

# O. N. E.

## ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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## *Celebrating a blessed past, rejoicing in what is to come*

**Right: Children of St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, in 1932.** This was one of the archival photos on display at their centennial.



### Youth Rally Confirmed Rev. Joshua Mosher

After a period of uncertainty, Fr. John Hopko, director of Youth Rally, confirmed in late May that Rally will indeed take place on Aug. 8-13. Rally is a week-long residential Orthodox Christian camp program for young people who have completed fifth grade (or the equivalent) and who have not

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### Centennial of St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, Mass.

Steve Nikitas

On Sunday June 5, St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts celebrated its 100th anniversary with a Divine Liturgy presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Nikon. The service was followed by a celebratory dinner.

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**Right: The parish of St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, in 1932.**



We at St. Nicholas are pleased that we have entered a significant new phase. Our church is growing and is filled with energy and Christian joy. This must have been what it felt like 100 years ago when the church was founded in 1916, and opened its new home on Wahconah Street in 1917.

Imagine the anticipation among the first parishioners after leaving behind the “old country” and entering this land of opportunity called America. Who could have imagined a place called Pittsfield, Massachusetts from thousands of miles away?

Yet with faith and a strong American economy Russian and Ukrainian immigrants founded a humble church with more than 900 years of Orthodox devotion to back them up. And now in 2016 another 100 years has been added on to the life of that church and that faith.

We have all seen the black-and-white photographs of those original parishioners. Long gone, they

are still among us, along with the saints and angels, and Christ and God Himself. And we owe them everything. We are certain that they would be proud and delighted at what we have accomplished in our brand-new church built on their dreams, their devotion and their financial contributions.

They were modest people, and surely none of them were rich. The church was small, but the faithful were wealthy in spirit just as we today are spiritually wealthier than our non-Orthodox counterparts.

The first meeting to establish a Pittsfield church was held May 20, 1916 under Reverend Peter Holkovitch. In March 1917 a house at 76 Wahconah St. was purchased and converted into a church which was consecrated on July 22, 1917. Three hundred parishioners were present at the consecration.

Imagine that... 300 parishioners! What a wonderful thought. Today we are thankful for 40 attendees on

Sunday, but considering that the church was being proposed by the diocese for closure back in the 1990s the mere existence of St. Nicholas today is nothing short of extraordinary. And with a brand new temple it is even moreso.

All services were initially conducted in Slavonic, the official language of the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1922 Ukrainian parishioners left the church to become Ukrainian Catholic. This was a setback for St. Nicholas but the church lived on.

The Sisterhood of the Holy Virgin was founded in 1927, and the parish grew during the 1930s. Under the direction of Rt. Rev. P. Zaychenko, St. Nicholas had a choir alone of 30 members. It was called "one of the outstanding choirs in Pittsfield and one that is supreme in its particular type of church music."

The parish sustained itself steadily in the ensuing decades of American

prosperity. Remembering personally the 1960s and 1970s parishioner Nicholas Bobrovsky recalls poor communication between the priest and parishioners due to the language barrier; church services were held on Sundays only; while church finances depended on plate collections which averaged less than \$20 per week. Nicholas also recalled a very difficult process for lowering and cleaning the chandelier that required access to the pulley crank in the church attic. He also remembers the introduction of the English language in services, along with this story:

"There was a tradition in this parish in the early 1960s that only children would take Holy Communion on Sunday. The adults would go only once a year. At one time we had a substitute priest to serve Liturgy. On one Sunday when no children were present and thus nobody took Communion, he said 'I am traveling for hours to serve the

**Below: Archbishop Nikon is greeted with flowers at the door of St. Nicholas.**



**Above: Archbishop Nikon begins his entrance prayers, surrounded by the clergy and faithful.**

**Below: Servers prepare for the hand-washing during the first antiphon of the Divine Liturgy.**



Divine Liturgy. If you are not going to participate in the Holy Sacrament this is my last visit!' That incident led to adult parishioners taking Holy Communion every Sunday."

Throughout the years dozens of dedicated figures sustained our church including the Koronchik family — Jacov and Anna and their children Sophia, Mary, Nina and finally Paul, who fell asleep in the Lord in October 2014. Paul was generous to St. Nicholas in his will, just as the entire family played a key role in sustaining the church over many decades.

The 1990s was a time of declining attendance but the church persevered. In 1993 St. Nicholas purchased its first separate rectory with the help of a bequest from the estate of longtime parishioner Vera Garin.

In the year 2000, the church adopted a stewardship plan and in 2006 the first full-time priest was hired. Under Father Barnabas Fravel, a plan was set into motion to construct or



**Right: Many clergy traveled to celebrate the centennial.**



acquire a new church. Various closed Catholic churches were considered and rejected. Meanwhile the Berkshire Medical Center across the street from the Wahconah Street location wanted to purchase the old church property for a parking lot, and so the process of renewal fell into place as if ordained by God.

The current house and property at 1304 North Street had been advocated by Fr. Joseph Petranin, the longest-serving rector in St. Nicholas history (1981-2003). The house and property were acquired in 2010, and construction of the new temple began in Autumn of 2011. After Father Barnabas and his family settled in the new rectory the old rectory was sold, bolstering church finances, and the church was complete for Pascha 2012.

On June 8, 2013, the new St. Nicholas was consecrated. This generated great excitement in a diocese in which no new churches were being built. Imagine the joy that the 1916 founders would have felt as

His Eminence Archbishop Nikon drove the pegs into the altar table, to see their efforts, contributions and 97 years of prayers come to fruition.

With the hiring and ordination of a dynamic young priest in Father Joseph Gall in February 2016 we the faithful of St. Nicholas see a bright future ahead. We are gaining new parishioners on a regular basis and there is a sense of upward momentum. The demolition of the old barn behind the parish house is another major step in improving our property.

This progress started 100 years ago in the hearts and minds of those St. Nicholas worshippers who immigrated from afar with hope, faith, love and dreams for a more fruitful and faithful life. That first church marked a humble beginning. Nobody in that church could have imagined the St. Nicholas of today, still humble, and still great and good.

Glory to God for All Things!

**ONE +**

# Diocesan Youth Rally 2016 is confirmed for August

V. Rev. John Hopko

yet celebrated their 18th birthday. The program is held at Saint Methodios Faith and Heritage Center, Contoocook, N.H.

Earlier in May, Fr. Hopko announced to the diocese that unexpectedly few volunteers had stepped forward. He made a fervent appeal for qualified laypeople to serve as camp counsellors—warning that if Youth Rally were understaffed, he could not in good conscience permit the program to go forward this year. By the end of the month, he gladly reported that all the positions had been filled by new volunteers.

In a letter sent to parishes on May 26, Fr. Hopko laid out the details for Rally 2016. He noted that fees are increasing for the first time in many years: “Though what is being asked in this regard is still far from the actual cost—The Diocese of New England heavily subsidizes Youth Rally through its ONE (Orthodox New England) Stewards program. The fee this year will be—from any given family—\$225 for the first child, \$175 for the second child, \$125 for the third child, with all further children accepted as participants at no charge.”

Fr. Hopko must receive registrations no later than Monday, July 11, 2016. For materials, contact

him at [saintcyril@snet.net](mailto:saintcyril@snet.net). All participants also require a health examination completed within the last two years.

The theme for this year’s Youth Rally is “Peace be to all.” Fr. Hopko wrote, “One of our anticipated presenters is Priest James Parnell. Fr. James is pastor of All Saints Orthodox Church, Hartford, Connecticut, and an Army National Guard Chaplain. Father James joined the U.S. Army in 2002 and served as an Arabic linguist. He deployed twice to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; first from 2005–2006 and again from 2007–2008.”

Fr. Hopko continued in his letter: “Fr. James was commissioned as a Chaplain Candidate in 2009 and, after studies at Saint Vladimir’s Seminary, was ordained to the holy priesthood in 2012. Fr. James’s wife, Holly, is also an Army veteran, who also served as an Arabic linguist. Fr. James and Matushka Holly have four children.”

With new volunteers added to the ranks of devoted participants of many years’ standing, preparations for Youth Rally 2016 are well underway. We hope that many families new and old will join in this wonderful opportunity.

**ONE +**



## *Fr. Walter Smith—Memory eternal!*

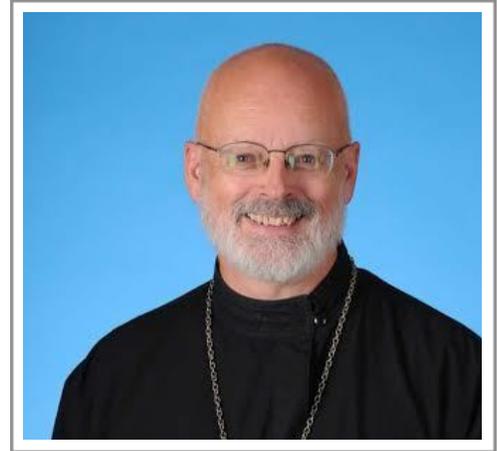
**Above:** The newly-departed servant of God, **Fr. Walter Smith.**

**Below:** The opening of the funeral service at Nativity of the Holy Virgin, Waterbury.

Priest Walter Smith, Rector of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church, Waterbury, unexpectedly fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, May 14, 2016.

A native of Montana, he was an art history professor and gallery curator/director in Massachusetts, Wisconsin and Mississippi prior to his conversion to Orthodox Christianity in 1996. In 2001, he began full-time studies at Saint Tikhon's Seminary, from which he received the Master of Divinity degree in 2004. He was ordained to the priesthood in 2003. Prior to his assignment to the Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church he had served Holy Trinity Church, McAdoo, PA; Holy Trinity Church, Moose Jaw, SK, Canada; and Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Missoula, MT.

Father Walter is survived by his beloved wife, Presbyteria Nancy, who received her Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Chicago and taught at Marywood University, Scranton, PA, 2001-06. A trained iconographer, she painted icons for



Holy Trinity Church, Moose Jaw, SK. He is further survived by their daughter, Flora, a graduate student at the New School, New York, NY.

Funeral services were held on Friday and Saturday, May 20-21, before the interment at the parish cemetery. Archbishop Nikon presided, accompanied by a great number of clergy and faithful from the diocese and beyond.

May Father Walter's memory be eternal! **ONE +**



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**Upcoming Events**

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|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>July 15</b> | <b>Deadline for the next issue of the ONE</b>                                   |
| Aug 8-13       | Diocesan Youth Rally                                                            |
| Sept. 10       | Altar Server Retreat led by Fr. John Hopko at SS. Peter & Paul, Meriden, Conn.  |
| Sept 18        | Holy Annunciation, Maynard, Mass., celebrates centennial                        |
| Sept. 23-24    | Stewardship Retreat led by Fr. Robert Holet at SS. Peter & Paul, Meriden, Conn. |
| Oct 9          | Holy Trinity, Willimantic, Conn., celebrates centennial                         |
| Oct. 29        | St. Peter & St. Paul, Springfield, Mass., celebrates centennial                 |
| Oct. 29-30     | Diocesan Assembly hosted by St. Peter & St. Paul, Springfield, Mass.            |