoil. The diocesan grant funded a fence around the garden.

Fr. John Hopko added a few comments to his written report on Youth Rally. "It is expensive to run but has a large impact both on kids and adult volunteers," he said. "It's a foretaste of heaven." Talking with the other clergy leaders, Fr. Dennis Rhodes and Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, they find that the children receive truths of Orthodox faith at a very high and deep level.

## Fr Robert Holet on Stewardship

V. Rev. Robert Holet introduced himself as a parish priest in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, with a Doctor of Ministry in the understanding of stewardship in Orthodoxy.

He also introduced the "patron saint of stewardship," Apostle Barnabas. He inherited land, sold it and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles. His gift brought great joy to church, we hear in the Acts of the Apostles. "This is how stewardship should work," Fr. Holet said.

We need to affirm that God is at work in our lives, Fr. Holet said. That fosters a desire to orient lives toward Him as stewards. Proper stewardship sets us free from anxiety about money and needs, he argued. We will lose it all at the grave regardless. But the Lord's promise is that one who gives receives thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.

Fr. Holet showed us how the Bible teaches good stewardship in the Old



**Below: Fr. Robert Holet** of the Ukrainian Archdiocese was invited to speak on stewardship.

and New Testament, above all in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

He invited us to embrace our calling as a holy priesthood of all believers: "Don't start with what you think God is asking or what the church needs. Rather ask, what has God given me? And give portion back in thanks and faith."

Fr. Holet concluded, "What will be the character of our parishes? Do we remain in fear, saying, 'Show me the money'? Or open our hearts in thanks and trust?"

His presentation had many illuminating stories and ideas, and resources from it are being shared on our diocesan web site: < dneoca.org >. There will be a more extensive report on his presentation in the next issue of the ONE.

## Choir director program

Matushka Cindy Voytovich has been leading the choir director training program for the diocese for several years. She announced that Tim Tassmer would be receiving his certificate later at the Assembly. Tim spoke on his experience of the





**Above:** One of many conversations at **Friday's dinner** at the Assembly.

training. He said he had learned a wide range, beyond the musical, to deepen his understanding of liturgy. He finished, "I am very grateful and I encourage everyone to participate."

### Treasurer's report

Treasurer John Skrobat reviewed diocesan finances. There was some concern about the shortfall in "Fair Share" contributions. Mr. Skrobat said there was only one real concern among the parishes, and that many years we see such shortfalls that are made up in the future.

One Stewards had a target of \$22,000 and received 23,000.

He noted the diocese netted \$65,000 for the year, due to the sale of the Chelsea, Mass., property.

Delegates recommended more members of the diocese switch to the electronic version of the ONE. Printing and mailing costs are substantial. ONE Editor Fr. Mosher also observed that the PDF version is very attractive in full color. [Email [frjmosher@sspeterpaul.org](mailto:frjmosher@sspeterpaul.org) if you

would like to change to the electronic subscription.]

Mr. Skrobat concluded his report by noting the Chelsea property will net about \$350,000, once the sale of the parish house is complete. The diocese is forming an investment committee to handle these and other funds wisely. The diocese has about \$700,000 in total savings.

### New budget

We pressed on to review the new budget. The All-American Council changed the OCA fair share calculation. Now we are responsible to contribute 50% of our fair share income from parishes, plus investment income.

The new budget added \$1,000 for participation in the OCA Mission School. Diocesan representatives will participate annually. The budget increased seminary support from \$1,000 to \$3,000.

Fr. John Hopko asked when the diocese will be able to move from assessments to proportional giving. Fr.

**Right: The Divine Liturgy** at the Assembly.



John Kreta responded that several parishes need to submit budgets to our treasurer so that he can propose such a move. Mr. Skrobat has not yet been able to make an analysis, he said.

### Worship and Fellowship

Business concluded, we gathered in the chapel for vespers, and then walked down the hall for a reception and dinner. The evening was filled with lively conversation.

The central point of every Diocesan Assembly is coming together as one Church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, with Archbishop Nikon presiding. Saturday morning, we assembled at Holy Trinity, Willimantic, for the liturgy and the rest of our work.

### Mission school.

After lunch, Fr. Steven Hosking gave the last presentation of the

weekend, on his experience of the Mission School and his ideas for how to expand the mission in our diocese.

Fr. Hosking said the school was intense and packed with information. But its heart was making the Gospel and the Orthodox faith understandable to those we encounter.

He spoke of his own missionary experience among the Yupiks of Alaska. He related a story he heard of a Yupik woman who taught traditional basket weaving. Each day, she only taught a song sung while doing a particular step of weaving. Students got frustrated: "We are here to learn practice. Show us baskets and techniques." Her reply, Fr. Hosking said, was, "You don't understand. Our baskets are songs made real."

Fr. Hosking said, "We are here to make God's love real. We have no other agenda. If we only focus on our

own goals, we will end up with a basket that holds nothing.”

He explained that “Yupik” just means “The People.” If we are going to be fruitful, he said, “We need to treat everyone we meet as The People. Embrace their culture and love them.”

Fr. Hosking said many Christians worry about secularism, but the biggest threat to us is “extreme denominationalism”—the idea that each individual can elect whatever belief system and is accountable to no one.

He asked, what is our biggest witness? It is the Gospel shown in how we live, testified in our worship. “If we don’t have services, don’t explain, don’t invite people in, how will anyone know who we are, what we believe, what we do?”

Fr. Hosking emphasized that each of our parishes is a mission. We need to be looking beyond what we already have. We discussed the possibility of doing mission school workshops in our diocese in the coming year.

Fr. Hosking finished by pointing to St Elizabeth the New Martyr, whose relics were in our midst. She too was a missionary. She converted from Lutheranism, laid aside her royal status and became a nun, serving in a slum to show love of Christ. He also pointed to Saint Innocent: “Whether sharing the Gospel in Russian or Yupik, he knew his people. We need to know our people.”

### Concluding Business

The agenda of the Assembly swiftly came to a close after Fr. Hosking’s presentation. Bob Popadick summarized the process of selling the Chelsea property. We held elections for all open diocesan offices.

The last item meriting lengthy discussion was one resolution from



**Right: Fr. Steven Hosking** spoke on mission during the final session of the Diocesan Assembly.

the Connecticut Deanery. Fr. John Hopko explained that since every parish in the diocese is mandated to screen many people, requiring significant expertise, the diocese should establish an office of background screening, empowered to act on behalf of all parishes and organizations of diocese.

Such an office would ensure uniformity and proper standards of checks. It would also remove duplication of effort, since a person might be a volunteer in the parish and a diocesan program. The measure makes sure that there is consistency across the diocese. If there was a prosecution and they found that a sister parish did much more, it would be huge legal liability, Fr. Hopko said. The measure passed unanimously.

We concluded the assembly with prayers and the blessing of all diocesan council members. We departed with much to consider and work on during the coming year. We will gather again next October for the Diocesan Assembly in Springfield, Mass.



## *Holy Trinity, New Britain, Conn. Reaches Out to the Neighborhood*

**Right:** Sunday, August 16, 2015. Members of **Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in New Britain** handing out backpacks filled with school supplies to the neighborhood children. During the year the church also donates food, clothing and winter coats to the community, as well as sponsoring a neighborhood picnic on our feast day weekend with food, games and a bounce house.





## *St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, Mass.*

Steve Nikitas

Our priest Father Barnabas Fravel has taken a new post in Wilmington, Delaware. In 9 years of service to St. Nicholas including the construction of a new church, Father Barnabas added greatly to the legacy of our parish. He and Matushka Daria, and their children Myra and Matthew, will be missed. Their youthful enthusiasm made our church a dynamic and attractive place.

We do not have a new priest yet, but we are searching. We will

continue with substitute priests and readers' services when necessary. We believe that God will guide us into a new and more prosperous era as our parish continues to grow.

We'd like to thank Father Barnabas and his family for their service, and wish them well in their new parish. And we are sure they will not miss the New England snow and cold!

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**Middle:** The **Benefit Dinner for FORCC**, the Fellowship of Orthodox Churches in Connecticut.

**Below Left:** Deacon Stephanos Ritsi, missionary to Albania was the guest speaker.

Below Right: **Eva Vaniotis** was recognized for her many years of service in FORCC.



**Right: Roderick Seurattan was baptized** at St. Alexis Orthodox Church in Clinton, Conn. He was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. He was a catechumen for over a year and is engaged to Kyra Elliot. He took the baptismal name of Innocent, after Saint Innocent of Alaska. (Roderick was baptized two days before the feast of St. Innocent's glorification). His sponsors were Stasia and Glenn Penkoff-Ledbeck.



# Metropolitan Tikhon presides at 100th Anniversary of Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven

John Kruchok

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon presided at the 100th Anniversary of Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, on the weekend of September 26-27, 2015. Concelebrating was His Eminence,

Archbishop Nikon, together with numerous clergy and seminarians. The weekend also marked the 35th Anniversary of Archpriest Michael and Matushka Lydia Westerberg's assignment to the parish. Two

**Middle:** Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Nikon with clergy and faithful at the centennial of Holy Transfiguration.

**Below:** Metropolitan Tikhon preaches at the Divine Liturgy to those assembled for the anniversary celebration.





**Right: Fr. Michael Westerberg**, rector of Holy Transfiguration, was also recognized for his 35 years of service in the parish.

Below: **Joseph (Tristan) Gall** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop Nikon.



hundred and fifty guests from as far as South Carolina, southern California, Montana and across New England attended the banquet at La Mirage, North Haven, Conn.

The weekend opened with a Panikhida for all parishioners who had departed this life during the past 100 years, followed by Great Vespers.

During Sunday's Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, two readers were tonsured and Subdeacon Joseph [Tristan] Gall was ordained to the diaconate.

Metropolitan Tikhon presented a Synodal gramota to the parish and Father Michael, while Archbishop Nikon presented diocesan gramotas to several

faithful parishioners and stewards.

In addition to the banquet addresses of Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Nikon, Archpriest John Dresko of Saint Paul Church, Las Vegas, NV, offered warm reflections on the many years of service and friendship working together when he served as Dean of the Connecticut Deanery and Father



Michael served as Chancellor of the Diocese of New England.

A ten-minute audio/video presentation highlighted the many faces and memorable moments of the parish's history. Priest Joshua Mosher of Saints Peter and Paul Church, Meriden, Conn., was congratulated on the 10th Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, which took place during the celebration of Holy Transfiguration's 90th Anniversary.

In January 2015, Father Michael observed the 40th Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. He begins his 36th year at Holy Transfiguration on October 1, 2015.

Clergy in attendance for the anniversary weekend included: V. Rev. Vladimir Aleandro, V. Rev. John Bacon, V. Rev. Steven Belonick, V. Rev. Sergei Bouteneff, V. Rev. John



**Above: Ilia and Larissa Korman** were among the members of Holy Transfiguration awarded gramota for their years of devoted service.

**Below: Clergy from across the country** joined in the celebration.

Dresko, V. Rev. David Koles, V. Rev. John Kreta, V. Rev. John Hopko, V. Rev. Michael Koblosh, Rev. Joshua Mosher, V. Rev. Peter Orfanakos (St. Barbara-Greek), Rev. James Parnell, V. Rev. Dennis Rhodes, Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, Protodeacon Paul Nimcheck, Deacon Tikhon Bishop, and Deacon George Zlatkowski, son of departed Fr. Paul Zlatkowski, Fr. Michael Westerberg's predecessor.

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# History of Holy Transfiguration, New Haven: part 2

John Kruchok

**Right:** Archbishop Nikon addresses the newly-ordained Deacon Joseph Gall and his wife Mary at the centennial of Holy Transfiguration.



*[The first part of this series was published earlier this year.]*

Holy Transfiguration parish joyously greeted the arrival of our new pastor, Fr. Michael Westerberg, and Matushka Lydia in October, 1980. Fr. Michael had previously served five years as Rector of Holy Resurrection Church in Berlin, New Hampshire. A graduate of St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, he fulfilled the parish council's desire to have an experienced and interactive pastor who understood American society and culture and would work hard to stimulate parish growth. Within the first few years many aspects of parish life changed dramatically. Among the many changes included the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist, weekday Vespers,

adult education, increased church school programs, service projects, stewardship reawakening, enhanced choir and many fellowship opportunities. Matushka Lydia established and maintained a new parish library. In addition, Fr. Michael immediately provided active support and participation in the long-standing parish organizations including the Ladies Auxiliary who organized the annual parish bazaar; Altar Guild which ran the "coffee hour" and the "R" Club FROC/FOCA chapter which provided some unique parish activities and service projects.

In addition to renewing the quality of parish life and the spiritual lives of the parishioners, an early challenge for Fr. Michael was guiding the parish through a difficult decision



to replace the original, large and striking cupola in 1985; its leakage plagued the parish for far too many years and seemed to be on the agenda of virtually every annual meeting.

The first ten years also began the transition from western-influenced to byzantine iconography through the generosity of many earmarked gifts. Feast day icons were commissioned, all iconography on the iconostas was replaced and 27 new stained glass icons finally completed the upper dome area.

The parish continued to grow throughout the decade of the 80's as a diverse influx of new parishioners added much to the revived parish, and a good number of conversions to the faith. Several new organizations evolved including Orthodox Christian Seniors and Orthodox Christian Library Outreach.

While Fr. Michael held many OCA and diocesan responsibilities including chancellor, he also served as chaplain at the Veteran's Hospital and chaplain of the local OCF chapter at Yale. Vespers were served on campus once a week; many students attended and participated in our parish as well. Holy Transfiguration also served as hosts of a St. Vladimir's Seminary adult education series for many years.

While weekly bingo helped the parish through structural problems and helped meet the annual budget, its profits dwindled and eventually terminated. A maturing parish recognized this was no longer a proper means of financial support and transitioned to a scripturally-based model.

It also became apparent that increased parish growth and the need to renovate the church (becoming more energy-efficient, air conditioning, elevators, classrooms etc) required some "soul-searching" to



**Right: Metropolitan Tikhon speaks with Archbishop Nikon at the conclusion of the Liturgy.**

determine whether a new church building and location should be considered instead of investing in the present structure. In the end, it was determined to remain at the present site, renovate and seek sources of financing.

1990 began a new decade and the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the parish, which included the priestly ordination of Fr. John Anderson. The parish experienced a natural transition from leadership of dedicated and long-standing stewards in the later years of their life to those whose history with the parish was more recent. Change is not easy to embrace and at times there were differences of opinion but what was best for the parish was always the end result.

By the mid-1990's the establishment of the St. Alexis mission in Clinton, Connecticut as a place of Orthodox worship to serve the southeastern part of the state had a major impact on the life of parish by the loss of a significant number of active stewards. There was joy of a new parish for an unserved area but sorrow to lose such dedicated parishioners who were a very active part of a close-knit parish family. The parish committed itself to renewed efforts and met the challenge.

Further renovations included handicap accessible improvements including a ramp and elevator/lift. The parish mortgage was paid off through



**Right:** Metropolitan Tikhon speaks at the centennial banquet.

the generosity of parishioners who offered no interest loans.

Extending their stewardship outside the parish, a number of parishioners were active in leadership positions throughout the church. This included the Russian Orthodox Laymen's League radio fund, the national presidency of the FROC and FOCA, the Fellowship of Orthodox Churches in Connecticut, the New England Diocese and the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America. In addition to his multitude of responsibilities, Fr. Michael continued to mentor seminarians-in-training through the internship program of St. Vladimir's Seminary. The seminarians added much to parish life as well.

The new millennium continued to bring new blood to the parish; a vibrant and diverse mix of families moving to the area, awareness of the Orthodox faith in the New Haven community and a number of students, faculty and staff connected with nearby Yale University. Stewardship continued to develop with the eventual transition to a pledge system of sacrificial giving from annual dues. Community service was expanded with an allocation of funds in the annual budget for "community care" agencies, "adoption" of needy families

at Christmas, food drives for the hungry etc. The 90th Anniversary of the parish was largely celebrated in 2005 as a means for fuller participation of older, life-long parishioners.

The celebration was highlighted also by the ordination of Fr. Joshua Mosher to the holy priesthood.

The past ten years of the parish continued a natural pattern of change. Many older, dedicated and active members have gone to their eternal rest, most parish organizations are relatively inactive mostly due to changes in American society and not enough hours in a day. As the need arises, the parish pulls together whether to help a needy family, host a unique group such as the "Stremsky family" or to provide hospitality following a liturgical celebration.

For the past thirty years, noted iconographer Fr. Theodore Jurewicz has continued to beautify the temple; the dome area is one of the final projects necessary as the parish enters its second hundred years. A new copper roof and an enhanced copper cupola have provided relief from far too many years of water leakage.

The church hall has undergone some renovation with further improvements planned along with carpet replacement. The "wish list" includes an expanded parking lot.

The parish celebrated its 100th Anniversary on September 26-27, 2015 with a very large number of past and present parishioners, clergy and friends. The celebration was highlighted by the recognition of 35 years of parish service of Fr. Michael Westerberg and Mat. Lydia.

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*Scenes from centennial of Holy Resurrection, Berlin, N.H.*





**Above and below right:** Holy Resurrection, Berlin, N.H. hosted an **iconography workshop.**



**Below left: Annabell Sousa**, daughter of Natasha and Mario Sousa, was baptized at SS. Peter & Paul, Meriden, Conn., on Aug. 29.



## *Holy Trinity, Springfield, Vermont, celebrates 110 years*

**Right:** A group portrait of all those assembled to celebrate the 110th anniversary of **Holy Trinity, Springfield, Vt.**



On Sunday September 20, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Springfield, Vt., celebrated their 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In 1905, Fr. Alexander Hotovitzky came to Springfield and celebrated the very first Divine Liturgy in a house owned by Alexander Lovell on Valley Street.

As a missionary priest Fr. Hotovitzky established many Orthodox Churches throughout New England and the East coast before returning to Russia in 1914. He was active and prominent in Russia and defended the Orthodox faith until 1937 when he was executed in prison at the age of 65. In 1994 he was canonized as a Saint in the Orthodox Church.

Holy Trinity has been at 90 Park St. since purchasing the property in 1909. The service on Sunday was led by Archbishop Nikon. Also

celebrating were V. Rev. John Kreta, Chancellor of the New England diocese, V. Rev. Peter Carmichael, Rector of Holy Trinity and V. Rev. Mark Sherman, retired and attached to Holy Trinity.

Many parishioners and friends of the parish attended and after the service a banquet was held at the Elks club BPOE#1560 to honor the occasion. The meal commemorated orphans who were housed at Holy Trinity from 1915 to 1926.

A presentation on Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage was made by Fr. Peter's son Donald Carmichael and in lieu of any money for the meal a collection was made to forward to St. Innocent Orphanage. The effort raised \$1600 for the orphanage. Information on Project Mexico can be found at [www.projectmexico.org](http://www.projectmexico.org) and information on Holy Trinity can be found at [www.htocvt.org](http://www.htocvt.org). **ONE +**

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## Upcoming Events

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| <b>Dec 31</b> | <b>Deadline for the next issue of the ONE.</b>                      |
| Dec. 6        | St. Tikhon's Seminary Choir concert at Three Saints, Ansonia, Conn. |
| June 5        | St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, Mass., celebrates centennial.             |
| June 10-11    | Christ the Savior, Southbury, Conn., celebrates 25th Anniversary.   |
| Oct 9, 2016   | Holy Trinity, Willimantic, Conn., celebrates centennial.            |
| Oct. 29, 2016 | St. Peter & St. Paul, Springfield, Mass. celebrates centennial.     |